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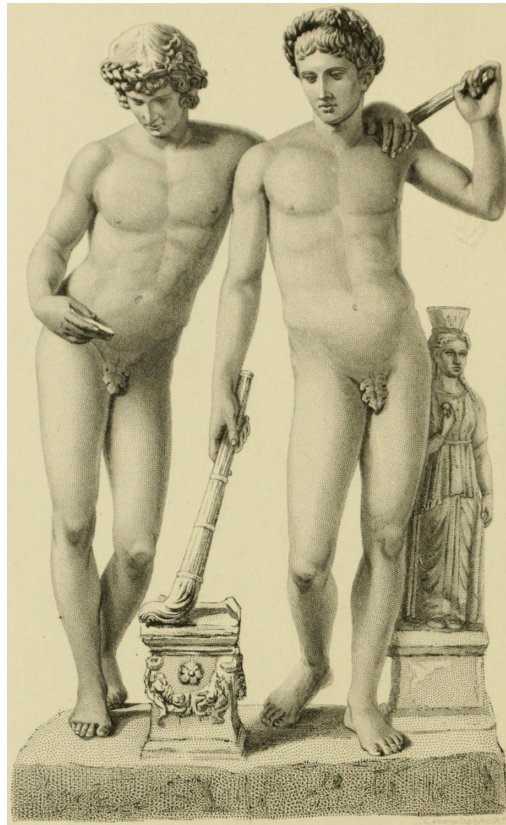
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Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece

by John Addington Symonds

Contents

VOLUME I.

THE LOVE OF THE ALPS
WINTER NIGHTS AT DAVOS
BACCHUS IN GRAUBÜNDEN
OLD TOWNS OF PROVENCE
THE CORNICE
AJACCIO
MONTE GENEROSO
LOMBARD VIGNETTES
COMO AND IL MEDEGHINO
BERGAMO AND BARTOLOMMEO COLLEONI
CREMA AND THE CRUCIFIX
CHERUBINO AT THE SCALA THEATRE
A VENETIAN MEDLEY
THE GONDOLIER'S WEDDING
A CINQUE CENTO BRUTUS
TWO DRAMATISTS OF THE LAST CENTURY

VOLUME II.

RAVENNA
RIMINI
MAY IN UMBRIA
THE PALACE OF URBINO
VITTORIA ACCORAMBONI
AUTUMN WANDERINGS
PARMA
CANOSSA
FORNOVO
FLORENCE AND THE MEDICI
THE DEBT OF ENGLISH TO ITALIAN LITERATURE
POPULAR SONGS OF TUSCANY
POPULAR ITALIAN POETRY OF THE RENAISSANCE
THE 'ORFEO' OF POLIZIANO
EIGHT SONNETS OF PETRARCH

VOLUME III.

FOLGORE DA SAN GEMIGNANO
THOUGHTS IN ITALY ABOUT CHRISTMAS
SIENA
MONTE OLIVETO
MONTEPULCIANO
PERUGIA
ORVIETO
LUCRETIUS
ANTINOUS
SPRING WANDERINGS
AMALFI, PÆSTUM, CAPRI
ETNA
PALERMO
SYRACUSE AND GIRGENTI
ATHENS
INDEX FOR ALL THREE VOLUMES

PREFATORY NOTE

In preparing this new edition of the late J.A. Symonds's three volumes of travels, 'Sketches in Italy and Greece,' 'Sketches and Studies in Italy,' and 'Italian Byways,' nothing has been changed except the order of the Essays. For the convenience of travellers a topographical arrangement has been adopted. This implied a new title to cover the contents of all three volumes, and 'Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece' has been chosen as departing least from the author's own phraseology.

HORATIO F. BROWN.

Venice: *June* 1898.

SKETCHES AND STUDIES
IN
ITALY AND GREECE

VOLUME I.

THE LOVE OF THE ALPS^[1]

Of all the joys in life, none is greater than the joy of arriving on the outskirts of Switzerland at the end of a long dusty day's journey from Paris. The true epicure in refined pleasures will never travel to Basle by night. He courts the heat of the sun and the monotony of French plains,—their sluggish streams and never-ending poplar trees—for the sake of the evening coolness and the gradual approach to the great Alps, which await him at the close of the day. It is about Mulhausen that he begins to feel a change in the landscape. The fields broaden into rolling downs, watered by clear and running streams; the green Swiss thistle grows by riverside and cowshed; pines begin to tuft the slopes of gently rising hills; and now the sun has set, the stars come out, first Hesper, then the troop of lesser lights; and he feels—yes, indeed, there is now no mistake—the well-known, well-loved magical fresh air, that never fails to blow from snowy mountains and meadows watered by perennial streams. The last hour is one of exquisite enjoyment, and when he reaches Basle, he scarcely sleeps all night for hearing the swift Rhine beneath the balconies, and knowing that the moon is shining on its waters, through the town, beneath the bridges, between pasture-lands and copses, up the still mountain-girdled valleys to the ice-caves where the water springs. There is nothing in all experience of travelling like this. We may greet the Mediterranean at Marseilles with enthusiasm; on entering Rome by the Porta del Popolo, we may reflect with pride that we have reached the goal of our pilgrimage, and are at last among world-shaking memories. But neither Rome nor the Riviera wins our hearts like Switzerland. We do not lie awake in London thinking of them; we do not long so intensely, as the year comes round, to revisit them. Our affection is less a passion than that which we cherish for Switzerland.

2

[1] This Essay was written in 1866, and published in 1867. Reprinting it in 1879, after eighteen months spent continuously in one high valley of the Grisons, I feel how slight it is. For some amends, I take this opportunity of printing at the end of it a description of Davos in winter.

Why, then, is this? What, after all, is the love of the Alps, and when and where did it begin? It is easier to ask these questions than to answer them. The classic nations hated mountains. Greek and Roman poets talk of them with disgust and dread. Nothing could have been more depressing to a courtier of Augustus than residence at Aosta, even though he found his theatres and triumphal arches there. Wherever classical feeling has predominated, this has been the case. Cellini's Memoirs, written in the height of pagan Renaissance, well express the aversion which a Florentine or Roman felt for the inhospitable wildernesses of Switzerland.^[2] Dryden, in his dedication to 'The Indian Emperor,' says, 'High objects, it is true, attract the sight; but it looks up with pain on craggy rocks and barren mountains, and continues not intent on any object which is wanting in shades and green to entertain it.' Addison and Gray had no better epithets than 'rugged,' 'horrid,' and the like for Alpine landscape. The classic spirit was adverse to enthusiasm for mere nature. Humanity was too prominent, and city life absorbed all interests,—not to speak of what perhaps is the weightiest reason—that solitude, indifferent accommodation, and imperfect means of travelling, rendered mountainous countries peculiarly disagreeable. It is impossible to enjoy art or nature while suffering from fatigue and cold, dreading the attacks of robbers, and wondering whether you will find food and shelter at the end of your day's journey. Nor was it different in the Middle Ages. Then individuals had either no leisure from war or strife with the elements, or else they devoted themselves to the salvation of their souls. But when the ideas of the Middle Ages had decayed, when improved arts of life had freed men from servile subjection to daily needs, when the bondage of religious tyranny had been thrown off and political liberty allowed the full development of tastes and instincts, when, moreover, the classical traditions had lost their power, and courts and coteries became too narrow for the activity of man,—then suddenly it was discovered that Nature in herself possessed transcendent charms. It may seem absurd to class them all together; yet there is no doubt that the French Revolution, the criticism of the Bible, Pantheistic forms of religious feeling, landscape-painting, Alpine travelling, and the poetry of Nature, are all signs of the same movement—of a new Renaissance. Limitations of every sort have been shaken off during the last century; all forms have been destroyed, all questions asked. The classical spirit loved to arrange, model, preserve traditions, obey laws. We are intolerant of

3

4

everything that is not simple, unbiassed by prescription, liberal as the wind, and natural as the mountain crags. We go to feed this spirit of freedom among the Alps. What the virgin forests of America are to the Americans, the Alps are to us. What there is in these huge blocks and walls of granite crowned with ice that fascinates us, it is hard to analyse. Why, seeing that we find them so attractive, they should have repelled our ancestors of the fourth generation and all the world before them, is another mystery. We cannot explain what rapport there is between our human souls and these inequalities in the surface of the earth which we call Alps. Tennyson speaks of

Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,

and its vagueness eludes definition. The interest which physical science has created for natural objects has something to do with it. Curiosity and the charm of novelty increase this interest. No towns, no cultivated tracts of Europe however beautiful, form such a contrast to our London life as Switzerland. Then there is the health and joy that comes from exercise in open air; the senses freshened by good sleep; the blood quickened by a lighter and rarer atmosphere. Our modes of life, the breaking down of class privileges, the extension of education, which contribute to make the individual greater and society less, render the solitude of mountains refreshing. Facilities of travelling and improved accommodation leave us free to enjoy the natural beauty which we seek. Our minds, too, are prepared to sympathise with the inanimate world; we have learned to look on the universe as a whole, and ourselves as a part of it, related by close ties of friendship to all its other members Shelley's, Wordsworth's, Goethe's poetry has taught us this; we are all more or less Pantheists, worshippers of 'God in Nature,' convinced of the omnipresence of the informing mind.

5

[2] See, however, what is said about Leo Battista Alberti in the sketch of Rimini in the second series.

Thus, when we admire the Alps, we are after all but children of the century. We follow its inspiration blindly; and while we think ourselves spontaneous in our ecstasy, perform the part for which we have been trained from childhood by the atmosphere in which we live. It is this very unconsciousness and universality of the impulse we obey which makes it hard to analyse. Contemporary history is difficult to write; to define the spirit of the age in which we live is still more difficult; to account for 'impressions which owe all their force to their identity with themselves' is most difficult of all. We must be content to feel, and not to analyse.

Rousseau has the credit of having invented the love of Nature. Perhaps he first expressed, in literature, the pleasures of open life among the mountains, of walking tours, of the '*école buissonnière*,' away from courts, and schools, and cities, which it is the fashion now to love. His bourgeois birth and tastes, his peculiar religious and social views, his intense self-engrossment,—all favoured the development of Nature-worship. But Rousseau was not alone, nor yet creative, in this instance. He was but one of the earliest to seize and express a new idea of growing humanity. For those who seem to be the most original in their inauguration of periods are only such as have been favourably placed by birth and education to imbibe the floating creeds of the whole race. They resemble the first cases of an epidemic, which become the centres of infection and propagate disease. At the time of Rousseau's greatness the French people were initiative. In politics, in literature, in fashions, and in philosophy, they had for some time led the taste of Europe. But the sentiment which first received a clear and powerful expression in the works of Rousseau, soon declared itself in the arts and literature of other nations. Goethe, Wordsworth, and the earlier landscape-painters, proved that Germany and England were not far behind the French. In England this love of Nature for its own sake is indigenous, and has at all times been peculiarly characteristic of our genius. Therefore it is not surprising that our life and literature and art have been foremost in developing the sentiment of which we are speaking. Our poets, painters, and prose writers gave the tone to European thought in this respect. Our travellers in search of the adventurous and picturesque, our Alpine Club, have made of Switzerland an English playground.

6

The greatest period in our history was but a foreshadowing of this. To return to Nature-worship was but to reassume the habits of the Elizabethan age, altered indeed by all the changes of religion, politics, society, and science which the last three centuries have wrought, yet still, in its original love of free open life among the fields and woods, and on the sea, the same. Now the French national genius is classical. It

reverts to the age of Louis XIV., and Rousseauism in their literature is as true an innovation and parenthesis as Pope-and-Drydenism was in ours. As in the age of the Reformation, so in this, the German element of the modern character predominates. During the two centuries from which we have emerged, the Latin element had the upper hand. Our love of the Alps is a Gothic, a Teutonic, instinct; sympathetic with all that is vague, infinite, and insubordinate to rules, at war with all that is defined and systematic in our genius. This we may perceive in individuals as well as in the broader aspects of arts and literatures. The classically minded man, the reader of Latin poets, the lover of brilliant conversation, the frequenter of clubs and drawing-rooms, nice in his personal requirements, scrupulous in his choice of words, averse to unnecessary physical exertion, preferring town to country life, *cannot* deeply feel the charm of the Alps. Such a man will dislike German art, and however much he may strive to be Catholic in his tastes, will find as he grows older that his liking for Gothic architecture and modern painting diminish almost to aversion before an increasing admiration for Greek peristyles and the Medicean Venus. If in respect of speculation all men are either Platonists or Aristotelians, in respect of taste all men are either Greek or German.

7

At present the German, the indefinite, the natural, commands; the Greek, the finite, the cultivated, is in abeyance. We who talk so much about the feeling of the Alps, are creatures, not creators of our *cultus*,—a strange reflection, proving how much greater man is than men, the common reason of the age in which we live than our own reasons, its constituents and subjects.

Perhaps it is our modern tendency to 'individualism' which makes the Alps so much to us. Society is there reduced to a vanishing point—no claims are made on human sympathies—there is no need to toil in yoke-service with our fellows. We may be alone, dream our own dreams, and sound the depths of personality without the reproach of selfishness, without a restless wish to join in action or money-making or the pursuit of fame. To habitual residents among the Alps this absence of social duties and advantages may be barbarising, even brutalising. But to men wearied with too much civilisation, and deafened by the noise of great cities, it is beyond measure refreshing. Then, again, among the mountains history finds no place. The Alps have no past nor present nor future. The human beings who live upon their sides are at odds with nature, clinging on for bare existence to the soil, sheltering themselves beneath protecting rocks from avalanches, damming up destructive streams, all but annihilated every spring. Man, who is paramount in the plain, is nothing here. His arts and sciences, and dynasties, and modes of life, and mighty works, and conquests and decays, demand our whole attention in Italy or Egypt. But here the mountains, immemorially the same, which were, which are, and which are to be, present a theatre on which the soul breathes freely and feels herself alone. Around her on all sides is God, and Nature, who is here the face of God and not the slave of man. The spirit of the world hath here not yet grown old. She is as young as on the first day; and the Alps are a symbol of the self-creating, self-sufficing, self-enjoying universe which lives for its own ends. For why do the slopes gleam with flowers, and the hillsides deck themselves with grass, and the inaccessible ledges of black rock bear their tufts of crimson primroses and flaunting tiger-lilies? Why, morning after morning, does the red dawn flush the pinnacles of Monte Rosa above cloud and mist unheeded? Why does the torrent shout, the avalanche reply in thunder to the music of the sun, the trees and rocks and meadows cry their 'Holy, Holy, Holy'? Surely not for us. We are an accident here, and even the few men whose eyes are fixed habitually upon these things are dead to them—the peasants do not even know the names of their own flowers, and sigh with envy when you tell them of the plains of Lincolnshire or Russian steppes.

8

But indeed there is something awful in the Alpine elevation above human things. We do not love Switzerland merely because we associate its thought with recollections of holidays and joyfulness. Some of the most solemn moments of life are spent high up above among the mountains, on the barren tops of rocky passes, where the soul has seemed to hear in solitude a low controlling voice. It is almost necessary for the development of our deepest affections that some sad and sombre moments should be interchanged with hours of merriment and elasticity. It is this variety in the woof of daily life which endears our home to us; and perhaps none have fully loved the Alps who have not spent some days of meditation, or it may be of sorrow, among their solitudes. Splendid scenery, like music, has the power to make 'of grief itself a fiery chariot for mounting above the sources of grief,' to ennoble and refine

9

our passions, and to teach us that our lives are merely moments in the years of the eternal Being. There are many, perhaps, who, within sight of some great scene among the Alps, upon the height of the Stelvio or the slopes of Mürren, or at night in the valley of Courmayeur, have felt themselves raised above cares and doubts and miseries by the mere recognition of unchangeable magnificence; have found a deep peace in the sense of their own nothingness. It is not granted to us everyday to stand upon these pinnacles of rest and faith above the world. But having once stood there, how can we forget the station? How can we fail, amid the tumult of our common cares, to feel at times the hush of that far-off tranquillity? When our life is most commonplace, when we are ill or weary in city streets, we can remember the clouds upon the mountains we have seen, the sound of innumerable waterfalls, and the scent of countless flowers. A photograph of Bisson's or of Braun's, the name of some well-known valley, the picture of some Alpine plant, rouses the sacred hunger in our souls, and stirs again the faith in beauty and in rest beyond ourselves which no man can take from us. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to everything which enables us to rise above depressing and enslaving circumstances, which brings us nearer in some way or other to what is eternal in the universe, and which makes us know that, whether we live or die, suffer or enjoy, life and gladness are still strong in the world. On this account, the proper attitude of the soul among the Alps is one of silence. It is almost impossible without a kind of impiety to frame in words the feelings they inspire. Yet there are some sayings, hallowed by long usage, which throng the mind through a whole summer's day, and seem in harmony with its emotions—some portions of the Psalms or lines of greatest poets, inarticulate hymns of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, waifs and strays not always apposite, but linked by strong and subtle chains of feeling with the grandeur of the mountains. This reverential feeling for the Alps is connected with the Pantheistic form of our religious sentiments to which I have before alluded. It is a trite remark, that even devout men of the present generation prefer temples *not* made with hands to churches, and worship God in the fields more contentedly than in their pews. What Mr. Ruskin calls 'the instinctive sense of the divine presence not formed into distinct belief' lies at the root of our profound veneration for the nobler aspects of mountain scenery. This instinctive sense has been very variously expressed by Goethe in Faust's celebrated confession of faith, by Shelley in the stanzas of 'Adonais,' which begin 'He is made one with nature,' by Wordsworth in the lines on Tintern Abbey, and lately by Mr. Roden Noel in his noble poems of Pantheism. It is more or less strongly felt by all who have recognised the indubitable fact that religious belief is undergoing a sure process of change from the dogmatic distinctness of the past to some at present dimly descried creed of the future. Such periods of transition are of necessity full of discomfort, doubt, and anxiety, vague, variable, and unsatisfying. The men in whose spirits the fermentation of the change is felt, who have abandoned their old moorings, and have not yet reached the haven for which they are steering, cannot but be indistinct and undecided in their faith. The universe of which they form a part becomes important to them in its infinite immensity. The principles of beauty, goodness, order and law, no longer connected in their minds with definite articles of faith, find symbols in the outer world. They are glad to fly at certain moments from mankind and its oppressive problems, for which religion no longer provides a satisfactory solution, to Nature, where they vaguely localise the spirit that broods over us controlling all our being. To such men Goethe's hymn is a form of faith, and born of such a mood are the following far humbler verses:—

10

At Mürren let the morning lead thee out
 To walk upon the cold and cloven hills,
 To hear the congregated mountains shout
 Their pæan of a thousand foaming rills.
 Raimented with intolerable light
 The snow-peaks stand above thee, row on row
 Arising, each a seraph in his might;
 An organ each of varied stop doth blow.
 Heaven's azure dome trembles through all her spheres,
 Feeling that music vibrate; and the sun
 Raises his tenor as he upward steers,
 And all the glory-coated mists that run
 Below him in the valley, hear his voice,
 And cry unto the dewy fields, Rejoice!

11

There is a profound sympathy between music and fine scenery: they both affect us in the same way, stirring strong but undefined emotions, which express themselves in 'idle tears,' or evoking thoughts 'which lie,'

as Wordsworth says, 'too deep for tears,' beyond the reach of any words. How little we know what multitudes of mingling reminiscences, held in solution by the mind, and colouring its fancy with the iridescence of variable hues, go to make up the sentiments which music or which mountains stir! It is the very vagueness, changefulness, and dreamlike indistinctness of these feelings which cause their charm; they harmonise with the haziness of our beliefs and seem to make our very doubts melodious. For this reason it is obvious that unrestrained indulgence in the pleasures of music or of scenery may tend to destroy habits of clear thinking, sentimentalise the mind, and render it more apt to entertain embryonic fancies than to bring ideas to definite perfection.

12

If hours of thoughtfulness and seclusion are necessary to the development of a true love for the Alps, it is no less essential to a right understanding of their beauty that we should pass some wet and gloomy days among the mountains. The unclouded sunsets and sunrises which often follow one another in September in the Alps, have something terrible. They produce a satiety of splendour, and oppress the mind with a sense of perpetuity. I remember spending such a season in one of the Oberland valleys, high up above the pine-trees, in a little *châlet*. Morning after morning I awoke to see the sunbeams glittering on the Eiger and the Jungfrau; noon after noon the snow-fields blazed beneath a steady fire; evening after evening they shone like beacons in the red light of the setting sun. Then peak by peak they lost the glow; the soul passed from them, and they stood pale yet weirdly garish against the darkened sky. The stars came out, the moon shone, but not a cloud sailed over the untroubled heavens. Thus day after day for several weeks there was no change, till I was seized with an overpowering horror of unbroken calm. I left the valley for a time; and when I returned to it in wind and rain, I found that the partial veiling of the mountain heights restored the charm which I had lost and made me feel once more at home. The landscape takes a graver tone beneath the mist that hides the higher peaks, and comes drifting, creeping, feeling, through the pines upon their slopes—white, silent, blinding vapour-wreaths around the sable spires. Sometimes the cloud descends and blots out everything. Again it lifts a little, showing cottages and distant Alps beneath its skirts. Then it sweeps over the whole valley like a veil, just broken here and there above a lonely *châlet* or a thread of distant dangling torrent foam. Sounds, too, beneath the mist are more strange. The torrent seems to have a hoarser voice and grinds the stones more passionately against its boulders. The cry of shepherds through the fog suggests the loneliness and danger of the hills. The bleating of penned sheep or goats, and the tinkling of the cowbells, are mysteriously distant and yet distinct in the dull dead air. Then, again, how immeasurably high above our heads appear the domes and peaks of snow revealed through chasms in the drifting cloud; how desolate the glaciers and the avalanches in gleams of light that struggle through the mist! There is a leaden glare peculiar to clouds, which makes the snow and ice more lurid. Not far from the house where I am writing, the avalanche that swept away the bridge last winter is lying now, dripping away, dank and dirty, like a rotting whale. I can see it from my window, green beech-boughs nodding over it, forlorn larches bending their tattered branches by its side, splinters of broken pine protruding from its muddy caves, the boulders on its flank, and the hoarse hungry torrent tossing up its tongues to lick the ragged edge of snow. Close by, the meadows, spangled with yellow flowers and red and blue, look even more brilliant than if the sun were shining on them. Every cup and blade of grass is drinking. But the scene changes; the mist has turned into rain-clouds, and the steady rain drips down, incessant, blotting out the view. Then, too, what a joy it is if the clouds break towards evening with a north wind, and a rainbow in the valley gives promise of a bright to-morrow! We look up to the cliffs above our heads, and see that they have just been powdered with the snow that is a sign of better weather.

13

14

Such rainy days ought to be spent in places like Seelisberg and Mürren, at the edge of precipices, in front of mountains, or above a lake. The cloud-masses crawl and tumble about the valleys like a brood of dragons; now creeping along the ledges of the rock with sinuous self-adjustment to its turns and twists; now launching out into the deep, repelled by battling winds, or driven onward in a coil of twisted and contorted serpent curls. In the midst of summer these wet seasons often end in a heavy fall of snow. You wake some morning to see the meadows which last night were gay with July flowers huddled up in snow a foot in depth. But fair weather does not tarry long to reappear. You put on your thickest boots and sally forth to find the great cups of the gentians full of snow, and to watch the rising of the cloud-wreaths under the hot sun.

Bad dreams or sickly thoughts, dissipated by returning daylight or a friend's face, do not fly away more rapidly and pleasantly than those swift glory-coated mists that lose themselves we know not where in the blue depths of the sky.

In contrast with these rainy days nothing can be more perfect than clear moonlight nights. There is a terrace upon the roof of the inn at Courmayeur where one may spend hours in the silent watches, when all the world has gone to sleep beneath. The Mont Chétif and the Mont de la Saxe form a gigantic portal not unworthy of the pile that lies beyond. For Mont Blanc resembles a vast cathedral; its countless spires are scattered over a mass like that of the Duomo at Milan, rising into one tower at the end. By night the glaciers glitter in the steady moon; domes, pinnacles, and buttresses stand clear of clouds. Needles of every height and most fantastic shapes rise from the central ridge, some solitary, like sharp arrows shot against the sky, some clustering into sheaves. On every horn of snow and bank of grassy hill stars sparkle, rising, setting, rolling round through the long silent night. Moonlight simplifies and softens the landscape. Colours become scarcely distinguishable, and forms, deprived of half their detail, gain in majesty and size. The mountains seem greater far by night than day—higher heights and deeper depths, more snowy pyramids, more beetling crags, softer meadows, and darker pines. The whole valley is hushed, but for the torrent and the chirping grasshopper and the striking of the village clocks. The black tower and the houses of Courmayeur in the foreground gleam beneath the moon until she reaches the edge of the Cramont, and then sinks quietly away, once more to reappear among the pines, then finally to leave the valley dark beneath the shadow of the mountain's bulk. Meanwhile the heights of snow still glitter in the steady light: they, too, will soon be dark, until the dawn breaks, tinging them with rose.

15

But it is not fair to dwell exclusively upon the more sombre aspect of Swiss beauty when there are so many lively scenes of which to speak. The sunlight and the freshness and the flowers of Alpine meadows form more than half the charm of Switzerland. The other day we walked to a pasture called the Col de Checruit, high up the valley of Courmayeur, where the spring was still in its first freshness. Gradually we climbed, by dusty roads and through hot fields where the grass had just been mown, beneath the fierce light of the morning sun. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the heavy pines hung overhead upon their crags, as if to fence the gorge from every wandering breeze. There is nothing more oppressive than these scorching sides of narrow rifts, shut in by woods and precipices. But suddenly the valley broadened, the pines and larches disappeared, and we found ourselves upon a wide green semicircle of the softest meadows. Little rills of water went rushing through them, rippling over pebbles, rustling under dock leaves, and eddying against their wooden barriers. Far and wide 'you scarce could see the grass for flowers,' while on every side the tinkling of cow-bells, and the voices of shepherds calling to one another from the Alps, or singing at their work, were borne across the fields. As we climbed we came into still fresher pastures, where the snow had scarcely melted. There the goats and cattle were collected, and the shepherds sat among them, fondling the kids and calling them by name. When they called, the creatures came, expecting salt and bread. It was pretty to see them lying near their masters, playing and butting at them with their horns, or bleating for the sweet rye-bread. The women knitted stockings, laughing among themselves, and singing all the while. As soon as we reached them, they gathered round to talk. An old herdsman, who was clearly the patriarch of this Arcadia, asked us many questions in a slow deliberate voice. We told him who we were, and tried to interest him in the cattle-plague, which he appeared to regard as an evil very unreal and far away—like the murrain upon Pharaoh's herds which one reads about in Exodus. But he was courteous and polite, doing the honours of his pasture with simplicity and ease. He took us to his ch[^]let and gave us bowls of pure cold milk. It was a funny little wooden house, clean and dark. The sky peeped through its tiles, and if shepherds were not in the habit of sleeping soundly all night long, they might count the setting and rising stars without lifting their heads from the pillow. He told us how far pleasanter they found the summer season than the long cold winter which they have to spend in gloomy houses in Courmayeur. This, indeed, is the true pastoral life which poets have described—a happy summer holiday among the flowers, well occupied with simple cares, and harassed by 'no enemy but winter and rough weather.'

16

Very much of the charm of Switzerland belongs to simple things—to greetings from the herdsmen, the 'Guten Morgen,' and 'Guten Abend,' that are invariably given and taken upon mountain paths; to the tame

17

creatures, with their large dark eyes, who raise their heads one moment from the pasture while you pass; and to the plants that grow beneath your feet. The latter end of May is the time when spring begins in the high Alps. Wherever sunlight smiles away a patch of snow, the brown turf soon becomes green velvet, and the velvet stars itself with red and white and gold and blue. You almost see the grass and lilies grow. First come pale crocuses and lilac soldanellas. These break the last dissolving clods of snow, and stand upon an island, with the cold wall they have thawed all round them. It is the fate of these poor flowers to spring and flourish on the very skirts of retreating winter; they soon wither—the frilled chalice of the soldanella shrivels up and the crocus fades away before the grass has grown; the sun, which is bringing all the other plants to life, scorches their tender petals. Often when summer has fairly come, you still may see their pearly cups and lilac bells by the side of avalanches, between the chill snow and the fiery sun, blooming and fading hour by hour. They have as it were but a Pisgah view of the promised land, of the spring which they are foremost to proclaim. Next come the clumsy gentians and yellow anemones, covered with soft down like fledgling birds. These are among the earliest and hardiest blossoms that embroider the high meadows with a diaper of blue and gold. About the same time primroses and auriculas begin to tuft the dripping rocks, while frail white fleur-de-lis, like flakes of snow forgotten by the sun, and golden-balled ranunculuses join with forget-me-nots and cranesbill in a never-ending dance upon the grassy floor. Happy, too, is he who finds the lilies-of-the-valley clustering about the chestnut boles upon the Colma, or in the beechwood by the stream at Macugnaga, mixed with garnet-coloured columbines and fragrant white narcissus, which the people of the villages call 'Angiolini.' There, too, is Solomon's seal, with waxen bells and leaves expanded like the wings of hovering butterflies. But these lists of flowers are tiresome and cold; it would be better to draw the portrait of one which is particularly fascinating. I think that botanists have called it *Saxifraga cotyledon*; yet, in spite of its long name, it is beautiful and poetic. London-pride is the commonest of all the saxifrages; but the one of which I speak is as different from London-pride as a Plantagenet upon his throne from that last Plantagenet who died obscure and penniless some years ago. It is a great majestic flower, which plumes the granite rocks of Monte Rosa in the spring. At other times of the year you see a little tuft of fleshy leaves set like a cushion on cold ledges and dark places of dripping cliffs. You take it for a stonecrop—one of those weeds doomed to obscurity, and safe from being picked because they are so uninviting—and you pass it by incuriously. But about June it puts forth its power, and from the cushion of pale leaves there springs a strong pink stem, which rises upward for a while, and then curves down and breaks into a shower of snow-white blossoms. Far away the splendour gleams, hanging like a plume of ostrich-feathers from the roof of rock, waving to the wind, or stooping down to touch the water of the mountain stream that dashes it with dew. The snow at evening, glowing with a sunset flush, is not more rosy-pure than this cascade of pendent blossoms. It loves to be alone—inaccessible ledges, chasms where winds combat, or moist caverns overarched near thundering falls, are the places that it seeks. I will not compare it to a spirit of the mountains or to a proud lonely soul, for such comparisons desecrate the simplicity of nature, and no simile can add a glory to the flower. It seems to have a conscious life of its own, so large and glorious it is, so sensitive to every breath of air, so nobly placed upon its bending stem, so royal in its solitude. I first saw it years ago on the Simplon, feathering the drizzling crags above Isella. Then we found it near Baveno, in a crack of sombre cliff beneath the mines. The other day we cut an armful opposite Varallo, by the Sesia, and then felt like murderers; it was so sad to hold in our hands the triumph of those many patient months, the full expansive life of the flower, the splendour visible from valleys and hillsides, the defenceless creature which had done its best to make the gloomy places of the Alps most beautiful.

18

19

After passing many weeks among the high Alps it is a pleasure to descend into the plains. The sunset, and sunrise, and the stars of Lombardy, its level horizons and vague misty distances, are a source of absolute relief after the narrow skies and embarrassed prospects of a mountain valley. Nor are the Alps themselves ever more imposing than when seen from Milan or the church-tower of Chivasso or the terrace of Novara, with a foreground of Italian cornfields and old city towers and rice-ground, golden-green beneath a Lombard sun. Half veiled by clouds, the mountains rise like visionary fortress walls of a celestial city—unapproachable, beyond the range of mortal feet. But those who know by old experience what friendly châlets, and cool meadows, and clear

streams are hidden in their folds and valleys, send forth fond thoughts and messages, like carrier-pigeons, from the marble parapets of Milan, crying, 'Before another sun has set, I too shall rest beneath the shadow of their pines!' It is in truth not more than a day's journey from Milan to the brink of snow at Macugnaga. But very sad it is to *leave* the Alps, to stand upon the terraces of Berne and waft ineffectual farewells. The unsympathising Aar rushes beneath; and the snow-peaks, whom we love like friends, abide untroubled by the coming and the going of the world. The clouds drift over them—the sunset warms them with a fiery kiss. Night comes, and we are hurried far away to wake beside the Seine, remembering, with a pang of jealous passion, that the flowers on Alpine meadows are still blooming, and the rivulets still flowing with a ceaseless song, while Paris shops are all we see, and all we hear is the dull clatter of a Paris crowd.

THE ALPS IN WINTER

The gradual approach of winter is very lovely in the high Alps. The valley of Davos, where I am writing, more than five thousand feet above the sea, is not beautiful, as Alpine valleys go, though it has scenery both picturesque and grand within easy reach. But when summer is passing into autumn, even the bare slopes of the least romantic glen are glorified. Golden lights and crimson are cast over the grey-green world by the fading of innumerable plants. Then the larches begin to put on fallow tints that deepen into orange, burning against the solid blue sky like amber. The frosts are severe at night, and the meadow grass turns dry and wan. The last lilac crocuses die upon the fields. Icicles, hanging from watercourse or mill-wheel, glitter in the noonday sunlight. The wind blows keenly from the north, and now the snow begins to fall and thaw and freeze, and fall and thaw again. The seasons are confused; wonderful days of flawless purity are intermingled with storm and gloom. At last the time comes when a great snowfall has to be expected. There is hard frost in the early morning, and at nine o'clock the thermometer stands at 2°. The sky is clear, but it clouds rapidly with films of cirrus and of stratus in the south and west. Soon it is covered over with grey vapour in a level sheet, all the hill-tops standing hard against the steely heavens. The cold wind from the west freezes the moustache to one's pipe-stem. By noon the air is thick with a coagulated mist; the temperature meanwhile has risen, and a little snow falls at intervals. The valleys are filled with a curious opaque blue, from which the peaks rise, phantom-like and pallid, into the grey air, scarcely distinguishable from their background. The pine-forests on the mountain-sides are of darkest indigo. There is an indescribable stillness and a sense of incubation. The wind has fallen. Later on, the snow-flakes flutter silently and sparsely through the lifeless air. The most distant landscape is quite blotted out. After sunset the clouds have settled down upon the hills, and the snow comes in thick, impenetrable fleeces. At night our hair crackles and sparkles when we brush it. Next morning there is a foot and a half of finely powdered snow, and still the snow is falling. Strangely loom the chalets through the semi-solid whiteness. Yet the air is now dry and singularly soothing. The pines are heavy with their wadded coverings; now and again one shakes himself in silence, and his burden falls in a white cloud, to leave a black-green patch upon the hillside, whitening again as the imperturbable fall continues. The stakes by the roadside are almost buried. No sound is audible. Nothing is seen but the snow-plough, a long raft of planks with a heavy stone at its stem and a sharp prow, drawn by four strong horses, and driven by a young man erect upon the stem.

So we live through two days and nights, and on the third a north wind blows. The snow-clouds break and hang upon the hills in scattered fleeces; glimpses of blue sky shine through, and sunlight glints along the heavy masses. The blues of the shadows are everywhere intense. As the clouds disperse, they form in moulded domes, tawny like sunburned marble in the distant south lands. Every chalet is a miracle of fantastic curves, built by the heavy hanging snow. Snow lies mounded on the roads and fields, writhed into loveliest wreaths, or outspread in the softest undulations. All the irregularities of the hills are softened into swelling billows like the mouldings of Titanic statuary.

It happened once or twice last winter that such a clearing after snowfall took place at full moon. Then the moon rose in a swirl of fleecy vapour—clouds above, beneath, and all around. The sky was blue as steel, and infinitely deep with mist-entangled stars. The horn above which she first appears stood carved of solid black, and through the valley's length from end to end yawned chasms and clefts of liquid

darkness. As the moon rose, the clouds were conquered, and massed into rolling waves upon the ridges of the hills. The spaces of open sky grew still more blue. At last the silver light came flooding over all, and here and there the fresh snow glistened on the crags. There is movement, palpitation, life of light through earth and sky. To walk out on such a night, when the perturbation of storm is over and the heavens are free, is one of the greatest pleasures offered by this winter life. It is so light that you can read the smallest print with ease. The upper sky looks quite black, shading by violet and sapphire into turquoise upon the horizon. There is the colour of ivory upon the nearest snow-fields, and the distant peaks sparkle like silver, crystals glitter in all directions on the surface of the snow, white, yellow, and pale blue. The stars are exceedingly keen, but only a few can shine in the intensity of moonlight. The air is perfectly still, and though icicles may be hanging from beard and moustache to the furs beneath one's chin, there is no sensation of extreme cold.

23

During the earlier frosts of the season, after the first snows have fallen, but when there is still plenty of moisture in the ground, the loveliest fern-fronds of pure rime may be found in myriads on the meadows. They are fashioned like perfect vegetable structures, opening fan-shaped upon crystal stems, and catching the sunbeams with the brilliancy of diamonds. Taken at certain angles, they decompose light into iridescent colours, appearing now like emeralds, rubies, or topazes, and now like Labrador spar, blending all hues in a wondrous sheen. When the lake freezes for the first time, its surface is of course quite black, and so transparent that it is easy to see the fishes swimming in the deep beneath; but here and there, where rime has fallen, there sparkle these fantastic flowers and ferns and mosses made of purest frost. Nothing, indeed, can be more fascinating than the new world revealed by frost. In shaded places of the valley you may walk through larches and leafless alder thickets by silent farms, all silvered over with hoar spangles—fairy forests, where the flowers and foliage are rime. The streams are flowing half-frozen over rocks sheeted with opaque green ice. Here it is strange to watch the swirl of water freeing itself from these frost-shackles, and to see it eddying beneath the overhanging eaves of frailest crystal-frosted snow. All is so silent, still, and weird in this white world, that one marvels when the spirit of winter will appear, or what shrill voices in the air will make his unimaginable magic audible. Nothing happens, however, to disturb the charm, save when a sunbeam cuts the chain of diamonds on an alder bough, and down they drift in a thin cloud of dust. It may be also that the air is full of floating crystals, like tiniest most restless fire-flies rising and falling and passing crosswise in the sun-illuminated shade of tree or mountain-side.

24

It is not easy to describe these beauties of the winter-world; and yet one word must be said about the sunsets. Let us walk out, therefore, towards the lake at four o'clock in mid-December. The thermometer is standing at 3°, and there is neither breath of wind nor cloud. Venus is just visible in rose and sapphire, and the thin young moon is beside her. To east and south the snowy ranges burn with yellow fire, deepening to orange and crimson hues, which die away and leave a greenish pallor. At last, the higher snows alone are livid with a last faint tinge of light, and all beneath is quite white. But the tide of glory turns. While the west grows momentarily more pale, the eastern heavens flush with afterglow, suffuse their spaces with pink and violet. Daffodil and tenderest emerald intermingle; and these colours spread until the west again has rose and primrose and sapphire wonderfully blent, and from the burning skies a light is cast upon the valley—a phantom light, less real, more like the hues of molten gems, than were the stationary flames of sunset. Venus and the moon meanwhile are silvery clear. Then the whole illumination fades like magic.

All the charms of which I have been writing are combined in a sledge-drive. With an arrowy gliding motion one passes through the snow-world as through a dream. In the sunlight the snow surface sparkles with its myriad stars of crystals. In the shadow it ceases to glitter, and assumes a blueness scarcely less blue than the sky. So the journey is like sailing through alternate tracts of light irradiate heavens, and interstellar spaces of the clearest and most flawless ether. The air is like the keen air of the highest glaciers. As we go, the bells keep up a drowsy tinkling at the horse's head. The whole landscape is transfigured—lifted high up out of commonplaceness. The little hills are Monte Rosas and Mont Blancs. Scale is annihilated, and nothing tells but form. There is hardly any colour except the blue of sky and shadow. Everything is traced in vanishing tints, passing from the almost amber of the distant sunlight through glowing white into pale greys and brighter blues and deep

25

ethereal azure. The pines stand in black platoons upon the hillsides, with a tinge of red or orange on their sable. Some carry masses of snow. Others have shaken their plumes free. The chalets are like fairy houses or toys, waist-deep in stores of winter fuel. With their mellow tones of madder and amber on the weather-beaten woodwork relieved against the white, with fantastic icicles and folds of snow depending from their eaves, or curled like coverlids from roof and window-sill, they are far more picturesque than in the summer. Colour, wherever it is found, whether in these cottages or in a block of serpentine by the roadside, or in the golden bulrush blades by the lake shore, takes more than double value. It is shed upon the landscape like a spiritual and transparent veil. Most beautiful of all are the sweeping lines of pure untroubled snow, fold over fold of undulating softness, billowing along the skirts of the peaked hills. There is no conveying the charm of immaterial, ærial, lucid beauty, the feeling of purity and aloofness from sordid things, conveyed by the fine touch on all our senses of light, colour, form, and air, and motion, and rare tinkling sound. The magic is like a spirit mood of Shelley's lyric verse. And, what is perhaps most wonderful, this delicate delight may be enjoyed without fear in the coldest weather. It does not matter how low the temperature may be, if the sun is shining, the air dry, and the wind asleep.

Leaving the horse-sledges on the verge of some high hill-road, and trusting oneself to the little hand-sledge which the people of the Grisons use, and which the English have christened by the Canadian term 'toboggan,' the excitement becomes far greater. The hand-sledge is about three feet long, fifteen inches wide, and half a foot above the ground, on runners shod with iron. Seated firmly at the back, and guiding with the feet in front, the rider skims down precipitous slopes and round perilous corners with a rapidity that beats a horse's pace. Winding through sombre pine-forests, where the torrent roars fitfully among caverns of barbed ice, and the glistening mountains tower above in their glory of sun-smitten snow, darting round the frozen ledges at the turnings of the road, silently gliding at a speed that seems incredible, it is so smooth, he traverses two or three miles without fatigue, carried onward by the mere momentum of his weight. It is a strange and great joy. The toboggan, under these conditions, might be compared to an enchanted boat shooting the rapids of a river; and what adds to its fascination is the entire loneliness in which the rider passes through those weird and ever-shifting scenes of winter radiance. Sometimes, when the snow is drifting up the pass, and the world is blank behind, before, and all around, it seems like plunging into chaos. The muffled pines loom fantastically through the drift as we rush past them, and the wind, ever and anon, detaches great masses of snow in clouds from their bent branches. Or again at night, when the moon is shining, and the sky is full of flaming stars, and the snow, frozen to the hardness of marble, sparkles with innumerable crystals, a new sense of strangeness and of joy is given to the solitude, the swiftness, and the silence of the exercise. No other circumstances invest the poetry of rapid motion with more fascination. Shelley, who so loved the fancy of a boat inspired with its own instinct of life, would have delighted in the game, and would probably have pursued it recklessly. At the same time, as practised on a humbler scale nearer home, in company, and on a run selected for convenience rather than for picturesqueness, tobogganing is a very Bohemian amusement. No one who indulges in it can count on avoiding hard blows and violent upsets, nor will his efforts to maintain his equilibrium at the dangerous corners be invariably graceful.

Nothing, it might be imagined, could be more monotonous than an Alpine valley covered up with snow. And yet to one who has passed many months in that seclusion Nature herself presents no monotony; for the changes constantly wrought by light and cloud and alternations of weather on this landscape are infinitely various. The very simplicity of the conditions seems to assist the supreme artist. One day is wonderful because of its unsullied purity; not a cloud visible, and the pines clothed in velvet of rich green beneath a faultless canopy of light. The next presents a fretwork of fine film, wrought by the south wind over the whole sky, iridescent with delicate rainbow tints within the influences of the sun, and ever-changing shape. On another, when the turbulent Föhn is blowing, streamers of snow may be seen flying from the higher ridges against a pallid background of slaty cloud, while the gaunt ribs of the hills glisten below with fitful gleams of lurid light. At sunrise, one morning, stealthy and mysterious vapours clothe the mountains from their basement to the waist, while the peaks are glistening serenely in clear daylight. Another opens with silently falling snow. A third is rosy through the length and breadth of the dawn-smitten valley. It is,

however, impossible to catalogue the indescribable variety of those beauties, which those who love nature may enjoy by simply waiting on the changes of the winter in a single station of the Alps.

I

Light, marvellously soft yet penetrating, everywhere diffused, everywhere reflected without radiance, poured from the moon high above our heads in a sky tinted through all shades and modulations of blue, from turquoise on the horizon to opaque sapphire at the zenith — *dolce color*. (It is difficult to use the word *colour* for this scene without suggesting an exaggeration. The blue is almost indefinable, yet felt. But if possible, the total effect of the night landscape should be rendered by careful exclusion of tints from the word-palette. The art of the etcher is more needed than that of the painter.) Heaven overhead is set with stars, shooting intensely, smouldering with dull red in Aldeboran, sparkling diamond-like in Sirius, changing from orange to crimson and green in the swart fire of yonder double star. On the snow this moonlight falls tenderly, not in hard white light and strong black shadow, but in tones of cream and ivory, rounding the curves of drift. The mountain peaks alone glisten as though they were built of silver burnished by an agate. Far away they rise diminished in stature by the all-pervading dimness of bright light, that erases the distinctions of daytime. On the path before our feet lie crystals of many hues, the splinters of a thousand gems. In the wood there are caverns of darkness, alternating with spaces of star-twinkled sky, or windows opened between russet stems and solid branches for the moony sheen. The green of the pines is felt, although invisible, so soft in substance that it seems less like velvet than some materialised depth of dark green shadow.

29

II

Snow falling noiseless and unseen. One only knows that it is falling by the blinking of our eyes as the flakes settle on their lids and melt. The cottage windows shine red, and moving lanterns of belated wayfarers define the void around them. Yet the night is far from dark. The forests and the mountain-bulk beyond the valley loom softly large and just distinguishable through a pearly haze. The path is purest trackless whiteness, almost dazzling though it has no light. This was what Dante felt when he reached the lunar sphere:

Parova a me, che nube ne coprissi
Lucida, spessa, solida e pulita.

Walking silent, with insensible footfall, slowly, for the snow is deep above our ankles, we wonder what the world would be like if this were all. Could the human race be acclimatised to this monotony (we say) perhaps emotion would be rarer, yet more poignant, suspended brooding on itself, and wakening by flashes to a quintessential mood. Then fancy changes, and the thought occurs that even so must be a planet, not yet wholly made, nor called to take her place among the sisterhood of light and song.

III

Sunset was fading out upon the Rhætikon and still reflected from the Seehorn on the lake, when we entered the gorge of the Fluela—dense pines on either hand, a mounting drift of snow in front, and faint peaks, paling from rose to saffron, far above, beyond. There was no sound but a tinkling stream and the continual jingle of our sledge-bells. We drove at a foot's pace, our horse finding his own path. When we left the forest, the light had all gone except for some almost imperceptible touches of primrose on the eastern horns. It was a moonless night, but the sky was alive with stars, and now and then one fell. The last house in the valley was soon passed, and we entered those bleak gorges where the wind, fine, noiseless, penetrating like an edge of steel, poured slantwise on us from the north. As we rose, the stars to west seemed far beneath us, and the Great Bear sprawled upon the ridges of the lower hills outspread. We kept slowly moving onward, upward, into what seemed like a thin impalpable mist, but was immeasurable tracts of snow. The last cembras were left behind, immovable upon dark granite boulders on our right. We entered a formless and unbillowed sea of greyness, from which there rose dim mountain-flanks that lost themselves in air. Up, ever up, and still below us westward sank the stars. We were now 7500 feet above sea-level, and the December night was rigid with intensity of frost. The

30

IV

The memory of things seen and done in moonlight is like the memory of dreams. It is as a dream that I recall the night of our tobogganing to Klosters, though it was full enough of active energy. The moon was in her second quarter, slightly filmed with very high thin clouds, that disappeared as night advanced, leaving the sky and stars in all their lustre. A sharp frost, sinking to three degrees above zero Fahrenheit, with a fine pure wind, such wind as here they call 'the mountain breath.' We drove to Wolfgang in a two-horse sledge, four of us inside, and our two Christians on the box. Up there, where the Alps of Death descend to join the Lakehorn Alps, above the Wolfswalk, there is a world of whiteness—frozen ridges, engraved like cameos of ærial onyx upon the dark, star-tremulous sky; sculptured buttresses of snow, enclosing hollows filled with diaphanous shadow, and sweeping aloft into the upland fields of pure clear drift. Then came the swift descent, the plunge into the pines, moon-silvered on their frosted tops. The battalions of spruce that climb those hills defined the dazzling snow from which they sprang, like the black tufts upon an ermine robe. At the proper moment we left our sledge, and the big Christian took his reins in hand to follow us. Furs and greatcoats were abandoned. Each stood forth tightly accoutred, with short coat, and clinging cap, and gaitered legs for the toboggan. Off we started in line, with but brief interval between, at first slowly, then glidingly, and when the impetus was gained, with darting, bounding, almost savage swiftness—sweeping round corners, cutting the hard snow-path with keen runners, avoiding the deep ruts, trusting to chance, taking advantage of smooth places, till the rush and swing and downward swoop became mechanical. Space was devoured. Into the massy shadows of the forest, where the pines joined overhead, we pierced without a sound, and felt far more than saw the great rocks with their icicles; and out again, emerging into moonlight, met the valley spread beneath our feet, the mighty peaks of the Silvretta and the vast blue sky. On, on, hurrying, delaying not, the woods and hills rushed by. Crystals upon the snow-banks glittered to the stars. Our souls would fain have stayed to drink these marvels of the moon-world, but our limbs refused. The magic of movement was upon us, and eight minutes swallowed the varying impressions of two musical miles. The village lights drew near and nearer, then the sombre village huts, and soon the speed grew less, and soon we glided to our rest into the sleeping village street.

31

V

It was just past midnight. The moon had fallen to the western horns. Orion's belt lay bar-like on the opening of the pass, and Sirius shot flame on the Seehorn. A more crystalline night, more full of fulgent stars, was never seen, stars everywhere, but mostly scattered in large sparkles on the snow. Big Christian went in front, tugging toboggans by their strings, as Gulliver, in some old woodcut, drew the fleets of Lilliput. Through the brown wood-châlets of Selfrangr, up to the undulating meadows, where the snow slept pure and crisp, he led us. There we sat awhile and drank the clear air, cooled to zero, but innocent and mild as mother Nature's milk. Then in an instant, down, down through the hamlet, with its châlets, stables, pumps, and logs, the slumbrous hamlet, where one dog barked, and darkness dwelt upon the path of ice, down with the tempest of a dreadful speed, that shot each rider upward in the air, and made the frame of the toboggan tremble—down over hillocks of hard frozen snow, dashing and bounding, to the river and the bridge. No bones were broken, though the race was thrice renewed, and men were spilt upon the roadside by some furious plunge. This amusement has the charm of peril and the unforeseen. In no wise else can colder, keener air be drunken at such furious speed. The joy, too, of the engine-driver and the steeplechaser is upon us. Alas, that it should be so short! If only roads were better made for the purpose, there would be no end to it; for the toboggan cannot lose his wind. But the good thing fails at last, and from the silence of the moon we pass into the silence of the fields of sleep.

32

VI

The new stable is a huge wooden building, with raftered lofts to stow the hay, and stalls for many cows and horses. It stands snugly in an angle of the pine-wood, bordering upon the great horse-meadow. Here at

33

night the air is warm and tepid with the breath of kine. Returning from my forest walk, I spy one window yellow in the moonlight with a lamp. I lift the latch. The hound knows me, and does not bark. I enter the stable, where six horses are munching their last meal. Upon the corn-bin sits a knecht. We light our pipes and talk. He tells me of the valley of Arosa (a hawk's flight westward over yonder hills), how deep in grass its summer lawns, how crystal-clear its stream, how blue its little lakes, how pure, without a taint of mist, 'too beautiful to paint,' its sky in winter! This knecht is an Ardüser, and the valley of Arosa lifts itself to heaven above his Langwies home. It is his duty now to harness a sleigh for some night-work. We shake hands and part—I to sleep, he for the snow.

VII

The lake has frozen late this year, and there are places in it where the ice is not yet firm. Little snow has fallen since it froze—about three inches at the deepest, driven by winds and wrinkled like the ribbed sea-sand. Here and there the ice-floor is quite black and clear, reflecting stars, and dark as heaven's own depths. Elsewhere it is of a suspicious whiteness, blurred in surface, with jagged cracks and chasms, treacherously mended by the hand of frost. Moving slowly, the snow cries beneath our feet, and the big crystals tinkle. These are shaped like fern-fronds, growing fan-wise from a point, and set at various angles, so that the moonlight takes them with capricious touch. They flash, and are quenched, and flash again, light darting to light along the level surface, while the sailing planets and the stars look down complacent at this mimicry of heaven. Everything above, around, beneath, is very beautiful—the slumbrous woods, the snowy fells, and the far distance painted in faint blue upon the tender background of the sky. Everything is placid and beautiful; and yet the place is terrible. For, as we walk, the lake groans, with throttled sobs, and sudden cracklings of its joints, and sighs that shiver, undulating from afar, and pass beneath our feet, and die away in distance when they reach the shore. And now and then an upper crust of ice gives way; and will the gulfs then drag us down? We are in the very centre of the lake. There is no use in thinking or in taking heed. Enjoy the moment, then, and march. Enjoy the contrast between this circumambient serenity and sweetness, and the dreadful sense of insecurity beneath. Is not, indeed, our whole life of this nature? A passage over perilous deeps, roofed by infinity and sempiternal things, surrounded too with evanescent forms, that like these crystals, trodden underfoot, or melted by the Föhn-wind into dew, flash, in some lucky moment, with a light that mimics stars! But to allegorise and sermonise is out of place here. It is but the expedient of those who cannot etch sensation by the burin of their art of words.

34

VIII

It is ten o'clock upon Sylvester Abend, or New Year's Eve. Herr Buol sits with his wife at the head of his long table. His family and serving folk are round him. There is his mother, with little Ursula, his child, upon her knee. The old lady is the mother of four comely daughters and nine stalwart sons, the eldest of whom is now a grizzled man. Besides our host, four of the brothers are here to-night; the handsome melancholy Georg, who is so gentle in his speech; Simeon, with his diplomatic face; Florian, the student of medicine; and my friend, colossal-breasted Christian. Palmy came a little later, worried with many cares, but happy to his heart's core. No optimist was ever more convinced of his philosophy than Palmy. After them, below the salt, were ranged the knechts and porters, the marmiton from the kitchen, and innumerable maids. The board was tessellated with plates of birnen-brod and eier-brod, küchli and cheese and butter; and Georg stirred grampampuli in a mighty metal bowl. For the uninitiated, it may be needful to explain these Davos delicacies. Birnen-brod is what the Scotch would call a 'bun,' or massive cake, composed of sliced pears, almonds, spices, and a little flour. Eier-brod is a saffron-coloured sweet bread, made with eggs; and küchli is a kind of pastry, crisp and flimsy, fashioned into various devices of cross, star, and scroll. Grampampuli is simply brandy burnt with sugar, the most unsophisticated punch I ever drank from tumblers. The frugal people of Davos, who live on bread and cheese and dried meat all the year, indulge themselves but once with these unwonted dainties in the winter.

35

The occasion was cheerful, and yet a little solemn. The scene was feudal. For these Buols are the scions of a warrior race:

During the six centuries through which they have lived nobles in Davos, they have sent forth scores of fighting men to foreign lands, ambassadors to France and Venice and the Milanese, governors to Chiavenna and Bregaglia and the much-contested Valtelline. Members of their house are Counts of Buol-Schauenstein in Austria, Freiherrns of Muhlingen and Berenberg in the now German Empire. They keep the patent of nobility conferred on them by Henri IV. Their ancient coat—parted per pale azure and argent, with a dame of the fourteenth century bearing in her hand a rose, all counterchanged—is carved in wood and monumental marble on the churches and old houses hereabouts. And from immemorial antiquity the Buol of Davos has sat thus on Sylvester Abend with family and folk around him, summoned from alp and snowy field to drink grampampuli and break the birnen-brod.

36

These rites performed, the men and maids began to sing—brown arms lounging on the table, and red hands folded in white aprons—serious at first in hymn-like cadences, then breaking into wilder measures with a jodel at the close. There is a measured solemnity in the performance, which strikes the stranger as somewhat comic. But the singing was good; the voices strong and clear in tone, no hesitation and no shirking of the melody. It was clear that the singers enjoyed the music for its own sake, with half-shut eyes, as they take dancing, solidly, with deep-drawn breath, sustained and indefatigable. But eleven struck; and the two Christians, my old friend, and Palmy, said we should be late for church. They had promised to take me with them to see bell-ringing in the tower. All the young men of the village meet, and draw lots in the Stube of the Rathhaus. One party tolls the old year out; the other rings the new year in. He who comes last is sconced three litres of Veltliner for the company. This jovial fine was ours to pay to-night.

When we came into the air, we found a bitter frost; the whole sky clouded over; a north wind whirling snow from alp and forest through the murky gloom. The benches and broad walnut tables of the Bathhaus were crowded with men, in shaggy homespun of brown and grey frieze. Its low wooden roof and walls enclosed an atmosphere of smoke, denser than the external snow-drift. But our welcome was hearty, and we found a score of friends. Titanic Fopp, whose limbs are Michelangelesque in length; spectacled Morosani; the little tailor Kramer, with a French horn on his knees; the puckered forehead of the Baumeister; the Troll-shaped postman; peasants and woodmen, known on far excursions upon pass and upland valley. Not one but carried on his face the memory of winter strife with avalanche and snow-drift, of horses struggling through Fluela whirlwinds, and wine-casks tugged across Bernina, and haystacks guided down precipitous gullies at thundering speed 'twixt pine and pine, and larches felled in distant glens beside the frozen watercourses. Here we were, all met together for one hour from our several homes and occupations, to welcome in the year with clinked glasses and cries of *Prosit Neujahr!*

37

The tolling bells above us stopped. Our turn had come. Out into the snowy air we tumbled, beneath the row of wolves' heads that adorn the pent-house roof. A few steps brought us to the still God's acre, where the snow lay deep and cold upon high-mounded graves of many generations. We crossed it silently, bent our heads to the low Gothic arch, and stood within the tower. It was thick darkness there. But far above, the bells began again to clash and jangle confusedly, with volleys of demonic joy. Successive flights of ladders, each ending in a giddy platform hung across the gloom, climb to the height of some hundred and fifty feet; and all their rungs were crusted with frozen snow, deposited by trampling boots. For up and down these stairs, ascending and descending, moved other than angels—the friezed-jacketed Bürschen, Grisons bears, rejoicing in their exercise, exhilarated with the tingling noise of beaten metal. We reached the first room safely, guided by firm-footed Christian, whose one candle just defined the rough walls and the slippery steps. There we found a band of boys, pulling ropes that set the bells in motion. But our destination was not reached. One more ærial ladder, perpendicular in darkness, brought us swiftly to the home of sound. It is a small square chamber, where the bells are hung, filled with the interlacement of enormous beams, and pierced to north and south by open windows, from whose parapets I saw the village and the valley spread beneath. The fierce wind hurried through it, charged with snow, and its narrow space was thronged with men. Men on the platform, men on the window-sills, men grappling the bells with iron arms, men brushing by to reach the stairs, crossing, recrossing, shouldering their mates, drinking red wine

38

from gigantic beakers, exploding crackers, firing squibs, shouting and yelling in corybantic chorus. They yelled and shouted, one could see it by their open mouths and glittering eyes; but not a sound from human lungs could reach our ears. The overwhelming incessant thunder of the bells drowned all. It thrilled the tympanum, ran through the marrow of the spine, vibrated in the inmost entrails. Yet the brain was only steadied and excited by this sea of brazen noise. After a few moments I knew the place and felt at home in it. Then I enjoyed a spectacle which sculptors might have envied. For they ring the bells in Davos after this fashion:— The lads below set them going with ropes. The men above climb in pairs on ladders to the beams from which they are suspended. Two mighty pine-trees, roughly squared and built into the walls, extend from side to side across the belfry. Another from which the bells hang, connects these massive trunks at right angles. Just where the central beam is wedged into the two parallel supports, the ladders reach them from each side of the belfry, so that, bending from the higher rung of the ladder, and leaning over, stayed upon the lateral beam, each pair of men can keep one bell in movement with their hands. Each comrade plants one leg upon the ladder, and sets the other knee firmly athwart the horizontal pine. Then round each other's waist they twine left arm and right. The two have thus become one man. Right arm and left are free to grasp the bell's horns, sprouting at its crest beneath the beam. With a grave rhythmic motion, bending sideward in a close embrace, swaying and returning to their centre from the well-knit loins, they drive the force of each strong muscle into the vexed bell. The impact is earnest at first, but soon it becomes frantic. The men take something from each other of exalted enthusiasm. This efflux of their combined energies inspires them and exasperates the mighty resonance of metal which they rule. They are lost in a trance of what approximates to dervish passion—so thrilling is the surge of sound, so potent are the rhythms they obey. Men come and tug them by the heels. One grasps the starting thews upon their calves. Another is impatient for their place. But they strain still, locked together, and forgetful of the world. At length they have enough: then slowly, clingingly unclasp, turn round with gazing eyes, and are resumed, sedately, into the diurnal round of common life. Another pair is in their room upon the beam.

39

The Englishman who saw these things stood looking up, enveloped in his ulster with the grey cowl thrust upon his forehead, like a monk. One candle cast a grotesque shadow of him on the plastered wall. And when his chance came, though he was but a weakling, he too climbed and for some moments hugged the beam, and felt the madness of the swinging bell. Descending, he wondered long and strangely whether he ascribed too much of feeling to the men he watched. But no, that was impossible. There are emotions deeply seated in the joy of exercise, when the body is brought into play, and masses move in concert, of which the subject is but half conscious. Music and dance, and the delirium of battle or the chase, act thus upon spontaneous natures. The mystery of rhythm and associated energy and blood tingling in sympathy is here. It lies at the root of man's most tyrannous instinctive impulses.

40

It was past one when we reached home, and now a meditative man might well have gone to bed. But no one thinks of sleeping on Sylvester Abend. So there followed bowls of punch in one friend's room, where English, French, and Germans blent together in convivial Babel; and flasks of old Montagner in another. Palmy, at this period, wore an archdeacon's hat, and smoked a churchwarden's pipe; and neither were his own, nor did he derive anything ecclesiastical or Anglican from the association. Late in the morning we must sally forth, they said, and roam the town. For it is the custom here on New Year's night to greet acquaintances, and ask for hospitality, and no one may deny these self-invited guests. We turned out again into the grey snow-swept gloom, a curious Comus—not at all like Greeks, for we had neither torches in our hands nor rose-wreaths to suspend upon a lady's door-posts. And yet I could not refrain, at this supreme moment of jollity, in the zero temperature, amid my Grisons friends, from humming to myself verses from the Greek Anthology:—

The die is cast! Nay, light the torch!
I'll take the road! Up, courage, ho!
Why linger pondering in the porch?
Upon Love's revel we will go!

Shake off those fumes of wine! Hang care
And caution! What has Love to do
With prudence? Let the torches flare!
Quick, drown the doubts that hampered you!

Cast weary wisdom to the wind!
One thing, but one alone, I know:
Love bent e'en Jove and made him blind
Upon Love's revel we will go!

And then again:—

I've drunk sheer madness! Not with wine,
But old fantastic tales, I'll arm
My heart in heedlessness divine,
And dare the road, nor dream of harm!

I'll join Love's rout! Let thunder break,
Let lightning blast me by the way!
Invulnerable Love shall shake
His ægis o'er my head to-day.

This last epigram was not inappropriate to an invalid about to begin the fifth act in a roystering night's adventure. And still once more:—

Cold blows the winter wind; 'tis Love,
Whose sweet eyes swim with honeyed tears,
That bears me to thy doors, my love,
Tossed by the storm of hopes and fears.

Cold blows the blast of aching Love;
But be thou for my wandering sail,
Adrift upon these waves of love,
Safe harbour from the whistling gale!

However, upon this occasion, though we had winter-wind enough, and cold enough, there was not much love in the business. My arm was firmly clenched in Christian Buol's, and Christian Palmy came behind, trolling out songs in Italian dialect, with still recurring *canaille* choruses, of which the facile rhymes seemed mostly made on a prolonged *amu-u-u-r*. It is noticeable that Italian ditties are specially designed for fellows shouting in the streets at night. They seem in keeping there, and nowhere else that I could ever see. And these Davosers took to them naturally when the time for Comus came. It was between four and five in the morning, and nearly all the houses in the place were dark. The tall church-tower and spire loomed up above us in grey twilight. The tireless wind still swept thin snow from fell and forest. But the frenzied bells had sunk into their twelvemonth's slumber, which shall be broken only by decorous tollings at less festive times. I wondered whether they were tingling still with the heart-throbs and with the pressure of those many arms? Was their old age warmed, as mine was, with that gust of life—the young men who had clung to them like bees to lily-bells, and shaken all their locked-up tone and shrillness into the wild winter air? Alas! how many generations of the young have handled them; and they are still there, frozen in their belfry; and the young grow middle-aged, and old, and die at last; and the bells they grappled in their lust of manhood toll them to their graves, on which the tireless wind will, winter after winter, sprinkle snow from alps and forests which they knew.

'There is a light,' cried Christian, 'up in Anna's window!' 'A light! a light!' the Comus shouted. But how to get at the window, which is pretty high above the ground, and out of reach of the most ardent revellers? We search a neighbouring shed, extract a stable-ladder, and in two seconds Palmy has climbed to the topmost rung, while Christian and Georg hold it firm upon the snow beneath. Then begins a passage from some comic opera of Mozart's or Cimarosa's—an escapade familiar to Spanish or Italian students, which recalls the stage. It is an episode from 'Don Giovanni,' translated to this dark-etched scene of snowy hills, and Gothic tower, and mullioned windows deep embayed beneath their eaves and icicles. *Deh vieni alla finestra!* sings Palmy-Leporello; the chorus answers: *Deh vieni! Perchè non vieni ancora?* pleads Leporello; the chorus shouts: *Perchè? Mio amu-u-u-r*, sighs Leporello; and Echo cries, *amu-u-u-r!* All the wooing, be it noticed, is conducted in Italian. But the actors murmur to each other in Davoser Deutsch, 'She won't come, Palmy! It is far too late; she is gone to bed. Come down; you'll wake the village with your caterwauling!' But Leporello waves his broad archdeacon's hat, and resumes a flood of flexible Bregaglian. He has a shrewd suspicion that the girl is peeping from behind the window curtain; and tells us, bending down from the ladder, in a hoarse stage-whisper, that we must have patience; 'these girls are kittle cattle, who take long to draw: but if your lungs last out, they're sure to show.' And Leporello is right. Faint heart ne'er won fair lady. From the summit of his ladder, by his eloquent Italian tongue, he brings the shy bird down at

last. We hear the unbarring of the house door, and a comely maiden, in her Sunday dress, welcomes us politely to her ground-floor sitting-room. The Comus enters, in grave order, with set speeches, handshakes, and inevitable *Prosits!* It is a large low chamber, with a huge stone stove, wide benches fixed along the walls, and a great oval table. We sit how and where we can. Red wine is produced, and eier-brod and kchli. Frulein Anna serves us sedately, holding her own with decent self-respect against the inrush of the revellers. She is quite alone; but are not her father and mother in bed above, and within earshot? Besides, the Comus, even at this abnormal hour and after an abnormal night, is well conducted. Things seem slipping into a decorous wine-party, when Leporello readjusts the broad-brimmed hat upon his head, and very cleverly acts a little love-scene for our benefit. Frulein Anna takes this as a delicate compliment, and the thing is so prettily done in truth, that not the sternest taste could be offended. Meanwhile another party of night-wanderers, attracted by our mirth, break in. More *Prosits* and clinked glasses follow; and with a fair good-morning to our hostess, we retire.

44

It is too late to think of bed. 'The quincunx of heaven,' as Sir Thomas Browne phrased it on a dissimilar occasion, 'runs low.... The huntsmen are up in America; and not in America only, for the huntsmen, if there are any this night in Graubnden, have long been out upon the snow, and the stable-lads are dragging the sledges from their sheds to carry down the mails to Landquart. We meet the porters from the various hotels, bringing letter-bags and luggage to the post. It is time to turn in and take a cup of black coffee against the rising sun.

IX

Some nights, even in Davos, are spent, even by an invalid, in bed. A leaflet, therefore, of 'Sleep-chasings' may not inappropriately be flung, as envoy to so many wanderings on foot and sledge upon the winter snows.

The first is a confused medley of things familiar and things strange. I have been dreaming of far-away old German towns, with gabled houses deep in snow; dreaming of chlets in forgotten Alpine glens, where wood-cutters come plunging into sleepy light from gloom, and sinking down beside the stove to shake the drift from their rough shoulders; dreaming of vast veils of icicles upon the gaunt black rocks in places where no foot of man will pass, and where the snow is weaving eyebrows over the ledges of grey whirlwind-beaten precipices; dreaming of Venice, forlorn beneath the windy drip of rain, the gas lamps flickering on the swimming piazzetta, the barche idle, the gondolier wrapped in his thread-bare cloak, alone; dreaming of Apennines, with world-old cities, brown, above the brown sea of dead chestnut boughs; dreaming of stormy tides, and watchers aloft in lighthouses when day is finished; dreaming of dead men and women and dead children in the earth, far down beneath the snow-drifts, six feet deep. And then I lift my face, awaking, from my pillow; the pallid moon is on the valley, and the room is filled with spectral light.

45

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is a hospice in an unfrequented pass, between sad peaks, beside a little black lake, overdrifted with soft snow. I pass into the house-room, gliding silently. An old man and an old woman are nodding, bowed in deepest slumber, by the stove. A young man plays the zither on a table. He lifts his head, still modulating with his fingers on the strings. He looks right through me with wide anxious eyes. He does not see me, but sees Italy, I know, and some one wandering on a sandy shore.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is S. Stephen's Church in Wien. Inside, the lamps are burning dimly in the choir. There is fog in the aisles; but through the sleepy air and over the red candles flies a wild soprano's voice, a boy's soul in its singing sent to heaven.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. From the mufflers in which his father, the mountebank, has wrapped the child, to carry him across the heath, a little tumbling-boy emerges in soiled tights. He is half asleep. His father scrapes the fiddle. The boy shortens his red belt, kisses his fingers to us, and ties himself into a knot among the glasses on the table.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. I am on the parapet of a huge circular tower, hollow like a well, and pierced with windows at irregular intervals. The parapet is broad, and slabbed with red Verona marble. Around me are athletic men, all naked, in the strangest attitudes of studied rest, down-gazing, as I do, into the depths below. There comes a confused murmur of voices, and the tower is threaded and rethreaded

46

with great cables. Up these there climb to us a crowd of young men, clinging to the ropes and flinging their bodies sideways on aërial trapezes. My heart trembles with keen joy and terror. For nowhere else could plastic forms be seen more beautiful, and nowhere else is peril more apparent. Leaning my chin upon the utmost verge, I wait. I watch one youth, who smiles and soars to me; and when his face is almost touching mine, he speaks, but what he says I know not.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. The whole world rocks to its foundations. The mountain summits that I know are shaken. They bow their bristling crests. They are falling, falling on us, and the earth is riven. I wake in terror, shouting: *INSOLITIS TREMUERUNT MOTIBUS ALPES!* An earthquake, slight but real, has stirred the ever-wakeful Vesta of the brain to this Virgilian quotation.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. Once more at night I sledge alone upon the Klosters road. It is the point where the woods close over it and moonlight may not pierce the boughs. There come shrill cries of many voices from behind, and rushings that pass by and vanish. Then on their sledges I behold the phantoms of the dead who died in Davos, longing for their homes; and each flies past me, shrieking in the still cold air; and phosphorescent like long meteors, the pageant turns the windings of the road below and disappears.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is the top of some high mountain, where the crags are cruelly tortured and cast in enormous splinters on the ledges of cliffs grey with old-world ice. A ravine, opening at my feet, plunges down immeasurably to a dim and distant sea. Above me soars a precipice embossed with a gigantic ice-bound shape. As I gaze thereon, I find the lineaments and limbs of a Titanic man chained and nailed to the rock. His beard has grown for centuries, and flowed this way and that, adown his breast and over to the stone on either side; and the whole of him is covered with a greenish ice, ancient beyond the memory of man. 'This is Prometheus,' I whisper to myself, 'and I am alone on Caucasus.'

I

Some years' residence in the Canton of the Grisons made me familiar with all sorts of Valtelline wine; with masculine but rough *Inferno*, generous *Forzato*, delicate *Sassella*, harsher *Montagner*, the raspberry flavour of *Grumello*, the sharp invigorating twang of *Villa*. The colour, ranging from garnet to almandine or ruby, told me the age and quality of wine; and I could judge from the crust it forms upon the bottle, whether it had been left long enough in wood to ripen. I had furthermore arrived at the conclusion that the best Valtelline can only be tasted in cellars of the Engadine or Davos, where this vintage matures slowly in the mountain air, and takes a flavour unknown at lower levels. In a word, it had amused my leisure to make or think myself a connoisseur. My literary taste was tickled by the praise bestowed in the Augustan age on Rhætic grapes by Virgil:

Et quo te carmine dicam,
Rhætica? nec cellis ideo contende Falernis.

I piqued myself on thinking that could the poet but have drunk one bottle at Samaden—where Stilicho, by the way, in his famous recruiting expedition may perhaps have drunk it—he would have been less chary in his panegyric. For the point of inferiority on which he seems to insist, namely, that Valtelline wine does not keep well in cellar, is only proper to this vintage in Italian climate.

Such meditations led my fancy on the path of history. Is there truth, then, in the dim tradition that this mountain land was colonised by Etruscans? Is *Ras* the root of Rhætia? The Etruscans were accomplished wine-growers, we know. It was their Montepulciano which drew the Gauls to Rome, if Livy can be trusted. Perhaps they first planted the vine in Valtelline. Perhaps its superior culture in that district may be due to ancient use surviving in a secluded Alpine valley. One thing is certain, that the peasants of Sondrio and Tirano understand viticulture better than the Italians of Lombardy.

Then my thoughts ran on to the period of modern history, when the Grisons seized the Valtelline in lieu of war-pay from the Dukes of Milan. For some three centuries they held it as a subject province. From the Rathhaus at Davos or Chur they sent their nobles—Von Salis and Buol, Planta and Sprecher von Bernegg—across the hills as governors or podestàs to Poschiavo, Sondrio, Tirano, and Morbegno. In those old days the Valtelline wines came duly every winter over snow-deep passes to fill the cellars of the Signori Grigioni. That quaint traveller Tom Coryat, in his so-called 'Crudities,' notes the custom early in the seventeenth century. And as that custom then obtained, it still subsists with little alteration. The wine-carriers—Weinführer, as they are called—first scaled the Bernina pass, halting then as now, perhaps at Poschiavo and Pontresina. Afterwards, in order to reach Davos, the pass of the Scaletta rose before them—a wilderness of untracked snow-drifts. The country-folk still point to narrow, light hand-sledges, on which the casks were charged before the last pitch of the pass. Some wine came, no doubt, on pack-saddles. A meadow in front of the Dischma-Thal, where the pass ends, still bears the name of the Ross-Weid, or horse-pasture. It was here that the beasts of burden used for this wine-service, rested after their long labours. In favourable weather the whole journey from Tirano would have occupied at least four days, with scanty halts at night.

The Valtelline slipped from the hands of the Grisons early in this century. It is rumoured that one of the Von Salis family negotiated matters with Napoleon more for his private benefit than for the interests of the state. However this may have been, when the Graubünden became a Swiss Canton, after four centuries of sovereign independence, the whole Valtelline passed to Austria, and so eventually to Italy. According to modern and just notions of nationality, this was right. In their period of power, the Grisons masters had treated their Italian dependencies with harshness. The Valtelline is an Italian valley, connected with the rest of the peninsula by ties of race and language. It is, moreover, geographically linked to Italy by the great stream of the Adda, which takes its rise upon the Stelvio, and after passing through the Lake of Como, swells the volume of the Po.

But, though politically severed from the Valtelline, the Engadiners and Davosers have not dropped their old habit of importing its best produce. What they formerly levied as masters, they now acquire by purchase.

49

50

The Italian revenue derives a large profit from the frontier dues paid at the gate between Tirano and Poschiavo on the Bernina road. Much of the same wine enters Switzerland by another route, travelling from Sondrio to Chiavenna and across the Splügen. But until quite recently, the wine itself could scarcely be found outside the Canton. It was indeed quoted upon Lombard wine-lists. Yet no one drank it; and when I tasted it at Milan, I found it quite unrecognisable. The fact seems to be that the Graubündeners alone know how to deal with it; and, as I have hinted, the wine requires a mountain climate for its full development.

51

II

The district where the wine of Valtellina is grown extends, roughly speaking, from Tirano to Morbegno, a distance of some fifty-four miles. The best sorts come from the middle of this region. High up in the valley, soil and climate are alike less favourable. Low down a coarser, earthier quality springs from fat land where the valley broadens. The northern hillsides to a very considerable height above the river are covered with vineyards. The southern slopes on the left bank of the Adda, lying more in shade, yield but little. Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella are the names of famous vineyards. Sassella is the general name for a large tract. Buying an Inferno, Grumello, or Perla di Sassella wine, it would be absurd to suppose that one obtained it precisely from the eponymous estate. But as each of these vineyards yields a marked quality of wine, which is taken as standard-giving, the produce of the whole district may be broadly classified as approaching more or less nearly to one of these accepted types. The Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella of commerce are therefore three sorts of good Valtelline, ticketed with famous names to indicate certain differences of quality. Montagner, as the name implies, is a somewhat lighter wine, grown higher up in the hill-vineyards. And of this class there are many species, some approximating to Sassella in delicacy of flavour, others approaching the tart lightness of the Villa vintage. This last takes its title from a village in the neighbourhood of Tirano, where a table-wine is chiefly grown.

Forzato is the strongest, dearest, longest-lived of this whole family of wines. It is manufactured chiefly at Tirano; and, as will be understood from its name, does not profess to belong to any one of the famous localities. Forzato or Sforzato, forced or enforced, is in fact a wine which has undergone a more artificial process. In German the people call it Strohwein, which also points to the method of its preparation. The finest grapes are selected and dried in the sun (hence the *Stroh*) for a period of eight or nine weeks. When they have almost become raisins, they are pressed. The must is heavily charged with sugar, and ferments powerfully. Wine thus made requires several years to ripen. Sweet at first, it takes at last a very fine quality and flavour, and is rough, almost acid, on the tongue. Its colour too turns from a deep rich crimson to the tone of tawny port, which indeed it much resembles.

52

Old Forzato, which has been long in cask, and then perhaps three years in bottle, will fetch at least six francs, or may rise to even ten francs a flask. The best Sassella rarely reaches more than five francs. Good Montagner and Grumello can be had perhaps for four francs; and Inferno of a special quality for six francs. Thus the average price of old Valtelline wine may be taken as five francs a bottle. These, I should observe, are hotel prices.

Valtelline wines bought in the wood vary, of course, according to their age and year of vintage. I have found that from 2.50 fr. to 3.50 fr. per litre is a fair price for sorts fit to bottle. The new wine of 1881 sold in the following winter at prices varying from 1.05 fr. to 1.80 fr. per litre.

It is customary for the Graubünden wine-merchants to buy up the whole produce of a vineyard from the peasants at the end of the vintage. They go in person or depute their agents to inspect the wine, make their bargains, and seal the cellars where the wine is stored. Then, when the snow has fallen, their own horses with sleighs and trusted servants go across the passes to bring it home. Generally they have some local man of confidence at Tirano, the starting-point for the homeward journey, who takes the casks up to that place and sees them duly charged. Merchants of old standing maintain relations with the same peasants, taking their wine regularly; so that from Lorenz Gredig at Pontresina or Andreas Gredig at Davos Dörfli, from Fanconi at Samaden, or from Giacomi at Chiavenna, special qualities of wine, the produce of certain vineyards, are to be obtained. Up to the present time this wine trade has been conducted with simplicity and honesty by both the dealers and the growers. One chief merit of Valtelline wine is that it is pure. How long so

53

desirable a state of things will survive the slow but steady development of an export business may be questioned.

III

With so much practical and theoretical interest in the produce of the Valtelline to stimulate my curiosity, I determined to visit the district at the season when the wine was leaving it. It was the winter of 1881-82, a winter of unparalleled beauty in the high Alps. Day succeeded day without a cloud. Night followed night with steady stars, gliding across clear mountain ranges and forests of dark pines unstirred by wind. I could not hope for a more prosperous season; and indeed I made such use of it, that between the months of January and March I crossed six passes of the Alps in open sleighs—the Fluela Bernina, Splügen, Julier, Maloja, and Albula—with less difficulty and discomfort in mid-winter than the traveller may often find on them in June.

At the end of January, my friend Christian and I left Davos long before the sun was up, and ascended for four hours through the interminable snow-drifts of the Fluela in a cold grey shadow. The sun's light seemed to elude us. It ran along the ravine through which we toiled; dipped down to touch the topmost pines above our heads; rested in golden calm upon the Schiahorn at our back; capriciously played here and there across the Weisshorn on our left, and made the precipices of the Schwartzhorn glitter on our right. But athwart our path it never fell until we reached the very summit of the pass. Then we passed quietly into the full glory of the winter morning—a tranquil flood of sunbeams, pouring through air of crystalline purity, frozen and motionless. White peaks and dark brown rocks soared up, cutting a sky of almost purple blueness. A stillness that might be felt brooded over the whole world; but in that stillness there was nothing sad, no suggestion of suspended vitality. It was the stillness rather of untroubled health, of strength omnipotent but unexerted.

From the Hochspitz of the Fluela the track plunges at one bound into the valley of the Inn, following a narrow cornice carved from the smooth bank of snow, and hung, without break or barrier, a thousand feet or more above the torrent. The summer road is lost in snow-drifts. The galleries built as a protection from avalanches, which sweep in rivers from those grim, bare fells above, are blocked with snow. Their useless arches yawn, as we glide over or outside them, by paths which instinct in our horse and driver traces. As a fly may creep along a house-roof, slanting downwards we descend. One whisk from the swung tail of an avalanche would hurl us, like a fly, into the ruin of the gaping gorge. But this season little snow has fallen on the higher hills; and what still lies there, is hard frozen. Therefore we have no fear, as we whirl fast and faster from the snow-fields into the black forests of gnarled cembras and wind-wearied pines. Then Süss is reached, where the Inn hurries its shallow waters clogged with ice-floes through a sleepy hamlet. The stream is pure and green; for the fountains of the glaciers are locked by winter frosts; and only clear rills from perennial sources swell its tide. At Süss we lost the sun, and toiled in garish gloom and silence, nipped by the ever-deepening cold of evening, upwards for four hours to Samaden.

The next day was spent in visiting the winter colony at San Moritz, where the Kulm Hotel, tenanted by some twenty guests, presented in its vastness the appearance of a country-house. One of the prettiest spots in the world is the ice-rink, fashioned by the skill of Herr Caspar Badrutt on a high raised terrace, commanding the valley of the Inn and the ponderous bulwarks of Bernina. The silhouettes of skaters, defined against that landscape of pure white, passed to and fro beneath a cloudless sky. Ladies sat and worked or read on seats upon the ice. Not a breath of wind was astir, and warm beneficent sunlight flooded the immeasurable air. Only, as the day declined, some iridescent films overspread the west; and just above Maloja the apparition of a mock sun—a well-defined circle of opaline light, broken at regular intervals by four globes—seemed to portend a change of weather. This forecast fortunately proved delusive. We drove back to Samaden across the silent snow, enjoying those delicate tints of rose and violet and saffron which shed enchantment for one hour over the white monotony of Alpine winter.

At half-past eight next morning, the sun was rising from behind Pitz Languard, as we crossed the Inn and drove through Pontresina in the glorious light, with all its huge hotels quite empty and none but a few country-folk abroad. Those who only know the Engadine in summer have little conception of its beauty. Winter softens the hard details of bare rock, and rounds the melancholy grassless mountain flanks, suspending

icicles to every ledge and spangling the curved surfaces of snow with crystals. The landscape gains in purity, and, what sounds unbelievable, in tenderness. Nor does it lose in grandeur. Looking up the valley of the Morteratsch that morning, the glaciers were distinguishable in hues of green and sapphire through their veil of snow; and the highest peaks soared in a transparency of amethystine light beneath a blue sky traced with filaments of windy cloud. Some storm must have disturbed the atmosphere in Italy, for fan-shaped mists frothed out around the sun, and curled themselves above the mountains in fine feathery wreaths, melting imperceptibly into air, until, when we had risen above the cembras, the sky was one deep solid blue.

All that upland wilderness is lovelier now than in the summer; and on the morning of which I write, the air itself was far more summery than I have ever known it in the Engadine in August. We could scarcely bear to place our hands upon the woodwork of the sleigh because of the fierce sun's heat. And yet the atmosphere was crystalline with windless frost. As though to increase the strangeness of these contrasts, the pavement of beaten snow was stained with red drops spilt from wine-casks which pass over it.

The chief feature of the Bernina—what makes it a dreary pass enough in summer, but infinitely beautiful in winter—is its breadth; illimitable undulations of snow-drifts; immensity of open sky; unbroken lines of white, descending in smooth curves from glittering ice-peaks.

A glacier hangs in air above the frozen lakes, with all its green-blue ice-cliffs glistening in intensest light. Pitz Palu shoots aloft like sculptured marble, delicately veined with soft ærial shadows of translucent blue. At the summit of the pass all Italy seems to burst upon the eyes in those steep serried ranges, with their craggy crests, violet-hued in noonday sunshine, as though a bloom of plum or grape had been shed over them, enamelling their jagged precipices.

57

The top of the Bernina is not always thus in winter. It has a bad reputation for the fury of invading storms, when falling snow hurtles together with snow scooped from the drifts in eddies, and the weltering white sea shifts at the will of whirlwinds. The Hospice then may be tenanted for days together by weather-bound wayfarers; and a line drawn close beneath its roof shows how two years ago the whole building was buried in one snow-shroud. This morning we lounged about the door, while our horses rested and postillions and carters pledged one another in cups of new Veltliner.

The road takes an awful and sudden dive downwards, quite irrespective of the carefully engineered post-track. At this season the path is badly broken into ruts and chasms by the wine traffic. In some places it was indubitably perilous: a narrow ledge of mere ice skirting thinly clad hard-frozen banks of snow, which fell precipitately sideways for hundreds of sheer feet. We did not slip over this parapet, though we were often within an inch of doing so. Had our horse stumbled, it is not probable that I should have been writing this.

When we came to the galleries which defend the road from avalanches, we saw ahead of us a train of over forty sledges ascending, all charged with Valtelline wine. Our postillions drew up at the inner side of the gallery, between massive columns of the purest ice dependent from the rough-hewn roof and walls of rock. A sort of open *loggia* on the farther side framed vignettes of the Valtelline mountains in their hard cerulean shadows and keen sunlight. Between us and the view defiled the wine-sledges; and as each went by, the men made us drink out of their *trinketti*. These are oblong, hexagonal wooden kegs, holding about fourteen litres, which the carter fills with wine before he leaves the Valtelline, to cheer him on the homeward journey. You raise it in both hands, and when the bung has been removed, allow the liquor to flow stream-wise down your throat. It was a most extraordinary Bacchic procession—a pomp which, though undreamed of on the banks of the Ilissus, proclaimed the deity of Dionysos in authentic fashion. Struggling horses, grappling at the ice-bound floor with sharp-spiked shoes; huge, hoarse drivers, some clad in sheepskins from Italian valleys, some brown as bears in rough Graubünden homespun; casks, dropping their spilth of red wine on the snow; greetings, embracings; patois of Bergamo, Romansch, and German roaring around the low-browed vaults and tingling ice pillars; pourings forth of libations of the new strong Valtelline on breasts and beards;—the whole made up a scene of stalwart jollity and manful labour such as I have nowhere else in such wild circumstances witnessed. Many Davosers were there, the men of Andreas Gredig, Valär, and so forth; and all of these, on greeting Christian, forced us to drain a *Schluck* from their unmanageable cruses.

58

Then on they went, crying, creaking, struggling, straining through the corridor, which echoed deafeningly, the gleaming crystals of those hard Italian mountains in their winter raiment building a background of still beauty to the savage Bacchanalian riot of the team.

How little the visitors who drink Valtelline wine at S. Moritz or Davos reflect by what strange ways it reaches them. A sledge can scarcely be laden with more than one cask of 300 litres on the ascent; and this cask, according to the state of the road, has many times to be shifted from wheels to runners and back again before the journey is accomplished. One carter will take charge of two horses, and consequently of two sledges and two casks, driving them both by voice and gesture rather than by rein. When they leave the Valtelline, the carters endeavour, as far as possible, to take the pass in gangs, lest bad weather or an accident upon the road should overtake them singly. At night they hardly rest three hours, and rarely think of sleeping, but spend the time in drinking and conversation. The horses are fed and littered; but for them too the night-halt is little better than a baiting-time. In fair weather the passage of the mountain is not difficult, though tiring. But woe to men and beasts alike if they encounter storms! Not a few perish in the passes; and it frequently happens that their only chance is to unyoke the horses and leave the sledges in a snow-wreath, seeking for themselves such shelter as may possibly be gained, frost-bitten, after hours of battling with impermeable drifts. The wine is frozen into one solid mass of rosy ice before it reaches Pontresina. This does not hurt the young vintage, but it is highly injurious to wine of some years' standing. The perils of the journey are aggravated by the savage temper of the drivers. Jealousies between the natives of rival districts spring up; and there are men alive who have fought the whole way down from Fluela Hospice to Davos Platz with knives and stones, hammers and hatchets, wooden staves and splintered cart-wheels, staining the snow with blood, and bringing broken pates, bruised limbs, and senseless comrades home to their women to be tended.

59

Bacchus Alpinus shepherded his train away from us to northward, and we passed forth into noonday from the gallery. It then seemed clear that both conductor and postillion were sufficiently merry. The plunge they took us down those frozen parapets, with shriek and *jauchzen* and cracked whips, was more than ever dangerous. Yet we reached La Rosa safely. This is a lovely solitary spot, beside a rushing stream, among grey granite boulders grown with spruce and rhododendron: a veritable rose of Sharon blooming in the desert. The wastes of the Bernina stretch above, and round about are leaguered some of the most forbidding sharp-toothed peaks I ever saw. Onwards, across the silent snow, we glided in immitigable sunshine, through opening valleys and pine-woods, past the robber-huts of Pisciadella, until at evenfall we rested in the roadside inn at Poschiavo.

60

IV

The snow-path ended at Poschiavo; and when, as usual, we started on our journey next day at sunrise, it was in a carriage upon wheels. Yet even here we were in full midwinter. Beyond Le Prese the lake presented one sheet of smooth black ice, reflecting every peak and chasm of the mountains, and showing the rocks and water-weeds in the clear green depths below. The glittering floor stretched away for acres of untenanted expanse, with not a skater to explore those dark mysterious coves, or strike across the slanting sunlight poured from clefts in the impendent hills. Inshore the substance of the ice sparkled here and there with iridescence like the plumelets of a butterfly's wing under the microscope, wherever light happened to catch the jagged or oblique flaws that veined its solid crystal.

From the lake the road descends suddenly for a considerable distance through a narrow gorge, following a torrent which rushes among granite boulders. Chestnut trees begin to replace the pines. The sunnier terraces are planted with tobacco, and at a lower level vines appear at intervals in patches. One comes at length to a great red gate across the road, which separates Switzerland from Italy, and where the export dues on wine are paid. The Italian custom-house is romantically perched above the torrent. Two courteous and elegant *finanziere*, mere boys, were sitting wrapped in their military cloaks and reading novels in the sun as we drove up. Though they made some pretence of examining the luggage, they excused themselves with sweet smiles and apologetic eyes—it was a disagreeable duty!

61

A short time brought us to the first village in the Valtelline, where the

road bifurcates northward to Bormio and the Stelvio pass, southward to Sondrio and Lombardy. It is a little hamlet, known by the name of La Madonna di Tirano, having grown up round a pilgrimage church of great beauty, with tall Lombard bell-tower, pierced with many tiers of pilastered windows, ending in a whimsical spire, and dominating a fantastic cupola building of the earlier Renaissance. Taken altogether, this is a charming bit of architecture, picturesquely set beneath the granite snow-peaks of the Valtelline. The church, they say, was raised at Madonna's own command to stay the tide of heresy descending from the Engadine; and in the year 1620, the bronze statue of S. Michael, which still spreads wide its wings above the cupola, looked down upon the massacre of six hundred Protestants and foreigners, commanded by the patriot Jacopo Robustelli.

From Madonna the road leads up the valley through a narrow avenue of poplar-trees to the town of Tirano. We were now in the district where Forzato is made, and every vineyard had a name and history. In Tirano we betook ourself to the house of an old acquaintance of the Buol family, Bernardo da Campo, or, as the Graubündeners call him, Bernard Campbèll. We found him at dinner with his son and grandchildren in a vast, dark, bare Italian chamber. It would be difficult to find a more typical old Scotchman of the Lowlands than he looked, with his clean close-shaven face, bright brown eyes, and snow-white hair escaping from a broad-brimmed hat. He might have sat to a painter for some Covenanters's portrait, except that there was nothing dour about him, or for an illustration to Burns's 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' The air of probity and canniness combined with a twinkle of dry humour was completely Scotch; and when he tapped his snuff-box, telling stories of old days, I could not refrain from asking him about his pedigree. It should be said that there is a considerable family of Campèlls or Campbèlls in the Graubünden, who are fabled to deduce their stock from a Scotch Protestant of Zwingli's time; and this made it irresistible to imagine that in our friend Bernardo I had chanced upon a notable specimen of atavism. All he knew, however, was, that his first ancestor had been a foreigner, who came across the mountains to Tirano two centuries ago.^[3]

62

[3] The Grisons surname Campèll may derive from the Romansch Campo Bello. The founder of the house was one Kaspar Campèll, who in the first half of the sixteenth century preached the Reformed religion in the Engadine.

This old gentleman is a considerable wine-dealer. He sent us with his son, Giacomo, on a long journey underground through his cellars, where we tasted several sorts of Valtelline, especially the new Forzato, made a few weeks since, which singularly combines sweetness with strength, and both with a slight effervescence. It is certainly the sort of wine wherewith to tempt a Polyphemus, and not unapt to turn a giant's head.

Leaving Tirano, and once more passing through the poplars by Madonna, we descended the valley all along the vineyards of Villa and the vast district of Sassella. Here and there, at wayside inns, we stopped to drink a glass of some particular vintage; and everywhere it seemed as though god Bacchus were at home. The whole valley on the right side of the Adda is one gigantic vineyard, climbing the hills in tiers and terraces, which justify its Italian epithet of *Teatro di Bacco*. The rock is a greyish granite, assuming sullen brown and orange tints where exposed to sun and weather. The vines are grown on stakes, not trellised over trees or carried across boulders, as is the fashion at Chiavenna or Terlan. Yet every advantage of the mountain is adroitly used; nooks and crannies being specially preferred, where the sun's rays are deflected from hanging cliffs. The soil seems deep, and is of a dull yellow tone. When the vines end, brushwood takes up the growth, which expires at last in crag and snow. Some alps and chalets, dimly traced against the sky, are evidences that a pastoral life prevails above the vineyards. Pan there stretches the pine-thyrus down to vine-garlanded Dionysos.

63

The Adda flows majestically among willows in the midst, and the valley is nearly straight. The prettiest spot, perhaps, is at Tresenda or S. Giacomo, where a pass from Edolo and Brescia descends from the southern hills. But the Valtelline has no great claim to beauty of scenery. Its chief town, Sondrio, where we supped and drank some special wine called *il vino de' Signori Grigioni*, has been modernised in dull Italian fashion.

V

The hotel at Sondrio, La Maddalena, was in carnival uproar of masquers, toppers, and musicians all night through. It was as much as we

could do to rouse the sleepy servants and get a cup of coffee ere we started in the frozen dawn. 'Verfluchte Maddalena!' grumbled Christian as he shouldered our portmanteaus and bore them in hot haste to the post. Long experience only confirms the first impression, that, of all cold, the cold of an Italian winter is most penetrating. As we lumbered out of Sondrio in a heavy diligence, I could have fancied myself back once again at Radicofani or among the Ciminian hills. The frost was penetrating. Fur-coats would not keep it out; and we longed to be once more in open sledges on Bernina rather than enclosed in that cold coupé. Now we passed Grumello, the second largest of the renowned vine districts; and always keeping the white mass of Monte di Disgrazia in sight, rolled at last into Morbegno. Here the Valtelline vintage properly ends, though much of the ordinary wine is probably supplied from the inferior produce of these fields. It was past noon when we reached Colico, and saw the Lake of Como glittering in sunlight, dazzling cloaks of snow on all the mountains, which look as dry and brown as dead beech-leaves at this season. Our Bacchic journey had reached its close; and it boots not here to tell in detail how we made our way across the Splügen, piercing its avalanches by low-arched galleries scooped from the solid snow, and careering in our sledges down perpendicular snow-fields, which no one who has crossed that pass from the Italian side in winter will forget. We left the refuge station at the top together with a train of wine-sledges, and passed them in the midst of the wild descent. Looking back, I saw two of their horses stumble in the plunge and roll headlong over. Unluckily in one of these somersaults a man was injured. Flung ahead into the snow by the first lurch, the sledge and wine-cask crossed him like a garden-roller. Had his bed not been of snow, he must have been crushed to death; and as it was, he presented a woeful appearance when he afterwards arrived at Splügen.

64

VI

Though not strictly connected with the subject of this paper, I shall conclude these notes of winter wanderings in the high Alps with an episode which illustrates their curious vicissitudes.

65

It was late in the month of March, and nearly all the mountain roads were open for wheeled vehicles. A carriage and four horses came to meet us at the termination of a railway journey in Bagalz. We spent one day in visiting old houses of the Grisons aristocracy at Mayenfeld and Zizers, rejoicing in the early sunshine, which had spread the fields with spring flowers—primroses and oxlips, violets, anemones, and bright blue squills. At Chur we slept, and early next morning started for our homeward drive to Davos. Bad weather had declared itself in the night. It blew violently, and the rain soon changed to snow, frozen by a bitter north blast. Crossing the dreary heath of Lenz was both magnificent and dreadful. By the time we reached Wiesen, all the forests were laden with snow, the roads deep in snow-drifts, the whole scene wintrier than it had been the winter through.

At Wiesen we should have stayed, for evening was fast setting in. But in ordinary weather it is only a two hours drive from Wiesen to Davos. Our coachman made no objections to resuming the journey, and our four horses had but a light load to drag. So we telegraphed for supper to be prepared, and started between five and six.

A deep gorge has to be traversed, where the torrent cleaves its way between jaws of limestone precipices. The road is carried along ledges and through tunnels in the rock. Avalanches, which sweep this passage annually from the hills above, give it the name of Züge, or the Snow-Paths. As we entered the gorge darkness fell, the horses dragged more heavily, and it soon became evident that our Tyrolese driver was hopelessly drunk. He nearly upset us twice by taking sharp turns in the road, banged the carriage against telegraph posts and jutting rocks, shaved the very verge of the torrent in places where there was no parapet, and, what was worst of all, refused to leave his box without a fight. The darkness by this time was all but total, and a blinding snow-storm swept howling through the ravine. At length we got the carriage to a dead-stop, and floundered out in deep wet snow toward some wooden huts where miners in old days made their habitation. The place, by a curious, perhaps unconscious irony, is called Hoffnungsau, or the Meadow of Hope. Indeed, it is not ill named; for many wanderers, escaping, as we did, from the dreadful gorge of Avalanches on a stormy night, may have felt, as we now felt, their hope reviving when they reached this shelter.

66

There was no light; nothing above, beneath, around, on any side, but

tearing tempest and snow whirled through the ravine. The horses were taken out of the carriage; on their way to the stable, which fortunately in these mountain regions will be always found beside the poorest habitation, one of them fell back across a wall and nearly broke his spine. Hoffnungsau is inhabited all through the year. In its dismal dark kitchen we found a knot of workmen gathered together, and heard there were two horses on the premises besides our own. It then occurred to us that we might accomplish the rest of the journey with such sledges as they bring the wood on from the hills in winter, if coal-boxes or boxes of any sort could be provided. These should be lashed to the sledges and filled with hay. We were only four persons; my wife and a friend should go in one, myself and my little girl in the other. No sooner thought of than put into practice. These original conveyances were improvised, and after two hours' halt on the Meadow of Hope, we all set forth again at half-past eight.

I have rarely felt anything more piercing than the grim cold of that journey. We crawled at a foot's pace through changeful snow-drifts. The road was obliterated, and it was my duty to keep a petroleum stable-lamp swinging to illuminate the untracked wilderness. My little girl was snugly nested in the hay, and sound asleep with a deep white covering of snow above her. Meanwhile, the drift clave in frozen masses to our faces, lashed by a wind so fierce and keen that it was difficult to breathe it. My forehead-bone ached, as though with neuralgia, from the mere mask of icy snow upon it, plastered on with frost. Nothing could be seen but millions of white specks, whirled at us in eddying concentric circles. Not far from the entrance to the village we met our house-folk out with lanterns to look for us. It was past eleven at night when at last we entered warm rooms and refreshed ourselves for the tiring day with a jovial champagne supper. Horses, carriage, and drunken driver reached home next morning.

Travellers journeying southward from Paris first meet with olive-trees near Montdragon or Monsélimart—little towns, with old historic names, upon the road to Orange. It is here that we begin to feel ourselves within the land of Provence, where the Romans found a second Italy, and where the autumn of their antique civilisation was followed, almost without an intermediate winter of barbarism, by the light and delicate springtime of romance. Orange itself is full of Rome. Indeed, the ghost of the dead empire seems there to be more real and living than the actual flesh and blood of modern time, as represented by narrow dirty streets and mean churches. It is the shell of the huge theatre, hollowed from the solid hill, and fronted with a wall that seems made rather to protect a city than to form a sounding-board for a stage, which first tells us that we have reached the old Arausio. Of all theatres this is the most impressive, stupendous, indestructible, the Colosseum hardly excepted; for in Rome herself we are prepared for something gigantic, while in the insignificant Arausio—a sort of antique Tewkesbury—to find such magnificence, durability, and vastness, impresses one with a nightmare sense that the old lioness of Empire can scarcely yet be dead. Standing before the colossal, towering, amorphous precipice which formed the background of the scena, we feel as if once more the 'heart-shaking sound of Consul Romanus' might be heard; as if Roman knights and deputies, arisen from the dead, with faces hard and stern as those of the warriors carved on Trajan's frieze, might take their seats beneath us in the orchestra, and, after proclamation made, the mortmain of imperial Rome be laid upon the comforts, liberties, and little gracefulnesses of our modern life. Nor is it unpleasant to be startled from such reverie by the voice of the old guardian upon the stage beneath, sonorously devolving the vacuous Alexandrines with which he once welcomed his ephemeral French emperor from Algiers. The little man is dim with distance, eclipsed and swallowed up by the shadows and grotesque fragments of the ruin in the midst of which he stands. But his voice—thanks to the inimitable constructive art of the ancient architect, which, even in the desolation of at least thirteen centuries, has not lost its cunning—emerges from the pigmy throat, and fills the whole vast hollow with its clear, if tiny, sound. Thank heaven, there is no danger of Roman resurrection here! The illusion is completely broken, and we turn to gather the first violets of February, and to wonder at the quaint postures of a praying mantis on the grass grown tiers and porches fringed with fern.

69

The sense of Roman greatness which is so oppressive in Orange and in many other parts of Provence, is not felt at Avignon. Here we exchange the ghost of Imperial for the phantom of Ecclesiastical Rome. The fixed epithet of Avignon is Papal; and as the express train rushes over its bleak and wind-tormented plain, the heavy dungeon-walls and battlemented towers of its palace fortress seem to warn us off, and bid us quickly leave the Babylon of exiled impious Antichrist. Avignon presents the bleakest, barest, greyest scene upon a February morning, when the incessant mistral is blowing, and far and near, upon desolate hillside and sandy plain, the scanty trees are bent sideways, the crumbling castle turrets shivering like bleached skeletons in the dry ungenial air. Yet inside the town, all is not so dreary. The Papal palace, with its terrible Glacière, its chapel painted by Simone Memmi, its endless corridors and staircases, its torture-chamber, funnel-shaped to drown and suffocate—so runs tradition—the shrieks of wretches on the rack, is now a barrack, filled with lively little French soldiers, whose politeness, though sorely taxed, is never ruffled by the introduction of inquisitive visitors into their dormitories, eating-places, and drill-grounds. And strange, indeed, it is to see the lines of neat narrow barrack beds, between which the red-legged little men are shaving, polishing their guns, or mending their trousers, in those vaulted halls of popes and cardinals, those vast presence-chambers and audience-galleries, where Urban entertained S. Catherine, where Rienzi came, a prisoner, to be stared at. Pass by the Glacière with a shudder, for it has still the reek of blood about it; and do not long delay in the cheerless dungeon of Rienzi. Time and regimental whitewash have swept these lurking-places of old crime very bare; but the parable of the seven devils is true in more senses than one, and the ghosts that return to haunt a deodorised, disinfected, garnished sepulchre are almost more ghastly than those which have never been disturbed from their old habitations.

70

Little by little the eye becomes accustomed to the bareness and greyness of this Provençal landscape; and then we find that the scenery round Avignon is eminently picturesque. The view from Les Doms—

which is a hill above the Pope's palace, the Acropolis, as it were, of Avignon—embraces a wide stretch of undulating champaign, bordered by low hills, and intersected by the flashing waters of the majestic Rhone. Across the stream stands Villeneuve, like a castle of romance, with its round stone towers fronting the gates and battlemented walls of the Papal city. A bridge used to connect the two towns, but it is now broken. The remaining fragment is of solid build, resting on great buttresses, one of which rises fantastically above the bridge into a little chapel. Such, one might fancy, was the bridge which Ariosto's Rodomonte kept on horse against the Paladins of Charlemagne, when angered by the loss of his love. Nor is it difficult to imagine Bradamante spurring up the slope against him with her magic lance in rest, and tilting him into the tawny waves beneath.

71

On a clear October morning, when the vineyards are taking their last tints of gold and crimson, and the yellow foliage of the poplars by the river mingles with the sober greys of olive-trees and willows, every square inch of this landscape, glittering as it does with light and with colour, the more beautiful for its subtlety and rarity, would make a picture. Out of many such vignettes let us choose one. We are on the shore close by the ruined bridge, the rolling muddy Rhone in front; beyond it, by the towing-path, a tall strong cypress-tree rises beside a little house, and next to it a crucifix twelve feet or more in height, the Christ visible afar, stretched upon His red cross; arundo donax is waving all around, and willows near; behind, far off, soar the peaked hills, blue and pearly with clouds; past the cypress, on the Rhone, comes floating a long raft, swift through the stream, its rudder guided by a score of men: one standing erect upon the prow bends forward to salute the cross; on flies the raft, the tall reeds rustle, and the cypress sleeps.

For those who have time to spare in going to or from the south it is worth while to spend a day or two in the most comfortable and characteristic of old French inns, the Hôtel de l'Europe, at Avignon. Should it rain, the museum of the town is worth a visit. It contains Horace Vernet's not uncelebrated picture of Mazeppa, and another, less famous, but perhaps more interesting, by swollen-cheeked David, the 'genius in convulsion,' as Carlyle has christened him. His canvas is unfinished. Who knows what cry of the Convention made the painter fling his palette down and leave the masterpiece he might have spoiled? For in its way the picture is a masterpiece. There lies Jean Barrad, drummer, aged fourteen, slain in La Vendée, a true patriot, who, while his life-blood flowed away, pressed the tricolor cockade to his heart, and murmured 'Liberty!' David has treated his subject classically. The little drummer-boy, though French enough in feature and in feeling, lies, Greek-like, naked on the sand—a very Hyacinth of the Republic, La Vendée's Ilioneus. The tricolor cockade and the sentiment of upturned patriotic eyes are the only indications of his being a hero in his teens, a citizen who thought it sweet to die for France.

72

In fine weather a visit to Vaucluse should by no means be omitted, not so much, perhaps, for Petrarch's sake as for the interest of the drive, and for the marvel of the fountain of the Sorgues. For some time after leaving Avignon you jog along the level country between avenues of plane-trees; then comes a hilly ridge, on which the olives, mulberries, and vineyards join their colours and melt subtly into distant purple. After crossing this we reach L'Isle, an island village girdled by the gliding Sorgues, overshadowed with gigantic plane-boughs, and echoing to the splash of water dripped from mossy fern-tufted millwheels. Those who expect Petrarch's Sorgues to be some trickling poet's rill emerging from a damp grotto, may well be astounded at the rush and roar of this azure river so close upon its fountain-head. It has a volume and an arrow-like rapidity that communicate the feeling of exuberance and life. In passing, let it not be forgotten that it was somewhere or other in this 'chiaro fondo di Sorga,' as Carlyle describes, that Jourdain, the hangman-hero of the Glacière, stuck fast upon his pony when flying from his foes, and had his accursed life, by some diabolical providence, spared for future butcheries. On we go across the austere plain, between fields of madder, the red roots of the 'garance' lying in swathes along the furrows. In front rise ash-grey hills of barren rock, here and there crimsoned with the leaves of the dwarf sumach. A huge cliff stands up and seems to bar all passage. Yet the river foams in torrents at our side. Whence can it issue? What pass or cranny in that precipice is cloven for its escape? These questions grow in interest as we enter the narrow defile of limestone rocks which leads to the cliff-barrier, and find ourselves among the figs and olives of Vaucluse. Here is the village, the little church, the ugly column to Petrarch's memory, the inn, with its caricatures of Laura, and its excellent trout, the bridge and the many-flashing, eddying Sorgues,

73

lashed by millwheels, broken by weirs, divided in its course, channelled and dyked, yet flowing irresistibly and undefiled. Blue, purple, greened by moss and water-weeds, silvered by snow-white pebbles, on its pure smooth bed the river runs like elemental diamond, so clear and fresh. The rocks on either side are grey or yellow, terraced into oliveyards, with here and there a cypress, fig, or mulberry tree. Soon the gardens cease, and lentisk, rosemary, box, and ilex—shrubs of Provence—with here and there a sumach out of reach, cling to the hard stone. And so at last we are brought face to face with the sheer impassable precipice. At its basement sleeps a pool, perfectly untroubled; a lakelet in which the sheltering rocks and nestling wild figs are glassed as in a mirror—a mirror of blue-black water, like amethyst or fluor-spar—so pure, so still, that where it laps the pebbles you can scarcely say where air begins and water ends. This, then, is Petrarch's 'grotto;' this is the fountain of Vaucluse. Up from its deep reservoirs, from the mysterious basements of the mountain, wells the silent stream; pauseless and motionless it fills its urn, rises unruffled, glides until the brink is reached, then overflows, and foams, and dashes noisily, a cataract, among the boulders of the hills. Nothing at Vaucluse is more impressive than the contrast between the tranquil silence of the fountain and the roar of the released impetuous river. Here we can realise the calm clear eyes of sculptured water-gods, their brimming urns, their gushing streams, the magic of the mountain-born and darkness-cradled flood. Or again, looking up at the sheer steep cliff, 800 feet in height, and arching slightly roofwise, so that no rain falls upon the cavern of the pool, we seem to see the stroke of Neptune's trident, the hoof of Pegasus, the force of Moses' rod, which cleft rocks and made water gush forth in the desert. There is a strange fascination in the spot. As our eyes follow the white pebble which cleaves the surface and falls visibly, until the veil of azure is too thick for sight to pierce, we feel as if some glamour were drawing us, like Hylas, to the hidden caves. At least, we long to yield a prized and precious offering to the spring, to grace the nymph of Vaucluse with a pearl of price as token of our reverence and love.

74

Meanwhile nothing has been said about Petrarch, who himself said much about the spring, and complained against those very nymphs to whom we have in wish, at least, been scattering jewels, that they broke his banks and swallowed up his gardens every winter. At Vaucluse Petrarch loved, and lived, and sang. He has made Vaucluse famous, and will never be forgotten there. But for the present the fountain is even more attractive than the memory of the poet.^[4]

[4] I have translated and printed at the end of the second volume some sonnets of Petrarch as a kind of palinode for this impertinence.

The change from Avignon to Nismes is very trying to the latter place; for Nismes is not picturesquely or historically interesting. It is a prosperous modern French town with two almost perfect Roman monuments—Les Arènes and the Maison Carrée. The amphitheatre is a complete oval, visible at one glance. Its smooth white stone, even where it has not been restored, seems unimpaired by age; and Charles Martel's conflagration, when he burned the Saracen hornet's nest inside it, has only blackened the outer walls and arches venerably. Utility and perfect adaptation of means to ends form the beauty of Roman buildings. The science of construction and large intelligence displayed in them, their strength, simplicity, solidity, and purpose, are their glory. Perhaps there is only one modern edifice—Palladio's Palazzo della Ragione at Vicenza—which approaches the dignity and loftiness of Roman architecture; and this it does because of its absolute freedom from ornament, the vastness of its design, and the durability of its material. The temple, called the Maison Carrée, at Nismes, is also very perfect, and comprehended at one glance. Light, graceful, airy, but rather thin and narrow, it reminds one of the temple of Fortuna Virilis at Rome.

75

But if Nismes itself is not picturesque, its environs contain the wonderful Pont du Gard. A two or three hours' drive leads through a desolate country to the valley of the Cardon, where suddenly, at a turn of the road, one comes upon the aqueduct. It is not within the scope of words to describe the impression produced by those vast arches, row above row, cutting the deep blue sky. The domed summer clouds sailing across them are comprehended in the gigantic span of their perfect semicircles, which seem rather to have been described by Miltonic compasses of Deity than by merely human mathematics. Yet, standing beneath one of the vaults and looking upward, you may read Roman numerals in order from I. to X., which prove their human origin well enough. Next to their strength, regularity, and magnitude, the most

76

astonishing point about this triple tier of arches, piled one above the other to a height of 180 feet above a brawling stream between two barren hills, is their lightness. The arches are not thick; the causeway on the top is only just broad enough for three men to walk abreast. So smooth and perpendicular are the supporting walls that scarcely a shrub or tuft of grass has grown upon the aqueduct in all these years. And yet the huge fabric is strengthened by no buttress, has needed no repair. This lightness of structure, combined with such prodigious durability, produces the strongest sense of science and self-reliant power in the men who designed it. None but Romans could have built such a monument, and have set it in such a place—a wilderness of rock and rolling hill, scantily covered with low brushwood, and browsed over by a few sheep—for such a purpose, too, in order to supply Nemausus with pure water. The modern town does pretty well without its water; but here subsists the civilisation of eighteen centuries past intact: the human labour yet remains, the measuring, contriving mind of man, shrinking from no obstacles, spanning the air, and in one edifice combining gigantic strength and perfect beauty. It is impossible not to echo Rousseau's words in such a place, and to say with him: 'Le retentissement de mes pas dans ces immenses voûtes me faisait croire entendre la forte voix de ceux qui les avaient bâties. Je me perdais comme un insecte dans cette immensité. Je sentais, tout en me faisant petit, je ne sais quoi qui m'élevait l'âme; et je me disais en soupirant, Que ne suis-je né Romain!'

There is nothing at Arles which produces the same deep and indelible impression. Yet Arles is a far more interesting town than Nismes, partly because of the Rhone delta which begins there, partly because of its ruinous antiquity, and partly also because of the strong local character of its population. The amphitheatre of Arles is vaster and more sublime in its desolation than the tidy theatre at Nismes; the crypts, and dens, and subterranean passages suggest all manner of speculation as to the uses to which they may have been appropriated; while the broken galleries outside, intricate and black and cavernous, like Piranesi's etchings of the 'Carceri,' present the wildest pictures of greatness in decay, fantastic dilapidation. The ruins of the smaller theatre, again, with their picturesquely grouped fragments and their standing columns, might be sketched for a frontispiece to some dilettante work on classical antiquities. For the rest, perhaps the Aliscamps, or ancient Roman burial-ground, is the most interesting thing at Arles, not only because of Dante's celebrated lines in the canto of 'Farinata:—

Si come ad Arli ove 'l Rodano stagna,
Fanno i sepolcri tutto 'l loco varo;

but also because of the intrinsic picturesqueness of this avenue of sepulchres beneath green trees upon a long soft grassy field.

But as at Avignon and Nismes, so also at Arles, one of the chief attractions of the place lies at a distance, and requires a special expedition. The road to Les Baux crosses a true Provençal desert where one realises the phrase, 'Vieux comme les rochers de Provence,'—a wilderness of grey stone, here and there worn into cart-tracks, and tufted with rosemary, box, lavender, and lentisk. On the way it passes the Abbaye de Mont Majeur, a ruin of gigantic size, embracing all periods of architecture; where nothing seems to flourish now but henbane and the wild cucumber, or to breathe but a mumble-toothed and terrible old hag. The ruin stands above a desolate marsh, its vast Italian buildings of Palladian splendour looking more forlorn in their decay than the older and austerer mediæval towers, which rise up proud and patient and defiantly erect beneath the curse of time. When at length what used to be the castle town of Les Baux is reached, you find a naked mountain of yellow sandstone, worn away by nature into bastions and buttresses and coigns of vantage, sculptured by ancient art into palaces and chapels, battlements and dungeons. Now art and nature are confounded in one ruin. Blocks of masonry lie cheek by jowl with masses of the rough-hewn rock; fallen cavern vaults are heaped round fragments of fan-shaped spandrel and clustered column-shaft; the doors and windows of old pleasure-rooms are hung with ivy and wild fig for tapestry; winding staircases start midway upon the cliff, and lead to vacancy. High overhead suspended in mid-air hang chambers—lady's bower or poet's singing-room—now inaccessible, the haunt of hawks and swallows. Within this rocky honeycomb—'cette ville en monolithe,' as it has been aptly called, for it is literally scooped out of one mountain block—live about two hundred poor people, foddering their wretched goats at carved piscina and stately sideboards, erecting mud beplastered hovels in the halls of feudal princes. Murray is wrong in calling the place a

mediæval town in its original state, for anything more purely ruinous, more like a decayed old cheese, cannot possibly be conceived. The living only inhabit the tombs of the dead. At the end of the last century, when revolutionary effervescence was beginning to ferment, the people of Arles swept all its feudality away, defacing the very arms upon the town gate, and trampling the palace towers to dust.

The castle looks out across a vast extent of plain over Arles, the stagnant Rhone, the Camargue, and the salt pools of the lingering sea. In old days it was the eyrie of an eagle race called Seigneurs of Les Baux; and whether they took their title from the rock, or whether, as genealogists would have it, they gave the name of Oriental Balthazar—their reputed ancestor, one of the Magi—to the rock itself, remains a mystery not greatly worth the solving.

Anyhow, here they lived and flourished, these feudal princes, bearing for their ensign a silver comet of sixteen rays upon a field of gules—themselves a comet race, baleful to the neighbouring lowlands, blazing with lurid splendour over wide tracts of country, a burning, raging, fiery-souled, swift-handed tribe, in whom a flame unquenchable glowed from son to sire through twice five hundred years until, in the sixteenth century, they were burned out, and nothing remained but cinders—these broken ruins of their eyrie, and some outworn and dusty titles. Very strange are the fate and history of these same titles: King of Arles, for instance, savouring of troubadour and high romance; Prince of Tarentum, smacking of old plays and Italian novels; Prince of Orange, which the Nassaus, through the Châlons, seized in all its emptiness long after the real principality had passed away, and came therewith to sit on England's throne.

The Les Baux in their heyday were patterns of feudal nobility. They warred incessantly with Counts of Provence, archbishops and burghers of Arles, Queens of Naples, Kings of Aragon. Crusading, pillaging, betraying, spending their substance on the sword, and buying it again by deeds of valour or imperial acts of favour, tuning troubadour harps, presiding at courts of love,—they filled a large page in the history of Southern France. The Les Baux were very superstitious. In the fulness of their prosperity they restricted the number of their dependent towns, or *places bassenques*, to seventy-nine, because these numbers in combination were thought to be of good omen to their house. Beral des Baux, Seigneur of Marseilles, was one day starting on a journey with his whole force to Avignon. He met an old woman herb-gathering at daybreak, and said, 'Mother, hast thou seen a crow or other bird?' 'Yea,' answered the crone, 'on the trunk of a dead willow.' Beral counted upon his fingers the day of the year, and turned bridle. With troubadours of name and note they had dealings, but not always to their own advantage, as the following story testifies. When the Baux and Berengers were struggling for the countship of Provence, Raymond Berenger, by his wife's counsel, went, attended by troubadours, to meet the Emperor Frederick at Milan. There he sued for the investiture and ratification of Provence. His troubadours sang and charmed Frederick; and the Emperor, for the joy he had in them, wrote his celebrated lines beginning—

Plas mi cavalier Francez.

And when Berenger made his request he met with no refusal. Hearing thereof, the lords of Baux came down in wrath with a clangour of armed men. But music had already gained the day; and where the Phoebus of Provence had shone, the Æolus of storm-shaken Les Baux was powerless. Again, when Blacas, a knight of Provence, died, the great Sordello chanted one of his most fiery hymns, bidding the princes of Christendom flock round and eat the heart of the dead lord. 'Let Rambaude des Baux,' cries the bard, with a sarcasm that is clearly meant, but at this distance almost unintelligible, 'take also a good piece, for she is fair and good and truly virtuous; let her keep it well who knows so well to husband her own weal.' But the poets were not always adverse to the house of Baux. Fouquet, the beautiful and gentle melodist whom Dante placed in paradise, served Adelaisie, wife of Berald, with long service of unhappy love, and wrote upon her death 'The Complaint of Berald des Baux for Adelaisie.' Guillaume de Cabestan loved Berangère des Baux, and was so loved by her that she gave him a philtre to drink, whereof he sickened and grew mad. Many more troubadours are cited as having frequented the castle of Les Baux, and among the members of the princely house were several poets.

Some of them were renowned for beauty. We hear of a Cécile, called Passe Rose, because of her exceeding loveliness; also of an unhappy

François, who, after passing eighteen years in prison, yet won the grace and love of Joan of Naples by his charms. But the real temper of this fierce tribe was not shown among troubadours, or in the courts of love and beauty. The stern and barren rock from which they sprang, and the comet of their scutcheon, are the true symbols of their nature. History records no end of their ravages and slaughters. It is a tedious catalogue of blood—how one prince put to fire and sword the whole town of Courthezon; how another was stabbed in prison by his wife; how a third besieged the castle of his niece, and sought to undermine her chamber, knowing her the while to be in childbed; how a fourth was flayed alive outside the walls of Avignon. There is nothing terrible, splendid, and savage, belonging to feudal history, of which an example may not be found in the annals of Les Baux, as narrated by their chronicler, Jules Canonge.

However abrupt may seem the transition from these memories of the ancient nobles of Les Baux to mere matters of travel and picturesqueness, it would be impossible to take leave of the old towns of Provence without glancing at the cathedrals of S. Trophime at Arles, and of S. Gilles—a village on the border of the dreary flamingo-haunted Camargue. Both of these buildings have porches splendidly encrusted with sculptures, half classical, half mediæval, marking the transition from ancient to modern art. But that of S. Gilles is by far the richer and more elaborate. The whole façade of this church is one mass of intricate decoration; Norman arches and carved lions, like those of Lombard architecture, mingling fantastically with Greek scrolls of fruit and flowers, with elegant Corinthian columns jutting out upon the church steps, and with the old conventional wave-border that is called Etruscan in our modern jargon. From the midst of florid fret and foliage lean mild faces of saints and Madonnas. Symbols of evangelists with half-human, half-animal eyes and wings, are interwoven with the leafy bowers of cupids. Grave apostles stand erect beneath acanthus wreaths that ought to crisp the forehead of a laughing Faun or Bacchus. And yet so full, exuberant, and deftly chosen are these various elements, that there remains no sense of incongruity or discord. The mediæval spirit had much trouble to disentangle itself from classic reminiscences; and fortunately for the picturesqueness of S. Gilles, it did not succeed. How strangely different is the result of this transition in the south from those severe and rigid forms which we call Romanesque in Germany and Normandy and England!

It was a dull afternoon in February when we left Nice, and drove across the mountains to Mentone. Over hill and sea hung a thick mist. Turbia's Roman tower stood up in cheerless solitude, wreathed round with driving vapour, and the rocky nest of Esa seemed suspended in a chaos between sea and sky. Sometimes the fog broke and showed us Villafranca, lying green and flat in the deep blue below: sometimes a distant view of higher peaks swam into sight from the shifting cloud. But the whole scene was desolate. Was it for this that we had left our English home, and travelled from London day and night? At length we reached the edge of the cloud, and jingled down by Roccabruna and the olive-groves, till one by one Mentone's villas came in sight, and at last we found ourselves at the inn door. That night, and all next day and the next night, we heard the hoarse sea beat and thunder on the beach. The rain and wind kept driving from the south, but we consoled ourselves with thinking that the orange-trees and every kind of flower were drinking in the moisture and waiting to rejoice in sunlight which would come.

It was a Sunday morning when we woke and found that the rain had gone, the sun was shining brightly on the sea, and a clear north wind was blowing cloud and mist away. Out upon the hills we went, not caring much what path we took; for everything was beautiful, and hill and vale were full of garden walks. Through lemon-groves,—pale, golden-tender trees,—and olives, stretching their grey boughs against the lonely cottage tiles, we climbed, until we reached the pines and heath above. Then I knew the meaning of Theocritus for the first time. We found a well, broad, deep, and clear, with green herbs growing at the bottom, a runlet flowing from it down the rocky steps, maidenhair, black adiantum, and blue violets, hanging from the brink and mirrored in the water. This was just the well in *Hylas*. Theocritus has been badly treated. They call him a court poet, dead to Nature, artificial in his pictures. Yet I recognised this fountain by his verse, just as if he had showed me the very spot. Violets grow everywhere, of every shade, from black to lilac. Their stalks are long, and the flowers 'nod' upon them, so that I see how the Greeks could make them into chaplets—how Lycidas wore his crown of white violets^[5] lying by the fireside elbow-deep in withered asphodel, watching the chestnuts in the embers, and softly drinking deep healths to Ageanax far off upon the waves. It is impossible to go wrong in these valleys. They are cultivated to the height of about five hundred feet above the sea, in terraces laboriously built up with walls, earthed and manured, and irrigated by means of tanks and aqueducts. Above this level, where the virgin soil has not been yet reclaimed, or where the winds of winter bring down freezing currents from the mountains through a gap or gully of the lower hills, a tangled growth of heaths and arbutus, and pines, and rosemarys, and myrtles, continue the vegetation, till it finally ends in bare grey rocks and peaks some thousand feet in height. Far above all signs of cultivation on these arid peaks, you still may see villages and ruined castles, built centuries ago for a protection from the Moorish pirates. To these mountain fastnesses the people of the coast retreated when they descried the sails of their foes on the horizon. In Mentone, not very long ago, old men might be seen who in their youth were said to have been taken captive by the Moors; and many Arabic words have found their way into the patois of the people.

84

85

[5] This begs the question whether λευκῳιον does not properly mean snowflake, or some such flower. Violets in Greece, however, were often used for crowns: ἰσοτέφανος is the epithet of Homer for Aphrodite, and of Aristophanes for Athens.

There is something strangely fascinating in the sight of these ruins on the burning rocks, with their black sentinel cypresses, immensely tall and far away. Long years and rain and sunlight have made these castellated eyries one with their native stone. It is hard to trace in their foundations where Nature's workmanship ends and where man's begins. What strange sights the mountain villagers must see! The vast blue plain of the unfurrowed deep, the fairy range of Corsica hung midway between the sea and sky at dawn or sunset, the stars so close above their heads, the deep dew-sprinkled valleys, the green pines! On penetrating into one of these hill-fortresses, you find that it is a whole village, with a church and castle and piazza, some few feet square, huddled together on a narrow platform. We met one day three magnates of Gorbio taking a morning stroll backwards and forwards, up and down their tiny square. Vehemently gesticulating, loudly chattering, they talked as though they had not seen each other for ten years, and were but just unloading their

budgets of accumulated news. Yet these three men probably had lived, eaten, drunk, and talked together from the cradle to that hour: so true it is that use and custom quicken all our powers, especially of gossiping and scandal-mongering. S. Agnese is the highest and most notable of all these villages. The cold and heat upon its absolutely barren rock must be alike intolerable. In appearance it is not unlike the Etruscan towns of Central Italy; but there is something, of course, far more imposing in the immense antiquity and the historical associations of a Narni, a Fiesole, a Chiusi, or an Orvieto. Sea-life and rusticity strike a different note from that of those Apennine-girdled seats of dead civilisation, in which nations, arts, and religions have gone by and left but few traces,—some wrecks of giant walls, some excavated tombs, some shrines, where monks still sing and pray above the relics of the founders of once world-shaking, now almost forgotten, orders. Here at Mentone there is none of this; the idyllic is the true note, and Theocritus is still alive.

93

86

We do not often scale these altitudes, but keep along the terraced glades by the side of olive-shaded streams. The violets, instead of peeping shyly from hedgerows, fall in ripples and cascades over mossy walls among maidenhair and spleen-worts. They are very sweet, and the sound of trickling water seems to mingle with their fragrance in a most delicious harmony. Sound, smell, and hue make up one chord, the sense of which is pure and perfect peace. The country-people are kind, letting us pass everywhere, so that we make our way along their aqueducts and through their gardens, under laden lemon-boughs, the pale fruit dangling at our ears, and swinging showers of scented dew upon us as we pass. Far better, however, than lemon or orange trees, are the olives. Some of these are immensely old, numbering, it is said, five centuries, so that Petrarch may almost have rested beneath their shade on his way to Avignon. These veterans are cavernous with age: gnarled, split, and twisted trunks, throwing out arms that break into a hundred branches; every branch distinct, and feathered with innumerable sparks and spikelets of white, wavy, greenish light. These are the leaves, and the stems are grey with lichens. The sky and sea—two blues, one full of sunlight and the other purple—set these fountains of perennial brightness like gems in lapis-lazuli. At a distance the same olives look hoary and soft—a veil of woven light or luminous haze. When the wind blows their branches all one way, they ripple like a sea of silver. But underneath their covert, in the shade, grey periwinkles wind among the snowy drift of allium. The narcissus sends its arrowy fragrance through the air, while, far and wide, red anemones burn like fire, with interchange of blue and lilac buds, white arums, orchises, and pink gladiolus. Wandering there, and seeing the pale flowers, stars white and pink and odorous, we dream of Olivet, or the grave Garden of the Agony, and the trees seem always whispering of sacred things. How people can blaspheme against the olives, and call them imitations of the willow, or complain that they are shabby shrubs, I do not know.^[6]

87

[6] Olive-trees must be studied at Mentone or San Remo, in Corfu, at Tivoli, on the coast between Syracuse and Catania, or on the lowlands of Apulia. The stunted but productive trees of the Rhone valley, for example, are no real measure of the beauty they can exhibit.

This shore would stand for Shelley's *Island of Epipsychidion*, or the golden age which Empedocles describes, when the mild nations worshipped Aphrodite with incense and the images of beasts and yellow honey, and no blood was spilt upon her altars—when 'the trees flourished with perennial leaves and fruit, and ample crops adorned their boughs through all the year.' This even now is literally true of the lemon-groves, which do not cease to flower and ripen. Everything fits in to complete the reproduction of Greek pastoral life. The goats eat cytissus and myrtle on the shore; a whole flock gathered round me as I sat beneath a tuft of golden green euphorbia the other day, and nibbled bread from my hands. The frog still croaks by tank and fountain, 'whom the Muses have ordained to sing for aye,' in spite of Bion's death. The narcissus, anemone, and hyacinth still tell their tales of love and death. Hesper still gazes on the shepherd from the mountain-head. The slender cypresses still vibrate, the pines murmur. Pan sleeps in noontide heat, and goat-herds and wayfaring men lie down to slumber by the roadside, under olive-boughs in which cicadas sing. The little villages high up are just as white, the mountains just as grey and shadowy when evening falls. Nothing is changed—except ourselves. I expect to find a statue of Priapus or pastoral Pan, hung with wreaths of flowers—the meal cake, honey, and spilt wine upon his altar, and young boys and maidens dancing round. Surely, in some far-off glade, by the side of lemon-grove

88

or garden, near the village, there must be still a pagan remnant of glad Nature-worship. Surely I shall chance upon some Thyrsis piping in the pine-tree shade, or Daphne flying from the arms of Phoebus. So I dream until I come upon the Calvary set on a solitary hillock, with its prayer-steps lending a wide prospect across the olives and the orange-trees, and the broad valleys, to immeasurable skies and purple seas. There is the iron cross, the wounded heart, the spear, the reed, the nails, the crown of thorns, the cup of sacrificial blood, the title, with its superscription royal and divine. The other day we crossed a brook and entered a lemon-field, rich with blossoms and carpeted with red anemones. Everything basked in sunlight and glittered with exceeding brilliancy of hue. A tiny white chapel stood in a corner of the enclosure. Two iron-grated windows let me see inside: it was a bare place, containing nothing but a wooden praying-desk, black and worm-eaten, an altar with its candles and no flowers, and above the altar a square picture brown with age. On the floor were scattered several pence, and in a vase above the holy-water vessel stood some withered hyacinths. As my sight became accustomed to the gloom, I could see from the darkness of the picture a pale Christ nailed to the cross with agonising upward eyes and ashy aureole above the bleeding thorns. Thus I stepped suddenly away from the outward pomp and bravery of nature to the inward aspirations, agonies, and martyrdoms of man—from Greek legends of the past to the real Christian present—and I remembered that an illimitable prospect has been opened to the world, that in spite of ourselves we must turn our eyes heavenward, inward, to the infinite unseen beyond us and within our souls. Nothing can take us back to Phoebus or to Pan. Nothing can again identify us with the simple natural earth. '*Une immense espérance a traversé la terre,*' and these chapels, with their deep significances, lurk in the fair landscape like the cares of real life among our dreams of art, or like a fear of death and the hereafter in the midst of opera music. It is a strange contrast. The worship of men in those old times was symbolised by dances in the evening, banquets, libations, and mirth-making. 'Euphrosyne' was alike the goddess of the righteous mind and of the merry heart. Old withered women telling their rosaries at dusk; belated shepherds crossing themselves beneath the stars when they pass the chapel; maidens weighed down with Margaret's anguish of unhappy love; youths vowing their life to contemplation in secluded cloisters,—these are the human forms which gather round such chapels; and the motto of the worshippers consists in this, 'Do often violence to thy desire.' In the Tyrol we have seen whole villages praying together at daybreak before their day's work, singing their *Miserere* and their *Gloria* and their *Dies Iræ*, to the sound of crashing organs and jangling bells; appealing in the midst of Nature's splendour to the Spirit which is above Nature, which dwells in darkness rather than light, and loves the yearnings and contentions of our soul more than its summer gladness and peace. Even the olives here tell more to us of Olivet and the Garden than of the oil-press and the wrestling-ground. The lilies carry us to the Sermon on the Mount, and teach humility, instead of summoning up some legend of a god's love for a mortal. The hillside tanks and running streams, and water-brooks swollen by sudden rain, speak of Palestine. We call the white flowers stars of Bethlehem. The large sceptre-reed; the fig-tree, lingering in barrenness when other trees are full of fruit; the locust-beans of the Caruba:—for one suggestion of Greek idylls there is yet another, of far deeper, dearer power.

89

But who can resist the influence of Greek ideas at the Cap S. Martin? Down to the verge of the sea stretch the tall, twisted stems of Levant pines, and on the caverned limestone breaks the deep blue water. Dazzling as marble are these rocks, pointed and honeycombed with constant dashing of the restless sea, tufted with corallines and grey and purple seaweeds in the little pools, but hard and dry and rough above tide level. Nor does the sea always lap them quietly; for the last few days it has come tumbling in, roaring and raging on the beach with huge waves crystalline in their transparency, and maned with fleecy spray. Such were the rocks and such the swell of breakers when Ulysses grasped the shore after his long swim. Samphire, very salt and fragrant, grows in the rocky honeycomb; then lentisk and beach-loving myrtle, both exceeding green and bushy; then rosemary and euphorbia above the reach of spray. Fishermen, with their long reeds, sit lazily perched upon black rocks above blue waves, sunning themselves as much as seeking sport. One distant tip of snow, seen far away behind the hills, reminds us of an alien, unremembered winter. While dreaming there, this fancy came into my head: Polyphemus was born yonder in the Gorbio Valley. There he fed his sheep and goats, and on the hills found scanty pasture for his kine. He and his mother lived in the white house

90

91

by the cypress near the stream where tulips grow. Young Galatea, nursed in the caverns of these rocks, white as the foam, and shy as the sea fishes, came one morning up the valley to pick mountain hyacinths, and little Polyphemus led the way. He knew where violets and sweet narcissus grew, as well as Galatea where pink coralline and spreading sea-flowers with their waving arms. But Galatea, having filled her lap with bluebells, quite forgot the leaping kids, and piping Cyclops, and cool summer caves, and yellow honey, and black ivy, and sweet vine, and water cold as Alpine snow. Down the swift streamlet she danced laughingly, and made herself once more bitter with the sea. But Polyphemus remained,—hungry, sad, gazing on the barren sea, and piping to the mockery of its waves.

Filled with these Greek fancies, it is strange to come upon a little sandstone dell furrowed by trickling streams and overgrown with English primroses; or to enter the village of Roccabruna, with its mediæval castle and the motto on its walls, *Tempora labuntur tacitisque senescimus annis*. A true motto for the town, where the butcher comes but once a week, and where men and boys, and dogs, and palms, and lemon-trees grow up and flourish and decay in the same hollow of the sunny mountain-side. Into the hard conglomerate of the hill the town is built; house walls and precipices mortised into one another, dovetailed by the art of years gone by, and riveted by age. The same plants grow from both alike—spurge, cistus, rue, and henbane, constant to the desolation of abandoned dwellings. From the castle you look down on roofs, brown tiles and chimney-pots, set one above the other like a big card-castle. Each house has its foot on a neighbour's neck, and its shoulder set against the native stone. The streets meander in and out, and up and down, overarched and balconied, but very clean. They swarm with children, healthy, happy, little monkeys, who grow fat on salt fish and yellow polenta, with oil and sun *ad libitum*.

At night from Roccabruna you may see the flaring gas-lamps of the gaming-house at Monaco, that Armida's garden of the nineteenth century. It is the sunniest and most sheltered spot of all the coast. Long ago Lucan said of Monaco, '*Non Corus in illum jus habet aut Zephyrus*;' winter never comes to nip its tangled cactuses, and aloes, and geraniums. The air swoons with the scent of lemon-groves; tall palm-trees wave their graceful branches by the shore; music of the softest and the loudest swells from the palace; cool corridors and sunny seats stand ready for the noontide heat or evening calm; without, are olive-gardens, green and fresh and full of flowers. But the witch herself holds her high court and never-ending festival of sin in the painted banquet-halls and among the green tables.

Let us leave this scene and turn with the country-folk of Roccabruna to S. Michael's Church at Mentone. High above the sea it stands, and from its open doors you look across the mountains with their olive-trees. Inside the church is a seething mass of country-folk and townspeople, mostly women, and these almost all old, but picturesque beyond description; kerchiefs of every colour, wrinkles of every shape and depth, skins of every tone of brown and yellow, voices of every gruffness, shrillness, strength, and weakness. Wherever an empty corner can be found, it is soon filled by tottering babies and mischievous children. The country-women come with their large dangling earrings of thin gold, wearing pink tulips or lemon-buds in their black hair. A low buzz of gossiping and mutual recognition keeps the air alive. The whole service seems a holiday—a general enjoyment of gala dresses and friendly greetings, very different from the silence, immobility, and *noli me tangere* aspect of an English congregation. Over all drones, rattles, snores, and shrieks the organ; wailing, querulous, asthmatic, incomplete, its everlasting nasal chant—always beginning, never ending, through a range of two or three notes ground into one monotony. The voices of the congregation rise and sink above it. These southern people, like the Arabs, the Apulians, and the Spaniards, seem to find their music in a hurdy-gurdy swell of sound. The other day we met a little girl, walking and spinning, and singing all the while, whose song was just another version of this chant. It has a discontented plaintive wail, as if it came from some vast age, and were a cousin of primeval winds.

At first sight, by the side of Mentone, San Remo is sadly prosaic. The valleys seem to sprawl, and the universal olives are monotonously grey upon their thick clay soil. Yet the wealth of flowers in the fat earth is wonderful. One might fancy oneself in a weedy farm flower-bed invaded by stray oats and beans and cabbages and garlic from the kitchen-garden. The country does not suggest a single Greek idea. It has no form or outline—no barren peaks, no spare and difficult vegetation. The beauty is rich but tame—valleys green with oats and corn, blossoming

cherry-trees, and sweet bean-fields, figs coming into leaf, and arrowy bay-trees by the side of sparkling streams: here and there a broken aqueduct or rainbow bridge hung with maidenhair and briar and clematis and sarsaparilla.

In the cathedral church of San Siro on Good Friday they hang the columns and the windows with black; they cover the pictures and deface the altar; above the high altar they raise a crucifix, and below they place a catafalque with the effigy of the dead Christ. To this sad symbol they address their prayers and incense, chant their 'litanies and luries,' and clash the rattles, which commemorate their rage against the traitor Judas. So far have we already passed away from the Greek feeling of Mentone. As I listened to the hideous din, I could not but remember the Theocritean burial of Adonis. Two funeral beds prepared: two feasts recurring in the springtime of the year. What a difference beneath this superficial similarity—καλος νέκυς οἱ ἄκαθεύδων—*atritus ægrâ macie*. But the fast of Good Friday is followed by the festival of Easter. That, after all, is the chief difference.

After leaving the cathedral we saw a pretty picture in a dull old street of San Remo—three children leaning from a window, blowing bubbles. The bubbles floated down the street, of every colour, round and trembling, like the dreams of life which children dream. The town is certainly most picturesque. It resembles a huge glacier of houses poured over a wedge of rock, running down the sides and along the ridge, and spreading itself into a fan between two torrents on the shore below. House over house, with balcony and staircase, convent turret and church tower, palm-trees and olives, roof gardens and clinging creepers—this white cataract of buildings streams downward from the lazar-house, and sanctuary, and sandstone quarries on the hill. It is a mass of streets placed close above each other, and linked together with arms and arches of solid masonry, as a protection from the earthquakes, which are frequent at San Remo. The walls are tall, and form a labyrinth of gloomy passages and treacherous blind alleys, where the Moors of old might meet with a ferocious welcome. Indeed, San Remo is a fortress as well as a dwelling-place. Over its gateways may still be traced the pipes for molten lead, and on its walls the eyeloops for arrows, with brackets for the feet of archers. Masses of building have been shaken down by earthquakes. The ruins of what once were houses gape with blackened chimneys and dark forlorn cellars; mazes of fungus and unhealthy weeds among the still secure habitations. Hardly a ray of light penetrates the streets; one learns the meaning of the Italian word *uggia* from their cold and gloom. During the day they are deserted by every one but babies and witchlike old women—some gossiping, some sitting vacant at the house door, some spinning or weaving, or minding little children—ugly and ancient as are their own homes, yet clean as are the streets. The younger population goes afield; the men on mules laden for the hills, the women burdened like mules with heavy and disgusting loads. It is an exceptionally good-looking race; tall, well-grown, and strong.—But to the streets again. The shops in the upper town are few, chiefly wine-booths and stalls for the sale of salt fish, eggs, and bread, or cobblers' and tinkers' ware. Notwithstanding the darkness of their dwellings, the people have a love of flowers; azaleas lean from their windows, and vines, carefully protected by a sheath of brickwork, climb the six stories, to blossom out into a pergola upon the roof. Look at that mass of greenery and colours, dimly seen from beneath, with a yellow cat sunning herself upon the parapet! To reach such a garden and such sunlight who would not mount six stories and thread a labyrinth of passages? I should prefer a room upon the east side of the town, looking southward to the Molo and the sea, with a sound of water beneath, and a palm soaring up to fan my window with his feathery leaves.

The shrines are little spots of brightness in the gloomy streets. Madonna with a sword; Christ holding His pierced and bleeding heart; l'Eterno Padre pointing to the dead Son stretched upon His knee; some souls in torment; S. Roch reminding us of old plagues by the spot upon his thigh;—these are the symbols of the shrines. Before them stand rows of pots filled with gillyflowers, placed there by pious, simple, praying hands—by maidens come to tell their sorrows to our Lady rich in sorrow, by old women bent and shrivelled, in hopes of paradise or gratitude for happy days, when Madonna kept Cecchino faithful to his home, or saved the baby from the fever.

Lower down, between the sea and the hill, is the municipal, aristocratic, ecclesiastical quarter of San Remo. There stands the Palace Borea—a truly princely pile, built in the last Renaissance style of splendour, with sea-nymphs and dolphins, and satyric heads, half lips, half leafage, round about its doors and windows. Once it formed the

dwelling of a feudal family, but now it is a roomy anthill of a hundred houses, shops, and offices, the Boreas of to-day retaining but a portion of one flat, and making profit of the rest. There, too, are the barracks and the syndic's hall; the Jesuits' school, crowded with boys and girls; the shops for clothes, confectionery, and trinkets; the piazza, with its fountain and tasselled planes, and flowery chestnut-trees, a mass of greenery. Under these trees the idlers lounge, boys play at leap-frog, men at bowls. Women in San Remo work all day, but men and boys play for the most part at bowls or toss-penny or leap-frog or morra. San Siro, the cathedral, stands at one end of the square. Do not go inside; it has a sickly smell of immemorial incense and garlic, undefinable and horrible. Far better looks San Siro from the parapet above the torrent. There you see its irregular half-Gothic outline across a tangle of lemon-trees and olives. The stream rushes by through high walls, covered with creepers, spanned by ferny bridges, feathered by one or two old tufty palms. And over all rises the ancient turret of San Siro, like a Spanish giralda, a minaret of pinnacles and pyramids and dome bubbles, with windows showing heavy bells, old clocks, and sundials painted on the walls, and a cupola of green and yellow tiles like serpent-scales, to crown the whole. The sea lies beyond, and the house-roofs break it with grey horizontal lines. Then there are convents, legions of them, large white edifices, Jesuitical apparently for the most part, clanging importunate bells, leaning rose-blossoms and cypress-boughs over their jealous walls.

97

Lastly, there is the port—the mole running out into the sea, the quay planted with plane-trees, and the fishing-boats—by which San Remo is connected with the naval glory of the past—with the Riviera that gave birth to Columbus—with the Liguria that the Dorias ruled—with the great name of Genoa. The port is empty enough now; but from the pier you look back on San Remo and its circling hills, a jewelled town set in illimitable olive greyness. The quay seems also to be the cattle-market. There the small buff cows of North Italy repose after their long voyage or march, kneeling on the sandy ground or rubbing their sides against the wooden cross awry with age and shorn of all its symbols. Lambs frisk among the boats; impudent kids nibble the drooping ears of patient mules. Hinds in white jackets and knee-breeches made of skins, lead shaggy rams and fiercely bearded goats, ready to butt at every barking dog, and always seeking opportunities of flight. Farmers and parish priests in black petticoats feel the cattle and dispute about the price, or whet their bargains with a draught of wine. Meanwhile the nets are brought on shore glittering with the fry of sardines, which are cooked like whitebait, with cuttlefish—amorphous objects stretching shiny feelers on the hot dry sand—and prickly purple eggs of the sea-urchin. Women go about their labour through the throng, some carrying stones upon their heads, or unloading boats and bearing planks of wood in single file, two marching side by side beneath one load of lime, others scarcely visible under a stack of oats, another with her baby in its cradle fast asleep.

98

San Remo has an elder brother among the hills, which is called San Romolo, after one of the old bishops of Genoa. Who San Remo was is buried in remote antiquity; but his town has prospered, while of San Romolo nothing remains but a ruined hill-convent among pine-trees. The old convent is worth visiting. Its road carries you into the heart of the sierra which surrounds San Remo, a hill-country something like the Jura, undulating and green to the very top with maritime pines and pinasters. Riding up, you hear all manner of Alpine sounds; brawling streams, tinkling cowbells, and herdsmen calling to each other on the slopes. Beneath you lies San Remo, scarcely visible; and over it the great sea rises ever so far into the sky, until the white sails hang in air, and cloud and sea-line melt into each other indistinguishably. Spanish chestnuts surround the monastery with bright blue gentians, hepaticas, forget-me-nots, and primroses about their roots. The house itself is perched on a knoll with ample prospect to the sea and to the mountains, very near to heaven, within a theatre of noble contemplations and soul-stirring thoughts. If Mentone spoke to me of the poetry of Greek pastoral life, this convent speaks of mediæval monasticism—of solitude with God, above, beneath, and all around, of silence and repose from agitating cares, of continuity in prayer, and changelessness of daily life. Some precepts of the *Imitatio* came into my mind: 'Be never wholly idle; read or write, pray or meditate, or work with diligence for the common needs.' 'Praiseworthy is it for the religious man to go abroad but seldom, and to seem to shun, and keep his eyes from men.' 'Sweet is the cell when it is often sought, but if we gad about, it wearies us by its seclusion.' Then I thought of the monks so living in this solitude; their cell windows looking across the valley to the sea, through summer and

99

winter, under sun and stars. Then would they read or write, what long melodious hours! or would they pray, what stations on the pine-clad hills! or would they toil, what terraces to build and plant with corn, what flowers to tend, what cows to milk and pasture, what wood to cut, what fir-cones to gather for the winter fire! or should they yearn for silence, silence from their comrades of the solitude, what whispering galleries of God, where never human voice breaks loudly, but winds and streams and lonely birds disturb the awful stillness! In such a hermitage as this, only more wild, lived S. Francis of Assisi, among the Apennines.^[7] It was there that he learned the tongues of beasts and birds, and preached them sermons. Stretched for hours motionless on the bare rocks, coloured like them and rough like them in his brown peasant's serge, he prayed and meditated, saw the vision of Christ crucified, and planned his order to regenerate a vicious age. So still he lay, so long, so like a stone, so gentle were his eyes, so kind and low his voice, that the mice nibbled breadcrumbs from his wallet, lizards ran over him, and larks sang to him in the air. There, too, in those long, solitary vigils, the Spirit of God came upon him, and the spirit of Nature was even as God's Spirit, and he sang: 'Laudato sia Dio mio Signore, con tutte le creature, specialmente messer lo frate sole; per suor luna, e per le stelle; per frate vento e per l'aire, e nuvolo, e sereno e ogni tempo.' Half the value of this hymn would be lost were we to forget how it was written, in what solitudes and mountains far from men, or to ticket it with some abstract word like Pantheism. Pantheism it is not; but an acknowledgment of that brotherhood, beneath the love of God, by which the sun and moon and stars, and wind and air and cloud, and clearness and all weather, and all creatures, are bound together with the soul of man.

100

[7] Dante, Par. xi. 106.

Few, of course, were like S. Francis. Probably no monk of San Romolo was inspired with his enthusiasm for humanity, or had his revelation of the Divine Spirit inherent in the world. Still fewer can have felt the æsthetic charm of Nature but most vaguely. It was as much as they could boast, if they kept steadily to the rule of their order, and attended to the concerns each of his own soul. A terrible selfishness, if rightly considered; but one which accorded with the delusion that this world is a cave of care, the other world a place of torture or undying bliss, death the prime object of our meditation, and lifelong abandonment of our fellow-men the highest mode of existence. Why, then, should monks, so persuaded of the riddle of the earth, have placed themselves in scenes so beautiful? Why rose the Camaldolis and Chartreuses over Europe? white convents on the brows of lofty hills, among the rustling boughs of Vallombrosas, in the grassy meadows of Engelbergs,—always the eyries of Nature's lovers, men smitten with the loveliness of earth? There is surely some meaning in these poetic stations.

Here is a sentence of the *Imitatio* which throws some light upon the hymn of S. Francis and the sites of Benedictine monasteries, by explaining the value of natural beauty for monks who spent their life in studying death: 'If thy heart were right, then would every creature be to thee a mirror of life, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and vile that does not show forth the goodness of God.' With this sentence bound about their foreheads, walked Fra Angelico and S. Francis. To men like them the mountain valleys and the skies, and all that they contained, were full of deep significance. Though they reasoned '*de conditione humanæ miseræ*,' and '*de contemptu mundi*,' yet the whole world was a pageant of God's glory, a testimony to His goodness. Their chastened senses, pure hearts, and simple wills were as wings by which they soared above the things of earth, and sent the music of their souls aloft with every other creature in the symphony of praise. To them, as to Blake, the sun was no mere blazing disc or ball, but 'an innumerable company of the heavenly host singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."' To them the winds were brothers, and the streams were sisters—brethren in common dependence upon God their Father, brethren in common consecration to His service, brethren by blood, brethren by vows of holiness. Unquestioning faith rendered this world no puzzle; they overlooked the things of sense because the spiritual things were ever present, and as clear as day. Yet did they not forget that spiritual things are symbolised by things of sense; and so the smallest herb of grass was vital to their tranquil contemplations. We who have lost sight of the invisible world, who set our affections more on things of earth, fancy that because these monks despised the world, and did not write about its landscapes, therefore they were dead to its beauty. This is mere vanity: the mountains, stars, seas, fields, and living things were only swallowed up in the one thought of God, and made

101

subordinate to the awfulness of human destinies. We to whom hills are hills, and seas are seas, and stars are ponderable quantities, speak, write, and reason of them as of objects interesting in themselves. The monks were less ostensibly concerned about such things, because they only found in them the vestibules and symbols of a hidden mystery.

The contrast between the Greek and mediæval modes of regarding Nature is not a little remarkable. Both Greeks and monks, judged by nineteenth-century standards, were unobservant of natural beauties. They make but brief and general remarks upon landscapes and the like. The *ποντίων τε κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα* is very rare. But the Greeks stopped at the threshold of Nature; the forces they found there, the gods, were inherent in Nature, and distinct. They did not, like the monks, place one spiritual power, omnipotent and omnipresent, above all, and see in Nature lessons of Divine government. We ourselves having somewhat overstrained the latter point of view, are now apt to return vaguely to Greek fancies. Perhaps, too, we talk so much about scenery because it is scenery to us, and the life has gone out of it.

I cannot leave the Cornice without one word about a place which lies between Mentone and San Remo. Bordighera has a beauty which is quite distinct from both. Palms are its chief characteristics. They lean against the garden walls, and feather the wells outside the town, where women come with brazen pitchers to draw water. In some of the marshy tangles of the plain, they spring from a thick undergrowth of spiky leaves, and rear their tall ærial arms against the deep blue background of the sea or darker purple of the distant hills. White pigeons fly about among their branches, and the air is loud with cooings and with rustlings, and the hoarser croaking of innumerable frogs. Then, in the olive-groves that stretch along the level shore, are labyrinths of rare and curious plants, painted tulips and white periwinkles, flinging their light of blossoms and dark glossy leaves down the swift channels of the brawling streams. On each side of the rivulets they grow, like sister cataracts of flowers instead of spray. At night fresh stars come out along the coast, beneath the stars of heaven; for you can see the lamps of Ventimiglia and Mentone and Monaco, and, far away, the lighthouses upon the promontories of Antibes and the Estrelles. At dawn, a vision of Corsica grows from the sea. The island lies eighty miles away, but one can trace the dark strip of irregular peaks glowing amid the gold and purple of the rising sun. If the air is clear and bright, the snows and overvaulting clouds which crown its mountains shine all day, and glitter like an apparition in the bright blue sky. 'Phantom fair,' half raised above the sea, it stands, as unreal and transparent as the moon when seen in April sunlight, yet not to be confounded with the shape of any cloud. If Mentone speaks of Greek legends, and San Romolo restores the monastic past, we feel ourselves at Bordighera transported to the East; and lying under its tall palms can fancy ourselves at Tyre or Daphne, or in the gardens of a Moslem prince.

Note.—Dec. 1873. My old impressions are renewed and confirmed by a third visit, after seven years, to this coast. For purely idyllic loveliness, the Cornice is surpassed by nothing in the South. A very few spots in Sicily, the road between Castellammare and Amalfi, and the island of Corfu, are its only rivals in this style of scenery. From Cannes to Sestri is one continuous line of exquisitely modulated landscape beauty, which can only be fully appreciated by travellers in carriage or on foot.

It generally happens that visitors to Ajaccio pass over from the Cornice coast, leaving Nice at night, and waking about sunrise to find themselves beneath the frowning mountains of Corsica. The difference between the scenery of the island and the shores which they have left is very striking. Instead of the rocky mountains of the Cornice, intolerably dry and barren at their summits, but covered at their base with villages and ancient towns and olive-fields, Corsica presents a scene of solitary and peculiar grandeur. The highest mountain-tops are covered with snow, and beneath the snow-level to the sea they are as green as Irish or as English hills, but nearly uninhabited and uncultivated. Valleys of almost Alpine verdure are succeeded by tracts of chestnut wood and scattered pines, or deep and flowery brushwood—the 'maquis' of Corsica, which yields shelter to its traditional outlaws and bandits. Yet upon these hillsides there are hardly any signs of life; the whole country seems abandoned to primeval wildness and the majesty of desolation. Nothing can possibly be more unlike the smiling Riviera, every square mile of which is cultivated like a garden, and every valley and bay dotted over with white villages. After steaming for a few hours along this savage coast, the rocks which guard the entrance to the bay of Ajaccio, murderous-looking teeth and needles ominously christened Sanguinari, are passed, and we enter the splendid land-locked harbour, on the northern shore of which Ajaccio is built. About three centuries ago the town, which used to occupy the extreme or eastern end of the bay, was removed to a more healthy point upon the northern coast, so that Ajaccio is quite a modern city. Visitors who expect to find in it the picturesqueness of Genoa or San Remo, or even of Mentone, will be sadly disappointed. It is simply a healthy, well-appointed town of recent date, the chief merits of which are, that it has wide streets, and is free, externally at least, from the filth and rubbish of most southern seaports.

105

But if Ajaccio itself is not picturesque, the scenery which it commands, and in the heart of which it lies, is of the most magnificent. The bay of Ajaccio resembles a vast Italian lake—a Lago Maggiore, with greater space between the mountains and the shore. From the snow-peaks of the interior, huge granite crystals clothed in white, to the southern extremity of the bay, peak succeeds peak and ridge rises behind ridge in a line of wonderful variety and beauty. The atmospheric changes of light and shadow, cloud and colour, on this upland country, are as subtle and as various as those which lend their beauty to the scenery of the lakes, while the sea below is blue and rarely troubled. One could never get tired with looking at this view. Morning and evening add new charms to its sublimity and beauty. In the early morning Monte d'Oro sparkles like a Monte Rosa with its fresh snow, and the whole inferior range puts on the crystal blueness of dawn among the Alps. In the evening, violet and purple tints and the golden glow of Italian sunset lend a different lustre to the fairyland. In fact, the beauties of Switzerland and Italy are curiously blended in this landscape.

In soil and vegetation the country round Ajaccio differs much from the Cornice. There are very few olive-trees, nor is the cultivated ground backed up so immediately by stony mountains; but between the seashore and the hills there is plenty of space for pasture-land, and orchards of apricot and peach-trees, and orange gardens. This undulating champaign, green with meadows and watered with clear streams, is very refreshing to the eyes of Northern people, who may have wearied of the bareness and greyness of Nice or Mentone. It is traversed by excellent roads, recently constructed on a plan of the French Government, which intersect the country in all directions, and offer an infinite variety of rides or drives to visitors. The broken granite of which these roads are made is very pleasant for riding over. Most of the hills through which they strike, after starting from Ajaccio, are clothed with a thick brushwood of box, ilex, lentisk, arbutus, and laurustinus, which stretches down irregularly into vineyards, olive-gardens, and meadows. It is, indeed, the native growth of the island; for wherever a piece of ground is left untilled, the macchi grow up, and the scent of their multitudinous aromatic blossoms is so strong that it may be smelt miles out at sea. Napoleon, at S. Helena, referred to this fragrance when he said that he should know Corsica blindfold by the smell of its soil. Occasional woods of holm oak make darker patches on the landscape, and a few pines fringe the side of enclosure walls or towers. The prickly pear runs riot in and out among the hedges and upon the walls, diversifying the colours of the landscape with its strange grey-green masses and unwieldy fans. In spring, when peach and almond trees are in blossom, and when the

106

roadside is starred with asphodels, this country is most beautiful in its gladness. The macchi blaze with cistus flowers of red and silver. Golden broom mixes with the dark purple of the great French lavender, and over the whole mass of blossom wave plumes of Mediterranean heath and sweet-scented yellow coronilla. Under the stems of the ilex peep cyclamens, pink and sweet; the hedgerows are a tangle of vetches, convolvuluses, lupines, orchises, and alliums, with here and there a purple iris. It would be difficult to describe all the rare and lovely plants which are found here in a profusion that surpasses even the flower-gardens of the Cornice, and reminds one of the most favoured Alpine valleys in their early spring.

107

Since the French occupied Corsica they have done much for the island by improving its harbours and making good roads, and endeavouring to mitigate the ferocity of the people. But they have many things to contend against, and Corsica is still behind the other provinces of France. The people are idle, haughty, umbrageous, fiery, quarrelsome, fond of gipsy life, and retentive through generations of old feuds and prejudices to an almost inconceivable extent. Then the nature of the country itself offers serious obstacles to its proper colonisation and cultivation. The savage state of the island and its internal feuds have disposed the Corsicans to quit the seaboard for their mountain villages and fortresses, so that the great plains at the foot of the hills are unwholesome for want of tillage and drainage. Again, the mountains themselves have in many parts been stripped of their forests, and converted into mere wildernesses of macchi stretching up and down their slopes for miles and miles of useless desolation. Another impediment to proper cultivation is found in the old habit of what is called free pasturage. The highland shepherds are allowed by the national custom to drive down their flocks and herds to the lowlands during the winter, so that fences are broken, young crops are browsed over and trampled down, and agriculture becomes a mere impossibility. The last and chief difficulty against which the French have had to contend, and up to this time with apparent success, is brigandage. The Corsican system of brigandage is so very different from that of the Italians, Sicilians, and Greeks, that a word may be said about its peculiar character. In the first place, it has nothing at all to do with robbery and thieving. The Corsican bandit took to a free life among the macchi, not for the sake of supporting himself by lawless depredation, but because he had put himself under a legal and social ban by murdering some one in obedience to the strict code of honour of his country. His victim may have been the hereditary foe of his house for generations, or else the newly made enemy of yesterday. But in either case, if he had killed him fairly, after a due notification of his intention to do so, he was held to have fulfilled a duty rather than to have committed a crime. He then betook himself to the dense tangles of evergreens which I have described, where he lived upon the charity of countryfolk and shepherds. In the eyes of those simple people it was a sacred duty to relieve the necessities of the outlaws, and to guard them from the bloodhounds of justice. There was scarcely a respectable family in Corsica who had not one or more of its members thus *alla campagna*, as it was euphemistically styled. The Corsicans themselves have attributed this miserable state of things to two principal causes. The first of these was the ancient bad government of the island: under its Genoese rulers no justice was administered, and private vengeance for homicide or insult became a necessary consequence among the haughty and warlike families of the mountain villages. Secondly, the Corsicans have been from time immemorial accustomed to wear arms in everyday life. They used to sit at their house doors and pace the streets with musket, pistol, dagger, and cartouch-box on their persons; and on the most trivial occasion of merriment or enthusiasm they would discharge their firearms. This habit gave a bloody termination to many quarrels, which might have ended more peaceably had the parties been unarmed; and so the seeds of *vendetta* were constantly being sown. Statistics published by the French Government present a hideous picture of the state of bloodshed in Corsica even during this century. In one period of thirty years (between 1821 and 1850) there were 4319 murders in the island. Almost every man was watching for his neighbour's life, or seeking how to save his own; and agriculture and commerce were neglected for this grisly game of hide-and-peek. In 1853 the French began to take strong measures, and, under the Prefect Thuillier, they hunted the bandits from the macchi, killing between 200 and 300 of them. At the same time an edict was promulgated against bearing arms. It is forbidden to sell the old Corsican stiletto in the shops, and no one may carry a gun, even for sporting purposes, unless he obtains a special licence. These licences, moreover, are only granted for short and precisely measured periods.

108

109

In order to appreciate the stern and gloomy character of the Corsicans, it is necessary to leave the smiling gardens of Ajaccio, and to visit some of the more distant mountain villages—Vico, Cavro, Bastelica, or Bocognano, any of which may easily be reached from the capital. Immediately after quitting the seaboard, we enter a country austere in its simplicity, solemn without relief, yet dignified by its majesty and by the sense of freedom it inspires. As we approach the mountains, the macchi become taller, feathering man-high above the road, and stretching far away upon the hills. Gigantic masses of granite, shaped like buttresses and bastions, seem to guard the approaches to these hills; while, looking backward over the green plain, the sea lies smiling in a haze of blue among the rocky horns and misty headlands of the coast. There is a stateliness about the abrupt inclination of these granite slopes, rising from their frowning portals by sharp *arêtes* to the snows piled on their summits, which contrasts in a strange way with the softness and beauty of the mingling sea and plain beneath. In no landscape are more various qualities combined; in none are they so harmonised as to produce so strong a sense of majestic freedom and severe power. Suppose that we are on the road to Corte, and have now reached Bocognano, the first considerable village since we left Ajaccio. Bocognano might be chosen as typical of Corsican hill-villages, with its narrow street, and tall tower-like houses of five or six stories high, faced with rough granite, and pierced with the smallest windows and very narrow doorways. These buildings have a mournful and desolate appearance. There is none of the grandeur of antiquity about them; no sculptured arms or castellated turrets, or balconies or spacious staircases, such as are common in the poorest towns of Italy. The signs of warlike occupation which they offer, and their sinister aspect of vigilance, are thoroughly prosaic. They seem to suggest a state of society in which feud and violence were systematised into routine. There is no relief to the savage austerity of their forbidding aspect; no signs of wealth or household comfort; no trace of art, no liveliness and gracefulness of architecture. Perched upon their coigns of vantage, these villages seem always menacing, as if Saracen pirates, or Genoese marauders, or bandits bent on vengeance, were still for ever on the watch. Forests of immensely old chestnut-trees surround Bocognano on every side, so that you step from the village streets into the shade of woods that seem to have remained untouched for centuries. The country-people support themselves almost entirely upon the fruit of these chestnuts; and there is a large department of Corsica called Castagniccia, from the prevalence of these trees and the sustenance which the inhabitants derive from them. Close by the village brawls a torrent, such as one may see in the Monte Rosa valleys or the Apennines, but very rarely in Switzerland. It is of a pure green colour, absolutely like Indian jade, foaming round the granite boulders, and gliding over smooth slabs of polished stone, and eddying into still, deep pools fringed with fern. Monte d'Oro, one of the largest mountains of Corsica, soars above, and from his snows the purest water, undefiled by glacier mud or the *débris* of avalanches, melts away. Following the stream, we rise through the macchi and the chestnut woods, which grow more sparsely by degrees, until we reach the zone of beeches. Here the scene seems suddenly transferred to the Pyrenees; for the road is carried along abrupt slopes, thickly set with gigantic beech-trees, overgrown with pink and silver lichens. In the early spring their last year's leaves are still crisp with hoar-frost; one morning's journey has brought us from the summer of Ajaccio to winter on these heights, where no flowers are visible but the pale hellebore and tiny lilac crocuses. Snow-drifts stretch by the roadside, and one by one the pioneers of the vast pine-woods of the interior appear. A great portion of the pine-forest (*Pinus larix*, or Corsican pine, not larch) between Bocognano and Corte had recently been burned by accident when we passed by. Nothing could be more forlorn than the black leafless stems and branches emerging from the snow. Some of these trees were mast-high, and some mere saplings. Corte itself is built among the mountain fastnesses of the interior. The snows and granite cliffs of Monte Rotondo overhang it to the north-west, while two fair valleys lead downward from its eyrie to the eastern coast. The rock on which it stands rises to a sharp point, sloping southward, and commanding the valleys of the Golo and the Tavignano. Remembering that Corte was the old capital of Corsica, and the centre of General Paoli's government, we are led to compare the town with Innsprück, Meran, or Grenoble. In point of scenery and situation it is hardly second to any of these mountain-girdled cities; but its poverty and bareness are scarcely less striking than those of Bocognano.

110

111

112

The whole Corsican character, with its stern love of justice, its furious

revengefulness and wild passion for freedom, seems to be illustrated by the peculiar elements of grandeur and desolation in this landscape. When we traverse the forest of Vico or the rocky pasture-lands of Niolo, the history of the Corsican national heroes, Giudice della Rocca and Sampiero, becomes intelligible, nor do we fail to understand some of the mysterious attraction which led the more daring spirits of the island to prefer a free life among the macchi and pine-woods to placid lawful occupations in farms and villages. The lives of the two men whom I have mentioned are so prominent in Corsican history, and are so often still upon the lips of the common people, that it may be well to sketch their outlines in the foreground of the Salvator Rosa landscape just described. Giudice was the governor of Corsica, as lieutenant for the Pisans, at the end of the thirteenth century. At that time the island belonged to the republic of Pisa, but the Genoese were encroaching on them by land and sea, and the whole life of their brave champion was spent in a desperate struggle with the invaders, until at last he died, old, blind, and in prison, at the command of his savage foes. Giudice was the title which the Pisans usually conferred upon their governor, and Della Rocca deserved it by right of his own inexorable love of justice. Indeed, justice seems to have been with him a passion, swallowing up all other feelings of his nature. All the stories which are told of him turn upon this point in his character; and though they may not be strictly true, they illustrate the stern virtues for which he was celebrated among the Corsicans, and show what kind of men this harsh and gloomy nation loved to celebrate as heroes. This is not the place either to criticise these legends or to recount them at full length. The most famous and the most characteristic may, however, be briefly told. On one occasion, after a victory over the Genoese, he sent a message that the captives in his hands should be released if their wives and sisters came to sue for them. The Genoese ladies embarked, and arrived in Corsica, and to Giudice's nephew was intrusted the duty of fulfilling his uncle's promise. In the course of executing his commission, the youth was so smitten with the beauty of one of the women that he dishonoured her. Thereupon Giudice had him at once put to death. Another story shows the Spartan justice of this hero in a less savage light. He was passing by a cowherd's cottage, when he heard some young calves bleating. On inquiring what distressed them, he was told that the calves had not enough milk to drink after the farm people had been served. Then Giudice made it a law that the calves throughout the land should take their fill before the cows were milked.

113

Sampiero belongs to a later period of Corsican history. After a long course of misgovernment the Genoese rule had become unbearable. There was no pretence of administering justice, and private vengeance had full sway in the island. The sufferings of the nation were so great that the time had come for a new judge or saviour to rise among them. Sampiero was the son of obscure parents who lived at Bastelica. But his abilities very soon declared themselves, and made a way for him in the world. He spent his youth in the armies of the Medici and of the French Francis, gaining great renown as a brave soldier. Bayard became his friend, and Francis made him captain of his Corsican bands. But Sampiero did not forget the wrongs of his native land while thus on foreign service. He resolved, if possible, to undermine the power of Genoa, and spent the whole of his manhood and old age in one long struggle with their great captain, Stephen Doria. Of his stern patriotism and Roman severity of virtue the following story is a terrible illustration. Sampiero, though a man of mean birth, had married an heiress of the noble Corsican house of the Ornani. His wife, Vannina, was a woman of timid and flexible nature, who, though devoted to her husband, fell into the snares of his enemies. During his absence on an embassy to Algiers the Genoese induced her to leave her home at Marseilles and to seek refuge in their city, persuading her that this step would secure the safety of her child. She was starting on her journey when a friend of Sampiero arrested her, and brought her back to Aix, in Provence. Sampiero, when he heard of these events, hurried to France, and was received by a relative of his, who hinted that he had known of Vannina's projected flight. 'E tu hai taciuto?' was Sampiero's only answer, accompanied by a stroke of his poignard that killed the lukewarm cousin. Sampiero now brought his wife from Aix to Marseilles, preserving the most absolute silence on the way, and there, on entering his house, he killed her with his own hand. It is said that he loved Vannina passionately; and when she was dead, he caused her to be buried with magnificence in the church of S. Francis. Like Giudice, Sampiero fell at last a prey to treachery. The murder of Vannina had made the Ornani his deadly foes. In order to avenge her blood, they played into the hands of the Genoese, and laid a plot by which the noblest of the Corsicans was brought to

114

death. First, they gained over to their scheme a monk of Bastelica, called Ambrogio, and Sampiero's own squire and shield-bearer, Vittolo. By means of these men, in whom he trusted, he was drawn defenceless and unattended into a deeply wooded ravine near Cavo, not very far from his birthplace, where the Ornani and their Genoese troops surrounded him. Sampiero fired his pistols in vain, for Vittolo had loaded them with the shot downwards. Then he drew his sword, and began to lay about him, when the same Vittolo, the Judas, stabbed him from behind, and the old lion fell dead by his friend's hand. Sampiero was sixty-nine when he died, in the year 1567. It is satisfactory to know that the Corsicans have called traitors and foes to their country Vittoli for ever. These two examples of Corsican patriots are enough; we need not add to theirs the history of Paoli—a milder and more humane, but scarcely less heroic leader. Paoli, however, in the hour of Corsica's extremest peril, retired to England, and died in philosophic exile. Neither Giudice nor Sampiero would have acted thus. The more forlorn the hope, the more they struggled.

115

Among the old Corsican customs which are fast dying out, but which still linger in the remote valleys of Niolo and Vico, is the *vózero*, or funeral chant, improvised by women at funerals over the bodies of the dead. Nothing illustrates the ferocious temper and savage passions of the race better than these *vóceri*, many of which have been written down and preserved. Most of them are songs of vengeance and imprecation, mingled with hyperbolic laments and utterances of extravagant grief, poured forth by wives and sisters at the side of murdered husbands and brothers. The women who sing them seem to have lost all milk of human kindness, and to have exchanged the virtues of their sex for Spartan fortitude and the rage of furies. While we read their turbid lines we are carried in imagination to one of the cheerless houses of Bastelica or Bocognano, overshadowed by its mournful chestnut-tree, on which the blood of the murdered man is yet red. The *gridata*, or wake, is assembled in a dark room. On the wooden board, called *tola*, the corpse lies stretched; and round it are women, veiled in the blue-black mantle of Corsican costume, moaning and rocking themselves upon their chairs. The *pasto* or *conforto*, food supplied for mourners, stands upon a side table, and round the room are men with savage eyes and bristling beards, armed to the teeth, keen for vengeance. The dead man's musket and pocket-pistol lie beside him, and his bloody shirt is hung up at his head. Suddenly, the silence, hitherto only disturbed by suppressed groans and muttered curses, is broken by a sharp cry. A woman rises: it is the sister of the dead man; she seizes his shirt, and holding it aloft with Mænad gestures and frantic screams, gives rhythmic utterance to her grief and rage. 'I was spinning, when I heard a great noise: it was a gunshot, which went into my heart, and seemed a voice that cried, "Run, thy brother is dying." I ran into the room above; I took the blow into my breast; I said, "Now he is dead, there is nothing to give me comfort. Who will undertake thy vengeance? When I show thy shirt, who will vow to let his beard grow till the murderer is slain? Who is there left to do it? A mother near her death? A sister? Of all our race there is only left a woman, without kin, poor, orphan, and a girl. Yet, O my brother! never fear. For thy vengeance thy sister is enough!

116

"Ma per fà la to bindetta,
Sta siguru, basta anch ella!

Give me the pistol; I will shoulder the gun; I will away to the hills. My brother, heart of thy sister, thou shalt be avenged!" A *vózero* declaimed upon the bier of Giammatteo and Pasquale, two cousins, by the sister of the former, is still fiercer and more energetic in its malediction. This Erinny of revenge prays Christ and all the saints to extirpate the murderer's whole race, to shrivel it up till it passes from the earth. Then, with a sudden and vehement transition to the pathos of her own sorrow, she exclaims:—

'Halla mai bista nissunu
Tumbà l'omi pe li canti?'

It appears from these words that Giammatteo's enemies had killed him because they were jealous of his skill in singing. Shortly after, she curses the curate of the village, a kinsman of the murderer, for refusing to toll the funeral bells; and at last, all other threads of rage and sorrow being twined and knotted into one, she gives loose to her raging thirst for blood: 'If only I had a son, to train like a sleuth-hound, that he might track the murderer! Oh, if I had a son! Oh, if I had a lad!' Her words seem to choke her, and she swoons, and remains for a short time insensible. When the Bacchante of revenge awakes, it is with milder

117

feelings in her heart: 'O brother mine, Matteo! art thou sleeping? Here I will rest with thee and weep till daybreak.' It is rare to find in literature so crude and intense an expression of fiery hatred as these untranslatable *vóceri* present. The emotion is so simple and so strong that it becomes sublime by mere force, and affects us with a strange pathos when contrasted with the tender affection conveyed in such terms of endearment as 'my dove,' 'my flower,' 'my pheasant,' 'my bright painted orange,' addressed to the dead. In the *vóceri* it often happens that there are several interlocutors: one friend questions and another answers; or a kinswoman of the murderer attempts to justify the deed, and is overwhelmed with deadly imprecations. Passionate appeals are made to the corpse: 'Arise! Do you not hear the women cry? Stand up. Show your wounds, and let the fountains of your blood flow! Alas! he is dead; he sleeps; he cannot hear!' Then they turn again to tears and curses, feeling that no help or comfort can come from the clay-cold form. The intensity of grief finds strange language for its utterance. A girl, mourning over her father, cries:—

'Mi l'hannu crucifissatu
Cume Ghiesu Cristu in croce.'

Once only, in Viale's collection, does any friend of the dead remember mercy. It is an old woman, who points to the crucifix above the bier.

118

But all the *vóceri* are not so murderous. Several are composed for girls who died unwedded and before their time, by their mothers or companions. The language of these laments is far more tender and ornate. They praise the gentle virtues and beauty of the girl, her piety and helpful household ways. The most affecting of these dirges is that which celebrates the death of Romana, daughter of Dariola Danesi. Here is a pretty picture of the girl: 'Among the best and fairest maidens you were like a rose among flowers, like the moon among stars; so far more lovely were you than the loveliest. The youths in your presence were like lighted torches, but full of reverence; you were courteous to all, but with none familiar. In church they gazed at you, but you looked at none of them; and after mass you said, "Mother, let us go." Oh! who will console me for your loss? Why did the Lord so much desire you? But now you rest in heaven, all joy and smiles; for the world was not worthy of so fair a face. Oh, how far more beautiful will Paradise be now!' Then follows a piteous picture of the old bereaved mother, to whom a year will seem a thousand years, who will wander among relatives without affection, neighbours without love; and who, when sickness comes, will have no one to give her a drop of water, or to wipe the sweat from her brow, or to hold her hand in death. Yet all that is left for her is to wait and pray for the end, that she may join again her darling.

But it is time to return to Ajaccio itself. At present the attractions and ornaments of the town consist of a good public library, Cardinal Fesch's large but indifferent collection of pictures, two monuments erected to Napoleon, and Napoleon's house. It will always be the chief pride of Ajaccio that she gave birth to the great emperor. Close to the harbour, in a public square by the sea-beach, stands an equestrian statue of the conqueror, surrounded by his four brothers on foot. They are all attired in Roman fashion, and are turned seaward, to the west, as if to symbolise the emigration of this family to subdue Europe. There is something ludicrous and forlorn in the stiffness of the group—something even pathetic, when we think how Napoleon gazed seaward from another island, no longer on horseback, no longer laurel-crowned, an unthroned, unseated conqueror, on S. Helena. His father's house stands close by. An old Italian waiting-woman, who had been long in the service of the Murats, keeps it and shows it. She has the manners of a lady, and can tell many stories of the various members of the Buonaparte family. Those who fancy that Napoleon was born in a mean dwelling of poor parents will be surprised to find so much space and elegance in these apartments. Of course his family was not rich by comparison with the riches of French or English nobles. But for Corsicans they were well-to-do, and their house has an air of antique dignity. The chairs of the entrance-saloon have been literally stripped of their coverings by enthusiastic visitors; the horse-hair stuffing underneath protrudes itself with a sort of comic pride, as if protesting that it came to be so tattered in an honourable service. Some of the furniture seems new; but many old presses, inlaid with marbles, agates, and lapis-lazuli, such as Italian families preserve for generations, have an air of respectable antiquity about them. Nor is there any doubt that the young Napoleon led his minuets beneath the stiff girandoles of the formal dancing-room. There, too, in a dark back chamber, is the bed in which he was born. At its foot is a photograph of the Prince Imperial sent by the Empress Eugénie,

119

who, when she visited the room, wept much *pianse molto* (to use the old lady's phrase)—at seeing the place where such lofty destinies began. On the wall of the same room is a portrait of Napoleon himself as the young general of the republic—with the citizen's unkempt hair, the fierce fire of the Revolution in his eyes, a frown upon his forehead, lips compressed, and quivering nostrils; also one of his mother, the pastille of a handsome woman, with Napoleonic eyes and brows and nose, but with a vacant simpering mouth. Perhaps the provincial artist knew not how to seize the expression of this feature, the most difficult to draw. For we cannot fancy that Letizia had lips without the firmness or the fulness of a majestic nature.

The whole first story of this house belonged to the Buonaparte family. The windows look out partly on a little court and partly on narrow streets. It was, no doubt, the memory of this home that made Napoleon, when emperor, design schemes for the good of Corsica—schemes that might have brought him more honour than many conquests, but which he had no time or leisure to carry out. On S. Helena his mind often reverted to them, and he would speak of the gummy odours of the macchi wafted from the hillsides to the seashore.

The long hot days of Italian summer were settling down on plain and country when, in the last week of May, we travelled northward from Florence and Bologna seeking coolness. That was very hard to find in Lombardy. The days were long and sultry, the nights short, without a respite from the heat. Milan seemed a furnace, though in the Duomo and the narrow shady streets there was a twilight darkness which at least looked cool. Long may it be before the northern spirit of improvement has taught the Italians to despise the wisdom of their forefathers, who built those sombre streets of palaces with overhanging eaves, that, almost meeting, form a shelter from the fiercest sun. The lake country was even worse than the towns; the sunlight lay all day asleep upon the shining waters, and no breeze came to stir their surface or to lift the tepid veil of haze, through which the stony mountains, with their yet unmelted patches of winter snow, glared as if in mockery of coolness.

Then we heard of a new inn, which had just been built by an enterprising Italian doctor below the very top of Monte Generoso. There was a picture of it in the hotel at Cadenabbia, but this gave but little idea of any particular beauty. A big square house, with many windows, and the usual ladies on mules, and guides with alpenstocks, advancing towards it, and some round bushes growing near, was all it showed. Yet there hung the real Monte Generoso above our heads, and we thought it must be cooler on its height than by the lake-shore. To find coolness was the great point with us just then. Moreover, some one talked of the wonderful plants that grew among its rocks, and of its grassy slopes enamelled with such flowers as make our cottage gardens at home gay in summer, not to speak of others rarer and peculiar to the region of the Southern Alps. Indeed, the Generoso has a name for flowers, and it deserves it, as we presently found.

122

This mountain is fitted by its position for commanding one of the finest views in the whole range of the Lombard Alps. A glance at the map shows that. Standing out pre-eminent among the chain of lower hills to which it belongs, the lakes of Lugano and Como with their long arms enclose it on three sides, while on the fourth the plain of Lombardy with its many cities, its rich pasture-lands and cornfields intersected by winding river-courses and straight interminable roads, advances to its very foot. No place could be better chosen for surveying that contrasted scene of plain and mountain, which forms the great attraction of the outlying buttresses of the central Alpine mass. The superiority of the Monte Generoso to any of the similar eminences on the northern outskirts of Switzerland is great. In richness of colour, in picturesqueness of suggestion, in sublimity and breadth of prospect, its advantages are incontestable. The reasons for this superiority are obvious. On the Italian side the transition from mountain to plain is far more abrupt; the atmosphere being clearer, a larger sweep of distance is within our vision; again, the sunlight blazes all day long upon the very front and forehead of the distant Alpine chain, instead of merely slanting along it, as it does upon the northern side.

From Mendrisio, the village at the foot of the mountain, an easy mule-path leads to the hotel, winding first through English-looking hollow lanes with real hedges, which are rare in this country, and English primroses beneath them. Then comes a forest region of luxuriant chestnut-trees, giants with pink boles just bursting into late leafage, yellow and tender, but too thin as yet for shade. A little higher up, the chestnuts are displaced by wild laburnums bending under their weight of flowers. The graceful branches meet above our heads, sweeping their long tassels against our faces as we ride beneath them, while the air for a good mile is full of fragrance. It is strange to be reminded in this blooming labyrinth of the dusty suburb roads and villa gardens of London. The laburnum is pleasant enough in S. John's Wood or the Regent's Park in May—a tame domesticated thing of brightness amid smoke and dust. But it is another joy to see it flourishing in its own home, clothing acres of the mountain-side in a very splendour of spring-colour, mingling its paler blossoms with the golden broom of our own hills, and with the silver of the hawthorn and wild cherry. Deep beds of lilies-of-the-valley grow everywhere beneath the trees; and in the meadows purple columbines, white asphodels, the Alpine spiræa, tall, with feathery leaves, blue scabious, golden hawkweeds, turkscap lilies, and, better than all, the exquisite narcissus poeticus, with its crimson-tipped cup, and the pure pale lilies of San Bruno, are crowded in a maze of dazzling brightness. Higher up the laburnums disappear, and flaunting crimson peonies gleam here and there upon the rocks, until at

123

length the gentians and white ranunculuses of the higher Alps displace the less hardy flowers of Italy.

About an hour below the summit of the mountain we came upon the inn, a large clean building, with scanty furniture and snowy wooden floors, guiltless of carpets. It is big enough to hold about a hundred guests; and Doctor Pasta, who built it, a native of Mendrisio, was gifted either with much faith or with a real prophetic instinct.^[8] Anyhow he deserves commendation for his spirit of enterprise. As yet the house is little known to English travellers: it is mostly frequented by Italians from Milan, Novara, and other cities of the plain, who call it the Italian Righi, and come to it, as cockneys go to Richmond, for noisy picnic excursions, or at most for a few weeks' *villeggiatura* in the summer heats. When we were there in May the season had scarcely begun, and the only inmates besides ourselves were a large party from Milan, ladies and gentlemen in holiday guise, who came, stayed one night, climbed the peak at sunrise, and departed amid jokes and shouting and half-childish play, very unlike the doings of a similar party in sober England. After that the stillness of nature descended on the mountain, and the sun shone day after day upon that great view which seemed created only for ourselves. And what a view it was! The plain stretching up to the high horizon, where a misty range of pink cirrus-clouds alone marked the line where earth ended and the sky began, was islanded with cities and villages innumerable, basking in the hazy shimmering heat. Milan, seen through the doctor's telescope, displayed its Duomo perfect as a microscopic shell, with all its exquisite fretwork, and Napoleon's arch of triumph surmounted by the four tiny horses, as in a fairy's dream. Far off, long silver lines marked the lazy course of Po and Ticino, while little lakes like Varese and the lower end of Maggiore spread themselves out, connecting the mountains with the plain.

[8] It is but just to Doctor Pasta to remark that the above sentence was written more than ten years ago. Since then he has enlarged and improved his house in many ways, furnished it more luxuriously, made paths through the beechwoods round it, and brought excellent water at a great cost from a spring near the summit of the mountain. A more charming residence from early spring to late autumn can scarcely be discovered.

Five minutes' walk from the hotel brought us to a ridge where the precipice fell suddenly and almost sheer over one arm of Lugano Lake. Sullenly outstretched asleep it lay beneath us, coloured with the tints of fluor-spar, or with the changeful green and azure of a peacock's breast. The depth appeared immeasurable. San Salvatore had receded into insignificance: the houses and churches and villas of Lugano bordered the lake-shore with an uneven line of whiteness. And over all there rested a blue mist of twilight and of haze, contrasting with the clearness of the peaks above. It was sunset when we first came here; and, wave beyond wave, the purple Italian hills tossed their crested summits to the foot of a range of stormy clouds that shrouded the high Alps. Behind the clouds was sunset, clear and golden; but the mountains had put on their mantle for the night, and the hem of their garment was all we were to see. And yet—over the edge of the topmost ridge of cloud, what was that long hard line of black, too solid and immovable for cloud, rising into four sharp needles clear and well defined? Surely it must be the familiar outline of Monte Rosa itself, the form which every one who loves the Alps knows well by heart, which picture-lovers know from Ruskin's woodcut in the 'Modern Painters.' For a moment only the vision stayed: then clouds swept over it again, and from the place where the empress of the Alps had been, a pillar of mist shaped like an angel's wing, purple and tipped with gold, shot up against the pale green sky. That cloud-world was a pageant in itself, as grand and more gorgeous perhaps than the mountains would have been. Deep down through the hollows of the Simplon a thunderstorm was driving; and we saw forked flashes once and again, as in a distant world, lighting up the valleys for a moment, and leaving the darkness blacker behind them as the storm blurred out the landscape forty miles away. Darkness was coming to us too, though our sky was clear and the stars were shining brightly. At our feet the earth was folding itself to sleep; the plain was wholly lost; little islands of white mist had formed themselves, and settled down upon the lakes and on their marshy estuaries; the birds were hushed; the gentian-cups were filling to the brim with dew. Night had descended on the mountain and the plain; the show was over.

The dawn was whitening in the east next morning, when we again scrambled through the dwarf beechwood to the precipice above the lake. Like an ink-blot it lay, unruffled, slumbering sadly. Broad sheets of

vapour brooded on the plain, telling of miasma and fever, of which we on the mountain, in the pure cool air, knew nothing. The Alps were all there now—cold, unreal, stretching like a phantom line of snowy peaks, from the sharp pyramids of Monte Viso and the Grivola in the west to the distant Bernina and the Ortler in the east. Supreme among them towered Monte Rosa—queenly, triumphant, gazing down in proud pre-eminence, as she does when seen from any point of the Italian plain. There is no mountain like her. Mont Blanc himself is scarcely so regal; and she seems to know it, for even the clouds sweep humbled round her base, girdling her at most, but leaving her crown clear and free. Now, however, there were no clouds to be seen in all the sky. The mountains had a strange unshriven look, as if waiting to be blessed. Above them, in the cold grey air, hung a low black arch of shadow, the shadow of the bulk of the huge earth, which still concealed the sun. Slowly, slowly this dark line sank lower, till, one by one, at last, the peaks caught first a pale pink flush; then a sudden golden glory flashed from one to the other, as they leapt joyfully into life. It is a supreme moment this first burst of life and light over the sleeping world, as one can only see it on rare days and in rare places like the Monte Generoso. The earth—enough of it at least for us to picture to ourselves the whole—lies at our feet; and we feel as the Saviour might have felt, when from the top of that high mountain He beheld the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. Strangely and solemnly may we image to our fancy the lives that are being lived down in those cities of the plain: how many are waking at this very moment to toil and a painful weariness, to sorrow, or to 'that unrest which men miscall delight;' while we upon our mountain buttress, suspended in mid-heaven and for a while removed from daily cares, are drinking in the beauty of the world that God has made so fair and wonderful. From this same eyrie, only a few years ago, the hostile armies of France, Italy, and Austria might have been watched moving in dim masses across the plains, for the possession of which they were to clash in mortal fight at Solferino and Magenta. All is peaceful now. It is hard to picture the waving cornfields trodden down, the burning villages and ransacked vineyards, all the horrors of real war to which that fertile plain has been so often the prey. But now these memories of

127

Old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago,

do but add a calm and beauty to the radiant scene that lies before us. And the thoughts which it suggests, the images with which it stores our mind, are not without their noblest uses. The glory of the world sinks deeper into our shallow souls than we well know; and the spirit of its splendour is always ready to revisit us on dark and dreary days at home with an unspeakable refreshment. Even as I write, I seem to see the golden glow sweeping in broad waves over the purple hills nearer and nearer, till the lake brightens at our feet, and the windows of Lugano flash with sunlight, and little boats creep forth across the water like spiders on a pond, leaving an arrowy track of light upon the green behind them, while Monte Salvadore with its tiny chapel and a patch of the further landscape are still kept in darkness by the shadow of the Generoso itself. The birds wake into song as the sun's light comes; cuckoo answers cuckoo from ridge to ridge; dogs bark; and even the sounds of human life rise up to us: children's voices and the murmurs of the market-place ascending faintly from the many villages hidden among the chestnut-trees beneath our feet; while the creaking of a cart we can but just see slowly crawling along the straight road by the lake, is heard at intervals.

128

The full beauty of the sunrise is but brief. Already the low lakelike mists we saw last night have risen and spread, and shaken themselves out into masses of summer clouds, which, floating upward, threaten to envelop us upon our vantage-ground. Meanwhile they form a changeful sea below, blotting out the plain, surging up into the valleys with the movement of a billowy tide, attacking the lower heights like the advance-guard of a besieging army, but daring not as yet to invade the cold and solemn solitudes of the snowy Alps. These, too, in time, when the sun's heat has grown strongest, will be folded in their midday pall of sheltering vapour.

The very summit of Monte Generoso must not be left without a word of notice. The path to it is as easy as the Bheep-walks on an English down, though cut along grass-slopes descending at a perilously sharp angle. At the top the view is much the same, as far as the grand features go, as that which is commanded from the cliff by the hotel. But the rocks here are crowded with rare Alpine flowers—delicate golden auriculas with powdery leaves and stems, pale yellow cowslips, imperial purple

129

saxifrages, soldanellas at the edge of lingering patches of the winter snow, blue gentians, crocuses, and the frail, rosy-tipped ranunculus, called *glacialis*. Their blooming time is brief. When summer comes the mountain will be bare and burned, like all Italian hills. The Generoso is a very dry mountain, silent and solemn from its want of streams. There is no sound of falling waters on its crags; no musical rivulets flow down its sides, led carefully along the slopes, as in Switzerland, by the peasants, to keep their hay-crops green and gladden the thirsty turf throughout the heat and drought of summer. The soil is a Jurassic limestone: the rain penetrates the porous rock, and sinks through cracks and fissures, to reappear above the base of the mountain in a full-grown stream. This is a defect in the Generoso, as much to be regretted as the want of shade upon its higher pastures. Here, as elsewhere in Piedmont, the forests are cut for charcoal; the beech-scrub, which covers large tracts of the hills, never having the chance of growing into trees much higher than a man. It is this which makes an Italian mountain at a distance look woolly, like a sheep's back. Among the brushwood, however, lilies-of-the-valley and Solomon's seals delight to grow; and the league-long beds of wild strawberries prove that when the laburnums have faded, the mountain will become a garden of feasting.

It was on the crest of Monte Generoso, late one afternoon in May, that we saw a sight of great beauty. The sun had yet about an hour before it sank behind the peaks of Monte Rosa, and the sky was clear, except for a few white clouds that floated across the plain of Lombardy. Then as we sat upon the crags, tufted with soldanellas and auriculas, we could see a fleecy vapour gliding upward from the hollows of the mountain, very thin and pale, yet dense enough to blot the landscape to the south and east from sight. It rose with an imperceptible motion, as the Oceanides might have soared from the sea to comfort Prometheus in the tragedy of Æschylus. Already the sun had touched its upper edge with gold, and we were expecting to be enveloped in a mist; when suddenly upon the outspread sheet before us there appeared two forms, larger than life, yet not gigantic, surrounded with haloes of such tempered iridescence as the moon half hidden by a summer cloud is wont to make. They were the glorified figures of ourselves; and what we did, the phantoms mocked, rising or bowing, or spreading wide their arms. Some scarce-felt breeze prevented the vapour from passing across the ridge to westward, though it still rose from beneath, and kept fading away into thin air above our heads. Therefore the vision lasted as long as the sun stayed yet above the Alps; and the images with their aureoles shrank and dilated with the undulations of the mist. I could not but think of that old formula for an anthropomorphic Deity—'the Brocken-spectre of the human spirit projected on the mists of the Non-ego.' Even like those cloud-phantoms are the gods made in the image of man, who have been worshipped through successive ages of the world, gods dowered with like passions to those of the races who have crouched before them, gods cruel and malignant and lustful, jealous and noble and just, radiant or gloomy, the counterparts of men upon a vast and shadowy scale. But here another question rose. If the gods that men have made and ignorantly worshipped be really but glorified copies of their own souls, where is the sun in this parallel? Without the sun's rays the mists of Monte Generoso could have shown, no shadowy forms. Without some other power than the mind of man, could men have fashioned for themselves those ideals that they named their gods? Unseen by Greek, or Norseman, or Hindoo, the potent force by which alone they could externalise their image, existed outside them, independent of their thought. Nor does the trite epigram touch the surface of the real mystery. The sun, the human beings on the mountain, and the mists are all parts of one material universe: the transient phenomenon we witnessed was but the effect of a chance combination. Is, then, the anthropomorphic God as momentary and as accidental in the system of the world as that vapoury spectre? The God in whom we live and move and have our being must be far more all-pervasive, more incognisable by the souls of men, who doubt not for one moment of His presence and His power. Except for purposes of rhetoric the metaphor that seemed so clever fails. Nor, when once such thoughts have been stirred in us by such a sight, can we do better than repeat Goethe's sublime profession of a philosophic mysticism. This translation I made one morning on the Pasterze Gletscher beneath the spires of the Gross Glockner:—

To Him who from eternity, self-stirred,
Himself hath made by His creative word!
To Him, supreme, who causeth Faith to be,
Trust, Hope, Love, Power, and endless Energy!
To Him, who, seek to name Him as we will,

130
314

131

Unknown within Himself abideth still!

Strain ear and eye, till sight and sense be dim;
Thou'lt find but faint similitudes of Him:
Yea, and thy spirit in her flight of flame
Still strives to gauge the symbol and the name:
Charmed and compelled thou climb'st from height to height,
And round thy path the world shines wondrous bright;
Time, Space, and Size, and Distance cease to be,
And every step is fresh infinity.

What were the God who sat outside to scan
The spheres that 'neath His finger circling ran?
God dwells within, and moves the world and moulds,
Himself and Nature in one form enfolds:
Thus all that lives in Him and breathes and is,
Shall ne'er His puissance, ne'er His spirit miss.

The soul of man, too, is an universe:
Whence follows it that race with race concurs
In naming all it knows of good and true
God,—yea, its own God; and with homage due
Surrenders to His sway both earth and heaven;
Fears Him, and loves, where place for love is given.

ON THE SUPERGA

This is the chord of Lombard colouring in May. Lowest in the scale: bright green of varied tints, the meadow-grasses mingling with willows and acacias, harmonised by air and distance. Next, opaque blue—the blue of something between amethyst and lapis-lazuli—that belongs alone to the basements of Italian mountains. Higher, the roseate whiteness of ridged snow on Alps or Apennines. Highest, the blue of the sky, ascending from pale turquoise to transparent sapphire filled with light. A mediæval mystic might have likened this chord to the spiritual world. For the lowest region is that of natural life, of plant and bird and beast, and unregenerate man; it is the place of faun and nymph and satyr, the plain where wars are fought and cities built, and work is done. Thence we climb to purified humanity, the mountains of purgation, the solitude and simplicity of contemplative life not yet made perfect by freedom from the flesh. Higher comes that thin white belt, where are the resting places of angelic feet, the points whence purged souls take their flight toward infinity. Above all is heaven, the hierarchies ascending row on row to reach the light of God.

This fancy occurred to me as I climbed the slope of the Superga, gazing over acacia hedges and poplars to the mountains bare in morning light. The occasional occurrence of bars across this chord—poplars shivering in sun and breeze, stationary cypresses as black as night, and tall campanili with the hot red shafts of glowing brick—adds just enough of composition to the landscape. Without too much straining of the allegory, the mystic might have recognised in these aspiring bars the upward effort of souls rooted in the common life of earth.

134

The panorama, unrolling as we ascend, is enough to overpower a lover of beauty. There is nothing equal to it for space and breadth and majesty. Monte Rosa, the masses of Mont Blanc blent with the Grand Paradis, the airy pyramid of Monte Viso, these are the battlements of that vast Alpine rampart, in which the vale of Susa opens like a gate. To west and south sweep the Maritime Alps and the Apennines. Beneath, glides the infant Po; and where he leads our eyes, the plain is only limited by pearly mist.

A BRONZE BUST OF CALIGULA AT TURIN

The Albertina bronze is one of the most precious portraits of antiquity, not merely because it confirms the testimony of the green basalt bust in the Capitol, but also because it supplies an even more emphatic and impressive illustration to the narrative of Suetonius.

Caligula is here represented as young and singularly beautiful. It is indeed an ideal Roman head, with the powerful square modelling, the crisp short hair, low forehead and regular firm features, proper to the noblest Roman type. The head is thrown backward from the throat; and there is a something of menace or defiance or suffering in the suggestion of brusque movement given to the sinews of the neck. This attitude, together with the tension of the forehead, and the fixed expression of pain and strain communicated by the lines of the mouth—strong muscles of the upper lip and abruptly chiselled under lip—in relation to the small eyes, deep set beneath their cavernous and level brows, renders the whole face a monument of spiritual anguish. I remember that the green basalt bust of the Capitol has the same anxious forehead, the same troubled and overburdened eyes; but the agony of this fretful mouth, comparable to nothing but the mouth of Pandolfo Sigismondo Malatesta, and, like that, on the verge of breaking into the spasms of delirium, is quite peculiar to the Albertina bronze. It is just this which the portrait of the Capitol lacks for the completion of Caligula. The man who could be so represented in art had nothing wholly vulgar in him. The brutality of Caracalla, the overblown sensuality of Nero, the effeminacy of Commodus or Heliogabalus, are all absent here. This face idealises the torture of a morbid soul. It is withal so truly beautiful that it might easily be made the poem of high suffering or noble passion. If the bronze were plastic, I see how a great sculptor, by but few strokes, could convert it into an agonising Stephen or Sebastian. As it is, the unimaginable touch of disease, the unrest of madness, made Caligula the genius of insatiable appetite; and his martyrdom was the torment of lust and ennui and everlasting agitation. The accident of empire tantalised him with vain hopes of satisfying the Charybdis of his soul's sick cravings. From point

135

to point he passed of empty pleasure and unsatisfying cruelty, for ever hungry; until the malady of his spirit, unrestrained by any limitations, and with the right medium for its development, became unique—the tragic type of pathological desire. What more than all things must have plagued a man with that face was probably the unavoidable meanness of his career. When we study the chapters of Suetonius, we are forced to feel that, though the situation and the madness of Caligula were dramatically impressive, his crimes were trivial and, small. In spite of the vast scale on which he worked his devilish will, his life presents a total picture of sordid vice, differing only from pot-house dissipation and schoolboy cruelty in point of size. And this of a truth is the Nemesis of evil. After a time, mere tyrannous caprice must become commonplace and cloying, tedious to the tyrant, and uninteresting to the student of humanity: nor can I believe that Caligula failed to perceive this to his own infinite disgust.

136

Suetonius asserts that he was hideously ugly. How are we to square this testimony with the witness of the bronze before us? What changed the face, so beautiful and terrible in youth, to ugliness that shrank from sight in manhood? Did the murderers find it blurred in its fine lineaments, furrowed with lines of care, hollowed with the soul's hunger? Unless a life of vice and madness had succeeded in making Caligula's face what the faces of some maniacs are—the bloated ruin of what was once a living witness to the soul within—I could fancy that death may have sanctified it with even more beauty than this bust of the self-tormented young man shows. Have we not all seen the anguish of thought-fretted faces smoothed out by the hands of the Deliverer?

FERRARI AT VERCELLI

It is possible that many visitors to the Cathedral of Como have carried away the memory of stately women with abundant yellow hair and draperies of green and crimson, in a picture they connect thereafter with Gaudenzio Ferrari. And when they come to Milan, they are probably both impressed and disappointed by a Martyrdom of S. Catherine in the Brera, bearing the same artist's name. If they wish to understand this painter, they must seek him at Varallo, at Saronno, and at Vercelli. In the Church of S. Cristoforo in Vercelli, Gaudenzio Ferrari at the full height of his powers showed what he could do to justify Lomazzo's title chosen for him of the Eagle. He has indeed the strong wing and the swiftness of the king of birds. And yet the works of few really great painters—and among the really great we place Ferrari—leave upon the mind a more distressing sense of imperfection. Extraordinary fertility of fancy, vehement dramatic passion, sincere study of nature, and great command of technical resources are here (as elsewhere in Ferrari's frescoes) neutralised by an incurable defect of the combining and harmonising faculty, so essential to a masterpiece. There is stuff enough of thought and vigour and imagination to make a dozen artists. And yet we turn away disappointed from the crowded, dazzling, stupefying wilderness of forma and faces on these mighty walls.

137

All that Ferrari derived from actual life—the heads of single figures, the powerful movement of men and women in excited action, the monumental pose of two praying nuns—is admirably rendered. His angels too, in S. Cristoforo as elsewhere, are quite original; not only in their type of beauty, which is terrestrial and peculiar to Ferrari, without a touch of Correggio's sensuality; but also in the intensity of their emotion, the realisation of their vitality. Those which hover round the Cross in the fresco of the 'Crucifixion' are as passionate as any angels of the Giottesque masters in Assisi. Those again which crowd the Stable of Bethlehem in the 'Nativity' yield no point of idyllic charm to Gozzoli's in the Riccardi Chapel.

The 'Crucifixion' and the 'Assumption of Madonna' are very tall and narrow compositions, audacious in their attempt to fill almost unmanageable space with a connected action. Of the two frescoes the 'Crucifixion,' which has points of strong similarity to the same subject at Varallo, is by far the best. Ferrari never painted anything at once truer to life and nobler in tragic style than the fainting Virgin. Her face expresses the very acme of martyrdom—not exaggerated nor spasmodic, but real and sublime—in the suffering of a stately matron. In points like this Ferrari cannot be surpassed. Raphael could scarcely have done better; besides, there is an air of sincerity, a stamp of popular truth, in this episode, which lies beyond Raphael's sphere. It reminds us rather of Tintoretto.

138

After the 'Crucifixion,' I place the 'Adoration of the Magi,' full of fine

mundane motives and gorgeous costumes; then the 'Sposalizio' (whose marriage, I am not certain), the only grandly composed picture of the series, and marked by noble heads; then the 'Adoration of the Shepherds,' with two lovely angels holding the bambino. The 'Assumption of the Magdalen'—for which fresco there is a valuable cartoon in the Albertina Collection at Turin—must have been a fine picture; but it is ruined now. An oil altar-piece in the choir of the same church struck me less than the frescoes. It represents Madonna and a crowd of saints under an orchard of apple-trees, with cherubs curiously flung about almost at random in the air. The motive of the orchard is prettily conceived and carried out with spirit.

What Ferrari possessed was rapidity of movement, fulness and richness of reality, exuberance of invention, excellent portraiture, dramatic vehemence, and an almost unrivalled sympathy with the swift and passionate world of angels. What he lacked was power of composition, simplicity of total effect, harmony in colouring, control over his own luxuriance, the sense of tranquillity. He seems to have sought grandeur in size and multitude, richness, éclat, contrast. Being the disciple of Lionardo and Raphael, his defects are truly singular. As a composer, the old leaven of Giovenone remained in him; but he felt the dramatic tendencies of a later age, and in occasional episodes he realised them with a force and *furia* granted to very few of the Italian painters.

139

LANINI AT VERCELLI

The Casa Mariano is a palace which belonged to a family of that name. Like many houses of the sort in Italy, it fell to vile uses; and its hall of audience was turned into a lumber-room. The Operai of Vercelli, I was told, bought the palace a few years ago, restored the noble hall, and devoted a smaller room to a collection of pictures valuable for students of the early Vercellese style of painting. Of these there is no need to speak. The great hall is the gem of the Casa Mariano. It has a coved roof, with a large flat oblong space in the centre of the ceiling. The whole of this vault and the lunettes beneath were painted by Lanini; so runs the tradition of the fresco-painter's name; and though much injured by centuries of outrage, and somewhat marred by recent restoration, these frescoes form a precious monument of Lombard art. The object of the painter's design seems to have been the glorification of Music. In the central compartment of the roof is an assembly of the gods, obviously borrowed from Raphael's 'Marriage of Cupid and Psyche' in the Farnesina at Rome. The fusion of Roman composition with Lombard execution constitutes the chief charm of this singular work, and makes it, so far as I am aware, unique. Single figures of the goddesses, and the whole movement of the scene upon Olympus, are transcribed without attempt at concealment. And yet the fresco is not a barefaced copy. The manner of feeling and of execution is quite different from that of Raphael's school. The poetry and sentiment are genuinely Lombard. None of Raphael's pupils could have carried out his design with a delicacy of emotion and a technical skill in colouring so consummate. What, we think, as we gaze upward, would the Master have given for such a craftsman? The hardness, coarseness, and animal crudity of the Roman School are absent: so also is their vigour. But where the grace of form and colour is so soft and sweet, where the high-bred calm of good company is so sympathetically rendered, where the atmosphere of amorous languor and of melody is so artistically diffused, we cannot miss the powerful modelling and rather vulgar *tours de force* of Giulio Romano. The scale of tone is silvery golden. There are no hard blues, no coarse red flesh-tints, no black shadows. Mellow lights, the morning hues of primrose, or of palest amber, pervade the whole society. It is a court of gentle and harmonious souls; and though this style of beauty might cloy, at first sight there is something ravishing in those yellow-haired white-limbed, blooming deities. No movement of lascivious grace as in Correggio, no perturbation of the senses as in some of the Venetians, disturbs the rhythm of their music; nor is the pleasure of the flesh, though felt by the painter and communicated to the spectator, an interruption to their divine calm. The white, saffron-haired goddesses are grouped together like stars seen in the topaz light of evening, like daffodils half smothered in snowdrops, and among them, Diana, with the crescent on her forehead, is the fairest. Her dream-like beauty need fear no comparison with the Diana of the Camera di S. Paolo. Apollo and Bacchus are scarcely less lovely in their bloom of earliest manhood; honey-pale, as Greeks would say; like statues of living electron; realising Simaetha's picture of her lover and his friend:—

140

[9] 'The down upon their cheeks and chin was yellower than helichrysus, and their breasts gleamed whiter far than thou, O Moon.'

It was thus that the almost childlike spirit of the Milanese painters felt the antique: how differently from their Roman brethren! It was thus that they interpreted the lines of their own poets:—

E i tuoi capei più volte ho somigliati
Di Cerere a le paglie secche o bionde
Dintorno crespi al tuo capo legati.^[10]

[10] 'Thy tresses have I oftentimes compared to Ceres' yellow autumn sheaves, wreathed in curled bands around thy head.'

Yet the painter of this hall—whether we are to call him Lanini or another—was not a composer. Where he has not robbed the motives and the distribution of the figures from Raphael, he has nothing left but grace of detail. The intellectual feebleness of his style may be seen in many figures of women playing upon instruments of music, ranged around the walls. One girl at the organ is graceful; another with a tambourine has a sort of Bassarid beauty. But the group of Apollo, Pegasus, and a Muse upon Parnassus, is a failure in its meaningless frigidity, while few of these subordinate compositions show power of conception or vigour of design.

Lanini, like Sodoma, was a native of Vercelli; and though he was Ferrari's pupil, there is more in him of Luini or of Sodoma than of his master. He does not rise at any point to the height of these three great masters, but he shares some of Luini's and Sodoma's fine qualities, without having any of Ferrari's force. A visit to the mangled remnants of his frescoes in S. Caterina will repay the student of art. This was once, apparently, a double church, or a church with the hall and chapel of a *confraternita* appended to it. One portion of the building was painted with the history of the Saint; and very lovely must this work have been, to judge by the fragments which have recently been rescued from whitewash, damp, and ruthless mutilation. What wonderful Lombard faces, half obliterated on the broken wall and mouldering plaster, smile upon us like drowned memories swimming up from the depths of oblivion! Wherever three or four are grouped together, we find an exquisite little picture—an old woman and two young women in a doorway, for example, telling no story, but touching us with simple harmony of form. Nothing further is needed to render their grace intelligible. Indeed, knowing the faults of the school, we may seek some consolation by telling ourselves that these incomplete fragments yield Lanini's best. In the coved compartments of the roof, above the windows, ran a row of dancing boys; and these are still most beautifully modelled, though the pallor of recent whitewash is upon them. All the boys have blonde hair. They are naked, with scrolls or ribbons wreathed around them, adding to the airiness of their continual dance. Some of the loveliest are in a room used to stow away the lumber of the church—old boards and curtains, broken lanterns, candle-ends in tin sconces, the musty apparatus of festival adornments, and in the midst of all a battered, weather-beaten bier.

