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L I V E S
OF
EMINENT
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GALILEO.

1564—1642.

THE history of the life and labours of Galileo is pregnant with a peculiar interest to the general reader, as well as to the philosopher. His brilliant discoveries, the man of science regards as his peculiar property; the means by which they were made, and the developement of his intellectual character, belong to the logician and to the philosopher; but the triumphs and the reverses of his eventful life must be claimed for our common nature, as a source of more than ordinary instruction.

The lengthened career which Providence assigned to Galileo was filled up throughout its rugged outline with events even of dramatic interest. But though it was emblazoned with achievements of transcendent magnitude, yet his finest discoveries were the derision of his contemporaries, and were even denounced as crimes which merited the vengeance of Heaven. Though he was the idol of his friends, and the favoured companion of princes, yet he afterwards became the victim of persecution, and spent some of his last hours within the walls of a prison; and though the Almighty granted

him, as it were, a new sight to descry unknown worlds in the obscurity of space, yet the eyes which were allowed to witness such wonders, were themselves doomed to be closed in darkness.

Such were the lights and shadows in which history delineates

“The starry Galileo with his woes.” *

But, however powerful be their contrasts, they are not unusual in their proportions. The balance which has been struck between his days of good and evil, is that which regulates the lot of man, whether we study it in the despotic sway of the autocrat, in the peaceful enquiries of the philosopher, or in the humbler toils of ordinary life.

Galileo Galilei was born at Pisa, on the 15th of February, 1564, and was the eldest of a family of three sons and three daughters. Under the name of Bonajuti, his noble ancestors had filled high offices at Florence; but about the middle of the 14th century they seem to have abandoned this surname for that of Galileo. Vincenzo Galilei, our author's father, was himself a philosopher of no mean powers; and though his talents seem to have been applied only in the composition of treatises on the theory and practice of music, yet he appears to have anticipated even his son in a just estimate of the philosophy of the age, and in a distinct perception of the true method of investigating truth.†

The early years of Galileo were, like those of almost all great experimental philosophers, spent in the construction of instruments and pieces of machinery, which were calculated chiefly to amuse himself and his school-fellows. This occupation of his hands, however, did not interfere with his regular studies; and though, from the straitened circumstances of his father, he was educated under considerable disadvantages, yet he acquired the elements of classical literature, and was initiated into all the learning of the times. Music, drawing, and paint-

* Childe Harold, canto iv. stanza liv.

† Life of Galileo, Library of Useful Knowledge, p. 1.

ing were the occupations of his leisure hours ; and such was his proficiency in these arts, that he was reckoned a skilful performer on several musical instruments, especially the lute ; and his knowledge of pictures was held in great esteem by some of the best artists of his day.

Galileo seems to have been desirous of following the profession of a painter : but his father had observed decided indications of early genius ; and, though by no means able to afford it, he resolved to send him to the university to pursue the study of medicine. He accordingly enrolled himself as a scholar in arts at the university of Pisa, on the 5th of November, 1581, and pursued his medical studies under the celebrated botanist Andrew Cæsalpinus, who filled the chair of medicine from 1567 to 1592.

In order to study the principles of music and drawing, Galileo found it necessary to acquire some knowledge of geometry. His father seems to have foreseen the consequences of following this new pursuit, and though he did not prohibit him from reading Euclid under Ostilio Ricci, one of the professors at Pisa, yet he watched his progress with the utmost jealousy, and had resolved that it should not interfere with his medical studies. The demonstrations, however, of the Greek mathematician had too many charms for the ardent mind of Galileo. His whole attention was engrossed with the new truths which burst upon his understanding ; and after many fruitless attempts to check his ardour and direct his thoughts to professional objects, his father was obliged to surrender his parental control, and allow the fullest scope to the genius of his son.

From the elementary works of geometry, Galileo passed to the writings of Archimedes ; and while he was studying the hydrostatical treatise* of the Syracusan philosopher, he wrote his essay on the hydrostatical balance†, in which he describes the construction of the instrument, and the method by which Archimedes detected the fraud committed by the jeweller

* De Insidentibus in Fluido.

† Opere di Galileo. Milano, 1810, vol. iv. p. 243—257.

in the composition of Hiero's crown. This work gained for its author the esteem of Guido Ubaldi, who had distinguished himself by his mechanical and mathematical acquirements, and who engaged his young friend to investigate the subject of the centre of gravity in solid bodies. The treatise on this subject, which Galileo presented to his patron, was the source of his future success.

Through the cardinal del Monte, the brother-in-law of Ubaldi, the reigning duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand de' Medici, was made acquainted with the merits of our young philosopher; and, in 1589, he was appointed lecturer on mathematics at Pisa. By the drudgery of private teaching he was obliged to add to the small salary of sixty crowns which was attached to the office.