142

THE PIAZZA OF PIACENZA

The great feature of Piacenza is its famous piazza—romantically, picturesquely perfect square, surpassing the most daring attempts of the scene-painter, and realising a poet's dreams. The space is considerable, and many streets converge upon it at irregular angles. Its finest architectural feature is the antique Palace of the Commune: Gothic arcades of stone below, surmounted by a brick building with wonderfully delicate and varied terra-cotta work in the round-arched windows. Before this façade, on the marble pavement, prance the bronze equestrian statues of two Farnesi—insignificant men, exaggerated horses, flying drapery—as *barocco* as it is possible to be in style, but so splendidly toned with verdigris, so superb in their *bravura* attitude, and so happily placed in the line of two streets lending far vistas from the square into the town beyond, that it is difficult to criticise them seriously. They form, indeed, an important element in the pictorial effect, and enhance the terra-cotta work of the façade by the contrast of their colour.

143

The time to see this square is in evening twilight—that wonderful hour

after sunset—when the people are strolling on the pavement, polished to a mirror by the pacing of successive centuries, and when the cavalry soldiers group themselves at the angles under the lamp-posts or beneath the dimly lighted Gothic arches of the Palace. This is the magical mellow hour to be sought by lovers of the picturesque in all the towns of Italy, the hour which, by its tender blendings of sallow western lights with glimmering lamps, casts the veil of half shadow over any crudeness and restores the injuries of Time; the hour when all the tints of these old buildings are intensified, etherealised, and harmonised by one pervasive glow. When I last saw Piacenza, it had been raining all day; and ere sundown a clearing had come from the Alps, followed by fresh threatenings of thunderstorms. The air was very liquid. There was a tract of yellow sunset sky to westward, a faint new moon half swathed in mist above, and over all the north a huge towered thundercloud kept flashing distant lightnings. The pallid primrose of the West, forced down and reflected back from that vast bank of tempest, gave unearthly beauty to the hues of church and palace—tender half-tones of violet and russet paling into greys and yellows on what in daylight seemed but dull red brick. Even the uncompromising façade of S. Francesco helped; and the Dukes were like statues of the 'Gran Commendatore,' waiting for Don Giovanni's invitation.

144

MASOLINO AT CASTIGLIONE D'OLONA

Through the loveliest Arcadian scenery of woods and fields and rushing waters the road leads downward from Varese to Castiglione. The Collegiate Church stands on a leafy hill above the town, with fair prospect over groves and waterfalls and distant mountains. Here in the choir is a series of frescoes by Masolino da Panicale, the master of Masaccio, who painted them about the year 1428. 'Masolinus de Florentia pinxit' decides their authorship. The histories of the Virgin, S. Stephen and S. Lawrence, are represented: but the injuries of time and neglect have been so great that it is difficult to judge them fairly. All we feel for certain is that Masolino had not yet escaped from the traditional Giottesque mannerism. Only a group of Jews stoning Stephen, and Lawrence before the tribunal, remind us by dramatic energy of the Brancacci Chapel.

The Baptistery frescoes, dealing with the legend of S. John, show a remarkable advance; and they are luckily in better preservation. A soldier lifting his two-handed sword to strike off the Baptist's head is a vigorous figure, full of Florentine realism. Also in the Baptism in Jordan we are reminded of Masaccio by an excellent group of bathers—one man taking off his hose, another putting them on again, a third standing naked with his back turned, and a fourth shivering half-dressed with a look of curious sadness on his face. The nude has been carefully studied and well realised. The finest composition of this series is a large panel representing a double action—Salome at Herod's table begging for the Baptist's head, and then presenting it to her mother Herodias. The costumes are quattrocento Florentine, exactly rendered. Salome is a graceful slender creature; the two women who regard her offering to Herodias with mingled curiosity and horror, are well conceived. The background consists of a mountain landscape in Masaccio's simple manner, a rich Renaissance villa, and an open loggia. The architecture perspective is scientifically accurate, and a frieze of boys with garlands on the villa is in the best manner of Florentine sculpture. On the mountain side, diminished in scale, is a group of elders, burying the body of S. John. These are massed together and robed in the style of Masaccio, and have his virile dignity of form and action. Indeed this interesting wall-painting furnishes an epitome of Florentine art, in its intentions and achievements, during the first half of the fifteenth century. The colour is strong and brilliant, and the execution solid.

145

The margin of the Salome panel has been used for scratching the Chronicle of Castiglione. I read one date, 1568, several of the next century, the record of a duel between two gentlemen, and many inscriptions to this effect, 'Erodiana Regina,' 'Omnia praetereunt,' &c. A dirty one-eyed fellow keeps the place. In my presence he swept the frescoes over with a scratchy broom, flaying their upper surface in profound unconsciousness of mischief. The armour of the executioner has had its steel colours almost rubbed off by this infernal process. Damp and cobwebs are far kinder.

146

THE CERTOSA

The Certosa of Pavia leaves upon the mind an impression of

bewildering sumptuousness: nowhere else are costly materials so combined with a lavish expenditure of the rarest art. Those who have only once been driven round together with the crew of sightseers, can carry little away but the memory of lapis-lazuli and bronze-work, inlaid agates and labyrinthine sculpture, cloisters tenantless in silence, fair painted faces smiling from dark corners on the senseless crowd, trim gardens with rows of pink primroses in spring, and of begonia in autumn, blooming beneath colonnades of glowing terra-cotta. The striking contrast between the Gothic of the interior and the Renaissance façade, each in its own kind perfect, will also be remembered; and thoughts of the two great houses, Visconti and Sforza, to whose pride of power it is a monument, may be blended with the recollection of art-treasures alien to their spirit.

Two great artists, Ambrogio Borgognone and Antonio Amadeo, are the presiding genii of the Certosa. To minute criticism, based upon the accurate investigation of records and the comparison of styles, must be left the task of separating their work from that of numerous collaborators. But it is none the less certain that the keynote of the whole music is struck by them, Amadeo, the master of the Colleoni chapel at Bergamo, was both sculptor and architect. If the façade of the Certosa be not absolutely his creation, he had a hand in the distribution of its masses and the detail of its ornaments. The only fault in this otherwise faultless product of the purest quattrocento inspiration, is that the façade is a frontispiece, with hardly any structural relation to the church it masks: and this, though serious from the point of view of architecture, is no abatement of its sculpturesque and picturesque refinement. At first sight it seems a wilderness of loveliest reliefs and statues—of angel faces, fluttering raiment, flowing hair, love-laden youths, and stationary figures of grave saints, mid wayward tangles of acanthus and wild vine and cupid-laden foliage; but the subordination of these decorative details to the main design, clear, rhythmical, and lucid, like a chaunt of Pergolese or Stradella, will enrapture one who has the sense for unity evoked from divers elements, for thought subduing all caprices to the harmony of beauty. It is not possible elsewhere in Italy to find the instinct of the earlier Renaissance, so amorous in its expenditure of rare material, so lavish in its bestowal of the costliest workmanship on ornamental episodes, brought into truer keeping with a pure and simple structural effect.

147

All the great sculptor-architects of Lombardy worked in succession on this miracle of beauty; and this may account for the sustained perfection of style, which nowhere suffers from the languor of exhaustion in the artist or from repetition of motives. It remains the triumph of North Italian genius, exhibiting qualities of tenderness and self-abandonment to inspiration, which we lack in the severer masterpieces of the Tuscan school.

To Borgognone is assigned the painting of the roof in nave and choir—exceeding rich, varied, and withal in sympathy with stately Gothic style. Borgognone again is said to have designed the saints and martyrs worked in *tarsia* for the choir-stalls. His frescoes are in some parts well preserved, as in the lovely little Madonna at the end of the south chapel, while the great fresco above the window in the south transept has an historical value that renders it interesting in spite of partial decay. Borgognone's oil pictures throughout the church prove, if such proof were needed after inspection of the altar-piece in our National Gallery, that he was one of the most powerful and original painters of Italy, blending the repose of the earlier masters and their consummate workmanship with a profound sensibility to the finest shades of feeling and the rarest forms of natural beauty. He selected an exquisite type of face for his young men and women; on his old men he bestowed singular gravity and dignity. His saints are a society of strong, pure, restful, earnest souls, in whom the passion of deepest emotion is transfigured by habitual calm. The brown and golden harmonies he loved, are gained without sacrifice of lustre: there is a self-restraint in his colouring which corresponds to the reserve of his emotion; and though a regret sometimes rises in our mind that he should have modelled the light and shade upon his faces with a brusque, unpleasing hardness, their pallor dwells within our memory as something delicately sought if not consummately attained. In a word, Borgognone was a true Lombard of the best time. The very imperfection of his flesh-painting repeats in colour what the greatest Lombard sculptors sought in stone—a sharpness of relief that passes over into angularity. This brusqueness was the counterpoise to tenderness of feeling and intensity of fancy in these northern artists. Of all Borgognone's pictures in the Certosa I should select the altar-piece of S. Siro with S. Lawrence and S. Stephen

148

and two Fathers of the Church, for its fusion of this master's qualities.

The Certosa is a wilderness of lovely workmanship. From Borgognone's majesty we pass into the quiet region of Luini's Christian grace, or mark the influence of Lionardo on that rare Assumption of Madonna by his pupil, Andrea Solari. Like everything touched by the Lionardesque spirit, this great picture was left unfinished: yet Northern Italy has nothing finer to show than the landscape, outspread in its immeasurable purity of calm, behind the grouped Apostles and the ascendant Mother of Heaven. The feeling of that happy region between the Alps and Lombardy, where there are many waters—*et tacitos sine labe laous sine murmure rivos*—and where the last spurs of the mountains sink in undulations to the plain, has passed into this azure vista, just as all Umbria is suggested in a twilight background of young Raphael or Perugino.

149

The portraits of the Dukes of Milan and their families carry us into a very different realm of feeling. Medallions above the doors of sacristy and chancel, stately figures reared aloft beneath gigantic canopies, men and women slumbering with folded hands upon their marble biers—we read in all those sculptured forms a strange record of human restlessness, resolved into the quiet of the tomb. The iniquities of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, *il gran Biscione*, the blood-thirst of Gian Maria, the dark designs of Filippo and his secret vices, Francesco Sforza's treason, Galeazzo Maria's vanities and lusts; their tyrants' dread of thunder and the knife; their awful deaths by pestilence and the assassin's poignard; their selfishness, oppression, cruelty and fraud; the murders of their kinsmen; their labyrinthine plots and acts of broken faith;—all is tranquil now, and we can say to each what Bosola found for the Duchess of Malfi ere her execution:—

Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent:
A long war disturbed your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed!

Some of these faces are commonplace, with *bourgeois* cunning written on the heavy features; one is bluff, another stolid, a third bloated, a fourth stately. The sculptors have dealt fairly with all, and not one has the lineaments of utter baseness. To Cristoforo Solari's statues of Lodovico Sforza and his wife, Beatrice d'Este, the palm of excellence in art and of historical interest must be awarded. Sculpture has rarely been more dignified and true to life than here. The woman with her short clustering curls, the man with his strong face, are resting after that long fever which brought woe to Italy, to Europe a new age, and to the boasted minion of Fortune a slow death in the prison palace of Loches. Attired in ducal robes, they lie in state; and the sculptor has carved the lashes on their eyelids, heavy with death's marmoreal sleep. He at least has passed no judgment on their crimes. Let us too bow and leave their memories to the historian's pen, their spirits to God's mercy.

150

After all wanderings in this Temple of Art, we return to Antonio Amadeo, to his long-haired seraphs playing on the lutes of Paradise, to his angels of the Passion with their fluttering robes and arms outspread in agony, to his saints and satyrs mingled on pilasters of the marble doorways, his delicate *Lavabo* decorations, and his hymns of piety expressed in noble forms of weeping women and dead Christs. Wherever we may pass, this master-spirit of the Lombard style enthalls attention. His curious treatment of drapery as though it were made of crumpled paper, and his trick of enhancing relief by sharp angles and attenuated limbs, do not detract from his peculiar charm. That is his way, very different from Donatello's, of attaining to the maximum of life and lightness in the stubborn vehicle of stone. Nor do all the riches of the choir—those multitudes of singing angels, those Ascensions and Assumptions, and innumerable bas-reliefs of gleaming marble moulded into softest wax by mastery of art—distract our eyes from the single round medallion, not larger than a common plate, inscribed by him upon the front of the high altar. Perhaps, if one who loved Amadeo were bidden to point out his masterpiece, he would lead the way at once to this. The space is small: yet it includes the whole tragedy of the Passion. Christ is lying dead among the women on his mother's lap, and there are pitying angels in the air above. One woman lifts his arm, another makes her breast a pillow for his head. Their agony is hushed, but felt in every limb and feature; and the extremity of suffering is seen in each articulation of the worn and wounded form just taken from the cross. It would be too painful, were not the harmony of art so rare, the interlacing of those many figures in a simple round so exquisite. The noblest tranquillity and the most passionate emotion are here fused in a manner of adorable naturalness.

151

From the church it is delightful to escape into the cloisters, flooded with sunlight, where the swallows skim, and the brown hawks circle, and the mason bees are at work upon their cells among the carvings. The arcades of the two cloisters are the final triumph of Lombard terra-cotta. The memory fails before such infinite invention, such facility and felicity of execution. Wreaths of cupids gliding round the arches among grape-bunches and bird-haunted foliage of vine; rows of angels, like rising and setting planets, some smiling and some grave, ascending and descending by the Gothic curves; saints stationary on their pedestals, and faces leaning from the rounds above; crowds of cherubs, and courses of stars, and acanthus leaves in woven lines, and ribands incessantly inscribed with Ave Maria! Then, over all, the rich red light and purple shadows of the brick, than which no substance sympathises more completely with the sky of solid blue above, the broad plain space of waving summer grass beneath our feet.

It is now late afternoon, and when evening comes, the train will take us back to Milan. There is yet a little while to rest tired eyes and strained spirits among the willows and the poplars by the monastery wall. Through that grey-green leafage, young with early spring, the pinnacles of the Certosa leap like flames into the sky. The rice-fields are under water, far and wide, shining like burnished gold beneath the level light now near to sun-down. Frogs are croaking; those persistent frogs, whom the Muses have ordained to sing for aye, in spite of Bion and all tuneful poets dead. We sit and watch the water-snakes, the busy rats, the hundred creatures swarming in the fat well-watered soil. Nightingales here and there, new-comers, tune their timid April song; but, strangest of all sounds in such a place, my comrade from the Grisons jodels forth an Alpine cowherd's melody. *Auf den Alpen droben ist ein herrliches Leben!*

Did the echoes of Gian Galeazzo's convent ever wake to such a tune as this before?

SAN MAURIZIO

The student of art in Italy, after mastering the characters of different styles and epochs, finds a final satisfaction in the contemplation of buildings designed and decorated by one master, or by groups of artists interpreting the spirit of a single period. Such supreme monuments of the national genius are not very common, and they are therefore the more precious. Giotto's Chapel at Padua; the Villa Farnesina at Rome, built by Peruzzi and painted in fresco by Raphael and Sodoma; the Palazzo del Te at Mantua, Giulio Romano's masterpiece; the Scuola di San Rocco, illustrating the Venetian Renaissance at its climax, might be cited among the most splendid of these achievements. In the church of the Monastero Maggiore at Milan, dedicated to S. Maurizio, Lombard architecture and fresco-painting may be studied in this rare combination. The monastery itself, one of the oldest in Milan, formed a retreat for cloistered virgins following the rule of S. Benedict. It may have been founded as early as the tenth century; but its church was rebuilt in the first two decades of the sixteenth, between 1503 and 1519, and was immediately afterwards decorated with frescoes by Luini and his pupils. Gian Giacomo Dolcebono, architect and sculptor, called by his fellow-craftsmen *magistro di taliare pietre*, gave the design, at once simple and harmonious, which was carried out with hardly any deviation from his plan. The church is a long parallelogram, divided into two unequal portions, the first and smaller for the public, the second for the nuns. The walls are pierced with rounded and pilastered windows, ten on each side, four of which belong to the outer and six to the inner section. The dividing wall or septum rises to the point from which the groinings of the roof spring; and round three sides of the whole building, north, east, and south, runs a gallery for the use of the convent. The altars of the inner and outer church are placed against the septum, back to back, with certain differences of structure that need not be described. Simple and severe, S. Maurizio owes its architectural beauty wholly and entirely to purity of line and perfection of proportion. There is a prevailing spirit of repose, a sense of space, fair, lightsome, and adapted to serene moods of the meditative fancy in this building, which is singularly at variance with the religious mysticism and imaginative grandeur of a Gothic edifice. The principal beauty of the church, however, is its tone of colour. Every square inch is covered with fresco or rich woodwork, mellowed by time into that harmony of tints which blends the work of greater and lesser artists in one golden hue of brown. Round the arcades of the convent-loggia run delicate arabesques with faces of fair female saints—Catherine, Agnes, Lucy, Agatha,—gem-like or star-like, gazing from their

gallery upon the church below. The Luinesque smile is on their lips and in their eyes, quiet, refined, as though the emblems of their martyrdom brought back no thought of pain to break the Paradise of rest in which they dwell. There are twenty-six in all, a sisterhood of stainless souls, the lilies of Love's garden planted round Christ's throne. Soldier saints are mingled with them in still smaller rounds above the windows, chosen to illustrate the virtues of an order which renounced the world. To decide whose hand produced these masterpieces of Lombard suavity and grace, or whether more than one, would not be easy. Near the altar we can perhaps trace the style of Bartolommeo Suardi in an Annunciation painted on the spandrils—that heroic style, large and noble, known to us by the chivalrous S. Martin and the glorified Madonna of the Brera frescoes. It is not impossible that the male saints of the loggia may be also his, though a tenderer touch, a something more nearly Lionardesque in its quietude, must be discerned in Lucy and her sisters. The whole of the altar in this inner church belongs to Luini. Were it not for darkness and decay, we should pronounce this series of the Passion in nine great compositions, with saints and martyrs and torch-bearing genii, to be one of his most ambitious and successful efforts. As it is, we can but judge in part; the adolescent beauty of Sebastian, the grave compassion of S. Rocco, the classical perfection of the cupid with lighted tapers, the gracious majesty of women smiling on us sideways from their Lombard eyelids—these remain to haunt our memory, emerging from the shadows of the vault above.

The inner church, as is fitting, excludes all worldly elements. We are in the presence of Christ's agony, relieved and tempered by the sunlight of those beauteous female faces. All is solemn here, still as the convent, pure as the meditations of a novice. We pass the septum, and find ourselves in the outer church appropriated to the laity. Above the high altar the whole wall is covered with Luini's loveliest work, in excellent light and far from ill preserved. The space divides into eight compartments. A Pietà, an Assumption, Saints and Founders of the church, group themselves under the influence of Luini's harmonising colour into one symphonious whole. But the places of distinction are reserved for two great benefactors of the convent, Alessandro de' Bentivogli and his wife, Ippolita Sforza. When the Bentivogli were expelled from Bologna by the Papal forces, Alessandro settled at Milan, where he dwelt, honoured by the Sforzas and allied to them by marriage, till his death in 1532. He was buried in the monastery by the side of his sister Alessandra, a nun of the order. Luini has painted the illustrious exile in his habit as he lived. He is kneeling, as though in ever-during adoration of the altar mystery, attired in a long black senatorial robe trimmed with furs. In his left hand he holds a book; and above his pale, serenely noble face is a little black berretta. Saints attend him, as though attesting to his act of faith. Opposite kneels Ippolita, his wife, the brilliant queen of fashion, the witty leader of society, to whom Bandello dedicated his *Novelle*, and whom he praised as both incomparably beautiful and singularly learned. Her queenly form is clothed from head to foot in white brocade, slashed and trimmed with gold lace, and on her forehead is a golden circlet. She has the proud port of a princess, the beauty of a woman past her prime but stately, the indescribable dignity of attitude which no one but Luini could have rendered so majestically sweet. In her hand is a book; and she, like Alessandro, has her saintly sponsors, Agnes and Catherine and S. Scolastica.

Few pictures bring the splendid Milanese Court so vividly before us as these portraits of the Bentivogli: they are, moreover, very precious for the light they throw on what Luini could achieve in the secular style so rarely touched by him. Great, however, as are these frescoes, they are far surpassed both in value and interest by his paintings in the side chapel of S. Catherine. Here more than anywhere else, more even than at Saronno or Lugano, do we feel the true distinction of Luini—his unrivalled excellence as a colourist, his power over pathos, the refinement of his feeling, and the peculiar beauty of his favourite types. The chapel was decorated at the expense of a Milanese advocate, Francesco Besozzi, who died in 1529. It is he who is kneeling, grey-haired and bareheaded, under the protection of S. Catherine of Alexandria, intently gazing at Christ unbound from the scourging pillar. On the other side stand S. Lawrence and S. Stephen, pointing to the Christ and looking at us, as though their lips were framed to say: 'Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow.' Even the soldiers who have done their cruel work, seem softened. They untie the cords tenderly, and support the fainting form, too weak to stand alone. What sadness in the lovely faces of S. Catherine and Lawrence! What divine anguish in the loosened limbs and bending body of Christ; what piety in

the adoring old man! All the moods proper to this supreme tragedy of the faith are touched as in some tenor song with low accompaniment of viols; for it was Luini's special province to feel profoundly and to express musically. The very depth of the Passion is there; and yet there is no discord.

Just in proportion to this unique faculty for yielding a melodious representation of the most intense moments of stationary emotion, was his inability to deal with a dramatic subject. The first episode of S. Catherine's execution, when the wheel was broken and the executioners struck by lightning, is painted in this chapel without energy and with a lack of composition that betrays the master's indifference to his subject. Far different is the second episode when Catherine is about to be beheaded. The executioner has raised his sword to strike. She, robed in brocade of black and gold, so cut as to display the curve of neck and back, while the bosom is covered, leans her head above her praying hands, and waits the blow in sweetest resignation. Two soldiers stand at some distance in a landscape of hill and meadow; and far up are seen the angels carrying her body to its tomb upon Mount Sinai. I cannot find words or summon courage to describe the beauty of this picture; its atmosphere of holy peace, the dignity of its composition, the golden richness of its colouring. The most tragic situation has here again been alchemised by Luini's magic into a pure idyll, without the loss of power, without the sacrifice of edification.

S. Catherine in this incomparable fresco is a portrait, the history of which so strikingly illustrates the relation of the arts to religion on the one hand, and to life on the other, in the age of the Renaissance, that it cannot be omitted. At the end of his fourth Novella, having related the life of the Contessa di Cellant, Bandello says: 'And so the poor woman was beheaded; such was the end of her unbridled desires; and he who would fain see her painted to the life, let him go to the Church of the Monistero Maggiore, and there will he behold her portrait.' The Contessa di Cellant was the only child of a rich usurer who lived at Casal Monferrato. Her mother was a Greek; and she was a girl of such exquisite beauty, that, in spite of her low origin, she became the wife of the noble Ermes Visconti in her sixteenth year. He took her to live with him at Milan, where she frequented the house of the Bentivogli, but none other. Her husband told Bandello that he knew her temper better than to let her visit with the freedom of the Milanese ladies. Upon his death, while she was little more than twenty, she retired to Casale and led a gay life among many lovers. One of these, the Count of Cellant in the Val d'Aosta, became her second husband, conquered by her extraordinary loveliness. They could not, however, agree together. She left him, and established herself at Pavia. Rich with her father's wealth and still of most seductive beauty, she now abandoned herself to a life of profligacy. Three among her lovers must be named: Ardizzino Valperga, Count of Masino; Roberto Sanseverino, of the princely Naples family; and Don Pietro di Cardona, a Sicilian. With each of the two first she quarrelled, and separately besought each to murder the other. They were friends and frustrated her plans by communicating them to one another. The third loved her with the insane passion of a very young man. What she desired, he promised to do blindly; and she bade him murder his two predecessors in her favour. At this time she was living at Milan, where the Duke of Bourbon was acting as viceroy for the Emperor. Don Pietro took twenty-five armed men of his household, and waylaid the Count of Masino, as he was returning with his brother and eight or nine servants, late one night from supper. Both the brothers and the greater part of their suite were killed: but Don Pietro was caught. He revealed the atrocity of his mistress; and she was sent to prison. Incapable of proving her innocence, and prevented from escaping, in spite of 15,000 golden crowns with which she hoped to bribe her jailors, she was finally beheaded. Thus did a vulgar and infamous Messalina, distinguished only by rare beauty, furnish Luini with a S. Catherine for this masterpiece of pious art! The thing seems scarcely credible. Yet Bandello lived in Milan while the Church of S. Maurizio was being painted; nor does he show the slightest sign of disgust at the discord between the Contessa's life and her artistic presentation in the person of a royal martyr.

A HUMANIST'S MONUMENT

In the Sculpture Gallery of the Brera is preserved a fair white marble tomb, carved by that excellent Lombard sculptor, Agostino Busti. The epitaph runs as follows:—

En Virtutem Mortis nesciam.

Vivet Lancinus Curtius
Sæcula per omnia
Quascunque lustrans oras,
Tantum possunt Camoenæ.

'Look here on Virtue that knows nought of Death! Lancinus Curtius shall live through all the centuries, and visit every shore of earth. Such power have the Muses.' The timeworn poet reclines, as though sleeping or resting, ready to be waked; his head is covered with flowing hair, and crowned with laurel; it leans upon his left hand. On either side of his couch stand cupids or genii with torches turned to earth. Above is a group of the three Graces, flanked by winged Pegasi. Higher up are throned two Victories with palms, and at the top a naked Fame. We need not ask who was Lancinus Curtius. He is forgotten, and his virtue has not saved him from oblivion; though he strove in his lifetime, *pro virili parte*, for the palm that Busti carved upon his grave. Yet his monument teaches in short compass a deep lesson; and his epitaph sums up the dream which lured the men of Italy in the Renaissance to their doom. We see before us sculptured in this marble the ideal of the humanistic poet-scholar's life: Love, Grace, the Muse, and Nakedness, and Glory. There is not a single intrusive thought derived from Christianity. The end for which the man lived was Pagan. His hope was earthly fame. Yet his name survives, if this indeed be a survival, not in those winged verses which were to carry him abroad across the earth, but in the marble of a cunning craftsman, scanned now and then by a wandering scholar's eye in the half-darkness of a vault.

160

THE MONUMENT OF GASTON DE FOIX IN THE BRERA

The hero of Ravenna lies stretched upon his back in the hollow of a bier covered with laced drapery; and his head rests on richly ornamented cushions. These decorative accessories, together with the minute work of his scabbard, wrought in the fanciful mannerism of the *cinquecento*, serve to enhance the statuesque simplicity of the young soldier's effigy. The contrast between so much of richness in the merely subordinate details, and this sublime severity of treatment in the person of the hero, is truly and touchingly dramatic. There is a smile as of content in death, upon his face; and the features are exceedingly beautiful—with the beauty of a boy, almost of a woman. The heavy hair is cut straight above the forehead and straight over the shoulders, falling in massive clusters. A delicately sculptured laurel branch is woven into a victor's crown, and laid lightly on the tresses it scarcely seems to clasp. So fragile is this wreath that it does not break the pure outline of the boy-conqueror's head. The armour is quite plain. So is the surcoat. Upon the swelling bust, that seems fit harbour for a hero's heart, there lies the collar of an order composed of cockle-shells; and this is all the ornament given to the figure. The hands are clasped across a sword laid flat upon the breast, and placed between the legs. Upon the chin is a little tuft of hair, parted, and curling either way; for the victor of Ravenna, like the Hermes of Homer, was *πρωτον ὑπμνήτης*, 'a youth of princely blood, whose beard hath just begun to grow, for whom the season of bloom is in its prime of grace.' The whole statue is the idealisation of *virtù*—that quality so highly prized by the Italians and the ancients, so well fitted for commemoration in the arts. It is the apotheosis of human life resolved into undying memory because of one great deed. It is the supreme portrait in modern times of a young hero, chiselled by artists belonging to a race no longer heroic, but capable of comprehending and expressing the æsthetic charm of heroism. Standing before it, we may say of Gaston what Arrian wrote to Hadrian of Achilles:—'That he was a hero, if hero ever lived, I cannot doubt; for his birth and blood were noble, and he was beautiful, and his spirit was mighty, and he passed in youth's prime away from men.' Italian sculpture, under the condition of the *cinquecento*, had indeed no more congenial theme than this of bravery and beauty, youth and fame, immortal honour and untimely death; nor could any sculptor of death have poetised the theme more thoroughly than Agostino Busti, whose simple instinct, unlike that of Michelangelo, led him to subordinate his own imagination to the pathos of reality.

161

SARONNO

The church of Saronno is a pretty building with a Bramantesque cupola, standing among meadows at some distance from the little town. It is the object of a special cult, which draws pilgrims from the

neighbouring country-side; but the concourse is not large enough to load the sanctuary with unnecessary wealth. Everything is very quiet in the holy place, and the offerings of the pious seem to have been only just enough to keep the building and its treasures of art in repair. The church consists of a nave, a central cupola, a vestibule leading to the choir, the choir itself, and a small tribune behind the choir. No other single building in North Italy can boast so much that is first-rate of the work of Luini and Gandenzio Ferrari.

162

The cupola is raised on a sort of drum composed of twelve pieces, perforated with round windows and supported on four massive piers. On the level of the eye are frescoes by Luini of S. Rocco, S. Sebastian, S. Christopher, and S. Antony—by no means in his best style, and inferior to all his other paintings in this church. The Sebastian, for example, shows an effort to vary the traditional treatment of this saint. He is tied in a sprawling attitude to a tree; and little of Luini's special pathos or sense of beauty—the melody of idyllic grace made spiritual—appears in him. These four saints are on the piers. Above are frescoes from the early Bible history by Lanini, painted in continuation of Ferrari's medallions from the story of Adam expelled from Paradise, which fill the space beneath the cupola, leading the eye upward to Ferrari's masterpiece.

The dome itself is crowded with a host of angels singing and playing upon instruments of music. At each of the twelve angles of the drum stands a coryphaeus of this celestial choir, full length, with waving drapery. Higher up, the golden-haired, broad-winged, divine creatures are massed together, filling every square inch of the vault with colour. Yet there is no confusion. The simplicity of the selected motive and the necessities of the place acted like a check on Ferrari, who, in spite of his dramatic impulse, could not tell a story coherently or fill a canvas with harmonised variety. There is no trace of his violence here. Though the motion of music runs through the whole multitude like a breeze, though the joy expressed is a real *tripudio celeste*, not one of all these angels flings his arms abroad or makes a movement that disturbs the rhythm. We feel that they are keeping time and resting quietly, each in his appointed seat, as though the sphere was circling with them round the throne of God, who is their centre and their source of gladness. Unlike Correggio and his imitators, Ferrari has introduced no clouds, and has in no case made the legs of his angels prominent. It is a mass of noble faces and voluminously robed figures, emerging each above the other like flowers in a vase. Each has specific character, while all are robust and full of life, intent upon the service set them. Their instruments of music are all the lutes and viols, flutes, cymbals, drums, fifes, citherns, organs, and harps that Ferrari's day could show. The scale of colour, as usual with Ferrari, is a little heavy; nor are the tints satisfactorily harmonised. But the vigour and invention of the whole work would atone for minor defects of far greater consequence.

163

It is natural, beneath this dome, to turn aside and think one moment of Correggio at Parma. Before the *macchinisti* of the seventeenth century had vulgarised the motive, Correggio's bold attempt to paint heaven in flight from earth—earth left behind in the persons of the Apostles standing round the empty tomb, heaven soaring upward with a spiral vortex into the abyss of light above—had an originality which set at nought all criticism. There is such ecstasy of jubilation, such rapturous rapidity of flight, that we who strain our eyes from below, feel we are in the darkness of the grave which Mary left. A kind of controlling rhythm for the composition is gained by placing Gabriel, Madonna, and Christ at three points in the swirl of angels. Nevertheless, composition—the presiding all-controlling intellect—is just what makes itself felt by absence; and Correggio's special qualities of light and colour have now so far vanished from the cupola of the Duomo that the, constructive poverty is not disguised. Here if anywhere in painting, we may apply Goethe's words—*Gefühl ist Alles*.

164

If then we return to Ferrari's angels at Saronno, we find that the painter of Varallo chose a safer though a far more modest theme. Nor did he expose himself to that most cruel of all degradations which the ethereal genius of Correggio has suffered from incompetent imitators. To daub a tawdry and superficial reproduction of those Parmese frescoes, to fill the cupolas of Italy with veritable *guazzetti di rane*, was comparatively easy; and between our intelligence and what remains of that stupendous masterpiece of boldness, crowd a thousand memories of such ineptitude. On the other hand, nothing but solid work and conscientious inspiration could enable any workman, however able, to follow Ferrari in the path struck out by him at Saronno. His cupola has had no imitator; and its only rival is the noble pendant painted at Varallo by his own hand, of angels in adoring anguish round the Cross.

In the ante-choir of the sanctuary are Luini's priceless frescoes of the 'Marriage of the Virgin,' and the 'Dispute with the Doctors.'^[11] Their execution is flawless, and they are perfectly preserved. If criticism before such admirable examples of so excellent a master be permissible, it may be questioned whether the figures are not too crowded, whether the groups are sufficiently varied and connected by rhythmic lines. Yet the concords of yellow and orange with blue in the 'Sposalizio,' and the blendings of dull violet and red in the 'Disputa,' make up for much of stiffness. Here, as in the Chapel of S. Catherine at Milan, we feel that Luini was the greatest colourist among *frescanti*. In the 'Sposalizio' the female heads are singularly noble and idyllically graceful. Some of the young men too have Luini's special grace and abundance of golden hair. In the 'Disputa' the gravity and dignity of old men are above all things striking.

165

[11] Both these and the large frescoes in the choir have been chromolithographed by the Arundel Society.

Passing into the choir, we find on either hand the 'Adoration of the Magi' and the 'Purification of the Virgin,' two of Luini's divinest frescoes. Above them in lunettes are four Evangelists and four Latin Fathers, with four Sibyls. Time and neglect have done no damage here: and here, again, perforce we notice perfect mastery of colour in fresco. The blues detach themselves too much, perhaps, from the rest of the colouring; and that is all a devil's advocate could say. It is possible that the absence of blue makes the S. Catherine frescoes in the Monastero Maggiore at Milan surpass all other works of Luini. But nowhere else has he shown more beauty and variety in detail than here. The group of women led by Joseph, the shepherd carrying the lamb upon his shoulder, the girl with a basket of white doves, the child with an apple on the altar-steps, the lovely youth in the foreground heedless of the scene; all these are idyllic incidents treated with the purest, the serenest, the most spontaneous, the truest, most instinctive sense of beauty. The landscape includes a view of Saronno, and an episodic picture of the 'Flight into Egypt' where a white-robed angel leads the way. All these lovely things are in the 'Purification,' which is dated *Bernardinus Lovinus pinxit, MDXXV*.

The fresco of the 'Magi' is less notable in detail, and in general effect is more spoiled by obtrusive blues. There is, however, one young man of wholly Lionardesque loveliness, whose divine innocence of adolescence, unalloyed by serious thought, unstirred by passions, almost forces a comparison with Sodoma. The only painter who approaches Luini in what may be called the Lombard, to distinguish it from the Venetian idyll, is Sodoma; and the work of his which comes nearest to Luini's masterpieces is the legend of S. Benedict, at Monte Oliveto, near Siena. Yet Sodoma had not all Luini's innocence or *naïveté*. If he added something slightly humorous which has an indefinite charm, he lacked that freshness as of 'cool, meek-blooded flowers' and boyish voices, which fascinates us in Luini. Sodoma was closer to the earth, and feared not to impregnate what he saw of beauty with the fiercer passions of his nature. If Luini had felt passion, who shall say? It appears nowhere in his work, where life is toned to a religious joyousness. When Shelley compared the poetry of the Theocritean amoulists to the perfume of the tuberose, and that of the earlier Greek poets to 'a meadow-gale of June, which mingles the fragrance of all the flowers of the field,' he supplied us with critical images which may not unfairly be used to point the distinction between Sodoma at Monte Oliveto and Luini at Saronno.

166

THE CASTELLO OF FERRARA

Is it possible that the patron saints of cities should mould the temper of the people to their own likeness? S. George, the chivalrous, is champion of Ferrara. His is the marble group above the Cathedral porch, so feudal in its medieval pomp. He and S. Michael are painted in fresco over the south portcullis of the Castle. His lustrous armour gleams with Giorgionesque brilliancy from Dossi's masterpiece in the Pinacoteca. That Ferrara, the only place in Italy where chivalry struck any root, should have had S. George for patron, is at any rate significant.

The best preserved relic of princely feudal life in Italy is this Castello of the Este family, with its sombre moat, chained drawbridges, doleful dungeons, and unnumbered tragedies, each one of which may be compared with Parisina's history. I do not want to dwell on these things now. It is enough to remember the Castello, built of ruddiest brick, time-mellowed with how many centuries of sun and soft sea-air, as it appeared upon the close of one tempestuous day. Just before evening the rain-clouds parted and the sun flamed out across the misty Lombard plain.

167

The Castello burned like a hero's funeral pyre, and round its high-built turrets swallows circled in the warm blue air. On the moat slept shadows, mixed with flowers of sunset, tossed from pinnacle and gable. Then the sky changed. A roof of thunder-cloud spread overhead with the rapidity of tempest. The dying sun gathered his last strength against it, fretting those steel-blue arches with crimson; and all the fierce light, thrown from vault to vault of cloud, was reflected back as from a shield, and cast in blots and patches on the buildings. The Castle towered up rosy-red and shadowy sombre, enshrined, embosomed in those purple clouds; and momentarily ran lightning forks like rapiers through the growing mass. Everything around, meanwhile, was quiet in the grass-grown streets. The only sound was a high, clear boy's voice chanting an opera tune.

PETRARCH'S TOMB AT ARQUA

The drive from Este along the skirts of the Euganean Hills to Arqua takes one through a country which is tenderly beautiful, because of its contrast between little peaked mountains and the plain. It is not a grand landscape. It lacks all that makes the skirts of Alps and Apennines sublime. Its charm is a certain mystery and repose—an undefined sense of the neighbouring Adriatic, a pervading consciousness of Venice unseen, but felt from far away. From the terraces of Arqua the eye ranges across olive-trees, laurels, and pomegranates on the southern slopes, to the misty level land that melts into the sea, with churches and tall campanili like gigantic galleys setting sail for fairyland over 'the foam of perilous seas forlorn.' Let a blue-black shadow from a thunder-cloud be cast upon this plain, and let one ray of sunlight strike a solitary bell-tower;—it burns with palest flame of rose against the steely dark, and in its slender shaft and shell-like tint of pink all Venice is foreseen.

The village church of Arqua stands upon one of these terraces, with a full stream of clearest water flowing by. On the little square before the church-door, where the peasants congregate at mass-time—open to the skies with all their stars and storms, girdled by the hills, and within hearing of the vocal stream—is Petrarch's sepulchre. Fit resting-place for what remains to earth of such a poet's clay! It is as though archangels, flying, had carried the marble chest and set it down here on the hillside, to be a sign and sanctuary for after-men. A simple rectilinear coffin, of smooth Verona *mandorlato*, raised on four thick columns, and closed by a heavy cippus-cover. Without emblems, allegories, or lamenting genii, this tomb of the great poet, the great awakener of Europe from mental lethargy, encircled by the hills, beneath the canopy of heaven, is impressive beyond the power of words. Bending here, we feel that Petrarch's own winged thoughts and fancies, eternal and ærial, 'forms more real than living man, nurslings of immortality,' have congregated to be the ever-ministering and irremovable attendants on the shrine of one who, while he lived, was purest spirit in a veil of flesh.

ON A MOUNTAIN

Milan is shining in sunset on those purple fields; and a score of cities flash back the last red light, which shows each inequality and undulation of Lombardy outspread four thousand feet beneath. Both ranges, Alps and Apennines, are clear to view; and all the silvery lakes are over-canopied and brought into one picture by flame-litten mists. Monte Rosa lifts her crown of peaks above a belt of clouds into light of living fire. The Mischabelhörner and the Dom rest stationary angel-wings upon the rampart, which at this moment is the wall of heaven. The pyramid of distant Monte Viso burns like solid amethyst far, far away. Mont Cervin beckons to his brother, the gigantic Finsteraarhorn, across tracts of liquid ether. Bells are rising from the villages, now wrapped in gloom, between me and the glimmering lake. A hush of evening silence falls upon the ridges, cliffs, and forests of this billowy hill, ascending into wave-like crests, and toppling with awful chasms over the dark waters of Lugano. It is good to be alone here at this hour. Yet I must rise and go—passing through meadows, where white lilies sleep in silvery drifts, and asphodel is pale with spires of faintest rose, and narcissus dreams of his own beauty, loading the air with fragrance sweet as some love-music of Mozart. These fields want only the white figure of Persephone to make them poems: and in this twilight one might fancy that the queen had left her throne by Pluto's side, to mourn for her dead youth among the flowers uplifted between earth and heaven. Nay, they are poems now, these fields; with that unchanging background of history, romance, and human life—the Lombard plain, against whose violet breadth the

blossoms bend their faint heads to the evening air. Downward we hurry, on pathways where the beeches meet, by silent farms, by meadows honey-scented, deep in dew. The columbine stands tall and still on those green slopes of shadowy grass. The nightingale sings now, and now is hushed again. Streams murmur through the darkness, where the growth of trees, heavy with honeysuckle and wild rose, is thickest. Fireflies begin to flit above the growing corn. At last the plain is reached, and all the skies are tremulous with starlight. Alas, that we should vibrate so obscurely to these harmonies of earth and heaven! The inner finer sense of them seems somehow unattainable—that spiritual touch of soul evoking soul from nature, which should transfigure our dull mood of self into impersonal delight. Man needs to be a mytho-poet at some moments, or, better still, to be a mystic steeped through half-unconsciousness in the vast wonder of the world. Gold and untouched to poetry or piety by scenes that ought to blend the spirit in ourselves with spirit in the world without, we can but wonder how this phantom show of mystery and beauty will pass away from us—how soon—and we be where, see what, use all our sensibilities on aught or nought?

170

SIC GENIUS

In the picture-gallery at Modena there is a masterpiece of Dosso Dossi. The frame is old and richly carved; and the painting, bordered by its beautiful dull gold, shines with the lustre of an emerald. In his happy moods Dosso set colour upon canvas, as no other painter out of Venice ever did; and here he is at his happiest. The picture is the portrait of a jester, dressed in courtly clothes and with a feathered cap upon his head. He holds a lamb in his arms, and carries the legend, *Sic Genius*. Behind him is a landscape of exquisite brilliancy and depth. His face is young and handsome. Dosso has made it one most wonderful laugh. Even so perhaps laughed Yorick. Nowhere else have I seen a laugh thus painted: not violent, not loud, although the lips are opened to show teeth of dazzling whiteness;—but fine and delicate, playing over the whole face like a ripple sent up from the depths of the soul within. Who was he? What does the lamb mean? How should the legend be interpreted? We cannot answer these questions. He may have been the court-fool of Ferrara; and his genius, the spiritual essence of the man, may have inclined him to laugh at all things. That at least is the value he now has for us. He is the portrait of perpetual irony, the spirit of the golden Sixteenth Century which delicately laughed at the whole world of thoughts and things, the quintessence of the poetry of Ariosto, the wit of Berni, all condensed into one incarnation and immortalised by truthfullest art. With the Gaul, the Spaniard, and the German at her gates, and in her cities, and encamped upon her fields, Italy still laughed; and when the voice of conscience sounding through Savonarola asked her why, she only smiled—*Sic Genius*.

171

One evening in May we rowed from Venice to Torcello, and at sunset broke bread and drank wine together among the rank grasses just outside that ancient church. It was pleasant to sit in the so-called chair of Attila and feel the placid stillness of the place. Then there came lounging by a sturdy young fellow in brown country clothes, with a marvellous old wide-awake upon his head, and across his shoulders a bunch of massive church-keys. In strange contrast to his uncouth garb he flirted a pink Japanese fan, gracefully disposing it to cool his sunburned olive cheeks. This made us look at him. He was not ugly. Nay, there was something of attractive in his face—the smooth-curved chin, the shrewd yet sleepy eyes, and finely cut thin lips—a curious mixture of audacity and meekness blent upon his features. Yet this impression was but the prelude to his smile. When that first dawned, some breath of humour seeming to stir in him unbidden, the true meaning was given to his face. Each feature helped to make a smile that was the very soul's life of the man expressed. I broadened, showing brilliant teeth, and grew into a noiseless laugh; and then I saw before me Dosso's jester, the type of Shakspere's fools, the life of that wild irony, now rude, now fine, which once delighted Courts. The laughter of the whole world and of all the centuries was silent in his face. What he said need not be repeated. The charm was less in his words than in his personality; for Momus-philosophy lay deep in every look and gesture of the man. The place lent itself to irony: parties of Americans and English parsons, the former agape for any rubbishy old things, the latter learned in the lore of obsolete Church-furniture, had thronged Torcello; and now they were all gone, and the sun had set behind the Alps, while an irreverent stranger drank his wine in Attila's chair, and nature's jester smiled—*Sic Genius*.

172

When I slept that night I dreamed of an altar-piece in the Temple of

Folly. The goddess sat enthroned beneath a canopy hung with bells and corals. On her lap was a beautiful winged smiling genius, who flourished two bright torches. On her left hand stood the man of Modena with his white lamb, a new S. John. On her right stood the man of Torcello with his keys, a new S. Peter. Both were laughing after their all-absorbent, divine, noiseless fashion; and under both was written, *Sic Genius*. Are not all things, even profanity, permissible in dreams?

To which of the Italian lakes should the palm of beauty be accorded? This question may not unfrequently have moved the idle minds of travellers, wandering through that loveliest region from Orta to Garda—from little Orta, with her gemlike island, rosy granite crags, and chestnut-covered swards above the Colma; to Garda, bluest of all waters, surveyed in majestic length from Desenzano or poetic Sirmione, a silvery sleeping haze of hill and cloud and heaven and clear waves bathed in modulated azure. And between these extreme points what varied lovelinesses lie in broad Maggiore, winding Como, Varese with the laughing face upturned to heaven, Lugano overshadowed by the crested crags of Monte Generoso, and Iseo far withdrawn among the rocky Alps! He who loves immense space, cloud shadows slowly sailing over purple slopes, island gardens, distant glimpses of snow-capped mountains, breadth, air, immensity, and flooding sunlight, will choose Maggiore. But scarcely has he cast his vote for this, the Juno of the divine rivals, when he remembers the triple lovelinesses of the Larian Aphrodite, disclosed in all their placid grace from Villa Serbelloni;—the green blue of the waters, clear as glass, opaque through depth; the *millefleurs* roses clambering into cypresses by Cadenabbia; the laburnums hanging their yellow clusters from the clefts of Sasso Eancio; the oleander arcades of Varenna; the wild white limestone crags of San Martiuo, which he has climbed to feast his eyes with the perspective, magical, serene, Lionardesquely perfect, of the distant gates of Adda. Then while this modern Paris is yet doubting, perhaps a thought may cross his mind of sterner, solitary Lake Iseo—the Pallas of the three. She offers her own attractions. The sublimity of Monte Adamello, dominating Lovere and all the lowland like Hesiod's hill of Virtue reared aloft above the plain of common life, has charms to tempt heroic lovers. Nor can Varese be neglected. In some picturesque respects, Varese is the most perfect of the lakes. Those long lines of swelling hills that lead into the level, yield an infinite series of placid foregrounds, pleasant to the eye by contrast with the dominant snow-summits, from Monte Viso to Monte Leone: the sky is limitless to southward; the low horizons are broken by bell-towers and farmhouses; while armaments of clouds are ever rolling in the interval of Alps and plain.

174

Of a truth, to decide which is the queen of the Italian lakes, is but an *infinita quæstio*; and the mere raising of it is folly. Still each lover of the beautiful may give his vote; and mine, like that of shepherd Paris, is already given to the Larian goddess. Words fail in attempting to set forth charms which have to be enjoyed, or can at best but lightly be touched with most consummate tact, even as great poets have already touched on Como Lake—from Virgil with his 'Lari maxume,' to Tennyson and the Italian Manzoni. The threshold of the shrine is, however, less consecrated ground; and the Cathedral of Como may form a vestibule to the temple where silence is more golden than the speech of a describer.

The Cathedral of Como is perhaps the most perfect building in Italy for illustrating the fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles, both of a good type and exquisite in their sobriety. The Gothic ends with the nave. The noble transepts and the choir, each terminating in a rounded tribune of the same dimensions, are carried out in a simple and decorous Bramantesque manner. The transition from the one style to the other is managed so felicitously, and the sympathies between them are so well developed, that there is no discord. What we here call Gothic, is conceived in a truly southern spirit, without fantastic efflorescence or imaginative complexity of multiplied parts; while the Renaissance manner, as applied by Tommaso Rodari, has not yet stiffened into the lifeless neo-Latinism of the later *cinquecento*: it is still distinguished by delicate inventiveness, and beautiful subordination of decorative detail to architectural effect. Under these happy conditions we feel that the Gothic of the nave, with its superior severity and sombreness, dilates into the lucid harmonies of choir and transepts like a flower unfolding. In the one the mind is tuned to inner meditation and religious awe; in the other the worshipper passes into a temple of the clear explicit faith—as an initiated neophyte might be received into the meaning of the mysteries.

175

After the collapse of the Roman Empire the district of Como seems to have maintained more vividly than the rest of Northern Italy some memory of classic art. *Magistri Comacini* is a title frequently inscribed upon deeds and charters of the earlier middle ages, as synonymous with sculptors and architects. This fact may help to account for the purity and beauty of the Duomo. It is the work of a race in which the tradition of

delicate artistic invention had never been wholly interrupted. To Tommaso Rodari and his brothers, Bernardino and Jacopo, the world owes this sympathetic fusion of the Gothic and the Bramantesque styles; and theirs too is the sculpture with which the Duomo is so richly decorated. They were natives of Maroggia, a village near Mendrisio, beneath the crests of Monte Generoso, close to Campione, which sent so many able craftsmen out into the world between the years 1300 and 1500. Indeed the name of Campionesi would probably have been given to the Rodari, had they left their native province for service in Eastern Lombardy. The body of the Duomo had been finished when Tommaso Rodari was appointed master of the fabric in 1487. To complete the work by the addition of a tribune was his duty. He prepared a wooden model and exposed it, after the fashion of those times, for criticism in his *bottega*; and the usual difference of opinion arose among the citizens of Como concerning its merits. Cristoforo Solaro, surnamed Il Gobbo, was called in to advise. It may be remembered that when Michelangelo first placed his Pietà in S. Peter's, rumour gave it to this celebrated Lombard sculptor, and the Florentine was constrained to set his own signature upon the marble. The same Solaro carved the monument of Beatrice Sforza in the Certosa of Pavia. He was indeed in all points competent to criticise or to confirm the design of his fellow-craftsman. Il Gobbo disapproved of the proportions chosen by Rodari, and ordered a new model to be made; but after much discussion, and some concessions on the part of Rodari, who is said to have increased the number of the windows and lightened the orders of his model, the work was finally entrusted to the master of Maroggia.

176

Not less creditable than the general design of the tribune is the sculpture executed by the brothers. The north side door is a master-work of early Renaissance chiselling, combining mixed Christian and classical motives with a wealth of floral ornament. Inside, over the same door, is a procession of children seeming to represent the Triumph of Bacchus, with perhaps some Christian symbolism. Opposite, above the south door, is a frieze of fighting Tritons—horsed sea deities pounding one another with bunches of fish and splashing the water, in Mantegna's spirit. The doorways of the façade are decorated with the same rare workmanship; and the canopies, supported by naked fauns and slender twisted figures, under which the two Plinies are seated, may be reckoned among the supreme achievements of delicate Renaissance sculpture. The Plinies are not like the work of the same master. They are older, stiffer, and more Gothic. The chief interest attaching to them is that they are habited and seated after the fashion of Humanists. This consecration of the two Pagan saints beside the portals of the Christian temple is truly characteristic of the fifteenth century in Italy. Beneath, are little bas-reliefs representing scenes from their respective lives, in the style of carved predellas on the altars of saints.

177

The whole church is peopled with detached statues, among which a Sebastian in the Chapel of the Madonna must be mentioned as singularly beautiful. It is a finely modelled figure, with the full life and exuberant adolescence of Venetian inspiration. A peculiar feature of the external architecture is the series of Atlantes, bearing on their shoulders urns, heads of lions, and other devices, and standing on brackets round the upper cornice just below the roof. They are of all sorts; young and old, male and female; classically nude, and boldly outlined. These water-conduits, the work of Bernardo Bianco and Francesco Rusca, illustrate the departure of the earlier Renaissance from the Gothic style. They are gargoyles; but they have lost the grotesque element. At the same time the sculptor, while discarding Gothic tradition, has not betaken himself yet to a servile imitation of the antique. He has used invention, and substituted for grinning dragons' heads something wild and bizarre of his own in harmony with classic taste.

The pictures in the chapels, chiefly by Luini and Ferrari—an idyllic Nativity, with faun-like shepherds and choirs of angels—a sumptuous adoration of the Magi—a jewelled Sposalizio with abundance of golden hair flowing over draperies of green and crimson—will interest those who are as yet unfamiliar with Lombard painting. Yet their architectural setting, perhaps, is superior to their intrinsic merit as works of art; and their chief value consists in adding rare dim flakes of colour to the cool light of the lovely church. More curious, because less easily matched, is the gilded woodwork above the altar of S. Abondio, attributed to a German carver, but executed for the most part in the purest Luinesque manner. The pose of the enthroned Madonna, the type and gesture of S. Catherine, and the treatment of the Pietà above, are thoroughly Lombard, showing how Luini's ideal of beauty could be expressed in carving. Some of the choicest figures in the Monastero Maggiore at

178

Milan seem to have descended from the walls and stepped into their tabernacles on this altar. Yet the style is not maintained consistently. In the reliefs illustrating the life of S. Abondio we miss Luini's childlike grace, and find instead a something that reminds us of Donatello—a seeking after the classical in dress, carriage, and grouping of accessory figures. It may have been that the carver, recognising Luini's defective composition, and finding nothing in that master's manner adapted to the spirit of relief, had the good taste to render what was Luinesquely lovely in his female figures, and to fall back on a severer model for his basreliefs.

The building-fund for the Duomo was raised in Como and its districts. Boxes were placed in all the churches to receive the alms of those who wished to aid the work. The clergy begged in Lent, and preached the duty of contributing on special days. Presents of lime and bricks and other materials were thankfully received. Bishops, canons, and municipal magistrates were expected to make costly gifts on taking office. Notaries, under penalty of paying 100 soldi if they neglected their engagement, were obliged to persuade testators, *cum bonis modis dulciter*, to inscribe the Duomo on their wills. Fines for various offences were voted to the building by the city. Each new burgher paid a certain sum; while guilds and farmers of the taxes bought monopolies and privileges at the price of yearly subsidies. A lottery was finally established for the benefit of the fabric. Of course each payment to the good work carried with it spiritual privileges; and so willingly did the people respond to the call of the Church, that during the sixteenth century the sums subscribed amounted to 200,000 golden crowns. Among the most munificent donators are mentioned the Marchese Giacomo Gallio, who bequeathed 290,000 lire, and a Benzi, who gave 10,000 ducats.

While the people of Como were thus straining every nerve to complete a pious work, which at the same time is one of the most perfect masterpieces of Italian art, their lovely lake was turned into a pirate's stronghold, and its green waves stained with slaughter of conflicting navies. So curious is this episode in the history of the Larian lake that it is worth while to treat of it at some length. Moreover, the lives of few captains of adventure offer matter more rich in picturesque details and more illustrative of their times than that of Gian Giacomo de' Medici, the Larian corsair, long known and still remembered as Il Medeghino. He was born in Milan in 1498, at the beginning of that darkest and most disastrous period of Italian history, when the old fabric of social and political existence went to ruin under the impact of conflicting foreign armies. He lived on until the year 1555, witnessing and taking part in the dismemberment of the Milanese Duchy, playing a game of hazard at high stakes for his own profit with the two last Sforzas, the Empire, the French, and the Swiss. At the beginning of the century, while he was still a youth, the rich valley of the Valtelline, with Bormio and Chiavenna, had been assigned to the Grisons. The Swiss Cantons at the same time had possessed themselves of Lugano and Bellinzona. By these two acts of robbery the mountaineers tore a portion of its fairest territory from the Duchy; and whoever ruled in Milan, whether a Sforza, or a Spanish viceroy, or a French general, was impatient to recover the lost jewel of the ducal crown. So much has to be premised, because the scene of our hero's romantic adventures was laid upon the borderland between the Duchy and the Cantons. Intriguing at one time with the Duke of Milan, at another with his foes the French or Spaniards, Il Medeghino found free scope for his peculiar genius in a guerilla warfare, carried on with the avowed purpose of restoring the Valtelline to Milan. To steer a plain course through that chaos of politics, in which the modern student, aided by the calm clear lights of history and meditation, cannot find a clue, was of course impossible for an adventurer whose one aim was to gratify his passions and exalt himself at the expense of others. It is therefore of little use to seek motives of statecraft or of patriotism in the conduct of Il Medeghino. He was a man shaped according to Machiavelli's standard of political morality—self-reliant, using craft and force with cold indifference to moral ends, bent only upon wringing for himself the largest share of this world's power for men who, like himself, identified virtue with unflinching and immitigable egotism.

Il Medeghino's father was Bernardo de' Medici, a Lombard, who neither claimed nor could have proved cousinship with the great Medicean family of Florence. His mother was Cecilia Serbelloni. The boy was educated in the fashionable humanistic studies, nourishing his young imagination with the tales of Roman heroes. The first exploit by which he proved his *virtù*, was the murder of a man he hated, at the age of sixteen. This 'virile act of vengeance,' as it was called, brought him

into trouble, and forced him to choose the congenial profession of arms. At a time when violence and vigour passed for manliness, a spirited assassination formed the best of introductions to the captains of mixed mercenary troops. Il Medeghino rose in favour with his generals, helped to reinstate Francesco Sforza in his capital, and, returning himself to Milan, inflicted severe vengeance on the enemies who had driven him to exile. It was his ambition, at this early period of his life, to be made governor of the Castle of Musso, on the Lake of Como. While fighting in the neighbourhood, he had observed the unrivalled capacities for defence presented by its site; and some pre-vision of his future destinies now urged him to acquire it, as the basis for the free marauding life he planned. The headland of Musso lies about halfway between Gravedona and Menaggio, on the right shore of the Lake of Como. Planted on a pedestal of rock, and surmounted by a sheer cliff, there then stood a very ancient tower, commanding this promontory on the side of the land. Between it and the water the Visconti, in more recent days, had built a square fort; and the headland had been further strengthened by the addition of connecting walls and bastions pierced for cannon. Combining precipitous cliffs, strong towers, and easy access from the lake below, this fortress of Musso was exactly the fit station for a pirate. So long as he kept the command of the lake, he had little to fear from land attacks, and had a splendid basis for aggressive operations. Il Medeghino made his request to the Duke of Milan; but the foxlike Sforza would not grant him a plain answer. At length he hinted that if his suitor chose to rid him of a troublesome subject, the noble and popular Astore Visconti, he should receive Musso for payment. Crimes of bloodshed and treason sat lightly on the adventurer's conscience. In a short time he compassed the young Visconti's death, and claimed his reward. The Duke despatched him thereupon to Musso, with open letters to the governor, commanding him to yield the castle to the bearer. Private advice, also entrusted to Il Medeghino, bade the governor, on the contrary, cut the bearer's throat. The young man, who had the sense to read the Duke's letter, destroyed the secret document, and presented the other, or, as one version of the story goes, forged a ducal order in his own favour.^[12] At any rate, the castle was placed in his hands; and affecting to know nothing of the Duke's intended treachery, Il Medeghino took possession of it as a trusted servant of the ducal crown.

182

[12] I cannot see clearly through these transactions, the muddy waters of decadent Italian plot and counterplot being inscrutable to senses assisted by nothing more luminous than mere tradition.

As soon as he was settled in his castle, the freebooter devoted all his energies to rendering it still more impregnable by strengthening the walls and breaking the cliffs into more horrid precipices. In this work he was assisted by his numerous friends and followers; for Musso rapidly became, like ancient Rome, an asylum for the ruffians and outlaws of neighbouring provinces. It is even said that his sisters, Clarina and Margherita, rendered efficient aid with manual labour. The mention of Clarina's name justifies a parenthetical side-glance at Il Medeghino's pedigree, which will serve to illustrate the exceptional conditions of Italian society during this age. She was married to the Count Giberto Borromeo, and became the mother of the pious Carlo Borromeo, whose shrine is still adored at Milan in the Duomo. Il Medeghino's brother, Giovan Angelo, rose to the Papacy, assuming the title of Pius IV. Thus this murderous marauder was the brother of a Pope and the uncle of a Saint; and these three persons of one family embraced the various degrees and typified the several characters which flourished with peculiar lustre in Renaissance Italy—the captain of adventure soaked in blood, the churchman unrivalled for intrigue, and the saint aflame with holiest enthusiasm. Il Medeghino was short of stature, but well made and powerful; broad-chested; with a penetrating voice and winning countenance. He dressed simply, like one of his own soldiers; slept but little; was insensible to carnal pleasure; and though he knew how to win the affection of his men by jovial speech, he maintained strict discipline in his little army. In all points he was an ideal bandit chief, never happy unless fighting or planning campaigns, inflexible of purpose, bold and cunning in the execution of his schemes, cruel to his enemies, generous to his followers, sacrificing all considerations, human and divine, to the one aim of his life, self-aggrandisement by force and intrigue. He knew well how to make himself both feared and respected. One instance of his dealing will suffice. A gentleman of Bellano, Polidoro Boldoni, in return to his advances, coldly replied that he cared for neither amity nor relationship with thieves and robbers; whereupon Il Medeghino extirpated his family, almost to a man.

183

Soon after his settlement in Musso, Il Medeghino, wishing to secure the gratitude of the Duke, his master, began war with the Grisons. From Coire, from the Engadine, and from Davos, the Alpine pikemen were now pouring down to swell the troops of Francis I.; and their road lay through the Lake of Como. Il Medeghino burned all the boats upon the lake, except those which he took into his own service, and thus made himself master of the water passage. He then swept the 'length of lordly Lario' from Colico to Lecco, harrying the villages upon the shore, and cutting off the bands of journeying Switzers at his pleasure. Not content with this guerilla, he made a descent upon the territory of the Trepievi, and pushed far up towards Chiavenna, forcing the Grisons to recall their troops from the Milanese. These acts of prowess convinced the Duke that he had found a strong ally in the pirate chief. "When Francis I. continued his attacks upon the Duchy, and the Grisons still adhered to their French paymaster, the Sforza formally invested Gian Giacomo de' Medici with the perpetual governorship of Musso, the Lake of Como, and as much as he could wrest from the Grisons above the lake. Furnished now with a just title for his depredations, Il Medeghino undertook the siege of Chiavenna. That town is the key to the valleys of the Splügen and Bregaglia. Strongly fortified and well situated for defence, the burghers of the Grisons well knew that upon its possession depended their power in the Italian valleys. To take it by assault was impossible, Il Medeghino used craft, entered the castle, and soon had the city at his disposition. Nor did he lose time in sweeping Val Bregaglia. The news of this conquest recalled the Switzers from the Duchy; and as they hurried homeward just before the battle of Pavia, it may be affirmed that Gian Giacomo de' Medici was instrumental in the defeat and capture of the French King. The mountaineers had no great difficulty in dislodging their pirate enemy from Chiavenna, the Valtelline, and Val Bregaglia. But he retained his hold on the Trepievi, occupied the Valsassina, took Porlezza, and established himself still more strongly in Musso as the corsair monarch of the lake.

184

The tyranny of the Sforzas in Milan was fast going to pieces between France and Spain; and in 1526 the Marquis of Pescara occupied the capital in the name of Charles V. The Duke, meanwhile, remained a prisoner in his Castello. Il Medeghino was now without a master; for he refused to acknowledge the Spaniards, preferring to watch events and build his own power on the ruins of the dukedom. At the head of 4,000 men, recruited from the lakes and neighbouring valleys, he swept the country far and wide, and occupied the rich champaign of the Brianza. He was now lord of the lakes of Como and Lugano, and absolute in Lecco and the adjoining valleys. The town of Como itself alone belonged to the Spaniards; and even Como was blockaded by the navy of the corsair. Il Medeghino had a force of seven big ships, with three sails and forty-eight oars, bristling with guns and carrying marines. His flagship was a large brigantine, manned by picked rowers, from the mast of which floated the red banner with the golden palle of the Medicean arms. Besides these larger vessels, he commanded a flotilla of countless small boats. It is clear that to reckon with him was a necessity. If he could not be put down with force, he might be bought over by concessions. The Spaniards adopted the second course, and Il Medeghino, judging that the cause of the Sforza family was desperate, determined in 1528 to attach himself to the Empire. Charles V. invested him with the Castle of Musso and the larger part of Como Lake, including the town of Lecco. He now assumed the titles of Marquis of Musso and Count of Lecco: and in order to prove his sovereignty before the world, he coined money with his own name and devices.

185

It will be observed that Gian Giacomo de' Medici had hitherto acted with a single-hearted view to his own interests. At the age of thirty he had raised himself from nothing to a principality, which, though petty, might compare with many of some name in Italy—with Carpi, for example, or Mirandola, or Camerino. Nor did he mean to remain quiet in the prime of life. He regarded Como Lake as the mere basis for more arduous undertakings. Therefore, when the whirligig of events restored Francesco Sforza to his duchy in 1529, Il Medeghino refused to obey his old lord. Pretending to move under the Duke's orders, but really acting for himself alone, he proceeded to attack his ancient enemies, the Grisons. By fraud and force he worked his way into their territory, seized Morbegno, and overran the Valtelline. He was destined, however, to receive a serious check. Twelve thousand Switzers rose against him on the one hand, on the other the Duke of Milan sent a force by land and water to subdue his rebel subject, while Alessandro Gonzaga marched upon his castles in the Brianza. He was thus assailed by formidable forces from three quarters, converging upon the Lake of Como, and

186

driving him to his chosen element, the water. Hastily quitting the Valtelline, he fell back to the Castle of Mandello on the lake, collected his navy, and engaged the ducal ships in a battle off Menaggio. In this battle he was worsted. But he did not lose his courage. From Bellagio, from Varenna, from Bellano he drove forth his enemies, rolled the cannon of the Switzers into the lake, regained Lecco, defeated the troops of Alessandro Gonzaga, and took the Duke of Mantua prisoner. Had he but held Como, it is probable that he might have obtained such terms at this time as would have consolidated his tyranny. The town of Como, however, now belonged to the Duke of Milan, and formed an excellent basis for operations against the pirate. Overmatched, with an exhausted treasury and broken forces, Il Medeghino was at last compelled to give in. Yet he retired with all the honours of war. In exchange for Musso and the lake, the Duke agreed to give him 35,000 golden crowns, together with the feud and marquisate of Marignano. A free pardon was promised not only to himself and his brothers, but to all his followers; and the Duke further undertook to transport his artillery and munitions of war at his own expense to Marignano. Having concluded this treaty under the auspices of Charles V. and his lieutenant, Il Medeghino, in March 1532, set sail from Musso, and turned his back upon the lake for ever. The Switzers immediately destroyed the towers, forts, walls, and bastions of the Musso promontory, leaving in the midst of their ruins the little chapel of S. Eufemia.

187

Gian Giacomo de' Medici, henceforth known to Europe as the Marquis of Marignano, now took service under Spain; and through the favour of Anton de Leyva, Viceroy for the Duchy, rose to the rank of Field Marshal. When the Marquis del Vasto succeeded to the Spanish governorship of Milan in 1536, he determined to gratify an old grudge against the expirate, and, having invited him to a banquet, made him prisoner. Il Medeghino was not, however, destined to languish in a dungeon. Princes and kings interested themselves in his fate. He was released, and journeyed to the court of Charles V. in Spain. The Emperor received him kindly, and employed him first in the Low Countries, where he helped to repress the burghers of Ghent, and at the siege of Landrecy commanded the Spanish artillery against other Italian captains of adventure: for, Italy being now dismembered and enslaved, her sons sought foreign service where they found best pay and widest scope for martial science. Afterwards the Medici ruled Bohemia as Spanish Viceroy; and then, as general of the league formed by the Duke of Florence, the Emperor, and the Pope to repress the liberties of Tuscany, distinguished himself in that cruel war of extermination, which turned the fair Contado of Siena into a poisonous Maremma. To the last Il Medeghino preserved the instincts and the passions of a brigand chief. It was at this time that, acting for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, he first claimed open kinship with the Medici of Florence. Heralds and genealogists produced a pedigree, which seemed to authorise this pretension; he was recognised, together with his brother, Pius IV., as an offshoot of the great house which had already given Dukes to Florence, Kings to France, and two Popes to the Christian world. In the midst of all this foreign service he never forgot his old dream of conquering the Valtelline; and in 1547 he made proposals to the Emperor for a new campaign against the Grisons. Charles V. did not choose to engage in a war, the profits of which would have been inconsiderable for the master of half the civilised world, and which might have proved troublesome by stirring up the tameless Switzers. Il Medeghino was obliged to abandon a project cherished from the earliest dawn of his adventurous manhood.

188

When Gian Giacomo died in 1555, his brother Battista succeeded to his claims upon Lecco and the Trepievi. His monument, magnificent with five bronze figures, the masterpiece of Leone Lioni, from Menaggio, Michelangelesque in style, and of consummate workmanship, still adorns the Duomo of Milan. It stands close by the door that leads to the roof. This mausoleum, erected to the memory of Gian Giacomo and his brother Gabrio, is said to have cost 7800 golden crowns. On the occasion of the pirate's funeral the Senate of Milan put on mourning, and the whole city followed the great robber, the hero of Renaissance *virtù*, to the grave.

Between the Cathedral of Como and the corsair Medeghino there is but a slight link. Yet so extraordinary were the social circumstances of Renaissance Italy, that almost at every turn, on her seaboard, in her cities, from her hill-tops, we are compelled to blend our admiration for the loveliest and purest works of art amid the choicest scenes of nature with memories of execrable crimes and lawless characters. Sometimes, as at Perugia, the *nexus* is but local. At others, one single figure, like that of Cellini, unites both points of view in a romance of unparalleled dramatic vividness. Or, again, beneath the vaults of the Certosa, near

189

Pavia, a masterpiece of the serenest beauty carries our thoughts perforce back to the hideous cruelties and snake-like frauds of its despotic founder. This is the excuse for combining two such diverse subjects in one study.

From the new town of commerce to the old town of history upon the hill, the road is carried along a rampart lined, with horse-chestnut trees—clumps of massy foliage, and snowy pyramids of bloom, expanded in the rapture of a southern spring. Each pair of trees between their stems and arch of intermingling leaves includes a space of plain, checkered with cloud-shadows, melting blue and green in amethystine haze. To right and left the last spurs of the Alps descend, jutting like promontories, heaving like islands from the misty breadth below: and here and there are towers, half-lost in airy azure; and cities dwarfed to blots; and silvery lines where rivers flow; and distant, vapour-drowned, dim crests of Apennines. The city walls above us wave with snapdragons and iris among fig-trees sprouting from the riven stones. There are terraces over-rioted with pergolas of vine, and houses shooting forward into balconies and balustrades, from which a Romeo might launch himself at daybreak, warned by the lark's song. A sudden angle in the road is turned, and we pass from airspace and freedom into the old town, beneath walls of dark brown masonry, where wild valerians light their torches of red bloom in immemorial shade. Squalor and splendour live here side by side. Grand Renaissance portals grinning with Satyr masks are flanked by tawdry frescoes shamming stonework, or by doorways where the withered bush hangs out a promise of bad wine. The Cappella Colleoni is our destination, that masterpiece of the sculptor-architect's craft, with its variegated marbles,—rosy and white and creamy yellow and jet-black,—in patterns, basreliefs, pilasters, statuettes, encrusted on the fanciful domed shrine. Upon the façade are mingled, in the true Renaissance spirit of genial acceptance, motives Christian and Pagan with supreme impartiality. Medallions of emperors and gods alternate with virtues, angels and cupids in a maze of loveliest arabesque; and round the base of the building are told two stories—the one of Adam from his creation to his fall, the other of Hercules and his labours. Italian craftsmen of the *quattrocento* were not averse to setting thus together, in one framework, the myths of our first parents and Alemena's son: partly perhaps because both subjects gave scope to the free treatment of the nude; but partly also, we may venture to surmise, because the heroism of Hellas counterbalanced the sin of Eden. Here then we see how Adam and Eve were made and tempted and expelled from Paradise and set to labour, how Cain killed Abel, and Lamech slew a man to his hurt, and Isaac was offered on the mountain. The tale of human sin and the promise of redemption are epitomised in twelve of the sixteen basreliefs. The remaining four show Hercules wrestling with Antæus, taming the Nemean lion, extirpating the Hydra, and bending to his will the bull of Crete. Labour, appointed for a punishment to Adam, becomes a title to immortality for the hero. The dignity of man is reconquered by prowess for the Greek, as it is repurchased for the Christian by vicarious suffering. Many may think this interpretation of Amadeo's basreliefs far-fetched; yet, such as it is, it agrees with the spirit of Humanism, bent ever on harmonising the two great traditions of the past. Of the workmanship little need be said, except that it is wholly Lombard, distinguished from the similar work of Della Quercia at Bologna and Siena by a more imperfect feeling for composition, and a lack of monumental gravity, yet graceful, rich in motives, and instinct with a certain wayward *improvvisatore* charm.

191

This Chapel was built by the great Condottiere Bartolommeo Colleoni, to be the monument of his puissance even in the grave. It had been the Sacristy of S. Maria Maggiore, which, when the Consiglio della Misericordia refused it to him for his half-proud, half-pious purpose, he took and held by force. The structure, of costliest materials, reared by Gian Antonio Amadeo, cost him 50,000 golden florins. An equestrian statue of gilt wood, voted to him by the town of Bergamo, surmounts his monument inside the Chapel. This was the work of two German masters, called 'Sisto figlio di Enrico Syri da Norimberga' and 'Leonardo Tedesco.' The tomb itself is of marble, executed for the most part in a Lombard style resembling Amadeo's, but scarcely worthy of his genius. The whole effect is disappointing. Five figures representing Mars, Hercules, and three sons-in-law of Colleoni, who surround the sarcophagus of the buried general, are indeed almost grotesque. The angularity and crumpled draperies of the Milanese manner, when so exaggerated, produce an impression of caricature. Yet many subordinate details—a row of *putti* in a *cinquecento* frieze, for instance—and much of the low relief work—especially the Crucifixion with its characteristic episodes of the fainting Maries and the soldiers casting dice—are lovely in their

192

unaffected Lombardism.

There is another portrait of Colleoni in a round above the great door, executed with spirit, though in a *bravura* style that curiously anticipates the decline of Italian sculpture. Gaunt, hollow-eyed, with prominent cheek bones and strong jaws, this animated, half-length statue of the hero bears the stamp of a good likeness; but when or by whom it was made, I do not know.

193

Far more noteworthy than Colleoni's own monument is that of his daughter Medea. She died young in 1470, and her father caused her tomb, carved of Carrara marble, to be placed in the Dominican Church of Basella, which he had previously founded. It was not until 1842 that this most precious masterpiece of Antonio Amadeo's skill was transferred to Bergamo. *Hic jacet Medea virgo*. Her hands are clasped across her breast. A robe of rich brocade, gathered to the waist and girdled, lies in simple folds upon the bier. Her throat, exceedingly long and slender, is circled with a string of pearls. Her face is not beautiful, for the features, especially the nose, are large and prominent; but it is pure and expressive of vivid individuality. The hair curls in crisp short clusters, and the ear, fine and shaped almost like a Faun's, reveals the scrupulous fidelity of the sculptor. Italian art has, in truth, nothing more exquisite than this still sleeping figure of the girl, who, when she lived, must certainly have been so rare of type and lovable in personality. If Busti's Lancinus Curtius be the portrait of a humanist, careworn with study, burdened by the laurel leaves that were so dry and dusty—if Gaston de Foix in the Brera, smiling at death and beautiful in the cropped bloom of youth, idealise the hero of romance—if Michelangelo's Pensive translate in marble the dark broodings of a despot's soul—if Della Porta's Julia Farnese be the Roman courtesan magnificently throned in nonchalance at a Pope's footstool—if Verocchio's Colleoni on his horse at Venice impersonate the pomp and circumstance of scientific war—surely this Medea exhales the flower-like graces, the sweet sanctities of human life, that even in that turbid age were found among high-bred Italian ladies. Such power have mighty sculptors, even in our modern world, to make the mute stone speak in poems and clasp the soul's life of a century in some five or six transcendent forms.

194

The Colleoni, or Coglioni, family were of considerable antiquity and well-authenticated nobility in the town of Bergamo. Two lions' heads conjoined formed one of their canting ensigns; another was borrowed from the vulgar meaning of their name. Many members of the house held important office during the three centuries preceding the birth of the famous general, Bartolommeo. He was born in the year 1400 at Solza, in the Bergamasque Contado. His father Paolo, or Pùho as he was commonly called, was poor and exiled from the city, together with the rest of the Guelf nobles, by the Visconti. Being a man of daring spirit, and little inclined to languish in a foreign state as the dependent on some patron, Pùho formed the bold design of seizing the Castle of Trezzo. This he achieved in 1405 by fraud, and afterwards held it as his own by force. Partly with the view of establishing himself more firmly in his acquired lordship, and partly out of family affection, Pùho associated four of his first-cousins in the government of Trezzo. They repaid his kindness with an act of treason and cruelty, only too characteristic of those times in Italy. One day while he was playing at draughts in a room of the Castle, they assaulted him and killed him, seized his wife and the boy Bartolommeo, and flung them into prison. The murdered Pùho had another son, Antonio, who escaped and took refuge with Giorgio Benzoni, the tyrant of Crema. After a short time the Colleoni brothers found means to assassinate him also; therefore Bartolommeo alone, a child of whom no heed was taken, remained to be his father's avenger. He and his mother lived together in great indigence at Solza, until the lad felt strong enough to enter the service of one of the numerous petty Lombard princes, and to make himself if possible a captain of adventure. His name alone was a sufficient introduction, and the Duchy of Milan, dismembered upon the death of Gian Maria Visconti, was in such a state that all the minor despots were increasing their forces and preparing to defend by arms the fragments they had seized from the Visconti heritage. Bartolommeo therefore had no difficulty in recommending himself to Filippo d'Arcello, sometime general in the pay of the Milanese, but now the new lord of Piacenza. With this master he remained as page for two or three years, learning the use of arms, riding, and training himself in the physical exercises which were indispensable to a young Italian soldier. Meanwhile Filippo Maria Visconti reacquired his hereditary dominions; and at the age of twenty, Bartolommeo found it prudent to seek a patron stronger than d'Arcello. The two great Condottieri, Sforza Attendolo and Braccio, divided the military glories of

195

Italy at this period; and any youth who sought to rise in his profession, had to enrol himself under the banners of the one or the other. Bartolommeo chose Braccio for his master, and was enrolled among his men as a simple trooper, or *ragazzo*, with no better prospects than he could make for himself by the help of his talents and his borrowed horse and armour. Braccio at this time was in Apulia, prosecuting the war of the Neapolitan Succession disputed between Alfonso of Aragon and Louis of Anjou under the weak sovereignty of Queen Joan. On which side of a quarrel a Condottiere fought mattered but little: so great was the confusion of Italian politics, and so complete was the egotism of these fraudulent, violent, and treacherous party leaders. Yet it may be mentioned that Braccio had espoused Alfonso's cause. Bartolommeo Colleoni early distinguished himself among the ranks of the Bracceschi. But he soon perceived that he could better his position by deserting to another camp. Accordingly he offered his services to Jacopo Caldora, one of Joan's generals, and received from him a commission of twenty men-at-arms. It may here be parenthetically said that the rank and pay of an Italian captain varied with the number of the men he brought into the field. His title 'Condottiere' was derived from the circumstance that he was said to have received a *Condotta di venti cavalli*, and so forth. Each *cavallo* was equal to one mounted man-at-arms and two attendants, who were also called *ragazzi*. It was his business to provide the stipulated number of men, to keep them in good discipline, and to satisfy their just demands. Therefore an Italian army at this epoch consisted of numerous small armies varying in size, each held together by personal engagements to a captain, and all dependent on the will of a general-in-chief, who had made a bargain with some prince or republic for supplying a fixed contingent of fighting-men. The *Condottiere* was in other words a contractor or *impresario*, undertaking to do a certain piece of work for a certain price, and to furnish the requisite forces for the business in good working order. It will be readily seen upon this system how important were the personal qualities of the captain, and what great advantages those Condottieri had, who, like the petty princes of Romagna and the March, the Montefeltri, Ordelauffi, Malatesti, Manfredi, Orsini, and Vitelli, could rely upon a race of hardy vassals for their recruits. It is not necessary to follow Colleoni's fortunes in the Regno, at Aquila, Ancona, and Bologna. He continued in the service of Caldora, who was now General of the Church, and had his *Condotta* gradually increased. Meanwhile his cousins, the murderers of his father, began to dread his rising power, and determined, if possible, to ruin him. He was not a man to be easily assassinated; so they sent a hired ruffian to Caldora's camp to say that Bartolommeo had taken his name by fraud, and that he was himself the real son of Pùho Colleoni. Bartolommeo defied the liar to a duel; and this would have taken place before the army, had not two witnesses appeared, who knew the fathers of both Colleoni and the *bravo*, and who gave such evidence that the captains of the army were enabled to ascertain the truth. The impostor was stripped and drummed out of the camp.

196

239

197

At the conclusion of a peace between the Pope and the Bolognese, Bartolommeo found himself without occupation. He now offered himself to the Venetians, and began to fight again under the great Carmagnola against Filippo Visconti. His engagement allowed him forty men, which, after the judicial murder of Carmagnola at Venice in 1432, were increased to eighty. Erasmo da Narni, better known as Gattamelata, was now his general-in-chief—a man who had risen from the lowest fortunes to one of the most splendid military positions in Italy. Colleoni spent the next years of his life, until 1443, in Lombardy, manoeuvring against Il Piccinino, and gradually rising in the Venetian service, until his *Condotta* reached the number of 800 men. Upon Gattamelata's death at Padua in 1440, Colleoni became the most important of the generals who had fought with Caldora in the March. The lordships of Romano in the Bergamasque and of Covo and Antegnate in the Cremonese had been assigned to him; and he was in a position to make independent engagements with princes. What distinguished him as a general, was a combination of caution with audacity. He united the brilliant system of his master Braccio with the more prudent tactics of the Sforzeschi; and thus, though he often surprised his foes by daring stratagems and vigorous assaults, he rarely met with any serious check. He was a captain who could be relied upon for boldly seizing an advantage, no less than for using a success with discretion. Moreover he had acquired an almost unique reputation for honesty in dealing with his masters, and for justice combined with humane indulgence to his men. His company was popular, and he could always bring capital troops into the field.

198

In the year 1443 Colleoni quitted the Venetian service on account of a

quarrel with Gherardo Dandolo, the Provoditore of the Republic. He now took a commission from Filippo Maria Visconti, who received him at Milan with great honour, bestowed on him the Castello Adorno at Pavia, and sent him into the March of Ancona upon a military expedition. Of all Italian tyrants this Visconti was the most difficult to serve. Constitutionally timid, surrounded with a crowd of spies and base informers, shrinking from the sight of men in the recesses of his palace, and controlling the complicated affairs of his Duchy by means of correspondents and intelligencers, this last scion of the Milanese despots lived like a spider in an inscrutable network of suspicion and intrigue. His policy was one of endless plot and counterplot. He trusted no man; his servants were paid to act as spies on one another; his bodyguard consisted of mutually hostile mercenaries; his captains in the field were watched and thwarted by commissioners appointed to check them at the point of successful ambition or magnificent victory. The historian has a hard task when he tries to fathom the Visconti's schemes, or to understand his motives. Half the Duke's time seems to have been spent in unravelling the webs that he had woven, in undoing his own work, and weakening the hands of his chosen ministers. Conscious that his power was artificial, that the least breath might blow him back into the nothingness from which he had arisen on the wrecks of his father's tyranny, he dreaded the personal eminence of his generals above all things. His chief object was to establish a system of checks, by means of which no one whom he employed should at any moment be great enough to threaten him. The most formidable of these military adventurers, Francesco Sforza, had been secured by marriage with Bianca Maria Visconti, his master's only daughter, in 1441; but the Duke did not even trust his son-in-law. The last six years of his life were spent in scheming to deprive Sforza of his lordships; and the war in the March, on which he employed Colleoni, had the object of ruining the principality acquired by this daring captain from Pope Eugenius IV. in 1443.

199

Colleoni was by no means deficient in those foxlike qualities which were necessary to save the lion from the toils spread for him by Italian intriguers. He had already shown that he knew how to push his own interests, by changing sides and taking service with the highest bidder, as occasion prompted. Nor, though his character for probity and loyalty stood exceptionally high among the men of his profession, was he the slave to any questionable claims of honour or of duty. In that age of confused politics and extinguished patriotism, there was not indeed much scope for scrupulous honesty. But Filippo Maria Visconti proved more than a match for him in craft. While Colleoni was engaged in pacifying the revolted population of Bologna, the Duke yielded to the suggestion of his parasites at Milan, who whispered that the general was becoming dangerously powerful. He recalled him, and threw him without trial into the dungeons of the Forni at Monza. Here Colleoni remained a prisoner more than a year, until the Duke's death in 1447, when he made his escape, and profited by the disturbance of the Duchy to reacquire his lordships in the Bergamasque territory. The true motive for his imprisonment remains still buried in obscure conjecture. Probably it was not even known to the Visconti, who acted on this, as on so many other occasions, by a mere spasm of suspicious jealousy, for which he could have given no account.

200

From the year 1447 to the year 1455, it is difficult to follow Colleoni's movements, or to trace his policy. First, we find him employed by the Milanese Republic, during its brief space of independence; then he is engaged by the Venetians, with a commission for 1500 horse; next, he is in the service of Francesco Sforza; once more in that of the Venetians, and yet again in that of the Duke of Milan. His biographer relates with pride that, during this period, he was three times successful against French troops in Piedmont and Lombardy. It appears that he made short engagements, and changed his paymasters according to convenience. But all this time he rose in personal importance, acquired fresh lordships in the Bergamasque, and accumulated wealth. He reached the highest point of his prosperity in 1455, when the Republic of S. Mark elected him General-in-Chief of their armies, with the fullest powers, and with a stipend of 100,000 florins. For nearly twenty-one years, until the day of his death, in 1475, Colleoni held this honourable and lucrative office. In his will he charged the Signory of Venice that they should never again commit into the hands of a single captain such unlimited control over their military resources. It was indeed no slight tribute to Colleoni's reputation for integrity, that the jealous Republic, which had signified its sense of Carmagnola's untrustworthiness by capital punishment, should have left him so long in the undisturbed disposal of their army. The Standard and the Bâton of S. Mark were conveyed to Colleoni by two

ambassadors, and presented to him at Brescia on June 24, 1455. Three years later he made a triumphal entry into Venice, and received the same ensigns of military authority from the hands of the new Doge, Pasquale Malipiero. On this occasion his staff consisted of some two hundred officers, splendidly armed, and followed by a train of serving-men. Noblemen from Bergamo, Brescia, and other cities of the Venetian territory, swelled the cortege. When they embarked on the lagoons, they found the water covered with boats and gondolas, bearing the population of Venice in gala attire, to greet the illustrious guest with instruments of music. Three great galleys of the Republic, called Bucentaurs, issued from the crowd of smaller craft. On the first was the Doge in his state robes, attended by the government in office, or the Signoria of S. Mark. On the second were members of the Senate and minor magistrates. The third carried the ambassadors of foreign powers. Colleoni was received into the first state-galley, and placed by the side of the Doge. The oarsmen soon cleared the space between the land and Venice, passed the small canals, and swept majestically up the Canalozzo among the plaudits of the crowds assembled on both sides to cheer their General. Thus they reached the piazzetta, where Colleoni alighted between the two great pillars, and, conducted by the Doge in person, walked to the Church of S. Mark. Here, after Mass had been said, and a sermon had been preached, kneeling before the high altar he received the truncheon from the Doge's hands. The words of his commission ran as follows:—

'By authority and decree of this most excellent City of Venice, of us the Prince, and of the Senate, you are to be Commander and Captain General of all our forces and armaments on terra firma. Take from our hands this truncheon, with good augury and fortune, as sign and warrant of your power. Be it your care and effort, with dignity and splendour to maintain and to defend the Majesty, the Loyalty, and the Principles of this Empire. Neither provoking, not yet provoked, unless at our command, shall you break into open warfare with our enemies. Free jurisdiction and lordship over each one of our soldiers, except in cases of treason, we hereby commit to you.'

After the ceremony of his reception, Colleoni was conducted with no less pomp to his lodgings, and the next ten days were spent in festivities of all sorts.

The commandership-in-chief of the Venetian forces was perhaps the highest military post in Italy. It placed Colleoni on the pinnacle of his profession, and made his camp the favourite school of young soldiers. Among his pupils or lieutenants we read of Ercole d'Este, the future Duke of Ferrara; Alessandro Sforza, lord of Pesaro; Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat; Cicco and Pino Ordellaffi, princes of Forli; Astorre Manfredi, the lord of Faenza; three Counts of Mirandola; two princes of Carpi; Deifobo, the Count of Anguillara; Giovanni Antonio Caldora, lord of Jesi in the March; and many others of less name. Honours came thick upon him. When one of the many ineffectual leagues against the infidel was formed in 1468, during the pontificate of Paul II., he was named Captain-General for the Crusade. Pius II. designed him for the leader of the expedition he had planned against the impious and savage despot, Sigismondo Malatesta. King René of Anjou, by special patent, authorised him to bear his name and arms, and made him a member of his family. The Duke of Burgundy, by a similar heraldic fiction, conferred upon him his name and armorial bearings. This will explain why Colleoni is often styled 'di Andegavia e Borgogna.' In the case of René, the honour was but a barren show. But the patent of Charles the Bold had more significance. In 1473 he entertained the project of employing the great Italian General against his Swiss foes; nor does it seem reasonable to reject a statement made by Colleoni's biographer, to the effect that a secret compact had been drawn up between him and the Duke of Burgundy, for the conquest and partition of the Duchy of Milan. The Venetians, in whose service Colleoni still remained, when they became aware of this project, met it with peaceful but irresistible opposition.

Colleoni had been engaged continually since his earliest boyhood in the trade of war. It was not therefore possible that he should have gained a great degree of literary culture. Yet the fashion of the times made it necessary that a man in his position should seek the society of scholars. Accordingly his court and camp were crowded with students, in whose wordy disputations he is said to have delighted. It will be remembered that his contemporaries, Alfonso the Magnanimous, Francesco Sforza, Federigo of Urbino, and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, piqued themselves at least as much upon their patronage of letters, as upon their prowess in the field.

Colleoni's court, like that of Urbino, was a model of good manners. As became a soldier, he was temperate in food and moderate in slumber. It

was recorded of him that he had never sat more than one hour at meat in his own house, and that he never overslept the sunrise. After dinner he would converse with his friends, using commonly his native dialect of Bergamo, and entertaining the company now with stories of adventure, and now with pithy sayings. In another essential point he resembled his illustrious contemporary, the Duke of Urbino; for he was sincerely pious in an age which, however it preserved the decencies of ceremonial religion, was profoundly corrupt at heart. His principal lordships in the Bergamasque territory owed to his munificence their fairest churches and charitable institutions. At Martinengo, for example, he rebuilt and re-endowed two monasteries, the one dedicated to S. Chiara, the other to S. Francis. In Bergamo itself he founded an establishment named 'La Pietà,' for the good purpose of dowering and marrying poor girls. This house he endowed with a yearly income of 3000 ducats. The Sulphur baths of Trescorio, at some distance from the city, were improved and opened to poor patients by a hospital which he provided. At Rumano he raised a church to S. Peter, and erected buildings of public utility, which on his death he bequeathed to the society of the Misericordia in that town. All the places of his jurisdiction owed to him such benefits as good water, new walls, and irrigation works. In addition to these munificent foundations must be mentioned the Basella, or Monastery of Dominican friars, which he established not far from Bergamo, upon the river Serio, in memory of his beloved daughter Medea. Last, not least, was the Chapel of S. John the Baptist, attached to the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, which he endowed with fitting maintenance for two priests and deacons.

204

The one defect acknowledged by his biographer was his partiality for women. Early in life he married Tisbe, of the noble house of the Brescian Martinenghi, who bore him one daughter, Caterina, wedded to Gasparre Martinengo. Two illegitimate daughters, Ursina and Isotta, were recognised and treated by him as legitimate. The first he gave in marriage to Gherardo Martinengo, and the second to Jacopo of the same family. Two other natural children, Doratina and Ricardona, were mentioned in his will: he left them four thousand ducats a piece for dowry. Medea, the child of his old age (for she was born to him when he was sixty), died before her father, and was buried, as we have seen, in the Chapel of Basella.

Throughout his life he was distinguished for great physical strength and agility. When he first joined the troop of Braccio, he could race, with his corselet on, against the swiftest runner of the army; and when he was stripped, few horses could beat him in speed. Far on into old age he was in the habit of taking long walks every morning for the sake of exercise, and delighted in feats of arms and jousting matches. 'He was tall, straight, and full of flesh, well proportioned, and excellently made in all his limbs. His complexion inclined somewhat to brown, but was coloured with sanguine and lively carnation. His eyes were black; in look and sharpness of light, they were vivid, piercing, and terrible. The outlines of his nose and all his countenance expressed a certain manly nobleness, combined with goodness and prudence.' Such is the portrait drawn of Colleoni by his biographer; and it well accords with the famous bronze statue of the general at Venice.

205

Colleoni lived with a magnificence that suited his rank. His favourite place of abode was Malpaga, a castle built by him at the distance of about an hour's drive from Bergamo. The place is worth a visit, though its courts and gates and galleries have now been turned into a monster farm, and the southern rooms, where Colleoni entertained his guests, are given over to the silkworms. Half a dozen families, employed upon a vast estate of the Martinengo family, occupy the still substantial house and stables. The moat is planted with mulberry-trees; the upper rooms are used as granaries for golden maize; cows, pigs, and horses litter in the spacious yard. Yet the walls of the inner court and of the ancient state rooms are brilliant with frescoes, executed by some good Venetian hand, which represent the chief events of Colleoni's life—his battles, his reception by the Signory of Venice, his tournaments and hawking parties, and the great series of entertainments with which he welcomed Christiern of Denmark. This king had made his pilgrimage to Rome and was returning westward, when the fame of Colleoni and his princely state at Malpaga induced him to turn aside and spend some days as the general's guest. In order to do him honour, Colleoni left his castle at the king's disposal and established himself with all his staff and servants in a camp at some distance from Malpaga. The camp was duly furnished with tents and trenches, stockades, artillery, and all the other furniture of war. On the king's approach, Colleoni issued with trumpets blowing and banners flying to greet his guest, gratifying him thus with a spectacle of

206

the pomp and circumstance of war as carried on in Italy. The visit was further enlivened by sham fights, feats of arms, and trials of strength. When it ended, Colleoni presented the king with one of his own suits of armour, and gave to each of his servants a complete livery of red and white, his colours. Among the frescoes at Malpaga none are more interesting, and none, thanks to the silkworms rather than to any other cause, are fortunately in a better state of preservation, than those which represent this episode in the history of the Castle.

Colleoni died in the year 1475, at the age of seventy-five. Since he left no male representative, he constituted the Republic of S. Mark his heir-in-chief, after properly providing for his daughters and his numerous foundations. The Venetians received under this testament a sum of 100,000 ducats, together with all arrears of pay due to him, and 10,000 ducats owed him by the Duke of Ferrara. It set forth the testator's intention that this money should be employed in defence of the Christian faith against the Turk. One condition was attached to the bequest. The legatees were to erect a statue to Colleoni on the Piazza of S. Mark. This, however, involved some difficulty; for the proud Republic had never accorded a similar honour, nor did they choose to encumber their splendid square with a monument. They evaded the condition by assigning the Campo in front of the Scuola di S. Marco, where also stands the Church of S. Zanipolo, to the purpose. Here accordingly the finest bronze equestrian statue in Italy, if we except the Marcus Aurelius of the Capitol, was reared upon its marble pedestal by Andrea Verocchio and Alessandro Leopardi.

207

Colleoni's liberal expenditure of wealth found its reward in the immortality conferred by art. While the names of Braccio, his master in the art of war, and of Piccinino, his great adversary, are familiar to few but professed students, no one who has visited either Bergamo or Venice can fail to have learned something about the founder of the Chapel of S. John and the original of Leopardi's bronze. The annals of sculpture assign to Verocchio, of Florence, the principal share in this statue: but Verocchio died before it was cast; and even granting that he designed the model, its execution must be attributed to his collaborator, the Venetian Leopardi. For my own part, I am loth to admit that the chief credit of this masterpiece belongs to a man whose undisputed work at Florence shows but little of its living spirit and splendour of suggested motion. That the Tuscan science of Verocchio secured conscientious modelling for man and horse may be assumed; but I am fain to believe that the concentrated fire which animates them both is due in no small measure to the handling of his northern fellow-craftsman.

While immersed in the dreary records of crimes, treasons, cruelties, and base ambitions, which constitute the bulk of fifteenth-century Italian history, it is refreshing to meet with a character so frank and manly, so simply pious and comparatively free from stain, as Colleoni. The only general of his day who can bear comparison with him for purity of public life and decency in conduct, was Federigo di Montefeltro. Even here, the comparison redounds to Colleoni's credit; for he, unlike the Duke of Urbino, rose to eminence by his own exertion in a profession fraught with peril to men of ambition and energy. Federigo started with a principality sufficient to satisfy his just desires for power. Nothing but his own sense of right and prudence restrained Colleoni upon the path which brought Francesco Sforza to a duchy by dishonourable dealings, and Carmagnola to the scaffold by questionable practice against his masters.

208

Few people visit Crema. It is a little country town of Lombardy, between Cremona and Treviglio, with no historic memories but very misty ones belonging to the days of the Visconti dynasty. On every side around the city walls stretch smiling vineyards and rich meadows, where the elms are married to the mulberry-trees by long festoons of foliage hiding purple grapes, where the sunflowers droop their heavy golden heads among tall stems of millet and gigantic maize, and here and there a rice-crop ripens in the marshy loam. In vintage time the carts, drawn by their white oxen, come creaking townward in the evening, laden with blue bunches. Down the long straight roads, between rows of poplars, they creep on; and on the shafts beneath the pyramid of fruit lie contadini stained with lees of wine. Far off across that 'waveless sea' of Lombardy, which has been the battlefield of countless generations, rise the dim grey Alps, or else pearly domes of thunder-clouds in gleaming masses over some tall solitary tower. Such backgrounds, full of peace, suggestive of almost infinite distance, and dignified with colours of incomparable depth and breadth, the Venetian painters loved. No landscape in Europe is more wonderful than this—thrice wonderful in the vastness of its arching heavens, in the stillness of its level plain, and in the bulwark of huge crested mountains, reared afar like bastions against the northern sky. The little town is all alive in this September weather. At every corner of the street, under rustling abeles and thick-foliaged planes, at the doors of palaces and in the yards of inns, men, naked from the thighs downward, are treading the red must into vats and tuns; while their mild-eyed oxen lie beneath them in the road, peaceably chewing the cud between one journey to the vineyard and another. It must not be imagined that the scene of Alma Tadema's 'Roman Vintage,' or what we fondly picture to our fancy of the Athenian Lenaea, is repeated in the streets of Crema. This modern treading of the wine-press is a very prosaic affair. The town reeks with a sour smell of old casks and crushed grape-skins, and the men and women at work bear no resemblance whatever to Bacchus and his crew. Yet even as it is, the Lombard vintage, beneath floods of sunlight and a pure blue sky, is beautiful; and he who would fain make acquaintance with Crema, should time his entry into the old town, if possible, on some still golden afternoon of autumn. It is then, if ever, that he will learn to love the glowing brickwork of its churches and the quaint terra-cotta traceries that form its chief artistic charm.

210

How the unique brick architecture of the Lombard cities took its origin—whether from the precepts of Byzantine aliens in the earliest middle ages, or from the native instincts of a mixed race composed of Gallic, Ligurian, Roman, and Teutonic elements, under the leadership of Longobardic rulers—is a question for antiquarians to decide. There can, however, be no doubt that the monuments of the Lombard style, as they now exist, are no less genuinely local, no less characteristic of the country they adorn, no less indigenous to the soil they sprang from, than the Attic colonnades of Mnesicles and Ictinus. What the marble quarries of Pentelicus were to the Athenian builders, the clay beneath their feet was to those Lombard craftsmen. From it they fashioned structures as enduring, towers as majestic, and cathedral aisles as solemn, as were ever wrought from chiselled stone. There is a true sympathy between those buildings and the Lombard landscape, which by itself might suffice to prove the originality of their almost unknown architects. The rich colour of the baked clay—finely modulated from a purplish red, through russet, crimson, pink, and orange, to pale yellow and dull grey—harmonises with the brilliant greenery of Lombard vegetation and with the deep azure of the distant Alpine range. Reared aloft above the flat expanse of plain, those square *torroni*, tapering into octagons and crowned with slender cones, break the long sweeping lines and infinite horizons with a contrast that affords relief, and yields a resting-place to tired eyes; while, far away, seen haply from some bridge above Ticino, or some high-built palace loggia, they gleam like columns of pale rosy fire against the front of mustering storm-clouds blue with rain. In that happy orchard of Italy, a pergola of vines in leaf, a clump of green acacias, and a campanile soaring above its church roof, brought into chance combination with the reaches of the plain and the dim mountain range, make up a picture eloquent in its suggestive beauty.

211

Those ancient builders wrought cunningly with their material. The bricks are fashioned and fixed to last for all time. Exposed to the icy winds of a Lombard winter, to the fierce fire of a Lombard summer, and to the moist vapours of a Lombard autumn; neglected by unheeding

generations; with flowers clustering in their crannies, and birds nesting in their eaves, and mason-bees filling the delicate network of their traceries—they still present angles as sharp as when they were but finished, and joints as nice as when the mortar dried in the first months of their building. This immunity from age and injury they owe partly to the imperishable nature of baked clay; partly to the care of the artists who selected and mingled the right sorts of earth, burned them with scrupulous attention, and fitted them together with a patience born of loving service. Each member of the edifice was designed with a view to its ultimate place. The proper curve was ascertained for cylindrical columns and for rounded arches. Larger bricks were moulded for the supporting walls, and lesser pieces were adapted to the airy vaults and lanterns. In the brickfield and the kiln the whole church was planned and wrought out in its details, before the hands that made a unity of all these scattered elements were set to the work of raising it in air. When they came to put the puzzle together, they laid each brick against its neighbour, filling up the almost imperceptible interstices with liquid cement composed of quicklime and fine sand in water. After five centuries the seams between the layers of bricks that make the bell-tower of S. Gottardo at Milan, yield no point of vantage to the penknife or the chisel.

Nor was it in their welding of the bricks alone that these craftsmen showed their science. They were wont to enrich the surface with marble, sparingly but effectively employed—as in those slender detached columns, which add such beauty to the octagon of S. Gottardo, or in the string-courses of strange beasts and reptiles that adorn the church fronts of Pavia. They called to their aid the *mandorlato* of Verona, supporting their porch pillars on the backs of couchant lions, inserting polished slabs on their façades, and building huge sarcophagi into their cloister alleys. Between terra-cotta and this marble of Verona there exists a deep and delicate affinity. It took the name of *mandorlato*, I suppose, from a resemblance to almond blossoms. But it is far from having the simple beauty of a single hue. Like all noble veined stones, it passes by a series of modulations and gradations through a gamut of associated rather than contrasted tints. Not the pink of the almond blossom only, but the creamy whiteness of the almond kernel, and the dull yellow of the almond nut may be found in it; and yet these colours are so blent and blurred to all-pervading mellowness, that nowhere is there any shock of contrast or violence of a preponderating tone. The veins which run in labyrinths of crossing, curving, and contorted lines all over its smooth surface add, no doubt, to this effect of unity. The polish, lastly, which it takes, makes the *mandorlato* shine like a smile upon the sober face of the brickwork: for, serviceable as terra-cotta is for nearly all artistic purposes, it cannot reflect light or gain the illumination which comes from surface brightness.

What the clay can do almost better than any crystalline material, may be seen in the mouldings so characteristic of Lombard architecture. Geometrical patterns of the rarest and most fanciful device; scrolls of acanthus foliage, and traceries of tendrils; Cupids swinging in festoons of vines; angels joining hands in dance, with fluttering skirts and windy hair, and mouths that symbol singing; grave faces of old men and beautiful profiles of maidens leaning from medallions; wide-winged genii filling the spandrils of cloister arches, and cherubs clustered in the rondure of rose-windows—ornaments like these, wrought from the plastic clay, and adapted with true taste to the requirements of the architecture, are familiar to every one who has studied the church front of Crema, the cloisters of the Certosa, the courts of the Ospedale Maggiore at Milan, or the public palace of Cremona.

If the *mandorlato* gives a smile to those majestic Lombard buildings, the terra-cotta decorations add the element of life and movement. The thought of the artist in its first freshness and vivacity is felt in them. They have all the spontaneity of improvisation, the seductive melody of unpremeditated music. Moulding the supple earth with 'hand obedient to the brain,' the *plasticatore* has impressed his most fugitive dreams of beauty on it without effort; and what it cost him but a few fatigueless hours to fashion, the steady heat of the furnace has gifted with imperishable life. Such work, no doubt, has the defects of its qualities. As there are few difficulties to overcome, it suffers from a fatal facility—*nec pluteum coedit nec demorsos sapit unguis*. It is therefore apt to be unequal, touching at times the highest point of inspiration, as in the angels of Guccio at Perugia, and sinking not unfrequently into the commonplace of easygoing triviality, as in the common floral traceries of Milanese windows. But it is never laboured, never pedantic, never dulled by the painful effort to subdue an obstinate material to the artist's will. If

marble is required to develop the strength of the few supreme sculptors, terra-cotta saves intact the fancies of a crowd of lesser men.

When we reflect that all the force, solemnity, and beauty of the Lombard buildings was evoked from clay, we learn from them this lesson: that the thought of man needs neither precious material nor yet stubborn substance for the production of enduring masterpieces. The red earth was enough for God when He made man in His own image; and mud dried in the sun suffices for the artist, who is next to God in his creative faculty—since *non merita nome di creatore se non Iddio ed il poeta*. After all, what is more everlasting than terra-cotta? The hobnails of the boys who ran across the brickfields in the Roman town of Silchester, may still be seen, mingled with the impress of the feet of dogs and hoofs of goats, in the tiles discovered there. Such traces might serve as a metaphor for the footfall of artistic genius, when the form-giver has stamped his thought upon the moist clay, and fire has made that imprint permanent.

215

Of all these Lombard edifices, none is more beautiful than the Cathedral of Crema, with its delicately finished campanile, built of choicely tinted yellow bricks, and ending in a lantern of the gracefulest, most airily capricious fancy. This bell-tower does not display the gigantic force of Cremona's famous torrazzo, shooting 396 feet into blue ether from the city square; nor can it rival the octagon of S. Gottardo for warmth of hue. Yet it has a character of elegance, combined with boldness of invention, that justifies the citizens of Crema in their pride. It is unique; and he who has not seen it does not know the whole resources of the Lombard style. The façade of the Cathedral displays that peculiar blending of Byzantine or Romanesque round arches with Gothic details in the windows, and with the acute angle of the central pitch, which forms the characteristic quality of the late *trecento* Lombard manner. In its combination of purity and richness it corresponds to the best age of decorated work in English Gothic. What, however, strikes a Northern observer is the strange detachment of this elaborate façade from the main structure of the church. Like a frontispiece cut out of cardboard and pierced with ornamental openings, it shoots far above the low roof of the nave; so that at night the moon, rising above the southern aisle, shines through its topmost window, and casts the shadow of its tracery upon the pavement of the square. This is a constructive blemish to which the Italians in no part of the peninsula were sensitive. They seem to have regarded their church fronts as independent of the edifice, capable of separate treatment, and worthy in themselves of being made the subject of decorative skill.

In the so-called Santuario of Crema—a circular church dedicated to S. Maria della Croce, outside the walls—the Lombard style has been adapted to the manner of the Mid-Renaissance. This church was raised in the last years of the fifteenth century by Gian Battista Battagli, an architect of Lodi, who followed the pure rules of taste, bequeathed to North Italian builders by Bramante. The beauty of the edifice is due entirely to its tranquil dignity and harmony of parts, the lightness of its circling loggia, and the just proportion maintained between the central structure and the four projecting porticoes. The sharp angles of these vestibules afford a contrast to the simplicity of the main building, while their clustered cupolas assist the general effect of roundness aimed at by the architect. Such a church as this proves how much may be achieved by the happy distribution of architectural masses. It was the triumph of the best Renaissance style to attain lucidity of treatment, and to produce beauty by geometrical proportion. When Leo Battista Alberti complained to his friend, Matteo di Bastia, that a slight alteration of the curves in his design for S. Francesco at Rimini would 'spoil his music,' *ciò che tu muti discorda tutta quella musica*, this is what he meant. The melody of lines and the harmony of parts made a symphony to his eyes no less agreeable than a concert of tuned lutes and voices to his ears; and to this concord he was so sensitive that any deviation was a discord.

216

After visiting the churches of Crema and sauntering about the streets awhile, there is nothing left to do but to take refuge in the old Albergo del Pozzo. This is one of those queer Italian inns, which carry you away at once into a scene of Goldoni. It is part of some palace, where nobles housed their *bravi* in the sixteenth century, and which the lesser people of to-day have turned into a dozen habitations. Its great stone staircase leads to a saloon upon which the various bedchambers open; and round its courtyard runs an open balcony, and from the court grows up a fig-tree poking ripe fruit against a bedroom window. Oleanders in tubs and red salvias in pots, and kitchen herbs in boxes, flourish on the pavement, where the ostler comes to wash his carriages, and where the barber shaves the poodle of the house. Visitors to the Albergo del Pozzo are

217

invariably asked if they have seen the Museo; and when they answer in the negative, they are conducted with some ceremony to a large room on the ground-floor of the inn, looking out upon the courtyard and the fig-tree. It was here that I gained the acquaintance of Signor Folcioni, and became possessor of an object that has made the memory of Crema doubly interesting to me ever since.

When we entered the Museo, we found a little old man, gentle, grave, and unobtrusive, varnishing the ugly portrait of some Signor of the *cinquecento*. Round the walls hung pictures, of mediocre value, in dingy frames; but all of them bore sounding titles. Titians, Lionardos, Guido Renis, and Luinis, looked down and waited for a purchaser. In truth this museum was a *bric-à-brac* shop of a sort that is common enough in Italy, where treasures of old lace, glass, armour, furniture, and tapestry, may still be met with. Signor Folcioni began by pointing out the merits of his pictures; and after making due allowance for his zeal as amateur and dealer, it was possible to join in some of his eulogiums. A would-be Titian, for instance, bought in Verona from a noble house in ruins, showed Venetian wealth of colour in its gemmy greens and lucid crimson shinning from a background deep and glowing. Then he led us to a walnut-wood bureau of late Renaissance work, profusely carved with nymphs and Cupids, and armed men, among festoons of fruits embossed in high relief. Deeply drilled worm-holes set a seal of antiquity upon the blooming faces and luxuriant garlandlike the touch of Time who 'delves the parallels in beauty's brow.' On the shelves of an ebony cabinet close by he showed us a row of cups cut out of rock-crystal and mounted in gilt silver, with heaps of engraved gems, old snuff-boxes, coins, medals, sprays of coral, and all the indescribable lumber that one age flings aside as worthless for the next to pick up from the dust-heap and regard as precious. Surely the genius of culture in our century might be compared to a chiffonnier of Paris, who, when the night has fallen, goes into the streets, bag on back and lantern in hand, to rake up the waifs and strays a day of whirling life has left him.

218

The next curiosity was an ivory carving of S. Anthony preaching to the fishes, so fine and small you held it on your palm, and used a lens to look at it. Yet there stood the Santo gesticulating, and there were the fishes in rows—the little fishes first, and then the middle-sized, and last of all the great big fishes almost out at sea, with their heads above the water and their mouths wide open, just as the *Fioretti di San Francesco* describes them. After this came some original drawings of doubtful interest, and then a case of fifty-two *nielli*. These were of unquestionable value; for has not Cicognara engraved them on a page of his classic monograph? The thin silver plates, over which once passed the burin of Maso Finiguerra, cutting lines finer than hairs, and setting here a shadow in dull acid-eaten grey, and there a high light of exquisite polish, were far more delicate than any proofs impressed from them. These frail masterpieces of Florentine art—the first beginnings of line engraving—we held in our hands while Signor Folcioni read out Cicognara's commentary in a slow impressive voice, breaking off now and then to point at the originals before us.

The sun had set, and the room was almost dark, when he laid his book down, and said: 'I have not much left to show—yet stay! Here are still some little things of interest.' He then opened the door into his bedroom, and took down from a nail above his bed a wooden Crucifix. Few things have fascinated me more than this Crucifix—produced without parade, half negligently, from the dregs of his collection by a dealer in old curiosities at Crema. The cross was, or is—for it is lying on the table now before me—twenty-one inches in length, made of strong wood, covered with coarse yellow parchment, and shod at the four ends with brass. The Christ is roughly hewn in reddish wood, coloured scarlet, where the blood streams from the five wounds. Over the head an oval medallion, nailed into the cross, serves as framework to a miniature of the Madonna, softly smiling with a Correggiesque *simper*. The whole Crucifix is not a work of art, but such as may be found in every convent. Its date cannot be earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century. As I held it in my hand, I thought—perhaps this has been carried to the bedside of the sick and dying; preachers have brandished it from the pulpit over conscience-stricken congregations; monks have knelt before it on the brick floor of their cells, and novices have kissed it in the vain desire to drown their yearnings after the relinquished world; perhaps it has attended criminals to the scaffold, and heard the secrets of repentant murderers; but why should it be shown me as a thing of rarity? These thoughts passed through my mind, while Signor Folcioni quietly remarked: 'I bought this Cross from the Frati when their convent was dissolved in Crema.' Then he bade me turn it round, and showed a little

219

steel knob fixed into the back between the arms. This was a spring. He pressed it, and the upper and lower parts of the cross came asunder; and holding the top like a handle, I drew out as from a scabbard a sharp steel blade, concealed in the thickness of the wood, behind the very body of the agonising Christ. What had been a crucifix became a deadly poniard in my grasp, and the rust upon it in the twilight looked like blood. 'I have often wondered,' said Signor Folcioni, 'that the Frati cared to sell me this.'

220

There is no need to raise the question of the genuineness of this strange relic, though I confess to having had my doubts about it, or to wonder for what nefarious purposes the impious weapon was designed—whether the blade was inserted by some rascal monk who never told the tale, or whether it was used on secret service by the friars. On its surface the infernal engine carries a dark certainty of treason, sacrilege, and violence. Yet it would be wrong to incriminate the Order of S. Francis by any suspicion, and idle to seek the actual history of this mysterious weapon. A writer of fiction could indeed produce some dark tale in the style of De Stendhal's 'Nouvelles,' and christen it 'The Crucifix of Crema.' And how delighted would Webster have been if he had chanced to hear of such a sword-sheath! He might have placed it in the hands of Bosola for the keener torment of his Duchess. Flamineo might have used it; or the disguised friars, who made the deathbed of Bracciano hideous, might have plunged it in the Duke's heart after mocking his eyes with the figure of the suffering Christ. To imagine such an instrument of moral terror mingled with material violence, lay within the scope of Webster's sinister and powerful genius. But unless he had seen it with his eyes, what poet would have ventured to devise the thing and display it even in the dumb show of a tragedy? Fact is more wonderful than romance. No apocalypse of Antichrist matches what is told of Roderigo Borgia; and the crucifix of Crema exceeds the sombre fantasy of Webster.

Whatever may be the truth about this cross, it has at any rate the value of a symbol or a metaphor. The idea which it materialises, the historical events of which it is a sign, may well arrest attention. A sword concealed in the crucifix—what emblem brings more forcibly to mind than this that two-edged glaive of persecution which Dominic unsheathed to mow down the populations of Provence and to make Spain destitute of men? Looking upon the crucifix of Crema, we may seem to see pestilence-stricken multitudes of Moors and Jews dying on the coasts of Africa and Italy. The Spaniards enter Mexico; and this is the cross they carry in their hands. They take possession of Peru; and while the gentle people of the Incas come to kiss the bleeding brows of Christ, they plunge this dagger in their sides. What, again, was the temporal power of the Papacy but a sword embedded in a cross? Each Papa Rè, when he ascended the Holy Chair, was forced to take the crucifix of Crema and to bear it till his death. A long procession of war-loving Pontiffs, levying armies and paying captains with the pence of S. Peter, in order to keep by arms the lands they had acquired by fraud, defiles before our eyes. First goes the terrible Sixtus IV., who died of grief when news was brought him that the Italian princes had made peace. He it was who sanctioned the conspiracy to murder the Medici in church, at the moment of the elevation of the Host. The brigands hired to do this work refused at the last moment. The sacrilege appalled them. 'Then,' says the chronicler, 'was found a priest, who, being used to churches, had no scruple.' The poignard this priest carried was this crucifix of Crema. After Sixtus came the blood-stained Borgia; and after him Julius II., whom the Romans in triumphal songs proclaimed a second Mars, and who turned, as Michelangelo expressed it, the chalices of Rome into swords and helms. Leo X., who dismembered Italy for his brother and nephew; and Clement VII., who broke the neck of Florence and delivered the Eternal City to the spoiler, follow. Of the antinomy between the Vicariate of Christ and an earthly kingdom, incarnated by these and other Holy Fathers, what symbol could be found more fitting than a dagger with a crucifix for case and covering?

221

222

It is not easy to think or write of these matters without rhetoric. When I laid my head upon my pillow that night in the Albergo del Pozzo at Crema, it was full of such thoughts; and when at last sleep came, it brought with it a dream begotten doubtless by the perturbation of my fancy. For I thought that a brown Franciscan, with hollow cheeks, and eyes aflame beneath his heavy cowl, sat by my bedside, and, as he raised the crucifix in his lean quivering hands, whispered a tale of deadly passion and of dastardly revenge. His confession carried me away to a convent garden of Palermo; and there was love in the story, and hate that is stronger than love, and, for the ending of the whole matter, remorse which dies not even in the grave. Each new possessor of the

crucifix of Crema, he told me, was forced to hear from him in dreams his dreadful history. But, since it was a dream and nothing more, why should I repeat it? I have wandered far enough already from the vintage and the sunny churches of the little Lombard town.

I

It was a gala night. The opera-house of Milan was one blaze of light and colour. Royalty in field-marshal's uniform and diamonds, attended by decorated generals and radiant ladies of the court, occupied the great box opposite the stage. The tiers from pit to gallery were filled with brilliantly dressed women. From the third row, where we were fortunately placed, the curves of that most beautiful of theatres presented to my gaze a series of retreating and approaching lines, composed of noble faces, waving feathers, sparkling jewels, sculptured shoulders, uniforms, robes of costly stuffs and every conceivable bright colour. Light poured from the huge lustre in the centre of the roof, ran along the crimson velvet cushions of the boxes, and flashed upon the gilded frame of the proscenium—satyrs and acanthus scrolls carved in the manner of a century ago. Pit and orchestra scarcely contained the crowd of men who stood in lively conversation, their backs turned to the stage, their lorgnettes raised from time to time to sweep the boxes. This surging sea of faces and sober costumes enhanced by contrast the glitter, variety, and luminous tranquillity of the theatre above it.

No one took much thought of the coming spectacle, till the conductor's rap was heard upon his desk, and the orchestra broke into the overture to Mozart's *Nozze*. Before they were half through, it was clear that we should not enjoy that evening the delight of perfect music added to the enchantment of so brilliant a scene. The execution of the overture was not exactly bad. But it lacked absolute precision, the complete subordination of all details to the whole. In rendering German music Italians often fail through want of discipline, or through imperfect sympathy with a style they will not take the pains to master. Nor, when the curtain lifted and the play began, was the vocalisation found in all parts satisfactory. The Contessa had a meagre *mezza voce*. Susanna, though she did not sing false, hovered on the verge of discords, owing to the weakness of an organ which had to be strained in order to make any effect on that enormous stage. On the other hand, the part of Almaviva was played with dramatic fire, and Figaro showed a truly Southern sense of comic fun. The scenes were splendidly mounted, and something of a princely grandeur—the largeness of a noble train of life—was added to the drama by the vast proportions of the theatre. It was a performance which, in spite of drawbacks, yielded pleasure.

224

And yet it might have left me frigid but for the artist who played Cherubino. This was no other than Pauline Lucca, in the prime of youth and petulance. From her first appearance to the last note she sang, she occupied the stage. The opera seemed to have been written for her. The mediocrity of the troupe threw her commanding merits—the richness of her voice, the purity of her intonation, her vivid conception of character, her indescribable brusquerie of movement and emotion—into that relief which a sapphire gains from a setting of pearls. I can see her now, after the lapse of nearly twenty years, as she stood there singing in blue doublet and white mantle, with the slouched Spanish hat and plume of ostrich feathers, a tiny rapier at her side, and blue rosettes upon her white silk shoes! The *Nozze di Figaro* was followed by a Ballo. This had for its theme the favourite legend of a female devil sent from the infernal regions to ruin a young man. Instead of performing the part assigned her, Satanella falls in love with the hero, sacrifices herself, and is claimed at last by the powers of goodness. *Quia multum amavit*, her lost soul is saved. If the opera left much to be desired, the Ballo was perfection. That vast stage of the Scala Theatre had almost overwhelmed the actors of the play. Now, thrown open to its inmost depths, crowded with glittering moving figures, it became a fairyland of fantastic loveliness. Italians possess the art of interpreting a serious dramatic action by pantomime. A Ballo with them is no mere affair of dancing—fine dresses, evolutions performed by brigades of pink-legged women with a fixed smile on their faces. It takes the rank of high expressive art. And the motive of this Ballo was consistently worked out in an intelligible sequence of well-ordered scenes. To moralise upon its meaning would be out of place. It had a conflict of passions, a rhythmical progression of emotions, a tragic climax in the triumph of good over evil.

225

II

At the end of the performance there were five persons in our box—the beautiful Miranda, and her husband, a celebrated English man of letters;

a German professor of biology; a young Milanese gentleman, whom we called Edoardo; and myself. Edoardo and the professor had joined us just before the ballet. I had occupied a seat behind Miranda and my friend the critic from the commencement. We had indeed dined together first at their hotel, the Rebecchino; and they now proposed that we should all adjourn together there on foot for supper. From the Scala Theatre to the Rebecchino is a walk of some three minutes.

226

When we were seated at the supper-table and had talked some while upon indifferent topics, the enthusiasm roused in me by Pauline Lucca burst out. I broke a moment's silence by exclaiming, 'What a wonder-world music creates! I have lived this evening in a sphere of intellectual enjoyment raised to rapture. I never lived so fast before!' 'Do you really think so?' said Miranda. She had just finished a *beccafico*, and seemed disposed for conversation. 'Do you really think so? For my part, music is in a wholly different region from experience, thought, or feeling. What does it communicate to you?' And she hummed to herself the *motif* of Cherubino's 'Non so più cosa son cosa faccio.'—'What does it teach me?' I broke in upon the melody. 'Why, to-night, when I heard the music, and saw her there, and felt the movement of the play, it seemed to me that a new existence was revealed. For the first time I understood what love might be in one most richly gifted for emotion.' Miranda bent her eyes on the table-cloth and played with her wineglass. 'I don't follow you at all. I enjoyed myself to-night. The opera, indeed, might have been better rendered. The ballet, I admit, was splendid. But when I remember the music—even the best of it—even Pauline Lucca's part—here she looked up, and shot me a quick glance across the table—I have mere music in my ears. Nothing more. Mere music!' The professor of biology, who was gifted with, a sense of music and had studied it scientifically, had now crunched his last leaf of salad. Wiping his lips with his napkin, he joined our *tête-à-tête*. 'Gracious madam, I agree with you. He who seeks from music more than music gives, is on the quest—how shall I put it?—of the Holy Grail.' 'And what,' I struck in, 'is this minimum or maximum that music gives?' 'Dear young friend,' replied the professor, 'music gives melodies, harmonies, the many beautiful forms to which sound shall be fashioned. Just as in the case of shells and fossils, lovely in themselves, interesting for their history and classification, so is it with music. You must not seek an intellectual meaning. No; there is no *Inhalt* in music' And he hummed contentedly the air of 'Voi che sapete.' While he was humming, Miranda whispered to me across the table, 'Separate the Lucca from the music.' 'But,' I answered rather hotly, for I was nettled by Miranda's argument *ad hominem*, 'But it is not possible in an opera to divide the music from the words, the scenery, the play, the actor. Mozart, when he wrote the score to Da Ponte's libretto, was excited to production by the situations. He did not conceive his melodies out of connection with a certain cast of characters, a given ethical environment.' 'I do not know, my dear young friend,' responded the professor, 'whether you have read Mozart's Life and letters. It is clearly shown in them how he composed airs at times and seasons when he had no words to deal with. These he afterwards used as occasion served. Whence I conclude that music was for him a free and lovely play of tone. The words of our excellent Da Ponte were a scaffolding to introduce his musical creations to the public. But without that carpenter's work, the melodies of Cherubino are *Selbst-ständig*, sufficient in themselves to vindicate their place in art. Do I interpret your meaning, gracious lady?' This he said bending to Miranda. 'Yes,' she replied. But she still played with her wineglass, and did not look as though she were quite satisfied. I meanwhile continued: 'Of course I have read Mozart's Life, and know how he went to work. But Mozart was a man of feeling, of experience, of ardent passions. How can you prove to me that the melodies he gave to Cherubino had not been evolved from situations similar to those in which Cherubino finds himself? How can you prove he did not feel a natural appropriateness in the *motifs* he selected from his memory for Cherubino? How can you be certain that the part itself did not stimulate his musical faculty to fresh and still more appropriate creativeness? And if we must fall back on documents, do you remember what he said himself about the love-music in *Die Entführung*? I think he tells us that he meant it to express his own feeling for the woman who had just become his wife.' Miranda looked up as though she were almost half-persuaded. Yet she hummed again 'Non so più,' then said to herself, 'Yes, it is wiser to believe with the professor that these are sequences of sounds, and nothing more.' Then she sighed. In the pause which followed, her husband, the famous critic, filled his glass, stretched his legs out, and began: 'You have embarked, I see, upon the ocean of æsthetics. For my part, to-night I was thinking how much better fitted

227

228

for the stage Beaumarchais' play was than this musical mongrel—this operatic adaptation. The wit, observe, is lost. And Cherubino—that sparkling little *enfant terrible*—becomes a sentimental fellow—a something I don't know what—between a girl and a boy—a medley of romance and impudence—anyhow a being quite unlike the sharply outlined playwright's page. I confess I am not a musician; the drama is my business, and I judge things by their fitness for the stage. My wife agrees with me to differ. She likes music, I like plays. To-night she was better pleased than I was; for she got good music tolerably well rendered, while I got nothing but a mangled comedy.'

We bore the critic's monologue with patience. But once again the spirit, seeking after something which neither Miranda, nor her husband, nor the professor could be got to recognise, moved within me. I cried out at a venture, 'People who go to an opera must forget music pure and simple, must forget the drama pure and simple. You must welcome a third species of art, in which the play, the music, the singers with their voices, the orchestra with its instruments—Pauline Lucca, if you like, with her fascination' (and here I shot a side-glance at Miranda), 'are so blent as to create a world beyond the scope of poetry or music or acting taken by themselves. I give Mozart credit for having had insight into this new world, for having brought it near to us. And I hold that every fresh representation of his work is a fresh revelation of its possibilities.'

To this the critic answered, 'You now seem to me to be confounding the limits of the several arts.' 'What!' I continued, 'is the drama but emotion presented in its most external forms as action? And what is music but emotion, in its most genuine essence, expressed by sound? Where then can a more complete artistic harmony be found than in the opera?'

'The opera,' replied our host, 'is a hybrid. You will probably learn to dislike artistic hybrids, if you have the taste and sense I give you credit for. My own opinion has been already expressed. In the *Nozze*, Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro* is simply spoiled. My friend the professor declares Mozart's music to be sufficient by itself, and the libretto to be a sort of machinery for its display. Miranda, I think, agrees with him. You plead eloquently for the hybrid. You have a right to your own view. These things are matters, in the final resort, of individual taste rather than of demonstrable principles. But I repeat that you are very young.' The critic drained his Lambrusco, and smiled at me.

'Yes, he is young,' added Miranda. 'He must learn to distinguish between music, his own imagination, and a pretty woman. At present he mixes them all up together. It is a sort of transcendental omelette. But I think the pretty woman has more to do with it than metaphysics!'

All this while Edoardo had bestowed devout attention on his supper. But it appeared that the drift of our discourse had not been lost by him. 'Well,' he said, 'you finely fibred people dissect and analyse. I am content with the *spettacolo*. That pleases. What does a man want more? The *Nozze* is a comedy of life and manners. The music is adorable. To-night the women were not bad to look at—the Lucca was divine; the scenes—ingenious. I thought but little. I came away delighted. You could have a better play, Caro Signore!' (with a bow to our host). 'That is granted. You might have better music, Cara Signora!' (with a bow to Miranda). 'That too is granted. But when the play and the music come together—how shall I say?—the music helps the play, and the play helps the music; and we—well we, I suppose, must help both!'

Edoardo's little speech was so ingenuous, and, what is more, so true to his Italian temperament, that it made us all laugh and leave the argument just where we found it. The bottles of Lambrusco supplied us each with one more glass; and while we were drinking them, Miranda, woman-like, taking the last word, but contradicting herself, softly hummed 'Non so più cosa son,' and 'Ah!' she said, 'I shall dream of love to-night!'

We rose and said good-night. But when I had reached my bedroom in the Hôtel de la Ville, I sat down, obstinate and unconvinced, and penned this rhapsody, which I have lately found among papers of nearly twenty years ago. I give it as it stands.

III

Mozart has written the two melodramas of love—the one a melo-tragedy, the other a melo-comedy. But in really noble art, Comedy and Tragedy have faces of equal serenity and beauty. In the Vatican there are marble busts of the two Muses, differing chiefly in their head-dresses: that of Tragedy is an elaborately built-up structure of fillets and

flowing hair, piled high above the forehead and descending in long curls upon the shoulders; while Comedy wears a similar adornment, with the addition of a wreath of vine-leaves and grape-bunches. The expression of the sister goddesses is no less finely discriminated. Over the mouth of Comedy plays a subtle smile, and her eyes are relaxed in a half-merriment. A shadow rests upon the slightly heavier brows of Tragedy, and her lips, though not compressed, are graver. So delicately did the Greek artist indicate the division between two branches of one dramatic art. And since all great art is classical, Mozart's two melodramas, *Don Giovanni* and the *Nozze di Figaro*, though the one is tragic and the other comic, are twin-sisters, similar in form and feature.

The central figure of the melo-tragedy is Don Juan, the hero of unlimited desire, pursuing the unattainable through tortuous interminable labyrinths, eager in appetite yet never satisfied, 'for ever following and for ever foiled.' He is the incarnation of lust that has become a habit of the soul—rebellious, licentious, selfish, even cruel. His nature, originally noble and brave, has assumed the qualities peculiar to lust—rebellion, license, cruelty, defiant egotism. Yet, such as he is, doomed to punishment and execration, Don Juan remains a fit subject for poetry and music, because he is complete, because he is impelled by some demonic influence, spurred on by yearnings after an unsearchable delight. In his death, the spirit of chivalry survives, metamorphosed, it is true, into the spirit of revolt, yet still tragic, such as might animate the desperate sinner of a haughty breed.

232

The central figure of the melo-comedy is Cherubino, the genius of love, no less insatiable, but undetermined to virtue or to vice. This is the point of Cherubino, that the ethical capacities in him are still potential. His passion still hovers on the borderland of good and bad. And this undetermined passion is beautiful because of extreme freshness; of infinite, immeasurable expansibility. Cherubino is the epitome of all that belongs to the amorous temperament in a state of still ascendant adolescence. He is about sixteen years of age—a boy yesterday, a man to-morrow—to-day both and neither—something beyond boyhood, but not yet limited by man's responsibility and man's absorbing passions. He partakes of both ages in the primal awakening to self-consciousness. Desire, which in Don Juan has become a fiend, hovers before him like a fairy. His are the sixteen years, not of a Northern climate, but of Spain or Italy, where manhood appears in a flash, and overtakes the child with sudden sunrise of new faculties. *Nondum amabam, sed amare amabam, quaerebam quod amarem, amans amare*—'I loved not yet, but was in love with loving; I sought what I should love, being in love with loving.' That sentence, penned by S. Augustine and consecrated by Shelley, describes the mood of Cherubino. He loves at every moment of his life, with every pulse of his being. His object is not a beloved being, but love itself—the satisfaction of an irresistible desire, the paradise of bliss which merely loving has become for him. What love means he hardly knows. He only knows that he must love. And women love him—half as a plaything to be trifled with, half as a young god to be wounded by. This rising of the star of love as it ascends into the heaven of youthful fancy, is revealed in the melodies Mozart has written for him. How shall we describe their potency? Who shall translate those curiously perfect words to which tone and rhythm have been indissolubly wedded? *E pur mi piace languir cosi.... E se non ho chi m' oda, parlo d'amor con me.*

233

But if this be so, it may be asked, Who shall be found worthy to act Cherubino on the stage? You cannot have seen and heard Pauline Lucca, or you would not ask this question.

Cherubino is by no means the most important person in the plot of the *Nozze*. But he strikes the keynote of the opera. His love is the standard by which we measure the sad, retrospective, stately love of the Countess, who tries to win back an alienated husband. By Cherubino we measure the libertine love of the Count, who is a kind of Don Juan without cruelty, and the humorous love of Figaro and his sprightly bride Susanna. Each of these characters typifies one of the many species of love. But Cherubino anticipates and harmonises all. They are conscious, experienced, world-worn, disillusioned, trivial. He is all love, foreseen, foreshadowed in a dream of life to be; all love, diffused through brain and heart and nerves like electricity; all love, merging the moods of ecstasy, melancholy, triumph, regret, jealousy, joy, expectation, in a hazy sheen, as of some Venetian sunrise. What will Cherubino be after three years? A Romeo, a Lovelace, a Lothario, a Juan? a disillusioned rake, a sentimentalist, an effete fop, a romantic lover? He may become any one of these, for he contains the possibilities of all. As yet, he is the dear glad angel of the May of love, the nightingale of orient emotion. This moment in the unfolding of character Mozart has arrested and eternalised for us

IV

This is indeed a rhapsodical production. Miranda was probably right. Had it not been for Pauline Lucca, I might not have philosophised the *Nozze* thus. Yet, in the main, I believe that my instinct was well grounded. Music, especially when wedded to words, more especially when those words are dramatic, cannot separate itself from emotion. It will not do to tell us that a melody is a certain sequence of sounds; that the composer chose it for its beauty of rhythm, form, and tune, and only used the words to get it vocalised. We are forced to go farther back, and ask ourselves, What suggested it in the first place to the composer? why did he use it precisely in connection with this dramatic situation? How can we answer these questions except by supposing that music was for him the utterance through art of some emotion? The final fact of human nature is emotion, crystallising itself in thought and language, externalising itself in action and art. 'What,' said Novalis, 'are thoughts but pale dead feelings?' Admitting this even in part, we cannot deny to music an emotional content of some kind. I would go farther, and assert that, while a merely mechanical musician may set inappropriate melodies to words, and render music inexpressive of character, what constitutes a musical dramatist is the conscious intention of fitting to the words of his libretto such melody as shall interpret character, and the power to do this with effect.

That the Cherubino of Mozart's *Nozze* is quite different from Beaumarchais' Cherubin does not affect this question. He is a new creation, just because Mozart could not, or would not, conceive the character of the page in Beaumarchais' sprightly superficial spirit. He used the part to utter something unutterable except by music about the soul of the still adolescent lover. The libretto-part and the melodies, taken together, constitute a new romantic ideal, consistent with experience, but realised with the intensity and universality whereby art is distinguished from life. Don Juan was a myth before Mozart touched him with the magic wand of music. Cherubino became a myth by the same Prospero's spell. Both characters have the universality, the symbolic potency, which belongs to legendary beings. That there remains a discrepancy between the boy-page and the music made for him, can be conceded without danger to my theory; for the music made for Cherubino is meant to interpret his psychical condition, and is independent of his boyishness of conduct.

235

This further explains why there may be so many renderings of Cherubino's melodies. Mozart idealised an infinite emotion. The singer is forced to define; the actor also is forced to define. Each introduces his own limit on the feeling. When the actor and the singer meet together in one personality, this definition of emotion becomes of necessity doubly specific. The condition of all music is that it depends in a great measure on the temperament of the interpreter for its momentary shade of expression, and this dependence is of course exaggerated when the music is dramatic. Furthermore, the subjectivity of the audience enters into the problem as still another element of definition. It may therefore be fairly said that, in estimating any impression produced by Cherubino's music, the original character of the page, transplanted from French comedy to Italian opera, Mozart's conception of that character, Mozart's specific quality of emotion and specific style of musical utterance, together with the contralto's interpretation of the character and rendering of the music, according to her intellectual capacity, artistic skill, and timbre of voice, have collaborated with the individuality of the hearer. Some of the constituents of the ever-varying product—a product which is new each time the part is played—are fixed. Da Ponte's Cherubino and Mozart's melodies remain unalterable. All the rest is undecided; the singer and the listener change on each occasion.

236

To assert that the musician Mozart meant nothing by his music, to assert that he only cared about it *quâ* music, is the same as to say that the painter Tintoretto, when he put the Crucifixion upon canvas, the sculptor Michelangelo, when he carved Christ upon the lap of Mary, meant nothing, and only cared about the beauty of their forms and colours. Those who take up this position prove, not that the artist has no meaning to convey, but that for them the artist's nature is unintelligible, and his meaning is conveyed in an unknown tongue. It seems superfluous to guard against misinterpretation by saying that to expect clear definition from music—the definition which belongs to poetry—would be absurd. The sphere of music is in sensuous perception; the

sphere of poetry is in intelligence. Music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry, dealing with words. Nevertheless, its effect upon the sentient subject may be more intense and penetrating for this very reason. We cannot fail to understand what words are intended to convey; we may very easily interpret in a hundred different ways the message of sound. But this is not because words are wider in their reach and more alive; rather because they are more limited, more stereotyped, more dead. They symbolise something precise and unmistakable; but this precision is itself attenuation of the something symbolised. The exact value of the counter is better understood when it is a word than when it is a chord, because all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualised. Poetry touches emotion through the thinking faculty. If music reaches the thinking faculty at all, it is through fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never rightly be translated into words. It is the very largeness and vividness of the sphere of simple feeling which makes its symbolical counterpart in sound so seeming vague. But in spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness, emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self, if we have ears to take it in, than the same emotion limited by language. It is intenser, it is more immediate, as compensation for being less intelligible, less unmistakable in meaning. It is an infinite, an indistinct, where each consciousness defines and sets a limitary form.

237

V

A train of thought which begins with the concrete not unfrequently finds itself finishing, almost against its will, in abstractions. This is the point to which the performance of Cherubino's part by Pauline Lucca at the Scala twenty years ago has led me—that I have to settle with myself what I mean by art in general, and what I take to be the proper function of music as one of the fine arts.

'Art,' said Goethe, 'is but form-giving.' We might vary this definition, and say, 'Art is a method of expression or presentation.' Then comes the question: If art gives form, if it is a method of expression or presentation, to what does it give form, what does it express or present? The answer certainly must be: Art gives form to human consciousness; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man. Whatever else art may do by the way, in the communication of innocent pleasures, in the adornment of life and the softening of manners, in the creation of beautiful shapes and sounds, this, at all events, is its prime function.

238

While investing thought, the spiritual subject-matter of all art, with form, or finding for it proper modes of presentation, each of the arts employs a special medium, obeying the laws of beauty proper to that medium. The vehicles of the arts, roughly speaking, are material substances (like stone, wood, metal), pigments, sounds, and words. The masterly handling of these vehicles and the realisation of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern. And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion; for dexterity in the manipulation of the chosen vehicle and power to create a beautiful object, distinguish the successful artist from the man who may have had like thoughts and feelings. This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *quâ* artist. Yet we must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself. Beauty, in like manner, is not the final end of art, but is the indispensable condition under which the artistic manifestation of the spiritual content must be made. It is the business of art to create an ideal world, in which perception, emotion, understanding, action, all elements of human life sublimed by thought, shall reappear in concrete forms as beauty. This being so, the logical criticism of art demands that we should not only estimate the technical skill of artists and their faculty for presenting beauty to the æsthetic sense, but that we should also ask ourselves what portion of the human spirit he has chosen to invest with form, and how he has conceived his subject. It is not necessary that the ideas embodied in a work of art should be the artist's own. They may be common to the race and age: as, for instance, the conception of sovereign deity expressed in the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias, or the conception of divine maternity expressed in Raphael's 'Madonna di San Sisto.' Still the personality of the artist, his own intellectual and moral

nature, his peculiar way of thinking and feeling, his individual attitude towards the material given to him in ideas of human consciousness, will modify his choice of subject and of form, and will determine his specific type of beauty. To take an example: supposing that an idea, common to his race and age, is given to the artist for treatment; this will be the final end of the work of art which he produces. But his personal qualities and technical performance determine the degree of success or failure to which he attains in presenting that idea and in expressing it with beauty. Signorelli fails where Perugino excels, in giving adequate and lovely form to the religious sentiment. Michelangelo is sure of the sublime, and Raphael of the beautiful.

Art is thus the presentation of the human spirit by the artist to his fellow-men. The subject-matter of the arts is commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life. But what distinguishes art from religion or from life is, that this subject-matter must assume beautiful form, and must be presented directly or indirectly to the senses. Art is not the school or the cathedral, but the playground, the paradise of humanity. It does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain. Truth and goodness are transmuted into beauty there, just as in science beauty and goodness assume the shape of truth, and in religion truth and beauty become goodness. The rigid definitions, the unmistakable laws of science, are not to be found in art. Whatever art has touched acquires a concrete sensuous embodiment, and thus ideas presented to the mind in art have lost a portion of their pure thought-essence. It is on this account that the religious conceptions of the Greeks were so admirably fitted for the art of sculpture, and certain portions of the mediæval Christian mythology lent themselves so well to painting. For the same reason the metaphysics of ecclesiastical dogma defy the artist's plastic faculty. Art, in a word, is a middle term between reason and the senses. Its secondary aim, after the prime end of presenting the human spirit in beautiful form has been accomplished, is to give tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

240

From what has gone before it will be seen that no human being can make or mould a beautiful form without incorporating in that form some portion of the human mind, however crude, however elementary. In other words, there is no work of art without a theme, without a motive, without a subject. The presentation of that theme, that motive, that subject, is the final end of art. The art is good or bad according as the subject has been well or ill presented, consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself. Thus we obtain two standards for æsthetic criticism. We judge a statue, for example, both by the sculptor's intellectual grasp upon his subject, and also by his technical skill and sense of beauty. In a picture of the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous. If the phrase 'Art for art's sake' has any meaning, this meaning is simply that the artist, having chosen a theme, thinks exclusively in working at it of technical dexterity or the quality of beauty. There are many inducements for the artist thus to narrow his function, and for the critic to assist him by applying the canons of a soulless connoisseurship to his work; for the conception of the subject is but the starting-point in art-production, and the artist's difficulties and triumphs as a craftsman lie in the region of technicalities. He knows, moreover, that, however deep or noble his idea may be, his work of art will be worthless if it fail in skill or be devoid of beauty. What converts a thought into a statue or a picture, is the form found for it; and so the form itself seems all-important. The artist, therefore, too easily imagines that he may neglect his theme; that a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, or, as Cellini put it, 'un bel corpo ignudo,' is enough. And this is especially easy in an age which reflects much upon the arts, and pursues them with enthusiasm, while its deeper thoughts and feelings are not of the kind which translate themselves readily into artistic form. But, after all, a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, a sonorous stanza, a learned essay in counterpoint, are not enough. They are all excellent good things, yielding delight to the artistic sense and instruction to the student. Yet when we think of the really great statues, pictures, poems, music of the world, we find that these are really great because of something more—and that more is their theme, their presentation of a noble portion of the human soul. Artists and art-

241

students may be satisfied with perfect specimens of a craftsman's skill, independent of his theme; but the mass of men will not be satisfied; and it is as wrong to suppose that art exists for artists and art-students, as to talk of art for art's sake. Art exists for humanity. Art transmutes thought and feeling into terms of beautiful form. Art is great and lasting in proportion as it appeals to the human consciousness at large, presenting to it portions of itself in adequate and lovely form.

242

VI

It was necessary in the first place firmly to apprehend the truth that the final end of all art is the presentation of a spiritual content; it is necessary in the next place to remove confusions by considering the special circumstances of the several arts.

Each art has its own vehicle of presentation. What it can present and how it must present it, depends upon the nature of this vehicle. Thus, though architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, meet upon the common ground of spiritualised experience—though the works of art produced by the architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, emanate from the spiritual nature of the race, are coloured by the spiritual nature of the men who make them, and express what is spiritual in humanity under concrete forms invented for them by the artist—yet it is certain that all of these arts do not deal exactly with the same portions of this common material in the same way or with the same results. Each has its own department. Each exhibits qualities of strength and weakness special to itself. To define these several departments, to explain the relation of these several vehicles of presentation to the common subject-matter, is the next step in criticism.

Of the fine arts, architecture alone subserves utility. We build for use. But the geometrical proportions which the architect observes, contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul. Into the language of arch and aisle and colonnade, of cupola and façade and pediment, of spire and vault, the architect translates emotion, vague perhaps but deep, mute but unmistakable. When we say that a building is sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern, we mean that sublimity or grace, frivolity or sternness, is inherent in it. The emotions connected with these qualities are inspired in us when we contemplate it, and are presented to us by its form. Whether the architect deliberately aimed at the sublime or graceful—whether the dignified serenity of the Athenian genius sought to express itself in the Parthenon, and the mysticism of mediæval Christianity in the gloom of Chartres Cathedral—whether it was Renaissance paganism which gave its mundane pomp and glory to S. Peter's, and the refined selfishness of royalty its specious splendour to the palace of Versailles—need not be curiously questioned. The fact that we are impelled to raise these points, that architecture more almost than any art connects itself indissolubly with the life, the character, the moral being of a nation and an epoch, proves that we are justified in bringing it beneath our general definition of the arts. In a great measure because it subserves utility, and is therefore dependent upon the necessities of life, does architecture present to us through form the human spirit. Comparing the palace built by Giulio Romano for the Dukes of Mantua with the contemporary castle of a German prince, we cannot fail at once to comprehend the difference of spiritual conditions, as these displayed themselves in daily life, which then separated Italy from the Teutonic nations. But this is not all. Spiritual quality in the architect himself finds clear expression in his work. Coldness combined with violence marks Brunelleschi's churches; a certain suavity and well-bred taste the work of Bramante; while Michelangelo exhibits wayward energy in his Library of S. Lorenzo, and Amadeo self-abandonment to fancy in his Lombard chapels. I have chosen examples from one nation and one epoch in order that the point I seek to make, the demonstration of a spiritual quality in buildings, may be fairly stated.

243

244

Sculpture and painting distinguish themselves from the other fine arts by the imitation of concrete existences in nature. They copy the bodies of men and animals, the aspects of the world around us, and the handiwork of men. Yet, in so far as they are rightly arts, they do not make imitation an object in itself. The grapes of Zeuxis at which birds pecked, the painted dog at which a cat's hair bristles—if such grapes or such a dog were ever put on canvas—are but evidences of the artist's skill, not of his faculty as artist. These two plastic, or, as I prefer to call them, figurative arts, use their imitation of the external world for the expression, the

presentation of internal, spiritual things. The human form is for them the outward symbol of the inner human spirit, and their power of presenting spirit is limited by the means at their disposal.

Sculpture employs stone, wood, clay, the precious metals, to model forms, detached and independent, or raised upon a flat surface in relief. Its domain is the whole range of human character and consciousness, in so far as these can be indicated by fixed facial expression, by physical type, and by attitude. If we dwell for an instant on the greatest historical epoch of sculpture, we shall understand the domain of this art in its range and limitation. At a certain point of Greek development the Hellenic Pantheon began to be translated by the sculptors into statues; and when the genius of the Greeks expired in Rome, the cycle of their psychological conceptions had been exhaustively presented through this medium. During that long period of time, the most delicate gradations of human personality, divinised, idealised, were presented to the contemplation of the consciousness which gave them being, in appropriate types. Strength and swiftness, massive force and airy lightness, contemplative repose and active energy, voluptuous softness and refined grace, intellectual sublimity and lascivious seductiveness—the whole rhythm of qualities which can be typified by bodily form—were analysed, selected, combined in various degrees, to incarnate the religious conceptions of Zeus, Aphrodite, Herakles, Dionysus, Pallas, Fauns and Satyrs, Nymphs of woods and waves, Tritons, the genius of Death, heroes and hunters, lawgivers and poets, presiding deities of minor functions, man's lustful appetites and sensual needs. All that men think, or do, or are, or wish for, or imagine in this world, had found exact corporeal equivalents. Not physiognomy alone, but all the portions of the body upon which the habits of the animating soul are wont to stamp themselves, were studied and employed as symbolism. Uranian Aphrodite was distinguished from her Pandemic sister by chastened lust-repelling loveliness. The muscles of Herakles were more ponderous than the tense sinews of Achilles. The Hermes of the palæstra bore a torso of majestic depth; the Hermes, who carried messages from heaven, had limbs alert for movement. The brows of Zeus inspired awe; the breasts of Dionysus breathed delight.

245

A race accustomed, as the Greeks were, to read this symbolism, accustomed, as the Greeks were, to note the individuality of naked form, had no difficulty in interpreting the language of sculpture. Nor is there now much difficulty in the task. Our surest guide to the subject of a basrelief or statue is study of the physical type considered as symbolical of spiritual quality. From the fragment of a torso the true critic can say whether it belongs to the athletic or the erotic species. A limb of Bacchus differs from a limb of Poseidon. The whole psychological conception of Aphrodite Pandemos enters into every muscle, every joint, no less than into her physiognomy, her hair, her attitude.

246

There is, however, a limit to the domain of sculpture. This art deals most successfully with personified generalities. It is also strong in the presentation of incarnate character. But when it attempts to tell a story, we often seek in vain its meaning. Battles of Amazons or Centaurs upon basreliefs, indeed, are unmistakable. The subject is indicated here by some external sign. The group of Laocoon appeals at once to a reader of Virgil, and the divine vengeance of Leto's children upon Niobe is manifest in the Uffizzi marbles. But who are the several heroes of the Æginetan pediment, and what was the subject of the Pheidias statues on the Parthenon? Do the three graceful figures of a basrelief which exists at Naples and in the Villa Albani, represent Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, or Antiope and her two sons? Was the winged and sworded genius upon the Ephesus column meant for a genius of Death or a genius of Love?

This dimness of significance indicates the limitation of sculpture, and inclines some of those who feel its charm to assert that the sculptor seeks to convey no intellectual meaning, that he is satisfied with the creation of beautiful form. There is sense in this revolt against the faith which holds that art is nothing but a mode of spiritual presentation. Truly the artist aims at producing beauty, is satisfied if he conveys delight. But it is impossible to escape from the certainty that, while he is creating forms of beauty, he means something; and that something, that theme for which he finds the form, is part of the world's spiritual heritage. Only the crudest works of plastic art, capricci and arabesques, have no intellectual content; and even these are good in so far as they convey the playfulness of fancy.

Painting employs colours upon surfaces—walls, panels, canvas. What has been said about sculpture will apply in a great measure to this art. The human form, the world around us, the works of man's hands, are

247

represented in painting, not for their own sake merely, but with a view to bringing thought, feeling, action, home to the consciousness of the spectator from the artist's consciousness on which they have been impressed. Painting can tell a story better than sculpture, can represent more complicated feelings, can suggest thoughts of a subtler intricacy. Through colour, it can play, like music, directly on powerful but vague emotion. It is deficient in fulness and roundness of concrete reality. A statue stands before us, the soul incarnate in ideal form, fixed and frozen for eternity. The picture is a reflection cast upon a magic glass; not less permanent, but reduced to a shadow of reality. To follow these distinctions farther would be alien from the present purpose. It is enough to repeat that, within their several spheres, according to their several strengths and weaknesses, both sculpture and painting present the spirit to us only as the spirit shows itself immersed in things of sense. The light of a lamp enclosed within an alabaster vase is still lamplight, though shorn of lustre and toned to coloured softness. Even thus the spirit, immersed in things of sense presented to us by the figurative arts, is still spirit, though diminished in its intellectual clearness and invested with hues not its own. To fashion that alabaster form of art with utmost skill, to make it beautiful, to render it transparent, is the artist's function. But he will have failed of the highest if the light within burns dim, or if he gives the world a lamp in which no spiritual flame is lighted.

Music transports us to a different region. It imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly artificial kind—so artificial that the musical sounds of one race are unmusical, and therefore unintelligible, to another. Like architecture, music relies upon mathematical proportions. Unlike architecture, music serves no utility. It is the purest art of pleasure—the truest paradise and playground of the spirit. It has less power than painting, even less power than sculpture, to tell a story or to communicate an idea. For we must remember that when music is married to words, the words, and not the music, reach our thinking faculty. And yet, in spite of all, music presents man's spirit to itself through form. The domain of the spirit over which music reigns, is emotion—not defined emotion, not feeling even so defined as jealousy or anger—but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling. Architecture, we have noticed, is so connected with specific modes of human existence, that from its main examples we can reconstruct the life of men who used it. Sculpture and painting, by limiting their presentation to the imitation of external things, have all the help which experience and, association render. The mere artificiality of music's vehicle separates it from life and makes its message untranslatable. Yet, as I have already pointed out, this very disability under which it labours is the secret of its extraordinary potency. Nothing intervenes between the musical work of art and the fibres of the sentient being it immediately thrills. We do not seek to say what music means. We feel the music. And if a man should pretend that the music has not passed beyond his ears, has communicated nothing but a musical delight, he simply tells us that he has not felt music. The ancients on this point were wiser than some moderns when, without pretending to assign an intellectual significance to music, they held it for an axiom that one type of music bred one type of character, another type another. A change in the music of a state, wrote Plato, will be followed by changes in its constitution. It is of the utmost importance, said Aristotle, to provide in education for the use of the ennobling and the fortifying moods. These philosophers knew that music creates a spiritual world, in which the spirit cannot live and move without contracting habits of emotion. In this vagueness of significance but intensity of feeling lies the magic of music. A melody occurs to the composer, which he certainly connects with no act of the reason, which he is probably unconscious of connecting with any movement of his feeling, but which nevertheless is the form in sound of an emotional mood. When he reflects upon the melody secreted thus impromptu, he is aware, as we learn from his own lips, that this work has correspondence with emotion. Beethoven calls one symphony Heroic, another Pastoral; of the opening of another he says, 'Fate knocks at the door.' Mozart sets comic words to the mass-music of a friend, in order to mark his sense of its inaptitude for religious sentiment. All composers use phrases like *Maestoso*, *Pomposo*, *Allegro*, *Lagrimoso*, *Con Fuoco*, to express the general complexion of the mood their music ought to represent.

248

249

Before passing to poetry, it may be well to turn aside and consider two

subordinate arts, which deserve a place in any system of æsthetics. These are dancing and acting. Dancing uses the living human form, and presents feeling or action, the passions and the deeds of men, in artificially educated movements of the body. The element of beauty it possesses, independently of the beauty of the dancer, is rhythm. Acting or the art of mimicry presents the same subject-matter, no longer under the conditions of fixed rhythm but as an ideal reproduction of reality. The actor is what he represents, and the element of beauty in his art is perfection of realisation. It is his duty as an artist to show us Orestes or Othello, not perhaps exactly as Othello and Orestes were, but as the essence of their tragedies, ideally incorporate in action, ought to be. The actor can do this in dumb show. Some of the greatest actors of the ancient world were mimes. But he usually interprets a poet's thought, and attempts to present an artistic conception in a secondary form of art, which has for its advantage his own personality in play.

250

The last of the fine arts is literature; or, in the narrower sphere of which it will be well to speak here only, is poetry. Poetry employs words in fixed rhythms, which we call metres. Only a small portion of its effect is derived from the beauty of its sound. It appeals to the sense of hearing far less immediately than music does. It makes no appeal to the eyesight, and takes no help from the beauty of colour. It produces no tangible object. But language being the storehouse of all human experience, language being the medium whereby spirit communicates with spirit in affairs of life, the vehicle which transmits to us the thoughts and feelings of the past, and on which we rely for continuing our present to the future, it follows that, of all the arts, poetry soars highest, flies widest, and is most at home in the region of the spirit. What poetry lacks of sensuous fulness, it more than balances by intellectual intensity. Its significance is unmistakable, because it employs the very material men use in their exchange of thoughts and correspondence of emotions. To the bounds of its empire there is no end. It embraces in its own more abstract being all the arts. By words it does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. It is the metaphysic of the fine arts. Philosophy finds place in poetry; and life itself, refined to its last utterance, hangs trembling on this thread which joins our earth to heaven, this bridge between experience and the realms where unattainable and imperceptible will have no meaning.

251

If we are right in defining art as the manifestation of the human spirit to man by man in beautiful form, poetry, more incontestably than any other art, fulfils this definition and enables us to gauge its accuracy. For words are the spirit, manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy. Poetry is therefore the presentation, through words, of life and all that life implies. Perception, emotion, thought, action, find in descriptive, lyrical, reflective, dramatic, and epical poetry their immediate apocalypse. In poetry we are no longer puzzled with problems as to whether art has or has not of necessity a spiritual content. There cannot be any poetry whatsoever without a spiritual meaning of some sort: good or bad, moral, immoral, or non-moral, obscure or lucid, noble or ignoble, slight or weighty—such distinctions do not signify. In poetry we are not met by questions whether the poet intended to convey a meaning when he made it. Quite meaningless poetry (as some critics would fain find melody quite meaningless, or a statue meaningless, or a Venetian picture meaningless) is a contradiction in terms. In poetry, life, or a portion of life, lives again, resuscitated and presented to our mental faculty through art. The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its intensest moments. Therefore the extensive species of the drama and the epic, the intensive species of the lyric, have been ever held in highest esteem. Only a half-crazy critic flaunts the paradox that poetry is excellent in so far as it assimilates the vagueness of music, or estimates a poet by his power of translating sense upon the borderland of nonsense into melodious words. Where poetry falls short in the comparison with other arts, is in the quality of form-giving, in the quality of sensuous concreteness. Poetry can only present forms to the mental eye and to the intellectual sense, stimulate the physical senses by indirect suggestion. Therefore dramatic poetry, the most complicated kind of poetry, relies upon the actor; and lyrical poetry, the intensest kind of poetry, seeks the aid of music. But these comparative deficiencies are overbalanced, for all the highest purposes of art, by the width and depth, the intelligibility and power, the flexibility and multitudinous associations, of language. The other arts are limited in what they utter. There is nothing which has entered into the life of man which poetry cannot express. Poetry says everything in man's own language to the mind. The other arts appeal imperatively, each in its own region, to man's senses; and the mind

252

receives art's message by the help of symbols from the world of sense. Poetry lacks this immediate appeal to sense. But the elixir which it offers to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.

VII

I used a metaphor in one of the foregoing paragraphs to indicate the presence of the vital spirit, the essential element of thought or feeling, in the work of art. I said it radiated through the form, as lamplight through an alabaster vase. Now the skill of the artist is displayed in modelling that vase, in giving it shape, rich and rare, and fashioning its curves with subtlest workmanship. In so far as he is a craftsman, the artist's pains must be bestowed upon this precious vessel of the animating theme. In so far as he has power over beauty, he must exert it in this plastic act. It is here that he displays dexterity; here that he creates; here that he separates himself from other men who think and feel. The poet, more perhaps than any other artist, needs to keep this steadily in view; for words being our daily vehicle of utterance, it may well chance that the alabaster vase of language should be hastily or trivially modelled. This is the true reason why 'neither gods nor men nor the columns either suffer mediocrity in singers.' Upon the poet it is specially incumbent to see that he has something rare to say and some rich mode of saying it. The figurative arts need hardly be so cautioned. They run their risk in quite a different direction. For sculptor and for painter, the danger is lest he should think that alabaster vase his final task. He may too easily be satisfied with moulding a beautiful but empty form.

253

The last word on the topic of the arts is given in one sentence. Let us remember that every work of art enshrines a spiritual subject, and that the artist's power is shown in finding for that subject a form of ideal loveliness. Many kindred points remain to be discussed; as what we mean by beauty, which is a condition indispensable to noble art; and what are the relations of the arts to ethics. These questions cannot now be raised. It is enough in one essay to have tried to vindicate the spirituality of art in general.

I.—FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND FAMILIARITY

It is easy to feel and to say something obvious about Venice. The influence of this sea-city is unique, immediate, and unmistakable. But to express the sober truth of those impressions which remain when the first astonishment of the Venetian revelation has subsided, when the spirit of the place has been harmonised through familiarity with our habitual mood, is difficult.

Venice inspires at first an almost Corybantic rapture. From our earliest visits, if these have been measured by days rather than weeks, we carry away with us the memory of sunsets emblazoned in gold and crimson upon cloud and water; of violet domes and bell-towers etched against the orange of a western sky; of moonlight silvering breeze-rippled breadths of liquid blue; of distant islands shimmering in sun-litten haze; of music and black gliding boats; of labyrinthine darkness made for mysteries of love and crime; of statue-fretted palace fronts; of brazen clangour and a moving crowd; of pictures by earth's proudest painters, cased in gold on walls of council chambers where Venice sat enthroned a queen, where nobles swept the floors with robes of Tyrian brocade. These reminiscences will be attended by an ever-present sense of loneliness and silence in the world around; the sadness of a limitless horizon, the solemnity of an unbroken arch of heaven, the calm and greyness of evening on the lagoons, the pathos of a marble city crumbling to its grave in mud and brine.

255

These first impressions of Venice are true. Indeed they are inevitable. They abide, and form a glowing background for all subsequent pictures, toned more austere, and painted in more lasting hues of truth upon the brain. Those have never felt Venice at all who have not known this primal rapture, or who perhaps expected more of colour, more of melodrama, from a scene which nature and the art of man have made the richest in these qualities. Yet the mood engendered by this first experience is not destined to be permanent. It contains an element of unrest and unreality which vanishes upon familiarity. From the blare of that triumphal bourdon of brass instruments emerge the delicate voices of violin and clarinette. To the contrasted passions of our earliest love succeed a multitude of sweet and fanciful emotions. It is my present purpose to recapture some of the impressions made by Venice in more tranquil moods. Memory might be compared to a kaleidoscope. Far away from Venice I raise the wonder-working tube, allow the glittering fragments to settle as they please, and with words attempt to render something of the patterns I behold.

II.—A LODGING IN SAN VIO

I have escaped from the hotels with their bustle of tourists and crowded *tables-d'hôte*. My garden stretches down to the Grand Canal, closed at the end with a pavilion, where I lounge and smoke and watch the cornice of the Prefettura fretted with gold in sunset light. My sitting-room and bed-room face the southern sun. There is a canal below, crowded with gondolas, and across its bridge the good folk of San Vio come and go the whole day long—men in blue shirts with enormous hats, and jackets slung on their left shoulder; women in kerchiefs of orange and crimson. Barelegged boys sit upon the parapet, dangling their feet above the rising tide. A hawker passes, balancing a basket full of live and crawling crabs. Barges filled with Brenta water or Mirano wine take up their station at the neighbouring steps, and then ensues a mighty splashing and hurrying to and fro of men with tubs upon their heads. The brawny fellows in the wine-barge are red from brows to breast with drippings of the vat. And now there is a bustle in the quarter. A *barca* has arrived from S. Erasmo, the island of the market-gardens. It is piled with gourds and pumpkins, cabbages and tomatoes, pomegranates and pears—a pyramid of gold and green and scarlet. Brown men lift the fruit aloft, and women bending from the pathway bargain for it. A clatter of chaffering tongues, a ring of coppers, a Babel of hoarse sea-voices, proclaim the sharpness of the struggle. When the quarter has been served, the boat sheers off diminished in its burden. Boys and girls are left seasoning their polenta with a slice of *zucca*, while the mothers of a score of families go pattering up yonder courtyard with the material for their husbands' supper in their handkerchiefs. Across the canal, or more correctly the *Rio*, opens a wide grass-grown court. It is lined on the right hand by a row of poor dwellings, swarming with gondoliers' children. A

256

garden wall runs along the other side, over which I can see pomegranate-trees in fruit and pergolas of vines. Far beyond are more low houses, and then the sky, swept with sea-breezes, and the masts of an ocean-going ship against the dome and turrets of Palladio's Redentore.

This is my home. By day it is as lively as a scene in *Masaniello*. By night, after nine o'clock, the whole stir of the quarter has subsided. Far away I hear the bell of some church tell the hours. But no noise disturbs my rest, unless perhaps a belated gondolier moors his boat beneath the window. My one maid, Catina, sings at her work the whole day through. My gondolier, Francesco, acts as valet. He wakes me in the morning, opens the shutters, brings sea-water for my bath, and takes his orders for the day. 'Will it do for Chioggia, Francesco?' 'Sissignore! The Signorino has set off in his *sandolo* already with Antonio. The Signora is to go with us in the gondola.' 'Then get three more men, Francesco, and see that all of them can sing.'

257

III.—TO CHIOGGIA WITH OAR AND SAIL

The *sandolo* is a boat shaped like the gondola, but smaller and lighter, without benches, and without the high steel prow or *ferro* which distinguishes the gondola. The gunwale is only just raised above the water, over which the little craft skims with a rapid bounding motion, affording an agreeable variation from the stately swanlike movement of the gondola. In one of these boats—called by him the *Fisolo* or Seamew—my friend Eustace had started with Antonio, intending to row the whole way to Chioggia, or, if the breeze favoured, to hoist a sail and help himself along. After breakfast, when the crew for my gondola had been assembled, Francesco and I followed with the Signora. It was one of those perfect mornings which occur as a respite from broken weather, when the air is windless and the light falls soft through haze on the horizon. As we broke into the lagoon behind the Redentore, the islands in front of us, S. Spirito, Poveglia, Malamocco, seemed as though they were just lifted from the sea-line. The Euganeans, far away to westward, were bathed in mist, and almost blent with the blue sky. Our four rowers put their backs into their work; and soon we reached the port of Malamocco, where a breeze from the Adriatic caught us sideways for a while. This is the largest of the breaches in the Lidi, or raised sand-reefs, which protect Venice from the sea: it affords an entrance to vessels of draught like the steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. We crossed the dancing wavelets of the port; but when we passed under the lee of Pelestrina, the breeze failed, and the lagoon was once again a sheet of undulating glass. At S. Pietro on this island a halt was made to give the oarsmen wine, and here we saw the women at their cottage doorways making lace. The old lace industry of Venice has recently been revived. From Burano and Pelestrina cargoes of hand-made imitations of the ancient fabrics are sent at intervals to Jesurun's magazine at S. Marco. He is the chief *impresario* of the trade, employing hundreds of hands, and speculating for a handsome profit in the foreign market on the price he gives his workwomen.

258

Now we are well lost in the lagoons—Venice no longer visible behind; the Alps and Euganeans shrouded in a noonday haze; the lowlands at the mouth of Brenta marked by clumps of trees ephemerally faint in silver silhouette against the filmy, shimmering horizon. Form and colour have disappeared in light-irradiated vapour of an opal hue. And yet instinctively we know that we are not at sea; the different quality of the water, the piles emerging here and there above the surface, the suggestion of coast-lines scarcely felt in this infinity of lustre, all remind us that our voyage is confined to the charmed limits of an inland lake. At length the jutting headland of Pelestrina was reached. We broke across the Porto di Chioggia, and saw Chioggia itself ahead—a huddled mass of houses low upon the water. One by one, as we rowed steadily, the fishing-boats passed by, emerging from their harbour for a twelve hours' cruise upon the open sea. In a long line they came, with variegated sails of orange, red, and saffron, curiously chequered at the corners, and cantled with devices in contrasted tints. A little land-breeze carried them forward. The lagoon reflected their deep colours till they reached the port. Then, slightly swerving eastward on their course, but still in single file, they took the sea and scattered, like beautiful bright-plumaged birds, who from a streamlet float into a lake, and find their way at large according as each wills.

259

The Signorino and Antonio, though want of wind obliged them to row the whole way from Venice, had reached Chioggia an hour before, and stood waiting to receive us on the quay. It is a quaint town this Chioggia,

which has always lived a separate life from that of Venice. Language and race and customs have held the two populations apart from those distant years when Genoa and the Republic of S. Mark fought their duel to the death out in the Chioggian harbours, down to these days, when your Venetian gondolier will tell you that the Chioggoto loves his pipe more than his *donna* or his wife. The main canal is lined with substantial palaces, attesting to old wealth and comfort. But from Chioggia, even more than from Venice, the tide of modern luxury and traffic has retreated. The place is left to fishing folk and builders of the fishing craft, whose wharves still form the liveliest quarter. Wandering about its wide deserted courts and *calli*, we feel the spirit of the decadent Venetian nobility. Passages from Goldoni's and Casanova's Memoirs occur to our memory. It seems easy to realise what they wrote about the dishevelled gaiety and lawless license of Chioggia in the days of powder, sword-knot, and *soprani*. Baffo walks beside us in hypocritical composure of bag-wig and senatorial dignity, whispering unmentionable sonnets in his dialect of *Xe* and *Ga*. Somehow or another that last dotage of S. Mark's decrepitude is more recoverable by our fancy than the heroism of Pisani in the fourteenth century. From his prison in blockaded Venice the great admiral was sent forth on a forlorn hope, and blocked victorious Doria here with boats on which the nobles of the Golden Book had spent their fortunes. Pietro Doria boasted that with his own hands he would bridle the bronze horses of S. Mark. But now he found himself between the navy of Carlo Zeno in the Adriatic and the flotilla led by Vittore Pisani across the lagoon. It was in vain that the Republic of S. George strained every nerve to send him succour from the Ligurian sea; in vain that the lords of Padua kept opening communications with him from the mainland. From the 1st of January 1380 till the 21st of June the Venetians pressed the blockade ever closer, grappling their foemen in a grip that if relaxed one moment would have hurled him at their throats. The long and breathless struggle ended in the capitulation at Chioggia of what remained of Doria's forty-eight galleys and fourteen thousand men.

260

These great deeds are far away and hazy. The brief sentences of mediæval annalists bring them less near to us than the *chroniques scandaleuses* of good-for-nothing scoundrels, whose vulgar adventures might be revived at the present hour with scarce a change of setting. Such is the force of *intimité* in literature. And yet Baffo and Casanova are as much of the past as Doria and Pisani. It is only perhaps that the survival of decadence in all we see around us, forms a fitting framework for our recollections of their vividly described corruption.

Not far from the landing-place a balustraded bridge of ample breadth and large bravura manner spans the main canal. Like everything at Chioggia, it is dirty and has fallen from its first estate. Yet neither time nor injury can obliterate style or wholly degrade marble. Hard by the bridge there are two rival inns. At one of these we ordered a seadinner—crabs, cuttlefishes, soles, and turbot—which we ate at a table in the open air. Nothing divided us from the street except a row of Japanese privet-bushes in hooped tubs. Our banquet soon assumed a somewhat unpleasant similitude to that of Dives; for the Chioggoti, in all stages of decrepitude and squalor, crowded round to beg for scraps—indescribable old women, enveloped in their own petticoats thrown over their heads; girls hooded with sombre black mantles; old men wrinkled beyond recognition by their nearest relatives; jabbering, half-naked boys; slow, slouching fishermen with clay pipes in their mouths and philosophical acceptance on their sober foreheads.

261

That afternoon the gondola and sandolo were lashed together side by side. Two sails were raised, and in this lazy fashion we stole homewards, faster or slower according as the breeze freshened or slackened, landing now and then on islands, sauntering along the sea-walls which bulwark Venice from the Adriatic, and singing—those at least of us who had the power to sing. Four of our Venetians had trained voices and memories of inexhaustible music. Over the level water, with the ripple plashing at our keel, their songs went abroad, and mingled with the failing day. The barcaroles and serenades peculiar to Venice were, of course, in harmony with the occasion. But some transcripts from classical operas were even more attractive, through the dignity with which these men invested them. By the peculiarity of their treatment the *recitativo* of the stage assumed a solemn movement, marked in rhythm, which removed it from the commonplace into antiquity, and made me understand how cultivated music may pass back by natural, unconscious transition into the realm of popular melody.

The sun sank, not splendidly, but quietly in banks of clouds above the Alps. Stars came out, uncertainly at first, and then in strength, reflected on the sea. The men of the Dogana watch-boat challenged us and let us

262

pass. Madonna's lamp was twinkling from her shrine upon the harbour-pile. The city grew before us. Stealing into Venice in that calm—stealing silently and shadowlike, with scarce a ruffle of the water, the masses of the town emerging out of darkness into twilight, till San Giorgio's gun boomed with a flash athwart our stern, and the gas-lamps of the Piazzetta swam into sight; all this was like a long enchanted chapter of romance. And now the music of our men had sunk to one faint whistling from Eustace of tunes in harmony with whispers at the prow.

Then came the steps of the Palazzo Venier and the deep-scented darkness of the garden. As we passed through to supper, I plucked a spray of yellow Banksia rose, and put it in my buttonhole. The dew was on its burnished leaves, and evening had drawn forth its perfume.

IV.—MORNING RAMBLES

A story is told of Poussin, the French painter, that when he was asked why he would not stay in Venice, he replied, 'If I stay here, I shall become a colourist!' A somewhat similar tale is reported of a fashionable English decorator. While on a visit to friends in Venice, he avoided every building which contains a Tintoretto, averring that the sight of Tintoretto's pictures would injure his carefully trained taste. It is probable that neither anecdote is strictly true. Yet there is a certain epigrammatic point in both; and I have often speculated whether even Venice could have so warped the genius of Poussin as to shed one ray of splendour on his canvases, or whether even Tintoretto could have so sublimed the prophet of Queen Anne as to make him add dramatic passion to a London drawing-room. Anyhow, it is exceedingly difficult to escape from colour in the air of Venice, or from Tintoretto in her buildings. Long, delightful mornings may be spent in the enjoyment of the one and the pursuit of the other by folk who have no classical or pseudo-mediæval theories to oppress them.

Tintoretto's house, though changed, can still be visited. It formed part of the *Fondamenta dei Mori*, so called from having been the quarter assigned to Moorish traders in Venice. A spirited carving of a turbaned Moor leading a camel charged with merchandise, remains above the waterline of a neighbouring building; and all about the crumbling walls sprout flowering weeds—sapphire and snapdragon and the spiked campanula, which shoots a spire of sea-blue stars from chinks of Istrian stone.

The house stands opposite the Church of Santa Maria dell' Orto, where Tintoretto was buried, and where four of his chief masterpieces are to be seen. This church, swept and garnished, is a triumph of modern Italian restoration. They have contrived to make it as commonplace as human ingenuity could manage. Yet no malice of ignorant industry can obscure the treasures it contains—the pictures of Cima, Gian Bellini, Palma, and the four Tintoretto's, which form its crowning glory. Here the master may be studied in four of his chief moods: as the painter of tragic passion and movement, in the huge 'Last Judgment;' as the painter of impossibilities, in the 'Vision of Moses upon Sinai;' as the painter of purity and tranquil pathos, in the 'Miracle of S. Agnes;' as the painter of Biblical history brought home to daily life, in the 'Presentation of the Virgin.' Without leaving the Madonna dell' Orto, a student can explore his genius in all its depth and breadth; comprehend the enthusiasm he excites in those who seek, as the essentials of art, imaginative boldness and sincerity; understand what is meant by adversaries who maintain that, after all, Tintoretto was but an inspired Gustave Doré. Between that quiet canvas of the 'Presentation,' so modest in its cool greys and subdued gold, and the tumult of flying, running ascending figures in the 'Judgment,' what an interval there is! How strangely the white lamb-like maiden, kneeling beside her lamb in the picture of S. Agnes, contrasts with the dusky gorgeousness of the Hebrew women despoiling themselves of jewels for the golden calf! Comparing these several manifestations of creative power, we feel ourselves in the grasp of a painter who was essentially a poet, one for whom his art was the medium for expressing before all things thought and passion. Each picture is executed in the manner suited to its tone of feeling, the key of its conception.

Elsewhere than in the Madonna dell' Orto there are more distinguished single examples of Tintoretto's realising faculty. The 'Last Supper' in San Giorgio, for instance, and the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' in the Scuola di San Rocco illustrate his unique power of presenting sacred history in a novel, romantic framework of familiar things. The commonplace circumstances of ordinary life have been employed to portray in the one case a lyric of mysterious splendour; in the other, an idyll of infinite

sweetness. Divinity shines through the rafters of that upper chamber, where round a low large table the Apostles are assembled in a group translated from the social customs of the painter's days. Divinity is shed upon the straw-spread manger, where Christ lies sleeping in the loft, with shepherds crowding through the room beneath.

A studied contrast between the simplicity and repose of the central figure and the tumult of passions in the multitude around, may be observed in the 'Miracle of S. Agnes.' It is this which gives dramatic vigour to the composition. But the same effect is carried to its highest fulfilment, with even a loftier beauty, in the episode of Christ before the judgment-seat of Pilate, at San Rocco. Of all Tintoretto's religious pictures, that is the most profoundly felt, the most majestic. No other artist succeeded as he has here succeeded in presenting to us God incarnate. For this Christ is not merely the just man, innocent, silent before his accusers. The stationary, white-draped figure, raised high above the agitated crowd, with tranquil forehead slightly bent, facing his perplexed and fussy judge, is more than man. We cannot say perhaps precisely why he is divine. But Tintoretto has made us feel that he is. In other words, his treatment of the high theme chosen by him has been adequate.

We must seek the Scuola di San Rocco for examples of Tintoretto's liveliest imagination. Without ceasing to be Italian in his attention to harmony and grace, he far exceeded the masters of his nation in the power of suggesting what is weird, mysterious, upon the borderland of the grotesque. And of this quality there are three remarkable instances in the Scuola. No one but Tintoretto could have evoked the fiend in his 'Temptation of Christ.' It is an indescribable hermaphroditic genius, the genius of carnal fascination, with outspread downy rose-plumed wings, and flaming bracelets on the full but sinewy arms, who kneels and lifts aloft great stones, smiling entreatingly to the sad, grey Christ seated beneath a rugged pent-house of the desert. No one again but Tintoretto could have dashed the hot lights of that fiery sunset in such quivering flakes upon the golden flesh of Eve, half hidden among laurels, as she stretches forth the fruit of the Fall to shrinking Adam. No one but Tintoretto, till we come to Blake, could have imagined yonder Jonah, summoned by the beck of God from the whale's belly. The monstrous fish rolls over in the ocean, blowing portentous vapour from his trumpet-shaped nostril. The prophet's beard descends upon his naked breast in hoary ringlets to the girdle. He has forgotten the past peril of the deep, although the whale's jaws yawn around him. Between him and the outstretched finger of Jehovah calling him again to life, there runs a spark of unseen spiritual electricity.

To comprehend Tintoretto's touch upon the pastoral idyll we must turn our steps to San Giorgio again, and pace those meadows by the running river in company with his Manna-Gatherers. Or we may seek the Accademia, and notice how he here has varied the 'Temptation of Adam by Eve,' choosing a less tragic motive of seduction than the one so powerfully rendered at San Rocco. Or in the Ducal Palace we may take our station, hour by hour, before the 'Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne.' It is well to leave the very highest achievements of art untouched by criticism, undescribed. And in this picture we have the most perfect of all modern attempts to realise an antique myth—more perfect than Raphael's 'Galatea,' or Titian's 'Meeting of Bacchus with Ariadne,' or Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus from the Sea.' It may suffice to marvel at the slight effect which melodies so powerful and so direct as these produce upon the ordinary public. Sitting, as is my wont, one Sunday morning, opposite the 'Bacchus,' four Germans with a cicerone sauntered by. The subject was explained to them. They waited an appreciable space of time. Then the youngest opened his lips and spake: 'Bacchus war der Wein-Gott.' And they all moved heavily away. *Bos locutus est.* 'Bacchus was the wine-god!' This, apparently, is what a picture tells to one man. To another it presents divine harmonies, perceptible indeed in nature, but here by the painter-poet for the first time brought together and cadenced in a work of art. For another it is perhaps the hieroglyph of pent-up passions and desired impossibilities. For yet another it may only mean the unapproachable inimitable triumph of consummate craft.

Tintoretto, to be rightly understood, must be sought all over Venice—in the church as well as the Scuola di San Rocco; in the 'Temptation of S. Anthony' at S. Trovaso no less than in the Temptations of Eve and Christ; in the decorative pomp of the Sala del Senato, and in the Paradisal vision of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Yet, after all, there is one of his most characteristic moods, to appreciate which fully we return to the Madonna dell' Orto. I have called him 'the painter of impossibilities.' At rare moments he rendered them possible by sheer imaginative force. If

we wish to realise this phase of his creative power, and to measure our own subordination to his genius in its most hazardous enterprise, we must spend much time in the choir of this church. Lovers of art who mistrust this play of the audacious fancy—aiming at sublimity in supersensual regions, sometimes attaining to it by stupendous effort or authentic revelation, not seldom sinking to the verge of bathos, and demanding the assistance of interpretative sympathy in the spectator—such men will not take the point of view required of them by Tintoretto in his boldest flights, in the 'Worship of the Golden Calf' and in the 'Destruction of the World by Water.' It is for them to ponder well the flying archangel with the scales of judgment in his hand, and the seraph-charioted Jehovah enveloping Moses upon Sinai in lightnings.

The gondola has had a long rest. Were Francesco but a little more impatient, he might be wondering what had become of the padrone. I bid him turn, and we are soon gliding into the Sacca della Misericordia. This is a protected float, where the wood which comes from Cadore and the hills of the Ampezzo is stored in spring. Yonder square white house, standing out to sea, fronting Murano and the Alps, they call the Oasa degli Spiriti. No one cares to inhabit it; for here, in old days, it was the wont of the Venetians to lay their dead for a night's rest before their final journey to the graveyard of S. Michele. So many generations of dead folk had made that house their inn, that it is now no fitting home for living men. San Michele is the island close before Murano, where the Lombardi built one of their most romantically graceful churches of pale Istrian stone, and where the Campo Santo has for centuries received the dead into its oozy clay. The cemetery is at present undergoing restoration. Its state of squalor and abandonment to cynical disorder makes one feel how fitting for Italians would be the custom of cremation. An island in the lagoons devoted to funeral pyres is a solemn and ennobling conception. This graveyard, with its ruinous walls, its mangy riot of unwholesome weeds, its corpses festering in slime beneath neglected slabs in hollow chambers, and the mephitic wash of poisoned waters that surround it, inspires the horror of disgust.

The morning has not lost its freshness. Antelao and Tofana, guarding the vale above Cortina, show faint streaks of snow upon their amethyst. Little clouds hang in the still autumn sky. There are men dredging for shrimps and crabs through shoals uncovered by the ebb. Nothing can be lovelier, more resting to eyes tired with pictures than this tranquil, sunny expanse of the lagoon. As we round the point of the Bersaglio, new landscapes of island and Alp and low-lying mainland move into sight at every slow stroke of the oar. A luggage-train comes lumbering along the railway bridge, puffing white smoke into the placid blue. Then we strike down Cannaregio, and I muse upon processions of kings and generals and noble strangers, entering Venice by this water-path from Mestre, before the Austrians built their causeway for the trains. Some of the rare scraps of fresco upon house fronts, still to be seen in Venice, are left in Cannaregio. They are chiaroscuro allegories in a bold bravura manner of the sixteenth century. From these and from a few rosy fragments on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the Fabbriche Nuove, and precious fading figures in a certain courtyard near San Stefano, we form some notion how Venice looked when all her palaces were painted. Pictures by Gentile Bellini, Mansueti, and Carpaccio help the fancy in this work of restoration. And here and there, in back canals, we come across coloured sections of old buildings, capped by true Venetian chimneys, which for a moment seem to realise our dream.

A morning with Tintoretto might well be followed by a morning with Carpaccio or Bellini. But space is wanting in these pages. Nor would it suit the manner of this medley to hunt the Lombardi through palaces and churches, pointing out their singularities of violet and yellow panellings in marble, the dignity of their wide-opened arches, or the delicacy of their shallow chiselled traceries in cream-white Istrian stone. It is enough to indicate the goal of many a pleasant pilgrimage: warrior angels of Vivarini and Basaiti hidden in a dark chapel of the Frari; Fra Francesco's fantastic orchard of fruits and flowers in distant S. Francesco della Vigna; the golden Gian Bellini in S. Zaccaria; Palma's majestic S. Barbara in S. Maria Formosa; San Giobbe's wealth of sculptured frieze and floral scroll; the Ponte di Paradiso, with its Gothic arch; the painted plates in the Museo Civico; and palace after palace, loved for some quaint piece of tracery, some moulding full of mediæval symbolism, some fierce impossible Renaissance freak of fancy.

Bather than prolong this list, I will tell a story which drew me one day past the Public Gardens to the metropolitan Church of Venice, San Pietro di Castello. The novella is related by Bandello. It has, as will be noticed, points of similarity to that of 'Romeo and Juliet.'

V.—A VENETIAN NOVELLA

At the time when Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini were painting those handsome youths in tight jackets, parti-coloured hose, and little round caps placed awry upon their shocks of well-combed hair, there lived in Venice two noblemen, Messer Pietro and Messer Paolo, whose palaces fronted each other on the Grand Canal. Messer Paolo was a widower, with one married daughter, and an only son of twenty years or thereabouts, named Gerardo. Messer Pietro's wife was still living; and this couple had but one child, a daughter, called Elena, of exceeding beauty, aged fourteen. Gerardo, as is the wont of gallants, was paying his addresses to a certain lady; and nearly every day he had to cross the Grand Canal in his gondola, and to pass beneath the house of Elena on his way to visit his Dulcinea; for this lady lived some distance up a little canal on which the western side of Messer Pietro's palace looked.

Now it so happened that at the very time when the story opens, Messer Pietro's wife fell ill and died, and Elena was left alone at home with her father and her old nurse. Across the little canal of which I spoke there dwelt another nobleman, with four daughters, between the years of seventeen and twenty-one. Messer Pietro, desiring to provide amusement for poor little Elena, besought this gentleman that his daughters might come on feast-days to play with her. For you must know that, except on festivals of the Church, the custom of Venice required that gentlewomen should remain closely shut within the private apartments of their dwellings. His request was readily granted; and on the next feast-day the five girls began to play at ball together for forfeits in the great saloon, which opened with its row of Gothic arches and balustraded balcony upon the Grand Canal. The four sisters, meanwhile, had other thoughts than for the game. One or other of them, and sometimes three together, would let the ball drop, and run to the balcony to gaze upon their gallants, passing up and down in gondolas below; and then they would drop flowers or ribands for tokens. Which negligence of theirs annoyed Elena much; for she thought only of the game. Wherefore she scolded them in childish wise, and one of them made answer, 'Elena, if you only knew how pleasant it is to play as we are playing on this balcony, you would not care so much for ball and forfeits!'

On one of those feast-days the four sisters were prevented from keeping their little friend company. Elena, with nothing to do, and feeling melancholy, leaned upon the window-sill which overlooked the narrow canal. And it chanced that just then Gerardo, on his way to Dulcinea, went by; and Elena looked down at him, as she had seen those sisters look at passers-by. Gerardo caught her eye, and glances passed between them, and Gerardo's gondolier, bending from the poop, said to his master, 'O master! methinks that gentle maiden is better worth your wooing than Dulcinea.' Gerardo pretended to pay no heed to these words; but after rowing a little way, he bade the man turn, and they went slowly back beneath the window. This time Elena, thinking to play the game which her four friends had played, took from her hair a clove carnation and let it fall close to Gerardo on the cushion of the gondola. He raised the flower and put it to his lips, acknowledging the courtesy with a grave bow. But the perfume of the clove and the beauty of Elena in that moment took possession of his heart together, and straightway he forgot Dulcinea.

As yet he knew not who Elena was. Nor is this wonderful; for the daughters of Venetian nobles were but rarely seen or spoken of. But the thought of her haunted him awake and sleeping; and every feast-day, when there was the chance of seeing her, he rowed his gondola beneath her windows. And there she appeared to him in company with her four friends; the five girls clustering together like sister roses beneath the pointed windows of the Gothic balcony. Elena, on her side, had no thought of love; for of love she had heard no one speak. But she took pleasure in the game those friends had taught her, of leaning from the balcony to watch Gerardo. He meanwhile grew love-sick and impatient, wondering how he might declare his passion. Until one day it happened that, talking through a lane or *calle* which skirted Messer Pietro's palace, he caught sight of Elena's nurse, who was knocking at the door, returning from some shopping she had made. This nurse had been his own nurse in childhood; therefore he remembered her, and cried aloud, 'Nurse, Nurse!' But the old woman did not hear him, and passed into the house and shut the door behind her. Whereupon Gerardo, greatly moved, still called to her, and when he reached the door, began to knock upon it violently. And whether it was the agitation of finding himself at last so near the wish of his heart, or whether the pains of waiting for his love had weakened him, I know not; but, while he knocked, his senses left

him, and he fell fainting in the doorway. Then the nurse recognised the youth to whom she had given suck, and brought him into the courtyard by the help of handmaidens, and Elena came down and gazed upon him. The house was now full of bustle, and Messer Pietro heard the noise, and seeing the son of his neighbour in so piteous a plight, he caused Gerardo to be laid upon a bed. But for all they could do with him, he recovered not from his swoon. And after a while force was that they should place him in a gondola and ferry him across to his father's house. The nurse went with him, and informed Messer Paolo of what had happened. Doctors were sent for, and the whole family gathered round Gerardo's bed. After a while he revived a little; and thinking himself still upon the doorstep of Pietro's palace, called again, 'Nurse, Nurse!' She was near at hand, and would have spoken to him. But while he summoned his senses to his aid, he became gradually aware of his own kinsfolk and dissembled the secret of his grief. They beholding him in better cheer, departed on their several ways, and the nurse still sat alone beside him. Then he explained to her what he had at heart, and how he was in love with a maiden whom he had seen on feast-days in the house of Messer Pietro. But still he knew not Elena's name; and she, thinking it impossible that such a child had inspired this passion, began to marvel which of the four sisters it was Gerardo loved. Then they appointed the next Sunday, when all the five girls should be together, for Gerardo by some sign, as he passed beneath the window, to make known to the old nurse his lady.

273

Elena, meanwhile, who had watched Gerardo lying still and pale in swoon beneath her on the pavement of the palace, felt the stirring of a new unknown emotion in her soul. When Sunday came, she devised excuses for keeping her four friends away, bethinking her that she might see him once again alone, and not betray the agitation which she dreaded. This ill suited the schemes of the nurse, who nevertheless was forced to be content. But after dinner, seeing how restless was the girl, and how she came and went, and ran a thousand times to the balcony, the nurse began to wonder whether Elena herself were not in love with some one. So she feigned to sleep, but placed herself within sight of the window. And soon Gerardo came by in his gondola; and Elena, who was prepared, threw to him her nosegay. The watchful nurse had risen, and peeping behind the girl's shoulder, saw at a glance how matters stood. Thereupon she began to scold her charge, and say, 'Is this a fair and comely thing, to stand all day at balconies and throw flowers at passers-by? Woe to you if your father should come to know of this! He would make you wish yourself among the dead!' Elena, sore troubled at her nurse's rebuke, turned and threw her arms about her neck, and called her 'Nanna!' as the wont is of Venetian children. Then she told the old woman how she had learned that game from the four sisters, and how she thought it was not different, but far more pleasant, than the game of forfeits; whereupon her nurse spoke gravely, explaining what love is, and how that love should lead to marriage, and bidding her search her own heart if haply she could choose Gerardo for her husband. There was no reason, as she knew, why Messer Paolo's son should not mate with Messer Pietro's daughter. But being a romantic creature, as many women are, she resolved to bring the match about in secret.

274

Elena took little time to reflect, but told her nurse that she was willing, if Gerardo willed it too, to have him for her husband. Then went the nurse and made the young man know how matters stood, and arranged with him a day, when Messer Pietro should be in the Council of the Pregadi, and the servants of the palace otherwise employed, for him to come and meet his Elena. A glad man was Gerardo, nor did he wait to think how better it would be to ask the hand of Elena in marriage from her father. But when the day arrived, he sought the nurse, and she took him to a chamber in the palace, where there stood an image of the Blessed Virgin. Elena was there, pale and timid; and when the lovers clasped hands, neither found many words to say. But the nurse bade them take heart, and leading them before Our Lady, joined their hands, and made Gerardo place his ring on his bride's finger. After this fashion were Gerardo and Elena wedded. And for some while, by the assistance of the nurse, they dwelt together in much love and solace, meeting often as occasion offered.

275

Messer Paolo, who knew nothing of these things, took thought meanwhile for his son's career. It was the season when the Signiory of Venice sends a fleet of galleys to Beirut with merchandise; and the noblemen may bid for the hiring of a ship, and charge it with wares, and send whomsoever they list as factor in their interest. One of these galleys, then, Messer Paolo engaged, and told his son that he had appointed him to journey with it and increase their wealth. 'On thy return, my son,' he said, 'we will bethink us of a wife for thee.' Gerardo,

when he heard these words, was sore troubled, and first he told his father roundly that he would not go, and flew off in the twilight to pour out his perplexities to Elena. But she, who was prudent and of gentle soul, besought him to obey his father in this thing, to the end, moreover, that, having done his will and increased his wealth, he might afterwards unfold the story of their secret marriage. To these good counsels, though loth, Gerardo consented. His father was overjoyed at his son's repentance. The galley was straightway laden with merchandise, and Gerardo set forth on his voyage.

The trip to Beirut and back lasted usually six months or at the most seven. Now when Gerardo had been some six months away, Messer Pietro, noticing how fair his daughter was, and how she had grown into womanhood, looked about him for a husband for her. When he had found a youth suitable in birth and wealth and years, he called for Elena, and told her that the day had been appointed for her marriage. She, alas! knew not what to answer. She feared to tell her father that she was already married, for she knew not whether this would please Gerardo. For the same reason she dreaded to throw herself upon the kindness of Messer Paolo. Nor was her nurse of any help in counsel; for the old woman repented her of what she had done, and had good cause to believe that, even if the marriage with Gerardo were accepted by the two fathers, they would punish her for her own part in the affair. Therefore she bade Elena wait on fortune, and hinted to her that, if the worst came to the worst, no one need know she had been wedded with the ring to Gerardo. Such weddings, you must know, were binding; but till they had been blessed by the Church, they had not taken the force of a religious sacrament. And this is still the case in Italy among the common folk, who will say of a man, 'Si, è ammogliato; ma il matrimonio non è stato benedetto.' 'Yes, he has taken a wife, but the marriage has not yet been blessed.'

So the days flew by in doubt and sore distress for Elena. Then on the night before her wedding, she felt that she could bear this life no longer. But having no poison, and being afraid to pierce her bosom with a knife, she lay down on her bed alone, and tried to die by holding in her breath. A mortal swoon came over her; her senses fled; the life in her remained suspended. And when her nurse came next morning to call her, she found poor Elena cold as a corpse. Messer Pietro and all the household rushed, at the nurse's cries, into the room, and they all saw Elena stretched dead upon her bed undressed. Physicians were called, who made theories to explain the cause of death. But all believed that she was really dead, beyond all help of art or medicine. Nothing remained but to carry her to church for burial instead of marriage. Therefore, that very evening, a funeral procession was formed, which moved by torchlight up the Grand Canal, along the Riva, past the blank walls of the Arsenal, to the Campo before San Pietro in Castello. Elena lay beneath the black felze in one gondola, with a priest beside her praying, and other boats followed bearing mourners. Then they laid her in a marble chest outside the church, and all departed, still with torches burning, to their homes.

Now it so fell out that upon that very evening Gerardo's galley had returned from Syria, and was anchoring within the port of Lido, which looks across to the island of Castello. It was the gentle custom of Venice at that time that, when a ship arrived from sea, the friends of those on board at once came out to welcome them, and take and give the news. Therefore many noble youths and other citizens were on the deck of Gerardo's galley, making merry with him over the safe conduct of his voyage. Of one of these he asked, 'Whose is yonder funeral procession returning from San Pietro?' The young man made answer, 'Alas, for poor Elena, Messer Pietro's daughter! She should have been married this day. But death took her, and to-night they buried her in the marble monument outside the church.' A woeful man was Gerardo, hearing suddenly this news, and knowing what his dear wife must have suffered ere she died. Yet he restrained himself, daring not to disclose his anguish, and waited till his friends had left the galley. Then he called to him the captain of the oarsmen, who was his friend, and unfolded to him all the story of his love and sorrow, and said that he must go that night and see his wife once more, if even he should have to break her tomb. The captain tried to dissuade him, but in vain. Seeing him so obstinate, he resolved not to desert Gerardo. The two men took one of the galley's boats, and rowed together toward San Pietro. It was past midnight when they reached the Campo and broke the marble sepulchre asunder. Pushing back its lid, Gerardo descended into the grave and abandoned himself upon the body of his Elena. One who had seen them at that moment could not well have said which of the two was dead and which was living—Elena or her

husband. Meantime the captain of the oarsmen, fearing lest the watch (set by the Masters of the Night to keep the peace of Venice) might arrive, was calling on Gerardo to come back. Gerardo heeded him no whit. But at the last, compelled by his entreaties, and as it were astonished, he arose, bearing his wife's corpse in his arms, and carried her clasped against his bosom to the boat, and laid her therein, and sat down by her side and kissed her frequently, and suffered not his friend's remonstrances. Force was for the captain, having brought himself into this scrape, that he should now seek refuge by the nearest way from justice. Therefore he hove gently from the bank, and plied his oar, and brought the gondola apace into the open waters. Gerardo still clasped Elena, dying husband by dead wife. But the sea-breeze freshened towards daybreak; and the captain, looking down upon that pair, and bringing to their faces the light of his boat's lantern, judged their case not desperate at all. On Elena's cheek there was a flush of life less deadly even than the pallor of Gerardo's forehead. Thereupon the good man called aloud, and Gerardo started from his grief; and both together they chafed the hands and feet of Elena; and, the sea-breeze aiding with its saltness, they awoke in her the spark of life.

Dimly burned the spark. But Gerardo, being aware of it, became a man again. Then, having taken counsel with the captain, both resolved to bear her to that brave man's mother's house. A bed was soon made ready, and food was brought; and after due time, she lifted up her face and knew Gerardo. The peril of the grave was past, but thought had now to be taken for the future. Therefore Gerardo, leaving his wife to the captain's mother, rowed back to the galley and prepared to meet his father. With good store of merchandise and with great gains from his traffic, he arrived in that old palace on the Grand Canal. Then having opened to Messer Paolo the matters of his journey, and shown him how he had fared, and set before him tables of disbursements and receipts, he seized the moment of his father's gladness. 'Father,' he said, and as he spoke he knelt upon his knees, 'Father, I bring you not good store of merchandise and bags of gold alone; I bring you also a wedded wife, whom I have saved this night from death.' And when the old man's surprise was quieted, he told him the whole story. Now Messer Paolo, desiring no better than that his son should wed the heiress of his neighbour, and knowing well that Messer Pietro would make great joy receiving back his daughter from the grave, bade Gerardo in haste take rich apparel and clothe Elena therewith, and fetch her home. These things were swiftly done; and after evenfall Messer Pietro was bidden to grave business in his neighbour's palace. With heavy heart he came, from a house of mourning to a house of gladness. But there, at the banquet-table's head he saw his dead child Elena alive, and at her side a husband. And when the whole truth had been declared, he not only kissed and embraced the pair who knelt before him, but of his goodness forgave the nurse, who in her turn came trembling to his feet. Then fell there joy and bliss in overmeasure that night upon both palaces of the Canal Grande. And with the morrow the Church blessed the spousals which long since had been on both sides vowed and consummated.

279

VI.—ON THE LAGOONS

The mornings are spent in study, sometimes among pictures, sometimes in the Marcian Library, or again in those vast convent chambers of the Frari, where the archives of Venice load innumerable shelves. The afternoons invite us to a further flight upon the water. Both sandolo and gondola await our choice, and we may sail or row, according as the wind and inclination tempt us.

Yonder lies San Lazzaro, with the neat red buildings of the Armenian convent. The last oleander blossoms shine rosy pink above its walls against the pure blue sky as we glide into the little harbour. Boats piled with coal-black grapes block the landing-place, for the Padri are gathering their vintage from the Lido, and their presses run with new wine. Eustace and I have not come to revive memories of Byron—that curious patron saint of the Armenian colony—or to inspect the printing-press, which issues books of little value for our studies. It is enough to pace the terrace, and linger half an hour beneath the low broad arches of the alleys pleached with vines, through which the domes and towers of Venice rise more beautiful by distance.

Malamocco lies considerably farther, and needs a full hour of stout rowing to reach it. Alighting there, we cross the narrow strip of land, and find ourselves upon the huge sea-wall—block piled on block—of Istrian stone in tiers and ranks, with cunning breathing-places for the waves to wreak their fury on and foam their force away in fretful waste. The very

280

existence of Venice may be said to depend sometimes on these *murazzi*, which were finished at an immense cost by the Republic in the days of its decadence. The enormous monoliths which compose them had to be brought across the Adriatic in sailing vessels. Of all the Lidi, that of Malamocco is the weakest; and here, if anywhere, the sea might effect an entrance into the lagoon. Our gondoliers told us of some places where the *murazzi* were broken in a gale, or *sciroccale*, not very long ago. Lying awake in Venice, when the wind blows hard, one hears the sea thundering upon its sandy barrier, and blesses God for the *murazzi*. On such a night it happened once to me to dream a dream of Venice overwhelmed by water. I saw the billows roll across the smooth lagoon like a gigantic Eager. The Ducal Palace crumbled, and San Marco's domes went down. The Campanile rocked and shivered like a reed. And all along the Grand Canal the palaces swayed helpless, tottering to their fall, while boats piled high with men and women strove to stem the tide, and save themselves from those impending ruins. It was a mad dream, born of the sea's roar and Tintoretto's painting. But this afternoon no such visions are suggested. The sea sleeps, and in the moist autumn air we break tall branches of the seeded yellowing samphire from hollows of the rocks, and bear them homeward in a wayward bouquet mixed with cobs of Indian-corn.

281

Fusina is another point for these excursions. It lies at the mouth of the Canal di Brenta, where the mainland ends in marsh and meadows, intersected by broad renes. In spring the ditches bloom with fleurs-de-lis; in autumn they take sober colouring from lilac daisies and the delicate sea-lavender. Scores of tiny plants are turning scarlet on the brown moist earth; and when the sun goes down behind the Euganean hills, his crimson canopy of cloud, reflected on these shallows, muddy shoals, and wilderness of matted weeds, converts the common earth into a fairyland of fabulous dyes. Purple, violet, and rose are spread around us. In front stretches the lagoon, tinted with a pale light from the east, and beyond this pallid mirror shines Venice—a long low broken line, touched with the softest roseate flush. Ere we reach the Giudecca on our homeward way, sunset has faded. The western skies have clad themselves in green, barred with dark fire-rimmed clouds. The Euganean hills stand like stupendous pyramids, Egyptian, solemn, against a lemon space on the horizon. The far reaches of the lagoons, the Alps, and islands assume those tones of glowing lilac which are the supreme beauty of Venetian evening. Then, at last, we see the first lamps glitter on the Zattere. The quiet of the night has come.

282

Words cannot be formed to express the endless varieties of Venetian sunset. The most magnificent follow after wet stormy days, when the west breaks suddenly into a labyrinth of fire, when chasms of clear turquoise heavens emerge, and horns of flame are flashed to the zenith, and unexpected splendours scale the fretted clouds, step over step, stealing along the purple caverns till the whole dome throbs. Or, again, after a fair day, a change of weather approaches, and high, infinitely high, the skies are woven over with a web of half-transparent cirrus-clouds. These in the afterglow blush crimson, and through their rifts the depth of heaven is of a hard and gemlike blue, and all the water turns to rose beneath them. I remember one such evening on the way back from Torcello. We were well out at sea between Mazzorbo and Murano. The ruddy arches overhead were reflected without interruption in the waveless ruddy lake below. Our black boat was the only dark spot in this sphere of splendour. We seemed to hang suspended; and such as this, I fancied, must be the feeling of an insect caught in the heart of a fiery-petalled rose. Yet not these melodramatic sunsets alone are beautiful. Even more exquisite, perhaps, are the lagoons, painted in monochrome of greys, with just one touch of pink upon a western cloud, scattered in ripples here and there on the waves below, reminding us that day has passed and evening come. And beautiful again are the calm settings of fair weather, when sea and sky alike are cheerful, and the topmost blades of the lagoon grass, peeping from the shallows, glance like emeralds upon the surface. There is no deep stirring of the spirit in a symphony of light and colour; but purity, peace, and freshness make their way into our hearts.

288

283

VII.—AT THE LIDO

Of all these afternoon excursions, that to the Lido is most frequent. It has two points for approach. The more distant is the little station of San Nicoletto, at the mouth of the Porto. With an ebb-tide, the water of the lagoon runs past the mulberry gardens of this hamlet like a river. There is here a grove of acacia-trees, shadowy and dreamy, above deep grass,

which even an Italian summer does not wither. The Riva is fairly broad, forming a promenade, where one may conjure up the personages of a century ago. For San Nicoletto used to be a fashionable resort before the other points of Lido had been occupied by pleasure-seekers. An artist even now will select its old-world quiet, leafy shade, and prospect through the islands of Vignole and Sant' Erasmo to snow-touched peaks of Antelao and Tofana, rather than the glare and bustle and extended view of Venice which its rival Sant' Elisabetta offers.

But when we want a plunge into the Adriatic, or a stroll along smooth sands, or a breath of genuine sea-breeze, or a handful of horned poppies from the dunes, or a lazy half-hour's contemplation of a limitless horizon flecked with russet sails, then we seek Sant' Elisabetta. Our boat is left at the landing-place. We saunter across the island and back again. Antonio and Francesco wait and order wine, which we drink with them in the shade of the little *osteria's* wall.

284

A certain afternoon in May I well remember, for this visit to the Lido was marked by one of those apparitions which are as rare as they are welcome to the artist's soul. I have always held that in our modern life the only real equivalent for the antique mythopoeic sense—that sense which enabled the Hellenic race to figure for themselves the powers of earth and air, streams and forests, and the presiding genii of places, under the forms of living human beings, is supplied by the appearance at some felicitous moment of a man or woman who impersonates for our imagination the essence of the beauty that environs us. It seems, at such a fortunate moment, as though we had been waiting for this revelation, although perchance the want of it had not been previously felt. Our sensations and perceptions test themselves at the touchstone of this living individuality. The keynote of the whole music dimly sounding in our ears is struck. A melody emerges, clear in form and excellent in rhythm. The landscapes we have painted on our brain, no longer lack their central figure. The life proper to the complex conditions we have studied is discovered, and every detail, judged by this standard of vitality, falls into its right relations.

I had been musing long that day and earnestly upon the mystery of the lagoons, their opaline transparencies of air and water, their fretful risings and sudden subsidence into calm, the treacherousness of their shoals, the sparkle and the splendour of their sunlight. I had asked myself how would a Greek sculptor have personified the elemental deity of these salt-water lakes, so different in quality from the Ægean or Ionian sea? What would he find distinctive of their spirit? The Tritons of these shallows must be of other form and lineage than the fierce-eyed youth who blows his conch upon the curled crest of a wave, crying aloud to his comrades, as he bears the nymph away to caverns where the billows plunge in tideless instability.

285

We had picked up shells and looked for sea-horses on the Adriatic shore. Then we returned to give our boatmen wine beneath the vine-clad *pergola*. Four other men were there, drinking, and eating from a dish of fried fish set upon the coarse white linen cloth. Two of them soon rose and went away. Of the two who stayed, one was a large, middle-aged man; the other was still young. He was tall and sinewy, but slender, for these Venetians are rarely massive in their strength. Each limb is equally developed by the exercise of rowing upright, bending all the muscles to their stroke. Their bodies are elastically supple, with free sway from the hips and a mercurial poise upon the ankle. Stefano showed these qualities almost in exaggeration. The type in him was refined to its artistic perfection. Moreover, he was rarely in repose, but moved with a singular brusque grace. A black broad-brimmed hat was thrown back upon his matted *zazzera* of dark hair tipped with dusky brown. This shock of hair, cut in flakes, and falling wilfully, reminded me of the lagoon grass when it darkens in autumn upon uncovered shoals, and sunset gilds its sombre edges. Fiery grey eyes beneath it gazed intensely, with compulsive effluence of electricity. It was the wild glance of a Triton. Short blonde moustache, dazzling teeth, skin bronzed, but showing white and healthful through open front and sleeves of lilac shirt. The dashing sparkle of this animate splendour, who looked to me as though the sea-waves and the sun had made him in some hour of secret and unquiet rapture, was somehow emphasised by a curious dint dividing his square chin—a cleft that harmonised with smile on lip and steady flame in eyes. I hardly know what effect it would have upon a reader to compare eyes to opals. Yet Stefano's eyes, as they met mine, had the vitreous intensity of opals, as though the colour of Venetian waters were vitalised in them. This noticeable being had a rough, hoarse voice, which, to develop the parallel with a sea-god, might have screamed in storm or whispered raucous messages from crests of tossing

286

billows.

I felt, as I looked, that here, for me at least, the mythopoeia of the lagoons was humanised; the spirit of the saltwater lakes had appeared to me; the final touch of life emergent from nature had been given. I was satisfied; for I had seen a poem.

Then we rose, and wandered through the Jews' cemetery. It is a quiet place, where the flat grave-stones, inscribed in Hebrew and Italian, lie deep in Lido sand, waved over with wild grass and poppies. I would fain believe that no neglect, but rather the fashion of this folk, had left the monuments of generations to be thus resumed by nature. Yet, knowing nothing of the history of this burial-ground, I dare not affirm so much. There is one outlying piece of the cemetery which seems to contradict my charitable interpretation. It is not far from San Nicoletto. No enclosure marks it from the unconsecrated dunes. Acacia-trees sprout amid the monuments, and break the tablets with their thorny shoots upthrusting from the soil. Where patriarchs and rabbis sleep for centuries, the fishers of the sea now wander, and defile these habitations of the dead:

Corruption most abhorred
Mingling itself with their renowned ashes.

Some of the grave-stones have been used to fence the towing-path; and one I saw, well carved with letters legible of Hebrew on fair Istrian marble, which roofed an open drain leading from the stable of a Christian dog.

287

VIII.—A VENETIAN RESTAURANT

At the end of a long glorious day, unhappy is that mortal whom the Hermes of a cosmopolitan hotel, white-chokered and white-waistcoated, marshals to the Hades of the *table-d'hôte*. The world has often been compared to an inn; but on my way down to this common meal I have, not unfrequently, felt fain to reverse the simile. From their separate stations, at the appointed hour, the guests like ghosts flit to a gloomy gas-lit chamber. They are of various speech and race, preoccupied with divers interests and cares. Necessity and the waiter drive them all to a sepulchral syssition, whereof the cook too frequently deserves that old Greek comic epithet—*αδου μάγειρος*—cook of the Inferno. And just as we are told that in Charon's boat we shall not be allowed to pick our society, so here we must accept what fellowship the fates provide. An English spinster retailing paradoxes culled to-day from Ruskin's handbooks; an American citizen describing his jaunt in a gondola from the railway station; a German shopkeeper descanting in one breath on Baur's Bock and the beauties of the Marcusplatz; an intelligent æsthete bent on working into clearness his own views of Carpaccio's genius: all these in turn, or all together, must be suffered gladly through well-nigh two long hours. Uncomforted in soul we rise from the expensive banquet; and how often rise from it unfed!