With this moderate competency, Galileo commenced his philosophical career. At the early age of eighteen, when he had entered the university, he displayed his innate antipathy to the Aristotelian philosophy. This feeling was strengthened by his earliest inquiries; and upon his establishment at Pisa, he seems to have regarded the doctrines of Aristotle as the intellectual prey which, in his chace of glory, he was destined to pursue. Nizzoli, who flourished near the beginning of the sixteenth century, and Giordano Bruno, who was burned at Rome in 1600, led the way in this daring pursuit; but it was reserved for Galileo to track the Thracian boar through its native thickets, and, at the risk of his own life, to strangle it in its den.

With the resolution of submitting every opinion to the test of experiment, Galileo's first inquiries at Pisa were directed to the mechanical doctrines of Aristotle. Their incorrectness and absurdity soon became apparent; and with a zeal, perhaps, bordering on indiscretion, he denounced them to his pupils with an ardour of manner and of expression proportioned to his own conviction of the truth. The detection of long-established errors is apt to inspire the young philosopher with an exultation which reason condemns. The feeling of triumph is apt to clothe itself in the language of asperity; and the

abettor of erroneous opinions is treated as a species of enemy to science. Like the soldier who fleshes his first spear in battle, the philosopher is apt to leave the stain of cruelty upon his early achievements. It is only from age and experience, indeed, that we can expect the discretion of valour, whether it is called forth in controversy or in battle. Galileo seems to have waged this stern warfare against the followers of Aristotle; and such was the exasperation which was excited by his reiterated and successful attacks, that he was assailed, during the rest of his life, with a degree of rancour which seldom originates in a mere difference of opinion. Forgetting that all knowledge is progressive, and that the errors of one generation call forth the comments, and are replaced by the discoveries, of the next, Galileo did not anticipate that his own speculations and incomplete labours might one day provoke unmitigated censure; and he therefore failed in making allowance for the prejudices and ignorance of his opponents. He who enjoys the proud lot of taking a position in advance of his age, need not wonder that his less gifted contemporaries are left behind. Men are not necessarily obstinate because they cleave to deeply rooted and venerable errors, nor are they absolutely stupid when they are long in understanding and embracing newly discovered truths.

It was one of the axioms of the Aristotelian mechanics, that the heavier of two falling bodies would reach the ground sooner than the other, and that their velocities would be proportional to their weights. Galileo attacked the arguments by which this opinion was supported; and when he found his reasoning ineffectual, he appealed to direct experiment. He maintained, that all bodies would fall through the same height in the same time, if they were not unequally retarded by the resistance of the air: and though he performed the same experiment with the most satisfactory results, by letting heavy bodies fall from the leaning tower of Pisa; yet the Aristotelians, who with their own eyes saw the unequal weights strike the ground

at the same instant, ascribed the effect to some unknown cause, and preferred the decision of their master to that of nature herself.

Galileo could not brook this opposition to his discoveries ; and the Aristotelians could not tolerate the rebukes of their young instructor. The two parties were, consequently, marshalled in hostile array ; when, fortunately for both, an event occurred, which placed them beyond the reach of danger. Don Giovanni de' Medici, a natural son of Cosmo, had proposed a method of clearing out the harbour of Leghorn. Galileo, whose opinion was requested, gave such an unfavourable report upon it, that the disappointed inventor directed against him all the force of his malice. It was an easy task to concentrate the malignity of his enemies at Pisa ; and so effectually was this accomplished, that Galileo resolved to accept another professorship, to which he had been previously invited.

The chair of mathematics in the university of Padua having been vacant for five years, the republic of Venice had resolved to fill it up ; and, on the recommendation of Guido Ubaldi, Galileo was appointed to it, in 1592, for a period of six years.

In 1591, Galileo lost his father, who died at an advanced age, and devolved upon his eldest son the support of the family. This event, probably, increased his anxiety to better his situation, and must have added to his other inducements to quit Pisa. In September, 1592, he removed to Padua, where he had a salary of only 180 florins, and where he was obliged to add to his income by the labours of tuition. Notwithstanding this fruitless occupation of his time, he appears to have found leisure for composing several of his works, and completing various inventions, which will be afterwards described. His manuscripts were circulated privately among his friends and pupils ; but some of them strayed beyond this sacred limit, and found their way into the hands of persons who did not scruple to claim and publish, as their own, the discoveries and inventions which they contained.

It is not easy to ascertain the exact time when Galileo became a convert to the doctrines of Copernicus, or the particular circumstances under which he was led to adopt them. It is stated by Gerard Voss, that a public lecture of Mæstlin, the instructor of Kepler, was the means of making Galileo acquainted with the true system of the universe. This assertion, however, is by no means probable ; and it has been ably shown, by the latest biographer of Galileo*, that, in his dialogues on the Copernican system, our author gives the true account of his own conversion. This passage is so interesting, that we shall give it entire.