Far other be the doom of my own friends—of pious bards and genial companions, lovers of natural and lovely things! Nor for these do I desire a seat at Florian's marble tables, or a perch in Quadri's window, though the former supply dainty food, and the latter command a bird's-eye view of the Piazza. Rather would I lead them to a certain humble tavern on the Zattere. It is a quaint, low-built, unpretending little place, near a bridge, with a garden hard by which sends a cataract of honeysuckles sunward over a too-jealous wall. In front lies a Mediterranean steamer, which all day long has been discharging cargo. Gazing westward up Giudecca, masts and funnels bar the sunset and the Paduan hills; and from a little front room of the *trattoria* the view is so marine that one keeps fancying oneself in some ship's cabin. Sea-captains sit and smoke beside their glass of grog in the pavilion and the *caffé*. But we do not seek their company at dinner-time. Our way lies under yonder arch, and up the narrow alley into a paved court. Here are oleanders in pots, and plants of Japanese spindle-wood in tubs; and from the walls beneath the window hang cages of all sorts of birds—a talking parrot, a whistling blackbird, goldfinches, canaries, linnets. Athos, the fat dog, who goes to market daily in a *barchetta* with his master, snuffs around. 'Where are Porthos and Aramis, my friend?' Athos does not take the joke; he only wags his stump of tail and pokes his nose into my hand. What a Tartufe's nose it is! Its bridge displays the full parade of leather-bound brass-nailed muzzle. But beneath, this muzzle is a patent sham. The frame does not even pretend to close on Athos' jaw, and the wise dog wears it like a decoration. A little farther we meet that ancient grey cat, who has no

discoverable name, but is famous for the sprightliness and grace with which she bears her eighteen years. Not far from the cat one is sure to find Carlo—the bird-like, bright-faced, close-cropped Venetian urchin, whose duty it is to trot backwards and forwards between the cellar and the dining-tables. At the end of the court we walk into the kitchen, where the black-capped little *padrone* and the gigantic white-capped chef are in close consultation. Here we have the privilege of inspecting the larder—fish of various sorts, meat, vegetables, several kinds of birds, pigeons, tordi, beccafichi, geese, wild ducks, chickens, woodcock, &c., according to the season. We select our dinner, and retire to eat it either in the court among the birds beneath the vines, or in the low dark room which occupies one side of it. Artists of many nationalities and divers ages frequent this house; and the talk arising from the several little tables, turns upon points of interest and beauty in the life and landscape of Venice. There can be no difference of opinion about the excellence of the *cuisine*, or about the reasonable charges of this *trattoria*. A soup of lentils, followed by boiled turbot or fried soles, beefsteak or mutton cutlets, tordi or beccafichi, with a salad, the whole enlivened with good red wine or Florio's Sicilian Marsala from the cask, costs about four francs. Gas is unknown in the establishment. There is no noise, no bustle, no brutality of waiters, no *ahurissement* of tourists. And when dinner is done, we can sit awhile over our cigarette and coffee, talking until the night invites us to a stroll along the Zattere or a *giro* in the gondola.

IX.—NIGHT IN VENICE

Night in Venice! Night is nowhere else so wonderful, unless it be in winter among the high Alps. But the nights of Venice and the nights of the mountains are too different in kind to be compared.

There is the ever-recurring miracle of the full moon rising, before day is dead, behind San Giorgio, spreading a path of gold on the lagoon which black boats traverse with the glow-worm lamp upon their prow; ascending the cloudless sky and silvering the domes of the Salute; pouring vitreous sheen upon the red lights of the Piazzetta; flooding the Grand Canal, and lifting the Rialto higher in ethereal whiteness; piercing but penetrating not the murky labyrinth of *rio* linked with *rio*, through which we wind in light and shadow, to reach once more the level glories and the luminous expanse of heaven beyond the Misericordia.

This is the melodrama of Venetian moonlight; and if a single impression of the night has to be retained from one visit to Venice, those are fortunate who chance upon a full moon of fair weather. Yet I know not whether some quieter and soberer effects are not more thrilling. To-night, for example, the waning moon will rise late through veils of *scirocco*. Over the bridges of San Cristoforo and San Gregorio, through the deserted Calle di Mezzo, my friend and I walk in darkness, pass the marble basements of the Salute, and push our way along its Riva to the point of the Dogana. We are out at sea alone, between the Canalozzo and the Giudecca. A moist wind ruffles the water and cools our forehead. It is so dark that we can only see San Giorgio by the light reflected on it from the Piazzetta. The same light climbs the Campanile of S. Mark, and shows the golden angel in a mystery of gloom. The only noise that reaches us is a confused hum from the Piazza. Sitting and musing there, the blackness of the water whispers in our ears a tale of death. And now we hear a splash of oars, and gliding through the darkness comes a single boat. One man leaps upon the landing-place without a word and disappears. There is another wrapped in a military cloak asleep. I see his face beneath me, pale and quiet. The *barcaruolo* turns the point in silence. From the darkness they came; into the darkness they have gone. It is only an ordinary incident of coastguard service. But the spirit of the night has made a poem of it.

Even tempestuous and rainy weather, though melancholy enough, is never sordid here. There is no noise from carriage traffic in Venice, and the sea-wind preserves the purity and transparency of the atmosphere. It had been raining all day, but at evening came a partial clearing. I went down to the Molo, where the large reach of the lagoon was all moon-silvered, and San Giorgio Maggiore dark against the bluish sky, and Santa Maria della Salute domed with moon-irradiated pearl, and the wet slabs of the Riva shimmering in moonlight, the whole misty sky, with its clouds and stellar spaces, drenched in moonlight, nothing but moonlight sensible except the tawny flare of gas-lamps and the orange lights of gondolas afloat upon the waters. On such a night the very spirit of Venice is abroad. We feel why she is called Bride of the Sea.

Take yet another night. There had been a representation of Verdi's 'Forza del Destino' at the Teatro Malibran. After midnight we walked homeward through the Merceria, crossed the Piazza, and dived into the narrow *calle* which leads to the *traghetto* of the Salute. It was a warm moist starless night, and there seemed no air to breathe in those narrow alleys. The gondolier was half asleep. Eustace called him as we jumped into his boat, and rang our *soldi* on the gunwale. Then he arose and turned the *ferro* round, and stood across towards the Salute. Silently, insensibly, from the oppression of confinement in the airless streets to the liberty and immensity of the water and the night we passed. It was but two minutes ere we touched the shore and said good-night, and went our way and left the ferryman. But in that brief passage he had opened our souls to everlasting things—the freshness, and the darkness, and the kindness of the brooding, all-enfolding night above the sea.

The night before the wedding we had a supper-party in my rooms. We were twelve in all. My friend Eustace brought his gondolier Antonio with fair-haired, dark-eyed wife, and little Attilio, their eldest child. My own gondolier, Francesco, came with his wife and two children. Then there was the handsome, languid Luigi, who, in his best clothes, or out of them, is fit for any drawing-room. Two gondoliers, in dark blue shirts, completed the list of guests, if we exclude the maid Catina, who came and went about the table, laughing and joining in the songs, and sitting down at intervals to take her share of wine. The big room looking across the garden to the Grand Canal had been prepared for supper; and the company were to be received in the smaller, which has a fine open space in front of it to southwards. But as the guests arrived, they seemed to find the kitchen and the cooking that was going on quite irresistible. Catina, it seems, had lost her head with so many cuttlefishes, *orai*, cakes, and fowls, and cutlets to reduce to order. There was, therefore, a great bustle below stairs; and I could hear plainly that all my guests were lending their making, or their marring, hands to the preparation of the supper. That the company should cook their own food on the way to the dining-room, seemed a quite novel arrangement, but one that promised well for their contentment with the banquet. Nobody could be dissatisfied with what was everybody's affair.

When seven o'clock struck, Eustace and I, who had been entertaining the children in their mothers' absence, heard the sound of steps upon the stairs. The guests arrived, bringing their own *risotto* with them. Welcome was short, if hearty. We sat down in carefully appointed order, and fell into such conversation as the quarter of San Vio and our several interests supplied. From time to time one of the matrons left the table and descended to the kitchen, when a finishing stroke was needed for roast pullet or stewed veal. The excuses they made their host for supposed failure in the dishes, lent a certain grace and comic charm to the commonplace of festivity. The entertainment was theirs as much as mine; and they all seemed to enjoy what took the form by degrees of curiously complicated hospitality. I do not think a well-ordered supper at any *trattoria*, such as at first suggested itself to my imagination, would have given any of us an equal pleasure or an equal sense of freedom. The three children had become the guests of the whole party. Little Attilio, propped upon an air-cushion, which puzzled him exceedingly, ate through his supper and drank his wine with solid satisfaction, opening the large brown eyes beneath those tufts of clustering fair hair which promise much beauty for him in his manhood. Francesco's boy, who is older and begins to know the world, sat with a semi-suppressed grin upon his face, as though the humour of the situation was not wholly hidden from him. Little Teresa, too, was happy, except when her mother, a severe Pomona, with enormous earrings and splendid *fazzoletto* of crimson and orange dyes, pounced down upon her for some supposed infraction of good manners—*creanza*, as they vividly express it here. Only Luigi looked a trifle bored. But Luigi has been a soldier, and has now attained the supercilious superiority of young-manhood, which smokes its cigar of an evening in the piazza and knows the merits of the different cafés.

The great business of the evening began when the eating was over, and the decanters filled with new wine of Mirano circulated freely. The four best singers of the party drew together; and the rest prepared themselves to make suggestions, hum tunes, and join with fitful effect in choruses. Antonio, who is a powerful young fellow, with bronzed cheeks and a perfect tempest of coal-black hair in flakes upon his forehead, has a most extraordinary soprano—sound as a bell, strong as a trumpet, well trained, and true to the least shade in intonation. Piero, whose rugged Neptunian features, sea-wrinkled, tell of a rough water-life, boasts a bass of resonant, almost pathetic quality. Francesco has a *mezzo voce*, which might, by a stretch of politeness, be called baritone. Piero's comrade, whose name concerns us not, has another of these nondescript voices. They sat together with their glasses and cigars before them, sketching part-songs in outline, striking the keynote—now higher and now lower—till they saw their subject well in view. Then they burst into full singing, Antonio leading with a metal note that thrilled one's ears, but still was musical. Complicated contrapuntal pieces, such as we should call madrigals, with ever-recurring refrains of 'Venezia, gemma Triatica, sposa del mar,' descending probably from ancient days, followed each other in quick succession. Barcaroles, serenades, love-songs, and invitations to the water were interwoven for relief. One of these romantic

pieces had a beautiful burden, 'Dormi, o bella, o fingi di dormir,' of which the melody was fully worthy. But the most successful of all the tunes were two with a sad motive. The one repeated incessantly 'Ohimé! mia madre morì;' the other was a girl's love lament: 'Perchè tradirmi, perchè lasciarmi! prima d'amarmi non eri così!' Even the children joined in these; and Catina, who took the solo part in the second, was inspired to a great dramatic effort. All these were purely popular songs. The people of Venice, however, are passionate for operas. Therefore we had duets and solos from 'Ernani,' the 'Ballo in Maschera,' and the 'Forza del Destino,' and one comic chorus from 'Boccaccio,' which seemed to make them wild with pleasure. To my mind, the best of these more formal pieces was a duet between Attila and Italia from some opera unknown to me, which Antonio and Piero performed with incomparable spirit. It was noticeable how, descending to the people, sung by them for love at sea, or on excursions to the villages round Mestre, these operatic reminiscences had lost something of their theatrical formality, and assumed instead the serious gravity, the quaint movement, and marked emphasis which belong to popular music in Northern and Central Italy. An antique character was communicated even to the recitative of Verdi by slight, almost indefinable, changes of rhythm and accent. There was no end to the singing. 'Siamo appassionati per il canto,' frequently repeated, was proved true by the profusion and variety of songs produced from inexhaustible memories, lightly tried over, brilliantly performed, rapidly succeeding each other. Nor were gestures wanting—lifted arms, hands stretched to hands, flashing eyes, hair tossed from the forehead—unconscious and appropriate action—which showed how the spirit of the music and words alike possessed the men. One by one the children fell asleep. Little Attilio and Teresa were tucked up beneath my Scotch shawl at two ends of a great sofa; and not even his father's clarion voice, in the character of Italia defying Attila to harm 'le mie superbe città,' could wake the little boy up. The night wore on. It was past one. Eustace and I had promised to be in the church of the Gesuati at six next morning. We therefore gave the guests a gentle hint, which they as gently took. With exquisite, because perfectly unaffected, breeding they sank for a few moments into common conversation, then wrapped the children up, and took their leave. It was an uncomfortable, warm, wet night of sullen *scirocco*.

The next day, which was Sunday, Francesco called me at five. There was no visible sunrise that cheerless damp October morning. Grey dawn stole somehow imperceptibly between the veil of clouds and leaden waters, as my friend and I, well sheltered by our *felze*, passed into the Giudecca, and took our station before the church of the Gesuati. A few women from the neighbouring streets and courts crossed the bridges in draggled petticoats on their way to first mass. A few men, shouldering their jackets, lounged along the Zattere, opened the great green doors, and entered. Then suddenly Antonio cried out that the bridal party was on its way, not as we had expected, in boats, but on foot. We left our gondola, and fell into the ranks, after shaking hands with Francesco, who is the elder brother of the bride. There was nothing very noticeable in her appearance, except her large dark eyes. Otherwise both face and figure were of a common type; and her bridal dress of sprigged grey silk, large veil and orange blossoms, reduced her to the level of a *bourgeoise*. It was much the same with the bridegroom. His features, indeed, proved him a true Venetian gondolier; for the skin was strained over the cheekbones, and the muscles of the throat beneath the jaws stood out like cords, and the bright blue eyes were deep-set beneath a spare brown forehead. But he had provided a complete suit of black for the occasion, and wore a shirt of worked cambric, which disguised what is really splendid in the physique of these oarsmen, at once slender and sinewy. Both bride and bridegroom looked uncomfortable in their clothes. The light that fell upon them in the church was dull and leaden. The ceremony, which was very hurriedly performed by an unctuous priest, did not appear to impress either of them. Nobody in the bridal party, crowding together on both sides of the altar, looked as though the service was of the slightest interest and moment. Indeed, this was hardly to be wondered at; for the priest, so far as I could understand his gabble, took the larger portion for read, after muttering the first words of the rubric. A little carven image of an acolyte—a weird boy who seemed to move by springs, whose hair had all the semblance of painted wood, and whose complexion was white and red like a clown's—did not make matters more intelligible by spasmodically clattering responses.

After the ceremony we heard mass and contributed to three distinct offertories. Considering how much account even two *soldi* are to these poor people, I was really angry when I heard the copper shower. Every

member of the party had his or her pennies ready, and dropped them into the boxes. Whether it was the effect of the bad morning, or the ugliness of a very ill-designed *barocco* building, or the fault of the fat oily priest, I know not. But the *sposalizio* struck me as tame and cheerless, the mass as irreverent and vulgarly conducted. At the same time there is something too impressive in the mass for any perfunctory performance to divest its symbolism of sublimity. A Protestant Communion Service lends itself more easily to degradation by unworthiness in the minister.

We walked down the church in double file, led by the bride and bridegroom, who had knelt during the ceremony with the best man—*compare*, as he is called—at a narrow *prie-dieu* before the altar. The *compare* is a person of distinction at these weddings. He has to present the bride with a great pyramid of artificial flowers, which is placed before her at the marriage-feast, a packet of candles, and a box of bonbons. The comfits, when the box is opened, are found to include two magnificent sugar babies lying in their cradles. I was told that a *compare*, who does the thing handsomely, must be prepared to spend about a hundred francs upon these presents, in addition to the wine and cigars with which he treats his friends. On this occasion the women were agreed that he had done his duty well. He was a fat, wealthy little man, who lived by letting market-boats for hire on the Rialto.

From the church to the bride's house was a walk of some three minutes. On the way we were introduced to the father of the bride—a very magnificent personage, with points of strong resemblance to Vittorio Emmanuele. He wore an enormous broad-brimmed hat and emerald-green earrings, and looked considerably younger than his eldest son, Francesco. Throughout the *nozze* he took the lead in a grand imperious fashion of his own. Wherever he went, he seemed to fill the place, and was fully aware of his own importance. In Florence I think he would have got the nickname of *Tacchin*, or turkey-cock. Here at Venice the sons and daughters call their parent briefly *Vecchio*. I heard him so addressed with a certain amount of awe, expecting an explosion of bubbly-jock displeasure. But he took it, as though it was natural, without disturbance. The other *Vecchio*, father of the bridegroom, struck me as more sympathetic. He was a gentle old man, proud of his many prosperous, laborious sons. They, like the rest of the gentlemen, were gondoliers. Both the *Vecchi*, indeed, continue to ply their trade, day and night, at the *traghetto*.

Traghetti are stations for gondolas at different points of the canals. As their name implies, it is the first duty of the gondoliers upon them to ferry people across. This they do for the fixed fee of five centimes. The *traghetti* are in fact Venetian cab-stands. And, of course, like London cabs, the gondolas may be taken off them for trips. The municipality, however, makes it a condition, under penalty of fine to the *traghetto*, that each station should always be provided with two boats for the service of the ferry. When vacancies occur on the *traghetti*, a gondolier who owns or hires a boat makes application to the municipality, receives a number, and is inscribed as plying at a certain station. He has now entered a sort of guild, which is presided over by a *Capo-traghetto*, elected by the rest for the protection of their interests, the settlement of disputes, and the management of their common funds. In the old acts of Venice this functionary is styled *Gastaldo di traghetto*. The members have to contribute something yearly to the guild. This payment varies upon different stations, according to the greater or less amount of the tax levied by the municipality on the *traghetto*. The highest subscription I have heard of is twenty-five francs; the lowest, seven. There is one *traghetto*, known by the name of Madonna del Giglio or Zobenigo, which possesses near its *pergola* of vines a nice old brown Venetian picture. Some stranger offered a considerable sum for this. But the guild refused to part with it.

As may be imagined, the *traghetti* vary greatly in the amount and quality of their custom. By far the best are those in the neighbourhood of the hotels upon the Grand Canal. At any one of these a gondolier during the season is sure of picking up some foreigner or other who will pay him handsomely for comparatively light service. A *traghetto* on the Giudecca, on the contrary, depends upon Venetian traffic. The work is more monotonous, and the pay is reduced to its tariffed minimum. So far as I can gather, an industrious gondolier, with a good boat, belonging to a good *traghetto*, may make as much as ten or fifteen francs in a single day. But this cannot be relied on. They therefore prefer a fixed appointment with a private family, for which they receive by tariff five francs a day, or by arrangement for long periods perhaps four francs a day, with certain perquisites and small advantages. It is great luck to get such an engagement for the winter. The heaviest anxieties which beset a

gondolier are then disposed of. Having entered private service, they are not allowed to ply their trade on the *traghetto*, except by stipulation with their masters. Then they may take their place one night out of every six in the rank and file. The gondoliers have two proverbs, which show how desirable it is, while taking a fixed engagement, to keep their hold on the *traghetto*. One is to this effect: *il traghetto è un buon padrone*. The other satirises the meanness of the poverty-stricken Venetian nobility: *pompa di servitù, misera insegna*. When they combine the *traghetto* with private service, the municipality insists on their retaining the number painted on their gondola; and against this their employers frequently object. It is therefore a great point for a gondolier to make such an arrangement with his master as will leave him free to show his number. The reason for this regulation is obvious. Gondoliers are known more by their numbers and their *traghetti* than their names. They tell me that though there are upwards of a thousand registered in Venice, each man of the trade knows the whole confraternity by face and number. Taking all things into consideration, I think four francs a day the whole year round are very good earnings for a gondolier. On this he will marry and rear a family, and put a little money by. A young unmarried man, working at two and a half or three francs a day, is proportionately well-to-do. If he is economical, he ought upon these wages to save enough in two or three years to buy himself a gondola. A boy from fifteen to nineteen is called a *mezz' uomo*, and gets about one franc a day. A new gondola with all its fittings is worth about a thousand francs. It does not last in good condition more than six or seven years. At the end of that time the hull will fetch eighty francs. A new hull can be had for three hundred francs. The old fittings—brass sea-horses or *cavalli*, steel prow or *ferro*, covered cabin or *felze*, cushions and leather-covered back-board or *stramazetto*, maybe transferred to it. When a man wants to start a gondola, he will begin by buying one already half past service—a *gondola da traghetto* or *di mezza età*. This should cost him something over two hundred francs. Little by little, he accumulates the needful fittings; and when his first purchase is worn out, he hopes to set up with a well-appointed equipage. He thus gradually works his way from the rough trade which involves hard work and poor earnings to that more profitable industry which cannot be carried on without a smart boat. The gondola is a source of continual expense for repairs. Its oars have to be replaced. It has to be washed with sponges, blacked, and varnished. Its bottom needs frequent cleaning. Weeds adhere to it in the warm brackish water, growing rapidly through the summer months, and demanding to be scrubbed off once in every four weeks. The gondolier has no place where he can do this for himself. He therefore takes his boat to a wharf, or *squero*, as the place is called. At these *squero* gondolas are built as well as cleaned. The fee for a thorough setting to rights of the boat is five francs. It must be done upon a fine day. Thus in addition to the cost, the owner loses a good day's work.

301

These details will serve to give some notion of the sort of people with whom Eustace and I spent our day. The bride's house is in an excellent position on an open canal leading from the Canalozzo to the Giudecca. She had arrived before us, and received her friends in the middle of the room. Each of us in turn kissed her cheek and murmured our congratulations. We found the large living-room of the house arranged with chairs all round the walls, and the company were marshalled in some order of precedence, my friend and I taking place near the bride. On either hand airy bedrooms opened out, and two large doors, wide open, gave a view from where we sat of a good-sized kitchen. This arrangement of the house was not only comfortable, but pretty; for the bright copper pans and pipkins ranged on shelves along the kitchen walls had a very cheerful effect. The walls were whitewashed, but literally covered with all sorts of pictures. A great plaster cast from some antique, an Atys, Adonis, or Paris, looked down from a bracket placed between the windows. There was enough furniture, solid and well kept, in all the rooms. Among the pictures were full-length portraits in oils of two celebrated gondoliers—one in antique costume, the other painted a few years since. The original of the latter soon came and stood before it. He had won regatta prizes; and the flags of four discordant colours were painted round him by the artist, who had evidently cared more to commemorate the triumphs of his sitter and to strike a likeness than to secure the tone of his own picture. This champion turned out a fine fellow—Corradini—with one of the brightest little gondoliers of thirteen for his son.

302

After the company were seated, lemonade and cakes were handed round amid a hubbub of chattering women. Then followed cups of black coffee and more cakes. Then a glass of Cyprus and more cakes. Then a

glass of curaçoa and more cakes. Finally, a glass of noyau and still more cakes. It was only a little after seven in the morning. Yet politeness compelled us to consume these delicacies. I tried to shirk my duty; but this discretion was taken by my hosts for well-bred modesty; and instead of being let off, I had the richest piece of pastry and the largest maccaroon available pressed so kindly on me, that, had they been poisoned, I would not have refused to eat them. The conversation grew more, and more animated, the women gathering together in their dresses of bright blue and scarlet, the men lighting cigars and puffing out a few quiet words. It struck me as a drawback that these picturesque people had put on Sunday-clothes to look as much like shopkeepers as possible. But they did not all of them succeed. Two handsome women, who handed the cups round—one a brunette, the other a blonde—wore skirts of brilliant blue, with a sort of white jacket, and white kerchief folded heavily about their shoulders. The brunette had a great string of coral, the blonde of amber, round her throat. Gold earrings and the long gold chains Venetian women wear, of all patterns and degrees of value, abounded. Nobody appeared without them; but I could not see any of an antique make. The men seemed to be contented with rings—huge, heavy rings of solid gold, worked with a rough flower pattern. One young fellow had three upon his fingers. This circumstance led me to speculate whether a certain portion at least of this display of jewellery around me had not been borrowed for the occasion.

303

Eustace and I were treated quite like friends. They called us *I Signori*. But this was only, I think, because our English names are quite unmanageable. The women fluttered about us and kept asking whether we really liked it all? whether we should come to the *pranzo*? whether it was true we danced? It seemed to give them unaffected pleasure to be kind to us; and when we rose to go away, the whole company crowded round, shaking hands and saying: 'Si divertirà bene stasera!' Nobody resented our presence; what was better, no one put himself out for us. 'Vogliono veder il nostro costume,' I heard one woman say.

We got home soon after eight, and, as our ancestors would have said, settled our stomachs with a dish of tea. It makes me shudder now to think of the mixed liquids and miscellaneous cakes we had consumed at that unwonted hour.

At half-past three, Eustace and I again prepared ourselves for action. His gondola was in attendance, covered with the *felze*, to take us to the house of the *sposa*. We found the canal crowded with poor people of the quarter—men, women, and children lining the walls along its side, and clustering like bees upon the bridges. The water itself was almost choked with gondolas. Evidently the folk of San Vio thought our wedding procession would be a most exciting pageant. We entered the house, and were again greeted by the bride and bridegroom, who consigned each of us to the control of a fair tyrant. This is the most fitting way of describing our introduction to our partners of the evening; for we were no sooner presented, than the ladies swooped upon us like their prey, placing their shawls upon our left arms, while they seized and clung to what was left available of us for locomotion. There was considerable giggling and tittering throughout the company when Signora Fenzo, the young and comely wife of a gondolier, thus took possession of Eustace, and Signora dell' Acqua, the widow of another gondolier, appropriated me. The affair had been arranged beforehand, and their friends had probably chaffed them with the difficulty of managing two mad Englishmen. However, they proved equal to the occasion, and the difficulties were entirely on our side. Signora Fenzo was a handsome brunette, quiet in her manners, who meant business. I envied Eustace his subjection to such a reasonable being. Signora dell' Acqua, though a widow, was by no means disconsolate; and I soon perceived that it would require all the address and diplomacy I possessed, to make anything out of her society. She laughed incessantly; darted in the most diverse directions, dragging me along with her; exhibited me in triumph to her cronies; made eyes at me over a fan, repeated my clumsiest remarks, as though they gave her indescribable amusement; and all the while jabbered Venetian at express rate, without the slightest regard for my incapacity to follow her vagaries. The *Vecchio* marshalled us in order. First went the *sposa* and *comare* with the mothers of bride and bridegroom. Then followed the *sposo* and the bridesmaid. After them I was made to lead my fair tormentor. As we descended the staircase there arose a hubbub of excitement from the crowd on the canals. The gondolas moved turbidly upon the face of the waters. The bridegroom kept muttering to himself, 'How we shall be criticised! They will tell each other who was decently dressed, and who stepped awkwardly into the boats, and what the price of my boots was!' Such exclamations,

304

305

murmured at intervals, and followed by chest-drawn sighs, expressed a deep preoccupation. With regard to his boots, he need have had no anxiety. They were of the shiniest patent leather, much too tight, and without a speck of dust upon them. But his nervousness infected me with a cruel dread. All those eyes were going to watch how we comported ourselves in jumping from the landing-steps into the boat! If this operation, upon a ceremonious occasion, has terrors even for a gondolier, how formidable it ought to be to me! And here is the Signora dell' Acqua's white cachemire shawl dangling on one arm, and the Signora herself languishingly clinging to the other; and the gondolas are fretting in a fury of excitement, like corks, upon the churned green water! The moment was terrible. The *sposa* and her three companions had been safely stowed away beneath their *felze*. The *sposo* had successfully handed the bridesmaid into the second gondola. I had to perform the same office for my partner. Off she went, like a bird, from the bank. I seized a happy moment, followed, bowed, and found myself to my contentment gracefully ensconced in a corner opposite the widow. Seven more gondolas were packed. The procession moved. We glided down the little channel, broke away into the Grand Canal, crossed it, and dived into a labyrinth from which we finally emerged before our destination, the Trattoria di San Gallo. The perils of the landing were soon over; and, with the rest of the guests, my mercurial companion and I slowly ascended a long flight of stairs leading to a vast upper chamber. Here we were to dine.

306

It had been the gallery of some palazzo in old days, was above one hundred feet in length, fairly broad, with a roof of wooden rafters and large windows opening on a courtyard garden. I could see the tops of three cypress-trees cutting the grey sky upon a level with us. A long table occupied the centre of this room. It had been laid for upwards of forty persons, and we filled it. There was plenty of light from great glass lustres blazing with gas. When the ladies had arranged their dresses, and the gentlemen had exchanged a few polite remarks, we all sat down to dinner—I next my inexorable widow, Eustace beside his calm and comely partner. The first impression was one of disappointment. It looked so like a public dinner of middle-class people. There was no local character in costume or customs. Men and women sat politely bored, expectant, trifling with their napkins, yawning, muttering nothings about the weather or their neighbours. The frozen commonplaceness of the scene was made for me still more oppressive by Signora dell' Acqua. She was evidently satirical, and could not be happy unless continually laughing at or with somebody. 'What a stick the woman will think me!' I kept saying to myself. 'How shall I ever invent jokes in this strange land? I cannot even flirt with her in Venetian! And here I have condemned myself—and her too, poor thing—to sit through at least three hours of mortal dullness!' Yet the widow was by no means unattractive. Dressed in black, she had contrived by an artful arrangement of lace and jewellery to give an air of lightness to her costume. She had a pretty little pale face, a *minois chiffonné*, with slightly turned-up nose, large laughing brown eyes, a dazzling set of teeth, and a tempestuously frizzled mop of powdered hair. When I managed to get a side-look at her quietly, without being giggled at or driven half mad by unintelligible incitements to a jocularity I could not feel, it struck me that, if we once found a common term of communication we should become good friends. But for the moment that *modus vivendi* seemed unattainable. She had not recovered from the first excitement of her capture of me. She was still showing me off and trying to stir me up. The arrival of the soup gave me a momentary relief; and soon the serious business of the afternoon began. I may add that before dinner was over, the Signora dell' Acqua and I were fast friends. I had discovered the way of making jokes, and she had become intelligible. I found her a very nice, though flighty, little woman; and I believe she thought me gifted with the faculty of uttering eccentric epigrams in a grotesque tongue. Some of my remarks were flung about the table, and had the same success as uncouth Lombard carvings have with connoisseurs in *naïvetés* of art. By that time we had come to be *compare* and *comare* to each other—the sequel of some clumsy piece of jocularity.

307

It was a heavy entertainment, copious in quantity, excellent in quality, plainly but well cooked. I remarked there was no fish. The widow replied that everybody present ate fish to satiety at home. They did not join a marriage feast at the San Gallo, and pay their nine francs, for that! It should be observed that each guest paid for his own entertainment. This appears to be the custom. Therefore attendance is complimentary, and the married couple are not at ruinous charges for the banquet. A curious feature in the whole proceeding had its origin in this custom. I noticed

that before each cover lay an empty plate, and that my partner began with the first course to heap upon it what she had not eaten. She also took large helpings, and kept advising me to do the same. I said: 'No; I only take what I want to eat; if I fill that plate in front of me as you are doing, it will be great waste.' This remark elicited shrieks of laughter from all who heard it; and when the hubbub had subsided, I perceived an apparently official personage bearing down upon Eustace, who was in the same perplexity. It was then circumstantially explained to us that the empty plates were put there in order that we might lay aside what we could not conveniently eat, and take it home with us. At the end of the dinner the widow (whom I must now call my *comare*) had accumulated two whole chickens, half a turkey, and a large assortment of mixed eatables. I performed my duty and won her regard by placing delicacies at her disposition.

Crudely stated, this proceeding moves disgust. But that is only because one has not thought the matter out. In the performance there was nothing coarse or nasty. These good folk had made a contract at so much a head—so many fowls, so many pounds of beef, &c, to be supplied; and what they had fairly bought, they clearly had a right to. No one, so far as I could notice, tried to take more than his proper share; except, indeed, Eustace and myself. In our first eagerness to conform to custom, we both overshot the mark, and grabbed at disproportionate helpings. The waiters politely observed that we were taking what was meant for two; and as the courses followed in interminable sequence, we soon acquired the tact of what was due to us.

Meanwhile the room grew warm. The gentlemen threw off their coats—a pleasant liberty of which I availed myself, and was immediately more at ease. The ladies divested themselves of their shoes (strange to relate!) and sat in comfort with their stockinged feet upon the *scagliola* pavement. I observed that some cavaliers by special permission were allowed to remove their partners' slippers. This was not my lucky fate. My *comare* had not advanced to that point of intimacy. Healths began to be drunk. The conversation took a lively turn; and women went fluttering round the table, visiting their friends, to sip out of their glass, and ask each other how they were getting on. It was not long before the stiff veneer of *bourgeoisie* which bored me had worn off. The people emerged in their true selves: natural, gentle, sparkling with enjoyment, playful. Playful is, I think, the best word to describe them. They played with infinite grace and innocence, like kittens, from the old men of sixty to the little boys of thirteen. Very little wine was drunk. Each guest had a litre placed before him. Many did not finish theirs; and for very few was it replenished. When at last the dessert arrived, and the bride's comfits had been handed round, they began to sing. It was very pretty to see a party of three or four friends gathering round some popular beauty, and paying her compliments in verse—they grouped behind her chair, she sitting back in it and laughing up to them, and joining in the chorus. The words, 'Brunetta mia simpatica, ti amo sempre più,' sung after this fashion to Eustace's handsome partner, who puffed delicate whiffs from a Russian cigarette, and smiled her thanks, had a peculiar appropriateness. All the ladies, it may be observed in passing, had by this time lit their cigarettes. The men were smoking Toscani, Sellas, or Cavours, and the little boys were dancing round the table breathing smoke from their pert nostrils.

The dinner, in fact, was over. Other relatives of the guests arrived, and then we saw how some of the reserved dishes were to be bestowed. A side-table was spread at the end of the gallery, and these late-comers were regaled with plenty by their friends. Meanwhile, the big table at which we had dined was taken to pieces and removed. The *scagliola* floor was swept by the waiters. Musicians came streaming in and took their places. The ladies resumed their shoes. Every one prepared to dance.

My friend and I were now at liberty to chat with the men. He knew some of them by sight, and claimed acquaintance with others. There was plenty of talk about different boats, gondolas, and sandolos and topas, remarks upon the past season, and inquiries as to chances of engagements in the future. One young fellow told us how he had been drawn for the army, and should be obliged to give up his trade just when he had begun to make it answer. He had got a new gondola, and this would have to be hung up during the years of his service. The warehousing of a boat in these circumstances costs nearly one hundred francs a year, which is a serious tax upon the pockets of a private in the line. Many questions were put in turn to us, but all of the same tenor. 'Had we really enjoyed the *pranzo*? Now, really, were we amusing ourselves? And did we think the custom of the wedding *un bel costume*?' We could give an unequivocally hearty response to all these

interrogations. The men seemed pleased. Their interest in our enjoyment was unaffected. It is noticeable how often the word *divertimento* is heard upon the lips of the Italians. They have a notion that it is the function in life of the *Signori* to amuse themselves.

The ball opened, and now we were much besought by the ladies. I had to deny myself with a whole series of comical excuses. Eustace performed his duty after a stiff English fashion—once with his pretty partner of the *pranzo*, and once again with a fat gondolier. The band played waltzes and polkas, chiefly upon patriotic airs—the Marcia Reale, Garibaldi's Hymn, &c. Men danced with men, women with women, little boys and girls together. The gallery whirled with a laughing crowd. There was plenty of excitement and enjoyment—not an unseemly or extravagant word or gesture. My *comare* careered about with a light mænadic impetuosity, which made me regret my inability to accept her pressing invitations. She pursued me into every corner of the room, but when at last I dropped excuses and told her that my real reason for not dancing was that it would hurt my health, she waived her claims at once with an *Ah, poverino!*

Some time after midnight we felt that we had had enough of *divertimento*. Francesco helped us to slip out unobserved. With many silent good wishes we left the innocent playful people who had been so kind to us. The stars were shining from a watery sky as we passed into the piazza beneath the Campanile and the pinnacles of S. Mark. The Riva was almost empty, and the little waves fretted the boats moored to the piazzetta, as a warm moist breeze went fluttering by. We smoked a last cigar, crossed our *traghetto*, and were soon sound asleep at the end of a long pleasant day. The ball, we heard next morning, finished about four.

Since that evening I have had plenty of opportunities for seeing my friends the gondoliers, both in their own homes and in my apartment. Several have entertained me at their mid-day meal of fried fish and amber-coloured polenta. These repasts were always cooked with scrupulous cleanliness, and served upon a table covered with coarse linen. The polenta is turned out upon a wooden platter, and cut with a string called *lassa*. You take a large slice of it on the palm of the left hand, and break it with the fingers of the right. Wholesome red wine of the Paduan district and good white bread were never wanting. The rooms in which we met to eat looked out on narrow lanes or over pergolas of yellowing vines. Their whitewashed walls were hung with photographs of friends and foreigners, many of them souvenirs from English or American employers. The men, in broad black hats and lilac shirts, sat round the table, girt with the red waist-wrapper, or *fascia*, which marks the ancient faction of the Castellani. The other faction, called Nicolotti, are distinguished by a black *assisa*. The quarters of the town are divided unequally and irregularly into these two parties. What was once a formidable rivalry between two sections of the Venetian populace, still survives in challenges to trials of strength and skill upon the water. The women, in their many-coloured kerchiefs, stirred polenta at the smoke-blackened chimney, whose huge pent-house roof projects two feet or more across the hearth. When they had served the table they took their seat on low stools, knitted stockings, or drank out of glasses handed across the shoulder to them by their lords. Some of these women were clearly notable housewives, and I have no reason to suppose that they do not take their full share of the housework. Boys and girls came in and out, and got a portion of the dinner to consume where they thought best. Children went tottering about upon the red-brick floor, the playthings of those hulking fellows, who handled them very gently and spoke kindly in a sort of confidential whisper to their ears. These little ears were mostly pierced for earrings, and the light blue eyes of the urchins peeped maliciously beneath shocks of yellow hair. A dog was often of the party. He ate fish like his masters, and was made to beg for it by sitting up and rowing with his paws. *Voga, Azzò, voga!* The Anzolo who talked thus to his little brown Spitz-dog has the hoarse voice of a Triton and the movement of an animated sea-wave. Azzo performed his trick, swallowed his fish-bones, and the fiery Anzolo looked round approvingly.

On all these occasions I have found these gondoliers the same sympathetic, industrious, cheery affectionate folk. They live in many respects a hard and precarious life. The winter in particular is a time of anxiety, and sometimes of privation, even to the well-to-do among them. Work then is scarce, and what there is, is rendered disagreeable to them by the cold. Yet they take their chance with facile temper, and are not soured by hardships. The amenities of the Venetian sea and air, the healthiness of the lagoons, the cheerful bustle of the poorer quarters, the brilliancy of this Southern sunlight, and the beauty which is everywhere

apparent, must be reckoned as important factors in the formation of their character. And of that character, as I have said, the final note is playfulness. In spite of difficulties, their life has never been stern enough to sadden them. Bare necessities are marvellously cheap, and the pinch of real bad weather—such frost as locked the lagoons in ice two years ago, or such south-western gales as flooded the basement floors of all the houses on the Zattere—is rare and does not last long. On the other hand, their life has never been so lazy as to reduce them to the savagery of the traditional Neapolitan lazzaroni. They have had to work daily for small earnings, but under favourable conditions, and their labour has been lightened by much good-fellowship among themselves, by the amusements of their *feste* and their singing clubs.

Of course it is not easy for a stranger in a very different social position to feel that he has been admitted to their confidence. Italians have an ineradicable habit of making themselves externally agreeable, of bending in all indifferent matters to the whims and wishes of superiors, and of saying what they think *Signori* like. This habit, while it smoothes the surface of existence, raises up a barrier of compliment and partial insincerity, against which the more downright natures of us Northern folk break in vain efforts. Our advances are met with an imperceptible but impermeable resistance by the very people who are bent on making the world pleasant to us. It is the very reverse of that dour opposition which a Lowland Scot or a North English peasant offers to familiarity; but it is hardly less insurmountable. The treatment, again, which Venetians of the lower class have received through centuries from their own nobility, makes attempts at fraternisation on the part of gentlemen unintelligible to them. The best way, here and elsewhere, of overcoming these obstacles is to have some bond of work or interest in common—of service on the one side rendered, and goodwill on the other honestly displayed. The men of whom I have been speaking will, I am convinced, not shirk their share of duty or make unreasonable claims upon the generosity of their employers.

I.—THE SESTIERE DI SAN POLO

There is a quarter of Venice not much visited by tourists, lying as it does outside their beat, away from the Rialto, at a considerable distance from the Frari and San Rocco, in what might almost pass for a city separated by a hundred miles from the Piazza. This is the quarter of San Polo, one corner of which, somewhere between the back of the Palazzo Foscari and the Campo di San Polo, was the scene of a memorable act of vengeance in the year 1546. Here Lorenzino de' Medici, the murderer of his cousin Alessandro, was at last tracked down and put to death by paid cut-throats. How they succeeded in their purpose, we know in every detail from the narrative dictated by the chief assassin. His story so curiously illustrates the conditions of life in Italy three centuries ago, that I have thought it worthy of abridgment. But, in order to make it intelligible, and to paint the manners of the times more fully, I must first relate the series of events which led to Lorenzino's murder of his cousin Alessandro, and from that to his own subsequent assassination. Lorenzino de' Medici, the Florentine Brutus of the sixteenth century, is the hero of the tragedy. Some of his relatives, however, must first appear upon the scene before he enters with a patriot's knife concealed beneath a court-fool's bauble.

316

II.—THE MURDER OF IPPOLITO DE' MEDICI

After the final extinction of the Florentine Republic, the hopes of the Medici, who now aspired to the dukedom of Tuscany, rested on three bastards—Alessandro, the reputed child of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino; Ippolito, the natural son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours; and Giulio, the offspring of an elder Giuliano, who was at this time Pope, with the title of Clement VII. Clement had seen Rome sacked in 1527 by a horde of freebooters fighting under the Imperial standard, and had used the remnant of these troops, commanded by the Prince of Orange, to crush his native city in the memorable siege of 1529-30. He now determined to rule Florence from the Papal chair by the help of the two bastard cousins I have named. Alessandro was created Duke of Cività di Penna, and sent to take the first place in the city. Ippolito was made a cardinal; since the Medici had learned that Rome was the real basis of their power, and it was undoubtedly in Clement's policy to advance this scion of his house to the Papacy. The sole surviving representative of the great Lorenzo de' Medici's legitimate blood was Catherine, daughter of the Duke of Urbino by Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne. She was pledged in marriage to the Duke of Orleans, who was afterwards Henry II. of France. A natural daughter of the Emperor Charles V. was provided for her putative half-brother Alessandro. By means of these alliances the succession of Ippolito to the Papal chair would have been secured, and the strength of the Medici would have been confirmed in Tuscany, but for the disasters which have now to be related.

Between the cousins Alessandro and Ippolito there was no love lost. As boys, they had both played the part of princes in Florence under the guardianship of the Cardinal Passerini da Cortona. The higher rank had then been given to Ippolito, who bore the title of Magnifico, and seemed thus designated for the lordship of the city. Ippolito, though only half a Medici, was of more authentic lineage than Alessandro; for no proof positive could be adduced that the latter was even a spurious child of the Duke of Urbino. He bore obvious witness to his mother's blood upon his mulatto's face; but this mother was the wife of a groom, and it was certain that in the court of Urbino she had not been chary of her favours. The old magnificence of taste, the patronage of art and letters, and the preference for liberal studies which distinguished Casa Medici, survived in Ippolito; whereas Alessandro manifested only the brutal lusts of a debauched tyrant. It was therefore with great reluctance that, moved by reasons of state and domestic policy, Ippolito saw himself compelled to accept the scarlet hat. Alessandro having been recognised as a son of the Duke of Urbino, had become half-brother to the future Queen of France. To treat him as the head of the family was a necessity thrust, in the extremity of the Medicean fortunes, upon Clement. Ippolito, who more entirely represented the spirit of the house, was driven to assume the position of a cadet, with all the uncertainties of an ecclesiastical career.

317

In these circumstances Ippolito had not strength of character to sacrifice himself for the consolidation of the Medicean power, which could only have been effected by maintaining a close bond of union

between its members. The death of Clement in 1534 obscured his prospects in the Church. He was still too young to intrigue for the tiara. The new Pope, Alessandro Farnese, soon after his election, displayed a vigour which was unexpected from his age, together with a nepotism which his previous character had scarcely warranted. The Cardinal de' Medici felt himself excluded and oppressed. He joined the party of those numerous Florentine exiles, headed by Filippo Strozzi, and the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi, all of whom were connected by marriage with the legitimate Medici, and who unanimously hated and were jealous of the Duke of Cività di Penna. On the score of policy it is difficult to condemn this step. Alessandro's hold upon Florence was still precarious, nor had he yet married Margaret of Austria. Perhaps Ippolito was right in thinking he had less to gain from his cousin than from the anti-Medicean faction and the princes of the Church who favoured it. But he did not play his cards well. He quarrelled with the new Pope, Paul III., and by his vacillations led the Florentine exiles to suspect he might betray them.

318

In the summer of 1535 Ippolito was at Itri, a little town not far from Gaeta and Terracina, within easy reach of Fondi, where dwelt the beautiful Giulia Gonzaga. To this lady the Cardinal paid assiduous court, passing his time with her in the romantic scenery of that world-famous Capuan coast. On the 5th of August his seneschal, Giovann' Andrea, of Borgo San Sepolcro, brought him a bowl of chicken-broth, after drinking which he exclaimed to one of his attendants, 'I have been poisoned, and the man who did it is Giovann' Andrea.' The seneschal was taken and tortured, and confessed that he had mixed a poison with the broth. Four days afterwards the Cardinal died, and a post-mortem examination showed that the omentum had been eaten by some corrosive substance. Giovann' Andrea was sent in chains to Rome; but in spite of his confession, more than once repeated, the court released him. He immediately took refuge with Alessandro de' Medici in Florence, whence he repaired to Borgo San Sepolcro, and was, at the close of a few months, there murdered by the people of the place. From these circumstances it was conjectured, not without good reason, that Alessandro had procured his cousin's death; and a certain Captain Pignatta, of low birth in Florence, a bravo and a coward, was believed to have brought the poison to Itri from the Duke. The Medicean courtiers at Florence did not disguise their satisfaction; and one of them exclaimed, with reference to the event, 'We know how to brush flies from our noses!'

319

III.—THE MURDER OF ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI

Having removed his cousin and rival from the scene, Alessandro de' Medici plunged with even greater effrontery into the cruelties and debaucheries which made him odious in Florence. It seemed as though fortune meant to smile on him; for in this same year (1535) Charles V. decided at Naples in his favour against the Florentine exiles, who were pleading their own cause and that of the city injured by his tyrannies; and in February of the following year he married Margaret of Austria, the Emperor's natural daughter. Francesco Guicciardini, the first statesman and historian of his age, had undertaken his defence, and was ready to support him by advice and countenance in the conduct of his government. Within the lute of this prosperity, however, there was one little rift. For some months past he had closely attached to his person a certain kinsman, Lorenzo de' Medici, who was descended in the fourth generation from Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo Pater Patriæ. This Lorenzo, or Lorenzino, or Lorenzaccio, as his most intimate acquaintances called him, was destined to murder Alessandro; and it is worthy of notice that the Duke had received frequent warnings of his fate. A Perugian page, for instance, who suffered from some infirmity, saw in a dream that Lorenzino would kill his master. Astrologers predicted that the Duke must die by having his throat cut. One of them is said to have named Lorenzo de' Medici as the assassin; and another described him so accurately that there was no mistaking the man. Moreover, Madonna Lucrezia Salviati wrote to the Duke from Rome that he should beware of a certain person, indicating Lorenzino; and her daughter, Madonna Maria, told him to his face she hated the young man, 'because I know he means to murder you, and murder you he will.' Nor was this all. The Duke's favourite body-servants mistrusted Lorenzino. On one occasion, when Alessandro and Lorenzino, attended by a certain Giomo, were escalading a wall at night, as was their wont upon illicit love-adventures, Giomo whispered to his master: 'Ah, my lord, do let me cut the rope, and rid ourselves of him!' To which the Duke replied: 'No, I do not want this; but if he could, I know he'd twist it round my neck.'

320

In spite, then, of these warnings and the want of confidence he felt, the

Duke continually lived with Lorenzino, employing him as pander in his intrigues, and preferring his society to that of simpler men. When he rode abroad, he took this evil friend upon his crupper; although he knew for certain that Lorenzino had stolen a tight-fitting vest of mail he used to wear, and, while his arms were round his waist, was always meditating how to stick a poignard in his body. He trusted, so it seems, to his own great strength and to the other's physical weakness.

At this point, since Lorenzino is the principal actor in the two-act drama which follows, it will be well to introduce him to the reader in the words of Varchi, who was personally acquainted with him. Born at Florence in 1514, he was left early by his father's death to the sole care of his mother, Maria Soderini, 'a lady of rare prudence and goodness, who attended with the utmost pains and diligence to his education. No sooner, however, had he acquired the rudiments of humane learning, which, being of very quick parts, he imbibed with incredible facility, than he began to display a restless mind, insatiable and appetitive of vice. Soon afterwards, under the rule and discipline of Filippo Strozzi, he made open sport of all things human and divine; and preferring the society of low persons, who not only flattered him but were congenial to his tastes, he gave free rein to his desires, especially in affairs of love, without regard for sex or age or quality, and in his secret soul, while he lavished feigned caresses upon every one he saw, felt no esteem for any living being. He thirsted strangely for glory, and omitted no point of deed or word that might, he thought, procure him the reputation of a man of spirit or of wit. He was lean of person, somewhat slightly built, and on this account people called him Lorenzino. He never laughed, but had a sneering smile; and although he was rather distinguished by grace than beauty, his countenance being dark and melancholy, still in the flower of his age he was beloved beyond all measure by Pope Clement; in spite of which he had it in his mind (according to what he said himself after killing the Duke Alessandro) to have murdered him. He brought Francesco di Raffaello de' Medici, the Pope's rival, who was a young man of excellent attainments and the highest hope, to such extremity that he lost his wits, and became the sport of the whole court at Rome, and was sent back, as a lesser evil, as a confirmed madman to Florence.' Varchi proceeds to relate how Lorenzino fell into disfavour with the Pope and the Romans by chopping the heads off statues from the arch of Constantine and other monuments; for which act of vandalism Molsa impeached him in the Roman Academy, and a price was set upon his head. Having returned to Florence, he proceeded to court Duke Alessandro, into whose confidence he wormed himself, pretending to play the spy upon the exiles, and affecting a personal timidity which put the Prince off his guard. Alessandro called him 'the philosopher,' because he conversed in solitude with his own thoughts and seemed indifferent to wealth and office. But all this while Lorenzino was plotting how to murder him.

Giovio's account of this strange intimacy may be added, since it completes the picture I have drawn from Varchi:—'Lorenzo made himself the accomplice and instrument of those amorous amusements for which the Duke had an insatiable appetite, with the object of deceiving him. He was singularly well furnished with all the scoundrelly arts and trained devices of the pander's trade; composed fine verses to incite to lust; wrote and represented comedies in Italian; and pretended to take pleasure only in such tricks and studies. Therefore he never carried arms like other courtiers, and feigned to be afraid of blood, a man who sought tranquillity at any price. Besides, he bore a pallid countenance and melancholy brow, walking alone, talking very little and with few persons. He haunted solitary places apart from the city, and showed such plain signs of hypochondria that some began covertly to pass jokes on him. Certain others, who were more acute, suspected that he was harbouring and devising in his mind some terrible enterprise.' The Prologue to Lorenzino's own comedy of 'Aridosiso' brings the sardonic, sneering, ironical man vividly before us. He calls himself 'un certo omiciatto, che non è nessun di voi che veggendolo non l'avesse a noia, pensando che egli abbia fatto una commedia;' and begs the audience to damn his play to save him the tedium of writing another. Criticised by the light of his subsequent actions, this prologue may even be understood to contain a covert promise of the murder he was meditating.

'In this way,' writes Varchi, 'the Duke had taken such familiarity with Lorenzo, that, not content with making use of him as a ruffian in his dealings with women, whether religious or secular, maidens or wives or widows, noble or plebeian, young or elderly, as it might happen, he applied to him to procure for his pleasure a half-sister of Lorenzo's own mother, a young lady of marvellous beauty, but not less chaste than

beautiful, who was the wife of Lionardo Ginori, and lived not far from the back entrance to the palace of the Medici.' Lorenzino undertook this odious commission, seeing an opportunity to work his designs against the Duke. But first he had to form an accomplice, since he could not hope to carry out the murder without help. A bravo, called Michele del Tavolaccino, but better known by the nickname of Scoronconcolo, struck him as a fitting instrument. He had procured this man's pardon for a homicide, and it appears that the fellow retained a certain sense of gratitude. Lorenzino began by telling the man there was a courtier who put insults upon him, and Scoronconcolo professed his readiness to kill the knave. 'Sia chi si voglia; io l'ammazzerò, se fosse Cristo.' Up to the last minute the name of Alessandro was not mentioned. Having thus secured his assistant, Lorenzino chose a night when he knew that Alessandro Vitelli, captain of the Duke's guard, would be from home. Then, after supper, he whispered in Alessandro's ear that at last he had seduced his aunt with an offer of money, and that she would come to his, Lorenzo's chamber at the service of the Duke that night. Only the Duke must appear at the rendezvous alone, and when he had arrived, the lady should be fetched. 'Certain it is,' says Varchi, 'that the Duke, having donned a cloak of satin in the Neapolitan style, lined with sable, when he went to take his gloves, and there were some of mail and some of perfumed leather, hesitated awhile and said: "Which shall I choose, those of war, or those of love-making?"' He took the latter and went out with only four attendants, three of whom he dismissed upon the Piazza di San Marco, while one was stationed just opposite Lorenzo's house, with strict orders not to stir if he should see folk enter or issue thence. But this fellow, called the Hungarian, after waiting a great while, returned to the Duke's chamber, and there went to sleep.

324

Meanwhile Lorenzino received Alessandro in his bedroom, where there was a good fire. The Duke unbuckled his sword, which Lorenzino took, and having entangled the belt with the hilt, so that it should not readily be drawn, laid it on the pillow. The Duke had flung himself already on the bed, and hid himself among the curtains—doing this, it is supposed, to save himself from the trouble of paying compliments to the lady when she should arrive. For Caterina Ginori had the fame of a fair speaker, and Alessandro was aware of his own incapacity to play the part of a respectful lover. Nothing could more strongly point the man's brutality than this act, which contributed in no small measure to his ruin.

Lorenzino left the Duke upon the bed, and went at once for Scoronconcolo. He told him that the enemy was caught, and bade him only mind the work he had to do. 'That will I do,' the bravo answered, 'even though it were the Duke himself.' 'You've hit the mark,' said Lorenzino with a face of joy; 'he cannot slip through our fingers. Come!' So they mounted to the bedroom, and Lorenzino, knowing where the Duke was laid, cried: 'Sir, are you asleep?' and therewith ran him through the back. Alessandro was sleeping, or pretending to sleep, face downwards, and the sword passed through his kidneys and diaphragm. But it did not kill him. He slipped from the bed, and seized a stool to parry the next blow. Scoronconcolo now stabbed him in the face, while Lorenzino forced him back upon the bed; and then began a hideous struggle. In order to prevent his cries, Lorenzino doubled his fist into the Duke's mouth. Alessandro seized the thumb between his teeth, and held it in a vice until he died. This disabled Lorenzino, who still lay upon his victim's body, and Scoronconcolo could not strike for fear of wounding his master. Between the writhing couple he made, however, several passes with his sword, which only pierced the mattress. Then he drew a knife and drove it into the Duke's throat, and bored about till he had severed veins and windpipe.

325

IV.—THE FLIGHT OF LORENZINO DE' MEDICI

Alessandro was dead. His body fell to earth. The two murderers, drenched with blood, lifted it up, and placed it on the bed, wrapped in the curtains, as they had found him first. Then Lorenzino went to the window, which looked out upon the Via Larga, and opened it to rest and breathe a little air. After this he called for Scoronconcolo's boy, Il Freccia, and bade him look upon the dead man. Il Freccia recognised the Duke. But why Lorenzino did this, no one knew. It seemed, as Varchi says, that, having planned the murder with great ability, and executed it with daring, his good sense and good luck forsook him. He made no use of the crime he had committed; and from that day forward till his own assassination, nothing prospered with him. Indeed, the murder of Alessandro appears to have been almost motiveless, considered from the point of view of practical politics. Varchi assumes that Lorenzino's

burning desire of glory prompted the deed; and when he had acquired the notoriety he sought, there was an end to his ambition. This view is confirmed by the Apology he wrote and published for his act. It remains one of the most pregnant, bold, and brilliant pieces of writing which we possess in favour of tyrannicide from that epoch of insolent crime and audacious rhetoric. So energetic is the style, and so biting the invective of this masterpiece, in which the author stabs a second time his victim, that both Giordani and Leopardi affirmed it to be the only true monument of eloquence in the Italian language. If thirst for glory was Lorenzino's principal incentive, immediate glory was his guerdon. He escaped that same night with Scoronconcolo and Freccia to Bologna, where he stayed to dress his thumb, and then passed forward to Venice. Filippo Strozzi there welcomed him as the new Brutus, gave him money, and promised to marry his two sons to the two sisters of the tyrant-killer. Poems were written and published by the most famous men of letters, including Benedetto Varchi and Francesco Maria Molsa, in praise of the Tuscan Brutus, the liberator of his country from a tyrant. A bronze medal was struck bearing his name, with a profile copied from Michelangelo's bust of Brutus. On the obverse are two daggers and a cup, and the date viii. id. Jan.

The immediate consequence of Alessandro's murder was the elevation of Cosimo, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and second cousin of Lorenzino, to the duchy. At the ceremony of his investiture with the ducal honours, Cosimo solemnly undertook to revenge Alessandro's murder. In the following March he buried his predecessor with pomp in San Lorenzo. The body was placed beside the bones of the Duke of Urbino in the marble chest of Michelangelo, and here not many years ago it was discovered. Soon afterwards Lorenzino was declared a rebel. His portrait was painted according to old Tuscan precedent, head downwards, and suspended by one foot, upon the wall of the fort built by Alessandro. His house was cut in twain from roof to pavement, and a narrow lane was driven through it, which received the title of Traitor's Alley, *Chiasso del Traditore*. The price of four thousand golden florins was put upon his head, together with the further sum of one hundred florins per annum in perpetuity to be paid to the murderer and his direct heirs in succession, by the Otto di Balìa. Moreover, the man who killed Lorenzino was to enjoy all civic privileges; exemption from all taxes, ordinary and extraordinary; the right of carrying arms, together with two attendants, in the city and the whole domain of Florence; and the further prerogative of restoring ten outlaws at his choice. If Lorenzino could be captured and brought alive to Florence, the whole of this reward would be doubled.

This decree was promulgated in April 1537, and thenceforward Lorenzino de' Medici lived a doomed man. The assassin, who had been proclaimed a Brutus by Tuscan exiles and humanistic enthusiasts, was regarded as a Judas by the common people. Ballads were written on him with the title of the 'Piteous and sore lament made unto himself by Lorenzino de' Medici, who murdered the most illustrious Duke Alessandro.' He had become a wild beast, whom it was honourable to hunt down, a pest which it was righteous to extirpate. Yet fate delayed nine years to overtake him. What remains to be told about his story must be extracted from the narrative of the bravo who succeeded, with the aid of an accomplice, in despatching him at Venice.^[13] So far as possible, I shall use the man's own words, translating them literally, and omitting only unimportant details. The narrative throws brilliant light upon the manners and movements of professional cut-throats at that period in Italy. It seems to have been taken down from the hero Francesco, or Cecco, Bibboni's lips; and there is no doubt that we possess in it a valuable historical document for the illustration of contemporary customs. It offers in all points a curious parallel to Cellini's account of his own homicides and hair-breadth escapes. Moreover, it is confirmed in its minutest circumstances by the records of the criminal courts of Venice in the sixteenth century. This I can attest from recent examination of MSS. relating to the *Signori di Notte* and the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia*, which are preserved among the Archives at the Frari.

[13] Those who are interested in such matters may profitably compare this description of a planned murder in the sixteenth century with the account written by Ambrogio Tremazzi of the way in which he tracked and slew Troilo Orsini in Paris in the year 1577. It is given by Gnoli in his *Vittoria Accoramboni*, pp. 404-414.

'When I returned from Germany,' begins Bibboni, 'where I had been in the pay of the Emperor, I found at Vicenza Bebo da Volterra, who was staying in the house of M. Antonio da Roma, a nobleman of that city. This gentleman employed him because of a great feud he had; and he was mighty pleased, moreover, at my coming, and desired that I too should take up my quarters in his palace.'

This paragraph strikes the keynote of the whole narrative, and introduces us to the company we are about to keep. The noblemen of that epoch, if they had private enemies, took into their service soldiers of adventure, partly to protect their persons, but also to make war, when occasion offered, on their foes. The *bravi*, as they were styled, had quarters assigned them in the basement of the palace, where they might be seen swaggering about the door or flaunting their gay clothes behind the massive iron bars of the windows which opened on the streets. When their master went abroad at night they followed him, and were always at hand to perform secret services in love affairs, assassination, and espial. For the rest, they haunted taverns, and kept up correspondence with prostitutes. An Italian city had a whole population of such fellows, the offcourings of armies, drawn from all nations, divided by their allegiance of the time being into hostile camps, but united by community of interest and occupation, and ready to combine against the upper class, upon whose vices, enmities, and cowardice they thrived.

329

Bibboni proceeds to say how another gentleman of Vicenza, M. Francesco Manente, had at this time a feud with certain of the Guazzi and the Laschi, which had lasted several years, and cost the lives of many members of both parties and their following. M. Francesco being a friend of M. Antonio, besought that gentleman to lend him Bibboni and Bebo for a season; and the two *bravi* went together with their new master to Celsano, a village in the neighbourhood. 'There both parties had estates, and all of them kept armed men in their houses, so that not a day passed without feats of arms, and always there was some one killed or wounded. One day, soon afterwards, the leaders of our party resolved to attack the foe in their house, where we killed two, and the rest, numbering five men, entrenched themselves in a ground-floor apartment; whereupon we took possession of their harquebuses and other arms, which forced them to abandon the villa and retire to Vicenza; and within a short space of time this great feud was terminated by an ample peace.' After this Bebo took service with the Rector of the University in Padua, and was transferred by his new patron to Milan. Bibboni remained at Vicenza with M. Galeazzo della Seta, who stood in great fear of his life, notwithstanding the peace which had been concluded between the two factions. At the end of ten months he returned to M. Antonio da Roma and his six brothers, 'all of whom being very much attached to me, they proposed that I should live my life with them, for good or ill, and be treated as one of the family; upon the understanding that if war broke out and I wanted to take part in it, I should always have twenty-five crowns and arms and horse, with welcome home, so long as I lived; and in case I did not care to join the troops, the same provision for my maintenance.'

330

From these details we comprehend the sort of calling which a bravo of Bibboni's species followed. Meanwhile Bebo was at Milan. 'There it happened that M. Francesco Vinta, of Volterra, was on embassy from the Duke of Florence. He saw Bebo, and asked him what he was doing in Milan, and Bebo answered that he was a knight errant.' This phrase, derived no doubt from the romantic epics then in vogue, was a pretty euphemism for a rogue of Bebo's quality. The ambassador now began cautiously to sound his man, who seems to have been outlawed from the Tuscan duchy, telling him he knew a way by which he might return with favour to his home, and at last disclosing the affair of Lorenzo. Bebo was puzzled at first, but when he understood the matter, he professed his willingness, took letters from the envoy to the Duke of Florence, and, in a private audience with Cosimo, informed him that he was ready to attempt Lorenzino's assassination. He added that 'he had a comrade fit for such a job, whose fellow for the business could not easily be found.'

Bebo now travelled to Vicenza, and opened the whole matter to Bibboni, who weighed it well, and at last, being convinced that the Duke's commission to his comrade was *bona fide*, determined to take his share in the undertaking. The two agreed to have no accomplices. They went to Venice, and 'I,' says Bibboni, 'being most intimately acquainted with all that city, and provided there with many friends, soon quietly contrived to know where Lorenzino lodged, and took a room in the neighbourhood, and spent some days in seeing how we best might rule our conduct.' Bibboni soon discovered that Lorenzino never left his palace; and he therefore remained in much perplexity, until, by good

luck, Ruberto Strozzi arrived from France in Venice, bringing in his train a Navarrese servant, who had the nickname of Spagnoletto. This fellow was a great friend of the bravo. They met, and Bibboni told him that he should like to go and kiss the hands of Messer Ruberto, whom he had known in Rome. Strozzi inhabited the same palace as Lorenzino. 'When we arrived there, both Messer Ruberto and Lorenzo were leaving the house, and there were around them so many gentlemen and other persons, that I could not present myself, and both straightway stepped into the gondola. Then I, not having seen Lorenzo for a long while past, and because he was very quietly attired, could not recognise the man exactly, but only as it were between certainty and doubt. Wherefore I said to Spagnoletto, "I think I know that gentleman, but don't remember where I saw him." And Messer Ruberto was giving him his right hand. Then Spagnoletto answered, "You know him well enough; he is Messer Lorenzo. But see you tell this to nobody. He goes by the name of Messer Dario, because he lives in great fear for his safety, and people don't know that he is now in Venice." I answered that I marvelled much, and if I could have helped him, would have done so willingly. Then I asked where they were going, and he said, to dine with Messer Giovanni della Casa, who was the Pope's Legate. I did not leave the man till I had drawn from him all I required.'

Thus spoke the Italian Judas. The appearance of La Casa on the scene is interesting. He was the celebrated author of the scandalous 'Capitolo del Forno,' the author of many sublime and melancholy sonnets, who was now at Venice, prosecuting a charge of heresy against Pier Paolo Vergerio, and paying his addresses to a noble lady of the Quirini family. It seems that on the territory of San Marco he made common cause with the exiles from Florence, for he was himself by birth a Florentine, and he had no objection to take Brutus-Lorenzino by the hand.

332

After the noblemen had rowed off in their gondola to dine with the Legate, Bibboni and his friend entered their palace, where he found another old acquaintance, the house-steward, or *spenditore* of Lorenzo. From him he gathered much useful information. Pietro Strozzi, it seems, had allowed the tyrannicide one thousand five hundred crowns a year, with the keep of three brave and daring companions (*tre compagni bravi e facinorosi*), and a palace worth fifty crowns on lease. But Lorenzo had just taken another on the Campo di San Polo at three hundred crowns a year, for which swagger (*altura*) Pietro Strozzi had struck a thousand crowns off his allowance. Bibboni also learned that he was keeping house with his uncle, Alessandro Soderini, another Florentine outlaw, and that he was ardently in love with a certain beautiful Barozza. This woman was apparently one of the grand courtesans of Venice. He further ascertained the date when he was going to move into the palace at San Polo, and, 'to put it briefly, knew everything he did, and, as it were, how many times a day he spit.' Such were the intelligences of the servants' hall, and of such value were they to men of Bibboni's calling.

In the Carnival of 1546 Lorenzo meant to go masqued in the habit of a gipsy woman to the square of San Spirito, where there was to be a joust. Great crowds of people would assemble, and Bibboni hoped to do his business there. The assassination, however, failed on this occasion, and Lorenzo took up his abode in the palace he had hired upon the Campo di San Polo. This Campo is one of the largest open places in Venice, shaped irregularly, with a finely curving line upon the western side, where two of the noblest private houses in the city are still standing. Nearly opposite these, in the south-western angle, stands, detached, the little old church of San Polo. One of its side entrances opens upon the square; the other on a lane, which leads eventually to the Frari. There is nothing in Bibboni's narrative to make it clear where Lorenzo hired his dwelling. But it would seem from certain things which he says later on, that in order to enter the church his victim had to cross the square. Meanwhile Bibboni took the precaution of making friends with a shoemaker, whose shop commanded the whole Campo, including Lorenzo's palace. In this shop he began to spend much of his time; 'and oftentimes I feigned to be asleep; but God knows whether I was sleeping, for my mind, at any rate, was wide-awake.'

333

A second convenient occasion for murdering Lorenzo soon seemed to offer. He was bidden to dine with Monsignor della Casa; and Bibboni, putting a bold face on, entered the Legate's palace, having left Bebo below in the loggia, fully resolved to do the business. 'But we found,' he says, 'that, they had gone to dine at Murano, so that we remained with our tabors in their bag.' The island of Murano at that period was a favourite resort of the Venetian nobles, especially of the more literary and artistic, who kept country-houses there, where they enjoyed the fresh air of the lagoons and the quiet of their gardens.

The third occasion, after all these weeks of watching, brought success to Bibboni's schemes. He had observed how Lorenzo occasionally so far broke his rules of caution as to go on foot, past the church of San Polo, to visit the beautiful Barozza; and he resolved, if possible, to catch him on one of these journeys. 'It so chanced on the 28th of February, which was the second Sunday of Lent, that having gone, as was my wont, to pry out whether Lorenzo would give orders for going abroad that day, I entered the shoemaker's shop, and stayed awhile, until Lorenzo came to the window with a napkin round his neck for he was combing his hair—and at the same moment I saw a certain Giovan Battista Martelli, who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person, enter and come forth again. Concluding that they would probably go abroad, I went home to get ready and procure the necessary weapons, and there I found Bebo asleep in bed, and made him get up at once, and we came to our accustomed post of observation, by the church of San Polo, where our men would have to pass.' Bibboni now retired to his friend the shoemaker's, and Bebo took up his station at one of the side-doors of San Polo; 'and, as good luck would have it, Giovan Battista Martelli came forth, and walked a piece in front, and then Lorenzo came, and then Alessandro Soderini, going the one behind the other, like storks, and Lorenzo, on entering the church, and lifting up the curtain of the door, was seen from the opposite door by Bebo, who at the same time noticed how I had left the shop, and so we met upon the street as we had agreed, and he told me that Lorenzo was inside the church.'

To any one who knows the Campo di San Polo, it will be apparent that Lorenzo had crossed from the western side of the piazza and entered the church by what is technically called its northern door. Bebo, stationed at the southern door, could see him when he pushed the heavy *stoia* or leather curtain aside, and at the same time could observe Bibboni's movements in the cobbler's shop. Meanwhile Lorenzo walked across the church and came to the same door where Bebo had been standing. 'I saw him issue from the church and take the main street; then came Alessandro Soderini, and I walked last of all; and when we reached the point we had determined on, I jumped in front of Alessandro with the poignard in my hand, crying, "Hold hard, Alessandro, and get along with you in God's name, for we are not here for you!" He then threw himself around my waist, and grasped my arms, and kept on calling out. Seeing how wrong I had been to try to spare his life, I wrenched myself as well as I could from his grip, and with my lifted poignard struck him, as God willed, above the eyebrow, and a little blood trickled from the wound. He, in high fury, gave me such a thrust that I fell backward, and the ground besides was slippery from having rained a little. Then Alessandro drew his sword, which he carried in its scabbard, and thrust at me in front, and struck me on the corslet, which for my good fortune was of double mail. Before I could get ready I received three passes, which, had I worn a doublet instead of that mailed corslet, would certainly have run me through. At the fourth pass I had regained my strength and spirit, and closed with him, and stabbed him four times in the head, and being so close he could not use his sword, but tried to parry with his hand and hilt, and I, as God willed, struck him at the wrist below the sleeve of mail, and cut his hand off clean, and gave him then one last stroke on his head. Thereupon he begged for God's sake spare his life, and I, in trouble about Bebo, left him in the arms of a Venetian nobleman, who held him back from jumping into the canal.'

Who this Venetian nobleman, found unexpectedly upon the scene, was, does not appear. Nor, what is still more curious, do we hear anything of that Martelli, the bravo, 'who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person.' The one had arrived accidentally, it seems. The other must have been a coward and escaped from the scuffle.

'When I turned,' proceeds Bibboni, 'I found Lorenzo on his knees. He raised himself, and I, in anger, gave him a great cut across the head, which split it in two pieces, and laid him at my feet, and he never rose again.'

VI.—THE ESCAPE OF THE BRAVI

Bebo, meanwhile, had made off from the scene of action. And Bibboni, taking to his heels, came up with him in the little square of San Marcello. They now ran for their lives till they reached the *traghetto* di San Spirito, where they threw their poignards into the water, remembering that no man might carry these in Venice under penalty of the galleys. Bibboni's white hose were drenched with blood. He therefore agreed to separate from Bebo, having named a rendezvous. Left alone, his ill luck brought him face to face with twenty constables (*sbirri*). 'In a moment I conceived

that they knew everything, and were come to capture me, and of a truth I saw that it was over with me. As swiftly as I could I quickened pace and got into a church, near to which was the house of a Compagnia, and the one opened into the other, and knelt down and prayed, commending myself with fervour to God for my deliverance and safety. Yet while I prayed, I kept my eyes well open and saw the whole band pass the church, except one man who entered, and I strained my sight so that I seemed to see behind as well as in front, and then it was I longed for my poignard, for I should not have heeded being in a church.' But the constable, it soon appeared, was not looking for Bibboni. So he gathered up his courage, and ran for the Church of San Spirito, where the Padre Andrea Volterrano was preaching to a great congregation. He hoped to go in by one door and out by the other, but the crowd prevented him, and he had to turn back and face the *sbirri*. One of them followed him, having probably caught sight of the blood upon his hose. Then Bibboni resolved to have done with the fellow, and rushed at him, and flung him down with his head upon the pavement, and ran like mad and came at last, all out of breath, to San Marco.

It seems clear that before Bibboni separated from Bebo they had crossed the water, for the Sestiere di San Polo is separated from the Sestiere di San Marco by the Grand Canal. And this they must have done at the traghetto di San Spirito. Neither the church nor the traghetto are now in existence, and this part of the story is therefore obscure.^[14] Having reached San Marco, he took a gondola at the Ponte della Paglia, where tourists are now wont to stand and contemplate the Ducal Palace and the Bridge of Sighs. First, he sought the house of a woman of the town who was his friend; then changed purpose, and rowed to the palace of the Count Salici da Collalto. 'He was a great friend and intimate of ours, because Bebo and I had done him many and great services in times passed. There I knocked; and Bebo opened the door, and when he saw me dabbled with blood, he marvelled that I had not come to grief and fallen into the hands of justice, and, indeed, had feared as much because I had remained so long away.' It appears, therefore, that the Palazzo Collalto was their rendezvous. 'The Count was from home; but being known to all his people, I played the master and went into the kitchen to the fire, and with soap and water turned my hose, which had been white, to a grey colour.' This is a very delicate way of saying that he washed out the blood of Alessandro and Lorenzo!

[14] So far as I can discover, the only church of San Spirito in Venice was a building on the island of San Spirito, erected by Sansavino, which belonged to the Sestiere di S. Croce, and which was suppressed in 1656. Its plate and the fine pictures which Titian painted there were transferred at that date to S.M. della Salute. I cannot help inferring that either Bibboni's memory failed him, or that his words were wrongly understood by printer or amanuensis. If for S. Spirito we substitute S. Stefano, the account would be intelligible.

Soon after the Count returned, and 'lavished caresses' upon Bebo and his precious comrade. They did not tell him what they had achieved that morning, but put him off with a story of having settled a *sbirro* in a quarrel about a girl. Then the Count invited them to dinner; and being himself bound to entertain the first physician of Venice, requested them to take it in an upper chamber. He and his secretary served them with their own hands at table. When the physician arrived, the Count went downstairs; and at this moment a messenger came from Lorenzo's mother, begging the doctor to go at once to San Polo, for that her son had been murdered and Soderini wounded to the death. It was now no longer possible to conceal their doings from the Count, who told them to pluck up courage and abide in patience. He had himself to dine and take his siesta, and then to attend a meeting of the Council.

About the hour of vespers, Bibboni determined to seek better refuge. Followed at a discreet distance by Bebo, he first called at their lodgings and ordered supper. Two priests came in and fell into conversation with them. But something in the behaviour of one of these good men roused his suspicions. So they left the house, took a gondola, and told the man to row hard to S. Maria Zobenigo. On the way he bade him put them on shore, paid him well, and ordered him to wait for them. They landed near the palace of the Spanish embassy; and here Bibboni meant to seek sanctuary. For it must be remembered that the houses of ambassadors, no less than of princes of the Church, were inviolable. They offered the most convenient harbouring-places to rascals. Charles V., moreover, was deeply interested in the vengeance taken on Alessandro de' Medici's murderer, for his own natural daughter was Alessandro's widow and Duchess of Florence. In the palace they were met with much courtesy by

about forty Spaniards, who showed considerable curiosity, and told them that Lorenzo and Alessandro Soderini had been murdered that morning by two men whose description answered to their appearance. Bibboni put their questions by and asked to see the ambassador. He was not at home. In that case, said Bibboni, take us to the secretary. Attended by some thirty Spaniards, 'with great joy and gladness,' they were shown into the secretary's chamber. He sent the rest of the folk away, 'and locked the door well, and then embraced and kissed us before we had said a word, and afterwards bade us talk freely without any fear.' When Bibboni had told the whole story, he was again embraced and kissed by the secretary, who thereupon left them and went to the private apartment of the ambassador. Shortly after he returned and led them by a winding staircase into the presence of his master. The ambassador greeted them with great honour, told them he would strain all the power of the empire to hand them in safety over to Duke Cosimo, and that he had already sent a courier to the Emperor with the good news.

So they remained in hiding in the Spanish embassy; and in ten days' time commands were received from Charles himself that everything should be done to convey them safely to Florence. The difficulty was how to smuggle them out of Venice, where the police of the Republic were on watch, and Florentine outlaws were mounting guard on sea and shore to catch them. The ambassador began by spreading reports on the Rialto every morning of their having been seen at Padua, at Verona, in Friuli. He then hired a palace at Malghera, near Mestre, and went out daily with fifty Spaniards, and took carriage or amused himself with horse exercise and shooting. The Florentines, who were on watch, could only discover from his people that he did this for amusement. When he thought that he had put them sufficiently off their guard, the ambassador one day took Bibboni and Bebo out by Canaregio and Mestre to Malghera, concealed in his own gondola, with the whole train of Spaniards in attendance. And though, on landing, the Florentines challenged them, they durst not interfere with an ambassador or come to battle with his men. So Bebo and Bibboni were hustled into a coach, and afterwards provided with two comrades and four horses. They rode for ninety miles without stopping to sleep, and on the day following this long journey reached Trento, having probably threaded the mountain valleys above Bassano, for Bibboni speaks of a certain village where the people talked half German. The Imperial Ambassador at Trento forwarded them next day to Mantua; from Mantua they came to Piacenza; thence, passing through the valley of the Taro, crossing the Apennines at Cisa, descending on Pontremoli, and reaching Pisa at night, the fourteenth day after their escape from Venice.

When they arrived at Pisa, Duke Cosimo was supping. So they went to an inn, and next morning presented themselves to his Grace. Cosimo received them kindly, assured them of his gratitude, confirmed them in the enjoyment of their rewards and privileges, and swore that they might rest secure of his protection in all parts of his dominion. We may imagine how the men caroused together after this reception. As Bibboni adds, 'We were now able for the whole time of life left us to live splendidly, without a thought or care.' The last words of his narrative are these: 'Bebo from Pisa, at what date I know not, went home to Volterra, his native town, and there finished his days; while I abode in Florence, where I have had no further wish to hear of wars, but to live my life in holy peace.'

So ends the story of the two *bravi*. We have reason to believe, from some contemporary documents which Cantù has brought to light, that Bibboni exaggerated his own part in the affair. Luca Martelli, writing to Varchi, says that it was Bebo who clove Lorenzo's skull with a cutlass. He adds this curious detail, that the weapons of both men were poisoned, and that the wound inflicted by Bibboni on Soderini's hand was a slight one. Yet, the poignard being poisoned, Soderini died of it. In other respects Martelli's brief account agrees with that given by Bibboni, who probably did no more, his comrade being dead, than claim for himself, at some expense of truth, the lion's share of their heroic action.

VII.—LORENZINO BRUTUS

It remains to ask ourselves, What opinion can be justly formed of Lorenzino's character and motives? When he murdered his cousin, was he really actuated by the patriotic desire to rid his country of a monster? Did he imitate the Roman Brutus in the noble spirit of his predecessors, Olgiati and Boscoli, martyrs to the creed of tyrannicide? Or must this crowning action of a fretful life be explained, like his previous mutilation of the statues on the Arch of Constantine, by a wild thirst for notoriety?

Did he hope that the exiles would return to Florence, and that he would enjoy an honourable life, an immortality of glorious renown? Did envy for his cousin's greatness and resentment of his undisguised contempt—the passions of one who had been used for vile ends—conscious of self-degradation and the loss of honour, yet mindful of his intellectual superiority—did these emotions take fire in him and mingle with a scholar's reminiscences of antique heroism, prompting him to plan a deed which should at least assume the show of patriotic zeal, and prove indubitable courage in its perpetrator? Did he, again, perhaps imagine, being next in blood to Alessandro and direct heir to the ducal crown by the Imperial Settlement of 1530, that the city would elect her liberator for her ruler?

Alfieri and Niccolini, having taken, as it were, a brief in favour of tyrannicide, praised Lorenzino as a hero. De Musset, who wrote a considerable drama on his story, painted him as a *roué* corrupted by society, enfeebled by circumstance, soured by commerce with an uncongenial world, who hides at the bottom of his mixed nature enough of real nobility to make him the leader of a forlorn hope for the liberties of Florence. This is the most favourable construction we can put upon Lorenzo's conduct. Yet some facts of the case warn us to suspend our judgment. He seems to have formed no plan for the liberation of his fellow-citizens. He gave no pledge of self-devotion by avowing his deed and abiding by its issues. He showed none of the qualities of a leader, whether in the cause of freedom or of his own dynastic interests, after the murder. He escaped as soon as he was able, as secretly as he could manage, leaving the city in confusion, and exposing himself to the obvious charge of abominable treason. So far as the Florentines knew, his assassination of their Duke was but a piece of private spite, executed with infernal craft. It is true that when he seized the pen in exile, he did his best to claim the guerdon of a patriot, and to throw the blame of failure on the Florentines. In his Apology, and in a letter written to Francesco de' Medici, he taunts them with lacking the spirit to extinguish tyranny when he had slain the tyrant. He summons plausible excuses to his aid—the impossibility of taking persons of importance into his confidence, the loss of blood he suffered from his wound, the uselessness of rousing citizens whom events proved over-indolent for action. He declares that he has nothing to regret. Having proved by deeds his will to serve his country, he has saved his life in order to spend it for her when occasion offered. But these arguments, invented after the catastrophe, these words, so bravely penned when action ought to have confirmed his resolution, do not meet the case. It was no deed of a true hero to assassinate a despot, knowing or half knowing that the despot's subjects would immediately elect another. Their languor could not, except rhetorically, be advanced in defence of his own flight.

The historian is driven to seek both the explanation and palliation of Lorenzo's failure in the temper of his times. There was enough daring left in Florence to carry through a plan of brilliant treason, modelled on an antique Roman tragedy. But there was not moral force in the protagonist to render that act salutary, not public energy sufficient in his fellow-citizens to accomplish his drama of deliverance. Lorenzo was corrupt. Florence was flaccid. Evil manners had emasculated the hero. In the state the last spark of independence had expired with Ferrucci.

Still I have not without forethought dubbed this man a Cinque Cento Brutus. Like much of the art and literature of his century, his action may be regarded as a *bizarre* imitation of the antique manner. Without the force and purpose of a Roman, Lorenzo set himself to copy Plutarch's men—just as sculptors carved Neptunes and Apollos without the dignity and serenity of the classic style. The antique faith was wanting to both murderer and craftsman in those days. Even as Renaissance work in art is too often aimless, decorative, vacant of intention, so Lorenzino's Brutus tragedy seems but the snapping of a pistol in void air. He had the audacity but not the ethical consistency of his crime. He played the part of Brutus like a Roscius, perfect in its histrionic details. And it doubtless gave to this skilful actor a supreme satisfaction—salving over many wounds of vanity, quenching the poignant thirst for things impossible and draughts of fame—that he could play it on no mimic stage, but on the theatre of Europe. The weakness of his conduct was the central weakness of his age and country. Italy herself lacked moral purpose, sense of righteous necessity, that consecration of self to a noble cause, which could alone have justified Lorenzo's perfidy. Confused memories of Judith, Jael, Brutus, and other classical tyrannicides, exalted his imagination. Longing for violent emotions, jaded with pleasure which had palled, discontented with his wasted life, jealous of his brutal cousin, appetitive to the last of glory, he conceived his scheme. Having

conceived, he executed it with that which never failed in Cinque Cento Italy—the artistic spirit of perfection. When it was over, he shrugged his shoulders, wrote his magnificent Apology with a style of adamant upon a plate of steel, and left it for the outlaws of Filippo Strozzi's faction to deal with the crisis he had brought about. For some years he dragged out an ignoble life in obscurity, and died at last, as Varchi puts it, more by his own carelessness than by the watchful animosity of others. Over the wild, turbid, clever, incomprehensible, inconstant hero-artist's grave we write our *Requiescat*. Clio, as she takes the pen in hand to record this prayer, smiles disdainfully and turns to graver business.

There are few contrasts more striking than that which is presented by the memoirs of Goldoni and Alfieri. Both of these men bore names highly distinguished in the history of Italian literature. Both of them were framed by nature with strongly marked characters, and fitted to perform a special work in the world. Both have left behind them records of their lives and literary labours, singularly illustrative of their peculiar differences. There is no instance in which we see more clearly the philosophical value of autobiographies, than in these vivid pictures which the great Italian tragedian and comic author have delineated. Some of the most interesting works of Lionardo da Vinci, Giorgione, Albert Dürer, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Andrea del Sarto, are their portraits painted by themselves. These pictures exhibit not only the lineaments of the masters, but also their art. The hand which drew them was the hand which drew the 'Last Supper,' or the 'Madonna of the Tribune:' colour, method, chiaroscuro, all that makes up manner in painting, may be studied on the same canvas as that which faithfully represents the features of the man whose genius gave his style its special character. We seem to understand the clear calm majesty of Lionardo's manner, the silver-grey harmonies and smooth facility of Andrea's Madonnas, the better for looking at their faces drawn by their own hands at Florence. And if this be the case with a dumb picture, how far higher must be the interest and importance of the written life of a known author! Not only do we recognise in its composition the style and temper and habits of thought which are familiar to us in his other writings; but we also hear from his own lips how these were formed, how his tastes took their peculiar direction, what circumstances acted on his character, what hopes he had, and where he failed. Even should his autobiography not bear the marks of uniform candour, it probably reveals more of the actual truth, more of the man's real nature in its height and depth, than any memoir written by friend or foe. Its unconscious admissions, its general spirit, and the inferences which we draw from its perusal, are far more valuable than any mere statement of facts or external analysis, however scientific. When we become acquainted with the series of events which led to the conception or attended the production of some masterpiece of literature, a new light is thrown upon its beauties, fresh life bursts forth from every chapter, and we seem to have a nearer and more personal interest in its success. What a powerful sensation, for instance, is that which we experience when, after studying the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' Gibbon tells us how the thought of writing it came to him upon the Capitol, among the ruins of dead Rome, and within hearing of the mutter of the monks of Ara Coeli, and how he finished it one night by Lake Geneva, and laid his pen down and walked forth and saw the stars above his terrace at Lausanne!

346

The memoirs of Alfieri and Goldoni are not deficient in any of the characteristics of good autobiography. They seem to bear upon their face the stamp of truthfulness, they illustrate their authors' lives with marvellous lucidity, and they are full of interest as stories. But it is to the contrast which they present that our attention should be chiefly drawn. Other biographies may be as interesting and amusing. None show in a more marked manner two distinct natures endowed with genius for one art, and yet designed in every possible particular for different branches of that art. Alfieri embodies Tragedy; Goldoni is the spirit of Comedy. They are both Italians: their tragedies and comedies are by no means cosmopolitan; but this national identity of character only renders more remarkable the individual divergences by which they were impelled into their different paths. Thalia seems to have made the one, body, soul, and spirit; and Melpomene the other; each goddess launched her favourite into circumstances suited to the evolution of his genius, and presided over his development, so that at his death she might exclaim,—Behold the living model of my Art!

347

Goldoni was born at Venice in the year 1707; he had already reached celebrity when Alfieri saw the light for the first time, in 1749, at Asti. Goldoni's grandfather was a native of Modena, who had settled in Venice, and there lived with the prodigality of a rich and ostentatious 'bourgeois.' 'Amid riot and luxury did I enter the world,' says the poet, after enumerating the banquets and theatrical displays with which the old Goldoni entertained his guests in his Venetian palace and country-house. Venice at that date was certainly the proper birthplace for a comic poet. The splendour of the Renaissance had thoroughly habituated her nobles to pleasures of the sense, and had enervated their proud, maritime character, while the great name of the republic robbed them of

the caution for which they used to be conspicuous. Yet the real strength of Venice was almost spent, and nothing remained but outward insolence and prestige. Everything was gay about Goldoni in his earliest childhood. Puppet-shows were built to amuse him by his grandfather. 'My mother,' he says, 'took charge of my education, and my father of my amusements.'

348

Let us turn to the opening scene in Alfieri's life, and mark the difference. A father above sixty, 'noble, wealthy, and respectable,' who died before his son had reached the age of one year old. A mother devoted to religion, the widow of one marquis, and after the death of a second husband, Alfieri's father, married for the third time to a nobleman of ancient birth. These were Alfieri's parents. He was born in a solemn palazzo in the country town of Asti, and at the age of five already longed for death as an escape from disease and other earthly troubles. So noble and so wealthy was the youthful poet that an abbé was engaged to carry out his education, but not to teach him more than a count should know. Except this worthy man he had no companions whatever. Strange ideas possessed the boy. He ruminated on his melancholy, and when eight years old attempted suicide. At this age he was sent to the academy at Turin, attended, as befitted a lad of his rank, by a manservant, who was to remain and wait on him at school. Alfieri stayed here several years without revisiting his home, tyrannised over by the valet who added to his grandeur, constantly subject to sickness, and kept in almost total ignorance by his incompetent preceptors. The gloom and pride and stoicism of his temperament were augmented by this unnatural discipline. His spirit did not break, but took a haughtier and more disdainful tone. He became familiar with misfortunes. He learned to brood over and intensify his passions. Every circumstance of his life seemed strung up to a tragic pitch. This at least is the impression which remains upon our mind after reading in his memoirs the narrative of what must in many of its details have been a common schoolboy's life at that time.

Meanwhile, what had become of young Goldoni? His boyhood was as thoroughly plebeian, various, and comic as Alfieri's had been patrician, monotonous, and tragical. Instead of one place of residence, we read of twenty. Scrape succeeds to scrape, adventure to adventure. Knowledge of the world, and some book learning also, flow in upon the boy, and are eagerly caught up by him and heterogeneously amalgamated in his mind. Alfieri learned nothing, wrote nothing, in his youth, and heard his parents say—'A nobleman need never strive to be a doctor of the faculties.' Goldoni had a little medicine and much law thrust upon him. At eight he wrote a comedy, and ere long began to read the plays of Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and Machiavelli. Between the nature of the two poets there was a marked and characteristic difference as to their mode of labour and of acquiring knowledge. Both of them loved fame, and wrought for it; but Alfieri did so from a sense of pride and a determination to excel; while Goldoni loved the approbation of his fellows, sought their compliments, and basked in the sunshine of smiles. Alfieri wrote with labour. Each tragedy he composed went through a triple process of composition, and received frequent polishing when finished. Goldoni dashed off his pieces with the greatest ease on every possible subject. He once produced sixteen comedies in one theatrical season. Alfieri's were like lion's whelps—brought forth with difficulty, and at long intervals; Goldoni's, like the brood of a hare—many, frequent, and as agile as their parent. Alfieri amassed knowledge scrupulously, but with infinite toil. He mastered Greek and Hebrew when he was past forty. Goldoni never gave himself the least trouble to learn anything, but trusted to the ready wit, good memory, and natural powers, which helped him in a hundred strange emergencies. Power of will and pride sustained the one; facility and a good-humoured vanity the other. This contrast was apparent at a very early age. We have seen how Alfieri passed his time at Turin, in a kind of aristocratic prison of educational ignorance. Goldoni's grandfather died when he was five years old, and left his family in great embarrassment. The poet's father went off to practise medicine at Perugia. His son followed him, acquired the rudiments of knowledge in that town, and then proceeded to study philosophy alone at Rimini. There was no man-servant or academy in his case. He was far too plebeian and too free. The boy lodged with a merchant, and got some smattering of Thomas Aquinas and the Peripatetics into his small brain, while he contrived to form a friendship with an acting company. They were on the wing for Venice in a coasting boat, which would touch at Chiozza, where Goldoni's mother then resided. The boy pleased them. Would he like the voyage? This offer seemed too tempting, and away he rushed, concealed himself on board, and made one of a merry motley shipload. 'Twelve persons, actors as

349

350

well as actresses, a prompter, a machinist, a storekeeper, eight domestics, four chambermaids, two nurses, children of every age, cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, birds, pigeons, and a lamb; it was another Noah's ark.' The young poet felt at home; how could a comic poet feel otherwise? They laughed, they sang, they danced; they ate and drank, and played at cards. 'Macaroni! Every one fell on it, and three dishes were devoured. We had also alamode beef, cold fowl, a loin of veal, a dessert, and excellent wine. What a charming dinner! No cheer like a good appetite.' Their harmony, however, was disturbed. The 'première amoureuse,' who, in spite of her rank and title, was ugly and cross, and required to be coaxed with cups of chocolate, lost her cat. She tried to kill the whole boat-load of beasts—cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, pigeons, even the lamb stood in danger of her wrath. A regular quarrel ensued, was somehow set at peace, and all began to laugh again. This is a sample of Goldoni's youth. Comic pleasures, comic dangers; nothing deep or lasting, but light and shadow cheerfully distributed, clouds lowering with storm, a distant growl of thunder, then a gleam of light and sunshine breaking overhead. He gets articled to an attorney at Venice, then goes to study law at Pavia; studies society instead, and flirts, and finally is expelled for writing satires. Then he takes a turn at medicine with his father in Friuli, and acts as clerk to the criminal chancellor at Chiozza.

351

Every employment seems easy to him, but he really cares for none but literature. He spends all his spare time in reading and in amusements, and begins to write a tragic opera. This proves, however, eminently unsuccessful, and he burns it in a comic fit of anger. One laughable love-affair in which he engaged at Udine exhibits his adventures in their truly comic aspect. It reminds us of the scene in 'Don Giovanni,' where Leporello personates the Don and deceives Donna Elvira. Goldoni had often noticed a beautiful young lady at church and on the public drives: she was attended by a waiting-maid, who soon perceived that her mistress had excited the young man's admiration, and who promised to befriend him in his suit. Goldoni was told to repair at night to the palace of his mistress, and to pour his passion forth beneath her window. Impatiently he waited for the trysting hour, conned his love-sentences, and gloried in the romance of the adventure. When night came, he found the window, and a veiled figure of a lady in the moonlight, whom he supposed at once to be his mistress. Her he eloquently addressed in the true style of Romeo's rapture, and she answered him. Night after night this happened, but sometimes he was a little troubled by a sound of ill-suppressed laughter interrupting the *tête-à-tête*. Meanwhile Teresa, the waiting-maid, received from his hands costly presents for her mistress, and made him promises on her part in exchange. As she proved unable to fulfil them, Goldoni grew suspicious, and at last discovered that the veiled figure to whom he had poured out his tale of love was none other than Teresa, and that the laughter had proceeded from her mistress, whom the faithless waiting-maid regaled at her lover's expense. Thus ended this ridiculous matter. Goldoni was not, however, cured by his experience. One other love-affair rendered Udine too hot to hold him, and in consequence of a third he had to fly from Venice just when he was beginning to flourish there. At length he married comfortably and suitably, settling down into a quiet life with a woman whom, if he did not love her with passion, he at least respected and admired. Goldoni, in fact, had no real passion in his nature.

352

Alfieri, on the other hand, was given over to volcanic ebullitions of the most ungovernable hate and affection, joy and sorrow. The chains of love which Goldoni courted so willingly, Alfieri regarded with the greatest shyness. But while Goldoni healed his heart of all its bruises in a week or so, the tragic poet bore about him wounds that would not close. He enumerates three serious passions which possessed his whole nature, and at times deprived him almost of his reason. A Dutch lady first won his heart, and when he had to leave her, Alfieri suffered so intensely that he never opened his lips during the course of a long journey through Germany, Switzerland, and Piedmont. Fevers, and suicides attempted but interrupted, marked the termination of this tragic amour. His second passion had for its object an English lady, with whose injured husband he fought a duel, although his collarbone was broken at the time. The lady proved unworthy of Alfieri as well as of her husband, and the poet left her in a most deplorable state of hopelessness and intellectual prostration. At last he formed a permanent affection for the wife of Prince Charles Edward, the Countess of Albany, in close friendship with whom he lived after her husband's death. The society of this lady gave him perfect happiness; but it was founded on her lofty beauty, the pathos of her situation, and her intellectual qualities. Melpomene presided at this union, while Thalia blessed the nuptials of Goldoni. How

353

characteristic also were the adventures which these two pairs of lovers encountered! Goldoni once carried his wife upon his back across two rivers in their flight from the Spanish to the Austrian camp at Rimini, laughing and groaning, and perceiving the humour of his situation all the time. Alfieri, on an occasion of even greater difficulty, was stopped with his illustrious friend at the gates of Paris in 1792. They were flying in post-chaises, with their servants and their baggage, from the devoted city, when a troop of *sansculottes* rushed on them, surged around the carriage, called them aristocrats, and tried to drag them off to prison. Alfieri, with his tall gaunt figure, pallid face, and red voluminous hair, stormed, raged, and raised his deep bass voice above the tumult. For half an hour he fought with them, then made his coachmen gallop through the gates, and scarcely halted till they got to Gravelines. By this prompt movement they escaped arrest and death at Paris. These two scenes would make agreeable companion pictures: Goldoni staggering beneath his wife across the muddy bed of an Italian stream—the smiling writer of agreeable plays, with his half-tearful helpmate ludicrous in her disasters; Alfieri mad with rage among Parisian Mænads, his princess quaking in her carriage, the air hoarse with cries, and death and safety trembling in the balance. It is no wonder that the one man wrote 'La Donna di Garbo' and the 'Cortese Veneziano,' while the other was inditing essays on Tyranny and dramas of 'Antigone,' 'Timoleon,' and 'Brutus.'

The difference between the men is seen no less remarkably in regard to courage. Alfieri was a reckless rider, and astonished even English huntsmen by his desperate leaps. In one of them he fell and broke his collar-bone, but not the less he held his tryst with a fair lady, climbed her park gates, and fought a duel with her husband. Goldoni was a pantaloon for cowardice. In the room of an inn at Desenzano which he occupied together with a female fellow-traveller, an attempt was made to rob them by a thief at night. All Goldoni was able to do consisted in crying out for help, and the lady called him 'M. l'Abbé' ever after for his want of pluck. Goldoni must have been by far the more agreeable of the two. In all his changes from town to town of Italy he found amusement and brought gaiety. The sights, the theatres, the society aroused his curiosity. He trembled with excitement at the performance of his pieces, made friends with the actors, taught them, and wrote parts to suit their qualities. At Pisa he attended as a stranger the meeting of the Arcadian Academy, and at its close attracted all attention to himself by his clever improvisation. He was in truth a ready-witted man, pliable, full of resource, bred half a valet, half a Roman *græculus*. Alfieri saw more of Europe than Goldoni. France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England, Spain, all parts of Italy he visited with restless haste. From land to land he flew, seeking no society, enjoying nothing, dashing from one inn door to another with his servants and his carriages, and thinking chiefly of the splendid stud of horses which he took about with him upon his travels. He was a lonely, stiff, self-engrossed, indomitable man. He could not rest at home: he could not bear to be the vassal of a king and breathe the air of courts. So he lived always on the wing, and ended by exiling himself from Sardinia in order to escape the trammels of paternal government. As for his tragedies, he wrote them to win laurels from posterity. He never cared to see them acted; he bullied even his printers and correctors; he cast a glove down in defiance of his critics. Goldoni sought the smallest meed of approbation. It pleased him hugely in his old age to be Italian master to a French princess. Alfieri openly despised the public. Goldoni wrote because he liked to write; Alfieri, for the sake of proving his superior powers. Against Alfieri's hatred of Turin and its trivial solemnities, we have to set Goldoni's love of Venice and its petty pleasures. He would willingly have drunk chocolate and played at dominoes or picquet all his life on the Piazza di San Marco, when Alfieri was crossing the sierras on his Andalusian horse, and devouring a frugal meal of rice in solitude. Goldoni glided through life an easy man, with genial, venial thoughts; with a clear, gay, gentle temper; a true sense of what is good and just; and a heart that loved diffusively, if not too warmly. Many were the checks and obstacles thrown on his path; but round them or above them he passed nimbly, without scar or scathe. Poverty went close behind him, but he kept her off, and never felt the pinch of need. Alfieri strained and strove against the barriers of fate; a sombre, rugged man, proud, candid, and self-confident, who broke or bent all opposition; now moving solemnly with tragic pomp, now dashing passionately forward by the might of will. Goldoni drew his inspirations from the moment and surrounding circumstances. Alfieri pursued an ideal, slowly formed, but strongly fashioned and resolutely followed. Of wealth he had plenty and to spare, but he disregarded it, and was a Stoic

in his mode of life. He was an unworldly man, and hated worldliness. Goldoni, but for his authorship, would certainly have grown a prosperous advocate, and died of gout in Venice. Goldoni liked smart clothes; Alfieri went always in black. Goldoni's fits of spleen—for he was melancholy now and then—lasted a day or two, and disappeared before a change of place. Alfieri dragged his discontent about with him all over Europe, and let it interrupt his work and mar his intellect for many months together. Alfieri was a patriot, and hated France. Goldoni never speaks of politics, and praises Paris as a heaven on earth. The genial moralising of the latter appears childish by the side of Alfieri's terse philosophy and pregnant remarks on the development of character. What suits the page of Plautus would look poor in 'Oedipus' or 'Agamemnon.' Goldoni's memoirs are diffuse and flippant in their light French dress. They seem written to please. Alfieri's Italian style marches with dignity and Latin terseness. He rarely condescends to smile. He writes to instruct the world and to satisfy himself. Grim humour sometimes flashes out, as when he tells the story of the Order of Homer, which he founded. How different from Goldoni's naïve account of his little ovation in the theatre at Paris!

But it would be idle to carry on this comparison, already tedious. The life of Goldoni was one long scene of shifts and jests, of frequent triumphs and some failures, of lessons hard at times, but kindly. Passions and *ennui*, flashes of heroic patriotism, constant suffering and stoical endurance, art and love idealised, fill up the life of Alfieri. Goldoni clung much to his fellow-men, and shared their pains and pleasures. Alfieri spent many of his years in almost absolute solitude. On the whole character and deeds of the one man was stamped Comedy: the other was own son of Tragedy.

If, after reading the autobiographies of Alfieri and Goldoni, we turn to the perusal of their plays, we shall perceive that there is no better commentary on the works of an artist than his life, and no better life than one written by himself. The old style of criticism, which strove to separate an author's productions from his life, and even from the age in which he lived, to set up an arbitrary canon of taste, and to select one or two great painters or poets as ideals because they seemed to illustrate that canon, has passed away. We are beginning to feel that art is a part of history and of physiology. That is to say, the artist's work can only be rightly understood by studying his age and temperament. Goldoni's versatility and want of depth induced him to write sparkling comedies. The merry life men passed at Venice in its years of decadence proved favourable to his genius. Alfieri's melancholy and passionate qualities, fostered in solitude, and aggravated by a tyranny he could not bear, led him irresistibly to tragic composition. Though a noble, his nobility only added to his pride, and insensibly his intellect had been imbued with the democratic sentiments which were destined to shake Europe in his lifetime. This, in itself, was a tragic circumstance, bringing him into close sympathy with the Brutus, the Prometheus, the Timoleon of ancient history. Goldoni's *bourgeoisie*, in the atmosphere of which he was born and bred, was essentially comic. The true comedy of manners, which is quite distinct from Shakspeare's fancy or from Aristophanic satire, is always laid in middle life. Though Goldoni tried to write tragedies, they were unimpassioned, dull, and tame. He lacked altogether the fire, high-wrought nobility of sentiment, and sense of form essential for tragic art. On the other hand, Alfieri composed some comedies before his death which were devoid of humour, grace, and lightness. A strange elephantine eccentricity is their utmost claim to comic character. Indeed, the temper of Alfieri, ever in extremes, led him even to exaggerate the qualities of tragedy. He carried its severity to a pitch of dulness and monotony. His chiaroscuro was too strong; virtue and villainy appearing in pure black and white upon his pages. His hatred of tyrants induced him to transgress the rules of probability, so that it has been well said that if his wicked kings had really had such words of scorn and hatred thrown at them by their victims, they were greatly to be pitied. On the other hand, his pithy laconisms have often a splendidly tragical effect. There is nothing in the modern drama more rhetorically impressive, though spasmodic, than the well-known dialogue between Antigone and Creon:—

'Cr. Scegliesti?
'Ant. Ho scelto.
'Cr. Emon?
'Ant. Morte.
'Cr. L'avrai!'

Goldoni's comedies, again, have not enough of serious thought or of true creative imagination to be works of high art. They lean too much to the side of farce; they have none of the tragic salt which gives a dignity to Tartuffe. They are, in a word, almost too aesthetically comic.

The contrast between these authors might lead us to raise the question long ago discussed by Socrates at Agathon's banquet—Can the same man write both comedies and tragedies? We in England are accustomed to read the serious and comic plays of Shakspeare, Fletcher, Jonson, and to think that one poet could excel in either branch. The custom of the Elizabethan theatre obliged this double authorship; yet it must be confessed that Shakspeare's comedies are not such comedies as Greek or Roman or French critics would admit. They are works of the purest imagination, wholly free from the laws of this world; while the tragedies of Fletcher have a melodramatic air equally at variance with the classical Melpomene. It may very seriously be doubted whether the same mind could produce, with equal power, a comedy like the 'Cortese Veneziano' and a tragedy like Alfieri's 'Brutus.' At any rate, returning to our old position, we find in these two men the very opposite conditions of dramatic genius. They are, as it were, specimens prepared by Nature for the instruction of those who analyse genius in its relations to temperament, to life, and to external circumstances.

VOLUME II.

The Emperor Augustus chose Ravenna for one of his two naval stations, and in course of time a new city arose by the sea-shore, which received the name of Portus Classis. Between this harbour and the mother city a third town sprang up, and was called Cæsarea. Time and neglect, the ravages of war, and the encroaching powers of Nature have destroyed these settlements, and nothing now remains of the three cities but Ravenna. It would seem that in classical times Ravenna stood, like modern Venice, in the centre of a huge lagune, the fresh waters of the Ronco and the Po mixing with the salt waves of the Adriatic round its very walls. The houses of the city were built on piles; canals instead of streets formed the means of communication, and these were always filled with water artificially conducted from the southern estuary of the Po. Round Ravenna extended a vast morass, for the most part under shallow water, but rising at intervals into low islands like the Lido or Murano or Torcello which surround Venice. These islands were celebrated for their fertility: the vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, springing from a fat and fruitful soil, watered with constant moisture, and fostered by a mild sea-wind and liberal sunshine, yielded crops that for luxuriance and quality surpassed the harvests of any orchards on the mainland. All the conditions of life in old Ravenna seem to have resembled those of modern Venice; the people went about in gondolas, and in the early morning barges laden with fresh fruit or meat and vegetables flocked from all quarters to the city of the sea.^[15] Water also had to be procured from the neighbouring shore, for, as Martial says, a well at Ravenna was more valuable than a vineyard. Again, between the city and the mainland ran a long low causeway all across the lagune like that on which the trains now glide into Venice. Strange to say, the air of Ravenna was remarkably salubrious: this fact, and the ease of life that prevailed there, and the security afforded by the situation of the town, rendered it a most desirable retreat for the monarchs of Italy during those troublous times in which the empire nodded to its fall. Honorius retired to its lagunes for safety; Odoacer, who dethroned the last Cæsar of the West, succeeded him; and was in turn, supplanted by Theodoric the Ostrogoth. Ravenna, as we see it now, recalls the peaceful and half-Roman rule of the great Gothic king. His palace, his churches, and the mausoleums in which his daughter Amalasantha laid the hero's bones, have survived the sieges of Belisarius and Astolphus, the conquest of Pepin, the bloody quarrels of Iconoclasts with the children of the Roman Church, the mediæval wars of Italy, the victory of Gaston de Foix, and still stand gorgeous with marbles and mosaics in spite of time and the decay of all around them.

2

[15] We may compare with Venice what is known about the ancient Hellenic city of Sybaris. Sybaris and Ravenna were the Greek and Roman Venice of antiquity.

As early as the sixth century, the sea had already retreated to such a distance from Ravenna that orchards and gardens were cultivated on the spot where once the galleys of the Cæsars rode at anchor. Groves of pines sprang up along the shore, and in their lofty tops the music of the wind moved like the ghost of waves and breakers plunging upon distant sands. This Pinetum stretches along the shore of the Adriatic for about forty miles, forming a belt of variable width between the great marsh and the tumbling sea. From a distance the bare stems and velvet crowns of the pine-trees stand up like palms that cover an oasis on Arabian sands; but at a nearer view the trunks detach themselves from an inferior forest-growth of juniper and thorn and ash and oak, the tall roofs of the stately firs shooting their breadth of sheltering greenery above the lower and less sturdy brushwood. It is hardly possible to imagine a more beautiful and impressive scene than that presented by these long alleys of imperial pines. They grow so thickly one behind another, that we might compare them to the pipes of a great organ, or the pillars of a Gothic church, or the basaltic columns of the Giant's Causeway. Their tops are evergreen and laden with the heavy cones, from which Ravenna draws considerable wealth. Scores of peasants are quartered on the outskirts of the forest, whose business it is to scale the pines and rob them of their fruit at certain seasons of the year. Afterwards they dry the fir-cones in the sun, until the nuts which they contain fall out. The empty husks are sold for firewood, and the kernels in their stony shells reserved for exportation. You may see the peasants, men, women, and boys, sorting them by millions, drying and sifting them upon the open spaces of the wood, and packing them in sacks to send abroad through

3

Italy. The *pinocchi* or kernels of the stone-pine are largely used in cookery, and those of Ravenna are prized for their good quality and aromatic flavour. When roasted or pounded, they taste like a softer and more mealy kind of almonds. The task of gathering this harvest is not a little dangerous. Men have to cut notches in the straight shafts, and having climbed, often to the height of eighty feet, to lean upon the branches, and detach the fir-cones with a pole—and this for every tree. Some lives, they say, are yearly lost in the business.

As may be imagined, the spaces of this great forest form the haunt of innumerable living creatures. Lizards run about by myriads in the grass. Doves coo among the branches of the pines, and nightingales pour their full-throated music all day and night from thickets of white-thorn and acacia. The air is sweet with aromatic scents: the resin of the pine and juniper, the mayflowers and acacia-blossoms, the violets that spring by thousands in the moss, the wild roses and faint honeysuckles which throw fragrant arms from bough to bough of ash or maple, join to make one most delicious perfume. And though the air upon the neighbouring marsh is poisonous, here it is dry, and spreads a genial health. The sea-wind murmuring through these thickets at nightfall or misty sunrise, conveys no fever to the peasants stretched among their flowers. They watch the red rays of sunset flaming through the columns of the leafy hall, and flaring on its fretted rafters of entangled boughs; they see the stars come out, and Hesper gleam, an eye of brightness, among dewy branches; the moon walks silver-footed on the velvet tree-tops, while they sleep beside the camp-fires; fresh morning wakes them to the sound of birds and scent of thyme and twinkling of dewdrops on the grass around. Meanwhile ague, fever, and death have been stalking all night long about the plain, within a few yards of their couch, and not one pestilential breath has reached the charmed precincts of the forest.

You may ride or drive for miles along green aisles between the pines in perfect solitude; and yet the creatures of the wood, the sunlight and the birds, the flowers and tall majestic columns at your side, prevent all sense of loneliness or fear. Huge oxen haunt the wilderness—grey creatures, with mild eyes and spreading horns and stealthy tread. Some are patriarchs of the forest, the fathers and the mothers of many generations who have been carried from their sides to serve in ploughs or waggons on the Lombard plain. Others are yearling calves, intractable and ignorant of labour. In order to subdue them to the yoke, it is requisite to take them very early from their native glades, or else they chafe and pine away with weariness. Then there is a sullen canal, which flows through the forest from the marshes to the sea; it is alive with frogs and newts and snakes. You may see these serpents basking on the surface among thickets of the flowering rush, or coiled about the lily leaves and flowers—lithe monsters, slippery and speckled, the tyrants of the fen.

It is said that when Dante was living at Ravenna he would spend whole days alone among the forest glades, thinking of Florence and her civil wars, and meditating cantos of his poem. Nor have the influences of the pine-wood failed to leave their trace upon his verse. The charm of its summer solitude seems to have sunk into his soul; for when he describes the whispering of winds and singing birds among the boughs of his terrestrial paradise, he says:—

Non però dal lor esser dritto sparte
 Tanto, che gli augelletti per le cime
 Lasciasser d' operare ogni lor arte:
 Ma con piena letizia l' aure prime,
 Cantando, ricevano intra le foglie,
 Che tenevan bordone alle sue rime
 Tal, qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie
 Per la pineta in sul lito di Chiassi
 Quand' Eolo Scirocco fuor discioglie.

With these verses in our minds, while wandering down the grassy aisles, beside the waters of the solitary place, we seem to meet that lady singing as she went, and plucking flower by flower, 'like Proserpine when Ceres lost a daughter, and she lost her spring.' There, too, the vision of the griffin and the car, of singing maidens, and of Beatrice descending to the sound of Benedictus and of falling flowers, her flaming robe and mantle green as grass, and veil of white, and olive crown, all flashed upon the poet's inner eye, and he remembered how he bowed before her when a boy. There is yet another passage in which it is difficult to believe that Dante had not the pine-forest in his mind. When Virgil and the poet were waiting in anxiety before the gates of Dis, when the Furies on the wall were tearing their breasts and crying, 'Venga

Medusa, e si 'l farem di smalto,' suddenly across the hideous river came a sound like that which whirlwinds make among the shattered branches and bruised stems of forest-trees; and Dante, looking out with fear upon the foam and spray and vapour of the flood, saw thousands of the damned flying before the face of one who forded Styx with feet unwet. 'Like frogs,' he says, 'they fled, who scurry through the water at the sight of their foe, the serpent, till each squats and hides himself close to the ground.' The picture of the storm among the trees might well have occurred to Dante's mind beneath the roof of pine-boughs. Nor is there any place in which the simile of the frogs and water-snake attains such dignity and grandeur. I must confess that till I saw the ponds and marshes of Ravenna, I used to fancy that the comparison was somewhat below the greatness of the subject; but there so grave a note of solemnity and desolation is struck, the scale of Nature is so large, and the serpents coiling in and out among the lily leaves and flowers are so much in their right place, that they suggest a scene by no means unworthy of Dante's conception.

Nor is Dante the only singer who has invested this wood with poetical associations. It is well known that Boccaccio laid his story of 'Honorio' in the pine-forest, and every student of English literature must be familiar with the noble tale in verse which Dryden has founded on this part of the 'Decameron.' We all of us have followed Theodore, and watched with him the tempest swelling in the grove, and seen the hapless ghost pursued by demon hounds and hunter down the glades. This story should be read while storms are gathering upon the distant sea, or thunderclouds descending from the Apennines, and when the pines begin to rock and surge beneath the stress of labouring winds. Then runs the sudden flash of lightning like a rapier through the boughs, the rain streams hissing down, and the thunder 'breaks like a whole sea overhead.'

With the Pinetum the name of Byron will be for ever associated. During his two years' residence in Ravenna he used to haunt its wilderness, riding alone or in the company of friends. The inscription placed above the entrance to the house he occupied alludes to it as one of the objects which principally attracted the poet to the neighbourhood of Ravenna: 'Impaziente di visitare l' antica selva, che ispirò già il Divino e Giovanni Boccaccio.' We know, however, that a more powerful attraction, in the person of the Countess Guiccioli, maintained his fidelity to 'that place of old renown, once in the Adrian Sea, Ravenna.'

Between the Bosco, as the people of Ravenna call this pine-wood, and the city, the marsh stretches for a distance of about three miles. It is a plain intersected by dykes and ditches, and mapped out into innumerable rice-fields. For more than half a year it lies under water, and during the other months exhales a pestilential vapour, which renders it as uninhabitable as the Roman Campagna; yet in springtime this dreary flat is even beautiful. The young blades of the rice shoot up above the water, delicately green and tender. The ditches are lined with flowering rush and golden flags, while white and yellow lilies sleep in myriads upon the silent pools. Tamarisks wave their pink and silver tresses by the road, and wherever a plot of mossy earth emerges from the marsh, it gleams with purple orchises and flaming marigolds; but the soil beneath is so treacherous and spongy, that these splendid blossoms grow like flowers in dreams or fairy stories. You try in vain to pick them; they elude your grasp, and flourish in security beyond the reach of arm or stick.

Such is the sight of the old town of Classis. Not a vestige of the Roman city remains, not a dwelling or a ruined tower, nothing but the ancient church of S. Apollinare in Classe. Of all desolate buildings this is the most desolate. Not even the deserted grandeur of S. Paolo beyond the walls of Rome can equal it. Its bare round campanile gazes at the sky, which here vaults only sea and plain—a perfect dome, star-spangled like the roof of Galla Placidia's tomb. Ravenna lies low to west, the pine-wood stretches away in long monotony to east. There is nothing else to be seen except the spreading marsh, bounded by dim snowy Alps and purple Apennines, so very far away that the level rack of summer clouds seem more attainable and real. What sunsets and sunrises that tower must see; what glaring lurid afterglows in August, when the red light scowls upon the pestilential fen; what sheets of sullen vapour rolling over it in autumn; what breathless heats, and rainclouds big with thunder; what silences; what unimpeded blasts of winter winds! One old monk tends this deserted spot. He has the huge church, with its echoing aisles and marble columns and giddy bell-tower and cloistered corridors, all to himself. At rare intervals, priests from Ravenna come to sing some special mass at these cold altars; pious folk make vows to pray upon their mouldy steps and kiss the relics which are shown on great occasions. But no one stays; they hurry, after muttering their prayers,

from the fever-stricken spot, reserving their domestic pieties and customary devotions for the brighter and newer chapels of the fashionable churches in Ravenna. So the old monk is left alone to sweep the marsh water from his church floor, and to keep the green moss from growing too thickly on its monuments. A clammy *conferva* covers everything except the mosaics upon tribune, roof, and clerestory, which defy the course of age. Christ on His throne *sedet aeternumque sedebit*: the saints around him glitter with their pitiless uncompromising eyes and wooden gestures, as if twelve centuries had not passed over them, and they were nightmares only dreamed last night, and rooted in a sick man's memory. For those gaunt and solemn forms there is no change of life or end of days. No fever touches them; no dampness of the wind and rain loosens their firm cement. They stare with senseless faces in bitter mockery of men who live and die and moulder away beneath. Their poor old guardian told us it was a weary life. He has had the fever three times, and does not hope to survive many more Septembers. The very water that he drinks is brought him from Ravenna; for the vast fen, though it pours its overflow upon the church floor, and spreads like a lake around, is death to drink. The monk had a gentle woman's voice and mild brown eyes. What terrible crime had consigned him to this living tomb? For what past sorrow is he weary of his life? What anguish of remorse has driven him to such a solitude? Yet he looked simple and placid; his melancholy was subdued and calm, as if life were over for him, and he were waiting for death to come with a friend's greeting upon noiseless wings some summer night across the fen-lands in a cloud of soft destructive fever-mist.

Another monument upon the plain is worthy of a visit. It is the so-called Colonna dei Francesi, a *cinquecento* pillar of Ionic design, erected on the spot where Gaston de Foix expired victorious after one of the bloodiest battles ever fought. The Ronco, a straight sluggish stream, flows by the lonely spot; mason bees have covered with laborious stucco-work the scrolls and leafage of its ornaments, confounding epitaphs and trophies under their mud houses. A few cypress-trees stand round it, and the dogs and chickens of a neighbouring farmyard make it their rendezvous. Those mason bees are like posterity, which settles down upon the ruins of a Baalbec or a Luxor, setting up its tents, and filling the fair spaces of Hellenic or Egyptian temples with clay hovels. Nothing differs but the scale; and while the bees content themselves with filling up and covering, man destroys the silent places of the past which he appropriates.

In Ravenna itself, perhaps what strikes us most is the abrupt transition everywhere discernible from monuments of vast antiquity to buildings of quite modern date. There seems to be no interval between the marbles and mosaics of Justinian or Theodoric and the insignificant frippery of the last century. The churches of Ravenna—S. Vitale, S. Apollinare, and the rest—are too well known, and have been too often described by enthusiastic antiquaries, to need a detailed notice in this place. Every one is aware that the ecclesiastical customs and architecture of the early Church can be studied in greater perfection here than elsewhere. Not even the basilicas and mosaics of Rome, nor those of Palermo and Monreale, are equal for historical interest to those of Ravenna. Yet there is not one single church which remains entirely unaltered and unspoiled. The imagination has to supply the atrium or outer portico from one building, the vaulted baptistery with its marble font from another, the pulpits and ambores from a third the tribune from a fourth, the round brick bell-tower from a fifth, and then to cover all the concave roofs and chapel walls with grave and glittering mosaics.

There is nothing more beautiful in decorative art than the mosaics of such tiny buildings as the tomb of Galla Placidia or the chapel of the Bishop's Palace. They are like jewelled and enamelled cases; not an inch of wall can be seen which is not covered with elaborate patterns of the brightest colours. Tall date-palms spring from the floor with fruit and birds among their branches, and between them stand the pillars and apostles of the Church. In the spandrels and lunettes above the arches and the windows angels fly with white extended wings. On every vacant place are scrolls and arabesques of foliage,—birds and beasts, doves drinking from the vase, and peacocks spreading gorgeous plumes—a maze of green and gold and blue. Overhead, the vault is powdered with stars gleaming upon the deepest azure, and in the midst is set an aureole embracing the majestic head of Christ, or else the symbol of the sacred fish, or the hand of the Creator pointing from a cloud. In Galla Placidia's tomb these storied vaults spring above the sarcophagi of empresses and emperors, each lying in the place where he was laid more than twelve centuries ago. The light which struggles through the narrow windows

serves to harmonise the brilliant hues and make a gorgeous gloom.

Besides these more general and decorative subjects, many of the churches are adorned with historical mosaics, setting forth the Bible narrative or incidents from the life of Christian emperors and kings. In S. Apollinare Nuovo there is a most interesting treble series of such mosaics extending over both walls of the nave. On the left hand, as we enter, we see the town of Classis; on the right the palace of Theodoric, its doors and loggie rich with curtains, and its friezes blazing with coloured ornaments. From the city gate of Classis virgins issue, and proceed in a long line until they reach Madonna seated on a throne, with Christ upon her knees, and the three kings in adoration at her feet. From Theodoric's palace door a similar procession of saints and martyrs carry us to Christ surrounded by archangels. Above this double row of saints and virgins stand the fathers and prophets of the Church, and highest underneath the roof are pictures from the life of our Lord. It will be remembered in connection with these subjects that the women sat upon the left and the men upon the right side of the church. Above the tribune, at the east end of the church, it was customary to represent the Creative Hand, or the monogram of the Saviour, or the head of Christ with the letters A and [Greek Ô]. Moses and Elijah frequently stand on either side to symbolise the transfiguration, while the saints and bishops specially connected with the church appeared upon a lower row. Then on the side walls were depicted such subjects as Justinian and Theodora among their courtiers, or the grant of the privileges of the church to its first founder from imperial patrons, with symbols of the old Hebraic ritual—Abel's lamb, the sacrifice of Isaac, Melchisedec's offering of bread and wine,—which were regarded as the types of Christian ceremonies. The baptistery was adorned with appropriate mosaics representing Christ's baptism in Jordan.

12

Generally speaking, one is struck with the dignity of these designs, and especially with the combined majesty and sweetness of the face of Christ. The sense for harmony of hue displayed in their composition is marvellous. It would be curious to trace in detail the remnants of classical treatment which may be discerned—Jordan, for instance, pours his water from an urn like a river-god crowned with sedge—or to show what points of ecclesiastical tradition are established these ancient monuments. We find Mariolatry already imminent, the names of the three kings, Kaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, the four evangelists as we now recognise them, and many of the rites and vestments which Ritualists of all denominations regard with superstitious reverence.

13

There are two sepulchral monuments in Ravenna which cannot be passed over unnoticed. The one is that of Theodoric the Goth, crowned by its semisphere of solid stone, a mighty tomb, well worthy of the conqueror and king. It stands in a green field, surrounded by acacias, where the nightingales sing ceaselessly in May. The mason bees have covered it, and the water has invaded its sepulchral vaults. In spite of many trials, it seems that human art is unable to pump out the pond and clear the frogs and efts from the chamber where the great Goth was laid by Amalasantha.

The other is Dante's temple, with its basrelief and withered garlands. The story of his burial, and of the discovery of his real tomb, is fresh in the memory of every one. But the 'little cupola, more neat than solemn,' of which Lord Byron speaks, will continue to be the goal of many a pilgrimage. For myself—though I remember Chateaubriand's bareheaded genuflection on its threshold, Alfieri's passionate prostration at the altar-tomb, and Byron's offering of poems on the poet's shrine—I confess that a single canto of the 'Inferno,' a single passage of the 'Vita Nuova,' seems more full of soul-stirring associations than the place where, centuries ago, the mighty dust was laid. It is the spirit that lives and makes alive. And Dante's spirit seems more present with us under the pine-branches of the Bosco than beside his real or fancied tomb. 'He is risen,'—'Lo, I am with you alway'—these are the words that ought to haunt us in a burying-ground. There is something affected and self-conscious in overpowering grief or enthusiasm or humiliation at a tomb.

SIGISMONDO PANDOLFO MALATESTA AND LEO
BATTISTA ALBERTI

Rimini is a city of about 18,000 souls, famous for its *Stabilimento de' Bagni* and its antiquities, seated upon the coast of the Adriatic, a little to the south-east of the world-historical Rubicon. It is our duty to mention the baths first among its claims to distinction, since the prosperity and cheerfulness of the little town depend on them in a great measure. But visitors from the north will fly from these, to marvel at the bridge which Augustus built and Tiberius completed, and which still spans the Marecchia with five gigantic arches of white Istrian limestone, as solidly as if it had not borne the trappings of at least three conquests. The triumphal arch, too, erected in honour of Augustus, is a notable monument of Roman architecture. Broad, ponderous, substantial, tufted here and there with flowering weeds, and surmounted with mediaeval machicolations, proving it to have sometimes stood for city gate or fortress, it contrasts most favourably with the slight and somewhat gimcrack arch of Trajan in the sister city of Ancona. Yet these remains of the imperial pontifices, mighty and interesting as they are, sink into comparative insignificance beside the one great wonder of Rimini, the cathedral remodelled for Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta by Leo Battista Alberti in 1450. This strange church, one of the earliest extant buildings in which the Neopaganism of the Renaissance showed itself in full force, brings together before our memory two men who might be chosen as typical in their contrasted characters of the transitional age which gave them birth.

15

No one with any tincture of literary knowledge is ignorant of the fame at least of the great Malatesta family—the house of the Wrongheads, as they were rightly called by some prevision of their future part in Lombard history. The readers of the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth cantos of the 'Inferno' have all heard of

E il mastin vecchio e il nuovo da Verucchio
Che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,

while the story of Francesca da Polenta, who was wedded to the hunchback Giovanni Malatesta and murdered by him with her lover Paolo, is known not merely to students of Dante, but to readers of Byron and Leigh Hunt, to admirers of Flaxman, Ary Scheffer, Doré—to all, in fact, who have of art and letters any love.

The history of these Malatesti, from their first establishment under Otho III. as lieutenants for the Empire in the Marches of Ancona, down to their final subjugation by the Papacy in the age of the Renaissance, is made up of all the vicissitudes which could befall a mediaeval Italian despotism. Acquiring an unlawful right over the towns of Rimini, Cesena, Sogliano, Ghiacchiuolo, they ruled their petty principalities like tyrants by the help of the Guelf and Ghibelline factions, inclining to the one or the other as it suited their humour or their interest, wrangling among themselves, transmitting the succession of their dynasty through bastards and by deeds of force, quarrelling with their neighbours the Counts of Urbino, alternately defying and submitting to the Papal legates in Romagna, serving as condottieri in the wars of the Visconti and the state of Venice, and by their restlessness and genius for military intrigues contributing in no slight measure to the general disturbance of Italy. The Malatesti were a race of strongly marked character: more, perhaps, than any other house of Italian tyrants, they combined for generations those qualities of the fox and the lion, which Machiavelli thought indispensable to a successful despot. Son after son, brother with brother, they continued to be fierce and valiant soldiers, cruel in peace, hardy in war, but treasonable and suspicious in all transactions that could not be settled by the sword. Want of union, with them as with the Baglioni and many other of the minor noble families in Italy, prevented their founding a substantial dynasty. Their power, based on force, was maintained by craft and crime, and transmitted through tortuous channels by intrigue. While false in their dealings with the world at large, they were diabolical in the perfidy with which they treated one another. No feudal custom, no standard of hereditary right, ruled the succession in their family. Therefore the ablest Malatesta for the moment clutched what he could of the domains that owned his house for masters. Partitions among sons or brothers, mutually hostile and suspicious, weakened the whole stock. Yet they were great enough to

16

hold their own for centuries among the many tyrants who infested Lombardy. That the other princely families of Romagna, Emilia, and the March were in the same state of internal discord and dismemberment, was probably one reason why the Malatesti stood their ground so firmly as they did.

So far as Rimini is concerned, the house of Malatesta culminated in Sigismondo Pandolfo, son of Gian Galeazzo Visconti's general, the perfidious Pandolfo. It was he who built the Rocca, or castle of the despots, which stands a little way outside the town, commanding a fair view of Apennine tossed hill-tops and broad Lombard plain, and who remodelled the Cathedral of S. Francis on a plan suggested by the greatest genius of the age. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta was one of the strangest products of the earlier Renaissance. To enumerate the crimes which he committed within the sphere of his own family, mysterious and inhuman outrages which render the tale of the Cenci credible, would violate the decencies of literature. A thoroughly bestial nature gains thus much with posterity that its worst qualities must be passed by in silence. It is enough to mention that he murdered three wives in succession,^[16] Bussoni di Carmagnuola, Guinipera d'Este, and Polissena Sforza, on various pretexts of infidelity, and carved horns upon his own tomb with this fantastic legend underneath:—

Porto le corna ch' ognuno le vede,
E tal le porta che non se lo crede.

[16] His first wife was a daughter of the great general of the Venetians against Francesco Sforza. Whether Sigismondo murdered her, as Sansovino seems to imply in his *Famiglie Illustri*, or whether he only repudiated her after her father's execution on the Piazza di San Marco, admits of doubt. About the question of Sigismondo's marriage with Isotta there is also some uncertainty. At any rate she had been some time his mistress before she became his wife.

He died in wedlock with the beautiful and learned Isotta degli Atti, who had for some time been his mistress. But, like most of the Malatesti, he left no legitimate offspring. Throughout his life he was distinguished for bravery and cunning, for endurance of fatigue and rapidity of action, for an almost fretful rashness in the execution of his schemes, and for a character terrible in its violence. He was acknowledged as a great general; yet nothing succeeded with him. The long warfare which he carried on against the Duke of Montefeltro ended in his discomfiture. Having begun by defying the Holy See, he was impeached at Rome for heresy, parricide, incest, adultery, rape, and sacrilege, burned in effigy by Pope Pius II., and finally restored to the bosom of the Church, after suffering the despoliation of almost all his territories, in 1463. The occasion on which this fierce and turbulent despiser of laws human and divine was forced to kneel as a penitent before the Papal legate in the gorgeous temple dedicated to his own pride, in order that the ban of excommunication might be removed from Rimini, was one of those petty triumphs, interesting chiefly for their picturesqueness, by which the Popes confirmed their questionable rights over the cities of Romagna. Sigismondo, shorn of his sovereignty, took the command of the Venetian troops against the Turks in the Morea, and returned in 1465, crowned with laurels, to die at Rimini in the scene of his old splendour.

A very characteristic incident belongs to this last act of his life. Dissolute, treacherous, and inhuman as he was, the tyrant of Rimini had always encouraged literature, and delighted in the society of artists. He who could brook no contradiction from a prince or soldier, allowed the pedantic scholars of the sixteenth century to dictate to him in matters of taste, and sat with exemplary humility at the feet of Latinists like Porcellio, Basinio, and Trebanio. Valturio, the engineer, and Alberti, the architect, were his familiar friends; and the best hours of his life were spent in conversation with these men. Now that he found himself upon the sacred soil of Greece, he was determined not to return to Italy empty-handed. Should he bring manuscripts or marbles, precious vases or inscriptions in half-legible Greek character? These relics were greedily sought for by the potentates of Italian cities; and no doubt Sigismondo enriched his library with some such treasures. But he obtained a nobler prize—nothing less than the body of a saint of scholarship, the authentic bones of the great Platonist, Gemisthus Pletho.^[17] These he exhumed from their Greek grave and caused them to be deposited in a stone sarcophagus outside the cathedral of his building in Rimini. The Venetians, when they stole the body of S. Mark from Alexandria, were scarcely more pleased than was Sigismondo with the acquisition of this Father of the Neopagan faith. Upon the tomb we still

may read this legend: 'Jemisthii Bizantii philosophi sua tempore principis reliquum Sig. Pan. Mal. Pan. F. belli Pelop adversus Turcorum regem Imp ob ingentem eruditorum quo flagrat amorem huc afferendum introque mittendum curavit MCCCCLXVI.' Of the Latinity of the inscription much cannot be said; but it means that 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, having served as general against the Turks in the Morea, induced by the great love with which he burns for all learned men, brought and placed here the remains of Gemisthus of Byzantium, the prince of the philosophers of his day.'

[17] For the place occupied in the evolution of Italian scholarship by this Greek sage, see my 'Revival of Learning,' *Renaissance in Italy*, part 2.

Sigismondo's portrait, engraved on medals, and sculptured upon every frieze and point of vantage in the Cathedral of Rimini, well denotes the man. His face is seen in profile. The head, which is low and flat above the forehead, rising swiftly backward from the crown, carries a thick bushy shock of hair curling at the ends, such as the Italians call a *zazzera*. The eye is deeply sunk, with long venomous flat eyelids, like those which Leonardo gives to his most wicked faces. The nose is long and crooked, curved like a vulture's over a petulant mouth, with lips deliberately pressed together, as though it were necessary to control some nervous twitching. The cheek is broad, and its bone is strongly marked. Looking at these features in repose, we cannot but picture to our fancy what expression they might assume under a sudden fit of fury, when the sinews of the face were contracted with quivering spasms, and the lips writhed in sympathy with knit forehead and wrinkled eyelids.

20

Allusion has been made to the Cathedral of S. Francis at Rimini, as the great ornament of the town, and the chief monument of Sigismondo's fame. It is here that all the Malatesti lie. Here too is the chapel consecrated to Isotta, 'Divæ Isottæ Sacrum;' and the tombs of the Malatesta ladies, 'Malatestorum domûs heroidum sepulchrum;' and Sigismondo's own grave with the cuckold's horns and scornful epitaph. Nothing but the fact that the church is duly dedicated to S. Francis, and that its outer shell of classic marble encases an old Gothic edifice, remains to remind us that it is a Christian place of worship.^[18] It has no sanctity, no spirit of piety. The pride of the tyrant whose legend—'Sigismundus Pandolphus Malatesta Pan. F. Fecit Anno Gratiae MCCCCL'—occupies every arch and stringcourse of the architecture, and whose coat-of-arms and portrait in medallion, with his cipher and his emblems of an elephant and a rose, are wrought in every piece of sculptured work throughout the building, seems so to fill this house of prayer that there is no room left for God. Yet the Cathedral of Rimini remains a monument of first-rate importance for all students who seek to penetrate the revived Paganism of the fifteenth century. It serves also to bring a far more interesting Italian of that period than the tyrant of Rimini himself, before our notice.

21

[18] The account of this church given by Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pii Secundi, Comment., ii. 92) deserves quotation: 'Edificavit tamen nobile templum Arimini in honorem divi Francisci, verum ita gentilibus operibus implevit, ut non tam Christianorum quam infidelium dæmones adorantium templum esse videatur.'

In the execution of his design, Sigismondo received the assistance of one of the most remarkable men of this or any other age. Leo Battista Alberti, a scion of the noble Florentine house of that name, born during the exile of his parents, and educated in the Venetian territory, was endowed by nature with aptitudes, faculties, and sensibilities so varied, as to deserve the name of universal genius. Italy in the Renaissance period was rich in natures of this sort, to whom nothing that is strange or beautiful seemed unfamiliar, and who, gifted with a kind of divination, penetrated the secrets of the world by sympathy. To Pico della Mirandola, Lionardo da Vinci, and Michel Agnolo Buonarroti may be added Leo Battista Alberti. That he achieved less than his great compeers, and that he now exists as the shadow of a mighty name, was the effect of circumstances. He came half a century too early into the world, and worked as a pioneer rather than a settler of the realm which Lionardo ruled as his demesne. Very early in his boyhood Alberti showed the versatility of his talents. The use of arms, the management of horses, music, painting, modelling for sculpture, mathematics, classical and modern literature, physical science as then comprehended, and all the bodily exercises proper to the estate of a young nobleman, were at his command. His biographer asserts that he was never idle, never subject

to ennui or fatigue. He used to say that books at times gave him the same pleasure as brilliant jewels or perfumed flowers: hunger and sleep could not keep him from them then. At other times the letters on the page appeared to him like twining and contorted scorpions, so that he preferred to gaze on anything but written scrolls. He would then turn to music or painting, or to the physical sports in which he excelled. The language in which this alternation of passion and disgust for study is expressed, bears on it the stamp of Alberti's peculiar temperament, his fervid and imaginative genius, instinct with subtle sympathies and strange repugnances. Flying from his study, he would then betake himself to the open air. No one surpassed him in running, in wrestling, in the force with which he cast his javelin or discharged his arrows. So sure was his aim and so skilful his cast, that he could fling a farthing from the pavement of the square, and make it ring against a church roof far above. When he chose to jump, he put his feet together and bounded over the shoulders of men standing erect upon the ground. On horseback he maintained perfect equilibrium, and seemed incapable of fatigue. The most restive and vicious animals trembled under him and became like lambs. There was a kind of magnetism in the man. We read, besides these feats of strength and skill, that he took pleasure in climbing mountains, for no other purpose apparently than for the joy of being close to nature.

22

In this, as in many other of his instincts, Alberti was before his age. To care for the beauties of landscape unadorned by art, and to sympathise with sublime or rugged scenery, was not in the spirit of the Renaissance. Humanity occupied the attention of poets and painters; and the age was yet far distant when the pantheistic feeling for the world should produce the art of Wordsworth and of Turner. Yet a few great natures even then began to comprehend the charm and mystery which the Greeks had imaged in their Pan, the sense of an all-pervasive spirit in wild places, the feeling of a hidden want, the invisible tie which makes man a part of rocks and woods and streams around him. Petrarch had already ascended the summit of Mont Ventoux, to meditate, with an exaltation of the soul he scarcely understood, upon the scene spread at his feet and above his head. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini delighted in wild places for no mere pleasure of the chase, but for the joy he took in communing with nature. How S. Francis found God in the sun and the air, the water and the stars, we know by his celebrated hymn; and of Dante's acute observation, every canto of the 'Divine Comedy' is witness.

23

Leo Alberti was touched in spirit by even a deeper and a stranger pathos than any of these men: 'In the early spring, when he beheld the meadows and hills covered with flowers, and saw the trees and plants of all kinds bearing promise of fruit, his heart became exceeding sorrowful; and when in autumn he looked on fields heavy with harvest and orchards apple-laden, he felt such grief that many even saw him weep for the sadness of his soul.' It would seem that he scarcely understood the source of this sweet trouble: for at such times he compared the sloth and inutility of men with the industry and fertility of nature; as though this were the secret of his melancholy. A poet of our century has noted the same stirring of the spirit, and has striven to account for it:—

Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Both Alberti and Tennyson have connected the *mal du pays* of the human soul for that ancient country of its birth, the mild Saturnian earth from which we sprang, with a sense of loss. It is the waste of human energy that affects Alberti; the waste of human life touches the modern poet. Yet both perhaps have scarcely interpreted their own spirit; for is not the true source of tears deeper and more secret? Man is a child of nature in the simplest sense; and the stirrings of the secular breasts that gave him suck, and on which he even now must hang, have potent influences over his emotions. Of Alberti's extraordinary sensitiveness to all such impressions many curious tales are told. The sight of refulgent jewels, of flowers, and of fair landscapes, had the same effect upon his nerves as the sound of the Dorian mood upon the youths whom Pythagoras cured of passion by music. He found in them an anodyne for pain, a restoration from sickness. Like Walt Whitman, who adheres to nature by closer and more vital sympathy than any other poet of the modern world, Alberti felt the charm of excellent old age no less than that of florid youth. 'On old men gifted with a noble presence and hale and vigorous, he gazed again and again, and said that he revered in them the delights of nature (*naturæ delicias*).' Beasts and birds and all

24

living creatures moved him to admiration for the grace with which they had been gifted, each in his own kind. It is even said that he composed a funeral oration for a dog which he had loved and which died.

To this sensibility for all fair things in nature, Alberti added the charm of a singularly sweet temper and graceful conversation. The activity of his mind, which was always being exercised on subjects of grave speculation, removed him from the noise and bustle of commonplace society. He was somewhat silent, inclined to solitude, and of a pensive countenance; yet no man found him difficult of access: his courtesy was exquisite, and among familiar friends he was noted for the flashes of a delicate and subtle wit. Collections were made of his apophthegms by friends, and some are recorded by his anonymous biographer.^[19] Their finer perfume, as almost always happens with good sayings which do not contain the full pith of a proverb, but owe their force, in part at least, to the personality of their author, and to the happy moment of their production, has evanesced. Here, however, is one which seems still to bear the impress of Alberti's genius: 'Gold is the soul of labour, and labour the slave of pleasure.' Of women he used to say that their inconstancy was an antidote to their falseness; for if a woman could but persevere in what she undertook, all the fair works of men would be ruined. One of his strongest moral sentences is aimed at envy, from which he suffered much in his own life, and against which he guarded with a curious amount of caution. His own family grudged the distinction which his talents gained for him, and a dark story is told of a secret attempt made by them to assassinate him through his servants. Alberti met these ignoble jealousies with a stately calm and a sweet dignity of demeanour, never condescending to accuse his relatives, never seeking to retaliate, but acting always for the honour of his illustrious house. In the same spirit of generosity he refused to enter into wordy warfare with detractors and calumniators, sparing the reputation even of his worst enemy when chance had placed him in his power. This moderation both of speech and conduct was especially distinguished in an age which tolerated the fierce invectives of Filelfo, and applauded the vindictive courage of Cellini. To money Alberti showed a calm indifference. He committed his property to his friends and shared with them in common. Nor was he less careless about vulgar fame, spending far more pains in the invention of machinery and the discovery of laws, than in their publication to the world. His service was to knowledge, not to glory. Self-control was another of his eminent qualities. With the natural impetuosity of a large heart, and the vivacity of a trained athlete, he yet never allowed himself to be subdued by anger or by sensual impulses, but took pains to preserve his character unstained and dignified before the eyes of men. A story is told of him which may remind us of Goethe's determination to overcome his giddiness. In his youth his head was singularly sensitive to changes of temperature; but by gradual habituation he brought himself at last to endure the extremes of heat and cold bareheaded. In like manner he had a constitutional disgust for onions and honey; so powerful, that the very sight of these things made him sick. Yet by constantly viewing and touching what was disagreeable, he conquered these dislikes; and proved that men have a complete mastery over what is merely instinctive in their nature. His courage corresponded to his splendid physical development. When a boy of fifteen, he severely wounded himself in the foot. The gash had to be probed and then sewn up. Alberti not only bore the pain of this operation without a groan, but helped the surgeon with his own hands; and effected a cure of the fever which succeeded by the solace of singing to his cithern. For music he had a genius of the rarest order; and in painting he is said to have achieved success. Nothing, however, remains of his work and from what Vasari says of it, we may fairly conclude that he gave less care to the execution of finished pictures, than to drawings subsidiary to architectural and mechanical designs. His biographer relates that when he had completed a painting, he called children and asked them what it meant. If they did not know, he reckoned it a failure. He was also in the habit of painting from memory. While at Venice, he put on canvas the faces of friends at Florence whom he had not seen for months. That the art of painting was subservient in his estimation to mechanics, is indicated by what we hear about the camera, in which he showed landscapes by day and the revolutions of the stars by night, so lively drawn that the spectators were affected with amazement. The semi-scientific impulse to extend man's mastery over nature, the magician's desire to penetrate secrets, which so powerfully influenced the development of Lionardo's genius, seems to have overcome the purely æsthetic instincts of Alberti, so that he became in the end neither a great artist like Raphael, nor a great discoverer like Galileo, but rather

a clairvoyant to whom the miracles of nature and of art lie open.

[19] Almost all the facts of Alberti's life are to be found in the Latin biography included in Muratori. It has been conjectured, and not without plausibility, by the last editor of Alberti's complete works, Bonucci, that this Latin life was penned by Alberti himself.

After the first period of youth was over, Leo Battista Alberti devoted his great faculties and all his wealth of genius to the study of the law—then, as now, the quicksand of the noblest natures. The industry with which he applied himself to the civil and ecclesiastical codes broke his health. For recreation he composed a Latin comedy called 'Philodoxeos,' which imposed upon the judgment of scholars, and was ascribed as a genuine antique to Lepidus, the comic poet. Feeling stronger, Alberti returned at the age of twenty to his law studies, and pursued them in the teeth of disadvantages. His health was still uncertain, and the fortune of an exile reduced him to the utmost want. It was no wonder that under these untoward circumstances even his Herculean strength gave way. Emaciated and exhausted, he lost the clearness of his eyesight, and became subject to arterial disturbances, which filled his ears with painful sounds. This nervous illness is not dissimilar to that which Rousseau describes in the confessions of his youth. In vain, however, his physicians warned Alberti of impending peril. A man of so much stanchness, accustomed to control his nature with an iron will, is not ready to accept advice. Alberti persevered in his studies, until at last the very seat of intellect was invaded. His memory began to fail him for names, while he still retained with wonderful accuracy whatever he had seen with his eyes. It was now impossible to think of law as a profession. Yet since he could not live without severe mental exercise, he had recourse to studies which tax the verbal memory less than the intuitive faculties of the reason. Physics and mathematics became his chief resource; and he devoted his energies to literature. His 'Treatise on the Family' may be numbered among the best of those compositions on social and speculative subjects in which the Italians of the Renaissance sought to rival Cicero. His essays on the arts are mentioned by Vasari with sincere approbation. Comedies, interludes, orations, dialogues, and poems flowed with abundance from his facile pen. Some were written in Latin, which he commanded more than fairly; some in the Tuscan tongue, of which owing to the long exile of his family in Lombardy, he is said to have been less a master. It was owing to this youthful illness, from which apparently his constitution never wholly recovered, that Alberti's genius was directed to architecture.

28

Through his friendship with Flavio Biondo, the famous Roman antiquary, Alberti received an introduction to Nicholas V. at the time when this, the first great Pope of the Renaissance, was engaged in rebuilding the palaces and fortifications of Rome. Nicholas discerned the genius of the man, and employed him as his chief counsellor in all matters of architecture. When the Pope died, he was able, while reciting his long Latin will upon his deathbed, to boast that he had restored the Holy See to its due dignity, and the Eternal City to the splendour worthy of the seat of Christendom. The accomplishment of the second part of his work he owed to the genius of Alberti. After doing thus much for Rome under Thomas of Sarzana, and before beginning to beautify Florence at the instance of the Rucellai family, Alberti entered the service of the Malatesta, and undertook to remodel the Cathedral of S. Francis at Rimini. He found it a plain Gothic structure with apse and side chapels. Such churches are common enough in Italy, where pointed architecture never developed its true character of complexity and richness, but was doomed to the vast vacuity exemplified in S. Petronio of Bologna. He left it a strange medley of mediæval and Renaissance work, a symbol of that dissolving scene in the world's pantomime, when the spirit of classic art, as yet but little comprehended, was encroaching on the early Christian taste. Perhaps the mixture of styles so startling in S. Francesco ought not to be laid to the charge of Alberti, who had to execute the task of turning a Gothic into a classic building. All that he could do was to alter the whole exterior of the church, by affixing a screen-work of Roman arches and Corinthian pilasters, so as to hide the old design and yet to leave the main features of the fabric, the windows and doors especially, *in statu quo*. With the interior he dealt upon the same general principle, by not disturbing its structure, while he covered every available square inch of surface with decorations alien to the Gothic manner. Externally, S. Francesco is perhaps the most original and graceful of the many attempts made by Italian builders to fuse the mediæval and the classic styles. For Alberti attempted nothing less. A century elapsed before Palladio, approaching the problem from a different point of view,

29

restored the antique in its purity, and erected in the Palazzo della Ragione of Vicenza an almost unique specimen of resuscitated Roman art.

Internally, the beauty of the church is wholly due to its exquisite wall-ornaments. These consist for the most part of low reliefs in a soft white stone, many of them thrown out upon a blue ground in the style of Della Robbia. Allegorical figures designed with the purity of outline we admire in Botticelli, draperies that Burne-Jones might copy, troops of singing boys in the manner of Donatello, great angels traced upon the stone so delicately that they seem to be rather drawn than sculptured, statuettes in niches, personifications of all arts and sciences alternating with half-bestial shapes of satyrs and sea-children:—such are the forms which fill the spaces of the chapel walls, and climb the pilasters, and fret the arches, in such abundance that had the whole church been finished as it was designed, it would have presented one splendid though bizarre effect of incrustation. Heavy screens of Verona marble, emblazoned in open arabesques with the ciphers of Sigismondo and Isotta, with coats-of-arms, emblems, and medallion portraits, shut the chapels from the nave. Who produced all this sculpture it is difficult to say. Some of it is very good: much is indifferent. We may hazard the opinion that, besides Bernardo Ciuffagni, of whom Vasari speaks, some pupils of Donatello and Benedetto da Majano worked at it. The influence of the sculptors of Florence is everywhere perceptible.

30

Whatever be the merit of these reliefs, there is no doubt that they fairly represent one of the most interesting moments in the history of modern art. Gothic inspiration had failed; the early Tuscan style of the Pisani had been worked out; Michelangelo was yet far distant, and the abundance of classic models had not overwhelmed originality. The sculptors of the school of Ghiberti and Donatello, who are represented in this church, were essentially pictorial, preferring low to high relief, and relief in general to detached figures. Their style, like the style of Boiardo in poetry, of Botticelli in painting, is specific to Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century. Mediæval standards of taste were giving way to classical, Christian sentiment to Pagan; yet the imitation of the antique had not been carried so far as to efface the spontaneity of the artist, and enough remained of Christian feeling to tinge the fancy with a grave and sweet romance. The sculptor had the skill and mastery to express his slightest shade of thought with freedom, spirit, and precision. Yet his work showed no sign of conventionality, no adherence to prescribed rules. Every outline, every fold of drapery, every attitude was pregnant, to the artist's own mind at any rate, with meaning. In spite of its symbolism, what he wrought was never mechanically figurative, but gifted with the independence of its own beauty, vital with an inbreathed spirit of life. It was a happy moment, when art had reached consciousness, and the artist had not yet become self-conscious. The hand and the brain then really worked together for the procreation of new forms of grace, not for the repetition of old models, or for the invention of the strange and startling. 'Delicate, sweet, and captivating,' are good adjectives to express the effect produced upon the mind by the contemplation even of the average work of this period.

31

To study the flowing lines of the great angels traced upon the walls of the Chapel of S. Sigismund in the Cathedral of Rimini, to follow the undulations of their drapery that seems to float, to feel the dignified urbanity of all their gestures, is like listening to one of those clear early Italian compositions for the voice, which surpasses in suavity of tone and grace of movement all that Music in her full-grown vigour has produced. There is indeed something infinitely charming in the crepuscular moments of the human mind. Whether it be the rather loveliness of an art still immature, or the beauty of art upon the wane—whether, in fact, the twilight be of morning or of evening, we find in the masterpieces of such periods a placid calm and chastened pathos, as of a spirit self-withdrawn from vulgar cares, which in the full light of meridian splendour is lacking. In the Church of S. Francesco at Rimini the tempered clearness of the dawn is just about to broaden into day.

FROM ROME TO TERNI

We left Rome in clear sunset light. The Alban Hills defined themselves like a cameo of amethyst upon a pale blue distance; and over the Sabine Mountains soared immeasurable moulded domes of alabaster thunderclouds, casting deep shadows, purple and violet, across the slopes of Tivoli. To westward the whole sky was lucid, like some half-transparent topaz, flooded with slowly yellowing sunbeams. The Campagna has often been called a garden of wild-flowers. Just now poppy and aster, gladiolus and thistle, embroider it with patterns infinite and intricate beyond the power of art. They have already mown the hay in part; and the billowy tracts of greyish green, where no flowers are now in bloom, supply a restful groundwork to those brilliant patches of diapered *fioriture*. These are like praying-carpets spread for devotees upon the pavement of a mosque whose roof is heaven. In the level light the scythes of the mowers flash as we move past. From their bronzed foreheads the men toss masses of dark curls. Their muscular flanks and shoulders sway sideways from firm yet pliant reins. On one hill, fronting the sunset, there stands a herd of some thirty huge grey oxen, feeding and raising their heads to look at us, with just a flush of crimson on their horns and dewlaps. This is the scale of Mason's and of Costa's colouring. This is the breadth and magnitude of Rome.

33

Thus, through dells of ilex and oak, yielding now a glimpse of Tiber and S. Peter's, now opening on a purple section of the distant Sabine Hills, we came to Monte Rotondo. The sun sank; and from the flames where he had perished, Hesper and the thin moon, very white and keen, grew slowly into sight. Now we follow the Tiber, a swollen, hurrying, turbid river, in which the mellowing Western sky reflects itself. This changeful mirror of swift waters spreads a dazzling foreground to valley, hill, and lustrous heaven. There is orange on the far horizon, and a green ocean above, in which sea-monsters fashioned from the clouds are floating. Yonder swims an elf with luminous hair astride upon a sea-horse, and followed by a dolphin plunging through the fiery waves. The orange deepens into dying red. The green divides into daffodil and beryl. The blue above grows fainter, and the moon and stars shine stronger.

Through these celestial changes we glide into a landscape fit for Francia and the early Umbrian painters. Low hills to right and left; suavely modelled heights in the far distance; a very quiet width of plain, with slender trees ascending into the pellucid air; and down in the mystery of the middle distance a glimpse of heaven-reflecting water. The magic of the moon and stars lends enchantment to this scene. No painting could convey their influences. Sometimes both luminaries tremble, all dispersed and broken, on the swirling river. Sometimes they sleep above the calm cool reaches of a rush-grown mere. And here and there a ruined turret, with a broken window and a tuft of shrubs upon the rifted battlement, gives value to the fading pallor of the West. The last phase in the sunset is a change to blue-grey monochrome, faintly silvered with starlight; hills, Tiber, fields and woods, all floating in ærial twilight. There is no definition of outline now. The daffodil of the horizon has faded into scarcely perceptible pale greenish yellow.

34

We have passed Stimigliano. Through the mystery of darkness we hurry past the bridges of Augustus and the lights of Narni.

THE CASCADES OF TERNI

The Velino is a river of considerable volume which rises in the highest region of the Abruzzi, threads the upland valley of Rieti, and precipitates itself by an artificial channel over cliffs about seven hundred feet in height into the Nera. The water is densely charged with particles of lime. This calcareous matter not only tends continually to choke its bed, but clothes the precipices over which the torrent thunders with fantastic drapery of stalactite; and, carried on the wind in foam, incrusts the forests that surround the falls with fine white dust. These famous cascades are undoubtedly the most sublime and beautiful which Europe boasts; and their situation is worthy of so great a natural wonder. We reach them through a noble mid-Italian landscape, where the mountain forms are austere and boldly modelled, but the vegetation, both wild and cultivated, has something of the South-Italian richness. The hillsides are a labyrinth of box and arbutus, with coronilla in golden bloom. The turf is starred with cyclamens and orchises. Climbing the staircase paths beside

the falls in morning sunlight, or stationed on the points of vantage that command their successive cataracts, we enjoyed a spectacle which might be compared in its effect upon the mind to the impression left by a symphony or a tumultuous lyric. The turbulence and splendour, the swiftness and resonance, the veiling of the scene in smoke of shattered water-masses, the withdrawal of these veils according as the volume of the river slightly shifted in its fall, the rainbows shimmering on the silver spray, the shivering of poplars hung above impendent precipices, the stationary grandeur of the mountains keeping watch around, the hurry and the incoherence of the cataracts, the immobility of force and changeful changelessness in nature, were all for me the elements of one stupendous poem. It was like an ode of Shelley translated into symbolism, more vivid through inarticulate appeal to primitive emotion than any words could be.

MONTEFALCO

The rich land of the Clitumnus is divided into meadows by transparent watercourses, gliding with a glassy current over swaying reeds. Through this we pass, and leave Bevagna to the right, and ascend one of those long gradual roads which climb the hills where all the cities of the Umbrians perch. The view expands, revealing Spello, Assisi, Perugia on its mountain buttress, and the far reaches northward of the Tiber valley. Then Trevi and Spoleto came into sight, and the severe hill-country above Gubbio in part disclosed itself. Over Spoleto the fierce witch-haunted heights of Norcia rose forbidding. This is the kind of panorama that dilates the soul. It is so large, so dignified, so beautiful in tranquil form. The opulent abundance of the plain contrasts with the severity of mountain ranges desolately grand; and the name of each of all those cities thrills the heart with memories.

The main object of a visit to Montefalco is to inspect its many excellent frescoes; painted histories of S. Francis and S. Jerome, by Benozzo Gozzoli; saints, angels, and Scripture episodes by the gentle Tiberio d'Assisi. Full justice had been done to these, when a little boy, seeing us lingering outside the church of S. Chiara, asked whether we should not like to view the body of the saint. This privilege could be purchased at the price of a small fee. It was only necessary to call the guardian of her shrine at the high altar. Indolent, and in compliant mood, with languid curiosity and half an hour to spare, we assented. A handsome young man appeared, who conducted us with decent gravity into a little darkened chamber behind the altar. There he lighted wax tapers, opened sliding doors in what looked like a long coffin, and drew curtains. Before us in the dim light there lay a woman covered with a black nun's dress. Only her hands, and the exquisitely beautiful pale contour of her face (forehead, nose, mouth, and chin, modelled in purest outline, as though the injury of death had never touched her) were visible. Her closed eyes seemed to sleep. She had the perfect peace of Luini's S. Catherine borne by the angels to her grave on Sinai. I have rarely seen anything which surprised and touched me more. The religious earnestness of the young custode, the hushed adoration of the country-folk who had silently assembled round us, intensified the sympathy-inspiring beauty of the slumbering girl. Could Julia, daughter of Claudius, have been fairer than this maiden, when the Lombard workmen found her in her Latin tomb, and brought her to be worshipped on the Capitol? S. Chiara's shrine was hung round with her relics; and among these the heart extracted from her body was suspended. Upon it, apparently wrought into the very substance of the mummied flesh, were impressed a figure of the crucified Christ, the scourge, and the five stigmata. The guardian's faith in this miraculous witness to her sainthood, the gentle piety of the men and women who knelt before it, checked all expressions of incredulity. We abandoned ourselves to the genius of the place; forgot even to ask what Santa Chiara was sleeping here; and withdrew, toned to a not unpleasing melancholy. The world-famous S. Clair, the spiritual sister of S. Francis, lies in Assisi. I have often asked myself, Who, then, was this nun? What history had she? And I think now of this girl as of a damsel of romance, a Sleeping Beauty in the wood of time, secluded from intrusive elements of fact, and folded in the love and faith of her own simple worshippers. Among the hollows of Arcadia, how many rustic shrines in ancient days held saints of Hellas, apocryphal, perhaps, like this, but hallowed by tradition and enduring homage!^[20]

[20] There is in reality no doubt or problem about this Saint Clair. She was born in 1275, and joined the Augustinian Sisterhood, dying young, in 1308, as Abbess of her convent. Continual and impassioned meditation on the Passion of our Lord impressed her

heart with the signs of His suffering which have been described above. I owe this note to the kindness of an anonymous correspondent, whom I here thank.

FOLIGNO

In the landscape of Raphael's votive picture, known as the Madonna di Foligno, there is a town with a few towers, placed upon a broad plain at the edge of some blue hills. Allowing for that license as to details which imaginative masters permitted themselves in matters of subordinate importance, Raphael's sketch is still true to Foligno. The place has not materially changed since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Indeed, relatively to the state of Italy at large, it is still the same as in the days of ancient Rome. Foligno forms a station of commanding interest between Rome and the Adriatic upon the great Flaminian Way. At Foligno the passes of the Apennines debouch into the Umbrian plain, which slopes gradually toward the valley of the Tiber, and from it the valley of the Nera is reached by an easy ascent beneath the walls of Spoleto. An army advancing from the north by the Metaurus and the Furlo Pass must find itself at Foligno; and the level champaign round the city is well adapted to the maintenance and exercises of a garrison. In the days of the Republic and the Empire, the value of this position was well understood; but Foligno's importance, as the key to the Flaminian Way, was eclipsed by two flourishing cities in its immediate vicinity, Hispellum and Mevania, the modern Spello and Bevagna. We might hazard a conjecture that the Lombards, when they ruled the Duchy of Spoleto, following their usual policy of opposing new military centres to the ancient Roman municipia, encouraged Fulginium at the expense of her two neighbours. But of this there is no certainty to build upon. All that can be affirmed with accuracy is that in the Middle Ages, while Spello and Bevagna declined into the inferiority of dependent burghs, Foligno grew in power and became the chief commune of this part of Umbria. It was famous during the last centuries of struggle between the Italian burghers and their native despots, for peculiar ferocity in civil strife. Some of the bloodiest pages in mediæval Italian history are those which relate the vicissitudes of the Trinci family, the exhaustion of Foligno by internal discord, and its final submission to the Papal power. Since railways have been carried from Rome through Narni and Spoleto to Ancona and Perugia, Foligno has gained considerably in commercial and military status. It is the point of intersection for three lines; the Italian government has made it a great cavalry depôt, and there are signs of reviving traffic in its decayed streets. Whether the presence of a large garrison has already modified the population, or whether we may ascribe something to the absence of Roman municipal institutions in the far past, and to the savagery of the mediæval period, it is difficult to say. Yet the impression left by Foligno upon the mind is different from that of Assisi, Spello, and Montefalco, which are distinguished for a certain grace and gentleness in their inhabitants.

My window in the city wall looks southward across the plain to Spoleto, with Montefalco perched aloft upon the right, and Trevi on its mountain-bracket to the left. From the topmost peaks of the Sabine Apennines, gradual tender sloping lines descend to find their quiet in the valley of Clitumnus. The space between me and that distance is infinitely rich with every sort of greenery, dotted here and there with towers and relics of baronial houses. The little town is in commotion; for the working men of Foligno and its neighbourhood have resolved to spend their earnings on a splendid festa—horse-races, and two nights of fireworks. The acacias and paulownias on the ramparts are in full bloom of creamy white and lilac. In the glare of Bengal lights these trees, with all their pendulous blossoms, surpassed the most fantastic of artificial decorations. The rockets sent aloft into the sky amid that solemn Umbrian landscape were nowise out of harmony with nature. I never sympathised with critics who resent the intrusion of fireworks upon scenes of natural beauty. The Giessbach, lighted up at so much per head on stated evenings, with a band playing and a crowd of cockneys staring, presents perhaps an incongruous spectacle. But where, as here at Foligno, a whole city has made itself a festival, where there are multitudes of citizens and soldiers and country-people slowly moving and gravely admiring, with the decency and order characteristic of an Italian crowd, I have nothing but a sense of satisfaction.

It is sometimes the traveller's good fortune in some remote place to meet with an inhabitant who incarnates and interprets for him the *genius loci* as he has conceived it. Though his own subjectivity will assuredly play a considerable part in such an encounter, transferring to

his chance acquaintance qualities he may not possess, and connecting this personality in some purely imaginative manner with thoughts derived from study, or impressions made by nature; yet the stranger will henceforth become the meeting-point of many memories, the central figure in a composition which derives from him its vividness. Unconsciously and innocently he has lent himself to the creation of a picture, and round him, as around the hero of a myth, have gathered thoughts and sentiments of which he had himself no knowledge. On one of these nights I had been threading the aisles of acacia-trees, now glaring red, now azure, as the Bengal lights kept changing. My mind instinctively went back to scenes of treachery and bloodshed in the olden time, when Gorrado Trinci paraded the mangled remnants of three hundred of his victims, heaped on mule-back, through Foligno, for a warning to the citizens. As the procession moved along the ramparts, I found myself in contest with a young man, who readily fell into conversation. He was very tall, with enormous breadth of shoulders, and long sinewy arms, like Michelangelo's favourite models. His head was small, curled over with crisp black hair. Low forehead, and thick level eyebrows absolutely meeting over intensely bright fierce eyes. The nose descending straight from the brows, as in a statue of Hadrian's age. The mouth full-lipped, petulant, and passionate above a firm round chin. He was dressed in the shirt, white trousers, and loose white jacket of a contadino; but he did not move with a peasant's slouch, rather with the elasticity and alertness of an untamed panther. He told me that he was just about to join a cavalry regiment; and I could well imagine, when military dignity was added to that gait, how grandly he would go. This young man, of whom I heard nothing more after our half-hour's conversation among the crackling fireworks and roaring cannon, left upon my mind an indescribable impression of dangerousness—of 'something fierce and terrible, eligible to burst forth.' Of men like this, then, were formed the Companies of Adventure who flooded Italy with villany, ambition, and lawlessness in the fifteenth century. Gattamelata, who began life as a baker's boy at Narni and ended it with a bronze statue by Donatello on the public square in Padua, was of this breed. Like this were the Trinci and their bands of murderers. Like this were the bravi who hunted Lorenzaccio to death at Venice. Like this was Pietro Paolo Baglioni, whose fault, in the eyes of Machiavelli, was that he could not succeed in being 'perfettamente tristo.' Beautiful, but inhuman; passionate, but cold; powerful, but rendered impotent for firm and lofty deeds by immorality and treason; how many centuries of men like this once wasted Italy and plunged her into servitude! Yet what material is here, under sterner discipline, and with a nobler national ideal, for the formation of heroic armies. Of such stuff, doubtless, were the Roman legionaries. When will the Italians learn to use these men as Fabius or as Cæsar, not as the Vitelli and the Trinci used them? In such meditations, deeply stirred by the meeting of my own reflections with one who seemed to represent for me in life and blood the spirit of the place which had provoked them, I said farewell to Cavallucci, and returned to my bedroom on the city wall. The last rockets had whizzed and the last cannons had thundered ere I fell asleep.

41

SPELLO

Spello contains some not inconsiderable antiquities—the remains of a Roman theatre, a Roman gate with the heads of two men and a woman leaning over it, and some fragments of Roman sculpture scattered through its buildings. The churches, especially those of S.M. Maggiore and S. Francesco, are worth a visit for the sake of Pinturicchio. Nowhere, except in the Piccolomini Library at Siena, can that master's work in fresco be better studied than here. The satisfaction with which he executed the wall paintings in S. Maria Maggiore is testified by his own portrait introduced upon a panel in the decoration of the Virgin's chamber. The scrupulously rendered details of books, chairs, window seats, &c., which he here has copied, remind one of Carpaccio's study of S. Benedict at Venice. It is all sweet, tender, delicate, and carefully finished; but without depth, not even the depth of Perugino's feeling. In S. Francesco, Pinturicchio, with the same meticulous refinement, painted a letter addressed to him by Gentile Baglioni. It lies on a stool before Madonna and her court of saints. Nicety of execution, technical mastery of fresco as a medium for Dutch detail-painting, prettiness of composition, and cheerfulness of colouring, are noticeable throughout his work here rather than either thought or sentiment. S. Maria Maggiore can boast a fresco of Madonna between a young episcopal saint and Catherine of Alexandria from the hand of Perugino. The rich

42

yellow harmony of its tones, and the graceful dignity of its emotion, conveyed no less by a certain Raphaellesque pose and outline than by suavity of facial expression, enable us to measure the distance between this painter and his quasi-pupil Pinturicchio.

We did not, however, drive to Spello to inspect either Roman antiquities or frescoes, but to see an inscription on the city walls about Orlando. It is a rude Latin elegiac couplet, saying that, 'from the sign below, men may conjecture the mighty members of Roland, nephew of Charles; his deeds are written in history.' Three agreeable old gentlemen of Spello, who attended us with much politeness, and were greatly interested in my researches, pointed out a mark waist-high upon the wall, where Orlando's knee is reported to have reached. But I could not learn anything about a phallic monolith, which is said by Guerin or Panizzi to have been identified with the Roland myth at Spello. Such a column either never existed here, or had been removed before the memory of the present generation.

43

EASTER MORNING AT ASSISI

We are in the lower church of S. Francesco. High mass is being sung, with orchestra and organ and a choir of many voices. Candles are lighted on the altar, over-canopied with Giotto's allegories. From the low southern windows slants the sun, in narrow bands, upon the many-coloured gloom and embrowned glory of these painted aisles. Women in bright kerchiefs kneel upon the stones, and shaggy men from the mountains stand or lean against the wooden benches. There is no moving from point to point. Where we have taken our station, at the north-western angle of the transept, there we stay till mass be over. The whole low-vaulted building glows duskiy; the frescoed roof, the stained windows, the figure-crowded pavements blending their rich but subdued colours, like hues upon some marvellous moth's wings, or like a deep-toned rainbow mist discerned in twilight dreams, or like such tapestry as Eastern queens, in ancient days, wrought for the pavilion of an empress. Forth from this maze of mingling tints, indefinite in shade and sunbeams, lean earnest, saintly faces—ineffably pure—adoring, pitying, pleading; raising their eyes in ecstasy to heaven, or turning them in ruth toward earth. Men and women of whom the world was not worthy—at the hands of those old painters they have received the divine grace, the dovelike simplicity, whereof Italians in the fourteenth century possessed the irrecoverable secret. Each face is a poem; the counterpart in painting to a chapter from the Fioretti di San Francesco. Over the whole scene—in the architecture, in the frescoes, in the coloured windows, in the gloom, on the people, in the incense, from the chiming bells, through the music—broods one spirit: the spirit of him who was 'the co-espoused, co-transfocate with Christ;' the ardent, the radiant, the beautiful in soul; the suffering, the strong, the simple, the victorious over self and sin; the celestial who trampled upon earth and rose on wings of ecstasy to heaven; the Christ-inebriated saint of visions supersensual and life beyond the grave. Far down below the feet of those who worship God through him, S. Francis sleeps; but his soul, the incorruptible part of him, the message he gave the world, is in the spaces round us. This is his temple. He fills it like an unseen god. Not as Phoebus or Athene, from their marble pedestals; but as an abiding spirit, felt everywhere, nowhere seized, absorbing in itself all mysteries, all myths, all burning exaltations, all abasements, all love, self-sacrifice, pain, yearning, which the thought of Christ, sweeping the centuries, hath wrought for men. Let, therefore, choir and congregation raise their voices on the tide of prayers and praises; for this is Easter morning—Christ is risen! Our sister, Death of the Body, for whom S. Francis thanked God in his hymn, is reconciled to us this day, and takes us by the hand, and leads us to the gate whence floods of heavenly glory issue from the faces of a multitude of saints. Pray, ye poor people; chant and pray. If all be but a dream, to wake from this were loss for you indeed!

44

PERUSIA AUGUSTA

The piazza in front of the Prefettura is my favourite resort on these nights of full moon. The evening twilight is made up partly of sunset fading over Thrasymene and Tuscany; partly of moonrise from the mountains of Gubbio and the passes toward Ancona. The hills are capped with snow, although the season is so forward. Below our parapets the bulk of S. Domenico, with its gaunt perforated tower, and the finer group of S. Pietro, flaunting the arrowy 'Pennacchio di Perugia,' jut out upon the spine of hill which dominates the valley of the Tiber. As the night

45

gloom deepens, and the moon ascends the sky, these buildings seem to form the sombre foreground to some French etching. Beyond them spreads the misty moon-irradiated plain of Umbria. Over all rise shadowy Apennines, with dim suggestions of Assisi, Spello, Foligno, Montefalco, and Spoleto on their basements. Little thin whiffs of breezes, very slight and searching, flit across, and shiver as they pass from Apennine to plain. The slowly moving population—women in veils, men winter-mantled—pass to and fro between the buildings and the grey immensity of sky. Bells ring. The bugles of the soldiers blow retreat in convents turned to barracks. Young men roam the streets beneath, singing May songs. Far, far away upon the plain, red through the vitreous moonlight ringed with thundery gauze, fires of unnamed castelli smoulder. As we lean from ledges eighty feet in height, gas vies with moon in chequering illuminations on the ancient walls; Etruscan mouldings, Roman letters, high-piled hovels, suburban world-old dwellings plastered like martins' nests against the masonry.

Sunlight adds more of detail to this scene. To the right of Subasio, where the passes go from Foligno towards Urbino and Ancona, heavy masses of thundercloud hang every day; but the plain and hill-buttresses are clear in transparent blueness. First comes Assisi, with S.M. degli Angeli below; then Spello; then Foligno; then Trevi; and, far away, Spoleto; with, reared against those misty battlements, the village height of Montefalco—the 'ringhiera dell' Umbria,' as they call it in this country. By daylight, the snow on yonder peaks is clearly visible, where the Monti della Sibilla tower up above the sources of the Nera and Velino from frigid wastes of Norcia. The lower ranges seem as though painted, in films of airiest and palest azure, upon china; and then comes the broad green champaign, flecked with villages and farms. Just at the basement of Perugia winds Tiber, through shallows and grey poplar-trees, spanned by ancient arches of red brick, and guarded here and there by castellated towers. The mills beneath their dams and weirs are just as Raphael drew them; and the feeling of air and space reminds one, on each coign of vantage, of some Umbrian picture. Every hedgerow is hoary with May-bloom and honeysuckle. The oaks hang out their golden-dusted tassels. Wayside shrines are decked with laburnum boughs and iris blossoms plucked from the copse-woods, where spires of purple and pink orchis variegate the thin, fine grass. The land waves far and wide with young corn, emerald green beneath the olive-trees, which take upon their under-foliage tints reflected from this verdure or red tones from the naked earth. A fine race of *contadini*, with large, heroically graceful forms, and beautiful dark eyes and noble faces, move about this garden, intent on ancient, easy tillage of the kind Saturnian soil.

46

LA MAGIONE

On the road from Perugia to Cortona, the first stage ends at La Magione, a high hill-village commanding the passage from the Umbrian champaign to the lake of Thrasymene. It has a grim square fortalice above it, now in ruins, and a stately castle to the south-east, built about the time of Braccio. Here took place that famous diet of Cesare Borgia's enemies, when the son of Alexander VI. was threatening Bologna with his arms, and bidding fair to make himself supreme tyrant of Italy in 1502. It was the policy of Cesare to fortify himself by reducing the fiefs of the Church to submission, and by rooting out the dynasties which had acquired a sort of tyranny in Papal cities. The Varani of Camerino and the Manfredi of Faenza had been already extirpated. There was only too good reason to believe that the turn of the Vitelli at Città di Castello, of the Baglioni at Perugia, and of the Bentivogli at Bologna would come next. Pandolfo Petrucci at Siena, surrounded on all sides by Cesare's conquests, and specially menaced by the fortification of Piombino, felt himself in danger. The great house of the Orsini, who swayed a large part of the Patrimony of S. Peter's, and were closely allied to the Vitelli, had even graver cause for anxiety. But such was the system of Italian warfare, that nearly all these noble families lived by the profession of arms, and most of them were in the pay of Cesare. When, therefore, the conspirators met at La Magione, they were plotting against a man whose money they had taken, and whom they had hitherto aided in his career of fraud and spoliation.

47

The diet consisted of the Cardinal Orsini, an avowed antagonist of Alexander VI.; his brother Paolo, the chieftain of the clan; Vitellozzo Vitelli, lord of Città di Castello; Gian-Paolo Baglioni, made undisputed master of Perugia by the recent failure of his cousin Grifonetto's treason; Oliverotto, who had just acquired the March of Fermo by the murder of his uncle Giovanni da Fogliani; Ermes Bentivoglio, the heir of Bologna;

and Antonio da Venafro, the secretary of Pandolfo Petrucci. These men vowed hostility on the basis of common injuries and common fear against the Borgia. But they were for the most part stained themselves with crime, and dared not trust each other, and could not gain the confidence of any respectable power in Italy except the exiled Duke of Urbino. Procrastination was the first weapon used by the wily Cesare, who trusted that time would sow among his rebel captains suspicion and dissension. He next made overtures to the leaders separately, and so far succeeded in his perfidious policy as to draw Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, Paolo Orsini, and Francesco Orsini, Duke of Gravina, into his nets at Sinigaglia. Under pretext of fair conference and equitable settlement of disputed claims, he possessed himself of their persons, and had them strangled—two upon December 31, and two upon January 18, 1503. Of all Cesare's actions, this was the most splendid for its successful combination of sagacity and policy in the hour of peril, of persuasive diplomacy, and of ruthless decision when the time to strike his blow arrived.

CORTONA

After leaving La Magione, the road descends upon the lake of Thrasymene through oak-woods full of nightingales. The lake lay basking, leaden-coloured, smooth and waveless, under a misty, rain-charged, sun-irradiated sky. At Passignano, close beside its shore, we stopped for mid-day. This is a little fishing village of very poor people, who live entirely by labour on the waters. They showed us huge eels coiled in tanks, and some fine specimens of the silver carp—Reina del Lago. It was off one of the eels that we made our lunch; and taken, as he was, alive from his cool lodging, he furnished a series of dishes fit for a king.

Climbing the hill of Cortona seemed a quite interminable business. It poured a deluge. Our horses were tired, and one lean donkey, who, after much trouble, was produced from a farmhouse and yoked in front of them, rendered but little assistance.

49

Next day we duly saw the Muse and Lamp in the Museo, the Fra Angelicos, and all the Signorellis. One cannot help thinking that too much fuss is made nowadays about works of art—running after them for their own sakes, exaggerating their importance, and detaching them as objects of study, instead of taking them with sympathy and carelessness as pleasant or instructive adjuncts to our actual life. Artists, historians of art, and critics are forced to isolate pictures; and it is of profit to their souls to do so. But simple folk, who have no aesthetic vocation, whether creative or critical, suffer more than is good for them by compliance with mere fashion. Sooner or later we shall return to the spirit of the ages which produced these pictures, and which regarded them with less of an industrious bewilderment than they evoke at present.

I am far indeed from wishing to decry art, the study of art, or the benefits to be derived from its intelligent enjoyment. I only mean to suggest that we go the wrong way to work at present in this matter. Picture and sculpture galleries accustom us to the separation of art from life. Our methods of studying art, making a beginning of art-study while traveling, tend to perpetuate this separation. It is only on reflection, after long experience, that we come to perceive that the most fruitful moments in our art education have been casual and unsought, in quaint nooks and unexpected places, where nature, art, and life are happily blent.

The Palace of the Commune at Cortona is interesting because of the shields of Florentine governors, sculptured on blocks of grey stone, and inserted in its outer walls—Peruzzi, Albizzi, Strozzi, Salviati, among the more ancient—de' Medici at a later epoch. The revolutions in the Republic of Florence may be read by a herald from these coats-of-arms and the dates beneath them.

50

The landscape of this Tuscan highland satisfies me more and more with sense of breadth and beauty. From S. Margherita above the town the prospect is immense and wonderful and wild—up into those brown, forbidding mountains; down to the vast plain; and over to the cities of Chiusi, Montepulciano, and Foiano. The jewel of the view is Trasimeno, a silvery shield encased with serried hills, and set upon one corner of the scene, like a precious thing apart and meant for separate contemplation. There is something in the singularity and circumscribed completeness of the mountain-girded lake, diminished by distance, which would have attracted Lionardo da Vinci's pencil, had he seen it.

Cortona seems desperately poor, and the beggars are intolerable. One

little blind boy, led by his brother, both frightfully ugly and ragged urchins, pursued us all over the city, incessantly whining 'Signore Padrone!' It was only on the threshold of the inn that I ventured to give them a few coppers, for I knew well that any public beneficence would raise the whole swarm of the begging population round us. Sitting later in the day upon the piazza of S. Domenico, I saw the same blind boy taken by his brother to play. The game consists, in the little creature throwing his arms about the trunk of a big tree, and running round and round it, clasping it. This seemed to make him quite inexpressibly happy. His face lit up and beamed with that inner beatitude blind people show—a kind of rapture shining over it, as though nothing could be more altogether delightful. This little boy had the smallpox at eight months, and has never been able to see since. He looks sturdy, and may live to be of any age—doomed always, is that possible, to beg?

51

CHIUSI

What more enjoyable dinner can be imagined than a flask of excellent Montepulciano, a well-cooked steak, and a little goat's cheese in the inn of the Leone d'Oro at Chiusi? The windows are open, and the sun is setting. Monte Cetona bounds the view to the right, and the wooded hills of Città della Pieve to the left. The deep green dimpled valley goes stretching away toward Orvieto; and at its end a purple mountain mass, distinct and solitary, which may peradventure be Soracte! The near country is broken into undulating hills, forested with fine olives and oaks; and the composition of the landscape, with its crowning villages, is worthy of a background to an Umbrian picture. The breadth and depth and quiet which those painters loved, the space of lucid sky, the suggestion of winding waters in verdant fields, all are here. The evening is beautiful—golden light streaming softly from behind us on this prospect, and gradually mellowing to violet and blue with stars above.

At Chiusi we visited several Etruscan tombs, and saw their red and black scrawled pictures. One of the sepulchres was a well-jointed vault of stone with no wall-paintings. The rest had been scooped out of the living tufa. This was the excuse for some pleasant hours spent in walking and driving through the country. Chiusi means for me the mingling of grey olives and green oaks in limpid sunlight; deep leafy lanes; warm sandstone banks; copses with nightingales and cyclamens and cuckoos; glimpses of a silvery lake; blue shadowy distances; the bristling ridge of Monte Cetona; the conical towers, Becca di Questo and Becca di Quello, over against each other on the borders; ways winding among hedgerows like some bit of England in June, but not so full of flowers. It means all this, I fear, for me far more than theories about Lars Porsenna and Etruscan ethnology.

52

GUBBIO

Gubbio ranks among the most ancient of Italian hill-towns. With its back set firm against the spine of central Apennines, and piled, house over house, upon the rising slope, it commands a rich tract of upland champaign, bounded southward toward Perugia and Foligno by peaked and rolling ridges. This amphitheatre, which forms its source of wealth and independence, is admirably protected by a chain of natural defences; and Gubbio wears a singularly old-world aspect of antiquity and isolation. Houses climb right to the crests of gaunt bare peaks; and the brown mediæval walls with square towers which protected them upon the mountain side, following the inequalities of the ground, are still a marked feature in the landscape. It is a town of steep streets and staircases, with quaintly framed prospects, and solemn vistas opening at every turn across the lowland. One of these views might be selected for especial notice. In front, irregular buildings losing themselves in country as they straggle by the roadside; then the open post-road with a cypress to the right; afterwards, the rich green fields, and on a bit of rising ground an ancient farmhouse with its brown dependencies; lastly, the blue hills above Fossato, and far away a wrack of tumbling clouds. All this enclosed by the heavy archway of the Porta Romana, where sunlight and shadow checker the mellow tones of a dim fresco, indistinct with age, but beautiful.

Gubbio has not greatly altered since the middle ages. But poor people are now living in the palaces of noblemen and merchants. These new inhabitants have walled up the fair arched windows and slender portals of the ancient dwellers, spoiling the beauty of the streets without materially changing the architectural masses. In that witching hour when the Italian sunset has faded, and a solemn grey replaces the

53

glowing tones of daffodil and rose, it is not difficult, here dreaming by oneself alone, to picture the old noble life—the ladies moving along those open loggias, the young men in plumed caps and curling hair with one foot on those doorsteps, the knights in armour and the sumpter mules and red-robed Cardinals defiling through those gates into the courts within. The modern bricks and mortar with which that picturesque scene has been overlaid, the ugly oblong windows and bright green shutters which now interrupt the flowing lines of arch and gallery; these disappear beneath the fine remembered touch of a sonnet sung by Folgore, when still the Parties had their day, and this deserted city was the centre of great aims and throbbing aspirations.

The names of the chief buildings in Gubbio are strongly suggestive of the middle ages. They abut upon a Piazza de' Signori. One of them, the Palazzo del Municipio, is a shapeless unfinished block of masonry. It is here that the Eugubine tables, plates of brass with Umbrian and Roman incised characters, are shown. The Palazzo de' Consoli has higher architectural qualities, and is indeed unique among Italian palaces for the combination of massiveness with lightness in a situation of unprecedented boldness. Rising from enormous substructures mortised into the solid hillside, it rears its vast rectangular bulk to a giddy height above the town; airy loggias imposed on great forbidding masses of brown stone, shooting aloft into a light ærial tower. The empty halls inside are of fair proportions and a noble size, and the views from the open colonnades in all directions fascinate. But the final impression made by the building is one of square, tranquil, massive strength—perpetuity embodied in masonry—force suggesting facility by daring and successful addition of elegance to hugeness. Vast as it is, this pile is not forbidding, as a similarly weighty structure in the North would be. The fine quality of the stone and the delicate though simple mouldings of the windows give it an Italian grace.

54

These public palaces belong to the age of the Communes, when Gubbio was a free town, with a policy of its own, and an important part to play in the internecine struggles of Pope and Empire, Guelf and Ghibelline. The ruined, deserted, degraded Palazzo Ducale reminds us of the advent of the despots. It has been stripped of all its tarsia-work and sculpture. Only here and there a Fe.D., with the cupping-glass of Federigo di Montefeltro, remains to show that Gubbio once became the fairest fief of the Urbino duchy. S. Ubaldo, who gave his name to this duke's son, was the patron of Gubbio, and to him the cathedral is dedicated—one low enormous vault, like a cellar or feudal banqueting hall, roofed with a succession of solid Gothic arches. This strange old church, and the House of Canons, buttressed on the hill beside it, have suffered less from modernisation than most buildings in Gubbio. The latter, in particular, helps one to understand what this city of grave palazzi must have been, and how the mere opening of old doors and windows would restore it to its primitive appearance. The House of the Canons has, in fact, not yet been given over to the use of middle-class and proletariat.

At the end of a day in Gubbio, it is pleasant to take our ease in the primitive hostelry, at the back of which foams a mountain-torrent, rushing downward from the Apennines. The Gubbio wine is very fragrant, and of a rich ruby colour. Those to whom the tints of wine and jewels give a pleasure not entirely childish, will take delight in its specific blending of tawny hues with rose. They serve the table still, at Gubbio, after the antique Italian fashion, covering it with a cream-coloured linen cloth bordered with coarse lace—the creases of the press, the scent of old herbs from the wardrobe, are still upon it—and the board is set with shallow dishes of warm, white earthenware, basket-worked in open lattice at the edge, which contain little separate messes of meat, vegetables, cheese, and comfits. The wine stands in strange, slender phials of smooth glass, with stoppers; and the amber-coloured bread lies in fair round loaves upon the cloth. Dining thus is like sitting down to the supper at Emmaus, in some picture of Gian Bellini or of Masolino. The very bareness of the room—its open rafters, plastered walls, primitive settees, and red-brick floor, on which a dog sits waiting for a bone—enhances the impression of artistic delicacy in the table.

55

FROM GUBBIO TO FANO

The road from Gubbio, immediately after leaving the city, enters a narrow Alpine ravine, where a thin stream dashes over dark, red rocks, and pendent saxifrages wave to the winds. The carriage in which we travelled at the end of May, one morning, had two horses, which our driver soon supplemented with a couple of white oxen. Slowly and toilsomely we ascended between the flanks of barren hills—gaunt masses

of crimson and grey crag, clothed at their summits with short turf and scanty pasture. The pass leads first to the little town of Scheggia, and is called the Monte Calvo, or bald mountain. At Scheggia, it joins the great Flaminian Way, or North road of the Roman armies. At the top there is a fine view over the conical hills that dominate Gubbio, and, far away, to noble mountains above the Furlo and the Foligno line of railway to Ancona. Range rises over range, crossing at unexpected angles, breaking into sudden precipices, and stretching out long, exquisitely modelled outlines, as only Apennines can do, in silvery sobriety of colours toned by clearest air. Every square piece of this austere, wild landscape forms a varied picture, whereof the composition is due to subtle arrangements of lines always delicate; and these lines seem somehow to have been determined in their beauty by the vast antiquity of the mountain system, as though they all had taken time to choose their place and wear down into harmony. The effect of tempered sadness was heightened for us by stormy lights and dun clouds, high in air, rolling vapours and flying shadows, over all the prospect, tinted in ethereal grisaille.

56

After Scheggia, one enters a land of meadow and oak-trees. This is the sacred central tract of Jupiter Apenninus, whose fane—

Delubra Jovis saxoque minantes
Apenninigenis cultae pastoribus arae

—once rose behind us on the bald Iguvian summits. A second little pass leads from this region to the Adriatic side of the Italian watershed, and the road now follows the Barano downward toward the sea. The valley is fairly green with woods, where mistletoe may here and there be seen on boughs of oak, and rich with cornfields. Cagli is the chief town of the district, and here they show one of the best pictures left to us by Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi. It is a Madonna, attended by S. Peter, S. Francis, S. Dominic, S. John, and two angels. One of the angels is traditionally supposed to have been painted from the boy Raphael, and the face has something which reminds us of his portraits. The whole composition, excellent in modelling, harmonious in grouping, soberly but strongly coloured, with a peculiar blending of dignity and sweetness, grace and vigour, makes one wonder why Santi thought it necessary to send his son from his own workshop to study under Perugino. He was himself a master of his art, and this, perhaps the most agreeable of his paintings, has a masculine sincerity which is absent from at least the later works of Perugino.

57

Some miles beyond Cagli, the real pass of the Furlo begins. It owes its name to a narrow tunnel bored by Vespasian in the solid rock, where limestone crags descend on the Barano. The Romans called this gallery Petra Pertusa, or Intercisa, or more familiarly Forulus, whence comes the modern name. Indeed, the stations on the old Flaminian Way are still well marked by Latin designations; for Cagli is the ancient Calles, and Fossombrone is Forum Sempronii, and Fano the Fanum Fortunæ. Vespasian commemorated this early achievement in engineering by an inscription carved on the living stone, which still remains; and Claudian, when he sang the journey of his Emperor Honorius from Rimini to Rome, speaks thus of what was even then an object of astonishment to travellers:—

Laetior hinc fano recipit fortuna vetusto,
Despiciturque vagus praeupta valle Metaurus,
Qua mons arte patens vivo se perforat arcu
Admittitque viam sectae per viscera rupis.

The Forulus itself may now be matched, on any Alpine pass, by several tunnels of far mightier dimensions; for it is narrow, and does not extend more than 126 feet in length. But it occupies a fine position at the end of a really imposing ravine. The whole Furlo Pass might, without too much exaggeration, be described as a kind of Cheddar on the scale of the Via Mala. The limestone rocks, which rise on either hand above the gorge to an enormous height, are noble in form and solemn, like a succession of gigantic portals, with stupendous flanking obelisks and pyramids. Some of these crag-masses rival the fantastic cliffs of Capri, and all consist of that southern mountain limestone which changes from pale yellow to blue grey and dusky orange. A river roars precipitately through the pass, and the roadsides wave with many sorts of campanulas—a profusion of azure and purple bells upon the hard white stone. Of Roman remains there is still enough (in the way of Roman bridges and bits of broken masonry) to please an antiquary's eye. But the lover of nature will dwell chiefly on the picturesque qualities of this historic gorge, so alien to the general character of Italian scenery, and yet so remote from anything to which Swiss travelling accustoms one.

58

The Furlo breaks out into a richer land of mighty oaks and waving cornfields, a fat pastoral country, not unlike Devonshire in detail, with green uplands, and wild-rose tangled hedgerows, and much running water, and abundance of summer flowers. At a point above Fossombrone, the Barano joins the Metauro, and here one has a glimpse of far-away Urbino, high upon its mountain eyrie. It is so rare, in spite of immemorial belief, to find in Italy a wilderness of wild flowers, that I feel inclined to make a list of those I saw from our carriage windows as we rolled down lazily along the road to Fossombrone. Broom, and cytissus, and hawthorn mingled with roses, gladiolus, and sainfoin. There were orchises, and clematis, and privet, and wild-vine, vetches of all hues, red poppies, sky-blue cornflowers, and lilac pimpernel. In the rougher hedges, dogwood, honeysuckle, pyracanth, and acacia made a network of white bloom and blushes. Milk-worts of all bright and tender tints combined with borage, iris, hawkweeds, harebells, crimson clover, thyme, red snap-dragon, golden asters, and dreamy love-in-a-mist, to weave a marvellous carpet such as the looms of Shiraz or of Cashmere never spread. Rarely have I gazed on Flora in such riot, such luxuriance, such self-abandonment to joy. The air was filled with fragrances. Songs of cuckoos and nightingales echoed from the copses on the hillsides. The sun was out, and dancing over all the landscape.

59

After all this, Fano was very restful in the quiet sunset. It has a sandy stretch of shore, on which the long, green-yellow rollers of the Adriatic broke into creamy foam, beneath the waning saffron light over Pesaro and the rosy rising of a full moon. This Adriatic sea carries an English mind home to many a little watering-place upon our coast. In colour and the shape of waves it resembles our Channel.

The sea-shore is Fano's great attraction; but the town has many churches, and some creditable pictures, as well as Roman antiquities. Giovanni Santi may here be seen almost as well as at Cagli; and of Perugino there is one truly magnificent altar-piece—lunette, great centre panel, and predella—dusty in its present condition, but splendidly painted, and happily not yet restored or cleaned. It is worth journeying to Fano to see this. Still better would the journey be worth the traveller's while if he could be sure to witness such a game of *Pallone* as we chanced upon in the Via dell' Arco di Augusto—lads and grown-men, tightly girt, in shirt sleeves, driving the great ball aloft into the air with cunning bias and calculation of projecting house-eaves. I do not understand the game; but it was clearly played something after the manner of our football, that is to say; with sides, and front and back players so arranged as to cover the greatest number of angles of incidence on either wall.

Fano still remembers that it is the Fane of Fortune. On the fountain in the market-place stands a bronze Fortuna, slim and airy, offering her veil to catch the wind. May she long shower health and prosperity upon the modern watering-place of which she is the patron saint!

I

At Rimini, one spring, the impulse came upon my wife and me to make our way across San Marino to Urbino. In the Piazza, called apocryphally after Julius Cæsar, I found a proper *vetturino*, with a good carriage and two indefatigable horses. He was a splendid fellow, and bore a great historic name, as I discovered when our bargain was completed. 'What are you called?' I asked him. '*Filippo Visconti, per servirla!*' was the prompt reply. Brimming over with the darkest memories of the Italian Renaissance, I hesitated when I heard this answer. The associations seemed too ominous. And yet the man himself was so attractive—tall, stalwart, and well looking—no feature of his face or limb of his athletic form recalling the gross tyrant who concealed worse than Caligula's ugliness from sight in secret chambers—that I shook this preconception from my mind. As it turned out, Filippo Visconti had nothing in common with his infamous namesake but the name. On a long and trying journey, he showed neither sullen nor yet ferocious tempers; nor, at the end of it, did he attempt by any master-stroke of craft to wheedle from me more than his fair pay; but took the meerschaum pipe I gave him for a keepsake, with the frank goodwill of an accomplished gentleman. The only exhibition of his hot Italian blood which I remember did his humanity credit. While we were ascending a steep hillside, he jumped from his box to thrash a ruffian by the roadside for brutal treatment to a little boy. He broke his whip, it is true, in this encounter; risked a dangerous quarrel; and left his carriage, with myself and wife inside it, to the mercy of his horses in a somewhat perilous position. But when he came back, hot and glowing, from this deed of justice, I could only applaud his zeal.

61

An Italian of this type, handsome as an antique statue, with the refinement of a modern gentleman and that intelligence which is innate in a race of immemorial culture, is a fascinating being. He may be absolutely ignorant in all book-learning. He may be as ignorant as a Bersagliere from Montalcino with whom I once conversed at Rimini, who gravely said that he could walk in three months to North America, and thought of doing it when his term of service was accomplished. But he will display, as this young soldier did, a grace and ease of address which are rare in London drawing-rooms; and by his shrewd remarks upon the cities he has visited, will show that he possesses a fine natural taste for things of beauty. The speech of such men, drawn from the common stock of the Italian people, is seasoned with proverbial sayings, the wisdom of centuries condensed in a few nervous words. When emotion fires their brain, they break into spontaneous eloquence, or suggest the motive of a poem by phrases pregnant with imagery.

For the first stage of the journey out of Rimini, Filippo's two horses sufficed. The road led almost straight across the level between quickset hedges in white bloom. But when we reached the long steep hill which ascends to San Marino, the inevitable oxen were called out, and we toiled upwards leisurely through cornfields bright with red anemones and sweet narcissus. At this point pomegranate hedges replaced the May-thorns of the plain. In course of time our *bovi* brought us to the Borgo, or lower town, whence there is a further ascent of seven hundred feet to the topmost hawk's-nest or acropolis of the republic. These we climbed on foot, watching the view expand around us and beneath. Craggs of limestone here break down abruptly to the rolling hills, which go to lose themselves in field and shore. Misty reaches of the Adriatic close the world to eastward. Cesena, Rimini, Verucchio, and countless hill-set villages, each isolated on its tract of verdure conquered from the stern grey soil, define the points where Montefeltri wrestled with Malatestas in long bygone years. Around are marly mountain-flanks in wrinkles and gnarled convolutions like some giant's brain, furrowed by rivers crawling through dry wasteful beds of shingle. Interminable ranges of gaunt Apennines stretch, tier by tier, beyond; and over all this landscape, a grey-green mist of rising crops and new-fledged oak-trees lies like a veil upon the nakedness of Nature's ruins.

62

Nothing in Europe conveys a more striking sense of geological antiquity than such a prospect. The denudation and abrasion of innumerable ages, wrought by slow persistent action of weather and water on an upheaved mountain mass, are here made visible. Every wave in that vast sea of hills, every furrow in their worn flanks, tells its tale of a continuous corrosion still in progress. The dominant impression is one of melancholy. We forget how Romans, countermarching Carthaginians,

trod the land beneath us. The marvel of San Marino, retaining independence through the drums and trappings of the last seven centuries, is swallowed in a deeper sense of wonder. We turn instinctively in thought to Leopardi's musings on man's destiny at war with unknown nature-forces and malignant rulers of the universe.

63

Omai disprezza
Te, la natura, il brutto
Poter che, ascoso, a comun danno impera,
E l' infinita vanità del tutto.

And then, straining our eyes southward, we sweep the dim blue distance for Recanati, and remember that the poet of modern despair and discouragement was reared in even such a scene as this.

The town of San Marino is grey, narrow-streeted, simple; with a great, new, decent, Greek-porticoed cathedral, dedicated to the eponymous saint. A certain austerity defines it from more picturesque hill-cities with a less uniform history. There is a marble statue of S. Marino in the choir of his church; and in his cell is shown the stone bed and pillow on which he took austere repose. One narrow window near the saint's abode commands a proud but melancholy landscape of distant hills and seaboard. To this, the great absorbing charm of San Marino, our eyes instinctively, recurrently, take flight. It is a landscape which by variety and beauty thralls attention, but which by its interminable sameness might grow almost overpowering. There is no relief. The gladness shed upon far humbler Northern lands in May is ever absent here. The German word *Gemüthlichkeit*, the English phrase 'a home of ancient peace,' are here alike by art and nature untranslated into visibilities. And yet (as we who gaze upon it thus are fain to think) if peradventure the intolerable *ennui* of this panorama should drive a citizen of San Marino into out-lands, the same view would haunt him whithersoever he went—the swallows of his native eyrie would shrill through his sleep—he would yearn to breathe its fine keen air in winter, and to watch its iris-hedges deck themselves with blue in spring;—like Virgil's hero, dying, he would think of San Marino: *Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos*. Even a passing stranger may feel the mingled fascination and oppression of this prospect—the monotony which maddens, the charm which at a distance grows upon the mind, environing it with memories.

64

Descending to the Borgo, we found that Filippo Visconti had ordered a luncheon of excellent white bread, pigeons, and omelette, with the best red muscat wine I ever drank, unless the sharp air of the hills deceived my appetite. An Italian history of San Marino, including its statutes, in three volumes, furnished intellectual food. But I confess to having learned from these pages little else than this: first, that the survival of the Commonwealth through all phases of European politics had been semi-miraculous; secondly, that the most eminent San Marinesi had been lawyers. It is possible on a hasty deduction from these two propositions (to which, however, I am far from wishing to commit myself), that the latter is a sufficient explanation of the former.

From San Marino the road plunges at a break-neck pace. We are now in the true Feltrian highlands, whence the Counts of Montefeltro issued in the twelfth century. Yonder eyrie is San Leo, which formed the key of entrance to the duchy of Urbino in campaigns fought many hundred years ago. Perched on the crest of a precipitous rock, this fortress looks as though it might defy all enemies but famine. And yet San Leo was taken and re-taken by strategy and fraud, when Montefeltro, Borgia, Malatesta, Rovere, contended for dominion in these valleys. Yonder is Sta. Agata, the village to which Guidobaldo fled by night when Valentino drove him from his dukedom. A little farther towers Carpegna, where one branch of the Montefeltro house maintained a countship through seven centuries, and only sold their fief to Rome in 1815. Monte Coppiolo lies behind, Pietra Rubia in front: two other eagles' nests of the same brood. What a road it is! It beats the tracks on Exmoor. The uphill and downhill of Devonshire scorns compromise or mitigation by *détour* and zigzag. But here geography is on a scale so far more vast, and the roadway is so far worse metalled than with us in England—knotty masses of talc and nodes of sandstone cropping up at dangerous turnings—that only Dante's words describe the journey:—

65

Vassi in Sanleo, e discendesi in Noli,
Montasi su Bismantova in cacume
Con esso i piè; ma qui convien ch' uom voli.

Of a truth, our horses seemed rather to fly than scramble up and down these rugged precipices; Visconti cheerily animating them with the brave spirit that was in him, and lending them his wary driver's help of hand

and voice at need.

We were soon upon a cornice-road between the mountains and the Adriatic: following the curves of gulch and cleft ravine; winding round ruined castles set on points of vantage; the sea-line high above their grass-grown battlements, the shadow-dappled champaign girdling their bastions mortised on the naked rock. Except for the blue lights across the distance, and the ever-present sea, these earthy Apennines would be too grim. Infinite air and this spare veil of spring-tide greenery on field and forest soothe their sternness. Two rivers, swollen by late rains, had to be forded. Through one of these, the Foglia, bare-legged peasants led the way. The horses waded to their bellies in the tawny water. Then more hills and vales; green nooks with rippling corn-crops; secular oaks attired in golden leafage. The clear afternoon air rang with the voices of a thousand larks overhead. The whole world seemed quivering with light and delicate ethereal sound. And yet my mind turned irresistibly to thoughts of war, violence, and pillage. How often has this intermediate land been fought over by Montefeltro and Brancaleoni, by Borgia and Malatesta, by Medici and Della Rovere! Its *contadini* are robust men, almost statuesque in build, and beautiful of feature. No wonder that the Princes of Urbino, with such materials to draw from, sold their service and their troops to Florence, Rome, S. Mark, and Milan. The bearing of these peasants is still soldierly and proud. Yet they are not sullen or forbidding like the Sicilians, whose habits of life, for the rest, much resemble theirs. The villages, there as here, are few and far between, perched high on rocks, from which the folk descend to till the ground and reap the harvest. But the southern *brusquerie* and brutality are absent from this district. The men have something of the dignity and slow-eyed mildness of their own huge oxen. As evening fell, more solemn Apennines upreared themselves to southward. The Monte d'Asdrubale, Monte Nerone, and Monte Catria hove into sight. At last, when light was dim, a tower rose above the neighbouring ridge, a broken outline of some city barred the sky-line. Urbino stood before us. Our long day's march was at an end.

66

The sunset was almost spent, and a four days' moon hung above the western Apennines, when we took our first view of the palace. It is a fancy-thralling work of wonder seen in that dim twilight; like some castle reared by Atlante's magic for imprisonment of Ruggiero, or palace sought in fairyland by Astolf winding his enchanted horn. Where shall we find its like, combining, as it does, the buttressed battlemented bulk of mediæval strongholds with the airy balconies, suspended gardens, and fantastic turrets of Italian pleasure-houses? This unique blending of the feudal past with the Renaissance spirit of the time when it was built, connects it with the art of Ariosto—or more exactly with Boiardo's epic. Duke Federigo planned his palace at Urbino just at the moment when the Count of Scandiano had begun to chaunt his lays of Roland in the Castle of Ferrara. Chivalry, transmuted by the Italian genius into something fanciful and quaint, survived as a frail work of art. The men-at-arms of the Condottieri still glittered in gilded hauberks. Their helmets waved with plumes and bizarre crests. Their surcoats blazed with heraldries; their velvet caps with medals bearing legendary emblems. The pomp and circumstance of feudal war had not yet yielded to the cannon of the Gascon or the Switzer's pike. The fatal age of foreign invasions had not begun for Italy. Within a few years Charles VIII.'s holiday excursion would reveal the internal rottenness and weakness of her rival states, and the peninsula for half a century to come would be drenched in the blood of Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, fighting for her cities as their prey. But now Lorenzo de' Medici was still alive. The famous policy which bears his name held Italy suspended for a golden time in false tranquillity and independence. The princes who shared his culture and his love of art were gradually passing into modern noblemen, abandoning the savage feuds and passions of more virile centuries, yielding to luxury and scholarly enjoyments. The castles were becoming courts, and despotisms won by force were settling into dynasties.

67

It was just at this epoch that Duke Federigo built his castle at Urbino. One of the ablest and wealthiest Condottieri of his time, one of the best instructed and humanest of Italian princes, he combined in himself the qualities which mark that period of transition. And these he impressed upon his dwelling-house, which looks backward to the mediæval fortalice and forward to the modern palace. This makes it the just embodiment in architecture of Italian romance, the perfect analogue of the 'Orlando Innamorato.' By comparing it with the castle of the Estes at Ferrara and the Palazzo del Te of the Gonzagas at Mantua, we place it in its right position between mediæval and Renaissance Italy, between the age when principalities arose upon the ruins of commercial independence

68

and the age when they became dynastic under Spain.

The exigencies of the ground at his disposal forced Federigo to give the building an irregular outline. The fine façade, with its embayed *loggie* and flanking turrets, is placed too close upon the city ramparts for its due effect. We are obliged to cross the deep ravine which separates it from a lower quarter of the town, and take our station near the Oratory of S. Giovanni Battista, before we can appreciate the beauty of its design, or the boldness of the group it forms with the cathedral dome and tower and the square masses of numerous out-buildings. Yet this peculiar position of the palace, though baffling to a close observer of its details, is one of singular advantage to the inhabitants. Set on the verge of Urbino's towering eminence, it fronts a wave-tossed sea of vales and mountain summits toward the rising and the setting sun. There is nothing but illimitable air between the terraces and loggias of the Duchess's apartments and the spreading pyramid of Monte Catria.

A nobler scene is nowhere swept from palace windows than this, which Castiglione touched in a memorable passage at the end of his 'Cortegiano.' To one who in our day visits Urbino, it is singular how the slight indications of this sketch, as in some silhouette, bring back the antique life, and link the present with the past—a hint, perhaps, for reticence in our descriptions. The gentlemen and ladies of the court had spent a summer night in long debate on love, rising to the height of mystical Platonic rapture on the lips of Bembo, when one of them exclaimed, 'The day has broken!' 'He pointed to the light which was beginning to enter by the fissures of the windows. Whereupon we flung the casements wide upon that side of the palace which looks toward the high peak of Monte Catria, and saw that a fair dawn of rosy hue was born already in the eastern skies, and all the stars had vanished except the sweet regent of the heaven of Venus, who holds the borderlands of day and night; and from her sphere it seemed as though a gentle wind were breathing, filling the air with eager freshness, and waking among the numerous woods upon the neighbouring hills the sweet-toned symphonies of joyous birds.'

69

II

The House of Montefeltro rose into importance early in the twelfth century. Frederick Barbarossa erected their fief into a county in 1160. Supported by imperial favour, they began to exercise an undefined authority over the district, which they afterwards converted into a duchy. But, though Ghibelline for several generations, the Montefeltri were too near neighbours of the Papal power to free themselves from ecclesiastical vassalage. Therefore in 1216 they sought and obtained the title of Vicars of the Church. Urbino acknowledged them as semi-despots in their double capacity of Imperial and Papal deputies. Cagli and Gubbio followed in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth, Castel Durante was acquired from the Brancaleoni by warfare, and Fossombrone from the Malatestas by purchase. Numerous fiefs and villages fell into their hands upon the borders of Rimini in the course of a continued struggle with the House of Malatesta: and when Fano and Pesaro were added at the opening of the sixteenth century, the domain over which they ruled was a compact territory, some forty miles square, between the Adriatic and the Apennines. From the close of the thirteenth century they bore the title of Counts of Urbino. The famous Conte Guido, whom Dante placed among the fraudulent in hell, supported the honours of the house and increased its power by his political action, at this epoch. But it was not until the year 1443 that the Montefeltri acquired their ducal title. This was conferred by Eugenius IV. upon Oddantonio, over whose alleged crimes and indubitable assassination a veil of mystery still hangs. He was the son of Count Guidantonio, and at his death the Montefeltri of Urbino were extinct in the legitimate line. A natural son of Guidantonio had been, however, recognised in his father's lifetime, and married to Gentile, heiress of Mercatello. This was Federigo, a youth of great promise, who succeeded his half-brother in 1444 as Count of Urbino. It was not until 1474 that the ducal title was revived for him.

70

Duke Frederick was a prince remarkable among Italian despots for private virtues and sober use of his hereditary power. He spent his youth at Mantua, in that famous school of Vittorino da Feltre, where the sons and daughters of the first Italian nobility received a model education in humanities, good manners, and gentle physical accomplishments. More than any of his fellow-students Frederick profited by this rare scholar's discipline. On leaving school he adopted the profession of arms, as it was then practised, and joined the troop of the Condottiere Niccolò Piccinino. Young men of his own rank, especially the younger sons and bastards of

ruling families, sought military service under captains of adventure. If they succeeded they were sure to make money. The coffers of the Church and the republics lay open to their not too scrupulous hands; the wealth of Milan and Naples was squandered on them in retaining-fees and salaries for active service. There was always the further possibility of placing a coronet upon their brows before they died, if haply they should wrest a town from their employers, or obtain the cession of a province from a needy Pope. The neighbours of the Montefeltri in Umbria, Romagna, and the Marches of Ancona were all of them Condottieri. Malatestas of Rimini and Pesaro, Vitelli of Città di Castello, Varani of Camerino, Baglioni of Perugia, to mention only a few of the most eminent nobles, enrolled themselves under the banners of plebeian adventurers like Piccinino and Sforza Attendolo. Though their family connections gave them a certain advantage, the system was essentially democratic. Gattamelata and Carmagnola sprang from obscurity by personal address and courage to the command of armies. Colleoni fought his way up from the grooms to princely station and the *bâton* of S. Mark. Francesco Sforza, whose father had begun life as a tiller of the soil, seized the ducal crown of Milan, and founded a house which ranked among the first in Europe.

71

It is not needful to follow Duke Frederick in his military career. We may briefly remark that when he succeeded to Urbino by his brother's death in 1444, he undertook generalship on a grand scale. His own dominions supplied him with some of the best troops in Italy. He was careful to secure the goodwill of his subjects by attending personally to their interests, relieving them of imposts, and executing equal justice. He gained the then unique reputation of an honest prince, paternally disposed toward his dependents. Men flocked to his standards willingly, and he was able to bring an important contingent into any army. These advantages secured for him alliances with Francesco Sforza, and brought him successively into connection with Milan, Venice, Florence, the Church of Naples. As a tactician in the field he held high rank among the generals of the age, and so considerable were his engagements that he acquired great wealth in the exercise of his profession. We find him at one time receiving 8000 ducats a month as war-pay from Naples, with a peace pension of 6000. While Captain-General of the League, he drew for his own use in war 45,000 ducats of annual pay. Retaining-fees and pensions in the name of past services swelled his income, the exact extent of which has not, so far as I am aware, been estimated, but which must have made him one of the richest of Italian princes. All this wealth he spent upon his duchy, fortifying and beautifying its cities, drawing youths of promise to his court, maintaining a great train of life, and keeping his vassals in good-humour by the lightness of a rule which contrasted favourably with the exactions of needier despots.

72

While fighting for the masters who offered him *condotta* in the complicated wars of Italy, Duke Frederick used his arms, when occasion served, in his own quarrels. Many years of his life were spent in a prolonged struggle with his neighbour Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, the bizarre and brilliant tyrant of Rimini, who committed the fatal error of embroiling himself beyond all hope of pardon with the Church, and who died discomfited in the duel with his warier antagonist. Urbino profited by each mistake of Sigismondo, and the history of this long desultory strife with Rimini is a history of gradual aggrandisement and consolidation for the Montefeltrian duchy.

In 1459 Duke Frederick married his second wife, Battista, daughter of Alessandro Sforza, Lord of Pesaro. Their portraits, painted by Piero della Francesca, are to be seen in the Uffizzi at Florence. Some years earlier, Frederick lost his right eye and had the bridge of his nose broken in a jousting match outside the town-gate of Urbino. After this accident, he preferred to be represented in profile—the profile so well known to students of Italian art on medals and bas-reliefs. It was not without medical aid and vows fulfilled by a mother's self-sacrifice to death, if we may trust the diarists of Urbino, that the ducal couple got an heir. In 1472, however, a son was born to them, whom they christened Guido Paolo Ubaldo. He proved a youth of excellent parts and noble nature—apt at study, perfect in all chivalrous accomplishments. But he inherited some fatal physical debility, and his life was marred with a constitutional disease, which then received the name of gout, and which deprived him of the free use of his limbs. After his father's death in 1482, Naples, Florence, and Milan continued Frederick's war engagements to Guidobaldo. The prince was but a boy of ten. Therefore these important *condotte* must be regarded as compliments and pledges for the future. They prove to what a pitch Duke Frederick had raised the credit of his state and war establishment. Seven years later, Guidobaldo married

73

Elisabetta, daughter of Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. This union, though a happy one, was never blessed with children; and in the certainty of barrenness, the young Duke thought it prudent to adopt a nephew as heir to his dominions. He had several sisters, one of whom, Giovanna, had been married to a nephew of Sixtus IV., Giovanni della Rovere, Lord of Sinigaglia and Prefect of Rome. They had a son, Francesco Maria, who, after his adoption by Guidobaldo, spent his boyhood at Urbino.

The last years of the fifteenth century were marked by the sudden rise of Cesare Borgia to a power which threatened the liberties of Italy. Acting as General for the Church, he carried his arms against the petty tyrants of Romagna, whom he dispossessed and extirpated. His next move was upon Camerino and Urbino. He first acquired Camerino, having lulled Guidobaldo into false security by treacherous professions of goodwill. Suddenly the Duke received intelligence that the Borgia was marching on him over Cagli. This was in the middle of June 1502. It is difficult to comprehend the state of weakness in which Guidobaldo was surprised, or the panic which then seized him. He made no efforts to rouse his subjects to resistance, but fled by night with his nephew through rough mountain roads, leaving his capital and palace to the marauder. Cesare Borgia took possession without striking a blow, and removed the treasures of Urbino to the Vatican. His occupation of the duchy was not undisturbed, however; for the people rose in several places against him, proving that Guidobaldo had yielded too hastily to alarm. By this time the fugitive was safe in Mantua, whence he returned, and for a short time succeeded in establishing himself again at Urbino. But he could not hold his own against the Borgias, and in December, by a treaty, he resigned his claims and retired to Venice, where he lived upon the bounty of S. Mark. It must be said, in justice to the Duke, that his constitutional debility rendered him unfit for active operations in the field. Perhaps he could not have done better than thus to bend beneath the storm.

74

The sudden death of Alexander VI. and the election of a Della Rovere to the Papacy in 1503 changed Guidobaldo's prospects. Julius II. was the sworn foe of the Borgias and the close kinsman of Urbino's heir. It was therefore easy for the Duke to walk into his empty palace on the hill, and to reinstate himself in the domains from which he had so recently been ousted. The rest of his life was spent in the retirement of his court, surrounded with the finest scholars and the noblest gentlemen of Italy. The ill-health which debarred him from the active pleasures and employments of his station, was borne with uniform sweetness of temper and philosophy.

When he died, in 1508, his nephew, Francesco Maria della Rovere, succeeded to the duchy, and once more made the palace of Urbino the resort of men-at-arms and captains. He was a prince of very violent temper: of its extravagance history has recorded three remarkable examples. He murdered the Cardinal of Pavia with his own hand in the streets of Ravenna; stabbed a lover of his sister to death at Urbino; and in a council of war knocked Francesco Guicciardini down with a blow of his fist. When the history of Italy came to be written, Guicciardini was probably mindful of that insult, for he painted Francesco Maria's character and conduct in dark colours. At the same time this Duke of Urbino passed for one of the first generals of the age. The greatest stain upon his memory is his behaviour in the year 1527, when, by dilatory conduct of the campaign in Lombardy, he suffered the passage of Frundsberg's army unopposed, and afterwards hesitated to relieve Rome from the horrors of the sack. He was the last Italian Condottiere of the antique type; and the vices which Machiavelli exposed in that bad system of mercenary warfare were illustrated on these occasions. During his lifetime, the conditions of Italy were so changed by Charles V.'s imperial settlement in 1530, that the occupation of Condottiere ceased to have any meaning. Strozzi and Farnesi, who afterwards followed this profession, enlisted in the ranks of France or Spain, and won their laurels in Northern Europe.

75

While Leo X. held the Papal chair, the duchy of Urbino was for a while wrested from the house of Della Rovere, and conferred upon Lorenzo de' Medici. Francesco Maria made a better fight for his heritage than Guidobaldo had done. Yet he could not successfully resist the power of Rome. The Pope was ready to spend enormous sums of money on this petty war; the Duke's purse was shorter, and the mercenary troops he was obliged to use, proved worthless in the field. Spaniards, for the most part, pitted against Spaniards, they suffered the campaigns to degenerate into a guerilla warfare of pillage and reprisals. In 1517 the duchy was formally ceded to Lorenzo. But this Medici did not live long to

76

enjoy it, and his only child Catherine, the future Queen of France, never exercised the rights which had devolved upon her by inheritance. The shifting scene of Italy beheld Francesco Maria reinstated in Urbino after Leo's death in 1522.

This Duke married Leonora Gonzaga, a princess of the House of Mantua. Their portraits, painted by Titian, adorn the Venetian room of the Uffizzi. Of their son, Guidobaldo II., little need be said. He was twice married, first to Giulia Varano, Duchess by inheritance of Camerino; secondly, to Vittoria Farnese, daughter of the Duke of Parma. Guidobaldo spent a lifetime in petty quarrels with his subjects, whom he treated badly, attempting to draw from their pockets the wealth which his father and the Montefeltri had won in military service. He intervened at an awkward period of Italian politics. The old Italy of despots, commonwealths, and Condottieri, in which his predecessors played substantial parts, was at an end. The new Italy of Popes and Austro-Spanish dynasties had hardly settled into shape. Between these epochs, Guidobaldo II., of whom we have a dim and hazy presentation on the page of history, seems somehow to have fallen flat. As a sign of altered circumstances, he removed his court to Pesaro, and built the great palace of the Della Roveres upon the public square.

Guidobaldaccio, as he was called, died in 1574, leaving an only son, Francesco Maria II., whose life and character illustrate the new age which had begun for Italy. He was educated in Spain at the court of Philip II., where he spent more than two years. When he returned, his Spanish haughtiness, punctilious attention to etiquette, and superstitious piety attracted observation. The violent temper of the Della Roveres, which Francesco Maria I. displayed in acts of homicide, and which had helped to win his bad name for Guidobaldaccio, took the form of sullenness in the last Duke. The finest episode in his life was the part he played in the battle of Lepanto, under his old comrade, Don John of Austria. His father forced him to an uncongenial marriage with Lucrezia d'Este, Princess of Ferrara. She left him, and took refuge in her native city, then honoured by the presence of Tasso and Guarini. He bore her departure with philosophical composure, recording the event in his diary as something to be dryly grateful for. Left alone, the Duke abandoned himself to solitude, religious exercises, hunting, and the economy of his impoverished dominions. He became that curious creature, a man of narrow nature and mediocre capacity, who, dedicated to the cult of self, is fain to pass for saint and sage in easy circumstances. He married, for the second time, a lady, Livia della Rovere, who belonged to his own family, but had been born in private station. She brought him one son, the Prince Federigo-Ubaldo. This youth might have sustained the ducal honours of Urbino, but for his sage-saint father's want of wisdom. The boy was a spoiled child in infancy. Inflated with Spanish vanity from the cradle, taught to regard his subjects as dependents on a despot's will, abandoned to the caprices of his own ungovernable temper, without substantial aid from the paternal piety or stoicism, he rapidly became a most intolerable princeling. His father married him, while yet a boy, to Claudia de' Medici, and virtually abdicated in his favour. Left to his own devices, Federigo chose companions from the troupes of players whom he drew from Venice. He filled his palaces with harlots, and degraded himself upon the stage in parts of mean buffoonery. The resources of the duchy were racked to support these parasites. Spanish rules of etiquette and ceremony were outraged by their orgies. His bride brought him one daughter, Vittoria, who afterwards became the wife of Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Then in the midst of his low dissipation and offences against ducal dignity, he died of apoplexy at the early age of eighteen—the victim, in the severe judgment of history, of his father's selfishness and want of practical ability.

This happened in 1623. Francesco Maria was stunned by the blow. His withdrawal from the duties of the sovereignty in favour of such a son had proved a constitutional unfitness for the duties of his station. The life he loved was one of seclusion in a round of pious exercises, petty studies, peddling economies, and mechanical amusements. A powerful and grasping Pope was on the throne of Rome. Urban at this juncture pressed Francesco Maria hard; and in 1624 the last Duke of Urbino devolved his lordships to the Holy See. He survived the formal act of abdication seven years; when he died, the Pontiff added his duchy to the Papal States, which thenceforth stretched from Naples to the bounds of Venice on the Po.

III

Duke Frederick began the palace at Urbino in 1454, when he was still

only Count. The architect was Luziano of Lauranna, a Dalmatian; and the beautiful white limestone, hard as marble, used in the construction, was brought from the Dalmatian coast. This stone, like the Istrian stone of Venetian buildings, takes and retains the chisel mark with wonderful precision. It looks as though, when fresh, it must have had the pliancy of clay, so delicately are the finest curves in scroll or foliage scooped from its substance. And yet it preserves each cusp and angle of the most elaborate pattern with the crispness and the sharpness of a crystal. When wrought by a clever craftsman, its surface has neither the waxiness of Parian, nor the brittle edge of Carrara marble; and it resists weather better than marble of the choicest quality. This may be observed in many monuments of Venice, where the stone has been long exposed to sea-air. These qualities of the Dalmatian limestone, no less than its agreeable creamy hue and smooth dull polish, adapt it to decoration in low relief. The most attractive details in the palace at Urbino are friezes carved of this material in choice designs of early Renaissance dignity and grace. One chimney-piece in the Sala degli Angeli deserves especial comment. A frieze of dancing Cupids, with gilt hair and wings, their naked bodies left white on a ground of ultramarine, is supported by broad flat pilasters. These are engraved with children holding pots of flowers; roses on one side, carnations on the other. Above the frieze another pair of angels, one at each end, hold lighted torches; and the pyramidal cap of the chimney is carved with two more, flying, and supporting the eagle of the Montefeltri on a raised medallion. Throughout the palace we notice emblems appropriate to the Houses of Montefeltro and Della Rovere: their arms, three golden bends upon a field of azure: the Imperial eagle, granted when Montefeltro was made a fief of the Empire: the Garter of England, worn by the Dukes Federigo and Guidobaldo: the ermine of Naples: the *ventosa*, or cupping-glass, adopted for a private badge by Frederick: the golden oak-tree on an azure field of Della Rovere: the palm-tree, bent beneath a block of stone, with its accompanying motto, *Inclinata Resurgam*: the cipher, FE DX. Profile medallions of Federigo and Guidobaldo, wrought in the lowest possible relief, adorn the staircases. Round the great courtyard runs a frieze of military engines and ensigns, trophies, machines, and implements of war, alluding to Duke Frederick's profession of Condottiere. The doorways are enriched with scrolls of heavy-headed flowers, acanthus foliage, honeysuckles, ivy-berries, birds and boys and sphinxes, in all the riot of Renaissance fancy.

79

This profusion of sculptured *rilievo* is nearly all that remains to show how rich the palace was in things of beauty. Castiglione, writing in the reign of Guidobaldo, says that 'in the opinion of many it is the fairest to be found in Italy; and the Duke filled it so well with all things fitting its magnificence, that it seemed less like a palace than a city. Not only did he collect articles of common use, vessels of silver, and trappings for chambers of rare cloths of gold and silk, and suchlike furniture, but he added multitudes of bronze and marble statues, exquisite pictures, and instruments of music of all sorts. There was nothing but was of the finest and most excellent quality to be seen there. Moreover, he gathered together at a vast cost a large number of the best and rarest books in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and silver, esteeming them the chiefest treasure of his spacious palace.' When Cesare Borgia entered Urbino as conqueror in 1502, he is said to have carried off loot to the value of 150,000 ducats, or perhaps about a quarter of a million sterling. Vespasiano, the Florentine bookseller, has left us a minute account of the formation of the famous library of manuscripts, which he valued at considerably over 30,000 ducats. Yet wandering now through these deserted halls, we seek in vain for furniture or tapestry or works of art. The books have been removed to Rome. The pictures are gone, no man knows whither. The plate has long been melted down. The instruments of music are broken. If frescoes adorned the corridors, they have been whitewashed; the ladies' chambers have been stripped of their rich arras. Only here and there we find a rafted ceiling, painted in fading colours, which, taken with the stonework of the chimney, and some fragments of inlaid panel-work on door or window, enables us to reconstruct the former richness of these princely rooms.

80

Exception must be made in favour of two apartments between the towers upon the southern facade. These were apparently the private rooms of the Duke and Duchess, and they are still approached by a great winding staircase in one of the *torricini*. Adorned in indestructible or irremovable materials, they retain some traces of their ancient splendour. On the first floor, opening on the vaulted loggia, we find a little chapel encrusted with lovely work in stucco and marble; friezes of

81

bulls, sphinxes, sea-horses, and foliage; with a low relief of Madonna and Child in the manner of Mino da Fiesole. Close by is a small study with inscriptions to the Muses and Apollo. The cabinet connecting these two cells has a Latin legend, to say that Religion here dwells near the temple of the liberal arts:

Bina vides parvo discrimine juncta sacella,
Altera pars Musis altera sacra Deo est.

On the floor above, corresponding in position to this apartment, is a second, of even greater interest, since it was arranged by the Duke Frederick for his own retreat. The study is panelled in tarsia of beautiful design and execution. Three of the larger compartments show Faith, Hope, and Charity; figures not unworthy of a Botticelli or a Filippino Lippi. The occupations of the Duke are represented on a smaller scale by armour, *bâtons* of command, scientific instruments, lutes, viols, and books, some open and some shut. The Bible, Homer, Virgil, Seneca, Tacitus, and Cicero, are lettered; apparently to indicate his favourite authors. The Duke himself, arrayed in his state robes, occupies a fourth great panel; and the whole of this elaborate composition is harmonised by emblems, badges, and occasional devices of birds, articles of furniture, and so forth. The tarsia, or inlaid wood of different kinds and colours, is among the best in this kind of art to be found in Italy, though perhaps it hardly deserves to rank with the celebrated choir-stalls of Bergamo and Monte Oliveto. Hard by is a chapel, adorned, like the lower one, with excellent reliefs. The loggia to which these rooms have access looks across the Apennines, and down on what was once a private garden. It is now enclosed and paved for the exercise of prisoners who are confined in one part of the desecrated palace!

82

A portion of the pile is devoted to more worthy purposes; for the Academy of Raphael here holds its sittings, and preserves a collection of curiosities and books illustrative of the great painter's life and works. They have recently placed in a tiny oratory, scooped by Guidobaldo II. from the thickness of the wall, a cast of Raphael's skull, which will be studied with interest and veneration. It has the fineness of modelling combined with shapeliness of form and smallness of scale which is said to have characterised Mozart and Shelley.

The impression left upon the mind after traversing this palace in its length and breadth is one of weariness and disappointment. How shall we reconstruct the long-past life which filled its rooms with sound, the splendour of its pageants, the thrill of tragedies enacted here? It is not difficult to crowd its doors and vacant spaces with liveried servants, slim pages in tight hose, whose well-combed hair escapes from tiny caps upon their silken shoulders. We may even replace the tapestries of Troy which hung one hall, and build again the sideboards with their embossed gilded plate. But are these chambers really those where Emilia Pia held debate on love with Bembo and Castiglione; where Bibbiena's witticisms and Fra Serafino's pranks raised smiles on courtly lips; where Bernardo Accolti, 'the Unique,' declaimed his verses to applauding crowds? Is it possible that into yonder hall, where now the lion of S. Mark looks down alone on staring desolation, strode the Borgia in all his panoply of war, a gilded glittering dragon, and from the dais tore the Montefeltri's throne, and from the arras stripped their ensigns, replacing these with his own Bull and Valentinus Dux? Here Tasso tuned his lyre for Francesco Maria's wedding-feast, and read 'Aminta' to Lucrezia d'Este. Here Guidobaldo listened to the jests and whispered scandals of the Aretine. Here Titian set his easel up to paint; here the boy Raphael, cap in hand, took signed and sealed credentials from his Duchess to the Gonfalonier of Florence. Somewhere in these huge chambers, the courtiers sat before a torch-lit stage, when Bibbiena's 'Calandria' and Caetiglione's 'Tirsi,' with their miracles of masques and mummers, whiled the night away. Somewhere, we know not where, Giuliano de' Medici made love in these bare rooms to that mysterious mother of ill-fated Cardinal Ippolito; somewhere, in some darker nook, the bastard Alessandro sprang to his strange-fortuned life of tyranny and license, which Brutus-Lorenzino cut short with a traitor's poignard-thrust in Via Larga. How many men, illustrious for arts and letters, memorable by their virtues or their crimes, have trod these silent corridors, from the great Pope Julius down to James III., self-titled King of England, who tarried here with Clementina Sobieski through some twelve months of his ex-royal exile! The memories of all this folk, flown guests and masters of the still-abiding palace-chambers, haunt us as we hurry through. They are but filmy shadows. We cannot grasp them, localise them, people surrounding emptiness with more than withering cobweb forms.

83

Death takes a stronger hold on us than bygone life. Therefore,

84

returning to the vast Throne-room, we animate it with one scene it witnessed on an April night in 1508. Duke Guidobaldo had died at Fossombrone, repeating to his friends around his bed these lines of Virgil:

Me circum limus niger et deformis arundo
Cocyti tardaue palus inamabilis unda
Alligat, et novies Styx interfusa coerces.

His body had been carried on the shoulders of servants through those mountain ways at night, amid the lamentations of gathering multitudes and the baying of dogs from hill-set farms alarmed by flaring flambeaux. Now it is laid in state in the great hall. The dais and the throne are draped in black. The arms and *bâtons* of his father hang about the doorways. His own ensigns are displayed in groups and trophies, with the banners of S. Mark, the Montefeltrian eagle, and the cross keys of S. Peter. The hall itself is vacant, save for the high-reared catafalque of sable velvet and gold damask, surrounded with wax candles burning steadily. Round it passes a ceaseless stream of people, coming and going, gazing at their Duke. He is attired in crimson hose and doublet of black damask. Black velvet slippers are on his feet, and his ducal cap is of black velvet. The mantle of the Garter, made of dark-blue Alexandrine velvet, hooded with crimson, lined with white silk damask, and embroidered with the badge, drapes the stiff sleeping form.

It is easier to conjure up the past of this great palace, strolling round it in free air and twilight; perhaps because the landscape and the life still moving on the city streets bring its exterior into harmony with real existence. The southern façade, with its vaulted balconies and flanking towers, takes the fancy, fascinates the eye, and lends itself as a fit stage for puppets of the musing mind. Once more imagination plants trim orange-trees in giant jars of Gubbio ware upon the pavement where the garden of the Duchess lay—the pavement paced in these bad days by convicts in grey canvas jackets—that pavement where Monsignor Bombo courted 'dear dead women' with Platonic phrase, smothering the Menta of his natural man in lettuce culled from Academe and thyme of Mount Hymettus. In yonder loggia, lifted above the garden and the court, two lovers are in earnest converse. They lean beneath the coffered arch, against the marble of the balustrade, he fingering his dagger under the dark velvet doublet, she playing with a clove carnation, deep as her own shame. The man is Giannandrea, broad-shouldered bravo of Verona, Duke Guidobaldo's favourite and carpet-count. The lady is Madonna Maria, daughter of Rome's Prefect, widow of Venanzio Varano, whom the Borgia strangled. On their discourse a tale will hang of woman's frailty and man's boldness—Camerino's Duchess yielding to a low-born suitor's stalwart charms. And more will follow, when that lady's brother, furious Francesco Maria della Rovere, shall stab the bravo in torch-litten palace rooms with twenty poignard strokes 'twixt waist and throat, and their Pandarus shall be sent down to his account by a varlet's *coltellata* through the midriff. Imagination shifts the scene, and shows in that same loggia Rome's warlike Pope, attended by his cardinals and all Urbino's chivalry. The snowy beard of Julius flows down upon his breast, where jewels clasp the crimson mantle, as in Raphael's picture. His eyes are bright with wine; for he has come to gaze on sunset from the banquet-chamber, and to watch the line of lamps which soon will leap along that palace cornice in his honour. Behind him lies Bologna humbled. The Pope returns, a conqueror, to Rome. Yet once again imagination is at work. A gaunt, bald man, close-habited in Spanish black, his spare, fine features carved in purest ivory, leans from that balcony. Gazing with hollow eyes, he tracks the swallows in their flight, and notes that winter is at hand. This is the last Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II., he whose young wife deserted him, who made for himself alone a hermit-pedant's round of petty cares and niggard avarice and mean-brained superstition. He drew a second consort from the convent, and raised up seed unto his line by forethought, but beheld his princeling fade untimely in the bloom of boyhood. Nothing is left but solitude. To the mortmain of the Church reverts Urbino's lordship, and even now he meditates the terms of devolution. Jesuits cluster in the rooms behind, with comfort for the ducal soul and calculations for the interests of Holy See.

A farewell to these memories of Urbino's dukedom should be taken in the crypt of the cathedral, where Francesco Maria II., the last Duke, buried his only son and all his temporal hopes. The place is scarcely solemn. Its dreary *barocco* emblems mar the dignity of death. A bulky *Pietà* by Gian Bologna, with Madonna's face unfinished, towers up and crowds the narrow cell. Religion has vanished from this late Renaissance art, nor has the afterglow of Guido Reni's hectic piety yet

overflushed it. Chilled by the stifling humid sense of an extinct race here entombed in its last representative, we gladly emerge from the sepulchral vault into the air of day.

Filippo Visconti, with a smile on his handsome face, is waiting for us at the inn. His horses, sleek, well fed, and rested, toss their heads impatiently. We take our seats in the carriage, open wide beneath a sparkling sky, whirl past the palace and its ghost-like recollections, and are halfway on the road to Fossombrone in a cloud of dust and whirr of wheels before we think of looking back to greet Urbino. There is just time. The last decisive turning lies in front. We stand bareheaded to salute the grey mass of buildings ridged along the sky. Then the open road invites us with its varied scenery and movement. From the shadowy past we drive into the world of human things, for ever changefully unchanged, unrestfully the same. This interchange between dead memories and present life is the delight of travel.

AND THE TRAGEDY OF WEBSTER

I

During the pontificate of Gregory XIII. (1572-85), Papal authority in Rome reached its lowest point of weakness, and the ancient splendour of the Papal court was well-nigh eclipsed. Art and learning had died out. The traditions of the days of Leo, Julius, and Paul III. were forgotten. It seemed as though the genius of the Renaissance had migrated across the Alps. All the powers of the Papacy were directed to the suppression of heresies and to the re-establishment of spiritual supremacy over the intellect of Europe. Meanwhile society in Rome returned to mediæval barbarism. The veneer of classical refinement and humanistic urbanity, which for a time had hidden the natural savagery of the Roman nobles, wore away. The Holy City became a den of bandits; the territory of the Church supplied a battle-ground for senseless party strife, which the weak old man who wore the triple crown was quite unable to control. It is related how a robber chieftain, Marianazzo, refused the offer of a general pardon from the Pope, alleging that the profession of brigand was far more lucrative, and offered greater security of life, than any trade within the walls of Rome. The Campagna, the ruined citadels about the basements of the Sabine and Ciminian hills, the quarters of the aristocracy within the city, swarmed with bravos, who were protected by great nobles and fed by decent citizens for the advantages to be derived from the assistance of abandoned and courageous ruffians. Life, indeed, had become impossible without fixed compact with the powers of lawlessness. There was hardly a family in Rome which did not number some notorious criminal among the outlaws. Murder, sacrilege, the love of adventure, thirst for plunder, poverty, hostility to the ascendant faction of the moment, were common causes of voluntary or involuntary outlawry; nor did public opinion regard a bandit's calling as other than honourable.

89

It may readily be imagined that in such a state of society the grisliest tragedies were common enough in Rome. The history of some of these has been preserved to us in documents digested from public trials and personal observation by contemporary writers. That of the Cenci, in which a notorious act of parricide furnished the plot of a popular novella, is well known. And such a tragedy, even more rife in characteristic incidents, and more distinguished by the quality of its *dramatis personæ*, is that of Vittoria Accoramboni.

Vittoria was born in 1557, of a noble but impoverished family, at Gubbio, among the hills of Umbria. Her biographers are rapturous in their praises of her beauty, grace, and exceeding charm of manner. Not only was her person most lovely, but her mind shone at first with all the amiable lustre of a modest, innocent, and winning youth. Her father, Claudio Accoramboni, removed to Rome, where his numerous children were brought up under the care of their mother, Tarquinia, an ambitious and unscrupulous woman, bent on rehabilitating the decayed honours of their house. Here Vittoria in early girlhood soon became the fashion. She exercised an irresistible influence over all who saw her, and many were the offers of marriage she refused. At length a suitor appeared whose condition and connection with the Roman ecclesiastical nobility rendered him acceptable in the eyes of the Accoramboni. Francesco Peretti was welcomed as the successful candidate for Vittoria's hand. His mother, Camilla, was sister to Felice, Cardinal of Montalto; and her son, Francesco Mignucci, had changed his surname in compliment to this illustrious relative. The Peretti were of humble origin. The cardinal himself had tended swine in his native village; but, supported by an invincible belief in his own destinies, and gifted with a powerful intellect and determined character, he passed through all grades of the Franciscan Order to its generalship, received the bishoprics of Fermo and S. Agata, and lastly, in the year 1570, assumed the scarlet with the title of Cardinal Montalto. He was now upon the high way to the Papacy, amassing money by incessant care, studying the humours of surrounding factions, effacing his own personality, and by mixing but little in the intrigues of the court, winning the reputation of a prudent, inoffensive old man. These were his tactics for securing the Papal throne; nor were his expectations frustrated; for in 1585 he was chosen Pope, the parties of the Medici and the Farnesi agreeing to accept him as a compromise. When Sixtus V. was once firmly seated on S. Peter's chair, he showed

90

himself in his true colours. An implacable administrator of severest justice, a rigorous economist, an iconoclastic foe to paganism, the first act of his reign was to declare a war of extirpation against the bandits who had reduced Rome in his predecessor's rule to anarchy.

It was the nephew, then, of this man, whom historians have judged the greatest personage of his own times, that Vittoria Accoramboni married on the 28th of June 1573. For a short while the young couple lived happily together. According to some accounts of their married life, the bride secured the favour of her powerful uncle-in-law, who indulged her costly fancies to the full. It is, however, more probable that the Cardinal Montalto treated her follies with a grudging parsimony; for we soon find the Peretti household hopelessly involved in debt. Discord, too, arose between Vittoria and her husband on the score of a certain levity in her behaviour; and it was rumoured that even during the brief space of their union she had proved a faithless wife. Yet she contrived to keep Francesco's confidence, and it is certain that her family profited by their connection with the Peretti. Of her six brothers, Mario, the eldest, was a favourite courtier of the great Cardinal d'Este. Ottavio was in orders, and through Montalto's influence obtained the See of Fossombrone. The same eminent protector placed Scipione in the service of the Cardinal Sforza. Camillo, famous for his beauty and his courage, followed the fortunes of Filibert of Savoy, and died in France. Flaminio was still a boy, dependent, as the sequel of this story shows, upon his sister's destiny. Of Marcello, the second in age and most important in the action of this tragedy, it is needful to speak with more particularity. He was young, and, like the rest of his breed, singularly handsome—so handsome, indeed, that he is said to have gained an infamous ascendancy over the great Duke of Bracciano, whose privy chamberlain he had become. Marcello was an outlaw for the murder of Matteo Pallavicino, the brother of the Cardinal of that name. This did not, however, prevent the chief of the Orsini house from making him his favourite and confidential friend. Marcello, who seems to have realised in actual life the worst vices of those Roman courtiers described for us by Aretino, very soon conceived the plan of exalting his own fortunes by trading on his sister's beauty. He worked upon the Duke of Bracciano's mind so cleverly, that he brought this haughty prince to the point of an insane passion for Peretti's young wife; and meanwhile so contrived to inflame the ambition of Vittoria and her mother, Tarquinia, that both were prepared to dare the worst of crimes in expectation of a dukedom. The game was a difficult one to play. Not only had Francesco Peretti first to be murdered, but the inequality of birth and wealth and station between Vittoria and the Duke of Bracciano rendered a marriage almost impossible. It was also an affair of delicacy to stimulate without satisfying the Duke's passion. Yet Marcello did not despair. The stakes were high enough to justify great risks; and all he put in peril was his sister's honour, the fame of the Accoramboni, and the favour of Montalto. Vittoria, for her part, trusted in her power to ensnare and secure the noble prey both had in view.

Paolo Giordano Orsini, born about the year 1537, was reigning Duke of Bracciano. Among Italian princes he ranked at least upon a par with the Dukes of Urbino, and his family, by its alliances, was more illustrious than any of that time in Italy. He was a man of gigantic stature, prodigious corpulence, and marked personal daring; agreeable in manners, but subject to uncontrollable fits of passion, and incapable of self-restraint when crossed in any whim or fancy. Upon the habit of his body it is needful to insist, in order that the part he played in this tragedy of intrigue, crime, and passion may be well defined. He found it difficult to procure a charger equal to his weight, and he was so fat that a special dispensation relieved him from the duty of genuflexion in the Papal presence. Though lord of a large territory, yielding princely revenues, he laboured under heavy debts; for no great noble of the period lived more splendidly, with less regard for his finances. In the politics of that age and country, Paolo Giordano leaned toward France. Yet he was a grandee of Spain, and had played a distinguished part in the battle of Lepanto. Now the Duke of Bracciano was a widower. He had been married in 1553 to Isabella de' Medici, daughter of the Grand Duke Cosimo, sister of Francesco, Bianca Capello's lover, and of the Cardinal Ferdinando. Suspicion of adultery with Troilo Orsini had fallen on Isabella, and her husband, with the full concurrence of her brothers, removed her in 1576 from this world.^[21] No one thought the worse of Bracciano for this murder of his wife. In those days of abandoned vice and intricate villany, certain points of honour were maintained with scrupulous fidelity. A wife's adultery was enough to justify the most savage and licentious husband in an act of semi-judicial vengeance; and the shame she brought upon his head was shared by the members of her

own house, so that they stood by, consenting to her death. Isabella, it may be said, left one son, Virginio, who became in due time Duke of Bracciano.

[21] The balance of probability leans against Isabella in this affair. At the licentious court of the Medici she lived with unpardonable freedom. Troilo Orsini was himself assassinated in Paris by Bracciano's orders a few years afterwards.

It appears that in the year 1581, four years after Vittoria's marriage, the Duke of Bracciano had satisfied Marcello of his intention to make her his wife, and of his willingness to countenance Francesco Peretti's murder. Marcello, feeling sure of his game, introduced the Duke in private to his sister, and induced her to overcome any natural repugnance she may have felt for the unwieldy and gross lover. Having reached this point, it was imperative to push matters quickly on toward matrimony.

But how should the unfortunate Francesco be entrapped? They caught him in a snare of peculiar atrocity, by working on the kindly feelings which his love for Vittoria had caused him to extend to all the Accoramboni. Marcello, the outlaw, was her favourite brother, and Marcello at that time lay in hiding, under the suspicion of more than ordinary crime, beyond the walls of Rome. Late in the evening of the 18th of April, while the Peretti family were retiring to bed, a messenger from Marcello arrived, entreating Francesco to repair at once to Monte Cavallo. Marcello had affairs of the utmost importance to communicate, and begged his brother-in-law not to fail him at a grievous pinch. The letter containing this request was borne by one Dominico d'Aquaviva, *alias* Il Mancino, a confederate of Vittoria's waiting-maid. This fellow, like Marcello, was an outlaw; but when he ventured into Rome he frequented Peretti's house, and had made himself familiar with its master as a trusty bravo. Neither in the message, therefore, nor in the messenger was there much to rouse suspicion. The time, indeed, was oddly chosen, and Marcello had never made a similar appeal on any previous occasion. Yet his necessities might surely have obliged him to demand some more than ordinary favour from a brother. Francesco immediately made himself ready to set out, armed only with his sword and attended by a single servant. It was in vain that his wife and his mother reminded him of the dangers of the night, the loneliness of Monte Cavallo, its ruinous palaces and robber-haunted caves. He was resolved to undertake the adventure, and went forth, never to return. As he ascended the hill, he fell to earth, shot with three harquebuses. His body was afterwards found on Monte Cavallo, stabbed through and through, without a trace that could identify the murderers. Only, in the course of subsequent investigations, Il Mancino (on the 24th of February 1582) made the following statements:—That Vittoria's mother, assisted by the waiting woman, had planned the trap; that Marchionne of Gubbio and Paolo Barca of Bracciano, two of the Duke's men, had despatched the victim. Marcello himself, it seems, had come from Bracciano to conduct the whole affair. Suspicion fell immediately upon Vittoria and her kindred, together with the Duke of Bracciano; nor was this diminished when the Accoramboni, fearing the pursuit of justice, took refuge in a villa of the Duke's at Magnanapoli a few days after the murder.

A cardinal's nephew, even in those troublous times, was not killed without some noise being made about the matter. Accordingly Pope Gregory XIII. began to take measures for discovering the authors of the crime. Strange to say, however, the Cardinal Montalto, notwithstanding the great love he was known to bear his nephew, begged that the investigation might be dropped. The coolness with which he first received the news of Francesco Peretti's death, the dissimulation with which he met the Pope's expression of sympathy in a full consistory, his reserve in greeting friends on ceremonial visits of condolence, and, more than all, the self-restraint he showed in the presence of the Duke of Bracciano, impressed the society of Rome with the belief that he was of a singularly moderate and patient temper. It was thought that the man who could so tamely submit to his nephew's murder, and suspend the arm of justice when already raised for vengeance, must prove a mild and indulgent ruler. When, therefore, in the fifth year after this event, Montalto was elected Pope, men ascribed his elevation in no small measure to his conduct at the present crisis. Some, indeed, attributed his extraordinary moderation and self-control to the right cause. '*Veramente costui è un gran frate!*' was Gregory's remark at the close of the consistory when Montalto begged him to let the matter of Peretti's murder rest. '*Of a truth, that fellow is a consummate hypocrite!*' How

accurate this judgment was, appeared when Sixtus V. assumed the reins of power. The same man who, as monk and cardinal, had smiled on Bracciano, though he knew him to be his nephew's assassin, now, as Pontiff and sovereign, bade the chief of the Orsini purge his palace and dominions of the scoundrels he was wont to harbour, adding significantly, that if Felice Peretti forgave what had been done against him in a private station, he would exact uttermost vengeance for disobedience to the will of Sixtus. The Duke of Bracciano judged it best, after that warning, to withdraw from Rome.

Francesco Peretti had been murdered on the 16th of April 1581. Sixtus V. was proclaimed on the 24th of April 1585. In this interval Vittoria underwent a series of extraordinary perils and adventures. First of all, she had been secretly married to the Duke in his gardens of Magnanapoli at the end of April 1581. That is to say, Marcello and she secured their prize, as well as they were able, the moment after Francesco had been removed by murder. But no sooner had the marriage become known, than the Pope, moved by the scandal it created, no less than by the urgent instance of the Orsini and Medici, declared it void. After some while spent in vain resistance, Bracciano submitted, and sent Vittoria back to her father's house. By an order issued under Gregory's own hand, she was next removed to the prison of Corte Savella, thence to the monastery of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, and finally to the Castle of S. Angelo. Here, at the end of December 1581, she was put on trial for the murder of her first husband. In prison she seems to have borne herself bravely, arraying her beautiful person in delicate attire, entertaining visitors, exacting from her friends the honours due to a duchess, and sustaining the frequent examinations to which she was submitted with a bold, proud front. In the middle of the month of July her constancy was sorely tried by the receipt of a letter in the Duke's own handwriting, formally renouncing his marriage. It was only by a lucky accident that she was prevented on this occasion from committing suicide. The Papal court meanwhile kept urging her either to retire to a monastery or to accept another husband. She firmly refused to embrace the religious life, and declared that she was already lawfully united to a living husband, the Duke of Bracciano. It seemed impossible to deal with her; and at last, on the 8th of November, she was released from prison under the condition of retirement to Gubbio. The Duke had lulled his enemies to rest by the pretence of yielding to their wishes. But Marcello was continually beside him at Bracciano, where we read of a mysterious Greek enchantress whom he hired to brew love-philters for the furtherance of his ambitious plots. Whether Bracciano was stimulated by the brother's arguments or by the witch's potions need not be too curiously questioned. But it seems in any case certain that absence inflamed his passion instead of cooling it.

97

Accordingly, in September 1583, under the excuse of a pilgrimage to Loreto, he contrived to meet Vittoria at Trevi, whence he carried her in triumph to Bracciano. Here he openly acknowledged her as his wife, installing her with all the splendour due to a sovereign duchess. On the 10th of October following, he once more performed the marriage ceremony in the principal church of his fief; and in the January of 1584 he brought her openly to Rome. This act of contumacy to the Pope, both as feudal superior and as supreme Pontiff, roused all the former opposition to his marriage. Once more it was declared invalid. Once more the Duke pretended to give way. But at this juncture Gregory died; and while the conclave was sitting for the election of the new Pope, he resolved to take the law into his own hands, and to ratify his union with Vittoria by a third and public marriage in Rome. On the morning of the 24th of April 1585, their nuptials were accordingly once more solemnised in the Orsini palace. Just one hour after the ceremony, as appears from the marriage register, the news arrived of Cardinal Montalto's election to the Papacy, Vittoria lost no time in paying her respects to Camilla, sister of the new Pope, her former mother-in-law. The Duke visited Sixtus V. in state to compliment him on his elevation. But the reception which both received proved that Rome was no safe place for them to live in. They consequently made up their minds for flight.

98

A chronic illness from which Bracciano had lately suffered furnished a sufficient pretext. This seems to have been something of the nature of a cancerous ulcer, which had to be treated by the application of raw meat to open sores. Such details are only excusable in the present narrative on the ground that Bracciano's disease considerably affects our moral judgment of the woman who could marry a man thus physically tainted, and with her husband's blood upon his hands. At any rate, the Duke's *lupa* justified his trying what change of air, together with the sulphur

waters of Abano, would do for him.

The Duke and Duchess arrived in safety at Venice, where they had engaged the Dandolo palace on the Zuecca. There they only stayed a few days, removing to Padua, where they had hired palaces of the Foscari in the Arena and a house called De' Cavalli. At Salò, also, on the Lake of Garda, they provided themselves with fit dwellings for their princely state and their large retinues, intending to divide their time between the pleasures which the capital of luxury afforded and the simpler enjoyments of the most beautiful of the Italian lakes. But *la gioia dei profani è un fumo passaggier*. Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, died suddenly at Salò on the 10th of November 1585, leaving the young and beautiful Vittoria helpless among enemies. What was the cause of his death? It is not possible to give a clear and certain answer. We have seen that he suffered from a horrible and voracious disease, which after his removal from Rome seems to have made progress. Yet though this malady may well have cut his life short, suspicion of poison was not, in the circumstances, quite unreasonable. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Pope, and the Orsini family were all interested in his death. Anyhow, he had time to make a will in Vittoria's favour, leaving her large sums of money, jewels, goods, and houses—enough, in fact, to support her ducal dignity with splendour. His hereditary fiefs and honours passed by right to his only son, Virginio.

99

Vittoria, accompanied by her brother, Marcello, and the whole court of Bracciano, repaired at once to Padua, where she was soon after joined by Flaminio, and by the Prince Lodovico Orsini. Lodovico Orsini assumed the duty of settling Vittoria's affairs under her dead husband's will. In life he had been the Duke's ally as well as relative. His family pride was deeply wounded by what seemed to him an ignoble, as it was certainly an unequal, marriage. He now showed himself the relentless enemy of the Duchess. Disputes arose between them as to certain details, which seem to have been legally decided in the widow's favour. On the night of the 22nd of December, however, forty men disguised in black and fantastically tricked out to elude detection, surrounded her palace. Through the long galleries and chambers hung with arras, eight of them went, bearing torches, in search of Vittoria and her brothers. Marcello escaped, having fled the house under suspicion of the murder of one of his own followers. Flaminio, the innocent and young, was playing on his lute and singing *Miserere* in the great hall of the palace. The murderers surprised him with a shot from one of their harquebuses. He ran, wounded in the shoulder, to his sister's room. She, it is said, was telling her beads before retiring for the night. When three of the assassins entered, she knelt before the crucifix, and there they stabbed her in the left breast, turning the poignard in the wound, and asking her with savage insults if her heart was pierced. Her last words were, 'Jesus, I pardon you.' Then they turned to Flaminio, and left him pierced with seventy-four stiletto wounds.

100

The authorities of Padua identified the bodies of Vittoria and Flaminio, and sent at once for further instructions to Venice. Meanwhile it appears that both corpses were laid out in one open coffin for the people to contemplate. The palace and the church of the Eremitani, to which they had been removed, were crowded all through the following day with a vast concourse of the Paduans. Vittoria's wonderful dead body, pale yet sweet to look upon, the golden hair flowing around her marble shoulders, the red wound in her breast uncovered, the stately limbs arrayed in satin as she died, maddened the populace with its surpassing loveliness. '*Dentibus fremebant*,' says the chronicler, when they beheld that gracious lady stiff in death. And of a truth, if her corpse was actually exposed in the chapel of the Eremitani, as we have some right to assume, the spectacle must have been impressive. Those grim gaunt frescoes of Mantegna looked down on her as she lay stretched upon her bier, solemn and calm, and, but for pallor, beautiful as though in life. No wonder that the folk forgot her first husband's murder, her less than comely marriage to the second. It was enough for them that this flower of surpassing loveliness had been cropped by villains in its bloom. Gathering in knots around the torches placed beside the corpse, they vowed vengeance against the Orsini; for suspicion, not unnaturally, fell on Prince Lodovico.

The Prince was arrested and interrogated before the court of Padua. He entered their hall attended by forty armed men, responded haughtily to their questions, and demanded free passage for his courier to Virginio Orsini, then at Florence. To this demand the court acceded; but the precaution of waylaying the courier and searching his person was very wisely taken. Besides some formal dispatches which announced Vittoria's assassination, they found in this man's boot a compromising letter, declaring Virginio a party to the crime, and asserting that Lodovico had

101

with his own poignard killed their victim. Padua placed itself in a state of defence, and prepared to besiege the palace of Prince Lodovico, who also got himself in readiness for battle. Engines, culverins, and firebrands were directed against the barricades which he had raised. The militia was called out and the Brenta was strongly guarded. Meanwhile the Senate of S. Mark had dispatched the Avogadore, Aloisio Bragadin, with full power to the scene of action. Lodovico Orsini, it may be mentioned, was in their service; and had not this affair intervened, he would in a few weeks have entered on his duties as Governor for Venice of Corfu.

The bombardment of Orsini's palace began on Christmas Day. Three of the Prince's men were killed in the first assault; and since the artillery brought to bear upon him threatened speedy ruin to the house and its inhabitants, he made up his mind to surrender. 'The Prince Luigi,' writes one-chronicler of these events, 'walked attired in brown, his poignard at his side, and his cloak slung elegantly under his arm. The weapon being taken from him, he leaned upon a balustrade, and began to trim his nails with a little pair of scissors he happened to find there.' On the 27th he was strangled in prison by order of the Venetian Republic. His body was carried to be buried, according to his own will, in the church of S. Maria dell' Orto at Venice. Two of his followers were hung next day. Fifteen were executed on the following Monday; two of these were quartered alive; one of them, the Conte Paganello, who confessed to having slain Vittoria, had his left side probed with his own cruel dagger. Eight were condemned to the galleys, six to prison, and eleven were acquitted. Thus ended this terrible affair, which brought, it is said, good credit and renown to the lords of Venice through all nations of the civilised world. It only remains to be added that Marcello Accoramboni was surrendered to the Pope's vengeance and beheaded at Ancona, where also his mysterious accomplice, the Greek sorceress, perished.

102

II

This story of Vittoria Accoramboni's life and tragic ending is drawn, in its main details, from a narrative published by Henri Beyle in his 'Chroniques et Nouvelles.'^[22] He professes to have translated it literally from a manuscript communicated to him by a nobleman of Mantua; and there are strong internal evidences of the truth of this assertion. Such compositions are frequent in Italian libraries, nor is it rare for one of them to pass into the common market—as Mr. Browning's famous purchase of the tale on which he based his 'Ring and the Book' sufficiently proves. These pamphlets were produced, in the first instance, to gratify the curiosity of the educated public in an age which had no newspapers, and also to preserve the memory of famous trials. How far the strict truth was represented, or whether, as in the case of Beatrice Cenci, the pathetic aspect of the tragedy was unduly dwelt on, depended, of course, upon the mental bias of the scribe, upon his opportunities of obtaining exact information, and upon the taste of the audience for whom he wrote. Therefore, in treating such documents as historical data, we must be upon our guard. Professor Gnoli, who has recently investigated the whole of Vittoria's eventful story by the light of contemporary documents, informs us that several narratives exist in manuscript, all dealing more or less accurately with the details of the tragedy. One of these was published in Italian at Brescia in 1586. A Frenchman, De Rosset, printed the same story in its main outlines at Lyons in 1621. Our own dramatist, John Webster, made it the subject of a tragedy, which he gave to the press in 1612. What were his sources of information we do not know for certain. But it is clear that he was well acquainted with the history. He has changed some of the names and redistributed some of the chief parts. Vittoria's first husband, for example, becomes Camillo; her mother, named Cornelia instead of Tarquinia, is so far from abetting Peretti's murder and countenancing her daughter's shame, that she acts the *rôle* of a domestic Cassandra. Flaminio and not Marcello is made the main instrument of Vittoria's crime and elevation. The Cardinal Montalto is called Monticelso, and his papal title is Paul IV. instead of Sixtus V. These are details of comparative indifference, in which a playwright may fairly use his liberty of art. On the other hand, Webster shows a curious knowledge of the picturesque circumstances of the tale. The garden in which Vittoria meets Bracciano is the villa of Magnanapoli; Zanche, the Moorish slave, combines Vittoria's waiting-woman, Caterina, and the Greek sorceress who so mysteriously dogged Marcello's footsteps to the death. The suspicion of Bracciano's murder is used to introduce a quaint episode of Italian poisoning.

103

Webster exercised the dramatist's privilege of connecting various threads of action in one plot, disregarding chronology, and hazarding an ethical solution of motives which mere fidelity to fact hardly warrants. He shows us Vittoria married to Camillo, a low-born and witless fool, whose only merit consists in being nephew to the Cardinal Monticelso, afterwards Pope Paul IV.^[23] Paulo Giordano Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, loves Vittoria, and she suggests to him that, for the furtherance of their amours, his wife, the Duchess Isabella, sister to Francesco de' Medici, Grand Duke of Florence, should be murdered at the same time as her own husband, Camillo. Brachiano is struck by this plan, and with the help of Vittoria's brother, Flamineo, he puts it at once into execution. Flamineo hires a doctor who poisons Brachiano's portrait, so that Isabella dies after kissing it. He also with his own hands twists Camillo's neck during a vaulting-match, making it appear that he came by his death accidentally. Suspicion of the murder attaches, however, to Vittoria. She is tried for her life before Monticelso and De' Medici; acquitted, and relegated to a house of Convertites or female reformatory. Brachiano, on the accession of Monticelso to the Papal throne, resolves to leave Rome with Vittoria. They escape, together with her mother Cornelia, and her brothers Flamineo and Marcello, to Padua; and it is here that the last scenes of the tragedy are laid.

[23] In dealing with Webster's tragedy, I have adhered to his use and spelling of names.

The use Webster made of Lodovico Orsini deserves particular attention. He introduces this personage in the very first scene as a spendthrift, who, having run through his fortune, has been outlawed. Count Lodovico, as he is always called, has no relationship with the Orsini, but is attached to the service of Francesco de' Medici, and is an old lover of the Duchess Isabella. When, therefore, the Grand Duke meditates vengeance on Brachiano, he finds a fitting instrument in the desperate Lodovico. Together, in disguise, they repair to Padua. Lodovico poisons the Duke of Brachiano's helmet, and has the satisfaction of ending his last struggles by the halter. Afterwards, with companions, habited as a masquer, he enters Vittoria's palace and puts her to death together with her brother Flamineo. Just when the deed of vengeance has been completed, young Giovanni Orsini, heir of Brachiano, enters and orders the summary execution of Lodovico for this deed of violence. Webster's invention in this plot is confined to the fantastic incidents attending on the deaths of Isabella, Camillo, and Brachiano, and to the murder of Marcello by his brother Flamineo, with the further consequence of Cornelia's madness and death. He has heightened our interest in Isabella, at the expense of Brachiano's character, by making her an innocent and loving wife instead of an adulteress. He has ascribed different motives from the real ones to Lodovico in order to bring this personage into rank with the chief actors, though this has been achieved with only moderate success. Vittoria is abandoned to the darkest interpretation. She is a woman who rises to eminence by crime, as an unfaithful wife, the murderess of her husband, and an impudent defier of justice. Her brother, Flamineo, becomes under Webster's treatment one of those worst human infamies—a court dependent; ruffian, buffoon, pimp, murderer by turns. Furthermore, and without any adequate object beyond that of completing this study of a type he loved, Webster makes him murder his own brother Marcello by treason. The part assigned to Marcello, it should be said, is a genial and happy one; and Cornelia, the mother of the Accoramboni, is a dignified character, pathetic in her suffering. Webster, it may be added, treats the Cardinal Monticelso as allied in some special way to the Medici. Yet certain traits in his character, especially his avoidance of bloodshed and the tameness of his temper after Camillo has been murdered, seem to have been studied from the historical Sixtus.

III

The character of the 'White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona,' is perhaps the most masterly creation of Webster's genius. Though her history is a true one in its leading incidents, the poet, while portraying a real personage, has conceived an original individuality. It is impossible to know for certain how far the actual Vittoria was guilty of her first husband's murder. Her personality fails to detach itself from the romance of her biography by any salient qualities. But Webster, with

true playwright's instinct, casts aside historical doubts, and delineates in his heroine a woman of a very marked and terrible nature. Hard as adamant, uncompromising, ruthless, Vittoria follows ambition as the loadstar of her life. It is the ambition to reign as Duchess, far more than any passion for a paramour, which makes her plot Camillo's and Isabella's murders, and throws her before marriage into Brachiano's arms. Added to this ambition, she is possessed with the cold demon of her own imperial and victorious beauty. She has the courage of her criminality in the fullest sense; and much of the fascination with which Webster has invested her, depends upon her dreadful daring. Her portrait is drawn with full and firm touches. Although she appears but five times on the scene, she fills it from the first line of the drama to the last. Each appearance adds effectively to the total impression. We see her first during a criminal interview with Brachiano, contrived by her brother Flamineo. The plot of the tragedy is developed in this scene; Vittoria suggesting, under the metaphor of a dream, that her lover should compass the deaths of his duchess and her husband. The dream is told with deadly energy and ghastly picturesqueness. The cruel sneer at its conclusion, murmured by a voluptuous woman in the ears of an impassioned paramour, chills us with the sense of concentrated vice. Her next appearance is before the court, on trial for her husband's murder. The scene is celebrated, and has been much disputed by critics. Relying on her own dauntlessness, on her beauty, and on the protection of Brachiano, Vittoria hardly takes the trouble to plead innocence or to rebut charges. She stands defiant, arrogant, vigilant, on guard; flinging the lie in the teeth of her arraigners; quick to seize the slightest sign of feebleness in their attack; protesting her guiltlessness so loudly that she shouts truth down by brazen strength of lung; retiring at the close with taunts; blazing throughout with the intolerable lustre of some baleful planet. When she enters for the third time, it is to quarrel with her paramour. He has been stung to jealousy by a feigned love-letter. She knows that she has given him no cause; it is her game to lure him by fidelity to marriage. Therefore she resolves to make his mistake the instrument of her exaltation. Beginning with torrents of abuse, hurling reproaches at him for her own dishonour and the murder of his wife, working herself by studied degrees into a tempest of ungovernable rage, she flings herself upon the bed, refuses his caresses, spurns and tramples on him, till she has brought Brachiano, terrified, humbled, fascinated, to her feet. Then she gradually relents beneath his passionate protestations and repeated promises of marriage. At this point she speaks but little. We only feel her melting humour in the air, and long to see the scene played by such an actress as Madame Bernhardt. When Vittoria next appears, it is as Duchess by the deathbed of the Duke, her husband. Her attendance here is necessary, but it contributes little to the development of her character. We have learned to know her, and expect neither womanish tears nor signs of affection at a crisis which touches her heart less than her self-love. Webster, among his other excellent qualities, knew how to support character by reticence. Vittoria's silence in this act is significant; and when she retires exclaiming, 'O me! this place is hell!' we know that it is the outcry, not of a woman who has lost what made life dear, but of one who sees the fruits of crime imperilled by a fatal accident. The last scene of the play is devoted to Vittoria. It begins with a notable altercation between her and Flamineo. She calls him 'ruffian' and 'villain,' refusing him the reward of his vile service. This quarrel emerges in one of Webster's grotesque contrivances to prolong a poignant situation. Flamineo quits the stage and reappears with pistols. He affects a kind of madness; and after threatening Vittoria, who never flinches, he proposes they should end their lives by suicide. She humours him, but manages to get the first shot. Flamineo falls, wounded apparently to death. Then Vittoria turns and tramples on him with her feet and tongue, taunting him in his death agony with the enumeration of his crimes. Her malice and her energy are equally infernal. Soon, however, it appears that the whole device was but a trick of Flamineo's to test his sister. The pistol was not loaded. He now produces a pair which are properly charged, and proceeds in good earnest to the assassination of Vittoria. But at this critical moment Lodovico and his masquers appear; brother and sister both die unrepentant, defiant to the end. Vittoria's customary pride and her familiar sneers impress her speech in these last moments with a trenchant truth to nature:

*You my death's-man!
Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough,
Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman:
If thou be, do thy office in right form;*

Fall down upon thy knees, and ask forgiveness!

I will be waited on in death; my servant
Shall never go before me.

Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great ambassadors:
I'll meet thy weapon half-way.

'Twas a manly blow!
The next thou giv'st, murder some sucking infant;
And then thou wilt be famous.

So firmly has Webster wrought the character of this white devil, that we seem to see her before us as in a picture. 'Beautiful as the leprosy, dazzling as the lightning,' to use a phrase of her enthusiastic admirer Hazlitt, she takes her station like a lady in some portrait by Paris Bordone, with gleaming golden hair twisted into snakelike braids about her temples, with skin white as cream, bright cheeks, dark dauntless eyes, and on her bosom, where it has been chafed by jewelled chains, a flush of rose. She is luxurious, but not so abandoned to the pleasures of the sense as to forget the purpose of her will and brain. Crime and peril add zest to her enjoyment. When arraigned in open court before the judgment-seat of deadly and unscrupulous foes, she conceals the consciousness of guilt, and stands erect, with fierce front, unabashed, relying on the splendour of her irresistible beauty and the subtlety of her piercing wit. Chafing with rage, the blood mounts and adds a lustre to her cheek. It is no flush of modesty, but of rebellious indignation. The Cardinal, who hates her, brands her emotion with the name of shame. She rebukes him, hurling a jibe at his own mother. And when they point with spiteful eagerness to the jewels blazing on her breast, to the silks and satins that she rustles in, her husband lying murdered, she retorts:

Had I foreknown his death, as you suggest,
I would have bespoke my mourning.

She is condemned, but not vanquished, and leaves the court with a stinging sarcasm. They send her to a house of Convertites:

V.C. A house of Convertites! what's that?
M. A house of penitent whores.
V.C. Do the noblemen of Rome
Erect it for their wives, that I am sent
To lodge there?

Charles Lamb was certainly in error? when he described Vittoria's attitude as one of 'innocence-resembling boldness.' In the trial scene, no less than in the scenes of altercation with Brachiano and Flamineo, Webster clearly intended her to pass for a magnificent vixen, a beautiful and queenly termagant. Her boldness is the audacity of impudence, which does not condescend to entertain the thought of guilt. Her egotism is so hard and so profound that the very victims whom she sacrifices to ambition seem in her sight justly punished. Of Camillo and Isabella, her husband and his wife, she says to Brachiano:

And both were struck dead by that sacred yew,
In that base shallow grave that was their due.

IV

It is tempting to pass from this analysis of Vittoria's life to a consideration of Webster's drama as a whole, especially in a book dedicated to Italian byways. For that mysterious man of genius had explored the dark and devious paths of Renaissance vice, and had penetrated the secrets of Italian wickedness with truly appalling lucidity. His tragedies, though worthless as historical documents, have singular value as commentaries upon history, as revelations to us of the spirit of the sixteenth century in its deepest gloom.

Webster's plays, owing to the condensation of their thought and the compression of their style, are not easy to read for the first time. He crowds so many fantastic incidents into one action, and burdens his discourse with so much profoundly studied matter, that we rise from the perusal of his works with a blurred impression of the fables, a deep sense of the poet's power and personality, and an ineffaceable recollection of one or two resplendent scenes. His Roman history-play of 'Appius and Virginia' proves that he understood the value of a simple plot, and that he was able, when he chose, to work one out with

conscientious calmness. But the two Italian dramas upon which his fame is justly founded, by right of which he stands alone among the playwrights of all literatures, are marked by a peculiar and wayward mannerism. Each part is etched with equal effort after luminous effect upon a background of lurid darkness; and the whole play is made up of these parts, without due concentration on a master-motive. The characters are definite in outline, but, taken together in the conduct of a single plot, they seem to stand apart, like figures in a *tableau vivant*; nor do they act and react each upon the other in the play of interpenetrative passions. That this mannerism was deliberately chosen, we have a right to believe. 'Willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind have I faulted,' is the answer Webster gives to such as may object that he has not constructed his plays upon the classic model. He seems to have had a certain sombre richness of tone and intricacy of design in view, combining sensational effect and sententious pregnancy of diction in works of laboured art, which, when adequately represented to the ear and eye upon the stage, might at a touch obtain the animation they now lack for chamber-students.

112

When familiarity has brought us acquainted with his style, when we have disentangled the main characters and circumstances from their adjuncts, we perceive that he treats poignant and tremendous situations with a concentrated vigour special to his genius; that he has studied each word and trait of character, and that he has prepared by gradual approaches and degrees of horror for the culmination of his tragedies. The sentences which seem at first sight copied from a commonplace book, are found to be appropriate. Brief lightning flashes of acute perception illuminate the midnight darkness of his all but unimaginably depraved characters. Sharp unexpected touches evoke humanity in the *fantoccini* of his wayward art. No dramatist has shown more consummate ability in heightening terrific effects, in laying bare the innermost mysteries of crime, remorse, and pain, combined to make men miserable. It has been said of Webster that, feeling himself deficient in the first poetic qualities, he concentrated his powers upon one point, and achieved success by sheer force of self-cultivation. There is perhaps some truth in this. At any rate, his genius was of a narrow and peculiar order, and he knew well how to make the most of its limitations. Yet we must not forget that he felt a natural bias toward the dreadful stuff with which he deals. The mystery of iniquity had an irresistible attraction for his mind. He was drawn to comprehend and reproduce abnormal elements of spiritual anguish. The materials with which he builds his tragedies are sought for in the ruined places of lost souls, in the agonies of madness and despair, in the sarcasms of criminal and reckless atheism, in slow tortures, griefs beyond endurance, the tempests of remorseful death, the spasms of fratricidal bloodshed. He is often melodramatic in the means employed to bring these psychological conditions home to us. He makes too free use of poisoned engines, daggers, pistols, disguised murderers, and so forth. Yet his firm grasp upon the essential qualities of diseased and guilty human nature saves him, even at his wildest, from the unrealities and extravagances into which less potent artists of the *drame sanglant*—Marston, for example—blundered.

113

With Webster, the tendency to brood on horrors was no result of calculation. It belonged to his idiosyncrasy. He seems to have been suckled from birth at the breast of that *Mater Tenebrarum*, our Lady of Darkness, whom De Quincey in one of his 'Suspiria de Profundis' describes among the Semnai Theai, the august goddesses, the mysterious foster-nurses of suffering humanity. He cannot say the simplest thing without giving it a ghastly or sinister turn. If one of his characters draws a metaphor from pie-crust, he must needs use language of the churchyard:

You speak as if a man
Should know what fowl is coffined in a baked meat
Afore you cut it open.

Hideous similes are heaped together in illustration of the commonest circumstances:

Places at court are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies
at that man's foot, and so lower and lower.
When knaves come to preferment, they rise as gallowses are raised in the
Low Countries, one upon another's shoulders.
I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one
sick of the plague than kiss one of you fasting.

A soldier is twitted with serving his master:

114

As witches do their serviceable spirits,
Even with thy prodigal blood.

An adulterous couple get this curse:

Like mistletoe on sear elms spent by weather,
Let him cleave to her, and both rot together.

A bravo is asked:

Dost thou imagine thou canst slide on blood,
And not be tainted with a shameful fall?
Or, like the black and melancholic yew-tree,
Dost think to root thyself in dead men's graves,
And yet to prosper?

It is dangerous to extract philosophy of life from any dramatist. Yet Webster so often returns to dark and doleful meditations, that we may fairly class him among constitutional pessimists. Men, according to the grimness of his melancholy, are:

Only like dead walls or vaulted graves,
That, ruined, yield no echo.
O this gloomy world!
In what a shadow or deep pit of darkness
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!

We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and banded
Which way please them.

Pleasure of life! what is't? only the good hours of an age.

A Duchess is 'brought to mortification,' before her strangling by the executioner, in this high fantastical oration:

Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salvatory of
green mummy. What's this flesh? A little crudded milk,
fantastical puff-paste, &c. &c.

Man's life in its totality is summed up with monastic cynicism in these lyric verses:

115

Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.

The greatness of the world passes by with all its glory:

Vain the ambition of kings,
Who seek by trophies and dead things
To leave a living name behind,
And weave but nets to catch the wind.

It would be easy to surfeit criticism with similar examples; where Webster is writing in sarcastic, meditative, or deliberately terror-stirring moods. The same dark dye of his imagination shows itself even more significantly in circumstances where, in the work of any other artist, it would inevitably mar the harmony of the picture. A lady, to select one instance, encourages her lover to embrace her at the moment of his happiness. She cries:

Sir, be confident!
What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir;
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster,
Kneels at my husband's tomb.

Yet so sustained is Webster's symphony of sombre tints, that we do not feel this sepulchral language, this 'talk fit for a charnel' (to use one of his own phrases), to be out of keeping. It sounds like a presentiment of coming woes, which, as the drama grows to its conclusion, gather and darken on the wretched victims of his bloody plot.

It was with profound sagacity, or led by some deep-rooted instinct, that Webster sought the fables of his two great tragedies, 'The White Devil' and 'The Duchess of Malfi,' in Italian annals. Whether he had visited Italy in his youth, we cannot say; for next to nothing is known about Webster's life. But that he had gazed long and earnestly into the mirror held up by that enchantress of the nations in his age, is certain. Aghast and fascinated by the sins he saw there flaunting in the light of day—sins on

116

whose pernicious glamour Ascham, Greene, and Howell have insisted with impressive vehemence—Webster discerned in them the stuff he needed for philosophy and art. Withdrawing from that contemplation, he was like a spirit 'loosed out of hell to speak of horrors.' Deeper than any poet of the time, deeper than any even of the Italians, he read the riddle of the sphinx of crime. He found there something akin to his own imaginative mood, something which he alone could fully comprehend and interpret. From the superficial narratives of writers like Bandello he extracted a spiritual essence which was, if not the literal, at least the ideal, truth involved in them.

The enormous and unnatural vices, the domestic crimes of cruelty, adultery, and bloodshed, the political scheming and the subtle arts of vengeance, the ecclesiastical tyranny and craft, the cynical scepticism and lustre of luxurious godlessness, which made Italy in the midst of her refinement blaze like 'a bright and ominous star' before the nations; these were the very elements in which the genius of Webster—salamander-like in flame—could live and flourish. Only the incidents of Italian history, or of French history in its Italianated epoch, were capable of supplying him with the proper type of plot. It was in Italy alone, or in an Italianated country, such as England for a brief space in the reign of the first Stuart threatened to become, that the well-nigh diabolical wickedness of his characters might have been realised. An audience familiar with Italian novels through Belleforest and Painter, inflamed by the long struggle of the Reformation against the scarlet abominations of the Papal See, outraged in their moral sense by the political paradoxes of Machiavelli, horror-stricken at the still recent misdoings of Borgias and Medici and Farnesi, alarmed by that Italian policy which had conceived the massacre of S. Bartholomew in France, and infuriated by that ecclesiastical hypocrisy which triumphed in the same; such an audience were at the right point of sympathy with a poet who undertook to lay the springs of Southern villany before them bare in a dramatic action. But, as the old proverb puts it, 'Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnato.' 'An Englishman assuming the Italian habit is a devil in the flesh.' The Italians were depraved, but spiritually feeble. The English playwright, when he brought them on the stage, arrayed with intellectual power and gleaming with the lurid splendour of a Northern fancy, made them tenfold darker and more terrible. To the subtlety and vices of the South he added the melancholy, meditation, and sinister insanity of his own climate. He deepened the complexion of crime and intensified lawlessness by robbing the Italian character of levity. Sin, in his conception of that character, was complicated with the sense of sin, as it never had been in a Florentine or a Neapolitan. He had not grasped the meaning of the Machiavellian conscience, in its cold serenity and disengagement from the dread of moral consequence. Not only are his villains stealthy, frigid, quick to evil, merciless, and void of honour; but they brood upon their crimes and analyse their motives. In the midst of their audacity they are dogged by dread of coming retribution. At the crisis of their destiny they look back upon their better days with intellectual remorse. In the execution of their bloodiest schemes they groan beneath the chains of guilt they wear, and quake before the phantoms of their haunted brains. Thus passion and reflection, superstition and profanity, deliberate atrocity and fear of judgment, are united in the same nature; and to make the complex still more strange, the play-wright has gifted these tremendous personalities with his own wild humour and imaginative irony. The result is almost monstrous, such an ideal of character as makes earth hell. And yet it is not without justification. To the Italian text has been added the Teutonic commentary, and both are fused by a dramatic genius into one living whole.

One of these men is Flamineo, the brother of Vittoria Corombona, upon whose part the action of the 'White Devil' depends. He has been bred in arts and letters at the university of Padua; but being poor and of luxurious appetites, he chooses the path of crime in courts for his advancement. A duke adopts him for his minion, and Flamineo acts the pander to this great man's lust. He contrives the death of his brother-in-law, suborns a doctor to poison the Duke's wife, and arranges secret meetings between his sister and the paramour who is to make her fortune and his own. His mother appears like a warning Até to prevent her daughter's crime. In his rage he cries:

What fury raised *thee* up? Away, away!

And when she pleads the honour of their house he answers:

Shall I,
Having a path so open and so free

To my preferment, still retain your milk
In my pale forehead?

Later on, when it is necessary to remove another victim, he runs his own brother through the body and drives his mother to madness. Yet, in the midst of these crimes, we are unable to regard him as a simple cut-throat. His irony and reckless courting of damnation open-eyed to get his gust of life in this world, make him no common villain. He can be brave as well as fierce. When the Duke insults him he bandies taunt for taunt:

119

Brach. No, you pander?
Flam. What, me, my lord?
Am I your dog?
B. A bloodhound; do you brave, do you stand me?
F. Stand you! let those that have diseases run;
I need no plasters.
B. Would you be kicked?
F. Would you have your neck broke?
I tell you, duke, I am not in Russia;
My shins must be kept whole.
B. Do you know me?
F. Oh, my lord, methodically:
As in this world there are degrees of evils,
So in this world there are degrees of devils.
You're a great duke, I your poor secretary.

When the Duke dies and his prey escapes him, the rage of disappointment breaks into this fierce apostrophe:

I cannot conjure; but if prayers or oaths.
Will get the speech of him, though forty devils
Wait on him in his livery of flames,
I'll speak to him and shake him by the hand,
Though I be blasted.

As crimes thicken round him, and he still despairs of the reward for which he sold himself, conscience awakes:

I have lived
Riotously ill, like some that live in court,
And sometimes when my face was full of smiles
Have felt the maze of conscience in my breast.

The scholar's scepticism, which lies at the root of his perversity, finds utterance in this meditation upon death:

120

Whither shall I go now? O Lucian, thy ridiculous purgatory! to find
Alexander the Great cobbling shoes, Pompey tagging points, and Julius
Cæsar making hair-buttons!
Whether I resolve to fire, earth, water, air, or all the elements by
scruples, I know not, nor greatly care.

At the last moment he yet can say:

We cease to grieve, cease to be Fortune's slaves,
Nay, cease to die, by dying.

And again, with the very yielding of his spirit:

My life was a black charnel.

It will be seen that in no sense does Flamineo resemble Iago. He is not a traitor working by craft and calculating ability to well-considered ends. He is the desperado frantically clutching at an uncertain and impossible satisfaction. Webster conceives him as a self-abandoned atheist, who, maddened by poverty and tainted by vicious living, takes a fury to his heart, and, because the goodness of the world has been for ever lost to him, recklessly seeks the bad.

Bosola, in the 'Duchess of Malfi,' is of the same stamp. He too has been a scholar. He is sent to the galleys 'for a notorious murder,' and on his release he enters the service of two brothers, the Duke of Calabria and the Cardinal of Aragon, who place him as their intelligencer at the court of their sister.

Bos. It seems you would create me
One of your familiars.
Ferd. Familiar! what's that?
Bos. Why, a very quaint invisible devil in flesh,
An intelligencer.

Ferd. Such a kind of thriving thing
I would wish thee; and ere long thou may'st arrive
At a higher place by it.

Lured by hope of preferment, Bosola undertakes the office of spy, tormentor, and at last of executioner. For:

121

Discontent and want
Is the best clay to mould a villain of.

But his true self, though subdued to be what he quaintly styles 'the devil's quilted anvil,' on which 'all sins are fashioned and the blows never heard,' continually rebels against this destiny. Compared with Flamineo, he is less unnaturally criminal. His melancholy is more fantastic, his despair more noble. Throughout the course of craft and cruelty on which he is goaded by a relentless taskmaster, his nature, hardened as it is, revolts.

At the end, when Bosola presents the body of the murdered Duchess to her brother, Webster has wrought a scene of tragic savagery that surpasses almost any other that the English stage can show. The sight, of his dead sister maddens Ferdinand, who, feeling the eclipse of reason gradually absorb his faculties, turns round with frenzied hatred on the accomplice of his fratricide. Bosola demands the price of guilt. Ferdinand spurns him with the concentrated eloquence of despair and the extravagance of approaching insanity. The murderer taunts his master coldly and laconically, like a man whose life is wrecked, who has waded through blood to his reward, and who at the last moment discovers the sacrifice of his conscience and masculine freedom to be fruitless. Remorse, frustrated hopes, and thirst for vengeance convert Bosola from this hour forward into an instrument of retribution. The Duke and his brother the Cardinal are both brought to bloody deaths by the hand which they had used to assassinate their sister.

It is fitting that something should be said about Webster's conception of the Italian despot. Brachiano and Ferdinand, the employers of Flamineo and Bosola, are tyrants such as Savonarola described, and as we read of in the chronicles of petty Southern cities. Nothing is suffered to stand between their lust and its accomplishment. They override the law by violence, or pervert its action to their own advantage:

122

The law to him
Is like a foul black cobweb to a spider;
He makes it his dwelling and a prison
To entangle those shall feed him.

They are eaten up with parasites, accomplices, and all the creatures of their crimes:

He and his brother are like plum-trees that grow crooked
over standing pools; they are rich and over-laden with
fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on
them.

In their lives they are without a friend; for society in guilt brings nought of comfort, and honours are but emptiness:

Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright;
But looked to near, have neither heat nor light.

Their plots and counterplots drive repose far from them:

There's but three furies found in spacious hell;
But in a great man's breast three thousand dwell.

Fearful shapes afflict their fancy; shadows of ancestral crime or ghosts of their own raising:

For these many years
None of our family dies, but there is seen
The shape of an old woman; which is given
By tradition to us to have been murdered
By her nephews for her riches.

Apparitions haunt them:

How tedious is a guilty conscience!
When I look into the fish-ponds in my garden,
Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake
That seems to strike at me.

Continually scheming against the objects of their avarice and hatred,

123

preparing poisons or suborning bravoos, they know that these same arts will be employed against them. The wine-cup hides arsenic; the headpiece is smeared with antimony; there is a dagger behind every arras, and each shadow is a murderer's. When death comes, they meet it trembling. What irony Webster has condensed in Brachiano's outcry:

On pain of death, let no man name death to me;
It is a word infinitely horrible.

And how solemn are the following reflections on the death of princes:

O thou soft natural death, that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber! no rough-bearded comet
Stares on thy mild departure; the dull owl
Beats not against thy casement, the hoarse wolf
Scents not thy carrion: pity winds thy corse,
Whilst horror waits on princes.

After their death, this is their epitaph:

These wretched eminent things
Leave no more fame behind'em than should one
Fall in a frost and leave his print in snow.

Of Webster's despots, the finest in conception and the firmest in execution is Ferdinand of Aragon. Jealousy of his sister and avarice take possession of him and torment him like furies. The flash of repentance over her strangled body is also the first flash of insanity. He survives to present the spectacle of a crazed lunatic, and to be run through the body by his paid assassin. In the Cardinal of Aragon, Webster paints a profligate Churchman, no less voluptuous, blood-guilty, and the rest of it, than his brother the Duke of Calabria. It seems to have been the poet's purpose in each of his Italian tragedies to unmask Rome as the Papal city really was. In the lawless desperado, the intemperate tyrant, and the goddess ecclesiastic, he portrayed the three curses from which Italian society was actually suffering.

124

It has been needful to dwell upon the gloomy and fantastic side of Webster's genius. But it must not be thought that he could touch no finer chord. Indeed, it might be said that in the domain of pathos he is even more powerful than in that of horror. His mastery in this region is displayed in the creation of that dignified and beautiful woman, the Duchess of Malfi, who, with nothing in her nature, had she but lived prosperously, to divide her from the sisterhood of gentle ladies, walks, shrined in love and purity and conscious rectitude, amid the snares and pitfalls of her persecutors, to die at last the victim of a brother's fevered avarice and a desperado's egotistical ambition. The apparatus of infernal cruelty, the dead man's hand, the semblances of murdered sons and husband, the masque of madmen, the dirge and doleful emblems of the tomb with which she is environed in her prison by the torturers who seek to goad her into lunacy, are insufficient to disturb the tranquillity and tenderness of her nature. When the rope is being fastened to her throat, she does not spend her breath in recriminations, but turns to the waiting-woman and says:

Farewell, Cariola!
I pray thee look thou givest my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.

In the preceding scenes we have had enough, nay, over-much, of madness, despair, and wrestling with doom. This is the calm that comes when death is present, when the tortured soul lays down its burden of the flesh with gladness. But Webster has not spared another touch of thrilling pathos. The death-struggle is over; the fratricide has rushed away, a maddened man; the murderer is gazing with remorse upon the beautiful dead body of his lady, wishing he had the world wherewith to buy her back to life again; when suddenly she murmurs 'Mercy!' Our interest, already overstrained, revives with momentary hope. But the guardians of the grave will not be exorcised; and 'Mercy!' is the last groan of the injured Duchess.

125

Webster showed great skill in his delineation of the Duchess. He had to paint a woman in a hazardous situation: a sovereign stooping in her widowhood to wed a servant; a lady living with the mystery of this unequal marriage round her like a veil. He dowered her with no salient qualities of intellect or heart or will; but he sustained our sympathy with her, and made us comprehend her. To the last she is a Duchess; and when she has divested state and bowed her head to enter the low gate of heaven—too low for coronets—her poet shows us, in the lines already

quoted, that the woman still survives.

The same pathos surrounds the melancholy portrait of Isabella in 'Vittoria Corombona.' But Isabella, in that play, serves chiefly to enhance the tyranny of her triumphant rival. The main difficulty under which these scenes of rarest pathos would labour, were they brought upon the stage, is their simplicity in contrast with the ghastly and contorted horrors that envelop them. A dialogue abounding in the passages I have already quoted—a dialogue which bandies 'O you screech-owl!' and 'Thou foul black cloud!'—in which a sister's admonition to her brother to think twice of suicide assumes a form so weird as this:

I prithee, yet remember,
Millions are now in graves, which at last day
Like mandrakes shall rise shrieking.—

such a dialogue could not be rendered save by actors strung up to a pitch of almost frenzied tension. To do full justice to what in Webster's style would be spasmodic were it not so weighty, and at the same time to maintain the purity of outline and melodious rhythm of such characters as Isabella, demands no common histrionic power.

126

In attempting to define Webster's touch upon Italian tragic story, I have been led perforce to concentrate attention on what is painful and shocking to our sense of harmony in art. He was a vigorous and profoundly imaginative playwright. But his most enthusiastic admirers will hardly contend that good taste or moderation determined the movement of his genius. Nor, though his insight into the essential dreadfulness of Italian tragedy was so deep, is it possible to maintain that his portraiture of Italian life was true to its more superficial aspects. What place would there be for a Correggio or a Raphael in such a world as Webster's? Yet we know that the art of Raphael and Correggio is in exact harmony with the Italian temperament of the same epoch which gave birth to Cesare Borgia and Bianca Capello. The comparatively slighter sketch of Iachimo in 'Cymbeline' represents the Italian as he felt and lived, better than the laboured portrait of Flamineo. Webster's Italian tragedies are consequently true, not so much to the actual conditions of Italy, as to the moral impression made by those conditions on a Northern imagination.

I.—ITALIAM PETIMUS

Italiam Petimus! We left our upland home before daybreak on a clear October morning. There had been a hard frost, spangling the meadows with rime-crystals, which twinkled where the sun's rays touched them. Men and women were mowing the frozen grass with thin short Alpine scythes; and as the swathes fell, they gave a crisp, an almost tinkling sound. Down into the gorge, surnamed of Avalanche, our horses plunged; and there we lost the sunshine till we reached the Bear's Walk, opening upon the vales of Albula, and Julier, and Schyn. But up above, shone morning light upon fresh snow, and steep torrent-cloven slopes reddening with a hundred fading plants; now and then it caught the grey-green icicles that hung from cliffs where summer streams had dripped. There is no colour lovelier than the blue of an autumn sky in the high Alps, defining ridges powdered with light snow, and melting imperceptibly downward into the warm yellow of the larches and the crimson of the bilberry. Wiesen was radiantly beautiful: those ærial ranges of the hills that separate Albula from Julier soared crystal-clear above their forests; and for a foreground, on the green fields starred with lilac crocuses, careered a group of children on their sledges. Then came the row of giant peaks—Pitz d'Aela, Tinzenhorn, and Michelhorn, above the deep ravine of Albula—all seen across wide undulating golden swards, close-shaven and awaiting winter. Carnations hung from cottage windows in full bloom, casting sharp angular black shadows on white walls.

128

Italiam petimus! We have climbed the valley of the Julier, following its green, transparent torrent. A night has come and gone at Mühlen. The stream still leads us up, diminishing in volume as we rise, up through the fleecy mists that roll asunder for the sun, disclosing far-off snowy ridges and blocks of granite mountains. The lifeless, soundless waste of rock, where only thin winds whistle out of silence and fade suddenly into still air, is passed. Then comes the descent, with its forests of larch and cembra, golden and dark green upon a ground of grey, and in front the serried shafts of the Bernina, and here and there a glimpse of emerald lake at turnings of the road. Autumn is the season for this landscape. Through the fading of innumerable leaflets, the yellowing of larches, and something vaporous in the low sun, it gains a colour not unlike that of the lands we seek. By the side of the lake at Silvaplana the light was strong and warm, but mellow. Pearly clouds hung over the Maloja, and floating overhead cast shadows on the opaque water, which may literally be compared to chrysoprase. The breadth of golden, brown, and russet tints upon the valley at this moment adds softness to its lines of level strength. Devotees of the Engadine contend that it possesses an austere charm beyond the common beauty of Swiss landscape; but this charm is only perfected in autumn. The fresh snow on the heights that guard it helps. And then there are the forests of dark pines upon those many knolls and undulating mountain-flanks beside the lakes. Sitting and dreaming there in noonday sun, I kept repeating to myself *Italiam petimus!*

A hurricane blew upward from the pass as we left Silvaplana, ruffling the lake with gusts of the Italian wind. By Silz Maria we came in sight of a dozen Italian workmen, arm linked in arm in two rows, tramping in rhythmic stride, and singing as they went. Two of them were such nobly built young men, that for a moment the beauty of the landscape faded from my sight, and I was saddened. They moved to their singing, like some of Mason's or Frederick Walker's figures, with the free grace of living statues, and laughed as we drove by. And yet, with all their beauty, industry, sobriety, intelligence, these Italians of the northern valleys serve the sterner people of the Grisons like negroes, doing their roughest work at scanty wages.

129

So we came to the vast Alpine wall, and stood on a bare granite slab, and looked over into Italy, as men might lean from the battlements of a fortress. Behind lies the Alpine valley, grim, declining slowly northward, with wind-lashed lakes and glaciers sprawling from storm-broken pyramids of gneiss. Below spread the unfathomable depths that lead to Lombardy, flooded with sunlight, filled with swirling vapour, but never wholly hidden from our sight. For the blast kept shifting the cloud-masses, and the sun streamed through in spears and bands of sheeny rays. Over the parapet our horses dropped, down through sable spruce and amber larch, down between tangles of rowan and autumnal underwood. Ever as we sank, the mountains rose—those sharp embattled

precipices, toppling spires, impendent chasms blurred with mist, that make the entrance into Italy sublime. Nowhere do the Alps exhibit their full stature, their commanding puissance, with such majesty as in the gates of Italy; and of all those gates I think there is none to compare with Maloja, none certainly to rival it in abruptness of initiation into the Italian secret. Below Vico Soprano we pass already into the violets and blues of Titian's landscape. Then come the purple boulders among chestnut trees; then the double dolomite-like peak of Pitz Badin and Promontogno.

130

It is sad that words can do even less than painting could to bring this window-scene at Promontogno before another eye. The casement just frames it. In the foreground are meadow slopes, thinly, capriciously planted with chestnut trees and walnuts, each standing with its shadow cast upon the sward. A little farther falls the torrent, foaming down between black jaws of rain-stained granite, with the wooden buildings of a rustic mill set on a ledge of rock. Suddenly above this landscape soars the valley, clothing its steep sides on either hand with pines; and there are emerald isles of pasture on the wooded flanks; and then cliffs, where the red-stemmed larches glow; and at the summit, shooting into ether with a swathe of mist around their basement, soar the double peaks, the one a pyramid, the other a bold broken crystal not unlike the Finsteraarhorn seen from Furka. These are connected by a snowy saddle, and snow is lying on their inaccessible crags in powdery drifts. Sunlight pours between them into the ravine. The green and golden forests now join from either side, and now recede, according as the sinuous valley brings their lines together or disparts them. There is a sound of cow-bells on the meadows; and the roar of the stream is dulled or quickened as the gusts of this October wind sweep by or slacken. *Italiam petimus!*

Tangimus Italiam! Chiavenna is a worthy key to this great gate Italian. We walked at night in the open galleries of the cathedral cloister—white, smoothly curving, well-proportioned loggie, enclosing a green space, whence soars the campanile to the stars. The moon had sunk, but her light still silvered the mountains that stand at watch round Chiavenna; and the castle rock was flat and black against that dreamy background. Jupiter, who walked so lately for us on the long ridge of the Jacobshorn above our pines, had now an ample space of sky over Lombardy to light his lamp in. Why is it, we asked each other, as we smoked our pipes and strolled, my friend and I;—why is it that Italian beauty does not leave the spirit so untroubled as an Alpine scene? Why do we here desire the flower of some emergent feeling to grow from the air, or from the soil, or from humanity to greet us? This sense of want evoked by Southern beauty is perhaps the antique mythopœic yearning. But in our perplexed life it takes another form, and seems the longing for emotion, ever fleeting, ever new, unrealised, unreal, insatiable.

131

II.—OVER THE APENNINES

At Parma we slept in the Albergo della Croce Bianca, which is more a bric-à-brac shop than an inn; and slept but badly, for the good folk of Parma twanged guitars and exercised their hoarse male voices all night in the street below. We were glad when Christian called us, at 5 A.M., for an early start across the Apennines. This was the day of a right Roman journey. In thirteen and a half hours, leaving Parma at 6, and arriving in Sarzana at 7.30, we flung ourselves across the spine of Italy, from the plains of Eridanus to the seashore of Etruscan Luna. I had secured a carriage and extra post-horses the night before; therefore we found no obstacles upon the road, but eager drivers, quick relays, obsequious postmasters, change, speed, perpetual movement. The road itself is a noble one, and nobly entertained in all things but accommodation for travellers. At Berceto, near the summit of the pass, we stopped just half an hour, to lunch off a mouldy hen and six eggs; but that was all the halt we made.

132

As we drove out of Parma, striking across the plain to the *ghiara* of the Taro, the sun rose over the austere autumnal landscape, with its withered vines and crimson haws. Christian, the mountaineer, who at home had never seen the sun rise from a flat horizon, stooped from the box to call attention to this daily recurring miracle, which on the plain of Lombardy is no less wonderful than on a rolling sea. From the village of Fornovo, where the Italian League was camped awaiting Charles VIII. upon that memorable July morn in 1495, the road strikes suddenly aside, gains a spur of the descending Apennines, and keeps this vantage till the pass of La Cisa is reached. Many windings are occasioned by thus adhering to arêtes, but the total result is a gradual ascent with free

prospect over plain and mountain. The Apennines, built up upon a smaller scale than the Alps, perplexed in detail and entangled with cross sections and convergent systems, lend themselves to this plan of carrying highroads along their ridges instead of following the valley.

What is beautiful in the landscape of that northern watershed is the subtlety, delicacy, variety, and intricacy of the mountain outlines. There is drawing wherever the eye falls. Each section of the vast expanse is a picture of tossed crests and complicated undulations. And over the whole sea of stationary billows, light is shed like an ethereal raiment, with spare colour—blue and grey, and parsimonious green—in the near foreground. The detail is somewhat dry and monotonous; for these so finely moulded hills are made up of washed earth, the immemorial wrecks of earlier mountain ranges. Brown villages, not unlike those of Midland England, low houses built of stone and tiled with stone, and square-towered churches, occur at rare intervals in cultivated hollows, where there are fields and fruit trees. Water is nowhere visible except in the wasteful river-beds. As we rise, we break into a wilder country, forested with oak, where oxen and goats are browsing. The turf is starred with lilac gentian and crocus bells, but sparsely. Then comes the highest village, Berceto, with keen Alpine air. After that, broad rolling downs of yellowing grass and russet beech-scrub lead onward to the pass La Cisa. The sense of breadth in composition is continually satisfied through this ascent by the fine-drawn lines, faint tints, and immense air-spaces of Italian landscape. Each little piece reminds one of England; but the geographical scale is enormously more grandiose, and the effect of majesty proportionately greater.

133

From La Cisa the road descends suddenly; for the southern escarpment of the Apennine, as of the Alpine, barrier is pitched at a far steeper angle than the northern. Yet there is no view of the sea. That is excluded by the lower hills which hem the Magra. The upper valley is beautiful, with verdant lawns and purple hillsides breaking down into thick chestnut woods, through which we wound at a rapid pace for nearly an hour. The leaves were still green, mellowing to golden; but the fruit was ripe and heavy, ready at all points to fall. In the still October air the husks above our heads would loosen, and the brown nuts rustle through the foliage, and with a dull short thud, like drops of thunder-rain, break down upon the sod. At the foot of this rich forest, wedged in between huge buttresses, we found Pontremoli, and changed our horses here for the last time. It was Sunday, and the little town was alive with country-folk; tall stalwart fellows wearing peacock's feathers in their black slouched hats, and nut-brown maids.

From this point the valley of the Magra is exceeding rich with fruit trees, vines, and olives. The tendrils of the vine are yellow now, and in some places hued like generous wine; through their thick leaves the sun shot crimson. In one cool garden, as the day grew dusk, I noticed quince trees laden with pale fruit entangled with pomegranates—green spheres and ruddy amid burnished leaves. By the roadside too were many berries of bright hues; the glowing red of haws and hips, the amber of the pyracanthus, the rose tints of the spindle-wood. These make autumn even lovelier than spring. And then there was a wood of chestnuts carpeted with pale pinkling, a place to dream of in the twilight. But the main motive of this landscape was the indescribable Carrara range, an island of pure form and shooting peaks, solid marble, crystalline in shape and texture, faintly blue against the blue sky, from which they were but scarce divided. These mountains close the valley to south-east, and seem as though they belonged to another and more celestial region.

134

Soon the sunlight was gone, and moonrise came to close the day, as we rolled onward to Sarzana, through arundo donax and vine-girdled olive trees and villages, where contadini lounged upon the bridges. There was a stream of sound in our ears, and in my brain a rhythmic dance of beauties caught through the long-drawn glorious golden autumn-day.

III.—FOSDINOVO

The hamlet and the castle of Fosdinovo stand upon a mountain-spur above Sarzana, commanding the valley of the Magra and the plains of Luni. This is an ancient fief of the Malaspina House, and is still in the possession of the Marquis of that name.

The road to Fosdinovo strikes across the level through an avenue of plane trees, shedding their discoloured leaves. It then takes to the open fields, bordered with tall reeds waving from the foss on either hand, where grapes are hanging to the vines. The country-folk allow their vines to climb into the olives, and these golden festoons are a great ornament

135

to the grey branches. The berries on the trees are still quite green, and it is a good olive season. Leaving the main road, we pass a villa of the Malaspini, shrouded in immense thickets of sweet bay and ilex, forming a grove for the Nymphs or Pan. Here may you see just such clean stems and lucid foliage as Gian Bellini painted, inch by inch, in his Peter Martyr picture. The place is neglected now; the semicircular seats of white Carrara marble are stained with green mosses, the altars chipped, the fountains choked with bay leaves; and the rose trees, escaped from what were once trim garden alleys, have gone wandering a-riot into country hedges. There is no demarcation between the great man's villa and the neighbouring farms. From this point the path rises, and the barren hillside is a-bloom with late-flowering myrtles. Why did the Greeks consecrate these myrtle-roses to Death as well as Love? Electra complained that her father's tomb had not received the honour of the myrtle branch; and the Athenians wreathed their swords with myrtle in memory of Harmodius. Thinking of these matters, I cannot but remember lines of Greek, which have themselves the rectitude and elasticity of myrtle wands:

καί προσπεσών εκλυσ' ε'ρημίας τυχών
 σπονδάς τε λύσας ασκόν ον Φέρω Ξένοις
 εσπεισα τύμβω δ'άμφεθηκα μυσσίνας

As we approach Fosdinovo, the hills above us gain sublimity; the prospect over plain and sea—the fields where Luna was, the widening bay of Spezzia—grows ever grander. The castle is a ruin, still capable of partial habitation, and now undergoing repair—the state in which a ruin looks most sordid and forlorn. How strange it is, too, that, to enforce this sense of desolation, sad dishevelled weeds cling ever to such antique masonry! Here are the henbane, the sow-thistle, the wild cucumber. At Avignon, at Orvieto, at Dolce Acqua, at Les Baux, we never missed them. And they have the dusty courtyards, the massive portals, where portcullises still threaten, of Fosdinovo to themselves. Over the gate, and here and there on corbels, are carved the arms of Malaspina—a barren thorn-tree, gnarled with the geometrical precision of heraldic irony.

136

Leaning from the narrow windows of this castle, with the spacious view to westward, I thought of Dante. For Dante in this castle was the guest of Moroello Malaspina, what time he was yet finishing the 'Inferno.' There is a little old neglected garden, full to south, enclosed upon a rampart which commands the Borgo, where we found frail canker-roses and yellow amaryllis. Here, perhaps, he may have sat with ladies—for this was the Marchesa's pleasaunce; or may have watched through a short summer's night, until he saw that *tremolar della marina*, portending dawn, which afterwards he painted in the 'Purgatory.'

From Fosdinovo one can trace the Magra work its way out seaward, not into the plain where once the *candentia moenia Lunae* flashed sunrise from their battlements, but close beside the little hills which back the southern arm of the Spezzian gulf. At the extreme end of that promontory, called Del Corvo, stood the Benedictine convent of S. Croce; and it was here in 1309, if we may trust to tradition, that Dante, before his projected journey into France, appeared and left the first part of his poem with the Prior. Fra Ilario, such was the good father's name, received commission to transmit the 'Inferno' to Ugucione della Faggiuola; and he subsequently recorded the fact of Dante's visit in a letter which, though its genuineness has been called in question, is far too interesting to be left without allusion. The writer says that on occasion of a journey into lands beyond the Riviera, Dante visited this convent, appearing silent and unknown among the monks. To the Prior's question what he wanted, he gazed upon the brotherhood, and only answered, 'Peace!' Afterwards, in private conversation, he communicated his name and spoke about his poem. A portion of the 'Divine Comedy' composed in the Italian tongue aroused Ilario's wonder, and led him to inquire why his guest had not followed the usual course of learned poets by committing his thoughts to Latin. Dante replied that he had first intended to write in that language, and that he had gone so far as to begin the poem in Virgilian hexameters. Reflection upon the altered conditions of society in that age led him, however, to reconsider the matter; and he was resolved to tune another lyre, 'suited to the sense of modern men.' 'For,' said he, 'it is idle to set solid food before the lips of sucklings.'

137

If we can trust Fra Ilario's letter as a genuine record, which is unhappily a matter of some doubt, we have in this narration not only a picturesque, almost a melodramatically picturesque glimpse of the poet's apparition to those quiet monks in their seagirt house of peace, but also an interesting record of the destiny which presided over the first great

IV.—LA SPEZZIA

While we were at Fosdinovo the sky filmed over, and there came a halo round the sun. This portended change; and by evening, after we had reached La Spezzia, earth, sea, and air were conscious of a coming tempest. At night I went down to the shore, and paced the sea-wall they have lately built along the Rada. The moon was up, but overdriven with dry smoky clouds, now thickening to blackness over the whole bay, now leaving intervals through which the light poured fitfully and fretfully upon the wrinkled waves; and ever and anon they shuddered with electric gleams which were not actual lightning. Heaven seemed to be descending on the sea; one might have fancied that some powerful charms were drawing down the moon with influence malign upon those still resisting billows. For not as yet the gulf was troubled to its depth, and not as yet the breakers dashed in foam against the moonlight-smitten promontories. There was but an uneasy murmuring of wave to wave; a whispering of wind, that stooped its wing and hissed along the surface, and withdrew into the mystery of clouds again; a momentary chafing of churned water round the harbour piers, subsiding into silence petulant and sullen. I leaned against an iron stanchion and longed for the sea's message. But nothing came to me, and the drowned secret of Shelley's death those waves which were his grave revealed not.

138

Howler and scooper of storms! capricious and dainty sea!

Meanwhile the incantation swelled in shrillness, the electric shudders deepened. Alone in this elemental overture to tempest I took no note of time, but felt, through self-abandonment to the symphonic influence, how sea and air, and clouds akin to both, were dealing with each other complainingly, and in compliance to some maker of unrest within them. A touch upon my shoulder broke this trance; I turned and saw a boy beside me in a coastguard's uniform. Francesco was on patrol that night; but my English accent soon assured him that I was no *contrabbandiere*, and he too leaned against the stanchion and told me his short story. He was in his nineteenth year, and came from Florence, where his people live in the Borgo Ognissanti. He had all the brightness of the Tuscan folk, a sort of innocent malice mixed with *espieglerie*. It was diverting to see the airs he gave himself on the strength of his new military dignity, his gun, and uniform, and night duty on the shore. I could not help humming to myself *Non più andrai*; for Francesco was a sort of Tuscan Cherubino. We talked about picture galleries and libraries in Florence, and I had to hear his favourite passages from the Italian poets. And then there came the plots of Jules Verne's stories and marvellous narrations about *l' uomo cavallo*, *l' uomo volante*, *l' uomo pesce*. The last of these personages turned out to be Paolo Boynon (so pronounced), who had swam the Arno in his diving dress, passing the several bridges, and when he came to the great weir 'allora tutti stare con bocca aperta.' Meanwhile the storm grew serious, and our conversation changed. Francesco told me about the terrible sun-stricken sand shores of the Riviera, burning in summer noon, over which the coast-guard has to tramp, their perils from falling stones in storm, and the trains that come rushing from those narrow tunnels on the midnight line of march. It is a hard life; and the thirst for adventure which drove this boy—'il più matto di tutta la famiglia'—to adopt it, seems well-nigh quenched. And still, with a return to Giulio Verne, he talked enthusiastically of deserting, of getting on board a merchant ship, and working his way to southern islands where wonders are.

139

A furious blast swept the whole sky for a moment almost clear. The moonlight fell, with racing cloud-shadows, upon sea and hills, the lights of Lerici, the great *fanali* at the entrance of the gulf, and Francesco's upturned handsome face. Then all again was whirled in mist and foam; one breaker smote the sea wall in a surge of froth, another plunged upon its heels; with inconceivable swiftness came rain; lightning deluged the expanse of surf, and showed the windy trees bent landward by the squall. It was long past midnight now, and the storm was on us for the space of three days.

140

V.—PORTO VENERE

For the next three days the wind went worrying on, and a line of surf leapt on the sea-wall always to the same height. The hills all around were inky black and weary.

At night the wild libeccio still rose, with floods of rain and lightning poured upon the waste. I thought of the Florentine patrol. Is he out in it, and where?

At last there came a lull. When we rose on the fourth morning, the sky was sulky, spent and sleepy after storm—the air as soft and tepid as boiled milk or steaming flannel. We drove along the shore to Porto Venere, passing the arsenals and dockyards, which have changed the face of Spezzia since Shelley knew it. This side of the gulf is not so rich in vegetation as the other, probably because it lies open to the winds from the Carrara mountains. The chestnuts come down to the shore in many places, bringing with them the wild mountain-side. To make up for this lack of luxuriance, the coast is furrowed with a succession of tiny harbours, where the fishing-boats rest at anchor. There are many villages upon the spurs of hills, and on the headlands naval stations, hospitals, lazaretti, and prisons. A prickly bindweed (the *Smilax Sarsaparilla*) forms a feature in the near landscape, with its creamy odoriferous blossoms, coral berries, and glossy thorned leaves.

A turn of the road brought Porto Venere in sight, and on its grey walls flashed a gleam of watery sunlight. The village consists of one long narrow street, the houses on the left side hanging sheer above the sea. Their doors at the back open on to cliffs which drop about fifty feet upon the water. A line of ancient walls, with mediaeval battlements and shells of chambers suspended midway between earth and sky, runs up the rock behind the town; and this wall is pierced with a deep gateway above which the inn is piled. We had our lunch in a room opening upon the town-gate, adorned with a deep-cut Pisan arch enclosing images and frescoes—a curious episode in a place devoted to the jollity of smugglers and seafaring folk. The whole house was such as Tintoretto loved to paint—huge wooden rafters; open chimneys with pent-house canopies of stone, where the cauldrons hung above logs of chestnut; rude low tables spread with coarse linen embroidered at the edges, and laden with plates of fishes, fruit, quaint glass, big-bellied jugs of earthenware, and flasks of yellow wine. The people of the place were lounging round in lazy attitudes. There were odd nooks and corners everywhere; unexpected staircases with windows slanting through the thickness of the town-wall; pictures of saints; high-zoned serving women, on whose broad shoulders lay big coral beads; smoke-blackened roofs, and balconies that opened on the sea. The house was inexhaustible in motives for pictures.

We walked up the street, attended by a rabble rout of boys—*diavoli scatenati*—clean, grinning, white-teethed, who kept incessantly shouting, 'Soldo, soldo!' I do not know why these sea-urchins are so far more irrepressible than their land brethren. But it is always thus in Italy. They take an imperturbable delight in noise and mere annoyance. I shall never forget the sea-roar of Porto Venere, with that shrill obligate, 'Soldo, soldo, soldo!' rattling like a dropping fire from lungs of brass.

At the end of Porto Venere is a withered and abandoned city, climbing the cliffs of S. Pietro; and on the headland stands the ruined church, built by Pisans with alternate rows of white and black marble, upon the site of an old temple of Venus. This is a modest and pure piece of Gothic architecture, fair in desolation, refined and dignified, and not unworthy in its grace of the dead Cyprian goddess. Through its broken lancets the sea-wind whistles and the vast reaches of the Tyrrhene gulf are seen. Samphire sprouts between the blocks of marble, and in sheltered nooks the caper hangs her beautiful purpureal snowy bloom.

The headland is a bold block of white limestone stained with red. It has the pitch of Exmoor stooping to the sea near Lynton. To north, as one looks along the coast, the line is broken by Porto Fino's amethystine promontory; and in the vaporous distance we could trace the Riviera mountains, shadowy and blue. The sea came roaring, rolling in with tawny breakers; but, far out, it sparkled in pure azure, and the cloud-shadows over it were violet. Where Corsica should have been seen, soared banks of fleecy, broad-domed alabaster clouds.

This point, once dedicated to Venus, now to Peter—both, be it remembered, fishers of men—is one of the most singular in Europe. The island of Palmaria, rich in veined marbles, shelters the port; so that outside the sea rages, while underneath the town, reached by a narrow strait, there is a windless calm. It was not without reason that our Lady of Beauty took this fair gulf to herself; and now that she has long been dispossessed, her memory lingers yet in names. For Porto Venere remembers her, and Lerici is only Eryx. There is a grotto here, where an inscription tells us that Byron once 'tempted the Ligurian waves.' It is just such a natural sea-cave as might have inspired Euripides when he

VI.—LERICI

Libeccio at last had swept the sky clear. The gulf was ridged with foam-fleeced breakers, and the water churned into green, tawny wastes. But overhead there flew the softest clouds, all silvery, dispersed in flocks. It is the day for pilgrimage to what was Shelley's home.

After following the shore a little way, the road to Lerici breaks into the low hills which part La Spezzia from Sarzana. The soil is red, and overgrown with arbutus and pinaster, like the country around Cannes. Through the scattered trees it winds gently upwards, with frequent views across the gulf, and then descends into a land rich with olives—a genuine Riviera landscape, where the mountain-slopes are hoary, and spikelets of innumerable light-flashing leaves twinkle against a blue sea, misty-deep. The walls here are not unfrequently adorned with bas-reliefs of Carrara marble—saints and madonnas very delicately wrought, as though they were love-labours of sculptors who had passed a summer on this shore. San Terenzio is soon discovered low upon the sands to the right, nestling under little cliffs; and then the high-built castle of Lerici comes in sight, looking across, the bay to Porto Venere—one Aphrodite calling to the other, with the foam between. The village is piled around its cove with tall and picturesquely coloured houses; the molo and the fishing-boats lie just beneath the castle. There is one point of the descending carriage road where all this gracefulness is seen, framed by the boughs of olive branches, swaying, wind-ruffled, laughing the many-twinkling smiles of ocean back from their grey leaves. Here *Erycina ridens* is at home. And, as we stayed to dwell upon the beauty of the scene, came women from the bay below—barefooted, straight as willow wands, with burnished copper bowls upon their heads. These women have the port of goddesses, deep-bosomed, with the length of thigh and springing ankles that betoken strength no less than elasticity and grace. The hair of some of them was golden, rippling in little curls around brown brows and glowing eyes. Pale lilac blent with orange on their dress, and coral beads hung from their ears.

144

At Lerici we took a boat and pushed into the rolling breakers. Christian now felt the movement of the sea for the first time. This was rather a rude trial, for the grey-maned monsters played, as it seemed, at will with our cockle-shell, tumbling in dolphin curves to reach the shore. Our boatmen knew all about Shelley and the Casa Magni. It is not at Lerici, but close to San Terenzio, upon the south side of the village. Looking across the bay from the molo, one could clearly see its square white mass, tiled roof, and terrace built on rude arcades with a broad orange awning. Trelawny's description hardly prepares one for so considerable a place. I think the English exiles of that period must have been exacting if the Casa Magni seemed to them no better than a bathing-house.

We left our boat at the jetty, and walked through some gardens to the villa. There we were kindly entertained by the present occupiers, who, when I asked them whether such visits as ours were not a great annoyance, gently but feelingly replied: 'It is not so bad now as it used to be.' The English gentleman who rents the Casa Magni has known it uninterruptedly since Shelley's death, and has used it for *villeggiatura* during the last thirty years. We found him in the central sitting-room, which readers of Trelawny's 'Recollections' have so often pictured to themselves. The large oval table, the settees round the walls, and some of the pictures are still unchanged. As we sat talking, I laughed to think of that luncheon party, when Shelley lost his clothes, and came naked, dripping with sea-water, into the room, protected by the skirts of the sympathising waiting-maid. And then I wondered where they found him on the night when he stood screaming in his sleep, after the vision of his veiled self, with its question, '*Siete soddisfatto?*'

145

There were great ilexes behind the house in Shelley's time, which have been cut down, and near these he is said to have sat and written the 'Triumph of Life.' Some new houses, too, have been built between the villa and the town; otherwise the place is unaltered. Only an awning has been added to protect the terrace from the sun. I walked out on this terrace, where Shelley used to listen to Jane's singing. The sea was fretting at its base, just as Mrs. Shelley says it did when the Don Juan disappeared.

From San Terenzio we walked back to Lerici through olive woods, attended by a memory which toned the almost overpowering beauty of the place to sadness.

VII.—VIAREGGIO

The same memory drew us, a few days later, to the spot where Shelley's body was burned. Viareggio is fast becoming a fashionable watering-place for the people of Florence and Lucca, who seek fresher air and simpler living than Livorno offers. It has the usual new inns and improvised lodging-houses of such places, built on the outskirts of a little fishing village, with a boundless stretch of noble sands. There is a wooden pier on which we walked, watching the long roll of waves, foam-flaked, and quivering with moonlight. The Apennines faded into the grey sky beyond, and the sea-wind was good to breathe. There is a feeling of 'immensity, liberty, action' here, which is not common in Italy. It reminds us of England; and to-night the Mediterranean had the rough force of a tidal sea.

146

Morning revealed beauty enough in Viareggio to surprise even one who expects from Italy all forms of loveliness. The sand-dunes stretch for miles between the sea and a low wood of stone pines, with the Carrara hills descending from their glittering pinnacles by long lines to the headlands of the Spezzian Gulf. The immeasurable distance was all painted in sky-blue and amethyst; then came the golden green of the dwarf firs; and then dry yellow in the grasses of the dunes; and then the many-tinted sea, with surf tossed up against the furthest cliffs. It is a wonderful and tragic view, to which no painter but the Roman Costa has done justice; and he, it may be said, has made this landscape of the Carrarese his own. The space between sand and pine-wood was covered with faint, yellow, evening primroses. They flickered like little harmless flames in sun and shadow, and the spires of the Carrara range were giant flames transformed to marble. The memory of that day described by Trelawny in a passage of immortal English prose, when he and Byron and Leigh Hunt stood beside the funeral pyre, and libations were poured, and the 'Cor Cordium' was found inviolate among the ashes, turned all my thoughts to flame beneath the gentle autumn sky.

Still haunted by these memories, we took the carriage road to Pisa, over which Shelley's friends had hurried to and fro through those last days. It passes an immense forest of stone-pines—aisles and avenues; undergrowth of ilex, laurustinus, gorse, and myrtle; the crowded cyclamens, the solemn silence of the trees; the winds hushed in their velvet roof and stationary domes of verdure.

Parma is perhaps the brightest *Residenzstadt* of the second class in Italy. Built on a sunny and fertile tract of the Lombard plain, within view of the Alps, and close beneath the shelter of the Apennines, it shines like a well-set gem with stately towers and cheerful squares in the midst of verdure. The cities of Lombardy are all like large country houses: walking out of their gates, you seem to be stepping from a door or window that opens on a trim and beautiful garden, where mulberry-tree is married to mulberry by festoons of vines, and where the maize and sunflower stand together in rows between patches of flax and hemp. But it is not in order to survey the union of well-ordered husbandry with the civilities of ancient city-life that we break the journey at Parma between Milan and Bologna. We are attracted rather by the fame of one great painter, whose work, though it may be studied piecemeal in many galleries of Europe, in Parma has a fulness, largeness, and mastery that can nowhere else be found. In Parma alone Correggio challenges comparison with Raphael, with Tintoret, with all the supreme decorative painters who have deigned to make their art the handmaid of architecture. Yet even in the cathedral and the church of S. Giovanni, where Correggio's frescoes cover cupola and chapel wall, we could scarcely comprehend his greatness now—so cruelly have time and neglect dealt with those delicate dream-shadows of celestial fairyland—were it not for an interpreter, who consecrated a lifetime to the task of translating his master's poetry of fresco into the prose of engraving. That man was Paolo Toschi—a name to be ever venerated by all lovers of the arts; since without his guidance we should hardly know what to seek for in the ruined splendours of the domes of Parma, or even seeking, how to find the object of our search. Toschi's labour was more effectual than that of a restorer however skilful, more loving than that of a follower however faithful. He respected Correggio's handiwork with religious scrupulousness, adding not a line or tone or touch of colour to the fading frescoes; but he lived among them, aloft on scaffoldings, and face to face with the originals which he designed to reproduce. By long and close familiarity, by obstinate and patient interrogation, he divined Correggio's secret, and was able at last to see clearly through the mist of cobweb and mildew and altar smoke, and through the still more cruel travesty of so-called restoration. What he discovered, he faithfully committed first to paper in water colours, and then to copperplate with the burin, so that we enjoy the privilege of seeing Correggio's masterpieces as Toschi saw them, with the eyes of genius and of love and of long scientific study. It is not too much to say that some of Correggio's most charming compositions—for example, the dispute of S. Augustine and S. John—have been resuscitated from the grave by Toschi's skill. The original offers nothing but a mouldering surface from which the painter's work has dropped in scales. The engraving presents a design which we doubt not was Correggio's, for it corresponds in all particulars to the style and spirit of the master. To be critical in dealing with so successful an achievement of restoration and translation is difficult. Yet it may be admitted once and for all that Toschi has not unfrequently enfeebled his original. Under his touch Correggio loses somewhat of his sensuous audacity, his dithyrambic ecstasy, and approaches the ordinary standard of prettiness and graceful beauty. The Diana of the Camera di S. Paolo, for instance, has the strong calm splendour of a goddess: the same Diana in Toschi's engraving seems about to smile with girlish joy. In a word, the engraver was a man of a more common stamp—more timid and more conventional than the painter. But this is after all a trifling deduction from the value of his work.

148

149

Our debt to Paolo Toschi is such that it would be ungrateful not to seek some details of his life. The few that can be gathered even at Parma are brief and bald enough. The newspaper articles and funeral panegyrics which refer to him are as barren as all such occasional notices in Italy have always been; the panegyrist seeming more anxious about his own style than eager to communicate information. Yet a bare outline of Toschi's biography may be supplied. He was born at Parma in 1788. His father was cashier of the post-office, and his mother's name was Anna Maria Brest. Early in his youth he studied painting at Parma under Biagio Martini; and in 1809 he went to Paris, where he learned the art of engraving from Bervic and of etching from Oortman. In Paris he contracted an intimate friendship with the painter Gérard. But after ten years he returned to Parma, where he established a company and school of engravers in concert with his friend Antonio Isac. Maria Louisa, the then Duchess, under whose patronage the arts flourished at Parma

(witness Bodoni's exquisite typography), soon recognised his merit, and appointed him Director of the Ducal Academy. He then formed the project of engraving a series of the whole of Correggio's frescoes. The undertaking was a vast one. Both the cupolas of S. John and the cathedral, together with the vault of the apse of S. Giovanni^[24] and various portions of the side aisles, and the so-called Camera di S. Paolo, are covered by frescoes of Correggio and his pupil Parmegiano. These frescoes have suffered so much from neglect and time, and from unintelligent restoration, that it is difficult in many cases to determine their true character. Yet Toschi did not content himself with selections, or shrink from the task of deciphering and engraving the whole. He formed a school of disciples, among whom were Carlo Raimondi of Milan, Antonio Costa of Venice, Edward Eichens of Berlin, Aloisio Juvara of Naples, Antonio Dalcò, Giuseppe Magnani, and Lodovico Bisola of Parma, and employed them as assistants in his work. Death overtook him in 1854, before it was finished, and now the water-colour drawings which are exhibited in the Gallery of Parma prove to what extent the achievement fell short of his design. Enough, however, was accomplished to place the chief masterpieces of Correggio beyond the possibility of utter oblivion.

150

[24] The fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin upon the semi-dome of S. Giovanni is the work of a copyist, Cesare Aretusi. But part of the original fresco, which was removed in 1684, exists in a good state of preservation at the end of the long gallery of the library.

To the piety of his pupil Carlo Raimondi, the bearer of a name illustrious in the annals of engraving, we owe a striking portrait of Toschi. The master is represented on his seat upon the scaffold in the dizzy half-light of the dome. The shadowy forms of saints and angels are around him. He has raised his eyes from his cartoon to study one of these. In his right hand is the opera-glass with which he scrutinises the details of distant groups. The upturned face, with its expression of contemplative intelligence, is like that of an astronomer accustomed to commerce with things above the sphere of common life, and ready to give account of all that he has gathered from his observation of a world not ours. In truth the world created by Correggio and interpreted by Toschi is very far removed from that of actual existence. No painter has infused a more distinct individuality into his work, realising by imaginative force and powerful projection an order of beauty peculiar to himself, before which it is impossible to remain quite indifferent. We must either admire the manner of Correggio, or else shrink from it with the distaste which sensual art is apt to stir in natures of a severe or simple type.

151

What, then, is the Correggiosity of Correggio? In other words, what is the characteristic which, proceeding from the personality of the artist, is impressed on all his work? The answer to this question, though by no means simple, may perhaps be won by a process of gradual analysis. The first thing that strikes us in the art of Correggio is, that he has aimed at the realistic representation of pure unrealities. His saints and angels are beings the like of whom we have hardly seen upon the earth. Yet they are displayed before us with all the movement and the vivid truth of nature. Next we feel that what constitutes the superhuman, visionary quality of these creatures, is their uniform beauty of a merely sensuous type. They are all created for pleasure, not for thought or passion or activity or heroism. The uses of their brains, their limbs, their every feature, end in enjoyment; innocent and radiant wantonness is the condition of their whole existence. Correggio conceived the universe under the one mood of sensuous joy: his world was bathed in luxurious light; its inhabitants were capable of little beyond a soft voluptuousness. Over the domain of tragedy he had no sway, and very rarely did he attempt to enter on it: nothing, for example, can be feebler than his endeavour to express anguish in the distorted features of Madonna, S. John, and the Magdalen, who are bending over the dead body of a Christ extended in the attitude of languid repose. In like manner he could not deal with subjects which demand a pregnancy of intellectual meaning. He paints the three Fates like young and joyous Bacchantes, places rose-garlands and thyrsi in their hands instead of the distaff and the thread of human destinies, and they might figure appropriately upon the panels of a banquet-chamber in Pompeii. In this respect Correggio might be termed the Rossini of painting. The melodies of the 'Stabat Mater'—*Fac ut portem* or *Quis est homo*—are the exact analogues in music of Correggio's voluptuous renderings of grave or mysterious motives. Nor, again, did he possess that severe and lofty art of composition which

152

subordinates the fancy to the reason, and which seeks for the highest intellectual beauty in a kind of architectural harmony supreme above the melodies of gracefulness in detail. The Florentines and those who shared their spirit—Michelangelo and Lionardo and Raphael—deriving this principle of design from the geometrical art of the Middle Ages, converted it to the noblest uses in their vast well-ordered compositions. But Correggio ignored the laws of scientific construction. It was enough for him to produce a splendid and brilliant effect by the life and movement of his figures, and by the intoxicating beauty of his forms. His type of beauty, too, is by no means elevated. Lionardo painted souls whereof the features and the limbs are but an index. The charm of Michelangelo's ideal is like a flower upon a tree of rugged strength. Raphael aims at the loveliness which cannot be disjoined from goodness. But Correggio is contented with bodies 'delicate and desirable.' His angels are genii disimprisoned from the perfumed chalices of flowers, hours of an erotic paradise, elemental spirits of nature wantoning in Eden in her prime. To accuse the painter of conscious immorality or of what is stigmatised as sensuality, would be as ridiculous as to class his seraphic beings among the products of the Christian imagination. They belong to the generation of the fauns; like fauns, they combine a certain savage wildness, a dithyrambic ecstasy of inspiration, a delight in rapid movement as they revel amid clouds or flowers, with the permanent and all-pervading sweetness of the master's style. When infantine or childlike, these celestial sylphs are scarcely to be distinguished for any noble quality of beauty from Murillo's cherubs, and are far less divine than the choir of children who attend Madonna in Titian's 'Assumption.' But in their boyhood and their prime of youth, they acquire a fulness of sensuous vitality and a radiance that are peculiar to Correggio. The lily-bearer who helps to support S. Thomas beneath the dome of the cathedral at Parma, the groups of seraphs who crowd behind the Incoronata of S. Giovanni, and the two wild-eyed open-mouthed S. Johns stationed at each side of the celestial throne, are among the most splendid instances of the adolescent loveliness conceived by Correggio. Where the painter found their models may be questioned but not answered; for he has made them of a different fashion from the race of mortals: no court of Roman emperor or Turkish sultan, though stocked with the flowers of Bithynian and Circassian youth, have seen their like. Mozart's Cherubino seems to have sat for all of them. At any rate they incarnate the very spirit of the songs he sings.

153

As a consequence of this predilection for sensuous and voluptuous forms, Correggio had no power of imagining grandly or severely. Satisfied with material realism in his treatment even of sublime mysteries, he converts the hosts of heaven into a 'fricassee of frogs,' according to the old epigram. His apostles, gazing after the Virgin who has left the earth, are thrown into attitudes so violent and so dramatically foreshortened, that seen from below upon the pavement of the cathedral, little of their form is distinguishable except legs and arms in vehement commotion. Very different is Titian's conception of this scene. To express the spiritual meaning, the emotion of Madonna's transit, with all the pomp which colour and splendid composition can convey, is Titian's sole care; whereas Correggio appears to have been satisfied with realising the tumult of heaven rushing to meet earth, and earth straining upwards to ascend to heaven in violent commotion—a very orgasm of frenetic rapture. The essence of the event is forgotten: its external manifestation alone is presented to the eye; and only the accessories of beardless angels and cloud-encumbered cherubs are really beautiful amid a surge of limbs in restless movement. More dignified, because designed with more repose, is the Apocalypse of S. John painted upon the cupola of S. Giovanni. The apostles throned on clouds, with which the dome is filled, gaze upward to one point. Their attitudes are noble; their form is heroic; in their eyes there is the strange ecstatic look by which Correggio interpreted his sense of supernatural vision: it is a gaze not of contemplation or deep thought, but of wild half-savage joy, as if these saints also had become the elemental genii of cloud and air, spirits emergent from ether, the salamanders of an empyrean intolerable to mortal sense. The point on which their eyes converge, the culmination of their vision, is the figure of Christ. Here all the weakness of Correggio's method is revealed. He had undertaken to realise by no ideal allegorical suggestion, by no symbolism of architectural grouping, but by actual prosaic measurement, by corporeal form in subjection to the laws of perspective and foreshortening, things which in their very essence admit of only a figurative revelation. Therefore his Christ, the centre of all those earnest eyes, is contracted to a shape in which humanity itself is mean, a sprawling figure which

154

irresistibly reminds one of a frog. The clouds on which the saints repose are opaque and solid; cherubs in countless multitudes, a swarm of merry children, crawl about upon these feather-beds of vapour, creep between the legs of the apostles, and play at bopeep behind their shoulders. There is no propriety in their appearance there. They take no interest in the beatific vision. They play no part in the celestial symphony; nor are they capable of more than merely infantine enjoyment. Correggio has sprinkled them lavishly like living flowers about his cloudland, because he could not sustain a grave and solemn strain of music, but was forced by his temperament to overlay the melody with roulades. Gazing at these frescoes, the thought came to me that Correggio was like a man listening to sweetest flute-playing, and translating phrase after phrase as they passed through his fancy into laughing faces, breezy tresses, and rolling mists. Sometimes a grander cadence reached his ear; and then S. Peter with the keys, or S. Augustine of the mighty brow, or the inspired eyes of S. John, took form beneath his pencil. But the light airs returned, and rose and lily faces bloomed again for him among the clouds. It is not therefore in dignity or sublimity that Correggio excels, but in artless grace and melodious tenderness. The Madonna della Scala clasping her baby with a caress which the little child returns, S. Catherine leaning in a rapture of ecstatic love to wed the infant Christ, S. Sebastian in the bloom of almost boyish beauty, are the so-called sacred subjects to which the painter was adequate, and which he has treated with the voluptuous tenderness we find in his pictures of Leda and Danae and Io. Could these saints and martyrs descend from Correggio's canvas, and take flesh, and breathe, and begin to live; of what high action, of what grave passion, of what exemplary conduct in any walk of life would they be capable? That is the question which they irresistibly suggest; and we are forced to answer, None! The moral and religious world did not exist for Correggio. His art was but a way of seeing carnal beauty in a dream that had no true relation to reality.

Correggio's sensibility to light and colour was exactly on a par with his feeling for form. He belongs to the poets of chiaroscuro and the poets of colouring; but in both regions he maintains the individuality so strongly expressed in his choice of purely sensuous beauty. Tintoretto makes use of light and shade for investing his great compositions with dramatic intensity. Rembrandt interprets sombre and fantastic moods of the mind by golden gloom and silvery irradiation, translating thought into the language of penumbral mystery. Lionardo studies the laws of light scientifically, so that the proper roundness and effect of distance should be accurately rendered, and all the subtleties of nature's smiles be mimicked. Correggio is content with fixing on his canvas the ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, the many-twinkling laughter of light in motion, rained down through fleecy clouds or trembling foliage, melting into half-shadows, bathing and illuminating every object with a soft caress. There are no tragic contrasts of splendour sharply defined on blackness, no mysteries of half-felt and pervasive twilight, no studied accuracies of noonday clearness in his work. Light and shadow are woven together on his figures like an impalpable Coan gauze, ærial and transparent, enhancing the palpitations of voluptuous movement which he loved. His colouring, in like manner, has none of the superb and mundane pomp which the Venetians affected; it does not glow or burn or beat the fire of gems into our brain; joyous and wanton, it seems to be exactly such a beauty-bloom as sense requires for its satiety. There is nothing in his hues to provoke deep passion or to stimulate the yearnings of the soul: the pure blushes of the dawn and the crimson pyres of sunset are nowhere in the world that he has painted. But that chord of jocund colour which may fitly be married to the smiles of light, the blues which are found in laughing eyes, the pinks that tinge the cheeks of early youth, and the warm yet silvery tones of healthy flesh, mingle as in a marvellous pearl-shell on his pictures. Both chiaroscuro and colouring have this supreme purpose in art, to effect the sense like music, and like music to create a mood in the soul of the spectator. Now the mood which Correggio stimulates is one of natural and thoughtless pleasure. To feel his influence, and at the same moment to be the subject of strong passion, or fierce lust, or heroic resolve, or profound contemplation, or pensive melancholy, is impossible. Wantonness, innocent because unconscious of sin, immoral because incapable of any serious purpose, is the quality which prevails in all that he has painted. The pantomimes of a Mohammedan paradise might be put upon the stage after patterns supplied by this least spiritual of painters.

It follows from this analysis that the Correggiosity of Correggio, that which sharply distinguished him from all previous artists, was the faculty of painting a purely voluptuous dream of beautiful beings in perpetual

movement, beneath the laughter of morning light, in a world of never-failing April hues. When he attempts to depart from the fairyland of which he was the Prospero, and to match himself with the masters of sublime thought or earnest passion, he proves his weakness. But within his own magic circle he reigns supreme, no other artist having blended the witcheries of colouring, chiaroscuro, and faunlike loveliness of form into a harmony so perfect in its sensuous charm. Bewitched by the strains of the siren, we pardon affectations of expression, emptiness of meaning, feebleness of composition, exaggerated and melodramatic attitudes. There is what Goethe called a demonic influence in the art of Correggio: 'In poetry,' said Goethe to Eckermann, 'especially in that which is unconscious, before which reason and understanding fall short, and which therefore produces effects so far surpassing all conception, there is always something demonic.' It is not to be wondered that Correggio, possessed of this demonic power in the highest degree, and working to a purely sensuous end, should have exercised a fatal influence over art. His successors, attracted by an intoxicating loveliness which they could not analyse, which had nothing in common with the reason or the understanding, but was like a glamour cast upon the soul in its most secret sensibilities, threw themselves blindly into the imitation of Correggio's faults. His affectation, his want of earnest thought, his neglect of composition, his sensuous realism, his all-pervading sweetness, his infantine prettiness, his substitution of thaumaturgical effects for conscientious labour, admitted only too easy imitation, and were but too congenial with the spirit of the late Renaissance. Cupolas through the length and breadth of Italy began to be covered with clouds and simpering cherubs in the convulsions of artificial ecstasy. The attenuated elegance of Parmigiano, the attitudinising of Anselmi's saints and angels, and a general sacrifice of what is solid and enduring to sentimental gewgaws on the part of all painters who had submitted to the magic of Correggio, proved how easy it was to go astray with the great master. Meanwhile no one could approach him in that which was truly his own—the delineation of a transient moment in the life of sensuous beauty, the painting of a smile on Nature's face, when light and colour tremble in harmony with the movement of joyous living creatures. Another demonic nature of a far more powerful type contributed his share to the ruin of art in Italy. Michelangelo's constrained attitudes and muscular anatomy were imitated by painters and sculptors, who thought that the grand style lay in the presentation of theatrical athletes, but who could not seize the secret whereby the great master made even the bodies of men and women—colossal trunks and writhen limbs—interpret the meanings of his deep and melancholy soul.

158

159

It is a sad law of progress in art, that when the æsthetic impulse is on the wane, artists should perforce select to follow the weakness rather than the vigour, of their predecessors. While painting was in the ascendant, Raphael could take the best of Perugino and discard the worst; in its decadence Parmigiano reproduces the affectations of Correggio, and Bernini carries the exaggerations of Michelangelo to absurdity. All arts describe a parabola. The force which produces them causes them to rise throughout their growth up to a certain point, and then to descend more gradually in a long and slanting line of regular declension. There is no real break of continuity. The end is the result of simple exhaustion. Thus the last of our Elizabethan dramatists, Shirley and Crowne and Killigrew, pushed to its ultimate conclusion the principle inherent in Marlowe, not attempting to break new ground, nor imitating the excellences so much as the defects of their forerunners. Thus too the Pointed style of architecture in England gave birth first to what is called the Decorated, next to the Perpendicular, and finally expired in the Tudor. Each step was a step of progress—at first for the better—at last for the worse—but logical, continuous, necessitated.^[25]

[25] See the chapter on Euripides in my *Studies of Greek Poets*, First Series, for a further development of this view of artistic evolution.

It is difficult to leave Correggio without at least posing the question of the difference between moralised and merely sensual art. Is all art excellent in itself and good in its effect that is beautiful and earnest? There is no doubt that Correggio's work is in a way most beautiful; and it bears unmistakable signs of the master having given himself with single-hearted devotion to the expression of that phase of loveliness which he could apprehend. In so far we must admit that his art is both excellent and solid. Yet we are unable to conceive that any human being could be made better—stronger for endurance, more fitted for the uses of the

160

world, more sensitive to what is noble in nature—by its contemplation. At the best Correggio does but please us in our lighter moments, and we are apt to feel that the pleasure he has given is of an enervating kind. To expect obvious morality of any artist is confessedly absurd. It is not the artist's province to preach, or even to teach, except by remote suggestion. Yet the mind of the artist may be highly moralised, and then he takes rank not merely with the ministers to refined pleasure, but also with the educators of the world. He may, for example, be penetrated with a just sense of humanity like Shakspeare, or with a sublime temperance like Sophocles, instinct with prophetic intuition like Michelangelo, or with passionate experience like Beethoven. The mere sight of the work of Pheidias is like breathing pure health-giving air. Milton and Dante were steeped in religious patriotism; Goethe was pervaded with philosophy, and Balzac with scientific curiosity. Ariosto, Cervantes, and even Boccaccio are masters in the mysteries of common life. In all these cases the tone of the artist's mind is felt throughout his work: what he paints, or sings, or writes, conveys a lesson while it pleases. On the other hand, depravity in an artist or a poet percolates through work which has in it nothing positive of evil, and a very miasma of poisonous influence may rise from the apparently innocuous creations of a tainted soul. Now Correggio is moralised in neither way—neither as a good nor as a bad man, neither as an acute thinker nor as a deliberate voluptuary. He is simply sensuous. On his own ground he is even very fresh and healthy: his delineation of youthful maternity, for example, is as true as it is beautiful; and his sympathy with the gleefulness of children is devoid of affectation. We have then only to ask ourselves whether the defect in him of all thought and feeling which is not at once capable of graceful fleshly incarnation, be sufficient to lower him in the scale of artists. This question must of course be answered according to our definition of the purposes of art. There is no doubt that the most highly organised art—that which absorbs the most numerous human qualities and effects a harmony between the most complex elements—is the noblest. Therefore the artist who combines moral elevation and power of thought with a due appreciation of sensual beauty, is more elevated and more beneficial than one whose domain is simply that of carnal loveliness. Correggio, if this be so, must take a comparatively low rank. Just as we welcome the beautiful athlete for the radiant life that is in him, but bow before the personality of Sophocles, whose perfect form enshrined a noble and highly educated soul, so we gratefully accept Correggio for his grace, while we approach the consummate art of Michelangelo with reverent awe. It is necessary in æsthetics as elsewhere to recognise a hierarchy of excellence, the grades of which are determined by the greater or less comprehensiveness of the artist's nature expressed in his work. At the same time, the calibre of the artist's genius must be estimated; for eminent greatness even of a narrow kind will always command our admiration: and the amount of his originality has also to be taken into account. What is unique has, for that reason alone, a claim on our consideration. Judged in this way, Correggio deserves a place, say, in the sweet planet Venus, above the moon and above Mercury, among the artists who have not advanced beyond the contemplations which find their proper outcome in love. Yet, even thus, he aids the culture of humanity. 'We should take care,' said Goethe, apropos of Byron, to Eckermann, 'not to be always looking for culture in the decidedly pure and moral. Everything that is great promotes cultivation as soon as we are aware of it.'

161

162

Italy is less the land of what is venerable in antiquity, than of beauty, by divine right young eternally in spite of age. This is due partly to her history and art and literature, partly to the temper of the races who have made her what she is, and partly to her natural advantages. Her oldest architectural remains, the temples of Paestum and Girgenti, or the gates of Perugia and Volterra, are so adapted to Italian landscape and so graceful in their massive strength, that we forget the centuries which have passed over them. We leap as by a single bound from the times of Roman greatness to the new birth of humanity in the fourteenth century, forgetting the many years during which Italy, like the rest of Europe, was buried in what our ancestors called Gothic barbarism. The illumination cast upon the classic period by the literature of Rome and by the memory of her great men is so vivid, that we feel the days of the Republic and the Empire to be near us; while the Italian Renaissance is so truly a revival of that former splendour, a resumption of the music interrupted for a season, that it is extremely difficult to form any conception of the five long centuries which elapsed between the Lombard invasion in 568 and the accession of Hildebrand to the Pontificate in 1073. So true is it that nothing lives and has reality for us but what is spiritual, intellectual, self-possessed in personality and consciousness. When the Egyptian priest said to Solon, 'You Greeks are always children,' he intended a gentle sarcasm, but he implied a compliment; for the quality of imperishable youth belonged to the Hellenic spirit, and has become the heritage of every race which partook of it. And this spirit in no common degree has been shared by the Italians of the earlier and the later classic epoch. The land is full of monuments pertaining to those two brilliant periods; and whenever the voice of poet has spoken or the hand of artist has been at work, that spirit, as distinguished from the spirit of mediaevalism, has found expression.

164

Yet it must be remembered that during the five centuries above mentioned Italy was given over to Lombards, Franks, and Germans. Feudal institutions, alien to the social and political ideals of the classic world, took a tolerably firm hold on the country. The Latin element remained silent, passive, in abeyance, undergoing an important transformation. It was in the course of those five hundred years that the Italians as a modern people, separable from their Roman ancestors, were formed. At the close of this obscure passage in Italian history, their communes, the foundation of Italy's future independence, and the source of her peculiar national development, appeared in all the vigour and audacity of youth. At its close the Italian genius presented Europe with its greatest triumph of constructive ability, the Papacy. At its close again the series of supreme artistic achievements, starting with the architecture of churches and public palaces, passing on to sculpture and painting, and culminating in music, which only ended with the temporary extinction of national vitality in the seventeenth century, was simultaneously begun in all the provinces of the peninsula.

So important were these five centuries of incubation for Italy, and so little is there left of them to arrest the attention of the student, dazzled as he is by the ever-living glories of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance, that a visit to the ruins of Canossa is almost a duty. There, in spite of himself, by the very isolation and forlorn abandonment of what was once so formidable a seat of feudal despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny, he is forced to confront the obscure but mighty spirit of the middle ages. There, if anywhere, the men of those iron-hearted times anterior to the Crusades will acquire distinctness for his imagination, when he recalls the three main actors in the drama enacted on the summit of Canossa's rock in the bitter winter of 1077.

165

Canossa lies almost due south of Reggio d'Emilia, upon the slopes of the Apennines. Starting from Reggio, the carriage-road keeps to the plain for some while in a westerly direction, and then bends away towards the mountains. As we approach their spurs, the ground begins to rise. The rich Lombard tilth of maize and vine gives place to English-looking hedgerows, lined with oaks, and studded with handsome dark tufts of green hellebore. The hills descend in melancholy earth-heaps on the plain, crowned here and there with ruined castles. Four of these mediaeval strongholds, called Bianello, Montevetro, Monteluzzo, and Montezano, give the name of Quattro Castelli to the commune. The most important of them, Bianello, which, next to Canossa, was the strongest fortress possessed by the Countess Matilda and her ancestors, still presents a considerable mass of masonry, roofed and habitable. The group formed a kind of advance-guard for Canossa against attack from

Lombardy. After passing Quattro Castelli we enter the hills, climbing gently upwards between barren slopes of ashy grey earth—the *débris* of most ancient Apennines—crested at favourable points with lonely towers. In truth the whole country bristles with ruined forts, making it clear that during the middle ages Canossa was but the centre of a great military system, the core and kernel of a fortified position which covered an area to be measured by scores of square miles, reaching far into the mountains, and buttressed on the plain. As yet, however, after nearly two hours' driving, Canossa has not come in sight. At last a turn in the road discloses an opening in the valley of the Enza to the left: up this lateral gorge we see first the Castle of Rossena on its knoll of solid red rock, flaming in the sunlight; and then, further withdrawn, detached from all surrounding objects, and reared aloft as though to sweep the sea of waved and broken hills around it, a sharp horn of hard white stone. That is Canossa—the *alba Canossa*, the *candida petra* of its rhyming chronicler. There is no mistaking the commanding value of its situation. At the same time the brilliant whiteness of Canossa's rocky hill, contrasted with the red gleam of Rossena, and outlined against the prevailing dulness of these earthy Apennines, secures a picturesque individuality concordant with its unique history and unrivalled strength.

166

There is still a journey of two hours before the castle can be reached: and this may be performed on foot or horseback. The path winds upward over broken ground; following the *arête* of curiously jumbled and thwarted hill-slopes; passing beneath the battlements of Rossena, whence the unfortunate Everelina threw herself in order to escape the savage love of her lord and jailor; and then skirting those horrid earthen *balze* which are so common and so unattractive a feature of Apennine scenery. The most hideous *balze* to be found in the length and breadth of Italy are probably those of Volterra, from which the citizens themselves recoil with a kind of terror, and which lure melancholy men by intolerable fascination on to suicide. For ever crumbling, altering with frost and rain, discharging gloomy glaciers of slow-crawling mud, and scarring the hillside with tracts of barrenness, these earth-precipices are among the most ruinous and discomfortable failures of nature. They have not even so much of wildness or grandeur as forms, the saving merit of nearly all wasteful things in the world, and can only be classed with the desolate *ghiare* of Italian river-beds.

167

Such as they are, these *balze* form an appropriate preface to the gloomy and repellent isolation of Canossa. The rock towers from a narrow platform to the height of rather more than 160 feet from its base. The top is fairly level, forming an irregular triangle, of which the greatest length is about 260 feet, and the width about 100 feet. Scarcely a vestige of any building can be traced either upon the platform or the summit, with the exception of a broken wall and windows supposed to belong to the end of the sixteenth century. The ancient castle, with its triple circuit of walls, enclosing barracks for the garrison, lodgings for the lord and his retainers, a stately church, a sumptuous monastery, storehouses, stables, workshops, and all the various buildings of a fortified stronghold, have utterly disappeared. The very passage of approach cannot be ascertained; for it is doubtful whether the present irregular path that scales the western face of the rock be really the remains of some old staircase, corresponding to that by which Mont S. Michel in Normandy is ascended. One thing is tolerably certain—that the three walls of which we hear so much from the chroniclers, and which played so picturesque a part in the drama of Henry IV.'s penance, surrounded the cliff at its base, and embraced a large acreage of ground. The citadel itself must have been but the acropolis or keep of an extensive fortress.

There has been plenty of time since the year 1255, when the people of Reggio sacked and destroyed Canossa, for Nature to resume her undisputed sway by obliterating the handiwork of men; and at present Nature forms the chief charm of Canossa. Lying one afternoon of May on the crisp short grass at the edge of a precipice purple with iris in full blossom, I surveyed, from what were once the battlements of Matilda's castle, a prospect than which there is none more spirit-stirring by reason of its beauty and its manifold associations in Europe. The lower castle-crowded hills have sunk. Reggio lies at our feet, shut in between the crests of Monte Carboniano and Monte delle Celle. Beyond Reggio stretches Lombardy—the fairest and most memorable battlefield of nations, the richest and most highly cultivated garden of civilised industry. Nearly all the Lombard cities may be seen, some of them faint like bluish films of vapour, some clear with dome and spire. There is Modena and her Ghirlandina. Carpi, Parma, Mirandola, Verona, Mantua, lie well defined and russet on the flat green map; and there flashes a

168

bend of lordly Po; and there the Euganeans rise like islands, telling us where Padua and Ferrara nestle in the amethystine haze Beyond and above all to the northward sweep the Alps, tossing their silvery crests up into the cloudless sky from the violet mist that girds their flanks and drowns their basements. Monte Adamello and the Ortler, the cleft of the Brenner, and the sharp peaks of the Venetian Alps are all distinctly visible. An eagle flying straight from our eyrie might traverse Lombardy and light among the snow-fields of the Valtelline between sunrise and sundown. Nor is the prospect tame to southward. Here the Apennines roll, billow above billow, in majestic desolation, soaring to snow summits in the Pellegrino region. As our eye attempts to thread that labyrinth of hill and vale, we tell ourselves that those roads wind to Tuscany, and yonder stretches Garfagnana, where Ariosto lived and mused in honourable exile from the world he loved.

It was by one of the mountain passes that lead from Lucca northward that the first founder of Canossa is said to have travelled early in the tenth century. Sigifredo, if the tradition may be trusted, was very wealthy; and with his money he bought lands and signorial rights at Reggio, bequeathing to his children, when he died about 945, a patrimony which they developed into a petty kingdom. Azzo, his second son, fortified Canossa, and made it his principal place of residence. When Lothair, King of Italy, died in 950, leaving his beautiful widow to the ill-treatment of his successor, Berenger, Adelaide found a protector in this Azzo. She had been imprisoned on the Lake of Garda; but managing to escape in man's clothes to Mantua, she thence sent news of her misfortunes to Canossa. Azzo lost no time in riding with his knights to her relief, and brought her back in safety to his mountain fastness. It is related that Azzo was afterwards instrumental in calling Otho into Italy and procuring his marriage with Adelaide, in consequence of which events Italy became a fief of the Empire. Owing to the part he played at this time, the Lord of Canossa was recognised as one of the most powerful vassals of the German Emperor in Lombardy. Honours were heaped upon him; and he grew so rich and formidable that Berenger, the titular King of Italy, laid siege to his fortress of Canossa. The memory of this siege, which lasted for three years and a half, is said still to linger in the popular traditions of the place. When Azzo died at the end of the tenth century, he left to his son Tedaldo the title of Count of Reggio and Modena; and this title was soon after raised to that of Marquis. The Marches governed as Vicar of the Empire by Tedaldo included Reggio, Modena, Ferrara, Brescia, and probably Mantua. They stretched, in fact, across the north of Italy, forming a quadrilateral between the Alps and Apennines. Like his father, Tedaldo adhered consistently to the Imperial party; and when he died and was buried at Canossa, he in his turn bequeathed to his son Bonifazio a power and jurisdiction increased by his own abilities. Bonifazio held the state of a sovereign at Canossa, adding the duchy of Tuscany to his father's fiefs, and meeting the allied forces of the Lombard barons in the field of Coviolo like an independent potentate. His power and splendour were great enough to rouse the jealousy of the Emperor; but Henry III. seems to have thought it more prudent to propitiate this proud vassal, and to secure his kindness, than to attempt his humiliation. Bonifazio married Beatrice, daughter of Frederick, Duke of Lorraine—her whose marble sarcophagus in the Campo Santo at Pisa is said to have inspired Niccola Pisano with his new style of sculpture. Their only child, Matilda, was born, probably at Lucca, in 1046; and six years after her birth, Bonifazio, who had swayed his subjects like an iron-handed tyrant, was murdered. To the great House of Canossa, the rulers of one-third of Italy, there now remained only two women, Bonifazio's widow Beatrice, and his daughter Matilda. Beatrice married Godfrey, Duke of Lorraine, who was recognised by Henry IV. as her husband and as feudatory of the Empire in the full place of Boniface. He died about 1070; and in this year Matilda was married by proxy to his son, Godfrey the Hunchback, whom, however, she did not see till the year 1072. The marriage was not a happy one; and the question has even been disputed among Matilda's biographers whether it was ever consummated. At any rate it did not last long; for Godfrey was killed at Antwerp in 1076. In this year Matilda also lost her mother, Beatrice, who died at Pisa, and was buried in the cathedral.

By this rapid enumeration of events it will be seen how the power and honours of the House of Canossa, including Tuscany, Spoleto, and the fairest portions of Lombardy, had devolved upon a single woman of the age of thirty at the moment when the fierce quarrel between Pope and Emperor began in the year 1076. Matilda was destined to play a great, a striking, and a tragic part in the opening drama of Italian history. Her decided character and uncompromising course of action have won for

her the name of 'la gran donna d'Italia,' and have caused her memory to be blessed or execrated, according as the temporal pretensions and spiritual tyranny of the Papacy may have found supporters or opponents in posterity. She was reared from childhood in habits of austerity and unquestioning piety. Submission to the Church became for her not merely a rule of conduct, but a passionate enthusiasm. She identified herself with the cause of four successive Popes, protected her idol, the terrible and iron-hearted Hildebrand, in the time of his adversity; remained faithful to his principles after his death; and having served the Holy See with all her force and all that she possessed through all her lifetime, she bequeathed her vast dominions to it on her deathbed. Like some of the greatest mediaeval characters—like Hildebrand himself—Matilda was so thoroughly of one piece, that she towers above the mists of ages with the massive grandeur of an incarnated idea. She is for us the living statue of a single thought, an undivided impulse, the more than woman born to represent her age. Nor was it without reason that Dante symbolised in her the love of Holy Church; though students of the 'Purgatory' will hardly recognise the lovely maiden, singing and plucking flowers beside the stream of Lethe, in the stern and warlike chatelaine of Canossa. Unfortunately we know but little of Matilda's personal appearance. Her health was not strong; and it is said to have been weakened, especially in her last illness, by ascetic observances. Yet she headed her own troops, armed with sword and cuirass, avoiding neither peril nor fatigue in the quarrels of her master Gregory. Up to the year 1622 two strong suits of mail were preserved at Quattro Castelli, which were said to have been worn by her in battle, and which were afterwards sold on the market-place at Reggio. This habit of donning armour does not, however, prove that Matilda was exceptionally vigorous; for in those savage times she could hardly have played the part of heroine without participating personally in the dangers of warfare.

172

No less monumental in the plastic unity of his character was the monk Hildebrand, who for twenty years before his elevation to the Papacy had been the maker of Popes and the creator of the policy of Rome. When he was himself elected in the year 1073, and had assumed the name of Gregory VII., he immediately began to put in practice the plans for Church aggrandisement he had slowly matured during the previous quarter of a century. To free the Church from its subservience to the Empire, to assert the Pope's right to ratify the election of the Emperor and to exercise the right of jurisdiction over him, to place ecclesiastical appointments in the sole power of the Roman See, and to render the celibacy of the clergy obligatory, were the points he had resolved to carry. Taken singly and together, these chief aims of Hildebrand's policy had but one object—the magnification of the Church at the expense both of the people and of secular authorities, and the further separation of the Church from the ties and sympathies of common life that bound it to humanity. To accuse Hildebrand of personal ambition would be but shallow criticism, though it is clear that his inflexible and puissant nature found a savage selfish pleasure in trampling upon power and humbling pride at warfare with his own. Yet his was in no sense an egotistic purpose like that which moved the Popes of the Renaissance to dismember Italy for their bastards. Hildebrand, like Matilda, was himself the creature of a great idea. These two potent personalities completely understood each other, and worked towards a single end. The mythopoeic fancy might conceive of them as the male and female manifestations of one dominant faculty, the spirit of ecclesiastical dominion incarnate in a man and woman of almost super-human mould.

173

Opposed to them, as the third actor in the drama of Canossa, was a man of feebler mould. Henry IV., King of Italy, but not yet crowned Emperor, had none of his opponents' unity of purpose or monumental dignity of character. At war with his German feudatories, browbeaten by rebellious sons, unfaithful and cruel to his wife, vacillating in the measures he adopted to meet his divers difficulties, at one time tormented by his conscience into cowardly submission, and at another treasonably neglectful of the most solemn obligations, Henry was no match for the stern wills against which he was destined to break in unavailing passion. Early disagreements with Gregory had culminated in his excommunication. The German nobles abandoned his cause; and Henry found it expedient to summon a council in Augsburg for the settlement of matters in dispute between the Empire and the Papacy. Gregory expressed his willingness to attend this council, and set forth from Rome accompanied by the Countess Matilda in December 1076. He did not, however, travel further than Vercelli, for news here reached him that Henry was about to enter Italy at the head of a powerful army. Matilda hereupon persuaded the Holy Father to place himself in safety

among her strongholds of Canossa. Thither accordingly Gregory retired before the ending of that year; and bitter were the sarcasms uttered by the imperial partisans in Italy upon this protection offered by a fair countess to the monk who had been made a Pope. The foul calumnies of that bygone age would be unworthy of even so much as this notice, if we did not trace in them the ineradicable Italian tendency to cynical insinuation—a tendency which has involved the history of the Renaissance Popes in an almost impenetrable mist of lies and exaggerations. Henry was in truth upon his road to Italy, but with a very different attendance from that which Gregory expected. Accompanied by Bertha, his wife, and his boy son Conrad, the Emperor elect left Spire in the condition of a fugitive, crossed Burgundy, spent Christmas at Besançon, and journeyed to the foot of Mont Cenis. It is said that he was followed by a single male servant of mean birth; and if the tale of his adventures during the passage of the Alps can be credited, history presents fewer spectacles more picturesque than the straits to which this representative of the Cæsars, this supreme chief of feudal civility, this ruler destined still to be the leader of mighty armies and the father of a line of monarchs, was exposed. Concealing his real name and state, he induced some shepherds to lead him and his escort through the thick snows to the summit of Mont Cenis; and by the help of these men the imperial party were afterwards let down the snow-slopes on the further side by means of ropes. Bertha and her women were sewn up in hides and dragged across the frozen surface of the winter drifts. It was a year memorable for its severity. Heavy snow had fallen in October, which continued ice-bound and unyielding till the following April.

173

No sooner had Henry reached Turin, than he set forward again in the direction of Canossa. The fame of his arrival had preceded him, and he found that his party was far stronger in Italy than he had ventured to expect. Proximity to the Church of Rome divests its fulminations of half their terrors. The Italian bishops and barons, less superstitious than the Germans, and with greater reason to resent the domineering graspingness of Gregory, were ready to espouse the Emperor's cause. Henry gathered a formidable force as he marched onward across Lombardy; and some of the most illustrious prelates and nobles of the South were in his suite. A more determined leader than Henry proved himself to be, might possibly have forced Gregory to some accommodation, in spite of the strength of Canossa and the Pope's invincible obstinacy, by proper use of these supporters. Meanwhile the adherents of the Church were mustered in Matilda's fortress; among whom may be mentioned Azzo, the progenitor of Este and Brunswick; Hugh, Abbot of Clugny; and the princely family of Piedmont. 'I am become a second Rome,' exclaims Canossa, in the language of Matilda's rhyming chronicler; 'all honours are mine; I hold at once both Pope and King, the princes of Italy and those of Gaul, those of Rome, and those from far beyond the Alps.' The stage was ready; the audience had assembled; and now the three great actors were about to meet. Immediately upon his arrival at Canossa, Henry sent for his cousin, the Countess Matilda, and besought her to intercede for him with Gregory. He was prepared to make any concessions or to undergo any humiliations, if only the ban of excommunication might be removed; nor, cowed as he was by his own superstitious conscience, and by the memory of the opposition he had met with from his German vassals, does he seem to have once thought of meeting force with force, and of returning to his northern kingdom triumphant in the overthrow of Gregory's pride. Matilda undertook to plead his cause before the Pontiff. But Gregory was not to be moved so soon to mercy. 'If Henry has in truth repented,' he replied, 'let him lay down crown and sceptre, and declare himself unworthy of the name of king.' The only point conceded to the suppliant was that he should be admitted in the garb of a penitent within the precincts of the castle. Leaving his retinue outside the walls, Henry entered the first series of outworks, and was thence conducted to the second, so that between him and the citadel itself there still remained the third of the surrounding bastions. Here he was bidden to wait the Pope's pleasure; and here, in the midst of that bitter winter weather, while the fierce winds of the Apennines were sweeping sleet upon him in their passage from Monte Pellegrino to the plain, he knelt barefoot, clothed in sackcloth, fasting from dawn till eve, for three whole days. On the morning of the fourth day, judging that Gregory was inexorable, and that his suit would not be granted, Henry retired to the Chapel of S. Nicholas, which stood within this second precinct. There he called to his aid the Abbot of Clugny and the Countess, both of whom were his relations, and who, much as they might sympathise with Gregory, could hardly be supposed to look with satisfaction on their royal kinsman's

175

176

outrage. The Abbot told Henry that nothing in the world could move the Pope; but Matilda, when in turn he fell before her knees and wept, engaged to do for him the utmost. She probably knew that the moment for unbending had arrived, and that her imperious guest could not with either decency or prudence prolong the outrage offered to the civil chief of Christendom. It was the 25th of January when the Emperor elect was brought, half dead with cold and misery, into the Pope's presence. There he prostrated himself in the dust, crying aloud for pardon. It is said that Gregory first placed his foot upon Henry's neck, uttering these words of Scripture: 'Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem,' and that then he raised him from the earth and formally pronounced his pardon. The prelates and nobles who took part in this scene were compelled to guarantee with their own oaths the vows of obedience pronounced by Henry; so that in the very act of reconciliation a new insult was offered to him. After this Gregory said mass, and permitted Henry to communicate; and at the close of the day a banquet was served, at which the King sat down to meat with the Pope and the Countess.

It is probable that, while Henry's penance was performed in the castle courts beneath the rock, his reception by the Pope, and all that subsequently happened, took place in the citadel itself. But of this we have no positive information. Indeed the silence of the chronicles as to the topography of Canossa is peculiarly unfortunate for lovers of the picturesque in historic detail, now that there is no possibility of tracing the outlines of the ancient building. Had the author of the 'Vita Mathildis' (Muratori, vol. v.) foreseen that his beloved Canossa would one day be nothing but a mass of native rock, he would undoubtedly have been more explicit on these points; and much that is vague about an event only paralleled by our Henry II.'s penance before Becket's shrine at Canterbury, might now be clear.

Very little remains to be told about Canossa. During the same year, 1077, Matilda made the celebrated donation of her fiefs to Holy Church. This was accepted by Gregory in the name of S. Peter, and it was confirmed by a second deed during the pontificate of Urban IV. in 1102. Though Matilda subsequently married Guelfo d'Este, son of the Duke of Bavaria, she was speedily divorced from him; nor was there any heir to a marriage ridiculous by reason of disparity of age, the bridegroom being but eighteen, while the bride was forty-three in the year of her second nuptials. During one of Henry's descents into Italy, he made an unsuccessful attack upon Canossa, assailing it at the head of a considerable force one October morning in 1092. Matilda's biographer informs us that the mists of autumn veiled his beloved fortress from the eyes of the beleaguers. They had not even the satisfaction of beholding the unvanquished citadel; and, what was more, the banner of the Emperor was seized and dedicated as a trophy in the Church of S. Apollonio. In the following year the Countess opened her gates of Canossa to an illustrious fugitive, Adelaide, the wife of her old foe, Henry, who had escaped with difficulty from the insults and the cruelty of her husband. After Henry's death, his son, the Emperor Henry V., paid Matilda a visit in her castle of Bianello, addressed her by the name of mother, and conferred upon her the vice-regency of Liguria. At the age of sixty-nine she died, in 1115, at Bondeno de' Roncori, and was buried, not among her kinsmen at Canossa, but in an abbey of S. Benedict near Mantua. With her expired the main line of the noble house she represented; though Canossa, now made a fief of the Empire in spite of Matilda's donation, was given to a family which claimed descent from Bonifazio's brother Conrad—a young man killed in the battle of Coviolo. This family, in its turn, was extinguished in the year 1570; but a junior branch still exists at Verona. It will be remembered that Michelangelo Buonarroti claimed kinship with the Count of Canossa; and a letter from the Count is extant acknowledging the validity of his pretension.

As far back as 1255 the people of Reggio destroyed the castle; nor did the nobles of Canossa distinguish themselves in subsequent history among those families who based their despotisms on the *débris* of the Imperial power in Lombardy. It seemed destined that Canossa and all belonging to it should remain as a mere name and memory of the outgrown middle ages. Estensi, Carraresi, Visconti, Bentivogli, and Gonzaghi belong to a later period of Lombard history, and mark the dawn of the Renaissance.

As I lay and mused that afternoon of May upon the short grass, cropped by two grey goats, whom a little boy was tending, it occurred to me to ask the woman who had served me as guide, whether any legend remained in the country concerning the Countess Matilda. She had often, probably, been asked this question by other travellers. Therefore

she was more than usually ready with an answer, which, as far as I could understand her dialect, was this. Matilda was a great and potent witch, whose summons the devil was bound to obey. One day she aspired, alone of all her sex, to say mass; but when the moment came for sacring the elements, a thunderbolt fell from the clear sky, and reduced her to ashes.^[26] That the most single-hearted handmaid of the Holy Church, whose life was one long devotion to its ordinances, should survive in this grotesque myth, might serve to point a satire upon the vanity of earthly fame. The legend in its very extravagance is a fanciful distortion of the truth.

[26] I find that this story is common in the country round Canossa. It is mentioned by Professor A. Ferretti in his monograph entitled *Canossa, Studi e Ricerche*, Reggio, 1876, a work to which I am indebted, and which will repay careful study.

In the town of Parma there is one surpassingly strange relic of the past. The palace of the Farnesi, like many a haunt of upstart tyranny and beggared pride on these Italian plains, rises misshapen and disconsolate above the stream that bears the city's name. The squalor of this grey-brown edifice of formless brick, left naked like the palace of the same Farnesi at Piacenza, has something even horrid in it now that only vague memory survives of its former uses. The princely *sprezzatura* of its ancient occupants, careless of these unfinished courts and unroofed galleries amid the splendour of their purpled silks and the glitter of their torchlight pageantry, has yielded to sullen cynicism—the cynicism of arrested ruin and unreverend age. All that was satisfying to the senses and distracting to the eyesight in their transitory pomp has passed away, leaving a sinister and naked shell. Remembrance can but summon up the crimes, the madness, the trivialities of those dead palace-builders. An atmosphere of evil clings to the dilapidated walls, as though the tainted spirit of the infamous Pier Luigi still possessed the spot, on which his toadstool brood of princelings sprouted in the mud of their misdeeds. Enclosed in this huge labyrinth of brickwork is the relic of which I spoke. It is the once world-famous Teatro Farnese, raised in the year 1618 by Ranunzio Farnese for the marriage of Odoardo Farnese with Margaret of Austria. Giambattista Aleotti, a native of pageant-loving Ferrara, traced the stately curves and noble orders of the galleries, designed the columns that support the raftered roof, marked out the orchestra, arranged the stage, and breathed into the whole the spirit of Palladio's most heroic neo-Latin style. Vast, built of wood, dishevelled, with broken statues and blurred coats of arms, with its empty scene, its uncurling frescoes, its hangings all in rags, its cobwebs of two centuries, its dust and mildew and discoloured gold—this theatre, a sham in its best days, and now that ugliest of things, a sham unmasked and naked to the light of day, is yet sublime, because of its proportioned harmony, because of its grand Roman manner. The sight and feeling of it fasten upon the mind and abide in the memory like a nightmare,—like one of Piranesi's weirdest and most passion-haunted etchings for the *Carceri*. Idling there at noon in the twilight of the dust-bedarkened windows, we fill the tiers of those high galleries with ladies, the space below with grooms and pages; the stage is ablaze with torches, and an Italian Masque, such as our Marlowe dreamed of, fills the scene. But it is impossible to dower these fancies with even such life as in healthier, happier ruins phantasy may lend to imagination's figments. This theatre is like a maniac's skull, empty of all but unrealities and mockeries of things that are. The ghosts we raise here could never have been living men and women: *questi sciaurati non fur mai vivi*. So clinging is the sense of instability that appertains to every fragment of that dry-rot tyranny which seized by evil fortune in the sunset of her golden day on Italy.

181

In this theatre I mused one morning after visiting Fornovo; and the thoughts suggested by the battlefield found their proper atmosphere in the dilapidated place. What, indeed, is the Teatro Farnese but a symbol of those hollow principalities which the despot and the stranger built in Italy after the fatal date of 1494, when national enthusiasm and political energy were expiring in a blaze of art, and when the Italians as a people had ceased to be; but when the phantom of their former life, surviving in high works of beauty, was still superb by reason of imperishable style! How much in Italy of the Renaissance was, like this plank-built plastered theatre, a glorious sham! The sham was seen through then; and now it stands unmasked: and yet, strange to say, so perfect is its form that we respect the sham and yield our spirits to the incantation of its music.

182

The battle of Fornovo, as modern battles go, was a paltry affair; and even at the time it seemed sufficiently without result. Yet the trumpets which rang on July 6, 1495, for the onset, sounded the *réveil* of the modern world; and in the inconclusive termination of the struggle of that day, the Italians were already judged and sentenced as a nation. The armies who met that morning represented Italy and France,—Italy, the Sibyl of Renaissance; France, the Sibyl of Revolution. At the fall of evening Europe was already looking northward; and the last years of the fifteenth century were opening an act which closed in blood at Paris on the ending of the eighteenth.

If it were not for thoughts like these, no one, I suppose, would take the trouble to drive for two hours out of Parma to the little village of Fornovo—a score of bare grey hovels on the margin of a pebbly river-bed beneath the Apennines. The fields on either side, as far as eye can see, are beautiful indeed in May sunlight, painted here with flax, like shallow

sheets of water reflecting a pale sky, and there with clover red as blood. Scarce unfolded leaves sparkle like flamelets of bright green upon the knotted vines, and the young corn is bending all one way beneath a western breeze. But not less beautiful than this is the whole broad plain of Lombardy; nor are the nightingales louder here than in the acacia trees around Pavia. As we drive, the fields become less fertile, and the hills encroach upon the level, sending down their spurs upon that waveless plain like blunt rocks jutting out into a tranquil sea. When we reach the bed of the Taro, these hills begin to narrow on either hand, and the road rises. Soon they open out again with gradual curving lines, forming a kind of amphitheatre filled up from flank to flank with the *ghiara* or pebbly bottom of the Taro. The Taro is not less wasteful than any other of the brotherhood of streams that pour from Alp or Apennine to swell the Po. It wanders, an impatient rivulet, through a wilderness of boulders, uncertain of its aim, shifting its course with the season of the year, unless the jaws of some deep-cloven gully hold it tight and show how insignificant it is. As we advance, the hills approach again; between their skirts there is nothing but the river-bed; and now on rising ground above the stream, at the point of juncture between the Ceno and the Taro, we find Fornovo. Beyond the village the valley broadens out once more, disclosing Apennines capped with winter snow. To the right descends the Ceno. To the left foams the Taro, following whose rocky channel we should come at last to Pontremoli and the Tyrrhenian sea beside Sarzana. On a May-day of sunshine like the present, the Taro is a gentle stream. A waggon drawn by two white oxen has just entered its channel, guided by a contadino with goat-skin leggings, wielding a long goad. The patient creatures stem the water, which rises to the peasant's thighs and ripples round the creaking wheels. Swaying to and fro, as the shingles shift upon the river-bed, they make their way across; and now they have emerged upon the stones; and now we lose them in a flood of sunlight.

183

It was by this pass that Charles VIII. in 1495 returned from Tuscany, when the army of the League was drawn up waiting to intercept and crush him in the mousetrap of Fornovo. No road remained for Charles and his troops but the rocky bed of the Taro, running, as I have described it, between the spurs of steep hills. It is true that the valley of the Baganza leads, from a little higher up among the mountains, into Lombardy. But this pass runs straight to Parma; and to follow it would have brought the French upon the walls of a strong city. Charles could not do otherwise than descend upon the village of Fornovo, and cut his way thence in the teeth of the Italian army over stream and boulder between the gorges of throttling mountain. The failure of the Italians to achieve what here upon the ground appears so simple, delivered Italy hand-bound to strangers. Had they but succeeded in arresting Charles and destroying his forces at Fornovo, it is just possible that then—even then, at the eleventh hour—Italy might have gained the sense of national coherence, or at least have proved herself capable of holding by her leagues the foreigner at bay. As it was, the battle of Fornovo, in spite of Venetian bonfires and Mantuan Madonnas of Victory, made her conscious of incompetence and convicted her of cowardice. After Fornovo, her sons scarcely dared to hold their heads up in the field against invaders; and the battles fought upon her soil were duels among aliens for the prize of Italy.

184

In order to comprehend the battle of Fornovo in its bearings on Italian history, we must go back to the year 1492, and understand the conditions of the various States of Italy at that date. On April 8 in that year, Lorenzo de' Medici, who had succeeded in maintaining a political equilibrium in the peninsula, expired, and was succeeded by his son Piero, a vain and foolhardy young man, from whom no guidance could be expected. On July 25, Innocent VIII. died, and was succeeded by the very worst Pope who has ever occupied S. Peter's chair, Roderigo Borgia, Alexander VI. It was felt at once that the old order of things had somehow ended, and that a new era, the destinies of which as yet remained incalculable, was opening for Italy. The chief Italian powers, hitherto kept in equipoise by the diplomacy of Lorenzo de' Medici, were these—the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Florence, the Papacy, and the kingdom of Naples. Minor States, such as the Republics of Genoa and Siena, the Duchies of Urbino and Ferrara, the Marquisate of Mantua, the petty tyrannies of Romagna, and the wealthy city of Bologna, were sufficiently important to affect the balance of power, and to produce new combinations. For the present purpose it is, however, enough to consider the five great Powers.

185

After the peace of Constance, which freed the Lombard Communes from Imperial interference in the year 1183, Milan, by her geographical

position, rose rapidly to be the first city of North Italy. Without narrating the changes by which she lost her freedom as a Commune, it is enough to state that, earliest of all Italian cities, Milan passed into the hands of a single family. The Visconti managed to convert this flourishing commonwealth, with all its dependencies, into their private property, ruling it exclusively for their own profit, using its municipal institutions as the machinery of administration, and employing the taxes which they raised upon its wealth for purely selfish ends. When the line of the Visconti ended in the year 1447, their tyranny was continued by Francesco Sforza, the son of a poor soldier of adventure, who had raised himself by his military genius, and had married Bianca, the illegitimate daughter of the last Visconti. On the death of Francesco Sforza in 1466, he left two sons, Galeazzo Maria and Lodovico, surnamed Il Moro, both of whom were destined to play a prominent part in history. Galeazzo Maria, dissolute, vicious, and cruel to the core, was murdered by his injured subjects in the year 1476. His son, Giovanni Galeazzo, aged eight, would in course of time have succeeded to the Duchy, had it not been for the ambition of his uncle Lodovico. Lodovico contrived to name himself as Regent for his nephew, whom he kept, long after he had come of age, in a kind of honourable prison. Virtual master in Milan, but without a legal title to the throne, unrecognised in his authority by the Italian powers, and holding it from day to day by craft and fraud, Lodovico at last found his situation untenable; and it was this difficulty of an usurper to maintain himself in his despotism which, as we shall see, brought the French into Italy.

186

Venice, the neighbour and constant foe of Milan, had become a close oligarchy by a process of gradual constitutional development, which threw her government into the hands of a few nobles. She was practically ruled by the hereditary members of the Grand Council. Ever since the year 1453, when Constantinople fell beneath the Turk, the Venetians had been more and more straitened in their Oriental commerce, and were thrown back upon the policy of territorial aggrandisement in Italy, from which they had hitherto refrained as alien to the temperament of the Republic. At the end of the fifteenth century Venice therefore became an object of envy and terror to the Italian States. They envied her because she alone was tranquil, wealthy, powerful, and free. They feared her because they had good reason to suspect her of encroachment; and it was foreseen that if she got the upper hand in Italy, all Italy would be the property of the families inscribed upon the Golden Book. It was thus alone that the Italians comprehended government. The principle of representation being utterly unknown, and the privileged burghers in each city being regarded as absolute and lawful owners of the city and of everything belonging to it, the conquest of a town by a republic implied the political extinction of that town and the disfranchisement of its inhabitants in favour of the conquerors.

Florence at this epoch still called itself a Republic; and of all Italian commonwealths it was by far the most democratic. Its history, unlike that of Venice, had been the history of continual and brusque changes, resulting in the destruction of the old nobility, in the equalisation of the burghers, and in the formation of a new aristocracy of wealth. From this class of *bourgeois* nobles sprang the Medici, who, by careful manipulation of the State machinery, by the creation of a powerful party devoted to their interests, by flattery of the people, by corruption, by taxation, and by constant scheming, raised themselves to the first place in the commonwealth, and became its virtual masters. In the year 1492 Lorenzo de' Medici, the most remarkable chief of this despotic family, died, bequeathing his supremacy in the Republic to a son of marked incompetence.

187

Since the Pontificate of Nicholas V. the See of Rome had entered upon a new period of existence. The Popes no longer dreaded to reside in Rome, but were bent upon making the metropolis of Christendom both splendid as a seat of art and learning, and also potent as the capital of a secular kingdom. Though their fiefs in Romagna and the March were still held but loosely, though their provinces swarmed with petty despots who defied the Papal authority, and though the princely Roman houses of Colonna and Orsini were still strong enough to terrorise the Holy Father in the Vatican, it was now clear that the Papal See must in the end get the better of its adversaries, and consolidate itself into a first-rate Power. The internal spirit of the Papacy at this time corresponded to its external policy. It was thoroughly secularised by a series of worldly and vicious pontiffs, who had clean forgotten what their title, Vicar of Christ, implied. They consistently used their religious prestige to enforce their secular authority, while by their temporal power they caused their

188

religious claims to be respected. Corrupt and shameless, they indulged themselves in every vice, openly acknowledged their children, and turned Italy upside down in order to establish favourites and bastards in the principalities they seized as spoils of war.

The kingdom of Naples differed from any other state of Italy. Subject continually to foreign rulers since the decay of the Greek Empire, governed in succession by the Normans, the Hohenstauffens, and the House of Anjou, it had never enjoyed the real independence, or the free institutions, of the northern provinces; nor had it been Italianised in the same sense as the rest of the peninsula. Despotism, which assumed so many forms in Italy, was here neither the tyranny of a noble house, nor the masked autocracy of a burgher, nor yet the forceful sway of a condottiere. It had a dynastic character, resembling the monarchy of one of the great European nations, but modified by the peculiar conditions of Italian statecraft. Owing to this dynastic and monarchical complexion of the Neapolitan kingdom, semi-feudal customs flourished in the south far more than in the north of Italy. The barons were more powerful; and the destinies of the Regno often turned upon their feuds and quarrels with the Crown. At the same time the Neapolitan despots shared the uneasy circumstances of all Italian potentates, owing to the uncertainty of their tenure, both as conquerors and aliens, and also as the nominal vassals of the Holy See. The rights of suzerainty which the Normans had yielded to the Papacy over their southern conquests, and which the Popes had arbitrarily exercised in favour of the Angevine princes, proved a constant source of peril to the rest of Italy by rendering the succession to the crown of Naples doubtful. On the extinction of the Angevine line, however, the throne was occupied by a prince who had no valid title but that of the sword to its possession. Alfonso of Aragon conquered Naples in 1442, and neglecting his hereditary dominion, settled in his Italian capital. Possessed with the enthusiasm for literature which was then the ruling passion of the Italians, and very liberal to men of learning, Alfonso won for himself the surname of Magnanimous. On his death, in 1458, he bequeathed his Spanish kingdom, together with Sicily and Sardinia, to his brother, and left the fruits of his Italian conquest to his bastard, Ferdinand. This Ferdinand, whose birth was buried in profound obscurity, was the reigning sovereign in the year 1492. Of a cruel and sombre temperament, traitorous and tyrannical, Ferdinand was hated by his subjects as much as Alfonso had been loved. He possessed, however, to a remarkable degree, the qualities which at that epoch constituted a consummate statesman; and though the history of his reign is the history of plots and conspiracies, of judicial murders and forcible assassinations, of famines produced by iniquitous taxation, and of every kind of diabolical tyranny, Ferdinand contrived to hold his own, in the teeth of a rebellious baronage or a maddened population. His political sagacity amounted almost to a prophetic instinct in the last years of his life, when he became aware that the old order was breaking up in Italy, and had cause to dread that Charles VIII. of France would prove his title to the kingdom of Naples by force of arms.^[27]

189

[27] Charles claimed under the will of René of Anjou, who in turn claimed under the will of Joan II.

Such were the component parts of the Italian body politic, with the addition of numerous petty principalities and powers, adhering more or less consistently to one or other of the greater States. The whole complex machine was bound together by no sense of common interest, animated by no common purpose, amenable to no central authority. Even such community of feeling as one spoken language gives, was lacking. And yet Italy distinguished herself clearly from the rest of Europe, not merely as a geographical fact, but also as a people intellectually and spiritually one. The rapid rise of humanism had aided in producing this national self-consciousness. Every State and every city was absorbed in the recovery of culture and in the development of art and literature. Far in advance of the other European nations, the Italians regarded the rest of the world as barbarous, priding themselves the while, in spite of mutual jealousies and hatreds, on their Italic civilisation. They were enormously wealthy. The resources of the Papal treasury, the private fortunes of the Florentine bankers, the riches of the Venetian merchants might have purchased all that France or Germany possessed of value. The single Duchy of Milan yielded to its masters 700,000 golden florins of revenue, according to the computation of De Comines. In default of a confederative system, the several States were held in equilibrium by diplomacy. By far the most important people, next to the despots and the captains of adventure, were ambassadors and orators. War itself had become a matter of arrangement, bargain, and diplomacy. The game of

190

stratagem was played by generals who had been friends yesterday and might be friends again to-morrow, with troops who felt no loyalty whatever for the standards under which they listed. To avoid slaughter and to achieve the ends of warfare by parade and demonstration was the interest of every one concerned. Looking back upon Italy of the fifteenth century, taking account of her religious deadness and moral corruption, estimating the absence of political vigour in the republics and the noxious tyranny of the despots, analysing her lack of national spirit, and comparing her splendid life of cultivated ease with the want of martial energy, we can see but too plainly that contact with a simpler and stronger people could not but produce a terrible catastrophe. The Italians themselves, however, were far from comprehending this. Centuries of undisturbed internal intrigue had accustomed them to play the game of forfeits with each other, and nothing warned them that the time was come at which diplomacy, finesse, and craft would stand them in ill stead against rapacious conquerors.

191

The storm which began to gather over Italy in the year 1492 had its first beginning in the North. Lodovico Sforza's position in the Duchy of Milan was becoming every day more difficult, when a slight and to all appearances insignificant incident converted his apprehension of danger into panic. It was customary for the States of Italy to congratulate a new Pope on his election by their ambassadors; and this ceremony had now to be performed for Roderigo Borgia. Lodovico proposed that his envoys should go to Rome together with those of Venice, Naples, and Florence; but Piero de' Medici, whose vanity made him wish to send an embassy in his own name, contrived that Lodovico's proposal should be rejected both by Florence and the King of Naples. So strained was the situation of Italian affairs that Lodovico saw in this repulse a menace to his own usurped authority. Feeling himself isolated among the princes of his country, rebuffed by the Medici, and coldly treated by the King of Naples, he turned in his anxiety to France, and advised the young king, Charles VIII., to make good his claim upon the Regno. It was a bold move to bring the foreigner thus into Italy; and even Lodovico, who prided himself upon his sagacity, could not see how things would end. He thought his situation so hazardous, however, that any change must be for the better. Moreover, a French invasion of Naples would tie the hands of his natural foe, King Ferdinand, whose granddaughter, Isabella of Aragon, had married Giovanni Galeazzo Sforza, and was now the rightful Duchess of Milan. When the Florentine ambassador at Milan asked him how he had the courage to expose Italy to such peril, his reply betrayed the egotism of his policy: 'You talk to me of Italy; but when have I looked Italy in the face? No one ever gave a thought to my affairs. I have, therefore, had to give them such security as I could.'

192

Charles VIII. was young, light-brained, romantic, and ruled by *parvenus*, who had an interest in disturbing the old order of the monarchy. He lent a willing ear to Lodovico's invitation, backed as this was by the eloquence and passion of numerous Italian refugees and exiles. Against the advice of his more prudent counsellors, he taxed all the resources of his kingdom, and concluded treaties on disadvantageous terms with England, Germany, and Spain, in order that he might be able to concentrate all his attention upon the Italian expedition. At the end of the year 1493, it was known that the invasion was resolved upon. Gentile Becchi, the Florentine envoy at the Court of France, wrote to Piero de' Medici: 'If the King succeeds, it is all over with Italy—*tutta a bordello*.' The extraordinary selfishness of the several Italian States at this critical moment deserves to be noticed. The Venetians, as Paolo Antonio Soderini described them to Piero de' Medici, 'are of opinion that to keep quiet, and to see other potentates of Italy spending and suffering, cannot but be to their advantage. They trust no one, and feel sure they have enough money to be able at any moment to raise sufficient troops, and so to guide events according to their inclinations.' As the invasion was directed against Naples, Ferdinand of Aragon displayed the acutest sense of the situation. 'Frenchmen,' he exclaimed, in what appears like a prophetic passion when contrasted with the cold indifference of others no less really menaced, 'have never come into Italy without inflicting ruin; and this invasion, if rightly considered, cannot but bring universal ruin, although it seems to menace us alone.' In his agony Ferdinand applied to Alexander VI. But the Pope looked coldly upon him, because the King of Naples, with rare perspicacity, had predicted that his elevation to the Papacy would prove disastrous to Christendom. Alexander preferred to ally himself with Venice and Milan. Upon this Ferdinand wrote as follows: 'It seems fated that the Popes should leave no peace in Italy. We are compelled to fight; but the Duke of Bari (*i.e.* Lodovico Sforza) should think what may ensue from the tumult he is

193

stirring up. He who raises this wind will not be able to lay the tempest when he likes. Let him look to the past, and he will see how every time that our internal quarrels have brought Powers from beyond the Alps into Italy, these have oppressed and lorded over her.'

Terribly verified as these words were destined to be,—and they were no less prophetic in their political sagacity than Savonarola's prediction of the Sword and bloody Scourge,—it was now too late to avert the coming ruin. On March 1, 1494, Charles was with his army at Lyons. Early in September he had crossed the pass of Mont Genève and taken up his quarters in the town of Asti. There is no need to describe in detail the holiday march of the French troops through Lombardy, Tuscany, and Rome, until, without having struck a blow of consequence, the gates of Naples opened to receive the conqueror upon February 22, 1495. Philippe de Comines, who parted from the King at Asti and passed the winter as his envoy at Venice, has more than once recorded his belief that nothing but the direct interposition of Providence could have brought so mad an expedition to so successful a conclusion. 'Dieu monstroit conduire l'entreprise,' No sooner, however, was Charles installed in Naples than the States of Italy began to combine against him. Lodovico Sforza had availed himself of the general confusion consequent upon the first appearance of the French, to poison his nephew. He was, therefore, now the titular, as well as virtual, Lord of Milan. So far, he had achieved what he desired, and had no further need of Charles. The overtures he now made to the Venetians and the Pope terminated in a League between these Powers for the expulsion of the French from Italy. Germany and Spain entered into the same alliance; and De Comines, finding himself treated with marked coldness by the Signory of Venice, despatched a courier to warn Charles in Naples of the coming danger. After a stay of only fifty days in his new capital, the French King hurried northward. Moving quickly through the Papal States and Tuscany, he engaged his troops in the passes of the Apennines near Pontremoli, and on July 5, 1495, took up his quarters in the village of Fornovo. De Comines reckons that his whole fighting force at this time did not exceed 9,000 men, with fourteen pieces of artillery. Against him at the opening of the valley was the army of the League, numbering some 35,000 men, of whom three-fourths were supplied by Venice, the rest by Lodovico Sforza and the German Emperor. Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, was the general of the Venetian forces; and on him, therefore, fell the real responsibility of the battle.

De Comines remarks on the imprudence of the allies, who allowed Charles to advance as far as Fornovo, when it was their obvious policy to have established themselves in the village and so have caught the French troops in a trap. It was a Sunday when the French marched down upon Fornovo. Before them spread the plain of Lombardy, and beyond it the white crests of the Alps. 'We were,' says De Comines, 'in a valley between two little mountain flanks, and in that valley ran a river which could easily be forded on foot, except when it is swelled with sudden rains. The whole valley was a bed of gravel and big stones, very difficult for horses, about a quarter of a league in breadth, and on the right bank lodged our enemies.' Any one who has visited Fornovo can understand the situation of the two armies. Charles occupied the village on the right bank of the Taro. On the same bank, extending downward toward the plain, lay the host of the allies; and in order that Charles should escape them, it was necessary that he should cross the Taro, just below its junction with the Ceno, and reach Lombardy by marching in a parallel line with his foes.

All through the night of Sunday it thundered and rained incessantly; so that on the Monday morning the Taro was considerably swollen. At seven o'clock the King sent for De Comines, who found him already armed and mounted on the finest horse he had ever seen. The name of this charger was *Savoy*. He was black, one-eyed, and of middling height; and to his great courage, as we shall see, Charles owed life upon that day. The French army, ready for the march, now took to the gravelly bed of the Taro, passing the river at a distance of about a quarter of a league from the allies. As the French left Fornovo, the light cavalry of their enemies entered the village and began to attack the baggage. At the same time the Marquis of Mantua, with the flower of his men-at-arms, crossed the Taro and harassed the rear of the French host; while raids from the right bank to the left were constantly being made by sharpshooters and flying squadrons. 'At this moment,' says De Comines, 'not a single man of us could have escaped if our ranks had once been broken.' The French army was divided into three main bodies. The vanguard consisted of some 350 men-at-arms, 3000 Switzers, 300 archers of the Guard, a few mounted crossbow-men, and the artillery. Next came the Battle, and after this the

rearguard. At the time when the Marquis of Mantua made his attack, the French rearguard had not yet crossed the river. Charles quitted the van, put himself at the head of his chivalry, and charged the Italian horsemen, driving them back, some to the village and others to their camp. De Comines observes, that had the Italian knights been supported in this passage of arms by the light cavalry of the Venetian force, called Stradiots, the French must have been outnumbered, thrown into confusion, and defeated. As it was, these Stradiots were engaged in plundering the baggage of the French; and the Italians, accustomed to bloodless encounters, did not venture, in spite of their immense superiority of numbers, to renew the charge. In the pursuit of Gonzaga's horsemen Charles outstripped his staff, and was left almost alone to grapple with a little band of mounted foemen. It was here that his noble horse, Savoy, saved his person by plunging and charging till assistance came up from the French, and enabled the King to regain his van.

It is incredible, considering the nature of the ground and the number of the troops engaged, that the allies should not have returned to the attack and have made the passage of the French into the plain impossible. De Comines, however, assures us that the actual engagement only lasted a quarter of an hour, and the pursuit of the Italians three quarters of an hour. After they had once resolved to fly, they threw away their lances and betook themselves to Reggio and Parma. So complete was their discomfiture, that De Comines gravely blames the want of military genius and adventure in the French host. If, instead of advancing along the left bank of the Taro and there taking up his quarters for the night, Charles had recrossed the stream and pursued the army of the allies, he would have had the whole of Lombardy at his discretion. As it was, the French army encamped not far from the scene of the action in great discomfort and anxiety. De Comines had to bivouac in a vineyard, without even a mantle to wrap round him, having lent his cloak to the King in the morning; and as it had been pouring all day, the ground could not have afforded very luxurious quarters. The same extraordinary luck which had attended the French in their whole expedition, now favoured their retreat; and the same pusillanimity which the allies had shown at Fornovo, prevented them from re-forming and engaging with the army of Charles upon the plain. One hour before daybreak on Tuesday morning, the French broke up their camp and succeeded in clearing the valley. That night they lodged at Fiorenzuola, the next at Piacenza, and so on; till on the eighth day they arrived at Asti without having been so much as incommoded by the army of the allies in their rear.

Although the field of Fornovo was in reality so disgraceful to the Italians, they reckoned it a victory upon the technical pretence that the camp and baggage of the French had been seized. Illuminations and rejoicings made the piazza of S. Mark in Venice gay, and Francesco da Gonzaga had the glorious Madonna della Vittoria painted for him by Mantegna, in commemoration of what ought only to have been remembered with shame.

A fitting conclusion to this sketch, connecting its close with the commencement, may be found in some remarks upon the manner of warfare to which the Italians of the Renaissance had become accustomed, and which proved so futile on the field of Fornovo. During the middle ages, and in the days of the Communes, the whole male population of Italy had fought light-armed on foot. Merchant and artisan left the counting-house and the workshop, took shield and pike, and sallied forth to attack the barons in their castles, or to meet the Emperor's troops upon the field. It was with this national militia that the citizens of Florence freed their *Contado* of the nobles, and the burghers of Lombardy gained the battle of Legnano. In course of time, by a process of change which it is not very easy to trace, heavily armed cavalry began to take the place of infantry in mediæval warfare. Men-at-arms, as they were called, encased from head to foot in iron, and mounted upon chargers no less solidly caparisoned, drove the foot-soldiers before them at the points of their long lances. Nowhere in Italy do they seem to have met with the fierce resistance which the bears of the Swiss Oberland and the bulls of Uri offered to the knights of Burgundy. No Tuscan Arnold von Winkelried clasped a dozen lances to his bosom that the foeman's ranks might thus be broken at the cost of his own life; nor did it occur to the Italian burghers to meet the charge of the horsemen with squares protected by bristling spears. They seem, on the contrary, to have abandoned military service with the readiness of men whose energies were already absorbed in the affairs of peace. To become a practised and efficient man-at-arms required long training and a life's devotion. So much time the burghers of the free towns could not

spare to military service, while the petty nobles were only too glad to devote themselves to so honourable a calling. Thus it came to pass that a class of professional fighting-men was gradually formed in Italy, whose services the burghers and the princes bought, and by whom the wars of the peninsula were regularly farmed by contract. Wealth and luxury in the great cities continued to increase; and as the burghers grew more comfortable, they were less inclined to take the field in their own persons, and more disposed to vote large sums of money for the purchase of necessary aid. At the same time this system suited the despots, since it spared them the peril of arming their own subjects, while they taxed them to pay the services of foreign captains. War thus became a commerce. Romagna, the Marches of Ancona, and other parts of the Papal dominions, supplied a number of petty nobles whose whole business in life it was to form companies of trained horsemen, and with these bands to hire themselves out to the republics and the despots. Gain was the sole purpose of these captains. They sold their service to the highest bidder, fighting irrespectively of principle or patriotism, and passing with the coldest equanimity from the camp of one master to that of his worst foe. It was impossible that true military spirit should survive this prostitution of the art of war. A species of mock warfare prevailed in Italy. Battles were fought with a view to booty more than victory; prisoners were taken for the sake of ransom; bloodshed was carefully avoided, for the men who fought on either side in any pitched field had been comrades with their present foemen in the last encounter, and who could tell how soon the general of the one host might not need his rival's troops to recruit his own ranks? Like every genuine institution of the Italian Renaissance, warfare was thus a work of fine art, a masterpiece of intellectual subtlety; and like the Renaissance itself, this peculiar form of warfare was essentially transitional. The cannon and the musket were already in use; and it only required one blast of gunpowder to turn the sham-fight of courtly, traitorous, finessing captains of adventure into something terribly more real. To men like the Marquis of Mantua war had been a highly profitable game of skill; to men like the Maréchal de Gié it was a murderous horseplay; and this difference the Italians were not slow to perceive. When they cast away their lances at Fornovo, and fled—in spite of their superior numbers—never to return, one fair-seeming sham of the fifteenth century became a vision of the past.

Di Firenze in prima si divisono intra loro i nobili, dipoi i nobili e il popolo, e in ultimo il popolo e la plebe; e molte volte occorse che una di queste parti rimasa superiore, si divide in due.—MACHIAVELLI.

I

Florence, like all Italian cities, owed her independence to the duel of the Papacy and Empire. The transference of the imperial authority beyond the Alps had enabled the burghs of Lombardy and Tuscany to establish a form of self-government. This government was based upon the old municipal organisation of duumvirs and decemvirs. It was, in fact, nothing more or less than a survival from the ancient Roman system. The proof of this was, that while vindicating their rights as towns, the free cities never questioned the validity of the imperial title. Even after the peace of Constance in 1183, when Frederick Barbarossa acknowledged their autonomy, they received within their walls a supreme magistrate, with power of life and death and ultimate appeal in all decisive questions, whose title of Potestà indicated that he represented the imperial power—Potestas. It was not by the assertion of any right, so much as by the growth of custom, and by the weakness of the Emperors, that in course of time each city became a sovereign State. The theoretical supremacy of the Empire prevented any other authority from taking the first place in Italy. On the other hand, the practical inefficiency of the Emperors to play their part encouraged the establishment of numerous minor powers amenable to no controlling discipline.

202

The free cities derived their strength from industry, and had nothing in common with the nobles of the surrounding country. Broadly speaking, the population of the towns included what remained in Italy of the old Roman people. This Roman stock was nowhere stronger than in Florence and Venice—Florence defended from barbarian incursions by her mountains and marshes, Venice by the isolation of her lagoons. The nobles, on the contrary, were mostly of foreign origin—Germans, Franks, and Lombards, who had established themselves as feudal lords in castles apart from the cities. The force which the burghs acquired as industrial communities was soon turned against these nobles. The larger cities, like Milan and Florence, began to make war upon the lords of castles, and to absorb into their own territory the small towns and villages around them. Thus in the social economy of the Italians there were two antagonistic elements ready to range themselves beneath any banners that should give the form of legitimate warfare to their mutual hostility. It was the policy of the Church in the twelfth century to support the cause of the cities, using them as a weapon against the Empire, and stimulating the growing ambition of the burghers. In this way Italy came to be divided into the two world-famous factions known as Guelf and Ghibelline. The struggle between Guelf and Ghibelline was the struggle of the Papacy for the depression of the Empire, the struggle of the great burghs face to face with feudalism, the struggle of the old Italian stock enclosed in cities with the foreign nobles established in fortresses. When the Church had finally triumphed by the extirpation of the House of Hohenstaufen, this conflict of Guelf and Ghibelline was really ended. Until the reign of Charles V. no Emperor interfered to any purpose in Italian affairs. At the same time the Popes ceased to wield a formidable power. Having won the battle by calling in the French, they suffered the consequences of this policy by losing their hold on Italy during the long period of their exile at Avignon. The Italians, left without either Pope or Emperor, were free to pursue their course of internal development, and to prosecute their quarrels among themselves. But though the names of Guelf and Ghibelline lost their old significance after the year 1266 (the date of King Manfred's death), these two factions had so divided Italy that they continued to play a prominent part in her annals. Guelf still meant constitutional autonomy, meant the burgher as against the noble, meant industry as opposed to feudal lordship. Ghibelline meant the rule of the few over the many, meant tyranny, meant the interest of the noble as against the merchant and the citizen. These broad distinctions must be borne in mind, if we seek to understand how it was that a city like Florence continued to be governed by parties, the European force of which had passed away.

203

II

Florence first rose into importance during the papacy of Innocent III. Up to this date she had been a town of second-rate distinction even in Tuscany. Pisa was more powerful by arms and commerce. Lucca was the old seat of the dukes and marquises of Tuscany. But between the years 1200 and 1250 Florence assumed the place she was to hold thenceforward, by heading the league of Tuscan cities formed to support the Guelf party against the Ghibellines. Formally adopting the Guelf cause, the Florentines made themselves the champions of municipal liberty in Central Italy; and while they declared war against the Ghibelline cities, they endeavoured to stamp out the very name of noble in their State. It is not needful to describe the varying fortunes of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, the burghers and the nobles, during the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries. Suffice it to say that through all the vicissitudes of that stormy period the name Guelf became more and more associated with republican freedom in Florence. At last, after the final triumph of that party in 1253, the Guelfs remained victors in the city. Associating the glory of their independence with Guelf principles, the citizens of Florence perpetuated within their State a faction that, in its turn, was destined to prove perilous to liberty.

204

When it became clear that the republic was to rule itself henceforth untrammelled by imperial interference, the people divided themselves into six districts, and chose for each district two Ancients, who administered the government in concert with the Potestà and the Captain of the People. The Ancients were a relic of the old Roman municipal organisation. The Potestà who was invariably a noble foreigner selected by the people, represented the extinct imperial right, and exercised the power of life and death within the city. The Captain of the People, who was also a foreigner, headed the burghers in their military capacity, for at that period the troops were levied from the citizens themselves in twenty companies. The body of the citizens, or the *popolo*, were ultimately sovereigns in the State. Assembled under the banners of their several companies, they formed a *parlamento* for delegating their own power to each successive government. Their representatives, again, arranged in two councils, called the Council of the People and the Council of the Commune, under the presidency of the Captain of the People and the Potestà, ratified the measures which had previously been proposed and carried by the executive authority or Signoria. Under this simple State system the Florentines placed themselves at the head of the Tuscan League, fought the battles of the Church, asserted their sovereignty by issuing the golden florin of the republic, and flourished until 1266.

205

III

In that year an important change was effected in the Constitution. The whole population of Florence consisted, on the one hand, of nobles or Grandi, as they were called in Tuscany, and on the other hand of working people. The latter, divided into traders and handicraftsmen, were distributed in guilds called Arti; and at that time there were seven Greater and five Lesser Arti, the most influential of all being the Guild of the Wool Merchants. These guilds had their halls for meeting, their colleges of chief officers, their heads, called Consoli or Priors, and their flags. In 1266 it was decided that the administration of the commonwealth should be placed simply and wholly in the hands of the Arti, and the Priors of these industrial companies became the lords or Signory of Florence. No inhabitant of the city who had not enrolled himself as a craftsman in one of the guilds could exercise any function of burghership. To be *scioperato*, or without industry, was to be without power, without rank or place of honour in the State. The revolution which placed the Arts at the head of the republic had the practical effect of excluding the Grandi altogether from the government. Violent efforts were made by these noble families, potent through their territorial possessions and foreign connections, and trained from boyhood in the use of arms, to recover the place from which the new laws thrust them: but their menacing attitude, instead of intimidating the burghers, roused their anger and drove them to the passing of still more stringent laws. In 1293, after the Ghibellines had been defeated in the great battle of Campaldino, a series of severe enactments, called the Ordinances of Justice, were decreed against the unruly Grandi. All civic rights were taken from them; the severest penalties were attached to their slightest infringement of municipal law; their titles to land were limited; the privilege of living within the city walls was allowed them only under

206

galling restrictions; and, last not least, a supreme magistrate, named the Gonfalonier of Justice, was created for the special purpose of watching them and carrying out the penal code against them. Henceforward Florence was governed exclusively by merchants and artisans. The Grandi hastened to enrol themselves in the guilds, exchanging their former titles and dignities for the solid privilege of burghership. The exact parallel to this industrial constitution for a commonwealth, carrying on wars with emperors and princes, holding haughty captains in its pay, and dictating laws to subject cities, cannot, I think, be elsewhere found in history. It is as unique as the Florence of Dante and Giotto is unique. While the people was guarding itself thus stringently against the Grandi, a separate body was created for the special purpose of extirpating the Ghibellines. A permanent committee of vigilance, called the College or the Captains of the Guelf Party, was established. It was their function to administer the forfeited possessions of Ghibelline rebels, to hunt out suspected citizens, to prosecute them for Ghibellinism, to judge them, and to punish them as traitors to the commonwealth. This body, like a little State within the State, proved formidable to the republic itself through the unlimited and undefined sway it exercised over burghers whom it chose to tax with treason. In course of time it became the oligarchical element within the Florentine democracy, and threatened to change the free constitution of the city into a government conducted by a few powerful families.

There is no need to dwell in detail on the internal difficulties of Florence during the first half of the fourteenth century. Two main circumstances, however, require to be briefly noticed. These are (i) the contest of the Blacks and Whites, so famous through the part played in it by Dante; and (ii) the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, Walter de Brienne. The feuds of the Blacks and Whites broke up the city into factions, and produced such anarchy that at last it was found necessary to place the republic under the protection of foreign potentates. Charles of Valois was first chosen, and after him the Duke of Athens, who took up his residence in the city. Entrusted with dictatorial authority, he used his power to form a military despotism. Though his reign of violence lasted rather less than a year, it bore important fruits; for the tyrant, seeking to support himself upon the favour of the common people, gave political power to the Lesser Arts at the expense of the Greater, and confused the old State-system by enlarging the democracy. The net result of these events for Florence was, first, that the city became habituated to rancorous party-strife, involving exiles and proscriptions; and, secondly, that it lost its primitive social hierarchy of classes.

207

IV

After the Guelfs had conquered the Ghibellines, and the people had absorbed the Grandi in their guilds, the next chapter in the troubled history of Florence was the division of the Popolo against itself. Civil strife now declared itself as a conflict between labour and capital. The members of the Lesser Arts, craftsmen who plied trades subordinate to those of the Greater Arts, rose up against their social and political superiors, demanding a larger share in the government, a more equal distribution of profits, higher wages, and privileges that should place them on an absolute equality with the wealthy merchants. It was in the year 1378 that the proletariat broke out into rebellion. Previous events had prepared the way for this revolt. First of all, the republic had been democratised through the destruction of the Grandi and through the popular policy pursued to gain his own ends by the Duke of Athens. Secondly, society had been shaken to its very foundation by the great plague of 1348. Both Boccaccio and Matteo Villani draw lively pictures of the relaxed morality and loss of order consequent upon this terrible disaster; nor had thirty years sufficed to restore their relative position to grades and ranks confounded by an overwhelming calamity. We may therefore reckon the great plague of 1348 among the causes which produced the anarchy of 1378. Rising in a mass to claim their privileges, the artisans ejected the Signory from the Public Palace, and for awhile Florence was at the mercy of the mob. It is worthy of notice that the Medici, whose name is scarcely known before this epoch, now came for one moment to the front. Salvestro de' Medici was Gonfalonier of Justice at the time when the tumult first broke out. He followed the faction of the handicraftsmen, and became the hero of the day. I cannot discover that he did more than extend a sort of passive protection to their cause. Yet there is no doubt that the attachment of the working classes to the House of Medici dates from this period. The rebellion of 1378 is known in Florentine history as the Tumult of the Ciompi. The name Ciompi

208

strictly means the Wool-Carders. One set of operatives in the city, and that the largest, gave its title to the whole body of the labourers. For some months these craftsmen governed the republic, appointing their own Signory and passing laws in their own interest; but, as is usual, the proletariat found itself incapable of sustained government. The ambition and discontent of the Ciompi foamed themselves away, and industrious working men began to see that trade was languishing and credit on the wane. By their own act at last they restored the government to the Priors of the Greater Arti. Still the movement had not been without grave consequences. It completed the levelling of classes, which had been steadily advancing from the first in Florence. After the Ciompi riot there was no longer not only any distinction between noble and burgher, but the distinction between greater and lesser guilds was practically swept away. The classes, parties, and degrees in the republic were so broken up, ground down, and mingled, that thenceforth the true source of power in the State was wealth combined with personal ability. In other words, the proper political conditions had been formed for unscrupulous adventurers. Florence had become a democracy without social organisation, which might fall a prey to oligarchs or despots. What remained of deeply rooted feuds or factions—animosities against the Grandi, hatred for the Ghibellines, jealousy of labour and capital—offered so many points of leverage for stirring the passions of the people and for covering personal ambition with a cloak of public zeal. The time was come for the Albizzi to attempt an oligarchy, and for the Medici to begin the enslavement of the State.

V

The Constitution of Florence offered many points of weakness to the attacks of such intriguers. In the first place it was in its origin not a political but an industrial organisation—a simple group of guilds invested with the sovereign authority. Its two most powerful engines, the Gonfalonier of Justice and the Guelf College, had been formed, not with a view to the preservation of the government, but with the purpose of quelling the nobles and excluding a detested faction. It had no permanent head, like the Doge of Venice; no fixed senate like the Venetian Grand Council; its chief magistrates, the Signory, were elected for short periods of two months, and their mode of election was open to the gravest criticism. Supposed to be chosen by lot, they were really selected from lists drawn up by the factions in power from time to time. These factions contrived to exclude the names of all but their adherents from the bags, or *borse*, in which the burghers eligible for election had to be inscribed. Furthermore, it was not possible for this shifting Signory to conduct affairs requiring sustained effort and secret deliberation; therefore recourse was being continually had to dictatorial Commissions. The people, summoned in parliament upon the Great Square, were asked to confer plenipotentiary authority upon a committee called *Balia*, who proceeded to do what they chose in the State, and who retained power after the emergency for which they were created passed away. The same instability in the supreme magistracy led to the appointment of special commissioners for war, and special councils, or *Pratiche*, for the management of each department. Such supplementary commissions not only proved the weakness of the central authority, but they were always liable to be made the instruments of party warfare. The Guelf College was another and a different source of danger to the State. Not acting under the control of the Signory, but using its own initiative, this powerful body could proscribe and punish burghers on the mere suspicion of Ghibellinism. Though the Ghibelline faction had become an empty name, the Guelf College excluded from the franchise all and every whom they chose on any pretext to admonish. Under this mild phrase, *to admonish*, was concealed a cruel exercise of tyranny—it meant to warn a man that he was suspected of treason, and that he had better relinquish the exercise of his burghership. By free use of this engine of Admonition, the Guelf College rendered their enemies voiceless in the State, and were able to pack the Signory and the councils with their own creatures. Another important defect in the Florentine Constitution was the method of imposing taxes. This was done by no regular system. The party in power made what estimate it chose of a man's capacity to bear taxation, and called upon him for extraordinary loans. In this way citizens were frequently driven into bankruptcy and exile; and since to be a debtor to the State deprived a burgher of his civic rights, severe taxation was one of the best ways of silencing and neutralising a dissident.

I have enumerated these several causes of weakness in the Florentine State-system, partly because they show how irregularly the Constitution

had been formed by the patching and extension of a simple industrial machine to suit the needs of a great commonwealth; partly because it was through these defects that the democracy merged gradually into a despotism. The art of the Medici consisted in a scientific comprehension of these very imperfections, a methodic use of them for their own purposes, and a steady opposition to any attempts made to substitute a stricter system. The Florentines had determined to be an industrial community, governing themselves on the co-operative principle, dividing profits, sharing losses, and exposing their magistrates to rigid scrutiny. All this in theory was excellent. Had they remained an unambitious and peaceful commonwealth, engaged in the wool and silk trade, it might have answered. Modern Europe might have admired the model of a communistic and commercial democracy. But when they engaged in aggressive wars, and sought to enslave sister-cities like Pisa and Lucca, it was soon found that their simple trading constitution would not serve. They had to piece it out with subordinate machinery, cumbrous, difficult to manage, ill-adapted to the original structure. Each limb of this subordinate machinery, moreover, was a *point d'appui* for insidious and self-seeking party leaders.

212

Florence, in the middle of the fourteenth century, was a vast beehive of industry. Distinctions of rank among burghers, qualified to vote and hold office, were theoretically unknown. Highly educated men, of more than princely wealth, spent their time in shops and counting-houses, and trained their sons to follow trades. Military service at this period was abandoned by the citizens; they preferred to pay mercenary troops for the conduct of their wars. Nor was there, as in Venice, any outlet for their energies upon the seas. Florence had no navy, no great port—she only kept a small fleet for the protection of her commerce. Thus the vigour of the commonwealth was concentrated on itself; while the influence of the citizens, through their affiliated trading-houses, correspondents, and agents, extended like a network over Europe. In a community of this kind it was natural that wealth—rank and titles being absent—should alone confer distinction. Accordingly we find that out of the very bosom of the people a new plutocratic aristocracy begins to rise. The Grandi are no more; but certain families achieve distinction by their riches, their numbers, their high spirit, and their ancient place of honour in the State. These nobles of the purse obtained the name of *Popolani Nobili*; and it was they who now began to play at high stakes for the supreme power. In all the subsequent vicissitudes of Florence every change takes place by intrigue and by clever manipulation of the political machine. Recourse is rarely had to violence of any kind, and the leaders of revolutions are men of the yard-measure, never of the sword. The despotism to which the republic eventually succumbed was no less commercial than the democracy had been. Florence in the days of her slavery remained a *Popolo*.

213

VI

The opening of the second half of the fourteenth century had been signalled by the feuds of two great houses, both risen from the people. These were the Albizzi and the Ricci. At this epoch there had been a formal closing of the lists of burghers;—henceforth no new families who might settle in the city could claim the franchise, vote in the assemblies, or hold magistracies. The Guelf College used their old engine of admonition to persecute *novi homines*, whom they dreaded as opponents. At the head of this formidable organisation the Albizzi placed themselves, and worked it with such skill that they succeeded in driving the Ricci out of all participation in the government. The tumult of the Ciompi formed but an episode in their career toward oligarchy; indeed, that revolution only rendered the political material of the Florentine republic more plastic in the hands of intriguers, by removing the last vestiges of class distinctions and by confusing the old parties of the State.

When the Florentines in 1387 engaged in their long duel with Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the difficulty of conducting this war without some permanent central authority still further confirmed the power of the rising oligarchs. The Albizzi became daily more autocratic, until in 1393 their chief, Maso degli Albizzi, a man of strong will and prudent policy, was chosen Gonfalonier of Justice. Assuming the sway of a dictator he revised the list of burghers capable of holding office, struck out the private opponents of his house, and excluded all names but those of powerful families who were well affected towards an aristocratic government. The great house of the Alberti were exiled in a body, declared rebels, and deprived of their possessions, for no reason except

214

that they seemed dangerous to the Albizzi. It was in vain that the people murmured against these arbitrary acts. The new rulers were omnipotent in the Signory, which they packed with their own men, in the great guilds, and in the Guelf College. All the machinery invented by the industrial community for its self-management and self-defence was controlled and manipulated by a close body of aristocrats, with the Albizzi at their head. It seemed as though Florence, without any visible alteration in her forms of government, was rapidly becoming an oligarchy even less open than the Venetian republic. Meanwhile the affairs of the State were most flourishing. The strong-handed masters of the city not only held the Duke of Milan in check, and prevented him from turning Italy into a kingdom; they furthermore acquired the cities of Pisa, Livorno, Arezzo, Montepulciano, and Cortona, for Florence, making her the mistress of all Tuscany, with the exception of Siena, Lucca, and Volterra. Maso degli Albizzi was the ruling spirit of the commonwealth, spending the enormous sum of 11,500,000 golden florins on war, raising sumptuous edifices, protecting the arts, and acting in general like a powerful and irresponsible prince.

In spite of public prosperity there were signs, however, that this rule of a few families could not last. Their government was only maintained by continual revision of the lists of burghers, by elimination of the disaffected, and by unremitting personal industry. They introduced no new machinery into the Constitution whereby the people might be deprived of its titular sovereignty, or their own dictatorship might be continued with a semblance of legality. Again, they neglected to win over the new nobles (*nobili popolanì*) in a body to their cause; and thus they were surrounded by rivals ready to spring upon them when a false step should be made. The Albizzi oligarchy was a masterpiece of art, without any force to sustain it but the craft and energy of its constructors. It had not grown up, like the Venetian oligarchy, by the gradual assimilation to itself of all the vigour in the State. It was bound, sooner or later, to yield to the renascent impulse of democracy inherent in Florentine institutions.

215

VII

Maso degli Albizzi died in 1417. He was succeeded in the government by his old friend, Niccolo da Uzzano, a man of great eloquence and wisdom, whose single word swayed the councils of the people as he listed. Together with him acted Maso's son, Rinaldo, a youth of even more brilliant talents than his father, frank, noble, and high-spirited, but far less cautious.

The oligarchy, which these two men undertook to manage, had accumulated against itself the discontent of overtaxed, disfranchised, jealous burghers. The times, too, were bad. Pursuing the policy of Maso, the Albizzi engaged the city in a tedious and unsuccessful war with Filippo Maria Visconti, which cost 350,000 golden florins, and brought no credit. In order to meet extraordinary expenses they raised new public loans, thereby depreciating the value of the old Florentine funds. What was worse, they imposed forced subsidies with grievous inequality upon the burghers, passing over their friends and adherents, and burdening their opponents with more than could be borne. This imprudent financial policy began the ruin of the Albizzi. It caused a clamour in the city for a new system of more just taxation, which was too powerful to be resisted. The voice of the people made itself loudly heard; and with the people on this occasion sided Giovanni de' Medici. This was in 1427.

It is here that the Medici appear upon that memorable scene where in the future they are to play the first part. Giovanni de' Medici did not belong to the same branch of his family as the Salvestro who favoured the people at the time of the Ciompi Tumult. But he adopted the same popular policy. To his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo he bequeathed on his deathbed the rule that they should invariably adhere to the cause of the multitude, found their influence on that, and avoid the arts of factious and ambitious leaders. In his own life he had pursued this course of conduct, acquiring a reputation for civic moderation and impartiality that endeared him to the people and stood his children in good stead. Early in his youth Giovanni found himself almost destitute by reason of the imposts charged upon him by the oligarchs. He possessed, however, the genius for money-making to a rare degree, and passed his manhood as a banker, amassing the largest fortune of any private citizen in Italy. In his old age he devoted himself to the organisation of his colossal trading business, and abstained, as far as possible, from political intrigues. Men observed that they rarely met him in the Public Palace or on the Great

216

Square.

Cosimo de' Medici was thirty years old when his father Giovanni died, in 1429. During his youth he had devoted all his time and energy to business, mastering the complicated affairs of Giovanni's banking-house, and travelling far and wide through Europe to extend its connections. This education made him a consummate financier; and those who knew him best were convinced that his ambition was set on great things. However quietly he might begin, it was clear that he intended to match himself, as a leader of the plebeians, against the Albizzi. The foundations he prepared for future action were equally characteristic of the man, of Florence, and of the age. Commanding the enormous capital of the Medicean bank he contrived, at any sacrifice of temporary convenience, to lend money to the State for war expenses, engrossing in his own hands a large portion of the public debt of Florence. At the same time his agencies in various European capitals enabled him to keep his own wealth floating far beyond the reach of foes within the city. A few years of this system ended in so complete a confusion between Cosimo's trade and the finances of Florence that the bankruptcy of the Medici, however caused, would have compromised the credit of the State and the fortunes of the fund-holders. Cosimo, in a word, made himself necessary to Florence by the wise use of his riches. Furthermore, he kept his eye upon the list of burghers, lending money to needy citizens, putting good things in the way of struggling traders, building up the fortunes of men who were disposed to favour his party in the State, ruining his opponents by the legitimate process of commercial competition, and, when occasion offered, introducing new voters into the Florentine Council by paying off the debts of those who were disqualified by poverty from using the franchise. While his capital was continually increasing he lived frugally, and employed his wealth solely for the consolidation of his political influence. By these arts Cosimo became formidable to the oligarchs and beloved by the people. His supporters were numerous, and held together by the bonds of immediate necessity or personal cupidity. The plebeians and the merchants were all on his side. The Grandi and the Ammoniti, excluded from the State by the practices of the Albizzi, had more to hope from the Medicean party than from the few families who still contrived to hold the reins of government. It was clear that a conflict to the death must soon commence between the oligarchy and this new faction.

217

218

VIII

At last, in 1433, war was declared. The first blow was struck by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who put himself in the wrong by attacking a citizen indispensable to the people at large, and guilty of no unconstitutional act. On September 7th of that year, a year decisive for the future destinies of Florence, he summoned Cosimo to the Public Palace, which he had previously occupied with troops at his command. There he declared him a rebel to the State, and had him imprisoned in a little square room in the central tower. The tocsin was sounded; the people were assembled in parliament upon the piazza. The Albizzi held the main streets with armed men, and forced the Florentines to place plenipotentiary power for the administration of the commonwealth at this crisis in the hands of a Balia, or committee selected by themselves. It was always thus that acts of high tyranny were effected in Florence. A show of legality was secured by gaining the compulsory sanction of the people, driven by soldiery into the public square, and hastily ordered to recognise the authority of their oppressors.

The bill of indictment against the Medici accused them of sedition in the year 1378—that is, in the year of the Ciompi Tumult—and of treasonable practice during the whole course of the Albizzi administration. It also strove to fix upon them the odium of the unsuccessful war against the town of Lucca. As soon as the Albizzi had unmasked their batteries, Lorenzo de' Medici managed to escape from the city, and took with him his brother Cosimo's children to Venice. Cosimo remained shut up within the little room called Barberia in Arnolfo's tower. From that high eagle's nest the sight can range Valdarno far and wide. Florence with her towers and domes lies below; and the blue peaks of Carrara close a prospect westward than which, with its villa-jewelled slopes and fertile gardens, there is nought more beautiful upon the face of earth. The prisoner can have paid but little heed to this fair landscape. He heard the frequent ringing of the great bell that called the Florentines to council, the tramp of armed men on the piazza, the coming and going of the burghers in the palace halls beneath. On all sides lurked anxiety and fear of death. Each mouthful he tasted might be poisoned. For many days he partook of only bread and

219

water, till his gaoler restored his confidence by sharing all his meals. In this peril he abode twenty-four days. The Albizzi, in concert with the Balia they had formed, were consulting what they might venture to do with him. Some voted for his execution. Others feared the popular favour, and thought that if they killed Cosimo this act would ruin their own power. The nobler natures among them determined to proceed by constitutional measures. At last, upon September 29th, it was settled that Cosimo should be exiled to Padua for ten years. The Medici were declared Grandi, by way of excluding them from political rights. But their property remained untouched; and on October 3rd, Cosimo was released.