“ I cannot omit this opportunity of relating to you what happened to myself at the time when this opinion (the Copernican system) began to be discursed. I was then a very young man, and had scarcely finished my course of philosophy, which other occupations obliged me to leave off, when there arrived in this country, from Rostoch, a foreigner, whose name, I believe, was Christian Vurstisius (Wurteisen), a follower of Copernicus. This person delivered, on this subject, two or three lectures in a certain academy, and to a crowded audience. Believing that several were attracted more by the novelty of the subject than by any other cause, and being firmly persuaded that this opinion was a piece of solemn folly, I was unwilling to be present. Upon interrogating, however, some of those who were there, I found that they all made it a subject of merriment, with the exception of one, who assured me that it was not a thing wholly ridiculous. As I considered this individual to be both prudent and circumspect, I repented that I had not attended the lectures ; and, whenever I met any of the followers of Copernicus, I began to inquire if they had always been of the same opinion. I found that there was not one of them who did not declare that he had long maintained the very opposite opinions, and had not gone over to the new doctrines till he was driven by the force of argument. I next examined them one by

* Life of Galileo, in Library of Useful Knowledge, p. 9.

one, to see if they were masters of the arguments on the opposite side ; and such was the readiness of their answers, that I was satisfied they had not taken up this opinion from ignorance or vanity. On the other hand, whenever I interrogated the Peripatetics and the Ptolemaeans (and, out of curiosity, I have interrogated not a few), respecting their perusal of Copernicus's work, I perceived that there were few who had seen the book, and not one who understood it. Nor have I omitted to enquire among the followers of the Peripatetic doctrines, if any of them had ever stood on the opposite side ; and the result was, that there was not one. Considering, then, that nobody followed the Copernican doctrine, who had not previously held the contrary opinion, and who was not well acquainted with the arguments of Aristotle and Ptolemy ; while, on the other hand, nobody followed Ptolemy and Aristotle, who had before adhered to Copernicus, and had gone over from him into the camp of Aristotle ; weighing, I say, these things, I began to believe that, if any one who rejects an opinion which he has imbibed with his milk, and which has been embraced by an infinite number, shall take up an opinion held only by a few, condemned by all the schools, and really regarded as a great paradox, it cannot be doubted that he must have been induced, not to say driven, to embrace it by the most cogent arguments. On this account, I have become very curious to penetrate to the very bottom of the subject."*

It appears, on the testimony of Galileo himself, that he taught the Ptolemaic system, out of compliance with the popular feeling, after he had convinced himself of the truth of the Copernican doctrines. In the treatise on the sphere, indeed, which bears his name†, and which must have been written soon after he went to Padua, and subsequently to 1592, the stability of the earth, and the motion of the sun, are supported by the very argu-

* *Systema Cosmicum*, Dial. ii. p. 121.

† The authenticity of this work has been doubted. It was printed at Rome, in 1656, from a MS. in the library of Somaschi, at Venice. See *Opere di Galileo*, tom. vii. p. 427.

ments which Galileo afterwards ridiculed ; but we have no means of determining whether or not he had then adopted the true system of the universe. Although he might have taught the Ptolemaic system in his lectures, after he had convinced himself of its falsehood ; yet it is not likely that he would go so far as to publish to the world, as true, the very doctrines which he despised. In a letter to Kepler, dated in 1597, he distinctly states that he *had, many years ago, adopted the opinions of Copernicus ; but that he had not yet dared to publish his arguments in favour of them, and his refutation of the opposite opinions.* These facts would leave us to place Galileo's conversion somewhere between 1593 and 1597 ; although *many* years cannot be said to have elapsed between these two dates.

At this early period of Galileo's life, in the year 1593, he met with an accident, which had nearly proved fatal. A party at Padua, of which he was one, were enjoying, at an open window, a current of air, which was artificially cooled by a fall of water. Galileo unfortunately fell asleep under its influence ; and so powerful was its effect upon his robust constitution, that he contracted a severe chronic disorder, accompanied with acute pains in his body, and loss of sleep and appetite, which attacked him at intervals during the rest of his life. Others of the party suffered still more severely, and perished by their own rashness.

Galileo's reputation was now widely extended over Europe ; and the archduke Ferdinand (afterwards emperor of Germany), the landgrave of Hesse, and the princes of Alsace and Mantua honoured his lectures with their presence. Prince Gustavus of Sweden also received instructions from him in mathematics, during his sojourn in Italy ; and it has been supposed that this was the celebrated Gustavus Adolphus.