On the same day Cosimo took his departure. His journey northward resembled a triumphant progress. He left Florence a simple burgher; he entered Venice a powerful prince. Though the Albizzi seemed to have gained the day, they had really cut away the ground beneath their feet. They committed the fatal mistake of doing both too much and too little—too much because they declared war against an innocent man, and roused the sympathies of the whole people in his behalf; too little, because they had not the nerve to complete their act by killing him outright and extirpating his party. Machiavelli, in one of his profoundest and most cynical critiques, remarks that few men know how to be thoroughly bad with honour to themselves. Their will is evil; but the grain of good in them—some fear of public opinion, some repugnance to committing a signal crime—paralyses their arm at the moment when it ought to have been raised to strike. He instances Gian Paolo Baglioni's omission to murder Julius II., when that Pope placed himself within his clutches at Perugia. He might also have instanced Rinaldo degli Albizzi's refusal to push things to extremities by murdering Cosimo. It was the combination of despotic violence in the exile of Cosimo with constitutional moderation in the preservation of his life, that betrayed the weakness of the oligarchs and restored confidence to the Medicean party.

220

IX

In the course of the year 1434 this party began to hold up its head. Powerful as the Albizzi were, they only retained the government by artifice; and now they had done a deed which put at nought their former arts and intrigues. A Signory favourable to the Medici came into office, and on September 26th, 1434, Rinaldo in his turn was summoned to the palace and declared a rebel. He strove to raise the forces of his party, and entered the piazza at the head of eight hundred men. The menacing attitude of the people, however, made resistance perilous. Rinaldo disbanded his troops, and placed himself under the protection of Pope Eugenius IV., who was then resident in Florence. This act of submission proved that Rinaldo had not the courage or the cruelty to try the chance of civil war. Whatever his motives may have been, he lost his hold upon the State beyond recovery. On September 29th, a new parliament was summoned; on October 2nd, Cosimo was recalled from exile and the Albizzi were banished. The intercession of the Pope procured for them nothing but the liberty to leave Florence unmolested. Rinaldo turned his back upon the city he had governed, never to set foot in it again. On October 6th, Cosimo, having passed through Padua, Ferrara, and Modena like a conqueror, reentered the town amid the plaudits of the people, and took up his dwelling as an honoured guest in the Palace of the Republic. The subsequent history of Florence is the history of his family. In after years the Medici loved to remember this return of Cosimo. His triumphal reception was painted in fresco on the walls of their villa at Cajano under the transparent allegory of Cicero's entrance into Rome.

221

X

By their brief exile the Medici had gained the credit of injured innocence, the fame of martyrdom in the popular cause. Their foes had struck the first blow, and in striking at them had seemed to aim against the liberties of the republic. The mere failure of their adversaries to hold the power they had acquired, handed over this power to the Medici; and the reprisals which the Medici began to take had the show of justice, not of personal hatred, or petty vengeance. Cosimo was a true Florentine. He disliked violence, because he knew that blood spilt cries for blood. His passions, too, were cool and temperate. No gust of anger, no intoxication of success, destroyed his balance. His one object, the consolidation of power for his family on the basis of popular favour, was

kept steadily in view; and he would do nothing that might compromise that end. Yet he was neither generous nor merciful. We therefore find that from the first moment of his return to Florence he instituted a system of pitiless and unforgiving persecution against his old opponents. The Albizzi were banished, root and branch, with all their followers, consigned to lonely and often to unwholesome stations through the length and breadth of Italy. If they broke the bonds assigned them, they were forthwith declared traitors and their property was confiscated. After a long series of years, by merely keeping in force the first sentence pronounced upon them, Cosimo had the cruel satisfaction of seeing the whole of that proud oligarchy die out by slow degrees in the insufferable tedium of solitude and exile. Even the high-souled Palla degli Strozzi, who had striven to remain neutral, and whose wealth and talents were devoted to the revival of classical studies, was proscribed because to Cosimo he seemed too powerful. Separated from his children, he died in banishment at Padua. In this way the return of the Medici involved the loss to Florence of some noble citizens, who might perchance have checked the Medicean tyranny if they had stayed to guide the State. The plebeians, raised to wealth and influence by Cosimo before his exile, now took the lead in the republic. He used these men as catspaws, rarely putting himself forward or allowing his own name to appear, but pulling the wires of government in privacy by means of intermediate agents. The Medicean party was called at first *Puccini* from a certain Puccio, whose name was better known in caucus or committee than that of his real master.

To rule through these creatures of his own making taxed all the ingenuity of Cosimo; but his profound and subtle intellect was suited to the task, and he found unlimited pleasure in the exercise of his consummate craft. We have already seen to what extent he used his riches for the acquisition of political influence. Now that he had come to power, he continued the same method, packing the Signory and the Councils with men whom he could hold by debt between his thumb and finger. His command of the public moneys enabled him to wink at peculation in State offices; it was part of his system to bind magistrates and secretaries to his interest by their consciousness of guilt condoned but not forgotten. Not a few, moreover, owed their living to the appointments he procured for them. While he thus controlled the wheelwork of the commonwealth by means of organised corruption, he borrowed the arts of his old enemies to oppress dissentient citizens. If a man took an independent line in voting, and refused allegiance to the Medicean party, he was marked out for persecution. No violence was used; but he found himself hampered in his commerce—money, plentiful for others, became scarce for him; his competitors in trade were subsidised to undersell him. And while the avenues of industry were closed, his fortune was taxed above its value, until he had to sell at a loss in order to discharge his public obligations. In the first twenty years of the Medicean rule, seventy families had to pay 4,875,000 golden florins of extraordinary imposts, fixed by arbitrary assessment.

The more patriotic members of his party looked with dread and loathing on this system of corruption and exclusion. To their remonstrances Cosimo replied in four memorable sayings: 'Better the State spoiled than the State not ours.' 'Governments cannot be carried on with paternosters.' 'An ell of scarlet makes a burgher.' 'I aim at finite ends.' These maxims represent the whole man,—first, in his egotism, eager to gain Florence for his family, at any risk of her ruin; secondly, in his cynical acceptance of base means to selfish ends; thirdly, in his bourgeois belief that money makes a man, and fine clothes suffice for a citizen; fourthly, in his worldly ambition bent on positive success. It was, in fact, his policy to reduce Florence to the condition of a rotten borough: nor did this policy fail. One notable sign of the influence he exercised was the change which now came over the foreign relations of the republic. Up to the date of his dictatorship Florence had uniformly fought the battle of freedom in Italy. It was the chief merit of the Albizzi oligarchy that they continued the traditions of the mediæval State, and by their vigorous action checked the growth of the Visconti. Though they engrossed the government they never forgot that they were first of all things Florentines, and only in the second place men who owed their power and influence to office. In a word, they acted like patriotic Tories, like republican patricians. Therefore they would not ally themselves with tyrants or countenance the enslavement of free cities by armed despots. Their subjugation of the Tuscan burghs to Florence was itself part of a grand republican policy. Cosimo changed all this. When the Visconti dynasty ended by the death of Filippo Maria in 1447, there was a chance of restoring the independence of Lombardy. Milan in effect declared

herself a republic, and by the aid of Florence she might at this moment have maintained her liberty. Cosimo, however, entered into treaty with Francesco Sforza, supplied him with money, guaranteed him against Florentine interference, and saw with satisfaction how he reduced the duchy to his military tyranny. The Medici were conscious that they, selfishly, had most to gain by supporting despots who in time of need might help them to confirm their own authority. With the same end in view, when the legitimate line of the Bentivogli was extinguished, Cosimo hunted out a bastard pretender of that family, presented him to the chiefs of the Bentivogli faction, and had him placed upon the seat of his supposed ancestors at Bologna. This young man, a certain Santi da Cascese, presumed to be the son of Ercole de' Bentivogli, was an artisan in a wool factory when Cosimo set eyes upon him. At first Santi refused the dangerous honour of governing a proud republic; but the intrigues of Cosimo prevailed, and the obscure craftsman ended his days a powerful prince.

225

By the arts I have attempted to describe, Cosimo in the course of his long life absorbed the forces of the republic into himself. While he shunned the external signs of despotic power he made himself the master of the State. His complexion was of a pale olive; his stature short; abstemious and simple in his habits, affable in conversation, sparing of speech, he knew how to combine that burgher-like civility for which the Romans praised Augustus, with the reality of a despotism all the more difficult to combat because it seemed nowhere and was everywhere. When he died, at the age of seventy-five, in 1464, the people whom he had enslaved, but whom he had neither injured nor insulted, honoured him with the title of *Pater Patriæ*. This was inscribed upon his tomb in S. Lorenzo. He left to posterity the fame of a great and generous patron,^[28] the infamy of a cynical, self-seeking, bourgeois tyrant. Such combinations of contradictory qualities were common enough at the time of the Renaissance. Did not Machiavelli spend his days in tavern-brawls and low amours, his nights among the mighty spirits of the dead, with whom, when he had changed his country suit of homespun for the habit of the Court, he found himself an honoured equal?

[28] For an estimate of Cosimo's services to art and literature, his collection of libraries, his great buildings, his generosity to scholars, and his promotion of Greek studies, I may refer to my *Renaissance in Italy*: 'The Revival of Learning,' chap. iv.

XI

Cosimo had shown consummate skill by governing Florence through a party created and raised to influence by himself. The jealousy of these adherents formed the chief difficulty with which his son Piero had to contend. Unless the Medici could manage to kick down the ladder whereby they had risen, they ran the risk of losing all. As on a former occasion, so now they profited by the mistakes of their antagonists. Three chief men of their own party, Diotalvi Neroni, Agnolo Acciaiuoli, and Luca Pitti, determined to shake off the yoke of their masters, and to repay the Medici for what they owed by leading them to ruin. Niccolo Soderini, a patriot, indignant at the slow enslavement of his country, joined them. At first they strove to undermine the credit of the Medici with the Florentines by inducing Piero to call in the moneys placed at interest by his father in the hands of private citizens. This act was unpopular; but it did not suffice to move a revolution. To proceed by constitutional measures against the Medici was judged impolitic. Therefore the conspirators decided to take, if possible, Piero's life. The plot failed, chiefly owing to the coolness and the cunning of the young Lorenzo, Piero's eldest son. Public sympathy was strongly excited against the aggressors. Neroni, Acciaiuoli, and Soderini were exiled. Pitti was allowed to stay, dishonoured, powerless, and penniless, in Florence. Meanwhile, the failure of their foes had only served to strengthen the position of the Medici. The ladder had saved them the trouble of kicking it down.

226

The congratulations addressed on this occasion to Piero and Lorenzo by the ruling powers of Italy show that the Medici were already regarded as princes outside Florence. Lorenzo and Giuliano, the two sons of Piero, travelled abroad to the Courts of Milan and Ferrara with the style and state of more than simple citizens. At home they occupied the first place on all occasions of public ceremony, receiving royal visitors on terms of equality, and performing the hospitalities of the republic like men who had been born to represent its dignities. Lorenzo's marriage to Clarice Orsini, of the noble Roman house, was another sign that the Medici were advancing on the way toward despotism. Cosimo had avoided foreign

227

alliances for his children. His descendants now judged themselves firmly planted enough to risk the odium of a princely match for the sake of the support outside the city they might win.

XII

Piero de' Medici died in December 1469. His son Lorenzo was then barely twenty-two years of age. The chiefs of the Medicean party, all-powerful in the State, held a council, in which they resolved to place him in the same position as his father and grandfather. This resolve seems to have been formed after mature deliberation, on the ground that the existing conditions of Italian politics rendered it impossible to conduct the government without a presidential head. Florence, though still a democracy, required a permanent chief to treat on an equality with the princes of the leading cities. Here we may note the prudence of Cosimo's foreign policy. When he helped to establish despots in Milan and Bologna he was rendering the presidency of his own family in Florence necessary.

Lorenzo, having received this invitation, called attention to his youth and inexperience. Yet he did not refuse it; and, after a graceful display of diffidence, he accepted the charge, entering thus upon that famous political career, in the course of which he not only established and maintained a balance of power in Italy, with Florence for the central city, but also contrived to remodel the government of the republic in the interest of his own family and to strengthen the Medici by relations with the Papal See.

The extraordinary versatility of this man's intellectual and social gifts, his participation in all the literary and philosophical interests of his century, his large and liberal patronage of art, and the gaiety with which he joined the people of Florence in their pastimes—Mayday games and Carnival festivities—strengthened his hold upon the city in an age devoted to culture and refined pleasure. Whatever was most brilliant in the spirit of the Italian Benaissance seemed to be incarnate in Lorenzo. Not merely as a patron and a dilettante, but as a poet and a critic, a philosopher and scholar, he proved himself adequate to the varied intellectual ambitions of his country. Penetrated with the passion for erudition which distinguished Florence in the fifteenth century, familiar with her painters and her sculptors, deeply read in the works of her great poets, he conceived the ideal of infusing the spirit of antique civility into modern life, and of effecting for society what the artists were performing in their own sphere. To preserve the native character of the Florentine genius, while he added the grace of classic form, was the aim to which his tastes and instincts led him. At the same time, while he made himself the master of Florentine revels and the Augustus of Renaissance literature, he took care that beneath his carnival masks and ball-dress should be concealed the chains which he was forging for the republic.

What he lacked, with so much mental brilliancy, was moral greatness. The age he lived in was an age of selfish despots, treacherous generals, godless priests. It was an age of intellectual vigour and artistic creativeness; but it was also an age of mean ambition, sordid policy, and vitiated principles. Lorenzo remained true in all respects to the genius of this age: true to its enthusiasm for antique culture, true to its passion for art, true to its refined love of pleasure; but true also to its petty political intrigues, to its cynical selfishness, to its lack of heroism. For Florence he looked no higher and saw no further than Cosimo had done. If culture was his pastime, the enslavement of the city by bribery and corruption was the hard work of his manhood. As is the case with much Renaissance art, his life was worth more for its decorative detail than for its constructive design. In richness, versatility, variety, and exquisiteness of execution, it left little to be desired; yet, viewed at a distance, and as a whole, it does not inspire us with a sense of architectonic majesty.

XIII

Lorenzo's chief difficulties arose from the necessity under which, like Cosimo, he laboured of governing the city through its old institutions by means of a party. To keep the members of this party in good temper, and to gain their approval for the alterations he effected in the State machinery of Florence, was the problem of his life. The successful solution of this problem was easier now, after two generations of the Medicean ascendancy, than it had been at first. Meanwhile the people were maintained in good humour by public shows, ease, plenty, and a general laxity of discipline. The splendour of Lorenzo's foreign alliances

and the consideration he received from all the Courts of Italy contributed in no small measure to his popularity and security at home. By using his authority over Florence to inspire respect abroad, and by using his foreign credit to impose upon the burghers, Lorenzo displayed the tact of a true Italian diplomatist. His genius for statecraft, as then understood, was indeed of a rare order, equally adapted to the conduct of a complicated foreign policy and to the control of a suspicious and variable Commonwealth. In one point alone he was inferior to his grandfather. He neglected commerce, and allowed his banking business to fall into disorder so hopeless that in course of time he ceased to be solvent. Meanwhile his personal expenses, both as a prince in his own palace, and as the representative of majesty in Florence, continually increased. The bankruptcy of the Medici, it had long been foreseen, would involve the public finances in serious confusion. And now, in order to retrieve his fortunes, Lorenzo was not only obliged to repudiate his debts to the exchequer, but had also to gain complete disposal of the State purse. It was this necessity that drove him to effect the constitutional revolution of 1480, by which he substituted a Privy Council of seventy members for the old Councils of the State, absorbing the chief functions of the commonwealth into this single body, whom he practically nominated at pleasure. The same want of money led to the great scandal of his reign—the plundering of the Monte delle Doti, or State Insurance Office Fund for securing dowers to the children of its creditors.

230

XIV

While tracing the salient points of Lorenzo de' Medici's administration I have omitted to mention the important events which followed shortly after his accession to power in 1469. What happened between that date and 1480 was not only decisive for the future fortunes of the Casa Medici, but it was also eminently characteristic of the perils and the difficulties which beset Italian despots. The year 1471 was signalised by a visit by the Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan, and his wife Bona of Savoy, to the Medici in Florence. They came attended by their whole Court—body guards on horse and foot, ushers, pages, falconers, grooms, kennel-varlets, and huntsmen. Omitting the mere baggage service, their train counted two thousand horses. To mention this incident would be superfluous, had not so acute an observer as Machiavelli marked it out as a turning-point in Florentine history. Now, for the first time, the democratic commonwealth saw its streets filled with a mob of courtiers. Masques, balls, and tournaments succeeded each other with magnificent variety; and all the arts of Florence were pressed into the service of these festivals. Machiavelli says that the burghers lost the last remnant of their old austerity of manners, and became, like the degenerate Romans, ready to obey the masters who provided them with brilliant spectacles. They gazed with admiration on the pomp of Italian princes, their dissolute and godless living, their luxury and prodigal expenditure; and when the Medici affected similar habits in the next generation, the people had no courage to resist the invasion of their pleasant vices.

231

In the same year, 1471, Volterra was reconquered for the Florentines by Frederick of Urbino. The honours of this victory, disgraced by a brutal sack of the conquered city, in violation of its articles of capitulation, were reserved for Lorenzo, who returned in triumph to Florence. More than ever he assumed the prince, and in his person undertook to represent the State.

In the same year, 1471, Francesco della Rovere was raised to the Papacy with the memorable name of Sixtus IV. Sixtus was a man of violent temper and fierce passions, restless and impatiently ambitious, bent on the aggrandisement of the beautiful and wanton youths, his nephews. Of these the most aspiring was Girolamo Riario, for whom Sixtus bought the town of Imola from Taddeo Manfredi, in order that he might possess the title of count and the nucleus of a tyranny in the Romagna. This purchase thwarted the plans of Lorenzo, who wished to secure the same advantages for Florence. Smarting with the sense of disappointment, he forbade the Roman banker, Francesco Pazzi, to guarantee the purchase-money. By this act Lorenzo made two mortal foes—the Pope and Francesco Pazzi. Francesco was a thin, pale, atrabilious fanatic, all nerve and passion, with a monomaniac intensity of purpose, and a will inflamed and guided by imagination—a man formed by nature for conspiracy, such a man, in fact, as Shakspeare drew in Cassius. Maddened by Lorenzo's prohibition, he conceived the notion of overthrowing the Medici in Florence by a violent blow. Girolamo Riario entered into his views. So did Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, who had private reasons for hostility. These men found no difficulty in

232

winning over Sixtus to their plot; nor is it possible to purge the Pope of participation in what followed. I need not describe by what means Francesco drew the other members of his family into the scheme, and how he secured the assistance of armed cut-throats. Suffice it to say that the chief conspirators, with the exception of the Count Girolamo, betook themselves to Florence, and there, after the failure of other attempts, decided to murder Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in the cathedral on Sunday, April 26th, 1478. The moment when the priest at the high altar finished the mass, was fixed for the assassination. Everything was ready. The conspirators, by Judas kisses and embraces, had discovered that the young men wore no protective armour under their silken doublets. Pacing the aisle behind the choir, they feared no treason. And now the lives of both might easily have been secured, if at the last moment the courage of the hired assassins had not failed them. Murder, they said, was well enough; but they could not bring themselves to stab men before the newly consecrated body of Christ. In this extremity a priest was found who, 'being accustomed to churches,' had no scruples. He and another reprobate were told off to Lorenzo. Francesco de' Pazzi himself undertook Giuliano. The moment for attack arrived. Francesco plunged his dagger into the heart of Giuliano. Then, not satisfied with this death-blow, he struck again, and in his heat of passion wounded his own thigh. Lorenzo escaped with a flesh-wound from the poniard of the priest, and rushed into the sacristy, where his friend Poliziano shut and held the brazen door. The plot had failed; for Giuliano, of the two brothers, was the one whom the conspirators would the more willingly have spared. The whole church was in an uproar. The city rose in tumult. Rage and horror took possession of the people. They flew to the Palazzo Pubblico and to the houses of the Pazzi, hunted the conspirators from place to place, hung the archbishop by the neck from the palace windows, and, as they found fresh victims for their fury, strung them one by one in a ghastly row at his side above the Square. About one hundred in all were killed. None who had joined in the plot escaped; for Lorenzo had long arms, and one man, who fled to Constantinople, was delivered over to his agents by the Sultan. Out of the whole Pazzi family only Guglielmo, the husband of Bianca de' Medici, was spared. When the tumult was over, Andrea del Castagno painted the portraits of the traitors head-downwards upon the walls of the Bargello Palace, in order that all men might know what fate awaited the foes of the Medici and of the State of Florence.^[29] Meanwhile a bastard son of Giuliano's was received into the Medicean household, to perpetuate his lineage. This child, named Giulio, was destined to be famous in the annals of Italy and Florence under the title of Pope Clement VII.

233

[29] Giotto had painted the Duke of Athens, in like manner, on the same walls.

XV

234

As is usual when such plots miss their mark, the passions excited redounded to the profit of the injured party. The commonwealth felt that the blow struck at Lorenzo had been aimed at their majesty. Sixtus, on the other hand, could not contain his rage at the failure of so ably planned a *coup de main*. Ignoring that he had sanctioned the treason, that a priest had put his hand to the dagger, that the impious deed had been attempted in a church before the very Sacrament of Christ, whose vicar on earth he was, the Pope now excommunicated the republic. The reason he alleged was, that the Florentines had dared to hang an archbishop.

Thus began a war to the death between Sixtus and Florence. The Pope inflamed the whole of Italy, and carried on a ruinous campaign in Tuscany. It seemed as though the republic might lose her subject cities, always ready to revolt when danger threatened the sovereign State. Lorenzo's position became critical. Sixtus made no secret of the hatred he bore him personally, declaring that he fought less with Florence than with the Medici. To support the odium of this long war and this heavy interdict alone, was more than he could do. His allies forsook him. Naples was enlisted on the Pope's side. Milan and the other States of Lombardy were occupied with their own affairs, and held aloof. In this extremity he saw that nothing but a bold step could save him. The league formed by Sixtus must be broken up at any risk, and, if possible, by his own ability. On December 6th, 1479, Lorenzo left Florence, unarmed and unattended, took ship at Leghorn, and proceeded to the court of the enemy, King Ferdinand, at Naples. Ferdinand was a cruel and treacherous sovereign, who had murdered his guest, Jacopo Piccinino, at a banquet given in his honour. But Ferdinand was the son of Alfonso,

235

who, by address and eloquence, had gained a kingdom from his foe and jailor, Filippo Maria Visconti. Lorenzo calculated that he too, following Alfonso's policy, might prove to Ferdinand how little there was to gain from an alliance with Rome, how much Naples and Florence, firmly united together for offence and defence, might effect in Italy.

Only a student of those perilous times can appreciate the courage and the genius, the audacity combined with diplomatic penetration, displayed by Lorenzo at this crisis. He calmly walked into the lion's den, trusting he could tame the lion and teach it, and all in a few days. Nor did his expectation fail. Though Lorenzo was rather ugly than handsome, with a dark skin, heavy brows, powerful jaws, and nose sharp in the bridge and broad at the nostrils, without grace of carriage or melody of voice, he possessed what makes up for personal defects—the winning charm of eloquence in conversation, a subtle wit, profound knowledge of men, and tact allied to sympathy, which placed him always at the centre of the situation. Ferdinand received him kindly. The Neapolitan nobles admired his courage and were fascinated by his social talents. On March 1st, 1480, he left Naples again, having won over the King by his arguments. When he reached Florence he was able to declare that he brought home a treaty of peace and alliance signed by the most powerful foe of the republic. The success of this bold enterprise endeared Lorenzo more than ever to his countrymen. In the same year they concluded a treaty with Sixtus, who was forced against his will to lay down arms by the capture of Otranto and the extreme peril of Turkish invasion. After the year 1480 Lorenzo remained sole master in Florence, the arbiter and peacemaker of the rest of Italy.

236

XVI

The conjuration of the Pazzi was only one in a long series of similar conspiracies. Italian despots gained their power by violence and wielded it with craft. Violence and craft were therefore used against them. When the study of the classics had penetrated the nation with antique ideas of heroism, tyrannicide became a virtue. Princes were murdered with frightful frequency. Thus Gian Maria Visconti was put to death at Milan in 1412; Galeazzo Maria Sforza in 1484; the Chiarelli of Fabriano were massacred in 1435; the Baglioni of Perugia in 1500; Girolamo Gentile planned the assassination of Galeazzo Sforza at Genoa in 1476; Niccolò d'Este conspired against his uncle Ercole in 1476; Stefano Porcari attempted the life of Nicholas V. at Rome in 1453; Lodovico Sforza narrowly escaped a violent death in 1453. I might multiply these instances beyond satiety. As it is, I have selected but a few examples falling, all but one, within the second half of the fifteenth century. Nearly all these attempts upon the lives of princes were made in church during the celebration of sacred offices. There was no superfluity of naughtiness, no wilful sacrilege, in this choice of an occasion. It only testified to the continual suspicion and guarded watchfulness maintained by tyrants. To strike at them except in church was almost impossible. Meanwhile the fate of the tyrannicides was uniform. Successful or not, they perished. Yet so grievous was the pressure of Italian despotism, so glorious was the ideal of Greek and Roman heroism, so passionate the temper of the people, that to kill a prince at any cost to self appeared the crown of manliness. This bloodshed exercised a delirious fascination: pure and base, personal and patriotic motives combined to add intensity of fixed and fiery purpose to the murderous impulse. Those then who, like the Medici, aspired to tyranny and sought to found a dynasty of princes, entered the arena against a host of unknown and unseen gladiators.

237

XVII

On his deathbed, in 1492, Lorenzo lay between two men—Angelo Poliziano and Girolamo Savonarola. Poliziano incarnated the genial, radiant, godless spirit of fifteenth-century humanism. Savonarola represented the conscience of Italy, self-convicted, amid all her greatness, of crimes that called for punishment. It is said that when Lorenzo asked the monk for absolution, Savonarola bade him first restore freedom to Florence. Lorenzo, turned his face to the wall and was silent. How indeed could he make this city in a moment free, after sixty years of slow and systematic corruption? Savonarola left him, and he died unshriven. This legend is doubtful, though it rests on excellent if somewhat partial authority. It has, at any rate, the value of a mythus, since it epitomises the attitude assumed by the great preacher to the prince. Florence enslaved, the soul of Lorenzo cannot lay its burden

down, but must go with all its sins upon it to the throne of God.

The year 1492 was a memorable year for Italy. In this year Lorenzo's death removed the keystone of the arch that had sustained the fabric of Italian federation. In this year Roderigo Borgia was elected Pope. In this year Columbus discovered America; Vasco de Gama soon after opened a new way to the Indies, and thus the commerce of the world passed from Italy to other nations. In this year the conquest of Granada gave unity to the Spanish nation. In this year France, through the lifelong craft of Louis XI., was for the first time united under a young hot-headed sovereign. On every side of the political horizon storms threatened. It was clear that a new chapter of European history had been opened. Then Savonarola raised his voice, and cried that the crimes of Italy, the abominations of the Church, would speedily be punished. Events led rapidly to the fulfilment of this prophecy. Lorenzo's successor, Piero de' Medici, was a vain, irresolute, and hasty princeling, fond of display, proud of his skill in fencing and football-playing, with too much of the Orsini blood in his hot veins, with too little of the Medicean craft in his weak head. The Italian despots felt they could not trust Piero, and this want of confidence was probably the first motive that impelled Lodovico Sforza to call Charles VIII. into Italy in 1494.

238

It will not be necessary to dwell upon this invasion of the French, except in so far as it affected Florence. Charles passed rapidly through Lombardy, engaged his army in the passes of the Apennines, and debouched upon the coast where the Magra divided Tuscany from Liguria. Here the fortresses of Sarzana and Pietra Santa, between the marble bulwark of Carrara and the Tuscan sea, stopped his further progress. The keys were held by the Florentines. To force these strong positions and to pass beyond them seemed impossible. It might have been impossible if Piero de' Medici had possessed a firmer will. As it was, he rode off to the French camp, delivered up the forts to Charles, bound the King by no engagements, and returned not otherwise than proud of his folly to Florence. A terrible reception awaited him. The Florentines, in their fury, had risen and sacked the Medicean palace. It was as much as Piero, with his brothers, could do to escape beyond the hills to Venice. The despotism of the Medici, so carefully built up, so artfully sustained and strengthened, was overthrown in a single day.

239

XVIII

Before considering what happened in Florence after the expulsion of the Medici, it will be well to pause a moment and review the state in which Lorenzo had left his family. Piero, his eldest son, recognised as chief of the republic after his father's death, was married to Alfonsina Orsini, and was in his twenty-second year. Giovanni, his second son, a youth of seventeen, had just been made cardinal. This honour, of vast importance for the Casa Medici in the future, he owed to his sister Maddalena's marriage to Franceschetto Cybo, son of Innocent VIII. The third of Lorenzo's sons, named Giuliano, was a boy of thirteen. Giulio, the bastard son of the elder Giuliano, was fourteen. These four princes formed the efficient strength of the Medici, the hope of the house; and for each of them, with the exception of Piero, who died in exile, and of whom no more notice need be taken, a brilliant destiny was still in store. In the year 1495, however, they now wandered, homeless and helpless, through the cities of Italy, each of which was shaken to its foundations by the French invasion.

XIX

Florence, left without the Medici, deprived of Pisa and other subject cities by the passage of the French army, with no leader but the monk Savonarola, now sought to reconstitute her liberties. During the domination of the Albizzi and the Medici the old order of the commonwealth had been completely broken up. The Arti had lost their primitive importance. The distinctions between the Grandi and the Popolani had practically passed away. In a democracy that has submitted to a lengthened course of tyranny, such extinction of its old life is inevitable. Yet the passion for liberty was still powerful; and the busy brains of the Florentines were stored with experience gained from their previous vicissitudes, from the study of antique history, and from the observation of existing constitutions in the towns of Italy. They now determined to reorganise the State upon the model of the Venetian republic. The Signory was to remain, with its old institution of Priors, Gonfalonier, and College, elected for brief periods. These magistrates were to take the initiative in debate, to propose measures, and to

240

consider plans of action. The real power of the State, for voting supplies and ratifying the measures of the Signory, was vested in a senate of one thousand members, called the Grand Council, from whom a smaller body of forty, acting as intermediates between the Council and the Signory, were elected. It is said that the plan of this constitution originated with Savonarola; nor is there any doubt that he used all his influence in the pulpit of the Duomo to render it acceptable to the people. Whoever may have been responsible for its formation, the new government was carried in 1495, and a large hall for the assembly of the Grand Council was opened in the Public Palace.

Savonarola, meanwhile, had become the ruling spirit of Florence. He gained his great power as a preacher: he used it like a monk. The motive principle of his action was the passion for reform. To bring the Church back to its pristine state of purity, without altering its doctrine or suggesting any new form of creed; to purge Italy of ungodly customs; to overthrow the tyrants who encouraged evil living, and to place the power of the State in the hands of sober citizens: these were his objects. Though he set himself in bold opposition to the reigning Pope, he had no desire to destroy the spiritual supremacy of S. Peter's see. Though he burned with an enthusiastic zeal for liberty, and displayed rare genius for administration, he had no ambition to rule Florence like a dictator. Savonarola was neither a reformer in the northern sense of the word, nor yet a political demagogue. His sole wish was to see purity of manners and freedom of self-government re-established. With this end in view he bade the Florentines elect Christ as their supreme chief; and they did so. For the same end he abstained from appearing in the State Councils, and left the Constitution to work by its own laws. His personal influence he reserved for the pulpit; and here he was omnipotent. The people believed in him as a prophet. They turned to him as the man who knew what he wanted—as the voice of liberty, the soul of the new régime, the genius who could breathe into the commonwealth a breath of fresh vitality. When, therefore, Savonarola preached a reform of manners, he was at once obeyed. Strict laws were passed enforcing sobriety, condemning trades of pleasure, reducing the gay customs of Florence to puritanical austerity.

241

Great stress has been laid upon this reaction of the monk-led populace against the vices of the past. Yet the historian is bound to pronounce that the reform effected by Savonarola was rather picturesque than vital. Like all violent revivals of pietism, it produced a no less violent reaction. The parties within the city who resented the interference of a preaching friar, joined with the Pope in Rome, who hated a contumacious schismatic in Savonarola. Assailed by these two forces at the same moment, and driven upon perilous ground by his own febrile enthusiasm, Savonarola succumbed. He was imprisoned, tortured, and burned upon the public square in 1498.

What Savonarola really achieved for Florence was not a permanent reform of morality, but a resuscitation of the spirit of freedom. His followers, called in contempt *I Piagnoni*, or the Weepers, formed the path of the commonwealth in future; and the memory of their martyr served as a common bond of sympathy to unite them in times of trial. It was a necessary consequence of the peculiar part he played that the city was henceforth divided into factions representing mutually antagonistic principles. These factions were not created by Savonarola; but his extraordinary influence accentuated, as it were, the humours that lay dormant in the State. Families favourable to the Medici took the name of *Palleschi*. Men who chafed against puritanical reform, and who were eager for any government that should secure them their old licence, were known as *Compagnacci*. Meanwhile the oligarchs, who disliked a democratic Constitution, and thought it possible to found an aristocracy without the intervention of the Medici, came to be known as *Gli Ottimati*. Florence held within itself, from this epoch forward to the final extinction of liberty, four great parties: the *Piagnoni*, passionate for political freedom and austerity of life; the *Palleschi*, favourable to the Medicean cause, and regretful of Lorenzo's pleasant rule; the *Compagnacci*, intolerant of the reformed republic, neither hostile nor loyal to the Medici, but desirous of personal licence; the *Ottimati*, astute and selfish, watching their own advantage, ever-mindful to form a narrow government of privileged families, disinclined to the Medici, except when they thought the Medici might be employed as instruments in their intrigues.

242

XX

During the short period of Savonarola's ascendancy, Florence was in

form at least a Theocracy, without any titular head but Christ; and as long as the enthusiasm inspired by the monk lasted, as long as his personal influence endured, the Constitution of the Grand Council worked well. After his death it was found that the machinery was too cumbrous. While adopting the Venetian form of government, the Florentines had omitted one essential element—the Doge. By referring measures of immediate necessity to the Grand Council, the republic lost precious time. Dangerous publicity, moreover, was incurred; and so large a body often came to no firm resolution. There was no permanent authority in the State; no security that what had been deliberated would be carried out with energy; no titular chief, who could transact affairs with foreign potentates and their ambassadors. Accordingly, in 1502, it was decreed that the Gonfalonier should hold office for life—should be in fact a Doge. To this important post of permanent president Piero Soderini was appointed; and in his hands were placed the chief affairs of the republic.

243

At this point Florence, after all her vicissitudes, had won her way to something really similar to the Venetian Constitution. Yet the similarity existed more in form than in fact. The government of burghers in a Grand Council, with a Senate of forty, and a Gonfalonier for life, had not grown up gradually and absorbed into itself the vital forces of the commonwealth. It was a creation of inventive intelligence, not of national development, in Florence. It had against it the jealousy of the Ottimati, who felt themselves overshadowed by the Gonfalonier; the hatred of the Palleschi, who yearned for the Medici; the discontent of the working classes, who thought the presence of a Court in Florence would improve trade; last, but not least, the disaffection of the Compagnacci, who felt they could not flourish to their heart's content in a free commonwealth. Moreover, though the name of liberty was on every lip, though the Florentines talked, wrote, and speculated more about constitutional independence than they had ever done, the true energy of free institutions had passed from the city. The corrupt government of Cosimo and Lorenzo bore its natural fruit now. Egotistic ambition and avarice supplanted patriotism and industry. It is necessary to comprehend these circumstances, in order that the next revolution may be clearly understood.

244

XXI

During the ten years which elapsed between 1502 and 1512, Piero Soderini administered Florence with an outward show of great prosperity. He regained Pisa, and maintained an honourable foreign policy in the midst of the wars stirred up by the League of Cambray. Meanwhile the young princes of the House of Medici had grown to manhood in exile. The Cardinal Giovanni was thirty-seven in 1512. His brother Giuliano was thirty-three. Both of these men were better fitted than their brother Piero to fight the battles of the family. Giovanni, in particular, had inherited no small portion of the Medicean craft. During the troubled reign of Julius II. he kept very quiet, cementing his connections with powerful men in Rome, but making no effort to regain his hold on Florence. Now the moment for striking a decisive blow had come. After the battle of Ravenna in 1512, the French were driven out of Italy, and the Sforzas returned to Milan; the Spanish troops, under the Viceroy Cardona, remained masters of the country. Following the camp of these Spaniards, Giovanni de' Medici entered Tuscany in August, and caused the restoration of the Medici to be announced in Florence. The people, assembled by Soderini, resolved to resist to the uttermost. No foreign army should force them to receive the masters whom they had expelled. Yet their courage failed on August 29th, when news reached them of the capture and the sack of Prato. Prato is a sunny little city a few miles distant from the walls of Florence, famous for the beauty of its women, the richness of its gardens, and the grace of its buildings. Into this gem of cities the savage soldiery of Spain marched in the bright autumnal weather, and turned the paradise into a hell. It is even now impossible to read of what they did in Prato without shuddering.^[30] Cruelty and lust, sordid greed for gold, and cold delight in bloodshed, could go no further. Giovanni de' Medici, by nature mild and voluptuous, averse to violence of all kinds, had to smile approval, while the Spanish Viceroy knocked thus with mailed hand for him at the door of Florence. The Florentines were paralysed with terror. They deposed Soderini and received the Medici. Giovanni and Giuliano entered their devastated palace in the Via Larga, abolished the Grand Council, and dealt with the republic as they listed.

245

XXII

There was no longer any medium in Florence possible between either tyranny or some such government as the Medici had now destroyed. The State was too rotten to recover even the modified despotism of Lorenzo's days. Each transformation had impaired some portion of its framework, broken down some of its traditions, and sowed new seeds of egotism in citizens who saw all things round them change but self-advantage. Therefore Giovanni and Giuliano felt themselves secure in flattering the popular vanity by an empty parade of the old institutions. They restored the Signory and the Gonfalonier, elected for intervals of two months by officers appointed for this purpose by the Medici. Florence had the show of a free government. But the Medici managed all things; and soldiers, commanded by their creature, Paolo Vettori, held the Palace and the Public Square. The tyranny thus established was less secure, inasmuch as it openly rested upon violence, than Lorenzo's power had been; nor were there signs wanting that the burghers could ill brook their servitude. The conspiracy of Pietro Paolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi proved that the Medicean brothers ran daily risk of life. Indeed, it is not likely that they would have succeeded in maintaining their authority—for they were poor and ill-supported by friends outside the city—except for one most lucky circumstance: that was the election of Giovanni de' Medici to the Papacy in 1513.

246

The creation of Leo X. spread satisfaction throughout Italy. Politicians trusted that he would display some portion of his father's ability, and restore peace to the nation. Men of arts and letters expected everything from a Medicean Pope, who had already acquired the reputation of polite culture and open-handed generosity. They at any rate were not deceived. Leo's first words on taking his place in the Vatican were addressed to his brother Giuliano: 'Let us enjoy the Papacy, now that God has given it to us;' and his notion of enjoyment was to surround himself with court-poets, jesters, and musicians, to adorn his Roman palaces with frescoes, to collect statues and inscriptions, to listen to Latin speeches, and to pass judgment upon scholarly compositions. Any one and every one who gave him sensual or intellectual pleasure, found his purse always open. He lived in the utmost magnificence, and made Rome the Paris of the Renaissance for brilliance, immorality, and self-indulgent ease. The politicians had less reason to be satisfied. Instead of uniting the Italians and keeping the great Powers of Europe in check, Leo carried on a series of disastrous petty wars, chiefly with the purpose of establishing the Medici as princes. He squandered the revenues of the Church, and left enormous debts behind him—an exchequer ruined and a foreign policy so confused that peace for Italy could only be obtained by servitude.

Florence shared in the general rejoicing which greeted Leo's accession to the Papacy. He was the first Florentine citizen who had received the tiara, and the popular vanity was flattered by this honour to the republic. Political theorists, meanwhile, began to speculate what greatness Florence, in combination with Rome, might rise to. The Pope was young; he ruled a large territory, reduced to order by his warlike predecessors. It seemed as though the republic, swayed by him, might make herself the first city in Italy, and restore the glories of her Guelf ascendancy upon the platform of Renaissance statecraft. There was now no overt opposition to the Medici in Florence. How to govern the city from Rome, and how to advance the fortunes of his brother Giuliano and his nephew Lorenzo (Piero's son, a young man of twenty-one), occupied the Pope's most serious attention. For Lorenzo Leo obtained the Duchy of Urbino and the hand of a French princess. Giuliano was named Gonfalonier of the Church. He also received the French title of Duke of Nemours and the hand of Filiberta, Princess of Savoy. Leo entertained a further project of acquiring the crown of Southern Italy for his brother, and thus of uniting Rome, Florence, and Naples under the headship of his house. Nor were the Medicean interests neglected in the Church. Giulio, the Pope's bastard cousin, was made cardinal. He remained in Rome, acting as vice-chancellor and doing the hard work of the Papal Government for the pleasure-loving pontiff.

247

To Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, the titular head of the family, was committed the government of Florence. During their exile, wandering from court to court in Italy, the Medici had forgotten what it was to be burghers, and had acquired the manners of princes. Leo alone retained enough of caution to warn his nephew that the Florentines must still be treated as free people. He confirmed the constitution of the Signory and the Privy Council of seventy established by his father, bidding Lorenzo,

while he ruled this sham republic, to avoid the outer signs of tyranny. The young duke at first behaved with moderation, but he could not cast aside his habits of a great lord. Florence now for the first time saw a regular court established in her midst, with a prince, who, though he bore a foreign title, was in fact her master. The joyous days of Lorenzo the Magnificent returned. Masquerades and triumphs filled the public squares. Two clubs of pleasure, called the Diamond and the Branch—badges adopted by the Medici to signify their firmness in disaster and their power of self-recovery—were formed to lead the revels. The best sculptors and painters devoted their genius to the invention of costumes and cars. The city affected to believe that the age of gold had come again.

XXIII

Fortune had been very favourable to the Medici. They had returned as princes to Florence. Giovanni was Pope. Giuliano was Gonfalonier of the Church. Giulio was Cardinal and Archbishop of Florence. Lorenzo ruled the city like a sovereign. But this prosperity was no less brief than it was brilliant. A few years sufficed to sweep off all the chiefs of the great house. Giuliano died in 1516, leaving only a bastard son Ippolito. Lorenzo died in 1519, leaving a bastard son Alessandro, and a daughter, six days old, who lived to be the Queen of France. Leo died in 1521. There remained now no legitimate male descendants from the stock of Cosimo. The honours and pretensions of the Medici devolved upon three bastards—on the Cardinal Giulio, and the two boys, Alessandro and Ippolito. Of these, Alessandro was a mulatto, his mother having been a Moorish slave in the Palace of Urbino; and whether his father was Giulio, or Giuliano, or a base groom, was not known for certain. To such extremities were the Medici reduced. In order to keep their house alive, they were obliged to adopt this foundling. It is true that the younger branch of the family, descended from Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo, still flourished. At this epoch it was represented by Giovanni, the great general known as the Invincible, whose bust so strikingly resembles that of Napoleon. But between this line of the Medici and the elder branch there had never been true cordiality. The Cardinal mistrusted Giovanni. It may, moreover, be added, that Giovanni was himself doomed to death in the year 1526.

249

Giulio de' Medici was left in 1521 to administer the State of Florence single-handed. He was archbishop, and he resided in the city, holding it with the grasp of an absolute ruler. Yet he felt his position insecure. The republic had no longer any forms of self-government; nor was there a magistracy to whom the despot could delegate his power in his absence. Giulio's ambition was fixed upon the Papal crown. The bastards he was rearing were but children. Florence had therefore to be furnished with some political machinery that should work of itself. The Cardinal did not wish to give freedom to the city, but clockwork. He was in the perilous situation of having to rule a commonwealth without life, without elasticity, without capacity of self-movement, yet full of such material as, left alone, might ferment, and breed a revolution. In this perplexity, he had recourse to advisers. The most experienced politicians, philosophical theorists, practical diplomatists, and students of antique history were requested to furnish him with plans for a new constitution, just as you ask an architect to give you the plan of a new house. This was the field-day of the doctrinaires. Now was seen how much political sagacity the Florentines had gained while they were losing liberty. We possess these several drafts of constitutions. Some recommend tyranny; some incline to aristocracy, or what Italians called *Governo Stretto*; some to democracy, or *Governo Largo*; some to an eclectic compound of the other forms, or *Governo Misto*. More consummate masterpieces of constructive ingenuity can hardly be imagined. What is omitted in all, is just what no doctinaire, no nostrum can communicate—the breath of life, the principle of organic growth. Things had come, indeed, to a melancholy pass for Florence when her tyrant, in order to confirm his hold upon her, had to devise these springs and irons to support her tottering limbs.

250

XXIV

While the archbishop and the doctors were debating, a plot was hatching in the Rucellai Gardens. It was here that the Florentine Academy now held their meetings. For this society Machiavelli wrote his 'Treatise on the Art of War,' and his 'Discourses upon Livy.' The former was an exposition of Machiavelli's scheme for creating a national militia,

as the only safeguard for Italy, exposed at this period to the invasions of great foreign armies. The latter is one of the three or four masterpieces produced by the Florentine school of critical historians. Stimulated by the daring speculations of Machiavelli, and fired to enthusiasm by their study of antiquity, the younger academicians formed a conspiracy for murdering Giulio de' Medici, and restoring the republic on a Roman model. An intercepted letter betrayed their plans. Two of the conspirators were taken and beheaded. Others escaped. But the discovery of this conjuration put a stop to Giulio's scheme of reforming the State. Henceforth he ruled Florence like a despot, mild in manners, cautious in the exercise of arbitrary power, but firm in his autocracy. The Condottiere, Alessandro Vitelli, with a company of soldiers, was taken into service for the protection of his person and the intimidation of the citizens.

251

In 1523, the Pope, Adrian VI., expired after a short papacy, from which he gained no honour and Italy no profit. Giulio hurried to Rome, and, by the clever use of his large influence, caused himself to be elected with the title of Clement VII. In Florence he left Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona, as his vicegerent and the guardian of the two boys Alessandro and Ippolito. The discipline of many years had accustomed the Florentines to a government of priests. Still the burghers, mindful of their ancient liberties, were galled by the yoke of a Cortonese, sprung up from one of their subject cities; nor could they bear the bastards who were being reared to rule them. Foreigners threw it in their teeth that Florence, the city glorious of art and freedom, was become a stable for mules—*stalla da muli*, in the expressive language of popular sarcasm. Bastardy, it may be said in passing, carried with it small dishonour among the Italians. The Estensi were all illegitimate; the Aragonese house in Naples sprang from Alfonso's natural son; and children of Popes ranked among the princes. Yet the uncertainty of Alessandro's birth and the base condition of his mother made the prospect of this tyrant peculiarly odious; while the primacy of a foreign cardinal in the midst of citizens whose spirit was still unbroken, embittered the cup of humiliation. The Casa Medici held its authority by a slender thread, and depended more upon the disunion of the burghers than on any power of its own. It could always reckon on the favour of the lower populace, who gained profit and amusement from the presence of a court. The Ottimati again hoped more from a weak despotism than from a commonwealth, where their privileges would have been merged in the mass of the Grand Council. Thus the sympathies of the plebeians and the selfishness of the rich patricians prevented the republic from asserting itself. On this meagre basis of personal cupidity the Medici sustained themselves. What made the situation still more delicate, and at the same time protracted the feeble rule of Clement, was that neither the Florentines nor the Medici had any army. Face to face with a potentate so considerable as the Pope, a free State could not be established without military force. On the other hand, the Medici, supported by a mere handful of mercenaries, had no power to resist a popular rising if any external event should inspire the middle classes with a hope of liberty.

252

XXV

Clement assumed the tiara at a moment of great difficulty. Leo had ruined the finance of Rome. France and Spain were still contending for the possession of Italy. While acting as Vice-Chancellor, Giulio de' Medici had seemed to hold the reins with a firm grasp, and men expected that he would prove a powerful Pope; but in those days he had Leo to help him; and Leo, though indolent, was an abler man than his cousin. He planned, and Giulio executed. Obligated to act now for himself, Clement revealed the weakness of his nature. That weakness was irresolution, craft without wisdom, diplomacy without knowledge of men. He raised the storm, and showed himself incapable of guiding it. This is not the place to tell by what a series of crooked schemes and cross purposes he brought upon himself the ruin of the Church and Rome, to relate his disagreement with the Emperor, or to describe again the sack of the Eternal City by the rabble of the Constable de Bourbon's army. That wreck of Rome in 1527 was the closing scene of the Italian Renaissance—the last of the Apocalyptic tragedies foretold by Savonarola—the death of the old age.

253

When the Florentines knew what was happening in Rome, they rose and forced the Cardinal Passerini to depart with the Medicean bastards from the city. The youth demanded arms for the defence of the town, and they received them. The whole male population was enrolled in a militia. The Grand Council was reformed, and the republic was restored upon

the basis of 1495. Niccolo Capponi was elected Gonfalonier. The name of Christ was again registered as chief of the commonwealth—to such an extent did the memory of Savonarola still sway the popular imagination. The new State hastened to form an alliance with France, and Malatesta Baglioni was chosen as military Commander-in-Chief. Meanwhile the city armed itself for siege—Michel Angelo Buonarroti and Francesco da San Gallo undertaking the construction of new forts and ramparts. These measures were adopted with sudden decision, because it was soon known that Clement had made peace with the Emperor, and that the army which had sacked Rome was going to be marched on Florence.

XXVI

In the month of August 1529 the Prince of Orange assembled his forces at Terni, and thence advanced by easy stages into Tuscany. As he approached, the Florentines laid waste their suburbs, and threw down their wreath of towers, in order that the enemy might have no harbourage or points of vantage for attack. Their troops were concentrated within the city, where a new Gonfalonier, Francesco Carducci, furiously opposed to the Medici, and attached to the Piagnoni party, now ruled. On September 4th the Prince of Orange appeared before the walls, and opened the memorable siege. It lasted eight months, at the end of which time, betrayed by their generals, divided among themselves, and worn out with delays, the Florentines capitulated. Florence was paid as compensation for the insult offered to the pontiff in the sack of Rome.

254

The long yoke of the Medici had undermined the character of the Florentines. This, their last glorious struggle for liberty, was but a flash in the pan—a final flare-up of the dying lamp. The city was not satisfied with slavery; but it had no capacity for united action. The Ottimati were egotistic and jealous of the people. The Palleschi desired to restore the Medici at any price—some of them frankly wishing for a principality, others trusting that the old quasi-republican government might still be reinstated. The Red Republicans, styled Libertini and Arrabbiati, clung together in blind hatred of the Medicean party; but they had no further policy to guide them. The Piagnoni, or Frateschi, stuck to the memory of Savonarola, and believed that angels would descend to guard the battlements when human help had failed. These enthusiasts still formed the true nerve of the nation—the class that might have saved the State, if salvation had been possible. Even as it was, the energy of their fanaticism prolonged the siege until resistance seemed no longer physically possible. The hero developed by the crisis was Francesco Ferrucci, a plebeian who had passed his youth in manual labour, and who now displayed rare military genius. He fell fighting outside the walls of Florence. Had he commanded the troops from the beginning, and remained inside the city, it is just possible that the fate of the war might have been less disastrous. As it was, Malatesta Baglioni, the Commander-in-Chief, turned out an arrant scoundrel. He held secret correspondence with Clement and the Prince of Orange. It was he who finally sold Florence to her foes, 'putting on his head,' as the Doge of Venice said before the Senate, 'the cap of the biggest traitor upon record.'

255

XXVII

What remains of Florentine history may be briefly told. Clement, now the undisputed arbiter of power and honour in the city, chose Alessandro de' Medici to be prince. Alessandro was created Duke of Cività di Penna, and married to a natural daughter of Charles V. Ippolito was made a cardinal. Ippolito would have preferred a secular to a priestly kingdom; nor did he conceal his jealousy for his cousin. Therefore Alessandro had him poisoned. Alessandro in his turn was murdered by his kinsman, Lorenzino de' Medici. Lorenzino paid the usual penalty of tyrannicide some years later. When Alessandro was killed in 1539, Clement had himself been dead five years. Thus the whole posterity of Cosimo de' Medici, with the exception of Catherine, Queen of France, was utterly extinguished. But the Medici had struck root so firmly in the State, and had so remodelled it upon the type of tyranny, that the Florentines were no longer able to do without them. The chiefs of the Ottimati selected Cosimo, the representative of Giovanni the Invincible, for their prince, and thus the line of the elder Lorenzo came at last to power. This Cosimo was a boy of eighteen, fond of field-sports, and unused to party intrigues. When Francesco Guicciardini offered him a privy purse of one hundred and twenty thousand ducats annually, together with the presidency of

Florence, this wily politician hoped that he would rule the State through Cosimo, and realise at last that dream of the Ottimati, a *Governo Stretto* or *di Pochi*. He was notably mistaken in his calculations. The first days of Cosimo's administration showed that he possessed the craft of his family and the vigour of his immediate progenitors, and that he meant to be sole master in Florence. He it was who obtained the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany from the Pope—a title confirmed by the Emperor, fortified by Austrian alliances, and transmitted through his heirs to the present century.

256

XXVIII

In this sketch of Florentine history, I have purposely omitted all details that did not bear upon the constitutional history of the republic, or on the growth of the Medici as despots; because I wanted to present a picture of the process whereby that family contrived to fasten itself upon the freest and most cultivated State in Italy. This success the Medici owed mainly to their own obstinacy, and to the weakness of republican institutions in Florence. Their power was founded upon wealth in the first instance, and upon the ingenuity with which they turned the favour of the proletariat to use. It was confirmed by the mistakes and failures of their enemies, by Rinaldo degli Albizzi's attack on Cosimo, by the conspiracy of Neroni and Pitti against Piero, and by Francesco de' Pazzi's attempt to assassinate Lorenzo. It was still further strengthened by the Medicean sympathy for arts and letters—a sympathy which placed both Cosimo and Lorenzo at the head of the Renaissance movement, and made them worthy to represent Florence, the city of genius, in the fifteenth century. While thus founding and cementing their dynastic influence upon the basis of a widespread popularity, the Medici employed persistent cunning in the enfeeblement of the Republic. It was their policy not to plant themselves by force or acts of overt tyranny, but to corrupt ambitious citizens, to secure the patronage of public officers, and to render the spontaneous working of the State machinery impossible. By pursuing this policy over a long series of years they made the revival of liberty in 1494, and again in 1527, ineffectual. While exiled from Florence, they never lost the hope of returning as masters, so long as the passions they had excited, and they alone could gratify, remained in full activity. These passions were avarice and egotism, the greed of the grasping Ottimati, the jealousy of the nobles, the self-indulgence of the proletariat. Yet it is probable they might have failed to recover Florence, on one or other of these two occasions, but for the accident which placed Giovanni de' Medici on the Papal chair, and enabled him to put Giulio in the way of the same dignity. From the accession of Leo in 1513 to the year 1527 the Medici ruled Florence from Rome, and brought the power of the Church into the service of their despotism. After that date they were still further aided by the imperial policy of Charles V., who chose to govern Italy through subject princes, bound to himself by domestic alliances and powerful interests. One of these was Cosimo, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany.

257

THE DEBT OF ENGLISH TO ITALIAN LITERATURE

To an Englishman one of the chief interests of the study of Italian literature is derived from the fact that, between England and Italy, an almost uninterrupted current of intellectual intercourse has been maintained throughout the last five centuries. The English have never, indeed, at any time been slavish imitators of the Italians; but Italy has formed the dreamland of the English fancy, inspiring poets with their most delightful thoughts, supplying them with subjects, and implanting in their minds that sentiment of Southern beauty which, engrafted on our more passionately imaginative Northern nature, has borne rich fruit in the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakspeare, Milton, and the poets of this century.

It is not strange that Italy should thus in matters of culture have been the guide and mistress of England. Italy, of all the European nations, was the first to produce high art and literature in the dawn of modern civilisation. Italy was the first to display refinement in domestic life, polish of manners, civilities of intercourse. In Italy the commerce of courts first developed a society of men and women, educated by the same traditions of humanistic culture. In Italy the principles of government were first discussed and reduced to theory. In Italy the zeal for the classics took its origin; and scholarship, to which we owe our mental training, was at first the possession of none almost but Italians. It therefore followed that during the age of the Renaissance any man of taste or genius, who desired to share the newly discovered privileges of learning, had to seek Italy. Every one who wished to be initiated into the secrets of science or philosophy, had to converse with Italians in person or through books. Every one who was eager to polish his native language, and to render it the proper vehicle of poetic thought, had to consult the masterpieces of Italian literature. To Italians the courtier, the diplomatist, the artist, the student of statecraft and of military tactics, the political theorist, the merchant, the man of laws, the man of arms, and the churchman turned for precedents and precepts. The nations of the North, still torpid and somnolent in their semi-barbarism, needed the magnetic touch of Italy before they could awake to intellectual life. Nor was this all. Long before the thirst for culture possessed the English mind, Italy had appropriated and assimilated all that Latin literature contained of strong or splendid to arouse the thought and fancy of the modern world; Greek, too, was rapidly becoming the possession of the scholars of Florence and Rome; so that English men of letters found the spirit of the ancients infused into a modern literature; models of correct and elegant composition existed for them in a language easy, harmonious, and not dissimilar in usage to their own.

259

The importance of this service, rendered by Italians to the rest of Europe, cannot be exaggerated. By exploring, digesting, and reproducing the classics, Italy made the labour of scholarship comparatively light for the Northern nations, and extended to us the privilege of culture without the peril of losing originality in the enthusiasm for erudition. Our great poets could handle lightly, and yet profitably, those masterpieces of Greece and Rome, beneath the weight of which, when first discovered, the genius of the Italians had wavered. To the originality of Shakspeare an accession of wealth without weakness was brought by the perusal of Italian works, in which the spirit of the antique was seen as in a modern mirror. Then, in addition to this benefit of instruction, Italy gave to England a gift of pure beauty, the influence of which, in refining our national taste, harmonising the roughness of our manners and our language, and stimulating our imagination, has been incalculable. It was a not unfrequent custom for young men of ability to study at the Italian universities, or at least to undertake a journey to the principal Italian cities. From their sojourn in that land of loveliness and intellectual life they returned with their Northern brains most powerfully stimulated. To produce, by masterpieces of the imagination, some work of style that should remain as a memento of that glorious country, and should vie on English soil with the art of Italy, was their generous ambition. Consequently the substance of the stories versified by our poets, the forms of our metres, and the cadences of our prose periods reveal a close attention to Italian originals.

260

This debt of England to Italy in the matter of our literature began with Chaucer. Truly original and national as was the framework of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we can hardly doubt but that Chaucer was determined in the form adopted for his poem by the example of

Boccaccio. The subject-matter, also, of many of his tales was taken from Boccaccio's prose or verse. For example, the story of Patient Grizzel is founded upon one of the legends of the 'Decameron,' while the Knight's Tale is almost translated from the 'Teseide' of Boccaccio, and Troilus and Creseide is derived from the 'Filostrato' of the same author. The Franklin's Tale and the Reeve's Tale are also based either on stories of Boccaccio or else on French 'Fabliaux,' to which Chaucer, as well as Boccaccio, had access. I do not wish to lay too much stress upon Chaucer's direct obligations to Boccaccio, because it is incontestable that the French 'Fabliaux,' which supplied them both with subjects, were the common property of the mediæval nations. But his indirect debt in all that concerns elegant handling of material, and in the fusion of the romantic with the classic spirit, which forms the chief charm of such tales as the Palamon and Arcite, can hardly be exaggerated. Lastly, the seven-lined stanza, called *rime royal*, which Chaucer used with so much effect in narrative poetry, was probably borrowed from the earlier Florentine 'Ballata,' the last line rhyming with its predecessor being substituted for the recurrent refrain. Indeed, the stanza itself, as used by our earliest poets, may be found in Guido Cavalcanti's 'Ballatetta,' beginning, *Posso degli occhi miei*.

Between Chaucer and Surrey the Muse of England fell asleep; but when in the latter half of the reign of Henry VIII. she awoke again, it was as a conscious pupil of the Italian that she attempted new strains and essayed fresh metres. 'In the latter end of Henry VIII.'s reign,' says Puttenham, 'sprang up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir T. Wyatt the elder, and Henry Earl of Surrey, were the two chieftains, who, having travelled into Italy, and there tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poesy, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesy, from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformers of our English metre and style.' The chief point in which Surrey imitated his 'master, Francis Petrarcha,' was in the use of the sonnet. He introduced this elaborate form of poetry into our literature; and how it has thriven with us, the masterpieces of Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Rossetti attest. As practised by Dante and Petrarch, the sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines, divided into two quatrains and two triplets, so arranged that the two quatrains repeat one pair of rhymes, while the two triplets repeat another pair. Thus an Italian sonnet of the strictest form is composed upon four rhymes, interlaced with great art. But much divergence from this rigid scheme of rhyming was admitted even by Petrarch, who not unfrequently divided the six final lines of the sonnet into three couplets, interwoven in such a way that the two last lines never rhymed.^[31]

[31] The order of rhymes runs thus: *a, b, b, a, a, b, b, a, c, d, c, d, c, d*; or in the terzets, *c, d, e, c, d, e*, or *c, d, e, d, c, e*, and so forth.

It has been necessary to say thus much about the structure of the Italian sonnet, in order to make clear the task which lay before Surrey and Wyatt, when they sought to transplant it into English. Surrey did not adhere to the strict fashion of Petrarch: his sonnets consist either of three regular quatrains concluded with a couplet, or else of twelve lines rhyming alternately and concluded with a couplet. Wyatt attempted to follow the order and interlacement of the Italian rhymes more closely, but he too concluded his sonnet with a couplet. This introduction of the final couplet was a violation of the Italian rule, which may be fairly considered as prejudicial to the harmony of the whole structure, and which has insensibly caused the English sonnet to terminate in an epigram. The famous sonnet of Surrey on his love, Geraldine, is an excellent example of the metrical structure as adapted to the supposed necessities of English rhyming, and as afterwards adhered to by Shakspeare in his long series of love-poems. Surrey, while adopting the form of the sonnet, kept quite clear of the Petrarchist's mannerism. His language is simple and direct: there is no subtilising upon far-fetched conceits, no wire-drawing of exquisite sentimentalism, although he celebrates in this, as in his other sonnets, a lady for whom he appears to have entertained no more than a Platonic or imaginary passion. Surrey was a great experimentalist in metre. Besides the sonnet, he introduced into England blank verse, which he borrowed from the Italian *versi sciolti*, fixing that decasyllable iambic rhythm for English versification in which our greatest poetical triumphs have been achieved.

Before quitting the subject of the sonnet it would, however, be well to mention the changes which were wrought in its structure by early poets desirous of emulating the Italians. Shakspeare, as already hinted, adhered

to the simple form introduced by Surrey: his stanzas invariably consist of three separate quatrains followed by a couplet. But Sir Philip Sidney, whose familiarity with Italian literature was intimate, and who had resided long in Italy, perceived that without a greater complexity and interweaving of rhymes the beauty of the poem was considerably impaired. He therefore combined the rhymes of the two quatrains, as the Italians had done, leaving himself free to follow the Italian fashion in the conclusion, or else to wind up after English usage with a couplet. Spenser and Drummond follow the rule of Sidney; Drayton and Daniel, that of Surrey and Shakspeare. It was not until Milton that an English poet preserved the form of the Italian sonnet in its strictness; but, after Milton, the greatest sonnet-writers—Wordsworth, Keats, and Rossetti—have aimed at producing stanzas as regular as those of Petrarch.

The great age of our literature—the age of Elizabeth—was essentially one of Italian influence. In Italy the Renaissance had reached its height: England, feeling the new life which had been infused into arts and letters, turned instinctively to Italy, and adopted her canons of taste. 'Euphues' has a distinct connection with the Italian discourses of polite culture. Sidney's 'Arcadia' is a copy of what Boccaccio had attempted in his classical romances, and Sanazzaro in his pastorals.^[32] Spenser approached the subject of the 'Faery Queen' with his head full of Ariosto and the romantic poets of Italy. His sonnets are Italian; his odes embody the Platonic philosophy of the Italians.^[33] The extent of Spenser's deference to the Italians in matters of poetic art may be gathered from this passage in the dedication to Sir Walter Raleigh of the 'Faery Queen':

I have followed all the antique poets historical: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governor and a virtuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis; then Virgil, whose like intention was to do in the person of Æneas; after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando; and lately Tasso dissevered them again, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or virtues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo, the other named Politico in his Goffredo.

[32] It has extraordinary interest for the student of our literary development, inasmuch as it is full of experiments in metres, which have never thriven on English soil. Not to mention the attempt to write in asclepiads and other classical rhythms, we might point to Sidney's *terza rima*, poems with *sdrucchio* or treble rhymes. This peculiar and painful form he borrowed from Ariosto and Sanazzaro; but even in Italian it cannot be handled without sacrifice of variety, without impeding the metrical movement and marring the sense.

[33] The stately structure of the *Prothalamion* and *Epithalamion* is a rebuilding of the Italian Canzone. His Eclogues, with their allegories, repeat the manner of Petrarch's minor Latin poems.

From this it is clear that, to the mind of Spenser, both Ariosto and Tasso were authorities of hardly less gravity than Homer and Virgil. Raleigh, in the splendid sonnet with which he responds to this dedication, enhances the fame of Spenser by affecting to believe that the great Italian, Petrarch, will be jealous of him in the grave. To such an extent were the thoughts of the English poets occupied with their Italian masters in the art of song.

It was at this time, again, that English literature was enriched by translations of Ariosto and Tasso—the one from the pen of Sir John Harrington, the other from that of Fairfax. Both were produced in the metre of the original—the octave stanza, which, however, did not at that period take root in England. At the same period the works of many of the Italian novelists, especially Bandello and Cinthio and Boccaccio, were translated into English; Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure' being a treasure-house of Italian works of fiction. Thomas Hoby translated Castiglione's 'Courtier' in 1561. As a proof of the extent to which Italian books were read in England at the end of the sixteenth century, we may take a stray sentence from a letter of Harvey, in which he disparages the works of Robert Greene:—'Even Guicciardine's silver histories and Ariosto's golden cantos grow out of request: and the Countess of Pembroke's "Arcadia" is not green enough for queasy stomachs; but they must have seen Greene's "Arcadia," and I believe most eagerly longed for Greene's "Faery Queen."'

Still more may be gathered on the same topic from the indignant protest uttered by Roger Ascham in his 'Schoolmaster' (pp. 78-91, date

1570) against the prevalence of Italian customs, the habit of Italian travel, and the reading of Italian books translated into English. Selections of Italian stories rendered into English were extremely popular; and Greene's tales, which had such vogue that Nash says of them, 'glad was that printer that might be so blest to pay him dear for the very dregs of his wit,' were all modelled on the Italian. The education of a young man of good family was not thought complete unless he had spent some time in Italy, studied its literature, admired its arts, and caught at least some tincture of its manners. Our rude ancestors brought back with them from these journeys many Southern vices, together with the culture they had gone to seek. The contrast between the plain dealing of the North and the refined Machiavellism of the South, between Protestant earnestness in religion and Popish scepticism, between the homely virtues of England and the courtly libertinism of Venice or Florence, blunted the moral sense, while it stimulated the intellectual activity of the English travellers, and too often communicated a fatal shock to their principles. *Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnato* passed into a proverb: we find it on the lips of Parker, of Howell, of Sidney, of Greene, and of Ascham; while Italy itself was styled by severe moralists the court of Circe. In James Howell's 'Instructions for forreine travell' we find this pregnant sentence: 'And being now in Italy, that great limbique of working braines, he must be very circumspect in his carriage, for she is able to turne a Saint into a devill, and deprave the best natures, if one will abandon himselfe, and become a prey to dissolut courses and wantonnesse.' Italy, in truth, had already become corrupt, and the fruit of her contact with the nations of the North was seen in the lives of such scholars as Robert Greene, who confessed that he returned from his travels instructed 'in all the villanies under the sun.' Many of the scandals of the Court of James might be ascribed to this aping of Southern manners.

266

Yet, together with the evil of depraved morality, the advantage of improved culture was imported from Italy into England; and the constitution of the English genius was young and healthy enough to purge off the mischief, while it assimilated what was beneficial. This is very manifest in the history of our drama, which, taking it altogether, is at the same time the purest and the most varied that exists in literature; while it may be affirmed without exaggeration that one of the main impulses to free dramatic composition in England was communicated by the attraction everything Italian possessed for the English fancy. It was in the drama that the English displayed the richness and the splendour of the Renaissance, which had blazed so gorgeously and at times so balefully below the Alps. The Italy of the Renaissance fascinated our dramatists with a strange wild glamour—the contrast of external pageant and internal tragedy, the alternations of radiance and gloom, the terrible examples of bloodshed, treason, and heroism emergent from ghastly crimes. Our drama began with a translation of Ariosto's 'Suppositi' and ended with Davenant's 'Just Italian.' In the very dawn of tragic composition Greene versified a portion of the 'Orlando Furioso,' and Marlowe devoted one of his most brilliant studies to the villanies of a Maltese Jew. Of Shakspeare's plays five are incontestably Italian: several of the rest are furnished with Italian names to suit the popular taste. Ben Jonson laid the scene of his most subtle comedy of manners, 'Volpone,' in Venice, and sketched the first cast of 'Every Man in his Humour' for Italian characters. Tourneur, Ford, and Webster were so dazzled by the tragic lustre of the wickedness of Italy that their finest dramas, without exception, are minute and carefully studied psychological analyses of great Italian tales of crime. The same, in a less degree, is true of Middleton and Dekker. Massinger makes a story of the Sforza family the subject of one of his best plays. Beaumont and Fletcher draw the subjects of comedies and tragedies alike from the Italian novelists. Fletcher in his 'Faithful Shepherdess' transfers the pastoral style of Tasso and Guarini to the North. So close is the connection between our tragedy and Italian novels that Marston and Ford think fit to introduce passages of Italian dialogue into the plays of 'Giovanni and Annabella' and 'Antonio and Mellida.' But the best proof of the extent to which Italian life and literature had influenced our dramatists, may be easily obtained by taking down Halliwell's 'Dictionary of Old Plays,' and noticing that about every third drama has an Italian title. Meanwhile the poems composed by the chief dramatists—Shakspeare's 'Venus and Adonis,' Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander,' Marston's 'Pygmalion,' and Beaumont's 'Hermaphrodite'—are all of them conceived in the Italian style, by men who had either studied Southern literature, or had submitted to its powerful æsthetic influences. The Masques, moreover, of Jonson, of Lyly, of Fletcher, and of Chapman are exact reproductions

267

268

upon the English court theatres of such festival pageants as were presented to the Medici at Florence or to the Este family at Ferrara.^[34] Throughout our drama the influence of Italy, direct or indirect, either as supplying our playwrights with subjects or as stimulating their imagination, may thus be traced. Yet the Elizabethan drama is in the highest sense original. As a work of art pregnant with deepest wisdom, and splendidly illustrative of the age which gave it birth, it far transcends anything that Italy produced in the same department. Our poets have a more masculine judgment, more fiery fancy, nobler sentiment, than the Italians of any age but that of Dante. What Italy gave, was the impulse toward creation, not patterns to be imitated—the excitement of the imagination by a spectacle of so much grandeur, not rules and precepts for production—the keen sense of tragic beauty, not any tradition of accomplished art.

[34] Marlowe makes Gaveston talk of 'Italian masques.' At the same time, in the prologue to *Tamburlaine*, he shows that he was conscious of the new and nobler direction followed by the drama in England.

The Elizabethan period of our literature was, in fact, the period during which we derived most from the Italian nation.

The study of the Italian language went hand in hand with the study of Greek and Latin, so that the three together contributed to form the English taste. Between us and the ancient world stood the genius of Italy as an interpreter. Nor was this connection broken until far on into the reign of Charles II. What Milton owed to Italy is clear not only from his Italian sonnets, but also from the frequent mention of Dante and Petrarch in his prose works, from his allusions to Boiardo and Ariosto in the 'Paradise Lost,' and from the hints which he probably derived from Pulci, Tasso and Andreini. It would, indeed, be easy throughout his works to trace a continuous vein of Italian influence in detail. But, more than this, Milton's poetical taste in general seems to have been formed and ripened by familiarity with the harmonies of the Italian language. In his Tractate on Education addressed to Mr. Hartlib, he recommends that boys should be instructed in the Italian pronunciation of vowel sounds, in order to give sonorousness and dignity to elocution. This slight indication supplies us with a key to the method of melodious structure employed by Milton in his blank verse. Those who have carefully studied the harmonies of the 'Paradise Lost,' know how all-important are the assonances of the vowel sounds of *o* and *a* in its most musical passages. It is just this attention to the liquid and sonorous recurrences of open vowels that we should expect from a poet who proposed to assimilate his diction to that of the Italians.

After the age of Milton the connection between Italy and England is interrupted. In the seventeenth century Italy herself had sunk into comparative stupor, and her literature was trivial. France not only swayed the political destinies of Europe, but also took the lead in intellectual culture. Consequently, our poets turned from Italy to France, and the French spirit pervaded English literature throughout the period of the Restoration and the reigns of William and Queen Anne. Yet during this prolonged reaction against the earlier movement of English literature, as manifested in Elizabethanism, the influence of Italy was not wholly extinct. Dryden's 'Tales from Boccaccio' are no insignificant contribution to our poetry, and his 'Palamon and Arcite,' through Chaucer, returns to the same source. But when, at the beginning of this century, the Elizabethan tradition was revived, then the Italian influence reappeared more vigorous than ever. The metre of 'Don Juan,' first practised by Frere and then adopted by Lord Byron, is Pulci's octave stanza; the manner is that of Berni, Folengo, and the Abbé Casti, fused and heightened by the brilliance of Byron's genius into a new form. The subject of Shelley's strongest work of art is Beatrice Cenci. Rogers's poem is styled 'Italy.' Byron's dramas are chiefly Italian. Leigh Hunt repeats the tale of Francesca da Rimini. Keats versifies Boccaccio's 'Isabella.' Passing to contemporary poets, Rossetti has acclimatised in English the metres and the manner of the earliest Italian lyrists. Swinburne dedicates his noblest song to the spirit of liberty in Italy. Even George Eliot and Tennyson have each of them turned stories of Boccaccio into verse. The best of Mrs. Browning's poems, 'Casa Guidi Windows' and 'Aurora Leigh,' are steeped in Italian thought and Italian imagery. Browning's longest poem is a tale of Italian crime; his finest studies in the 'Men and Women' are portraits of Italian character of the Renaissance period. But there is more than any mere enumeration of poets and their work can set forth, in the connection between Italy and England. That connection, so far as the poetical imagination is

concerned, is vital. As poets in the truest sense of the word, we English live and breathe through sympathy with the Italians. The magnetic touch which is required to inflame the imagination of the North, is derived from Italy. The nightingales of English song who make our oak and beech copses resonant in spring with purest melody, are migratory birds, who have charged their souls in the South with the spirit of beauty, and who return to warble native wood-notes in a tongue which is their own.

What has hitherto been said about the debt of the English poets to Italy, may seem to imply that our literature can be regarded as to some extent a parasite on that of the Italians. Against such a conclusion no protest too energetic could be uttered. What we have derived directly from the Italian poets are, first, some metres—especially the sonnet and the octave stanza, though the latter has never taken firm root in England. 'Terza rima,' attempted by Shelley, Byron, Morris, and Mrs. Browning, has not yet become acclimatised. Blank verse, although originally remodelled by Surrey upon the *versi sciolti* of the Italians, has departed widely from Italian precedent, first by its decasyllabic structure, whereas Italian verse consists of hendecasyllables; and, secondly, by its greater force, plasticity, and freedom. The Spenserian stanza, again, is a new and original metre peculiar to our literature; though it is possible that but for the complex structures of Italian lyric verse, it might not have been fashioned for the 'Faery Queen.' Lastly, the so-called heroic couplet is native to England; at any rate, it is in no way related to Italian metre. Therefore the only true Italian exotic adopted without modification into our literature is the sonnet.

In the next place, we owe to the Italians the subject-matter of many of our most famous dramas and our most delightful tales in verse. But the English treatment of these histories and fables has been uniformly independent and original. Comparing Shakspeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' with Bandello's tale, Webster's 'Duchess of Malfy' with the version given from the Italian in Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure,' and Chaucer's Knight's Tale with the 'Teseide' of Boccaccio, we perceive at once that the English poets have used their Italian models merely as outlines to be filled in with freedom, as the canvas to be embroidered with a tapestry of vivid groups. Nothing is more manifest than the superiority of the English genius over the Italian in all dramatic qualities of intense passion, profound analysis, and living portrayal of character in action. The mere rough detail of Shakspeare's 'Othello' is to be found in Cinthio's Collection of Novelle; but let an unprejudiced reader peruse the original, and he will be no more deeply affected by it than by any touching story of treachery, jealousy, and hapless innocence. The wily subtleties of Iago, the soldierly frankness of Cassio, the turbulent and volcanic passions of Othello, the charm of Desdemona, and the whole tissue of vivid incidents which make 'Othello' one of the most tremendous extant tragedies of characters in combat, are Shakspeare's, and only Shakspeare's. This instance, indeed, enables us exactly to indicate what the English owed to Italy and what was essentially their own. From that Southern land of Circe about which they dreamed, and which now and then they visited, came to their imaginations a spirit-stirring breath of inspiration. It was to them the country of marvels, of mysterious crimes, of luxurious gardens and splendid skies, where love was more passionate and life more picturesque, and hate more bloody and treachery more black, than in our Northern climes. Italy was a spacious grove of wizardry, which mighty poets, on the quest of fanciful adventure, trod with fascinated senses and quickened pulses. But the strong brain which converted what they heard and read and saw of that charmed land into the stuff of golden romance or sable tragedy, was their own.

English literature has been defined a literature of genius.

Our greatest work in art has been achieved not so much by inspiration, subordinate to sentiments of exquisite good taste or guided by observance of classical models, as by audacious sallies of pure inventive power. This is true as a judgment of that constellation which we call our drama, of the meteor Byron, of Milton and Dryden, who are the Jupiter and Mars of our poetic system, and of the stars which stud our literary firmament under the names of Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Chatterton, Scott, Coleridge, Clough, Blake, Browning, Swinburne, Tennyson. There are only a very few of the English poets, Pope and Gray, for example, in whom the free instincts of genius are kept systematically in check by the laws of the reflective understanding. Now Italian literature is in this respect all unlike our own. It began, indeed, with Dante, as a literature pre-eminently of genius; but the spirit of scholarship assumed the sway as early as the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, and after them Italian has been consistently a literature of taste. By this I mean that even the greatest Italian poets have sought to render their style correct, have

endeavoured to subordinate their inspiration to what they considered the rules of sound criticism, and have paid serious attention to their manner as independent of the matter they wished to express. The passion for antiquity, so early developed in Italy, delivered the later Italian poets bound hand and foot into the hands of Horace. Poliziano was content to reproduce the classic authors in a mosaic work of exquisite translations. Tasso was essentially a man of talent, producing work of chastened beauty by diligent attention to the rule and method of his art. Even Ariosto submitted the liberty of his swift spirit to canons of prescribed elegance. While our English poets have conceived and executed without regard for the opinion of the learned and without obedience to the usages of language—Shakspeare, for example, producing tragedies which set Aristotle at defiance, and Milton engrafting Latinisms on the native idiom—the Italian poets thought and wrote with the fear of Academies before their eyes, and studied before all things to maintain the purity of the Tuscan tongue. The consequence is that the Italian and English literatures are eminent for very different excellences. All that is forcible in the dramatic presentation of life and character and action, all that is audacious in imagination and capricious in fancy, whatever strength style can gain from the sallies of original and untrammelled eloquence, whatever beauty is derived from spontaneity and native grace, belong in abundant richness to the English. On the other hand, the Italian poets present us with masterpieces of correct and studied diction, with carefully elaborated machinery, and with a style maintained at a uniform level of dignified correctness. The weakness of the English proceeds from inequality and extravagance; it is the weakness of self-confident vigour, intolerant of rule, rejoicing in its own exuberant resources. The weakness of the Italian is due to timidity and moderation; it is the weakness that springs not so much from a lack of native strength as from the over-anxious expenditure of strength upon the attainment of finish, polish, and correctness. Hence the two nations have everything to learn from one another. Modern Italian poets may seek by contact with Shakspeare and Milton to gain a freedom from the trammels imposed upon them by the slavish followers of Petrarch; while the attentive perusal of Tasso should be recommended to all English people who have no ready access to the masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature.

274

Another point of view may be gained by noticing the pre-dominant tone of the two literatures. Whenever English poetry is really great, it approximates to the tragic and the stately; whereas the Italians are peculiarly felicitous in the smooth and pleasant style, which combines pathos with amusement, and which does not trespass beyond the region of beauty into the domain of sublimity or terror. Italian poetry is analogous to Italian painting and Italian music: it bathes the soul in a plenitude of charms, investing even the most solemn subjects with loveliness. Rembrandt and Albert Dürer depict the tragedies of the Sacred History with a serious and awful reality: Italian painters, with a few rare but illustrious exceptions, shrink from approaching them from any point of view but that of harmonious melancholy. Even so the English poets stir the soul to its very depths by their profound and earnest delineations of the stern and bitter truths of the world: Italian poets environ all things with the golden haze of an artistic harmony; so that the soul is agitated by no pain at strife with the persuasions of pure beauty.

275

It is a noticeable fact about the popular songs of Tuscany that they are almost exclusively devoted to love. The Italians in general have no ballad literature resembling that of our Border or that of Spain. The tragic histories of their noble families, the great deeds of their national heroes, and the sufferings of their country during centuries of warfare, have left but few traces in their rustic poetry. It is true that some districts are less utterly barren than others in these records of the past. The Sicilian people's poetry, for example, preserves a memory of the famous Vespers; and one or two terrible stories of domestic tragedy, like the tale of Rosmunda in 'La Donna Lombarda,' the romance of the Baronessa di Carini, and the so-called Caso di Sciacca, may still be heard upon the lips of the people. But these exceptions are insignificant in comparison with the vast mass of songs which deal with love; and I cannot find that Tuscany, where the language of this minstrelsy is purest, and where the artistic instincts of the race are strongest, has anything at all approaching to our ballads.^[35] Though the Tuscan contadini are always singing, it rarely happens that

The plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.

277

On the contrary, we may be sure, when we hear their voices ringing through the olive-groves or macchi, that they are chanting

Some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day,—
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again;

or else, since their melodies are by no means uniformly sad, some ditty of the joyousness of springtime or the ecstasy of love.

[35] This sentence requires some qualification. In his *Poesia Popolare Italiana*, 1878, Professor d'Ancona prints a Pisan, a Venetian, and two Lombard versions of our Border ballad 'Where hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son,' so close in general type and minor details to the English, German, Swedish, and Finnish versions of this Volkslied as to suggest a very ancient community of origin. It remains as yet, however, an isolated fact in the history of Italian popular poetry.

This defect of anything corresponding to our ballads of 'Chevy Chase,' or 'Sir Patrick Spens,' or 'Gil Morrice,' in a poetry which is still so vital with the life of past centuries, is all the more remarkable because Italian history is distinguished above that of other nations by tragic episodes peculiarly suited to poetic treatment. Many of these received commemoration in the fourteenth century from Dante; others were embodied in the *novelle* of Boccaccio and Cinthio and Bandello, whence they passed into the dramas of Shakspeare, Webster, Ford, and their contemporaries. But scarcely an echo can be traced through all the volumes of the recently collected popular songs. We must seek for an explanation of this fact partly in the conditions of Italian life, and partly in the nature of the Italian imagination. Nowhere in Italy do we observe that intimate connection between the people at large and the great nobles which generates the sympathy of clanship. Politics in most parts of the peninsula fell at a very early period into the hands either of irresponsible princes, who ruled like despots, or else of burghers, who administered the state within the walls of their Palazzo Pubblico. The people remained passive spectators of contemporary history. The loyalty of subjects to their sovereign which animates the Spanish ballads, the loyalty of retainers to their chief which gives life to the tragic ballads of the Border, did not exist in Italy. Country-folk felt no interest in the doings of Visconti or Medici or Malatesti sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of local bards or to call forth the celebration of their princely tragedies in verse. Amid the miseries of foreign wars and home oppression, it seemed better to demand from verse and song some mitigation of the woes of life, some expression of personal emotion, than to record the disasters which to us at a distance appear poetic in their grandeur.

278

These conditions of popular life, although unfavourable to the production of ballad poetry, would not, however, have been sufficient by themselves to check its growth, if the Italians had been strongly impelled to literature of this type by their nature. The real reason why their

Volkslieder are amorous and personal is to be found in the quality of their imagination. The Italian genius is not creatively imaginative in the highest sense. The Italians have never, either in the ancient or the modern age, produced a great drama or a national epic, the 'Æneid' and the 'Divine Comedy' being obviously of different species from the 'Iliad' or the 'Nibelungen Lied.' Modern Italians, again, are distinguished from the French, the Germans, and the English in being the conscious inheritors of an older, august, and strictly classical civilisation. The great memories of Rome weigh down their faculties of invention. It would also seem as though they shrank in their poetry from the representation of what is tragic and spirit-stirring. They incline to what is cheerful, brilliant, or pathetic. The dramatic element in human life, external to the personality of the poet, which exercised so strong a fascination over our ballad-bards and playwrights, has but little attraction for the Italian. When he sings, he seeks to express his own individual emotions—his love, his joy, his jealousy, his anger, his despair. The language which he uses is at the same time direct in its intensity, and hyperbolic in its display of fancy; but it lacks those imaginative touches which exalt the poetry of personal passion into a sublimer region. Again, the Italians are deficient in a sense of the supernatural. The wraiths that cannot rest because their love is still unsatisfied, the voices which cry by night over field and fell, the water-spirits and forest fairies, the second-sight of coming woes, the presentiment of death, the warnings and the charms and spells, which fill the popular poetry of all Northern nations, are absent in Italian songs. In the whole of Tigri's collection I only remember one mention of a ghost. It is not that the Italians are deficient in superstitions of all kinds. Every one has heard of their belief in the evil eye, for instance. But they do not connect this kind of fetishism with their poetry; and even their greatest poets, with the exception of Dante, have shown no capacity or no inclination for enhancing the imaginative effect of their creations by an appeal to the instinct of mysterious awe.

279

The truth is that the Italians as a race are distinguished as much by a firm grasp upon the practical realities of existence as by powerful emotions. They have but little of that dreamy *Schwärmerei* with which the people of the North are largely gifted. The true sphere of their genius is painting. What appeals to the imagination through the eyes, they have expressed far better than any other modern nation. But their poetry, like their music, is deficient in tragic sublimity and in the higher qualities of imaginative creation.

It may seem paradoxical to say this of the nation which produced Dante. But we must remember not to judge races by single and exceptional men of genius. Petrarch, the Troubadour of exquisite emotions, Boccaccio, who touches all the keys of life so lightly, Ariosto, with the smile of everlasting April on his lips, and Tasso, excellent alone when he confines himself to pathos or the picturesque, are no exceptions to what I have just said. Yet these poets pursued their art with conscious purpose. The tragic splendour of Greece, the majesty of Rome, were not unknown to them. Far more is it true that popular poetry in Italy, proceeding from the hearts of uncultivated peasants and expressing the national character in its simplicity, displays none of the stuff from which the greatest works of art in verse, epics and dramas, can be wrought. But within its own sphere of personal emotion, this popular poetry is exquisitely melodious, inexhaustibly rich, unique in modern literature for the direct expression which it has given to every shade of passion.

280

Signor Tigri's collection,^[36] to which I shall confine my attention in this paper, consists of eleven hundred and eighty-five *rispetti*, with the addition of four hundred and sixty-one *stornelli*. Rispetto, it may be said in passing, is the name commonly given throughout Italy to short poems, varying from six to twelve lines, constructed on the principle of the octave stanza. That is to say, the first part of the rispetto consists of four or six lines with alternate rhymes, while one or more couplets, called the *ripresa*, complete the poem.^[37] The stornello, or ritournelle, never exceeds three lines, and owes its name to the return which it makes at the end of the last line to the rhyme given by the emphatic word of the first. Browning, in his poem of 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' has accustomed English ears to one common species of the stornello,^[38] which sets out with the name of a flower, and rhymes with it, as thus:

281

Fior di narciso.
Prigionero d'amore mi son reso,
Nel rimirare il tuo leggiadro viso.

[36] *Canti Popolari Toscani*, raccolti e annotati da Giuseppe Tigri. Volume unico. Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1869.

[37] This is a description of the Tuscan *rispetto*. In Sicily the stanza generally consists of eight lines rhyming alternately throughout, while in the North of Italy it is normally a simple quatrain. The same poetical material assumes in Northern, Central, and Southern Italy these diverge but associated forms.

[38] This song, called *Ciure* (Sicilian for *fiore*) in Sicily, is said by Signor Pitré to be in disrepute there. He once asked an old dame of Palermo to repeat him some of these ditties. Her answer was, 'You must get them from light women; I do not know any. They sing them in bad houses and prisons, where, God be praised, I have never been.' In Tuscany there does not appear to be so marked a distinction between the flower song and the *rispetto*.

The divisions of those two sorts of songs, to which Tigri gives names like The Beauty of Women, The Beauty of Men, Falling in Love, Serenades, Happy Love, Unhappy Love, Parting, Absence, Letters, Return to Home, Anger and Jealousy, Promises, Entreaties and Reproaches, Indifference, Treachery and Abandonment, prove with what fulness the various phases of the tender passion are treated. Through the whole fifteen hundred the one theme of Love is never relinquished. Only two persons, 'I' and 'thou,' appear upon the scene; yet so fresh and so various are the moods of feeling, that one can read them from first to last without too much satiety.

To seek for the authors of these ditties would be useless. Some of them may be as old as the fourteenth century; others may have been made yesterday. Some are the native product of the Tuscan mountain villages, especially of the regions round Pistoja and Siena, where on the spurs of the Apennines the purest Italian is vernacular. Some, again, are importations from other provinces, especially from Sicily and Naples, caught up by the peasants of Tuscany and adapted to their taste and style; for nothing travels faster than a *Volklied*. Born some morning in a noisy street of Naples, or on the solitary slopes of Radicofani, before the week is out, a hundred voices are repeating it. Waggoners and pedlars carry it across the hills to distant towns. It floats with the fishermen from bay to bay, and marches with the conscript to his barrack in a far-off province. Who was the first to give it shape and form? No one asks, and no one cares. A student well acquainted with the habits of the people in these matters says, 'If they knew the author of a ditty, they would not learn it, far less if they discovered that it was a scholar's.' If the cadence takes their ear, they consecrate the song at once by placing it upon the honoured list of 'ancient lays.' Passing from lip to lip and from district to district, it receives additions and alterations, and becomes the property of a score of provinces. Meanwhile the poet from whose soul it blossomed that first morning like a flower, remains contented with obscurity. The wind has carried from his lips the thistledown of song, and sown it on a hundred hills and meadows, far and wide. After such wise is the birth of all truly popular compositions. Who knows, for instance, the veritable author of many of those mighty German chorals which sprang into being at the period of the Reformation? The first inspiration was given, probably, to a single mind; but the melody, as it has reached us, is the product of a thousand. This accounts for the variations which in different dialects and districts the same song presents. Meanwhile, it is sometimes possible to trace the authorship of a ballad with marked local character to an improvisatore famous in his village, or to one of those professional rhymesters whom the country-folk employ in the composition of love-letters to their sweethearts at a distance.^[39] Tommaseo, in the preface to his 'Canti Popolari,' mentions in particular a Beatrice di Pian degli Ontani, whose poetry was famous through the mountains of Pistoja; and Tigri records by name a little girl called Cherubina, who made *rispetti* by the dozen as she watched her sheep upon the hills. One of the songs in his collection (p. 181) contains a direct reference to the village letter-writer:—

Salutatemi, bella, lo scrivano;
Non lo conosco e non so chi si sia.
A me mi pare un poeta sovrano,
Tanto gli è sperto nella poesia.^[40]

[39] Much light has lately been thrown on the popular poetry of Italy; and it appears that contemporary improvisatori trust more to their richly stocked memories and to their power of recombination than to original or novel inspiration. It is in Sicily that the vein of truly creative lyric utterance is said to flow most freely and most copiously at the present time.

[40] 'Remember me, fair one, to the scrivener. I do not know him or who he is, but he seems to me a sovereign poet, so cunning is

While I am writing thus about the production and dissemination of these love-songs, I cannot help remembering three days and nights which I once spent at sea between Genoa and Palermo, in the company of some conscripts who were going to join their regiment in Sicily. They were lads from the Milanese and Liguria, and they spent a great portion of their time in composing and singing poetry. One of them had a fine baritone voice; and when the sun had set, his comrades gathered round him and begged him to sing to them 'Con quella patetica tua voce.' Then followed hours of singing, the low monotonous melodies of his ditties harmonising wonderfully with the tranquillity of night, so clear and calm that the sky and all its stars were mirrored on the sea, through which we moved as if in a dream. Sometimes the songs provoked conversation, which, as is usual in Italy, turned mostly upon 'le bellezze delle donne.' I remember that once an animated discussion about the relative merits of blondes and brunettes nearly ended in a quarrel, when the youngest of the whole band, a boy of about seventeen, put a stop to the dispute by theatrically raising his eyes and arms to heaven and crying, 'Tu sei innamorato d' una grande Diana cacciatrice nera, ed io d' una bella Venere bionda.' Though they were but village lads, they supported their several opinions with arguments not unworthy of Firenzuola, and showed the greatest delicacy of feeling in the treatment of a subject which could scarcely have failed to reveal any latent coarseness.

284

The purity of all the Italian love-songs collected by Tigri is very remarkable.^[41] Although the passion expressed in them is Oriental in its vehemence, not a word falls which could offend a virgin's ear. The one desire of lovers is lifelong union in marriage. The *damo*—for so a sweetheart is termed in Tuscany—trembles until he has gained the approval of his future mother-in-law, and forbids the girl he is courting to leave her house to talk to him at night:—

Dice che tu tî affacci alia finestra;
Ma non tî dice che tu vada fuora,
Perchè, la notte, è cosa disonesta.

All the language of his love is respectful. *Signore*, or master of my soul, *madonna*, *anima mia*, *dolce mio ben*, *nobil persona*, are the terms of adoration with which he approaches his mistress. The elevation of feeling and perfect breeding which Manzoni has so well delineated in the loves of Renzo and Lucia are traditional among Italian country-folk. They are conscious that true gentleness is no matter of birth or fortune:—

285

E tu non mi lasciar per povertà,
Chè povertà non guasta gentilezza.^[42]

This in itself constitutes an important element of culture, and explains to some extent the high romantic qualities of their impassioned poetry. The beauty of their land reveals still more. 'O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint!' Virgil's exclamation is as true now as it was when he sang the labours of Italian country-folk some nineteen centuries ago. To a traveller from the north there is a pathos even in the contrast between the country in which these children of a happier climate toil, and those bleak, winter-beaten fields where our own peasants pass their lives. The cold nights and warm days of Tuscan springtime are like a Swiss summer. They make rich pasture and a hardy race of men. Tracts of corn and oats and rye alternate with patches of flax in full flower, with meadows yellow with buttercups or pink with ragged robin; the young vines, running from bough to bough of elm and mulberry, are just coming into leaf. The poplars are fresh with bright green foliage. On the verge of this blooming plain stand ancient cities ringed with hills, some rising to snowy Apennines, some covered with white convents and sparkling with villas. Cypressess shoot, black and spirelike, amid grey clouds of olive-boughs upon the slopes; and above, where vegetation borders on the barren rock, are masses of ilex and arbutus interspersed with chestnut-trees not yet in leaf. Men and women are everywhere at work, ploughing with great white oxen, or tilling the soil with spades six feet in length—Sabellian ligones. The songs of nightingales among acacia-trees, and the sharp scream of swallows wheeling in air, mingle with the monotonous chant that always rises from the country-people at their toil. Here and there on points of vantage, where the hill-slopes sink into the plain, cluster white villages with flower-like campanili. It is there that the *veglia*, or evening rendezvous of lovers, the serenades and balls and feste, of which one hears so much in the popular minstrelsy, take place. Of course it would not be difficult to paint the darker shades of this picture. Autumn comes, when the contadini of Lucca and Siena and

286

Pistoja go forth to work in the unwholesome marshes of the Maremma, or of Corsica and Sardinia. Dismal superstitions and hereditary hatreds cast their blight over a life externally so fair. The bad government of centuries has perverted in many ways the instincts of a people naturally mild and cheerful and peace-loving. But as far as nature can make men happy, these husbandmen are surely to be reckoned fortunate, and in their songs we find little to remind us of what is otherwise than sunny in their lot.

[41] It must be remarked that Tigri draws a strong contrast in this respect between the songs of the mountain districts which he has printed and those of the towns, and that Pitrè, in his edition of Sicilian *Volkslieder*, expressly alludes to the coarseness of a whole class which he had omitted. The MSS. of Sicilian and Tuscan songs, dating from the fifteenth century and earlier, yield a fair proportion of decidedly obscene compositions. Yet the fact stated above is integrally correct. When acclimatised in the large towns, the rustic Muse not unfrequently assumes a garb of grossness. At home, among the fields and on the mountains, she remains chaste and romantic.

[42] In a *rispetto*, of which I subjoin a translation, sung by a poor lad to a mistress of higher rank, love itself is pleaded as the sign of a gentle soul:—

My state is poor: I am not meet
 To court so nobly born a love;
 For poverty hath tied my feet,
 Trying to climb too far above.
 Yet am I gentle, loving thee;
 Nor need thou shun my poverty.

A translator of these *Volkslieder* has to contend with difficulties of no ordinary kind. The freshness of their phrases, the spontaneity of their sentiments, and the melody of their unstudied cadences, are inimitable. So again is the peculiar effect of their frequent transitions from the most fanciful imagery to the language of prose. No mere student can hope to rival, far less to reproduce, in a foreign tongue, the charm of verse which sprang untaught from the hearts of simple folk, which lives unwritten on the lips of lovers, and which should never be dissociated from singing.^[43] There are, besides, peculiarities in the very structure of the popular *rispetto*. The constant repetition of the same phrase with slight variations, especially in the closing lines of the *ripresa* of the Tuscan *rispetto*, gives an antique force and flavour to these ditties, like that which we appreciate in our own ballads, but which may easily, in the translation, degenerate into weakness and insipidity. The Tuscan rhymester, again, allows himself the utmost licence. It is usual to find mere assonances like *bene* and *piacere*, *oro* and *volo*, *ala* and *alata*, in the place of rhymes; while such remote resemblances of sound as *colli* and *poggi*, *lascia* and *piazza*, are far from uncommon. To match these rhymes by joining 'home' and 'alone,' 'time' and 'shine,' &c, would of course be a matter of no difficulty; but it has seemed to me on the whole best to preserve, with some exceptions, such accuracy as the English ear requires. I fear, however, that, after all, these wild-flowers of song, transplanted to another climate and placed in a hothouse, will appear but pale and hectic by the side of their robuster brethren of the Tuscan hills.

287

[43] When the Cherubina, of whom mention has been made above, was asked by Signor Tigri to dictate some of her *rispetti*, she answered, 'O signore! ne dico tanti quando li canto! . . . ma ora . . . bisognerebbe averli tutti in visione; se no, proprio non vengono.'

In the following serenade many of the peculiarities which I have just noticed occur. I have also adhered to the irregularity of rhyme which may be usually observed about the middle of the poem (p. 103):—

288

Sleeping or waking, thou sweet face,
 Lift up thy fair and tender brow:
 List to thy love in this still place;
 He calls thee to thy window now:
 But bids thee not the house to quit,
 Since in the night this were not meet.
 Come to thy window, stay within;
 I stand without, and sing and sing:
 Come to thy window, stay at home;
 I stand without, and make my moan.

Here is a serenade of a more impassioned character (p. 99):—

I come to visit thee, my beauteous queen,
Thee and the house where thou art harboured:
All the long way upon my knees, my queen,
I kiss the earth where'er thy footsteps tread.
I kiss the earth, and gaze upon the wall,
Whereby thou goest, maid imperial!
I kiss the earth, and gaze upon the house,
Whereby thou farest, queen most beauteous!

In the next the lover, who has passed the whole night beneath his sweetheart's window, takes leave at the break of day. The feeling of the half-hour before dawn, when the sound of bells rises to meet the growing light, and both form a prelude to the glare and noise of day, is expressed with much unconscious poetry (p. 105):—

I see the dawn e'en now begin to peer:
Therefore I take my leave, and cease to sing,
See how the windows open far and near,
And hear the bells of morning, how they ring!
Through heaven and earth the sounds of ringing swell;
Therefore, bright jasmine flower, sweet maid, farewell!
Through heaven and Rome the sound of ringing goes;
Farewell, bright jasmine flower, sweet maiden rose!

The next is more quaint (p. 99):—

289

I come by night, I come, my soul aflame;
I come in this fair hour of your sweet sleep;
And should I wake you up, it were a shame.
I cannot sleep, and lo! I break your sleep.
To wake you were a shame from your deep rest;
Love never sleeps, nor they whom Love hath blest.

A very great many *rispetti* are simple panegyrics of the beloved, to find similitude for whose beauty heaven and earth are ransacked. The compliment of the first line in the following song is perfect (p. 23):—

Beauty was born with you, fair maid:
The sun and moon inclined to you;
On you the snow her whiteness laid
The rose her rich and radiant hue:
Saint Magdalen her hair unbound,
And Cupid taught you how to wound—
How to wound hearts Dan Cupid taught:
Your beauty drives me love-distraught.

The lady in the next was December's child (p. 25):—

O beauty, born in winter's night,
Born in the month of spotless snow:
Your face is like a rose so bright;
Your mother may be proud of you!
She may be proud, lady of love,
Such sunlight shines her house above:
She may be proud, lady of heaven,
Such sunlight to her home is given.

The sea wind is the source of beauty to another (p. 16):—

Nay, marvel not you are so fair;
For you beside the sea were born:
The sea-waves keep you fresh and fair,
Like roses on their leafy thorn.

If roses grow on the rose-bush,
Your roses through midwinter blush;
If roses bloom on the rose-bed,
Your face can show both white and red.

290

The eyes of a fourth are compared, after quite a new and original fashion, to stars (p. 210):—

The moon hath risen her plaint to lay
Before the face of Love Divine.
Saying in heaven she will not stay,
Since you have stolen what made her shine:
Aloud she wails with sorrow wan,—
She told her stars and two are gone:
They are not there; you have them now;
They are the eyes in your bright brow.

Nor are girls less ready to praise their lovers, but that they do not dwell so much on physical perfection. Here is a pleasant greeting (p. 124):—

O welcome, welcome, lily white,
Thou fairest youth of all the valley!
When I'm with you, my soul is light;
I chase away dull melancholy.
I chase all sadness from my heart:
Then welcome, dearest that thou art!
I chase all sadness from my side:
Then welcome, O my love, my pride!
I chase all sadness far away:
Then welcome, welcome, love, to-day!

The image of a lily is very prettily treated in the next (p 79):—

I planted a lily yestreen at my window;
I set it yestreen, and to-day it sprang up:
When I opened the latch and leaned out of my window,
It shadowed my face with its beautiful cup.
O lily, my lily, how tall you are grown!
Remember how dearly I loved you, my own.
O lily, my lily, you'll grow to the sky!
Remember I love you for ever and aye.

The same thought of love growing like a flower receives another turn (p. 69):—

291

On yonder hill I saw a flower;
And, could it thence be hither borne,
I'd plant it here within my bower,
And water it both eve and morn.
Small water wants the stem so straight;
'Tis a love-lily stout as fate.
Small water wants the root so strong:
'Tis a love-lily lasting long.
Small water wants the flower so sheen:
'Tis a love-lily ever green.

Envious tongues have told a girl that her complexion is not good. She replies, with imagery like that of Virgil's 'Alba ligustra cadunt, vaccinia nigra leguntur' (p. 31):—

Think it no grief that I am brown,
For all brunettes are born to reign:
White is the snow, yet trodden down;
Black pepper kings need not disdain:
White snow lies mounded on the vales
Black pepper's weighed in brazen scales.

Another song runs on the same subject (p. 38):—

The whole world tells me that I'm brown,
The brown earth gives us goodly corn:
The clove-pink too, however brown,
Yet proudly in the hand 'tis borne.
They say my love is black, but he
Shines like an angel-form to me:
They say my love is dark as night;
To me he seems a shape of light.

The freshness of the following spring song recalls the ballads of the Val de Vire in Normandy (p. 85):—

It was the morning of the first of May,
Into the close I went to pluck a flower;
And there I found a bird of woodland gay,
Who whiled with songs of love the silent hour.

O bird, who fliest from fair Florence, how
Dear love begins, I prithee teach me now!—
Love it begins with music and with song,
And ends with sorrow and with sighs ere long.

292

Love at first sight is described (p. 79):—

The very moment that we met,
That moment love began to beat:
One glance of love we gave, and swore
Never to part for evermore;
We swore together, sighing deep,
Never to part till Death's long sleep.

Here too is a memory of the first days of love (p. 79):—

If I remember, it was May
When love began between us two:

The roses in the close were gay,
The cherries blackened on the bough.
O cherries black and pears so green!
Of maidens fair you are the queen.
Fruit of black cherry and sweet pear!
Of sweethearts you're the queen, I swear.

The troth is plighted with such promises as these (p. 230):—

Or ere I leave you, love divine,
Dead tongues shall stir and utter speech,
And running rivers flow with wine,
And fishes swim upon the beach;
Or ere I leave or shun you, these
Lemons shall grow on orange-trees.

The girl confesses her love after this fashion (p. 86):—

Passing across the billowy sea,
I let, alas, my poor heart fall;
I bade the sailors bring it me;
They said they had not seen it fall.
I asked the sailors, one and two;
They said that I had given it you.
I asked the sailors, two and three;
They said that I had given it thee.

It is not uncommon to speak of love as a sea. Here is a curious play upon this image (p. 227):—

293

Ho, Cupid! Sailor Cupid, ho!
Lend me awhile that bark of thine;
For on the billows I will go,
To find my love who once was mine:
And if I find her, she shall wear
A chain around her neck so fair,
Around her neck a glittering bond,
Four stars, a lily, a diamond.

It is also possible that the same thought may occur in the second line of the next ditty (p. 120):—

Beneath the earth I'll make a way
To pass the sea and come to you.
People will think I'm gone away;
But, dear, I shall be seeing you.
People will say that I am dead;
But we'll pluck roses white and red:
People will think I'm lost for aye;
But we'll pluck roses, you and I.

All the little daily incidents are beautified by love. Here is a lover who thanks the mason for making his window so close upon the road that he can see his sweetheart as she passes (p. 118):—

Blest be the mason's hand who built
This house of mine by the roadside,
And made my window low and wide
For me to watch my love go by.
And if I knew when she went by,
My window should be fairly gilt;
And if I knew what time she went,
My window should be flower-besprent.

Here is a conceit which reminds one of the pretty epistle of Philostratus, in which the footsteps of the beloved are called *ερηρησμένα Φιλήματα* (p. 117):—

What time I see you passing by;
I sit and count the steps you take:
You take the steps; I sit and sigh:
Step after step, my sighs awake.
Tell me, dear love, which more abound,
My sighs or your steps on the ground?
Tell me, dear love, which are the most,
Your light steps or the sighs they cost?

294

A girl complains that she cannot see her lover's house (p. 117):—

I lean upon the lattice, and look forth
To see the house where my lover dwells.
There grows an envious tree that spoils my mirth:
Cursed be the man who set it on these hills!
But when those jealous boughs are all unclad,

I then shall see the cottage of my lad:
When once that tree is rooted from the hills,
I'll see the house wherein my lover dwells.

In the same mood a girl who has just parted from her sweetheart is angry with the hill beyond which he is travelling (p. 167):—

I see and see, yet see not what I would:
I see the leaves atremble on the tree:
I saw my love where on the hill he stood,
Yet see him not drop downward to the lea.
O traitor hill, what will you do?
I ask him, live or dead, from you.
O traitor hill, what shall it be?
I ask him, live or dead, from thee.

All the songs of love in absence are very quaint. Here is one which calls our nursery rhymes to mind (p. 119):—

I would I were a bird so free,
That I had wings to fly away:
Unto that window I would flee,
Where stands my love and grinds all day.
Grind, miller, grind; the water's deep!
I cannot grind; love makes me weep.
Grind, miller, grind; the waters flow!
I cannot grind; love wastes me so.

295

The next begins after the same fashion, but breaks into a very shower of benedictions (p. 118):—

Would God I were a swallow free,
That I had wings to fly away:
Upon the miller's door I'd be,
Where stands my love and grinds all day:
Upon the door, upon the sill,
Where stays my love;—God bless him still!
God bless my love, and blessed be
His house, and bless my house for me;
Yea, blest be both, and ever blest
My lover's house, and all the rest!

The girl alone at home in her garden sees a wood-dove flying by and calls to it (p. 179):—

O dove, who fliest far to yonder hill,
Dear dove, who in the rock hast made thy nest,
Let me a feather from thy pinion pull,
For I will write to him who loves me best.
And when I've written it and made it clear,
I'll give thee back thy feather, dove so dear:
And when I've written it and sealed it, then
I'll give thee back thy feather love-laden.

A swallow is asked to lend the same kind service (p. 179):—

O swallow, swallow, flying through the air,
Turn, turn, I prithee, from thy flight above!
Give me one feather from thy wing so fair,
For I will write a letter to my love.
When I have written it and made it clear,
I'll give thee back thy feather, swallow dear;
When I have written it on paper white,
I'll make, I swear, thy missing feather right;
When once 'tis written on fair leaves of gold,
I'll give thee back thy wing and flight so bold.

Long before Tennyson's song in the 'Princess,' it would seem that swallows were favourite messengers of love. In the next song which I translate, the repetition of one thought with delicate variation is full of character (p. 178):—

296

O swallow, flying over hill and plain,
If thou shouldst find my love, oh bid him come!
And tell him, on these mountains I remain
Even as a lamb who cannot find her home:
And tell him, I am left all, all alone,
Even as a tree whose flowers are overblown:
And tell him, I am left without a mate
Even as a tree whose boughs are desolate:
And tell him, I am left uncomforted
Even as the grass upon the meadows dead.

The following is spoken by a girl who has been watching the lads of the

village returning from their autumn service in the plain, and whose damo comes the last of all (p. 240):—

O dear my love, you come too late!
What found you by the way to do?
I saw your comrades pass the gate,
But yet not you, dear heart, not you!
If but a little more you'd stayed,
With sighs you would have found me dead;
If but a while you'd keep me crying,
With sighs you would have found me dying.

The *amantium iræ* find a place too in these rustic ditties. A girl explains to her sweetheart (p. 240):—

'Twas told me and vouchsafed for true,
Your kin are wroth as wroth can be;
For loving me they swear at you,
They swear at you because of me;
Your father, mother, all your folk,
Because you love me, chafe and choke!
Then set your kith and kin at ease;
Set them at ease and let me die:
Set the whole clan of them at ease;
Set them at ease and see me die!

Another suspects that her damo has paid his suit to a rival (p. 200):—

297

On Sunday morning well I knew
Where gaily dressed you turned your feet;
And there were many saw it too,
And came to tell me through the street:
And when they spoke, I smiled, ah me!
But in my room wept privately;
And when they spoke, I sang for pride,
But in my room alone I sighed.

Then come reconciliations (p. 223):—

Let us make peace, my love, my bliss!
For cruel strife can last no more.
If you say nay, yet I say yes:
'Twixt me and you there is no war.
Princes and mighty lords make peace;
And so may lovers twain, I wis:
Princes and soldiers sign a truce;
And so may two sweethearts like us:
Princes and potentates agree;
And so may friends like you and me.

There is much character about the following, which is spoken by the damo (p. 223):—

As yonder mountain height I trod,
I chanced to think of your dear name;
I knelt with clasped hands on the sod,
And thought of my neglect with shame:
I knelt upon the stone, and swore
Our love should bloom as heretofore.

Sometimes the language of affection takes a more imaginative tone, as in the following (p. 232):—

Dearest, what time you mount to heaven above,
I'll meet you holding in my hand my heart:
You to your breast shall clasp me full of love,
And I will lead you to our Lord apart.

Our Lord, when he our love so true hath known,
Shall make of our two hearts one heart alone;
One heart shall make of our two hearts, to rest
In heaven amid the splendours of the blest.

298

This was the woman's. Here is the man's (p. 113):—

If I were master of all loveliness,
I'd make thee still more lovely than thou art:
If I were master of all wealthiness,
Much gold and silver should be thine, sweetheart:
If I were master of the house of hell,
I'd bar the brazen gates in thy sweet face;
Or ruled the place where purging spirits dwell,
I'd free thee from that punishment apace.
Were I in paradise and thou shouldst come,

I'd stand aside, my love, to make thee room;
Were I in paradise, well seated there,
I'd quit my place to give it thee, my fair!

Sometimes, but very rarely, weird images are sought to clothe passion, as in the following (p. 136):—

Down into hell I went and thence returned:
Ah me! alas! the people that were there!
I found a room where many candles burned,
And saw within my love that languished there.
When as she saw me, she was glad of cheer,
And at the last she said: Sweet soul of mine;
Dost thou recall the time long past, so dear,
When thou didst say to me, Sweet soul of mine?
Now kiss me on the mouth, my dearest, here;
Kiss me that I for once may cease to pine!
So sweet, ah me, is thy dear mouth, so dear,
That of thy mercy pritheee sweeten mine!
Now, love, that thou hast kissed me, now, I say,
Look not to leave this place again for aye.

Or again in this (p. 232):—

Methinks I hear, I hear a voice that cries:
Beyond the hill it floats upon the air.
It is my lover come to bid me rise,
If I am fain forthwith toward heaven to fare.

But I have answered him, and said him No!
I've given my paradise, my heaven, for you:
Till we together go to paradise,
I'll stay on earth and love your beauteous eyes.

299

But it is not with such remote and eerie thoughts that the rustic muse of Italy can deal successfully. Far better is the following half-playful description of love-sadness (p. 71):—

Ah me, alas! who know not how to sigh!
Of sighs I now full well have learned the art:
Sighing at table when to eat I try,
Sighing within my little room apart,
Sighing when jests and laughter round me fly,
Sighing with her and her who know my heart:
I sigh at first, and then I go on sighing;
'Tis for your eyes that I am ever sighing:
I sigh at first, and sigh the whole year through;
And 'tis your eyes that keep me sighing so.

The next two *rispetti*, delicious in their naïveté, might seem to have been extracted from the libretto of an opera, but that they lack the sympathising chorus, who should have stood at hand, ready to chime in with 'he,' 'she,' and 'they,' to the 'I,' 'you,' and 'we' of the lovers (p. 123):

Ah, when will dawn that glorious day
When you will softly mount my stair?
My kin shall bring you on the way;
I shall be first to greet you there.
Ah, when will dawn that day of bliss
When we before the priest say Yes?

Ah, when will dawn that blissful day
When I shall softly mount your stair,
Your brothers meet me on the way,
And one by one I greet them there?
When comes the day, my staff, my strength,
To call your mother mine at length?
When will the day come, love of mine,
I shall be yours and you be mine?

Hitherto the songs have told only of happy love, or of love returned. Some of the best, however, are unhappy. Here is one, for instance, steeped in gloom (p. 142):—

They have this custom in fair Naples town;
They never mourn a man when he is dead:
The mother weeps when she has reared a son
To be a serf and slave by love misled;
The mother weeps when she a son hath born
To be the serf and slave of galley scorn;
The mother weeps when she a son gives suck
To be the serf and slave of city luck.

300

The following contains a fine wildimage, wrought out with strange passion in detail (p. 300):—

I'll spread a table brave for revelry,
And to the feast will bid sad lovers all.
For meat I'll give them my heart's misery;
For drink I'll give these briny tears that fall.
Sorrows and sighs shall be the varletry,
To serve the lovers at this festival:
The table shall be death, black death profound;
Weep, stones, and utter sighs, ye walls around!
The table shall be death, yea, sacred death;
Weep, stones, and sigh as one that sorroweth!

Nor is the next a whit less in the vein of mad Jeronimo (p. 304):—

High up, high up, a house I'll rear,
High up, high up, on yonder height;
At every window set a snare,
With treason, to betray the night;
With treason, to betray the stars,
Since I'm betrayed by my false feres;
With treason, to betray the day,
Since Love betrayed me, well away!

The vengeance of an Italian reveals itself in the energetic song which I quote next (p. 303):—

I have a sword; 'twould cut a brazen bell,
Tough steel 'twould cut, if there were any need:
I've had it tempered in the streams of hell
By masters mighty in the mystic rede:
I've had it tempered by the light of stars;
Then let him come whose skin is stout as Mars;
I've had it tempered to a trenchant blade;
Then let him come who stole from me my maid.

301

More mild, but brimful of the bitterness of a soul to whom the whole world has become but ashes in the death of love, is the following lament (p. 143):—

Call me the lovely Golden Locks no more,
But call me Sad Maid of the golden hair.
If there be wretched women, sure I think
I too may rank among the most forlorn.
I fling a palm into the sea; 'twill sink:
Others throw lead, and it is lightly borne.
What have I done, dear Lord, the world to cross?
Gold in my hand forthwith is turned to dross.
How have I made, dear Lord, dame Fortune wroth?
Gold in my hand forthwith is turned to froth.
What have I done, dear Lord, to fret the folk?
Gold in my hand forthwith is turned to smoke.

Here is pathos (p. 172):—

The wood-dove who hath lost her mate,
She lives a dolorous life, I ween;
She seeks a stream and bathes in it,
And drinks that water foul and green:
With other birds she will not mate,
Nor haunt, I wis, the flowery treen;
She bathes her wings and strikes her breast;
Her mate is lost: oh, sore unrest!

And here is fanciful despair (p. 168):—

I'll build a house of sobs and sighs,
With tears the lime I'll slack;
And there I'll dwell with weeping eyes
Until my love come back:
And there I'll stay with eyes that burn
Until I see my love return.

302

The house of love has been deserted, and the lover comes to moan beneath its silent eaves (p. 171):—

Dark house and window desolate!
Where is the sun which shone so fair?
'Twas here we danced and laughed at fate:
Now the stones weep; I see them there.
They weep, and feel a grievous chill:
Dark house and widowed window-sill!

And what can be more piteous than this prayer? (p. 809):—

Love, if you love me, delve a tomb,
And lay me there the earth beneath;
After a year, come see my bones,
And make them dice to play therewith.
But when you're tired of that game,
Then throw those dice into the flame;
But when you're tired of gaming free,
Then throw those dice into the sea.

The simpler expression of sorrow to the death is, as usual, more impressive. A girl speaks thus within sight of the grave (p. 808):—

Yes, I shall die: what wilt thou gain?
The cross before my bier will go;
And thou wilt hear the bells complain,
The *Misereres* loud and low.
Midmost the church thou'lt see me lie
With folded hands and frozen eye;
Then say at last, I do repent!—
Nought else remains when fires are spent.

Here is a rustic CEnone (p. 307):—

Fell death, that fliest fraught with woe!
Thy gloomy snares the world ensphere:
Where no man calls, thou lov'st to go;
But when we call, thou wilt not hear.
Fell death, false death of treachery,
Thou makest all content but me.

Another is less reproachful, but scarcely less sad (p. 308):—

303

Strew me with blossoms when I die,
Nor lay me 'neath the earth below;
Beyond those walls, there let me lie,
Where oftentimes we used to go.
There lay me to the wind and rain;
Dying for you, I feel no pain:
There lay me to the sun above;
Dying for you, I die of love.

Yet another of these pitiful love-wailings displays much poetry of expression (p. 271):—

I dug the sea, and delved the barren sand:
I wrote with dust and gave it to the wind:
Of melting snow, false Love, was made thy band,
Which suddenly the day's bright beams unbind.
Now am I ware, and know my own mistake—
How false are all the promises you make;
Now am I ware, and know the fact, ah me!
That who confides in you, deceived will be.

It would scarcely be well to pause upon these very doleful ditties. Take, then, the following little serenade, in which the lover on his way to visit his mistress has unconsciously fallen on the same thought as Bion (p. 85):—

Yestreen I went my love to greet,
By yonder village path below:
Night in a coppice found my feet;
I called the moon her light to show—
O moon, who needs no flame to fire thy face,
Look forth and lend me light a little space!

Enough has been quoted to illustrate the character of the Tuscan popular poetry. These village *rispetti* bear the same relation to the *canzoniere* of Petrarch as the 'savage drupe' to the 'suave plum.' They are, as it were, the wild stock of that highly artificial flower of art. Herein lies, perhaps, their chief importance. As in our ballad literature we may discern the stuff of the Elizabethan drama undeveloped, so in the Tuscan people's songs we can trace the crude form of that poetic instinct which produced the sonnets to Laura. It is also very probable that some such rustic minstrelsy preceded the *Idylls* of Theocritus and the *Bucolics* of Virgil; for coincidences of thought and imagery, which can scarcely be referred to any conscious study of the ancients, are not a few. Popular poetry has this great value for the student of literature: it enables him to trace those forms of fancy and of feeling which are native to the people, and which must ultimately determine the character of national art, however much that may be modified by culture.

304

POPULAR ITALIAN POETRY OF THE RENAISSANCE

The semi-popular poetry of the Italians in the fifteenth century formed an important branch of their national literature, and flourished independently of the courtly and scholastic studies which gave a special character to the golden age of the revival. While the latter tended to separate the people from the cultivated classes, the former established a new link of connection between them, different indeed from that which existed when smiths and carters repeated the Canzoni of Dante by heart in the fourteenth century, but still sufficiently real to exercise a weighty influence over the national development. Scholars like Angelo Poliziano, princes like Lorenzo de' Medici, men of letters like Feo Belcari and Benivieni, borrowed from the people forms of poetry, which they handled with refined taste, and appropriated to the uses of polite literature. The most important of these forms, native to the people but assimilated by the learned classes, were the Miracle Play or 'Sacra Rappresentazione;' the 'Ballata' or lyric to be sung while dancing; the 'Canto Carnascialesco' or Carnival Chorus; the 'Rispetto' or short love-ditty; the 'Lauda' or hymn; the 'Maggio' or May-song; and the 'Madrigale' or little part-song.

At Florence, where even under the despotism of the Medici a show of republican life still lingered, all classes joined in the amusements of carnival and spring time; and this poetry of the dance, the pageant, and the villa flourished side by side with the more serious efforts of the humanistic muse. It is not my purpose in this place to inquire into the origins of each lyrical type, to discuss the alterations they may have undergone at the hands of educated versifiers, or to define their several characteristics; but only to offer translations of such as seem to me best suited to represent the genius of the people and the age.

306

In the composition of the poetry in question, Angelo Poliziano was indubitably the most successful. This giant of learning, who filled the lecture-rooms of Florence with students of all nations, and whose critical and rhetorical labours marked an epoch in the history of scholarship, was by temperament a poet, and a poet of the people. Nothing was easier for him than to throw aside his professor's mantle, and to improvise 'Ballate' for the girls to sing as they danced their 'Carola' upon the Piazza di Santa Trinità in summer evenings. The peculiarity of this lyric is that it starts with a couplet, which also serves as refrain, supplying the rhyme to each successive stanza. The stanza itself is identical with our rime royal, if we count the couplet in the place of the seventh line. The form is in itself so graceful and is so beautifully treated by Poliziano that I cannot content myself with fewer than four of his *Ballate*.^[44] The first is written on the world-old theme of 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.'

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Violets and lilies grew on every side
Mid the green grass, and young flowers wonderful,
Golden and white and red and azure-eyed;
Toward which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
Plenty to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

307

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

But when my lap was full of flowers I spied
Roses at last, roses of every hue;
Therefore I ran to pluck their ruddy pride,
Because their perfume was so sweet and true
That all my soul went forth with pleasure new,
With yearning and desire too soft to say.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

I gazed and gazed. Hard task it were to tell
How lovely were the roses in that hour:
One was but peeping from her verdant shell,
And some were faded, some were scarce in flower:
Then Love said: Go, pluck from the blooming bower
Those that thou seest ripe upon the spray.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,

In a green garden in mid month of May.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath,
When she is sweetest and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses with great glee,
Sweet girls, or ere their perfume pass away.

I went a roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

[44] I need hardly guard myself against being supposed to mean that the form of *Ballata* in question was the only one of its kind in Italy.

The next *Ballata* is less simple, but is composed with the same intention. It may here be parenthetically mentioned that the courtly poet, when he applied himself to this species of composition, invented a certain rusticity of incident, scarcely in keeping with the spirit of his art. It was in fact a conventional feature of this species of verse that the scene should be laid in the country, where the burgher, on a visit to his villa, is supposed to meet with a rustic beauty who captivates his eyes and heart. Guido Cavalcanti, in his celebrated *Ballata*, 'In un boschetto trovai pastorella,' struck the keynote of this music, which, it may be reasonably conjectured, was imported into Italy through Provençal literature from the pastorals of Northern France. The lady so quaintly imaged by a bird in the following *Ballata* of Poliziano is supposed to have been Monna Ippolita Leoncina of Prato, white-throated, golden-haired, and dressed in crimson silk.

308

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

I do not think the world a field could show
With herbs of perfume so surpassing rare;
But when I passed beyond the green hedge-row,
A thousand flowers around me flourished fair,
White, pied and crimson, in the summer air;
Among the which I heard a sweet bird's tone.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

Her song it was so tender and so clear
That all the world listened with love; then I
With stealthy feet a-tiptoe drawing near,
Her golden head and golden wings could spy,
Her plumes that flashed like rubies 'neath the sky,
Her crystal beak and throat and bosom's zone.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

Fain would I snare her, smit with mighty love;
But arrow-like she soared, and through the air
Fled to her nest upon the boughs above;
Wherefore to follow her is all my care,
For haply I might lure her by some snare
Forth from the woodland wild where she is flown.

309

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

Yea, I might spread some net or woven wile;
But since of singing she doth take such pleasure,
Without or other art or other guile
I seek to win her with a tuneful measure;
Therefore in singing spend I all my leisure,
To make by singing this sweet bird my own.

I found myself one day all, all alone,
For pastime in a field with blossoms strewn.

The same lady is more directly celebrated in the next *Ballata*, where Poliziano calls her by her name, Ippolita. I have taken the liberty of substituting *Myrrha* for this somewhat unmanageable word.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on *Myrrha*'s eyes.

From *Myrrha*'s eyes there flieth, girt with fire,

An angel of our lord, a laughing boy,
Who lights in frozen hearts a flaming pyre,
And with such sweetness doth the soul destroy,
That while it dies, it murmurs forth its joy;
Oh blessed am I to dwell in Paradise!

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

From Myrrha's eyes a virtue still doth move,
So swift and with so fierce and strong a flight,
That it is like the lightning of high Jove,
Riving of iron and adamant the might;
Nathless the wound doth carry such delight
That he who suffers dwells in Paradise.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

From Myrrha's eyes a lovely messenger
Of joy so grave, so virtuous, doth flee,
That all proud souls are bound to bend to her;
So sweet her countenance, it turns the key
Of hard hearts locked in cold security:
Forth flies the prisoned soul to Paradise.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

In Myrrha's eyes beauty doth make her throne,
And sweetly smile and sweetly speak her mind:
Such grace in her fair eyes a man hath known
As in the whole wide world he scarce may find:
Yet if she slay him with a glance too kind,
He lives again beneath her gazing eyes.

He who knows not what thing is Paradise,
Let him look fixedly on Myrrha's eyes.

The fourth Ballata sets forth the fifteenth-century Italian code of love, the code of the Novelle, very different in its avowed laxity from the high ideal of the trecentisti poets.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

From those who feel the fire I feel, what use
Is there in asking pardon? These are so
Gentle, kind-hearted, tender, piteous,
That they will have compassion, well I know.
From such as never felt that honeyed woe,
I seek no pardon: nought they know of Love.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Honour, pure love, and perfect gentleness,
Weighed in the scales of equity refined,
Are but one thing: beauty is nought or less,
Placed in a dame of proud and scornful mind.
Who can rebuke me then if I am kind
So far as honesty comports and Love?

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Let him rebuke me whose hard heart of stone
Ne'er felt of Love the summer in his vein!
I pray to Love that who hath never known
Love's power, may ne'er be blessed with Love's great gain;
But he who serves our lord with might and main,
May dwell for ever in the fire of Love!

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

Let him rebuke me without cause who will;
For if he be not gentle, I fear nought:
My heart obedient to the same love still
Hath little heed of light words envy-fraught:
So long as life remains, it is my thought
To keep the laws of this so gentle Love.

I ask no pardon if I follow Love;
Since every gentle heart is thrall thereof.

This Ballata is put into a woman's mouth. Another, ascribed to Lorenzo de' Medici, expresses the sadness of a man who has lost the favour of his lady. It illustrates the well-known use of the word *Signore* for mistress in Florentine poetry.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me?

Dances and songs and merry wakes I leave
To lovers fair, more fortunate and gay;
Since to my heart so many sorrows cleave
That only doleful tears are mine for aye:
Who hath heart's ease, may carol, dance, and play
While I am fain to weep continually.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me?

I too had heart's ease once, for so Love willed,
When my lord loved me with love strong and great:
But envious fortune my life's music stilled,
And turned to sadness all my gleeful state.
Ah me! Death surely were less desolate
Than thus to live and love-neglected be!

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me?

One only comfort soothes my heart's despair,
And mid this sorrow lends my soul some cheer;
Unto my lord I ever yielded fair
Service of faith untainted pure and clear;
If then I die thus guiltless, on my bier
It may be she will shed one tear for me.

How can I sing light-souled and fancy-free,
When my loved lord no longer smiles on me?

The Florentine *Rispetto* was written for the most part in octave stanzas, detached or continuous. The octave stanza in Italian literature was an emphatically popular form; and it is still largely used in many parts of the peninsula for the lyrical expression of emotion.^[45] Poliziano did no more than treat it with his own facility, sacrificing the unstudied raciness of his popular models to literary elegance.

[45] See my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, p. 114.

Here are a few of these detached stanzas or *Rispetti Spicciolati*:—

Upon that day when first I saw thy face,
I vowed with loyal love to worship thee.
Move, and I move; stay, and I keep my place:
Whate'er thou dost, will I do equally.

In joy of thine I find most perfect grace,
And in thy sadness dwells my misery:
Laugh, and I laugh; weep, and I too will weep.
Thus Love commands, whose laws I loving keep.

Nay, be not over-proud of thy great grace,
Lady! for brief time is thy thief and mine.
White will he turn those golden curls, that lace
Thy forehead and thy neck so marble-fine.
Lo! while the flower still flourisheth apace,
Pluck it: for beauty but awhile doth shine.
Fair is the rose at dawn; but long ere night
Her freshness fades, her pride hath vanished quite.

Fire, fire! Ho, water! for my heart's afire!
Ho, neighbours! help me, or by God I die!
See, with his standard, that great lord, Desire!
He sets my heart aflame: in vain I cry.
Too late, alas! The flames mount high and higher.
Alack, good friends! I faint, I fail, I die.
Ho! water, neighbours mine! no more delay I
My heart's a cinder if you do but stay.

Lo, may I prove to Christ a renegade,
And, dog-like, die in pagan Barbary;
Nor may God's mercy on my soul be laid,

If ere for aught I shall abandon thee:
Before all-seeing God this prayer be made—
When I desert thee, may death feed on me:
Now if thy hard heart scorn these vows, be sure
That without faith none may abide secure.

I ask not, Love, for any other pain
To make thy cruel foe and mine repent,
Only that thou shouldst yield her to the strain
Of these my arms, alone, for chastisement;
Then would I clasp her so with might and main,
That she should learn to pity and relent,
And, in revenge for scorn and proud despite,
A thousand times I'd kiss her forehead white.

Not always do fierce tempests vex the sea,
Nor always clinging clouds offend the sky;
Cold snows before the sunbeams haste to flee,
Disclosing flowers that 'neath their whiteness lie;
The saints each one doth wait his day to see,
And time makes all things change; so, therefore, I
Ween that 'tis wise to wait my turn, and say,
That who subdues himself, deserves to sway.

314

It will be observed that the tone of these poems is not passionate nor elevated. Love, as understood in Florence of the fifteenth century, was neither; nor was Poliziano the man to have revived Platonic mysteries or chivalrous enthusiasms. When the octave stanzas, written with this amorous intention, were strung together into a continuous poem, this form of verse took the title of *Rispetto Gontinuato*. In the collection of Poliziano's poems there are several examples of the long *Rispetto*, carelessly enough composed, as may be gathered from the recurrence of the same stanzas in several poems. All repeat the old arguments, the old enticements to a less than lawful love. The one which I have chosen for translation, styled *Serenata ovvero Lettera in Istrambotti*, might be selected as an epitome of Florentine convention in the matter of love-making.

O thou of fairest fairs the first and queen,
Most courteous, kind, and honourable dame,
Thine ear unto thy servant's singing lean,
Who loves thee more than health, or wealth, or fame;
For thou his shining planet still hast been,
And day and night he calls on thy fair name:
First wishing thee all good the world can give,
Next praying in thy gentle thoughts to live.

He humbly prayeth that thou shouldst be kind
To think upon his pure and perfect faith,
And that such mercy in thy heart and mind
Should reign, as so much beauty argueth:
A thousand, thousand hints, or he were blind,
Of thy great courtesy he reckoneth:
Wherefore thy loyal subject now doth sue
Such guerdon only as shall prove them true.

315

He knows himself unmeet for love from thee,
Unmeet for merely gazing on thine eyes;
Seeing thy comely squires so plenteous be,
That there is none but 'neath thy beauty sighs:
Yet since thou seekest fame and bravery,
Nor carest aught for gauds that others prize,
And since he strives to honour thee alway,
He still hath hope to gain thy heart one day.

Virtue that dwells untold, unknown, unseen,
Still findeth none to love or value it;
Wherefore his faith, that hath so perfect been,
Not being known, can profit him no whit:
He would find pity in thine eyes, I ween,
If thou shouldst deign to make some proof of it;
The rest may flatter, gape, and stand agaze;
Him only faith above the crowd doth raise.

Suppose that he might meet thee once alone,
Face unto face, without or jealousy,
Or doubt or fear from false misgiving grown,
And tell his tale of grievous pain to thee,
Sure from thy breast he'd draw full many a moan.
And make thy fair eyes weep right plenteously:
Yea, if he had but skill his heart to show,
He scarce could fail to win thee by its woe.

Now art thou in thy beauty's blooming hour;
Thy youth is yet in pure perfection's prime:
Make it thy pride to yield thy fragile flower,
Or look to find it paled by envious time:
For none to stay the flight of years hath power,
And who culls roses caught by frosty rime?
Give therefore to thy lover, give, for they
Too late repent who act not while they may.

Time flies: and lo! thou let'st it idly fly:
There is not in the world a thing more dear;
And if thou wait to see sweet May pass by,
Where find'st thou roses in the later year?
He never can, who lets occasion die:
Now that thou canst, stay not for doubt or fear;
But by the forelock take the flying hour,
Ere change begins, and clouds above thee lower.

Too long 'twixt yea and nay he hath been wrung;
Whether he sleep or wake he little knows,
Or free or in the bands of bondage strung:
Nay, lady, strike, and let thy lover loose!
What joy hast thou to keep a captive hung?
Kill him at once, or cut the cruel noose:
No more, I prithee, stay; but take thy part:
Either relax the bow, or speed the dart.

Thou feedest him on words and windiness,
On smiles, and signs, and bladders light as air;
Saying, thou fain wouldst comfort his distress,
But dar'st not, canst not: nay, dear lady fair,
All things are possible beneath the stress
Of will, that flames above the soul's despair!
Dally no longer: up, set to thy hand;
Or see his love unclothed and naked stand.

For he hath sworn, and by this oath will bide,
E'en though his life be lost in the endeavour,
To leave no way, nor art, nor wile untried,
Until he pluck the fruit he sighs for ever:
And, though he still would spare thy honest pride,
The knot that binds him he must loose or sever;
Thou too, O lady, shouldst make sharp thy knife,
If thou art fain to end this amorous strife.

Lo! if thou lingerest still in dubious dread,
Lest thou shouldst lose fair fame of honesty,
Here hast thou need of wile and warthead,
To test thy lover's strength in screening thee;
Indulge him, if thou find him well bestead,
Knowing that smothered love flames outwardly:
Therefore, seek means, search out some privy way;
Keep not the steed too long at idle play.

Or if thou heedest what those friars teach,
I cannot fail, lady, to call thee fool:
Well may they blame our private sins and preach;
But ill their acts match with their spoken rule;
The same pitch clings to all men, one and each.
There, I have spoken: set the world to school
With this true proverb, too, be well acquainted
The devil's ne'er so black as he is painted.

Nor did our good Lord give such grace to thee
That thou shouldst keep it buried in thy breast,
But to reward thy servant's constancy,
Whose love and loyal faith thou hast repressed:
Think it no sin to be some trifle free,
Because thou livest at a lord's behest;
For if he take enough to feed his fill,
To cast the rest away were surely ill.

They find most favour in the sight of heaven
Who to the poor and hungry are most kind;
A hundred-fold shall thus to thee be given
By God, who loves the free and generous mind;
Thrice strike thy breast, with pure contrition riven,
Crying: I sinned; my sin hath made me blind!—
He wants not much: enough if he be able
To pick up crumbs that fall beneath thy table.

Wherefore, O lady, break the ice at length;

Make thou, too, trial of love's fruits and flowers:
When in thine arms thou feel'st thy lover's strength,
Thou wilt repent of all these wasted hours;
Husbands, they know not love, its breadth and length,
Seeing their hearts are not on fire like ours:
Things longed for give most pleasure; this I tell thee:
If still thou doubtest let the proof compel thee.

What I have spoken is pure gospel sooth;
I have told all my mind, withholding nought:
And well, I ween, thou canst unhusk the truth,
And through the riddle read the hidden thought:
Perchance if heaven still smile upon my youth,
Some good effect for me may yet be wrought:
Then fare thee well; too many words offend:
She who is wise is quick to comprehend.

318

The levity of these love-declarations and the fluency of their vows show them to be 'false as dicers' oaths,' mere verses of the moment, made to please a facile mistress. One long poem, which cannot be styled a Rispetto, but is rather a Canzone of the legitimate type, stands out with distinctness from the rest of Poliziano's love-verses. It was written by him for Giuliano de' Medici, in praise of the fair Simonetta. The following version attempts to repeat its metrical effects in some measure:—

My task it is, since thus Love wills, who strains
And forces all the world beneath his sway,
In lowly verse to say
The great delight that in my bosom reigns.
For if perchance I took but little pains
To tell some part of all the joy I find,
I might be deem'd unkind
By one who knew my heart's deep happiness.
He feels but little bliss who hides his bliss;
Small joy hath he whose joy is never sung;
And he who curbs his tongue
Through cowardice, knows but of love the name.
Wherefore to succour and augment the fame
Of that pure, virtuous, wise, and lovely may,
Who like the star of day
Shines mid the stars, or like the rising sun,
Forth from my burning heart the words shall run.
Far, far be envy, far be jealous fear,
With discord dark and drear,
And all the choir that is of love the foe.—
The season had returned when soft winds blow,
The season friendly to young lovers coy,
Which bids them clothe their joy
In divers garbs and many a masked disguise.
Then I to track the game 'neath April skies
Went forth in raiment strange apparellèd,
And by kind fate was led
Unto the spot where stayed my soul's desire.
The beauteous nymph who feeds my soul with fire,
I found in gentle, pure, and prudent mood,
In graceful attitude,
Loving and courteous, holy, wise, benign.
So sweet, so tender was her face divine,
So gladsome, that in those celestial eyes
Shone perfect paradise,
Yea, all the good that we poor mortals crave.
Around her was a band so nobly brave
Of beauteous dames, that as I gazed at these
Methought heaven's goddesses
That day for once had deigned to visit earth.
But she who gives my soul sorrow and mirth,
Seemed Pallas in her gait, and in her face
Venus; for every grace
And beauty of the world in her combined.
Merely to think, far more to tell my mind
Of that most wondrous sight, confoundeth me,
For mid the maidens she
Who most resembled her was found most rare.
Call ye another first among the fair;
Not first, but sole before my lady set:
Lily and violet
And all the flowers below the rose must bow.
Down from her royal head and lustrous brow
The golden curls fell sportively unpent,
While through the choir she went
With feet well lessoned to the rhythmic sound.
Her eyes, though scarcely raised above the ground,
Sent me by stealth a ray divinely fair;

319

But still her jealous hair
 Broke the bright beam, and veiled her from my gaze.
 She, born and nursed in heaven for angels' praise,
 No sooner saw this wrong, than back she drew,
 With hand of purest hue,
 Her truant curls with kind and gentle mien.
 Then from her eyes a soul so fiery keen,
 So sweet a soul of love she cast on mine,
 That scarce can I divine
 How then I 'scaped from burning utterly.
 These are the first fair signs of love to be,
 That bound my heart with adamant, and these
 The matchless courtesies
 Which, dreamlike, still before mine eyes must hover.
 This is the honeyed food she gave her lover,
 To make him, so it pleased her, half-divine;
 Nectar is not so fine,
 Nor ambrosy, the fabled feast of Jove.
 Then, yielding proofs more clear and strong of love,
 As though to show the faith within her heart,
 She moved, with subtle art,
 Her feet accordant to the amorous air.
 But while I gaze and pray to God that ne'er
 Might cease that happy dance angelical,
 O harsh, unkind recall!
 Back to the banquet was she beckonèd.
 She, with her face at first with pallor spread,
 Then tinted with a blush of coral dye,
 'The ball is best!' did cry,
 Gentle in tone and smiling as she spake.
 But from her eyes celestial forth did break
 Favour at parting; and I well could see
 Young love confusedly
 Enclosed within the furtive fervent gaze,
 Heating his arrows at their beauteous rays,
 For war with Pallas and with Dian cold.
 Fairer than mortal mould,
 She moved majestic with celestial gait;
 And with her hand her robe in royal state
 Raised, as she went with pride ineffable.
 Of me I cannot tell,
 Whether alive or dead I there was left.
 Nay, dead, methinks! since I of thee was reft,
 Light of my life! and yet, perchance, alive—
 Such virtue to revive
 My lingering soul possessed thy beauteous face,
 But if that powerful charm of thy great grace
 Could then thy loyal lover so sustain,
 Why comes there not again
 More often or more soon the sweet delight?
 Twice hath the wandering moon with borrowed light
 Stored from her brother's rays her crescent horn,
 Nor yet hath fortune borne
 Me on the way to so much bliss again.
 Earth smiles anew; fair spring renews her reign:
 The grass and every shrub once more is green;
 The amorous birds begin,
 From winter loosed, to fill the field with song.
 See how in loving pairs the cattle throng;
 The bull, the ram, their amorous jousts enjoy:
 Thou maiden, I a boy,
 Shall we prove traitors to love's law for aye?
 Shall we these years that are so fair let fly?
 Wilt thou not put thy flower of youth to use?
 Or with thy beauty choose
 To make him blest who loves thee best of all?
 Haply I am some hind who guards the stall,
 Or of vile lineage, or with years outworn,
 Poor, or a cripple born,
 Or faint of spirit that you spurn me so?
 Nay, but my race is noble and doth grow
 With honour to our land, with pomp and power;
 My youth is yet in flower,
 And it may chance some maiden sighs for me.
 My lot it is to deal right royally
 With all the goods that fortune spreads around,
 For still they more abound,
 Shaken from her full lap, the more I waste.
 My strength is such as whoso tries shall taste;
 Circled with friends, with favours crowned am I:
 Yet though I rank so high
 Among the blest, as men may reckon bliss,
 Still without thee, my hope, my happiness,

It seems a sad, and bitter thing to live!
Then stint me not, but give
That joy which holds all joys enclosed in one.
Let me pluck fruits at last, not flowers alone!

With much that is frigid, artificial, and tedious in this old-fashioned love-song, there is a curious monotony of sweetness which commends it to our ears; and he who reads it may remember the profile portrait of Simonetta from the hand of Piero della Francesca in the Pitti Palace at Florence.

It is worth comparing Poliziano's treatment of popular or semi-popular verse-forms with his imitations of Petrarch's manner. For this purpose I have chosen a *Canzone*, clearly written in competition with the celebrated 'Chiare, fresche e dolci acque,' of Laura's lover. While closely modelled upon Petrarch's form and similar in motive, this *Canzone* preserves Poliziano's special qualities of fluency and emptiness of content.

Hills, valleys, caves and fells,
With flowers and leaves and herbage spread;
Green meadows; shadowy groves where light is low;
Lawns watered with the rills
That cruel Love hath made me shed,
Cast from these cloudy eyes so dark with woe;
Thou stream that still dost know
What fell pangs pierce my heart,
So dost thou murmur back my moan;
Lone bird that chauntest tone for tone,
While in our descant drear Love sings his part:
Nymphs, woodland wanderers, wind and air;
List to the sound out-poured from my despair!
Seven times and once more seven
The roseate dawn her beauteous brow
Enwreathed with orient jewels hath displayed;
Cynthia once more in heaven
Hath orb'd her horns with silver now;
While in sea waves her brother's light was laid;
Since this high mountain glade
Felt the white footsteps fall
Of that proud lady, who to spring
Converts whatever woodland thing
She may o'ershadow, touch, or heed at all.
Here bloom the flowers, the grasses spring
From her bright eyes, and drink what mine must bring.
Yea, nourished with my tears
Is every little leaf I see,
And the stream rolls therewith a prouder wave.
Ah me! through what long years
Will she withhold her face from me,
Which stills the stormy skies howe'er they rave?
Speak! or in grove or cave
If one hath seen her stray,
Plucking amid those grasses green
Wreaths for her royal brows serene,
Flowers white and blue and red and golden gay!
Nay, prithee, speak, if pity dwell
Among these woods, within this leafy dell!
O Love! 'twas here we saw,
Beneath the new-fledged leaves that spring
From this old beech, her fair form lowly laid:—
The thought renews my awe!
How sweetly did her tresses fling
Waves of wreathed gold unto the winds that strayed
Fire, frost within me played,
While I beheld the bloom
Of laughing flowers—O day of bliss!—
Around those tresses meet and kiss,
And roses in her lap of Love the home!
Her grace, her port divinely fair,
Describe it, Love! myself I do not dare.
In mute intent surprise
I gazed, as when a hind is seen
To dote upon its image in a rill;
Drinking those love-lit eyes,
Those hands, that face, those words serene,
That song which with delight the heaven did fill,
That smile which thralls me still,
Which melteth stones unkind,
Which in this woodland wilderness
Tames every beast and stills the stress
Of hurrying waters. Would that I could find
Her footprints upon field or grove!

I should not then be envious of Jove.
 Thou cool stream rippling by,
 Where oft it pleased her to dip
 Her naked foot, how blest art thou!
 Ye branching trees on high,
 That spread your gnarled roots on the lip
 Of yonder hanging rock to drink heaven's dew!
 She often leaned on you,
 She who is my life's bliss!
 Thou ancient beech with moss o'ergrown,
 How do I envy thee thy throne,
 Found worthy to receive such happiness!
 Ye winds, how blissful must ye be,
 Since ye have borne to heaven her harmony!
 The winds that music bore,
 And wafted it to God on high,
 That Paradise might have the joy thereof.
 Flowers here she plucked, and wore
 Wild roses from the thorn hard by:
 This air she lightened with her look of love:
 This running stream above,
 She bent her face!—Ah me!
 Where am I? What sweet makes me swoon?
 What calm is in the kiss of noon?
 Who brought me here? Who speaks? What melody?
 Whence came pure peace into my soul?
 What joy hath rapt me from my own control?

Poliziano's refrain is always: 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. It is
 spring-time now and youth. Winter and old age are coming!' A *Maggio*,
 or May-day song, describing the games, dances, and jousting matches of
 the Florentine lads upon the morning of the first of May, expresses this
 facile philosophy of life with a quaintness that recalls Herrick. It will be
 noticed that the *Maggio* is built, so far as rhymes go, on the same system
 as Poliziano's *Ballata*. It has considerable historical interest, for the
 opening couplet is said to be Guido Cavalcanti's, while the whole poem is
 claimed by Roscoe for Lorenzo de' Medici, and by Carducci with better
 reason for Poliziano.

325

Welcome in the May
 And the woodland garland gay!

Welcome in the jocund spring
 Which bids all men lovers be!
 Maidens, up with carolling,
 With your sweethearts stout and free,
 With roses and with blossoms ye
 Who deck yourselves this first of May!

Up, and forth into the pure
 Meadows, mid the trees and flowers!
 Every beauty is secure
 With so many bachelors:
 Beasts and birds amid the bowers
 Burn with love this first of May.

Maidens, who are young and fair,
 Be not harsh, I counsel you;
 For your youth cannot repair
 Her prime of spring, as meadows do:
 None be proud, but all be true
 To men who love, this first of May.

Dance and carol every one
 Of our band so bright and gay!
 See your sweethearts how they run
 Through the jousts for you to-day!
 She who saith her lover nay,
 Will deflower the sweets of May,

Lads in love take sword and shield
 To make pretty girls their prize:
 Yield ye, merry maidens, yield
 To your lovers' vows and sighs:
 Give his heart back ere it dies:
 Wage not war this first of May.

He who steals another's heart,
 Let him give his own heart too:
 Who's the robber? 'Tis the smart
 Little cherub Cupid, who
 Homage comes to pay with you,
 Damsels, to the first of May.

326

Love comes smiling; round his head
Lilies white and roses meet:
'Tis for you his flight is sped.
Fair one, haste our king to greet:
Who will fling him blossoms sweet
Soonest on this first of May?

Welcome, stranger! welcome, king!
Love, what hast thou to command?
That each girl with wreaths should ring
Her lover's hair with loving hand,
That girls small and great should band
In Love's ranks this first of May.

The *Canto Carnascialesco*, for the final development if not for the invention of which all credit must be given to Lorenzo de' Medici, does not greatly differ from the Maggio in structure. It admitted, however, of great varieties, and was generally more complex in its interweaving of rhymes. Yet the essential principle of an exordium which should also serve for a refrain, was rarely, if ever, departed from. Two specimens of the Carnival Song will serve to bring into close contrast two very different aspects of Florentine history. The earlier was composed by Lorenzo de' Medici at the height of his power and in the summer of Italian independence. It was sung by masquers attired in classical costume, to represent Bacchus and his crew.

Fair is youth and void of sorrow;
But it hourly flies away.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

This is Bacchus and the bright
Ariadne, lovers true!
They, in flying time's despite,
Each with each find pleasure new;
These their Nymphs, and all their crew
Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These blithe Satyrs, wanton-eyed,
Of the Nymphs are paramours:
Through the caves and forests wide
They have snared them mid the flowers;
Warmed with Bacchus, in his bowers,
Now they dance and leap away.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These fair Nymphs, they are not loth
To entice their lovers' wiles.
None but thankless folk and rough
Can resist when Love beguiles.
Now enlaced, with wreathèd smiles,
All together dance and play.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

See this load behind them plodding
On the ass! Silenus he,
Old and drunken, merry, nodding,
Full of years and jollity;
Though he goes so swayingly,
Yet he laughs and quaffs away.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Midas treads a wearier measure:
All he touches turns to gold:
If there be no taste of pleasure,
What's the use of wealth untold?
What's the joy his fingers hold,
When he's forced to thirst for aye?—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Listen well to what we're saying;
Of to-morrow have no care!
Young and old together playing,
Boys and girls, be blithe as air!
Every sorry thought forswear!

Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Ladies and gay lovers young!
Long live Bacchus, live Desire!
Dance and play; let songs be sung;
Let sweet love your bosoms fire;
In the future come what may!—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day!
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Fair is youth and void of sorrow;
But it hourly flies away.

The next, composed by Antonio Alamanni, after Lorenzo's death and the ominous passage of Charles VIII., was sung by masquers habited as skeletons. The car they rode on, was a Car of Death designed by Piero di Cosimo, and their music was purposely gloomy. If in the jovial days of the Medici the streets of Florence had rung to the thoughtless refrain, 'Nought ye know about to-morrow,' they now re-echoed with a cry of 'Penitence,' for times had strangely altered, and the heedless past had brought forth a doleful present. The last stanza of Alamanni's chorus is a somewhat clumsy attempt to adapt the too real moral of his subject to the customary mood of the Carnival.

Sorrow, tears, and penitence
Are our doom of pain for aye;
This dead concourse riding by
Hath no cry but penitence!

E'en as you are, once were we:
You shall be as now we are:
We are dead men, as you see:
We shall see you dead men, where
Nought avails to take great care,
After sins, of penitence.

We too in the Carnival
Sang our love-songs through the town;
Thus from sin to sin we all
Headlong, heedless, tumbled down:—
Now we cry, the world around,
Penitence! oh, Penitence!

Senseless, blind, and stubborn fools!
Time steals all things as he rides:
Honours, glories, states, and schools,
Pass away, and nought abides;
Till the tomb our carcase hides,
And compels this penitence.

This sharp scythe you see us bear,
Brings the world at length to woe:
But from life to life we fare;
And that life is joy or woe:
All heaven's bliss on him doth flow
Who on earth does penitence.

Living here, we all must die;
Dying, every soul shall live:
For the King of kings on high
This fixed ordinance doth give:
Lo, you all are fugitive!
Penitence! Cry Penitence!

Torment great and grievous dole
Hath the thankless heart mid you;
But the man of piteous soul
Finds much honour in our crew:
Love for loving is the due
That prevents this penitence.

Sorrow, tears, and penitence
Are our doom of pain for aye:
This dead concourse riding by
Hath no cry but Penitence!

One song for dancing, composed less upon the type of the Ballata than on that of the Carnival Song, may here be introduced, not only in illustration of the varied forms assumed by this style of poetry, but also because it is highly characteristic of Tuscan town-life. This poem in the

vulgar style has been ascribed to Lorenzo de' Medici, but probably without due reason. It describes the manners and customs of female street gossips.

Since you beg with such a grace,
How can I refuse a song,
Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
On the follies of the place?

Courteously on you I call;
Listen well to what I sing:
For my roundelay to all
May perchance instruction bring,
And of life good lessoning.—
When in company you meet,
Or sit spinning, all the street
Clamours like a market-place.

Thirty of you there may be;
Twenty-nine are sure to buzz,
And the single silent she
Racks her brains about her coz:—
Mrs. Buzz and Mrs. Huzz,
Mind your work, my ditty saith;
Do not gossip till your breath
Fails and leaves you black of face!

Governments go out and in:—
You the truth must needs discover.
Is a girl about to win
A brave husband in her lover?—
Straight you set to talk him over:
'Is he wealthy?' 'Does his coat
Fit?' 'And has he got a vote?'
'Who's his father?' 'What's his race?'

Out of window one head pokes;
Twenty others do the same:—
Chatter, clatter!—creaks and croaks
All the year the same old game!—
'See my spinning!' cries one dame,
'Five long ells of cloth, I trow!'
Cries another, 'Mine must go,
Drat it, to the bleaching base!'

'Devil take the fowl!' says one:
'Mine are all bewitched, I guess;
Cocks and hens with vermin run,
Mangy, filthy, featherless.'
Says another: 'I confess
Every hair I drop, I keep—
Plague upon it, in a heap
Falling off to my disgrace!'

If you see a fellow walk
Up or down the street and back,
How you nod and wink and talk,
Hurry-skurry, cluck and clack!—
'What, I wonder, does he lack
Here about?'—'There's something wrong!'
Till the poor man's made a song
For the female populace.

It were well you gave no thought
To such idle company;
Shun these gossips, care for nought
But the business that you ply.
You who chatter, you who cry,
Heed my words; be wise, I pray:
Fewer, shorter stories say:
Bide at home, and mind your place.

Since you beg with such a grace,
How can I refuse a song,
Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
On the follies of the place?

The *Madrigale*, intended to be sung in parts, was another species of popular poetry cultivated by the greatest of Italian writers. Without seeking examples from such men as Petrarch, Michelangelo, or Tasso, who used it as a purely literary form, I will content myself with a few Madrigals by anonymous composers, more truly popular in style, and more immediately intended for music.^[46] The similarity both of manner

and matter, between these little poems and the Ballate, is obvious. There is the same affectation of rusticity in both.

[46] The originals will be found in Carducci's *Studi Letterari*, p. 273 *et seq.* I have preserved their rhyming structure.

Cogliendo per un prato.

Plucking white lilies in a field I saw
Fair women, laden with young Love's delight:
Some sang, some danced; but all were fresh and bright.
Then by the margin of a fount they leaned,
And of those flowers made garlands for their hair—
Wreaths for their golden tresses quaint and rare.
Forth from the field I passed, and gazed upon
Their loveliness, and lost my heart to one.

Togliendo l' una all' altra.

One from the other borrowing leaves and flowers,
I saw fair maidens 'neath the summer trees,
Weaving bright garlands with low love-ditties.
Mid that sweet sisterhood the loveliest
Turned her soft eyes to me, and whispered, "Take!"
Love-lost I stood, and not a word I spake.
My heart she read, and her fair garland gave:
Therefore I am her servant to the grave.

333

Appress' un fiume chiaro.

Hard by a crystal stream
Girls and maids were dancing round
A lilac with fair blossoms crowned.
Mid these I spied out one
So tender-sweet, so love-laden,
She stole my heart with singing then:
Love in her face so lovely-kind
And eyes and hands my soul did bind.

Di riva in riva.

From lawn to lea Love led me down the valley,
Seeking my hawk, where 'neath a pleasant hill
I spied fair maidens bathing in a rill.
Lina was there all loveliness excelling;
The pleasure of her beauty made me sad,
And yet at sight of her my soul was glad.
Downward I cast mine eyes with modest seeming,
And all a tremble from the fountain fled:
For each was naked as her maidenhead.
Thence singing fared I through a flowery plain,
Where bye and bye I found my hawk again!

Nel chiaro fiume.

Down a fair streamlet crystal-clear and pleasant
I went a fishing all alone one day,
And spied three maidens bathing there at play.
Of love they told each other honeyed stories,
While with white hands they smote the stream, to wet
Their sunbright hair in the pure rivulet.
Gazing I crouched among thick flowering leafage,
Till one who spied a rustling branch on high,
Turned to her comrades with a sudden cry,
And 'Go! Nay, pritheo go!' she called to me:
'To stay were surely but scant courtesy.'

Quel sole che nutrica.

334

The sun which makes a lily bloom,
Leans down at times on her to gaze—
Fairer, he deems, than his fair rays:
Then, having looked a little while,
He turns and tells the saints in bliss
How marvellous her beauty is.
Thus up in heaven with flute and string
Thy loveliness the angels sing.

Di novo è giunt'.

Lo: here hath come an errant knight
On a barbed charger clothed in mail:
His archers scatter iron hail.

At brow and breast his mace he aims;
Who therefore hath not arms of proof,
Let him live locked by door and roof;
Until Dame Summer on a day
That grisly knight return to slay.

Poliziano's treatment of the octave stanza for Rispetti was comparatively popular. But in his poem of 'La Giostra,' written to commemorate the victory of Giuliano de' Medici in a tournament and to celebrate his mistress, he gave a new and richer form to the metre which Boccaccio had already used for epic verse. The slight and uninteresting framework of this poem, which opened a new sphere for Italian literature, and prepared the way for Ariosto's golden cantos, might be compared to one of those wire baskets which children steep in alum water, and incrust with crystals, sparkling, artificial, beautiful with colours not their own. The mind of Poliziano held, as it were, in solution all the images and thoughts of antiquity, all the riches of his native literature. In that vast reservoir of poems and mythologies and phrases, so patiently accumulated, so tenaciously preserved, so thoroughly assimilated, he plunged the trivial subject he had chosen, and triumphantly presented to the world the *spolia opima* of scholarship and taste. What mattered it that the theme was slight? The art was perfect, the result splendid. One canto of 125 stanzas describes the youth of Giuliano, who sought to pass his life among the woods, a hunter dead to love, but who was doomed to be ensnared by Cupid. The chase, the beauty of Simonetta, the palace of Venus, these are the three subjects of a book as long as the first Iliad. The second canto begins with dreams and prophecies of glory to be won by Giuliano in the tournament. But it stops abruptly. The tragic catastrophe of the Pazzi Conjuraction cut short Poliziano's panegyric by the murder of his hero. Meanwhile the poet had achieved his purpose. His torso presented to Italy a model of style, a piece of written art adequate to the great painting of the Renaissance period, a double star of poetry which blent the splendours of the ancient and the modern world. To render into worthy English the harmonies of Poliziano is a difficult task. Yet this must be attempted if an English reader is to gain any notion of the scope and substance of the Italian poet's art. In the first part of the poem we are placed, as it were, at the mid point between the 'Hippolytus' of Euripides and Shakspeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' The cold hunter Giuliano is to see Simonetta, and seeing, is to love her. This is how he first discovers the triumphant beauty:^[47]

335

White is the maid, and white the robe around her,
With buds and roses and thin grasses pied;
Enwreathèd folds of golden tresses crowned her,
Shadowing her forehead fair with modest pride:

The wild wood smiled; the thicket where he found her,
To ease his anguish, bloomed on every side:
Serene she sits, with gesture queenly mild,
And with her brow tempers the tempests wild.

336

[47] Stanza XLIII. All references are made to Carducci's excellent edition, *Le Stanze, l'Orfeo e le Rime di Messer Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*. Firenze: G. Barbéra. 1863.

After three stanzas of this sort, in which the poet's style is more apparent than the object he describes, occurs this charming picture:—

Reclined he found her on the swarded grass
In jocund mood; and garlands she had made
Of every flower that in the meadow was,
Or on her robe of many hues displayed;
But when she saw the youth before her pass,
Raising her timid head awhile she stayed;
Then with her white hand gathered up her dress,
And stood, lap-full of flowers, in loveliness.

Then through the dewy field with footstep slow
The lingering maid began to take her way,
Leaving her lover in great fear and woe,
For now he longs for nought but her away:
The wretch, who cannot bear that she should go,
Strives with a whispered prayer her feet to stay;
And thus at last, all trembling, all afire,
In humble wise he breathes his soul's desire:

'Whoe'er thou art, maid among maidens queen,
Goddess, or nymph—nay, goddess seems most clear—
If goddess, sure my Dian I have seen;
If mortal, let thy proper self appear!

Beyond terrestrial beauty is thy mien;
I have no merit that I should be here!
What grace of heaven, what lucky star benign
Yields me the sight of beauty so divine?'

A conversation ensues, after which Giuliano departs utterly lovesick, and Cupid takes wing exultingly for Cyprus, where his mother's palace stands. In the following picture of the house of Venus, who shall say how much of Ariosto's Alcina and Tasso's Armida is contained? Cupid arrives, and the family of Love is filled with joy at Giuliano's conquest. From the plan of the poem it is clear that its beauties are chiefly those of detail. They are, however, very great. How perfect, for example, is the richness combined with delicacy of the following description of a country life:—

337

BOOK I. STANZAS 17-21.

How far more safe it is, how far more fair,
To chase the flying deer along the lea;
Through ancient woods to track their hidden lair,
Far from the town, with long-drawn subtlety:
To scan the vales, the hills, the limpid air,
The grass and flowers, clear ice, and streams so free;
To hear the birds wake from their winter trance,
The wind-stirred leaves and murmuring waters dance.

How sweet it were to watch the young goats hung
From toppling crags, cropping the tender shoot,
While in thick pleached shade the shepherd sung
His uncouth rural lay and woke his flute;
To mark, mid dewy grass, red apples flung,
And every bough thick set with ripening fruit,
The butting rams, kine lowing o'er the lea,
And cornfields waving like the windy sea.

Lo! how the rugged master of the herd
Before his flock unbars the wattled cote;
Then with his rod and many a rustic word
He rules their going: or 'tis sweet to note
The delver, when his toothèd rake hath stirred
The stubborn clod, his hoe the glebe hath smote;
Barefoot the country girl, with loosened zone,
Spins, while she keeps her geese 'neath yonder stone.

After such happy wise, in ancient years,
Dwelt the old nations in the age of gold;
Nor had the fount been stirred of mothers' tears
For sons in war's fell labour stark and cold;
Nor trusted they to ships the wild wind steers,
Nor yet had oxen groaning ploughed the wold;
Their houses were huge oaks, whose trunks had store
Of honey, and whose boughs thick acorns bore.

338

Nor yet, in that glad time, the accursèd thirst
Of cruel gold had fallen on this fair earth:
Joyous in liberty they lived at first;
Unploughed the fields sent forth their teeming birth;
Till fortune, envious of such concord, burst
The bond of law, and pity banned and worth;
Within their breasts sprang luxury and that rage
Which men call love in our degenerate age.

We need not be reminded that these stanzas are almost a cento from Virgil, Hesiod, and Ovid. The merits of the translator, adapter, and combiner, who knew so well how to cull their beauties and adorn them with a perfect dress of modern diction, are so eminent that we cannot deny him the title of a great poet. It is always in picture-painting more than in dramatic presentation that Poliziano excels. Here is a basrelief of Venus rising from the Ocean foam:—

STANZAS 99-107.

In Thetis' lap, upon the vexed Egean,
The seed deific from Olympus sown,
Beneath dim stars and cycling empyrean
Drifts like white foam across the salt waves blown;
Thence, born at last by movements hymenean,
Rises a maid more fair than man hath known;
Upon her shell the wanton breezes waft her;
She nears the shore, while heaven looks down with laughter

Seeing the carved work you would cry that real
Were shell and sea, and real the winds that blow;

The lightning of the goddess' eyes you feel,
The smiling heavens, the elemental glow:
White-vested Hours across the smooth sands steal,
With loosened curls that to the breezes flow;
Like, yet unlike, are all their beauteous faces,
E'en as befits a choir of sister Graces.

339

Well might you swear that on those waves were riding
The goddess with her right hand on her hair,
And with the other the sweet apple hiding;
And that beneath her feet, divinely fair,
Fresh flowers sprang forth, the barren sands dividing;
Then that, with glad smiles and enticements rare,
The three nymphs round their queen, embosoming her,
Threw the starred mantle soft as gossamer.

The one, with hands above her head upraised,
Upon her dewy tresses fits a wreath,
With ruddy gold and orient gems emblazed;
The second hangs pure pearls her ears beneath;
The third round shoulders white and breast hath placed
Such wealth of gleaming carcanets as sheathe
Their own fair bosoms, when the Graces sing
Among the gods with dance and carolling.

Thence might you see them rising toward the spheres,
Seated upon a cloud of silvery white;
The trembling of the cloven air appears
Wrought in the stone, and heaven serenely bright;
The gods drink in with open eyes and ears
Her beauty, and desire her bed's delight;
Each seems to marvel with a mute amaze—
Their brows and foreheads wrinkle as they gaze.

The next quotation shows Venus in the lap of Mars, and Visited by Cupid:—

STANZAS 122—124.

Stretched on a couch, outside the coverlid,
Love found her, scarce unloosed from Mars' embrace;
He, lying back within her bosom, fed
His eager eyes on nought but her fair face;

Roses above them like a cloud were shed,
To reinforce them in the amorous chace;
While Venus, quick with longings unsuppressed,
A thousand times his eyes and forehead kissed.

340

Above, around, young Loves on every side
Played naked, darting birdlike to and fro;
And one, whose plumes a thousand colours dyed,
Fanned the shed roses as they lay arow;
One filled his quiver with fresh flowers, and hied
To pour them on the couch that lay below;
Another, poised upon his pinions, through
The falling shower soared shaking rosy dew:

For, as he quivered with his tremulous wing,
The wandering roses in their drift were stayed;—
Thus none was weary of glad gambolling;
Till Cupid came, with dazzling plumes displayed,
Breathless; and round his mother's neck did fling
His languid arms, and with his winnowing made
Her heart burn:—very glad and bright of face,
But, with his flight, too tired to speak apace.

These pictures have in them the very glow of Italian painting. Sometimes we seem to see a quaint design of Piero di Cosimo, with bright tints and multitudinous small figures in a spacious landscape. Sometimes it is the languid grace of Botticelli, whose soul became possessed of classic inspiration as it were in dreams, and who has painted the birth of Venus almost exactly as Poliziano imagined it. Again, we seize the broader beauties of the Venetian masters, or the vehemence of Giulio Romano's pencil. To the last class belong the two next extracts:

STANZAS 104—107.

In the last square the great artificer
Had wrought himself crowned with Love's perfect palm;
Black from his forge and rough, he runs to her,

Leaving all labour for her bosom's calm:
Lips joined to lips with deep love-longing stir,
Fire in his heart, and in his spirit balm;
Far fiercer flames through breast and marrow fly
Than those which heat his forge in Sicily.

341

Jove, on the other side, becomes a bull,
Goodly and white, at Love's behest, and rears
His neck beneath his rich freight beautiful:
She turns toward the shore that disappears,
With frightened gesture; and the wonderful
Gold curls about her bosom and her ears
Float in the wind; her veil waves, backward borne;
This hand still clasps his back, and that his horn.

With naked feet close-tucked beneath her dress,
She seems to fear the sea that dares not rise:
So, imaged in a shape of drear distress,
In vain unto her comrades sweet she cries;
They left amid the meadow-flowers, no less
For lost Europa wail with weeping eyes:
Europa, sounds the shore, bring back our bliss
But the bull swims and turns her feet to kiss.

Here Jove is made a swan, a golden shower,
Or seems a serpent, or a shepherd-swain,
To work his amorous will in secret hour;
Here, like an eagle, soars he o'er the plain,
Love-led, and bears his Ganymede, the flower
Of beauty, mid celestial peers to reign;
The boy with cypress hath his fair locks crowned,
Naked, with ivy wreathed his waist around.

STANZAS 110—112.

Lo! here again fair Ariadne lies,
And to the deaf winds of false Theseus plains.
And of the air and slumber's treacheries;
Trembling with fear even as a reed that strain.
And quivers by the mere 'neath breezy skies:
Her very speechless attitude complains—
No beast there is so cruel as thou art,
No beast less loyal to my broken heart.

Throned on a car, with ivy crowned and vine,
Rides Bacchus, by two champing tigers driven:
Around him on the sand deep-soaked with brine
Satyrs and Bacchantes rush; the skies are riven
With shouts and laughter; Fauns quaff bubbling wine
From horns and cymbals; Nymphs, to madness driven,
Trip, skip, and stumble; mixed in wild enlacements,
Laughing they roll or meet for glad embracements.

342

Upon his ass Silenus, never sated,
With thick, black veins, wherethrough the must is soaking,
Nods his dull forehead with deep sleep belated;
His eyes are wine-inflamed, and red, and smoking:
Bold Mænads goad the ass so sorely weighted,
With stinging thyrsi; he sways feebly poking
The mane with bloated fingers; Fauns behind him,
E'en as he falls, upon the crupper bind him.

We almost seem to be looking at the frescoes in some Trasteverine palace, or at the canvas of one of the sensual Genoese painters. The description of the garden of Venus has the charm of somewhat artificial elegance, the exotic grace of style, which attracts us in the earlier Renaissance work:—

The leafy tresses of that timeless garden
Nor fragile brine nor fresh snow dares to whiten;
Frore winter never comes the rills to harden,
Nor winds the tender shrubs and herbs to frighten;
Glad Spring is always here, a laughing warden;
Nor do the seasons wane, but ever brighten;
Here to the breeze young May, her curls unbinding,
With thousand flowers her wreath is ever winding.

Indeed it may be said with truth that Poliziano's most eminent faculty as a descriptive poet corresponded exactly to the genius of the painters of his day. To produce pictures radiant with Renaissance colouring, and vigorous with Renaissance passion, was the function of his art, not to express profound thought or dramatic situations. This remark might be extended with justice to Ariosto, and Tasso, and Boiardo. The great

343

narrative poets of the Renaissance in Italy were not dramatists; nor were their poems epics: their forte lay in the inexhaustible variety and beauty of their pictures.

Of Poliziano's plagiarism—if this be the right word to apply to the process of assimilation and selection, by means of which the poet-scholar of Florence taught the Italians how to use the riches of the ancient languages and their own literature—here are some specimens. In stanza 42 of the 'Giostra' he says of Simonetta:—

E 'n lei discerne un non so che divino.

Dante has the line:—

Vostri risplende un non so che divino.

In the 44th he speaks about the birds:—

E canta ogni augelletto in suo latino.

This comes from Cavalcanti's:—

E cantinne gli augelli.
Ciascuno in suo latino.

Stanza 45 is taken bodily from Claudian, Dante, and Cavalcanti. It would seem as though Poliziano wished to show that the classic and medieval literature of Italy was all one, and that a poet of the Renaissance could carry on the continuous tradition in his own style. A, line in stanza 54 seems perfectly original:—

E già dall'alte ville il fumo esala.

It comes straight from Virgil:—

Et jam summa pocul villarum culmina fumant.

In the next stanza the line—

Tal che 'l ciel tutto rasserenò d'intorno,

is Petrarch's. So in the 56th, is the phrase 'il dolce andar celeste.' In stanza 57—

Par che 'l cor del petto se gli schianti,

belongs to Boccaccio. In stanza 60 the first line:—

La notte che le cose ci nasconde,

together with its rhyme, 'sotto le amate fronde,' is borrowed from the 23rd canto of the 'Paradiso.' In the second line, 'Stellato ammanto' is Claudian's 'stellantes sinus' applied to the heaven. When we reach the garden of Venus we find whole passages translated from Claudian's 'Marriage of Honorius,' and from the 'Metamorphoses' of Ovid.

Poliziano's second poem of importance, which indeed may historically be said to take precedence of 'La Giostra,' was the so-called tragedy of 'Orfeo.' The English version of this lyrical drama must be reserved for a separate study: yet it belongs to the subject of this, inasmuch as the 'Orfeo' is a classical legend treated in a form already familiar to the Italian people. Nearly all the popular kinds of poetry of which specimens have been translated in this chapter, will be found combined in its six short scenes.

The 'Orfeo' of Messer Angelo Poliziano ranks amongst the most important poems of the fifteenth century. It was composed at Mantua in the short space of two days, on the occasion of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga's visit to his native town in 1472. But, though so hastily put together, the 'Orfeo' marks an epoch in the evolution of Italian poetry. It is the earliest example of a secular drama, containing within the compass of its brief scenes the germ of the opera, the tragedy, and the pastoral play. In form it does not greatly differ from the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni' of the fifteenth century, as those miracle plays were handled by popular poets of the earlier Renaissance. But while the traditional octave stanza is used for the main movement of the piece, Poliziano has introduced episodes of *terza rima*, madrigals, a carnival song, a *ballata*, and, above all, choral passages which have in them the future melodrama of the musical Italian stage. The lyrical treatment of the fable, its capacity for brilliant and varied scenic effects, its combination of singing with action, and the whole artistic keeping of the piece, which never passes into genuine tragedy, but stays within the limits of romantic pathos, distinguish the 'Orfeo' as a typical production of Italian genius. Thus, though little better than an improvisation, it combines the many forms of verse developed by the Tuscans at the close of the Middle Ages, and fixes the limits beyond which their dramatic poets, with a few exceptions, were not destined to advance. Nor was the choice of the fable without significance. Quitting the Bible stories and the Legends of Saints, which supplied the mediaeval playwright with material, Poliziano selects a classic story: and this story might pass for an allegory of Italy, whose intellectual development the scholar-poet ruled. Orpheus is the power of poetry and art, softening stubborn nature, civilising men, and prevailing over Hades for a season. He is the right hero of humanism, the genius of the Renaissance, the tutelary god of Italy, who thought she could resist the laws of fate by verse and elegant accomplishments. To press this kind of allegory is unwise; for at a certain moment it breaks in our hands. And yet in Eurydice the fancy might discover Freedom, the true spouse of poetry and art; Orfeo's last resolve too vividly depicts the vice of the Renaissance; and the Mænads are those barbarous armies destined to lay waste the plains of Italy, inebriate with wine and blood, obeying a new lord of life on whom the poet's harp exerts no charm. But a truce to this spinning of pedantic cobwebs. Let Mercury appear, and let the play begin.

346

THE FABLE OF ORPHEUS

MERCURY *announces the show.*

Ho, silence! Listen! There was once a hind,
 Son of Apollo, Aristaeus hight,
 Who loved with so untamed and fierce a mind
 Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus wight,
 That chasing her one day with will unkind
 He wrought her cruel death in love's despite;
 For, as she fled toward the mere hard by,
 A serpent stung her, and she had to die.

Now Orpheus, singing, brought her back from hell,
 But could not keep the law the fates ordain:
 Poor wretch, he backward turned and broke the spell;
 So that once more from him his love was ta'en.
 Therefore he would no more with women dwell,
 And in the end by women he was slain.

347

Enter A SHEPHERD, who says—

Nay, listen, friends! Fair auspices are given,
 Since Mercury to earth hath come from heaven.

SCENE I

MOPSUS, *an old shepherd.*

Say, hast thou seen a calf of mine, all white
 Save for a spot of black upon her front,
 Two feet, one flank, and one knee ruddy-bright?

ARISTAEUS, *a young shepherd.*

Friend Mopsus, to the margin of this fount
No herds have come to drink since break of day;
Yet may'st thou hear them low on yonder mount.
Go, Thyrsis, search the upland lawn, I pray!
Thou Mopsus shalt with me the while abide;
For I would have thee listen to my lay.

[*Exit* THYRSIS.]

'Twas yester morn where trees yon cavern hide,
I saw a nymph more fair than Dian, who
Had a young lusty lover at her side:
But when that more than woman met my view,
The heart within my bosom leapt outright,
And straight the madness of wild Love I knew.
Since then, dear Mopsus, I have no delight;
But weep and weep: of food and drink I tire,
And without slumber pass the weary night.

MOPSUS.

Friend Aristaeus, if this amorous fire
Thou dost not seek to quench as best may be,
Thy peace of soul will vanish in desire.
Thou know'st that love is no new thing to me:
I've proved how love grown old brings bitter pain:
Cure it at once, or hope no remedy;
For if thou find thee in Love's cruel chain,
Thy bees, thy blossoms will be out of mind,
Thy fields, thy vines, thy flocks, thy cotes, thy grain

ARISTAEUS.

Mopsus, thou speakest to the deaf and blind:
Waste not on me these wingèd words, I pray,
Lest they be scattered to the inconstant wind,
I love, and cannot wish to say love nay;
Nor seek to cure so charming a disease:
They praise Love best who most against him say.
Yet if thou fain wouldst give my heart some ease,
Forth from thy wallet take thy pipe, and we
Will sing awhile beneath the leafy trees;
For well my nymph is pleased with melody.

THE SONG.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay;
Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

The lovely nymph is deaf to my lament,
Nor heeds the music of this rustic reed;
Wherefore my flocks and herds are ill content,
Nor bathe their hoof where grows the water weed,
Nor touch the tender herbage on the mead;
So sad, because their shepherd grieves, are they.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay;
Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

The herds are sorry for their master's moan;
The nymph heeds not her lover though he die,
The lovely nymph, whose heart is made of stone—
Nay steel, nay adamant! She still doth fly
Far, far before me, when she sees me nigh,
Even as a lamb flies fern the wolf away.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay;
Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

Nay, tell her, pipe of mine, how swift doth flee
Beauty together with our years amain;
Tell her how time destroys all rarity,
Nor youth once lost can be renewed again;
Tell her to use the gifts that yet remain:
Roses and violets blossom not alway.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay;
Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

Carry, ye winds, these sweet words to her ears,
Unto the ears of my loved nymph, and tell
How many tears I shed, what bitter tears!
Beg her to pity one who loves so well:

Say that my life is frail and mutable,
And melts like rime before the rising day.

Listen, ye wild woods, to my roundelay;
Since the fair nymph will hear not, though I pray.

MOPSUS.

Less sweet, methinks the voice of waters falling
From cliffs that echo back their murmurous song;
Less sweet the summer sound of breezes calling
Through pine-tree tops sonorous all day long;
Than are thy rhymes, the soul of grief enthralling,
Thy rhymes o'er field and forest borne along:
If she but hear them, at thy feet she'll fawn.—
Lo, Thyrsis, hurrying homeward from the lawn!

[*Re-enters* THYRSIS.

ARISTAEUS.

350

What of the calf? Say, hast thou seen her now?

THYRSIS, *the cowherd.*

I have, and I'd as lief her throat were cut!
She almost ripped my bowels up, I vow,
Running amuck with horns well set to butt:
Nathless I've locked her in the stall below:
She's blown with grass, I tell you, saucy slut!

ARISTAEUS.

Now, prithee, let me hear what made you stay
So long upon the upland lawns away?

THYRSIS.

Walking, I spied a gentle maiden there,
Who plucked wild flowers upon the mountain side:
I scarcely think that Venus is more fair,
Of sweeter grace, most modest in her pride:
She speaks, she sings, with voice so soft and rare,
That listening streams would backward roll their tide:
Her face is snow and roses; gold her head;
All, all alone she goes, white-raimented,

ARISTAEUS.

Stay, Mopsus! I must follow: for 'tis she
Of whom I lately spoke. So, friend, farewell!

MOPSUS.

Hold, Aristaeus, lest for her or thee
Thy boldness be the cause of mischief fell!

ARISTAEUS.

Nay, death this day must be my destiny,
Unless I try my fate and break the spell.
Stay therefore, Mopsus, by the fountain stay!
I'll follow her, meanwhile, yon mountain way.

[*Exit* ARISTAEUS.

MOPSUS.

351

Thyrsis, what thinkest thou of thy loved lord?
See'st thou that all his senses are distraught?
Couldst thou not speak some seasonable word,
Tell him what shame this idle love hath wrought?

THYRSIS.

Free speech and servitude but ill accord,
Friend Mopsus, and the hind is folly-fraught
Who rates his lord! He's wiser far than I.
To tend these kine is all my mastery.

SCENE II

ARISTAEUS, *in pursuit of* EURYDICE.

Flee not from me, maiden!
Lo, I am thy friend!
Dearer far than life I hold thee.
List, thou beauty-laden,
To these prayers attend:
Flee not, let my arms enfold thee!
Neither wolf nor bear will grasp thee:
That I am thy friend I've told thee:
Stay thy course then; let me clasp thee!—
Since thou'rt deaf and wilt not heed me,
Since thou'rt still before me flying,
While I follow panting, dying,
Lend me wings, Love, wings to speed me!

[*Exit* ARISTAEUS, *pursuing* EURYDICE.

SCENE III

A DRYAD.

Sad news of lamentation and of pain,
Dear sisters, hath my voice to bear to you:
I scarcely dare to raise the dolorous strain.
Eurydice by yonder stream lies low;
The flowers are fading round her stricken head,
And the complaining waters weep their woe.
The stranger soul from that fair house hath fled;
And she, like privet pale, or white May-bloom
Untimely plucked, lies on the meadow, dead.
Hear then the cause of her disastrous doom!
A snake stole forth and stung her suddenly.
I am so burdened with this weight of gloom
That, lo, I bid you all come weep with me!

352

CHORUS OF DRYADS.

Let the wide air with our complaint resound!
For all heaven's light is spent.
Let rivers break their bound,
Swollen with tears outpoured from our lament!

Fell death hath ta'en their splendour from the skies:
The stars are sunk in gloom.
Stern death hath plucked the bloom
Of nymphs:—Eurydice down-trodden lies.
Weep, Love! The woodland cries.
Weep, groves and founts;
Ye craggy mounts; you leafy dell,
Beneath whose boughs she fell,
Bend every branch in time with this sad sound.

Let the wide air with our complaint resound!

Ah, fortune pitiless! Ah, cruel snake!
Ah, luckless doom of woes!
Like a cropped summer rose,
Or lily cut, she withers on the brake.
Her face, which once did make
Our age so bright
With beauty's light, is faint and pale;
And the clear lamp doth fail,
Which shed pure splendour all the world around

Let the wide air with our complaint resound!

Who e'er will sing so sweetly, now she's gone?
Her gentle voice to hear,
The wild winds dared not stir;
And now they breathe but sorrow, moan for moan:
So many joys are flown,
Such jocund days
Doth Death erase with her sweet eyes!
Bid earth's lament arise,
And make our dirge through heaven and sea rebound!

353

Let the wide air with our complaint resound!

A DRYAD.

'Tis surely Orpheus, who hath reached the hill,
With harp in hand, glad-eyed and light of heart!
He thinks that his dear love is living still.
My news will stab him with a sudden smart:

An unforeseen and unexpected blow
Wounds worst and stings the bosom's tenderest part.
Death hath disjoined the truest love, I know,
That nature yet to this low world revealed,
And quenched the flame in its most charming glow.
Go, sisters, hasten ye to yonder field,
Where on the sward lies slain Eurydice;
Strew her with flowers and grasses! I must yield
This man the measure of his misery.

[*Exeunt DRYADS. Enter ORPHEUS, singing.*]

ORPHEUS.

*Musa, triumphales titulos et gesta canamus
Herculis, et forti monstra subacta manu;
Ut timidæ malri pressos ostenderit angues,
Intrepidusque fero riserit ore puer.*

A DRYAD.

Orpheus, I bring thee bitter news. Alas!
Thy nymph who was so beautiful, is slain!
flying from Aristæus o'er the grass,
What time she reached yon stream that threads the plain,

A snake which lurked mid flowers where she did pass,
Pierced her fair foot with his envenomed bane:
So fierce, so potent was the sting, that she
Died in mid course. Ah, woe that this should be!

354

[*ORPHEUS turns to go in silence.*]

MNESILLUS, *the satyr.*

Mark ye how sunk in woe
The poor wretch forth doth pass,
And may not answer, for his grief, one word?
On some lone shore, unheard,
Far, far away, he'll go,
And pour his heart forth to the winds, alas!
I'll follow and observe if he
Moves with his moan the hills to sympathy.

[*Follows ORPHEUS.*]

ORPHEUS.

Let us lament, O lyre disconsolate!
Our wonted music is in tune no more.
Lament we while the heavens revolve, and let
The nightingale be conquered on Love's shore!
O heaven, O earth, O sea, O cruel fate!
How shall I bear a pang so passing sore?
Eurydice, my love! O life of mine!
On earth I will no more without thee pine!
I will go down unto the doors of Hell,
And see if mercy may be found below:
Perchance we shall reverse fate's spoken spell
With tearful songs and words of honeyed woe:
Perchance will Death be pitiful; for well
With singing have we turned the streams that flow;
Moved stones, together hind and tiger drawn,
And made trees dance upon the forest lawn.

[*Passes from sight on his way to Hades.*]

MNESILLUS.

The staff of Fate is strong
And will not lightly bend,
Nor yet the stubborn gates of steely Hell.
Nay, I can see full well
His life will not be long:
Those downward feet no more will earthward wend.
What marvel if they lose the light,
Who make blind Love their guide by day and night!

355

SCENE IV

ORPHEUS, *at the gate of Hell.*

Pity, nay pity for a lover's moan!

Ye Powers of Hell, let pity reign in you!
 To your dark regions led me Love alone:
 Downward upon his wings of light I flew.
 Hush, Cerberus! Howl not by Pluto's throne!
 For when you hear my tale of misery, you,
 Nor you alone, but all who here abide
 In this blind world, will weep by Lethe's tide.
 There is no need, ye Furies, thus to rage;
 To dart those snakes that in your tresses twine:
 Knew ye the cause of this my pilgrimage,
 Ye would lie down and join your moans with mine.
 Let this poor wretch but pass, who war doth wage
 With heaven, the elements, the powers divine!
 I beg for pity or for death. No more!
 But open, ope Hell's adamant door!

[ORPHEUS *enters Hell.*

PLUTO.

What man is he who with his golden lyre
 Hath moved the gates that never move,
 While the dead folk repeat his dirge of love?
 The rolling stone no more doth tire
 Swart Sisyphus on yonder hill;
 And Tantalus with water slakes his fire;
 The groans of mangled Tityos are still;
 Ixion's wheel forgets to fly;
 The Danaids their urns can fill:
 I hear no more the tortured spirits cry;
 But all find rest in that sweet harmony.

PROSERPINE.

356

Dear consort, since, compelled by love of thee,
 I left the light of heaven serene,
 And came to reign in hell, a sombre queen;
 The charm of tenderest sympathy
 Hath never yet had power to turn
 My stubborn heart, or draw forth tears from me.
 Now with desire for yon sweet voice I yearn;
 Nor is there aught so dear
 As that delight. Nay, be not stern
 To this one prayer! Relax thy brows severe,
 And rest awhile with me that song to hear!

[ORPHEUS *stands before the throne.*

ORPHEUS.

Ye rulers of the people lost in gloom,
 Who see no more the jocund light of day!
 Ye who inherit all things that the womb
 Of Nature and the elements display!
 Hear ye the grief that draws me to the tomb!
 Love, cruel Love, hath led me on this way:
 Not to chain Cerberus I hither come,
 But to bring back my mistress to her home.
 A serpent hidden among flowers and leaves
 Stole my fair mistress—nay, my heart—from me:
 Wherefore my wounded life for ever grieves,
 Nor can I stand against this agony.
 Still, if some fragrance lingers yet and cleaves
 Of your famed love unto your memory,
 If of that ancient rape you think at all,
 Give back Eurydice!—On you I call.
 All things ere long unto this bourne descend:
 All mortal lives to you return at last:
 Whate'er the moon hath circled, in the end
 Must fade and perish in your empire vast:
 Some sooner and some later hither wend;
 Yet all upon this pathway shall have passed:
 This of our footsteps is the final goal;
 And then we dwell for aye in your control.
 Therefore the nymph I love is left for you
 When nature leads her deathward in due time:
 But now you've cropped the tendrils as they grew,
 The grapes unripe, while yet the sap did climb:
 Who reaps the young blades wet with April dew,
 Nor waits till summer hath o'erpassed her prime?
 Give back, give back my hope one little day!—
 Not for a gift, but for a loan I pray.
 I pray not to you by the waves forlorn

357

Of marshy Styx or dismal Acheron,
By Chaos where the mighty world was born,
Or by the sounding flames of Phlegethon;
But by the fruit which charmed thee on that morn
When thou didst leave our world for this dread throne!
O queen! if thou reject this pleading breath,
I will no more return, but ask for death!

PROSERPINE.

Husband, I never guessed
That in our realm oppressed
Pity could find a home to dwell:
But now I know that mercy teems in Hell.
I see Death weep; her breast
Is shaken by those tears that faultless fell.
Let then thy laws severe for him be swayed
By love, by song, by the just prayers he prayed!

PLUTO.

She's thine, but at this price:
Bend not on her thine eyes,
Till mid the souls that live she stay.
See that thou turn not back upon the way!
Check all fond thoughts that rise!
Else will thy love be torn from thee away.
I am well pleased that song so rare as thine
The might of my dread sceptre should incline.

SCENE V

358

ORPHEUS, *sings*.

*Ite tritumphales circum mea tempora lauri.
Vicimus Eurydicen: reddita mihi est,
Haec mea praecipue victoria digna coronâ.
Oredimus? an lateri juncta puella meo?*

EURYDICE.

All me! Thy love too great
Hath lost not thee alone!
I am torn from thee by strong Fate.
No more I am thine own.
In vain I stretch these arms. Back, back to Hell
I'm drawn, I'm drawn. My Orpheus, fare thee well!

[EURYDICE *disappears*.

ORPHEUS.

Who hath laid laws on Love?
Will pity not be given
For one short look so full thereof?
Since I am robbed of heaven,
Since all my joy so great is turned to pain,
I will go back and plead with Death again!

[TISIPHONE *blocks his way*.

TISIPHONE.

Nay, seek not back to turn!
Vain is thy weeping, all thy words are vain.
Eurydice may not complain
Of aught but thee—albeit her grief is great.
Vain are thy verses 'gainst the voice of Fate!
How vain thy song! For Death is stern!
Try not the backward path: thy feet refrain!
The laws of the abyss are fixed and firm remain.

SCENE VI

359

ORPHEUS.

What sorrow-laden song shall e'er be found
To match the burden of my matchless woe?
How shall I make the fount of tears abound,
To weep apace with grief's unmeasured flow?
Salt tears I'll waste upon the barren ground,
So long as life delays me here below;
And since my fate hath wrought me wrong so sore,

I swear I'll never love a woman more!
Henceforth I'll pluck the buds of opening spring,
The bloom of youth when life is loveliest,
Ere years have spoiled the beauty which they bring:
This love, I swear, is sweetest, softest, best!
Of female charms let no one speak or sing;
Since she is slain who ruled within my breast.
He who would seek my converse, let him see
That ne'er he talk of woman's love to me!
How pitiful is he who changes mind
For woman! for her love laments or grieves!
Who suffers her in chains his will to bind,
Or trusts her words lighter than withered leaves,
Her loving looks more treacherous than the wind!
A thousand times she veers; to nothing cleaves:
Follows who flies; from him who follows, flees;
And comes and goes like waves on stormy seas!
High Jove confirms the truth of what I said,
Who, caught and bound in love's delightful snare,
Enjoys in heaven his own bright Ganymed:
Phoebus on earth had Hyacinth the fair:
Hercules, conqueror of the world, was led
Captive to Hylas by this love so rare.—
Advice for husbands! Seek divorce, and fly
Far, far away from female company!

[*Enter a MAENAD leading a train of BACCHANTES.*

A MAENAD.

Ho! Sisters! Up! Alive!
See him who doth our sex deride!
Hunt him to death, the slave!
Thou snatch the thyrsus! Thou this oak-tree rive!
Cast down this doeskin and that hide!
We'll wreak our fury on the knave!
Yea, he shall feel our wrath, the knave!
He shall yield up his hide
Riven as woodmen fir-trees rive!
No power his life can save;
Since women he hath dared deride!
Ho! To him, sisters! Ho! Alive!

360

[*ORPHEUS is chased off the scene and slain: the MAENADS then return.*

A MAENAD.

Ho! Bacchus! Ho! I yield thee thanks for this!
Through all the woodland we the wretch have borne:
So that each root is slaked with blood of his:
Yea, limb from limb his body have we torn
Through the wild forest with a fearful bliss:
His gore hath bathed the earth by ash and thorn!—
Go then! thy blame on lawful wedlock fling!
Ho! Bacchus! take the victim that we bring!

CHORUS OF MAENADS.

Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

With ivy coronals, bunch and berry,
Crown we our heads to worship thee!
Thou hast bidden us to make merry
Day and night with jollity!
Drink then! Bacchus is here! Drink free,
And hand ye the drinking-cup to me!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

See, I have emptied my horn already:
Stretch hither your beaker to me, I pray:
Are the hills and the lawns where we roam unsteady?
Or is it my brain that reels away?
Let every one run to and fro through the hay,
As ye see me run! Ho! after me!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

361

Methinks I am dropping in swoon or slumber:
Am I drunken or sober, yes or no?
What are these weights my feet encumber?

You too are tipsy, well I know!
Let every one do as ye see me do,
Let every one drink and quaff like me!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

Cry Bacchus! Cry Bacchus! Be blithe and merry,
Tossing wine down your throats away!
Let sleep then come and our gladness bury:
Drink you, and you, and you, while ye may!
Dancing is over for me to-day.
Let every one cry aloud Evohé!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

Though an English translation can do little toward rendering the facile graces of Poliziano's style, that 'roseate fluency' for which it has been praised by his Italian admirers, the main qualities of the 'Orfeo' as a composition may be traced in this rough copy. Of dramatic power, of that mastery over the deeper springs of human nature which distinguished the first effort of the English muse in Marlowe's plays, there is but little. A certain adaptation of the language to the characters, as in the rudeness of Thyrsis when contrasted with the rustic elegance of Aristæus, a touch of simple feeling in Eurydice's lyrical outcry of farewell, a discrimination between the tender sympathy of Proserpine and Pluto's stern relenting, a spirited presentation of the Bacchanalian *furore* in the Mænads, an attempt to model the Satyr Mnesillus as apart from human nature and yet sympathetic to its anguish, these points constitute the chief dramatic features of the melodrama. Orpheus himself is a purely lyrical personage. Of character, he can scarcely be said to have anything marked; and his part rises to its height precisely in that passage where the lyrist has to be displayed. Before the gates of Hades and the throne of Proserpine he sings, and his singing is the right outpouring of a poet's soul; each octave resumes the theme of the last stanza with a swell of utterance, a crescendo of intonation that recalls the passionate and unpremeditated descant of a bird upon the boughs alone. To this true quality of music is added the persuasiveness of pleading. That the violin melody of his incomparable song is lost, must be reckoned a great misfortune. We have good reason to believe that the part of Orpheus was taken by Messer Baccio Ugolini, singing to the viol. Here too it may be mentioned that a *tondo* in monochrome, painted by Signorelli among the arabesques at Orvieto, shows Orpheus at the throne of Plato, habited as a poet with the laurel crown and playing on a violin of antique form. It would be interesting to know whether a rumour of the Mantuan pageant had reached the ears of the Cortonese painter.

362

If the whole of the 'Orfeo' had been conceived and executed with the same artistic feeling as the chief act, it would have been a really fine poem independently of its historical interest. But we have only to turn the page and read the lament uttered for the loss of Eurydice, in order to perceive Poliziano's incapacity for dealing with his hero in a situation of greater difficulty. The pathos which might have made us sympathise with Orpheus in his misery, the passion, approaching to madness, which might have justified his misogyny, are absent. It is difficult not to feel that in this climax of his anguish he was a poor creature, and that the Mænads served him right. Nothing illustrates the defect of real dramatic imagination better than this failure to dignify the catastrophe. Gifted with a fine lyrical inspiration, Poliziano seems to have already felt the Bacchic chorus which forms so brilliant a termination to his play, and to have forgotten his duty to the unfortunate Orpheus, whose sorrow for Eurydice is stultified and made unmeaning by the prosaic expression of a base resolve. It may indeed be said in general that the 'Orfeo' is a good poem only where the situation is not so much dramatic as lyrical, and that its finest passage—the scene in Hades—was fortunately for its author one in which the dramatic motive had to be lyrically expressed. In this respect, as in many others, the 'Orfeo' combines the faults and merits of the Italian attempts at melo-tragedy. To break a butterfly upon the wheel is, however, no fit function of criticism: and probably no one would have smiled more than the author of this improvisation, at the thought of its being gravely dissected just four hundred years after the occasion it was meant to serve had long been given over to oblivion.

363

NOTE

Poliziano's 'Orfeo' was dedicated to Messer Carlo Canale, the husband of that famous Vannoza who bore Lucrezia and Cesare Borgia to Alexander VI. As first published in 1494, and as republished from time to time up to the year 1776, it carried the title of 'La Favola di Orfeo,' and was not divided into acts. Frequent stage-directions sufficed, as in the

case of Florentine 'Sacre Rappresentazioni,' for the indication of the scenes. In this earliest redaction of the 'Orfeo' the chorus of the Dryads, the part of Mnesillus, the lyrical speeches of Proserpine and Pluto, and the first lyric of the Mænads are either omitted or represented by passages in *ottava rima*. In the year 1776 the Padre Ireneo Affò printed at Venice a new version of 'Orfeo, Tragedia di Messer Angelo Poliziano,' collated by him from two MSS. This play is divided into five acts, severally entitled 'Pastoricus,' 'Nymphas Habet,' 'Heroïcus,' 'Necromanticus,' and 'Bacchanalis.' The stage-directions are given partly in Latin, partly in Italian; and instead of the 'Announcement of the Feast' by Mercury, a prologue consisting of two octave stanzas is appended. A Latin Sapphic ode in praise of the Cardinal Gonzaga, which was interpolated in the first version, is omitted, and certain changes are made in the last soliloquy of Orpheus. There is little doubt, I think, that the second version, first given to the press by the Padre Affò, was Poliziano's own recension of his earlier composition. I have therefore followed it in the main, except that I have not thought it necessary to observe the somewhat pedantic division into acts, and have preferred to use the original 'Announcement of the Feast,' which proves the integral connection between this ancient secular play and the Florentine Mystery or 'Sacra Rappresentazione.' The last soliloquy of Orpheus, again, has been freely translated by me from both versions for reasons which will be obvious to students of the original. I have yet to make a remark upon one detail of my translation. In line 390 (part of the first lyric of the Mænads) the Italian gives us:—

Spezzata come il fabbro il cribro spezza.

This means literally: 'Riven as a blacksmith rives a sieve or boulder.' Now sieves are made in Tuscany of a plate of iron, pierced with holes; and the image would therefore be familiar to an Italian. I have, however, preferred to translate thus:—

Riven as woodmen fir-trees rive,

instead of giving:—

Riven as blacksmiths boulders rive,

because I thought that the second and faithful version would be unintelligible as well as unpoetical for English readers.

ON THE PAPAL COURT AT AVIGNON

Fountain of woe! Harbour of endless ire!
 Thou school of errors, haunt of heresies!
 Once Rome, now Babylon, the world's disease,
 That maddenest men with fears and fell desire!
 O forge of fraud! O prison dark and dire,
 Where dies the good, where evil breeds increase!
 Thou living Hell! Wonders will never cease
 If Christ rise not to purge thy sins with fire.
 Founded in chaste and humble poverty,
 Against thy founders thou dost raise thy horn,
 Thou shameless harlot! And whence flows this pride?
 Even from foul and loathed adultery,
 The wage of lewdness. Constantine, return!
 Not so: the felon world its fate must bide.

TO STEFANO COLONNA
WRITTEN FROM VAUCLUSE

Glorius Colonna, thou on whose high head
 Rest all our hopes and the great Latin name,
 Whom from the narrow path of truth and fame
 The wrath of Jove turned not with stormful dread:
 Here are no palace-courts, no stage to tread;
 But pines and oaks the shadowy valleys fill
 Between the green fields and the neighbouring hill,
 Where musing oft I climb by fancy led.
 These lift from earth to heaven our soaring soul,
 While the sweet nightingale, that in thick bowers
 Through darkness pours her wail of tuneful woe,
 Doth bend our charmed breast to love's control;
 But thou alone hast marred this bliss of ours,
 Since from our side, dear lord, thou needs must go.

IN VITA DI MADONNA LAURA. XI
ON LEAVING AVIGNON

366

Backward at every weary step and slow
 These limbs I turn which with great pain I bear;
 Then take I comfort from the fragrant air
 That breathes from thee, and sighing onward go.
 But when I think how joy is turned to woe,
 Remembering my short life and whence I fare,
 I stay my feet for anguish and despair,
 And cast my tearful eyes on earth below.
 At times amid the storm of misery
 This doubt assails me: how frail limbs and poor
 Can severed from their spirit hope to live.
 Then answers Love: Hast thou no memory
 How I to lovers this great guerdon give,
 Free from all human bondage to endure?

IN VITA DI MADONNA LAURA. XII
THOUGHTS IN ABSENCE

The wrinkled sire with hair like winter snow
 Leaves the beloved spot where he hath passed his years,
 Leaves wife and children, dumb with bitter tears,
 To see their father's tottering steps and slow.
 Dragging his aged limbs with weary woe,
 In these last days of life he nothing fears,
 But with stout heart his fainting spirit cheers,
 And spent and wayworn forward still doth go;
 Then comes to Rome, following his heart's desire,
 To gaze upon the portraiture of Him
 Whom yet he hopes in heaven above to see:
 Thus I, alas! my seeking spirit tire,
 Lady, to find in other features dim
 The longed for, loved, true lineaments of thee.

IN VITA DI MADONNA LAURA. LII
OH THAT I HAD WINGS LIKE A DOVE!

367

I am so tired beneath the ancient load
 Of my misdeeds and custom's tyranny,
 That much I fear to fail upon the road
 And yield my soul unto mine enemy.
 'Tis true a friend from whom all splendour flowed,

To save me came with matchless courtesy:
Then flew far up from sight to heaven's abode,
So that I strive in vain his face to see.
Yet still his voice reverberates here below:
Oh ye who labour, lo! the path is here;
Come unto me if none your going stay!
What grace, what love, what fate surpassing fear
Shall give me wings like dove's wings soft as snow,
That I may rest and raise me from the clay?

IN MORTE DI MADONNA LAURA. XXIV

The eyes whereof I sang my fervid song,
The arms, the hands, the feet, the face benign,
Which severed me from what was rightly mine,
And made me sole and strange amid the throng,
The crispèd curls of pure gold beautiful,
And those angelic smiles which once did shine
Imparadising earth with joy divine,
Are now a little dust—dumb, deaf, and dull.
And yet I live! wherefore I weep and wail,
Left alone without the light I loved so long,
Storm-tossed upon a bark that hath no sail.
Then let me here give o'er my amorous song;
The fountains of old inspiration fail,
And nought but woe my dolorous chords prolong.

IN MORTE DI MADONNA LAURA. XXXIV

368

In thought I raised me to the place where she
Whom still on earth I seek and find not, shines;
There 'mid the souls whom the third sphere confines,
More fair I found her and less proud to me.
She took my hand and said: Here shalt thou be
With me ensphered, unless desires mislead;
Lo! I am she who made thy bosom bleed,
Whose day ere eve was ended utterly:
My bliss no mortal heart can understand;
Thee only do I lack, and that which thou
So loved, now left on earth, my beauteous veil.
Ah! wherefore did she cease and loose my hand?
For at the sound of that celestial tale
I all but stayed in paradise till now.

IN MORTE DI MADONNA LAURA. LXXIV

The flower of angels and the spirits blest,
Burghers of heaven, on that first day when she
Who is my lady died, around her pressed
Fulfilled with wonder and with piety.
What light is this? What beauty manifest?
Marvelling they cried: for such supremacy
Of splendour in this age to our high rest
Hath never soared from earth's obscurity.
She, glad to have exchanged her spirit's place,
Consorts with those whose virtues most exceed;
At times the while she backward turns her face
To see me follow—seems to wait and plead:
Therefore toward heaven my will and soul I raise,
Because I hear her praying me to speed.

VOLUME III.

FOLGORE DA SAN GEMIGNANO

Students of Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translations from the early Italian poets (*Dante and his Circle*. Ellis & White, 1874) will not fail to have noticed the striking figure made among those jejune imitators of Provençal mannerism by two rhymesters, Cecco Angiolieri and Folgore da San Gemignano. Both belong to the school of Siena, and both detach themselves from the metaphysical fashion of their epoch by clearness of intention and directness of style. The sonnets of both are remarkable for what in the critical jargon of to-day might be termed realism. Cecco is even savage and brutal. He anticipates Villon from afar, and is happily described by Mr. Rossetti as the prodigal, or 'scamp' of the Dantesque circle. The case is different with Folgore. There is no poet who breathes a fresher air of gentleness. He writes in images, dealing but little with ideas. Every line presents a picture, and each picture has the charm of a miniature fancifully drawn and brightly coloured on a missal-margin. Cecco and Folgore alike have abandoned the mediæval mysticism which sounds unreal on almost all Italian lips but Dante's. True Italians, they are content to live for life's sake, and to take the world as it presents itself to natural senses. But Cecco is perverse and impious. His love has nothing delicate; his hatred is a morbid passion. At his worst or best (for his best writing is his worst feeling) we find him all but rabid. If Caligula, for instance, had written poetry, he might have piqued himself upon the following sonnet; only we must do Cecco the justice of remembering that his rage is more than half ironical and humorous:—

2

An I were fire, I would burn up the world;
An I were wind, with tempest I'd it break;
An I were sea, I'd drown it in a lake;
An I were God, to hell I'd have it hurled;
An I were Pope, I'd see disaster whirled
O'er Christendom, deep joy thereof to take;
An I were Emperor, I'd quickly make
All heads of all folk from their necks be twirled;
An I were death, I'd to my father go;
An I were life, forthwith from him I'd fly;
And with my mother I'd deal even so;
An I were Cecco, as I am but I,
Young girls and pretty for myself I'd hold,
But let my neighbours take the plain and old.

Of all this there is no trace in Folgore. The worst a moralist could say of him is that he sought out for himself a life of pure enjoyment. The famous Sonnets on the Months give particular directions for pastime in a round of pleasure suited to each season. The Sonnets on the Days are conceived in a like hedonistic spirit. But these series are specially addressed to members of the Glad Brigades and Spending Companies, which were common in the great mercantile cities of mediæval Italy. Their tone is doubtless due to the occasion of their composition, as compliments to Messer Nicholò di Nisi and Messer Guerra Caviccioli.

The mention of these names reminds me that a word need be said about the date of Folgore. Mr. Rossetti does not dispute the commonly assigned date of 1260, and takes for granted that the Messer Nicolò of the Sonnets on the Months was the Sienese gentleman referred to by Dante in a certain passage of the 'Inferno':^[48]—

3

And to the Poet said I: 'Now was ever
So vain a people as the Sienese?
Not for a certainty the French by far.'
Whereat the other leper, who had heard me,
Replied unto my speech: 'Taking out Stricca,
Who knew the art of moderate expenses,
And Nicolò, who the luxurious use
Of cloves discovered earliest of all
Within that garden where such seed takes root.
And taking out the band, among whom squandered
Caccia d' Ascian his vineyards and vast woods,
And where his wit the Abbagliato proffered.'

Now Folgore refers in his political sonnets to events of the years 1314 and 1315; and the correct reading of a line in his last sonnet on the Months gives the name of Nicholò di Nisi to the leader of Folgore's 'blithe and lordly Fellowship.' The first of these facts leads us to the conclusion that Folgore flourished in the first quarter of the fourteenth, instead of in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The second prevents our identifying Nicholò di Nisi with the Niccolò de' Salimbeni, who is thought to have been the founder of the Fellowship of the

Carnation. Furthermore, documents have recently been brought to light which mention at San Gemignano, in the years 1305 and 1306, a certain Folgore. There is no sufficient reason to identify this Folgore with the poet; but the name, to say the least, is so peculiar that its occurrence in the records of so small a town as San Gemignano gives some confirmation to the hypothesis of the poet's later date. Taking these several considerations together, I think we must abandon the old view that Folgore was one of the earliest Tuscan poets, a view which is, moreover, contradicted by his style. Those critics, at any rate, who still believe him to have been a predecessor of Dante's, are forced to reject as spurious the political sonnets referring to Monte Catini and the plunder of Lucca by Ugucione della Faggiuola. Yet these sonnets rest on the same manuscript authority as the Months and Days, and are distinguished by the same qualities.^[49]

4

[48] *Inferno*, xxix. 121.—*Longfellow*.

[49] The above points are fully discussed by Signor Giulio Navone, in his recent edition of *Le Rime di Folgore da San Gemignano e di Cene da la Chitarra d' Arezzo*. Bologna: Romagnoli, 1880. I may further mention that in the sonnet on the Pisans, translated on p. 18, which belongs to the political series, Folgore uses his own name.

Whatever may be the date of Folgore, whether we assign his period to the middle of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, there is no doubt but that he presents us with a very lively picture of Italian manners, drawn from the point of view of the high bourgeoisie. It is on this account that I have thought it worth while to translate five of his Sonnets on Knighthood, which form the fragment that remains to us from a series of seventeen. Few poems better illustrate the temper of Italian aristocracy when the civil wars of two centuries had forced the nobles to enroll themselves among the burghers, and when what little chivalry had taken root in Italy was fast decaying in a gorgeous over-bloom of luxury. The institutions of feudal knighthood had lost their sterner meaning for our poet. He uses them for the suggestion of delicate allegories fancifully painted. Their mysterious significance is turned to gaiety, their piety to amorous delight, their grimness to refined enjoyment. Still these changes are effected with perfect good taste and in perfect good faith. Something of the perfume of true chivalry still lingered in a society which was fast becoming mercantile and diplomatic. And this perfume is exhaled by the petals of Folgore's song-blossom. He has no conception that to readers of *Mort Arthur*, or to Founders of the Garter, to Sir Miles Stapleton, Sir Richard Fitz-Simon, or Sir James Audley, his ideal knight would have seemed but little better than a scented civet-cat. Such knights as his were all that Italy possessed, and the poet-painter was justly proud of them, since they served for finished pictures of the beautiful in life.

5

The Italians were not a feudal race. During the successive reigns of Lombard, Frankish, and German masters, they had passively accepted, stubbornly resisted feudalism, remaining true to the conviction that they themselves were Roman. In Roman memories they sought the traditions which give consistency to national consciousness. And when the Italian communes triumphed finally over Empire, counts, bishops, and rural aristocracy; then Roman law was speedily substituted for the 'asinine code' of the barbarians, and Roman civility gave its tone to social customs in the place of Teutonic chivalry. Yet just as the Italians borrowed, modified, and misconceived Gothic architecture, so they took a feudal tincture from the nations of the North with whom they came in contact. Their noble families, those especially who followed the Imperial party, sought the honour of knighthood; and even the free cities arrogated to themselves the right of conferring this distinction by diploma on their burghers. The chivalry thus formed in Italy was a decorative institution. It might be compared to the ornamental frontispiece which masks the structural poverty of such Gothic buildings as the Cathedral of Orvieto.

On the descent of the German Emperor into Lombardy, the great vassals who acknowledged him, made knighthood, among titles of more solid import, the price of their allegiance.^[50] Thus the chronicle of the Cortusi for the year 1354 tells us that when Charles IV. 'was advancing through the March, and had crossed the Oglio, and was at the borders of Cremona, in his camp upon the snow, he, sitting upon his horse, did knight the doughty and noble man, Francesco da Carrara, who had constantly attended him with a great train, and smiting him upon the neck with his palm, said: "Be thou a good knight, and loyal to the Empire." Thereupon the noble German peers dismounted, and forthwith

6

buckled on Francesco's spurs. To them the Lord Francesco gave chargers and horses of the best he had.' Immediately afterwards Francesco dubbed several of his own retainers knights. And this was the customary fashion of these Lombard lords. For we read how in the year 1328 Can Grande della Scala, after the capture of Padua, 'returned to Verona, and for the further celebration of his victory upon the last day of October held a court, and made thirty-eight knights with his own hand of the divers districts of Lombardy.' And in 1294 Azzo d'Este 'was knighted by Gerardo da Camino, who then was Lord of Treviso, upon the piazza of Ferrara, before the gate of the Bishop's palace. And on the same day at the same hour the said Lord Marquis Azzo made fifty-two knights with his own hand, namely, the Lord Francesco, his brother, and others of Ferrara, Modena, Bologna, Florence, Padua, and Lombardy; and on this occasion was a great court held in Ferrara.' Another chronicle, referring to the same event, says that the whole expenses of the ceremony, including the rich dresses of the new knights, were at the charge of the Marquis. It was customary, when a noble house had risen to great wealth and had abundance of fighting men, to increase its prestige and spread abroad its glory by a wholesale creation of knights. Thus the Chronicle of Rimini records a high court held by Pandolfo Malatesta in the May of 1324, when he and his two sons, with two of his near relatives and certain strangers from Florence, Bologna, and Perugia, received this honour. At Siena, in like manner, in the year 1284, 'thirteen of the house of Salimbeni were knighted with great pomp.'

7

[50] The passages used in the text are chiefly drawn from Muratori's fifty-third Dissertation.

It was not on the battlefield that the Italians sought this honour. They regarded knighthood as a part of their signorial parade. Therefore Republics, in whom perhaps, according to strict feudal notions, there was no fount of honour, presumed to appoint procurators for the special purpose of making knights. Florence, Siena, and Arezzo, after this fashion gave the golden spurs to men who were enrolled in the arts of trade or commerce. The usage was severely criticised by Germans who visited Italy in the Imperial train. Otto Frisingensis, writing the deeds of Frederick Barbarossa, speaks with bitterness thereof: 'To the end that they may not lack means of subduing their neighbours, they think it no shame to gird as knights young men of low birth, or even handicraftsmen in despised mechanic arts, the which folk other nations banish like the plague from honourable and liberal pursuits.' Such knights, amid the chivalry of Europe, were not held in much esteem; nor is it easy to see what the cities, which had formally excluded nobles from their government, thought to gain by aping institutions which had their true value only in a feudal society. We must suppose that the Italians were not firmly set enough in their own type to resist an enthusiasm which inflamed all Christendom. At the same time they were too Italian to comprehend the spirit of the thing they borrowed. The knights thus made already contained within themselves the germ of those Condottieri who reduced the service of arms to a commercial speculation. But they lent splendour to the Commonwealth, as may be seen in the grave line of mounted warriors, steel-clad, with open visors, who guard the commune of Siena in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco. Giovanni Villani, in a passage of his Chronicle which deals with the fair state of Florence just before the outbreak of the Black and White parties, says the city at that epoch numbered 'three hundred Cavalieri di Corredo, with many clubs of knights and squires, who morning and evening went to meat with many men of the court, and gave away on high festivals many robes of vair.' It is clear that these citizen knights were leaders of society, and did their duty to the commonwealth by adding to its joyous cheer. Upon the battlefields of the civil wars, moreover, they sustained at their expense the charges of the cavalry.

8

Siena was a city much given to parade and devoted to the Imperial cause, in which the institution of chivalry flourished. Not only did the burghers take knighthood from their procurators, but the more influential sought it by a special dispensation from the Emperor. Thus we hear how Nino Tolomei obtained a Cæsarean diploma of knighthood for his son Giovanni, and published it with great pomp to the people in his palace. This Giovanni, when he afterwards entered religion, took the name of Bernard, and founded the Order of Monte Oliveto.

Owing to the special conditions of Italian chivalry, it followed that the new knight, having won his spurs by no feat of arms upon the battlefield, was bounden to display peculiar magnificence in the ceremonies of his investiture. His honour was held to be less the reward of courage than of liberality. And this feeling is strongly expressed in a curious passage of

Matteo Villani's Chronicle. 'When the Emperor Charles had received the crown in Rome, as we have said, he turned towards Siena, and on the 19th day of April arrived at that city; and before he entered the same, there met him people of the commonwealth with great festivity upon the hour of vespers; in the which reception eight burghers, given to display but miserly, to the end they might avoid the charges due to knighthood, did cause themselves then and there to be made knights by him. And no sooner had he passed the gates than many ran to meet him without order in their going or provision for the ceremony, and he, being aware of the vain and light impulse of that folk, enjoined upon the Patriarch to knight them in his name. The Patriarch could not withstay from knighting as many as offered themselves; and seeing the thing so cheap, very many took the honour, who before that hour had never thought of being knighted, nor had made provision of what is required from him who seeketh knighthood, but with light impulse did cause themselves to be borne upon the arms of those who were around the Patriarch; and when they were in the path before him, these raised such an one on high, and took his customary cap off, and after he had had the cheek-blow which is used in knighting, put a gold-fringed cap upon his head, and drew him from the press, and so he was a knight. And after this wise were made four-and-thirty on that evening, of the noble and lesser folk. And when the Emperor had been attended to his lodging, night fell, and all returned home; and the new knights without preparation or expense celebrated their reception into chivalry with their families forthwith. He who reflects with a mind not subject to base avarice upon the coming of a new-crowned Emperor into so famous a city, and bethinks him how so many noble and rich burghers were promoted to the honour of knighthood in their native land, men too by nature fond of pomp, without having made any solemn festival in common or in private to the fame of chivalry, may judge this people little worthy of the distinction they received.'

10

This passage is interesting partly as an instance of Florentine spite against Siena, partly as showing that in Italy great munificence was expected from the carpet-knights who had not won their spurs with toil, and partly as proving how the German Emperors, on their parade expeditions through Italy, debased the institutions they were bound to hold in respect. Enfeebled by the extirpation of the last great German house which really reigned in Italy, the Empire was now no better than a cause of corruption and demoralisation to Italian society. The conduct of a man like Charles disgusted even the most fervent Ghibellines; and we find Fazio degli Uberti flinging scorn upon his avarice and baseness in such lines as these:—

Sappi ch' i' son Italia che ti parlo,
 Di Lusimburgo *ignominioso Carlo* ...
 Veggendo te aver tesse tue arti
A tór danari e gir con essi a casa ...
 Tu dunque, Giove, perche 'l Santo uccello
 Da questo Carlo quarto
 Imperador non togli e dalle mani
Degli altri, lurchi moderni Germani
Che d' aquila un allocco n' hanno fatto?

From a passage in a Sieneſe chronicle we learn what ceremonies of bravery were usual in that city when the new knights understood their duty. It was the year 1326. Messer Francesco Bandinelli was about to be knighted on the morning of Christmas Day. The friends of his house sent peacocks and pheasants by the dozen, and huge pies of marchpane, and game in quantities. Wine, meat, and bread were distributed to the Franciscan and other convents, and a fair and noble court was opened to all comers. Messer Sozzo, father of the novice, went, attended by his guests, to hear high mass in the cathedral; and there upon the marble pulpit, which the Pisans carved, the ceremony was completed. Tommaso di Nello bore his sword and cap and spurs before him upon horseback. Messer Sozzo girded the sword upon the loins of Messer Francesco, his son aforesaid. Messer Pietro Ridolfi, of Rome, who was the first vicar that came to Siena, and the Duke of Calabria buckled on his right spur. The Captain of the People buckled on his left. The Count Simone da Battifolle then undid his sword and placed it in the hands of Messer Giovanni di Messer Bartolo de' Fibenzi da Rodi, who handed it to Messer Sozzo, the which sword had previously been girded by the father on his son. After this follows a list of the illustrious guests, and an inventory of the presents made to them by Messer Francesco. We find among these 'a robe of silken cloth and gold, skirt, and fur, and cap lined with vair, with a silken cord.' The description of the many costly dresses is minute; but I find no mention of armour. The singers received golden florins, and the

11

players upon instruments 'good store of money.' A certain Salamone was presented with the clothes which the novice doffed before he took the ceremonial bath. The whole catalogue concludes with Messer Francesco's furniture and outfit. This, besides a large wardrobe of rich clothes and furs, contains armour and the trappings for charger and palfrey. The *Corte Bandita*, or open house held upon this occasion, lasted for eight days, and the charges on the Bandinelli estates must have been considerable.

Knights so made were called in Italy *Cavalieri Addobbati*, or *di Corredo*, probably because the expense of costly furniture was borne by them—*addobbo* having become a name for decorative trappings, and *Corredo* for equipment. The latter is still in use for a bride's trousseau. The former has the same Teutonic root as our verb 'to dub.' But the Italians recognised three other kinds of knights, the *Cavalieri Bagati*, *Cavalieri di Scudo*, and *Cavalieri d'Arme*. Of the four sorts Sacchetti writes in one of his novels:—'Knights of the Bath are made with the greatest ceremonies, and it behoves them to be bathed and washed of all impurity. Knights of Equipment are those who take the order with a mantle of dark green and the gilded garland. Knights of the Shield are such as are made knights by commonwealths or princes, or go to investiture armed, and with the casque upon their head. Knights of Arms are those who in the opening of a battle, or upon a foughten field, are dubbed knights.' These distinctions, however, though concordant with feudal chivalry, were not scrupulously maintained in Italy. Messer Francesco Bandinelli, for example, was certainly a *Cavaliere di Corredo*. Yet he took the bath, as we have seen. Of a truth, the Italians selected those picturesque elements of chivalry which lent themselves to pageant and parade. The sterner intention of the institution, and the symbolic meaning of its various ceremonies, were neglected by them.

12

In the foregoing passages, which serve as a lengthy preamble to Folgore's five sonnets, I have endeavoured to draw illustrations from the history of Siena, because Folgore represents Sienese society at the height of mediæval culture. In the first of the series he describes the preparation made by the aspirant after knighthood. The noble youth is so bent on doing honour to the order of chivalry, that he raises money by mortgage to furnish forth the banquets and the presents due upon the occasion of his institution. He has made provision also of equipment for himself and all his train. It will be noticed that Folgore dwells only on the fair and joyous aspect of the ceremony. The religious enthusiasm of knighthood has disappeared, and already, in the first decade of the fourteenth century, we find the spirit of Jehan de Saintrè prevalent in Italy. The word *donzello*, derived from the Latin *domicellus*, I have translated *squire*, because the donzel was a youth of gentle birth awaiting knighthood.

13

This morn a young squire shall be made a knight;
hereof he fain would be right worthy found,
And therefore pledgeth lands and castles round
To furnish all that fits a man of might.
Meat, bread and wine he gives to many a wight;
Capons and pheasants on his board abound,
Where serving men and pages march around;
Choice chambers, torches, and wax candle light.
Barbed steeds, a multitude, are in his thought,
Mailed men at arms and noble company,
Spears, pennants, housing cloths, bells richly wrought.
Musicians following with great barony
And jesters through the land his state have brought,
With dames and damsels whereso rideth he.

The subject having thus been introduced, Folgore treats the ceremonies of investiture by an allegorical method, which is quite consistent with his own preference of images to ideas. Each of the four following sonnets presents a picture to the mind, admirably fitted for artistic handling. We may imagine them to ourselves wrought in arras for a sumptuous chamber. The first treats of the bath, in which, as we have seen already from Sacchetti's note, the aspirant after knighthood puts aside all vice, and consecrates himself anew. Prodezza, or Prowess, must behold him nude from head to foot, in order to assure herself that the neophyte bears no blemish; and this inspection is an allegory of internal wholeness.

Lo Prowess, who despoileth him straightway,
And saith: 'Friend, now beseems it thee to strip;
For I will see men naked, thigh and hip,
And thou my will must know and eke obey;
And leave what was thy wont until this day,

14

And for new toil, new sweat, thy strength equip;
 This do, and thou shalt join my fellowship,
 If of fair deeds thou tire not nor cry nay.'
 And when she sees his comely body bare,
 Forthwith within her arms she him doth take,
 And saith: 'These limbs thou yieldest to my prayer;
 I do accept thee, and this gift thee make,
 So that thy deeds may shine for ever fair;
 My lips shall never more thy praise forsake.'

After courage, the next virtue of the knightly character is gentleness or modesty, called by the Italians humility. It is this quality which makes a strong man pleasing to the world, and wins him favour. Folgore's sonnet enables us to understand the motto of the great Borromeo family —*Humilitas*, in Gothic letters underneath the coronet upon their princely palace fronts.

Humility to him doth gently go,
 And saith: 'I would in no wise weary thee;
 Yet must I cleanse and wash thee thoroughly,
 And I will make thee whiter than the snow.
 Hear what I tell thee in few words, for so
 Fain am I of thy heart to hold the key;
 Now must thou sail henceforward after me;
 And I will guide thee as myself do go.
 But one thing would I have thee straightway leave;
 Well knowest thou mine enemy is pride;
 Let her no more unto thy spirit cleave:
 So leal a friend with thee will I abide
 That favour from all folk thou shalt receive;
 This grace hath he who keepeth on my side.'

The novice has now bathed, approved himself to the searching eyes of Prowess, and been accepted by Humility. After the bath, it was customary for him to spend a night in vigil; and this among the Teutons should have taken place in church, alone before the altar. But the Italian poet, after his custom, gives a suave turn to the severe discipline. His donzel passes the night in bed, attended by Discretion, or the virtue of reflection. She provides fair entertainment for the hours of vigil, and leaves him at the morning with good counsel. It is not for nothing that he seeks knighthood, and it behoves him to be careful of his goings. The last three lines of the sonnet are the gravest of the series, showing that something of true chivalrous feeling survived even among the Cavalieri di Corredo of Tuscany.

15

Then did Discretion to the squire draw near,
 And drieth him with a fair cloth and clean,
 And straightway putteth him the sheets between,
 Silk, linen, counterpane, and minevere.
 Think now of this! Until the day was clear,
 With songs and music and delight the queen,
 And with new knights, fair fellows well-beseen,
 To make him perfect, gave him goodly cheer.
 Then saith she: 'Rise forthwith, for now 'tis due,
 Thou shouldst be born into the world again;
 Keep well the order thou dost take in view.'
 Unfathomable thoughts with him remain
 Of that great bond he may no more eschew,
 Nor can he say, 'I'll hide me from this chain.'

The vigil is over. The mind of the novice is prepared for his new duties. The morning of his reception into chivalry has arrived. It is therefore fitting that grave thoughts should be abandoned; and seeing that not only prowess, humility, and discretion are the virtues of a knight, but that he should also be blithe and debonair, Gladness comes to raise him from his bed and equip him for the ceremony of institution.

Comes Blithesomeness with mirth and merriment,
 All decked in flowers she seemeth a rose-tree;
 Of linen, silk, cloth, fur, now beareth she
 the new knight a rich habiliment;
 Head-gear and cap and garland flower-besprent,
 So brave they were May-bloom he seemed to be;
 With such a rout, so many and such glee,
 That the floor shook. Then to her work she went;
 And stood him on his feet in hose and shoon;
 And purse and gilded girdle 'neath the fur
 That drapes his goodly limbs, she buckles on;
 Then bids the singers and sweet music stir,
 And showeth him to ladies for a boon
 And all who in that following went with her.

16

At this point the poem is abruptly broken. The manuscript from which these sonnets are taken states they are a fragment. Had the remaining twelve been preserved to us, we should probably have possessed a series of pictures in which the procession to church would have been portrayed, the investiture with the sword, the accolade, the buckling on of the spurs, and the concluding sports and banquets. It is very much to be regretted that so interesting, so beautiful, and so unique a monument of Italian chivalry survives thus mutilated. But students of art have to arm themselves continually with patience, repressing the sad thoughts engendered in them by the spectacle of time's unconscious injuries.

It is certain that Folgore would have written at least one sonnet on the quality of courtesy, which in that age, as we have learned from Matteo Villani, identified itself in the Italian mind with liberality. This identification marks a certain degradation of the chivalrous ideal, which is characteristic of Italian manners. One of Folgore's miscellaneous sonnets shows how sorely he felt the disappearance of this quality from the midst of a society bent daily more and more upon material aims. It reminds us of the lamentable outcries uttered by the later poets of the fourteenth century, Sacchetti, Boccaccio, Uberti, and others of less fame, over the decline of their age.

Courtesy! Courtesy! Courtesy! I call:
 But from no quarter comes there a reply.
 And whoso needs her, ill must us befall.
 Greed with his hook hath ta'en men one and all,
 And murdered every grace that dumb doth lie:
 Whence, if I grieve, I know the reason why;
 From you, great men, to God I make my call:
 For you my mother Courtesy have cast
 So low beneath your feet she there must bleed;
 Your gold remains, but you're not made to last:
 Of Eve and Adam we are all the seed:
 Able to give and spend, you hold wealth fast:
 Ill is the nature that rears such a breed!

17

Folgore was not only a poet of occasion and compliment, but a political writer, who fully entertained the bitter feeling of the Guelphs against their Ghibelline opponents.

Two of his sonnets addressed to the Guelphs have been translated by Mr. Rossetti. In order to complete the list I have made free versions of two others in which he criticised the weakness of his own friends. The first is addressed, in the insolent impiety of rage, to God:—

I praise thee not, O God, nor give thee glory,
 Nor yield thee any thanks, nor bow the knee,
 Nor pay thee service; for this irketh me
 More than the souls to stand in purgatory;
 Since thou hast made us Guelphs a jest and story
 Unto the Ghibellines for all to see:
 And if Uguccion claimed tax of thee,
 Thou'dst pay it without interrogatory.
 Ah, well I wot they know thee! and have stolen
 St. Martin from thee, Altopascio,
 St. Michael, and the treasure thou hast lost;
 And thou that rotten rabble so hast swollen
 That pride now counts for tribute; even so
 Thou'st made their heart stone-hard to thine own cost.

About the meaning of some lines in this sonnet I am not clear. But the feeling and the general drift of it are manifest. The second is a satire on the feebleness and effeminacy of the Pisans.

18

Ye are more silky-sleek than ermines are,
 Ye Pisan counts, knights, damozels, and squires,
 Who think by combing out your hair like wires
 To drive the men of Florence from their car.
 Ye make the Ghibellines free near and far,
 Here, there, in cities, castles, huts, and byres,
 Seeing how gallant in your brave attires,
 How bold you look, true paladins of war.
 Stout-hearted are ye as a hare in chase,
 To meet the sails of Genoa on the sea;
 And men of Lucca never saw your face.
 Dogs with a bone for courtesy are ye:
 Could Folgore but gain a special grace,
 He'd have you banded 'gainst all men that be.

Among the sonnets not translated by Mr. Rossetti two by Folgore remain, which may be classified with the not least considerable contributions to Italian gnomic poetry in an age when literature easily

assumed a didactic tone. The first has for its subject the importance of discernment and discrimination. It is written on the wisdom of what the ancient Greeks called *Kaiρός*, or the right occasion in all human conduct.

Dear friend, not every herb puts forth a flower;
Nor every flower that blossoms fruit doth bear;
Nor hath each spoken word a virtue rare;
Nor every stone in earth its healing power:
This thing is good when mellow, that when sour;
One seems to grieve, within doth rest from care;
Not every torch is brave that flaunts in air;
There is what dead doth seem, yet flame doth shower.
Wherefore it ill behoveth a wise man
His truss of every grass that grows to bind,
Or pile his back with every stone he can,
Or counsel from each word to seek to find,
Or take his walks abroad with Dick and Dan:
Not without cause I'm moved to speak my mind.

19

The second condemns those men of light impulse who, as Dante put it, discoursing on the same theme, 'subject reason to inclination.'^[51]

What time desire hath o'er the soul such sway
That reason finds nor place nor puissance here,
Men oft do laugh at what should claim a tear,
And over grievous dole are seeming gay.
He sure would travel far from sense astray
Who should take frigid ice for fire; and near
Unto this plight are those who make glad cheer
For what should rather cause their soul dismay.
But more at heart might he feel heavy pain
Who made his reason subject to mere will,
And followed wandering impulse without rein;
Seeing no lordship is so rich as still
One's upright self unswerving to sustain,
To follow worth, to flee things vain and ill.

The sonnets translated by me in this essay, taken together with those already published by Mr. Rossetti, put the English reader in possession of all that passes for the work of Folgore da San Gemignano.

[51] The line in Dante runs:

'Che la ragion sommettono al talento.'

In Folgore's sonnet we read:

'Chi sommette rason a volontade.'

On the supposition that Folgore wrote in the second decade of the fourteenth century, it is not impossible that he may have had knowledge of this line from the fifth canto of the *Inferno*.

Since these words were written, England has lost the poet-painter, to complete whose work upon the sonnet-writer of mediæval Siena I attempted the translations in this essay. One who has trodden the same path as Rossetti, at however a noticeable interval, and has attempted to present in English verse the works of great Italian singers, doing inadequately for Michelangelo and Campanella what he did supremely well for Dante, may here perhaps be allowed to lay the tribute of reverent recognition at his tomb.

20

What is the meaning of our English Christmas? What makes it seem so truly Northern, national, and homely, that we do not like to keep the feast upon a foreign shore? These questions grew upon me as I stood one Advent afternoon beneath the Dome of Florence. A priest was thundering from the pulpit against French scepticism, and exalting the miracle of the Incarnation. Through the whole dim church blazed altar candles. Crowds of men and women knelt or sat about the transepts, murmuring their prayers of preparation for the festival. At the door were pedlars selling little books, in which were printed the offices for Christmas-tide, with stories of S. Felix and S. Catherine, whose devotion to the infant Christ had wrought them weal, and promises of the remission of four purgatorial centuries to those who zealously observed the service of the Church at this most holy time. I knew that the people of Florence were preparing for Christmas in their own way. But it was not our way. It happened that outside the church the climate seemed as wintry as our own—snowstorms and ice, and wind and chilling fog, suggesting Northern cold. But as the palaces of Florence lacked our comfortable firesides, and the greetings of friends lacked our hearty handshakes and loud good wishes, so there seemed to be a want of the home feeling in those Christmas services and customs. Again I asked myself, 'What do we mean by Christmas?'

The same thought pursued me as I drove to Rome: by Siena, still and brown, uplifted, mid her russet hills and wilderness of rolling plain; by Chiusi, with its sepulchral city of a dead and unknown people; through the chestnut forests of the Apennines; by Orvieto's rock, Viterbo's fountains, and the oak-grown solitudes of the Ciminian heights, from which one looks across the broad lake of Bolsena and the Roman plain. Brilliant sunlight, like that of a day in late September, shone upon the landscape, and I thought—Can this be Christmas? Are they bringing mistletoe and holly on the country carts into the towns in far-off England? Is it clear and frosty there, with the tramp of heels upon the flag, or snowing silently, or foggy with a round red sun and cries of warning at the corners of the streets?

I reached Rome on Christmas Eve, in time to hear midnight services in the Sistine Chapel and S. John Lateran, to breathe the dust of decayed shrines, to wonder at doting cardinals begrimed with snuff, and to resent the open-mouthed bad taste of my countrymen who made a mockery of these palsy-stricken ceremonies. Nine cardinals going to sleep, nine train-bearers talking scandal, twenty huge, handsome Switzers in the dress devised by Michelangelo, some ushers, a choir caged off by gilded railings, the insolence and eagerness of polyglot tourists, plenty of wax candles dripping on people's heads, and a continual nasal drone proceeding from the gilded cage, out of which were caught at intervals these words, and these only,—'Sæcula sæculorum, amen.' Such was the celebrated Sistine service. The chapel blazed with light, and very strange did Michelangelo's Last Judgment, his Sibyls, and his Prophets, appear upon the roof and wall above this motley and unmeaning crowd.

Next morning I put on my dress-clothes and white tie, and repaired, with groups of Englishmen similarly attired, and of Englishwomen in black crape—the regulation costume—to S. Peter's. It was a glorious and cloudless morning; sunbeams streamed in columns from the southern windows, falling on the vast space full of soldiers and a mingled mass of every kind of people. Up the nave stood double files of the Pontifical guard. Monks and nuns mixed with the Swiss cuirassiers and halberds. Contadini crowded round the sacred images, and especially round the toe of S. Peter. I saw many mothers lift their swaddled babies up to kiss it. Valets of cardinals, with the invariable red umbrellas, hung about side chapels and sacristies. Purple-mantled monsignori, like emperor butterflies, floated down the aisles from sunlight into shadow. Movement, colour, and the stir of expectation, made the church alive. We showed our dress-clothes to the guard, were admitted within their ranks, and solemnly walked up toward the dome. There under its broad canopy stood the altar, glittering with gold and candles. The choir was carpeted and hung with scarlet. Two magnificent thrones rose ready for the Pope: guards of honour, soldiers, attachés, and the élite of the residents and visitors in Rome, were scattered in groups picturesquely varied by ecclesiastics of all orders and degrees. At ten a stirring took place near the great west door. It opened, and we saw the procession of the Pope and his cardinals. Before him marched the singers and the blowers of the silver trumpets, making the most liquid melody. Then came his Cap of Maintenance, and three tiaras; then a company of mitred priests; next

the cardinals in scarlet; and last, aloft beneath a canopy, upon the shoulders of men, and flanked by the mystic fans, advanced the Pope himself, swaying to and fro like a Lama, or an Aztec king. Still the trumpets blew most silverly, and still the people knelt; and as he came, we knelt and had his blessing. Then he took his state and received homage. After this the choir began to sing a mass of Palestrina's, and the deacons robed the Pope. Marvellous putting on and taking off of robes and tiaras and mitres ensued, during which there was much bowing and praying and burning of incense. At last, when he had reached the highest stage of sacrificial sanctity, he proceeded to the altar, waited on by cardinals and bishops. Having censed it carefully, he took a higher throne and divested himself of part of his robes. Then the mass went on in earnest, till the moment of consecration, when it paused, the Pope descended from his throne, passed down the choir, and reached the altar. Every one knelt; the shrill bell tinkled; the silver trumpets blew; the air became sick and heavy with incense, so that sun and candle light swooned in an atmosphere of odorous cloud-wreaths. The whole church trembled, hearing the strange subtle music vibrate in the dome, and seeing the Pope with his own hands lift Christ's body from the altar and present it to the people. An old parish priest, pilgrim from some valley of the Apennines, who knelt beside me, cried and quivered with excess of adoration. The great tombs around, the sculptured saints and angels, the dome, the volumes of light and incense and unfamiliar melody, the hierarchy ministrant, the white and central figure of the Pope, the multitude—made up an overpowering scene. What followed was comparatively tedious. My mind again went back to England, and I thought of Christmas services beginning in all village churches and all cathedrals throughout the land—their old familiar hymn, their anthem of Handel, their trite and sleepy sermons. How different the two feasts are—Christmas in Rome, Christmas in England—Italy and the North—the spirit of Latin and the spirit of Teutonic Christianity.

24

What, then, constitutes the essence of our Christmas as different from that of more Southern nations? In their origin they are the same. The stable of Bethlehem, the star-led kings, the shepherds, and the angels—all the beautiful story, in fact, which S. Luke alone of the Evangelists has preserved for us—are what the whole Christian world owes to the religious feeling of the Hebrews. The first and second chapters of S. Luke are most important in the history of Christian mythology and art. They are far from containing the whole of what we mean by Christmas; but the religious poetry which gathers round that season must be sought upon their pages. Angels, ever since the Exodus, played a first part in the visions of the Hebrew prophets and in the lives of their heroes. We know not what reminiscences of old Egyptian genii, what strange shadows of the winged beasts of Persia, flitted through their dreams. In the desert, or under the boundless sky of Babylon, these shapes became no less distinct than the precise outlines of Oriental scenery. They incarnated the vivid thoughts and intense longings of the prophets, who gradually came to give them human forms and titles. We hear of them by name, as servants and attendants upon God, as guardians of nations, and patrons of great men. To the Hebrew mind the whole unseen world was full of spirits, active, strong, and swift of flight, of various aspect, and with power of speech. It is hard to imagine what the first Jewish disciples and the early Greek and Roman converts thought of these great beings. To us, the hierarchies of Dionysius, the services of the Church, the poetry of Dante and Milton, and the forms of art, have made them quite familiar. Northern nations have appropriated the Angels, and invested them with attributes alien to their Oriental origin. They fly through our pine-forests, and the gloom of cloud or storm; they ride upon our clanging bells, and gather in swift squadrons among the arches of Gothic cathedrals; we see them making light in the cavernous depth of woods, where sun or moon beams rarely pierce, and ministering to the wounded or the weary; they bear aloft the censers of the mass; they sing in the anthems of choristers, and live in strains of poetry and music; our churches bear their names; we call our children by their titles; we love them as our guardians, and the whole unseen world is made a home to us by their imagined presence. All these things are the growth of time and the work of races whose myth-making imagination is more artistic than that of the Hebrews. Yet this rich legacy of romance is bound up in the second chapter of S. Luke; and it is to him we must give thanks when at Christmas-tide we read of the shepherds and the angels in English words more beautiful than his own Greek.

25

26

The angels in the stable of Bethlehem, the kings who came from the far East, and the adoring shepherds, are the gift of Hebrew legend and of the Greek physician Luke to Christmas. How these strange and splendid

incidents affect modern fancy remains for us to examine; at present we must ask, What did the Romans give to Christmas? The customs of the Christian religion, like everything that belongs to the modern world, have nothing pure and simple in their nature. They are the growth of long ages, and of widely different systems, parts of which have been fused into one living whole. In this respect they resemble our language, our blood, our literature, and our modes of thought and feeling. We find Christianity in one sense wholly original; in another sense composed of old materials; in both senses universal and cosmopolitan. The Roman element in Christmas is a remarkable instance of this acquisitive power of Christianity. The celebration of the festival takes place at the same time as that of the Pagan Saturnalia; and from the old customs of that holiday, Christmas absorbed much that was consistent with the spirit of the new religion. During the Saturnalia the world enjoyed, in thought at least, a perfect freedom. Men who had gone to bed as slaves, rose their own masters. From the *ergastula* and dismal sunless cages they went forth to ramble in the streets and fields. Liberty of speech was given them, and they might satirise those vices of their lords to which, on other days, they had to minister. Rome on this day, by a strange negation of logic, which we might almost call a prompting of blind conscience, negated the philosophic dictum that barbarians were by law of nature slaves, and acknowledged the higher principle of equality. The Saturnalia stood out from the whole year as a protest in favour of universal brotherhood, and the right that all men share alike to enjoy life after their own fashion, within the bounds that nature has assigned them. We do not know how far the Stoic school, which was so strong in Rome, and had so many points of contact with the Christians, may have connected its own theories of equality with this old custom of the Saturnalia. But it is possible that the fellowship of human beings, and the temporary abandonment of class prerogatives, became a part of Christmas through the habit of the Saturnalia. We are perhaps practising a Roman virtue to this day when at Christmas-time our hand is liberal, and we think it wrong that the poorest wretch should fail to feel the pleasure of the day.

27

Of course Christianity inspired the freedom of the Saturnalia with a higher meaning. The mystery of the Incarnation, or the deification of human nature, put an end to slavery through all the year, as well as on this single day. What had been a kind of aimless licence became the most ennobling principle by which men are exalted to a state of self-respect and mutual reverence. Still in the Saturnalia was found, ready-made, an easy symbol of unselfish enjoyment. It is, however, dangerous to push speculations of this kind to the very verge of possibility.

The early Roman Christians probably kept Christmas with no special ceremonies. Christ was as yet too close to them. He had not become the glorious creature of their fancy, but was partly an historic being, partly confused in their imagination with reminiscences of Pagan deities. As the Good Shepherd, and as Orpheus, we find him painted in the Catacombs; and those who thought of him as God, loved to dwell upon his risen greatness more than on the idyll of his birth. To them his entry upon earth seemed less a subject of rejoicing than his opening of the heavens; they suffered, and looked forward to a future happiness; they would not seem to make this world permanent by sharing its gladness with the Heathens. Theirs, in truth, was a religion of hope and patience, not of triumphant recollection or of present joyfulness.

28

The Northern converts of the early Church added more to the peculiar character of our Christmas. Who can tell what Pagan rites were half sanctified by their association with that season, or how much of our cheerfulness belonged to Heathen orgies and the banquets of grim warlike gods? Certainly nothing strikes one more in reading Scandinavian poetry, than the strange mixture of Pagan and Christian sentiments which it presents. For though the missionaries of the Church did all they could to wean away the minds of men from their old superstitions; yet, wiser than their modern followers, they saw that some things might remain untouched, and that even the great outlines of the Christian faith might be adapted to the habits of the people whom they studied to convert. Thus, on the one hand, they destroyed the old temples one by one, and called the idols by the name of devils, and strove to obliterate the songs which sang great deeds of bloody gods and heroes; while, on the other, they taught the Northern sea-kings that Jesus was a Prince surrounded by twelve dukes, who conquered all the world. Besides, they left the days of the week to their old patrons. It is certain that the imagination of the people preserved more of heathendom than even such missionaries could approve; mixing up the deeds of the Christian saints with old heroic legends; seeing Balder's

29

beauty in Christ and the strength of Thor in Samson; attributing magic to S. John; swearing, as of old, bloody oaths in God's name, over the gilded boar's-head; burning the yule-log, and cutting sacred boughs to grace their new-built churches.

The songs of choirs and sound of holy bells, and superstitious reverence for the mass, began to tell upon the people; and soon the echo of their old religion only swelled upon the ear at intervals, attaching itself to times of more than usual sanctity. Christmas was one of these times, and the old faith threw around its celebration a fantastic light. Many customs of the genial Pagan life remained; they seemed harmless when the sense of joy was Christian. The Druid's mistletoe graced the church porches of England and of France, and no blood lingered on its berries. Christmas thus became a time of extraordinary mystery. The people loved it as connecting their old life with the new religion, perhaps unconsciously, though every one might feel that Christmas was no common Christian feast. On its eve strange wonders happened: the thorn that sprang at Glastonbury from the sacred crown which Joseph brought with him from Palestine, when Avalon was still an island, blossomed on that day. The Cornish miners seemed to hear the sound of singing men arise from submerged churches by the shore, and others said that bells, beneath the ground where villages had been, chimed yearly on that eve. No evil thing had power, as Marcellus in 'Hamlet' tells us, and the bird of dawning crowed the whole night through. One might multiply folklore about the sanctity of Christmas, but enough has been said to show that round it lingered long the legendary spirit of old Paganism. It is not to Jews, or Greeks, or Romans only that we owe our ancient Christmas fancies, but also to those half-heathen ancestors who lovingly looked back to Odin's days, and held the old while they embraced the new.

30

Let us imagine Christmas Day in a mediæval town of Northern England. The cathedral is only partly finished. Its nave and transepts are the work of Norman architects, but the choir has been destroyed in order to be rebuilt by more graceful designers and more skilful hands. The old city is full of craftsmen, assembled to complete the church. Some have come as a religious duty, to work off their tale of sins by bodily labour. Some are animated by a love of art—simple men, who might have rivalled with the Greeks in ages of more cultivation. Others, again, are well-known carvers, brought for hire from distant towns and countries beyond the sea. But to-day, and for some days past, the sound of hammer and chisel has been silent in the choir. Monks have hustled about the nave, dressing it up with holly-boughs and bushes of yew, and preparing a stage for the sacred play they are going to exhibit on the feast day. Christmas is not like Corpus Christi, and now the market-place stands inches deep in snow, so that the Miracles must be enacted beneath a roof instead of in the open air. And what place so appropriate as the cathedral, where poor people may have warmth and shelter while they see the show? Besides, the gloomy old church, with its windows darkened by the falling snow, lends itself to candlelight effects that will enhance the splendour of the scene. Everything is ready. The incense of morning mass yet lingers round the altar. The voice of the friar who told the people from the pulpit the story of Christ's birth, has hardly ceased to echo. Time has just been given for a mid-day dinner, and for the shepherds and farm lads to troop in from the country-side. The monks are ready at the wooden stage to draw its curtain, and all the nave is full of eager faces. There you may see the smith and carpenter, the butcher's wife, the country priest, and the grey cowled friar. Scores of workmen, whose home the cathedral for the time is made, are also here, and you may know the artists by their thoughtful foreheads and keen eyes. That young monk carved Madonna and her Son above the southern porch. Beside him stands the master mason, whose strong arms have hewn gigantic images of prophets and apostles for the pinnacles outside the choir; and the little man with cunning eyes between the two is he who cuts such quaint hobgoblins for the gargoyles. He has a vein of satire in him, and his humour overflows into the stone. Many and many a grim beast and hideous head has he hidden among vine-leaves and trellis-work upon the porches. Those who know him well are loth to anger him, for fear their sons and sons' sons should laugh at them for ever caricatured in solid stone.

31

Hark! there sounds the bell. The curtain is drawn, and the candles blaze brightly round the wooden stage. What is this first scene? We have God in Heaven, dressed like a Pope with triple crown, and attended by his court of angels. They sing and toss up censers till he lifts his hand and speaks. In a long Latin speech he unfolds the order of creation and his will concerning man. At the end of it up leaps an ugly buffoon, in goatskin, with rams' horns upon his head. Some children begin to cry;

but the older people laugh, for this is the Devil, the clown and comic character, who talks their common tongue, and has no reverence before the very throne of Heaven. He asks leave to plague men, and receives it; then, with many a curious caper, he goes down to Hell, beneath the stage. The angels sing and toss their censers as before, and the first scene closes to a sound of organs. The next is more conventional, in spite of some grotesque incidents. It represents the Fall; the monks hurry over it quickly, as a tedious but necessary prelude to the birth of Christ. That is the true Christmas part of the ceremony, and it is understood that the best actors and most beautiful dresses are to be reserved for it. The builders of the choir in particular are interested in the coming scenes, since one of their number has been chosen, for his handsome face and tenor voice, to sing the angel's part. He is a young fellow of nineteen, but his beard is not yet grown, and long hair hangs down upon his shoulders. A chorister of the cathedral, his younger brother, will act the Virgin Mary. At last the curtain is drawn.

32

We see a cottage-room, dimly lighted by a lamp, and Mary spinning near her bedside. She sings a country air, and goes on working, till a rustling noise is heard, more light is thrown upon the stage, and a glorious creature, in white raiment, with broad golden wings, appears. He bears a lily, and cries,—'Ave Maria, Gratia Plena!' She does not answer, but stands confused, with down-dropped eyes and timid mien. Gabriel rises from the ground and comforts her, and sings aloud his message of glad tidings. Then Mary gathers courage, and, kneeling in her turn, thanks God; and when the angel and his radiance disappears, she sings the song of the Magnificat clearly and simply, in the darkened room. Very soft and silver sounds this hymn through the great church. The women kneel, and children are hushed as by a lullaby. But some of the hinds and 'prentice lads begin to think it rather dull. They are not sorry when the next scene opens with a sheepfold and a little camp-fire. Unmistakable bleatings issue from the fold, and five or six common fellows are sitting round the blazing wood. One might fancy they had stepped straight from the church floor to the stage, so natural do they look. Besides, they call themselves by common names—Colin, and Tom Lie-a-bed, and nimble Dick. Many a round laugh wakes echoes in the church when these shepherds stand up, and hold debate about a stolen sheep. Tom Lie-a-bed has nothing to remark but that he is very sleepy, and does not want to go in search of it to-night; Colin cuts jokes, and throws out shrewd suspicions that Dick knows something of the matter; but Dick is sly, and keeps them off the scent, although a few of his asides reveal to the audience that he is the real thief. While they are thus talking, silence falls upon the shepherds. Soft music from the church organ breathes, and they appear to fall asleep.

33

The stage is now quite dark, and for a few moments the aisles echo only to the dying melody. When, behold, a ray of light is seen, and splendour grows around the stage from hidden candles, and in the glory Gabriel appears upon a higher platform made to look like clouds. The shepherds wake in confusion, striving to shelter their eyes from this unwonted brilliancy. But Gabriel waves his lily, spreads his great gold wings, and bids good cheer with clarion voice. The shepherds fall to worship, and suddenly round Gabriel there gathers a choir of angels, and a song of 'Gloria in Excelsis' to the sound of a deep organ is heard far off. From distant aisles it swells, and seems to come from heaven. Through a long resonant fugue the glory flies, and as it ceases with complex conclusion, the lights die out, the angels disappear, and Gabriel fades into the darkness. Still the shepherds kneel, rustically chanting a carol half in Latin, half in English, which begins 'In dulci Jubilo.' The people know it well, and when the chorus rises with 'Ubi sunt gaudia?' its wild melody is caught by voices up and down the nave. This scene makes deep impression upon many hearts; for the beauty of Gabriel is rare, and few who see him in his angel's dress would know him for the lad who daily carves his lilies and broad water-flags about the pillars of the choir. To that simple audience he interprets Heaven, and little children will see him in their dreams. Dark winter nights and awful forests will be trodden by his feet, made musical by his melodious voice, and parted by the rustling of his wings. The youth himself may return to-morrow to the workman's blouse and chisel, but his memory lives in many minds and may form a part of Christmas for the fancy of men as yet unborn.

34

The next drawing of the curtain shows us the stable of Bethlehem crowned by its star. There kneels Mary, and Joseph leans upon his staff. The ox and ass are close at hand, and Jesus lies in jewelled robes on straw within the manger. To right and left bow the shepherds, worshipping in dumb show, while voices from behind chant a solemn hymn. In the midst of the melody is heard a flourish of trumpets, and

heralds step upon the stage, followed by the three crowned kings. They have come from the far East, led by the star. The song ceases, while drums and fifes and trumpets play a stately march. The kings pass by, and do obeisance one by one. Each gives some costly gift; each doffs his crown and leaves it at the Saviour's feet. Then they retire to a distance and worship in silence like the shepherds. Again the angel's song is heard, and while it dies away the curtain closes, and the lights are put out.

The play is over, and evening has come. The people must go from the warm church into the frozen snow, and crunch their homeward way beneath the moon. But in their minds they carry a sense of light and music and unearthly loveliness. Not a scene of this day's pageant will be lost. It grows within them and creates the poetry of Christmas. Nor must we forget the sculptors who listen to the play. We spoke of them minutely, because these mysteries sank deep into their souls and found a way into their carvings on the cathedral walls. The monk who made Madonna by the southern porch, will remember Gabriel, and place him bending low in lordly salutation by her side. The painted glass of the chapter-house will glow with fiery choirs of angels learned by heart that night. And who does not know the mocking devils and quaint satyrs that the humorous sculptor will carve among his fruits and flowers? Some of the misereres of the stalls still bear portraits of the shepherd thief, and of the ox and ass who blinked so blindly when the kings, by torchlight, brought their dazzling gifts. Truly these old miracle-plays, and the carved work of cunning hands that they inspired, are worth to us more than all the delicate creations of Italian pencils. Our homely Northern churches still retain, for the child who reads their bosses and their sculptured fronts, more Christmas poetry than we can find in Fra Angelico's devoutness or the liveliness of Giotto. Not that Southern artists have done nothing for our Christmas. Cimabue's gigantic angels at Assisi, and the radiant seraphs of Raphael or of Signorelli, were seen by Milton in his Italian journey. He gazed in Romish churches on graceful Nativities, into which Angelico and Credi threw their simple souls. How much they tinged his fancy we cannot say. But what we know of heavenly hierarchies we later men have learned from Milton; and what he saw he spoke, and what he spoke in sounding verse lives for us now and sways our reason, and controls our fancy, and makes fine art of high theology.

Thus have I attempted rudely to recall a scene of mediæval Christmas. To understand the domestic habits of that age is not so easy, though one can fancy how the barons in their halls held Christmas, with the boar's head and the jester and the great yule-log. On the daïs sat lord and lady, waited on by knight and squire and page; but down the long hall feasted yeomen and hinds and men-at-arms. Little remains to us of those days, and we have outworn their jollity. It is really from the Elizabethan poets that our sense of old-fashioned festivity arises. They lived at the end of one age and the beginning of another. Though born to inaugurate the new era, they belonged by right of association and sympathy to the period that was fleeting fast away. This enabled them to represent the poetry of past and present. Old customs and old states of feeling, when they are about to perish, pass into the realm of art. For art is like a flower, which consummates the plant and ends its growth, while it translates its nature into loveliness. Thus Dante and Lorenzetti and Orcagna enshrined mediæval theology in works of imperishable beauty, and Shakspeare and his fellows made immortal the life and manners that were decaying in their own time. Men do not reflect upon their mode of living till they are passing from one state to another, and the consciousness of art implies a beginning of new things. Let one who wishes to appreciate the ideal of an English Christmas read Shakspeare's song, 'When icicles hang by the wall;' and if he knows some old grey grange, far from the high-road, among pastures, with a river flowing near, and cawing rooks in elm-trees by the garden-wall, let him place Dick and Joan and Marian there.

We have heard so much of pensioners, and barons of beef, and yule-logs, and bay, and rosemary, and holly boughs cut upon the hillside, and crab-apples bobbing in the wassail bowl, and masques and mummers, and dancers on the rushes, that we need not here describe a Christmas Eve in olden times. Indeed, this last half of the nineteenth century is weary of the worn-out theme. But one characteristic of the age of Elizabeth may be mentioned: that is its love of music. Fugued melodies, sung by voices without instruments, were much in vogue. We call them madrigals, and their half-merry, half-melancholy music yet recalls the time when England had her gift of art, when she needed not to borrow of Marenzio and Palestrina, when her Wilbyes and her Morlands and her

Dowlands won the praise of Shakspeare and the court. We hear the echo of those songs; and in some towns at Christmas or the New Year old madrigals still sound in praise of Oriana and of Phyllis and the country life. What are called 'waits' are but a poor travesty of those well-sung Elizabethan carols. We turn in our beds half pitying, half angered by harsh voices that quaver senseless ditties in the fog, or by tuneless fiddles playing popular airs without propriety or interest.

It is a strange mixture of picturesquely blended elements which the Elizabethan age presents. We see it afar off like the meeting of a hundred streams that grow into a river. We are sailing on the flood long after it has shrunk into a single tide, and the banks are dull and tame, and the all-absorbing ocean is before us. Yet sometimes we hear a murmur of the distant fountains, and Christmas is a day on which for some the many waters of the age of great Elizabeth sound clearest.

The age which followed was not poetical. The Puritans restrained festivity and art, and hated music. Yet from this period stands out the hymn of Milton, written when he was a youth, but bearing promise of his later muse. At one time, as we read it, we seem to be looking on a picture by some old Italian artist. But no picture can give Milton's music or make the 'base of heaven's deep organ blow.' Here he touches new associations, and reveals the realm of poetry which it remains for later times to traverse. Milton felt the true sentiment of Northern Christmas when he opened his poem with the 'winter wild,' in defiance of historical probability and what the French call local colouring. Nothing shows how wholly we people of the North have appropriated Christmas, and made it a creature of our own imagination, more than this dwelling on winds and snows and bitter frosts, so alien from the fragrant nights of Palestine. But Milton's hymn is like a symphony, embracing many thoughts and periods of varying melody. The music of the seraphim brings to his mind the age of gold, and that suggests the judgment and the redemption of the world. Satan's kingdom fails, the false gods go forth, Apollo leaves his rocky throne, and all the dim Phoenician and Egyptian deities, with those that classic fancy fabled, troop away like ghosts into the darkness. What a swell of stormy sound is in those lines! It recalls the very voice of Pan, which went abroad upon the waters when Christ died, and all the utterances of God on earth, feigned in Delphian shrines, or truly spoken on the sacred hills, were mute for ever.

38

After Milton came the age which, of all others, is the prosiest in our history. We cannot find much novelty of interest added to Christmas at this time. But there is one piece of poetry that somehow or another seems to belong to the reign of Anne and of the Georges—the poetry of bells. Great civic corporations reigned in those days; churchwardens tyrannised and were rich; and many a goodly chime of bells they hung in our old church-steeple. Let us go into the square room of the belfry, where the clock ticks all day, and the long ropes hang dangling down, with fur upon their hemp for ringers' hands above the socket set for ringers' feet. There we may read long lists of gilded names, recording mountainous bob-majors, rung a century ago, with special praise to him who pulled the tenor-bell, year after year, until he died, and left it to his son. The art of bell-ringing is profound, and requires a long apprenticeship. Even now, in some old cities, the ringers form a guild and mystery. Suppose it to be Christmas Eve in the year 1772. It is now a quarter before twelve, and the sexton has unlocked the church-gates and set the belfry door ajar. Candles are lighted in the room above, and jugs of beer stand ready for the ringers. Up they bustle one by one, and listen to the tickings of the clock that tells the passing minutes. At last it gives a click; and now they throw off coat and waistcoat, strap their girdles tighter round the waist, and each holds his rope in readiness. Twelve o'clock strikes, and forth across the silent city go the clamorous chimes. The steeple rocks and reels, and far away the night is startled. Damp turbulent west winds, rushing from the distant sea, and swirling up the inland valleys, catch the sound, and toss it to and fro, and bear it by gusts and snatches to watchers far away, upon bleak moorlands and the brows of woody hills. Is there not something dim and strange in the thought of these eight men meeting, in the heart of a great city, in the narrow belfry-room, to stir a mighty sound that shall announce to listening ears miles, miles away, the birth of a new day, and tell to dancers, mourners, students, sleepers, and perhaps to dying men, that Christ is born?

39

Let this association suffice for the time. And of our own Christmas so much has been said and sung by better voices, that we may leave it to the feelings and the memories of those who read the fireside tales of Dickens, and are happy in their homes. The many elements which I have endeavoured to recall, mix all of them in the Christmas of the present,

partly, no doubt, under the form of vague and obscure sentiment; partly as time-honoured reminiscences, partly as a portion of our own life. But there is one phase of poetry which we enjoy more fully than any previous age. That is music. Music is of all the arts the youngest, and of all can free herself most readily from symbols. A fine piece of music moves before us like a living passion, which needs no form or colour, no interpreting associations, to convey its strong but indistinct significance. Each man there finds his soul revealed to him, and enabled to assume a cast of feeling in obedience to the changeful sound. In this manner all our Christmas thoughts and emotions have been gathered up for us by Handel in his drama of the 'Messiah.' To Englishmen it is almost as well known and necessary as the Bible. But only one who has heard its pastoral episode performed year after year from childhood in the hushed cathedral, where pendent lamps or sconces make the gloom of aisle and choir and airy column half intelligible, can invest this music with long associations of accumulated awe. To his mind it brings a scene at midnight of hills clear in the starlight of the East, with white flocks scattered on the down. The breath of winds that come and go, the bleating of the sheep, with now and then a tinkling bell, and now and then the voice of an awakened shepherd, is all that breaks the deep repose. Overhead shimmer the bright stars, and low to west lies the moon, not pale and sickly (he dreams) as in our North, but golden, full, and bathing distant towers and tall ærial palms with floods of light. Such is a child's vision, begotten by the music of the symphony; and when he wakes from trance at its low silver close, the dark cathedral seems glowing with a thousand angel faces, and all the air is tremulous with angel wings. Then follow the solitary treble voice and the swift chorus.

After leaving the valley of the Arno at Empoli, the railway enters a country which rises into earthy hills of no great height, and spreads out at intervals into broad tracts of cultivated lowland. Geologically speaking, this portion of Tuscany consists of loam and sandy deposits, forming the basin between two mountain-ranges—the Apennines and the chalk hills of the western coast of Central Italy. Seen from the eminence of some old Tuscan turret, this champaign country has a stern and arid aspect. The earth is grey and dusty, the forms of hill and valley are austere and monotonous; even the vegetation seems to sympathise with the uninteresting soil from which it springs. A few spare olives cast their shadows on the lower slopes; here and there a copse of oakwood and acacia marks the course of some small rivulet; rye-fields, grey beneath the wind, clothe the hillsides with scanty verdure. Every knoll is crowned with a village—brown roofs and white house-fronts clustered together on the edge of cliffs, and rising into the campanile or antique tower, which tells so many stories of bygone wars and decayed civilisations.

Beneath these villages stand groups of stone pines clearly visible upon the naked country, cypresses like spires beside the square white walls of convent or of villa, patches of dark foliage, showing where the ilex and the laurel and the myrtle hide thick tangles of rose-trees and jessamines in ancient gardens. Nothing can exceed the barren aspect of this country in midwinter: it resembles an exaggerated Sussex, without verdure to relieve the rolling lines of down, and hill, and valley; beautiful yet, by reason of its frequent villages and lucid air and infinitely subtle curves of mountain-ridges. But when spring comes, a light and beauty break upon this gloomy soil; the whole is covered with a delicate green veil of rising crops and fresh foliage, and the immense distances which may be seen from every height are blue with cloud-shadows, or rosy in the light of sunset.

42

Of all the towns of Lower Tuscany, none is more celebrated than Siena. It stands in the very centre of the district which I have attempted to describe, crowning one of its most considerable heights, and commanding one of its most extensive plains. As a city it is a typical representative of those numerous Italian towns, whose origin is buried in remote antiquity, which have formed the seat of three civilisations, and which still maintain a vigorous vitality upon their ancient soil. Its site is Etruscan, its name is Roman, but the town itself owes all its interest and beauty to the artists and the statesmen and the warriors of the middle ages. A single glance at Siena from one of the slopes on the northern side, will show how truly mediæval is its character. A city wall follows the outline of the hill, from which the towers of the cathedral and the palace, with other cupolas and red-brick campanili, spring; while cypresses and olive-gardens stretch downwards to the plain. There is not a single Palladian façade or Renaissance portico to interrupt the unity of the effect. Over all, in the distance, rises Monte Amiata melting imperceptibly into sky and plain.

The three most striking objects of interest in Siena maintain the character of mediæval individuality by which the town is marked. They are the public palace, the cathedral, and the house of S. Catherine. The civil life, the arts, and the religious tendencies of Italy during the ascendancy of mediæval ideas, are strongly set before us here. High above every other building in the town soars the straight brick tower of the Palazzo Pubblico, the house of the republic, the hearth of civil life within the State. It guards an irregular Gothic building in which the old government of Siena used to be assembled, but which has now for a long time been converted into prisons, courts of law, and showrooms. Let us enter one chamber of the Palazzo—the Sala della Pace, where Ambrogio Lorenzetti, the greatest, perhaps, of Sienese painters, represented the evils of lawlessness and tyranny, and the benefits of peace and justice, in three noble allegories. They were executed early in the fourteenth century, in the age of allegories and symbolism, when poets and painters strove to personify in human shape all thoughts and sentiments. The first great fresco represents Peace—the peace of the Republic of Siena. Ambrogio has painted the twenty-four councillors who formed the Government, standing beneath the thrones of Concord, Justice, and Wisdom. From these controlling powers they stretch in a long double line to a seated figure, gigantic in size, and robed with the ensigns of baronial sovereignty. This figure is the State and Majesty of Siena.^[52] Around him sit Peace, Fortitude, and Prudence, Temperance, Magnanimity, and Justice, inalienable assessors of a powerful and righteous lord. Faith, Hope, and Charity, the Christian virtues, float like

43

44

angels in the air above. Armed horsemen guard his throne, and captives show that he has laid his enemy beneath his feet. Thus the mediæval artist expressed, by painting, his theory of government. The rulers of the State are subordinate to the State itself; they stand between the State and the great animating principles of wisdom, justice, and concord, incarnating the one, and receiving inspiration from the others. The pagan qualities of prudence, magnanimity, and courage give stability and greatness to good government, while the spirit of Christianity must harmonise and rule the whole. Arms, too, are needful to maintain by force what right and law demand, and victory in a just quarrel proclaims the power and vigour of the commonwealth. On another wall Ambrogio has depicted the prosperous city of Siena, girt by battlements and moat, with tower and barbican and drawbridge, to insure its peace. Through the gates stream country-people, bringing the produce of their farms into the town. The streets are crowded with men and women intent on business or pleasure; craftsmen at their trade, merchants with laden mules, a hawking party, hunters scouring the plain, girls dancing, and children playing in the open square. A school-master watching his class, together with the sculptured figures of Geometry, Astronomy, and Philosophy, remind us that education and science flourish under the dominion of well-balanced laws. The third fresco exhibits the reverse of this fair spectacle. Here Tyranny presides over a scene of anarchy and wrong. He is a hideous monster, compounded of all the bestial attributes which indicate force, treason, lechery, and fear. Avarice and Fraud and Cruelty and War and Fury sit around him. At his feet lies Justice, and above are the effigies of Nero, Caracalla, and like monsters of ill-regulated power. Not far from the castle of Tyranny we see the same town as in the other fresco; but its streets are filled with scenes of quarrel, theft, and bloodshed. Nor are these allegories merely fanciful. In the middle ages the same city might more than once during one lifetime present in the vivid colours of reality the two contrasted pictures.^[53]

45

[52] It is probable that the firm Ghibelline sympathies of the Sieneſe people for the Empire were allegorised in this figure; ſo that the fresco represented by form and colour what Dante had expreſſed in his treatiſe 'De Monarchiâ.' Among the virtues who attend him, Peace diſtinguiſhes herſelf by rare and very remarkable beauty. She is dreſſed in white and crowned with olive; the folds of her drapery, clinging to the delicately modelled limbs beneath, irreſiſtibly ſuggeſt a classic ſtatue. So again does the monumental poſe of her dignified, reclining, and yet languid figure. It ſeems not unreaſonable to believe that Lorenzetti copied Peace from the antique Venus which belonged to the Sieneſe, and which in a fit of ſuperſtitious malice they ſubſequentlly deſtroyed and buried in Florentine ſoil.

[53] Siena, of all Italian cities, was moſt ſubject to revolutions. Comines deſcribes it as a city which 'ſe gouverne plus follement que ville d'Italie.' Varchi calls it 'un guazzabuglio ed una confuſione di repubbliche piuttosto che bene ordinata e inſtituta repubblica.' See my 'Age of the Deſpots' (*Renaissance in Italy*, Part I.), pp. 141, 554, for ſome account of the Sieneſe conſtitution, and of the feuds and reconciliations of the burghers.

Quitting the Palazzo, and threading narrow ſtreets, paved with brick and overſhadowed with huge empty palaces, we reach the higheſt of the three hills on which Siena ſtands, and ſee before us the Duomo. This church is the moſt purely Gothic of all Italian cathedrals deſigned by national architects. Together with that of Orvieto, it ſtands to ſhow what the unaſſiſted genius of the Italians could produce, when under the empire of mediæval Chriſtianity and before the advent of the neopagan ſpirit. It is built wholly of marble, and overlaid, inside and out, with florid ornaments of exquisite beauty. There are no flying buttreſſes, no pinnacles, no deep and fretted doorways, ſuch as form the charm of French and English architecture; but inſtead of this, the lines of parti-coloured marbles, the ſcrolls and wreaths of foliage, the moſaics and the frescoes which meet the eye in every direction, ſatisfy our ſenſe of variety, producing moſt agreeable combinations of blending hues and harmoniouſly connected forms. The chief fault which offends againſt our Northern taſte is the predominance of horizontal lines, both in the conſtruction of the façade, and alſo in the internal decoration. This ſingle fact ſufficiently proves that the Italians had never ſeized the true idea of Gothic or aſpiring architecture. But, allowing for this original defect, we feel that the Cathedral of Siena combines ſolemnity and ſplendour to a degree almoſt unrivalled. Its dome is another point in which the inſtinct of Italian architects has led them to adhere to the genius of their anceſtral art rather than to follow the principles of Gothic

46

design. The dome is Etruscan and Roman, native to the soil, and only by a kind of violence adapted to the character of pointed architecture. Yet the builders of Siena have shown what a glorious element of beauty might have been added to our Northern cathedrals, had the idea of infinity which our ancestors expressed by long continuous lines, by complexities of interwoven aisles, and by multitudinous aspiring pinnacles, been carried out into vast spaces of ærial cupolas, completing and embracing and covering the whole like heaven. The Duomo, as it now stands, forms only part of a vast design. On entering we are amazed to hear that this church, which looks so large, from the beauty of its proportions, the intricacy of its ornaments, and the interlacing of its columns, is but the transept of the intended building lengthened a little, and surmounted by a cupola and campanile.^[54] Yet such is the fact. Soon after its commencement a plague swept over Italy, nearly depopulated Siena, and reduced the town to penury for want of men. The cathedral, which, had it been accomplished, would have surpassed all Gothic churches south of the Alps, remained a ruin. A fragment of the nave still stands, enabling us to judge of its extent. The eastern wall joins what was to have been the transept, measuring the mighty space which would have been enclosed by marble vaults and columns delicately wrought. The sculpture on the eastern door shows with what magnificence the Sienese designed to ornament this portion of their temple; while the southern façade rears itself aloft above the town, like those high arches which testify to the past splendour of Glastonbury Abbey; but the sun streams through the broken windows, and the walls are encumbered with hovels and stables and the refuse of surrounding streets.

47

[54] The present church was begun about 1229. In 1321 the burghers fancied it was too small for the fame and splendour of their city. So they decreed a new *ecclesia pulcra, magna, et magnifica*, for which the older but as yet unfinished building was to be the transept.

One most remarkable feature of the internal decoration is a line of heads of the Popes carried all round the church above the lower arches. Larger than life, white solemn faces they lean, each from his separate niche, crowned with the triple tiara, and labelled with the name he bore. Their accumulated majesty brings the whole past history of the Church into the presence of its living members. A bishop walking up the nave of Siena must feel as a Roman felt among the waxen images of ancestors renowned in council or in war. Of course these portraits are imaginary for the most part; but the artists have contrived to vary their features and expression with great skill.

Not less peculiar to Siena is the pavement of the cathedral. It is inlaid with a kind of *tarsia* work in stone, setting forth a variety of pictures in simple but eminently effective mosaic. Some of these compositions are as old as the cathedral; others are the work of Beccafumi and his scholars. They represent, in the liberal spirit of mediæval Christianity, the history of the Church before the Incarnation. Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls meet us at the doorway: in the body of the church we find the mighty deeds of the old Jewish heroes—of Moses and Samson and Joshua and Judith. Independently of the artistic beauty of the designs, of the skill with which men and horses are drawn in the most difficult attitudes, of the dignity of some single figures, and of the vigour and simplicity of the larger compositions, a special interest attaches to this pavement in connection with the twelfth canto of the 'Purgatorio.' Dante cannot have trodden these stones and meditated upon their sculptured histories. Yet when we read how he journeyed through the plain of Purgatory with eyes intent upon its storied floor, how 'morti i morti, e i vivi parean vivi,' how he saw 'Nimrod at the foot of his great work, confounded, gazing at the people who were proud with him,' we are irresistibly led to think of the Divine comedy. The strong and simple outlines of the pavement correspond to the few words of the poet. Bending over these pictures and trying to learn their lesson, with the thought of Dante in our mind, the tones of an organ, singularly sweet and mellow, fall upon our ears, and we remember how he heard *Te Deum* sung within the gateway of repentance.

48

Continuing our walk, we descend the hill on which the Duomo stands, and reach a valley lying between the ancient city of Siena and a western eminence crowned by the church of San Domenico. In this depression there has existed from old time a kind of suburb or separate district of the poorer people known by the name of the Contrada d' Oca. To the Sienese it has especial interest, for here is the birthplace of S. Catherine, the very house in which she lived, her father's workshop, and the chapel

which has been erected in commemoration of her saintly life. Over the doorway is written in letters of gold 'Sponsa Christi Katherinæ domus.' Inside they show the room she occupied, and the stone on which she placed her head to sleep; they keep her veil and staff and lantern and enamelled vinaigrette, the bag in which her alms were placed, the sackcloth that she wore beneath her dress, the crucifix from which she took the wounds of Christ. It is impossible to conceive, even after the lapse of several centuries, that any of these relics are fictitious. Every particular of her life was remembered and recorded with scrupulous attention by devoted followers. Her fame was universal throughout Italy before her death; and the house from which she went forth to preach and heal the sick and comfort plague-stricken wretches whom kith and kin had left alone to die, was known and well beloved by all her citizens. From the moment of her death it became, and has continued to be, the object of superstitious veneration to thousands. From the little loggia which runs along one portion of its exterior may be seen the campanile and the dome of the cathedral; on the other side rises the huge brick church of San Domenico, in which she spent the long ecstatic hours that won for her the title of Christ's spouse. In a chapel attached to the church she watched and prayed, fasting and wrestling with the fiends of a disordered fancy. There Christ appeared to her and gave her His own heart, there He administered to her the sacrament with His own hands, there she assumed the robe of poverty, and gave her Lord the silver cross and took from Him the crown of thorns.

49

To some of us these legends may appear the flimsiest web of fiction: to others they may seem quite explicable by the laws of semi-morbid psychology; but to Catherine herself, her biographers, and her contemporaries, they were not so. The enthusiastic saint and reverent people believed firmly in these things; and, after the lapse of five centuries, her votaries still kiss the floor and steps on which she trod, still say, 'This was the wall on which she leant when Christ appeared; this was the corner where she clothed Him, naked and shivering like a beggar-boy; here He sustained her with angels' food.'

S. Catherine was one of twenty-five children born in wedlock to Jacopo and Lapa Benincasa, citizens of Siena. Her father exercised the trade of dyer and fuller. In the year of her birth, 1347, Siena reached the climax of its power and splendour. It was then that the plague of Boccaccio began to rage, which swept off 80,000 citizens, and interrupted the building of the great Duomo. In the midst of so large a family, and during these troubled times, Catherine grew almost unnoticed; but it was not long before she manifested her peculiar disposition. At six years old she already saw visions and longed for a monastic life: about the same time she used to collect her childish companions together and preach to them. As she grew, her wishes became stronger; she refused the proposals which her parents made that she should marry, and so vexed them by her obstinacy that they imposed on her the most servile duties in their household. These she patiently fulfilled, pursuing at the same time her own vocation with unwearied ardour. She scarcely slept at all, and ate no food but vegetables and a little bread, scourged herself, wore sackcloth, and became emaciated, weak, and half delirious. At length the firmness of her character and the force of her hallucinations won the day. Her parents consented to her assuming the Dominican robe, and at the age of thirteen she entered the monastic life. From this moment till her death we see in her the ecstatic, the philanthropist, and the politician combined to a remarkable degree. For three whole years she never left her cell except to go to church, maintaining an almost unbroken silence. Yet when she returned to the world, convinced at last of having won by prayer and pain the favour of her Lord, it was to preach to infuriated mobs, to toil among men dying of the plague, to execute diplomatic negotiations, to harangue the republic of Florence, to correspond with queens, and to interpose between kings and popes. In the midst of this varied and distracting career she continued to see visions and to fast and scourge herself. The domestic virtues and the personal wants and wishes of a woman were annihilated in her: she lived for the Church, for the poor, and for Christ, whom she imagined to be constantly supporting her. At length she died, worn out by inward conflicts, by the tension of religious ecstasy, by want of food and sleep, and by the excitement of political life. To follow her in her public career is not my purpose. It is well known how, by the power of her eloquence and the ardour of her piety, she succeeded as a mediator between Florence and her native city, and between Florence and the Pope; that she travelled to Avignon, and there induced Gregory XI. to put an end to the Babylonian captivity of the Church by returning to Rome; that she narrowly escaped political martyrdom during one of her embassies from Gregory to the Florentine

50

51

republic; that she preached a crusade against the Turks; that her last days were clouded with sorrow for the schism which then rent the Papacy; and that she aided by her dying words to keep Pope Urban on the Papal throne. When we consider her private and spiritual life more narrowly, it may well move our amazement to think that the intricate politics of Central Italy, the counsels of licentious princes and ambitious Popes, were in any measure guided and controlled by such a woman. Alone, and aided by nothing but a reputation for sanctity, she dared to tell the greatest men in Europe of their faults; she wrote in words of well-assured command, and they, demoralised, worldly, sceptical, or indifferent as they might be, were yet so bound by superstition that they could not treat with scorn the voice of an enthusiastic girl.

Absolute disinterestedness, the belief in her own spiritual mission, natural genius, and that vast power which then belonged to all energetic members of the monastic orders, enabled her to play this part. She had no advantages to begin with. The daughter of a tradesman overwhelmed with an almost fabulously numerous progeny, Catherine grew up uneducated. When her genius had attained maturity, she could not even read or write. Her biographer asserts that she learned to do so by a miracle. Anyhow, writing became a most potent instrument in her hands; and we possess several volumes of her epistles, as well as a treatise of mystical theology. To conquer self-love as the root of all evil, and to live wholly for others, was the cardinal axiom of her morality. She pressed this principle to its most rigorous conclusions in practice; never resting day or night from some kind of service, and winning by her unselfish love the enthusiastic admiration of the people. In the same spirit of exalted self-annihilation, she longed for martyrdom, and courted death. There was not the smallest personal tie or afterthought of interest to restrain her in the course of action which she had marked out. Her personal influence seems to have been immense. When she began her career of public peacemaker and preacher in Siena, Raymond, her biographer, says that whole families devoted to *vendetta* were reconciled, and that civil strifes were quelled by her letters and addresses. He had seen more than a thousand people flock to hear her speak; the confessionals crowded with penitents, smitten by the force of her appeals; and multitudes, unable to catch the words which fell from her lips, sustained and animated by the light of holiness which beamed from her inspired countenance.^[55] She was not beautiful, but her face so shone with love, and her eloquence was so pathetic in its tenderness, that none could hear or look on her without emotion. Her writings contain abundant proofs of this peculiar suavity. They are too sweet and unctuous in style to suit our modern taste. When dwelling on the mystic love of Christ she cries, 'O blood! O fire! O ineffable love!' When interceding before the Pope, she prays for 'Pace, pace, pace, babbo mio dolce; pace, e non più guerra.' Yet clear and simple thoughts, profound convictions, and stern moral teaching underlie her ecstatic exclamations. One prayer which she wrote, and which the people of Siena still use, expresses the prevailing spirit of her creed: 'O Spirito Santo, o Deità eterna Cristo Amore! vieni nel mio cuore; per la tua potenza trailo a Te, mio Dio, e concedemi carità con timore. Liberami, o Amore ineffabile, da ogni mal pensiero; riscaldami ed infiammami del tuo dolcissimo amore, sicchè ogni pena mi sembri leggiera. Santo mio Padre e dolce mio Signore, ora aiutami in ogni mio ministero. Cristo amore. Cristo amore.' The reiteration of the word 'love' is most significant. It was the key-note of her whole theology, the mainspring of her life. In no merely figurative sense did she regard herself as the spouse of Christ, but dwelt upon the bliss, beyond all mortal happiness, which she enjoyed in supersensual communion with her Lord. It is easy to understand how such ideas might be, and have been, corrupted, when impressed on natures no less susceptible, but weaker and less gifted than S. Catherine's.

[55] The part played in Italy by preachers of repentance and peace is among the most characteristic features of Italian history. On this subject see the Appendix to my 'Age of the Despots,' *Renaissance in Italy*, Part I.

One incident related by Catherine in a letter to Raymond, her confessor and biographer, exhibits the peculiar character of her influence in the most striking light. Nicola Tuldo, a citizen of Perugia, had been condemned to death for treason in the flower of his age. So terribly did the man rebel against his sentence, that he cursed God, and refused the consolations of religion. Priests visited him in vain; his heart was shut and sealed by the despair of leaving life in all the vigour of its prime. Then Catherine came and spoke to him: 'whence,' she says, 'he received such comfort that he confessed, and made me promise, by the

love of God, to stand at the block beside him on the day of his execution.' By a few words, by the tenderness of her manner, and by the charm which women have, she had already touched the heart no priest could soften, and no threat of death or judgment terrify into contrition. Nor was this strange. In our own days we have seen men open the secrets of their hearts to women, after repelling the advances of less touching sympathy. Youths, cold and cynical enough among their brethren, have stood subdued like little children before her who spoke to them of love and faith and penitence and hope. The world has not lost its ladies of the race of S. Catherine, beautiful and pure and holy, who have suffered and sought peace with tears, and who have been appointed ministers of mercy for the worst and hardest of their fellow-men. Such saints possess an efficacy even in the imposition of their hands; many a devotee, like Tuldo, would more willingly greet death if his S. Catherine were by to smile and lay her hands upon his head, and cry, 'Go forth, my servant, and fear not!' The chivalrous admiration for women mixes with religious awe to form the reverence which these saints inspire. Human and heavenly love, chaste and ecstatic, constitute the secret of their power. Catherine then subdued the spirit of Tuldo and led him to the altar, where he received the communion for the first time in his life. His only remaining fear was that he might not have strength to face death bravely. Therefore he prayed Catherine, 'Stay with me, do not leave me; so it shall be well with me, and I shall die contented;' 'and,' says the saint, 'he laid his head in the prison on my breast, and I said, "Comfort thee, my brother, the block shall soon become thy marriage altar, the blood of Christ shall bathe thy sins away, and I will stand beside thee."' When the hour came, she went and waited for him by the scaffold, meditating on Madonna and Catherine the saint of Alexandria. She laid her own neck on the block, and tried to picture to herself the pains and ecstasies of martyrdom. In her deep thought, time and place became annihilated; she forgot the eager crowd, and only prayed for Tuldo's soul and for herself. At length he came, walking 'like a gentle lamb,' and Catherine received him with the salutation of 'sweet brother.' She placed his head upon the block, and laid her hands upon him, and told him of the Lamb of God. The last words he uttered were the names of Jesus and of Catherine. Then the axe fell, and Catherine beheld his soul borne by angels into the regions of eternal love. When she recovered from her trance, she held his head within her hands; her dress was saturated with his blood, which she could scarcely bear to wash away, so deeply did she triumph in the death of him whom she had saved. The words of S. Catherine herself deserve to be read. The simplicity, freedom from self-consciousness, and fervent faith in the reality of all she did and said and saw, which they exhibit, convince us of her entire sincerity.

55

The supernatural element in the life of S. Catherine may be explained partly by the mythologising adoration of the people ready to find a miracle in every act of her they worshipped—partly by her own temperament and modes of life, which inclined her to ecstasy and fostered the faculty of seeing visions—partly by a pious misconception of the words of Christ and Bible phraseology.

To the first kind belong the wonders which are related of her early years, the story of the candle which burnt her veil without injuring her person, and the miracles performed by her body after death. Many childish incidents were treasured up which, had her life proved different, would have been forgotten, or have found their proper place among the catalogue of common things. Thus on one occasion, after hearing of the hermits of the Thebaïd, she took it into her head to retire into the wilderness, and chose for her dwelling one of the caverns in the sandstone rock which abound in Siena near the quarter where her father lived. We merely see in this event a sign of her monastic disposition, and a more than usual aptitude for realising the ideas presented to her mind. But the old biographers relate how one celestial vision urged the childish hermit to forsake the world, and another bade her return to the duties of her home.

56

To the second kind we may refer the frequent communings with Christ and with the fathers of the Church, together with the other visions to which she frequently laid claim: nor must we omit the stigmata which she believed she had received from Christ. Catherine was constitutionally inclined to hallucinations. At the age of six, before it was probable that a child should have laid claim to spiritual gifts which she did not possess, she burst into loud weeping because her little brother rudely distracted her attention from the brilliant forms of saints and angels which she traced among the clouds. Almost all children of a vivid imagination are apt to transfer the objects of their fancy to the world without them. Goethe walked for hours in his enchanted gardens as a

boy, and Alfieri tells us how he saw a company of angels in the choristers at Asti. Nor did S. Catherine omit any means of cultivating this faculty, and of preventing her splendid visions from fading away, as they almost always do, beneath the discipline of intellectual education and among the distractions of daily life. Believing simply in their heavenly origin, and receiving no secular training whatsoever, she walked surrounded by a spiritual world, environed, as her legend says, by angels. Her habits were calculated to foster this disposition: it is related that she took but little sleep, scarcely more than two hours at night, and that too on the bare ground; she ate nothing but vegetables and the sacred wafer of the host, entirely abjuring the use of wine and meat. This diet, combined with frequent fasts and severe ascetic discipline, depressed her physical forces, and her nervous system was thrown into a state of the highest exaltation. Thoughts became things, and ideas were projected from her vivid fancy upon the empty air around her. It was therefore no wonder that, after spending long hours in vigils and meditating always on the thought of Christ, she should have seemed to take the sacrament from His hands, to pace the chapel in communion with Him, to meet Him in the form of priest and beggar, to hear Him speaking to her as a friend. Once when the anguish of sin had plagued her with disturbing dreams, Christ came and gave her His own heart in exchange for hers. When lost in admiration before the cross at Pisa, she saw His five wounds stream with blood—five crimson rays smote her, passed into her soul, and left their marks upon her hands and feet and side. The light of Christ's glory shone round about her, she partook of His martyrdom, and awaking from her trance she cried to Raymond, 'Behold! I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!'

This miracle had happened to S. Francis. It was regarded as the sign of fellowship with Christ, of worthiness to drink His cup, and to be baptised with His baptism. We find the same idea at least in the old Latin hymns:

Fac me plagis vulnerari—
Cruce hac inebriari—
Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortem,
Et plagas recolare.

These are words from the 'Stabat Mater;' nor did S. Francis and S. Catherine do more than carry into the vividness of actual hallucination what had been the poetic rapture of many less ecstatic, but not less ardent, souls. They desired to be *literally* 'crucified with Christ;' they were not satisfied with metaphor or sentiment, and it seemed to them that their Lord had really vouchsafed to them the yearning of their heart. We need not here raise the question whether the stigmata had ever been actually self-inflicted by delirious saint or hermit: it was not pretended that the wounds of S. Catherine were visible during her lifetime. After her death the faithful thought that they had seen them on her corpse, and they actually appeared in the relics of her hands and feet. The pious fraud, if fraud there must have been, should be ascribed, not to the saint herself, but to devotees and relic-mongers.^[56] The order of S. Dominic would not be behind that of S. Francis. If the latter boasted of their stigmata, the former would be ready to perforate the hand or foot of their dead saint. Thus the ecstasies of genius or devotion are brought to earth, and rendered vulgar by mistaken piety and the rivalry of sects. The people put the most material construction on all tropes and metaphors: above the door of S. Catherine's chapel at Siena, for example, it is written—

Hæc tenet ara caput Catharinæ; corda requiris?
Hæc imo Christus pectore clausa tenet.

The frequent conversations which she held with S. Dominic and other patrons of the Church, and her supernatural marriage, must be referred to the same category. Strong faith, and constant familiarity with one order of ideas, joined with a creative power of fancy, and fostered by physical debility, produced these miraculous colloquies. Early in her career, her injured constitution, resenting the violence with which it had been forced to serve the ardours of her piety, troubled her with foul phantoms, haunting images of sin and seductive whisperings, which clearly revealed a morbid condition of the nervous system. She was on the verge of insanity. The reality of her inspiration and her genius are proved by the force with which her human sympathies, and moral dignity, and intellectual vigour triumphed over these diseased hallucinations of the cloister, and converted them into the instruments for effecting patriotic and philanthropic designs. There was nothing savouring of mean pretension or imposture in her claim to supernatural

enlightenment. Whatever we may think of the wisdom of her public policy with regard to the Crusades and to the Papal Sovereignty, it is impossible to deny that a holy and high object possessed her from the earliest to the latest of her life—that she lived for ideas greater than self-aggrandisement or the saving of her soul, for the greatest, perhaps, which her age presented to an earnest Catholic.

[56] It is not impossible that the stigmata may have been naturally produced in the person of S. Francis or S. Catherine. There are cases on record in which grave nervous disturbances have resulted in such modifications of the flesh as may have left the traces of wounds in scars and blisters.

The abuses to which the indulgence of temperaments like that of S. Catherine must in many cases have given rise, are obvious. Hysterical women and half-witted men, without possessing her abilities and understanding her objects, beheld unmeaning visions, and dreamed childish dreams. Others won the reputation of sanctity by obstinate neglect of all the duties of life and of all the decencies of personal cleanliness. Every little town in Italy could show its saints like the Santa Fina of whom San Gemignano boasts—a girl who lay for seven years on a back-board till her mortified flesh clung to the wood; or the San Bartolo, who, for hideous leprosy, received the title of the Job of Tuscany. Children were encouraged in blasphemous pretensions to the special power of Heaven, and the nerves of weak women were shaken by revelations in which they only half believed. We have ample evidence to prove how the trade of miracles is still carried on, and how in the France of our days, when intellectual vigour has been separated from old forms of faith, such vision-mongering undermines morality, encourages ignorance, and saps the force of individuals. But S. Catherine must not be confounded with those sickly shams and make-believes. Her enthusiasms were real; they were proper to her age; they inspired her with unrivalled self-devotion and unwearied energy; they connected her with the political and social movements of her country.

60

Many of the supernatural events in S. Catherine's life were founded on a too literal acceptance of biblical metaphors. The Canticles, perhaps, inspired her with the belief in a mystical marriage. An enigmatical sentence of S. Paul's suggested the stigmata. When the saint bestowed her garment upon Christ in the form of a beggar and gave Him the silver cross of her rosary, she was but realising His own words: 'Inasmuch as ye shall do it unto the least of these little ones, ye shall do it unto Me.' Charity, according to her conception, consisted in giving to Christ. He had first taught this duty; He would make it the test of all duty at the last day. Catherine was charitable for the love of Christ. She thought less of the beggar than of her Lord. How could she do otherwise than see the aureole about His forehead, and hear the voice of Him who had declared, 'Behold, I am with you, even to the end of the world.' Those were times of childlike simplicity when the eye of love was still unclouded, when men could see beyond the phantoms of this world, and stripping off the accidents of matter, gaze upon the spiritual and eternal truths that lie beneath. Heaven lay around them in that infancy of faith; nor did they greatly differ from the saints and founders of the Church—from Paul, who saw the vision of the Lord, or Magdalen, who cried, 'He is risen!' An age accustomed to veil thought in symbols, easily reversed the process and discerned essential qualities beneath the common or indifferent objects of the outer world. It was therefore Christ whom S. Christopher carried in the shape of a child; Christ whom Fra Angelico's Dominicans received in pilgrim's garb at their convent gate; Christ with whom, under a leper's loathsome form, the flower of Spanish chivalry was said to have shared his couch.

61

In all her miracles it will be noticed that S. Catherine showed no originality. Her namesake of Alexandria had already been proclaimed the spouse of Christ. S. Francis had already received the stigmata; her other visions were such as had been granted to all fervent mystics; they were the growth of current religious ideas and unbounded faith. It is not as an innovator in religious ecstasy, or as the creator of a new kind of spiritual poetry, that we admire S. Catherine. Her inner life was simply the foundation of her character, her visions were a source of strength to her in times of trial, or the expression of a more than usually exalted mood; but the means by which she moved the hearts of men belonged to that which she possessed in common with all leaders of mankind—enthusiasm, eloquence, the charm of a gracious nature, and the will to do what she designed. She founded no religious order, like S. Francis or S. Dominic, her predecessors, or Loyola, her successor. Her work was a woman's work—to make peace, to succour the afflicted, to strengthen

the Church, to purify the hearts of those around her; not to rule or organise. When she died she left behind her a memory of love more than of power, the fragrance of an unselfish and gentle life, the echo of sweet and earnest words. Her place is in the heart of the humble; children belong to her sisterhood, and the poor crowd her shrine on festivals.

Catherine died at Rome on the 29th of April 1380, in her thirty-third year, surrounded by the most faithful of her friends and followers; but it was not until 1461 that she received the last honour of canonisation from the hands of Pius II., Æneas Sylvius, her countryman. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini was perhaps the most remarkable man that Siena has produced. Like S. Catherine, he was one of a large family; twenty of his brothers and sisters perished in a plague. The licentiousness of his early life, the astuteness of his intellect, and the worldliness of his aims, contrast with the singularly disinterested character of the saint on whom he conferred the highest honours of the Church. But he accomplished by diplomacy and skill what Catherine had begun. If she was instrumental in restoring the Popes to Rome, he ended the schism which had clouded her last days. She had preached a crusade; he lived to assemble the armies of Christendom against the Turks, and died at Ancona, while it was still uncertain whether the authority and enthusiasm of a pope could steady the wavering counsels and vacillating wills of kings and princes. The middle ages were still vital in S. Catherine; Pius II. belonged by taste and genius to the new period of Renaissance. The hundreds of the poorer Sieneese who kneel before S. Catherine's shrine prove that her memory is still alive in the hearts of her fellow-citizens; while the gorgeous library of the cathedral, painted by the hand of Pinturicchio, the sumptuous palace and the Loggia del Papa designed by Bernardo Rossellino and Antonio Federighi, record the pride and splendour of the greatest of the Piccolomini. But honourable as it was for Pius to fill so high a place in the annals of his city; to have left it as a poor adventurer, to return to it first as bishop, then as pope: to have a chamber in its mother church adorned with the pictured history of his achievements for a monument, and a triumph of Renaissance architecture dedicated to his family, *gentilibus suis*—yet we cannot but feel that the better part remains with S. Catherine, whose prayer is still whispered by children on their mother's knee, and whose relics are kissed daily by the simple and devout.

Some of the chief Italian painters have represented the incidents of S. Catherine's life and of her mystical experience. All the pathos and beauty which we admire in Sodoma's S. Sebastian at Florence, are surpassed by his fresco of S. Catherine receiving the stigmata. This is one of several subjects painted by him on the walls of her chapel in San Domenico. The tender unction, the sweetness, the languor, and the grace which he commanded with such admirable mastery, are all combined in the figure of the saint falling exhausted into the arms of her attendant nuns. Soft undulating lines rule the composition; yet dignity of attitude and feature prevails over mere loveliness. Another of Siena's greatest masters, Beccafumi, has treated the same subject with less pictorial skill and dramatic effect, but with an earnestness and simplicity that are very touching. Colourists always liked to introduce the sweeping lines of her white robes into their compositions. Fra Bartolommeo, who showed consummate art by tempering the masses of white drapery with mellow tones of brown or amber, painted one splendid picture of the marriage of S. Catherine, and another in which he represents her prostrate in adoration before the mystery of the Trinity. His gentle and devout soul sympathised with the spirit of the saint. The fervour of her devotion belonged to him more truly than the leonine power which he unsuccessfully attempted to express in his large figure of S. Mark. Other artists have painted the two Catherines together—the princess of Alexandria, crowned and robed in purple, bearing her palm of martyrdom, beside the nun of Siena, holding in her hand the lantern with which she went about by night among the sick. Ambrogio Borgognone makes them stand one on each side of Madonna's throne, while the infant Christ upon her lap extends His hands to both, in token of their marriage.

The traditional type of countenance which may be traced in all these pictures is not without a real foundation. Not only does there exist at Siena, in the Church of San Domenico, a contemporary portrait of S. Catherine, but her head also, which was embalmed immediately after death, is still preserved. The skin of the face is fair and white, like parchment, and the features have more the air of sleep than death. We find in them the breadth and squareness of general outline, and the long, even eyebrows which give peculiar calm to the expression of her pictures. This relic is shown publicly once a year on the 6th of May. That

is the Festa of the saint, when a procession of priests and acolytes, and pious people holding tapers, and little girls dressed out in white, carry a splendid silver image of their patroness about the city. Banners and crosses and censers go in front; then follows the shrine beneath a canopy: roses and leaves of box are scattered on the path. The whole Contrada d'Oca is decked out with such finery as the people can muster: red cloths hung from the windows, branches and garlands strewn about the doorsteps, with brackets for torches on the walls, and altars erected in the middle of the street. Troops of country-folk and townspeople and priests go in and out to visit the cell of S. Catherine; the upper and the lower chapel, built upon its site, and the hall of the *confraternità* blaze with lighted tapers. The faithful, full of wonder, kneel or stand about the 'santi luoghi,' marvelling at the relics, and repeating to one another the miracles of the saint. The same bustle pervades the Church of San Domenico. Masses are being said at one or other chapel all the morning, while women in their flapping Tuscan hats crowd round the silver image of S. Catherine, and say their prayers with a continual undercurrent of responses to the nasal voice of priest or choir. Others gain entrance to the chapel of the saint, and kneel before her altar. There, in the blaze of sunlight and of tapers, far away behind the gloss and gilding of a tawdry shrine, is seen the pale, white face which spoke and suffered so much, years ago. The contrast of its rigid stillness and half-concealed corruption with the noise and life and light outside is very touching. Even so the remnant of a dead idea still stirs the souls of thousands, and many ages may roll by before time and oblivion assert their inevitable sway.

I

In former days the traveller had choice of two old hostelries in the chief street of Siena. Here, if he was fortunate, he might secure a prophet's chamber, with a view across tiled huseroofs to the distant Tuscan champaign—glimpses of russet field and olive-garden framed by jutting city walls, which in some measure compensated for much discomfort. He now betakes himself to the more modern Albergo di Siena, overlooking the public promenade La Lizza. Horse-chestnuts and acacias make a pleasant foreground to a prospect of considerable extent. The front of the house is turned toward Belcaro and the mountains between Grosseto and Volterra. Sideways its windows command the brown bulk of San Domenico, and the Duomo, set like a marble coronet upon the forehead of the town. When we arrived there one October afternoon the sun was setting amid flying clouds and watery yellow spaces of pure sky, with a wind blowing soft and humid from the sea. Long after he had sunk below the hills, a fading chord of golden and rose-coloured tints burned on the city. The cathedral bell tower was glistening with recent rain, and we could see right through its lancet windows to the clear blue heavens beyond. Then, as the day descended into evening, the autumn trees assumed that wonderful effect of luminousness self-evolved, and the red brick walls that crimson afterglow, which Tuscan twilight takes from singular transparency of atmosphere.

67

It is hardly possible to define the specific character of each Italian city, assigning its proper share to natural circumstances, to the temper of the population, and to the monuments of art in which these elements of nature and of human qualities are blended. The fusion is too delicate and subtle for complete analysis; and the total effect in each particular case may best be compared to that impressed on us by a strong personality, making itself felt in the minutest details. Climate, situation, ethnological conditions, the political vicissitudes of past ages, the bias of the people to certain industries and occupations, the emergence of distinguished men at critical epochs, have all contributed their quota to the composition of an individuality which abides long after the locality has lost its ancient vigour.

Since the year 1557, when Gian Giacomo de' Medici laid the country of Siena waste, levelled her luxurious suburbs, and delivered her famine-stricken citizens to the tyranny of the Grand Duke Cosimo, this town has gone on dreaming in suspended decadence. Yet the epithet which was given to her in her days of glory, the title of 'Fair Soft Siena,' still describes the city. She claims it by right of the gentle manners, joyous but sedate, of her inhabitants, by the grace of their pure Tuscan speech, and by the unique delicacy of her architecture. Those palaces of brick, with finely moulded lancet windows, and the lovely use of sculptured marbles in pilastered colonnades, are fit abodes for the nobles who reared them five centuries ago, of whose refined and costly living we read in the pages of Dante or of Folgore da San Gemignano. And though the necessities of modern life, the decay of wealth, the dwindling of old aristocracy, and the absorption of what was once an independent state in the Italian nation, have obliterated that large signorial splendour of the Middle Ages, we feel that the modern Sieneese are not unworthy of their courteous ancestry.

68

Superficially, much of the present charm of Siena consists in the soft opening valleys, the glimpses of long blue hills and fertile country-side, framed by irregular brown houses stretching along the slopes on which the town is built, and losing themselves abruptly in olive fields and orchards. This element of beauty, which brings the city into immediate relation with the country, is indeed not peculiar to Siena. We find it in Perugia, in Assisi, in Montepulciano, in nearly all the hill towns of Umbria and Tuscany. But their landscape is often tragic and austere, while this is always suave. City and country blend here in delightful amity. Neither yields that sense of aloofness which stirs melancholy.

The most charming district in the immediate neighbourhood of Siena lies westward, near Belcaro, a villa high up on a hill. It is a region of deep lanes and golden-green oak-woods, with cypresses and stone-pines, and little streams in all directions flowing over the brown sandstone. The country is like some parts of rural England—Devonshire or Sussex. Not only is the sandstone here, as there, broken into deep gullies; but the vegetation is much the same. Tufted spleenwort, primroses, and broom

tangle the hedges under boughs of hornbeam and sweet-chestnut. This is the landscape which the two sixteenth-century novelists of Siena, Fortini and Sermini, so lovingly depicted in their tales. Of literature absorbing in itself the specific character of a country, and conveying it to the reader less by description than by sustained quality of style, I know none to surpass Fortini's sketches. The prospect from Belcaro is one of the finest to be seen in Tuscany. The villa stands at a considerable elevation, and commands an immense extent of hill and dale. Nowhere, except Maremma-wards, a level plain. The Tuscan mountains, from Monte Amiata westward to Volterra, round Valdelsa, down to Montepulciano and Radicofani, with their innumerable windings and intricacies of descending valleys, are dappled with light and shade from flying storm-clouds, sunshine here, and there cloud-shadows. Girdling the villa stands a grove of ilex-trees, cut so as to embrace its high-built walls with dark continuous green. In the courtyard are lemon-trees and pomegranates laden with fruit. From a terrace on the roof the whole wide view is seen; and here upon a parapet, from which we leaned one autumn afternoon, my friend discovered this *graffito*: '*E vidi e piansi il fato amaro!*'—'I gazed, and gazing, wept the bitterness of fate.'

69

II

The prevailing note of Siena and the Sieneſe ſeems, as I have ſaid, to be a ſoft and tranquil grace; yet this people had one of the ſtormieſt and maddeſt of Italian hiſtories. They were paſſionate in love and hate, vehement in their popular amuſements, almoſt frantic in their political conduct of affairs. The luxury, for which Dante blamed them, the levity De Comines noticed in their government, found counter-poize in more than uſual piety and fervour. S. Bernardino, the great preacher and peacemaker of the Middle Ages; S. Catherine, the wortheiſt of all women to be canonized; the bleſſed Colombini, who founded the Order of the Geſuati or Brothers of the Poor in Chriſt; the bleſſed Bernardo, who founded that of Monte Oliveto; were all Sieneſe. Few cities have given four ſuch ſaints to modern Chriſtendom. The biography of one of theſe may ſerve as prelude to an account of the Sieneſe monaſtery of Oliveto Maggiore.

The family of Tolomei was among the nobleſt of the Sieneſe ariſtocracy. On May 10, 1272, Mino Tolomei and his wife Fulvia, of the Tancredi, had a ſon whom they chriſtened Giovanni, but who, when he entered the religious life, aſſumed the name of Bernard, in memory of the great Abbot of Clairvaux. Of this child, Fulvia is ſaid to have dreamed, long before his birth, that he aſſumed the form of a white ſwan, and ſang melodiouſly, and ſettled in the boughs of an olive-tree, whence afterwards he winged his way to heaven amid a flock of ſwans as dazzling white as he. The boy was educated in the Dominican Cloiſter at Siena, under the care of his uncle Criſtoforo Tolomei. There, and afterwards in the fraternity of S. Anſano, he felt that impuſe towards a life of piety, which after a ſhort but brilliant episode of ſecular ambition, was deſtined to return with overwhelming force upon his nature. He was a youth of promiſe, and at the age of ſixteen he obtained the doctorate in philoſophy and both laws, civil and canonical. The Tolomei upon this occaſion adorned their palaces and threw them open to the people of Siena. The Republic hailed with acclamation the early honours of a noble, born to be one of their chief leaders. Soon after this event Mino obtained for his ſon from the Emperor the title of Cæſarian Knight; and when the diploma arrived, new feſtivities proclaimed the fortunate youth to his fellow-citizens. Bernardo caſed his limbs in ſteel, and rode in proceſſion with ladies and young nobles through the ſtreets. The ceremonies of a knight's reception in Siena at that period were magnificent. From contemporary chronicles and from the ſonnets written by Folgore da San Gemignano for a ſimilar occaſion, we gather that the whole reſources of a wealthy family and all their friends were ſtrained to the utmoſt to do honour to the order of chivalry. Open houſe was held for ſeveral days. Rich preſents of jewels, armour, dresses, chargers were freely diſtributed. Tournaments alternated with dances. But the climax of the pageant was the novice's inveſtiture with ſword and ſpurs and belt in the cathedral. This, as it appears from a record of the year 1326, actually took place in the great marble pulpit carved by the Piſani; and the moſt illuſtrious knights of his acquaintance were ſummoned by the ſquire to act as ſponsors for his fealty.

70

It is ſaid that young Bernardo Tolomei's head was turned to vanity by theſe honours ſhowered upon him in his earlieſt manhood. Yet, after a ſhort period of aberration, he rejoined his confraternity and mortified his fleſh by diſcipline and ſtrict attendance on the poor. The time had come,

71

however, when he should choose a career suitable to his high rank. He devoted himself to jurisprudence, and began to lecture publicly on law. Already at the age of twenty-five his fellow-citizens admitted him to the highest political offices, and in the legend of his life it is written, not without exaggeration doubtless, that he ruled the State. There is, however, no reason to suppose that he did not play an important part in its government. Though a just and virtuous statesman, Bernardo now forgot the special service of God, and gave himself with heart and soul to mundane interests. At the age of forty, supported by the wealth, alliances, and reputation of his semi-princely house, he had become one of the most considerable party-leaders in that age of faction. If we may trust his monastic biographer, he was aiming at nothing less than the tyranny of Siena. But in that year, when he was forty, a change, which can only be described as conversion, came over him. He had advertised a public disputation, in which he proposed before all comers to solve the most arduous problems of scholastic science. The concourse was great, the assembly brilliant; but the hero of the day, who had designed it for his glory, was stricken with sudden blindness. In one moment he comprehended the internal void he had created for his soul, and the blindness of the body was illumination to the spirit. The pride, power, and splendour of this world seemed to him a smoke that passes. God, penitence, eternity appeared in all the awful clarity of an authentic vision. He fell upon his knees and prayed to Mary that he might receive his sight again. This boon was granted; but the revelation which had come to him in blindness was not withdrawn. Meanwhile the hall of disputation was crowded with an expectant audience. Bernardo rose from his knees, made his entry, and ascended the chair; but instead of the scholastic subtleties he had designed to treat, he pronounced the old text, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'

72

Afterwards, attended by two noble comrades, Patrizio Patrizzi and Ambrogio Piccolomini, he went forth into the wilderness. For the human soul, at strife with strange experience, betakes itself instinctively to solitude. Not only prophets of Israel, saints of the Thebaïd, and founders of religions in the mystic East have done so; even the Greek Menander recognised, although he sneered at, the phenomenon. 'The desert, they say, is the place for discoveries.' For the mediæval mind it had peculiar attractions. The wilderness these comrades chose was Accona, a doleful place, hemmed in with earthen precipices, some fifteen miles to the south of Siena. Of his vast possessions Bernardo retained but this—

The lonesome lodge,
That stood so low in a lonely glen.

The rest of his substance he abandoned to the poor. This was in 1313, the very year of the Emperor Henry VII.'s death at Buonconvento, which is a little walled town between Siena and the desert of Accona. Whether Bernardo's retirement was in any way due to the extinction of immediate hope for the Ghibelline party by this event, we do not gather from his legend. That, as is natural, refers his action wholly to the operation of divine grace. Yet we may remember how a more illustrious refugee, the singer of the 'Divine Comedy,' betook himself upon the same occasion to the lonely convent of Fonte Avellana on the Alps of Catria, and meditated there the cantos of his Purgatory. While Bernardo Tolomei was founding the Order of Monte Oliveto, Dante penned his letter to the cardinals of Italy: *Quomodo sola sedet civitas plena populo: facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.*

73

Bernardo and his friends hollowed with their own hands grottos in the rock, and strewed their stone beds with withered chestnut-leaves. For S. Scolastica, the sister of S. Benedict, they built a little chapel. Their food was wild fruit, and their drink the water of the brook. Through the day they delved, for it was in their mind to turn the wilderness into a land of plenty. By night they meditated on eternal truth. The contrast between their rude life and the delicate nurture of Sienese nobles, in an age when Siena had become a by-word for luxury, must have been cruel. But it fascinated the mediæval imagination, and the three anchorites were speedily joined by recruits of a like temper. As yet the new-born order had no rules; for Bernardo, when he renounced the world, embraced humility. The brethren were bound together only by the ties of charity. They lived in common; and under their sustained efforts Accona soon became a garden.

The society could not, however, hold together without further organisation. It began to be ill spoken of, inasmuch as vulgar minds can recognise no good except in what is formed upon a pattern they are familiar with. Then Bernardo had a vision. In his sleep he saw a ladder of light ascending to the heavens. Above sat Jesus with Our Lady in white

74

raiment, and the celestial hierarchies around them were attired in white. Up the ladder, led by angels, climbed men in vesture of dazzling white; and among these Bernardo recognised his own companions. Soon after this dream, he called Ambrogio Piccolomini, and bade him get ready for a journey to the Pope at Avignon.

John XXII. received the pilgrims graciously, and gave them letters to the Bishop of Arezzo, commanding him to furnish the new brotherhood with one of the rules authorised by Holy Church for governance of a monastic order. Guido Tarlati, of the great Pietra-mala house, was Bishop and despot of Arezzo at this epoch. A man less in harmony with coenobitical enthusiasm than this warrior prelate, could scarcely have been found. Yet attendance to such matters formed part of his business, and the legend even credits him with an inspired dream; for Our Lady appeared to him, and said: 'I love the valley of Accona and its pious solitaries. Give them the rule of Benedict. But thou shalt strip them of their mourning weeds, and clothe them in white raiment, the symbol of my virgin purity. Their hermitage shall change its name, and henceforth shall be called Mount Olivet, in memory of the ascension of my divine Son, the which took place upon the Mount of Olives. I take this family beneath my own protection; and therefore it is my will it should be called henceforth the congregation of S. Mary of Mount Olivet.' After this, the Blessed Virgin took forethought for the heraldic designs of her monks, dictating to Guido Tarlati the blazon they still bear; it is of three hills or, whereof the third and highest is surmounted with a cross gules, and from the meeting-point of the three hillocks upon either hand a branch of olive vert. This was in 1319. In 1324 John XXII. confirmed the order, and in 1344 it was further approved by Clement VI. Affiliated societies sprang up in several Tuscan cities; and in 1347, Bernardo Tolomei, at that time General of the Order, held a chapter of its several houses. The next year was the year of the great plague or Black Death. Bernardo bade his brethren leave their seclusion, and go forth on works of mercy among the sick. Some went to Florence, some to Siena, others to the smaller hill-set towns of Tuscany. All were bidden to assemble on the Feast of the Assumption at Siena. Here the founder addressed his spiritual children for the last time. Soon afterwards he died himself, at the age of seventy-seven, and the place of his grave is not known. He was beatified by the Church for his great virtues.

75

III

At noon we started, four of us, in an open waggonette with a pair of horses, for Monte Oliveto, the luggage heaped mountain-high and tied in a top-heavy mass above us. After leaving the gateway, with its massive fortifications and frescoed arches, the road passes into a dull earthy country, very much like some parts—and not the best parts—of England. The beauty of the Sienese contado is clearly on the sandstone, not upon the clay. Hedges, haystacks, isolated farms—all were English in their details. Only the vines, and mulberries, and wattled waggons drawn by oxen, most Roman in aspect, reminded us we were in Tuscany. In such *carpenta* may the vestal virgins have ascended the Capitol. It is the primitive war-chariot also, capable of holding four with ease; and Romulus may have mounted with the images of Roman gods in even such a vehicle to Latian Jove upon the Alban hill. Nothing changes in Italy. The wooden ploughs are those which Virgil knew. The sight of one of them would save an intelligent lad much trouble in mastering a certain passage of the Georgics.

76

Siena is visible behind us nearly the whole way to Buonconvento, a little town where the Emperor Henry VII. died, as it was supposed, of poison, in 1313. It is still circled with the wall and gates built by the Sienese in 1366, and is a fair specimen of an intact mediæval stronghold. Here we leave the main road, and break into a country-track across a bed of sandstone, with the delicate volcanic lines of Monte Amiata in front, and the aerial pile of Montalcino to our right. The pyracanthus bushes in the hedge yield their clusters of bright yellow berries, mingled with more glowing hues of red from haws and glossy hips. On the pale grey earthen slopes men and women are plying the long Sabellian hoes of their forefathers, and ploughmen are driving furrows down steep hills. The labour of the husbandmen in Tuscany is very graceful, partly, I think, because it is so primitive, but also because the people have an eminently noble carriage, and are fashioned on the lines of antique statues. I noticed two young contadini in one field, whom Frederick Walker might have painted with the dignity of Pheidian form. They were guiding their ploughs along a hedge of olive-trees, slanting upwards, the white-horned oxen moving slowly through the marl, and the lads bending

to press the plough-shares home. It was a delicate piece of colour—the grey mist of olive branches, the warm smoking earth, the creamy flanks of the oxen, the brown limbs and dark eyes of the men, who paused awhile to gaze at us, with shadows cast upon the furrows from their tall straight figures. Then they turned to their work again, and rhythmic movement was added to the picture. I wonder when an Italian artist will condescend to pluck these flowers of beauty, so abundantly offered by the simplest things in his own native land. Each city has an Accademia delle Belle Arti, and there is no lack of students. But the painters, having learned their trade, make copies ten times distant from the truth of famous masterpieces for the American market. Few seem to look beyond their picture galleries. Thus the democratic art, the art of Millet, the art of life and nature and the people, waits.

77

As we mount, the soil grows of a richer brown; and there are woods of oak where herds of swine are feeding on the acorns. Monte Oliveto comes in sight—a mass of red brick, backed up with cypresses, among dishevelled earthy precipices, *balze* as they are called—upon the hill below the village of Chiusure. This Chiusure was once a promising town; but the life was crushed out of it in the throes of mediæval civil wars, and since the thirteenth century it has been dwindling to a hamlet. The struggle for existence, from which the larger communes of this district, Siena and Montepulciano, emerged at the expense of their neighbours, must have been tragical. The *balze* now grow sterner, drier, more dreadful. We see how deluges outpoured from thunder-storms bring down their viscous streams of loam, destroying in an hour the terraces it took a year to build, and spreading wasteful mud upon the scanty cornfields. The people call this soil *creta*; but it seems to be less like a chalk than a marl, or *marna*. It is always washing away into ravines and gullies, exposing the roots of trees, and rendering the tillage of the land a thankless labour. One marvels how any vegetation has the faith to settle on its dreary waste, or how men have the patience, generation after generation, to renew the industry, still beginning, never ending, which reclaims such wildernesses. Comparing Monte Oliveto with similar districts of cretaceous soil—with the country, for example, between Pienza and San Quirico—we perceive how much is owed to the perseverance of the monks whom Bernard Tolomei planted here. So far as it is clothed at all with crop and wood, this is their service.

78

At last we climb the crowning hill, emerge from a copse of oak, glide along a terraced pathway through the broom, and find ourselves in front of the convent gateway. A substantial tower of red brick, machicolated at the top and pierced with small square windows, guards this portal, reminding us that at some time or other the monks found it needful to arm their solitude against a force descending from Chiusure. There is an avenue of slender cypresses; and over the gate, protected by a jutting roof, shines a fresco of Madonna and Child. Passing rapidly downwards, we are in the courtyard of the monastery, among its stables, barns, and out-houses, with the forlorn bulk of the huge red building, spreading wide, and towering up above us. As good luck ruled our arrival, we came face to face with the Abbate de Negro, who administers the domain of Monte Oliveto for the Government of Italy, and exercises a kindly hospitality to chance-comers. He was standing near the church, which, with its tall square campanile, breaks the long stern outline of the convent. The whole edifice, it may be said, is composed of a red-brick inclining to purple in tone, which contrasts not unpleasantly with the lustrous green of the cypresses, and the glaucous sheen of olives. Advantage has been taken of a steep crest; and the monastery, enlarged from time to time through the last five centuries, has here and there been reared upon gigantic buttresses, which jut upon the *balze* at a sometimes giddy height.

The Abbate received us with true courtesy, and gave us spacious rooms, three cells apiece, facing Siena and the western mountains. There is accommodation, he told us, for three hundred monks; but only three are left in it. As this order was confined to members of the nobility, each of the religious had his own apartment—not a cubicle such as the uninstructed dream of when they read of monks, but separate chambers for sleep and study and recreation.

79

In the middle of the vast sad landscape, the place is still, with a silence that can be almost heard. The deserted state of those innumerable cells, those echoing corridors and shadowy cloisters, exercises overpowering tyranny over the imagination. Siena is so far away, and Montalcino is so faintly outlined on its airy parapet, that these cities only deepen our sense of desolation. It is a relief to mark at no great distance on the hillside a contadino guiding his oxen, and from a lonely farm yon column of ascending smoke. At least the world goes on, and life is somewhere

resonant with song. But here there rests a pall of silence among the oak-groves and the cypresses and *balze*. As I leaned and mused, while Christian (my good friend and fellow-traveller from the Grisons) made our beds, a melancholy sunset flamed up from a rampart of cloud, built like a city of the air above the mountains of Volterra—fire issuing from its battlements, and smiting the fretted roof of heaven above. It was a conflagration of celestial rose upon the saddest purples and cavernous recesses of intensest azure.

We had an excellent supper in the visitors' refectory—soup, good bread and country wine, ham, a roast chicken with potatoes, a nice white cheese made of sheep's milk, and grapes for dessert. The kind Abbate sat by, and watched his four guests eat, tapping his tortoiseshell snuff-box, and telling us many interesting things about the past and present state of the convent. Our company was completed with Lupo, the pet cat, and Pirro, a woolly Corsican dog, very good friends, and both enormously voracious. Lupo in particular engraved himself upon the memory of Christian, into whose large legs he thrust his claws, when the cheese-parings and scraps were not supplied him with sufficient promptitude. I never saw a hungrier and bolder cat. It made one fancy that even the mice had been exiled from this solitude. And truly the rule of the monastic order, no less than the habit of Italian gentlemen, is frugal in the matter of the table, beyond the conception of northern folk.

Monte Oliveto, the Superior told us, owned thirty-two *poderi*, or large farms, of which five have recently been sold. They are worked on the *mezzeria* system; whereby peasants and proprietors divide the produce of the soil; and which he thinks inferior for developing its resources to that of *affitto*, or leaseholding.

The contadini live in scattered houses; and he says the estate would be greatly improved by doubling the number of these dwellings, and letting the subdivided farms to more energetic people. The village of Chiusure is inhabited by labourers. The contadini are poor: a dower, for instance, of fifty *lire* is thought something: whereas near Genoa, upon the leasehold system, a farmer may sometimes provide a dower of twenty thousand *lire*. The country produces grain of different sorts, excellent oil, and timber. It also yields a tolerable red wine. The Government makes from eight to nine per cent. upon the value of the land, employing him and his two religious brethren as agents.

In such conversation the evening passed. We rested well in large hard beds with dry rough sheets. But there was a fretful wind abroad, which went wailing round the convent walls and rattling the doors in its deserted corridors. One of our party had been placed by himself at the end of a long suite of apartments, with balconies commanding the wide sweep of hills that Monte Amiata crowns. He confessed in the morning to having passed a restless night, tormented by the ghostly noises of the wind, a wanderer, 'like the world's rejected guest,' through those untenanted chambers. The olives tossed their filmy boughs in twilight underneath his windows, sighing and shuddering, with a sheen in them as eerie as that of willows by some haunted mere.

IV

The great attraction to students of Italian art in the convent of Monte Oliveto is a large square cloister, covered with wall-paintings by Luca Signorelli and Giovannantonio Bazzi, surnamed Il Sodoma. These represent various episodes in the life of S. Benedict; while one picture, in some respects the best of the whole series, is devoted to the founder of the Olivetan Order, Bernardo Tolomei, dispensing the rule of his institution to a consistory of white-robed monks. Signorelli, that great master of Cortona, may be studied to better advantage elsewhere, especially at Orvieto and in his native city. His work in this cloister, consisting of eight frescoes, has been much spoiled by time and restoration. Yet it can be referred to a good period of his artistic activity (the year 1497) and displays much which is specially characteristic of his manner. In Totila's barbaric train, he painted a crowd of fierce emphatic figures, combining all ages and the most varied attitudes, and reproducing with singular vividness the Italian soldiers of adventure of his day. We see before us the long-haired followers of Braccio and the Baglioni; their handsome savage faces; their brawny limbs clad in the particoloured hose and jackets of that period; feathered caps stuck sideways on their heads; a splendid swagger in their straddling legs. Female beauty lay outside the sphere of Signorelli's sympathy; and in the Monte Oliveto cloister he was not called upon to paint it. But none of the Italian masters felt more keenly, or more powerfully represented in their

work, the muscular vigour of young manhood. Two of the remaining frescoes, different from these in motive, might be selected as no less characteristic of Signorelli's manner. One represents three sturdy monks, clad in brown, working with all their strength to stir a boulder, which has been bewitched, and needs a miracle to move it from its place. The square and powerfully outlined drawing of these figures is beyond all praise for its effect of massive solidity. The other shows us the interior of a fifteenth-century tavern, where two monks are regaling themselves upon the sly. A country girl, with shapely arms and shoulders, her upper skirts tucked round the ample waist to which broad sweeping lines of back and breasts descend, is serving wine. The exuberance of animal life, the freedom of attitude expressed in this, the mainly interesting figure of the composition, show that Signorelli might have been a great master of realistic painting. Nor are the accessories less effective. A wide-roofed kitchen chimney, a page-boy leaving the room by a flight of steps which leads to the house door, and the table at which the truant monks are seated, complete a picture of homely Italian life. It may still be matched out of many an inn in this hill district.

Called to graver work at Orvieto, where he painted his gigantic series of frescoes illustrating the coming of Anti-christ, the Destruction of the World, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, and the final state of souls in Paradise and Hell, Signorelli left his work at Monte Oliveto unaccomplished. Seven years later it was taken up by a painter of very different genius. Sodoma was a native of Vercelli, and had received his first training in the Lombard schools, which owed so much to Lionardo da Vinci's influence. He was about thirty years of age when chance brought him to Siena. Here he made acquaintance with Pandolfo Petrucci, who had recently established himself in a species of tyranny over the Republic. The work he did for this patron and other nobles of Siena, brought him into notice. Vasari observes that his hot Lombard colouring, a something florid and attractive in his style, which contrasted with the severity of the Tuscan school, rendered him no less agreeable as an artist than his free manners made him acceptable as a house-friend. Fra Domenico da Leccio, also a Lombard, was at that time General of the monks of Monte Oliveto. On a visit to this compatriot in 1505, Sodoma received a commission to complete the cloister; and during the next two years he worked there, producing in all twenty-five frescoes. For his pains he seemed to have received but little pay—Vasari says, only the expenses of some colour-grinders who assisted him; but from the books of the convent it appears that 241 ducats, or something over 60*l.* of our money, were disbursed to him.

Sodoma was so singular a fellow, even in that age of piquant personalities, that it may be worth while to translate a fragment of Vasari's gossip about him. We must, however, bear in mind that, for some unknown reason, the Aretine historian bore a rancorous grudge against this Lombard whose splendid gifts and great achievements he did all he could by writing to depreciate. 'He was fond,' says Vasari, 'of keeping in his house all sorts of strange animals: badgers, squirrels, monkeys, cat-a-mountains, dwarf-donkeys, horses, racers, little Elba ponies, jackdaws, bantams, doves of India, and other creatures of this kind, as many as he could lay his hands on. Over and above these beasts, he had a raven, which had learned so well from him to talk, that it could imitate its master's voice, especially in answering the door when some one knocked, and this it did so cleverly that people took it for Giovannantonio himself, as all the folk of Siena know quite well. In like manner, his other pets were so much at home with him that they never left his house, but played the strangest tricks and maddest pranks imaginable, so that his house was like nothing more than a Noah's Ark.' He was a bold rider, it seems; for with one of his racers, ridden by himself, he bore away the prize in that wild horse-race they run upon the Piazza at Siena. For the rest, 'he attired himself in pompous clothes, wearing doublets of brocade, cloaks trimmed with gold lace, gorgeous caps, neck-chains, and other vanities of a like description, fit for buffoons and mountebanks.' In one of the frescoes of Monte Oliveto, Sodoma painted his own portrait, with some of his curious pets around him. He there appears as a young man with large and decidedly handsome features, a great shock of dark curled hair escaping from a yellow cap, and flowing down over a rich mantle which drapes his shoulders. If we may trust Vasari, he showed his curious humours freely to the monks. 'Nobody could describe the amusement he furnished to those good fathers, who christened him Mattaccio (the big madman), or the insane tricks he played there.'

In spite of Vasari's malevolence, the portrait he has given us of Bazzi has so far nothing unpleasant about it. The man seems to have been a

madcap artist, combining with his love for his profession a taste for fine clothes, and what was then perhaps rarer in people of his sort, a great partiality for living creatures of all kinds. The darker shades of Vasari's picture have been purposely omitted from these pages. We only know for certain, about Bazzi's private life, that he was married in 1510 to a certain Beatrice, who bore him two children, and who was still living with him in 1541. The further suggestion that he painted at Monte Oliveto subjects unworthy of a religious house, is wholly disproved by the frescoes which still exist in a state of very tolerable preservation. They represent various episodes in the legend of S. Benedict; all marked by that spirit of simple, almost childish piety which is a special characteristic of Italian religious history. The series forms, in fact, a painted *novella* of monastic life; its petty jealousies, its petty trials, its tribulations and temptations, and its indescribably petty miracles. Bazzi was well fitted for the execution of this task. He had a swift and facile brush, considerable versatility in the treatment of monotonous subjects, and a never-failing sense of humour. His white-cowled monks, some of them with the rosy freshness of boys, some with the handsome brown faces of middle life, others astute and crafty, others again wrinkled with old age, have clearly been copied from real models. He puts them into action without the slightest effort, and surrounds them with landscapes, architecture, and furniture, appropriate to each successive situation. The whole is done with so much grace, such simplicity of composition, and transparency of style, corresponding to the *naïf* and superficial legend, that we feel a perfect harmony between the artist's mind and the motives he was made to handle. In this respect Bazzi's portion of the legend of S. Benedict is more successful than Signorelli's. It was fortunate, perhaps, that the conditions of his task confined him to uncomplicated groupings, and a scale of colour in which white predominates. For Bazzi, as is shown by subsequent work in the Farnesina Villa at Rome, and in the church of S. Domenico at Siena, was no master of composition; and the tone, even of his masterpieces, inclines to heat. Unlike Signorelli, Bazzi felt a deep artistic sympathy with female beauty; and the most attractive fresco in the whole series is that in which the evil monk Florentius brings a bevy of fair damsels to the convent. There is one group, in particular, of six women, so delicately varied in carriage of the head and suggested movement of the body, as to be comparable only to a strain of concerted music. This is perhaps the painter's masterpiece in the rendering of pure beauty, if we except his S. Sebastian of the Uffizzi.

85

We tire of studying pictures, hardly less than of reading about them! I was glad enough, after three hours spent among the frescoes of this cloister, to wander forth into the copses which surround the convent. Sunlight was streaming treacherously from flying clouds; and though it was high noon, the oak-leaves were still a-tremble with dew. Pink cyclamens and yellow amaryllis starred the moist brown earth; and under the cypress-trees, where alleys had been cut in former time for pious feet, the short firm turf was soft and mossy. Before bidding the hospitable Padre farewell, and starting in our waggonette for Asciano, it was pleasant to meditate awhile in these green solitudes. Generations of white-stoled monks who had sat or knelt upon the now deserted terraces, or had slowly paced the winding paths to Calvaries aloft and points of vantage high above the wood, rose up before me. My mind, still full of Bazzi's frescoes, peopled the wilderness with grave monastic forms, and gracious, young-eyed faces of boyish novices.

86

I

For the sake of intending travellers to this, the lordliest of Tuscan hill-towns, it will be well to state at once and without circumlocution what does not appear upon the time-tables of the line from Empoli to Rome. Montepulciano has a station; but this railway station is at the distance of at least an hour and a half's drive from the mountain upon which the city stands.

The lumbering train which brought us one October evening from Asciano crawled into this station after dark, at the very moment when a storm, which had been gathering from the south-west, burst in deluges of rain and lightning. There was, however, a covered carriage going to the town. Into this we packed ourselves, together with a polite Italian gentleman who, in answer to our questions, consulted his watch, and smilingly replied that a little half-hour would bring us easily to Montepulciano. He was a native of the place. He knew perfectly well that he would be shut up with us in that carriage for two mortal hours of darkness and downpour. And yet, such is the irresistible impulse in Italians to say something immediately agreeable, he fed us with false hopes and had no fear of consequences. What did it matter to him if we were pulling out our watches and chattering in well-contented undertone about *vino nobile*, *biftek*, and possibly a *polio arrosto*, or a dish of *tord*? At the end of the half-hour, as he was well aware, self-congratulations and visions of a hearty supper would turn to discontented wailings, and the querulous complaining of defrauded appetites. But the end of half an hour was still half an hour off; and we meanwhile were comfortable.

88

The night was pitchy dark, and blazing flashes of lightning showed a white ascending road at intervals. Rain rushed in torrents, splashing against the carriage wheels, which moved uneasily, as though they could but scarcely stem the river that swept down upon them. Far away above us to the left, was one light on a hill, which never seemed to get any nearer. We could see nothing but a chasm of blackness below us on one side, edged with ghostly olive-trees, and a high bank on the other. Sometimes a star swam out of the drifting clouds; but then the rain hissed down again, and the flashes came in floods of livid light, illuminating the eternal olives and the cypresses which looked like huge black spectres. It seemed almost impossible for the horses to keep their feet, as the mountain road grew ever steeper and the torrent swelled around them. Still they struggled on. The promised half-hour had been doubled, trebled, quadrupled, when at last we saw the great brown sombre walls of a city tower above us. Then we entered one of those narrow lofty Tuscan gates, and rolled upon the pavement of a street.

The inn at Montepulciano is called Marzocco, after the Florentine lion which stands upon its column in a little square before the house. The people there are hospitable, and more than once on subsequent occasions have they extended to us kindly welcome. But on this, our first appearance, they had scanty room at their disposal. Seeing us arrive so late, and march into their dining-room, laden with sealskins, waterproofs, and ulsters, one of the party hugging a complete Euripides in Didot's huge edition, they were confounded. At last they conducted the whole company of four into a narrow back bedroom, where they pointed to one fair-sized and one very little bed. This was the only room at liberty, they said; and could we not arrange to sleep here? *S' accomodi, Signore! S' accomodi, Signora!* These encouraging words, uttered in various tones of cheerful and insinuating politeness to each member of the party in succession, failed to make us comprehend how a gentleman and his wife, with a lean but rather lengthy English friend, and a bulky native of the Grisons, could 'accommodate themselves' collectively and undividedly with what was barely sufficient for their just moiety, however much it might afford a night's rest to their worse half. Christian was sent out into the storm to look for supplementary rooms in Montepulciano, which he failed to get. Meanwhile we ordered supper, and had the satisfaction of seeing set upon the board a huge red flask of *vino nobile*. In copious draughts of this the King of Tuscan wines, we drowned our cares; and when the cloth was drawn, our friend and Christian passed their night upon the supper table. The good folk of the inn had recovered from their surprise, and from the inner recesses of their house had brought forth mattresses and blankets. So the better and larger half of the company enjoyed sound sleep.

89

It rained itself out at night, and the morning was clear, with the

transparent atmosphere of storm-clouds hurrying in broken squadrons from the bad sea quarter. Yet this is just the weather in which Tuscan landscape looks its loveliest. Those immense expanses of grey undulating uplands need the luminousness of watery sunshine, the colour added by cloud-shadows, and the pearly softness of rising vapours, to rob them of a certain awful grimness. The main street of Montepulciano goes straight uphill for a considerable distance between brown palaces; then mounts by a staircase-zigzag under huge impending masses of masonry; until it ends in a piazza. On the ascent, at intervals, the eye is fascinated by prospects to the north and east over Val di Chiana, Cortona, Thrasymene, Chiusi; to south and west over Monte Cetona, Radicofani, Monte Amiata, the Val d' Ombrone, and the Sienese Contado. Grey walls overgrown with ivy, arcades of time-toned brick, and the forbidding bulk of houses hewn from solid travertine, frame these glimpses of ærial space. The piazza is the top of all things. Here are the Duomo; the Palazzo del Comune, closely resembling that of Florence, with the Marzocco on its front; the fountain, between two quaintly sculptured columns; and the vast palace Del Monte, of heavy Renaissance architecture, said to be the work of Antonio di San Gallo.

90

We climbed the tower of the Palazzo del Comune, and stood at the altitude of 2000 feet above the sea. The view is finer in its kind than I have elsewhere seen, even in Tuscany, that land of panoramic prospects over memorable tracts of world-historic country. Such landscape cannot be described in words. But the worst is that, even while we gaze, we know that nothing but the faintest memory of our enjoyment will be carried home with us. The atmospheric conditions were perfect that morning. The sun was still young; the sky sparkled after the night's thunderstorm; the whole immensity of earth around lay lucid, smiling, newly washed in baths of moisture. Masses of storm-cloud kept rolling from the west, where we seemed to feel the sea behind those intervening hills. But they did not form in heavy blocks or hang upon the mountain summits. They hurried and dispersed and changed and flung their shadows on the world below.

91

II

The charm of this view is composed of so many different elements, so subtly blent, appealing to so many separate sensibilities; the sense of grandeur, the sense of space, the sense of natural beauty, and the sense of human pathos; that deep internal faculty we call historic sense; that it cannot be defined. First comes the immense surrounding space—a space measured in each arc of the circumference by sections of at least fifty miles, limited by points of exquisitely picturesque beauty, including distant cloud-like mountain ranges and crystals of sky-blue Apennines, circumscribing landscapes of refined loveliness in detail, always varied, always marked by objects of peculiar interest where the eye or memory may linger. Next in importance to this immensity of space, so powerfully affecting the imagination by its mere extent, and by the breadth of atmosphere attuning all varieties of form and colour to one harmony beneath illimitable heaven, may be reckoned the episodes of rivers, lakes, hills, cities, with old historic names. For there spreads the lordly length of Thrasymene, islanded and citadelled, in hazy morning mist, still dreaming of the shock of Roman hosts with Carthaginian legions. There is the lake of Chiusi, set like a jewel underneath the copause-clad hills which hide the dust of a dead Tuscan nation. The streams of Arno start far far away, where Arezzo lies enfolded in bare uplands. And there at our feet rolls Tiber's largest affluent, the Chiana. And there is the canal which joins their fountains in the marsh that Lionardo would have drained. Monte Cetona is yonder height which rears its bristling ridge defiantly from neighbouring Chiusi. And there springs Radicofani, the eagle's eyrie of a brigand brood. Next, Monte Amiata stretches the long lines of her antique volcano; the swelling mountain flanks, descending gently from her cloud-capped top, are russet with autumnal oak and chestnut woods. On them our eyes rest lovingly; imagination wanders for a moment through those mossy glades, where cyclamens are growing now, and primroses in spring will peep amid anemones from rustling foliage strewn by winter's winds. The heights of Casentino, the Perugian highlands, Volterra, far withdrawn amid a wilderness of rolling hills, and solemn snow-touched ranges of the Spolentino, Sibyl-haunted fastnesses of Norcia, form the most distant horizon-lines of this unending panorama. And then there are the cities placed each upon a point of vantage: Siena; olive-mantled Chiusi; Cortona, white upon her spreading throne; poetic Montalcino, lifted aloft against the vaporous sky; San Quirico, nestling in pastoral tranquillity; Pienza, where Æneas Sylvius

92

built palaces and called his birthplace after his own Papal name. Still closer to the town itself of Montepulciano, stretching along the irregular ridge which gave it building ground, and trending out on spurs above deep orchards, come the lovely details of oak-copses, blending with grey tilth and fields rich with olive and vine. The gaze, exhausted with immensity, pierces those deeply cloven valleys, sheltered from wind and open to the sun—undulating folds of brown earth, where Bacchus, when he visited Tuscany, found the grape-juice that pleased him best, and crowned the wine of Montepulciano king. Here from our eyrie we can trace white oxen on the furrows, guided by brown-limbed, white-shirted contadini.

The morning glory of this view from Montepulciano, though irrecoverable by words, abides in the memory, and draws one back by its unique attractiveness. On a subsequent visit to the town in springtime, my wife and I took a twilight walk, just after our arrival, through its gloomy fortress streets, up to the piazza, where the impendent houses lowered like bastions, and all the masses of their mighty architecture stood revealed in shadow and dim lamplight. Far and wide, the country round us gleamed with bonfires; for it was the eve of the Ascension, when every contadino lights a beacon of chestnut logs and straw and piled-up leaves. Each castello on the plain, each village on the hills, each lonely farmhouse at the skirt of forest or the edge of lake, smouldered like a red Cyclopean eye beneath the vault of stars. The flames waxed and waned, leapt into tongues, or disappeared. As they passed from gloom to brilliancy and died away again, they seemed almost to move. The twilight scene was like that of a vast city, filling the plain and climbing the heights in terraces. Is this custom, I thought, a relic of old Pales-worship?

93

III

The early history of Montepulciano is buried in impenetrable mists of fable. No one can assign a date to the foundation of these high-hill cities. The eminence on which it stands belongs to the volcanic system of Monte Amiata, and must at some time have formed a portion of the crater which threw that mighty mass aloft. But sons have passed since the *gran sasso di Maremma* was a fire-vomiting monster, glaring like Etna in eruption on the Tyrrhene sea; and through those centuries how many races may have camped upon the summit we call Montepulciano! Tradition assigns the first quasi-historical settlement to Lars Porsena, who is said to have made it his summer residence, when the lower and more marshy air of Clusium became oppressive. Certainly it must have been a considerable town in the Etruscan period. Embedded in the walls of palaces may still be seen numerous fragments of sculptured basreliefs, the works of that mysterious people. Apropos of Montepulciano's importance in the early years of Roman history, I lighted on a quaint story related by its very jejune annalist, Spinello Benci. It will be remembered that Livy attributes the invasion of the Gauls, who, after besieging Clusium, advanced on Rome, to the persuasions of a certain Aruns. He was an exile from Clusium; and wishing to revenge himself upon his country-people, he allured the Senonian Gauls into his service by the promise of excellent wine, samples of which he had taken with him into Lombardy. Spinello Benci accepts the legend literally, and continues: 'These wines were so pleasing to the palate of the barbarians, that they were induced to quit the rich and teeming valley of the Po, to cross the Apennines, and move in battle array against Chiusi. And it is clear that the wine which Aruns selected for the purpose was the same as that which is produced to this day at Montepulciano. For nowhere else in the Etruscan district can wines of equally generous quality and fiery spirit be found, so adapted for export and capable of such long preservation.'

94

We may smile at the historian's *naïveté*. Yet the fact remains that good wine of Montepulciano can still allure barbarians of this epoch to the spot where it is grown. Of all Italian vintages, with the exception of some rare qualities of Sicily and the Valtellina, it is, in my humble opinion, the best. And when the time comes for Italy to develop the resources of her vineyards upon scientific principles, Montepulciano will drive Brolio from the field and take the same place by the side of Chianti which Volnay occupies by common Macon. It will then be quoted upon wine-lists throughout Europe, and find its place upon the tables of rich epicures in Hyperborean regions, and add its generous warmth to Trans-atlantic banquets. Even as it is now made, with very little care bestowed on cultivation and none to speak of on selection of the grape, the wine is rich and noble, slightly rough to a sophisticated palate, but clean in

95

quality and powerful and racy. It deserves the enthusiasm attributed by Redi to Bacchus:^[57]

Fill, fill, let us all have our will!
But with *what*, with *what*, boys, shall we fill.
Sweet Ariadne—no, not *that* one—*ah* no;
Fill me the manna of Montepulciano:
Fill me a magnum and reach it me.—Gods!
How it glides to my heart by the sweetest of roads!
Oh, how it kisses me, tickles me, bites me!
Oh, how my eyes loosen sweetly in tears!
I'm ravished! I'm rapt! Heaven finds me admissible!
Lost in an ecstasy! blinded! invisible!—
Hearken all earth!
We, Bacchus, in the might of our great mirth,
To all who reverence us, are right thinkers;
Hear, all ye drinkers!
Give ear and give faith to the edict divine;
Montepulciano's the King of all wine.

[57] From Leigh Hunt's Translation.

It is necessary, however, that our modern barbarian should travel to Montepulciano itself, and there obtain a flask of *manna* or *vino nobile* from some trusty cellar-master. He will not find it bottled in the inns or restaurants upon his road.

IV

The landscape and the wine of Montepulciano are both well worth the trouble of a visit to this somewhat inaccessible city. Yet more remains to be said about the attractions of the town itself. In the Duomo, which was spoiled by unintelligent rebuilding at a dismal epoch of barren art, are fragments of one of the rarest monuments of Tuscan sculpture. This is the tomb of Bartolommeo Aragazzi. He was a native of Montepulciano, and secretary to Pope Martin V., that *Papa Martino non vale un quattrino*, on whom, during his long residence in Florence, the street-boys made their rhymes. Twelve years before his death he commissioned Donatello and Michelozzo Michelozzi, who about that period were working together upon the monuments of Pope John XXIII. and Cardinal Braccacci, to erect his own tomb at the enormous cost of twenty-four thousand scudi. That thirst for immortality of fame, which inspired the humanists of the Renaissance, prompted Aragazzi to this princely expenditure. Yet, having somehow won the hatred of his fellow-students, he was immediately censured for excessive vanity. Lionardo Bruni makes his monument the theme of a ferocious onslaught. Writing to Poggio Bracciolini, Bruni tells a story how, while travelling through the country of Arezzo, he met a train of oxen dragging heavy waggons piled with marble columns, statues, and all the necessary details of a sumptuous sepulchre. He stopped, and asked what it all meant. Then one of the contractors for this transport, wiping the sweat from his forehead, in utter weariness of the vexatious labour, at the last end of his temper, answered: 'May the gods destroy all poets, past, present, and future.' I inquired what he had to do with poets, and how they had annoyed him. 'Just this,' he replied, 'that this poet, lately deceased, a fool and windy-pated fellow, has ordered a monument for himself; and with a view to erecting it, these marbles are being dragged to Montepulciano; but I doubt whether we shall contrive to get them up there. The roads are too bad.' 'But,' cried I, 'do you believe *that* man was a poet—that dunce who had no science, nay, nor knowledge either? who only rose above the heads of men by vanity and doltishness?' 'I don't know,' he answered, 'nor did I ever hear tell, while he was alive, about his being called a poet; but his fellow-townsmen now decide he was one; nay, if he had but left a few more money-bags, they'd swear he was a god. Anyhow, but for his having been a poet, I would not have cursed poets in general.' Whereupon, the malevolent Bruni withdrew, and composed a scorpion-tailed oration, addressed to his friend Poggio, on the suggested theme of 'diuturnity in monuments,' and false ambition. Our old friends of humanistic learning—Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar—meet us in these frothy paragraphs. Cambyses, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, Darius, are thrown in to make the gruel of rhetoric 'thick and slab.' The whole epistle ends in a long-drawn peroration of invective against 'that excrement in human shape,' who had had the ill-luck, by pretence to scholarship, by big gains from the Papal treasury, by something in his manners alien from the easy-going customs of the Roman Court, to rouse the rancour of his fellow-humanists.

I have dwelt upon this episode, partly because it illustrates the

peculiar thirst for glory in the students of that time, but more especially because it casts a thin clear thread of actual light upon the masterpiece which, having been transported with this difficulty from Donatello's workshop, is now to be seen by all lovers of fine art, in part at least, at Montepulciano. In part at least: the phrase is pathetic. Poor Aragazzi, who thirsted so for 'diuturnity in monuments,' who had been so cruelly assaulted in the grave by humanistic jealousy, expressing its malevolence with humanistic crudity of satire, was destined after all to be defrauded of his well-paid tomb. The monument, a master work of Donatello and his collaborator, was duly erected. The oxen and the contractors, it appears, had floundered through the mud of Valdichiana, and struggled up the mountain-slopes of Montepulciano. But when the church, which this triumph of art adorned, came to be repaired, the miracle of beauty was dismembered. The sculpture for which Aragazzi spent his thousands of crowns, which Donatello touched with his immortalising chisel, over which the contractors vented their curses and Bruni eased his bile; these marbles are now visible as mere *disjecta membra* in a church which, lacking them, has little to detain a traveller's haste.

98

On the left hand of the central door, as you enter, Aragazzi lies, in senatorial robes, asleep; his head turned slightly to the right upon the pillow, his hands folded over his breast. Very noble are the draperies, and dignified the deep tranquillity of slumber. Here, we say, is a good man fallen upon sleep, awaiting resurrection. The one commanding theme of Christian sculpture, in an age of Pagan feeling, has been adequately rendered. Bartolommeo Aragazzi, like Ilaria led Carretto at Lucca, like the canopied doges in S. Zanipolo at Venice, like the Acciaiuoli in the Florentine Certosa, like the Cardinal di Portogallo in Samminiato, is carved for us as he had been in life, but with that life suspended, its fever all smoothed out, its agitations over, its pettinesses dignified by death. This marmoreal repose of the once active man symbolises for our imagination the state into which he passed four centuries ago, but in which, according to the creed, he still abides, reserved for judgment and re-incarnation. The flesh, clad with which he walked our earth, may moulder in the vaults beneath. But it will one day rise again; and art has here presented it imperishable to our gaze. This is how the Christian sculptors, inspired by the majestic calm of classic art, dedicated a Christian to the genius of repose. Among the nations of antiquity this repose of death was eternal; and being unable to conceive of a man's body otherwise than for ever obliterated by the flames of funeral, they were perforce led back to actual life when they would carve his portrait on a tomb. But for Christianity the rest of the grave has ceased to be eternal. Centuries may pass, but in the end it must be broken. Therefore art is justified in showing us the man himself in an imagined state of sleep. Yet this imagined state of sleep is so incalculably long, and by the will of God withdrawn from human prophecy, that the ages sweeping over the dead man before the trumpets of archangels wake him, shall sooner wear away memorial stone than stir his slumber. It is a slumber, too, unterrified, unentertained by dreams. Suspended animation finds no fuller symbolism than the sculptor here presents to us in abstract form.

99

The boys of Montepulciano have scratched Messer Aragazzi's sleeping figure with *graffiti* at their own free will. Yet they have had no power to erase the poetry of Donatello's mighty style. That, in spite of Bruni's envy, in spite of injurious time, in spite of the still worse insult of the modernised cathedral and the desecrated monument, embalms him in our memory and secures for him the diuturnity for which he paid his twenty thousand crowns. Money, methinks, beholding him, was rarely better expended on a similar ambition. And ambition of this sort, relying on the genius of such a master to give it wings for perpetuity of time, is, *pace* Lionardo Bruni, not ignoble.

Opposite the figure of Messer Aragazzi are two square bas-reliefs from the same monument, fixed against piers of the nave. One represents Madonna enthroned among worshippers; members, it may be supposed, of Aragazzi's household. Three angelic children, supporting the child Christ upon her lap, complete that pyramidal form of composition which Fra Bartolommeo was afterwards to use with such effect in painting. The other bas-relief shows a group of grave men and youths, clasping hands with loveliest interlacement; the placid sentiment of human fellowship translated into harmonies of sculptured form. Children below run up to touch their knees, and reach out boyish arms to welcome them. Two young men, with half-draped busts and waving hair blown off their foreheads, anticipate the type of adolescence which Andrea del Sarto perfected in his S. John. We might imagine that this masterly panel was

100

intended to represent the arrival of Messer Aragazzi in his home. It is a scene from the domestic life of the dead man, duly subordinated to the recumbent figure, which, when the monument was perfect, would have dominated the whole composition.

Nothing in the range of Donatello's work surpasses these two bas-reliefs for harmonies of line and grouping, for choice of form, for beauty of expression, and for smoothness of surface-working. The marble is of great delicacy, and is wrought to a wax-like surface. At the high altar are three more fragments from the mutilated tomb. One is a long low frieze of children bearing garlands, which probably formed the base of Aragazzi's monument, and now serves for a predella. The remaining pieces are detached statues of Fortitude and Faith. The former reminds us of Donatello's S. George; the latter is twisted into a strained attitude, full of character, but lacking grace. What the effect of these emblematic figures would have been when harmonised by the architectural proportions of the sepulchre, the repose of Aragazzi on his sarcophagus, the suavity of the two square panels and the rhythmic beauty of the frieze, it is not easy to conjecture. But rudely severed from their surroundings, and exposed in isolation, one at each side of the altar, they leave an impression of awkward discomfort on the memory. A certain hardness, peculiar to the Florentine manner, is felt in them. But this quality may have been intended by the sculptors for the sake of contrast with what is eminently graceful, peaceful, and melodious in the other fragments of the ruined masterpiece.

101

V

At a certain point in the main street, rather more than halfway from the Albergo del Marzocco to the piazza, a tablet has been let into the wall upon the left-hand side. This records the fact that here in 1454 was born Angelo Ambrogini, the special glory of Montepulciano, the greatest classical scholar and the greatest Italian poet of the fifteenth century. He is better known in the history of literature as Poliziano, or Politianus, a name he took from his native city, when he came, a marvellous boy, at the age of ten, to Florence, and joined the household of Lorenzo de' Medici. He had already claims upon Lorenzo's hospitality. For his father, Benedetto, by adopting the cause of Piero de' Medici in Montepulciano, had exposed himself to bitter feuds and hatred of his fellow-citizens. To this animosity of party warfare he fell a victim a few years previously. We only know that he was murdered, and that he left a helpless widow with five children, of whom Angelo was the eldest. The Ambrogini or Cini were a family of some importance in Montepulciano; and their dwelling-house is a palace of considerable size. From its eastern windows the eye can sweep that vast expanse of country, embracing the lakes of Thrasymene and Chiusi, which has been already described. What would have happened, we wonder, if Messer Benedetto, the learned jurist, had not espoused the Medicean cause and embroiled himself with murderous antagonists? Would the little Angelo have grown up in this quiet town, and practised law, and lived and died a citizen of Montepulciano? In that case the lecture-rooms of Florence would never have echoed to the sonorous hexameters of the 'Rusticus' and 'Ambra.' Italian literature would have lacked the 'Stanze' and 'Orfeo.' European scholarship would have been defrauded of the impulse given to it by the 'Miscellanea.' The study of Roman law would have missed those labours on the Pandects, with which the name of Politian is honourably associated. From the Florentine society of the fifteenth century would have disappeared the commanding central figure of humanism, which now contrasts dramatically with the stern monastic Prior of S. Mark. Benedetto's tragic death gave Poliziano to Italy and to posterity.

102

VI

Those who have a day to spare at Montepulciano can scarcely spend it better than in an excursion to Pienza and San Quirico. Leaving the city by the road which takes a westerly direction, the first object of interest is the Church of San Biagio, placed on a fertile plateau immediately beneath the ancient acropolis. It was erected by Antonio di San Gallo in 1518, and is one of the most perfect specimens existing of the sober classical style. The Church consists of a Greek square, continued at the east end into a semicircular tribune, surmounted by a central cupola, and flanked by a detached bell-tower, ending in a pyramidal spire. The whole is built of solid yellow travertine, a material which, by its warmth of colour, is pleasing to the eye, and mitigates the mathematical severity of the design. Upon entering, we feel at once what Alberti called the

music of this style; its large and simple harmonies, depending for effect upon sincerity of plan and justice of balance. The square masses of the main building, the projecting cornices and rounded tribune, meet together and soar up into the cupola; while the grand but austere proportions of the arches and the piers compose a symphony of perfectly concordant lines. The music is grave and solemn, architecturally expressed in terms of measured space and outlined symmetry. The whole effect is that of one thing pleasant to look upon, agreeably appealing to our sense of unity, charming us by grace and repose; not stimulative nor suggestive, not multiform nor mysterious. We are reminded of the temples imagined by Francesco Colonna, and figured in his *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. One of these shrines has, we feel, come into actual existence here; and the religious ceremonies for which it is adapted are not those of the Christian worship. Some more primitive, less spiritual rites, involving less of tragic awe and deep-wrought symbolism, should be here performed. It is better suited for Polifilo's lustration by Venus Physizoe than for the mass on Easter morning. And in this respect, the sentiment of the architecture is exactly faithful to that mood of religious feeling which appeared in Italy under the influences of the classical revival—when the essential doctrines of Christianity were blurred with Pantheism; when Jehovah became *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*; and Jesus was the *Heros* of Calvary, and nuns were *Virgines Vestales*. In literature this mood often strikes us as insincere and artificial. But it admitted of realisation and showed itself to be profoundly felt in architecture.

103

After leaving Madonna di San Biagio, the road strikes at once into an open country, expanding on the right towards the woody ridge of Monte Fallonica, on the left toward Cetona and Radicofani, with Monte Amiata full in front—its double crest and long volcanic slope recalling Etna; the belt of embrowned forest on its flank, made luminous by sunlight. Far away stretches the Sienese Maremma; Siena dimly visible upon her gentle hill; and still beyond, the pyramid of Volterra, huge and cloud-like, piled against the sky. The road, as is almost invariable in this district, keeps to the highest line of ridges, winding much, and following the dimplings of the earthy hills. Here and there a solitary castello, rusty with old age, and turned into a farm, juts into picturesqueness from some point of vantage on a mound surrounded with green tillage. But soon the dull and intolerable *creta*, ash-grey earth, without a vestige of vegetation, furrowed by rain, and desolately breaking into gullies, swallows up variety and charm. It is difficult to believe that this *creta* of Southern Tuscany, which has all the appearance of barrenness, and is a positive deformity in the landscape, can be really fruitful. Yet we are frequently being told that it only needs assiduous labour to render it enormously productive.

104

When we reached Pienza we were already in the middle of a country without cultivation, abandoned to the marl. It is a little place, perched upon the ledge of a long sliding hill, which commands the vale of Orcia; Monte Amiata soaring in ærial majesty beyond. Its old name was Cosignano. But it had the honour of giving birth to Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who, when he was elected to the Papacy and had assumed the title of Pius II., determined to transform and dignify his native village, and to call it after his own name. From that time forward Cosignano has been known as Pienza.

Pius II. succeeded effectually in leaving his mark upon the town. And this forms its main interest at the present time. We see in Pienza how the most active-minded and intelligent man of his epoch, the representative genius of Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century, commanding vast wealth and the Pontifical prestige, worked out his whim of city-building. The experiment had to be made upon a small scale; for Pienza was then and was destined to remain a village. Yet here, upon this miniature piazza—in modern as in ancient Italy the meeting-point of civic life, the forum—we find a cathedral, a palace of the bishop, a palace of the feudal lord, and a palace of the commune, arranged upon a well-considered plan, and executed after one design in a consistent style. The religious, municipal, signorial, and ecclesiastical functions of the little town are centralised around the open market-place, on which the common people transacted business and discussed affairs. Pius entrusted the realisation of his scheme to a Florentine architect; whether Bernardo Rossellino, or a certain Bernardo di Lorenzo, is still uncertain. The same artist, working in the flat manner of Florentine domestic architecture, with rusticated basements, rounded windows and bold projecting cornices—the manner which is so nobly illustrated by the Rucellai and Strozzi palaces at Florence—executed also for Pius the monumental Palazzo Piccolomini at Siena. It is a great misfortune for the

105

group of buildings he designed at Pienza, that they are huddled together in close quarters on a square too small for their effect. A want of space is peculiarly injurious to the architecture of this date, 1462, which, itself geometrical and spatial, demands a certain harmony and liberty in its surroundings, a proportion between the room occupied by each building and the masses of the edifice. The style is severe and prosaic. Those charming episodes and accidents of fancy, in which the Gothic style and the style of the earlier Lombard Renaissance abounded, are wholly wanting to the rigid, mathematical, hard-headed genius of the Florentine quattrocento. Pienza, therefore, disappoints us. Its heavy palace frontispieces shut the spirit up in a tight box. We seem unable to breathe, and lack that element of life and picturesqueness which the splendid retinues of nobles in the age of Pinturicchio might have added to the now forlorn Piazza.

Yet the material is a fine warm travertine, mellowing to dark red, brightening to golden, with some details, especially the tower of the Palazzo Comunale, in red brick. This building, by the way, is imitated in miniature from that of Florence. The cathedral is a small church of three aisles, equally high, ending in what the French would call a *chevet*. Pius had observed this plan of construction somewhere in Austria, and commanded his architect, Bernardo, to observe it in his plan. He was attracted by the facilities for window-lighting which it offered; and what is very singular, he provided by the Bull of his foundation for keeping the walls of the interior free from frescoes and other coloured decorations. The result is that, though the interior effect is pleasing, the church presents a frigid aspect to eyes familiarised with warmth of tone in other buildings of that period. The details of the columns and friezes are classical; and the façade, strictly corresponding to the structure, and very honest in its decorative elements, is also of the earlier Renaissance style. But the vaulting and some of the windows are pointed.

The Palazzo Piccolomini, standing at the right hand of the Duomo, is a vast square edifice. The walls are flat and even, pierced at regular intervals with windows, except upon the south-west side, where the rectangular design is broken by a noble double Loggiata, gallery rising above gallery—serene curves of arches, grandly proportioned columns, massive balustrades, a spacious corridor, a roomy vaulting—opening out upon the palace garden, and offering fair prospect over the wooded heights of Castiglione and Rocca d' Orcia, up to Radicofani and shadowy Amiata. It was in these double tiers of galleries, in the garden beneath and in the open inner square of the palazzo, that the great life of Italian aristocracy displayed itself. Four centuries ago these spaces, now so desolate in their immensity, echoed to the tread of serving-men, the songs of pages; horse-hooves struck upon the pavement of the court; spurs jingled on the staircases; the brocaded trains of ladies sweeping from their chambers rustled on the marbles of the loggia; knights let their hawks fly from the garden parapets; cardinals and abbreviators gathered round the doors from which the Pope would issue, when he rose from his siesta to take the cool of evening in those airy colonnades. How impossible it is to realise that scene amid this solitude! The palazzo still belongs to the Piccolomini family. But it has fallen into something worse than ruin—the squalor of half-starved existence, shorn of all that justified its grand proportions. Partition-walls have been run up across its halls to meet the requirements of our contracted modern customs. Nothing remains of the original decorations except one carved chimney-piece, an emblazoned shield, and a frescoed portrait of the founder. All movable treasures have been made away with. And yet the carved heraldics of the exterior, the coat of Piccolomini, 'argent, on a cross azure five crescents or,' the Papal ensigns, keys, and tiara, and the monogram of Pius, prove that this country dwelling of a Pope must once have been rich in details befitting its magnificence. With the exception of the very small portion reserved for the Signori, when they visit Pienza, the palace has become a granary for country produce in a starveling land. There was one redeeming point about it to my mind. That was the handsome young man, with earnest Tuscan eyes and a wonderfully sweet voice, the servant of the Piccolomini family, who lives here with his crippled father, and who showed us over the apartments.

We left Pienza and drove on to S. Quirico, through the same wrinkled wilderness of marl; wasteful, uncultivated, bare to every wind that blows. A cruel blast was sweeping from the sea, and Monte Amiata darkened with rain-clouds. Still the pictures, which formed themselves at intervals, as we wound along these barren ridges, were very fair to look upon, especially one not far from S. Quirico. It had for fore-ground a stretch of tith—olive-trees, honeysuckle hedges, and cypresses. Beyond soared Amiata in all its breadth and blue air-blackness, bearing on its mighty

flanks the broken cliffs and tufted woods of Castiglione and the Rocca d'Orcia; eagles' nests emerging from a fertile valley-champaign, into which the eye was led for rest. It so chanced that a band of sunlight, escaping from filmy clouds, touched this picture with silvery greys and soft greens—a suffusion of vaporous radiance, which made it for one moment a Claude landscape.

S. Quirico was keeping *fiesta*. The streets were crowded with healthy, handsome men and women from the contado. This village lies on the edge of a great oasis in the Sieneese desert—an oasis formed by the waters of the Orcia and Asso sweeping down to join Ombrone, and stretching on to Montalcino. We put up at the sign of the 'Two Hares,' where a notable housewife gave us a dinner of all we could desire; *frittata di cervello*, good fish, roast lamb stuffed with rosemary, salad and cheese, with excellent wine and black coffee, at the rate of three *lire* a head.

The attraction of S. Quirico is its gem-like little collegiata, a Lombard church of the ninth century, with carved portals of the thirteenth. It is built of golden travertine; some details in brown sandstone. The western and southern portals have pillars resting on the backs of lions. On the western side these pillars are four slender columns, linked by snake-like ligatures. On the southern side they consist of two carved figures—possibly S. John and the Archangel Michael. There is great freedom and beauty in these statues, as also in the lions which support them, recalling the early French and German manner. In addition, one finds the usual Lombard grotesques—two sea-monsters, biting each other; harpy-birds; a dragon with a twisted tail; little men grinning and squatting in adaptation to coigns and angles of the windows. The toothed and chevron patterns of the north are quaintly blent with rude acanthus scrolls and classical egg-mouldings. Over the western porch is a Gothic rose window. Altogether this church must be reckoned one of the most curious specimens of that hybrid architecture, fusing and appropriating different manners, which perplexes the student in Central Italy. It seems strangely out of place in Tuscany. Yet, if what one reads of Toscanella, a village between Viterbo and Orbetello, be true, there exist examples of a similar fantastic Lombard style even lower down.

The interior was most disastrously gutted and 'restored' in 1731: its open wooden roof masked by a false stucco vaulting. A few relics, spared by the eighteenth-century Vandals, show that the church was once rich in antique curiosities. A marble knight in armour lies on his back, half hidden by the pulpit stairs. And in the choir are half a dozen rarely beautiful panels of tarsia, executed in a bold style and on a large scale. One design—a man throwing his face back, and singing, while he plays a mandoline; with long thick hair and fanciful beretta; behind him a fine line of cypress and other trees—struck me as singularly lovely. In another I noticed a branch of peach, broad leaves and ripe fruit, not only drawn with remarkable grace and power, but so modelled as to stand out with the roundness of reality.

The whole drive of three hours back to Montepulciano was one long banquet of inimitable distant views. Next morning, having to take farewell of the place, we climbed to the Castello, or *arx* of the old city! It is a ruined spot, outside the present walls, upon the southern slope, where there is now a farm, and a fair space of short sheep-cropped turf, very green and grassy, and gemmed with little pink geraniums as in England in such places. The walls of the old castle, overgrown with ivy, are broken down to their foundations. This may possibly have been done when Montepulciano was dismantled by the Sieneese in 1232. At that date the Commune succumbed to its more powerful neighbours. The half of its inhabitants were murdered, and its fortifications were destroyed. Such episodes are common enough in the history of that internecine struggle for existence between the Italian municipalities, which preceded the more famous strife of Guelfs and Ghibellines. Stretched upon the smooth turf of the Castello, we bade adieu to the divine landscape bathed in light and mountain air—to Thrasymene and Chiusi and Cetona; to Amiata, Pienza, and S. Quirico; to Montalcino and the mountains of Volterra; to Siena and Cortona; and, closer, to Monte Fallonica, Madonna di Biagio, the house-roofs and the Palazzo tower of Montepulciano.

Perugia is the empress of hill-set Italian cities. Southward from her high-built battlements and church towers the eye can sweep a circuit of the Apennines unrivalled in its width. From cloudlike Radicofani, above Siena in the west, to snow-capped Monte Catria, beneath whose summit Dante spent those saddest months of solitude in 1313, the mountains curve continuously in lines of austere dignity and tempered sweetness. Assisi, Spoleto, Todi, Trevi, crown lesser heights within the range of vision. Here and there the glimpse of distant rivers lights a silver spark upon the plain. Those hills conceal Lake Trasymene; and there lies Orvieto, and Ancona there: while at our feet the Umbrian champaign, breaking away into the valley of the Tiber, spreads in all the largeness of majestically converging mountain-slopes. This is a landscape which can never lose its charm. Whether it be purple golden summer, or winter with sad tints of russet woods and faintly rosy snows, or spring attired in tenderest green of new-fledged trees and budding flowers, the air is always pure and light and finely tempered here. City gates, sombre as their own antiquity, frame vistas of the laughing fields. Terraces, flanked on either side by jutting masonry, cut clear vignettes of olive-hoary slopes, with cypress-shadowed farms in hollows of the hills. Each coign or point of vantage carries a bastion or tower of Etruscan, Roman, mediæval architecture, tracing the limits of the town upon its mountain plateau. Everywhere art and nature lie side by side in amity beneath a sky so pure and delicate, that from its limpid depth the spirit seems to drink new life. What air-tints of lilac, orange, and pale amethyst are shed upon those vast ethereal hills and undulating plains! What wandering cloud-shadows sail across this sea of olives and of vines, with here and there a fleece of vapour or a column of blue smoke from charcoal burners on the mountain flank! To southward, far away beyond those hills, is felt the presence of eternal Rome, not seen, but clearly indicated by the hurrying of a hundred streams that swell the Tiber.

112

In the neighbourhood of the town itself there is plenty to attract the student of antiquities, or art, or history. He may trace the walls of the Etruscan city, and explore the vaults where the dust of the Volumnii lies coffered in sarcophagi and urns. Mild faces of grave deities lean from the living tufa above those narrow alcoves, where the chisel-marks are still fresh, and where the vigilant lamps still hang suspended from the roof by leaden chains. Or, in the Museum, he may read on basreliefs and vases how gloomy and morose were the superstitions of those obscure forerunners of majestic Rome. The piazza offers one of the most perfect Gothic façades, in its Palazzo Pubblico, to be found in Italy. The flight of marble steps is guarded from above by the bronze griffin of Perugia and the Baglioni, with the bronze lion of the Guelf faction, to which the town was ever faithful. Upon their marble brackets they ramp in all the lean ferocity of feudal heraldry, and from their claws hang down the chains wrested in old warfare from some barricaded gateway of Siena. Below is the fountain, on the many-sided curves of which Giovanni Pisano sculptured, in quaint statuettes and basreliefs, all the learning of the middle ages, from the Bible history down to fables of Æsop and allegories of the several months. Facing the same piazza is the Sala del Cambio, a mediæval Bourse, with its tribunal for the settlement of mercantile disputes, and its exquisite carved woodwork and frescoes, the masterpiece of Peruginò's school. Hard by is the University, once crowded with native and foreign students, where the eloquence of Greek Demetrius in the first dawn of the Renaissance withdrew the gallants of Perugia—those slim youths with shocks of nut-brown hair beneath their tiny red caps, whose comely legs, encased in tight-fitting hose of two different colours, looked so strange to modern eyes upon the canvas of Signorelli—from their dice and wine-cups, and amours and daggers, to grave studies in the lore of Greece and Rome.

113

This piazza, the scene of all the bloodiest tragedies in Perugian annals, is closed at the north end by the Cathedral, with the open pulpit in its wall from which S. Bernardino of Siena preached peace in vain. The citizens wept to hear his words: a bonfire of vanities was lighted on the flags beside Pisano's fountain: foe kissed foe: and the same cowl of S. Francis was set in token of repentance on heads that long had schemed destruction, each for each. But a few days passed, and the penitents returned to cut each other's throat. Often and often have those steps of the Duomo run with blood of Baglioni, Oddi, Arcipreti, and La Staffa. Once the whole church had to be washed with wine and blessed anew before the rites of Christianity could be resumed in its desecrated aisles. It was here that within the space of two days, in 1500, the catafalque

was raised for the murdered Astorre, and for his traitorous cousin Grifonetto Baglioni. Here, too, if more ancient tradition does not err, were stretched the corpses of twenty-seven members of the same great house at the end of one of their grim combats.

No Italian city illustrates more forcibly than Perugia the violent contrasts of the earlier Renaissance. This is perhaps its most essential characteristic—that which constitutes its chief æsthetic interest. To many travellers the name of Perugia suggests at once the painter who, more than any other, gave expression to devout emotions in consummate works of pietistic art. They remember how Raphael, when a boy, with Pinturicchio, Lo Spagna, and Adone Doni, in the workshop of Pietro Perugino, learned the secret of that style to which he gave sublimity and freedom in his Madonnas di San Sisto, di Foligno, and del Cardellino. But the students of mediæval history in detail know Perugia far better as the lion's lair of one of the most ferocious broods of heroic ruffians Italy can boast. To them the name of Perugia suggests at once the great house of the Baglioni, who drenched Umbria with blood, and gave the broad fields of Assisi to the wolf, and who through six successive generations bred captains for the armies of Venice, Florence, Naples, and the Church.^[58] That the trade of Perugino in religious pictures should have been carried on in the city which shared the factions of the Baglioni—that Raphael should have been painting Pietas while Astorre and Simonetto were being murdered by the beautiful young Grifonetto—is a paradox of the purest water in the history of civilisation.

[58] Most of the references in this essay are made to the Perugian chronicles of Graziani, Matarazzo, Bontempi, and Froliere, in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. xvi. parts 1 and 2. Ariodante Fabretti's *Biografie dei Capitani Venturieri dell' Umbria* supply some details.

The art of Perugino implied a large number of devout and wealthy patrons, a public not only capable of comprehending him, but also eager to restrict his great powers within the limits of purely devotional delineation. The feuds and passions of the Baglioni, on the other hand, implied a society in which egregious crimes only needed success to be accounted glorious, where force, cruelty, and cynical craft reigned supreme, and where the animal instincts attained gigantic proportions in the persons of splendid young athletic despots. Even the names of these Baglioni, Astorre, Lavinia, Zenobia, Atalanta, Troilo, Ercole, Annibale, Ascanio, Penelope, Orazio, and so forth, clash with the sweet mild forms of Perugino, whose very executioners are candidates for Paradise, and kill their martyrs with compunction.

In Italy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries such contradictions subsisted in the same place and under the conditions of a common culture, because there was no limit to the development of personality. Character was far more absolute then than now. The force of the modern world, working in the men of those times like powerful wine, as yet displayed itself only as a spirit of freedom and expansion and revolt. The strait laces of mediæval Christianity were loosened. The coercive action of public opinion had not yet made itself dominant. That was an age of adolescence, in which men were and dared to be *themselves* for good or evil. Hypocrisy, except for some solid, well-defined, selfish purpose, was unknown: the deference to established canons of decorum which constitutes more than half of our so-called morality, would have been scarcely intelligible to an Italian. The outlines of individuality were therefore strongly accentuated. Life itself was dramatic in its incidents and motives, its catastrophes and contrasts. These conditions, eminently favourable to the growth of arts and the pursuit of science, were no less conducive to the hypertrophy of passions, and to the full development of ferocious and inhuman personalities. Every man did what seemed good in his own eyes. Far less restrained than we are by the verdict of his neighbours, but bound by faith more blind and fiercer superstitions, he displayed the contradictions of his character in picturesque chiaroscuro. What he could was the limit set on what he would. Therefore, considering the infinite varieties of human temperaments, it was not merely possible, but natural, for Pietro Perugino and Gianpaolo Baglioni to be inhabitants at the same time of the selfsame city, and for the pious Atalanta to mourn the bloodshed and the treason of her Achillean son, the young and terrible Grifone. Here, in a word, in Perugia, beneath the fierce blaze of the Renaissance, were brought into splendid contrast both the martial violence and the religious sentiment of mediævalism, raised for a moment to the elevation of fine art.

Some of Perugino's qualities can be studied better in Perugia than elsewhere. Of his purely religious pictures—altar-pieces of Madonna and

Saints, martyrdoms of S. Sebastian, Crucifixions, Ascensions, Annunciations, and Depositions from the Cross,—fine specimens are exhibited in nearly all the galleries of Europe. A large number of his works and of those of his scholars may be seen assembled in the Pinacoteca of Perugia. Yet the student of his pietistic style finds little here of novelty to notice. It is in the Sala del Cambio that we gain a really new conception of his faculty. Upon the decoration of that little hall he concentrated all his powers of invention. The frescoes of the Transfiguration and the Nativity, which face the great door, are the triumphs of his devotional manner. On other panels of the chamber he has portrayed the philosophers of Greece and Rome, the kings and generals of antiquity, the prophets and the sibyls who announced Christ's advent. The roof is covered with arabesques of delicate design and dainty execution—labyrinths of fanciful improvisation, in which flowers and foliage and human forms are woven into a harmonious framework for the medallions of the seven planets. The woodwork with which the hall is lined below the frescoes, shows to what a point of perfection the art of intarsiatura had been carried in his school. All these decorative masterpieces are the product of one ingenuous style. Uninfluenced by the Roman frescoes imitated by Raphael in his Loggia of the Vatican, they breathe the spirit of the earlier Renaissance, which created for itself free forms of grace and loveliness without a pattern, divining by its innate sense of beauty what the classic artists had achieved. Take for an example the medallion of the planet Jupiter. The king of gods and men, hoary-headed and mild-eyed, is seated in his chariot drawn by eagles: before him kneels Ganymede, a fair-haired, exquisite, slim page, with floating mantle and ribbands fluttering round his tight hose and jerkin. Such were the cup-bearers of Galeazzo Sforza and Gianpaolo Baglioni. Then compare this fresco with the Jupiter in mosaic upon the cupola of the Chigi chapel in S. Maria del Popolo at Rome. A new age of experience had passed over Raphael between his execution of Perugino's design in the one and his conception of the other. He had seen the marbles of the Vatican, and had heard of Plato in the interval: the simple graces of the earlier Renaissance were no longer enough for him; but he must realise the thought of classic myths in his new manner. In the same way we may compare this Transfiguration with Raphael's last picture, these sibyls with those of S. Maria della Pace, these sages with the School of Athens, these warriors with the Battle of Maxentius. What is characteristic of the full-grown Raphael is his universal comprehension, his royal faculty for representing past and present, near and distant, things the most diverse, by forms ideal and yet distinctive. Each phase of the world's history and of human activity receives from him appropriate and elevated expression. What is characteristic of the frescoes in the Sala del Cambio, and indeed of the whole manner of Perugino, is that all subjects, sacred or secular, allegorical or real, are conceived in the same spirit of restrained and well-bred piety. There is no attempt at historical propriety or dramatic realism. Grave, ascetic, melancholy faces of saints are put on bodies of kings, generals, sages, sibyls, and deities alike. The same ribbands and studied draperies clothe and connect all. The same conventional attitudes of meditative gracefulness are repeated in each group. Yet, the whole effect, if somewhat feeble and insipid, is harmonious and thoughtful. We see that each part has proceeded from the same mind, in the same mood, and that the master's mind was no common one, the mood itself was noble. Good taste is everywhere apparent: the work throughout is a masterpiece of refined fancy.

117

118

To Perugino the representative imagination was of less importance than a certain delicate and adequately ideal mode of feeling and conceiving. The consequent charm of his style is that everything is thought out and rendered visible in one decorous key. The worst that can be said of it is that its suavity inclines to mawkishness, and that its quietism borders upon sleepiness. We find it difficult not to accuse him of affectation. At the same time we are forced to allow that what he did, and what he refrained from doing, was determined by a purpose. A fresco of the Adoration of the Shepherds, and a picture of S. Sebastian in the Pinacoteca, where the archer on the right hand is drawn in a natural attitude with force and truth, show well enough what Perugino could do when he chose.

The best way of explaining his conventionality, in which the supreme power of a master is always verging on the facile trick of a mannerist, is to suppose that the people of Perugia and the Umbrian highlands imposed on him this narrow mode of treatment. We may presume that he was always receiving orders for pictures to be executed in his well-known manner. Celestial insipidity in art was the fashion in that Umbria

119

which the Baglioni and the Popes laid waste from time to time with fire and sword.^[59]

[59] It will not be forgotten by students of Italian history that Umbria was the cradle of the *Battuti* or Flagellants, who overspread Italy in the fourteenth century, and to whose devotion were due the *Laude*, or popular hymns of the religious confraternities, which in course of time produced the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* of fifteenth-century Florentine literature. Umbria, and especially Perugia and Assisi, seems to have been inventive in piety between 1200 and 1400.

Therefore the painter who had made his reputation by placing devout young faces upon twisted necks, with a back-ground of limpid twilight and calm landscape, was forced by the fervour of his patrons, and his own desire for money, to perpetuate pious prettinesses long after he had ceased to feel them. It is just this widespread popularity of a master unrivalled in one line of devotional sentimentalism which makes the contrast between Perugino and the Baglioni family so striking.

The Baglioni first came into notice during the wars they carried on with the Oddi of Perugia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.^[60] This was one of those duels to the death, like that of the Visconti with the Torrensi of Milan, on which the fate of so many Italian cities in the middle ages hung. The nobles fought; the townsfolk assisted like a Greek chorus, sharing the passions of the actors, but contributing little to the catastrophe. The piazza was the theatre on which the tragedy was played. In this contest the Baglioni proved the stronger, and began to sway the state of Perugia after the irregular fashion of Italian despots. They had no legal right over the city, no hereditary magistracy, no title of princely authority.^[61] The Church was reckoned the supreme administrator of the Perugian commonwealth. But in reality no man could set foot on the Umbrian plain without permission from the Baglioni. They elected the officers of state. The lives and goods of the citizens were at their discretion. When a Papal legate showed his face, they made the town too hot to hold him. One of Innocent VIII.'s nephews had been murdered by them.^[62] Another cardinal had shut himself up in a box, and sneaked on mule-back like a bale of merchandise through the gates to escape their fury. It was in vain that from time to time the people rose against them, massacring Pandolfo Baglioni on the public square in 1393, and joining with Ridolfo and Braccio of the dominant house to assassinate another Pandolfo with his son Niccolo in 1460. The more they were cut down, the more they flourished. The wealth they derived from their lordships in the duchy of Spoleto and the Umbrian hill-cities, and the treasures they accumulated in the service of the Italian republics, made them omnipotent in their native town. There they built tall houses on the site which Paul III. chose afterwards for his *castello*, and which is now an open place above the Porta San Carlo. From the balconies and turrets of these palaces, swarming with their *bravi*, they surveyed the splendid land that felt their force—a land which, even in midsummer, from sunrise to sunset keeps the light of day upon its up-turned face. And from this eyrie they issued forth to prey upon the plain, or to take their lust of love or blood within the city streets. The Baglioni spent but short time in the amusements of peace. From father to son they were warriors, and we have records of few Italian houses, except perhaps the Malatesti of Rimini, who equalled them in hardihood and fierceness. Especially were they noted for the remorseless *vendette* which they carried on among themselves, cousin tracking cousin to death with the ferocity and craft of sleuthhounds. Had they restrained these fratricidal passions, they might, perhaps, by following some common policy, like that of the Medici in Florence or the Bentivogli in Bologna, have successfully resisted the Papal authority and secured dynastic sovereignty.

[60] The Baglioni persecuted their rivals with persistent fury to the very last. Matarazzo tells how Morgante Baglioni gave a death-wound to his nephew, the young Carlo de li Oddi, in 1501: 'Dielli una ferita nella formosa faccia: el quale era in aspetto vago e bello giovane d' anni 23 o 24, *al quale uscivano e bionde tresse sotto la bella armadura.*' The same night his kinsman Pompeo was murdered in prison with this last lament upon his lips: 'O infelice casa degli Oddi, quale aveste tanta, fama di conduttieri, capitanie, cavaliere, speron d' oro, protonotarie, e abbate; et in uno solo tempo aveste homine quarantadue; e oggie, per me quale son ultimo, se asconde el nome de la magnifica e famosa casa degli Oddi, che mai al mondo non serà piu nominata' (p. 175).

[61] The Baglioni were lords of Spello, Bettona, Montalera, and other Umbrian burghs, but never of Perugia. Perugia had a civic

constitution similar to that of Florence and other Guelf towns under the protection of the Holy See. The power of the eminent house was based only on wealth and prestige.

[62] See Matarazzo, p. 38. It is here that he relates the covert threat addressed by Guido Baglioni to Alexander VI., who was seeking to inveigle him into his clutches.

It is not until 1495 that the history of the Baglioni becomes dramatic, possibly because till then they lacked the pen of Matarazzo.^[63] But from this year forward to their final extinction, every detail of their doings has a picturesque and awful interest. Domestic furies, like the revel described by Cassandra above the palace of Mycenæ, seem to take possession of the fated house; and the doom which has fallen on them is worked out with pitiless exactitude to the last generation. In 1495 the heads of the Casa Baglioni were two brothers, Guido and Ridolfo, who had a numerous progeny of heroic sons. From Guido sprang Astorre, Adriano, called for his great strength Morgante,^[64] Gismondo, Marcantonio, and Gentile. Ridolfo owned Troilo, Gianpaolo, and Simonetto. The first glimpse we get of these young athletes in Matarazzo's chronicle is on the occasion of a sudden assault upon Perugia, made by the Oddi and the exiles of their faction in September 1495. The foes of the Baglioni entered the gates, and began breaking the iron chains, *serragli*, which barred the streets against advancing cavalry. None of the noble house were on the alert except young Simonetto, a lad of eighteen, fierce and cruel, who had not yet begun to shave his chin.^[65] In spite of all dissuasion, he rushed forth alone, bareheaded, in his shirt, with a sword in his right hand and a buckler on his arm, and fought against a squadron. There at the barrier of the piazza he kept his foes at bay, smiting men-at-arms to the ground with the sweep of his tremendous sword, and receiving on his gentle body twenty-two cruel wounds. While thus at fearful odds, the noble Astorre mounted his charger and joined him. Upon his helmet flashed the falcon of the Baglioni with the dragon's tail that swept behind. Bidding Simonetto tend his wounds, he in his turn held the square.

122

[63] His chronicle is a masterpiece of naïve, unstudied narrative. Few documents are so important for the student of the sixteenth century in Italy. Whether it be really the work of Matarazzo or Maturanzio, the distinguished humanist, is more than doubtful. The writer seems to me as yet unspoiled by classic studies and the pedantries of imitation.

[64] This name, it may be incidentally mentioned, proves the widespread popularity of Pulci's poem, the *Morgante Maggiore*.

[65] 'Era costui al presente di anni 18 o 19; ancora non se radeva barba; e mostrava tanta forza e tanto ardire, e era tanto adatto nel fatto d' arme, che era gran maraveglia; e iostrava cum tanta gentilezza e gagliardia, che homo del mondo non l' aria mai creso; et aria dato con la punta de la lancia in nel fondo d' uno bicchiere da la mattina a la sera,' &c. (p. 50).

Listen to Matarazzo's description of the scene; it is as good as any piece of the 'Mort Arthur':—'According to the report of one who told me what he had seen with his own eyes, never did anvil take so many blows as he upon his person and his steed; and they all kept striking at his lordship in such crowds that the one prevented the other. And so many lances, partisans, and crossbow quarries, and other weapons, made upon his body a most mighty din, that above every other noise and shout was heard the thud of those great strokes. But he, like one who had the mastery of war, set his charger where the press was thickest, jostling now one, and now another; so that he ever kept at least ten men of his foes stretched on the ground beneath his horse's hoofs; which horse was a most fierce beast, and gave his enemies what trouble he best could. And now that gentle lord was all fordone with sweat and toil, he and his charger; and so weary were they that scarcely could they any longer breathe.'

123

Soon after, the Baglioni mustered in force. One by one their heroes rushed from the palaces. The enemy were driven back with slaughter; and a war ensued, which made the fair land between Assisi and Perugia a wilderness for many months. It must not be forgotten that, at the time of these great feats of Simonetto and Astorre, young Raphael was painting in the studio of Perugino. What the whole city witnessed with astonishment and admiration, he, the keenly sensitive artist-boy, treasured in his memory. Therefore in the S. George of the Louvre, and in the mounted horseman trampling upon Heliodorus in the Stanze of the Vatican, victorious Astorre lives for ever, immortalised in all his

splendour by the painter's art. The grinning griffin on the helmet, the resistless frown upon the forehead of the beardless knight, the terrible right arm, and the ferocious steed,—all are there as Raphael saw and wrote them on his brain. One characteristic of the Baglioni, as might be plentifully illustrated from their annalist, was their eminent beauty, which inspired beholders with an enthusiasm and a love they were far from deserving by their virtues. It is this, in combination with their personal heroism, which gives a peculiarly dramatic interest to their doings, and makes the chronicle of Matarazzo more fascinating than a novel. He seems unable to write about them without using the language of an adoring lover.

124

In the affair of 1495 the Baglioni were at amity among themselves. When they next appear upon the scene, they are engaged in deadly feud. Cousin has set his hand to the throat of cousin, and the two heroes of the piazza are destined to be slain by foulest treachery of their own kin. It must be premised that besides the sons of Guido and Ridolfo already named, the great house counted among its most distinguished members a young Grifone, or Grifonetto, the son of Grifone and Atalanta Baglioni. Both his father and grandfather had died violent deaths in the prime of their youth; Galeotto, the father of Atalanta, by poison, and Grifone by the knife at Ponte Ricciolo in 1477. Atalanta was left a young widow with one only son, this Grifonetto, whom Matarazzo calls 'un altro Ganimede,' and who combined the wealth of two chief branches of the Baglioni. In 1500, when the events about to be related took place, he was quite a youth. Brave, rich, handsome, and married to a young wife, Zenobia Sforza, he was the admiration of Perugia. He and his wife loved each other dearly; and how, indeed, could it be otherwise, since 'l' uno e l' altro sembravano doi angeli di Paradiso?' At the same time he had fallen into the hands of bad and desperate counsellors. A bastard of the house, Filippo da Braccio, his half-uncle, was always at his side, instructing him not only in the accomplishments of chivalry, but also in wild ways that brought his name into disrepute. Another of his familiars was Carlo Barciglia Baglioni, an unquiet spirit, who longed for more power than his poverty and comparative obscurity allowed. With them associated Jeronimo della Penna, a veritable ruffian, contaminated from his earliest youth with every form of lust and violence, and capable of any crime.^[66]

125

These three companions, instigated partly by the Lord of Camerino and partly by their own cupidity, conceived a scheme for massacring the families of Guido and Ridolfo at one blow. As a consequence of this wholesale murder, Perugia would be at their discretion. Seeing of what use Grifonetto by his wealth and name might be to them, they did all they could to persuade him to join their conjuration. It would appear that the bait first offered him was the sovereignty of the city, but that he was at last gained over by being made to believe that his wife Zenobia had carried on an intrigue with Gianpaolo Baglioni. The dissolute morals of the family gave plausibility to an infernal trick which worked upon the jealousy of Grifonetto. Thirsting for revenge, he consented to the scheme. The conspirators were further fortified by the accession of Jeronimo della Staffa, and three members of the House of Corgna. It is noticeable that out of the whole number only two, Bernardo da Corgna and Filippo da Braccio, were above the age of thirty. Of the rest, few had reached twenty-five. At so early an age were the men of those times adepts in violence and treason. The execution of the plot was fixed for the wedding festivities of Astorre Baglioni with Lavinia, the daughter of Giovanni Colonna and Giustina Orsini. At that time the whole Baglioni family were to be assembled in Perugia, with the single exception of Marcantonio, who was taking baths at Naples for his health. It was known that the members of the noble house, nearly all of them condottieri by trade, and eminent for their great strength and skill in arms, took few precautions for their safety. They occupied several houses close together between the Porta San Carlo and the Porta Eburnea, set no regular guard over their sleeping chambers, and trusted to their personal bravery, and to the fidelity of their attendants.^[67] It was thought that they might be assassinated in their beds. The wedding festivities began upon the 28th of July, and great is the particularity with which Matarazzo describes the doings of each successive day—processions, jousts, triumphal arches, banquets, balls, and pageants. The night of the 14th of August was finally set apart for the consummation of *el gran tradimento*: it is thus that Matarazzo always alludes to the crime of Grifonetto with a solemnity of reiteration that is most impressive. A heavy stone let fall into the courtyard of Guido Baglioni's palace was to be the signal: each conspirator was then to run to the sleeping chamber of his appointed prey. Two of the principals and fifteen bravi were told off to each victim: rams and crowbars were prepared to force the doors,

126

if needful. All happened as had been anticipated. The crash of the falling stone was heard. The conspirators rushed to the scene of operations. Astorre, who was sleeping in the house of his traitorous cousin Grifonetto, was slain in the arms of his young bride, crying, as he vainly struggled, 'Misero Astorre che more come poltrone!' Simonetto, who lay that night with a lad called Paolo he greatly loved, flew to arms, exclaiming to his brother, 'Non dubitare Gismondo, mio fratello!' He too was soon despatched, together with his bedfellow. Filippo da Braccio, after killing him, tore from a great wound in his side the still quivering heart, into which he drove his teeth with savage fury. Old Guido died groaning, 'Ora è gionto il ponto mio;' and Gismondo's throat was cut while he lay holding back his face that he might be spared the sight of his own massacre. The corpses of Astorre and Simonetto were stripped and thrown out naked into the streets. Men gathered round and marvelled to see such heroic forms, with faces so proud and fierce even in death. In especial the foreign students likened them to ancient Romans.^[68] But on their fingers were rings, and these the ruffians of the place would fain have hacked off with their knives. From this indignity the noble limbs were spared; then the dead Baglioni were hurriedly consigned to an unhonoured tomb. Meanwhile the rest of the intended victims managed to escape. Gianpaolo, assailed by Grifonetto and Gianfrancesco della Corgna, took refuge with his squire and bedfellow, Maraglia, upon a staircase leading from his room. While the squire held the passage with his pike against the foe, Gianpaolo effected his flight over neighbouring house-roofs. He crept into the attic of some foreign students, who, trembling with terror, gave him food and shelter, clad him in a scholar's gown, and helped him to fly in this disguise from the gates at dawn. He then joined his brother Troilo at Marsciano, whence he returned without delay to punish the traitors. At the same time Grifonetto's mother, Atalanta, taking with her his wife Zenobia and the two young sons of Gianpaolo, Malatesta and Orazio, afterwards so celebrated in Italian history for their great feats of arms and their crimes, fled to her country-house at Landona. Grifonetto in vain sought to see her there. She drove him from her presence with curses for the treason and the fratricide that he had planned. It is very characteristic of these wild natures, framed of fierce instincts and discordant passions, that his mother's curse weighed like lead upon the unfortunate young man. Next day, when Gianpaolo returned to try the luck of arms, Grifonetto, deserted by the companions of his crime and paralysed by the sense of his guilt, went out alone to meet him on the public place. The semi-failure of their scheme had terrified the conspirators: the horrors of that night of blood unnerved them. All had fled except the next victim of the feud. Putting his sword to the youth's throat, Gianpaolo looked into his eyes and said, 'Art thou here, Grifonetto? Go with God's peace: I will not slay thee, nor plunge my hand in my own blood, as thou hast done in thine.' Then he turned and left the lad to be hacked in pieces by his guard. The untranslatable words which Matarazzo uses to describe his death are touching from the strong impression they convey of Grifonetto's goodness: 'Qui ebbe sua signoria sopra sua nobile persona tante ferite che suoi membra leggiadre stese in terra.'^[69] None but Greeks felt the charm of personal beauty thus. But while Grifonetto was breathing out his life upon the pavement of the piazza, his mother Atalanta and his wife Zenobia came to greet him through the awe-struck city. As they approached, all men fell aside and slunk away before their grief. None would seem to have had a share in Grifonetto's murder. Then Atalanta knelt by her dying son, and ceased from wailing, and prayed and exhorted him to pardon those who had caused his death. It appears that Grifonetto was too weak to speak, but that he made a signal of assent, and received his mother's blessing at the last: 'E allora pose el nobil giovenetto la dextra mano a la sua giovenile matre strengendo de sua matre la bianca mano; e poi incontinentemente spirò l' anima dal formoso corpo, e passò cum infinite benedizioni de sua matre in cambio de la maledictione che prima li aveva date.'^[70] Here again the style of Matarazzo, tender and full of tears, conveys the keenest sense of the pathos of beauty and of youth in death and sorrow. He has forgotten *el gran tradimento*. He only remembers how comely Grifonetto was, how noble, how frank and spirited, how strong in war, how sprightly in his pleasures and his loves. And he sees the still young mother, delicate and nobly born, leaning over the athletic body of her bleeding son. This scene, which is perhaps a genuine instance of what we may call the neo-Hellenism of the Renaissance, finds its parallel in the 'Phoenissæ' of Euripides. Jocasta and Antigone have gone forth to the battlefield and found the brothers Polynices and Eteocles drenched in blood:—

127

128

129

Heaving a heavy breath, King Eteocles heard
His mother, and stretched forth a cold damp hand
On hers, and nothing said, but with his eyes
Spake to her by his tears, showing kind thoughts
In symbols.

[66] Matarazzo's description of the ruffians who surrounded Grifonetto (pp. 104, 105, 113) would suit Webster's Flamineo or Bosola. In one place he likens Filippo to Achitophel and Grifonetto to Absalom. Villano Villani, quoted by Fabretti (vol. iii. p. 125), relates the street adventures of this clique. It is a curious picture of the pranks of an Italian princeling in the fifteenth century.

[67] Jacobo Antiquari, the secretary of Lodovico Sforza, in a curious letter, which gives an account of the massacre, says that he had often reproved the Baglioni for 'sleeping in their beds without any guard or watch, so that they might easily be overcome by enemies.'

[68] 'Quelli che li vidino, e maxime li forastiere studiante assimigliavano el magnifico Messer Astorre così morto ad un antico Romano, perchè prima era unanissimo; tanto sua figura era degna e magna,' &c. This is a touch exquisitely illustrative of the Renaissance enthusiasm for classic culture.

[69] Here his lordship received upon his noble person so many wounds that he stretched his graceful limbs upon the earth.

[70] 'And then the noble stripling stretched his right hand to his youthful mother, pressing the white hand of his mother; and afterwards forthwith he breathed his soul forth from his beauteous body, and died with numberless blessings of his mother instead of the curses she had given him before.'

It was Atalanta, we may remember, who commissioned Raphael to paint the so-called Borghese Entombment. Did she perhaps feel, as she withdrew from the piazza, soaking with young Grifonetto's blood,^[71] that she too had some portion in the sorrow of that mother who had wept for Christ? The memory of the dreadful morning must have remained with her through life, and long communion with our Lady of Sorrows may have sanctified the grief that had so bitter and so shameful a root of sin.

130

[71] See Matarazzo, p. 134, for this detail.

After the death of Grifonetto, and the flight of the conspirators, Gianpaolo took possession of Perugia. All who were suspected of complicity in the treason were massacred upon the piazza and in the Cathedral. At the expense of more than a hundred murders, the chief of the Baglioni found himself master of the city on the 17th of July. First he caused the Cathedral to be washed with wine and reconsecrated. Then he decorated the Palazzo with the heads of the traitors and with their portraits in fresco, painted hanging head downwards, as was the fashion in Italy.^[72] Next he established himself in what remained of the palaces of his kindred, hanging the saloons with black, and arraying his retainers in the deepest mourning. Sad indeed was now the aspect of Perugia. Helpless and comparatively uninterested, the citizens had been spectators of these bloody broils. They were now bound to share the desolation of their masters. Matarazzo's description of the mournful palace and the silent town, and of the return of Marcantonio from Naples, presents a picture striking for its vividness.^[73] In the true style of the Baglioni, Marcantonio sought to vent his sorrow not so much in tears as by new violence. He prepared and lighted torches, meaning to burn the whole quarter of Sant' Angelo; and from this design he was with difficulty dissuaded by his brother. To such mad freaks of rage and passion were the inhabitants of a mediæval town in Italy exposed! They make us understand the *ordinanze di giustizia*, by which to be a noble was a crime in Florence.

131

[72] See Varchi (ed. Lemonnier, 1857), vol. ii. p. 265, vol. iii. pp. 224, 652, and Corio (Venice, 1554), p. 326, for instances of *dipinti per traditori*.

[73] P. 142. 'Pareva ogni cosa oscura e lacrimosa: tutte loro servitore piangevano; et le camere de lo resto de li magnifici Baglioni, e sale, e ogni cosa erano tutte intorno cum pagnie negre. E per la città non era più alcuno che sonasse nè cantasse; e poco si rideva,' &c.

From this time forward the whole history of the Baglioni family is one of crime and bloodshed. A curse had fallen on the house, and to the last of its members the penalty was paid. Gianpaolo himself acquired the

highest reputation throughout Italy for his courage and sagacity both as a general and a governor.^[74] It was he who held Julius II. at his discretion in 1506, and was sneered at by Machiavelli for not consummating his enormities by killing the warlike Pope.^[75] He again, after joining the diet of La Magione against Cesare Borgia, escaped by his acumen the massacre of Sinigaglia, which overthrew the other conspirators. But his name was no less famous for unbridled lust and deeds of violence. He boasted that his son Constantino was a true Baglioni, since he was his sister's child. He once told Machiavelli that he had it in his mind to murder four citizens of Perugia, his enemies. He looked calmly on while his kinsmen Eusebio and Taddeo Baglioni, who had been accused of treason, were hewn to pieces by his guard. His wife, Ippolita de' Conti, was poignarded in her Roman farm; on hearing the news, he ordered a festival in which he was engaged to proceed with redoubled merriment.^[76] At last the time came for him to die by fraud and violence. Leo X., anxious to remove so powerful a rival from Perugia, lured him in 1520 to Rome under the false protection of a papal safe-conduct. After a short imprisonment he had him beheaded in the Castle of S. Angelo. It was thought that Gentile, his first cousin, sometime Bishop of Orvieto, but afterwards the father of two sons in wedlock with Giulia Vitelli—such was the discipline of the Church at this epoch—had contributed to the capture of Gianpaolo, and had exulted in his execution.^[77] If so, he paid dear for his treachery; for Orazio Baglioni, the second son of Gianpaolo and captain of the Church under Clement VII., had him murdered in 1527, together with his two nephews Fileno and Annibale.^[78] This Orazio was one of the most bloodthirsty of the whole brood. Not satisfied with the assassination of Gentile, he stabbed Galeotto, the son of Grifonetto, with his own hand in the same year.^[79] Afterwards he died in the kingdom of Naples while leading the Black Bands in the disastrous war which followed the sack of Rome. He left no son. Malatesta, his elder brother, became one of the most celebrated generals of the age, holding the batons of the Venetian and Florentine republics, and managing to maintain his ascendancy in Perugia in spite of the persistent opposition of successive popes. But his name is best known in history for one of the greatest public crimes—a crime which must be ranked with that of Marshal Bazaine. Intrusted with the defence of Florence during the siege of 1530, he sold the city to his enemy, Pope Clement, receiving for the price of this infamy certain privileges and immunities which fortified his hold upon Perugia for a season. All Italy was ringing with the great deeds of the Florentines, who for the sake of their liberty transformed themselves from merchants into soldiers, and withstood the united powers of Pope and Emperor alone. Meanwhile Malatesta, whose trade was war, and who was being largely paid for his services by the beleaguered city, contrived by means of diplomatic procrastination, secret communication with the enemy, and all the arts that could intimidate an army of recruits, to push affairs to a point at which Florence was forced to capitulate without inflicting the last desperate glorious blow she longed to deal her enemies. The universal voice of Italy condemned him. When Matteo Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, heard what he had done, he cried before the Pregadi in conclave, 'He has sold that people and that city, and the blood of those poor citizens ounce by ounce, and has donned the cap of the biggest traitor in the world.'^[80] Consumed with shame, corroded by an infamous disease, and mistrustful of Clement, to whom he had sold his honour, Malatesta retired to Perugia, and died in 1531. He left one son, Ridolfo, who was unable to maintain himself in the lordship of his native city. After killing the Papal legate, Cinzio Filonardi, in 1534, he was dislodged four years afterwards, when Paul III. took final possession of the place as an appanage of the Church, razed the houses of the Baglioni to the ground, and built upon their site the Rocca Paolina. This fortress bore an inscription: 'Ad coercendam Perusinorum audaciam.' The city was given over to the rapacity of the abominable Pier Luigi Farnese, and so bad was this tyranny of priests and bastards, that, strange to say, the Perugians regretted the troublous times of the Baglioni. Malatesta in dying had exclaimed, 'Help me, if you can; since after me you will be set to draw the cart like oxen.' Frolieri, relating the speech, adds, 'And this has been fulfilled to the last letter, for all have borne not only the yoke but the burden and the goad.' Ridolfo Baglioni and his cousin Braccio, the eldest son of Grifonetto, were both captains of Florence. The one died in battle in 1554, the other in 1559. Thus ended the illustrious family. They are now represented by descendants from females, and by contadini who preserve their name and boast a pedigree of which they have no records.

132

133

134

[74] See Frolieri, p. 437, for a very curious account of his character.

[75] Fabretti (vol. iii. pp. 193-202. and notes) discusses this circumstance in detail. Machiavelli's critique runs thus (*Discorsi*, lib. i. cap. 27): 'Nè si poteva credere che si fosse astenuto o per bontà, o per coscienza che lo ritenesse; perchè in un petto d'un uomo facinoroso, che si teneva la sorella, ch' aveva morti i cugini e i nipotí per regnare, non poteva scendere alcuno pietoso rispetto: ma si conchiuse che gli uomini non sanno essere onorevolmente tristi, o perfettamente buoni,' &c.

[76] See Fabretti, vol. iii. p. 230. He is an authority for the details of Gianpaolo's life. The circumstance alluded to above justifies the terrible opening scene in Shelley's tragedy, *The Cenci*.

[77] Fabretti, vol. iii. p. 230, vol. iv. p. 10.

[78] See Varchi, *Storie Florentine*, vol. i. p. 224.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Fabretti, vol. iv. p. 206.

The history of the Baglioni needs no commentary. They were not worse than other Italian nobles, who by their passions and their parties destroyed the peace of the city they infested. It is with an odd mixture of admiration and discontent that the chroniclers of Perugia allude to their ascendancy. Matarazzo, who certainly cannot be accused of hostility to the great house, describes the miseries of his country under their bad government in piteous terms:^[81] 'As I wish not to swerve from the pure truth, I say that from the day the Oddi were expelled, our city went from bad to worse. All the young men followed the trade of arms. Their lives were disorderly; and every day divers excesses were divulged, and the city had lost all reason and justice. Every man administered right unto himself, *propriâ autoritate et manu regiâ*. Meanwhile the Pope sent many legates, if so be the city could be brought to order: but all who came returned in dread of being hewn in pieces; for they threatened to throw some from the windows of the palace, so that no cardinal or other legate durst approach Perugia, unless he were a friend of the Baglioni. And the city was brought to such misery, that the most wrongous men were most prized; and those who had slain two or three men walked as they listed through the palace, and went with sword or poignard to speak to the podestà and other magistrates. Moreover, every man of worth was down-trodden by bravi whom the nobles favoured; nor could a citizen call his property his own. The nobles robbed first one and then another of goods and land. All offices were sold or else suppressed; and taxes and extortions were so grievous that every one cried out. And if a man were in prison for his head, he had no reason to fear death, provided he had some interest with a noble.' Yet the same Matarazzo in another place finds it in his heart to say:^[82] 'Though the city suffered great pains for these nobles, yet the illustrious house of Baglioni brought her honour throughout Italy, by reason of the great dignity and splendour of that house, and of their pomp and name. Wherefore through them our city was often set above the rest, and notably above the commonwealths of Florence and Siena.' Pride feels no pain. The gratified vanity of the Perugian burgher, proud to see his town preferred before its neighbours, blinds the annalist to all the violence and villany of the magnificent Casa Baglioni. So strong was the *esprit de ville* which through successive centuries and amid all vicissitudes of politics divided the Italians against themselves, and proved an insuperable obstacle to unity.

[81] Pp. 102, 103.

[82] P. 139.

After reading the chronicle of Matarazzo at Perugia through one winter day, I left the inn and walked at sunset to the blood-bedabbled cathedral square; for still those steps and pavements to my strained imagination seemed reeking with the outpoured blood of Baglioni; and on the ragged stonework of San Lorenzo red patches slanted from the dying day. Then by one of those strange freaks of the brain to which we are all subject, for a moment I lost sight of untidy Gothic façades and gaunt unfinished church walls; and as I walked, I was in the Close of Salisbury on a perfumed summer afternoon. The drowsy scent of lime-flowers and mignonette, the cawing of elm-cradled rooks, the hum of bees above, the velvet touch of smooth-shorn grass, and the breathless shadow of motionless green boughs made up one potent and absorbing mood of the charmed senses. Far overhead soared the calm grey spire into the infinite air, and the perfection of accomplished beauty slept beneath in those long lines of nave and choir and transepts. It was but a momentary dream, a thought that burned itself upon a fancy overtaxed

by passionate images. Once more the puppet-scene of the brain was shifted; once more I saw the bleak bare flags of the Perugian piazza, the forlorn front of the Duomo, the bronze griffin, and Pisano's fountain, with here and there a flake of that tumultuous fire which the Italian sunset sheds. Who shall adequately compare the two pictures? Which shall we prefer—the Close of Salisbury, with its sleepy bells and cushioned ease of immemorial Deans—or this poor threadbare passion of Perugia, where every stone is stained with blood, and where genius in painters and scholars and prophets and ecstatic lovers has throbbled itself away to nothingness? It would be foolish to seek an answer to this question, idle to institute a comparison, for instance, between those tall young men with their broad winter cloaks who remind me of Grifonetto, and the vergers pottering in search of shillings along the gravel paths of Salisbury. It is more rational, perhaps, to reflect of what strange stuff our souls are made in this age of the world, when æsthetic pleasures, full, genuine, and satisfying, can be communicated alike by Perugia with its fascination of a dead irrevocable dramatic past, and Salisbury, which finds the artistic climax of its English comfort in the 'Angel in the House.' From Matarazzo, smitten with a Greek love for the beautiful Grifonetto, to Mr. Patmore, is a wide step.

On the road from Siena to Rome, halfway between Ficulle and Viterbo, is the town of Orvieto. Travellers often pass it in the night-time. Few stop there, for the place is old and dirty, and its inns are said to be indifferent. But none who see it even from a distance can fail to be struck with its imposing aspect, as it rises from the level plain upon that mass of rock among the Apennines.

Orvieto is built upon the first of those huge volcanic blocks which are found like fossils embedded in the more recent geological formations of Central Italy, and which stretch in an irregular but unbroken line to the Campagna of Rome. Many of them, like that on which Civita Castellana is perched, are surrounded by rifts and chasms and ravines and fosses, strangely furrowed and twisted by the force of fiery convulsions. But their advanced guard, Orvieto, stands up definite and solid, an almost perfect cube, with walls precipitous to north and south and east, but slightly sloping to the westward. At its foot rolls the Paglia, one of those barren streams which swell in winter with the snows and rains of the Apennines, but which in summer-time shrink up, and leave bare beds of sand and pestilential canebreaks to stretch irregularly round their dwindled waters.

The weary flatness and utter desolation of this valley present a sinister contrast to the broad line of the Apennines, swelling tier on tier, from their oak-girdled basements set with villages and towers, up to the snow and cloud that crown their topmost crags. The time to see this landscape is at sunrise; and the traveller should take his stand upon the rising ground over which the Roman road is carried from the town—the point, in fact, which Turner has selected for his vague and misty sketch of Orvieto in our Gallery. Thence he will command the whole space of the plain, the Apennines, and the river creeping in a straight line at the base; while the sun, rising to his right, will slant along the mountain flanks, and gild the leaden stream, and flood the castled crags of Orvieto with a haze of light. From the centre of this glory stand out in bold relief old bastions built upon the solid tufa, vast gaping gateways black in shadow, towers of churches shooting up above a medley of deep-corniced tall Italian houses, and, amid them all, the marble front of the Cathedral, calm and solemn in its unfamiliar Gothic state. Down to the valley from these heights there is a sudden fall; and we wonder how the few spare olive-trees that grow there can support existence on the steep slope of the cliff.

138

Our mind, in looking at this landscape, is carried by the force of old association to Jerusalem. We could fancy ourselves to be standing on Mount Olivet, with the valley of Jehoshaphat between us and the Sacred City. As we approach the town, the difficulty of scaling its crags seems insurmountable. The road, though carried skilfully along each easy slope or ledge of quarried rock, still winds so much that nearly an hour is spent in the ascent. Those who can walk should take a footpath, and enter Orvieto by the mediæval road, up which many a Pope, flying from rebellious subjects or foreign enemies, has hurried on his mule.^[83]

[83] Clement VII., for example, escaped from Rome disguised as a gardener after the sack in 1527, and, to quote the words of Varchi (St. Flor., v. 17), 'Entrò agli otto di dicembre a due ore di notte in Orvieto, terra di sito fortissimo, per lo essere ella sopra uno scoglio pieno di tufi posta, d' ogni intorno scosceso e dirupato,' &c.

To unaccustomed eyes there is something forbidding and terrible about the dark and cindery appearance of volcanic tufa. Where it is broken, the hard and gritty edges leave little space for vegetation; while at intervals the surface spreads so smooth and straight that one might take it for solid masonry erected by the architect of Pandemonium. Rubbish and shattered bits of earthenware and ashes, thrown from the city walls, cling to every ledge and encumber the broken pavement of the footway. Then as we rise, the castle battlements above appear more menacing, toppling upon the rough edge of the crag, and guarding each turn of the road with jealous loopholes or beetle-browed machicolations, until at last the gateway and portcullis are in view.

139

On first entering Orvieto, one's heart fails to find so terrible a desolation, so squalid a solitude, and so vast a difference between the present and the past, between the beauty of surrounding nature and the misery of this home of men. A long space of unoccupied ground intervenes between the walls and the hovels which skirt the modern town. This, in the times of its splendour, may have served for oliveyards, vineyards, and pasturage, in case of siege. There are still some faint

traces of dead gardens left upon its arid wilderness, among the ruins of a castellated palace, decorated with the cross-keys and tiara of an unremembered pope. But now it lies a mere tract of scorched grass, insufferably hot and dry and sandy, intersected by dirty paths, and covered with the loathliest offal of a foul Italian town. Should you cross this ground at mid-day, under the blinding sun, when no living thing, except perhaps some poisonous reptile, is about, you would declare that Orvieto had been stricken for its sins by Heaven. Your mind would dwell mechanically on all that you have read of Papal crimes, of fratricidal wars, of Pagan abominations in the high places of the Church, of tempestuous passions and refined iniquity—of everything, in fact, which renders Italy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance dark and ominous amid the splendours of her art and civilisation. This is the natural result; this shrunken and squalid old age of poverty and self-abandonment is the end of that strong, prodigal, and vicious youth. Who shall restore vigour to these dead bones? we cry. If Italy is to live again, she must quit her ruined palace towers to build fresh dwellings elsewhere. Filth, lust, rapacity, treason, godlessness, and violence have made their habitation here; ghosts haunt these ruins; these streets still smell of blood and echo to the cries of injured innocence; life cannot be pure, or calm, or healthy, where this curse has settled.

140

Occupied with such reflections, we reach the streets of Orvieto. They are not very different from those of most Italian villages, except that there is little gaiety about them. Like Assisi or Siena, Orvieto is too large for its population, and merriment flows better from close crowding than from spacious accommodation. Very dark, and big, and dirty, and deserted, is the judgment we pronounce upon the houses; very filthy and malodorous each passage; very long this central street; very few and sad and sullen the inhabitants; and where, we wonder, is the promised inn? In search of this one walks nearly through the city, until one enters the Piazza, where there is more liveliness. Here cafés may be found; soldiers, strong and sturdy, from the north, lounge at the corners; the shops present more show; and a huge hotel, not bad for such a place, and appropriately dedicated to the Belle Arti, standing in a courtyard of its own, receives the traveller weary with his climb. As soon as he has taken rooms, his first desire is to go forth and visit the Cathedral.

The great Duomo was erected at the end of the thirteenth century to commemorate the Miracle of Bolsena. The value of this miracle consisted in its establishing unmistakably the truth of transubstantiation. The story runs that a young Bohemian priest who doubted the dogma was performing the office of the mass in a church at Bolsena, when, at the moment of consecration, blood issued from five gashes in the wafer, which resembled the five wounds of Christ. The fact was evident to all the worshippers, who saw blood falling on the linen of the altar; and the young priest no longer doubted, but confessed the miracle, and journeyed straightway with the evidence thereof to Pope Urban IV. The Pope, who was then at Orvieto, came out with all his retinue to meet the convert and do honour to the magic-working relics. The circumstances of this miracle are well known to students of art through Raphael's celebrated fresco in the Stanze of the Vatican. And it will be remembered by the readers of ecclesiastical history that Urban had in 1264 promulgated by a bull the strict observance of the Corpus Christi festival in connection with his strong desire to re-establish the doctrine of Christ's presence in the elements. Nor was it without reason that, while seeking miraculous support for this dogma, he should have treated the affair of Bolsena so seriously as to celebrate it by the erection of one of the most splendid cathedrals in Italy; for the peace of the Church had recently been troubled by the reforming ardour of the Fraticelli and by the promulgation of Abbot Joachim's Eternal Gospel. This new evangelist had preached the doctrine of progression in religious faith, proclaiming a kingdom of the Spirit which should transcend the kingdom of the Son, even as the Christian dispensation had superseded the Jewish supremacy of the Father. Nor did he fail at the same time to attack the political and moral abuses of the Papacy, attributing its degradation to the want of vitality which pervaded the old Christian system, and calling on the clergy to lead more simple and regenerate lives, consistently with the spiritual doctrine which he had received by inspiration. The theories of Joachim were immature and crude; but they were among the first signs of that liberal effort after self-emancipation which eventually stirred all Europe at the time of the Renaissance. It was, therefore, the obvious policy of the Popes to crush so dangerous an opposition while they could; and by establishing the dogma of transubstantiation, they were enabled to satisfy the craving mysticism of the people, while they placed upon a firmer basis the cardinal support of their own religious power.

141

142

In pursuance of his plan, Urban sent for Lorenzo Maitani, the great Sienese architect, who gave designs for a Gothic church in the same style as the Cathedral of Siena, though projected on a smaller scale. These two churches, in spite of numerous shortcomings manifest to an eye trained in French or English architecture, are still the most perfect specimens of Pointed Gothic produced by the Italian genius. The Gotic Tedesco had never been received with favour in Italy. Remains of Roman architecture, then far more numerous and perfect than they are at present, controlled the minds of artists, and induced them to adopt the rounded rather than the pointed arch. Indeed, there would seem to be something peculiarly Northern in the spirit of Gothic architecture: its intricacies suit the gloom of Northern skies, its massive exterior is adapted to the severity of Northern weather, its vast windows catch the fleeting sunlight of the North, and the pinnacles and spires which constitute its beauty are better expressed in rugged stone than in the marbles of the South. Northern cathedrals do not depend for their effect upon the advantages of sunlight or picturesque situations. Many of them are built upon broad plains, over which for more than half the year hangs fog. But the cathedrals of Italy owe their charm to colour and brilliancy: their gilded sculpture and mosaics, the variegated marbles and shallow portals of their façades, the light ærial elegance of their campanili, are all adapted to the luminous atmosphere of a smiling land, where changing effects of natural beauty distract the attention from solidity of design and permanence of grandeur in the edifice itself.^[84]

143

[84] In considering why Gothic architecture took so little root in mediæval Italy, we must remember that the Italians had maintained an unbroken connection with Pagan Rome, and that many of their finest churches were basilicas appropriated to Christian rites. Add to this that the commerce of their cities, which first acquired wealth in the twelfth century, especially Pisa and Venice, kept them in communication with the Levant, where they admired the masterpieces of Byzantine architecture, and whence they imported Greek artists in mosaic and stonework. Against these external circumstances, taken in connection with the hereditary leanings of an essentially Latin race, and with the natural conditions of landscape and climate alluded to above, the influence of a few imported German architects could not have had sufficient power to effect a thorough metamorphosis of the national taste. For further treatment of this subject see my 'Fine Arts,' *Renaissance in Italy*, Part III. chap. ii.

The Cathedral of Orvieto will illustrate these remarks. Its design is very simple. It consists of a parallelogram, from which three chapels of equal size project, one at the east end, and one at the north and south. The windows are small and narrow, the columns round, and the roof displays none of that intricate groining we find in English churches. The beauty of the interior depends on surface decoration, on marble statues, woodwork, and fresco-paintings. Outside, there is the same simplicity of design, the same elaborated local ornament. The sides of the Cathedral are austere, their narrow windows cutting horizontal lines of black and white marble. But the façade is a triumph of decorative art. It is strictly what has often been described as a 'frontispiece;' for it bears no sincere relation to the construction of the building. The three gables rise high above the aisles. The pinnacles and parapets and turrets are stuck on to look agreeable. It is a screen such as might be completed or left unfinished at will by the architect. Finished as it is, the façade of Orvieto presents a wilderness of beauties. Its pure white marble has been mellowed by time to a rich golden hue, in which are set mosaics shining like gems or pictures of enamel. A statue stands on every pinnacle; each pillar has a different design; round some of them are woven wreaths of vine and ivy; acanthus leaves curl over the capitals, making nests for singing birds or Cupids; the doorways are a labyrinth of intricate designs, in which the utmost elegance of form is made more beautiful by incrustations of precious agates and Alexandrine glasswork. On every square inch of this wonderful façade have been lavished invention, skill, and precious material. But its chief interest centres in the sculptures executed by Giovanni and Andrea, sons and pupils of Nicola Pisano. The names of these three men mark an era in the history of art. They first rescued Italian sculpture from the grotesqueness of the Lombard and the wooden monotony of the Byzantine styles. Sculpture takes the lead of all the arts. And Nicola Pisano, before Cimabue, before Duccio, even before Dante, opened the gates of beauty, which for a thousand years had been shut up and overgrown with weeds. As Dante invoked the influence of Virgil when he began to write his mediæval poem, and made a heathen bard his hierophant in Christian mysteries, just so did Nicola Pisano draw inspiration from a Græco-Roman sarcophagus. He studied the

144

basrelief of Phædra and Hippolytus, which may still be seen upon the tomb of Countess Beatrice in the Campo Santo, and so learned by heart the beauty of its lines and the dignity expressed in its figures, that in all his subsequent works we trace the elevated tranquillity of Greek sculpture. This imitation never degenerated into servile copying; nor, on the other hand, did Nicola attain the perfect grace of an Athenian artist. He remained a truly mediæval carver, animated with a Christian instead of a Pagan spirit, but caring for the loveliness of form which art in the dark ages failed to realise.^[85]

145

[85] I am not inclined to reject the old legend mentioned above about Pisano's study of the antique. For a full discussion of the question see my 'Fine Arts,' *Renaissance in Italy*, Part III. chap. iii.

Whether it was Nicola or his scholars who designed the basreliefs at Orvieto is of little consequence. Vasari ascribes them to the father; but we know that he completed his pulpit at Pisa in 1230, and his death is supposed to have taken place fifteen years before the foundation of the cathedral. At any rate, they are imbued with his genius, and bear the strongest affinity to his sculptures at Pisa, Siena, and Bologna. To estimate the influence they exercised over the arts of sculpture and painting in Italy would be a difficult task. Duccio and Giotto studied here; Ghiberti closely followed them. Signorelli and Raphael made drawings from their compositions. And the spirit which pervades these sculptures may be traced in all succeeding works of art. It is not classic; it is modern, though embodied in a form of beauty modelled on the Greek.

The basreliefs are carved on four marble tablets placed beside the porches of the church, and corresponding in size and shape with the chief doorways. They represent the course of Biblical history, beginning with the creation of the world, and ending with the last judgment. If it were possible here to compare them in detail with the similar designs of Ghiberti, Michel Angelo, and Raphael, it might be shown that the Pisani established modes of treating sacred subjects from which those mighty masters never deviated, though each stamped upon them his peculiar genius, making them more perfect as time added to the power of art. It would also be not without interest to show that, in their primitive conceptions of the earliest events in history, the works of the Pisan artists closely resemble some sculptures executed on the walls of Northern cathedrals, as well as early mosaics in the South of Italy. We might have noticed how all the grotesque elements which appear in Nicola Pisano, and which may still be traced in Ghiberti, are entirely lost in Michel Angelo, how the supernatural is humanised, how the symbolical receives an actual expression, and how intellectual types are substituted for mere local and individual representations. For instance, the Pisani represent the Creator as a young man standing on the earth, with a benign and dignified expression, and attended by two ministering angels. He is the Christ of the Creed, 'by whom all things were made.' In Ghiberti we find an older man, sometimes appearing in a whirlwind of clouds and attendant spirits, sometimes walking on the earth, but still far different in conception from the Creative Father of Michel Angelo. The latter is rather the Platonic Demiurgus than the Mosaic God. By every line and feature of his face and flowing hair, by each movement of his limbs, whether he ride on clouds between the waters and the firmament, or stand alone creating by a glance and by a motion of his hand Eve, the full-formed and conscious woman, he is proclaimed the Maker who from all eternity has held the thought of the material universe within his mind. Raphael does not depart from this conception. The profound abstraction of Michel Angelo ruled his intellect, and received from his genius a form of perhaps greater grace. A similar growth from the germinal designs of the Pisani may be traced in many groups.

146

But we must not linger at the gate. Let us enter the cathedral and see some of the wonders it contains. Statues of gigantic size adorn the nave. Of these, the most beautiful are the work of Ippolito Scalza, an artist whom Orvieto claims with pride as one of her own sons. The long line of saints and apostles whom they represent conduct us to the high altar, surrounded by its shadowy frescoes, and gleaming with the work of carvers in marble and bronze and precious metals. But our steps are drawn toward the chapel of the south transept, where now a golden light from the autumnal sunset falls across a crowd of worshippers. From far and near the poor people are gathered. Most of them are women. They kneel upon the pavement and the benches, sunburnt faces from the vineyards and the canebrakes of the valley. The old look prematurely aged and withered—their wrinkled cheeks bound up in scarlet and orange-coloured kerchiefs, their skinny fingers fumbling on the rosary, and their mute lips moving in prayer. The younger women have great

147

listless eyes and large limbs used to labor. Some of them carry babies trussed up in tight swaddling-clothes. One kneels beside a dark-browed shepherd, on whose shoulder falls his shaggy hair; and little children play about, half hushed, half heedless of the place, among old men whose life has dwindled down into a ceaseless round of prayers. We wonder why this chapel, alone in the empty cathedral, is so crowded with worshippers. They surely are not turned towards that splendid Pietà of Scalza—a work in which the marble seems to live a cold, dead, shivering life. They do not heed Angelico's and Signorelli's frescoes on the roof and walls. The interchange of light and gloom upon the stalls and carved work of the canopies can scarcely rivet so intense a gaze. All eyes seem fixed upon a curtain of red silk above the altar. Votive pictures, and glass cases full of silver hearts, wax babies, hands and limbs of every kind, are hung round it. A bell rings. A jingling organ plays a little melody in triple time; and from the sacristy comes forth the priest. With much reverence, and with a show of preparation, he and the acolytes around him mount the altar steps and pull a string which draws the curtain. Behind the silken veil we behold Madonna and her child—a faint, old, ugly picture, blackened with the smoke and incense of five hundred years, a wonder-working image, cased in gold, and guarded from the common air by glass and draperies. Jewelled crowns are stuck upon the heads of the mother and the infant. In the efficacy of Madonna di San Brizio to ward off agues, to deliver from the pangs of childbirth or the fury of the storm, to keep the lover's troth and make the husband faithful to his home, these pious women of the marshes and the mountains put a simple trust.

148

While the priest sings, and the people pray to the dance-music of the organ, let us take a quiet seat unseen, and picture to our minds how the chapel looked when Angelico and Signorelli stood before its plastered walls, and thought the thoughts with which they covered them. Four centuries have gone by since those walls were white and even to their brushes; and now you scarce can see the golden aureoles of saints, the vast wings of the angels, and the flowing robes of prophets through the gloom. Angelico came first, in monk's dress, kneeling before he climbed the scaffold to paint the angry judge, the Virgin crowned, the white-robed army of the Martyrs, and the glorious company of the Apostles. These he placed upon the roof, expectant of the Judgment. Then he passed away, and Luca Signorelli, the rich man who 'lived splendidly and loved to dress himself in noble clothes,' the liberal and courteous gentleman, took his place upon the scaffold. For all the worldliness of his attire and the worldliness of his living, his brain teemed with stern and terrible thoughts. He searched the secrets of sin and of the grave, of destruction and of resurrection, of heaven and hell. All these he has painted on the walls beneath the saints of Fra Angelico. First come the troubles of the last days, the preaching of Antichrist, and the confusion of the wicked. In the next compartment we see the Resurrection from the tomb; and side by side with that is painted Hell. Paradise occupies another portion of the chapel. On each side of the window, beneath the Christ of Fra Angelico, are delineated scenes from the Judgment. A wilderness of arabesques, enclosing medallion portraits of poets and chiaroscuro episodes selected from Dante and Ovid, occupies the lower portions of the chapel walls beneath the great subjects enumerated above; and here Signorelli has given free vein to his fancy and his mastery over anatomical design, accumulating naked human figures in the most fantastic and audacious variety of pose.

149

Look at the 'Fulminati'—so the group of wicked men are called whose death precedes the Judgment. Huge naked angels, sailing upon vanlike wings, breathe columns of red flame upon a crowd of wicked men and women. In vain these sinners avoid the descending fire. It pursues and fells them to the earth. As they fly, their eyes are turned towards the dreadful faces in the air. Some hurry through a portico, huddled together, falling men, and women clasping to their arms dead babies scorched with flame. One old man stares straightforward, doggedly awaiting death. One woman scowls defiance as she dies. A youth has twisted both hands in his hair, and presses them against his ears to drown the screams and groans and roaring thunder. They trample upon prostrate forms already stiff. Every shape and attitude of sudden terror and despairing guilt are here. Next comes the Resurrection. Two angels of the Judgment—gigantic figures, with the plumeless wings that Signorelli loves—are seen upon the clouds. They blow trumpets with all their might, so that each naked muscle seems strained to make the blast, which bellows through the air and shakes the sepulchres beneath the earth. Thence rise the dead. All are naked, and a few are seen like skeletons. With painful effort they struggle from the soil that clasps them

150

round, as if obeying an irresistible command. Some have their heads alone above the ground. Others wrench their limbs from the clinging earth; and as each man rises, it closes under him. One would think that they were being born again from solid clay, and growing into form with labour. The fully risen spirits stand and walk about, all occupied with the expectation of the Judgment; but those that are yet in the act of rising, have no thought but for the strange and toilsome process of this second birth. Signorelli here, as elsewhere, proves himself one of the greatest painters by the simple means with which he produces the most marvellous effects. His composition sways our souls with all the passion of the terrible scenes that he depicts. Yet what does it contain? Two stern angels on the clouds, a blank grey plain, and a multitude of naked men and women. In the next compartment Hell is painted. This is a complicated picture, consisting of a mass of human beings entangled with torturing fiends. Above hover demons bearing damned spirits, and three angels see that justice takes its course. Signorelli here degenerates into no mediæval ugliness and mere barbarity of form. His fiends are not the bestial creatures of Pisano's basreliefs, but models of those monsters which Duppa has engraved from Michel Angelo's 'Last Judgment'—lean naked men, in whose hollow eyes glow the fires of hate and despair, whose nails have grown to claws, and from whose ears have started horns. They sail upon bats' wings; and only by their livid hue, which changes from yellow to the ghastliest green, and by the cruelty of their remorseless eyes, can you know them from the souls they torture. In Hell ugliness and power of mischief come with length of years. Continual growth in crime distorts the form which once was human; and the interchange of everlasting hatred degrades the tormentor and his victim to the same demoniac ferocity. To this design the science of foreshortening, and the profound knowledge of the human form in every posture, give its chief interest. Paradise is not less wonderful. Signorelli has contrived to throw variety and grace into the somewhat monotonous groups which this subject requires. Above are choirs of angels, not like Fra Angelico's, but tall male creatures clothed in voluminous drapery, with grave features and still, solemn eyes. Some are dancing, some are singing to the lute, and one, the most gracious of them all, bends down to aid a suppliant soul. The men beneath, who listen in a state of bliss, are all undraped. Signorelli, in this difficult composition, remains temperate, serene, and simple; a Miltonic harmony pervades the movement of his angelic choirs. Their beauty is the product of their strength and virtue. No floral ornaments or cherubs, or soft clouds, are found in his Paradise; yet it is fair and full of grace. Here Luca seems to have anticipated Raphael.

151

It may be parenthetically observed, that Signorelli has introduced himself and Niccolo Angeli, treasurer of the cathedral building fund, in the corner of the fresco representing Antichrist, with the date 1503. They stand as spectators and solemn witnesses of the tragedy, set forth in all its acts by the great master.

After viewing these frescoes, we muse and ask ourselves why Signorelli's fame is so inadequate to his deserts? Partly, no doubt, because he painted in obscure Italian towns, and left few easel-pictures. [86] Besides, the artists of the sixteenth century eclipsed all their predecessors, and the name of Signorelli has been swallowed up in that of Michel Angelo. Vasari said that 'esso Michel Angelo imitò l'andar di Luca, come può vedere ognuno.' Nor is it hard to see that what the one began at Orvieto the other completed in the Vatican. These great men had truly kindred spirits. Both struggled to express their intellectual conceptions in the simplest and most abstract forms. The works of both are distinguished by contempt for adventitious ornaments and for the grace of positive colour. Both chose to work in fresco, and selected subjects of the gravest and most elevated character. The study of anatomy, and the scientific drawing of the naked body, which Luca practised, were carried to perfection by Michel Angelo. Sublimity of thought and self-restraint pervade their compositions. He who would understand Buonarroti must first appreciate Signorelli. The latter, it is true, was confined to a narrower circle in his study of the beautiful and the sublime. He had not ascended to that pure idealism, superior to all the accidents of place and time, which is the chief distinction of Michel Angelo's work. At the same time, his manner had not suffered from too fervid an enthusiasm for the imperfectly comprehended antique. He painted the life he saw around him, and clothed his men and women in the dress of Italy.

152

153

154

Such reflections, and many more, pass through our mind as we sit and ponder in the chapel, which the daylight has deserted. The country people are still on their knees, still careless of the frescoed forms around

them, still praying to Madonna of the Miracles. The service is well-nigh done. The benediction has been given, the organist strikes up his air of Verdi, and the congregation shuffles off, leaving the dimly lighted chapel for the vast sonorous dusky nave. How strange it is to hear that faint strain of a feeble opera sounding where, a short while since, the trumpet-blast of Signorelli's angels seemed to thrill our ears!

[86] The Uffizzi and Pitti Galleries at Florence contain one or two fine specimens of Luca Signorelli's Holy Families, which show his influence over the early manner of Michel Angelo. Into the background of one circular picture he has introduced a group of naked figures, which was imitated by Buonarroti in the Holy Family of the Tribune. The Accademia has also a picture of saints and angels illustrative of his large style and crowded composition. The Brera at Milan can boast of a very characteristic Flagellation, where the nude has been carefully studied, and the brutality of an insolent officer is forcibly represented. But perhaps the most interesting of his works out of Orvieto are those in his native place, Cortona. In the Church of the Gesù in that town there is an altar-piece representing Madonna in glory with saints, which also contains on a smaller scale than the principal figures a little design of the Temptation in Eden. You recognise the master's individuality in the muscular and energetic Adam. The Duomo has a Communion of the Apostles which shows Signorelli's independence of tradition. It is the Cenacolo treated with freedom. Christ stands in the midst of the twelve, who are gathered around him, some kneeling and some upright, upon a marble pavement. The whole scene is conceived in a truly grand style—noble attitudes, broad draperies, sombre and rich colouring, masculine massing of the figures in effective groups. The Christ is especially noble. Swaying a little to the right, he gives the bread to a kneeling apostle. The composition is marked by a dignity and self-restraint which Raphael might have envied. San Niccolo, again, has a fine picture by this master. It is a Deposition with saints and angels—those large-limbed and wide-winged messengers of God whom none but Signorelli realised. The composition of this picture is hazardous, and at first sight it is even displeasing. The figures seem roughly scattered in a vacant space. The dead Christ has but little dignity, and the passion of S. Jerome in the foreground is stiff in spite of its exaggeration. But long study only serves to render this strange picture more and more attractive. Especially noticeable is the youthful angel clad in dark green who sustains Christ. He is a young man in the bloom of strength and beauty, whose long golden hair falls on each side of a sublimely lovely face. Nothing in painting surpasses the modelling of the vigorous but delicate left arm stretched forward to support the heavy corpse. This figure is conceived and executed in a style worthy of the Orvietan frescoes. Signorelli, for whose imagination angels had a special charm, has shown here that his too frequent contempt for grace was not the result of insensibility to beauty. Strength is the parent of sweetness in this wonderful winged youth. But not a single sacrifice is made in the whole picture to mere elegance.—Cortona is a place which, independently of Signorelli, well deserves a visit. Like all Etruscan towns, it is perched on the top of a high hill, whence it commands a wonderful stretch of landscape—Monte Amiata and Montepulciano to the south, Chiusi with its lake, the lake of Thrasymene, and the whole broad Tuscan plain. The city itself is built on a projecting buttress of the mountain, to which it clings so closely that, in climbing to the terrace of S. Margarita, you lose sight of all but a few towers and house-roofs. One can almost fancy that Signorelli gained his broad and austere style from the habitual contemplation of a view so severe in outline, and so vacant in its width. This landscape has none of the variety which distinguishes the prospect from Perugia, none of the suavity of Siena. It is truly sympathetic in its bare simplicity to the style of the great painter of Cortona. Try to see it on a winter morning, when the mists are lying white and low and thin upon the plain, when distant hills rise islanded into the air, and the outlines of lakes are just discernible through fleecy haze.—Next to Cortona in importance is the Convent of Monte Oliveto in the neighbourhood of Siena, where Signorelli painted eight frescoes from the story of S. Benedict, distinguished by his customary vigour of conception, masculine force of design, and martial splendour in athletic disdainful young men. One scene in this series, representing the interior of a country inn, is specially interesting for a realism not usual in the work of Signorelli. The frescoes painted for Petruccio at Siena, one of which is now in the National Gallery, the fresco in the Sistine Chapel, which has suffered sadly from retouching, and the magnificent classical picture called the 'School of Pan,' executed for Lorenzo de' Medici, and now at Berlin, must not be forgotten, nor yet the church-pictures scattered over Loreto, Arcevia, Città di Castello, Borgo San Sepolcro, Volterra, and other cities of the Tuscan-Umbrian

district. Arezzo, it may be added in conclusion, has two altarpieces of Signorelli's in its Pinacoteca, neither of which adds much to our conception of this painter's style. Noticeable as they may be among the works of that period, they prove that his genius was hampered by the narrow and traditional treatment imposed on him in pictures of this kind. Students may be referred to Robert Vischer's *Luca Signorelli* (Leipzig, 1879) for a complete list of the master's works and an exhaustive biography. I have tried to estimate his place in the history of Italian art in my volume on the 'Fine Arts,' *Renaissance in Italy*, Part III. I may also mention two able articles by Professor Colvin published a few years since in the *Cornhill Magazine*.

In seeking to distinguish the Roman from the Greek genius we can find no surer guide than Virgil's famous lines in the Sixth *Æneid*. Virgil lived to combine the traditions of both races in a work of profoundly meditated art, and to their points of divergence he was sensitive as none but a poet bent upon resolving them could be. The real greatness of the Romans consisted in their capacity for government, law, practical administration. What they willed, they carried into effect with an iron indifference to everything but the object in view. What they acquired, they held with the firm grasp of force, and by the might of organised authority. Their architecture, in so far as it was original, subserved purposes of public utility. Philosophy with them ceased to be speculative, and applied itself to the ethics of conduct. Their religious conceptions—in so far as these were not adopted together with general culture from the Greeks, or together with sensual mysticism from the East—were practical abstractions. The Latin ideal was to give form to the state by legislation, and to mould the citizen by moral discipline. The Greek ideal was contained in the poetry of Homer, the sculpture of Pheidias, the heroism of Harmodius, the philosophy of Socrates. Hellas was held together by no system, but by the Delphic oracle and the Olympian games. The Greeks depended upon culture, as the Romans upon law. The national character determined by culture, and that determined by discipline, eventually broke down: but the ruin in either case was different. The Greek became servile, indolent, and slippery; the Roman became arrogant, bloodthirsty, tyrannous, and brutal. The Greeks in their best days attained to σωφροσύνη, their regulative virtue, by a kind of instinct; and even in their worst debasement they never exhibited the extravagance of lust and cruelty and pompous prodigality displayed by Rome. The Romans, deficient in the æsthetic instinct, whether applied to morals or to art, were temperate upon compulsion; and when the strain of law relaxed, they gave themselves unchecked to profligacy. The bad taste of the Romans made them aspire to the huge and monstrous. Nero's whim to cut through the isthmus, Caligula's villa built upon the sea at Baiæ, the acres covered by imperial palaces in Rome, are as Latin as the small scale of the Parthenon is Greek. Athens annihilates our notions of mere magnitude by the predominance of harmony and beauty, to which size is irrelevant. Rome dilates them to the full: it is the colossal greatness, the mechanical pride, of her monuments that win our admiration. By comparing the Dionysian theatre at Athens, during a representation of the 'Antigone,' with the Flavian amphitheatre at Rome, while the gladiators sang their *Ave Cæsar!* we gain at once a measure for the differences between Greek and Latin taste. In spiritual matters, again, Rome, as distinguished from Hellas, was omnivorous. The cosmopolitan receptivity of Roman sympathies, absorbing Egypt and the Orient wholesale, is as characteristic as the exclusiveness of the Greeks, their sensitive anxiety about the ἥθος. We feel that it was in a Roman rather than a Greek atmosphere, where no middle term of art existed like a neutral ground between the moral law and sin, where no delicate intellectual sensibilities interfered with the assimilation of new creeds, that Christianity was destined to strike root and flourish.

156

These remarks, familiar to students, form a proper prelude to the criticism of Lucretius: for in Lucretius the Roman character found its most perfect literary incarnation. He is at all points a true Roman, gifted with the strength, the conquering temper, the uncompromising haughtiness, and the large scale of his race. Holding, as it were, the thought of Greece in fee, he administers the Epicurean philosophy as though it were a province, marshalling his arguments like legionaries, and spanning the chasms of speculative insecurity with the masonry of hypotheses. As the arches of the Pont du Gard, suspended in their power amid that solitude, produce an overmastering feeling of awe; so the huge fabric of the Lucretian system, hung across the void of Nihilism, inspires a sense of terror, not so much on its own account as for the Roman sternness of the mind that made it. 'Le retentissement de mes pas dans ces immenses voûtes me faisait croire entendre la forte voix de ceux qui les avait bâties. Je me perdais comme un insecte dans cette immensité.' This is what Rousseau wrote about the aqueduct of Nismes. This is what we feel in pacing the corridors of the Lucretian poem. Sometimes it seems like walking through resounding caves of night and death, where unseen cataracts keep plunging down uncertain depths, and winds 'thwarted and forlorn' swell from an unknown distance, and rush by, and wail themselves to silence in the unexplored beyond. At another time the impression left upon the memory is different. We have been following a

157

Roman road from the gate of the Eternal City, through field and vineyard, by lake and river-bed, across the broad intolerable plain and the barren tops of Alps, down into forests where wild beasts and barbarian tribes wander, along the marge of Rhine or Elbe, and over frozen fens, in one perpetual straight line, until the sea is reached and the road ends because it can go no further. All the while, the iron wheel-rims of our chariot have jarred upon imperishable paved work; there has been no stop nor stay; the visions of things beautiful and strange and tedious have flown past; at the climax we look forth across a waste of waves and tumbling wilderness of surf and foam, where the storm sweeps and hurrying mists drive eastward close above our heads. The want of any respite, breathing-space, or intermission in the poem, helps to force this image of a Roman journey on our mind. From the first line to the last there is no turning-point, no pause of thought, scarcely a comma, and the whole breaks off:—

158

rixantes potius quam corpora desererentur:

as though a scythe-sweep from the arm of Death had cut the thread of singing short.

Is, then, this poem truly song? Indeed it is. The brazen voice of Rome becomes tunable; a majestic rhythm sustains the progress of the singer, who, like Milton's Satan,

O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings or feet, pursues his way,
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.

It is only because, being so much a Roman, he insists on moving ever onward with unwavering march, that Lucretius is often wearisome and rough. He is too disdainful to care to mould the whole stuff of his poem to one quality. He is too truth-loving to condescend to rhetoric. The scoriæ, the grit, the dross, the quartz, the gold, the jewels of his thought are hurried onward in one mighty lava-flood, that has the force to bear them all with equal ease—not altogether unlike that hurling torrent of the world painted by Tintoretto in his picture of the Last Day, which carries on its breast cities and forests and men with all their works, to plunge them in a bottomless abyss.

Poems of the perfect Hellenic type may be compared to bronze statues, in the material of which many divers metals have been fused. Silver and tin and copper and lead and gold are there: each substance adds a quality to the mass; yet the whole is bronze. The furnace of the poet's will has so melted and mingled all these ores, that they have run together and filled the mould of his imagination. It is thus that Virgil chose to work. He made it his glory to realise artistic harmony, and to preserve a Greek balance in his style. Not so Lucretius. In him the Roman spirit, disdainful, uncompromising, and forceful, had full sway. We can fancy him accosting the Greek masters of the lyre upon Parnassus, deferring to none, conceding nought, and meeting their arguments with proud indifference:—

159

tu regere imperio populos Romane memento.

The Roman poet, swaying the people of his thoughts, will stoop to no persuasion, adopt no middle course. It is not his business to please, but to command; he will not wait upon the *καίρός*, or court opportunity; Greeks may surprise the Muses in relenting moods, and seek out 'mollia tempora fandi;' all times and seasons must serve him; the terrible, the discordant, the sublime, and the magnificent shall drag his thundering car-wheels, as he lists, along the road of thought.

At the very outset of the poem we feel ourselves within the grasp of the Roman imagination. It is no Aphrodite, risen from the waves and white as the sea-foam, that he invokes:—

Æneadum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas, alma Venus.

This Venus is the mother of the brood of Rome, and at the same time an abstraction as wide as the universe. See her in the arms of Mavors:—

in gremium qui sæpe tuum se
reicit æterno devictus volnere amoris,
atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus,
eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore.
hunc tu, diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto
circumfusa super, suavis ex ore loquelas
funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem.

160

In the whole Lucretian treatment of love there is nothing really Greek. We do not hear of Eros, either as the mystic mania of Plato, or as the winged boy of Meleager. Love in Lucretius is something deeper, larger, and more elemental than the Greeks conceived; a fierce and overmastering force, a natural impulse which men share in common with the world of things.^[87] Both the pleasures and the pains of love are conceived on a gigantic scale, and described with an irony that has the growl of a roused lion mingled with its laughter:—

ulcus enim vivescit et inveterascit alendo
inque dies gliscit furor atque aerumna gravescit.

[87] A fragment preserved from the *Danaides* of Æschylus has the thought of Aphrodite as the mistress of love in earth and sky and sea and cloud; and this idea finds a philosophical expression in Empedocles. But the tone of these Greek poets is as different from that of Lucretius as a Greek Hera is from a Roman Juno.

The acts of love and the insanities of passion are viewed from no standpoint of sentiment or soft emotion, but always in relation to philosophical ideas, or as the manifestation of something terrible in human life. Yet they lose nothing thereby in the voluptuous impression left upon the fancy:—

sic in amore Venus simulacris ludit amantis,
nec satiari queunt spectando corpora coram
nec manibus quicquam teneris abradere membris
possunt errantes incerti corpore toto.
denique cum membris conlatis flore fruuntur
ætatis, iam cum præsaigit gaudia corpus
atque in eost Venus ut muliebria conserat arva,
adfigunt avide corpus iunguntque salivas
oris et inspirant pressantes dentibus ora,
nequiquam, quoniam nil inde abradere possunt
nec penetrare et abire in corpus corpore toto.

161

The master-word in this passage is *nequiquam*. 'To desire the impossible,' says the Greek proverb, 'is a disease of the soul.' Lucretius, who treats of physical desire as a torment, asserts the impossibility of its perfect satisfaction. There is something almost tragic in these sighs and pantings and pleasure-throes, and incomplete fruitions of souls pent up within their frames of flesh. We seem to see a race of men and women such as have never lived, except perhaps in Rome or in the thought of Michel Angelo,^[88] meeting in leonine embracements that yield pain, whereof the climax is, at best, relief from rage and respite for a moment from consuming fire. There is a life dæmonic rather than human in those mighty limbs; and the passion that bends them on the marriage bed has in it the stress of storms, the rampings and the roarings of leopards at play. Or, take again this single line:—

et Venus in silvis iungebat corpora amantum.

What a picture of primeval breadth and vastness! The *vice égrillard* of Voltaire, the coarse animalism of Rabelais, even the large comic sexuality of Aristophanes, are in another region: for the forest is the world, and the bodies of the lovers are things natural and unashamed, and Venus is the tyrannous instinct that controls the blood in spring. Only a Roman poet could have conceived of passion so mightily and so impersonally, expanding its sensuality to suit the scale of Titanic existences, and purging from it both sentiment and spirituality as well as all that makes it mean.

162

[88] See, for instance, his meeting of Ixion with the phantom of Juno, or his design for Leda and the Swan.

In like manner, the Lucretian conception of Ennui is wholly Roman:—

Si possent homines, proinde ac sentire videntur
pondus inesse animo quod se gravitate fatiget,
e quibus id fiat causis quoque noscere et unde
tanta mali tamquam moles in pectore constet,
haut ita vitam agerent, ut nunc plerumque videmus
quid sibi quisque velit nescire et quærere semper
commutare locum quasi onus deponere possit.
exit sæpe foras magnis ex ædibus ille,
esse domi quem pertæsumst, subitoque revertit,
quippe foris nilo melius qui sentiat esse.
currit agens mannos ad villam præcipitanter,
auxilium tectis quasi ferre ardentibus instans;
oscitat extemplo, tetigit cum limina villæ,
aut abit in somnum gravis atque oblivia quærit,

aut etiam properans urbem petit atque revisit,
hoc se quisque modo fugit (at quem scilicet, ut fit,
effugere haut potis est, ingratis hæret) et odit
propterea, morbi quia causam non tenet æger;
quam bene si videat, iam rebus quisque relictis
naturam primum studeat cognoscere rerum,
temporis æterni quoniam, non unius horæ,
ambigitur status, in quo sit mortalibus omnis
ætæ, post mortem quæ restat cumque manenda.

Virgil would not have written these lines. A Greek poet could not have conceived them: unless we imagine to ourselves what Æschylus or Pindar, oppressed by long illness, and forgetful of the gods, might possibly have felt. In its sense of spiritual vacancy, when the world and all its uses have become flat, stale, unprofitable, and the sentient soul oscillates like a pendulum between weariful extremes, seeking repose in restless movement, and hurling the ruins of a life into the gulf of its exhausted cravings, we perceive already the symptoms of that unnamed malady which was the plague of imperial Rome. The tyrants and the suicides of the Empire expand before our eyes a pageant of their lassitude, relieved in vain by festivals of blood and orgies of unutterable lust. It is not that *ennui* was a specially Roman disease. Under certain conditions it is sure to afflict all overtaxed civilisation; and for the modern world no one has expressed its nature better than the slight and feminine De Musset.^[89] Indeed, the Latin language has no one phrase denoting Ennui;—*livor* and *fastidium*, and even *tædium vitæ*, meaning something more specific and less all-pervasive as a moral agency. This in itself is significant, since it shows the unconsciousness of the race at large, and renders the intuition of Lucretius all the more remarkable. But in Rome there were the conditions favourable to its development—imperfect culture, vehement passions unabsorbed by commerce or by political life, the habituation to extravagant excitement in war and in the circus, and the fermentation of an age foredestined to give birth to new religious creeds. When the infinite but ill-assured power of the Empire was conferred on semi-madmen, Ennui in Rome assumed colossal proportions. Its victims sought for palliatives in cruelty and crime elsewhere unknown, except perhaps in Oriental courts. Lucretius, in the last days of the Republic, had discovered its deep significance for human nature. To all the pictures of Tacitus it forms a solemn tragic background, enhancing, as it were, by spiritual gloom the carnival of passions which gleam so brilliantly upon his canvas. In the person of Caligula, Ennui sat supreme upon the throne of the terraqueous globe. The insane desires and the fantastic deeds of the autocrat who wished one head for humanity that he might cut it off, sufficiently reveal the extent to which his spirit had been gangrened by this ulcer. There is a simple paragraph in Suetonius which lifts the veil from his imperial unrest more ruthlessly than any legend:—'Incitabatur insomniis maxime; neque enim plus tribus horis nocturnis quiescebat, ac ne his quidem placidâ quiete, at pavidâ, miris rerum imaginibus ... ideoque magnâ parte noctis, vigiliæ cubandique tædio, nunc toro residens, nunc per longissimas porticus vagus, invocare identidem atque expectare lucem consueverat.' This is the very picture of Ennui that has become mortal disease. Nor was Nero different. 'Néron,' says Victor Hugo, 'cherche tout simplement une distraction. Poëte, comédien, chanteur, cocher, épuisant la férocité pour trouver la volupté, essayant le changement de sexe, époux de l'eunuque Sporus et épouse de l'esclave Pythagore, et se promenant dans les rues de Rome entre sa femme et son mari; ayant deux plaisirs: voir le peuple se jeter sur les pièces d'or, les diamants et les perles, et voir les lions se jeter sur le peuple; incendiaire par curiosité et parricide par désœuvrement.' Nor need we stop at Nero. Over Vitellius at his banquets, over Hadrian in his Tiburtine villa calling in vain on Death, over Commodus in the arena, and Heliogabalus among the rose-leaves, the same livid shadow of imperial Ennui hangs. We can even see it looming behind the noble form of Marcus Aurelius, who, amid the ruins of empire and the revolutions of belief, penned in his tent among the Quadi those maxims of endurance which were powerless to regenerate the world.

[89] See the prelude to *Les Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle* and *Les Nuits*.

Roman again, in the true sense of the word, is the Lucretian philosophy of Conscience. Christianity has claimed the celebrated imprecation of Persius upon tyrants for her own, as though to her alone belonged the secret of the soul-tormenting sense of guilt. Yet it is certain that we owe to the Romans that conception of sin bearing its own fruit of torment

which the Latin Fathers—Augustine and Tertullian— imposed with such terrific force upon the mediæval consciousness. There is no need to conclude that Persius was a Christian because he wrote—

Magne pater divum, sævos punire tyrannos, etc.,

when we know that he had before his eyes that passage in the third book of the 'De Rerum Naturâ,' (978-1023) which reduces the myths of Tityos and Sisyphus and Cerberus and the Furies to facts of the human soul:—

sed metus in vita poenarum pro male factis
est insignibus insignis, scelerisque luella,
carcer et horribilis de saxo iactu' deorsum,
verbera carnifices robur pix lammina tædæ;
quæ tamen etsi absunt, at mens sibi conscia facti
præmetuens adhibet stimulos terretque flagellis
nec videt interea qui terminus esse malorum
possit nec quæ sit poenarum denique finis
atque eadem metuit magis hæc ne in morte gravescant.

The Greeks, by personifying those secret terrors, had removed them into a region of existences separate from man. They became dread goddesses, who might to some extent be propitiated by exorcisms or expiatory rites. This was in strict accordance with the mythopoeic and artistic quality of the Greek intellect. The stern and somewhat prosaic rectitude of the Roman broke through such figments of the fancy, and exposed the sore places of the soul itself. The theory of the Conscience, moreover, is part of the Lucretian polemic against false notions of the gods and the pernicious belief in hell.

Positivism and Realism were qualities of Roman as distinguished from Greek culture. There was no self-delusion in Lucretius—no attempt, however unconscious, to compromise unpalatable truth, or to invest philosophy with the charm of myth. A hundred illustrations might be chosen to prove his method of setting forth thought with unadorned simplicity. These, however, are familiar to any one who has but opened the 'De Rerum Naturâ.' It is more profitable to trace this Roman ruggedness in the poet's treatment of the subject which more than any other seems to have preoccupied his intellect and fascinated his imagination—that is Death. His poem has been called by a great critic the 'poem of Death.' Shakspeare's line—

And Death once dead, there's no more dying then,

might be written as a motto on the title-page of the book, which is full of passages like this:—

scire licet nobis nil esse in morte timendum
nec miserum fieri qui non est posse neque hilum
differre anne ullo fuerit iam tempore natus,
mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit.

His whole mind was steeped in the thought of death; and though he can hardly be said to have written 'the words that shall make death exhilarating,' he devoted his genius, in all its energy, to removing from before men the terror of the doom that waits for all. Sometimes, in his attempt at consolation, he adduces images which, like the Delphian knife, are double-handed, and cut both ways:—

hinc indignatur se mortalem esse creatum
nec videt in vera nullum fore morte alium se
qui possit vivus sibi se lugere peremptum
stansque iacentem se lacerari urive dolere.

This suggests, by way of contrast, Blake's picture of the soul that has just left the body and laments her separation. As we read, we are inclined to lay the book down, and wonder whether the argument is, after all, conclusive. May not the spirit, when she has quitted her old house, be forced to weep and wring her hands, and stretch vain shadowy arms to the limbs that were so dear? No one has felt more profoundly than Lucretius the pathos of the dead. The intensity with which he realised what we must lose in dying and what we leave behind of grief to those who loved us, reaches a climax of restrained passion in this well-known paragraph:—

'iam iam non domus accipiet te læta, neque uxor
optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
præripere et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent.
non poteris factis florentibus esse, tuisque
præsidium. misero misere' aiunt 'omnia ademit
una dies infesta tibi tot præmia vitæ.'

illud in his rebus non addunt 'nec tibi earum
iam desiderium rerum super insidet una.'
quod bene si videant animo dictisque sequantur,
dissoluant animi magno se angore metuque.
'tu quidem ut es leto sopitus, sic eris ævi
quod superest cunctis privato' doloribus ægris.
at nos horrifico cinefactum te prope busto
insatiabiliter deflevimus, æternumque
nulla dies nobis mærorem e pectore demet.'

Images, again, of almost mediæval grotesqueness, rise in his mind when he contemplates the universality of Death. Simonides had dared to say: 'One horrible Charybdis waits for all.' That was as near a discord as a Greek could venture on. Lucretius describes the open gate and 'huge wide-gaping maw' which must devour heaven, earth, and sea, and all that they contain:—

haut igitur leti præclusa est ianua cælo
nec soli terræque neque altis æquoris undis,
sed patet immani et vasto respectat hiatus.

The ever-during battle of life and death haunts his imagination. Sometimes he sets it forth in philosophical array of argument. Sometimes he touches on the theme with elegiac pity:—

miscetur funere vagor
quem pueri tollunt visentis luminis oras;
nec nox ulla diem neque noctem aurora secutast
quæ non audierit mixtos vagitibus ægris
ploratus mortis comites et funeris atri.

Then again he returns, with obstinate persistence, to describe how the dread of death, fortified by false religion, hangs like a pall over humanity, and how the whole world is a cemetery overshadowed by cypresses. The most sustained, perhaps, of these passages is at the beginning of the third book (lines 31 to 93). The most profoundly melancholy is the description of the new-born child (v. 221):—

168

quare mors immatura vagatur?
tum porro puer, ut sævis proiectus ab undis
navita, nudus humi iacet, infans, indigus omni
vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut æcumst
cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.

Disease and old age, as akin to Death, touch his imagination with the same force. He rarely alludes to either without some lines as terrible as these (iii. 472, 453):—

nam dolor ac morbus leti fabricator uterquest.
claudicat ingenium, delirat lingua, labat mens.

Another kindred subject affects him with an equal pathos. He sees the rising and decay of nations, age following after age, like waves hurrying to dissolve upon a barren shore, and writes (ii. 75):—

sic rerum summa novatur
semper, et inter se mortales mutua vivunt,
augescunt aliæ gentes, aliæ minuuntur,
inque brevi spatio mutantur sæcla animantum
et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt.

Although the theme is really the procession of life through countless generations, it obtains a tone of sadness from the sense of intervenient decay and change. No Greek had the heart thus to dilate his imagination with the very element of death. What the Greeks commemorated when they spoke of Death was the loss of the lyre and the hymeneal chaunt, and the passage across dim waves to a sunless land. Nor indeed does Lucretius, like the modern poet of Democracy, ascend into the regions of ecstatic trance:—

169

Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

He keeps his reason cool, and sternly contemplates the thought of the annihilation which awaits all perishable combinations of eternal things. Like Milton, Lucretius delights in giving the life of his imagination to abstractions. Time, with his retinue of ages, sweeps before his vision, and he broods in fancy over the illimitable ocean of the universe. The fascination of the infinite is the quality which, more than any other,

separates Lucretius as a Roman poet from the Greeks.

Another distinctive feature of his poetry Lucretius inherited as part of his birthright. This is the sense of Roman greatness. It pervades the poem, and may be felt in every part; although to Athens, and the Greek sages, Democritus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, and Epicurus, as the fountain-heads of soul-delivering culture, he reserves his most magnificent periods of panegyric. Yet when he would fain persuade his readers that the fear of death is nugatory, and that the future will be to them even as the past, it is the shock of Rome with Carthage that he dwells upon as the critical event of the world's history (iii. 830):—

Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum,
quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur.
et velut anteacto nil tempore sensimus ægri,
ad confligendum venientibus undique Poenis,
omnia cum belli trepido concussa tumultu
horrida contremuere sub altis ætheris oris,
in dubioque fuere utrorum ad regna cadendum
omnibus humanis esset terraque marique,
sic:

The lines in italics could have been written by none but a Roman conscious that the conflict with Carthage had decided the absolute empire of the habitable world. In like manner the description of a military review (ii. 323) is Roman: so, too, is that of the amphitheatre (iv. 75):—

et volgo faciunt id lutea russaque vela
et ferrugina, cum magnis intenta theatris
per malos volgata trabesque trementia flutant.
namque ibi consessum caveai supter et omnem
scænai speciem, patrum coetumque decorum
infiunt coguntque suo fluitare colore.

The imagination of Lucretius, however, was habitually less affected by the particular than by the universal. He loved to dwell upon the large and general aspects of things—on the procession of the seasons, for example, rather than upon the landscape of the Campagna in spring or autumn. Therefore it is only occasionally and by accident that we find in his verse touches peculiarly characteristic of the manners of his country. Therefore, again, it has happened that modern critics have detected a lack of patriotic interest in this most Roman of all Latin poets. Also may it here be remembered, that the single line which sums up all the history of Rome in one soul-shaking hexameter, is not Lucretian but Virgilian:—

Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.

The custode of the Baths of Titus, when he lifts his torch to explore those ruined arches, throws the wan light upon one place where a Roman hand has scratched that verse in gigantic letters on the cement. The colossal genius of Rome seems speaking to us, an oracle no lapse of time can render dumb.

But Lucretius is not only the poet *par excellence* of Rome. He will always rank also among the first philosophical poets of the world: and here we find a second standpoint for inquiry. The question how far it is practicable to express philosophy in verse, and to combine the accuracy of scientific language with the charm of rhythm and the ornaments of the fancy, is one which belongs rather to modern than to ancient criticism. In the progress of culture there has been an ever-growing separation between the several spheres of intellectual activity. What Livy said about the Roman Empire is true now of knowledge: *magnitudine laborat suâ*; so that the labour of specialising and distinguishing has for many centuries been all-important. Not only do we disbelieve in the desirability of smearing honey upon the lip of the medicine-glass through which the draught of erudition has to be administered; but we know for certain that it is only at the meeting-points between science and emotion that the philosophic poet finds a proper sphere. Whatever subject-matter can be permeated or penetrated with strong human feeling is fit for verse. Then the rhythms and the forms of poetry to which high passions naturally move, become spontaneous. The emotion is paramount, and the knowledge conveyed is valuable as supplying fuel to the fire of feeling. There are, were, and always will be high imaginative points of vantage commanding the broad fields of knowledge, upon which the poet may take his station to survey the world and all that it contains. But it has long ceased to be his function to set forth, in any kind of metre, systems of speculative thought or purely scientific truths. This was not the case

in the old world. There was a period in the development of the intellect when the abstractions of logic appeared like intuitions, and guesses about the structure of the universe still wore the garb of fancy. When physics and metaphysics were scarcely distinguished from mythology, it was natural to address the Muses at the outset of a treatise of ontology, and to cadence a theory of elemental substances in hexameter verse. Thus the philosophical poems of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles belonged essentially to a transitional stage of human culture.

172

There is a second species of poetry to which the name of philosophical may be given, though it better deserves that of mystical. Pantheism occupies a middle place between a scientific theory of the universe and a form of religious enthusiasm. It supplies an element in which the poetic faculty can move with freedom: for its conclusions, in so far as they pretend to philosophy, are large and general, and the emotions which it excites are co-extensive with the world. Therefore, Pantheistic mysticism, from the Bhagavadgita of the far East, through the Persian Soofis, down to the poets of our own century, Goethe, and Shelley, and Wordsworth, and Whitman, and many more whom it would be tedious to enumerate, has generated a whole tribe of philosophic singers.

Yet a third class may be mentioned. Here we have to deal with what are called didactic poems. These, like the metaphysical epic, began to flourish in early Greece at the moment when exact thought was dividing itself laboriously from myths and fancies. Hesiod with his poem on the life of man leads the way; and the writers of moral sentences in elegiac verse, among whom Solon and Theognis occupy the first place, follow. Latin literature contributes highly artificial specimens of this kind in the 'Georgics' of Virgil, the stoical diatribes of Persius, and the 'Ars Poetica' of Horace. Didactic verse had a special charm for the genius of the Latin race. The name of such poems in the Italian literature of the Renaissance is legion. The French delighted in the same style under the same influences; nor can we fail to attribute the 'Essay on Man' and the 'Essay on Criticism' of our own Pope to a similar revival in England of Latin forms of art. The taste for didactic verse has declined. Yet in its stead another sort of philosophical poetry has grown up in this century, which, for the want of a better term, may be called psychological. It deserves this title, inasmuch as the motive-interest of the art in question is less the passion or the action of humanity than the analysis of the same. The 'Faust' of Goethe, the 'Prelude' and 'Excursion' of Wordsworth, Browning's 'Sordello' and Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh,' together with the 'Musings' of Coleridge and the 'In Memoriam' of Tennyson, may be roughly reckoned in this class. It will be noticed that nothing has been said about professedly religious poetry, much of which attaches itself to mysticism, while some, like the 'Divine Comedy' of Dante, is philosophic in the truest sense of the word.

173

Where, then, are we to place Lucretius? He was a Roman, imbued with the didactic predilections of the Latin race; and the didactic quality of the 'De Rerum Naturâ' is unmistakable. Yet it would be uncritical to place this poem in the class which derives from Hesiod. It belongs really to the succession of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles. As such it was an anachronism. The specific moment in the development of thought at which the Parmenidean Epic was natural has been already described. The Romans of the age of Lucretius had advanced far beyond it. The idealistic metaphysics of the Socratic school, the positive ethics of the Stoics, and the profound materialism of Epicurus, had accustomed the mind to habits of exact and subtle thinking, prolonged from generation to generation upon the same lines of speculative inquiry. Philosophy expressed in verse was out of date. Moreover, the very myths had been rationalised. Euhemerus had even been translated into Latin by Ennius, and his prosaic explanations of Greek legend had found acceptance with the essentially positive Roman intellect. Lucretius himself, it may be said in passing, thought it worth while to offer a philosophical explanation of the Greek mythology. The Cybele of the poets is shown in one of his sublimest passages (ii. 600-645) to be Earth. To call the sea Neptune, corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus, seems to him a simple folly (ii. 652-657). We have already seen how he reduces the fiends and spectres of the Greek Hades to facts of moral subjectivity (iii. 978-1023). In another place he attacks the worship of Phoebus and the stars (v. 110); in yet another he upsets the belief in the Centaurs, Scylla, and Chimæra (v. 877-924) with a gravity which is almost comic. Such arguments formed a necessary element in his polemic against foul religion (*foeda religio—turpis religio*); to deliver men from which (i. 62-112), by establishing firmly in their minds the conviction that the gods exist far away from this world in unconcerned tranquillity (ii. 646), and

174

by substituting the notion of Nature for that of deity (ii. 1090), was the object of his scientific demonstration.

Lucretius, therefore, had outgrown mythology, was hostile to religion, and burned with unsurpassable enthusiasm to indoctrinate his Roman readers with the weighty conclusions of systematised materialism. Yet he chose the vehicle of hexameter verse, and trammelled his genius with limitations which Empedocles, four hundred years before, must have found almost intolerable. It needed the most ardent intellectual passion and the loftiest inspiration to sustain on his far flight a poet who had forged a hoplite's panoply for singing robes. Both passion and inspiration were granted to Lucretius in full measure. And just as there was something contradictory between the scientific subject-matter and the poetical form of his masterpiece, so the very sources of his poetic strength were such as are usually supposed to depress the soul. His passion was for death, annihilation, godlessness. It was not the eloquence, but the force of logic in Epicurus that roused his enthusiasm:

ergo vivida vis animi pervicit et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi.

No other poet who ever lived in any age, or any shore, drew inspiration from founts more passionless and more impersonal.

175

The 'De Rerum Naturâ' is therefore an attempt, unique in its kind, to combine philosophical exposition and poetry in an age when the requirements of the former had already outgrown the resources of the latter. Throughout the poem we trace a discord between the matter and the form. The frost of reason and the fire of fancy war in deadly conflict; for the Lucretian system destroyed nearly everything with which the classical imagination loved to play. It was only in some high ethereal region, before the majestic thought of Death or the new Myth of Nature, that the two faculties of the poet's genius met for mutual support. Only at rare intervals did he allow himself to make artistic use of mere mythology, as in the celebrated exordium of the first book, or the description of the Seasons in the fifth book (737-745). For the most part reason and fancy worked separately: after long passages of scientific explanation, Lucretius indulged his readers with those pictures of unparalleled sublimity and grace which are the charm of the whole poem; or dropping the phraseology of atoms, void, motion, chance, he spoke at times of Nature as endowed with reason and a will (v. 186, 811, 846).

It would be beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the particular form given by Lucretius to the Democritean philosophy. He believed the universe to be composed of atoms, infinite in number, and variable, to a finite extent, in form, which drift slantingly through an infinite void. Their combinations under the conditions of what we call space and time are transitory, while they remain themselves imperishable. Consequently, as the soul itself is corporeally constituted, and as thought and sensation depend on mere material idola, men may divest themselves of any fear of the hereafter. There is no such thing as providence, nor do the gods concern themselves with the kaleidoscopic medley of atoms in transient combination which we call our world. The latter were points of supreme interest to Lucretius. He seems to have cared for the cosmology of Epicurus chiefly as it touched humanity through ethics and religion. To impartial observers, the identity or the divergence of the forms assumed by scientific hypothesis at different periods of the world's history is not a matter of much importance. Yet a peculiar interest has of late been given to the Lucretian materialism by the fact that physical speculation has returned to what is substantially the same ground. The most modern theories of evolution and of molecular structure may be stated in language which, allowing for the progress made by exact thought during the last twenty centuries, is singularly like that of Lucretius. The Roman poet knew fewer facts than are familiar to our men of science, and was far less able to analyse one puzzle into a whole group of unexplained phenomena. He had besides but a feeble grasp upon those discoveries which subserve the arts of life and practical utility. But as regards *absolute knowledge*—knowledge, that is to say, of what the universe really is, and of how it became what it seems to us to be—Lucretius stood at the same point of ignorance as we, after the labours of Darwin and of Spencer, of Helmholtz and of Huxley, still do. Ontological speculation is as barren now as then, and the problems of existence still remain insoluble. The chief difference indeed between him and modern investigators is that they have been lessoned by the experience of the last two thousand years to know better the depths of human ignorance, and the directions in which it is possible to

176

sound them.

It may not be uninteresting to collect a few passages in which the Roman poet has expressed in his hexameters the lines of thought adopted by our most advanced theorists. Here is the general conception of Nature, working by her own laws toward the achievement of that result which we apprehend through the medium of the senses (ii. 1090):—

177

Quæ bene cognita si teneas, natura videtur
libera continuo dominis privata superbis
ipsa sua per se sponte omnia dis agere expers.

Here again is a demonstration of the absurdity of supposing that the world was made for the use of men (v. 156):—

dicere porro hominum causa voluisse parare
præclaram mundi naturam proptereaque
adlaudabile opus divom laudare decere
æternumque putare atque immortale futurum
nec fas esse, deum quod sit ratione vetusta
gentibus humanis fundatum perpetuo ævo,
sollicitare suis ulla vi ex sedibus umquam
nec verbis vexare et ab imo evertere summa,
cetera de genere hoc adfingere et addere, Memmi
desiperest.

A like cogent rhetoric is directed against the arguments of teleology (iv. 823):—

Illud in his rebus vitium vehementer avessis
effugere, errorem vitareque præmetuenter,
lumina ne facias oculorum clara creata,
prospicere ut possemus, et ut proferre queamus
proceros passus, ideo fastigia posse
surarum ac feminum pedibus fundata plicari,
bracchia tum porro validis ex apta lacertis
esse manusque datas utraque ex parte ministras,
ut facere ad vitam possemus quæ foret usus.
cetera de genere hoc inter quæcumque pretantur
omnia perversa præpostera sunt ratione,
nil ideo quoniam natumst in corpore ut uti
possemus, sed quod natumst id procreat usum.
nec fuit ante videre oculorum lumina nata
nec dictis orare prius quam lingua creatast,
sed potius longe linguæ præcessit origo
sermonem multoque creatæ sunt prius aures
quam sonus est auditus, et omnia denique membra
ante fuere, ut opinor, eorum quam foret usus.
haud igitur potuere utendi crescere causa.

178

The ultimate dissolution and the gradual decay of the terrestrial globe is set forth in the following luminous passage (ii. 1148):—

Sic igitur magni quoque circum moenia mundi
expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas.
iamque adeo fracta est ætas effetaque tellus
vix animalia parva creat quæ cuncta creavit
sæcla deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.^[90]

[90] Compare book v. 306-317 on the evidences of decay continually at work in the fabric of the world.

The same mind which recognised these probabilities knew also that our globe is not single, but that it forms one among an infinity of sister orbs (ii. 1084):—

quapropter cælum simili ratione fatendumst
terramque et solem lunam mare, cetera quæ sunt
non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerali.^[91]

[91] The same truth is insisted on with even greater force of language in vi. 649-652.

When Lucretius takes upon himself to describe the process of becoming which made the world what it now is, he seems to incline to a theory not at all dissimilar to that of unassisted evolution (v. 419):—

nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
ordine se suo quæque sagaci mente locarunt
nec quos quæque darent motus pepigere profecto,
sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
ex infinito iam tempore percita plagis
ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri

omnimodisque coire atque omnia pertemptare,
quæcumque inter se possent congressa creare,
propterea fit uti magnum volgata per ævom
omne genus coetus et motus experiundo
tandem conveniant ea quæ convecta repente
magnarum rerum fiunt exordia sæpe,
terrai maris et cæli generisque animantum.

179

Entering into the details of the process, he describes the many ill-formed, amorphous beginnings of organised life upon the globe, which came to nothing, 'since nature set a ban upon their increase' (v. 837-848); and then proceeds to explain how, in the struggle for existence, the stronger prevailed over the weaker (v. 855-863). What is really interesting in this exposition is that Lucretius ascribes to nature the volition ('convertibat ibi natura foramina terræ;' 'quoniam natura absterruit auctum') which has recently been attributed by materialistic speculators to the same maternal power.

To press these points, and to neglect the gap which separates Lucretius from thinkers fortified by the discoveries of modern chemistry, astronomy, physiology, and so forth, would be childish. All we can do is to point to the fact that the circumambient atmosphere of human ignorance, with reference to the main matters of speculation, remains undissipated. The mass of experience acquired since the age of Lucretius is enormous, and is infinitely valuable; while our power of tabulating, methodising, and extending the sphere of experimental knowledge seems to be unlimited. Only ontological deductions, whether negative or affirmative, remain pretty much where they were then.

The fame of Lucretius, however, rests not on this foundation of hypothesis. In his poetry lies the secret of a charm which he will continue to exercise as long as humanity chooses to read Latin verse. No poet has created a world of larger and nobler images, designed with the *sprezzatura* of indifference to mere gracefulness, but all the more fascinating because of the artist's negligence. There is something monumental in the effect produced by his large-sounding single epithets and simple names. We are at home with the dæmonic life of nature when he chooses to bring Pan and his following before our eyes (iv. 580). Or, again, the Seasons pass like figures on some frieze of Mantegna, to which, by divine accident, has been added the glow of Titian's colouring^[92] (v. 737):—

180

it ver et Venus, et veris prænuntius ante
pennatus graditur zephyrus, vestigia propter
Flora quibus mater præspargens ante viai
cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.
inde loci sequitur calor aridus et comes una
pulverulenta Ceres et etesia flabra aquilonum,
inde autumnus adit, graditur simul Eubius Euan,
inde aliæ tempestates ventique secuntur,
altitonans Voltumnus et auster fulmine pollens.
tandem bruma nives adfert pigrumque rigorem,
prodit hiemps, sequitur crepitans hanc dentibus algor.

[92] The elaborate illustration of the first four lines of this passage, painted by Botticelli (in the Florence Academy of Fine Arts), proves Botticelli's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with the subject in the spirit of the original. It is graceful and 'subtle' enough, but not Lucretian.

With what a noble style, too, are the holidays of the primeval pastoral folk described (v. 1379-1404). It is no mere celebration of the *bell' età dell' oro*: but we see the woodland glades, and hear the songs of shepherds, and feel the hush of summer among rustling forest trees, while at the same time all is far away, in a better, simpler, larger age. The sympathy of Lucretius for every form of country life was very noticeable. It belonged to that which was most deeply and sincerely poetic in the Latin genius, whence Virgil drew his sweetest strain of melancholy, and Horace his most unaffected pictures, and Catullus the tenderness of his best lines on Sirmio. No Roman surpassed the pathos with which Lucretius described the separation of a cow from her calf (ii. 352-365). The same note indeed was touched by Virgil in his lines upon the forlorn nightingale, and in the peroration to the third 'Georgic.' But the style of Virgil is more studied, the feeling more artistically elaborated. It would be difficult to parallel such Lucretian passages in Greek poetry. The Greeks lacked an undefinable something of rusticity which dignified the Latin race. This quality was not altogether different from what we call homeliness. Looking at the busts of Romans, and noticing their resemblance to English country gentlemen, I have sometimes wondered whether the Latin genius, just in those points

181

where it differed from the Greek, was not approximated to the English.

All subjects needing a large style, brief and rapid, but at the same time luminous with imagination, were sure of the right treatment from Lucretius. This is shown by his enumeration of the celestial signs (v. 1188):—

in cæloque deum sedes et templa locarunt,
per cælum volvi quia nox et luna videtur,
luna dies et nox et noctis signa severa
noctivagæque faces cæli flammæque volantes,
nubila sol imbres nix venti fulmina grando
et rapidi fremitus et murmura magna minarum.

Again, he never failed to rise to an occasion which required the display of fervid eloquence. The Roman eloquence, which in its energetic volubility was the chief force of Juvenal, added a tidal strength and stress of storm to the quick gathering thoughts of the greater poet. The exordia to the first and second books, the analysis of Love in the fourth, the praises of Epicurus in the third and fifth, the praises of Empedocles and Ennius in the first, the elaborate passage on the progress of civilisation in the fifth, and the description of the plague at Athens which closes the sixth, are noble instances of the sublimest poetry sustained and hurried onward by the volume of impassioned improvisation. It is difficult to imagine that Lucretius wrote slowly. The strange word *vociferari*, which he uses so often, and which the Romans of the Augustan age almost dropped from their poetic vocabulary, seems exactly made to suit his utterance. Yet at times he tempers the full torrent of resonant utterance with divine tranquillity, and leaves upon our mind that sense of powerful aloofness from his subject, which only belongs to the mightiest poets in their most majestic moments. One instance of this rare felicity of style shall end the list of our quotations (v. 1194):—

O genus infelix humanum, talia divis
cum tribuit facta atque iras adiunxit acerbas!
quantos tum gemitus ipsi sibi, quantaque nobis
volnera, quas lacrimas peperere minoribu' nostris!
nec pietas ullast velatum sæpe videri
vertier ad lapidem atque omnis accedere ad aras
nec procumbere humi prostratum et pandere palmas
ante deum delubra nec aras sanguine multo
spargere quadrupedum nec votis nectere vota,
sed mage pacata posse omnia mente tueri.
nam cum suspicimus magni cælestia mundi
ellisque micantibus æthera fixum,
et venit in mentem solis lunæque viarum,
tunc aliis oppressa malis in pectora cura
illa quoque expergefactum caput erigere inquit,
ne quæ forte deum nobis immensa potestas
sit, vario motu quæ candida sidera verset.
temptat enim dubiam mentem rationis egestas,
ecquænam fuerit mundi genitalis origo,
et simul ecquæ sit finis, quoad moenia mundi
solliciti motus hunc possint ferre laborem,
an divinitus æterna donata salute
perpetuo possint ævi labentia tractu
inmensi validas ævi contemnere viris.

It would be impossible to adduce from any other poet a passage in which the deepest doubts and darkest terrors and most vexing questions that beset the soul, are touched with an eloquence more stately and a pathos more sublime. Without losing the sense of humanity, we are carried off into the infinite. Such poetry is as imperishable as the subject of which it treats.

Visitors to picture and sculpture galleries are haunted by the forms of two handsome young men—Sebastian and Antinous. Both were saints: the one of decadent Paganism, the other of mythologising Christianity. According to the popular beliefs to which they owed their canonisation, both suffered death in the bloom of earliest manhood for the faith that burned in them. There is, however, this difference between the two—that whereas Sebastian is a shadowy creature of the pious fancy, Antinous preserves a marked and unmistakable personality. All his statues are distinguished by unchanging characteristics. The pictures of Sebastian vary according to the ideal of adolescent beauty conceived by each successive artist. In the frescoes of Perugino and Luini he shines with the pale pure light of saintliness. On the canvas of Sodoma he reproduces the voluptuous charm of youthful Bacchus, with so much of anguish in his martyred features as may serve to heighten his dæmonic fascination. On the richer panels of the Venetian masters he glows with a flame of earthly passion aspiring heavenward. Under Guido's hand he is a model of mere carnal comeliness. And so forth through the whole range of the Italian painters. We know Sebastian only by his arrows. The case is very different with Antinous. Depicted under diverse attributes—as Hermes of the wrestling-ground, as Aristæus or Vertumnus, as Dionysus, as Ganymede, as Herakles, or as a god of ancient Egypt—his individuality is always prominent. No metamorphosis of divinity can change the lineaments he wore on earth. And this difference, so marked in the artistic presentation of the two saints, is no less striking in their several histories. The legend of Sebastian tells us nothing to be relied upon, except that he was a Roman soldier converted to the Christian faith, and martyred. In spite of the perplexity and mystery that involve the death of Antinous in impenetrable gloom, he is a true historic personage, no phantom of myth, but a man as real as Hadrian, his master.

185

Antinous, as he appears in sculpture, is a young man of eighteen or nineteen years, almost faultless in his form. His beauty is not of a pure Greek type. Though perfectly proportioned and developed by gymnastic exercises to the true athletic fulness, his limbs are round and florid, suggesting the possibility of early over-ripeness. The muscles are not trained to sinewy firmness, but yielding and elastic; the chest is broad and singularly swelling; and the shoulders are placed so far back from the thorax that the breasts project beyond them in a massive arch. It has been asserted that one shoulder is slightly lower than the other. Some of the busts seem to justify this statement; but the appearance is due probably to the different position of the two arms, one of which, if carried out, would be lifted and the other be depressed. The legs and arms are modelled with exquisite grace of outline; yet they do not show that readiness for active service which is noticeable in the statues of the Meleager, the Apoxyomenos, or the Belvedere Hermes. The whole body combines Greek beauty of structure with something of Oriental voluptuousness. The same fusion of diverse elements may be traced in the head. It is not too large, though more than usually broad, and is nobly set upon a massive throat, slightly inclined forwards, as though this posture were habitual; the hair lies thick in clusters, which only form curls at the tips. The forehead is low and somewhat square; the eyebrows are level, of a peculiar shape, and very thick, converging so closely as almost to meet above the deep-cut eyes. The nose is straight, but blunter than is consistent with the Greek ideal. Both cheeks and chin are delicately formed, but fuller than a severe taste approves: one might trace in their rounded contours either a survival of infantine innocence and immaturity, or else the sign of rapidly approaching over-bloom. The mouth is one of the loveliest ever carved; but here again the blending of the Greek and Oriental types is visible. The lips, half parted, seem to pout; and the distance between mouth and nostrils is exceptionally short. The undefinable expression of the lips, together with the weight of the brows and slumberous half-closed eyes, gives a look of sulkiness or voluptuousness to the whole face. This, I fancy, is the first impression which the portraits of Antinous produce; and Shelley has well conveyed it by placing the two following phrases, 'eager and impassioned tenderness' and 'effeminate sullenness,' in close juxtaposition.^[93] But, after longer familiarity with the whole range of Antinous's portraits, and after study of his life, we are brought to read the peculiar expression of his face and form somewhat differently. A prevailing melancholy, sweetness of temperament overshadowed by resignation, brooding reverie, the innocence of youth, touched and saddened by a calm resolve

186

or an accepted doom—such are the sentences we form to give distinctness to a still vague and uncertain impression. As we gaze, Virgil's lines upon the young Marcellus recur to our mind: what seemed sullen, becomes mournful; the unmistakable voluptuousness is transfigured in tranquillity.

[93] Fragment, *The Coliseum*.

After all is said and written, the statues of Antinous do not render up their secret. Like some of the Egyptian gods with whom he was associated, he remains for us a sphinx, secluded in the shade of a 'mild mystery.' His soul, like the Harpocrates he personated, seems to hold one finger on closed lips, in token of eternal silence. One thing, however, is certain. We have before us no figment of the artistic imagination, but a real youth of incomparable beauty, just as nature made him, with all the inscrutableness of undeveloped character, with all the pathos of a most untimely doom, with the almost imperceptible imperfections that render choice reality more permanently charming than the ideal. It has been disputed whether the Antinous statues are portraits or idealised works of inventive art; and it is usually conceded that the sculptors of Hadrian's age were not able to produce a new ideal type. Critics, therefore, like Helbig and Overbeck, arrive at the conclusion that Antinous was one of nature's masterpieces, modelled in bronze, marble, and granite with almost flawless technical dexterity. Without attaching too much weight to this kind of criticism, it is well to find the decisions of experts in harmony with the instincts of simple observers. Antinous is as real as any man who ever sat for his portrait to a modern sculptor.

But who was Antinous, and what is known of him? He was a native of Bithynium or Claudiopolis, a Greek town claiming to have been a colony from Arcadia, which was situated near the Sangarius, in the Roman province of Bithynia; therefore he may have had pure Hellenic blood in his veins, or, what is more probable, his ancestry may have been hybrid between the Greek immigrants and the native populations of Asia Minor. Antinous was probably born in the first decade of the second century of our era. About his youth and education we know nothing. He first appears upon the scene of the world's history as Hadrian's friend. Whether the Emperor met with him during his travels in Asia Minor, whether he found him among the students of the University at Athens, or whether the boy had been sent to Rome in his childhood, must remain matter of the merest conjecture. We do not even know for certain whether Antinous was free or a slave. The report that he was one of the Emperor's pages rests upon the testimony of Hegeisippus, quoted by a Christian Father, and cannot therefore be altogether relied upon. It receives, however, some confirmation from the fact that Antinous is more than once represented in the company of Hadrian and Trajan in a page's hunting dress upon the bas-reliefs which adorn the Arch of Constantine. The so-called Antinous-Castor of the Villa Albani is probably of a similar character. Winckelmann, who adopted the tradition as trustworthy, pointed out the similarity between the portraits of Antinous and some lines in Phædrus, which describe a curly-haired *atriensis*. If Antinous took the rank of *atriensis* in the imperial *pædagogium*, his position would have been, to say the least, respectable; for to these upper servants was committed the charge of the *atrium*, where the Romans kept their family archives, portraits, and works of art. Yet he must have quitted this kind of service some time before his death, since we find him in the company of Hadrian upon one of those long journeys in which an *atriensis* would have had no *atrium* to keep. By the time of Hadrian's visit to Egypt, Antinous had certainly passed into the closest relationship with his imperial master; and what we know of the Emperor's inclination towards literary and philosophical society perhaps justifies the belief that the youth he admitted to his friendship had imbibed Greek culture, and had been initiated into those cloudy metaphysics which amused the leisure of semi-Oriental thinkers in the last age of decaying Paganism.

It was a moment in the history of the human mind when East and West were blending their traditions to form the husk of Christian creeds and the fantastic visions of neo-Platonism. Rome herself had received with rapture the strange rites of Nilotic and of Syrian superstition. Alexandria was the forge of fanciful imaginations, the majority of which were destined to pass like vapours and leave not a wrack behind, while a few fastened with the force of dogma on the conscience of awakening Christendom. During Hadrian's reign it was still uncertain which among the many hybrid products of that motley age would live and flourish; and the Emperor, we know, dreamed fondly of reviving the cults and restoring the splendour of degenerate Hellas. At the same time he was

not averse to the more mystic rites of Egypt: in his villa at Tivoli he built a Serapeum, and named one of its quarters Canopus. What part Antinous may have taken in the projects of his friend and master we know not; yet, when we come to consider the circumstances of his death, it may not be superfluous to have thus touched upon the intellectual conditions of the world in which he lived. The mixed blood of the boy, born and bred in a Greek city near the classic ground of Dindymean rites, and his beauty, blent of Hellenic and Eastern qualities, may also not unprofitably be remembered. In such a youth, nurtured between Greece and Asia, admitted to the friendship of an emperor for whom neo-Hellenism was a life's dream in the midst of grave state-cares, influenced by the dark and symbolical creeds of a dimly apprehended East, might there not have lurked some spark of enthusiasm combining the impulses of Atys and Aristogeiton, pathetic even in its inefficiency when judged by the light of modern knowledge, but heroic at that moment in its boundless vista of great deeds to be accomplished?

After journeying through Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, Hadrian, attended by Antinous, came to Egypt. He there restored the tomb of Pompey, near Pelusium, with great magnificence, and shortly afterwards embarked from Alexandria upon the Nile, proceeding on his journey through Memphis into the Thebaïd. When he had arrived near an ancient city named Besa, on the right bank of the river, he lost his friend. Antinous was drowned in the Nile. He had thrown himself, it was believed, into the water; seeking thus by a voluntary death to substitute his own life for Hadrian's, and to avert predicted perils from the Roman Empire. What these perils were, and whether Hadrian was ill, or whether an oracle had threatened him with approaching calamity, we do not know. Even supposition is at fault, because the date of the event is still uncertain; some authorities placing Hadrian's Egyptian journey in the year 122, and others in the year 130 A.D. Of the two dates, the second seems the more probable. We are left to surmise that, if the Emperor was in danger, the recent disturbances which followed a new discovery of Apis, may have exposed him to fanatical conspiracy. The same doubt affects an ingenious conjecture that rumours which reached the Roman court of a new rising in Judæa had disturbed the Emperor's mind, and led to the belief that he was on the verge of a mysterious doom. He had pacified the Empire and established its administration on a solid basis. Yet the revolt of the indomitable Jews—more dreaded since the days of Titus than any other perturbation of the imperial economy—would have been enough, especially in Egypt, to engender general uneasiness. However this may have been, the grief of the Emperor, intensified either by gratitude or remorse, led to the immediate canonisation of Antinous. The city where he died was rebuilt, and named after him. His worship as a hero and as a god spread far and wide throughout the provinces of the Mediterranean. A new star, which appeared about the time of his decease, was supposed to be his soul received into the company of the immortals. Medals were struck in his honour, and countless works of art were produced to make his memory undying. Great cities wore wreaths of red lotos on his feast-day in commemoration of the manner of his death. Public games were celebrated in his honour at the city Antinoë; and also in Arcadian Mantinea. This canonisation may probably have taken place in the fourteenth year of Hadrian's reign, A.D. 130.^[94] Antinous continued to be worshipped until the reign of Valentinian.

[94] Overbeck, Hausrath, and Mommsen, following apparently the conclusions arrived at by Flemmer in his work on Hadrian's journeys, place it in 130 A.D. This would leave an interval of only eight years between the deaths of Antinous and Hadrian. It may here be observed that two medals of Antinous, referred by Rasche with some hesitation to the Egyptian series, bear the dates of the eighth and ninth years of Hadrian's reign. If these coins are genuine, and if we accept Flemmer's conclusions, they must have been struck in the lifetime of Antinous. Neither of them represents Antinous with the insignia of deity: one gives the portrait of Hadrian upon the reverse.

Thus far I have told a simple story, as though the details of the youth's last days were undisputed. Still we are as yet but on the threshold of the subject. All that we have any right to take for uncontested is that Antinous passed from this life near the city of Besa, called thereafter Antinoopolis or Antinoë;. Whether he was drowned by accident, whether he drowned himself in order to save Hadrian by vicarious suffering, or whether Hadrian sacrificed him in order to extort the secrets of fate from blood-propitiated deities, remains a question buried in the deepest gloom. With a view to throwing such light as is possible upon the matter,

we must proceed to summon in their order the most trustworthy authorities among the ancients.

Dion Cassius takes precedence. In compiling his life of Hadrian, he had beneath his eyes the Emperor's own 'Commentaries,' published under the name of the freedman Phlegon. We therefore learn from him at least what the friend of Antinous wished the world to know about his death; and though this does not go for much, since Hadrian is himself an accused person in the suit before us, yet the whole Roman Empire may be said to have accepted his account, and based on it a pious cult that held its own through the next three centuries of growing Christianity. Dion, in the abstract of his history compiled by Xiphilinus, speaks then to this effect: 'In Egypt he also built the city named after Antinous. Now Antinous was a native of Bithynium, a city of Bithynia, which we also call Claudiopolis. He was Hadrian's favourite, and he died in Egypt: whether by having fallen into the Nile, as Hadrian writes, or by having been sacrificed, as the truth was. For Hadrian, as I have said, was in general over-much given to superstitious subtleties, and practised all kinds of sorceries and magic arts. At any rate he so honoured Antinous, whether because of the love he felt for him, or because he died voluntarily, since a willing victim was needed for his purpose, that he founded a city in the place where he met this fate, and called it after him, and dedicated statues, or rather images, of him in, so to speak, the whole inhabited world. Lastly, he affirmed that a certain star which he saw was the star of Antinous, and listened with pleasure to the myths invented by his companions about this star having really sprung from the soul of his favourite, and having then for the first time appeared. For which things he was laughed at.'

192

We may now hear what Spartian, in his 'Vita Hadriani,' has to say: 'He lost his favourite, Antinous, while sailing on the Nile, and lamented him like a woman. About Antinous reports vary, for some say that he devoted his life for Hadrian, while others hint what his condition seems to prove, as well as Hadrian's excessive inclination to luxury. Some Greeks, at the instance of Hadrian, canonised him, asserting that oracles were given by him, which Hadrian himself is supposed to have made up.'

193

In the third place comes Aurelius Victor: 'Others maintain that this sacrifice of Antinous was both pious and religious; for when Hadrian was wishing to prolong his life, and the magicians required a voluntary vicarious victim, they say that, upon the refusal of all others, Antinous offered himself.'

These are the chief authorities. In estimating them we must remember that, though Dion Cassius wrote less than a century after the event narrated, he has come down to us merely in fragments and in the epitome of a Byzantine of the twelfth century, when everything that could possibly be done to discredit the worship of Antinous, and to blacken the memory of Hadrian, had been attempted by the Christian Fathers. On the other hand, Spartianus and Aurelius Victor compiled their histories at too distant a date to be of first-rate value. Taking the three reports together, we find that antiquity differed about the details of Antinous's death. Hadrian himself averred that his friend was drowned; and it was surmised that he had drowned himself in order to prolong his master's life. The courtiers, however, who had scoffed at Hadrian's fondness for his favourite, and had laughed to see his sorrow for his death, somewhat illogically came to the conclusion that Antinous had been immolated by the Emperor, either because a victim was needed to prolong his life, or because some human sacrifice was required in order to complete a dark mysterious magic rite. Dion, writing not very long after the event, believed that Antinous had been immolated for some such purpose with his own consent. Spartian, who wrote at the distance of more than a century, felt uncertain about the question of self-devotion; but Aurelius Victor, following after the interval of another century, unhesitatingly adopted Dion's view, and gave it a fresh colour. This opinion he summarised in a compact, authoritative form, upon which we may perhaps find an assumption that the belief in Antinous, as a self-devoted victim, had been gradually growing through two centuries.

194

There are therefore three hypotheses to be considered. The first is that Antinous died an accidental death by drowning; the second is, that Antinous, in some way or another, gave his life willingly for Hadrian's; the third is, that Hadrian ordered his immolation in the performance of magic rites.

For the first of the three hypotheses we have the authority of Hadrian himself, as quoted by Dion. The simple words εἰς τοῦ Νεῖλου ἐκπεσῶν imply no more than accidental death; and yet, if the Emperor had

believed the story of his favourite's self-devotion, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have recorded it in his 'Memoirs.' Accepting this view of the case, we must refer the deification of Antinous wholly to Hadrian's affection; and the tales of his *devotio* may have been invented partly to flatter the Emperor's grief, partly to explain its violence to the Roman world. This hypothesis seems, indeed, by far the most natural of the three; and if we could strip the history of Antinous of its mysterious and mythic elements, it is rational to believe that we should find his death a simple accident. Yet our authorities prove that writers of history among the ancients wavered between the two other theories of (i) Self-Devotion and (ii) Immolation, with a bias toward the latter. These, then, have now to be considered with some attention. Both, it may parenthetically be observed, relieve Antinous from a moral stigma, since in either case a pure untainted victim was required.

If we accept the former of the two remaining hypotheses, we can understand how love and gratitude, together with sorrow, led Hadrian to canonise Antinous. If we accept the latter, Hadrian's sorrow itself becomes inexplicable; and we must attribute the foundation of Antinoë; and the deification of Antinous to remorse. It may be added, while balancing these two solutions of the problem, that cynical sophists, like Hadrian's Græculi, were likely to have put the worst construction on the Emperor's passion, and to have invented the worst stories concerning the favourite's death. To perpetuate these calumnious reports was the real interest of the Christian apologists, who not unnaturally thought it scandalous that a handsome page should be deified. Thus, at first sight, the balance of probability inclines toward the former of the two solutions, while the second may be rejected as based upon court-gossip and religious animosity. Attention may also again be called to the fact that Hadrian ventured to publish an account of Antinous quite inconsistent with what Dion chose to call the truth, and that virtuous Emperors like the Antonines did not interfere with a cult, which, had it been paid to the mere victim of Hadrian's passion and his superstition, would have been an infamy even in Rome. Moreover, that cult was not, like the creations of the impious emperors, forgotten or destroyed by public acclamation. It took root and flourished apparently, as we shall see, because it satisfied some craving of the popular religious sense, and because the people believed that this man had died for his friend. It will not, however, do to dismiss the two hypotheses so lightly.

The alternative of self-devotion presents itself under a double aspect. Antinous may either have committed suicide by drowning with the intention of prolonging the Emperor's life, or he may have offered himself as a voluntary victim to the magicians, who required a sacrifice for a similar purpose. Spartian's brief phrase, *aliis eum devotum pro Hadriano*, may seem to point to the first form of self-devotion; the testimony of Aurelius Victor clearly supports the second: yet it does not much matter which of the two explanations we adopt. The point is whether Antinous gave his life willingly to save the Emperor's, or whether he was murdered for the satisfaction of some superstitious curiosity. It was absolutely necessary that the vicarious victim should make a free and voluntary oblation of himself. That the notion of vicarious suffering was familiar to the ancients is sufficiently attested by the phrases ἀτίψυχοι, ἀνταδρόοι, and *hostia succidanea*. We find traces of it in the legend of Alcestis, who died for Admetus, and of Cheiron, who took the place of Prometheus in Hades. Suetonius records that in the first days of Caligula's popularity, when he was labouring under dangerous illness, many Romans of both sexes vowed their lives for his recovery in temples of the gods. That this superstition retained a strong hold on the popular imagination in the time of Hadrian is proved by the curious affirmation of Aristides, a contemporary of that Emperor. He says that once, when he was ill, a certain Philumene offered her soul for his soul, her body for his body, and that, upon his own recovery, she died. On the same testimony it appears that her brother Hermeas had also died for Aristides. This faith in the efficacy of substitution is persistent in the human race. Not long ago a Christian lady was supposed to have vowed her own life for the prolongation of that of Pope Pius IX., and good Catholics inclined to the belief that the sacrifice had been accepted. We shall see that in the first centuries of Christendom the popular conviction that Antinous had died for Hadrian brought him into inconvenient rivalry with Christ, whose vicarious suffering was the cardinal point of the new creed.

The alternative of immolation has next to be considered. The question before us here is, Did Hadrian sacrifice Antinous for the satisfaction of a superstitious curiosity, and in the performance of magic rites? Dion Cassius uses the word ἱερούργηθεις, and explains it by saying that

Hadrian needed a voluntary human victim for the accomplishment of an act of divination in which he was engaged. Both Spartian and Dion speak emphatically of the Emperor's proclivities to the black art; and all antiquity agreed about this trait in his character. Ammianus Marcellinus spoke of him as '*futurorum sciscitationi nimis deditum.*' Tertullian described him as '*curiositatum omnium exploratorem.*' To multiply such phrases would, however, be superfluous, for they are probably mere repetitions from the text of Dion. That human victims were used by the Romans of the Empire seems certain. Lampridius, in the 'Life of Heliogabalus,' records his habit of slaying handsome and noble youths, in order that he might inspect their entrails. Eusebius, in his 'Life of Maxentius,' asserts the same of that Emperor. *Quum inspiceret exta puerilia, νεογονον σπλάγχνα βρέφων διερευνομένου,* are the words used by Lampridius and Eusebius. Justin Martyr speaks of *εποπτεύσεις παίδων αδιαφθόρον.* Caracalla and Julian are credited with similar bloody sacrifices. Indeed, it may be affirmed in general that tyrants have ever been eager to foresee the future and to extort her secrets from Fate, stopping short at no crime in the attempt to quiet a corroding anxiety for their own safety. What we read about Italian despots—Ezzelino da Romano, Sigismondo Malatesta, Filippo Maria Visconti, and Pier Luigi Farnese—throws light upon the practice of their Imperial predecessors; while the mysterious murder of the beautiful Astorre Manfredi by the Borgias in Hadrian's Mausoleum has been referred by modern critics of authority to the same unholy curiosity. That Hadrian laboured under this moral disease, and that he deliberately used the body of Antinous for *extispicium*, is, I think, Dion's opinion. But are we justified in reckoning Hadrian among these tyrants? That must depend upon our view of his character.

Hadrian was a man in whom the most conflicting qualities were blent. In his youth and through his whole life he was passionately fond of hunting; hardy, simple in his habits, marching bareheaded with his legions through German frost and Nubian heat, sharing the food of his soldiers, and exercising the most rigid military discipline. At the same time he has aptly been described as 'the most sumptuous character of antiquity.' He filled the cities of the empire with showy buildings, and passed his last years in a kind of classic Munich, where he had constructed imitations of every celebrated monument in Europe. He was so far fond of nature that, anticipating the most recently developed of modern tastes, he ascended Mount Ætna and the Mons Casius, in order to enjoy the spectacle of sunrise. In his villa at Tivoli he indulged a trivial fancy by christening one garden Tempe and another the Elysian Fields; and he had his name carved on the statue of the vocal Memnon with no less gusto than a modern tourist: *audivi voces divinas.* His memory was prodigious, his eloquence in the Latin language studied and yet forcible, his knowledge of Greek literature and philosophy far from contemptible. He enjoyed the society of Sophists and distinguished rhetoricians, and so far affected authorship as to win the unenviable title of *Græculus* in his own lifetime: yet he never neglected state affairs. Owing to his untiring energy and vast capacity for business, he not only succeeded in reorganising every department of the empire, social, political, fiscal, military, and municipal; but he also held in his own hands the threads of all its complicated machinery. He was strict in matters of routine, and appears to have been almost a martinet among his legions: yet in social intercourse he lived on terms of familiarity with inferiors, combining the graces of elegant conversation with the *bonhomie* of boon companionship, displaying a warm heart to his friends, and using magnificent generosity. He restored the domestic as well as the military discipline of the Roman world; and his code of laws lasted till Justinian. Among many of his useful measures of reform he issued decrees restricting the power of masters over their slaves, and depriving them of their old capital jurisdiction. His biographers find little to accuse him of beyond a singular avidity for fame, addiction to magic arts and luxurious vices: yet they adduce no proof of his having, at any rate before the date of his final retirement to his Tiburtine villa, shared the crimes of a Nero or a Commodus. On the whole, we must recognise in Hadrian a nature of extraordinary energy, capacity for administrative government, and mental versatility. A certain superficiality, vulgarity, and commonplaceness seems to have been forced upon him by the circumstances of his age, no less than by his special temperament. This quality of the immitigable commonplace is clearly written on his many portraits. Their chief interest consists in a fixed expression of fatigue—as though the man were weary with much seeking and with little finding. In all things, he was somewhat of a dilettante; and the Nemesis of that sensibility to impressions which distinguishes the dilettante, came upon

him ere he died. He ended his days in an appalling and persistent paroxysm of *ennui*, desiring the death which would not come to his relief.

The whole creative and expansive force of Hadrian's century lay concealed in the despised Christian sect. Art was expiring in a sunset blaze of gorgeous imitation, tasteless grandeur, technical elaboration. Philosophy had become sophistical or mystic; its real life survived only in the phrase 'entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren' of the Stoics. Literature was repetitive and scholastic. Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Juvenal indeed were living; but their works formed the last great literary triumph of the age. Religion had degenerated under the twofold influences of scepticism and intrusive foreign cults. It was, in truth, an age in which, for a sound heart and manly intellect, there lay no proper choice except between the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius and the Christianity of the Catacombs. All else had passed into shams, unrealities, and visions. Now Hadrian was neither stoical nor Christian, though he so far coquetted with Christianity as to build temples dedicated to no Pagan deity, which passed in after times for unfinished churches. He was a *Græculus*. In that contemptuous epithet, stripping it of its opprobrious significance, we find the real key to his character. In a failing age he lived a restless-minded, many-sided soldier-prince, whose inner hopes and highest aspirations were for Hellas. Hellas, her art, her history, her myths, her literature, her lovers, her young heroes filled him with enthusiasm. To rebuild her ruined cities, to restore her deities, to revive her golden life of blended poetry and science, to reconstruct her spiritual empire as he had re-organised the Roman world, was Hadrian's dream. It was indeed a dream; one which a far more creative genius than Hadrian's could not have realised.

200

But now, returning to the two alternatives regarding his friend's death: was this philo-Hellenic Emperor the man to have immolated Antinous for *extispicium* and then deified him? Probably not. The discord between this bloody act and subsequent hypocrisy upon the one hand, and Hadrian's Greek sympathies upon the other, must be reckoned too strong for even such a dipsychic character as his. There is nothing in either Spartian or Dion to justify the opinion that he was naturally cruel or fantastically deceitful. On the other hand, Hadrian's philo-Hellenic, splendour-loving, somewhat tawdry, fame-desiring nature was precisely of the sort to jump eagerly at the deification of a favourite who had either died a natural death or killed himself to save his master. Hadrian had loved Antinous with a Greek passion in his lifetime. The Roman Emperor was half a god. He remembered how Zeus had loved Ganymede, and raised him to Olympus; how Achilles had loved Patroclus, and performed his funeral rites at Troy; how the demi-god Alexander had loved Hephæstion, and lifted him into a hero's seat on high. He, Hadrian, would do the like, now that death had robbed him of his comrade. The Roman, who surrounded himself at Tivoli with copies of Greek temples, and who called his garden Tempe, played thus at being Zeus, Achilles, Alexander; and the civilised world humoured his whim. Though the Sophists scoffed at his real grief and honourable tears, they consecrated his lost favourite, found out a star for him, carved him in breathing brass, and told tales about his sacred flower. Pancrates was entertained in Alexandria at the public cost for his fable of the lotos; and the lyrist Mesomedes received so liberal a pension for his hymn to Antinous that Antoninus Pius found it needful to curtail it.

201

After weighing the authorities, considering the circumstances of the age, and estimating Hadrian's character, I am thus led to reject the alternative of immolation. Spartian's own words, *quem muliebriter flevit*, as well as the subsequent acts of the Emperor and the acquiescence of the whole world in the new deity, prove to my mind that in the suggestion of *extispicium* we have one of those covert calumnies which it is impossible to set aside at this distance of time, and which render the history of Roman Emperors and Popes almost impracticable.

The case, then, stands before us thus. Antinous was drowned in the Nile, near Besa, either by accident or by voluntary suicide to save his master's life. Hadrian's love for him had been unmeasured, so was his grief. Both of them were genuine; but in the nature of the man there was something artificial. He could not be content to love and grieve alone; he must needs enact the part of Alexander, and realise, if only by a sort of makebelieve, a portion of his Greek ideal. Antinous, the beautiful servant, was to take the place of Ganymede, of Patroclus, of Hephæstion; never mind if Hadrian was a Roman and his friend a Bithynian, and if the love between them, as between an emperor of fifty and a boy of nineteen, had been less than heroic. The opportunity was too fair to be missed; the *rôle* too fascinating to be rejected. The world, in spite of

202

covert sneers, lent itself to the sham, and Antinous became a god.

The uniformly contemptuous tone of antique authorities almost obliges us to rank this deification of Antinous, together with the Tiburtine villa and the dream of a Hellenic Renaissance, among the part-shams, part-enthusiasms of Hadrian's 'sumptuous' character. Spartian's account of the consecration, and his hint that Hadrian composed the oracles delivered at his favourite's tomb; Arrian's letter to the Emperor describing the island Leukè and flattering him by an adroit comparison with Achilles; the poem by Pancrates mentioned in the 'Deipnosophistæ,' which furnished the myth of a new lotos dedicated to Antinous; the invention of the star, and Hadrian's conversations with his courtiers on this subject—all converge to form the belief that something of consciously unreal mingled with this act of apotheosis by Imperial decree. Hadrian sought to assuage his grief by paying his favourite illustrious honours after death; he also desired to give the memory of his own love the most congenial and poetical environment, to feed upon it in the daintiest places, and to deck it with the prettiest flowers of fancy. He therefore canonised Antinous, and took measures for disseminating his cult throughout the world, careless of the element of imposture which might seem to mingle with the consecration of his true affection. Hadrian's superficial taste was not offended by the gimcrack quality of the new god; and Antinous was saved from being a merely pinchbeck saint by his own charming personality.

203

This will not, however, wholly satisfy the conditions of the problem; and we are obliged to ask ourselves whether there was not something in the character of Antinous himself, something divinely inspired and irradiate with spiritual beauty, apparent to his fellows and remembered after his mysterious death, which justified his canonisation, and removed it from the region of Imperial makebelieve. If this was not the case, if Antinous died like a flower cropped from the seraglio garden of the court-pages, how should the Emperor in the first place have bewailed him with 'unhusbanded passion,' and the people afterwards have received him as a god? May it not have been that he was a youth of more than ordinary promise, gifted with intellectual enthusiasms proportioned to his beauty and endowed with something of Phoebean inspiration, who, had he survived, might have even inaugurated a new age for the world, or have emulated the heroism of Hypatia in a hopeless cause? Was the link between him and Hadrian formed less by the boy's beauty than by his marvellous capacity for apprehending and his fitness for realising the Emperor's Greek dreams? Did the spirit of neo-Platonism find in him congenial incarnation? At any rate, was there not enough in the then current beliefs about the future of the soul, as abundantly set forth in Plutarch's writings, to justify a conviction that after death he had already passed into the lunar sphere, awaiting the final apotheosis of purged spirits in the sun? These questions may be asked—indeed, they must be asked—for, without suggesting them, we leave the worship of Antinous an almost inexplicable scandal, an almost unintelligible blot on human nature. Unless we ask them, we must be content to echo the coarse and violent diatribes of Clemens Alexandrinus against the vigils of the deified *exoletus*. But they cannot be answered, for antiquity is altogether silent about him; only here and there, in the indignant utterance of a Christian Father, stung to the quick by Pagan parallels between Antinous and Christ, do we catch a perverted echo of the popular emotion upon which his cult reposed, which recognised his godhood or his vicarious self-sacrifice, and which paid enduring tribute to the sublimity of his young life untimely quenched.

204

The *senatus consultum* required for the apotheosis of an Emperor was not, so far as we know, obtained in the case of Antinous. Hadrian's determination to exalt his favourite sufficed; and this is perhaps one of the earliest instances of those informal deifications which became common in the later Roman period. Antinous was canonised according to Greek ritual and by Greek priests: *Græci quidam volente Hadriano eum consecraverunt*. How this was accomplished we know not; but forms of canonisation must have been in common usage, seeing that emperors and members of the Imperial family received the honour in due course. The star which was supposed to have appeared soon after his death, and which represented his soul admitted to Olympus, was somewhere near the constellation Aquila, according to Ptolemy, but not part of it. I believe the letters η.θ.ι.κ.λ. of Aquila now bear the name of Antinous; but this appropriation dates only from the time of Tycho Brahe. It was also asserted that as a new star had appeared in the skies, so a new flower had blossomed on the earth, at the moment of his death. This was the lotos, of a peculiar red colour, which the people of Lower Egypt used to wear in wreaths upon his festival. It received the name Antinoeian; and

the Alexandrian sophist, Pancrates, seeking to pay a double compliment to Hadrian and his favourite, wrote a poem in which he pretended that this lily was stained with the blood of a Libyan lion slain by the Emperor. As Arrian compared his master to Achilles, so Pancrates flattered him with allusions to Herakles. The lotos, it is well known, was a sacred flower in Egypt. Both as a symbol of the all-nourishing moisture of the earth and of the mystic marriage of Isis and Osiris, and also as an emblem of immortality, it appeared on all the sacred places of the Egyptians, especially on tombs and funeral utensils. To dignify Antinous with the lotos emblem was to consecrate him; to find a new species of the revered blossom and to wear it in his honour, calling it by his name, was to exalt him to the company of gods. Nothing, as it seems, had been omitted that could secure for him the patent of divinity.

He met his death near the city Besa, an ancient Egyptian town upon the eastern bank of the Nile, almost opposite to Hermopolis. Besa was the name of a local god, who gave oracles and predicted future events. But of this Besa we know next to nothing. Hadrian determined to rebuild the city, change its name, and let his favourite take the place of the old deity. Accordingly, he raised a splendid new town in the Greek style; furnished it with temples, agora, hippodrome, gymnasium, and baths; filled it with Greek citizens; gave it a Greek constitution, and named it Antinoë. This new town, whether called Antinoë, Antinoopolis, Antinous, Antinoeia, or even Besantinous (for its titles varied), continued long to flourish, and was mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, together with Copton and Hermopolis, as one of the three most distinguished cities of the Thebaid. In the age of Julian these three cities were perhaps the only still thriving towns of Upper Egypt. It has even been maintained on Ptolemy's authority that Antinoë was the metropolis of a nome, called Antinoeitis; but this is doubtful, since inscriptions discovered among the ruins of the town record no name of nomarch or strategus, while they prove the government to have consisted of a Boulè and a Prytaneus, who was also the Eponymous Magistrate. Strabo reckons it, together with Ptolemais and Alexandria, as governed after the Greek municipal system.

In this city Antinous was worshipped as a god. Though a Greek god, and the eponym of a Greek city, he inherited the place and functions of an Egyptian deity, and was here represented in the hieratic style of Ptolemaic sculpture. A fine specimen of this statuary is preserved in the Vatican, showing how the neo-Hellenic sculptors had succeeded in maintaining the likeness of Antinous without sacrificing the traditional manner of Egyptian piety. The sacred emblems of Egyptian deities were added: we read, for instance, in one passage, that his shrine contained a boat. This boat, like the mystic egg of Erôs or the cista of Dionysos, symbolised the embryo of cosmic life. It was specially appropriated to Osiris, and suggested collateral allusions doubtless to immortality and the soul's journey in another world. Antinous had a college of priests appointed to his service; and oracles were delivered from the cenotaph inside his temple. The people believed him to be a genius of warning, gracious to his suppliants, but terrible to evil-doers, combining the qualities of the avenging and protective deities. Annual games were celebrated in Antinoë; on his festival, with chariot races and gymnastic contests; and the fashion of keeping his day seems, from Athenæus's testimony, to have spread through Egypt. An inscription in Greek characters discovered at Rome upon the Campus Martius entitles Antinous a colleague of the gods in Egypt—

ANTINOΩΙ ΣΥΝΘΡΟΝΩΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΑΙΓΥΗΤΩΙ ΘΕΩΝ.

The worship of Antinous spread rapidly through the Greek and Asian provinces, especially among the cities which owed debts of gratitude to Hadrian or expected from him future favours. At Athens, for example, the Emperor, attended perhaps by Antinous, had presided as Archon during his last royal progress, had built a suburb called after his name, and raised a splendid temple to Olympian Jove. The Athenians, therefore, founded games and a priesthood in honour of the new divinity. Even now, in the Dionysiac theatre, among the chairs above the orchestra assigned to priests of elder deities and more august tradition, may be found one bearing the name of Antinous—ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΥ. A marble tablet has also been discovered inscribed with the names of agonothetai for the games celebrated in honour of Antinous; and a stele exists engraved with the crown of these contests together with the crowns of Severus, Commodus, and Antoninus. It appears that the games in honour of Antinous took place both at Eleusis and at Athens; and that the agonothetai, as also the priest of the new god, were chosen from the Epebi. The Corinthians, the Argives, the Achaians, and the Epirots, as

we know from coins issued by the priests of Antinous, adopted his cult; [95] but the region of Greece proper where it flourished most was Arcadia, the mother state of his Bithynian birthplace. Pausanias, who lived contemporaneously with Antinous, and might have seen him, though he tells us that he had not chanced to meet the youth alive, mentions the temple of Antinous at Mantinea as the newest in that city. 'The Mantineans,' he says, 'reckon Antinous among their gods.' He then describes the yearly festival and mysteries connected with his cult, the quinquennial games established in his honour, and his statues. The gymnasium had a cell dedicated to Antinous, adorned with pictures and fair stone-work. The new god was in the habit of Dionysus.

208

[95] For example:

ΟΣΤΙΑΙΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΟΣΟ ΙΕΡΕΥΣΤΟΥ ΑΝΤΙΟΥ
ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΧΑΙΟΙΣ and a similar inscription for
Corinth.

As was natural, his birthplace paid him special observance. Coins dedicated by the province of Bithynia, as well as by the town Bithynium, are common, with the epigraphs, ΑΝΤΙΟΥ Η ΠΑΤΡΙΣ and ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ Η ΠΑΤΡΙΣ. Among the cities of Asia Minor and the vicinity the new cult seems to have been widely spread. Adramyttene in Mysia, Alabanda, Ancyra in Galatia, Chalcedon, Cuma in Æolis, Cyzicum in Mysia, the Ciani, the Hadrianothērītæ of Bithynia, Hierapolis in Phrygia, Nicomedia, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Tarsus, the Tianians of Paphlagonia, and a town Rhesæna in Mesopotamia, all furnish their quota of medals. On the majority of these medals he is entitled Herôs, but on others he has the higher title of god; and he seems to have been associated in each place with some deity of local fame.

Being essentially a Greek hero, or divinised man received into the company of immortals and worshipped with the attributes of god, his cult took firmer root among the neo-Hellenic provinces of the empire than in Italy. Yet there are signs that even in Italy he found his votaries. Among these may first be mentioned the comparative frequency of his name in Roman inscriptions, which have no immediate reference to him, but prove that parents gave it to their children. The discovery of his statues in various cities of the Roman Campagna shows that his cult was not confined to one or two localities. Naples in particular, which remained in all essential points a Greek city, seems to have received him with acclamation. A quarter of the town was called after his name, and a phratría of priests was founded in connection with his worship. The Neapolitans owed much to the patronage of Hadrian, and they repaid him after this fashion. At the beginning of the last century Raffaello Fabretti discovered an inscription near the Porta S. Sebastiano at Rome, which throws some light on the matter. It records the name of a Roman knight, Sufenas, who had held the office of Lupercus and had been a fellow of the Neapolitan phratría of Antinous—*fretriacò Neapoli Antinoiton et Eunostidon*. Eunostos was a hero worshipped at Tanagra in Boeotia, where he had a sacred grove no female foot might enter; and the wording of the inscription leaves it doubtful whether the Eunostidæ and Antinoitæ of Naples were two separate colleges; or whether the heroes were associated as the common patrons of one brotherhood.

209

A valuable inscription discovered in 1816 near the Baths at Lanuvium or Lavigna shows that Antinous was here associated with Diana as the saint of a benefit club. The rules of the confraternity prescribe the payments and other contributions of its members, provide for their assembling on the feast days of their patrons, fix certain fines, and regulate the ceremonies and expenses of their funerals. This club seems to have resembled modern burial societies, as known to us in England; or still more closely to have been formed upon the same model as Italian confraternitè of the Middle Ages. The Lex, or table of regulations, was drawn up in the year 133 A.D. It fixes the birthday of Antinous as v.k. Decembr., and alludes to the temple of Antinous—*Tetrastylo Antinoi*. Probably we cannot build much on the birthday as a genuine date, for the same table gives the birthday of Diana; and what was wanted was not accuracy in such matters, but a settled anniversary for banquets and pious celebrations. When we come to consider the divinity of Antinous, it will be of service to remember that at Lanuvium, together with Diana of the nether world, he was reckoned among the saints of sepulture. Could this thought have penetrated the imagination of his worshippers: that since Antinous had given his life for his friend, since he had faced death and triumphed over it, winning immortality and godhood for himself by sacrifice, the souls of his votaries might be committed to his charge and guidance on their journey through the darkness of the tomb? Could we

210

venture to infer thus much from his selection by a confraternity existing for the purpose of securing decent burial or pious funeral rites, the date of its formation, so soon after his death, would confirm the hypothesis that he was known to have devoted his life for Hadrian.

While speaking of Antinous as a divinised man, adscript to the gods of Egypt, accepted as hero and as god in Hellas, Italy, and Asia Minor, we have not yet considered the nature of his deity. The question is not so simple as it seems at first sight: and the next step to take, with a view to its solution, is to consider the various forms under which he was adored—the phases of his divinity. The coins already mentioned, and the numerous works of glyptic art surviving in the galleries of Europe, will help us to place ourselves at the same point of view as the least enlightened of his antique votaries. Reasoning upon these data by the light of classic texts, may afterwards enable us to assign him his true place in the Pantheon of decadent and uninventive Paganism.

In Egypt, as we have already seen, Antinous was worshipped by the neo-Hellenes of Antinoopolis as their Eponymous Hero; but he took the place of an elder native god, and was represented in art according to the traditions of Egyptian sculpture. The marble statue of the Vatican is devoid of hieratic emblems. Antinous is attired with the Egyptian head-dress and waistband: he holds a short truncheon firmly clasped in each hand; and by his side is a palm-stump, such as one often finds in statues of the Greek Hermes. Two colossal statues of red granite discovered in the ruins of Hadrian's villa, at Tivoli, represent him in like manner with the usual Egyptian head-dress. They seem to have been designed for pillars supporting the architrave of some huge portal; and the wands grasped firmly in both hands are supposed to be symbolical of the genii called *Dii Avernici*. Von Levezow, in his monograph upon Antinous in art, catalogues five statues of a similar description to the three already mentioned. From the indistinct character of all of them, it would appear that Antinous was nowhere identified with any one of the great Egyptian deities, but was treated as a *Dæmon* powerful to punish and protect. This designation corresponds to the contemptuous rebuke addressed by Origen to Celsus, where he argues that the new saint was only a malignant and vengeful spirit. His Egyptian medals are few and of questionable genuineness: the majority of them seem to be purely Hellenic; but on one he bears a crown like that of Isis, and on another a lotos wreath. The dim records of his cult in Egypt, and the remnants of Græco-Egyptian art, thus mark him out as one of the *Avernican* deities, associated perhaps with *Kneph* or the *Agathodæmon* of Hellenic mythology, or approximated to *Anubis*, the Egyptian *Hermes*. Neither statues nor coins throw much light upon his precise place among those gods of Nile whose throne he is said to have ascended. Egyptian piety may not have been so accommodating as that of Hellas.

With the Græco-Roman world the case is different. We obtain a clearer conception of the Antinous divinity, and recognise him always under the mask of youthful gods already honoured with fixed ritual. To worship even living men under the names and attributes of well-known deities was no new thing in Hellas. We may remember the *Ithyphallic* hymn with which the Athenians welcomed *Demetrius Poliorkêtes*, the marriage of *Anthony* as *Dionysus* to *Athenè*, and the deification of *Mithridates* as *Bacchus*. The Roman Emperors had already been represented in art with the characteristics of gods—*Nero*, for example, as *Phoebus*, and *Hadrian* as *Mars*. Such compliments were freely paid to Antinous. On the Achaian coins we find his portrait on the obverse, with different types of *Hermes* on the reverse, varied in one case by the figure of a ram, in another by the representation of a temple, in a third by a nude hero grasping a spear. One Mysian medal, bearing the epigraph '*Antinous Iacchus*,' represents him crowned with ivy, and exhibits *Demeter* on the reverse. A single specimen from *Ancyra*, with the legend '*Antinous Herôs*,' depicts the god *Lunus* carrying a crescent moon upon his shoulder. The Bithynian coins generally give youthful portraits of Antinous upon the obverse, with the title of '*Herôs*' or '*Theos*;' while the reverse is stamped with a pastoral figure, sometimes bearing the *talaria*, sometimes accompanied by a feeding ox or a boar or a star. This youth is supposed to be *Philesius*, the son of *Hermes*. In one specimen of the Bithynian series the reverse yields a head of *Proserpine* crowned with thorns. A coin of *Chalcedon* ornaments the reverse with a griffin seated near a naked figure. Another, from *Corinth*, bears the sun-god in a chariot; another, from *Cuma*, presents an armed *Pallas*. Bulls, with the crescent moon, occur in the *Hadrianotheritan* medals: a crescent moon in that of *Hierapolis*: a ram and star, a female head crowned with towers, a standing bull, and *Harpocrates* placing one finger on his lips, in those of *Nicomedia*; a horned moon and star in that of *Epirot Nicopolis*. One

Philadelphian coin is distinguished by Antinous in a temple with four columns; another by an Aphrodite in her cella. The Sardinian coins give Zeus with the thunderbolt, or Phoebus with the lyre; those of Smyrna are stamped with a standing ox, a ram, and the caduceus, a female panther and the thyrsus, or a hero reclining beneath a plane-tree; those of Tarsus with the Dionysian cista, the Phoebean tripod, the river Cydnus, and the epigraphs 'Neos Puthios,' 'Neos Iacchos;' those of the Tiansians with Antinous as Bacchus on a panther, or, in one case, as Poseidôn.

213

It would be unsafe to suppose that the emblems of the reverse in each case had a necessary relation to Antinous, whose portrait is almost invariably represented on the obverse. They may refer, as in the case of the Tarsian river-god, to the locality in which the medal was struck. Yet the frequent occurrence of the well-known type with the attributes and sacred animals of various deities, and the epigraphs 'Neos Puthios' or 'Neos Iacchos,' justify us in assuming that he was associated with divinities in vogue among the people who accepted his cult—especially Apollo, Dionysus, and Hermes. On more than one coin he is described as Antinous-Pan, showing that his Arcadian compatriots of Peloponnese and Bithynia paid him the compliment of placing him beside their great local deity. In a Latin inscription discovered at Tibur, he is connected with the sun-god of Noricia, Pannonia and Illyria, who was worshipped under the title of Belenus:—

Antinoo et Beleno par ætas famaue par est;
Cur non Antinous sit quoque qui Belenus?

This couplet sufficiently explains the ground of his adscription to the society of gods distinguished for their beauty. Both Belenus and Antinous are young and beautiful: why, therefore, should not Antinous be honoured equally with Belenus? The same reasoning would apply to all his impersonations. The pious imagination or the æsthetic taste tricked out this favourite of fortune in masquerade costumes, just as a wealthy lover may amuse himself by dressing his mistress after the similitude of famous beauties. The analogy of statues confirms this assumption. A considerable majority represent him as Dionysus Kisseus: in some of the best he is conceived as Hermes of the Palæstra or a simple hero: in one he is probably Dionysus Antheus; in another Vertumnus or Aristæus; yet again he is the Agathos Daimon: while a fine specimen preserved in England shows him as Ganymede raising a goblet of wine: a little statue in the Louvre gives him the attributes of youthful Herakles; a basrelief of somewhat doubtful genuineness in the Villa Albani exhibits him with Romanised features in the character perhaps of Castor. Again, I am not sure whether the Endymion in the celebrated basrelief of the Capitol does not yield a portrait of Antinous.

214

This rapid enumeration will suffice to show that Antinous was universally conceived as a young deity in bloom, and that preference was given to Phoebus and Iacchus, the gods of divination and enthusiasm, for his associates. In some cases he appears to have been represented as a simple hero without the attributes of any deity. Many of his busts, and the fine nude statues of the Capitol and the Neapolitan Museum, belong to this class, unless we recognise the two last as Antinous under the form of a young Hercules, or of the gymnastic Hermes. But when he comes before us with the title of Puthios, or with the attributes of Dionysus, distinct reference is probably intended in the one case to his oracular quality, in the other to the enthusiasm which led to his death. Allusions to Harpocrates, Lunus, Aristæus, Philesius, Vertumnus, Castor, Herakles, Ganymedes, show how the divinising fancy played around the beauty of his youth, and sought to connect him with myths already honoured in the pious conscience. Lastly, though it would be hazardous to strain this point, we find in his chief impersonations a Chthonian character, a touch of the mystery that is shrouded in the world beyond the grave. The double nature of his Athenian cult may perhaps confirm this view. But, over and above all these symbolic illustrations, one artistic motive of immortal loveliness pervades and animates the series.

It becomes at this point of some moment to determine what was the relation of Antinous to the gods with whom he blended, and whose attributes he shared. It seems tolerably certain that he had no special legend which could be idealised in art. The mythopoeic fancy invented no fable for him. His cult was parasitic upon elder cults. He was the colleague of greater well-established deities, from whom he borrowed a pale and evanescent lustre. Speaking accurately, he was a hero or divinised mortal, on the same grade as Helen immortalised for her beauty, as Achilles for his prowess, or as Herakles for his great deeds. But having no poet like Homer to sing his achievements, no myth fertile in emblems, he dwelt beneath the shadow of superior powers, and crept

215

into a place with them. What was this place worth? What was the meaning attached by his votaries to the title σύνθρονος or πάρεδρος θεός? According to the simple meaning of both epithets, he occupied a seat together with or by the side of the genuine Olympians. In this sense Pindar called Dionysus the πάρεδρος of Demeter, because the younger god had been admitted to her worship on equal terms at Eleusis. In this sense Sophocles spoke of Himeros as πάρεδρος of the eternal laws, and of Justice as σύνοικος with the Chthonian deities. In this sense Euripides makes Helen ζύυθακος her brethren, the Dioscuri. In this sense the three chief Archons at Athens were said to have two πάρεδροι apiece. In this sense, again, Hephæstion was named a θεος παρεδρος, and Alexander in his lifetime was voted a thirteenth in the company of the twelve Olympians. The divinised emperors were πάρεδροι or σύνθρονοι nor did Virgil hesitate to flatter Augustus by questioning into which college of the immortals he would be adscript after death—

Tuque adeo, quem mox quæ sint habitura deorum
Concilia, incertum est.

Conscript deities of this heroic order were supposed to avert evils from their votaries, to pursue offenders with calamity, to inspire prophetic dreams, and to appear, as the phantom of Achilles appeared to Apollonius of Tyana, and answer questions put to them. They corresponded very closely and exactly to the saints of mediævalism, acting as patrons of cities, confraternities, and persons, and interposing between the supreme powers of heaven and their especial devotees. As a πάρεδρος of this exalted quality, Antinous was the associate of Phoebus, Bacchus, and Hermes among the Olympians, and a colleague with the gods of Nile. The principal difficulty of grasping his true rank consists in the variety of his emblems and divine disguises.

It must here be mentioned that the epithet πάρεδρος had a secondary and inferior signification. It was applied by later authors to the demons or familiar spirits who attended upon enchanters like Simon Magus or Apollonius; and such satellites were believed to be supplied by the souls of innocent young persons violently slain. Whether this secondary meaning of the title indicates a degeneration of the other, and forms the first step of the process whereby classic heroes were degraded into the foul fiends of mediæval fancy, or whether we find in it a wholly new application of the word, is questionable. I am inclined to believe that, while πάρεδρος θεος in the one case means an associate of the Olympian gods, πάρεδρος δαίμων in the other means a fellow-agent and assessor of the wizard. In other words, however they may afterwards have been confounded, the two uses of the same epithet were originally distinct: so that not every πάρεδρος θεος, Achilles, or Hephæstion or Antinous, was supposed to haunt and serve a sorcerer, but only some inferior spirit over whom his black art gave him authority. The πάρεδρος θεος was so called because he sat with the great gods. The πάρεδρος δαίμων was so called because he sat beside the magician. At the same time there seems sufficient evidence that the two meanings came to be confounded; and as the divinities of Hellas, with all their lustrous train, paled before the growing splendour of Christ, they gradually fell beneath the necromantic ferule of the witch.

Returning from this excursion, and determining that Antinous was a hero or divinised mortal, adscript to the college of the greater gods, and invested with many of their attributes, we may next ask the question, why this artificial cult, due in the first place to imperial passion and caprice, and nourished by the adulation of fawning provinces, was preserved from the rapid dissolution to which the flimsy products of court-flattery are subject. The mythopoetic faculty was extinct, or in its last phase of decadent vitality. There was nothing in the life of Antinous to create a legend or to stimulate the sense of awe; and yet this worship persisted long after the fear of Hadrian had passed away, long after the benefits to be derived by humouring a royal fancy had been exhausted, long after anything could be gained by playing out the farce. It is clear, from a passage in Clemens Alexandrinus, that the sacred nights of Antinous were observed, at least a century after the date of his deification, with an enthusiasm that roused the anger of the Christian Father. Again, it is worthy of notice that, while many of the noblest works of antiquity have perished, the statues of Antinous have descended to us in fair preservation and in very large numbers. From the contemptuous destruction which erased the monuments of base men in the Roman Empire they were safe; and the state in which we have them shows how little they had suffered from neglect. The most rational conclusion seems to be that Antinous became in truth a popular saint, and satisfied some new need in Paganism, for which none of the elder

and more respectable deities sufficed. The novelty of his cult had, no doubt, something to do with the fascination it exercised; and something may be attributed to the impulse art received from the introduction of so rare and original a type of beauty into the exhausted cycle of mythical subjects. The blending of Greek and Egyptian elements was also attractive to an age remarkable for its eclecticism. But after allowing for the many adventitious circumstances which concurred to make Antinous the fashion, it is hardly unreasonable to assume that the spirit of poetry in the youth's story, the rumour of his self-devoted death, kept him alive in the memory of the people. It is just that element of romance in the tale of his last hours, that preservative association with the pathos of self-sacrifice, which forms the interest we still feel for him.

The deified Antinous was therefore for the Roman world a charming but dimly felt and undeveloped personality, made perfect by withdrawal into an unseen world of mystery. The belief in the value of vicarious suffering attached itself to his beautiful and melancholy form. His sorrow borrowed something of the universal world-pain, more pathetic than the hero-pangs of Herakles, the anguish of Prometheus, or the passion of Iacchus-Zagreus, because more personal and less suggestive of a cosmic mystery. The ancient cries of Ah Linus, Ah Adonis, found in him an echo. For votaries ready to accept a new god as simply as we accept a new poet, he was the final manifestation of an old-world mystery, the rejuvenescence of a well-known incarnation, the semi-Oriental realisation of a recurring Avatar. And if we may venture on so bold a surmise, this last flower of antique mythology had taken up into itself a portion of the blood outpoured on Calvary. Planted in the conservatory of semi-philosophical yearnings, faintly tintured with the colours of misapprehended Christianity, without inherent stamina, without the powerful nutrition which the earlier heroic fables had derived from the spiritual vigour of a truly mythopoeic age, the cult of Antinous subsisted as an echo, a reflection, the last serious effort of deifying but no longer potent Paganism, the last reverberation of its oracles, an æsthetic rather than a religious product, viewed even in its origin with sarcasm by the educated, and yet sufficiently attractive to enthral the minds of simple votaries, and to survive the circumstances of its first creation. It may be remembered that the century which witnessed the canonisation of Antinous, produced the myth of Cupid and Psyche—or, if this be too sweeping an assertion, gave it final form, and handed it, in its suggestive beauty, to the modern world. Thus at one and the same moment the dying spirit of Hellas seized upon those doctrines of self-devotion and immortality which, through the triumph of Christian teaching, were gaining novel and incalculable value for the world. According to its own laws of inspiration, it stamped both legends of Love victorious over Death, with beautiful form in myth and poem and statuary.

That we are not altogether unjustified in drawing this conclusion may be gathered from the attitude assumed by the Christian apologists toward Antinous. There is more than the mere hatred of a Pagan hero, more than the bare indignation at a public scandal, in their acrimony. Accepting the calumnious insinuations of Dion Cassius, these gladiators of the new faith found a terrible rhetorical weapon ready to their hands in the canonisation of a court favourite. Prudentius, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Eusebius, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, Tatian—all inveigh, in nearly the same terms, against the Emperor's Ganymede, exalted to the skies, and worshipped with base fear and adulation by abject slaves. But in Origen, arguing with Celsus, we find a somewhat different keynote struck. Celsus, it appears, had told the story of Antinous, and had compared his cult with that of Christ. Origen replies justly, that there was nothing in common between the lives of Antinous and of Christ, and that his supposed divinity is a fiction. We can discern in this response an echo of the faith which endeared Antinous to his Pagan votaries. Antinous was hated by the Christians as a rival; insignificant, it is true, and unworthy, but still of sufficient force to be regarded and persecuted. If Antinous had been utterly contemptible, if he had not gained some firm hold upon the piety of Græco-Roman Paganism, Celsus could hardly have ventured to rest an argument upon his worship, nor would Origen have chosen to traverse that argument with solid reasoning, instead of passing it by in rhetorical silence. Nothing is more difficult than to understand the conditions of that age or to sympathise with its dominant passions. Educated as we have been in the traditions of the finally triumphant Christian faith, warmed through and through as we are by its summer glow and autumn splendour, believing as we do in the adequacy of its spirit to satisfy the cravings of the human heart, how can we comprehend a moment in its growth when the divinised Antinous was not merely an object offensive to the moral

sense, but also a parody dangerous to the pure form of Christ?

It remains to say somewhat of Antinous as he appears in art. His place in classic sculpture corresponds to his position in antique mythology. The Antinous statues and coins are reflections of earlier artistic masterpieces, executed with admirable skill, but lacking original faculty for idealisation in the artists. Yet there is so much personal attraction in his type, his statues are so manifestly faithful portraits, and we find so great a charm of novelty in his delicately perfect individuality, that the life-romance which they reveal, as through a veil of mystery, has force enough to make them rank among the valuable heirlooms of antiquity. We could almost believe that, while so many gods and heroes of Greece have perished, Antinous has been preserved in all his forms and phases for his own most lovely sake; as though, according to Ghiberti's exquisite suggestion, gentle souls in the first centuries of Christianity had spared this blameless youth, and hidden him away with tender hands, in quiet places, from the fury of iconoclasts. Nor is it impossible that the great vogue of his worship was due among the Pagan laity to this same fascination of pure beauty. Could a more graceful temple of the body have been fashioned, after the Platonic theory, for the habitation of a guileless, god-inspired, enthusiastic soul? The personality of Antinous, combined with the suggestion of his self-devoted death, made him triumphant in art as in the affections of the pious.

221

It would be an interesting task to compose a *catalogue raisonné* of Antinous statues and basreliefs, and to discuss the question of their mythological references. This is, however, not the place for such an inquiry. And yet I cannot quit Antinous without some retrospect upon the most important of his portraits. Among the simple busts, by far the finest, to my thinking, are the colossal head of the Louvre, and the ivy-crowned bronze at Naples. The latter is not only flawless in its execution, but is animated with a pensive beauty of expression. The former, though praised by Winckelmann, as among the two or three most precious masterpieces of antique art, must be criticised for a certain vacancy and lifelessness. Of the heroic statues, the two noblest are those of the Capitol and Naples. The identity of the Capitoline Antinous has only once, I think, been seriously questioned; and yet it may be reckoned more than doubtful. The head is almost certainly not his. How it came to be placed upon a body presenting so much resemblance to the type of Antinous I do not know. Careful comparison of the torso and the arms with an indubitable portrait will even raise the question whether this fine statue is not a Hermes or a hero of an earlier age. Its attitude suggests Narcissus or Adonis; and under either of these forms Antinous may properly have been idealised. The Neapolitan marble, on the contrary, yields the actual Antinous in all the exuberant fulness of his beauty. Head, body, pose, alike bring him vividly before us, forming an undoubtedly authentic portrait. The same personality, idealised, it is true, but rather suffering than gaining by the process, is powerfully impressed upon the colossal Dionysus of the Vatican. What distinguishes this great work is the inbreathed spirit of divinity, more overpowering here than in any other of the extant *αυδριάντες και αγάλματα*. The basrelief of the Villa Albani, restored to suit the conception of a Vertumnus, has even more of florid beauty; but whether the restoration was wisely made may be doubted. It is curious to compare this celebrated masterpiece of technical dexterity with another basrelief in the Villa Albani, representing Antinous as Castor. He is standing, half clothed with the chlamys, by a horse. His hair is close-cropped, after the Roman fashion, cut straight above the forehead, but crowned with a fillet of lotos-buds. The whole face has a somewhat stern and frowning Roman look of resolution, contrasting with the mild benignity of the Bacchus statues, and the almost sulky voluptuousness of the busts. In the Lateran Museum Antinous appears as a god of flowers, holding in his lap a multitude of blossoms, and wearing on his head a wreath. The conception of this statue provokes comparison with the Flora of the Neapolitan Museum. I should like to recognise in it a Dionysus Antheus, rather than one of the more prosy Roman gods of horticulture. Not unworthy to rank with these first-rate portraits of Antinous is a Ganymede, engraved by the Dilettante Society, which represents him standing alert, in one hand holding the wine-jug and in the other lifting a cup aloft. It will be seen from even this brief enumeration of a few among the statues of Antinous, how many and how various they are. One, however, remains still to be discussed, which, so far as concerns the story of Antinous, is by far the most interesting of all. As a work of art, to judge by photographs, it is inferior to others in execution and design. Yet could we but understand its meaning clearly, the mystery of Antinous would be solved: the key to the whole matter probably lies

222

223

here; but, alas! we know not how to use it. I speak of the Ildefonso Group at Madrid.^[96]

[96] See Frontispiece.

On one pedestal there are three figures in white marble. To the extreme right of the spectator stands a little female statue of a goddess, in archaistic style, crowned with the calathos, and holding a sphere, probably of pomegranate fruit, to her breast. To the left of this image are two young men, three times the height of the goddess, quite naked, standing one on each side of a low altar. Both are crowned with a wreath of leaves and berries—laurel or myrtle. The youth to the right, next the image, holds a torch in either hand: with the right he turns the flaming point downwards, till it lies upon the altar; with the left he lifts the other torch aloft, and rests it on his shoulder. He has a beautiful Græco-Roman face, touched with sadness or ineffable reflection. The second youth leans against his comrade, resting his left arm across the other's back, and this hand is lightly placed upon the shoulder, close to the lifted torch. His right arm is bent, and so placed that the hand just cuts the line of the pelvis a little above the hip. The weight of his body is thrown principally upon the right leg; the left foot is drawn back, away from the altar. It is the attitude of the Apollo Sauroctonos. His beautiful face, bent downward, is intently gazing with a calm, collected, serious, and yet sad cast of earnest meditation. His eyes seem fixed on something beyond him and beneath him—as it were on an inscrutable abyss; and in this direction also looks his companion. The face is unmistakably the face of Antinous; yet the figure, and especially the legs, are not characteristic. They seem modelled after the conventional type of the Greek Ephebus. Parts of the two torches and the lower half of the right arm of Antinous are restorations.

224

Such is the Ildefonso marble; and it may be said that its execution is hard and rough—the arms of both figures are carelessly designed; the hands and fingers are especially angular, elongated, and ill-formed. But there is a noble feeling in the whole group, notwithstanding. F. Tieck, the sculptor and brother of the poet, was the first to suggest that we have here Antinous, the Genius of Hadrian, and Persephone.^[97] He also thought that the self-immolation of Antinous was indicated by the loving, leaning attitude of the younger man, and by his melancholy look of resolution. The same view, in all substantial points, is taken by Friedrichs, author of a work on Græco-Roman sculpture. But Friedrichs, while admitting the identity of the younger figure with Antinous, and recognising Persephone in the archaic image, is not prepared to accept the elder as the Genius of Hadrian; and it must be confessed that this face does not bear any resemblance to the portraits of the Emperor. According to his interpretation, the Dæmon is kindling the fire upon the sacrificial altar with the depressed torch; and the second or lifted torch must be supposed to have been needed for the performance of some obscure rite of immolation. What Friedrichs fails to elucidate is the trustful attitude of Antinous, who could scarcely have been conceived as thus affectionately reclining on the shoulder of a merely sacrificial dæmon; nor is there anything upon the altar to kindle. It must, however, be conceded that the imperfection of the marble at this point leaves the restoration of the altar and the torch upon it doubtful.

225

[97] See the article on Antinous, by Victor Rydberg, in the *Svensk Tidskrift för Litteratur, Politik, och Ekonomi*. 1875, Stockholm. Also Karl Bötticher, *Königliches Museum, Erklärendes Verzeichniss*. Berlin, 1871.

Charles Bötticher started a new solution of the principal problem. According to him, it was executed in the lifetime of Antinous; and it represents not a sacrifice of death, but a sacrifice of fidelity on the part of the two friends, Hadrian and Antinous, who have met together before Persephone to ratify a vow of love till death. He suggests that the wreaths are of stephanotis, that large-leaved myrtle, which was sacred to the Chthonian goddesses after the liberation of Semele from Hades by her son Dionysus. With reference to such ceremonies between Greek comrades, Bötticher cites a vase upon which Theseus and Peirithous are sacrificing in the temple of Persephone; and he assumes that there may have existed Athenian groups in marble representing similar vows of friendship, from which Hadrian had this marble copied. He believes that the Genius of Hadrian is kindling one torch at the sacred fire, which he will reach to Antinous, while he holds the other in readiness to kindle for himself. This explanation is both ingenious and beautiful. It has also the great merit of explaining the action of the right arm of Antinous. Yet it is hardly satisfactory. It throws no light upon the melancholy and solemnity

of both figures, which irresistibly suggest a funereal rather than a joyous rite. Antinous is not even looking at the altar, and the meditative curves of his beautiful reclining form indicate anything rather than the spirited alacrity with which a friend would respond to his comrade's call at such a moment. Besides, why should not the likeness of Hadrian have been preserved as well as that of Antinous, if the group commemorated an act of their joint will? On the other hand, we must admit that the altar itself is not dressed for a funereal sacrifice.

226

It has been pointed out that in the British Museum there exists a basrelief of Homer's apotheosis where we notice a figure holding two torches. Is it, then, possible that the Ildefonso marble may express, not the sacrifice, but the apotheosis of Antinous, and that the Genius who holds the two torches is conferring on him immortality? The lifted torch would symbolise his new life, and the depressed torch would stand for the life he had devoted. According to this explanation, the sorrowful expression of Antinous must indicate the agony of death through which he passed into the company of the undying. Against this interpretation is the fact that we have no precise authority for the symbolism of the torches, except only the common inversion of the life-brand by the Genius of Death.

Yet another solution may be suggested. Assuming that we have before us a sacrificial ceremony, and that the group was executed after the self-devotion of Antinous had passed into the popular belief, we may regard the elder youth as either the Genius of the Emperor, separate in spirit from Hadrian himself and presiding over his destinies, who accepts the offer of Antinous with solemn calmness suited to so great a gift; or else as the Genius of the Roman people, witnessing the same act in the same majestic spirit. This view finds some support in the abstract ideality of the torch-bearer, who is clearly no historical personage as Antinous himself is, but rather a power controlling his fate. The interpretation of the two torches remains very difficult. In the torch flung down upon the flameless and barren altar we might recognise a symbol of Hadrian's life upon the point of extinction, but not yet extinguished; and in the torch lifted aloft we might find a metaphor of life resuscitated and exalted. Nor is it perhaps without significance that the arm of the self-immolating youth meets the upraised torch, as though to touch the life which he will purchase with his death. There is, however, the objection stated above to this bold use of symbolism.

227

In support of any explanation which ascribes this group to a period later than the canonisation of Antinous, it may be repeated that the execution is inferior to that of almost all the other statues of the hero. Is it possible, then, that it belongs to a subsequent date, when art was further on the wane, but when the self-devotion of Antinous had become a dogma of his cult?

After all is said, the Ildefonso marble, like the legend of Antinous, remains a mystery. Only hypotheses, more or less ingenious, more or less suited to our sympathies, varying between Casaubon's coarse vilification and Rydberg's roseate vision, are left us.

As a last note on the subject of Antinous let me refer to Raphael's statue of Jonah in the Chigi Chapel of S. Maria del Popolo at Rome. Raphael, who handled the myth of Cupid and Psyche so magnificently in the Villa Farnesina of his patron Agostino Chigi, dedicated a statue of Antinous—the only statue he ever executed in marble—under the title of a Hebrew prophet in a Christian sanctuary. The fact is no less significant than strange. During the early centuries of Christianity, as is amply proved by the sarcophagi in the Lateran Museum, Jonah symbolised self-sacrifice and immortality. He was a type of Christ, an emblem of the Christian's hope beyond the grave. During those same centuries Antinous represented the same ideas, however inadequately, however dimly, for the unlettered laity of Paganism. It could scarcely have been by accident, or by mere admiration for the features of Antinous, that Raphael, in his marble, blent the Christian and the Pagan traditions. To unify and to transcend the double views of Christianity and Paganism in a work of pure art was Raphael's instinctive, if not his conscious, aim. Nor is there a more striking instance of this purpose than the youthful Jonah with the head of Hadrian's favourite. Leonardo's Dionysus-John-the-Baptist seems but a careless *jeu d'esprit* compared with this profound and studied symbol of nascent humanism. Thus to regard the Jonah-Antinous of the Cappella Chigi as a type of immortality and self-devotion, fusing Christian and Græco-Roman symbolism in one work of modern art, is the most natural interpretation; but it would not be impossible to trace in it a metaphor of the resurgent Pagan spirit also—as though, leaving Jonah and his Biblical associations in the background, the artist had determined that from the mouth of the monstrous grave

228

should issue not a bearded prophet, but the victorious youth who had captivated with his beauty and his heroism the sunset age of the classic world. At any rate, whatever may have been Raphael's intention, the legend of Antinous, that last creation of antique mythology, shines upon us in this marble, just as the tale of Hero and Leander, that last blossom of antique literature, flowers afresh in the verses of our Marlowe. It would appear as though the Renaissance poets, hastening to meet the classic world with arms of welcome, had embraced its latest saints, as nearest to them, in the rapture of their first enthusiasm.

Over all these questions, over all that concerns Antinous, there rests a cloud of darkness and impenetrable doubt. To pierce that cloud is now impossible. The utmost we can do is to indulge our fancy in dreams of greater or less probability, and to mark out clearly the limitations of the subject. It is indeed something to have shown that the stigma of slavery and disgrace attaching to his name has no solid historical justification, and something to have suggested plausible reasons for conjecturing that his worship had a genuine spiritual basis. Yet the sincere critic, at the end of the whole inquiry, will confess that he has only cast a plummet into the unfathomable sea of ignorance. What remains, immortal, indestructible, victorious, is Antinous in art. Against the gloomy background of doubt, calumny, contention, terrible surmise, his statues are illuminated with the dying glory of the classic genius—even as the towers and domes of a marble city shine forth from the purple banks of a thunder-cloud in sunset light. Here and here only does reality emerge from the chaos of conflicting phantoms. Front to front with them, it is allowed us to forget all else but the beauty of one who died young because the gods loved him. But when we question those wonderful mute features and beg them for their secret, they return no answer. There is not even a smile upon the parted lips. So profound is the mystery, so insoluble the enigma, that from its most importunate interrogation we derive nothing but an attitude of deeper reverence. This in itself, however, is worth the pains of study.^[98]

229

[98] I must here express my indebtedness to my friend H.F. Brown for a large portion of the materials used by me in this essay on Antinous, which I had no means at Davos Platz of accumulating for myself, and which he unearthed from the libraries of Florence in the course of his own work, and generously placed at my disposal.

ANA-CAPRI

The storm-clouds at this season, though it is the bloom of May, are daily piled in sulky or menacing masses over Vesuvius and the Abruzzi, frothing out their curls of moulded mist across the bay, and climbing the heavens with toppling castle towers and domes of alabaster.

We made the most of a tranquil afternoon, when there was an armistice of storm, to climb the bluff of Mount Solaro. A ruined fort caps that limestone bulwark; and there we lay together, drinking the influences of sea, sun, and wind. Immeasurably deep beneath us plunged the precipices, deep, deep descending to a bay where fisher boats were rocking, diminished to a scale that made the fishermen in them invisible. Low down above the waters wheeled white gulls, and higher up the hawks and ospreys of the cliff sailed out of sunlight into shadow. Immitigable strength is in the moulding of this limestone, and sharp, clear definiteness marks yon clothing of scant brushwood where the fearless goats are browsing. The sublime of sculpturesque in crag structure is here, refined and modulated by the sweetness of sea distances. For the air came pure and yielding to us over the unfooted sea; and at the basement of those fortress-cliffs the sea was dreaming in its caves; and far away, to east and south and west, soft light was blent with mist upon the surface of the shimmering waters.

The distinction between prospects viewed from a mountain overlooking a great plain, or viewed from heights that, like this, dominate the sea, principally lies in this: that while the former only offer cloud shadows cast upon the fields below our feet, in the latter these shadows are diversified with cloud reflections. This gives superiority in qualities of colour, variety of tone, and luminous effect to the sea, compensating in some measure for the lack of those associations which render the outlook over a wide extent of populated land so thrilling. The emergence of towered cities into sunlight at the skirts of moving shadows, the liquid lapse of rivers half disclosed by windings among woods, the upturned mirrors of unruffled lakes, are wanting to the sea. For such episodes the white sails of vessels, with all their wistfulness of going to and fro on the mysterious deep, are but a poor exchange. Yet the sea-lover may justify his preference by appealing to the beauty of empurpled shadows, toned by amethyst or opal, or shining with violet light, reflected from the clouds that cross and find in those dark shields a mirror. There are suggestions, too, of immensity, of liberty, of action, presented by the boundless horizons and the changeless changeless tracts of ocean which no plain possesses.

It was nigh upon sunset when we descended to Ana-Capri. That evening the clouds assembled suddenly. The armistice of storm was broken. They were terribly blue, and the sea grew dark as steel beneath them, till the moment when the sun's lip reached the last edge of the waters. Then a courier of rosy flame sent forth from him passed swift across the gulf, touching, where it trod, the waves with accidental fire. The messenger reached Naples; and in a moment, as by some diabolical illumination, the sinful city kindled into light like glowing charcoal. From Posilippo on the left, along the palaces of the Chiaja, up to S. Elmo on the hill, past Santa Lucia, down on the Marinella, beyond Portici, beyond Torre del Greco, where Vesuvius towered up aloof, an angry mount of amethystine gloom, the conflagration spread and reached Pompeii, and dwelt on Torre dell' Annunziata. Stationary, lurid, it smouldered while the day died slowly. The long, densely populated sea-line from Pozzuoli to Castellammare burned and smoked with intensest incandescence, sending a glare of fiery mist against the threatening blue behind, and fringing with pomegranate-coloured blots the water where no light now lingered. It is difficult to bend words to the use required. The scene, in spite of natural suavity and grace, had become like Dante's first glimpse of the City of Dis—like Sodom and Gomorrah when fire from heaven descended on their towers before they crumbled into dust.

FROM CAPRI TO ISCHIA

After this, for several days, Libeccio blew harder. No boats could leave or come to Capri. From the piazza parapet we saw the wind scooping the surface of the waves, and flinging spray-fleeces in sheets upon the churning water. As they broke on Cape Campanella, the rollers climbed in foam—how many feet?—and blotted out the olive-trees above the headland. The sky was always dark with hanging clouds and masses of

231

232

low-lying vapour, very moist, but scarcely raining—lightning without thunder in the night.

Such weather is unexpected in the middle month of May, especially when the olives are blackened by December storms, and the orange-trees despoiled of foliage, and the tendrils of the vines yellow with cold. The walnut-trees have shown no sign of making leaves. Only the figs seem to have suffered little.

It had been settled that we should start upon the first seafaring dawn for Ischia or Sorrento, according as the wind might set; and I was glad when, early one morning, the captain of the *Serena* announced a moderate sirocco. When we reached the little quay we found the surf of the Libeccio still rolling heavily into the gulf. A gusty south-easter crossed it, tearing spray-crests from the swell as it went plunging onward. The sea was rough enough; but we made fast sailing, our captain steering with a skill which it was beautiful to watch, his five oarsmen picturesquely grouped beneath the straining sail. The sea slapped and broke from time to time on our windward quarter, drenching the boat with brine; and now and then her gunwale scooped into the shoulder of a wave as she shot sidling up it. Meanwhile enormous masses of leaden-coloured clouds formed above our heads and on the sea-line; but these were always shifting in the strife of winds, and the sun shone through them petulantly. As we climbed the rollers, or sank into their trough, the outline of the bay appeared in glimpses, shyly revealed, suddenly withdrawn from sight; the immobility and majesty of mountains contrasted with the weltering waste of water round us—now blue and garish where the sunlight fell, now shrouded in squally rain-storms, and then again sullen beneath a vaporous canopy. Each of these vignettes was photographed for one brief second on the brain, and swallowed by the hurling drift of billows. The painter's art could but ill have rendered that changeful colour in the sea, passing from tawny cloud-reflections and surfaces of glowing violet to bright blue or impenetrable purple flecked with boiling foam, according as a light-illuminated or a shadowed facet of the moving mass was turned to sight.

Halfway across the gulf the sirocco lulled; the sail was lowered, and we had to make the rest of the passage by rowing. Under the lee of Ischia we got into comparatively quiet water; though here the beautiful Italian sea was yellowish green with churned-up sand, like an unripe orange. We passed the castle on its rocky island, with the domed church which has been so often painted in *gouache* pictures through the last two centuries, and soon after noon we came to Casamicciola.

LA PICCOLA SENTINELLA

Casamicciola is a village on the north side of the island, in its centre, where the visitors to the mineral baths of Ischia chiefly congregate. One of its old-established inns is called La Piccola Sentinella. The first sight on entrance is an open gallery, with a pink wall on which bloom magnificent cactuses, sprays of thick-clustering scarlet and magenta flowers. This is a rambling house, built in successive stages against a hill, with terraces and verandahs opening on unexpected gardens to the back and front. Beneath its long irregular façade there spreads a wilderness of orange-trees and honeysuckles and roses, verbenas, geraniums and mignonette, snapdragons, gazanias and stocks, exceeding bright and fragrant, with the green slopes of Monte Epomeo for a background and Vesuvius for far distance. There are wonderful bits of detail in this garden. One dark, thick-foliaged olive, I remember, leaning from the tufa over a lizard-haunted wall, feathered waist-high in huge acanthus leaves. The whole rich orchard ground of Casamicciola is dominated by Monte Epomeo, the extinct volcano which may be called the *raison d'être* of Ischia; for this island is nothing but a mountain lifted by the energy of fire from the sea-basement. Its fantastic peaks and ridges, sulphur-coloured, dusty grey, and tawny, with brushwood in young leaf upon the cloven flanks, form a singular pendant to the austere but more artistically modelled limestone crags of Capri. No two islands that I know, within so short a space of sea, offer two pictures so different in style and quality of loveliness. The inhabitants are equally distinct in type. Here, in spite of what De Musset wrote somewhat affectedly about the peasant girls—

Ischia! c'est là qu'on a des yeux,
C'est là qu'un corsage amoureux
Serre la hanche.
Sur un bas rouge bien tiré
Brille, sous le jupon doré,
La mule blanche—

in spite of these lines I did not find the Ischian women eminent, as those of Capri are, for beauty. But the young men have fine, loose, faun-like figures, and faces that would be strikingly handsome but for too long and prominent noses. They are a singular race, graceful in movement.

Evening is divine in Ischia. From the topmost garden terrace of the inn one looks across the sea towards Terracina, Gaeta, and those descending mountain buttresses, the Phlegræan plains, and the distant snows of the Abruzzi. Rain-washed and luminous, the sunset sky held Hesper trembling in a solid green of beryl. Fireflies flashed among the orange blossoms. Far away in the obscurity of eastern twilight glared the smouldering cone of Vesuvius—a crimson blot upon the darkness—a Cyclops' eye, bloodshot and menacing.

The company in the Piccola Sentinella, young and old, were decrepit, with an odd, rheumatic, shrivelled look upon them. The dining-room reminded me, as certain rooms are apt to do, of a ship's saloon. I felt as though I had got into the cabin of the *Flying Dutchman*, and that all these people had been sitting there at meat a hundred years, through storm and shine, for ever driving onward over immense waves in an enchanted calm.

ISCHIA AND FORIO

One morning we drove along the shore, up hill, and down, by the Porto d'Ischia to the town and castle. This country curiously combines the qualities of Corfu and Catania. The near distance, so richly cultivated, with the large volcanic slopes of Monte Epomeo rising from the sea, is like Catania. Then, across the gulf, are the bold outlines and snowy peaks of the Abruzzi, recalling Albanian ranges. Here, as in Sicily, the old lava is overgrown with prickly pear and red valerian. Mesembrianthemums—I must be pardoned this word; for I cannot omit those fleshy-leaved creepers, with their wealth of gaudy blossoms, shaped like sea anemones, coloured like strawberry and pineapple cream-ices—mesembrianthemums, then, tumble in torrents from the walls, and large-cupped white convolvuluses curl about the hedges. The Castle Rock, with Capri's refined sky-coloured outline relieving its hard profile on the horizon, is one of those exceedingly picturesque objects just too theatrical to be artistic. It seems ready-made for a back scene in 'Masaniello,' and cries out to the chromo-lithographer, 'Come and make the most of me!' Yet this morning all things, in sea, earth, and sky, were so delicately tinted and bathed in pearly light that it was difficult to be critical.

In the afternoon we took the other side of the island, driving through Lacca to Forio. One gets right round the bulk of Epomeo, and looks up into a weird region called Le Falange, where white lava streams have poured in two broad irregular torrents among broken precipices. Forio itself is placed at the end of a flat headland, boldly thrust into the sea; and its furthest promontory bears a pilgrimage church, intensely white and glaring.

There is something arbitrary in the memories we make of places casually visited, dependent as they are upon our mood at the moment, or on an accidental interweaving of impressions which the *genius loci* blends for us. Of Forio two memories abide with me. The one is of a young woman, with very fair hair, in a light blue dress, standing beside an older woman in a garden. There was a flourishing pomegranate-tree above them. The whiteness and the dreamy smile of the young woman seemed strangely out of tune with her strong-toned southern surroundings. I could have fancied her a daughter of some moist north-western isle of Scandinavian seas. My other memory is of a lad, brown, handsome, powerfully featured, thoughtful, lying curled up in the sun upon a sort of ladder in his house-court, profoundly meditating. He had a book in his hand, and his finger still marked the place where he had read. He looked as though a Columbus or a Campanella might emerge from his earnest, fervent, steadfast adolescence. Driving rapidly along, and leaving Forio in all probability for ever, I kept wondering whether those two lives, discerned as though in vision, would meet—whether she was destined to be his evil genius, whether posterity would hear of him and journey to his birthplace in this world-neglected Forio. Such reveries are futile. Yet who entirely resists them?

MONTE EPOMEO

About three on the morning which divides the month of May into two equal parts I woke and saw the waning moon right opposite my window, stayed in her descent upon the slope of Epomeo. Soon afterwards

Christian called me, and we settled to ascend the mountain. Three horses and a stout black donkey, with their inevitable grooms, were ordered; and we took for guide a lovely faun-like boy, goat-faced, goat-footed, with gentle manners and pliant limbs swaying beneath the breath of impulse. He was called Giuseppe.

The way leads past the mineral baths and then strikes uphill, at first through lanes cut deep in the black lava. The trees meet almost overhead. It is like Devonshire, except that one half hopes to see tropical foxgloves with violet bells and downy leaves sprouting among the lush grasses and sweet-scented ferns upon those gloomy, damp, warm walls. After this we skirted a thicket of arbutus, and came upon the long volcanic ridge, with divinest outlook over Procida and Miseno toward Vesuvius. Then once more we had to dive into brown sandstone gullies, extremely steep, where the horses almost burst their girths in scrambling, and the grooms screamed, exasperating their confusion with encouragements and curses. Straight or bending as a willow wand, Giuseppe kept in front. I could have imagined he had stepped to life from one of Lionardo's fancy-sprighted studies.

After this fashion we gained the spine of mountain which composes Ischia—the smooth ascending ridge that grows up from those eastern waves to what was once the apex of fire-vomiting Inarime, and breaks in precipices westward, a ruin of gulfed lava, tortured by the violence of pent Typhoeus. Under a vast umbrella pine we dismounted, rested, and saw Capri. Now the road skirts slanting-wise along the further flank of Epomeo, rising by muddy earth-heaps and sandstone hollows to the quaint pinnacles which build the summit. There is no inconsiderable peril in riding over this broken ground; for the soil crumbles away, and the ravines open downward, treacherously masked with brushwood.

On Epomeo's topmost cone a chapel dedicated to S. Niccolo da Bari, the Italian patron of seamen, has been hollowed from the rock. Attached to it is the dwelling of two hermits, subterranean, with long dark corridors and windows opening on the western seas. Church and hermitage alike are scooped, with slight expenditure of mason's skill, from solid mountain. The windows are but loopholes, leaning from which the town of Forio is seen, 2500 feet below; and the jagged precipices of the menacing Falange toss their contorted horror forth to sea and sky. Through gallery and grotto we wound in twilight under a monk's guidance, and came at length upon the face of the crags above Casamicciola. A few steps upward, cut like a ladder in the stone, brought us to the topmost peak—a slender spire of soft, yellowish tufa. It reminded me (with differences) of the way one climbs the spire at Strasburg, and stands upon that temple's final crocket, with nothing but a lightning conductor to steady swimming senses. Different indeed are the views unrolled beneath the peak of Epomeo and the pinnacle of Strasburg! Vesuvius, with the broken lines of Procida, Miseno, and Lago Fusaro for foreground; the sculpturesque beauty of Capri, buttressed in everlasting calm upon the waves; the Phlegræan plains and champaign of Volturno, stretching between smooth seas and shadowy hills; the mighty sweep of Naples' bay; all merged in blue; ærial, translucent, exquisitely frail. In this ethereal fabric of azure the most real of realities, the most solid of substances, seem films upon a crystal sphere.

The hermit produced some flasks of amber-coloured wine from his stores in the grotto. These we drank, lying full-length upon the tufa in the morning sunlight. The panorama of sea, sky, and long-drawn lines of coast, breathless, without a ripple or a taint of cloud, spread far and wide around us. Our horses and donkey cropped what little grass, blent with bitter herbage, grew on that barren summit. Their grooms helped us out with the hermit's wine, and turned to sleep face downward. The whole scene was very quiet, islanded in immeasurable air. Then we asked the boy, Giuseppe, whether he could guide us on foot down the cliffs of Monte Epomeo to Casamicciola. This he was willing and able to do; for he told me that he had spent many months each year upon the hillside, tending goats. When rough weather came, he wrapped himself in a blanket from the snow that falls and melts upon the ledges. In summer time he basked the whole day long, and slept the calm ambrosial nights away. Something of this free life was in the burning eyes, long clustering dark hair, and smooth brown bosom of the faun-like creature. His graceful body had the brusque, unerring movement of the goats he shepherded. Human thought and emotion seemed a-slumber in this youth who had grown one with nature. As I watched his careless incarnate loveliness I remembered lines from an old Italian poem of romance, describing a dweller of the forest, who

Haunteth the woodland aye 'neath verdurous shade,

Eateth wild fruit, drinketh of running stream;
 And such-like is his nature, as 'tis said,
 That ever weepeth he when clear skies gleam,
 Seeing of storms and rain he then hath dread,
 And feareth lest the sun's heat fail for him;
 But when on high hurl winds and clouds together,
 Full glad is he and waiteth for fair weather.

Giuseppe led us down those curious volcanic *balze*, where the soil is soft as marl, with tints splashed on it of pale green and rose and orange, and a faint scent in it of sulphur. They break away into wild chasms, where rivulets begin; and here the narrow watercourses made for us plain going. The turf beneath our feet was starred with cyclamens and wavering anemones. At last we reached the chestnut woods, and so by winding paths descended on the village. Giuseppe told me, as we walked, that in a short time he would be obliged to join the army. He contemplated this duty with a dim and undefined dislike. Nor could I, too, help dreading and misliking it for him. The untamed, gentle creature, who knew so little but his goats as yet, whose nights had been passed from childhood *à la belle étoile*, whose limbs had never been cumbered with broadcloth or belt—for him to be shut up in the barrack of some Lombard city, packed in white conscript's sacking, drilled, taught to read and write, and weighted with the knapsack and the musket! There was something lamentable in the prospect. But such is the burden of man's life, of modern life especially. United Italy demands of her children that by this discipline they should be brought into that harmony which builds a nation out of diverse elements.

241

FROM ISCHIA TO NAPLES

Ischia showed a new aspect on the morning of our departure. A sea-mist passed along the skirts of the island, and rolled in heavy masses round the peaks of Monte Epomeo, slowly condensing into summer clouds, and softening each outline with a pearly haze, through which shone emerald glimpses of young vines and fig-trees.

We left in a boat with four oarsmen for Pozzuoli. For about an hour the breeze carried us well, while Ischia behind grew ever lovelier, soft as velvet, shaped like a gem. The mist had become a great white luminous cloud—not dense and alabastrine, like the clouds of thunder; but filmy, tender, comparable to the atmosphere of Dante's moon. Porpoises and sea-gulls played and fished about our bows, dividing the dark brine in spray. The mountain distances were drowned in bluish vapour—Vesuvius quite invisible. About noon the air grew clearer, and Capri reared her fortalice of sculptured rock, aerially azure, into liquid ether. I know not what effect of atmosphere or light it is that lifts an island from the sea by interposing that thin edge of lustrous white between it and the water. But this phenomenon to-day was perfectly exhibited. Like a mirage on the wilderness, like Fata Morgana's palace ascending from the deep, the pure and noble vision stayed suspense 'twixt heaven and ocean. At the same time the breeze failed, and we rowed slowly between Procida and Capo Miseno—a space in old-world history athrong with Cæsar's navies. When we turned the point, and came in sight of Baiæ, the wind freshened and took us flying into Pozzuoli. The whole of this coast has been spoiled by the recent upheaval of Monte Nuovo with its lava floods and cindery deluges. Nothing remains to justify its fame among the ancient Romans and the Neapolitans of Boccaccio's and Pontano's age. It is quite wrecked, beyond the power even of hendecasyllables to bring again its breath of beauty:—

242

Mecum si sapiēs, Gravina, mecum
 Baias, et placidos coles recessus,
 Quos ipsæ et veneres colunt, et illa
 Quæ mentes hominum regit voluptas.
 Hic vina et choreæ jocique regnant,
 Regnant et charites facetiæque.
 Has sedes amor, has colit cupido.
 His passim juvenes puellulæque
 Ludunt, et tepidis aquis lavantur,
 Coenantque et dapibus leporibusque
 Miscent delitias venustiores:
 Miscent gaudia et osculationes,
 Atque una sociis toris fiventur,
 Has te ad delitias vocant camoenæ;
 Invitat mare, myrteumque littus;
 Invitant volueres canoræ, et ipse
 Gaurus pampineas parat corollas.^[99]

243

[99] These verses are extracted from the second book of Pontano's

Hendecasyllabi (Aldus, 1513, p. 208). They so vividly paint the amusements of a watering-place in the fifteenth century that I have translated them:—

With me, let but the mind be wise, Gravina,
With me haste to the tranquil haunts of Baiæ,
Haunts that pleasure hath made her home, and she who
Sways all hearts, the voluptuous Aphrodite.
Here wine rules, and the dance, and games and laughter;
Graces reign in a round of mirthful madness;
Love hath built, and desire, a palace here too,
Where glad youths and enamoured girls on all sides
Play and bathe in the waves in sunny weather,
Dine and sup, and the merry mirth of banquets
Blend with dearer delights and love's embraces,
Blend with pleasures of youth and honeyed kisses,
Till, sport-tired, in the couch inarmed they slumber.
Thee our Muses invite to these enjoyments;
Thee those billows allure, the myrtled seashore,
Birds allure with a song, and mighty Gaurus
Twines his redolent wreath of vines and ivy.

At Pozzuoli we dined in the Albergo del Ponte di Caligola (Heaven save the mark!), and drank Falernian wine of modern and indifferent vintage. Then Christian hired two open carriages for Naples. He and I sat in the second. In the first we placed the two ladies of our party. They had a large, fat driver. Just after we had all passed the gate a big fellow rushed up, dragged the corpulent coachman from his box, pulled out a knife, and made a savage thrust at the man's stomach. At the same moment a *guardia-porta*, with drawn cutlass, interposed and struck between the combatants. They were separated. Their respective friends assembled in two jabbering crowds, and the whole party, uttering vociferous objurgations, marched off, as I imagined, to the watch-house. A very shabby lazzarone, without more ado, sprang on the empty box, and we made haste for Naples. Being only anxious to get there, and not at all curious about the squabble which had deprived us of our fat driver, I relapsed into indifference when I found that neither of the men to whose lot we had fallen was desirous of explaining the affair. It was sufficient cause for self-congratulation that no blood had been shed, and that the Procuratore del Rè would not require our evidence.

244

The Grotta di Posilippo was a sight of wonder, with the afternoon sun slanting on its festoons of creeping plants above the western entrance—the gas lamps, dust, huge carts, oxen, and *contadini* in its subterranean darkness—and then the sudden revelation of the bay and city as we jingled out into the summery air again by Virgil's tomb.

NIGHT AT POMPEII

On to Pompeii in the clear sunset, falling very lightly upon mountains, islands, little ports, and indentations of the bay.

From the railway station we walked above half a mile to the Albergo del Sole under a lucid heaven of aqua-marine colour, with Venus large in it upon the border line between the tints of green and blue.

The Albergo del Sole is worth commemorating. We stepped, without the intervention of courtyard or entrance hall, straight from the little inn garden into an open, vaulted room. This was divided into two compartments by a stout column supporting round arches. Wooden gates furnished a kind of fence between the atrium and what an old Pompeian would have styled the triclinium. For in the further part a table was laid for supper and lighted with suspended lamps. And here a party of artists and students drank and talked and smoked. A great live peacock, half asleep and winking his eyes, sat perched upon a heavy wardrobe watching them. The outer chamber, where we waited in armchairs of ample girth, had its *loggia* windows and doors open to the air. There were singing-birds in cages; and plants of rosemary, iris, and arundo sprang carelessly from holes in the floor. A huge vase filled to overflowing with oranges and lemons, the very symbol of generous prodigality, stood in the midst, and several dogs were lounging round. The outer twilight, blending with the dim sheen of the lamps, softened this pretty scene to picturesqueness. Altogether it was a strange and unexpected place. Much experienced as the nineteenth-century nomad may be in inns, he will rarely receive a more powerful and refreshing impression, entering one at evenfall, than here.

245

There was no room for us in the inn. We were sent, attended by a boy with a lantern, through fields of dew-drenched barley and folded poppies, to a farmhouse overshadowed by four spreading pines. Exceedingly soft and grey, with rose-tinted weft of steam upon its

summit, stood Vesuvius above us in the twilight. Something in the recent impression of the dimly lighted supper-room, and in the idyllic simplicity of this lantern-litten journey through the barley, suggested, by one of those inexplicable stirrings of association which affect tired senses, a dim, dreamy thought of Palestine and Bible stories. The feeling of the *cenacolo* blent here with feelings of Ruth's cornfields, and the white square houses with their flat roofs enforced the illusion. Here we slept in the middle of a *contadino* colony. Some of the folk had made way for us; and by the wheezing, coughing, and snoring of several sorts and ages in the chamber next me, I imagine they must have endured considerable crowding. My bed was large enough to have contained a family. Over its head there was a little shrine, hollowed in the thickness of the wall, with several sacred emblems and a shallow vase of holy water. On dressers at each end of the room stood glass shrines, occupied by finely dressed Madonna dolls and pots of artificial flowers. Above the doors S. Michael and S. Francis, roughly embossed in low relief and boldly painted, gave dignity and grandeur to the walls. These showed some sense for art in the first builders of the house. But the taste of the inhabitants could not be praised. There were countless gaudy prints of saints, and exactly five pictures of the Bambino, very big, and sprawling in a field alone. A crucifix, some old bottles, a gun, old clothes suspended from pegs, pieces of peasant pottery and china, completed the furniture of the apartment.

246

But what a view it showed when Christian next morning opened the door! From my bed I looked across the red-tiled terrace to the stone-pines with their velvet roofage and the blue-peaked hills of Stabia.

SAN GERMANO

No one need doubt about his quarters in this country town. The Albergo di Pompeii is a truly sumptuous place. Sofas, tables, and chairs in our sitting-room are made of buffalo horns, very cleverly pieced together, but torturing the senses with suggestions of impalement. Sitting or standing, one felt insecure. When would the points run into us? when should we begin to break these incrustations off? and would the whole fabric crumble at a touch into chaotic heaps of horns?

It is market day, and the costumes in the streets are brilliant. The women wear a white petticoat, a blue skirt made straight and tightly bound above it, a white richly worked bodice, and the white square-folded napkin of the Abruzzi on their heads. Their jacket is of red or green—pure colour. A rug of striped red, blue, yellow, and black protects the whole dress from the rain. There is a very noble quality of green—sappy and gemmy—like some of Titian's or Giorgione's—in the stuffs they use. Their build and carriage are worthy of goddesses.

247

Rain falls heavily, persistently. We must ride on donkeys, in waterproofs, to Monte Cassino. Mountain and valley, oak wood and ilex grove, lentisk thicket and winding river-bed, are drowned alike in soft-descending, soaking rain. Far and near the landscape swims in rain, and the hillsides send down torrents through their watercourses.

The monastery is a square, dignified building, of vast extent and princely solidity. It has a fine inner court, with sumptuous staircases of slabbed stone leading to the church. This public portion of the edifice is both impressive and magnificent, without sacrifice of religious severity to parade. We acknowledge a successful compromise between the austerity of the order and the grandeur befitting the fame, wealth, prestige, and power of its parent foundation. The church itself is a tolerable structure of the Renaissance—costly marble incrustations and mosaics, meaningless Neapolitan frescoes. One singular episode in the mediocrity of art adorning it, is the tomb of Pietro de' Medici. Expelled from Florence in 1494, he never returned, but was drowned in the Garigliano. Clement VII. ordered, and Duke Cosimo I. erected, this marble monument—the handicraft, in part at least, of Francesco di San Gallo—to their relative. It is singularly stiff, ugly, out of place—at once obtrusive and insignificant.

A gentle old German monk conducted Christian and me over the convent—boys' school, refectory, printing press, lithographic workshop, library, archives. We then returned to the church, from which we passed to visit the most venerable and sacred portion of the monastery. The cell of S. Benedict is being restored and painted in fresco by the Austrian Benedictines; a pious but somewhat frigid process of re-edification. This so-called cell is a many-chambered and very ancient building, with a tower which is now embedded in the massive superstructure of the modern monastery. The German artists adorning it contrive to blend the styles of Giotto, Fra Angelico, Egypt, and Byzance, not without force and a kind of intense frozen pietism. S. Mauro's vision of his master's

248

translation to heaven—the ladder of light issuing between two cypresses, and the angels watching on the tower walls—might even be styled poetical. But the decorative angels on the roof and other places, being adapted from Egyptian art, have a strange, incongruous appearance.

Monasteries are almost invariably disappointing to one who goes in search of what gives virtue and solidity to human life; and even Monte Cassino was no exception. This ought not to be otherwise, seeing what a peculiar sympathy with the monastic institution is required to make these cloisters comprehensible. The atmosphere of operose indolence, prolonged through centuries and centuries, stifles; nor can antiquity and influence impose upon a mind which resents monkery itself as an essential evil. That Monte Cassino supplied the Church with several potentates is incontestable. That mediæval learning and morality would have suffered more without this brotherhood cannot be doubted. Yet it is difficult to name men of very eminent genius whom the Cassinesi claim as their alumni; nor, with Boccaccio's testimony to their carelessness, and with the evidence of their library before our eyes, can we rate their services to civilised erudition very highly. I longed to possess the spirit, for one moment, of Montalembert. I longed for what is called historical imagination, for the indiscriminate voracity of those men to whom world-famous sites are in themselves soul-stirring.

The road between Vietri and Amalfi is justly celebrated as one of the most lovely pieces of coast scenery in Italy. Its only rivals are the roads from Castellammare to Sorrento, from Genoa to Sestri, and from Nice to Mentone. Each of these has its own charm; and yet their similarity is sufficient to invite comparison: under the spell of each in turn, we are inclined to say, This then, at all events, is the most beautiful. On first quitting Vietri, Salerno is left low down upon the sea-shore, nestling into a little corner of the bay which bears its name, and backed up by gigantic mountains. With each onward step these mountain-ranges expand in long ærial line, revealing reaches of fantastic peaks, that stretch away beyond the plain of Pæstum, till they end at last in mist and sunbeams shimmering on the sea. On the left hand hangs the cliff above the deep salt water, with here and there a fig-tree spreading fanlike leaves against the blue beneath. On the right rises the hillside, clothed with myrtle, lentisk, cistus, and pale yellow coronilla—a tangle as sweet with scent as it is gay with blossom. Over the parapet that skirts the precipice lean heavy-foliaged locust-trees, and the terraces in sunny nooks are set with lemon-orchards. There are but few olives, and no pines. Meanwhile each turn in the road brings some change of scene—now a village with its little beach of grey sand, lapped by clearest seawaves, where bare-legged fishermen mend their nets, and naked boys bask like lizards in the sun—now towering bastions of weird rock, broken into spires and pinnacles like those of Skye, and coloured with bright hues of red and orange—then a ravine, where the thin thread of a mountain streamlet seems to hang suspended upon ferny ledges in the limestone—or a precipice defined in profile against sea and sky, with a lad, half dressed in goat-skin, dangling his legs into vacuity and singing—or a tract of cultivation, where the orange, apricot, and lemon trees nestle together upon terraces with intermingled pergolas of vines.

251

Amalfi and Atrani lie close together in two of these ravines, the mountains almost arching over them, and the sea washing their very house-walls. Each has its crowning campanile; but that of Amalfi is the stranger of the two, like a Moorish tower at the top, and coloured with green and yellow tiles that glitter in the sunlight. The houses are all dazzling white, plastered against the naked rock, rising on each other's shoulders to get a glimpse of earth and heaven, jutting out on coigns of vantage from the toppling cliff, and pierced with staircases as dark as night at noonday. Some frequented lanes lead through the basements of these houses; and as the donkeys pick their way from step to step in the twilight, bare-chested macaroni-makers crowd forth like ants to see us strangers pass. A myriad of swallows or a swarm of mason bees might build a town like this.

It is not easy to imagine the time when Amalfi and Atrani were one town, with docks and arsenals and harbourage for their associated fleets, and when these little communities were second in importance to no naval power of Christian Europe. The Byzantine Empire lost its hold on Italy during the eighth century; and after this time the history of Calabria is mainly concerned with the republics of Naples and Amalfi, their conflict with the Lombard dukes of Benevento, their opposition to the Saracens, and their final subjugation by the Norman conquerors of Sicily. Between the year 839 A.D., when Amalfi freed itself from the control of Naples and the yoke of Benevento, and the year 1131, when Roger of Hauteville incorporated the republic in his kingdom of the Two Sicilies, this city was the foremost naval and commercial port of Italy. The burghers of Amalfi elected their own doge; founded the Hospital of Jerusalem, whence sprang the knightly order of S. John; gave their name to the richest quarter in Palermo; and owned trading establishments or factories in all the chief cities of the Levant. Their gold coinage of *tari* formed the standard of currency before the Florentines had stamped the lily and S. John upon the Tuscan florin. Their shipping regulations supplied Europe with a code of maritime laws. Their scholars, in the darkest depth of the dark ages, prized and coned a famous copy of the Pandects of Justinian; and their seamen deserved the fame of having first used, if they did not actually invent, the compass.

252

To modern visitors those glorious centuries of Amalfitan power and independence cannot but seem fabulous; so difficult is it for us to imagine the conditions of society in Europe when a tiny city, shut in between barren mountains and a tideless sea, without a circumjacent territory, and with no resources but piracy or trade, could develop maritime supremacy in the Levant and produce the first fine flowers of liberty and culture.

If the history of Amalfi's early splendour reads like a brilliant legend, the story of its premature extinction has the interest of a tragedy. The republic had grown and flourished on the decay of the Greek Empire. When the hard-handed race of Hauteville absorbed the heritage of Greeks and Lombards and Saracens in Southern Italy, these adventurers succeeded in annexing Amalfi. But it was not their interest to extinguish the state. On the contrary, they relied for assistance upon the navies and the armies of the little commonwealth. New powers had meanwhile arisen in the North of Italy, who were jealous of rivalry upon the open seas; and when the Neapolitans resisted King Roger in 1135, they called Pisa to their aid, and sent her fleet to destroy Amalfi. The ships of Amalfi were on guard with Roger's navy in the Bay of Naples. The armed citizens were, under Roger's orders, at Aversa. Meanwhile the home of the republic lay defenceless on its mountain-girdled seaboard. The Pisans sailed into the harbour, sacked the city, and carried off the famous Pandects of Justinian as a trophy. Two years later they returned, to complete the work of devastation. Amalfi never recovered from the injuries and the humiliation of these two attacks. It was ever thus that the Italians, like the children of the dragon's teeth which Cadmus sowed, consumed each other. Pisa cut the throat of her sister-port Amalfi, and Genoa gave a mortal wound to Pisa, when the waters of Meloria were dyed with blood in 1284. Venice fought a duel to the death with Genoa in the succeeding century; and what Venice failed to accomplish was completed by Milan and the lords of the Visconti dynasty, who crippled and enslaved the haughty queen of the Ligurian Riviera.

The naval and commercial prosperity of Amalfi was thus put an end to by the Pisans in the twelfth century. But it was not then that the town assumed its present aspect. What surprises the student of history more than anything is the total absence of fortifications, docks, arsenals, and breakwaters, bearing witness to the ancient grandeur of a city which numbered 50,000 inhabitants, and traded with Alexandria, Syria, and the far East. Nothing of the sort, with the exception of a single solitary tower upon the Monte Aureo, is visible. Nor will he fail to remember that Amalfi and Atrani, which are now divided by a jutting mountain buttress, were once joined by a tract of sea-beach, where the galleys of the republic rested after sweeping the Levant, and where the fishermen drew up their boats upon the smooth grey sand. That also has disappeared. The violence of man was not enough to reduce Amalfi to its present state of insignificance. The forces of nature aided—partly by the gradual subsidence of the land, which caused the lower quarters of the city to be submerged, and separated Amalfi from her twin-port by covering the beach with water—partly by a fearful tempest, accompanied by earthquake, in 1343. Petrarch, then resident at Naples, witnessed the destructive fury of this great convulsion, and the description he wrote of it soon after its occurrence is so graphic that some notice may well be taken of it here.

His letter, addressed to the noble Roman, Giovanni Colonna, begins with a promise to tell something of a storm which deserved the title of 'poetic,' and in a degree so superlative that no epithet but 'Homeric' would suffice to do it justice. This exordium is singularly characteristic of Petrarch, who never forgot that he was a literary man, and lost no opportunity of dragging the great names of antiquity into his rhetorical compositions. The catastrophe was hardly unexpected; for it had been prophesied by an astrological bishop, whom Petrarch does not name, that Naples would be overwhelmed by a terrible disaster in December 1343. The people were therefore in a state of wild anxiety, repenting of their sins, planning a total change of life under the fear of imminent death, and neglecting their ordinary occupations. On the day of the predicted calamity women roamed in trembling crowds through the streets, pressing their babies to their breasts, and besieging the altars of the saints with prayers. Petrarch, who shared the general disquietude, kept watching the signs of the weather; but nothing happened to warrant an extraordinary panic. At sunset the sky was quieter than usual; and he could discern none of the symptoms of approaching tempest, to which his familiarity with the mountains of Vacluse accustomed him. After dusk he stationed himself at a window to observe the moon until she went down, before midnight, obscured by clouds. Then he betook himself to bed; but scarcely had he fallen into his first sleep when a most horrible noise aroused him. The whole house shook; the night-light on his table was extinguished; and he was thrown with violence from his couch. He was lodging in a convent; and soon after this first intimation of the tempest he heard the monks calling to each other through the darkness. From cell to cell they hurried, the ghastly gleams of lightning falling on their terror-stricken faces. Headed by the Prior, and holding

crosses and relics of the saints in their hands, they now assembled in Petrarch's chamber. Thence they proceeded in a body to the chapel, where they spent the night in prayer and expectation of impending ruin. It would be impossible, says the poet, to relate the terrors of that hellish night—the deluges of rain, the screaming of the wind, the earthquake, the thunder, the howling of the sea, and the shrieks of agonising human beings. All these horrors were prolonged, as though by some magician's spell, for what seemed twice the duration of a natural night. It was so dark that at last by conjecture rather than the testimony of their senses they knew that day had broken. A hurried mass was said. Then, as the noise in the town above them began to diminish, and a confused clamour from the sea-shore continually increased, their suspense became unendurable. They mounted their horses, and descended to the port—to see and perish. A fearful spectacle awaited them. The ships in the harbour had broken their moorings, and were crashing helplessly together. The strand was strewn with mutilated corpses. The breakwaters were submerged, and the sea seemed gaining momentarily upon the solid land. A thousand watery mountains surged up into the sky between the shore and Capri; and these massive billows were not black or purple, but hoary with a livid foam. After describing some picturesque episodes—such as the gathering of the knights of Naples to watch the ruin of their city, the procession of court ladies headed by the queen to implore the intercession of Mary, and the wreck of a vessel freighted with 400 convicts bound for Sicily—Petrarch concludes with a fervent prayer that he may never have to tempt the sea, of whose fury he had seen so awful an example.

256

The capital on this occasion escaped the ruin prophesied. But Amalfi was inundated; and what the waters then gained has never been restored to man. This is why the once so famous city ranks now upon a level with quiet little towns whose names are hardly heard in history—with San Remo, or Rapallo, or Chiavari—and yet it is still as full of life as a wasp's nest, especially upon the molo, or raised piazza paved with bricks, in front of the Albergo de' Cappuccini. The changes of scene upon this tiny square are so frequent as to remind one of a theatre. Looking down from the inn-balcony, between the glazy green pots gay with scarlet amaryllis-bloom, we are inclined to fancy that the whole has been prepared for our amusement. In the morning the corn for the macaroni-flour, after being washed, is spread out on the bricks to dry. In the afternoon the fishermen bring their nets for the same purpose. In the evening the city magnates promenade and whisper. Dark-eyed women, with orange or crimson kerchiefs for headgear, cross and re-cross, bearing baskets on their shoulders. Great lazy large-limbed fellows, girt with scarlet sashes and finished off with dark blue nightcaps (for a contrast to their saffron-coloured shirts, white breeches, and sunburnt calves), slouch about or sleep face downwards on the parapets. On either side of this same molo stretches a miniature beach of sand and pebble, covered with nets, which the fishermen are always mending, and where the big boats lade or unlade, trimming for the sardine fishery, or driving in to shore with a whirr of oars and a jabber of discordant voices. As the land-wind freshens, you may watch them set off one by one, like pigeons taking flight, till the sea is flecked with twenty sail, all scudding in the same direction. The torrent runs beneath the molo, and finds the sea beyond it; so that here too are the washerwomen, chattering like sparrows; and everywhere the naked boys, like brown sea-urchins, burrow in the clean warm sand, or splash the shallow brine. If you like the fun, you may get a score of them to dive together and scramble for coppers in the deeper places, their lithe bodies gleaming wan beneath the water in a maze of interlacing arms and legs.

257

Over the whole busy scene rise the grey hills, soaring into blueness of air-distance, turreted here and there with ruined castles, capped with particoloured campanili and white convents, and tufted through their whole height with the orange and the emerald of the great tree-spurge, and with the live gold of the blossoming broom. It is difficult to say when this picture is most beautiful—whether in the early morning, when the boats are coming back from their night-toil upon the sea, and along the headlands in the fresh light lie swathes of fleecy mist, betokening a still, hot day—or at noontide, when the houses on the hill stand, tinted pink and yellow, shadowless like gems, and the great caruba-trees above the tangles of vines and figs are blots upon the steady glare—or at sunset, when violet and rose, reflected from the eastern sky, make all these terraces and peaks translucent with a wondrous glow. The best of all, perhaps, is night, with a full moon hanging high overhead. Who shall describe the silhouettes of boats upon the shore or sleeping on the misty sea? On the horizon lies a dusky film of brownish golden haze, between

258

the moon and the glimmering water; and here and there a lamp or candle burns with a deep red. Then is the time to take a boat and row upon the bay, or better, to swim out into the waves and trouble the reflections from the steady stars. The mountains, clear and calm, with light-irradiated chasms and hard shadows cast upon the rock, soar up above a city built of alabaster, or sea-foam, or summer clouds. The whole is white and wonderful: no similes suggest an analogue for the lustre, solid and transparent, of Amalfi nestling in moonlight between the grey-blue sea and lucid hills. Stars stand on all the peaks, and twinkle, or keep gliding, as the boat moves, down the craggy sides. Stars are mirrored on the marble of the sea, until one knows not whether the oar has struck sparks from a star image or has scattered diamonds of phosphorescent brine.

All this reads like a rhapsody; but indeed it is difficult not to be rhapsodical when a May night of Amalfi is in the memory, with the echo of rich baritone voices chanting Neapolitan songs to a mandoline. It is fashionable to complain that these Italian airs are opera-tunes; but this is only another way of saying that the Italian opera is the genuine outgrowth of national melody, and that Weber was not the first, as some German critics have supposed, to string together Volkslieder for the stage. Northerners, who have never seen or felt the beauty of the South, talk sad nonsense about the superiority of German over Italian music. It is true that much Italian music is out of place in Northern Europe, where we seem to need more travail of the intellect in art. But the Italians are rightly satisfied with such facile melody and such simple rhythms as harmonise with sea and sky and boon earth sensuously beautiful. 'Perchè pensa? Pensando s' invecchia,' expresses the same habit of mind as another celebrated saying, 'La musica è il lamento dell' amore o la preghiera agli Dei.' Whatever may be the value of Italian music, it is in concord with such a scene as Amalfi by moon-light; and he who does not appreciate this no less than some more artificial combination of sights and sounds in Wagner's theatre at Bayreuth, has scarcely learned the first lesson in the lore of beauty.

There is enough and to spare for all tastes at Amalfi. The student of architecture may spend hours in the Cathedral, pondering over its high-built western front, and wondering whether there is more of Moorish or of Gothic in its delicate arcades. The painter may transfer its campanile, glittering like dragon's scales, to his canvas. The lover of the picturesque will wander through its aisle at mass-time, watching the sunlight play upon those upturned Southern faces with their ardent eyes; and happy is he who sees young men and maidens on Whit Sunday crowding round the chancel rails, to catch the marigolds and gillyflowers scattered from baskets which the priest has blessed. Is this a symbol of the Holy Spirit's gifts, or is it some quaint relic of Pagan *sparsiones*? This question, with the memory of Pompeian *graffiti* in our mind, may well suggest itself in Southern Italy, where old and new faiths are so singularly blended. Then there is Ravello on the hills above. The path winds upward between stone walls tufted with maidenhair; and ever nearer grow the mountains, and the sea-line soars into the sky. An Englishman has made his home here in a ruined Moorish villa, with cool colonnaded cloisters and rose-embowered terraces, lending far prospect over rocky hills and olive-girdled villages to Pæstum's plain. The churches of Ravello have rare mosaics, and bronze doors, and marble pulpits, older perhaps than those of Tuscany, which tempt the archæologist to ask if Nicholas the Pisan learned his secret here. But who cares to be a sober antiquary at Amalfi? Far pleasanter is it to climb the staircase to the Capuchins, and linger in those caverns of the living rock, and pluck the lemons hanging by the mossy walls; or to row from cove to cove along the shore, watching the fishes swimming in the deeps beneath, and the medusas spreading their filmy bells; to land upon smooth slabs of rock, where corallines wave to and fro; or to rest on samphire-tufted ledges, when the shadows slant beneath the westering sun.

There is no point in all this landscape which does not make a picture. Painters might even complain that the pictures are too easy and the poetry too facile, just as the musicians find the melodies of this fair land too simple. No effect, carefully sought and strenuously seized, could enhance the mere beauty of Amalfi bathed in sunlight. You have only on some average summer day to sit down and paint the scene. Little scope is afforded for suggestions of far-away weird thoughts, or for elaborately studied motives. Daubigny and Corot are as alien here as Blake or Dürer.

What is wanted, and what no modern artist can successfully recapture from the wasteful past, is the mythopoeic sense—the apprehension of primeval powers akin to man, growing into shape and substance on the borderland between the world and the keen human sympathies it stirs in

us. Greek mythology was the proper form of art for scenery like this. It gave the final touch to all its beauties, and added to its sensuous charm an inbreathed spiritual life. No exercise of the poetic faculty, far less that metaphysical mood of the reflective consciousness which 'leads from nature up to nature's God,' can now supply this need. From sea and earth and sky, in those creative ages when the world was young, there leaned to greet the men whose fancy made them, forms imagined and yet real—human, divine—the archetypes and everlasting patterns of man's deepest sense of what is wonderful in nature. Feeling them there, for ever there, inalienable, ready to start forth and greet successive generations—as the Hamadryad greeted Rhaicos from his father's oak—those mythopoeists called them by immortal names. All their pent-up longings, all passions that consume, all aspirations that inflame—the desire for the impossible, which is disease, the day-dreams and visions of the night, which are spontaneous poems—were thus transferred to nature. And nature, responsive to the soul that loves her, gave them back transfigured and translated into radiant beings of like substance with mankind. It was thus, we feel, upon these southern shores that the gods of Greece came into being. The statues in the temples were the true fine flower of all this beauty, the culmination of the poetry which it evoked in hearts that feel and brains that think.

261

In Italy, far more than in any other part of Europe, the life of the present is imposed upon the strata of successive past lives. Greek, Latin, Moorish, and mediæval civilisations have arisen, flourished, and decayed on nearly the same soil; and it is common enough to find one city, which may have perished twenty centuries ago, neighbour to another that enjoyed its brief prosperity in the middle of our era. There is not, for example, the least sign of either Greek or Roman at Amalfi. Whatever may have been the glories of the republic in the early middle ages, they had no relation to the classic past. Yet a few miles off along the bay rise the ancient Greek temples of Pæstum, from a desert—with no trace of any intervening occupants. Poseidonia was founded in the sixth century before Christ, by colonists from Sybaris. Three centuries later the Hellenic element in this settlement, which must already have become a town of no little importance, was submerged by a deluge of recurrent barbarism. Under the Roman rule it changed its name to Pæstum, and was prosperous. The Saracens destroyed it in the ninth century of our era; and Robert Guiscard carried some of the materials of its buildings to adorn his new town of Salerno. Since then the ancient site has been abandoned to malaria and solitude. The very existence of Pæstum was unknown, except to wandering herdsmen and fishers coasting near its ruined colonnades, until the end of the last century. Yet, strange to relate, after all these revolutions, and in the midst of this total desolation, the only relics of the antique city are three Greek temples, those very temples where the Hellenes, barbarised by their Lucanian neighbours, met to mourn for their lost liberty. It is almost impossible to trace more than the mere circuit of the walls of Poseidonia. Its port, if port it had in Roman days, has disappeared. Its theatre is only just discernible. Still not a column of the great hypæthral temple, built by the Sybarite colonists two thousand and five hundred years ago, to be a house for Zeus or for Poseidon, has been injured. The accidents that erased far greater cities, like Syracuse, from the surface of the earth—pillage, earthquake, the fury of fanatics, the slow decay of perishable stone, or the lust of palace builders in the middle ages—have spared those three houses of the gods, over whom, in the days of Alexander, the funeral hymn was chanted by the enslaved Hellenes.

262

'We do the same,' said Aristoxenus in his *Convivial Miscellanies*, 'as the men of Poseidonia, who dwell on the Tyrrhenian Gulf. It befell them, having been at first true Hellenes, to be utterly barbarised, changing to Tyrrhenes or Romans, and altering their language, together with their other customs. Yet they still observe one Hellenic festival, when they meet together and call to remembrance their old names and bygone institutions; and having lamented one to the other, and shed bitter tears, they afterwards depart to their own homes. Even thus a few of us also, now that our theatres have been barbarised, and this art of music has gone to ruin and vulgarity, meet together and remember what once music was.'^[100]

263

[100] *Athenæus*, xiv. 632.

This passage has a strange pathos, considering how it was penned, and how it has come down to us, tossed by the dark indifferent stream of time. The Aristoxenus who wrote it was a pupil of the Peripatetic School, born at Tarentum, and therefore familiar with the vicissitudes of Magna Græcia. The study of music was his chief preoccupation; and he used this

episode in the agony of an enslaved Greek city, to point his own conservative disgust for innovations in an art of which we have no knowledge left. The works of Aristoxenus have perished, and the fragment I have quoted is embedded in the gossip of Egyptian Athenæus. In this careless fashion has been opened for us, as it were, a little window on a grief now buried in the oblivion of a hundred generations. After reading his words one May morning, beneath the pediment of Pæstum's noblest ruin, I could not refrain from thinking that if the spirits of those captive Hellenes were to revisit their old habitations, they would change their note of wailing into a thin ghostly pæan, when they found that Romans and Lucanians had passed away, that Christians and Saracens had left alike no trace behind, while the houses of their own ἀντῆλιοι θεοί—dawn-facing deities—were still abiding in the pride of immemorial strength. Who knows whether buffalo-driver or bandit may not ere now have seen processions of these Poseidonian phantoms, bearing laurels and chanting hymns on the spot where once they fell each on the other's neck to weep? Gathering his cloak around him and cowering closer to his fire of sticks, the night-watcher in those empty colonnades may have mistaken the Hellenic outlines of his shadowy visitants for fevered dreams, and the melody of their evanished music for the whistling of night winds or the cry of owls. So abandoned is Pæstum in its solitude that we know not even what legends may have sprung up round those relics of a mightier age.

264

The shrine is ruined now; and far away
To east and west stretch olive groves, whose shade
Even at the height of summer noon is grey.

Asphodels sprout upon the plinth decayed
Of these low columns, and the snake hath found
Her haunt 'neath altar-steps with weeds o'erlaid.

Yet this was once a hero's temple, crowned
With myrtle-boughs by lovers, and with palm
By wrestlers, resonant with sweetest sound

Of flute and fife in summer evening's calm,
And odorous with incense all the year,
With nard and spice, and galbanum and balm.

These lines sufficiently express the sense of desolation felt at Pæstum, except that the scenery is more solemn and mournful, and the temples are too august to be the shrine of any simple hero. There are no olives. The sea plunges on its sandy shore within the space of half a mile to westward. Far and wide on either hand stretch dreary fever-stricken marshes. The plain is bounded to the north, and east, and south, with mountains, purple, snow-peaked, serrated, and grandly broken like the hills of Greece. Driving over this vast level where the Silarus stagnates, the monotony of the landscape is broken now and then by a group of buffaloes standing up to their dewlaps in reeds, by peasants on horseback, with goads in their hands, and muskets slung athwart their backs, or by patrols of Italian soldiers crossing and re-crossing on the brigand-haunted roads. Certain portions have been reclaimed from the swamp, and here may be seen white oxen in herds of fifty grazing; or gangs of women at field-labour, with a man to oversee them, cracking a long hunting-whip; or the mares and foals of a famous stud-farm browsing under spreading pines. There are no villages, and the few farmhouses are so widely scattered as to make us wonder where the herdsmen and field-workers, scanty as they are, can possibly be lodged.

265

At last the three great temples come in sight. The rich orange of the central building contrasts with the paler yellow of its two companions, while the glowing colour of all three is splendidly relieved against green vegetation and blue mountain-flanks. Their material is travertine—a calcareous stone formed by the deposit of petrifying waters, which contains fragments of reeds, spiral shells, and other substances, embedded in the porous limestone. In the flourishing period of old Poseidonia these travertine columns were coated with stucco, worked to a smooth surface, and brilliantly tinted to harmonise with the gay costumes of a Greek festival. Even now this coating of fine sand, mingled with slaked lime and water, can be seen in patches on the huge blocks of the masonry. Thus treated, the travertine lacked little of the radiance of marble, for it must be remembered that the Greeks painted even the Pentelic cornice of the Parthenon with red and blue. Nor can we doubt that the general effect of brightness suited the glad and genial conditions of Greek life.

All the surroundings are altered now, and the lover of the picturesque

may be truly thankful that the hand of time, by stripping the buildings of this stucco, without impairing their proportions, has substituted a new harmony of tone between the native stone and the surrounding landscape, no less sympathetic to the present solitude than the old symphony of colours was to the animated circumstances of a populous Greek city. In this way those critics who defend the polychrome decorations of the classic architects, and those who contend that they cannot imagine any alteration from the present toning of Greek temples for the better, are both right.

In point of colour the Pæstum ruins are very similar to those of Girgenti; but owing to their position on a level plain, in front of a scarcely indented sea-shore, we lack the irregularity which adds so much charm to the row of temples on their broken cliff in the old town of Agrigentum. In like manner the celebrated *asymmetreia* of the buildings of the Athenian Acropolis, which causes so much variety of light and shade upon the temple-fronts, and offers so many novel points of view when they are seen in combination, seems to have been due originally to the exigencies of the ground. At Pæstum, in planning out the city, there can have been no utilitarian reasons for placing the temples at odd angles, either to each other or the shore. Therefore we see them now almost exactly in line and parallel, though at unequal distances. If something of picturesque effect is thus lost at Pæstum through the flatness of the ground, something of impressive grandeur on the other hand is gained by the very regularity with which those phalanxes of massive Doric columns are drawn up to face the sea.

Poseidonia, as the name betokens, was dedicated to the god of the sea; and the coins of the city are stamped with his effigy bearing a trident, and with his sacred animal, the bull. It has therefore been conjectured that the central of the three temples—which was hypæthral and had two entrances, east and west—belonged to Poseidon; and there is something fine in the notion of the god being thus able to pass to and fro from his cella through those sunny peristyles, down to his chariot, yoked with sea-horses, in the brine. Yet hypæthral temples were generally consecrated to Zeus, and it is therefore probable that the traditional name of this vast edifice is wrong. The names of the two other temples, *Tempio di Cerere* and *Basilica*, are wholly unsupported by any proof or probability. The second is almost certainly founded on a mistake; and if we assign the largest of the three shrines to Zeus, one or other of the lesser belonged most likely to Poseidon.

The style of the temples is severe and primitive. In general effect their Doric architecture is far sterner than that adapted by Ictinus to the Parthenon. The entablature seems somewhat disproportioned to the columns and the pediment; and, owing to this cause, there is a general effect of heaviness. The columns, again, are thick-set; nor is the effect of solidity removed by their gradual narrowing from the base upwards. The pillars of the *Neptune* are narrowed in a straight line; those of the *Basilica* and *Ceres* by a gentle curve. Study of these buildings, so sublime in their massiveness, so noble in the parsimony of their decoration, so dignified in their employment of the simplest means for the attainment of an indestructible effect of harmony, heightens our admiration for the Attic genius which found in this grand manner of the elder Doric architects resources as yet undeveloped; creating, by slight and subtle alterations of outline, proportion, and rhythm of parts, what may fairly be classed as a style unique, because exemplified in only one transcendent building.

It is difficult not to return again and again to the beauty of colouring at Pæstum. Lying basking in the sun upon a flat slab of stone, and gazing eastward, we overlook a foreground of dappled light and shadow, across which the lizards run— quick streaks of living emerald—making the bunches of yellow rue and little white serpyllum in the fissures of the masonry nod as they hurry past. Then come two stationary columns, built, it seems, of solid gold, where the sunbeams strike along their russet surface. Between them lies the landscape, a medley first of brakefern and asphodel and feathering acanthus and blue spikes of bugloss; then a white farm in the middle distance, roofed with the reddest tiles and sheltered by a velvety umbrella pine. Beyond and above the farm, a glimpse of mountains purple almost to indigo with cloud shadows, and flecked with snow. Still higher—but for this we have to raise our head a little—the free heavens enclosed within the frame-work of the tawny travertine, across which sail hawks and flutter jackdaws, sharply cut against the solid sky. Down from the architrave, to make the vignette perfect, hang tufts of crimson snapdragons. Each opening in the peristyle gives a fresh picture.

The temples are overgrown with snapdragons and mallows, yellow

asters and lilac gillyflowers, white allium and wild fig. When a breeze passes, the whole of this many-coloured tapestry waves gently to and fro. The fields around are flowery enough; but where are the roses? I suppose no one who has read his Virgil at school, crosses the plain from Salerno to Pæstum without those words of the 'Georgics' ringing in his ears: *biferique rosaria Pæsti*. They have that wonderful Virgilian charm which, by a touch, transforms mere daily sights and sounds, and adds poetic mystery to common things. The poets of ancient Rome seem to have felt the magic of this phrase; for Ovid has imitated the line in his 'Metamorphoses,' tamely substituting *tepidi* for the suggestive *biferi*, while again in his 'Elegies' he uses the same termination with *odorati* for his epithet. Martial sings of *Pæstanæ rosæ* and *Pæstani gloria ruris*. Even Ausonius, at the very end of Latin literature, draws from the rosaries of Pæstum a pretty picture of beauty doomed to premature decline:—

Vidi Pæstano gaudere rosaria cultu
Exoriente novo roscida Lucifero.

'I have watched the rose-beds that luxuriate on Pæstum's well-tilled soil, all dewy in the young light of the rising dawn-star.'

What a place indeed was this for a rose-garden, spreading far and wide along the fertile plain, with its deep loam reclaimed from swamps and irrigated by the passing of perpetual streams! But where are the roses now? As well ask, *où sont les neiges d'antan?*

We left Amalfi for Capri in the freshness of an early morning at the end of May. As we stepped into our six-oared boat the sun rose above the horizon, flooding the sea with gold and flashing on the terraces above Amalfi. High up along the mountains hung pearly and empurpled mists, set like resting-places between a world too beautiful and heaven too far for mortal feet. Not a breath of any wind was stirring. The water heaved with a scarcely perceptible swell, and the vapours lifted gradually as the sun's rays grew in power. Here the hills descend abruptly on the sea, ending in cliffs where light reflected from the water dances. Huge caverns open in the limestone; on their edges hang stalactites like beards, and the sea within sleeps dark as night. For some of these caves the maidenhair fern makes a shadowy curtain; and all of them might be the home of Proteus, or of Calypso, by whose side her mortal lover passed his nights in vain home-sickness:—

εν σπέσσι γλαφυροισι παρ' ουκ εθέλων εθελούση.

This is a truly Odyssean journey. Soon the islands of the Sirens come in sight,—bare bluffs of rock, shaped like galleys taking flight for the broad sea. As we row past in this ambrosial weather, the oarsmen keeping time and ploughing furrows in the fruitless fields of Nereus, it is not difficult to hear the siren voices—for earth and heaven and sea make melodies far above mortal singing. The water round the Galli—so the islands are now called, as antiquaries tell us, from an ancient fortress named Guallo—is very deep, and not a sign of habitation is to be seen upon them. In bygone ages they were used as prisons; and many doges of Amalfi languished their lives away upon those shadeless stones, watching the sea around them blaze like a burnished shield at noon, and the peaks of Capri deepen into purple when the west was glowing after sunset with the rose and daffodil of Southern twilight.

The end of the Sorrentine promontory, Point Campanella, is absolutely barren—grey limestone, with the scantiest over-growth of rosemary and myrtle. A more desolate spot can hardly be imagined. But now the morning breeze springs up behind; sails are hoisted, and the boatmen ship their oars. Under the albatross wings of our lateen sails we scud across the freshening waves. The precipice of Capri soars against the sky, and the Bay of Naples expands before us with those sweeping curves and azure amplitude that all the poets of the world have sung. Even thus the mariners of ancient Hellas rounded this headland when the world was young. Rightly they named yon rising ground, beneath Vesuvius, Posilippo—rest from grief. Even now, after all those centuries of toil, though the mild mountain has been turned into a mouth of murderous fire, though Roman emperors and Spanish despots have done their worst to mar what nature made so perfect, we may here lay down the burden of our cares, gaining tranquillity by no mysterious lustral rites, no penitential prayers or offerings of holocausts, but by the influence of beauty in the earth and air, and by sympathy with a people unspoiled in their healthful life of labour alternating with simple joy.

The last hour of the voyage was beguiled by stories of our boatmen, some of whom had seen service on distant seas, while others could tell of

risks on shore and love adventures. They showed us how the tunny-nets were set, and described the solitary life of the tunny-watchers, in their open boats, waiting to spear the monsters of the deep entangled in the chambers made for them beneath the waves. How much of Æschylean imagery, I reflected, is drawn from this old fisher's art—the toils of Clytemnestra and the tragedy of Psyttaleia rising to my mind. One of the crew had his little son with him, a child of six years old; and when the boy was restless, his father spoke of Barbarossa and Timberio (*sic*) to keep him quiet; for the memory of the Moorish pirate and the mighty emperor is still alive here. The people of Capri are as familiar with Tiberius as the Bretons with King Arthur; and the hoof-mark of illustrious crime is stamped upon the island.

Capri offers another example of the versatility of Southern Italy. If Amalfi brings back to us the naval and commercial prosperity of the early middle ages; if Pæstuni remains a monument of the oldest Hellenic civilisation; Capri, at a few miles' distance, is dedicated to the Roman emperor who made it his favourite residence, when, life-weary with the world and all its shows, he turned these many peaks and slumbering caves into a summer palace for the nursing of his brain-sick phantasy. Already on landing, we are led to remember that from this shore was loosed the galley bearing that great letter—*verbosa et grandis epistola*—which undid Sejanus and shook Rome. Riding to Ana-Capri and the Salto di Tiberio, exploring the remains of his favourite twelve villas, and gliding over the smooth waters paved with the white marbles of his baths, we are for ever attended by the same forbidding spectre. Here, perchance, were the *sedes arcanarum libidinum* whereof Suetonius speaks; the Spintrian medals, found in these recesses, still bear witness that the biographer trusted no mere fables for the picture he has drawn. Here, too, below the Villa Jovis, gazing 700 feet sheer down into the waves, we tread the very parapet whence fell the victims of that maniac lust for blood. 'After long and exquisite torments,' says the Roman writer, 'he ordered condemned prisoners to be cast into the sea before his eyes; marines were stationed near to pound the fallen corpses with poles and oars, lest haply breath should linger in their limbs.' The Neapolitan Museum contains a little basrelief representing Tiberius, with the well-known features of the Claudian house, seated astride upon a donkey, with a girl before him. A slave is leading the beast and its burden to a terminal statue under an olive-tree. This curious relic, discovered some while since at Capri, haunted my fancy as I climbed the olive-planted slopes to his high villa on the Arx Tiberii. It is some relief, amid so much that is tragic in the associations of this place, to have the horrible Tiberius burlasqued and brought into donkey-riding relation with the tourist of to-day. And what an ironical revenge of time it is that his famous Salto should be turned into a restaurant, where the girls dance tarantella for a few coppers; that a toothless hermit should occupy a cell upon the very summit of his Villa Jovis; and that the Englishwoman's comfortable hotel should be called *Timberio* by the natives! A spiritualist might well believe that the emperor's ghost was forced to haunt the island, and to expiate his old atrocities by gazing on these modern vulgarisms.

Few problems suggested by history are more darkly fascinating than the madness of despots; and of this madness, whether inherent in their blood or encouraged by the circumstance of absolute autocracy, the emperors of the Claudian and Julian houses furnish the most memorable instance.^[101] It is this that renders Tiberius ever present to our memory at Capri. Nor will the student of Suetonius forget his even more memorable grand-nephew Caligula. The following passage is an episode from the biography of that imperial maniac, whose portrait in green basalt, with the strain of dire mental tension on the forehead, is still so beautiful that we are able at this distance of time to pity more than loathe him. 'Above all, he was tormented with nervous irritation, by sleeplessness; for he enjoyed not more than three hours of nocturnal repose, nor even these in pure untroubled rest, but agitated by phantasmata of portentous augury; as, for example, upon one occasion, among other spectral visions, he fancied that he saw the sea, under some definite impersonation, conversing with himself. Hence it was, and from this incapacity of sleeping, and from weariness of lying awake, that he had fallen into habits of ranging all night long through the palace, sometimes throwing himself on a couch, sometimes wandering along the vast corridors, watching for the earliest dawn, and anxiously wishing its approach.' Those corridors, or loggie, where Caligula spent his wakeful hours, opened perchance upon this Bay of Naples, if not upon the sea-waves of his favourite Porto d'Anzio; for we know that one of his great follies was a palace built above the sea on piles at Baiæ; and where else

could *Pelagus*, with his cold azure eyes and briny locks, have more appropriately terrified his sleep with prophecy conveyed in dreams? The very nature of this vision, selected for such special comment by Suetonius as to show that it had troubled Caligula profoundly, proves the fantastic nature of the man, and justifies the hypothesis of insanity.

274

[101] De Quincey, in his essay on *The Cæsars*, has worked out this subject with such artistic vividness that no more need be said. From his pages I have quoted the paraphrastic version of Suetonius that follows.

But it is time to shake off the burden of the past. Only students, carrying superfluity of culture in their knapsacks, will ponder over the imperial lunatics who made Capri and Baiæ fashionable in the days of ancient Rome. Neither Tiberius nor Caligula, nor yet Ferdinand of Aragon or Bomba for that matter, has been able to leave trace of vice or scar of crime on nature in this Eden. A row round the island, or a supper-party in the loggia above the sea at sunset-time, is no less charming now, in spite of Roman or Spanish memories, than when the world was young.

Sea-mists are frequent in the early summer mornings, swathing the cliffs of Capri in impenetrable wool and brooding on the perfectly smooth water till the day-wind rises. Then they disappear like magic, rolling in smoke-wreaths from the surface of the sea, condensing into clouds and climbing the hillsides like Oceanides in quest of Prometheus, or taking their station on the watch-towers of the world, as in the chorus of the *Nephelei*. Such a morning may be chosen for the *giro* of the island. The blue grotto loses nothing of its beauty, but rather gains by contrast, when passing from dense fog you find yourself transported to a world of wavering subaqueous sheen. It is only through the opening of the very topmost arch that a boat can glide into this cavern; the arch itself spreads downward through the water, so that all the light is transmitted from beneath and coloured by the sea. The grotto is domed in many chambers; and the water is so clear that you can see the bottom, silvery, with black-finned fishes diapered upon the blue white sand. The flesh of a diver in this water showed like the faces of children playing at snapdragon; all around him the spray leapt up with living fire; and when the oars struck the surface, it was as though a phosphorescent sea had been smitten, and the drops ran from the blades in blue pearls. I have only once seen anything (outside the magic-world of a pantomime) to equal these effects of blue and silver; and that was when I made my way into an ice-cave in the Great Aletsch glacier—not an artificial gallery such as they cut at Grindelwald, but a natural cavern, arched, hollowed into fanciful recesses, and hung with stalactites of pendent ice. The difference between the glacier-cavern and the sea-grotto was that in the former all the light was transmitted through transparent sides, so that the whole was one uniform azure, except in rare places where little chinks opened upwards to the air, and the light of day came glancing with a roseate flush. In the latter the light sent from beneath through the water played upon a roof of rock; reflections intermingled with translucence; and a greater variety of light and shadow compensated the lack of that strange sense of being shut within a solid gem.

275

Numberless are the caves at Capri. The so-called green grotto has the beauty of moss-agate in its liquid floor; the red grotto shows a warmer chord of colour; and where there is no other charm to notice, endless beauty may be found in the play of sunlight upon roofs of limestone, tinted with yellow, orange, and pale pink, mossed over, hung with fern, and catching tones of blue or green from the still deeps beneath.

Sheets of water, wherever found, are the most subtle heighteners of colour. To those who are familiar with Venetian or Mantuan sunsets, who have seen the flocks of flamingoes reflected on the lagoons of Tunis, or who have watched stormy red flakes tossed from crest to crest of great Atlantic waves on our own coasts, this need hardly be said. Yet I cannot leave this beauty of the sea at Capri without touching on a melodrama of light and colour I once saw at Castellammare. It was a festa night, when the people sent up rockets and fireworks of every hue from the harbour-breakwater. The surf rolled shoreward like a bath of molten metals, all confused of blue, and red, and green, and gold—dying dolphin tints that burned strangely beneath the purple skies and tranquil stars. Boats at sea hung out their crimson cressets, flickering in long lines on the bay; and larger craft moved slowly with rows of lamps defining their curves; while the full moon shed over all her 'vitreous pour, just tinged with blue.' To some tastes this mingling of natural and artificial effects would seem unworthy of sober notice; but I confess to having enjoyed it with childish eagerness like music never to be forgotten.

276

After a day upon the water it is pleasant to rest at sunset in the loggia

above the sea. The Bay of Naples stretches far and wide in front, beautiful by reason chiefly of the long fine line descending from Vesuvius, dipping almost to a level and then gliding up to join the highlands of the north. Now sun and moon begin to mingle: waning and waxing splendours. The cliffs above our heads are still blushing a deep flame-colour, like the heart of some tea-rose; when lo, the touch of the huntress is laid upon those eastern pinnacles, and the horizon glimmers with her rising. Was it on such a night that Ferdinand of Aragon fled from his capital before the French, with eyes turned ever to the land he loved, chanting, as he leaned from his galley's stern, that melancholy psalm—'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain'—and seeing Naples dwindle to a white blot on the purple shore?

Our journey takes the opposite direction. Farewell to Capri, welcome to Sorrento! The roads are sweet with scent of acacia and orange flowers. When you walk in a garden at night, the white specks beneath your feet are fallen petals of lemon blossoms. Over the walls hang cataracts of roses, honey-pale clusters of the Banksia rose, and pink bushes of the China rose, growing as we never see them grow with us. The grey rocks wave with gladiolus—feathers of crimson, set amid tufts of rosemary, and myrtle, and tree-spurge. In the clefts of the sandstone, and behind the orchard walls, sleeps a dark green night of foliage, in the midst of which gleam globed oranges, and lemons dropping like great pearls of palest amber dew. It is difficult to believe that the lemons have not grown into length by their own weight, as though mere hanging on the bough prevented them from being round—so waxen are they. Overhead soar stone-pines—a roof of sombre green, a lattice-work of strong red branches, through which the moon peers wonderfully. One part of this marvellous *piano* is bare rock tufted with keen-scented herbs, and sparsely grown with locust-trees and olives. Another waves from sea to summit with beech-copses and oak-woods, as verdant as the most abundant English valley. Another region turns its hoary raiment of olive-gardens to the sun and sea, or flourishes with fig and vine. Everywhere, the houses of men are dazzling white, perched on natural coigns of vantage, clustered on the brink of brown cliffs, nestling under mountain eaves, or piled up from the sea-beach in ascending tiers, until the broad knees of the hills are reached, and great Pan, the genius of solitude in nature, takes unto himself a region yet untenanted by man. The occupations of the sea and land are blent together on this shore; and the people are both blithe and gentle. It is true that their passions are upon the surface, and that the knife is ready to their hand. But the combination of fierceness and softness in them has an infinite charm when one has learned by observation that their lives are laborious and frugal, and that their honesty is hardly less than their vigour. Happy indeed are they—so happy that, but for crimes accumulated through successive generations by bad governors, and but for superstitions cankering the soul within, they might deserve what Shelley wrote of his imagined island in 'Epipsychidion.'

The eruptions of Etna have blackened the whole land for miles in every direction. That is the first observation forced upon one in the neighbourhood of Catania, or Giarre, or Bronte. From whatever point of view you look at Etna, it is always a regular pyramid, with long and gradually sloping sides, broken here and there by the excrescence of minor craters and dotted over with villages; the summit crowned with snow, divided into peak and cone, girdled with clouds, and capped with smoke, that shifts shape as the wind veers, dominates a blue-black monstrous mass of outpoured lava. From the top of Monte Rosso, a subordinate volcano which broke into eruption in 1669, you can trace the fountain from which 'the unapproachable river of purest fire,' that nearly destroyed Catania, issued. You see it still, bubbling up like a frozen geyser from the flank of the mountain, whence the sooty torrent spreads, or rather sprawls, with jagged edges to the sea. The plain of Catania lies at your feet, threaded by the Simeto, bounded by the promontory of Syracuse and the mountains of Castro Giovanni. This huge amorphous blot upon the landscape may be compared to an ink-stain on a variegated tablecloth, or to the coal districts marked upon a geological atlas, or to the heathen in a missionary map—the green and red and grey colours standing for Christians and Mahommedans and Jews of different shades and qualities. The lava, where it has been cultivated, is reduced to fertile sand, in which vines and fig-trees are planted—their tender green foliage contrasting strangely with the sinister soil that makes them flourish. All the roads are black as jet, like paths leading to coal-pits, and the country-folk on mule-back plodding along them look like Arabs on an infernal Sahara. The very lizards which haunt the rocks are swart and smutty. Yet the flora of the district is luxuriant. The gardens round Catania, nestling into cracks and ridges of the stiffened flood, are marvellously brilliant with spurge and fennel and valerian. It is impossible to form a true conception of flower-brightness till one has seen these golden and crimson tints upon their ground of ebony, or to realise the blueness of the Mediterranean except in contrast with the lava where it breaks into the sea. Copses of frail oak and ash, undergrown with ferns of every sort; cactus-hedges, orange-trees grafted with lemons and laden with both fruits; olives of scarce two centuries' growth, and fig-trees knobbed with their sweet produce, overrun the sombre soil, and spread their boughs against the deep blue sea and the translucent amethyst of the Calabrian mountains. Underfoot, a convolvulus with large white blossoms, binding dingy stone to stone, might be compared to a rope of Desdemona's pearls upon the neck of Othello.

280

The villages are perhaps the most curious feature of this scenery. Their houses, rarely more than one story high, are walled, paved, and often roofed with the inflexible material which once was ruinous fire, and is now the servant of the men it threatened to destroy. The churches are such as might be raised in Hades to implacable Proserpine, such as one might dream of in a vision of the world turned into hell, such as Baudelaire in his fiction of a metallic landscape might have imagined under the influence of hasheesh. Their flights of steps are built of sharply cut black lava blocks no feet can wear. Their door-jambs and columns and pediments and carved work are wrought and sculptured of the same gloomy masonry. How forbidding are the acanthus scrolls, how grim the skulls and cross-bones on these portals! The bell-towers, again, are ribbed and beamed with black lava. A certain amount of the structure is whitewashed, which serves to relieve the funereal solemnity of the rest. In an Indian district each of these churches would be a temple, raised in vain propitiation to the demon of the fire above and below. Some pictures made by their spires in combination with the sad village-hovels, the snowy dome of Etna, and the ever-smiling sea, are quite unique in their variety of suggestion and wild beauty.

281

The people have a sorrow-smitten and stern aspect. Some of the men in the prime of life are grand and haughty, with the cast-bronze countenance of Roman emperors. But the old men bear rigid faces of carved basalt, gazing fixedly before them as though at some time or other in their past lives they had met Medusa: and truly Etna in eruption is a Gorgon, which their ancestors have oftentimes seen shuddering, and fled from terror-frozen. The white-haired old women, plying their spindle or distaff, or meditating in grim solitude, sit with the sinister set features of Fates by their doorways. The young people are very rarely seen to smile: they open hard, black, beaded eyes upon a world in which there is little for them but endurance or the fierceness of passions that delight in

blood. Strangely different are these dwellers on the sides of Etna from the voluble, lithe sailors of Sciacca or Mazara, with their sunburnt skins and many-coloured garments.

The Val del Bove—a vast chasm in the flank of Etna, where the very heart of the volcano has been riven and its entrails bared—is the most impressive spot of all this region. The road to it leads from Zafferana (so called because of its crocus-flowers) along what looks like a series of black moraines, where the lava torrents pouring from the craters of Etna have spread out, and reared themselves in stiffened ridges against opposing mountain buttresses. After toiling for about three hours over the dismal waste, a point between the native rock of Etna and the dead sea of lava is reached, which commands a prospect of the cone with its curling smoke surmounting a caldron of some four thousand feet in depth and seemingly very wide. The whole of this space is filled with billows of blackness, wave on wave, crest over crest, and dyke by dyke, precisely similar to a gigantic glacier, swarthy and immovable. The resemblance of the lava flood to a glacier is extraordinarily striking. One can fancy oneself standing on the Belvedere at Macugnaga, or the Tacul point upon the Mer de Glace, in some nightmare, and finding to one's horror that the radiant snows and river-breeding ice-fields have been turned by a malignant deity to sullen, stationary cinders. It is a most hideous place, like a pit in Dante's Hell, disused for some unexplained reason, and left untenanted by fiends. The scenery of the moon, without atmosphere and without life, must be of this sort; and such, rolling round in space, may be some planet that has survived its own combustion. When the clouds, which almost always hang about the Val del Bove, are tumbling at their awful play around its precipices, veiling the sweet suggestion of distant sea and happier hills that should be visible, the horror of this view is aggravated. Breaking here and there, the billows of mist disclose forlorn tracts of jet-black desolation, wicked, unutterable, hateful in their hideousness, with patches of smutty snow above, and downward-rolling volumes of murky smoke. Shakspeare, when he imagined the damned spirits confined to 'thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice,' divined the nature of a glacier; but what line could he have composed, adequate to shadow forth the tortures of a soul condemned to palpitate for ever between the ridges of this thirsty and intolerable sea of dead fire? If the world-spirit chose to assume for itself the form and being of a dragon, of like substance to this, impenetrable, invulnerable, unapproachable would be its hide. It requires no great stretch of the imagination to picture these lava lakes glowing, as they must have been, when first outpoured, the bellowing of the crater, the heaving and surging of the solid earth, the air obstructed with cinders and whizzing globes of molten rock. Yet in these throes of devilish activity, the Val del Bove would be less insufferable than in its present state of suspension, asleep, but threatening, ready to regurgitate its flame, but for a moment inert.

An hour's drive from Nicolosi or Zafferana, seaward, brings one into the richest land of 'olive and aloe and maize and vine' to be found upon the face of Europe. Here, too, are laughing little towns, white, prosperous, and gleeful, the very opposite of those sad stations on the mountain-flank. Every house in Aci Reale has its courtyard garden filled with orange-trees, and nespole, and fig-trees, and oleanders. From the grinning corbels that support the balconies hang tufts of gem-bright ferns and glowing clove-pinks. Pergolas of vines, bronzed in autumn, and golden green like chrysoprase beneath an April sun, fling their tendrils over white walls and shady loggie. Gourds hang ripening in the steady blaze. Far and wide stretches a landscape rich with tilth and husbandry, boon Nature paying back to men tenfold for all their easy toil. The terrible great mountain sleeps in the distance innocent of fire. I know not whether this land be more delightful in spring or autumn. The little flamelike flakes of brightness upon vines and fig-trees in April have their own peculiar charm. But in November the whole vast flank of Etna glows with the deep-blue tone of steel; the russet woods are like a film of rust; the vine-boughs thrust living carbuncles against the sun. To this season, when the peculiar earth-tints of Etna, its strong purples and tawny browns, are harmonised with the decaying wealth of forest and of orchard, I think the palm of beauty must be given in this land.

The sea is an unchangeable element of charm in all this landscape. Aci Castello should be visited, and those strange rocks, called the Ciclopidi, forced by volcanic pressure from beneath the waves. They are made of black basalt like the Giant's Causeway; and on their top can be traced the caps of calcareous stone they carried with them in the fret and fury of their upheaval from the sea-bed. Samphire, wild fennel, cactus, and acanthus clothe them now from crest to basement where the cliff is not

too sheer. By the way, there are few plants more picturesque than the acanthus in full flower. Its pale lilac spikes of blossom stand waist-high above a wilderness of feathering, curving, delicately indented, burnished leaves—deep, glossy, cool, and green.

This is the place for a child's story of the one-eyed giant Polyphemus, who fed his flocks among the oak-woods of Etna, and who, strolling by the sea one summer evening, saw and loved the fair girl Galatea. She was afraid of him, and could not bear his shaggy-browed round rolling eye. But he forgot his sheep and goats, and sat upon the cliffs and piped to her. Meanwhile she loved the beautiful boy Acis, who ran down from the copse to play with her upon the sea-beach. They hid together from Polyphemus in a fern-curtained cavern of the shore. But Polyphemus spied them out and heard them laughing together at their games. Then he grew wroth, and stamped with his huge feet upon the earth, and made it shake and quiver. He roared and bellowed in his rage, and tore up rocks and flung them at the cavern where the children were in hiding, and his eye shot fire beneath the grisly pent-house of his wrinkled brows. They, in their sore distress, prayed to heaven; and their prayers were heard: Galatea became a mermaid, so that she might swim and sport like foam upon the crests of the blue sea; and Acis was changed into a stream that leapt from the hills to play with her amid bright waters. But Polyphemus, in punishment for his rage, and spite, and jealousy, was forced to live in the mid-furnaces of Etna. There he growled and groaned and shot forth flame in impotent fury; for though he remembered the gladness of those playfellows, and sought to harm them by tossing red-hot rocks upon the shore, yet the light sea ever laughed, and the radiant river found its way down from the copsewood to the waves. The throes of Etna in convulsion are the pangs of his great giant's heart, pent up and sick with love for the bright sea and gladsome sun; for, as an old poet sings:—

There's love when holy heaven doth wound the earth;
And love still prompts the land to yearn for bridal:
The rain that falls in rivers from the sky,
Impregnates earth: and she brings forth for men
The flocks and herds and life of teeming Ceres.

To which let us add:—

But sometimes love is barren, when broad hills,
Rent with the pangs of passion, yearn in vain,
Pouring fire tears adown their furrowed cheeks,
And heaving in the impotence of anguish.

There are few places in Europe where the poetic truth of Greek mythology is more apparent than here upon the coast between Etna and the sea. Of late, philosophers have been eager to tell us that the beautiful legends of the Greeks, which contain in the coloured haze of fancy all the thoughts afterwards expressed by that divine race in poetry and sculpture, are but decayed phrases, dead sentences, and words whereof the meaning was forgotten. In this theory there is a certain truth; for mythology stands midway between the first lisplings of a nation in its language, and its full-developed utterances in art. Yet we have only to visit the scenes which gave birth to some Hellenic myth, and we perceive at once that, whatever philology may affirm, the legend was a living poem, a drama of life and passion transferred from human experience to the inanimate world by those early myth-makers, who were the first and the most fertile of all artists. Persephone was the patroness of Sicily, because amid the billowy cornfields of her mother Demeter and the meadow flowers she loved in girlhood, are ever found sulphurous ravines and chasms breathing vapour from the pit of Hades. What were the Cyclops—that race of one-eyed giants—but the many minor cones of Etna? Observed from the sea by mariners, or vaguely spoken of by the natives, who had reason to dread their rage, these hillocks became lawless and devouring giants, each with one round burning eye. Afterwards the tales of Titans who had warred with Zeus were realised in this spot. Typhoeus or Enceladus made the mountain heave and snort; while Hephæstus not unnaturally forged thunder-bolts in the central caverns of a volcano that never ceased to smoke. To the student of art and literature, mythology is chiefly interesting in its latest stages, when, the linguistic origin of special legends being utterly forgotten, the poets of the race played freely with its rich material. Who cares to be told that Achilles was the sun, when the child of Thetis and the lover of Patroclus has been sung for us by Homer? Are the human agonies of the doomed house of Thebes made less appalling by tracing back the tale of OEdipus to some prosaic source in old astronomy? The

incest of Jocasta is the subject of supreme tragic art. It does not improve the matter, or whitewash the imagination of the Greeks, as some have fondly fancied, to unravel the fabric wrought by Homer and by Sophocles, into its raw material in Aryan dialects. Indeed, this new method of criticism bids fair to destroy for young minds the human lessons of pathos and heroism in Greek poetry, and to create an obscure conviction that the greatest race of artists the world has ever produced were but dotards, helplessly dreaming over distorted forms of speech and obsolete phraseology.

Let us bid farewell to Etna from Taormina. All along the coast between Aci and Giardini the mountain towers distinct against a sunset sky—divested of its robe of cloud, translucent and blue as some dark sea-built crystal. The Val del Bove is shown to be a circular crater in which the lava has boiled and bubbled over to the fertile land beneath. As we reach Giardini, the young moon is shining, and the night is alive with stars so large and bright that they seem leaning down to whisper in the ears of our soul. The sea is calm, touched here and there on the fringes of the bays and headlands with silvery light; and impendent crags loom black and sombre against the feeble azure of the moonlit sky. *Quale per incertam lunam et sub luce malignâ*: such is our journey, with Etna, a grey ghost, behind our path, and the reflections of stars upon the sea, and glow-worms in the hedges, and the mystical still splendour of the night, that, like Death, liberates the soul, raising it above all common things, simplifying the outlines of the earth as well as our own thoughts to one twilight hush of ærial tranquillity. It is a strange compliment to such a landscape to say that it recalls a scene from an opera. Yet so it is. What the arts of the scene-painter and the musician strive to suggest is here realised in fact; the mood of the soul created by music and by passion is natural here, spontaneous, prepared by the divine artists of earth, air, and sea.

288

Was there ever such another theatre as this of Taormina? Turned to the south, hollowed from the crest of a promontory 1000 feet above the sea, it faces Etna with its crown of snow: below, the coast sweeps onward to Catania and the distant headland of Syracuse. From the back the shore of Sicily curves with delicately indented bays towards Messina: then come the straits, and the blunt mass of the Calabrian mountains terminating Italy at Spartivento. Every spot on which the eye can rest is rife with reminiscences. It was there, we say, looking northward to the straits, that Ulysses tossed between Scylla and Charybdis; there, turning towards the flank of Etna, that he met with Polyphemus and defied the giant from his galley. From yonder snow-capped eyrie, Αἰτνας σκοπία, the rocks were hurled on Acis. And all along that shore, after Persephone was lost, went Demeter, torch in hand, wailing for the daughter she could no more find among Sicilian villages. Then, leaving myths for history, we remember how the ships of Nikias set sail from Reggio, and coasted the forelands at our feet, past Naxos, on their way to Catania and Syracuse. Gylippus afterwards in his swift galley took the same course: and Dion, when he came to destroy his nephew's empire. Here too Timoleon landed, resolute in his firm will to purge the isle of tyrants.

What scenes, more spirit-shaking than any tragic shows—pageants of fire and smoke, and mountains in commotion—are witnessed from these grassy benches, when the earth rocks, and the sea is troubled, and the side of Etna flows with flame, and night grows horrible with bellowings that forebode changes in empires!—

Quoties Cyclopum effervere in agros
Vidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Ætnam,
Flammarumque globos liquefactaque volvere saxa.

289

The stage of these tremendous pomps is very calm and peaceful now. Lying among acanthus leaves and asphodels, bound together by wreaths of white and pink convolvulus, we only feel that this is the loveliest landscape on which our eyes have ever rested or can rest. The whole scene is a symphony of blues—gemlike lapis-lazuli in the sea, ærial azure in the distant headlands, light-irradiated sapphire in the sky, and impalpable vapour-mantled purple upon Etna. The grey tones of the neighbouring cliffs, and the glowing brickwork of the ruined theatre, through the arches of which shine sea and hillside, enhance by contrast these modulations of the one prevailing hue. Etna is the dominant feature of the landscape—Αἰτνας ματερ εμά—πολυδένδρεος Αἰτνας—than which no other mountain is more sublimely solitary, more worthy of Pindar's praise, 'The pillar of heaven, the nurse of sharp eternal snow.' It is Etna that gives its unique character of elevated beauty to this coast scenery, raising it to a grander and more tragic level than the landscape of the Cornice and the Bay of Naples.

THE NORMANS IN SICILY

Sicily, in the centre of the Mediterranean, has been throughout all history the meeting-place and battle-ground of the races that contributed to civilise the West. It was here that the Greeks measured their strength against Phoenicia, and that Carthage fought her first duel with Rome. Here the bravery of Hellenes triumphed over barbarian force in the victories of Gelon and Timoleon. Here, in the harbour of Syracuse, the Athenian Empire succumbed to its own intemperate ambition. Here, in the end, Rome laid her mortmain upon Greek, Phoenician, and Sikeliot alike, turning the island into a granary and reducing its inhabitants to serfdom. When the classic age had closed, when Belisarius had vainly reconquered from the Goths for the empire of the East the fair island of Persephone and Zeus Olympius, then came the Mussulman, filling up with an interval of Oriental luxury and Arabian culture the period of utter deadness between the ancient and the modern world. To Islam succeeded the conquerors of the house of Hauteville, Norman knights who had but lately left their Scandinavian shores, and settled in the northern provinces of France. The Normans flourished for a season, and were merged in a line of Suabian princes, old Barbarossa's progeny. German rulers thus came to sway the corn-lands of Trinacria, until the bitter hatred of the Popes extinguished the house of Hohenstauffen upon the battlefield of Grandella and the scaffold of Naples. Frenchmen had the next turn—for a brief space only; since Palermo cried to the sound of her tocsins, 'Mora, Mora,' and the tyranny of Anjou was expunged with blood. Spain, the tardy and patient power, which inherited so much from the failure of more brilliant races, came at last, and tightened so firm a hold upon the island, that from the end of the thirteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, with one brief exception, Sicily belonged to the princes of Aragon, Castile, and Bourbon. These vicissitudes have left their traces everywhere. The Greek temples of Segeste and Girgenti and Selinus, the Roman amphitheatre of Syracuse, the Byzantine mosaics and Saracenic villas of Palermo, the Norman cathedrals of Monreale and Cefalù, and the Spanish habits which still characterise the life of Sicilian cities, testify to the successive strata of races which have been deposited upon the island. Amid its anarchy of tongues, the Latin alone has triumphed. In the time of the Greek colonists Sicily was polyglot. During the Saracenic occupation it was trilingual. It is now, and during modern history it has always been, Italian. Differences of language and of nationality have gradually been fused into one substance, by the spirit which emanates from Rome, and vivifies the Latin race.

291

The geographical position of Sicily has always influenced its history in a very marked way. The eastern coast, which is turned towards Greece and Italy, has been the centre of Aryan civilisation in the island, so that during Greek and Roman ascendancy Syracuse was held the capital. The western end, which projects into the African sea, was occupied in the time of the Hellenes by Phoenicians, and afterwards by Mussulmans: consequently Panormus, the ancient seat of Punic colonists, now called Palermo, became the centre of the Moslem rule, which, inherited entire by the Norman chieftains, was transmitted eventually to Spain. Palermo, devoid of classic monuments, and unknown except as a name to the historians of Greek civilisation, is therefore the modern capital of the island. 'Prima sedes, corona regis, et regni caput,' is the motto inscribed upon the cathedral porch and the archiepiscopal throne of Palermo: nor has any other city, except Messina,^[102] presumed to contest this title.

292

[102] Messina, owing to its mercantile position between the Levant, Italy, and France, and as the key to Sicily from the mainland, might probably have become the modern capital had not the Normans found a state machinery ready to their use centralised at Palermo.

Perhaps there are few spots upon the surface of the globe more beautiful than Palermo. The hills on either hand descend upon the sea with long-drawn delicately broken outlines, so exquisitely tinted with aërial hues, that at early dawn or beneath the blue light of a full moon the panorama seems to be some fabric of the fancy, that must fade away, 'like shapes of clouds we form,' to nothing. Within the cradle of these hills, and close upon the tideless water, lies the city. Behind and around on every side stretches the famous *Conca d'Oro*, or golden shell, a plain of marvellous fertility, so called because of its richness and also because of its shape; for it tapers to a fine point where the mountains meet, and

spreads abroad, where they diverge, like a cornucopia, toward the sea. The whole of this long vega is a garden, thick with olive-groves and orange-trees, with orchards of nespole and palms and almonds, with fig-trees and locust-trees, with judas-trees that blush in spring, and with flowers as multitudinously brilliant as the fretwork of sunset clouds. It was here that in the days of the Kelbite dynasty, the sugar-cane and cotton-tree and mulberry supplied both East and West with produce for the banquet and the paper-mill and the silk-loom; and though these industries are now neglected, vast gardens of cactuses still give a strangely Oriental character to the scenery of Palermo, while the land flows with honey-sweet wine instead of sugar. The language in which Arabian poets extolled the charms of this fair land is even now nowise extravagant: 'Oh how beautiful is the lakelet of the twin palms, and the island where the spacious palace stands! The limpid water of the double springs resembles liquid pearls, and their basin is a sea: you would say that the branches of the trees stretched down to see the fishes in the pool and smile at them. The great fishes swim in those clear waters, and the birds among the gardens tune their songs. The ripe oranges of the island are like fire that burns on boughs of emerald; the pale lemon reminds me of a lover who has passed the night in weeping for his absent darling. The two palms may be compared to lovers who have gained an inaccessible retreat against their enemies, or raise themselves erect in pride to confound the murmurs and ill thoughts of jealous men. O palms of the two lakelets of Palermo, may ceaseless, undisturbed, and plenteous dews for ever keep your freshness!' Such is the poetry which suits the environs of Palermo, where the Moorish villas of La Zisa and La Cuba and La Favara still stand, and where the modern gardens, though wilder, are scarcely less delightful than those beneath which King Roger discoursed with Edrisi, and Gian da Procida surprised his sleeping mistress.^[103] The groves of oranges and lemons are an inexhaustible source of joy: not only because of their 'golden lamps in a green night,' but also because of their silvery constellations, nebulæ, and drifts of stars, in the same green night, and milky ways of blossoms on the ground beneath. As in all southern scenery, the transition from these perfumed thickly clustering gardens to the bare unirrigated hillsides is very striking. There the dwarf-palm tufts with its spiky foliage the clefts of limestone rock, and the lizards run in and out among bushes of tree-spurge and wild cactus and grey asphodels. The sea-shore is a tangle of lilac and oleander and laurustinus and myrtle and lentisk and cytissus and geranium. The flowering plants that make our shrubberies gay in spring with blossoms, are here wild, running riot upon the sand-heaps of Mondello or beneath the barren slopes of Monte Pellegrino.

293

294

It was into this terrestrial paradise, cultivated through two preceding centuries by the Arabs, who of all races were wisest in the arts of irrigation and landscape-gardening, that the Norsemen entered as conquerors, and lay down to pass their lives.^[104]

[103] Boccaccio, *Giorn. v. Nov. 6.*

[104] The Saracens possessed themselves of Sicily by a gradual conquest, which began about 827 A.D. Disembarking on the little isle of Pantellaria and the headland of Lilyboeum, where of old the Carthaginians used to enter Sicily, they began by overrunning the island for the first four years. In 831 they took Palermo; during the next ten years they subjugated the Val di Mazara; between 841 and 859 they possessed themselves of the Val di Noto; after this they extended their conquest over the seaport towns of the Val Demone, but neglected to reduce the whole of the N.E. district. Syracuse was stormed and reduced to ruins after a desperate defence in 878, while Leo, the heir of the Greek Empire, contented himself with composing two Anacreontic elegies on the disaster at Byzantium. In 895 Sicily was wholly lost to the Greeks, by a treaty signed between the Saracens and the remaining Christian towns. The Christians during the Mussulman occupation were divided into four classes—(1) A few independent municipalities obedient loosely to the Greek Empire; (2) tributaries who paid the Arabs what they would otherwise have sent to Byzantium; (3) vassals, whose towns had fallen by arms or treaty into the hands of the conquerors, and who, though their property was respected and religion tolerated, were called 'dsimmi' or 'humbled;' (4) serfs, prisoners of war, sold as slaves or attached to the soil (*Amari*, vol. i.).

No chapter of history more resembles a romance than that which records the sudden rise and brief splendour of the house of Hauteville. In one generation the sons of Tancred passed from the condition of squires in the Norman vale of Cotentin, to kingdom in the richest island of the southern sea. The Norse adventurers became Sultans of an Oriental

295

capital. The sea-robbers assumed together with the sceptre the culture of an Arabian court. The marauders whose armies burned Rome, received at papal hands the mitre and dalmatic as symbols of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.^[105] The brigands who on their first appearance in Italy had pillaged stables and farmyards to supply their needs, lived to mate their daughters with princes and to sway the politics of Europe with gold. The freebooters, whose skill consisted in the use of sword and shield, whose brains were vigorous in strategy or statecraft, and whose pleasures were confined to the hunting-field and the wine-cup, raised villas like the Zisa and encrusted the cathedral of Monreale with mosaics. Finally, while the race was yet vigorous, after giving two heroes to the first Crusade, it transmitted its titles, its temper, and its blood to the great Emperor, who was destined to fight out upon the battlefield of Italy the strife of Empire against Papacy, and to bequeath to mediæval Europe the tradition of cosmopolitan culture. The physical energy of this brood of heroes was such as can scarcely be paralleled in history. Tancred de Hauteville begat two families by different wives. Of his children twelve were sons; two of whom stayed with their father in Normandy, while ten sought fame and found a kingdom in the south. Of these, William Iron Arm, the first Count of Apulia; Robert Guiscard, who united Calabria and Apulia under one dukedom, and carried victorious arms against both Emperors of East and West; and Roger the Great Count, who added Sicily to the conquests of the Normans and bequeathed the kingdom of South Italy to his son, rose to the highest name. But all the brothers shared the great qualities of the house; and two of them, Humphrey and Drogo, also wore a coronet. Large of limb and stout of heart, persevering under difficulties, crafty yet gifted with the semblance of sincerity, combining the piety of pilgrims with the morals of highwaymen, the sturdiness of barbarians with the plasticity of culture, eloquent in the council-chamber and the field, dear to their soldiers for their bravery and to women for their beauty, equally eminent as generals and as rulers, restrained by no scruples but such as policy suggested, restless in their energy, yet neither fickle nor rash, comprehensive in their views, but indefatigable in detail, these lions among men were made to conquer in the face of overwhelming obstacles, and to hold their conquests with a grasp of iron. What they wrought, whether wisely or not for the ultimate advantage of Italy, endures to this day, while the work of so many emperors, republics, and princes has passed and shifted like the scenes in a pantomime. Through them the Greeks, the Lombards, and the Moors were extinguished in the south. The Papacy was checked in its attempt to found a province of S. Peter below the Tiber. The republics of Naples, Gaeta, Amalfi, which might have rivalled perchance with Milan, Genoa, and Florence, were subdued to a master's hand. In short, to the Normans Italy owed that kingdom of the Two Sicilies which formed one-third of her political balance, and which proved the cause of all her most serious revolutions.

296

[105] King Roger in the mosaics of the Martorana Church at Palermo wears the dalmatic, and receives his crown from the hands of Christ.

Roger, the youngest of the Hauteville family, and the founder of the kingdom of Sicily, showed by his untamable spirit and sound intellect that his father's vigour remained unexhausted. Each of Tancred's sons was physically speaking a masterpiece, and the last was the prime work of all. This Roger, styled the Great Count, begat a second Roger, the first King of Sicily, whose son and grandson, both named William, ruled in succession at Palermo. With them the direct line of the house of Hauteville expired. It would seem as if the energy and fertility of the stock had been drained by its efforts in the first three generations. Constance, the heiress of the family, who married Henry VI. and gave birth to the Emperor Frederick II., was daughter of King Roger, and therefore third in descent from Tancred. Drawing her blood more immediately from the parent stem, she thus transmitted to the princes of the race of Hohenstauffen the vigour of her Norman ancestry unweakened. This was a circumstance of no small moment in the history of Europe. Upon the fierce and daring Suabian stem were grafted the pertinacity, the cunning, the versatility of the Norman adventurers. Young Frederick, while strong and subtle enough to stand for himself against the world, was so finely tempered by the blended strains of his parentage that he received the polish of an Oriental education without effeminacy. Called upon to administer the affairs of Germany, to govern Italy, to contend with the Papacy, and to settle by arms and treaties the great Oriental question of his days, Frederick, cosmopolitan from the cradle, was equal to the task. Had Europe been but ready, the

297

Renaissance would have dated from his reign, and a universal empire, if not of political government, yet of intellectual culture, might have been firmly instituted.

Of the personal appearance of the Norman chiefs—their fair hair, clear eyes, and broad shoulders—we hear much from the chroniclers. One minutely studied portrait will serve to bring the whole race vividly before us. Bohemond, Prince of Tarentum, the son of Robert Guiscard, and first cousin to Tancred of Montferrat, was thus described by Anna Comnena, who saw him at her father's court during the first Crusade: 'Neither amongst our own nation (the Greeks), nor amongst foreigners, is there in our age a man equal to Bohemond. His presence dazzled the eyes, as his reputation the fancy. He was one cubit taller than the tallest man known. In his waist he was thin, but broad in his shoulders and chest, without being either too thin or too fat. His arms were strong, his hands full and large, his feet firm and solid. He stooped a little, but through habit only, and not on account of any deformity. He was fair, but on his cheeks there was an agreeable mixture of vermilion. His hair was not loose over his shoulders, according to the fashion of the barbarians, but was cut above his ears. His eyes were blue, and full of wrath and fierceness. His nostrils were large, inasmuch as having a wide chest and a great heart, his lungs required an unusual quantity of air to moderate the warmth of his blood. His handsome face had in itself something gentle and softening, but the height of his person and the fierceness of his looks had something wild and terrible. He was more dreadful in his smiles than others in their rage.' When we read this description, remembering the romance of Bohemond's ancestry and his own life, we do not wonder at the tales of chivalry. Those 'knights of Logres and of Lyonesse, Lancelot or Pelleas or Pellenore,' with whose adventures our tawny-haired magnificent Plantagenets amused their leisure, become realities. The manly beauty, described by the Byzantine princess in words which seem to betray a more than common interest in her handsome foe, was hereditary in the house of Hauteville. They transmitted it to the last of the Suabian dynasty, to Manfred and Conradin, and to the king Enzo, whose long golden hair fell down from his shoulders to his saddle-bow as he rode, a captive, into Bologna.

298

The story of the Norman conquest is told by two chroniclers—William of Apulia, who received his materials from Robert Guiscard, and Godfrey Malaterra, who wrote down the oral narrative of Roger. Thus we possess what is tantamount to personal memoirs of the Norman chiefs. Nevertheless, a veil of legendary romance obscures the first appearance of the Scandinavian warriors upon the scene of history. William of Apulia tells how, in the course of a pilgrimage to S. Michael's shrine on Monte Gargano, certain knights of Normandy were accosted by a stranger of imposing aspect, who persuaded them to draw their swords in the quarrel of the Lombard towns of South Italy against the Greeks. This man was Melo of Bari. Whether his invitation were so theatrically conveyed or not, it is probable that the Norsemen made their first acquaintance with Apulia on a pilgrimage to the Italian Michael's mount; and it is certain that Melo, whom we dimly descry as a patriot of enlarged views and indomitable constancy, provided them with arms and horses, raised troops in Salerno and Benevento to assist them, and directed them against the Greeks. This happened in 1017. Twelve years later we find the town of Aversa built and occupied by Normans under the control of their Count Rainulf; while another band, headed by Ardoin, a Lombard of Milan, lived at large upon the country, selling its services to the Byzantine Greeks. In the anarchy of Southern Italy at this epoch, when the decaying Empire of the East was relaxing its hold upon the Apulian provinces, when the Papacy was beginning to lift up its head after the ignominy of Theodora and Marozia, and the Lombard power was slowly dissolving upon its ill-established foundations, the Norman adventurers pursued a policy which, however changeful, was invariably self-advantageous. On whatever side they fought, they took care that the profits of war should accrue to their own colony. Quarrel as they might among themselves, they were always found at one against a common foe. And such was their reputation in the field, that the hardiest soldiers errant of all nations joined their standard. Thus it fell out that when Ardoin and his Normans had helped Maniaces to wrest the eastern districts of Sicily from the Moors, they returned, upon an insult offered by the Greek general, to extend the right hand of fellowship to Rainulf and his Normans of Aversa. 'Why should you stay here like a rat in his hole, when with our help you might rule those fertile plains, expelling the women in armour who keep guard over them?' The agreement of Ardoin and Rainulf formed the basis of the future Norman power. Their companies joined forces. Melfi was chosen as the centre of their federal

299

300

government. The united Norman colony elected twelve chiefs or counts of equal authority; and henceforth they thought only of consolidating their ascendancy over the effete races which had hitherto pretended to employ their arms. The genius of their race and age, however, was unfavourable to federations. In a short time the ablest man among them, the true king, by right of personal vigour and mental cunning, showed himself. It was at this point that the house of Hauteville rose to the altitude of its romantic destiny. William Iron Arm was proclaimed Count of Apulia. Two of his brothers succeeded him in the same dignity. His half-brother, Robert Guiscard, imprisoned one Pope,^[106] Leo IX., and wrested from another, Nicholas II., the title of Duke of Apulia and Calabria. By the help of his youngest brother, Roger, he gradually completed the conquest of Italy below the Tiber, and then addressed himself to the task of subduing Sicily. The Papacy, incapable of opposing the military vigour of the Northmen, was distracted between jealousy of their growing importance and desire to utilise them for its own advantage.^[107] The temptation to employ these filial pirates as a catspaw for restoring Sicily to the bosom of the Church, was too strong to be resisted. In spite of many ebbs and flows of policy, the favour which the Popes accorded to the Normans gilded the might and cunning of the adventurers with the specious splendour of acknowledged sanctity. The time might come for casting off these powerful allies and adding their conquests to the patrimony of S. Peter. Meanwhile it costs nothing to give away what does not belong to one, particularly when by doing so a title to the same is gradually formed. So the Popes reckoned. Robert and Roger went forth with banners blessed by Rome to subjugate the island of the Greek and Moor.

301

[106] The Normans were lucky in getting hold of Popes. King Roger caught Innocent II. at San Germano in 1139, and got from him the confirmation of all his titles.

[107] Even the great Hildebrand wavered in his policy toward Robert Guiscard. Having raised an army by the help of the Countess Matilda in 1074, he excommunicated Robert and made war against him. Robert proved more than his match in force and craft; and Hildebrand had to confirm his title as duke, and designate him Knight of S. Peter in 1080. When Robert drove the Emperor Henry IV. from Rome, and burned the city of the Coelian, Hildebrand retired with his terrible defender to Salerno, and died there in 1085. Robert and both Rogers were good sons of the Church, deserving the titles of 'Terror of the faithless,' 'Sword of the Lord drawn from the scabbard of Sicily,' as long as they were suffered to pursue their own schemes of empire. They respected the Pope's person and his demesne of Benevento; they were largely liberal in donations to churches and abbeys. But they did not suffer their piety to interfere with their ambition.

The honours of this conquest, paralleled for boldness only by the achievements of Cortes and Pizarro, belong to Roger. It is true that since the fall of the Kelbite dynasty Sicily had been shaken by anarchy and despotism, by the petty quarrels of princes and party leaders, and to some extent also by the invasion of Maniaces. Yet on the approach of Roger with a handful of Norman knights, 'the island was guarded,' to quote Gibbon's energetic phrase, 'to the water's edge.' For some years he had to content himself with raids and harrying excursions, making Messina, which he won from the Moors by the aid of their Christian serfs and vassals, the basis of his operations, and retiring from time to time across the Faro with booty to Reggio. The Mussulmans had never thoroughly subdued the north-eastern highlands of Sicily. Satisfied with occupying the whole western and southern sections of the island, with planting their government firmly at Palermo, destroying Syracuse, and establishing a military fort on the heights of Castro Giovanni, they had somewhat neglected the Christian populations of the Val Demone. Thus the key to Sicily upon the Italian side fell into the hands of the invaders. From Messina Roger advanced by Rametta and Centorbi to Troina, a hill-town raised high above the level of the sea, within view of the solemn blue-black pyramid of Etna. There he planted a garrison in 1062, two years after his first incursion into the island. The interval had been employed in marches and countermarches, descents upon the vale of Catania, and hurried expeditions as far as Girgenti, on the southern coast. One great battle is recorded beneath the walls of Castro Giovanni, when six hundred Norman knights, so say the chroniclers, engaged with fifteen thousand of the Arabian chivalry and one hundred thousand foot soldiers. However great the exaggeration of these numbers, it is certain that the Christians fought at fearful odds that day, and that all the eloquence of Roger, who wrought on their fanaticism in his speech

302

before the battle, was needed to raise their courage to the sticking-point. The scene of the great rout of Saracens which followed, is in every respect memorable. Castro Giovanni, the old Enna of the Greeks and Romans, stands on the top of a precipitous mountain, two thousand feet above a plain which waves with corn. A sister height, Calascibetta, raised nearly to an equal altitude, keeps ward over the same valley; and from their summits the whole of Sicily is visible. Here in old days Demeter from her rock-built temple could survey vast tracts of hill and dale, breaking downwards to the sea and undulating everywhere with harvest. The much praised lake and vale of Enna^[108] are now a desolate sulphur district, void of beauty, with no flowers to tempt Proserpine. Yet the landscape is eminently noble because of its breadth—bare naked hills stretching in every direction to the sea that girdles Sicily—peak rising above peak and town-capped eyrie over eyrie—while Etna, wreathed with snow, and purple with the peculiar colour of its coal-black lava seen through light-irradiated air, sleeps far off beneath a crown of clouds. Upon the cornfields in the centre of this landscape the multitudes of the Infidels were smitten hip and thigh by the handful of Christian warriors. Yet the victory was by no means a decisive one. The Saracens swarmed round the Norman fortress of Troina; where, during a severe winter, Roger and his young wife, Judith of Evreux, whom he had loved in Normandy, and who journeyed to marry him amid the din of battles, had but one cloak to protect them both from the cold. The traveller, who even in April has experienced the chill of a high-set Sicilian village, will not be inclined to laugh at the hardships revealed by this little incident. Yet the Normans, one and all, were stanch. A victory over their assailants in the spring gave them courage to push their arms as far as the river Himera and beyond the Simeto, while a defeat of fifty thousand Saracens by four hundred Normans at Cerami opened the way at last to Palermo. Reading of these engagements, we are led to remember how Gelon smote his Punic foes upon the Himera, and Timoleon arrayed Greeks by the ten against Carthaginians by the thousand on the Crimisus. The battlefields are scarcely altered; the combatants are as unequally matched, and represent analogous races. It is still the combat of a few heroic Europeans against the hordes of Asia. In the battle of Cerami it is said that S. George fought visibly on horseback before the Christian band, like that wide-winged chivalrous archangel whom Spinello Aretino painted beside Sant' Efeso in the press of men upon the walls of the Pisan Campo Santo.

303

304

[108] Cicero's description of Enna is still accurate: 'Enna is placed in a very lofty and exposed situation, at the top of which is a tableland and never-failing supply of springs. The whole site is cut off from access, and precipitous.' But when he proceeds to say, 'many groves and lakes surround it and luxuriant flowers through all the year,' we cannot follow him. The only quality which Enna has not lost is the impregnable nature of its cliffs. A few poplars and thorns are all that remain of its forests. Did we not know that the myth of Demeter and Persephone was a poem of seed-time and harvest, we might be tempted, while sitting on the crags of Castro Giovanni and looking toward the lake, to fancy that in old days a village dependent upon Enna, and therefore called her daughter, might have occupied the site of the lake, and that this village might have been withdrawn into the earth by the volcanic action which produced the cavity. Then people would have said that Demeter had lost Persephone and sought her vainly through all the cities of Sicily: and if this happened in spring Persephone might well have been thought to have been gathering flowers at the time when Hades took her to himself. So easy and yet so dangerous is it to rationalise a legend.

The capture of Palermo cost the Normans another eight years, part of which was spent according to their national tactics in plundering expeditions, part in the subjugation of Catania and other districts, part in the blockade of the capital by sea and land. After the fall of Palermo, it only remained for Roger to reduce isolated cities—Taormina, Syracuse, ^[109] Girgenti, and Castro Giovanni—to his sway. The last-named and strongest hold of the Saracens fell into his hands by the treason of Ibn-Hamûd in 1087, and thus, after thirty years' continual effort, the two brothers were at last able to divide the island between them. The lion's share, as was due, fell to Roger, who styled himself Great Count of Sicily and Calabria. In 1098, Urban II., a politician of the school of Cluny, who well understood the scope of Hildebrand's plan for subjecting Europe to the Court of Rome, rewarded Roger for his zeal in the service of the Church with the title of Hereditary Apostolical Legate. The Great Count was now on a par with the most powerful monarchs of Europe. In riches he exceeded all; so that he was able to wed one daughter to the King of

305

Hungary, another to Conrad, King of Italy, a third to Raimond, Count of Provence and Toulouse, dowering them all with imperial munificence.

[109] In this siege, as in that of the Athenians, and of the Saracens 878 A.D., decisive engagements took place in the great harbour.

Hale and vigorous, his life was prolonged through a green old age until his seventieth year; when he died in 1101, he left two sons by his third wife, Adelaide. Roger, the younger of the two, destined to succeed his father, and (on the death of his cousin, William, Duke of Apulia, in 1127) to unite South Italy and Sicily under one crown, was only four years old at the death of the Great Count. Inheriting all the valour and intellectual qualities of his family, he rose to even higher honour than his predecessors. In 1130 he assumed the style of King of Sicily, no doubt with the political purpose of impressing his Mussulman subjects; and nine years later, when he took Innocent captive at San Germano, he forced from the half-willing pontiff a confirmation of this title as well as the investiture of Apulia, Calabria, and Capua. The extent of his sway is recorded in the line engraved upon his sword:—

Appulus et Calaber Siculus mihi servit et Afer.

King Roger died in 1154, and bequeathed his kingdoms to his son William, surnamed the Bad; who in his turn left them to a William, called the Good, in 1166. The second William died in 1189, transmitting his possessions by will to Constance, wife of the Suabian emperor. These two Williams, the last of the Hauteville monarchs of Sicily, were not altogether unworthy of their Norman origin. William the Bad could rouse himself from the sloth of his seraglio to head an army; William the Good, though feeble in foreign policy, and no general, administered the state with clemency and wisdom.

306

Sicily under the Normans offered the spectacle of a singularly hybrid civilisation. Christians and Northmen, adopting the habits and imbibing the culture of their Mussulman subjects, ruled a mixed population of Greeks, Arabs, Berbers, and Italians. The language of the princes was French; that of the Christians in their territory, Greek and Latin; that of their Mahommedan subjects, Arabic. At the same time the Scandinavian Sultans of Palermo did not cease to play an active part in the affairs, both civil and ecclesiastical, of Europe. The children of the Vikings, though they spent their leisure in harems, exercised, as hereditary Legates of the Holy See, a peculiar jurisdiction in the Church of Sicily. They dispensed benefices to the clergy, and assumed the mitre and dalmatic, together with the sceptre, and the crown, as symbols of their authority in Church as well as State. As a consequence of this confusion of nationalities in Sicily, we find French and English ecclesiastics^[110] mingling at court with Moorish freedmen and Oriental odalisques, Apulian captains fraternising with Greek corsairs, Jewish physicians in attendance on the person of the prince, and Arabian poets eloquent in his praises. The very money with which Roger subsidised his Italian allies was stamped with Cuphic letters,^[111] and there is reason to believe that the reproach against Frederick of being a false coiner arose from his adopting the Eastern device of plating copper pieces to pass for silver. The commander of Roger's navies and his chief minister of state was styled, according to Oriental usage, Emir or Ammiraglio. George of Antioch, who swept the shores of Africa, the Morea, and the Black Sea, in his service, was a Christian of the Greek Church, who had previously held an office of finance under Temin Prince of Mehdia. The workers in his silk factories were slaves from Thebes and Corinth. The pages of his palace were Sicilian or African eunuchs. His charters ran in Arabic as well as Greek and Latin. His jewellers engraved the rough gems of the Orient with Christian mottoes in Semitic characters.^[112] His architects were Mussulmans who adapted their native style to the requirements of Christian ritual, and inscribed the walls of cathedrals with Catholic legends in the Cuphic language. The predominant characteristic of Palermo was Orientalism. Religious toleration was extended to the Mussulmans, so that the two creeds, Christian and Mahommedan, flourished side by side. The Saracens had their own quarters in the towns, their mosques and schools, and Cadis for the administration of petty justice. French and Italian women in Palermo adopted the Oriental fashions of dress. The administration of law and government was conducted on Eastern principles. In nothing had the Mussulmans shown greater genius than in their system of internal statecraft. Count Roger found a machinery of taxation in full working order, officers acquainted with the resources of the country, books and schedules constructed on the principles of strictest accuracy, a whole bureaucracy, in fact, ready to his use. By applying this machinery he became the richest potentate in

307

308

Europe, at a time when the northern monarchs were dependent upon feudal aids and precarious revenues from crown lands. In the same way, the Saracens bequeathed to the Normans the court system, which they in turn had derived from the princes of Persia and the example of Constantinople. Roger found it convenient to continue that organisation of pages, chamberlains, ushers, secretaries, viziers, and masters of the wardrobe, invested each with some authority of state according to his rank, which confined the administration of an Eastern kingdom to the walls of the palace.^[113] At Palermo Europe saw the first instance of a court not wholly unlike that which Versailles afterwards became. The intrigues which endangered the throne and liberty of William the Bad, and which perplexed the policy of William the Good, were court-conspiracies of a kind common enough at Constantinople. In this court life men of letters and erudition played a first part three centuries before Petrarch taught the princes of Italy to respect the pen of a poet.

[110] The English Gualterio Offamilio, or Walter of the Mill, Archbishop of Palermo during the reign of William the Good, by his intrigues brought about the match between Constance and Henry VI. Richard Palmer at the same time was Bishop of Syracuse. Stephen des Rotrous, a Frenchman of the Counts of Perche, preceded Walter of the Mill in the Arch See of Palermo.

[111] Frederick Barbarossa's soldiers are said to have bidden the Romans: 'Take this German iron in change for Arab gold. This pay your master gives you, and this is how Franks win empire.'—*Amari*, vol. iii. p. 468.

[112] The embroidered skullcap of Constance of Aragon, wife of Frederick II., in the sacristy of the cathedral at Palermo, is made of gold thread thickly studded with pearls and jewels—rough sapphires and carbuncles, among which may be noticed a red cornelian engraved in Arabic with this sentence, 'In Christ, God, I put my hope.'

[113] The Arabic title of *Kâid*, which originally was given to a subordinate captain of the guard, took a wide significance at the Norman Court. Latinised to *gaytus*, and Grecised under the form of *κάιτος*, it frequently occurs in chronicles and diplomas to denote a high minister of state. Matteo of Ajello, who exercised so powerful an influence over the policy of William the Good, heading the Mussulman and national party against the great ecclesiastics who were intriguing to draw Sicily into the entanglements of European diplomacy, was a *Kâid*. Matteo favoured the cause of Tancred, Walter of the Mill espoused that of the Germans, during the war of succession which followed upon William's death. The barons of the realm had to range themselves under these two leaders—to such an extent were the affairs of state in Sicily within the grasp of courtiers and churchmen.

King Roger, of whom the court geographer Edrisi writes that 'he did more sleeping than any other man waking,' was surrounded during his leisure moments, beneath the palm-groves of Favara, with musicians, historians, travellers, mathematicians, poets, and astrologers of Oriental breeding. At his command Ptolemy's Optics were translated into Latin from the Arabic. The prophecies of the Erythrean Sibyl were rendered accessible in the same way. His respect for the occult sciences was proved by his disinterring the bones of Virgil from their resting-place at Posilippo, and placing them in the Castel dell' Uovo in order that he might have access through necromancy to the spirit of the Roman wizard. It may be remembered in passing, that Palermo in one of her mosques already held suspended between earth and air the supposed relics of Aristotle. Such were the saints of modern culture in its earliest dawning. While Venice was robbing Alexandria of the body of S. Mark, Palermo and Naples placed themselves beneath the protection of a philosopher and a poet. But Roger's greatest literary work was the compilation of a treatise of universal geography. Fifteen years were devoted to the task; and the manuscript, in Arabic, drawn up by the philosopher Edrisi, appeared only six weeks before the king's death in 1154. This book, called 'The Book of Roger, or the Delight of whoso loves to make the Circuit of the World,' was based upon the previous labours of twelve geographers, classical and Mussulman. But aiming at greater accuracy than could be obtained by a merely literary compilation, Roger caused pilgrims, travellers, and merchants of all countries to be assembled for conference and examination before him. Their accounts were sifted and collated. Edrisi held the pen while Roger questioned. Measurements and distances were carefully compared; and a vast silver disc was constructed, on which all the seas, islands, continents, plains, rivers, mountain ranges, cities, roads, and harbours of the known world

were delineated. The text supplied an explanatory description of this map, with tables of the products, habits, races, religions, and qualities, both physical and moral, of all climates. The precious metal upon which the map was drawn proved its ruin, and the Geography remained in the libraries of Arab scholars. Yet this was one of the first great essays of practical exploration and methodical statistic, to which the genius of the Norseman and the Arab each contributed a quota. The Arabians, by their primitive nomadic habits, by the necessities of their system of taxation, by their predilection for astrology, by their experience as pilgrims, merchants, and poets errant, were specially qualified for the labour of geographical investigation. Roger supplied the unbounded curiosity and restless energy of his Scandinavian temper, the kingly comprehensive intellect of his race, and the authority of a prince who was powerful enough to compel the service of qualified collaborators.

The architectural works of the Normans in Palermo reveal the same ascendancy of Arab culture. San Giovanni degli Eremiti, with its low white rounded domes, is nothing more or less than a little mosque adapted to the rites of Christians.^[114] The country palaces of the Zisa and the Cuba, built by the two Williams, retain their ancient Moorish character. Standing beneath the fretted arches of the hall of the Zisa, through which a fountain flows within a margin of carved marble, and looking on the landscape from its open porch, we only need to reconstruct in fancy the green gardens and orange-groves, where fair-haired Normans whiled away their hours among black-eyed odalisques and graceful singing boys from Persia. Amid a wild tangle of olive and lemon trees overgrown with scarlet passion-flowers, the pavilion of the Cubola, built of hewn stone and open at each of its four sides, still stands much as it stood when William II. paced through flowers from his palace of the Cuba, to enjoy the freshness of the evening by the side of its fountain. The views from all these Saracenic villas over the fruitful valley of the Golden Horn, and the turrets of Palermo, and the mountains and the distant sea, are ineffably delightful. When the palaces were new—when the gilding and the frescoes still shone upon their honeycombed ceilings, when their mosaics glittered in noonday twilight, and their amber-coloured masonry was set in shade of pines and palms, and the cool sound of rivulets made music in their courts and gardens, they must have well deserved their Arab titles of 'Sweet Waters' and 'The Glory' and 'The Paradise of Earth.'

311

[114] Tradition asserts that the tocsin of this church gave the signal in Palermo to the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers.

But the true splendour of Palermo, that which makes this city one of the most glorious of the south, is to be sought in its churches—in the mosaics of the Cappella Palatina founded by King Roger, in the vast aisles and cloisters of Monreale built by King William the Good at the instance of his Chancellor Matteo,^[115] in the Cathedral of Palermo begun by Offamilio, and in the Martorana dedicated by George the Admiral. These triumphs of ecclesiastical architecture, none the less splendid because they cannot be reduced to rule or assigned to any single style, were the work of Saracen builders assisted by Byzantine, Italian, and Norman craftsmen. The genius of Latin Christianity determined the basilica shape of the Cathedral of Monreale. Its bronze doors were wrought by smiths of Trani and Pisa. Its walls were incrustated with the mosaics of Constantinople. The woodwork of its roof, and the emblazoned patterns in porphyry and serpentine and glass and smalto, which cover its whole surface, were designed by Oriental decorators. Norman sculptors added their dog-tooth and chevron to the mouldings of its porches; Greeks, Frenchmen, and Arabs may have tried their skill in turn upon the multitudinous ornaments of its cloister capitals. 'The like of which church,' said Lucius III. in 1182, 'hath not been constructed by any king even from ancient times, and such an one as must compel all men to admiration.' These words remain literally and emphatically true. Other cathedrals may surpass that of Monreale in sublimity, simplicity, bulk, strength, or unity of plan. None can surpass it in the strange romance with which the memory of its many artificers invests it. None again can exceed it in richness and glory, in the gorgeousness of a thousand decorative elements subservient to one controlling thought. 'It is evident,' says Fergusson in his 'History of Architecture,' 'that all the architectural features in the building were subordinate in the eyes of the builders to the mosaic decorations, which cover every part of the interior, and are in fact the glory and the pride of the edifice, and alone entitle it to rank among the finest of mediæval churches.' The whole of the Christian history is depicted in this series of mosaics; but on first entering, one form alone compels attention. The semi-dome of the

312

eastern apse above the high altar is entirely filled with a gigantic half-length figure of Christ. He raises His right hand to bless, and with His left holds an open book on which is written in Greek and Latin, 'I am the Light of the world.' His face is solemn and severe, rather than mild or piteous; and round His nimbus runs the legend *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός ὁ παντοκράτωρ*. Below Him on a smaller scale are ranged the archangels and the mother of the Lord, who holds the child upon her knees. Thus Christ appears twice upon this wall, once as the Omnipotent Wisdom, the Word by whom all things were made, and once as God deigning to assume a shape of flesh and dwell with men. The magnificent image of supreme Deity seems to fill with a single influence and to dominate the whole building. The house with all its glory is His. He dwells there like Pallas in her Parthenon or Zeus in his Olympian temple. To left and right over every square inch of the cathedral blaze mosaics, which portray the story of God's dealings with the human race from the Creation downwards, together with those angelic beings and saints who symbolise each in his own degree some special virtue granted to mankind. The walls of the fane are therefore an open book of history, theology, and ethics for all men to read.

313

[115] Matteo of Ajello induced William to found an archbishopric at Monreale in order to spite his rival Offamilio.

The superiority of mosaics over fresco as an architectural adjunct on this gigantic scale is apparent at a glance in Monreale. Permanency of splendour and glowing richness of tone are all on the side of the mosaics. Their true rival is painted glass. The jewelled churches of the south are constructed for the display of coloured surfaces illuminated by sunlight falling on them from narrow windows, just as those of the north—Rheims, for example, or Le Mans—are built for the transmission of light through a variegated medium of transparent hues. The painted windows of a northern cathedral find their proper counterpart in the mosaics of the south. The Gothic architect strove to obtain the greatest amount of translucent surface. The Byzantine builder directed his attention to securing just enough light for the illumination of his glistening walls. The radiance of the northern church was similar to that of flowers or sunset clouds or jewels. The glory of the southern temple was that of dusky gold and gorgeous needlework. The north needed acute brilliancy as a contrast to external greyness. The south found rest from the glare and glow of noonday in these sombre splendours. Thus Christianity, both of the south and of the north, decked her shrines with colour. Not so the Paganism of Hellas. With the Greeks, colour, though used in architecture, was severely subordinated to sculpture; toned and modified to a calculated harmony with actual nature, it did not, as in a Christian church, create a world beyond the world, a paradise of supersensual ecstasy, but remained within the limits of the known. Light falling upon carved forms of gods and heroes, bathing clear-cut columns and sharp bas-reliefs in simple lustre, was enough for the Phoebean rites of Hellas. Though we know that red and blue and green and gilding were employed to accentuate the mouldings of Greek temples, yet neither the gloomy glory of mosaics nor the gemmed fretwork of storied windows was needed to attune the souls of Hellenic worshippers to devotion.

314

Less vast than Monreale, but even more beautiful, because the charm of mosaic increases in proportion as the surface it covers may be compared to the interior of a casket, is the Cappella Palatina of the royal palace in Palermo. Here, again, the whole design and ornament are Arabo-Byzantine. Saracenic pendentives with Cuphic legends incrust the richly painted ceiling of the nave. The roofs of the apses and the walls are coated with mosaics, in which the Bible history, from the dove that brooded over Chaos to the lives of S. Peter and S. Paul, receives a grand though formal presentation. Beneath the mosaics are ranged slabs of grey marble, edged and divided with delicate patterns of inserted glass, resembling drapery with richly embroidered fringes. The floor is inlaid with circles of serpentine and porphyry encased in white marble, and surrounded by winding bands of Alexandrine work. Some of these patterns are restricted to the five tones of red, green, white, black, and pale yellow. Others add turquoise blue, and emerald, and scarlet, and gold. Not a square inch of the surface—floor, roof, walls, or cupola—is free from exquisite gemmed work of precious marbles. A candelabrum of fanciful design, combining lions devouring men and beasts, cranes, flowers, and winged genii, stands by the pulpit. Lamps of chased silver hang from the roof. The cupola blazes with gigantic archangels, stationed in a ring beneath the supreme figure and face of Christ. Some of the Ravenna churches are more historically interesting, perhaps, than this little masterpiece of the mosaic art. But none is so rich in detail and

315

lustrous in effect. It should be seen at night, when the lamps are lighted in a pyramid around the sepulchre of the dead Christ on Holy Thursday, when partial gleams strike athwart the tawny gold of the arches, and fall upon the profile of a priest declaiming in voluble Italian to a listening crowd.

Such are a few of the monuments which still remain to show of what sort was the mixed culture of Normans, Saracens, Italians, and Greeks at Palermo. In scenes like these the youth of Frederick II. was passed:—for at the end, while treating of Palermo, we are bound to think again of the Emperor who inherited from his German father the ambition of the Hohenstauffens, and from his Norman mother the fair fields and Oriental traditions of Sicily. The strange history of Frederick—an intellect of the eighteenth century born out of date, a cosmopolitan spirit in the age of Saint Louis, the crusader who conversed with Moslem sages on the threshold of the Holy Sepulchre, the Sultan of Lucera^[116] who persecuted Paterini while he respected the superstition of Saracens, the anointed successor of Charlemagne, who carried his harem with him to the battlefields of Lombardy, and turned Infidels loose upon the provinces of Christ's Vicar—would be inexplicable, were it not that Palermo still reveals in all her monuments the *genius loci* which gave spiritual nurture to this phoenix among kings. From his Mussulman teachers Frederick derived the philosophy to which he gave a vogue in Europe. From his Arabian predecessors he learnt the arts of internal administration and finance, which he transmitted to the princes of Italy. In imitation of Oriental courts, he adopted the practice of verse composition, which gave the first impulse to Italian literature. His Grand Vizier, Piero Delle Vigne, set an example to Petrarch, not only by composing the first sonnet in Italian, but also by showing to what height a low-born secretary versed in art and law might rise. In a word, the zeal for liberal studies, the luxury of life, the religious indifference, the bureaucratic system of state government, which mark the age of the Italian Renaissance, found their first manifestation within the bosom of the Middle Ages in Frederick. While our King John was signing Magna Charta, Frederick had already lived long enough to comprehend, at least in outline, what is meant by the spirit of modern culture.^[117] It is true that the so-called Renaissance followed slowly and by tortuous paths upon the death of Frederick. The Church obtained a complete victory over his family, and succeeded in extinguishing the civilisation of Sicily. Yet the fame of the Emperor who transmitted questions of sceptical philosophy to Arab sages, who conversed familiarly with men of letters, who loved splendour and understood the arts of refined living, survived both long and late in Italy. His power, his wealth, his liberality of soul and lofty aspirations, formed the theme of many a tale and poem. Dante places him in hell among the heresiarchs; and truly the splendour of his supposed infidelity found for him a goodly following. Yet Dante dated the rise of Italian literature from the blooming period of the Sicilian court. Frederick's unorthodoxy proved no drawback to his intellectual influence. More than any other man of mediæval times he contributed, if only as the memory of a mighty name, to the progress of civilised humanity.

316

317

[116] Charles of Anjou gave this nickname to Manfred, who carried on the Siculo-Norman tradition. Frederick, it may here be mentioned, had transferred his Saracen subjects of the vale of Mazara to Lucera in the Capitanate. He employed them as trusty troops in his warfare with the Popes and preaching friars. Nothing shows the confusion of the century in matters ecclesiastical and religious more curiously than that Frederick, who conducted a crusade and freed the Holy Sepulchre, should not only have tolerated the religion of Mussulmans, but also have armed them against the Head of the Church. What we are apt to regard as religious questions really belonged at that period to the sphere of politics.

[117] It is curious to note that in this year 1215, the date of Magna Charta, Frederick took the Cross at Aix-la-Chapelle.

Let us take leave both of Frederick and of Palermo, that centre of converging influences which was his cradle, in the cathedral where he lies gathered to his fathers. This church, though its rich sunbrowned yellow^[118] reminds one of the tone of Spanish buildings, is like nothing one has seen elsewhere. Here even more than at Monreale the eye is struck with a fusion of styles. The western towers are grouped into something like the clustered sheafs of the Caen churches: the windows present Saracenic arches: the southern porch is covered with foliated incrustations of a late and decorative Gothic style: the exterior of the apse combines Arabic inlaid patterns of black and yellow with the Greek honeysuckle: the western door adds Norman dog-tooth and chevron to

the Saracenic billet. Nowhere is any one tradition firmly followed. The whole wavers and yet is beautiful—like the immature eclecticism of the culture which Frederick himself endeavoured to establish in his southern kingdoms. Inside there is no such harmony of blended voices: all the strange tongues, which speak together on the outside, making up a music in which the far North, and ancient Byzance, and the delicate East sound each a note, are hushed. The frigid silence of the Palladian style reigns there—simple indeed and dignified, but lifeless as the century in which it flourished.

[118] Nearly all cities have their own distinctive colour. That of Venice is a pearly white suggestive of every hue in delicate abeyance, and that of Florence is a sober brown. Palermo displays a rich yellow ochre passing at the deepest into orange, and at the lightest into primrose. This is the tone of the soil, of sun-stained marble, and of the rough ashlar masonry of the chief buildings. Palermo has none of the glaring whiteness of Naples, nor yet of that particoloured gradation of tints which adds gaiety to the grandeur of Genoa.

Yet there, in a side chapel near the western door, stand the porphyry sarcophagi which shrine the bones of the Hautevilles and their representatives. There sleeps King Roger—'Dux strenuus et primus Rex Siciliae'—with his daughter Constance in her purple chest beside him. Henry VI. and Frederick II. and Constance of Aragon complete the group, which surpasses for interest all sepulchral monuments—even the tombs of the Scaligers at Verona—except only, perhaps, the statues of the nave of Innsbruck. Very sombre and stately are these porphyry resting-places of princes born in the purple, assembled here from lands so distant—from the craggy heights of Hohenstauffen, from the green orchards of Cotentin, from the dry hills of Aragon. They sleep, and the centuries pass by. Rude hands break open the granite lids of their sepulchres, to find tresses of yellow hair and fragments of imperial mantles, embroidered with the hawks and stags the royal hunter loved. The church in which they lie changes with the change of taste in architecture and the manners of successive ages. But the huge stone arks remain unmoved, guarding their freight of mouldering dust beneath gloomy canopies of stone that temper the sunlight as it streams from the chapel windows.

The traveller in Sicily is constantly reminded of classical history and literature. While tossing, it may be, at anchor in the port of Trapani, and wondering when the tedious Libeccio will release him, he must perforce remember that here Æneas instituted the games for Anchises. Here Mnestheus and Gyas and Sergestus and Cloanthus raced their galleys: on yonder little isle the Centaur struck; and that was the rock which received the dripping Menoetes:—

Illum et labentem Teucri et risere natantem,
Et salsos rident revomentem pectore fluctus.

Or crossing a broken bridge at night in the lumbering diligence, guarded by infantry with set bayonets, and wondering on which side of the ravine the brigands are in ambush, he suddenly calls to mind that this torrent was the ancient Halycus, the border between Greeks and Carthaginians, established of old, and ratified by Timoleon after the battle of the Crimisus. Among the bare grey hills of Segeste his thoughts revert to that strange story told by Herodotus of Philippus, the young soldier of Crotona, whose beauty was so great, that when the Segesteans found him slain among their foes, they raised the corpse and burned it on a pyre of honour, and built a hero's temple over the urn that held his ashes. The first sight of Etna makes us cry with Theocritus, Αἴτνα μᾶτερ ἐμά....πολυδένδρεος Αἴτνα. The solemn heights of Castro Giovanni bring lines of Ovid to our lips:—

320

Haud procul Hennæis lacus est a moenibu altæ
Nomine Pergus aquæ. Non illo plura Caystros
Carmina cygnorum labentibus audit in undis.
Silva coronat aquas, cingens latus omne; suisque
Frondebibus ut velo Phoebeos summovet ignes.
Frigora dant rami, Tyrios humus humida flores.
Perpetnum ver est.

We look indeed in vain for the leafy covert and the purple flowers that tempted Proserpine. The place is barren now: two solitary cypress-trees mark the road which winds downwards from a desolate sulphur mine, and the lake is clearly the crater of an extinct volcano. Yet the voices of old poets are not mute. 'The rich Virgilian rustic measure' recalls a long-since buried past. Even among the wavelets of the Faro we remember Homer, scanning the shore if haply somewhere yet may linger the wild fig-tree which saved Ulysses from the whirlpool of Charybdis. At any rate we cannot but exclaim with Goethe, 'Now all these coasts, gulfs, and creeks, islands and peninsulas, rocks and sand-banks, wooded hills, soft meadows, fertile fields, neat gardens, hanging grapes, cloudy mountains, constant cheerfulness of plains, cliffs and ridges, and the surrounding sea, with such manifold variety are present in my mind; now is the "Odyssey" for the first time become to me a living world.'

But rich as the whole of Sicily may be in classical associations, two places, Syracuse and Girgenti, are pre-eminent for the power of bringing the Greek past forcibly before us. Their interest is of two very different kinds. Girgenti still displays the splendour of temples placed upon a rocky cornice between sea and olive-groves. Syracuse has nothing to show but the scene of world-important actions. Yet the great deeds recorded by Thucydides, the conflict between eastern and western Hellas which ended in the annihilation of the bright, brief, brilliant reality of Athenian empire, remain so clearly written on the hills and harbours and marshlands of Syracuse that no place in the world is topographically more memorable. The artist, whether architect, or landscape-painter, or poet, finds full enjoyment at Girgenti. The historian must be exacting indeed in his requirements if he is not satisfied with Syracuse.

321

What has become of Syracuse, 'the greatest of Greek cities and the fairest of all cities' even in the days of Cicero? Scarcely one stone stands upon another of all those temples and houses. The five towns which were included by the walls have now shrunk to the little island which the first settlers named Ortygia, where the sacred fountain of Arethusa seemed to their home-loving hearts to have followed them from Hellas.^[119] Nothing survives but a few columns of Athene's temple built into a Christian church, with here and there the marble masonry of a bath or the Roman stonework of an amphitheatre. There are not even any mounds or deep deposits of rubble mixed with pottery to show here once a town had been.^[120] *Etiam periere ruinæ.* The vast city, devastated for the last time by the Saracens in 878 A.D., has been reduced to dust and swept by the

scirocco into the sea. This is the explanation of its utter ruin. The stone of Syracuse is friable and easily disintegrated. The petulant moist wind of the south-east corrodes its surface; and when it falls, it crumbles to powder. Here, then, the elements have had their will unchecked by such sculptured granite as in Egypt resists the mounded sand of the desert, or by such marble colonnades as in Athens have calmly borne the insults of successive sieges. What was hewn out of the solid rock—the semicircle of the theatre, the street of the tombs with its deeply dented chariot-ruts, the gigantic quarries from which the material of the metropolis was scooped, the catacombs which burrow for miles underground—alone prove how mighty must have been the Syracuse of Dionysius. Truly 'the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity.' Standing on the beach of the Great Harbour or the Bay of Thapsus, we may repeat almost word by word Antipater's solemn lament over Corinth:—

Where is thy splendour now, thy crown of towers,
 Thy beauty visible to all men's eyes,
 The gold and silver of thy treasures,
 Thy temples of blest gods, thy woven bowers
 Where long-stoled ladies walked in tranquil hours,
 Thy multitudes like stars that crowd the skies?
 All, all are gone. Thy desolation lies
 Bare to the night. The elemental powers
 Resume their empire: on this lonely shore
 Thy deathless Nereids, daughters of the sea,
 Wailing 'mid broken stones unceasingly,
 Like halcyons when the restless south winds roar,
 Sing the sad story of thy woes of yore:
 These plunging waves are all that's left to thee.

Time, however, though he devours his children, cannot utterly destroy either the written record of illustrious deeds or the theatre of their enactment. Therefore, with Thucydides in hand, we may still follow the events of that Syracusan siege which decided the destinies of Greece, and by the fall of Athens, raised Sparta, Macedonia, and finally Rome to the hegemony of the civilised world.

323

[119] The fountain of Arethusa, recently rescued from the washerwomen of Syracuse, is shut off from the Great Harbour by a wall and planted with papyrus. Taste has not been displayed in the bear-pit architecture of its circular enclosure.

[120] This is not strictly true of Achradina, where some *débris* may still be found worth excavating.

There are few students of Thucydides and Grote who would not be surprised by the small scale of the cliffs, and the gentle incline of Epipolæ—the rising ground above the town of Syracuse, upon the slope of which the principal operations of the Athenian siege took place.^[121] Maps, and to some extent also the language of Thucydides, who talks of the προσβάσεις or practicable approaches to Epipolæ, and the κρημνοί, or precipices by which it was separated from the plain, would lead one to suppose that the whole region was on each hand rocky and abrupt. In reality it is extremely difficult to distinguish the rising ground of Epipolæ upon the southern side from the plain, so very gradual is the line of ascent and so comparatively even is the rocky surface of the hill. Thucydides, in narrating the night attack of Demosthenes upon the lines of Gylippus (book vii. 43-45), lays stress upon the necessity of approaching Epipolæ from the western side by Euryâlus, and again asserts that during the hurried retreat of the Athenians great numbers died by leaping from the cliffs, while still more had to throw away their armour. At this time the Athenian army was encamped upon the shore of the Great Harbour, and held trenches and a wall that stretched from that side at least halfway across Epipolæ. It seems therefore strange that, unless their movements were impeded by counterworks and lines of walls, of which we have no information, the troops of Demosthenes should not, at least in their retreat, have been able to pour down over the gentle descent of Epipolæ toward the Anapus, instead of returning to Euryâlus. Anyhow, we can scarcely discern cliffs of more than ten feet upon the southern slope of Epipolæ, nor can we understand why the Athenians should have been forced to take these in their line of retreat. There must have been some artificial defences of which we read nothing, and of which no traces now remain, but which were sufficient to prevent them from choosing their ground. Slight difficulties of this kind raise the question whether the wonderful clearness of Thucydides in detail was really the result of personal observation, or whether his graphic style enabled him to give the appearance of scrupulous accuracy. I incline to

324

think that the author of the sixth and seventh books of the History must have visited Syracuse, and that if we could see his own map of Epipolæ, we should better be able to understand the difficulties of the backward night march of Demosthenes, by discovering that there was some imperative necessity for not descending, as seems natural, upon the open slope of the hill to the south. The position of Euryâlus at the extreme point called Mongibellisi is clear enough. Here the ground, which has been continually rising from the plateau of Achradina (the northern suburb of Syracuse), comes to an abrupt finish. Between Mongibellisi and the Belvedere hill beyond there is a deep depression, and the slope to Euryâlus either from the south or north is gradual. It was a gross piece of neglect on the part of Nikias not to have fortified this spot on his first investment of Epipolæ, instead of choosing Labdalum, which, wherever we may place it, must have been lower down the hill to the east. For Euryâlus is the key to Epipolæ. It was here that Nikias himself ascended in the first instance, and that afterwards he permitted Gylippus to enter and raise the siege, and lastly that Demosthenes, by overpowering the insufficient Syracusan guard, got at night within the lines of the Spartan general. Thus the three most important movements of the siege were made upon Euryâlus. Dionysius, when he enclosed Epipolæ with walls, recognised the value of the point, and fortified it with the castle which remains, and to which, as Colonel Leake believes, Archimedes, at the order of Hiero II., made subsequent additions. This castle is one of the most interesting Greek ruins extant. A little repair would make it even now a substantial place of defence, according to Greek tactics. Its deep foss is cut in the solid rock, and furnished with subterranean magazines for the storage of provisions. The three piles of solid masonry on which the drawbridge rested, still stand in the centre of this ditch. The oblique grand entrance to the foss descends by a flight of well-cut steps. The rock itself over which the fort was raised is honeycombed with excavated passages for infantry and cavalry, of different width and height, so that one sort can be assigned to mounted horsemen and another to foot soldiers. The trap-doors which led from these galleries into the fortress are provided with rests for ladders that could be let down to help a sallying force or drawn up to impede an advancing enemy. The inner court for stabled horses and the stations for the catapults are still in tolerable preservation. Thus the whole arrangement of the stronghold can be traced not dimly but distinctly. Being placed on the left side of the chief gate of Epipolæ, the occupants of the fort could issue to attack a foe advancing toward that gate in the rear. At the same time the subterranean galleries enabled them to pour out upon the other side, if the enemy had forced an entrance, while the minor passages and trap-doors provided a retreat in case the garrison were overpowered in one of their offensive operations. The view from Euryâlus is extensive. To the left rises Etna, snowy, solitary, broadly vast, above the plain of Catania, the curving shore, Thapsus, and the sea. Syracuse itself, a thin white line between the harbour and the open sea, a dazzling streak between two blues, terminates the slope of Epipolæ, and on the right hand stretch the marshes of Anapus rich with vines and hoary with olives.

325

326

[121] Epipolæ is in shape a pretty regular isosceles triangle, of which the apex is Mongibellisi or Euryâlus, and the base Achradina or the northern quarter of the ancient city. Thucydides describes it as χωρίου αποκρήμνου τε και υπερ της πόλεως ευθους κειμένου... εξήρτηται γαρ το άλλο χωρίον και μέχρι της πόλεως επικλινές τέ εστι και επιφανες παν εισο και ωνομαστα υπυ του Συρακοσίων δια το επιπολης του άλλου ειναι Επιπολαι (vi. 96).]

By far the most interesting localities of Syracuse are the Great Harbour and the stone quarries. When the sluggish policy and faint heart of Nikias had brought the Athenians to the verge of ruin, when Gylippus had entered the besieged city, and Plemmyrium had been wrested from the invaders, and Demosthenes had failed in his attack upon Epipolæ, and the blockading trenches had been finally evacuated, no hope remained for the armament of Athens except only in retreat by water. They occupied a palisaded encampment upon the shore of the harbour, between the mouth of the Anapus and the city; whence they attempted to force their way with their galleys to the open sea. Hitherto the Athenians had been supreme upon their own element; but now the Syracusans adopted tactics suited to the narrow basin in which the engagements had to take place. Building their vessels with heavy beaks, they crushed the lighter craft of the Athenians, which had no room for flank movements and rapid evolutions. A victory was thus obtained by the Syracusan navy; the harbour was blockaded with chains by the order of Gylippus; the Athenians were driven back to their palisades upon the fever-haunted

shore. Their only chance seemed to depend upon a renewal of the sea-fight in the harbour. The supreme moment arrived. What remained of the Athenian fleet, in numbers still superior to that of their enemies, steered straight for the mouth of the harbour. The Syracusans advanced from the naval stations of Ortygia to meet them. The shore was thronged with spectators, Syracusans tremulous with the expectation of a decisive success, Athenians on the tenter-hooks of hope and dread. In a short time the harbour became a confused mass of clashing triremes; the water beaten into bloody surf by banks of oars; the air filled with shouts from the combatants and exclamations from the lookers-on: ολοφυρμός, βοή, νικούντες, κρατούμενοι, αλλά οσα εν μεγάλω κινδύνω μέγα στρατόπεδον πολυειδη αναγκάζοιτο φθέγγεσθαι. Then after a struggle, in which desperation gave energy to the Athenians, and ambitious hope inspired their foes with more than wonted vigour, the fleet of the Athenians was finally overwhelmed. The whole scene can be reproduced with wonderful distinctness; for the low shores of Plemmyrium, the city of Ortygia, the marsh of Lysimeleia, the hills above the Anapus, and the distant dome of Etna, are the same as they were upon that memorable day. Nothing has disappeared except the temple of Zeus Olympius and the buildings of Temenitis.

What followed upon the night of that defeat is less easily realised. Thucydides, however, by one touch reveals the depth of despair to which the Athenians had sunk. They neglected to rescue the bodies of their dead from the Great Harbour, or to ask for a truce, according to hallowed Greek usage, in order that they might perform the funeral rites. To such an extent was the army demoralised. Meanwhile within the city the Syracusans kept high festival, honouring their patron Herakles, upon whose day it happened that the battle had been fought. Nikias neglected this opportunity of breaking up his camp and retiring unmolested into the interior of the island. When after the delay of two nights and a day he finally began to move, the Syracusans had blockaded the roads. How his own division capitulated by the blood-stained banks of the Asinarus after a six days' march of appalling misery, and how that of Demosthenes surrendered in the olive-field of Polyzelus, is too well known.

One of the favourite excursions from modern Syracuse takes the traveller in a boat over the sandy bar of the Anapus, beneath the old bridge which joined the Helorine road to the city, and up the river to its junction with the Cyane. This is the ground traversed by the army first in their attempted flight and then in their return as captives to Syracuse. Few, perhaps, who visit the spot, think as much of that last act in a world-historical tragedy, as of the picturesque compositions made by arundo donax, castor-oil plant, yellow flags, and papyrus, on the river-banks and promontories. Like miniature palm-groves these water-weeds stand green and golden against the bright blue sky, feathering above the boat which slowly pushes its way through clinging reeds. The huge red oxen of Sicily in the marsh on either hand toss their spreading horns and canter off knee-deep in ooze. Then comes the fountain of Cyane, a broad round well of water, thirty feet in depth, but quite clear, so that you can see the pebbles at the bottom and fishes swimming to and fro among the weeds. Papyrus plants edge the pool; thick and tufted, they are exactly such as one sees carved or painted upon Egyptian architecture of the Ptolemaic period.

With Thucydides still in hand, before quitting Syracuse we must follow the Athenian captives to their prison-grave. The Latomia de' Cappuccini is a place which it is impossible to describe in words, and of which no photographs give any notion. Sunk to the depth of a hundred feet below the level of the soil, with sides perpendicular and in many places as smooth as though the chisel had just passed over them, these vast excavations produce the impression of some huge subterranean gallery, widening here and there into spacious halls, the whole of which has been unroofed and opened to the air of heaven. It is a solemn and romantic labyrinth, where no wind blows rudely, and where orange-trees shoot upward luxuriantly to meet the light. The wild fig bursts from the living rock, mixed with lentisk-shrubs and pendent caper-plants. Old olives split the masses of fallen cliff with their tough, snakelike, slowly corded and compacted roots. Thin flames of pomegranate-flowers gleam amid foliage of lustrous green; and lemons drop unheeded from femininely fragile branches. There too the ivy hangs in long festoons, waving like tapestry to the breath of stealthy breezes; while under foot is a tangle of acanthus, thick curling leaves of glossiest green, surmounted by spikes of dull lilac blossoms. Wedges and columns and sharp teeth of the native rock rear themselves here and there in the midst of the open spaces to the sky, worn fantastically into notches and saws by the action of scirocco. A light yellow calcined by the sun to white is the prevailing

colour of the quarries. But in shady places the limestone takes a curious pink tone of great beauty, like the interior of some sea-shells. The reflected lights too, and half-shadows in their scooped-out chambers, make a wonderful natural chiaroscuro. The whole scene is now more picturesque in a sublime and grandiose style than forbidding. There is even one spot planted with magenta-coloured *mesembrianthemums* of dazzling brightness; and the air is loaded with the drowsy perfume of lemon-blossoms. Yet this is the scene of a great agony. This garden was once the Gethsemane of a nation, where 9000 free men of the proudest city of Greece were brought by an unexampled stroke of fortune to slavery, shame, and a miserable end. Here they dwindled away, worn out by wounds, disease, thirst, hunger, heat by day and cold by night, heart-sickness, and the insufferable stench of putrefying corpses. The pupils of Socrates, the admirers of Euripides, the orators of the Pnyx, the athletes of the Lyceum, lovers and comrades and philosophers, died here like dogs; and the dames of Syracuse stood doubtless on those parapets above, and looked upon them like wild beasts. What the Gorgo of Theocritus might have said to her friend Praxinoe on the occasion would be the subject for an idyll *à la* Browning! How often, pining in those great glaring pits, which were not then curtained with ivy or canopied by olive-trees, must the Athenians have thought with vain remorse of their own Rhamnusia Nemesis, the goddess who held scales adverse to the hopes of men, and bore the legend 'Be not lifted up!' How often must they have watched the dawn walk forth fire-footed upon the edge of those bare crags, or the stars slide from east to west across the narrow space of sky! How they must have envied the unfettered clouds sailing in liquid ether, or traced the far flight of hawk and swallow, sighing, 'Oh that I too had the wings of a bird!' The weary eyes turned upwards found no change or respite, save what the frost of night brought to the fire of day, and the burning sun to the pitiless cold constellations.

330

A great painter, combining Doré's power over space and distance with the distinctness of Flaxman's design and the colouring of Alma Tadema, might possibly realise this agony of the Athenian captives in the stone quarries. The time of day chosen for the picture should be full noon, with its glare of light and sharply defined vertical shadows. The crannies in the straight sides of the quarry should here and there be tufted with a few dusty creepers and wild fig-trees. On the edge of the sky-line stand parties of Syracusan citizens with their wives and children, shaded by umbrellas, richly dressed, laughing and triumphing over the misery beneath. In the full foreground there are placed two figures. A young Athenian has just died of fever. His body lies stretched along the ground, the head resting on a stone, and the face turned to the sky. Beside him kneels an older warrior, sunburned and dry with thirst, but full as yet of vigour. He stares with wide despair-smitten eyes straight out, as though he had lately been stretched upon the corpse, but had risen at the sound of movement, or some supposed word of friends close by. His bread lies untasted near him, and the half-pint of water—his day's portion—has been given to bathe the forehead of his dying friend. They have stood together through the festival of leave-taking from Peiræus, through the battles of Epipolæ, through the retreat and the slaughter at the passage of the Asinarus. But now it has come to this, and death has found the younger. Perhaps the friend beside him remembers some cool wrestling-ground in far-off Athens, or some procession up the steps of the Acropolis, where first they met. Anyhow his fixed gaze now shows that he has passed in thought at least beyond the hell around him. Not far behind should be ranged groups of haggard men, with tattered clothes and dulled or tigerish eyes, some dignified, some broken down by grief; while here and there newly fallen corpses, and in one hideous corner a great heap of abandoned dead, should point the ghastly words of Thucydides: *τον νεκρον ομου επι αλληλοις ξυνηνεημενων*.

331

Every landscape has some moment of its own at which it should be seen for the first time. Mediæval cities, with their narrow streets and solemn spires, demand the twilight of a summer night. Mediterranean islands show their best in the haze of afternoon, when sea and sky and headland are bathed in ærial blue, and the mountains seem to be made of transparent amethyst. The first sight of the Alps should be taken at sunset from some point of vantage, like the terrace at Berne, or the castle walls of Salzburg. If these fortunate moments be secured, all after knowledge of locality and detail serves to fortify and deepen the impression of picturesque harmony. The mind has then conceived a leading thought, which gives ideal unity to scattered memories and invests the crude reality with an æsthetic beauty. The lucky moment for the landscape of Girgenti is half an hour past sunset in a golden afterglow. Landing at the port named after Empedocles, having caught

332

from the sea some glimpses of temple-fronts emergent on green hill-slopes among almond-trees, with Pindar's epithet of 'splendour-loving' in my mind, I rode on such an evening up the path which leads across the Drago to Girgenti. The way winds through deep-sunk lanes of rich amber sandstone, hedged with cactus and dwarf-palm, and set with old gnarled olive-trees. As the sunlight faded, Venus shone forth in a luminous sky, and the deep yellows and purples overhead seemed to mingle with the heavy scent of orange-flowers from scarcely visible groves by the roadside. Saffron in the west and violet in the east met midway, composing a translucent atmosphere of mellow radiance, like some liquid gem—*dolce color d' oriental berillo*. Girgenti, far off and far up, gazing seaward, and rearing her topaz-coloured bastions into that gorgeous twilight, shone like the ærial vision of cities seen in dreams or imaged in the clouds. Hard and sharp against the fallow line of sunset, leaned grotesque shapes of cactuses like hydras, and delicate silhouettes of young olive-trees like sylphs: the river ran silver in the hollow, and the mountain-side on which the town is piled was solid gold. Then came the dirty dull interior of Girgenti, misnamed the magnificent. But no disenchantment could destroy the memory of that vision, and Pindar's φιλάγλαος Ακράγλας remains in my mind a reality.^[122]

[122] Lest I should seem to have overstated the splendour of this sunset view, I must remark that the bare dry landscape of the south is peculiarly fortunate in such effects. The local tint of the Girgenti rock is yellow. The vegetation on the hillside is sparse. There is nothing to prevent the colours of the sky being reflected upon the vast amber-tinted surface, which then glows with indescribable glory.

The temples of Girgenti are at the distance of two miles from the modern town. Placed upon the edge of an irregular plateau which breaks off abruptly into cliffs of moderate height below them, they stand in a magnificent row between the sea and plain on one side, and the city and the hills upon the other. Their colour is that of dusky honey or dun amber; for they are not built of marble, but of sandstone, which at some not very distant geological period must have been a sea-bed. Oyster and scallop shells are embedded in the roughly hewn masonry, while here and there patches of a red deposit, apparently of broken coralline, make the surface crimson. The vegetation against which the ruined colonnades are relieved consists almost wholly of almond and olive trees, the bright green foliage of the one mingling with the greys of the other, and both enhancing the warm tints of the stone. This contrast of colours is very agreeable to the eye; yet when the temples were perfect it did not exist. There is no doubt that their surface was coated with a fine stucco, wrought to smoothness, toned like marble, and painted over with the blue and red and green decorations proper to the Doric style. This fact is a practical answer to those æsthetic critics who would fain establish that the Greeks practised no deception in their arts. The whole effect of the colonnades of Selinus and Girgenti must have been an illusion, and their surface must have needed no less constant reparation than the exterior of a Gothic cathedral. The sham jewellery frequently found in Greek tombs, and the curious mixture of marble with sandstone in the sculptures from Selinus, are other instances that Greeks no less than modern artists condescended to trickery for the sake of effect. In the series of the metopes from Selinus now preserved in the museum at Palermo, the flesh of the female persons is represented by white marble, while that of the men, together with the dresses and other accessories, is wrought of common stone. Yet the bas-reliefs in which this peculiarity occurs belong to the best period of Greek sculpture, and the groups are not unworthy for spirit and design to be placed by the side of the metopes of the Parthenon. Most beautiful, for example, is the contrast between the young unarmed Hercules and the Amazon he overpowers. His naked man's foot grasps with the muscular energy of an athlete her soft and helpless woman's foot, the roughness of the sandstone and the smoothness of the marble really heightening the effect of difference.

Though ranged in a row along the same cornice, the temples of Girgenti, originally at least six in number, were not so disposed that any of their architectural lines should be exactly parallel. The Greeks disliked formality; the carefully calculated *asymmetreia* in the disposition of their groups of buildings secured variety of effect as well as a broken surface for the display of light and shadow. This is very noticeable on the Acropolis of Athens, where, however regular may be the several buildings, all are placed at different angles to each other and the hill. Only two of the Girgenti temples survive in any degree of perfection—the so-called Concordia and the Juno Lacinia. The rest are but mere heaps of mighty ruins, with here and there a broken column, and in one place an

angle of a pediment raised upon a group of pillars. The foundations of masonry which supported them and the drums of their gigantic columns are tufted with wild palm, aloe, asphodel, and crimson snapdragon. Yellow blossoming sage, and mint, and lavender, and mignonette, sprout in the crevices where snakes and lizards harbour. The grass around is gemmed with blue pimpernel and convolvulus. *Gladiolus* springs amid the young corn-blades beneath the almond-trees; while a beautiful little iris makes the most unpromising dry places brilliant with its delicate greys and blues. In cooler and damper hollows, around the boles of old olives and under ruined arches, flourishes the tender acanthus, and the road-sides are gaudy with a yellow daisy flower, which may perchance be the *ελίχρυσος* of Theocritus. Thus the whole scene is a wilderness of brightness, less radiant but more touching than when processions of men and maidens bearing urns and laurel-branches, crowned with ivy or with myrtle, paced along those sandstone roads, chanting pæans and prosodial hymns, toward the glistening porches and hypæthral cells.

335

The only temple about the name of which there can be no doubt is that of Zeus Olympius. A prostrate giant who once with nineteen of his fellows helped to support the roof of this enormous fane, and who now lies in pieces among the asphodels, remains to prove that this was the building begun by the Agrigentines after the defeat of the Phoenicians at the Himera, when slaves were many and spoil was abundant, and Hellas both in Sicily and on the mainland felt a more than usual thrill of gratitude to their ancestral deity. The greatest architectural works of the island, the temples of Segeste and Selinus, as well as those of Girgenti, were begun between this period and the Carthaginian invasion of 409 B.C. The victory of the Hellenes over the barbarians in 480 B.C., symbolised in the victory of Zeus over the enslaved Titans of this temple, gave a vast impulse to their activity and wealth. After the disastrous incursion of the same foes seventy years later, the western Greek towns of the island received a check from which they never recovered. Many of their noblest buildings remained unfinished. The question which rises to the lips of all who contemplate the ruins of this gigantic temple and its compeer dedicated to Herakles is this: Who wrought the destruction of works so solid and enduring? For what purpose of spite or interest were those vast columns—in the very flutings of which a man can stand with ease—felled like forest pines? One sees the mighty pillars lying as they sank, like swathes beneath the mower's scythe. Their basements are still in line. The drums which composed them have fallen asunder, but maintain their original relation to each other on the ground. Was it earthquake or the hand of man that brought them low? Poggio Bracciolini tells us that in the fifteenth century they were burning the marble buildings of the Roman Campagna for lime. We know that the Senator Brancaleone made havoc among the classic monuments occupied as fortresses by Frangipani and Savelli and Orsini. We understand how the Farnesi should have quarried the Coliseum for their palace. But here, at the distance of three miles from Girgenti, in a comparative desert, what army, or what band of ruffians, or what palace-builders could have found it worth their while to devastate mere mountains of sculptured sandstone? The Romans invariably respected Greek temples. The early Christians used them for churches:—and this accounts for the comparative perfection of the Concordia. It was in the age of the Renaissance that the ruin of Girgenti's noblest monuments occurred. The temple of Zeus Olympius was shattered in the fifteenth century, and in the next its fragments were used to build a breakwater. The demolition of such substantial edifices is as great a wonder as their construction. We marvel at the energy which must have been employed on their overthrow, no less than at the art which raised such blocks of stone and placed them in position.

336

While so much remains both at Syracuse and at Girgenti to recall the past, we are forced here, as at Athens, to feel how very little we really know about Greek life. We cannot bring it up before our fancy with any clearness, but rather in a sort of hazy dream, from which some luminous points emerge. The entrance of an Olympian victor through the breach in the city walls of Girgenti, the procession of citizens conducting old Timoleon in his chariot to the theatre, the conferences of the younger Dionysius with Plato in his guarded palace-fort, the stately figure of Empedocles presiding over incantations in the marshes of Selinus, the austerity of Dion and his mystic dream, the first appearance of stubborn Gylippus with long Lacedæmonian hair in the theatre of Syracuse,—such picturesque pieces of history we may fairly well recapture. But what were the daily occupations of the Simætha of Theocritus? What was the state dress of the splendid Queen Philistis, whose name may yet be read upon her seat, and whose face adorns the coins of Syracuse? How did

337

the great altar of Zeus look, when the oxen were being slaughtered there by hundreds, in a place which must have been shambles and meat-market and temple all in one? What scene of architectural splendour met the eyes of the swimmers in the Piscina of Girgenti? How were the long hours of so many days of leisure occupied by the Greeks, who had each three pillows to his head in 'splendour-loving Acragas'? Of what sort was the hospitality of Gellias? Questions like these rise up to tantalise us with the hopelessness of ever truly recovering the life of a lost race. After all the labour of antiquary and the poet, nothing remains to be uttered but such moralisings as Sir Thomas Browne poured forth over the urns discovered at Old Walsingham: 'What time the persons of these ossuaries entered the famous nations of the dead, and slept with princes and counsellors, might admit a wide solution. But who were the proprietaries of these bones, or what bodies these ashes made up, were a question above antiquarism; not to be resolved by man, nor easily perhaps by spirits except we consult the provincial guardians, or tutelary observers.' Death reigns over the peoples of the past, and we must fain be satisfied to cry with Raleigh: 'O eloquent, just, and mighty death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of men, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *hic jacet*.' Even so. Yet while the cadence of this august rhetoric is yet in our ears, another voice is heard as of the angel seated by a void and open tomb, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' The spirit of Hellas is indestructible, however much the material existence of the Greeks be lost beyond recovery; for the life of humanity is not many but one, not parcelled into separate moments but continuous.

Athens, by virtue of scenery and situation, was predestined to be the motherland of the free reason of mankind, long before the Athenians had won by their great deeds the right to name their city the ornament and the eye of Hellas. Nothing is more obvious to one who has seen many lands and tried to distinguish their essential characters, than the fact that no one country exactly resembles another, but that, however similar in climate and locality, each presents a peculiar and well-marked property belonging to itself alone. The specific quality of Athenian landscape is light—not richness or sublimity or romantic loveliness or grandeur of mountain outline, but luminous beauty, serene exposure to the airs of heaven. The harmony and balance of the scenery, so varied in its details and yet so comprehensible, are sympathetic to the temperance of Greek morality, the moderation of Greek art. The radiance with which it is illuminated has all the clearness and distinction of the Attic intellect. From whatever point the plain of Athens with its semicircle of greater and lesser hills may be surveyed, it always presents a picture of dignified and lustrous beauty. The Acropolis is the centre of this landscape, splendid as a work of art with its crown of temples; and the sea, surmounted by the long low hills of the Morea, is the boundary to which the eye is irresistibly led. Mountains and islands and plain alike are made of limestone, hardening here and there into marble, broken into delicate and varied forms, and sprinkled with a vegetation of low shrubs and brushwood so sparse and slight that the naked rock in every direction meets the light. This rock is grey and colourless: viewed in the twilight of a misty day, it shows the dull, tame uniformity of bone. Without the sun it is asleep and sorrowful. But by reason of this very deadness, the limestone of Athenian landscape is always ready to take the colours of the air and sun. In noonday it smiles with silvery lustre, fold upon fold of the indented hills and islands melting from the brightness of the sea into the untempered brilliance of the sky. At dawn and sunset the same rocks array themselves with a celestial robe of rainbow-woven hues: islands, sea, and mountains, far and near, burn with saffron, violet, and rose, with the tints of beryl and topaz, sapphire and almandine and amethyst, each in due order and at proper distances. The fabled dolphin in its death could not have showed a more brilliant succession of splendours waning into splendours through the whole chord of prismatic colours. This sensitiveness of the Attic limestone to every modification of the sky's light gives a peculiar spirituality to the landscape. The hills remain in form and outline unchanged; but the beauty breathed upon them lives or dies with the emotions of the air from whence it emanates: the spirit of light abides with them and quits them by alternations that seem to be the pulses of an ethereally communicated life. No country, therefore, could be better fitted for the home of a race gifted with exquisite sensibilities, in whom humanity should first attain the freedom of self-consciousness in art and thought. *Αει δια λαμπροτάτου βαίνοντες αβρος αιθέρος*—ever delicately moving through most translucent air—said Euripides of the Athenians: and truly the bright air of Attica was made to be breathed by men in whom the light of culture should begin to shine. *Ιοστέφανος* is an epithet of Aristophanes for his city; and if not crowned with other violets, Athens wears for her garland the air-empurpled hills—Hymettus, Lycabettus, Pentelicus, and Parnes.^[123] Consequently, while still the Greeks of Homer's age were Achaians, while Argos was the titular seat of Hellenic empire, and the mythic deeds of the heroes were being enacted in Thebes or Mycenæ, Athens did but bide her time, waiting to manifest herself as the true godchild of Pallas, who sprang perfect from the brain of Zeus, Pallas, who is the light of cloudless heaven emerging after storms. And Pallas, when she planted her chosen people in Attica, knew well what she was doing. To the far-seeing eyes of the goddess, although the first-fruits of song and science and philosophy might be reaped upon the shores of the Ægean and the islands, yet the days were clearly descried when Athens should stretch forth her hand to hold the lamp of all her founder loved for Europe. As the priest of Egypt told Solon: 'She chose the spot of earth in which you were born, because she saw that the happy temperament of the seasons in that land would produce the wisest of men. Wherefore the goddess, who was a lover both of war and wisdom, selected and first of all settled that spot which was the most likely to produce men likest herself.' This sentence from the 'Timæus' of Plato^[124] reveals the consciousness possessed by the Greeks of that intimate connection which subsists between a country and the temper of its race. To us the name Athenai—the fact that Athens by its title even in

340

341

342

the prehistoric age was marked out as the appanage of her who was the patroness of culture—seems a fortunate accident, an undesigned coincidence of the most striking sort. To the Greeks, steeped in mythologic faith, accustomed to regard their lineage as autochthonous and their polity as the fabric of a god, nothing seemed more natural than that Pallas should have selected for her own exactly that portion of Hellas where the arts and sciences might flourish best. Let the Boeotians grow fat and stagnant upon their rich marshlands: let the Spartans form themselves into a race of soldiers in their mountain fortress: let Corinth reign, the queen of commerce, between her double seas: let the Arcadians in their oak woods worship pastoral Pan: let the plains of Elis be the meeting-place of Hellenes at their sacred games: let Delphi boast the seat of sooth oracular from Phoebus. Meanwhile the sunny but barren hills of Attica, open to the magic of the sky, and beautiful by reason of their nakedness, must be the home of a people powerful by might of intelligence rather than strength of limb, wealthy not so much by natural resources as by enterprise. Here, and here only, could stand the city sung by Milton:—

Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil,
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades.

[123] This interpretation of the epithet *Ἰοστέφανος* is not, I think, merely fanciful. It seems to occur naturally to those who visit Athens with the language of Greek poets in their memory. I was glad to find, on reading a paper by the Dean of Westminster on the topography of Greece, that the same thought had struck him. Ovid, too, gives the adjective *purpureus* to Hymettus.

[124] Jowett's translation, vol. ii. p. 520.

We who believe in no authentic Pallas, child of Zeus, may yet pause awhile, when we contemplate Athens, to ponder whether those old mythologic systems, which ascribed to godhead the foundation of states and the patronage of peoples, had not some glimpse of truth beyond a mere blind guess. Is not, in fact, this Athenian land the promised and predestined home of a peculiar people, in the same sense as that in which Palestine was the heritage by faith of a tribe set apart by Jehovah for His own?

343

Unlike Rome, Athens leaves upon the memory one simple and ineffaceable impression. There is here no conflict between Paganism and Christianity, no statues of Hellas baptised by popes into the company of saints, no blending of the classical and mediæval and Renaissance influences in a bewilderment of vast antiquity. Rome, true to her historical vocation, embraces in her ruins all ages, all creeds, all nations. Her life has never stood still, but has submitted to many transformations, of which the traces are still visible. Athens, like the Greeks of history, is isolated in a sort of self-completion: she is a thing of the past, which still exists, because the spirit never dies, because beauty is a joy for ever. What is truly remarkable about the city is just this, that while the modern town is an insignificant mushroom of the present century, the monuments of Greek art in the best period—the masterpieces of Ictinus and Mnesicles, and the theatre on which the plays of the tragedians were produced—survive in comparative perfection, and are so far unencumbered with subsequent edifices that the actual Athens of Pericles absorbs our attention. There is nothing of any consequence intermediate between us and the fourth century B.C.. Seen from a distance the Acropolis presents nearly the same appearance as it offered to Spartan guardsmen when they paced the ramparts of Deceleia. Nature around is all unaltered. Except that more villages, enclosed with olive-groves and vineyards, were sprinkled over those bare hills in classic days, no essential change in the landscape has taken place, no transformation, for example, of equal magnitude with that which converted the Campagna of Rome from a plain of cities to a poisonous solitude. All through the centuries which divide us from the age of Hadrian—centuries unfilled, as far as Athens is concerned, with memorable deeds or national activity—the Acropolis has stood uncovered to the sun. The tones of the marble of Pentelicus have daily grown more golden; decay has here and there invaded frieze and capital; war too has done its work, shattering the Parthenon in 1687 by the explosion of a powder magazine, and the Propylæa in 1656 by a similar accident, and seaming the colonnades that still remain with cannon-balls in 1827. Yet in spite of time and violence the Acropolis survives, a miracle of beauty: like an everlasting flower, through all that lapse of years it has spread its

344

coronal of marbles to the air, unheeded. And now, more than ever, its temples seem to be incorporate with the rock they crown. The slabs of column and basement have grown together by long pressure or molecular adhesion into a coherent whole. Nor have weeds or creeping ivy invaded the glittering fragments that strew the sacred hill. The sun's kiss alone has caused a change from white to amber-hued or russet. Meanwhile, the exquisite adaptation of Greek building to Greek landscape has been enhanced rather than impaired by that 'unimaginable touch of time,' which has broken the regularity of outline, softened the chisel-work of the sculptor, and confounded the painter's fretwork in one tint of glowing gold. The Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the Propylæa have become one with the hill on which they cluster, as needful to the scenery around them as the everlasting mountains, as sympathetic as the rest of nature to the successions of morning and evening, which waken them to passionate life by the magic touch of colour.

Thus there is no intrusive element in Athens to distract the mind from memories of its most glorious past. Walk into the theatre of Dionysus. The sculptures that support the stage—Sileni bending beneath the weight of cornices, and lines of graceful youths and maidens—are still in their ancient station.^[125] The pavement of the orchestra, once trodden by Athenian choruses, presents its tessellated marbles to our feet; and we may choose the seat of priest or archon or herald or thesmothetes, when we wish to summon before our mind's eye the pomp of the 'Agamemnon' or the dances of the 'Birds' and 'Clouds.' Each seat still bears some carven name—*ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΟΥΣΩΝ* or *ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΟΥ*—and that of the priest of Dionysus is beautifully wrought with Bacchic bas-reliefs. One of them, inscribed *ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΥ*, proves indeed that the extant chairs were placed here in the age of Hadrian, who completed the vast temple of Zeus Olympius, and filled its precincts with statues of his favourite, and named a new Athens after his own name.^[126] Yet we need not doubt that their position round the orchestra is traditional, and that even in their form they do not differ from those which the priests and officers of Athens used from the time of Æschylus downward. Probably a slave brought cushion and footstool to complete the comfort of these stately armchairs. Nothing else is wanted to render them fit now for their august occupants; and we may imagine the long-stoled greybearded men throned in state, each with his wand and with appropriate fillets on his head. As we rest here in the light of the full moon, which simplifies all outlines and heals with tender touch the wounds of ages, it is easy enough to dream ourselves into the belief that the ghosts of dead actors may once more glide across the stage. Fiery-hearted Medea, statuesque Antigone, Prometheus silent beneath the hammer-strokes of Force and Strength, Orestes hounded by his mother's Furies, Cassandra aghast before the palace of Mycenæ, pure-souled Hippolytus, ruthless Alcestis, the divine youth of Helen, and Clytemnestra in her queenliness, emerge like faint grey films against the bluish background of Hymettus. The night air seems vocal with echoes of old Greek, more felt than heard, like voices wafted to our sense in sleep, the sound whereof we do not seize, though the burden lingers in our memory.

[125] It is true, however, that these sculptures belong to a comparatively late period, and that the theatre underwent some alterations in Roman days, so that the stage is now probably a few yards farther from the seats than in the time of Sophocles.

[126] It is not a little surprising to come upon this relic of the worship of the young Bithynian at Athens in the theatre still consecrated by the memories of Æschylus and Sophocles.

In like manner, when moonlight, falling aslant upon the Propylæa, restores the marble masonry to its original whiteness, and the shattered heaps of ruined colonnades are veiled in shadow, and every form seems larger, grander, and more perfect than by day, it is well to sit upon the lowest steps, and looking upwards, to remember what processions passed along this way bearing the sacred peplus to Athene. The Panathenaic pomp, which Pheidias and his pupils carved upon the friezes of the Parthenon, took place once in five years, on one of the last days of July.^[127] All the citizens joined in the honour paid to their patroness. Old men bearing olive-branches, young men clothed in bronze, chapleted youths singing the praise of Pallas in prosodial hymns, maidens carrying holy vessels, aliens bending beneath the weight of urns, servants of the temple leading oxen crowned with fillets, troops of horsemen reining in impetuous steeds: all these pass before us in the frieze of Pheidias. But to our imagination must be left what he has refrained from sculpturing,

the chariot formed like a ship, in which the most illustrious nobles of Athens sat, splendidly arrayed, beneath the crocus-coloured curtain or peplus outspread upon a mast. Some concealed machinery caused this car to move; but whether it passed through the Propylæa, and entered the Acropolis, admits of doubt. It is, however, certain that the procession which ascended those steep slabs, and before whom the vast gates of the Propylæa swung open with the clangour of resounding bronze, included not only the citizens of Athens and their attendant aliens, but also troops of cavalry and chariots; for the mark of chariot-wheels can still be traced upon the rock. The ascent is so abrupt that this multitude moved but slowly. Splendid indeed, beyond any pomp of modern ceremonial, must have been the spectacle of the well-ordered procession, advancing through those giant colonnades to the sound of flutes and solemn chants—the shrill clear voices of boys in antiphonal chorus rising above the confused murmurs of such a crowd, the chafing of horses' hoofs upon the stone, and the lowing of bewildered oxen.

[127] My purpose being merely picturesque, I have ignored the grave antiquarian difficulties which beset the interpretation of this frieze.

To realise by fancy the many-coloured radiance of the temples, and the rich dresses of the votaries illuminated by that sharp light of a Greek sun, which defines outline and shadow and gives value to the faintest hue, would be impossible. All we can know for positive about the chromatic decoration of the Greeks is, that whiteness artificially subdued to the tone of ivory prevailed throughout the stonework of the buildings, while blue and red and green in distinct, yet interwoven patterns, added richness to the fretwork and the sculpture of pediment and frieze. The sacramental robes of the worshippers accorded doubtless with this harmony, wherein colour was subordinate to light, and light was toned to softness.

Musing thus upon the staircase of the Propylæa, we may say with truth that all our modern art is but child's play to that of the Greeks. Very soul-subduing is the gloom of a cathedral like the Milanese Duomo, when the incense rises in blue clouds athwart the bands of sunlight falling from the dome, and the crying of choirs upborne upon the wings of organ music fills the whole vast space with a mystery of melody. Yet such ceremonial poms as this are as dreams and the shapes of visions, when compared with the clearly defined splendours of a Greek procession through marble peristyles in open air beneath the sun and sky. That spectacle combined the harmonies of perfect human forms in movement with the divine shapes of statues, the radiance of carefully selected vestments with hues inwrought upon pure marble. The rhythms and the melodies of the Doric mood were sympathetic to the proportions of the Doric colonnades. The grove of pillars through which the pageant passed grew from the living rock into shapes of beauty, fulfilling by the inbreathed spirit of man Nature's blind yearning after absolute completion. The sun himself—not thwarted by artificial gloom, or tricked with alien colours of stained glass—was made to minister in all his strength to a pomp, the pride of which was the display of form in manifold magnificence. The ritual of the Greeks was the ritual of a race at one with Nature, glorying in its affiliation to the mighty mother of all life, and striving to add by human art the coping-stone and final touch to her achievement. The ritual of the Catholic Church is the ritual of a race shut out from Nature, holding no communion with the powers of earth and air, but turning the spirit inwards and aiming at the concentration of the whole soul upon an unseen God. The temple of the Greeks was the house of a present deity; its cell his chamber; its statue his reality. The Christian cathedral is the fane where God who is a spirit is worshipped; no statue fills the choir from wall to wall and lifts its forehead to the roof; but the vacant aisles, with their convergent arches soaring upwards to the dome, are made to suggest the brooding of infinite and omnipresent Godhead. It was the object of the Greek artist to preserve a just proportion between the god's statue and his house, in order that the worshipper might approach him as a subject draws near to his monarch's throne. The Christian architect seeks to affect the emotions of the votary with a sense of vastness filled with unseen power. Our cathedrals are symbols of the universe where God is everywhere pavilioned and invisible. The Greek temple was a practical, utilitarian dwelling-house, made beautiful enough to suit divinity. The modern church is an idea expressed in stone, an aspiration of the spirit, shooting up from arch and pinnacle and spire into illimitable fields of air.

It follows from these differences between the religious aims of Pagan and Christian architecture, that the former was far more favourable to

the plastic arts. No beautiful or simple incident of human life was an inappropriate subject for the sculptor, in adorning the houses of gods who were themselves but human on a higher level; and the ritual whereby the gods were honoured was merely an exhibition, in its strength and joyfulness, of mortal beauty. Therefore the Panathenaic procession furnished Pheidias with a series of sculptural motives, which he had only to express according to the principles of his art. The frieze, three feet and four inches in height, raised forty feet above the pavement of the peristyle, ran for five hundred and twenty-four continuous feet round the outside wall of the cella of the Parthenon. The whole of this long line was wrought with carving of exquisite delicacy and supreme vigour, in such low relief as its peculiar position, far above the heads of the spectators, and only illuminated by light reflected from below, required. Each figure, each attitude, and each fold of drapery in its countless groups is a study; yet the whole was a transcript from actual contemporary Athenian life. Truly in matters of art we are but infants to the Greeks.

350

The topographical certainty which invests the ruins of the Acropolis with such peculiar interest, belongs in a less degree to the whole of Athens. Although the most recent researches have thrown fresh doubt upon the exact site of the Pnyx, and though no traces of the agora remain, yet we may be sure that the Bema from which Pericles sustained the courage of the Athenians during the Peloponnesian war, was placed upon the northern slope looking towards the Propylæa, while the wide irregular space between this hill, the Acropolis, the Areopagus, and the Theseum, must have formed the meeting-ground for amusement and discussion of the citizens at leisure. About Areopagus, with its tribunal hollowed in the native rock, and the deep cleft beneath, where the shrine of the Eumenides was built, there is no question. The extreme insignificance of this little mound may at first indeed excite incredulity and wonder; but a few hours in Athens accustom the traveller to a smallness of scale which at first sight seemed ridiculous. Colonus, for example, the Colonus which every student of Sophocles has pictured to himself in the solitude of unshorn meadows, where groves of cypresses and olives bent unpruned above wild tangles of narcissus flowers and crocuses, and where the nightingale sang undisturbed by city noise or labour of the husbandman, turns out to be a scarcely appreciable mound, gently swelling from the cultivated land of the Cephissus. The Cephissus even in a rainy season may be crossed dryshod by an active jumper; and the Ilissus, where it flows beneath the walls of the Olympieion, is now dedicated to washerwomen instead of water-nymphs. Nature herself remains, on the whole, unaltered. Most notable are still the white poplars dedicated of old to Herakles, and the spreading planes which whisper to the limes in spring. In the midst of so arid and bare a landscape, these umbrageous trees are singularly grateful to the eye and to the sense oppressed with heat and splendour. Nightingales have not ceased to crowd the gardens in such numbers as to justify the tradition of their Attic origin, nor have the bees of Hymettus forgotten their labours: the honey of Athens can still boast a quality superior to that of Hybla or any other famous haunt of hives.

351

Tradition points out one spot which commands a beautiful distant view of Athens and the hills, as the garden of the Academy. The place is not unworthy of Plato and his companions. Very old olives grow in abundance, to remind us of those sacred trees beneath which the boys of Aristophanes ran races; and reeds with which they might crown their foreheads are thickly scattered through the grass. Abeles interlace their murmuring branches overhead, and the planes are as leafy as that which invited Socrates and Phædrus on the morning when they talked of love. In such a place we comprehend how philosophy went hand in hand at Athens with gymnastics, and why the poplar and the plane were dedicated to athletic gods. For the wrestling-grounds were built in groves like these, and their cool peristyles, the meeting-places of young men and boys, supplied the sages not only with an eager audience, but also with the leisure and the shade that learning loves.

It was very characteristic of Greek life that speculative philosophy should not have chosen 'to walk the studious cloister pale,' but should rather have sought out places where 'the busy hum of men' was loudest, and where youthful voices echoed. The Athenian transacted no business, and pursued but few pleasures, under a private roof. He conversed and bargained in the agora, debated on the open rocks of the Pnyx, and enjoyed discussion in the courts of the gymnasium. It is also far from difficult to understand beneath this over-vaulted and grateful gloom of bee-laden branches, what part love played in the haunts of runners and of wrestlers, why near the statue of Hermes stood that of Erôs, and

352

wherefore Socrates surnamed his philosophy the Science of Love. Φιλοσοφουμεν ανευ μαλακίας is the boast of Pericles in his description of the Athenian spirit. Φιλοσοφία μετα παιδεραστίας is Plato's formula for the virtues of the most distinguished soul. These two mottoes, apparently so contradictory, found their point of meeting and their harmony in the gymnasium.

The mere contemplation of these luxuriant groves, set in the luminous Attic landscape, and within sight of Athens, explains a hundred passages of poets and philosophers. Turn to the opening scenes of the 'Lysis' and the 'Charmides.' The action of the latter dialogue is laid in the palæstra of Taureas. Socrates has just returned from the camp at Potidæa, and after answering the questions of his friends, has begun to satisfy his own curiosity:^[128]—

When there had been enough of this, I, in my turn, began to make inquiries about matters at home—about the present state of philosophy, and about the youth. I asked whether any of them were remarkable for beauty or sense—or both. Critias, glancing at the door, invited my attention to some youths who were coming in, and talking noisily to one another, followed by a crowd. 'Of the beauties, Socrates,' he said, 'I fancy that you will soon be able to form a judgment. For those who are just entering are the advanced guard of the great beauty of the day—and he is likely not to be far off himself.'

'Who is he?' I said; 'and who is his father?'

'Charmides,' he replied, 'is his name; he is my cousin, and the son of my uncle Glaucon: I rather think that you know him, although he was not grown up at the time of your departure.'

'Certainly I know him,' I said; 'for he was remarkable even then when he was still a child, and now I should imagine that he must be almost a young man.'

'You will see,' he said, 'in a moment what progress he has made, and what he is like.' He had scarcely said the word, when Charmides entered.

Now you know, my friend, that I cannot measure anything, and of the beautiful, I am simply such a measure as a white line is of chalk; for almost all young persons are alike beautiful in my eyes. But at that moment, when I saw him coming in, I must admit that I was quite astonished at his beauty and stature; all the world seemed to be enamoured of him; amazement and confusion reigned when he entered; and a troop of lovers followed him. That grown-up men like ourselves should have been affected in this way was not surprising, but I observed that there was the same feeling among the boys; all of them, down to the very least child, turned and looked at him as if he had been a statue.

Chaerephon called me and said: 'What do you think of him, Socrates? Has he not a beautiful face?'

'That he has indeed,' I said.

'But you would think nothing of his face,' he replied, 'if you could see his naked form: he is absolutely perfect.'

[128] I quote from Professor Jowett's translation.

This Charmides is a true Greek of the perfect type. Not only is he the most beautiful of Athenian youths; he is also temperate, modest, and subject to the laws of moral health. His very beauty is a harmony of well-developed faculties in which the mind and body are at one. How a young Greek managed to preserve this balance in the midst of the admiring crowds described by Socrates is a marvel. Modern conventions unfit our minds for realising the conditions under which he had to live. Yet it is indisputable that Plato has strained no point in the animated picture he presents of the palæstra. Aristophanes and Xenophon bear him out in all the details of the scene. We have to imagine a totally different system of social morality from ours, with virtues and vices, temptations and triumphs, unknown to our young men. The next scene from the 'Lysis' introduces us to another wrestling-ground in the neighbourhood of Athens. Here Socrates meets with Hippothales, who is a devoted lover but a bad poet. Hippothales asks the philosopher's advice as to the best method of pleasing the boy Lysis:—

'Will you tell me by what words or actions I may become endeared to my love?'

'That is not easy to determine,' I said; 'but if you will bring your love to me, and will let me talk with him, I may perhaps be able to show you how

to converse with him, instead of singing and reciting in the fashion of which you are accused.'

'There will be no difficulty in bringing him,' he replied; 'if you will only go into the house with Ctesippus, and sit down and talk, he will come of himself; for he is fond of listening, Socrates. And as this is the festival of the Hermæa, there is no separation of young men and boys, but they are all mixed up together. He will be sure to come. But if he does not come, Ctesippus, with whom he is familiar, and whose relation Menexenus is, his great friend, shall call him.'

'That will be the way,' I said. Thereupon I and Ctesippus went towards the Palæstra, and the rest followed.

Upon entering we found that the boys had just been sacrificing; and this part of the festival was nearly come to an end. They were all in white array, and games at dice were going on among them. Most of them were in the outer court amusing themselves; but some were in a corner of the Apodyterium playing at odd-and-even with a number of dice, which they took out of little wicker baskets. There was also a circle of lookers-on, one of whom was Lysis. He was standing among the other boys and youths, having a crown upon his head, like a fair vision, and not less worthy of praise for his goodness than for his beauty. We left them, and went over to the opposite side of the room, where we found a quiet place, and sat down; and then we began to talk. This attracted Lysis, who was constantly turning round to look at us—he was evidently wanting to come to us. For a time he hesitated and had not the courage to come alone; but first of all, his friend Menexenus came in out of the court in the interval of his play, and when he saw Ctesippus and myself, came and sat by us; and then Lysis, seeing him, followed and sat down with him; and the other boys joined. I should observe that Hippothales, when he saw the crowd, got behind them, where he thought that he would be out of sight of Lysis, lest he should anger him; and there he stood and listened.

Enough has been quoted to show that beneath the porches of a Greek palæstra, among the youths of Athens, who wrote no exercises in dead languages, and thought chiefly of attaining to perfect manhood by the harmonious exercise of mind and body in temperate leisure, divine philosophy must indeed have been charming both to teachers and to learners:—

Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

There are no remains above ground of the buildings which made the Attic gymnasia splendid. Nor are there in Athens itself many statues of the noble human beings who paced their porches and reclined beneath their shade. The galleries of Italy and the verses of the poets can alone help us to repeople the Academy with its mixed multitude of athletes and of sages. The language of Simætha, in Theocritus, brings the younger men before us: their cheeks are yellower than helichrysus with the down of youth, and their breasts shine brighter far than the moon, as though they had but lately left the 'fair toils of the wrestling-ground.' Upon some of the monumental tablets exposed in the burying-ground of Cerameicus and in the Theseum may be seen portraits of Athenian citizens. A young man holding a bird, with a boy beside him who carries a lamp or strigil; a youth, naked, and scraping himself after the games; a boy taking leave with clasped hands of his mother, while a dog leaps up to fawn upon his knee; a wine-party; a soul in Charon's boat; a husband parting from his wife: such are the simple subjects of these monuments; and under each is written *XPHΣTE XAIPE*—Friend, farewell! The tombs of the women are equally plain in character: a nurse brings a baby to its mother, or a slave helps her mistress at the toilette table. There is nothing to suggest either the gloom of the grave or the hope of heaven in any of these sculptures. Their symbolism, if it at all exist, is of the least mysterious kind. Our attention is rather fixed upon the commonest affairs of life than on the secrets of death.

As we wander through the ruins of Athens, among temples which are all but perfect, and gardens which still keep their ancient greenery, we must perforce reflect how all true knowledge of Greek life has passed away. To picture to ourselves its details, so as to become quite familiar with the way in which an Athenian thought and felt and occupied his time, is impossible. Such books as the 'Charicles' of Becker or Wieland's 'Agathon' only increase our sense of hopelessness, by showing that neither a scholar's learning nor a poet's fancy can pierce the mists of

antiquity. We know that it was a strange and fascinating life, passed for the most part beneath the public eye, at leisure, without the society of free women, without what we call a home, in constant exercise of body and mind, in the duties of the law-courts and the assembly, in the toils of the camp and the perils of the sea, in the amusements of the wrestling-ground and the theatre, in sportful study and strenuous play. We also know that the citizens of Athens, bred up under the peculiar conditions of this artificial life, became impassioned lovers of their city;^[129] that the greatest generals, statesmen, poets, orators, artists, historians, and philosophers that the world can boast, were produced in the short space of a century and a half by a city numbering about 20,000 burghers. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say with the author of 'Hereditary Genius,' that the population of Athens, taken as a whole, was as superior to us as we are to the Australian savages. Long and earnest, therefore, should be our hesitation before we condemn as pernicious or unprofitable the instincts and the customs of such a race.

357

[129] Την της πόλεως δύναμιν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐργῶ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς.—Thuc. ii. 43.

The permanence of strongly marked features in of Greece, and the small scale of the whole country, add a vivid charm to the scenery of its great events. In the harbour of Peiræus we can scarcely fail to picture to ourselves the pomp which went forth to Sicily that solemn morning, when the whole host prayed together and made libations at the signal of the herald's trumpet. The nation of athletes and artists and philosophers were embarked on what seemed to some a holiday excursion, and for others bid fair to realise unbounded dreams of ambition or avarice. Only a few were heavy-hearted; but the heaviest of all was the general who had vainly dissuaded his countrymen from the endeavour, and fruitlessly refused the command thrust upon him. That was 'the morning of a mighty day, a day of crisis' for the destinies of Athens. Of all that multitude, how few would come again; of the empire which they made so manifest in its pride of men and arms, how little but a shadow would be left, when war and fever and the quarries of Syracuse had done their fore-appointed work! Yet no commotion of the elements, no eclipse or authentic oracle from heaven, was interposed between the arrogance of Athens and sure-coming Nemesis. The sun shone, and the waves laughed, smitten by the oars of galleys racing to Ægina. Meanwhile Zeus from the watchtower of the world held up the scales of fate, and the balance of Athens was wavering to its fall.

358

A few strokes of the oar carry us away from Peiræus to a scene fraught with far more thrilling memories. That little point of rock emergent from the water between Salamis and the mainland, bare, insignificant, and void of honour among islands to the natural eye, is Psyttaleia. A strange tightening at the heart assails us when we approach the centre-point of the most memorable battlefield of history. It was again 'the morning of a mighty day, a day of crisis' for the destinies, not of Athens alone, but of humanity, when the Persian fleet, after rowing all night up and down the channel between Salamis and the shore, beheld the face of Phoebus flash from behind Pentelicus and flood the Acropolis of Athens with fire. The Peiræus recalls a crisis in the world's drama whereof the great actors were unconscious: fair winds and sunny waves bore light hearts to Sicily. But Psyttaleia brings before us the heroism of a handful of men, who knew that the supreme hour of ruin or of victory for their nation and themselves had come. Terrible therefore was the energy with which they prayed and joined their pæan to the trumpet-blast of dawn that blazed upon them from the Attic hills. And this time Zeus, when he heard their cry, saw the scale of Hellas mount to the stars. Let Æschylus tell the tale; for he was there. A Persian is giving an account of the defeat of Salamis to Atossa:—

The whole disaster, O my queen, began
With some fell fiend or devil,—I know not whence:
For thus it was; from the Athenian host
A man of Hellas came to thy son, Xerxes,
Saying that when black night shall fall in gloom,
The Hellenes would no longer stay, but leap
Each on the benches of his bark, and save
Hither and thither by stolen flight their lives.
He, when he heard thereof, discerning not
The Hellene's craft, no, nor the spite of heaven,
To all his captains gives this edict forth:
When as the sun doth cease to light the world,
And darkness holds the precincts of the sky,
They should dispose the fleet in three close ranks,
To guard the outlets and the water-ways;

359

Others should compass Ajax' isle around:
 Seeing that if the Hellenes 'scaped grim death
 By finding for their ships some privy exit,
 It was ordained that all should lose their heads.
 So spake he, led by a mad mind astray,
 Nor knew what should be by the will of heaven.
 They, like well-ordered vassals, with assent
 Straightway prepared their food, and every sailor
 Fitted his oar-blade to the steady rowlock.
 But when the sunlight waned and night apace
 Descended, every man who swayed an oar
 Went to the boats with him who wielded armour.
 Then through the ship's length rank cheered rank in concert,
 Sailing as each was set in order due:
 And all night long the tyrants of the ships
 Kept the whole navy cruising to and fro.
 Night passed: yet never did the host of Hellene
 At any point attempt their stolen sally;
 Until at length, when day with her white steeds
 Forth shining, held the whole world under sway.
 First from the Hellenes with a loud clear cry
 Song-like, a shout made music, and therewith
 The echo of the rocky isle rang back
 Shrill triumph: but the vast barbarian host
 Shorn of their hope trembled; for not for flight
 The Hellenes hymned their solemn pæan then—
 Nay, rather as for battle with stout heart.
 Then too the trumpet speaking fired our foes,
 And with a sudden rush of oars in time
 They smote the deep sea at that clarion cry;
 And in a moment you might see them all.
 The right wing in due order well arrayed
 First took the lead; then came the serried squadron
 Swelling against us, and from many voices
 One cry arose: Ho! sons of Hellenes, up!
 Now free your fatherland, now free your sons,
 Your wives, the fanes of your ancestral gods,
 Your fathers' tombs! Now fight you for your all.
 Yea, and from our side brake an answering hum
 Of Persian voices. Then, no more delay,
 Ship upon ship her beak of biting brass
 Struck stoutly. 'Twas a bark, I ween, of Hellas
 First charged, dashing from a Tyrrhenian galleon
 Her prow-gear; then ran hull on hull pell-mell.
 At first the torrent of the Persian navy
 Bore up: but when the multitude of ships
 Were straitly jammed, and none could help another,
 Huddling with brazen-mouthed beaks they clashed
 And brake their serried banks of oars together;
 Nor were the Hellenes slow or slack to muster
 And pound them in a circle. Then ships' hulks
 Floated keel upwards, and the sea was covered
 With shipwreck multitudinous and with slaughter.
 The shores and jutting reefs were full of corpses.
 In indiscriminate rout, with straining oar,
 The whole barbarian navy turned and fled.
 Our foes, like men 'mid tunnies, draughts of fishes,
 With splintered oars and spokes of shattered spars
 Kept striking, grinding, smashing us: shrill shrieks
 With groanings mingled held the hollow deep,
 Till night's dark eye set limit to the slaughter.
 But for our mass of miseries, could I speak
 Straight on for ten days, I should never sum it:
 For know this well, never in one day died
 Of men so many multitudes before.

360

After a pause he resumes his narrative by describing Psyttaleia:—

There lies an island before Salamis,
 Small, with scant harbour, which dance-loving Pan
 Is wont to tread, haunting the salt sea-beaches.
 Thence Xerxes placed his chiefs, that when the foes
 Chased from their ships should seek the sheltering isle,
 They might with ease destroy the host of Hellas,
 Saving their own friends from the briny straits.
 Ill had he learned what was to hap; for when
 God gave the glory to the Greeks at sea,
 That same day, having fenced their flesh with brass,
 They leaped from out their ships; and in a circle
 Enclosed the whole girth of the isle, that so
 None knew where he should turn; but many fell
 Crushed with sharp stones in conflict, and swift arrows
 Flew from the quivering bowstrings winged with murder.
 At last in one fierce onset with one shout

361

They strike, hack, hew the wretches' limbs asunder,
Till every man alive had fallen beneath them.
Then Xerxes groaned, seeing the gulf unclose
Of grief below him; for his throne was raised
High in the sight of all by the sea-shore.
Rending his robes, and shrieking a shrill shriek,
He hurriedly gave orders to his host;
Then headlong rushed in rout and heedless ruin.

Atossa makes appropriate exclamations of despair and horror. Then the messenger proceeds:—

The captains of the ships that were not shattered,
Set speedy sail in flight as the winds blew.
The remnant of the host died miserably,
Some in Boeotia round the glimmering springs
Tired out with thirst; some of us scant of breath
Escaped, with bare life to the Phocian bounds,
And land of Doris, and the Melian Gulf,
Where with kind draughts Spercheius soaks the soil.
Thence in our flight Achaia's ancient plain
And Thessaly's stronghold received us worn
For want of food. Most died in that fell place
Of thirst and famine; for both deaths were there.
Yet to Magnesia came we and the coast
Of Macedonia, to the ford of Axius,
And Bolbe's canebrakes and the Pangæan range,
Edonian borders. Then in that grim night
God sent unseasonable frost, and froze
The stream of holy Strymon. He who erst
Recked nought of gods, now prayed with supplication,
Bowling before the powers of earth and sky.
But when the hosts from lengthy orisons
Surceased, it crossed the ice-incrusted ford.
And he among us who set forth before
The sun-god's rays were scattered, now was saved.
For blazing with sharp beams the sun's bright circle
Pierced the mid-stream, dissolving it with fire.
There were they huddled. Happy then was he
Who soonest cut the breath of life asunder.
Such as survived and had the luck of living,
Crossed Thrace with pain and peril manifold,
'Scaping mischance, a miserable remnant,
Into the dear land of their homes. Wherefore
Persia may wail, wanting in vain her darlings.
This is the truth. Much I omit to tell
Of woes by God wrought on the Persian race.

362

Upon this triumphal note it were well, perhaps, to pause. Yet since the sojourner in Athens must needs depart by sea, let us advance a little way farther beyond Salamis. The low shore of the isthmus soon appears; and there is the hill of Corinth and the site of the city, as desolate now as when Antipater of Sidon made the sea-waves utter a threnos over her ruins. 'The deathless Nereids, daughters of Oceanus,' still lament by the shore, and the Isthmian pines are as green as when their boughs were plucked to bind a victor's forehead. Feathering the grey rock now as then, they bear witness to the wisdom and the moderation of the Greeks, who gave to the conquerors in sacred games no wreath of gold, or title of nobility, or land, or jewels, but the honour of an illustrious name, the guerdon of a mighty deed, and branches taken from the wild pine of Corinth, or the olive of Olympia, or the bay that flourished like a weed at Delphi. What was indigenous and characteristic of his native soil, not rare and costly things from foreign lands, was precious to the Greek. This piety, after the lapse of centuries and the passing away of mighty cities, still bears fruit. Oblivion cannot wholly efface the memory of those great games while the fir-trees rustle to the sea-wind as of old. Down the gulf we pass, between mountain range and mountain. On one hand, two peaked Parnassus rears his cope of snow aloft over Delphi; on the other, Erymanthus and Hermes' home, Cyllene, bar the pastoral glades of Arcady. Greece is the land of mountains, not of rivers or of plains. The titles of the hills of Hellas smite our ears with echoes of ancient music—Olympus and Cithæron, Taygetus, Othrys, Helicon, and Ida. The headlands of the mainland are mountains, and the islands are mountain summits of a submerged continent. Austerely beautiful, not wild with an Italian luxuriance, nor mournful with Sicilian monotony of outline, nor yet again overwhelming with the sublimity of Alps, they seem the proper home of a race which sought its ideal of beauty in distinction of shape and not in multiplicity of detail, in light and not in richness of colouring, in form and not in size.

363

At length the open sea is reached. Past Zante and Cephalonia we glide

'under a roof of blue Ionian weather;' or, if the sky has been troubled with storm, we watch the moulding of long glittering cloud-lines, processions and pomps of silvery vapour, fretwork and frieze of alabaster piled above the islands, pearly promontories and domes of rounded snow. Soon Santa Maura comes in sight:—

Leucatæ nimbosa cacumina montis,
Et formidatus nautis aperitur Apollo.

Here Sappho leapt into the waves to cure love-longing, according to the ancient story; and he who sees the white cliffs chafed with breakers and burning with fierce light, as it was once my luck to see them, may well with Childe Harold 'feel or deem he feels no common glow.' All through the afternoon it had been raining, and the sea was running high beneath a petulant west wind. But just before evening, while yet there remained a hand's-breadth between the sea and the sinking sun, the clouds were rent and blown in masses about the sky. Rain still fell fretfully in scuds and fleeces; but where for hours there had been nothing but a monotone of greyness, suddenly fire broke and radiance and storm-clouds in commotion. Then, as if built up by music, a rainbow rose and grew above Leucadia, planting one foot on Actium and the other on Ithaca, and spanning with a horseshoe arch that touched the zenith, the long line of roseate cliffs. The clouds upon which this bow was woven were steel-blue beneath and crimson above; and the bow itself was bathed in fire—its violets and greens and yellows visibly ignited by the liquid flame on which it rested. The sea beneath, stormily dancing, flashed back from all its crest the same red glow, shining like a ridged lava-torrent in its first combustion. Then as the sun sank, the crags burned deeper with scarlet blushes as of blood, and with passionate bloom as of pomegranate or oleander flowers. Could Turner rise from the grave to paint a picture that should bear the name of 'Sappho's Leap,' he might strive to paint it thus: and the world would complain that he had dreamed the poetry of his picture. But who could *dream* anything so wild and yet so definite? Only the passion of orchestras, the fire-flight of the last movement of the C minor symphony, can in the realms of art give utterance to the spirit of scenes like this.

INDEX

- Aar, the, i. 20
Abano, ii. 98
Abruzzi, the, ii. 34; iii. 230, 235, 236
Acciaiuoli, Agnolo, ii. 226
Acciaiuoli, the, iii. 98
Accolti, Bernardo, ii. 83
Accona, iii. 72, 74
Accoramboni, Camillo, ii. 91:
 ◦ Claudio, ii. 89:
Flaminio, ii. 91, 99, 100, 103 foll., 118 foll., 126:
Marcello, ii. 91 foll., 99, 102, 103, 105:
Mario, ii. 91:
Ottavio, ii. 91:
Scipione, ii. 91:
Tarquinia, ii. 89, 92, 103:
Vittoria, ii. 89-125
- Achilles, iii. 286
 - Achradina, iii. 321, 324
 - Aci, iii. 287
 - Aci Castello, iii. 284
 - Acis and Galatea, iii. 284, 285
 - Acropolis, the, iii. 339, 344, 347
 - Actium, iii. 364
 - Adda, the, i. 50, 51, 62, 63, 174
 - Addison, i. 3
 - Adelaide, Queen of Lothair, King of Italy, ii. 169, 178
 - Adelaisie (wife of Berald des Baux), i. 80
 - Adrian VI. (Pope), ii. 251
 - Adriatic, the, ii. 1, 3, 56, 59
 - Æ, iii. 319
 - Æschylus, iii. 162, 271, 345, 358-362
 - Affò, Padre Ireneo, ii. 363 _note_
 - Agrigentines, the, iii. 335
 - Agrigentum, iii. 266
 - Ajaccio, i. 104-120
 - Alamanni, Antonio, ii. 328
 - Alban Hills, ii. 32
 - Albany, Countess of, i. 352
 - Alberti, house of the, ii. 213
 - Alberti, Leo Battista, i. 216; ii. 14, 18, 21-29; iii. 102
 - Albizzi, the, ii. 50, 209, 213 foll., 221, 224
 - Albizzi, Maso degli, ii. 213-215
 - Albizzi, Rinaldo degli, ii. 215, 218, 220, 221, 256
 - Albula, ii. 127, 128;

 - Pass of, i. 53

 - Aleotti, Giambattista, ii. 180
 - Alexander the Great, iii. 262
 - Alexander VI., ii. 47, 74, 184, 191, 193, 237, 363 _note_
 - Alexandria, ii. 19; iii. 189, 190, 201, 253
 - Alfieri, i. 342, 345-359
 - Alfonso of Aragon, i. 195, 203; ii. 189, 235
 - Alps, the, i. 1-67, 122, 123, 126, 133, 209, 258; ii. 8, 129, 168 _et passim_
 - Amadeo, Gian Antonio, i. 146, 150, 151, 191-193, 243
 - Amalasantha, daughter of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, ii. 2, 13
 - Amalfi, i. 103 _note_; iii. 250-261
 - Ambrogini family, iii. 101
 - Ambrogini, Angelo. (_See_ Poliziano, Angelo)
 - Ambrogini, Benedetto, iii. 101, 102
 - Ampezzo, the, i. 268
 - Ana-Capri, iii. 231, 232, 271
 - Anapus, the, iii. 326, 328
 - Anchises, iii. 319
 - Ancona, i. 196, 198; ii. 14, 38, 45, 55, 102, 199; iii. 111
 - Ancona, Professor d', ii. 276 _note_
 - Andrea, Giovann', i. 318
 - Andreini, ii. 269
 - Angeli, Niccolo, iii. 151
 - Angelico, Fra, i. 100, 240; ii. 49; iii. 35, 61, 147-149, 151, 248
 - Angelo, S., ii. 96
 - Angelo, Giovan. (_See_ Pius IV.)

- Angiolieri, Cecco, iii. [1](#) [2](#)
 - Anguillara, Deifobo, Count of, i. [202](#)
 - Anjou, house of, ii. [188](#)
 - Ansano, S., iii. [70](#)
 - Anselmi, ii. [158](#)
 - Antegnate, i. [197](#)
 - Antelao, i. [268](#), [283](#)
 - Antibes, i. [102](#)
 - Antinoë, iii. [191](#), [205](#)
 - Antinoopolis, iii. [191](#), [205](#)
 - Antinous, iii. [184-197](#), [200-229](#)
 - Antipater, iii. [322](#), [362](#)
 - Antiquari, Jacobo, iii. [126](#) [_note_](#)
 - Antonio da Venafro, ii. [47](#)
 - Aosta, i. [2](#)
 - Apennines, the, i. [45](#), [99](#), [133](#); ii. [7](#), [8](#), [37](#), [45](#), [56](#), [62](#), [65](#), [66](#), [132](#)
foll., [145](#), [168](#); iii. [91](#) [_et passim_](#)
 - Apollonius of Tyana, iii. [216](#)
 - Apulia, i. [87](#) [_note_](#); iii. [305](#)
 - Aquaviva, Dominico d', ii. [94](#)
 - Aquila, i. [196](#)
 - Aragazzi, Bartolommeo, iii. [95-100](#)
 - Aragon, Kings of, i. [79](#)
 - Arausio, i. [68](#)
 - Archimedes, iii. [325](#)
 - Arcipreti family, the, iii. [113](#)
 - Ardoin of Milan, iii. [299](#), [300](#)
 - Aretine, the, ii. [83](#)
 - Aretino, Pietro, ii. [91](#)
 - Aretino, Spinello, iii. [304](#)
 - Aretusi, Cesare, ii. [149](#) [_note_](#)
 - Arezzo, ii. [214](#); iii. [7](#), [91](#), [96](#), [151](#) [_note_](#);
-
- Bishop of, iii. [74](#)
-
- Ariosto, i. [71](#); ii. [66](#), [160](#), [168](#), [261](#), [264](#), [265](#), [267](#), [269](#), [273](#), [280](#),
[336](#), [343](#)
 - Aristides, iii. [196](#)
 - Aristophanes, i. [84](#) [_note_](#); iii. [161](#), [341](#), [351](#), [353](#)
 - Aristotle, i. [249](#); ii. [74](#); iii. [309](#)
 - Aristoxenus, iii. [262](#), [263](#)
 - Arles, i. [76-81](#);
-
- King of, i. [79](#)
-
- Arno, the, iii. [91](#);
-
- valley of, iii. [41](#)
-
- Arosa, valley of, i. [33](#)
 - Arqua, i. [167](#), [168](#)
 - Arrian, iii. [205](#)
 - Aruns, iii. [94](#)
 - Ascham, Roger, ii. [265](#), [266](#)
 - Asciano, iii. [86](#), [87](#)
 - Asinarus, iii. [327](#)
 - Assisi, i. [137](#); ii. [35](#), [39](#), [43](#), [44](#), [46](#); iii. [35](#), [68](#), [111](#), [114](#), [140](#)
 - Asso, the, iii. [108](#)
 - Asti, i. [347](#), [348](#); ii. [193](#), [197](#)
 - Astolphus, ii. [2](#)
 - Athens, i. [243](#); iii. [156](#), [169](#), [182](#), [188](#), [207](#), [323](#), [339-364](#)
 - Athens, Duke of, ii. [207](#), [208](#), [233](#) [_note_](#)
 - Atrani, iii. [251](#), [254](#)
 - Attendolo, Sforza, i. [195](#); ii. [71](#)
 - Atti, Isotta degli, ii. [17](#) and [_note_](#), [20](#)
 - Augustine, S., i. [232](#)
 - Augustus, Emperor, ii. [1](#), [14](#); iii. [215](#)
 - Aurelius, Marcus, iii. [164](#), [200](#)
 - Ausonias, iii. [268](#)
 - Aversa, iii. [253](#), [299](#), [300](#)
 - Avignon, i. [69-71](#), [77](#), [81](#), [86](#); ii. [136](#); iii. [51](#), [74](#)
 - Azzo (progenitor of Este and Brunswick), ii. [175](#)
 - Azzo (son of Sigifredo), ii. [169](#)
-
- Badrutt, Herr Caspar, i. [55](#)
 - Baffo, i. [259](#), [260](#)

Baganza, the, ii. [184](#)
 Baglioni, the, ii. [16](#), [47](#), [71](#), [236](#); iii. [81](#), [113-115](#), [119-136](#)
 Baglioni, Annibale, iii. [132](#):

- Astorre, iii. [113](#), [114](#), [121](#), [122](#), [125](#), [126](#):
- Atalanta, iii. [116](#), [124](#), [127-129](#):
- Braccio, iii. [134](#):
- Carlo Barciglia, iii. [124](#):
- Constantino, iii. [131](#):
- Eusebio, iii. [131](#):
- Filene, iii. [132](#):
- Galeotto, iii. [124](#), [132](#):
- Gentile, ii. [42](#), iii. [122](#), [132](#):
- Gian-Paolo, ii. [47](#), [220](#), iii. [116](#), [117](#), [122](#), [125](#), [127](#), [128](#), [130-132](#):
- Gismondo, iii. [122](#), [126](#), [127](#):
- Grifone, iii. [124](#):
- Grifonetto, ii. [47](#), iii. [113](#), [114](#), [124-129](#):
- Guido, iii. [121](#), [126](#), [127](#):
- Ippolita, iii. [131](#):
- Malatesta, ii. [253](#), [254](#), iii. [127](#), [132](#):
- Marcantonio, iii. [122](#), [125](#), [130](#):
- Morgante, iii. [119_note_2](#):
- Niccolo, iii. [120](#):
- Orazio, iii. [127](#), [132](#):
- Pandolfo, iii. [120](#):
- Pietro Paolo, ii. [41](#):
- Ridolfo (1), iii. [120](#), [121](#):
- Ridolfo (2), iii. [133](#), [134](#):
- Simonetto, iii. [123](#), [124](#), [126](#):
- Taddeo, iii. [131](#):
- Troilo, iii. [122](#), [127](#)

 Baiæ, iii. [242](#)
 Balzac, ii. [160](#)
 Bandello, i. [155](#), [157](#), [158](#), [270](#); ii. [116](#), [265](#), [271](#), [277](#)
 Bandinelli, Messer Francesco, iii. [10-12](#)
 Barano, the, ii. [56-58](#)
 Barbarossa, Frederick, ii. [69](#), [201](#); iii. [7](#), [271](#), [290](#), [306_note_2](#)
 Bari, Duke of. (_See_ Sforza, Lodovico)
 Bartolo, San, iii. [59](#)
 Bartolommeo, Fra, iii. [63](#), [99](#)
 Basaiti, i. [269](#)
 Basella, i. [193](#)
 Basinio, ii. [18](#)
 Basle, i. [1](#), [2](#)
 Bassano, i. [340](#)
 Bastelica, i. [109](#), [113](#), [115](#)
 Bastia, Matteo di, i. [216](#)
 Battagli, Gian Battista, i. [216](#)
 Battifolle, Count Simone da, iii. [11](#)
 Baudelaire, iii. [280](#)
 Baveno, i. [19](#)
 Bayard, i. [113](#)
 Bazzi, Giovannantonio. (_See_ Sodoma)
 Beatrice, Countess, iii. [144](#)
 Beatrice, Dante's, ii. [6](#)
 Beatrice of Lorraine, ii. [170](#)
 Beaumarchais, i. [228](#), [229](#), [234](#)
 Beaumont and Fletcher, ii. [267](#), [269](#)
 Becchi, Gentile, ii. [192](#)
 Beethoven, i. [10](#), [249](#); ii. [160](#)
 Belcari, Feo, ii. [305](#)
 Belcaro, iii. [66](#), [68](#)
 Belisarius, ii. [2](#); iii. [290](#)
 Bellagio, i. [186](#)
 Bellano, i. [186](#)
 Belleforest, ii. [116](#)
 Bellini, Gentile, i. [269](#), [270](#)
 Bellini, Gian, i. [263](#), [269](#); ii. [55](#), [135](#)
 Bellinzona, i. [180](#)
 Bembo, Pietro, ii. [82](#), [85](#)
 Benci, Spinello, iii. [94](#)
 Benedict, S., iii. [73](#), [81](#), [85](#), [248](#)
 Benevento, iii. [251](#), [252](#), [299](#)
 Benincasa, Jacopo (father of S. Catherine of Siena), iii. [50](#)
 Benivieni, ii. [305](#)
 Bentivogli, the, ii. [47](#), [178](#), [224](#)
 Bentivogli, Alessandro de', i. [155](#), [156](#)
 Bentivogli, Ercole de', ii. [224](#)
 Bentivoglio, Ermes, ii. [47](#)
 Benzzone, Giorgio, i. [194](#)
 Beral des Baux, i. [79](#), [80](#)
 Berangère des Baux, i. [80](#)
 Berceto, ii. [131](#), [133](#)
 Berenger, King of Italy, ii. [169](#)

Berenger, Raymond, i. 80
Bergamo, i. 190-207; ii. 82
Bernardino, S., iii. 69, 113
Bernardo, iii. 69-75
Bernardo da Campo, i. 61
Berne, i. 20
Bernhardt, Madame, ii. 108
Berni, ii. 270
Bernina, the, i. 37, 55-57, 60, 64, 126; ii. 128
Bernini, ii. 159
Bersaglio, i. 268
Bervic, ii. 149
Besa, iii. 190, 191, 205
Besozzi, Francesco, i. 156
Bevagna, ii. 35, 38
Beyle, Henri, ii. 102
Bianco, Bernardo, i. 177
Bibbiena, Cardinal, ii. 82, 83
Bibboni, Francesco, or Cecco, i. 327-341
Bion, i. 152; ii. 303
Biondo, Flavio, ii. 28
Bisola, Lodovico, ii. 150
Bithynia, iii. 208
Bithynium, iii. 187, 208
Blacas (a knight of Provence), i. 80
Blake, the poet, i. 101, 265; ii. 273; iii. 166, 260
Boccaccio, ii. 7, 160, 208, 260, 261, 265, 270, 272, 273, 277, 334; iii. 16, 50, 248, 293
Bocognano, i. 109-111, 115
Bohemond, Prince of Tarentum, iii. 297, 298
Boiardo, Matteo Maria, ii. 30, 66, 269, 343
Boldoni, Polidoro, i. 183
Bologna, i. 121, 155, 192, 196, 326; ii. 29, 47, 85, 185, 224
Bologna, Gian, ii. 86
Bolsena, iii. 140, 141;
 ◦ Lake of, iii. 22
Bona of Savoy (wife of Galeazzo Maria Sforza), ii. 230
Bondeno de' Roncori, ii. 178
Bonifazio (of Canossa), ii. 169, 170
Bordighera, i. 102, 103
Bordone, Paris, ii. 109
Borgia family, ii. 66, 117, 363_note_
Borgia, Cesare, ii. 47, 48, 73, 74, 80, 83, 126, 363_note_; iii. 131
Borgia, Lucrezia, ii. 363_note_
Borgia, Roderigo, i. 220. (See also Alexander VI.)
Borgognone, Ambrogio, i. 146-148; iii. 64
Bormio, i. 61, 180
Borromeo family, iii. 14
Borromeo, Carlo, i. 182
Borromeo, Count Giberto, i. 182
Boscoli, i. 341; ii. 246
Bosola, i. 149
Botticelli, Sandro, i. 266; ii. 29, 30; iii. 180_note_
Bötticher, Charles, iii. 225
Bourbon, Duke of, i. 158;
 ◦ Constable of, ii. 252
Bracciano, Duke of, ii. 91 foll., 104
Bracciano, second Duke of, ii. 93, 99, 101
Braccio, i. 195, 197, 204, 207; ii. 47; iii. 81
Braccio, Filippo da, iii. 124-126
Bracciolini, Poggio, iii. 96, 336
Bragadin, Aloisio, ii. 101
Bramante, i. 216, 243
Brancacci, Cardinal, iii. 96
Brancaleone, Senator, iii. 336
Brancaleoni family, ii. 66, 69
Bregaglia, i. 35;
 ◦ valley of, i. 184
Brenner, the, ii. 168
Brenta, the, i. 258
Brescia, i. 63, 200; ii. 103, 169
Brest, Anna Maria, ii. 149
Brianza, the, i. 185, 186
Brolio, iii. 94
Bronte, iii. 279
Browne, Sir Thomas, i. 44; iii. 337
Browning, Robert, ii. 102, 270, 273, 281; iii. 173
Browning, Mrs., ii. 270, 271; iii. 173
Bruni, Lionardo, iii. 96, 98, 99
Buol family, the, i. 35, 36, 40, 41, 49, 61
Buol, Herr, i. 34-36
Buonaparte family, the, i. 119, 120
Buonarroti, Michel Angelo, i. 176, 193, 221, 236, 243, 326; ii. 21, 30, 40, 152,

158, 160, 161, 178, 253, 332; iii. 20, 22, 145, 146, 150, 154, 161
Buonconvento, iii. 72, 76
Burano, i. 258
Burgundy, Duke of, i. 202, 203
Burne-Jones, ii. 29
Busti, Agostino, i. 159, 161, 193
Byron, i. 280; ii. 7, 13, 15, 146, 162, 270, 271

Cadenabbia, i. 121, 173
Cadore, i. 267
Cæsarea, ii. 1
Cagli, ii. 56, 69, 74
Cajano, ii. 221
Calabria, iii. 305;
 ◦ mountains of, iii.? 288
Calabria, Duke of, iii. 11
Calascibetta, iii. 302
Caldora, Giovanni Antonio, i. 202
Caldora, Jacopo, i. 196
Caligula, i. 134-136; iii. 2, 156, 163, 197, 273, 274
Calles (Cagli), ii. 57
Camargue, the, i. 78, 81
Camerino, Duchy of, i. 185; ii. 47, 73
Campagna, the, ii. 32
Campaldino, ii. 206
Campanella, iii. 20, 270
Campell (or Campbèll) family, the i. 61, 62 and _note_
Campione, i. 175
Canale, Messer Carlo, ii. 363 _note_
Cannaregio, i. 268, 269, 339
Cannes, i. 103 _note_ ; ii. 143
Canonge, Jules, i. 81
Canossa, ii. 163-179
Cantù, i. 340
Cap S. Martin, i. 90
Capello, Bianca, ii. 93, 126
Capponi, Agostino, ii. 246
Capponi, Niccolo, ii. 253
Capri, ii. 58; iii. 242, 256, 269-276
Caracalla, i. 135; iii. 197
Cardona, Viceroy, ii. 244
Carducci, Francesco, ii. 253, 325
Carini, Baronessa di, ii. 276
Carlyle (quoted), i. 72
Carmagnola, i. 197, 200, 208; ii. 71
Carmagnuola, Bussoni di, ii. 17 and _note_
Carpaccio, Vittore, i. 269, 270; ii. 42
Carpegna, ii. 64
Carpi, Duchy of, i. 185; ii. 168
Carpi, the princes of, i. 202
Carrara range, the, ii. 134, 146, 218, 238
Casamicciola, iii. 234, 239
Casanova, i. 259, 260
Cascese, Santi da, ii. 224
Casentino, iii. 92
Cassinesi, the, iii. 248
Cassius, Dion, iii. 191, 193, 195-197, 219
Castagniccia, i. 110
Castagno, Andrea del, ii. 233
Castellammare, i. 103 _note_ ; iii. 232, 250, 276
Casti, Abbé, ii. 270
Castiglione, i. 144, 145; ii. 68, 80, 82; iii. 106, 108
Castro Giovanni, mountains of, iii. 279, 302, 304, 320
Catania, i. 87 _note_ ; iii. 279, 280, 288, 302, 304, 325
Catherine, S. (of Alexandria), i. 136, 142, 153, 155-157, 178; iii. 55, 61
Catherine, S. (of Sienna), i. 70; iii. 48-65
Catria, iii. 73
Catullus, iii. 180
Cavalcanti, Guido, ii. 261, 308, 325, 343
Cavicciuoli, Messer Guerra, iii. 2
Cavro, i. 109
Cécile (Passe Rose), i. 81
Cefalù, iii. 291
Cellant, Contessa di, i. 157-159
Cellant, Count of, i. 158
Cellini, Benvenuto, i. 2, 189, 240, 241, 328; ii. 25
Celsano, i. 329
Celsus, iii. 211, 219, 220
Cenci, the, ii. 17, 89
Cenci, Beatrice, ii. 102, 270
Ceno, the, ii. 183, 195
Centorbi, iii. 302
Cephalonia, iii. 363
Cephissus, the, iii. 350

Cerami, iii. 304
Cervantes, ii. 160
Cesena, ii. 15, 62
Cetona, iii. 103
Chalcedon, iii. 212
Châlons, the, i. 79
Chapman, George, ii. 268
Charles IV., iii. 6
Charles V., i. 184, 185, 187, 188, 319, 338, 339; ii. 75, 202, 255, 257
Charles VIII., ii. 67, 132, 183, 189 and [_note_](#), 191-197, 238, 328
Charles of Anjou, iii. 315 [_note_](#)
Charles the Bold, i. 202
Charles Martel, i. 75
Charles of Valois, ii. 207
Chartres, i. 243
Chateaubriand, ii. 13
Chatterton, ii. 273
Chaucer, ii. 258, 260, 261, 270, 272
Chiana, the, iii. 91; valley of, iii. 90, 97
Chianti, iii. 94
Chiara, S., ii. 36, 37
Chiarelli, the, of Fabriano, ii. 236
Chiavari, iii. 256
Chiavenna, i. 35, 53, 63, 180, 184; ii. 130, 131
Chioggia, i. 257-261
Chiozzia, i. 350, 351
Chiusi, i. 86; ii. 50, 51, 52; iii. 22, 90, 92;
 ◦ Lake of, iii. 91, 94, 101
Chiusure, iii. 77, 78, 80
Chivasso, i. 19
Christiern of Denmark, i. 205
Chur, i. 49, 65
Cicero, iii. 321
Ciclopidi rocks, iii. 284
Cima, i. 263
Cimabue, iii. 35, 144
Ciminian Hills, ii. 88; iii. 22
Cini family. ([See](#) [Ambrogini](#))
Cinthio, ii. 265, 272, 277
Ciompi, the, ii. 208, 209
Cisa, i. 340
Città della Pieve, ii. 51
Città di Castello, ii. 47, 71
Ciuffagni, Bernardo, ii. 30
Clair, S., ii. 37 and [_note_](#)
Clairvaux, Abbot of, iii. 70
Claudian, ii. 57, 343, 344
Clemens Alexandrinus, iii. 204, 217, 219
Clement VI., iii. 74, 132
Clement VII., i. 221, 316, 317, 321; ii. 233, 239, 247 foll.; iii. 138 [_note_](#), 247
Climmnus, the, ii. 35, 39
Cloanthus, iii. 319
Clough, the poet, ii. 273
Clusium, iii. 93, 94
Coire, i. 183
Col de Checruit, the, i. 15
Coleridge, S.T., ii. 273; iii. 173
Colico, i. 64, 183
Collalto, Count Salici da, i. 337
Colleoni family, the, i. 194
Colleoni, Bartolommeo, i. 192-208; ii. 71
Colleoni, Medea, i. 193, 204
Collona family, ii. 187
Colma, the, i. 18
Colombini, iii. 69
Colonna, Francesco, iii. 103
Colonna, Giovanni, iii. 125, 254
Colonus, the, iii. 350
Columbus, i. 97; ii. 237
Commodus, i. 135; iii. 164
Comnena, Anna, iii. 297
Como, i. 136, 174-189
Como, Lake of, i. 50, 64, 122, 173, 174, 179, 181, 183-186
Conrad (of Canossa), ii. 178
Conrad, King of Italy, iii. 305
Conradin, iii. 298
Constance, daughter of King Roger of Sicily, iii. 297, 318
Constance of Aragon, wife of Frederick II., iii. 307 [_note_](#)
Constantinople, ii. 186; iii. 311
Contado, iii. 90
Copton, iii. 205
Corfu, i. 87 [_note_](#), 103 [_note_](#)
Corgna, Bernardo da, iii. 125

Corinth, iii. [212](#), [322](#), [342](#), [362](#)
Cormayeur, valley of, i. [9](#), [14-16](#)
Correggio, i. [137](#), [140](#), [163](#); ii. [126](#), [147-162](#)
Corsica, i. [85](#), [102-120](#); ii. [286](#)
Corte, i. [110](#), [111](#)
Corte Savella, ii. [96](#)
Cortina, i. [268](#)
Cortona, ii. [48-51](#), [214](#); iii. [90](#), [92](#), [151](#) _note_
Cortusi, the, iii. [6](#)
Corviolo, ii. [170](#), [178](#)
Coryat, Tom, i. [49](#)
Costa (of Venice), Antonio, ii. [150](#)
Costa (of Rome), ii. [33](#), [146](#)
Courthezon, i. [81](#)
Covo, i. [197](#)
Cramont, the, i. [15](#)
Credi, Lorenzo di, iii. [35](#)
Crema, i. [194](#), [209-222](#)
Cremona, i. [209](#), [213](#), [215](#); iii. [6](#)
Crimisus, the, iii. [304](#), [319](#)
Crotona, iii. [319](#)
Crowne, the dramatist, ii. [159](#)
Cuma, iii. [212](#)
Curtius, Lancinus, i. [159](#), [193](#)
Cyane, the, iii. [328](#)
Cybo, Franceschetto, ii. [239](#)

Dalcò, Antonio, ii. [150](#)
Dandolo, Gherardo, i. [198](#)
Dandolo, Matteo, iii. [133](#)
Daniel, Samuel (the poet), ii. [263](#)
Dante, i. [29](#), [80](#); ii. [5](#), [6](#), [13](#), [15](#), [23](#), [65](#), [70](#), [136](#), [137](#), [160](#), [170](#), [206](#), [207](#), [261](#), [262](#), [269](#), [273](#), [277](#), [305](#), [343](#); iii. [2](#), [19](#), [25](#), [36](#), [43](#) _note_, [67](#), [69](#), [73](#), [111](#), [144](#), [149](#), [173](#), [241](#), [317](#)
D'Arcello, Filippo, i. [195](#)
Davenant, Sir William, ii. [267](#)
David, Jacques Louis, i. [71](#), [72](#)
Davos, i. [20](#), [28-47](#), [49](#), [53](#), [58](#), [65](#), [183](#)
Davos Dörfli, i. [53](#)
De Comines, Philippe, ii. [190](#), [193-197](#); iii. [45](#) _note_, [69](#)
De Gié, Maréchal, ii. [199](#)
De Musset, iii. [163](#), [235](#)
De Quincey, ii. [113](#); iii. [273](#) _note_
De Rosset, ii. [103](#)
Dekker, Thomas, ii. [267](#)
Del Corvo, ii. [136](#)
Della Casa, Giovanni, i. [331](#), [333](#)
Della Porta, i. [193](#)
Della Quercia, i. [192](#)
Della Rocca, Giudice, i. [112](#), [113](#)
Della Rovere family, ii. [66](#) (_see also_ [Rovere](#))
Della Seta, Galeazzo, i. [329](#)
Demetrius, iii. [113](#)
Demosthenes, iii. [323](#), [324](#), [326](#), [327](#)
Desenzano, i. [173](#)
Dickens, Charles, iii. [39](#)
Dionysius, iii. [322](#), [325](#)
Dischma-Thal, the, i. [49](#)
Dolce Acqua, ii. [136](#)
Dolcebono, Gian Giacomo, i. [153](#)
Domenico da Leccio, Fra, iii. [83](#)
Dominic, S., i. [221](#); iii. [61](#)
Donatello, i. [150](#), [178](#); ii. [29](#), [30](#), [41](#); iii. [96](#), [97](#), [100](#)
Doni, Adone, iii. [114](#)
Doré, Gustave, i. [264](#); ii. [15](#)
Doria, Pietro, i. [260](#)
Doria, Stephen, i. [113](#)
Dorias, the, i. [97](#)
Dossi, Dosso, i. [166](#), [170](#), [172](#)
Drayton, Michael, ii. [263](#)
Druids, the, iii. [29](#)
Drummond, William (the poet), ii. [263](#)
Dryden, i. [2](#), [6](#); ii. [7](#), [270](#)
Duccio, iii. [144](#), [145](#)
Dürer, Albert, i. [345](#); ii. [275](#); iii. [260](#)

Eckermann, ii. [157](#), [162](#)
Edolo, i. [63](#)
Edrisi, iii. [308](#), [309](#)
Egypt, iii. [189](#), [190](#), [192](#), [210](#) foll.
Eichens, Edward, ii. [150](#)
Eiger, the, i. [12](#)
Electra, ii. [135](#)
'Eliot, George,' ii. [270](#)

Emilia, ii. 16
Emilia Pia, ii. 82
Empedocles, i. 87; iii. 172, 173, 174, 181, 337
Empoli, iii. 41, 87
Engadine, the, i. 48, 55, 56, 61, 183; ii. 128
Enna, iii. 302, 303 and [_note_](#)
Ennius, iii. 173, 181
Enza, the, ii. 166
Enzio, King, iii. 298
Epicurus, iii. 173, 174, 181
Eridanus, ii. 131
Eryx (Lerici), ii. 142
Este, i. 167
Este family, the, i. 166; ii. 68, 251, 268
Este, Azzo d', iii. 6:

- Beatrice d', i. 150:
- Cardinal d', ii. 91:
- Ercole d', i. 202, ii. 236:
- Guelfo d', ii. 177:
- Guinipera d', ii. 17;
- Lucrezia d', ii. 77, 83:
- Niccolo d', ii. 236

Estrelles, the, i. 102
Etna, iii. 93, 103, 198, 279-287, 319, 325, 327
Etruscans, the, i. 49
Euganeans, the, i. 258, 281, 282; ii. 168
Eugénie, Empress, i. 119
Eugenius IV., i. 199; ii. 70, 220
Euhemerus, iii. 173
Euripides, ii. 142, 159 [_note_](#), 335; iii. 89, 215, 340
Eusebius, iii. 197, 219
Everelina, ii. 166

Fabretti, Raffaello, iii. 209
Faenza, ii. 47
Fairfax, Edward, translator of Tasso, ii. 265
Fano, ii. 57, 59, 69
Fanum Fortunæ (Fano), ii. 57
Farnese, Alessandro, i. 317:

- Julia, i. 193:
- Odoardo, ii. 180:
- Pier Luigi, iii. 133:
- Ranunzio, ii. 180:
- Vittoria, ii. 76

Farnesi family, ii. 75, 90, 117, 180; iii. 336
Faro, the, iii. 301, 320
Favara, iii. 309
Federighi, Antonio, iii. 62
Federigo of Urbino. ([See_ Urbino](#))
Feltre, Vittorino da, ii. 70
Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany, ii. 78
Ferdinand of Aragon, ii. 189, 191, 192, 193, 234; iii. 274, 276
Fermo, ii. 47, 90
Ferrara, i. 166, 167, 171; ii. 67, 68, 168, 169, 185, 221; iii. 6
Ferrara, Duke of, i. 206
Ferrari, Gaudenzio, i. 137-139, 141, 162-164, 177
Ferretti, Professor, ii. 179
Ferrucci, Francesco, i. 343; ii. 254
Fesch, Cardinal, i. 118
Fiesole, i. 86
Filelfo, Francesco, ii. 25
Filibert of Savoy, ii. 91
Filiberta, Princess of Savoy, ii. 247
Filippo, i. 149
Filonardi, Cinzio, iii. 133
Fina, Santa, iii. 59
Finguerra, Maso, i. 218
Finsteraarhorn, the, ii. 130
Fiorenzuola, ii. 197, 284
Flaminian Way, ii. 55, 57
Flaxman, ii. 15
Fletcher, the dramatist, i. 358; ii. 267
Florence, i. 121, 316, 318, 319; ii. 5, 50, 145, 185, 187, 198, 201-257, 259, 305, 306; iii. 7, 10, 21, 132, 151 [_note_](#), 317 [_note_](#), [_et passim_](#)
Florence, Duke of, i. 187
Fluela, the, i. 29, 37, 54
Fluela Bernina Pass, the, i. 53
Fluela Hospice, i. 59
Foglia, the, ii. 65
Foiano, ii. 50
Folcioni, Signor, i. 217
Folengo, ii. 270
Folgore da San Gemignano, ii. 53; iii. 1-20, 67, 70
Foligno, ii. 37-41, 45, 46, 52

Fondi, i. [318](#)
 Ford, John (the dramatist), ii. [267](#), [277](#)
 Forio, iii. [236](#), [237](#)
 Fornovo, ii. [132](#), [180-200](#)
 Fortini, iii. [68](#)
 Forulus (Furlo), ii. [57](#)
 Forum Sempronii (Fossombrone), ii. [57](#)
 Foscari, the, ii. [98](#)
 Fosdinovo, ii. [134-137](#)
 Fossato, ii. [52](#)
 Fossombrone, ii. [57](#), [58](#), [69](#), [85](#), [91](#)
 Fouquet, i. [80](#)
 Francesco, Fra, i. [269](#)
 Francesco da Carrara, iii. [6](#)
 Francesco Maria I. of Urbino. (_See_ Urbino)
 Francesco Maria II. of Urbino. (_See_ Urbino)
 Francia, Francesco, ii. [33](#)
 Francis I. of France, i. [113](#), [183](#), [184](#)
 Francis of Assisi, S., i. [99](#), [100](#); ii. [23](#), [44](#); iii. [57](#), [58](#), [61](#), [113](#)
 François des Baux, i. [81](#)
 Frederick, Emperor, i. [80](#)
 Frederick II., Emperor, iii. [297](#), [315](#) and [_note_](#), [316-318](#)
 Frere, J.H., ii. [270](#)
 Friedrichs, ----, iii. [224](#)
 Frisingensis, Otto, iii. [7](#)
 Friuli, i. [351](#)
 Furka, ii. [130](#)
 Furlo, ii. [55](#)
 Furlo Pass, ii. [57](#), [58](#)
 Fusina, i. [281](#)

Gaeta, i. [318](#); iii. [235](#)
 Galatea, i. [91](#)
 Galileo, ii. [27](#)
 Galli Islands, iii. [270](#)
 Gallio, Marchese Giacomo, i. [179](#)
 Gallo, Antonio di San, iii. [90](#), [102](#)
 Gallo, Francesco da San, ii. [253](#); iii. [247](#)
 Garda, i. [173](#);
 ◦ Lake of, ii. [98](#), [169](#)
 Gardon, the, valley of, i. [75](#)
 Garfagnana, ii. [168](#)
 Garigliano, iii. [247](#)
 Gaston de Foix, i. [160](#), [161](#), [193](#); ii. [2](#), [10](#)
 Gattamelata (Erasmus da Narni), i. [197](#); ii. [41](#), [71](#)
 Gellias, iii. [337](#)
 Gelon, iii. [290](#), [304](#)
 Genoa, i. [97](#), [105](#), [113](#), [259](#); ii. [185](#); iii. [250](#), [253](#), [317](#) [_note_](#)
 Gentile, Girolamo, ii. [236](#)
 George of Antioch, iii. [307](#), [311](#)
 Gérard, ii. [149](#)
 Gerardo da Camino, iii. [6](#)
 Ghiacchiuolo, ii. [15](#)
 Ghibellines, ii. [15](#), [54](#), [69](#), [202](#) foll.; iii. [17](#), [43](#) [_note_](#), [73](#), [110](#)
 Ghiberti, Lorenzo di Cino, ii. [30](#); iii. [145](#), [146](#)
 Giannandrea, bravo of Verona, ii. [85](#)
 Giardini, iii. [287](#)
 Giarre, iii. [279](#)
 Gibbon, Edward (cited), i. [346](#)
 Ginori, Caterina, i. [323](#), [324](#)
 Ginori, Lionardo, i. [323](#)
 Giordani, i. [326](#)
 Giorgione, i. [345](#); iii. [247](#)
 Giotto, ii. [233](#) [_note_](#)
 Giotto, i. [152](#); ii. [43](#), [206](#); iii. [35](#), [145](#), [248](#)
 Giovanni da Fogliani, ii. [47](#)
 Giovenone, i. [139](#)
 Giovio, i. [322](#)
 Girgenti, iii. [266](#), [291](#), [302](#), [304](#), [320](#), [321](#), [332-338](#)
 Giulio Romano, i. [140](#), [152](#)
 Glastonbury, iii. [29](#), [47](#)
 Gnoli, Professor, i. [327](#) [_note_](#); ii. [102](#) [_note_](#), [103](#)
 Godfrey, the Hunchback, ii. [170](#)
 Godfrey, Duke of Lorraine, ii. [170](#)
 Goethe, i. [5](#), [6](#), [10](#), [11](#), [131](#), [164](#), [237](#); ii. [26](#), [157](#), [160](#), [162](#); iii. [172](#), [173](#), [320](#)
 Goldoni, i. [259](#), [345-359](#)
 Golo, the, valley of, i. [111](#)
 Gonfalonier of Florence, ii. [83](#), [206](#), [209](#), [243](#), [245](#), [253](#)
 Gonzaga family, ii. [68](#)
 Gonzaga, Alessandro, i. [186](#):
 ◦ Elisabetta, ii. [73](#):
 ◦ Grancesco, ii. [73](#), [194](#), [196](#), [197](#), [345](#), [363](#) [_note_](#):
 ◦ Giulia, i. [318](#):
 ◦ Leonora, ii. [76](#)

Gorbio, i. [85](#), [91](#)
Gozzoli, Benozzo, i. [137](#); ii. [35](#)
Graubünden, the, i. [50](#)
Gravedona, i. [181](#)
Gray, the poet, i. [3](#); ii. [273](#)
Greece, and the Greeks, i. [101](#), [102](#), [240](#), [244](#); ii. [18](#); iii. [155](#) foll., [260](#) foll., [285-287](#), [290-292](#), [320](#) foll., [339-364](#)
Greene, Robert, ii. [265](#), [266](#), [267](#)
Gregory VII., ii. [172](#), [173-176](#) (_see also_ [Hildebrand](#))
Gregory XI., iii. [51](#)
Gregory XIII., ii. [88](#), [95](#), [96](#), [97](#)
Grenoble, i. [111](#)
Grigioni, the, i. [49](#)
Grindelwald, iii. [275](#)
Grisons, Canton of the, i. [48](#), [49](#), [50](#), [183](#), [184](#), [186](#), [188](#)
Grivola, the, i. [126](#)
Grosseto, iii. [66](#)
Grote, the historian, iii. [323](#)
Grumello, i. [48](#), [64](#)
Guarini, ii. [267](#)
Guazzi, the, i. [329](#)
Gubbio, ii. [35](#), [45](#), [52-55](#), [69](#), [85](#), [89](#), [97](#)
Guelfs, ii. [15](#), [54](#), [202](#) foll.; iii. [17](#), [110](#), [112](#)
Guérin, ii. [43](#)
Guicciardini, Francesco, i. [319](#); ii. [75](#), [255](#)
Guiccioli, Countess, ii. [7](#)
Guidantonio, Count, ii. [70](#)
Guido, iii. [184](#)
Guidobaldo I. (_See_ [Urbino](#))
Guidobaldo II. (_See_ [Urbino](#))
Guillaume de Cabestan, i. [80](#)
Guiscard, Robert, iii. [262](#), [297](#), [298](#), [300](#)
Gyas, iii. [319](#)
Gylippus, iii. [323](#), [324](#), [326](#), [337](#)

Hadrian, iii. [164](#), [185](#), [187-205](#), [208](#), [210](#), [212](#), [224](#), [225](#), [226](#), [228](#), [343](#), [345](#)
Halycus, the, iii. [319](#)
Handel, iii. [40](#)
Harmodius, ii. [135](#); iii. [155](#)
Harrington, Sir John, ii. [265](#)
Harvey, Gabriel, ii. [265](#)
Hauteville, house of, iii. [252](#), [253](#), [254](#), [290](#), [294](#) foll.
Hazlitt, ii. [109](#)
Hegesippus, iii. [188](#)
Helbig, iii. [187](#)
Heliogabalus, i. [135](#); iii. [164](#)
Henry II. of France, i. [316](#)
Henry III., ii. [170](#)
Henry IV., King of Italy, ii. [170](#), [173-177](#); iii. [300](#) _note_
Henry V., Emperor, ii. [178](#)
Henry VI. (of Sicily), iii. [297](#), [318](#)
Henry VII., Emperor, iii. [72](#), [76](#)
Hermopolis, iii. [205](#)
Herodotus, iii. [319](#)
Herrick, Robert, ii. [324](#)
Hesiod, ii. [338](#); iii. [172](#), [173](#)
Hiero II., iii. [325](#)
Hildebrand, ii. [163](#), [171](#), [172](#); iii. [300](#) _note_ 2, [305](#)
Himera, the, iii. [304](#)
Hispellum (Spello), ii. [38](#)
Hoby, Thomas, ii. [265](#)
Hoffnungsaus, i. [66](#)
Hohenstauffen, house of, ii. [188](#), [202](#); iii. [290](#), [297](#), [315](#)
Homer, i. [84](#) _note_; iii. [155](#), [226](#), [286](#), [287](#), [320](#)
Honorius, Emperor, ii. [2](#), [57](#)
Horace, ii. [273](#); iii. [180](#)
Howell, James, ii. [266](#)
Hugh, Abbot of Clugny, ii. [175](#), [176](#)
Hugo, Victor, iii. [164](#)
Hunt, Leigh, ii. [15](#), [146](#), [270](#)
Hymettus, iii. [351](#)

Ibn-Hamûd, iii. [304](#)
Ictinus, iii. [267](#), [343](#)
Il Medeghino. (_See_ [Medici](#), Gian Giacomo de')
Ilaria del Caretto, iii. [98](#)
Ilario, Fra, ii. [136](#), [137](#)
Ilissus, the, iii. [350](#)
Imola, ii. [231](#)
Imperial, Prince, i. [119](#)
Inn river, the, i. [54](#), [55](#)
Innocent III., ii. [203](#)
Innocent VIII., ii. [184](#)
Innsprück, i. [111](#)

Isabella of Aragon, ii. [192](#)
Isac, Antonio, ii. [149](#)
Ischia, iii. [233](#), [234](#), [236](#), [238](#), [241](#)
Isella, i. [19](#)
Iseo, Lake, i. [173](#), [174](#)
Ithaca, iii. [364](#)
Itri, i. [318](#), [319](#)

Jacobshorn, the, ii. [131](#)
James 'III. of England,' ii. [83](#)
Joachim, Abbot, iii. [141](#), [142](#)
Joan of Naples, i. [81](#), [195](#)
John XXII., iii. [74](#)
John XXIII., iii. [96](#)
John of Austria, Don, ii. [77](#)
Jonson, Ben, ii. [267](#), [268](#)
Jourdain (the hangman of the Glacière), i. [72](#)
Judith of Evreux, iii. [303](#)
Julia, daughter of Claudius, ii. [36](#)
Julian, iii. [197](#)
Julier, ii. [127](#), [128](#)
Julius II., i. [221](#); ii. [74](#), [83](#), [220](#); iii. [131](#)
Jungfrau, the, i. [12](#)
Justin Martyr, iii. [197](#), [219](#)
Justinian, ii. [10](#), [12](#)
Juvara, Aloisio, ii. [150](#)
Juvenal, iii. [181](#), [199](#)

Keats, the poet, ii. [262](#), [263](#), [270](#), [273](#)
Kelbite dynasty, iii. [292](#), [301](#)
Killigrew, the dramatist, ii. [159](#)
Klosters, i. [30](#), [46](#)

La Cisa, the pass, ii. [132](#), [133](#)
La Madonna di Tirano, i. [61](#), [62](#)
La Magione, ii. [46-48](#)
La Rosa, i. [59](#)
La Spezia, ii. [137-139](#), [143](#)
La Staffa family, the, iii. [113](#)
Lacca, iii. [236](#)
Lamb, Charles, ii. [110](#)
Lampridius, iii. [197](#)
Landona, iii. [127](#)
Lanini, i. [139-142](#), [162](#)
Lanuvium, iii. [209](#)
Lars Porsena, ii. [52](#), [93](#)
Laschi, the, i. [329](#)
Le Prese, i. [60](#)
Leake, Colonel, iii. [325](#)
Lecco, i. [183](#), [185](#), [186](#), [188](#)
Legnano, ii. [198](#)
Lenz, i. [65](#)
Leo IX., iii. [300](#)
Leo X., i. [221](#); ii. [75](#), [88](#), [246](#); iii. [132](#)
Leonardo. (_ See_ Vinci, Leonardo da)
Leoncina, Monna Ippolita, ii. [308](#)
Leopardi, Alessandro, i. [207](#), [326](#); ii. [62](#)
Lepanto, ii. [77](#), [93](#)
Lepidus, ii. [27](#)
Lerici, ii. [139](#), [142-145](#)
Les Baux, i. [77-81](#); ii. [136](#)
Leucadia, iii. [364](#)
Levezow, Von, iii. [211](#)
Leyva, Anton de, i. [187](#)
Lido, the, i. [280](#), [283-286](#); ii. [1](#)
Liguria, the, i. [97](#); ii. [178](#), [283](#)
Lilyboeum, iii. [294](#) _note_
Lioni, Leone, i. [188](#)
L'Isle, i. [72](#)
Livorno, ii. [145](#), [214](#)
Livy, iii. [94](#), [171](#)
Lo Spagna, iii. [114](#)
Lodi, i. [216](#)
Lomazzo, i. [137](#)
Lombardy, i. [19](#), [49](#), [61](#), [121](#), [122](#), [129](#), [133-172](#), [209](#); ii. [129](#), [132](#), [147](#), [165](#), [168](#), [182](#)
Lorenzaccio, ii. [41](#)
Lorenzetti, Ambrogio, iii. [8](#), [36](#), [43](#), [44](#)
Lorenzo, Bernardo di, iii. [105](#)
Loreto, ii. [97](#)
Lothair, King of Italy, ii. [169](#)
Louis XI, ii. [237](#)
Louis of Anjou, i. [195](#)
Lovere, i. [174](#)

Loyola, Ignatius, iii. 61
Lucca (quoted), i. 92
Lucca, ii. 145, 168, 170, 203, 211, 214, 218, 286; iii. 4, 98
Lucca, Pauline, i. 224, 226, 227, 229, 233, 234, 237
Lucera, iii. 315 and _note_
Lucius III., iii. 312
Lucretius, iii. 157-183
Lugano, i. 125, 128, 156, 180
Lugano, Lake, i. 122, 125, 169, 185
Luigi, Pier, ii. 180
Luini, i. 141, 148, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 162, 164-166, 177, 178; iii. 184
Luna, Etruscan, ii. 131
Luziano of Lauranna, ii. 78
Lyly, John, ii. 268
Lysimeleia, iii. 327

Macedonia, iii. 323
Machiavelli, ii. 16, 41, 75, 117, 219, 220, 225, 231, 250; iii. 131
Macugnaga, i. 18, 20; iii. 282
Madrid, iii. 223
Magenta, i. 127
Maggiore, Lake, i. 124, 173
Magnanapoli, ii. 95, 96, 103
Magnani, Giuseppe, ii. 150
Magra, the, ii. 133, 134, 136, 238
Maitani, Lorenzo, iii. 142
Majano, Benedetto da, ii. 30
Malamocco, i. 257, 280, 281
Malaspina family, ii. 134, 136
Malaspina, Moroello, ii. 136
Malaterra, Godfrey, iii. 298
Malatesta family, ii. 15-17, 62, 66, 69, 71, 278; iii. 121
Malatesta, Gian Galeazzo, ii. 16
Malatesta, Giovanni, ii. 15
Malatesta, Sigismondo Pandolfo, i. 135, 202, 203; ii. 14, 16-21, 72; iii. 7
Malfi, Duchess of, i. 149
Malghera, i. 339
Malipiero, Pasquale, i. 200
Maloja, i. 55, ii. 128, 129;
 ◦ the Pass of, i. 53
Malpaga, i. 205, 206
Manente, M. Francesco, i. 329
Manfred, King, ii. 203
Manfredi, the, ii. 47
Manfredi, Astorre, i. 202; iii. 197
Manfredi, Taddeo, ii. 231
Maniaces, iii. 299, 301
Mansueti, i. 269
Mantegna, i. 176; ii. 100, 197; iii. 180
Mantinea, iii. 207
Mantua, i. 340; ii. 68, 70, 74, 168, 185, 345
Mantua, Dukes of, i. 186, 243
Mantua, Marquis of, ii. 194-196, 199
Marcellinus, Ammianus, iii. 197, 205
Marcellus, iii. 186
March, the, ii. 16, 187
Marches of Ancona, ii. 199
Marecchia, the, ii. 14
Maremma, the, ii. 286; iii. 69, 103
Marenzio, iii. 37
Margaret of Austria, ii. 180
Maria, Galeazzo, i. 149
Maria, Gian, i. 149
Maria Louisa, Duchess of Parma, ii. 149
Marianazzo, robber chieftain, ii. 88
Mariano family, the, i. 139
Marignano, i. 186
Marignano, Marquis of. (_See_ Medici, Gian Giacomo de')
Mark, S., ii. 19
Marlowe, Christopher, ii. 159, 181, 258, 267, 268 and _note_ ; iii. 228
Maroggia, i. 175
Marseilles, i. 2
Marston, the dramatist, ii. 113, 267, 268
Martelli, Giovan Battista, i. 334, 335
Martelli, Luca, i. 340
Martial, i. 2; iii. 268
Martin V., iii. 95
Martinengo, i. 203
Martinengo family, i. 204
Martini, Biagio, ii. 149
Masaccio, i. 144, 145
Masolino da Panicale, i. 144, 145; ii. 55
Mason (artist), ii. 32, 129
Massinger, Philip, ii. 267

Matarazzo, iii. [121](#), [122](#), [128](#), [130](#), [134](#)
Matilda, Countess, ii. [165](#), [168](#), [170-173](#), [179](#); iii. [300_note_2](#)
Matteo of Ajello, iii. [308_note_](#), [311](#)
Mauro, S., iii. [248](#)
Mayenfeld, i. [65](#)
Mazara, iii. [281](#)
Mazzorbo, i. [282](#)
Medici family, i. [187](#), [315-344](#); ii. [66](#), [90](#), [117](#), [187](#), [208](#), [209](#) foll., [245](#), [247](#), [278](#)
Medici, Alessandro de', i. [315-327](#), ii. [83](#), [248](#), [251](#), [255](#):

- Battista de', i. [188](#):
- Bernardo de', i. [180](#):
- Bianca de', ii. [233](#):
- Casa de', i. [317](#):
- Catherine de', i. [316](#), ii. [76](#), [255](#):
- Clarina de', i. [182](#):
- Claudia de', ii. [77](#):
- Cosimo de', i. [319](#), ii. [225_note_](#), iii. [67](#), [247](#):
- Cosimo (the younger) de', i. [326](#), [330](#), [340](#), ii. [255](#), [257](#):
- Ferdinand de', (Cardinal), ii. [93](#):
- Francesco di Raffaello de', i. [321](#), ii. [93](#), [104](#):
- Gabrio de', i. [188](#):
- Gian Giacomo de' (Il Medeghino), i. [179-188](#), iii. [67](#):
- Giovanni de', ii. [215](#), [216](#), [239](#), [244](#), [245](#), [246](#) (_see also_ Leo X.):
- Giovanni de' (general), ii. [249](#):
- Giuliano, son of Piero de', ii. [83](#), [226](#), [232](#), [233](#), [239](#), [318](#), [334](#):
- Giuliano de' (Duke of Nemours), ii. [239](#), [244](#), [245](#), [247](#):
- Giulio dei (_see_ Clement VII.):
- Ippolito de', i. [316-319](#), ii. [83](#), [248](#), [251](#), [255](#):
- Isabella de', ii. [93](#), [104](#), [105](#):
- Lorenzino de', i. [315](#), [319-335](#), [338](#), [341-344](#), ii. [83](#), [255](#):
- Lorenzo de' (the Magnificent), ii. [67](#), [184](#), [185](#), [187](#), [216](#), [218](#), [226](#) foll., [305](#), [311](#), [325](#), [326](#), [330](#), iii. [101](#):
- Lorenzo de' (Duke of Urbino) (_see_ Urbino):
- Maddalena de', ii. [239](#):
- Piero de', ii. [184](#), [191](#), [192](#), [226](#), [227](#), [238](#), [328](#), iii. [101](#):
- Pietro de', iii. [247](#):
- Salvestro de', ii. [208](#)

Mediterranean, the, i. [2](#); ii. [145](#)
Melfi, iii. [300](#)
Melo of Bari, iii. [299](#)
Meloria, the, iii. [253](#)
Menaggio, i. [181](#), [186](#), [188](#)
Menander, iii. [72](#)
Mendelssohn, i. [10](#)
Mendrisio, i. [122](#), [175](#)
Menoetes, iii. [319](#)
Mentone, i. [83-93](#), [94](#), [98](#), [102](#), [103](#), [106](#); iii. [250](#)
Menzioni, ii. [285](#)
Mer de Glace, iii. [282](#)
Meran, i. [111](#)
Mercatello, Gentile, ii. [70](#)
Mesomedes, iii. [201](#)
Messina, iii. [288](#), [292](#) and [_note_](#), [301](#)
Mestre, i. [339](#)
Metaurus, or Metauro, the, ii. [38](#), [58](#)
Mevania (Bevagna), ii. [38](#)
Michelangelo. (_See_ Buonarroti, Michel Angelo)
Michelhorn, ii. [127](#)
Michelozzi, Michelozzo, iii. [96](#)
Middleton, Thomas, ii. [267](#)
Mignucci, Francesco, ii. [90](#)
Milan, i. [14](#), [19](#), [20](#), [50](#), [121](#), [124](#), [136](#), [152-161](#), [168](#), [178](#), [180](#), [184](#), [195](#), [203](#), [212](#), [213](#), [223](#) foll.; ii. [185](#), [186](#), [190](#), [191](#), [224](#); iii. [151_note_](#), [253](#), [348](#)
Milan, Dukes of, i. [49](#), [149](#), [180](#), [186](#), [200](#); ii. [214](#)
Millet, iii. [77](#)
Milton, ii. [160](#), [258](#), [262](#), [263](#), [269](#), [274](#); iii. [25](#), [35](#), [37](#), [38](#), [158](#), [169](#), [342](#)
Mino da Fiesole, ii. [81](#)
Mirandola, Duchy of, i. [185](#); ii. [168](#)
Mirandola, the Counts of, i. [202](#)
Mirandola, Pico della, ii. [21](#)
Mirano, i. [294](#)
Miseno, iii. [238](#), [239](#), [242](#)
Mnesicles, iii. [343](#)
Mnestheus, iii. [319](#)
Modena, i. [170](#), [172](#); ii. [168](#), [169](#), [221](#)
Molsa, Francesco Maria, i. [326](#)
Monaco, i. [92](#), [102](#)
Mondello, iii. [294](#)
Monreale, ii. [10](#); iii. [291](#), [311-314](#)
Mont Blanc, i. [14](#), [126](#), [134](#):

- Cenis, ii. [174](#):
- Cervin, i. [169](#):

- Chétif, i. 14:
- Finsteraarhorn, i. 169:
- Genève, ii. 193:
- S. Michel, ii. 167:
- de la Saxe, i. 14:
- Solaro, iii. 230:
- Ventoux, ii. 22

Montalcino, iii. 76, 79, 92

Montalembert, iii. 249

Montalto, Cardinal, ii. 90, 91, 95, 98, 103 (_see also_ Sixtus V.)

Montdragon, i. 68

Monte Adamello, i. 174, ii. 168:

- Amiata, iii. 42, 69, 76, 80, 90, 91, 93, 103, 104, 106, 108:
- d'Asdrubale, ii. 66:
- Aureo, iii. 253:
- Calvo, ii. 55:
- Carboniano, ii. 168:
- Cassino, iii. 248:
- Catini, iii. 4:
- Catria, ii. 66, 68, 69, iii. 111:
- Cavallo, ii. 94:
- Cetona, ii. 51, iii. 90, 91:
- Coppiolo, ii. 64:
- Delle Celle, ii. 168:
- di Disgrazia, i. 64:
- Epomeo, iii. 234, 236, 237-240, 241:
- Fallonica, iii. 103, 110:
- Gargano, iii. 299:
- Generoso, i. 121-132, 173:
- Leone, i. 174:
- Nerone, ii. 66:
- Nuovo, iii. 242:
- Oliveto, i. 166, ii. 82, iii. 8, 69, 73, 74 foll., 151 _note_:
- d'Oro, i. 105, 111:
- Pellegrino, ii. 176, iii. 294:
- Rosa, i. 8, 18, 105, 125, 126, 129, 134, 169:
- Rosso, iii. 279:
- Rotondo, i. 111, ii. 33:
- Salvatore, i. 125, 128:
- Soracte, ii. 51:
- Viso, i. 126, 134, 169, 174

Montefalco, ii. 35-37, 39, 45, 46

Montefeltro family, ii. 62, 64, 66, 69-72

Montefeltro, Federigo di, i. 207, 208

Montefeltro, Giovanna, ii. 73

Montélimart, i. 68

Montepulciano, ii. 50, 214; iii. 68, 69, 77, 87-102, 109, 110

Montferrat, Boniface, Marquis of, i. 202

Monti della Sibilla, ii. 46

Monza, i. 199

Moors, the, i. 85, 94; iii. 296, 299, 301

Morbegno, i. 49, 51, 64, 186

Morea, the, ii. 18; iii. 339

Morris, William, ii. 271

Mortersatsch, the, i. 56

Mozart, i. 223, 227, 229, 231-237, 249; ii. 153

Mühlen, ii. 128

Mulhausen, i. 1

Murano, i. 268, 282, 333; ii. 1

Murillo, ii. 153

Mürren, i. 9, 11, 14

Musset, De, i. 342

Mussulmans, iii. 290, 291, 294 _note_, 302, 305, 307, 316

Naples, ii. 185, 188, 189, 191, 193, 234, 282; iii. 221, 231, 239, 243, 253, 254, 256, 270, 276, 289, 317 _note_

Naples, Queens of, i. 79

Napoleon Buonaparte, i. 50, 106, 118, 119, 120

Narni, i. 86; ii. 34, 38

Nash, Thomas, ii. 265

Nassaus, the, i. 79

Navone, Signor Giulio, iii. 4 _note_

Naxos, iii. 288

Negro, Abbate de, iii. 78, 79

Nera, the, ii. 34, 37, 46

Nero, i. 135; iii. 156, 164

Neroni, Diotalvi, ii. 226, 256

Niccolini, i. 342

Niccolo da Bari, S., iii. 238

Niccolo da Uzzano, ii. 215

Nice, i. 83, 106; iii. 250

Nicholas II., iii. 300

Nicholas V., ii. 28, 187, 236

Nicholas the Pisan, iii. 260

Nicolosi, iii. 283
 Nikias, iii. 288, 324, 326, 327
 Nile, the, iii. 190, 201, 205
 Niolo, i. 112, 115
 Nisi, Messer Nicholò di, iii. 2, 3
 Nismes, i. 74-77
 Noel, Mr. Roden, i. 10
 Norcia, ii. 35, 46; iii. 92
 Normans (in Sicily), iii. 290 foll.
 Novara, i. 19, 124

Oberland valleys, i. 12
 Oddantonio, Duke of Urbino, ii. 70
 Oddi family, the, iii. 113, 119, 122, 134
 Odoacer, ii. 2
 Offamilio, iii. 311
 Oglio, the, iii. 6
 Olgiati, i. 341
 Oliverotto da Fermo, ii. 47, 48
 Ombrone, the, iii. 108;
 o Val d', iii. 90
 Oortman, ii. 149
 Orange, i. 68, 69
 Orange, Prince of, i. 79, 316; ii. 253, 254
 Orcagna, iii. 36
 Orcia, the, iii. 104, 108
 Ordelauffi, Cicco and Pino, i. 202
 Origen, iii. 211, 219, 220 Orlando, ii. 42, 43
 Ormani, the, i. 114
 Orpheus, ii. 346-364
 Orsini, the, ii. 47, 91, 157
 Orsini, Alfonsina, ii. 239:
 o Cardinal, ii. 47:
 o Clarice, ii. 227:
 o Francesco, ii. 48:
 o Giustina, iii. 125:
 o Lodovico, ii. 99, 100, 101, 104, 105, 108:
 o Paolo, ii. 47, 48:
 o Paolo Giordano (_see_ Bracciano, Duke of):
 o Troilo, i. 327 _note_, ii. 93 and _note_ :
 o Virginio (_see_ Bracciano, second Duke of)

Orta, i. 173
 Ortlter, the, i. 126; ii. 168
 Ortygia, iii. 321, 326, 327
 Orvieto, i. 86; ii. 51, 136, 362; iii. 5, 82, 111, 137-154
 Otho I., ii. 169
 Otho III., ii. 15
 Otranto, ii. 235
 'Ottimati,' the, ii. 242 foll., 251, 254, 255, 257
 Overbeck, iii. 187
 Ovid, ii. 338, 344; iii. 149, 268, 320, 341 _note_ 1

Padua, i. 152, 197, 260; ii. 41, 98, 99, 101, 104, 168, 218, 221; iii. 6
 Pæstum, iii. 250, 259, 261-269
 Paganello, Conte, ii. 102
 Paglia, the, iii. 137
 Painter, William, ii. 117, 265, 272
 Palermo, ii. 10; iii. 252, 290-318
 Palestrina, iii. 37
 Palladio, i. 75, 256; ii. 29
 Pallavicino, Matteo, ii. 91
 Palma, i. 263, 269
 Palmaria, ii. 142
 Palmer, Richard, Bishop of Syracuse, iii. 306 _note_
 Pancrates, iii. 201, 204, 205
 Panizzi, ii. 43
 Panormus, iii. 291
 Pantellaria, iii. 294 _note_
 Paoli, General, i. 111, 115
 Paris, i. 20
 Parker, ---, ii. 266
 Parma, i. 163; ii. 131, 147-162, 168, 180, 184, 196
 Parma, Duke of, ii. 76
 Parmegiano, ii. 150, 158, 159
 Parmenides, iii. 171, 173
 Passerini, Silvio (Cardinal of Cortona), ii. 251
 Passerini da Cortona, Cardinal, i. 316
 Passignano, ii. 48
 Pasta, Dr., i. 123, 124 _note_
 Patmore, Coventry, iii. 136
 Patrizzi, Patrizio, iii. 72
 Paul III., i. 318; ii. 88; iii. 120, 133
 Pausanias, iii. 207
 Pavia, i. 146-151, 158, 176, 184, 189, 198, 212, 351; ii. 182

Pavia, Cardinal of, ii. 75
Pazzi, Francesco, ii. 232, 233, 256, 335
Pazzi, Guglielmo, ii. 233
Peiræeus, iii. 357
Pelestrina, i. 258
Pelusium, iii. 189
Pembroke, Countess of, ii. 265
Penna, Jeronimo della, iii. 124
Pentelicus, i. 210
Pepin, ii. 2
Peretti family, ii. 90, 94
Peretti, Camilla, ii. 90, 98
Peretti, Francesco, ii. 90, 92 foll., 103
Pericles, iii. 343, 350
Persephone, iii. 290
Persius, iii. 165, 172
Perugia, i. 188, 214, 350; ii. 35, 38, 46, 52, 163; iii. 53, 68, 92, 111-136
Perugino, i. 149, 239; ii. 42, 57, 59, 159; iii. 114, 116, 117-119, 184
Perusia Augusta, ii. 45, 46
Peruzzi, i. 152; ii. 49
Pesaro, ii. 59, 69, 76
Pescara, Marquis of, i. 184
Petrarch, i. 72, 73, 74 and _note_, 86, 168; ii. 22, 261, 262, 269, 273, 280, 303, 332, 344, 365-368; iii. 254-256, 308, 316
Petrucci, Pandolfo, ii. 47; iii. 82
Phædrus, iii. 188, 351
Pheidias, i. 239, 246; iii. 155, 346, 349
Philippus, iii. 319
Philistis, Queen, iii. 337
Philostratus, ii. 293
Phlegræan plains, iii. 235, 239
Phoenicians, iii. 290, 291, 335
Piacenza, i. 142-144, 195, 340; ii. 180, 197
'Piagnoni,' the, ii. 253, 254
Piccinino, Jacopo, ii. 234
Piccinino, Niccolò, i. 207; ii. 70
Piccolomini family, iii. 107
Piccolomini, Æneas Sylvius, ii. 23 (_see also_ Pius II.)
Piccolomini, Ambrogio, iii. 72, 74
Piedmont, i. 129
Pienza, iii. 77, 92, 102, 104-107
Piero della Francesca, ii. 72, 322
Piero Delle Vigne, iii. 316
Pietra Rubia, ii. 64
Pietra Santa, ii. 238
Pietro di Cardona, Don, i. 158
Pignatta, Captain, i. 319
Pindar, iii. 162, 215, 289, 332
Pinturicchio, Bernardo, ii. 42; iii. 62, 105, 114
Piranesi, i. 77; ii. 181
Pisa, i. 340; ii. 170, 203, 211, 214, 239, 244; iii. 145, 253, 304, 311
Pisani, the, ii. 30; iii. 71
Pisani, Vittore, i. 259
Pisano, Andrea, iii. 144
Pisano, Giovanni, iii. 112, 144
Pisano, Niccola, ii. 170; iii. 144, 146
Pisciadella, i. 60
Pistoja, ii. 281, 283, 287
Pitré, Signor, ii. 281 _note_
Pitta, Luca, ii. 226, 256
Pitz d'Aela, ii. 127
Pitz Badin, ii. 130
Pitz Languard, i. 55
Pitz Palu, i. 56
Pius II., i. 202; ii. 18; iii. 62, 104, 105
Pius IV., i. 182, 188
Pius IX., iii. 196
Placidia, Galla, ii. 8, 11
Planta, i. 49
Plato, i. 249; iii. 337, 341, 351, 352, 353
Pletho, Gemisthus, ii. 19 and _note_
Plinies, the, i. 177
Plutarch, iii. 199
Po, the, i. 50, 124, 134; ii. 1, 168; iii. 94
Poggio. (_See_ Bracciolini, Poggio)
Polenta, Francesca da, ii. 15
Politian, iii. 102
Poliziano, Angelo, ii. 233, 237, 273, 305, 306, 308, 309, 312, 314, 318, 322, 323, 324, 334, 335, 338, 340, 342-344, 345-364; iii. 101
Polyphemus, i. 91
Pompeii, iii. 232, 244
Pompey, iii. 189
Pontano, iii. 242, 243 _note_

Ponte, Da, i. 227, 236
Pontremoli, i. 340; ii. 133, 183, 194
Pontresina, i. 49, 53, 55
Pope, Alexander, i. 6; ii. 273; iii. 172
Porcari, Stefano, ii. 236
Porcellio, ii. 18
Porlezza, i. 184
Portici, iii. 232
Porto d' Anzio, iii. 273
Porto Fino, ii. 142
Porto Venere, ii. 140-142
Portogallo, Cardinal di, iii. 98
Portus Classis, ii. 1, 8, 11, 12
Poschiavo, i. 49, 60
Poseidonia, iii. 261 foll.
Posilippo, iii. 231, 270, 309
Poussin (cited), i. 262
Poveglia, i. 257
Pozzuoli, iii. 232, 241, 242, 243
Prato, ii. 244, 245
Procida, iii. 238, 239, 242
Promontogno, ii. 130
Provence, i. 68-82
Provence, Counts of, i. 79
Psyttaleia, iii. 358
Ptolemy, iii. 205
Puccini (Medicean) party, the, ii. 222
Pulci, ii. 269, 270
Pythagoras, ii. 24

Quattro Castelli, ii. 165, 171
Quirini, the, i. 331

Rabelais, iii. 161
Radicofani, iii. 69, 90, 91, 103, 106, 111
Ragatz, i. 65
Raimond, Count of Provence, iii. 305
Raimondi, Carlo, ii. 150
Rainulf, Count, iii. 299, 300
Raleigh, Sir Walter, ii. 264
Rametta, iii. 302
Rapallo, iii. 256
Raphael, i. 138-140, 149, 152, 239, 266; ii. 27, 37, 46, 56, 82, 83, 85, 126, 147, 152, 159; iii. 35, 114, 117, 123, 129, 141, 145, 146, 227, 228
Ravello, iii. 259
Ravenna, i. 160; ii. 1-13, 75, 244; iii. 315
Raymond, iii. 52, 53
Recanati, ii. 63
Redi, iii. 95
Reggio d'Emilia, ii. 165, 167-169, 196; iii. 288
Regno, the, i. 196
Rembrandt, i. 345; ii. 156, 275
René of Anjou, King, i. 202
Reni, Guido, ii. 86
Rhætia, i. 49
Rhætikon, the, i. 29
Rhine, the, i. 2
Rhone, the, i. 70, 71, 76, 78
Riario, Girolamo, ii. 231, 232
Ricci, the, ii. 213
Ridolfi, Cardinal, i. 318
Ridolfi, Pietro, iii. 11
Rienzi, i. 70
Rieti, valley of, ii. 34
Rimini, i. 350, 353; ii. 14-31, 60, 70
Rimini, Francesca da, ii. 270
Riviera, the, i. 2, 97, 104; ii. 143
Riviera, mountains of, ii. 142
Robbia, Luca della, ii. 29
Robustelli, Jacopo, i. 61
Rocca d' Orcia, iii. 106, 108
Roccabruna, i. 83, 91, 92
Rodari, Bernardino, i. 175
Rodari, Jacopo, i. 175
Rodari, Tommaso, i. 175, 176
Roger of Hauteville, iii. 295 and *_note_*, 296 foll.
Roger (the younger) of Hauteville, King of Sicily, iii. 252, 253, 293, 305, 307-311, 318
Rogers, Samuel, ii. 270
Roland, ii. 42, 43
Roma, Antonio da, i. 328, 329
Romagna, ii. 16, 73, 185, 187, 199
Romano, i. 197
Romano, Giulio, i. 243

Rome, i. [2](#), [49](#), [68](#), [75](#), [139](#); ii. [10](#), [32](#), [88](#), [89](#), [187](#), [259](#); iii. [22](#) foll., [85](#), [156](#), [323](#)
Ronco, the, ii. [1](#), [10](#)
Rossellino, Bernardo, iii. [62](#), [105](#), [106](#)
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, ii. [262](#), [263](#), [270](#); iii. [1](#), [3](#), [17](#) foll.
Rousseau, i. [5](#), [6](#); ii. [27](#); iii. [157](#)
Rovere, Francesco della. (_See_ Sixtus IV.)
Rovere, Francesco Maria (Duke of Urbino). (_See_ Urbino)
Rovere, Giovanni della, ii. [73](#)
Rovere, Livia della, ii. [77](#)
Rovere, Vittoria della, ii. [78](#)
Rubens, i. [345](#)
Rubicon, the, ii. [14](#)
Rucellai family, ii. [28](#)
Rumano, i. [204](#)
Rusca, Francesco, i. [177](#)
Ruskin, Mr., i. [10](#), [125](#)
Rydberg, Victor, iii. [224](#) _note_, [227](#)

Sabine Mountains, ii. [32](#), [33](#), [39](#), [88](#)
Sacchetti, iii. [12](#), [13](#), [16](#)
Saintrè, Jehan de, iii. [13](#)
Salamis, iii. [358](#), [362](#)
Salerno, iii. [250](#), [262](#), [268](#), [299](#)
Salimbeni, house of, iii. [7](#)
Salimbeni, Niccolò de', iii. [3](#)
Salis, Von, family, i. [50](#)
Salis, Von, i. [49](#)
Salò, ii. [98](#)
Salviati, Cardinal, i. [318](#)
Salviati, Francesco (Archbishop of Pisa), ii. [232](#), [233](#)
Salviati (Governor of Cortona), ii. [50](#)
Salviati, Madonna Lucrezia, i. [320](#)
Salviati, Madonna Maria, i. [320](#)
Samaden, i. [48](#), [53](#), [55](#)
Samminiato, iii. [98](#)
Sampiero, i. [112](#), [113-115](#)
Sanazzaro, ii. [264](#) and _note_ [1](#)
S. Agnese, i. [85](#)
S. Erasmo, i. [256](#), [283](#)
S. Gilles, i. [81](#), [82](#)
S. Pietro, i. [258](#)
S. Spirito, i. [257](#)
San Gemignano, iii. [3](#), [59](#)
San Germano, iii. [246](#), [305](#)
San Giacomo, i. [63](#)
San Lazzaro, i. [280](#)
San Leo, ii. [64](#)
San Marino, ii. [60](#), [62-64](#)
San Martino, i. [173](#)
San Michele, i. [268](#)
San Moritz, i. [55](#), [58](#)
San Nicoletto, i. [283](#), [286](#)
San Quirico, iii. [77](#), [92](#), [102](#), [107-110](#)
San Remo, i. [87](#) _note_, [93-98](#), [105](#); iii. [256](#)
San Rocco, i. [265](#)
San Romolo, i. [98-100](#), [103](#)
San Terenzio, ii. [143](#), [144](#)
Sangarius, the, iii. [187](#)
Sanseverino, Roberto, i. [158](#)
Sansovino, i. [337](#) _note_, ii. [17](#) _note_
Sant' Elisabetta, i. [283](#)
Santa Agata, ii. [64](#), [90](#)
Santa Lucia, iii. [232](#)
Santa Maura, iii. [363](#).
Santi, Giovanni, ii. [56](#), [59](#)
Sappho, iii. [363](#)
Saracens, iii. [252](#), [263](#), [294](#) _note_, [302](#) foll., [308](#), [321](#)
Sardinia, ii. [189](#), [286](#)
Saronno, i. [137](#), [156](#), [161-166](#)
Sarto, Andrea del, i. [345](#); iii. [100](#)
Sarzana, ii. [131](#), [134](#), [143](#), [183](#), [238](#)
Sassella, i. [48](#), [62](#)
Sasso Rancio, i. [173](#)
Savonarola, i. [171](#); ii. [122](#), [193](#), [237](#), [238](#), [239-242](#)
Scala, Can Grande della, iii. [6](#)
Scaletta, pass of the, i. [49](#)
Scaligers, the, iii. [318](#)
Scalza, Ippolito, iii. [147](#)
Scandiano, Count of. ii. [67](#)
Scheffer, Ary, ii. [15](#)
Scheggia, ii. [55](#)
Schiahorn, the, i. [54](#)
Schwartzhorn, the, i. [54](#)

Schyn, ii. [127](#)
 Sciacca, iii. [281](#)
 Scolastica, S., iii. [73](#)
 Scott, Sir Walter, ii. [273](#)
 Sebastian, S., iii. [184](#), [185](#)
 Seehorn, the, i. [29](#)
 Seelisberg, i. [14](#)
 Segeste, iii. [291](#), [319](#), [335](#)
 Selinus, iii. [291](#), [333](#), [335](#), [337](#)
 Serafino, Fra, ii. [83](#)
 Serbelloni, Cecilia, i. [180](#)
 Sergestus, iii. [319](#)
 Serio, river, i. [204](#)
 Sermini, iii. [68](#)
 Sesia, the, i. [19](#)
 Sestri, i. [103_note](#); iii. [250](#)
 Sforza family, the, i. [146](#), [155](#), [179](#), [184](#), [185](#), [197](#), [244](#)
 Sforza, Alessandro, i. [202](#), ii. [72](#):

- Battista, ii. [72](#):
- Beatrice, i. [176](#):
- Cardinal Ascanio, ii. [91](#):
- Francesco, i. [149](#), [181](#), [186](#), [198](#), [200](#), [203](#), [208](#), ii. [1717_note](#), [71](#), [185](#), [224](#):
- Galeazzo, ii. [236](#):
- Galeazzo Maria, ii. [185](#), [230](#), [236](#), iii. [117](#):
- Giovanni Galeazzo, ii. [185](#), [192](#):
- Ippolita, i. [155](#):
- Lodovico, i. [149](#), ii. [185](#), [186](#), [191](#), [193](#), [194](#), [236](#), [238](#):
- Polissena, ii. [17](#):
- Zenobia, iii. [124](#), [125](#), [128](#)

Shakspeare, ii. [258](#), [262](#), [263](#), [267](#), [268](#), [271-274](#), [277](#), [335](#); iii. [36](#), [37](#), [166](#), [280](#), [282](#)
 Shelley, i. [5](#), [10](#), [25](#), [26](#), [87](#), [166](#), [232](#); ii. [138](#), [140](#), [143-145](#), [270](#), [271](#), [273](#); iii. [172](#), [186](#)
 Shirley, the dramatist, ii. [159](#)
 Sicily, i. [103_note](#); ii. [66](#), [189](#), [276](#), [281_note](#), [282](#); iii. [252](#), [279](#) foll., [286](#), [288](#), [290](#) foll., [319](#) foll.
 Sidney, Sir Philip, ii. [263](#), [264](#), [266](#)
 Siena, i. [166](#), [187](#), [192](#); ii. [42](#), [185](#), [214](#), [281](#), [286](#); iii. [1](#), [7](#), [10](#), [12](#), [41-65](#), [66](#) foll., [92](#), [105_et passim](#)
 Sigifredo, ii. [168](#)
 Signorelli, i. [239](#); ii. [49](#), [362](#); iii. [35](#), [81](#), [82](#), [85](#), [145](#), [147-152](#), [154](#)
 Silarus, the, iii. [264](#)
 Silchester, i. [214](#)
 Silvapiana, ii. [128](#), [129](#)
 Silvretta, the, i. [31](#)
 Silz Maria, ii. [129](#)
 Simaetha, i. [140](#)
 Simeto, the, iii. [279](#), [304](#)
 Simon Magus, iii. [216](#)
 Simonetta, La Bella, ii. [318](#), [322](#), [335](#), [343](#)
 Simonides, iii. [167](#)
 Simplon, the, i. [19](#), [125](#)
 Sinigaglia, ii. [48](#); iii. [131](#)
 Sirmione, i. [173](#)
 Sixtus IV., i. [221](#); ii. [73](#), [231](#), [232](#), [234](#), [235](#)
 Sixtus V., ii. [90](#), [95](#), [98](#)
 Smyrna, iii. [212](#)
 Sobieski, Clementina, ii. [83](#)
 Socrates, iii. [155](#), [329](#), [351](#), [352](#), [353](#), [354](#)
 Soderini, Alessandro, i. [332](#), [334](#), [335](#), [338](#), [341](#)
 Soderini, Maria, i. [320](#)
 Soderini, Niccolo, ii. [226](#)
 Soderini, Paolo Antonio, ii. [192](#)
 Soderini, Piero, ii. [243-245](#)
 Sodoma, i. [141](#), [152](#), [165](#), [166](#); iii. [63](#), [81](#), [82-84](#), [184](#)
 Sogliano, ii. [15](#)
 Solari, Andrea, i. [148](#)
 Solari, Cristoforo (Il Gobbo), i. [149](#), [176](#)
 Solferino, i. [127](#)
 Solon, ii. [163](#); iii. [172](#), [341](#)
 Solza, i. [194](#)
 Sondrio, i. [49](#), [61](#), [63](#)
 Sophocles, ii. [160](#), [161](#); iii. [215](#), [287](#), [345_notes_1](#) and [2](#), [350](#)
 Sordello, i. [80](#)
 Sorgues river, i. [72](#)
 Sorrento, iii. [233](#), [250](#), [276-278](#)
 Sozzo, Messer, iii. [10](#), [11](#)
 Sparta, iii. [323](#)
 Spartian, iii. [192](#), [193](#), [197](#)
 Spartivento, iii. [288](#)
 Spello, ii. [35](#), [38](#), [39](#), [41-43](#), [45](#), [46](#)
 Spenser, Edmund, ii. [258](#), [262](#), [264](#)

Spezzia, Bay of, ii. [135](#), [146](#)
Splügen, i. [64](#)
Splügen, the, i. [50](#), [53](#), [64](#);
 ◦ valley of, i. [184](#)
Spolentino, hills of, iii. [92](#)
Spoleto, ii. [35](#), [38](#), [45](#), [46](#), [170](#); iii. [111](#), [120](#)
Sprecher von Bernegg, i. [49](#)
Stabiae, iii. [246](#)
Staffa, Jeronimo della, iii. [125](#)
Stelvio, the, i. [9](#), [50](#), [61](#)
Stephen des Rotrous, Archbishop of Palermo, iii. [306](#) _note_ 1
Stimigliano, ii. [34](#)
Strabo, iii. [206](#)
Strozzi family, ii. [75](#)
Strozzi, Filippo, i. [318](#), [321](#), [326](#), [344](#)
Strozzi (Governor of Cortona), ii. [50](#)
Strozzi, Palla degli, ii. [222](#)
Strozzi, Pietro, i. [332](#)
Strozzi, Ruberto, i. [331](#)
Suardi, Bartolommeo, i. [154](#)
Subasio, ii. [45](#)
Suetonius, i. [134-136](#); iii. [164](#), [196](#), [199](#), [272](#), [274](#)
Sufenas, iii. [209](#)
Superga, the, i. [133](#), [134](#)
Surrey, Earl of, ii. [261-263](#), [271](#)
Susa, vale of, i. [134](#)
Süss, i. [55](#)
Swinburne, Mr., ii. [270](#), [273](#)
Switzerland, i. [1-67](#), [105](#), [129](#)
Sybaris, ancient Hellenic city of, ii. [2](#) _note_ ; iii. [261](#)
Syracuse, i. [87](#) _note_ ; iii. [262](#), [279](#), [288](#), [290](#), [291](#), [294](#) _note_ , [304](#), [320-331](#)

Tacitus, iii. [199](#)
Tadema, Alma, i. [210](#)
Tanagra, iii. [209](#)
Tancred de Hauteville, iii. [294](#), [295](#)
Taormina, iii. [287](#), [288](#), [304](#)
Tarentum, iii. [263](#)
Tarentum, Prince of, i. [79](#)
Tarlatti, Guido, iii. [74](#)
Taro, the, i. [340](#); ii. [132](#), [183](#), [184](#), [195](#)
Tarsus, iii. [212](#)
Tasso, ii. [83](#), [264](#), [265](#), [267](#), [269](#), [273](#), [274](#), [280](#), [332](#), [337](#), [343](#)
Tavignano, the, valley of, i. [111](#)
Tedaldo, Count of Reggio and Modena, ii. [169](#)
Tennyson, Lord, i. [4](#); ii. [23](#), [270](#), [273](#), [296](#); iii. [173](#)
Terlan, i. [63](#)
Terni, ii. [34](#), [253](#)
Terracina, i. [318](#); iii. [235](#)
Tertullian, iii. [219](#)
Theocritus, i. [84](#), [94](#); ii. [304](#), [330](#), [335](#), [337](#), [355](#); iii. [319](#)
Theodoric the Ostrogoth, ii. [2](#), [10](#), [11](#), [13](#)
Theognis, iii. [172](#)
Thomas à Kempis (quoted), i. [98](#), [100](#)
Thomas of Sarzana, ii. [28](#)
Thrasymene, ii. [45](#), [46](#), [48](#); iii. [90](#), [91](#), [101](#), [111](#)
Thucydides, iii. [321-324](#), [327](#), [328](#), [331](#)
Thuillier, Prefect, i. [109](#)
Tiber, the, ii. [33](#), [46](#); iii. [112](#)
Tiberio d'Assisi, ii. [35](#)
Tiberius, ii. [14](#); iii. [271-274](#)
Ticino, the, i. [124](#), [211](#)
Tieck, R. iii. [224](#)
Timoleon, iii. [288](#), [290](#), [304](#), [319](#), [337](#)
Tintoretto, i. [138](#), [236](#), [262-267](#), [269](#), [281](#); ii. [147](#), [156](#); iii. [158](#)
Tinzenhorn, ii. [127](#)
Tirano, i. [49-53](#), [61](#), [62](#)
Titian, i. [337](#) _note_ ; ii. [76](#), [83](#), [130](#), [153](#), [154](#); iii. [180](#), [247](#)
Titus, iii. [190](#)
Tivoli, i. [87](#) _note_ ; ii. [32](#); iii. [189](#), [198](#), [201](#), [210](#)
Todi, iii. [111](#)
Tofana, i. [268](#), [283](#)
Tolomei family, iii. [69](#)
Tolomei, Cristoforo, iii. [70](#)
Tolomei, Fulvia, iii. [70](#)
Tolomei, Giovanni, iii. [8](#), [70](#) (_see also_ Bernardo)
Tolomei, Nino, iii. [8](#), [70](#)
Tommaseo, ii. [283](#)
Tommaso di Nello, iii. [11](#)
Torcello, i. [171](#), [172](#), [282](#); ii. [1](#)
Torre dell' Annunziata, iii. [232](#)
Torre del Greco, iii. [232](#)
Torrensi family, the, iii. [119](#)
Toscanella, iii. [109](#)

Toschi, Paolo, ii. 148-150
Totila, iii. 81
Tourneur, ii. 267
Trajan, ii. 14; iii. 188
Trani, iii. 311
Trapani, iii. 319
Trasimeno, ii. 50
Trastevere, ii. 96
Trebanio, ii. 19
Trelawny, ii. 144, 146
Tremazzi, Ambrogio, i. 327 _note_
Trento, i. 340
Trepievi, the, i. 184, 188
Trescorio, i. 204
Tresenda, i. 63
Trevi, ii. 35, 39, 46, 97; iii. 111
Treviglio, i. 209
Treviso, iii. 6
Trezzo, i. 194
Trinacria, iii. 290
Trinci family, ii. 38, 41
Trinci, Corrado, ii. 40
Troina, iii. 302, 303
Tuldo, Nicola, iii. 53-55
Tunis, iii. 275
Turin, i. 134, 138, 348
Turner, J.M.W., iii. 138, 364
Tuscany, i. 187; ii. 45, 169, 234, 244, 276 foll.; iii. 41 foll., 68, 104
Tuscany, Grand Duke of, ii. 99, 170, 256
Tyrol, the, i. 89
Tyrrhenian sea, the, ii. 183

Ubaldo, S., ii. 54
Uberti, Fazio degli, iii. 10, 16
Udine, i. 351
Ugolini, Messer Baccio, ii. 362
Ugucione della Faggiuola, ii. 136; iii. 4
Ulysses, iii. 288, 320
Umbria, i. 149; ii. 32-59; iii. 68, 119 _note_ 1
Urban II., iii. 304
Urban IV., ii. 177; iii. 141, 142
Urban V., i. 70; ii. 78
Urbino, i. 203; ii. 45, 58, 66-69, 74, 78-87, 185
Urbino, Counts of, ii. 15, 70
Urbino, Federigo, Duke of, i. 203, 207, 316, 317, 326; ii. 48, 66-68, 70-73, 78-81, 231
Urbino, Prince Federigo-Ubaldo of, ii. 77, 78
Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of, ii. 73-76, 85
Urbino, Francesco Maria II., Duke of, ii. 76-78, 86
Urbino, Guidobaldo, Duke of, ii. 73, 74, 79, 80, 83, 84
Urbino, Guidobaldo II., Duke of, ii. 76, 82
Urbino, Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of, ii. 75, 76, 247

Valdarno, ii. 218
Valdelsa, iii. 69
Valentinian, iii. 191
Valentino, ii. 64
Valperga, Ardizzino, i. 158
Valsassina, the, i. 184
Valtelline, the, i. 35, 48-51, 53, 58, 61, 64, 180, 184, 186, 188; ii. 168; iii. 94
Valturio, ii. 18
Varallo, i. 19, 136, 138, 164
Varani, the, ii. 47, 71
Varano, Giulia, ii. 76
Varano, Madonna Maria, ii. 85
Varano, Venanzio, ii. 85
Varchi, i. 320-322, 325, 326; iii. 45 _note_
Varenna, i. 173, 186
Varese, i. 144;
 ◦ Lake of, i. 124, 173, 174
Vasari, Giorgio, ii. 26, 28; iii. 83, 84, 145
Vasco de Gama, ii. 237
Vasto, Marquis del, i. 187
Vaucluse, i. 72-74
Velino, the, ii. 34, 46
Venice, i. 44, 167, 171, 200, 201, 206, 254-315; ii. 1, 2 and _note_, 16, 42, 102; iii. 253, 309, 317 _note_, _et passim_
Ventimiglia, i. 102
Vercelli, i. 136-142; ii. 173; iii. 82
Vergerio, Pier Paolo, i. 331
Verne, M. Jules, ii. 139
Vernet, Horace, i. 71
Verocchio, i. 193, 207
Verona, i. 212; ii. 168; iii. 6, 318

Verucchio, ii. [62](#)
 Vespasian, ii. [57](#)
 Vespasiano, Florentine bookseller, ii. [80](#)
 Vesuvius, iii. [230](#), [232](#), [234](#), [235](#), [239](#), [242](#), [245](#), [276](#)
 Vettori, Paolo, ii. [245](#)
 Via Mala, the, ii. [57](#)
 Viareggio, ii. [145](#), [146](#)
 Vicenza, i. [75](#), [328-330](#)
 Vico, i. [109](#), [112](#), [115](#)
 Vico Soprano, ii. [129](#)
 Victor, Aurelius, iii. [193](#), [195](#)
 Vietri, iii. [250](#)
 Vignole, i. [283](#)
 Villa, i. [48](#), [62](#)
 Villafranca, i. [83](#)
 Villani, Giovanni, iii. [8](#)
 Villani, Matteo, ii. [208](#); iii. [8](#), [16](#)
 Villeneuve, i. [70](#)
 Villon, iii. [1](#)
 Vinci, Leonardo da, i. [139](#), [148](#), [154](#), [349](#); ii. [19](#), [21](#), [27](#), [50](#), [152](#), [156](#); iii. [82](#), [228](#), [238](#)
 Vinta, M. Francesco, i. [330](#)
 Vire, Val de, ii. [291](#)
 Virgil, i. [246](#); ii. [6](#), [63](#), [285](#), [304](#), [338](#), [343](#); iii. [75](#), [144](#), [155](#), [162](#), [172](#), [180](#), [181](#), [186](#), [215](#), [268](#), [309](#), [320](#)
 Visconti family, the, i. [146](#), [181](#), [195](#); ii. [16](#), [178](#), [185](#), [224](#), [278](#); iii. [119](#), [253](#)
 Visconti, Astore, i. [181](#), [182](#)
 Visconti, Bianca Maria, i. [199](#)
 Visconti, Ermes, i. [157](#)
 Visconti, Filippo Maria, i. [195](#), [197-199](#); ii. [215](#), [224](#), [235](#)
 Visconti, Gian Galeazzo, i. [149](#), [152](#); ii. [213](#)
 Visconti, Gian Maria, ii. [236](#)
 Vitelli, the, ii. [41](#), [47](#), [71](#)
 Vitelli, Alessandro, ii. [250](#)
 Vitelli, Giulia, iii. [132](#)
 Vitelli, Vitellozzo, ii. [47](#), [48](#)
 Vitellius, iii. [164](#)
 Vittoli, the, i. [114](#), [115](#)
 Vivarini, i. [269](#)
 Voltaire, iii. [161](#)
 Volterra, ii. [163](#), [214](#), [231](#); iii. [66](#), [69](#), [79](#), [92](#), [103](#)
 Volterra, Bebo da, i. [328-330](#), [333-341](#)
 Volterrano, Andrea, i. [336](#)
 Volturno, iii. [239](#)
 Volumnii, the, iii. [112](#)

Walker, Frederick, ii. [129](#); iii. [76](#)
 Walter of Brienne. (See Athens, Duke of)
 Walter of the Mill, Archbishop of Palermo, iii. [306_note](#), [308](#)
 Webster, the dramatist, i. [220](#); ii. [103-126](#), [267](#), [271](#), [277](#)
 Weisshorn, the, i. [54](#)
 Whitman, Walt, ii. [24](#); iii. [172](#)
 Wien, i. [45](#)
 Wiesen, i. [65](#); ii. [127](#)
 William of Apulia, iii. [298](#), [299](#), [305](#)
 William the Bad and William the Good of Sicily, iii. [305](#), [306](#), [308](#), [311](#)
 Winckelman, iii. [188](#)
 Wolfgang, i. [30](#)
 Wolfswalk, the, i. [31](#)
 Wordsworth, i. [5](#), [6](#), [10](#), [11](#); ii. [262](#), [263](#), [273](#); iii. [172](#), [173](#)
 Wyatt, Sir Thomas, ii. [261](#), [262](#)

Xenophanes, iii. [171](#), [173](#), [353](#)
 Xiphilinus, iii. [192](#)

Zafferana, iii. [282](#), [283](#)
 Zante, iii. [363](#)
 Zeno, Carlo, i. [260](#)
 Zeus Olympius, iii. [290](#)
 Zizers, i. [65](#)

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