When Galileo had completed the first period of his engagement at Padua, he was re-elected for other six years, with an increased salary of 320 florins. This liberal addition to his income is ascribed by Fabbioni

to the malice of one of his enemies, who informed the senate that Galileo was living in illicit intercourse with Marina Gamba. Without inquiring into the truth of the accusation, the senate is said to have replied, that if "he had a family to support, he had the more need of an increased salary." It is more likely that the liberality of the republic had been called forth by the high reputation of their professor, and that the terms of their reply were intended only to rebuke the malignity of the informer. The mode of expression would seem to indicate that one or more of Galileo's children had been born previous to his re-election in 1598 ; but as this is scarcely consistent with other facts, we are disposed to doubt the authenticity of Fabbroni's anecdote.

The new star, which attracted the notice of astronomers in 1604, excited the particular attention of Galileo. The observations which he made upon it, and the speculations which they suggested, formed the subject of three lectures, the beginning of the first of which only has reached our times. From the absence of parallax, he proved that the common hypothesis of its being a meteor was erroneous, and that, like the fixed stars, it was situated far beyond the bounds of our own system. The popularity of the subject attracted crowds to his lecture-room ; and Galileo had the boldness to reproach his hearers for taking so deep an interest in a temporary phenomenon, while they passed unnoticed the wonders of creation which were daily presented to their view.

In the year 1606, Galileo was again appointed to the professorship at Padua, with an augmented stipend of 520 florins. His popularity had now risen so high, that his audience could not be accommodated in his lecture-room ; and even when he had assembled them in the school of medicine, which contained 1000 persons, he was frequently obliged to adjourn to the open air.

Among the variety of pursuits which occupied his attention, was the examination of the properties of the loadstone. In 1607, he commenced his experiments ; but, with the exception of a method of arming loadstones,

which, according to the report of Sir Kenelm Digby, enabled them to carry twice as much weight as others, he does not seem to have made any additions to our knowledge of magnetism. He appears to have studied with care the admirable work of our countryman, Dr. Gilbert, "*De Magnete*," which was published in 1600; and he recognised, in the experiments and reasonings of the English philosopher, the principles of that method of investigating truth which he had himself adopted. Gilbert died in 1603, in the 63d year of his age, and probably never read the fine compliment which was paid to him by the Italian philosopher: — "I extremely praise, admire, and envy this author."

In the preceding pages we have brought down the history of Galileo's labours to that auspicious year in which he first directed the telescope to the heavens. No sooner was that noble instrument placed in his hands, than Providence released him from his professional toils, and supplied him with the fullest leisure and the amplest means for pursuing and completing the grandest discoveries.

Although he had quitted the service and the domains of his munificent patron, the grand duke of Tuscany, yet he maintained his connection with the family, by visiting Florence during his academic vacations, and giving mathematical instruction to the younger branches of that distinguished house. Cosmo, who had been one of his pupils, now succeeded his father Ferdinand; and having his mind early imbued with a love of knowledge, which had become hereditary in his family, he felt that the residence of Galileo within his dominions—and still more his introduction into his household—would do honour to their common country, and reflect a lustre upon his own name. In the year 1609, accordingly, Cosmo made proposals to Galileo to return to his original situation at Pisa. These overtures were gratefully received; and in the arrangements which Galileo on this occasion suggested, as well as in the manner in which they were urged, we obtain some insight into

his temper and character. He informs the correspondent through whom Cosmo's offer was conveyed, that his salary of 520 florins at Padua would be increased to as many crowns at his re-election; and that he could enlarge his income to any extent he pleased, by giving private lectures, and receiving pupils. His public duties, he stated, occupied him only sixty half-hours in the year; but his studies suffered such interruptions from the domestic pupils and private lectures, that his most ardent wish was to be relieved from them, in order that he might have sufficient rest and leisure, before the close of his life, to finish and publish those great works which he had in hand. In the event, therefore, of his returning to Pisa, he hoped that it would be the first object of his serene highness to give him leisure to complete his works without the drudgery of lecturing. He expresses his anxiety to gain his bread by his writings, and he promises to dedicate them to his serene master. He enumerates, among these books, two on the system of the universe; three on local motion; three books of mechanics; two on the demonstration of principles, and one of problems; besides treatises on sound and speech, on light and colours, on the tides, on the composition of continuous quantity, on the motions of animals, and on the military art. On the subject of his salary, he makes the following curious observations: —

“I say nothing,” says he, “on the amount of my salary; being convinced that, as I am to live upon it, the graciousness of his highness would not deprive me of any of those comforts, of which, however, I feel the want of less than many others; and, therefore, I say nothing more on the subject. Finally, on the title and profession of my service, I should wish that, to the title of mathematician, his highness would add that of philosopher, as I profess to have studied a greater number of years in philosophy, than months in pure mathematics; and how I have profited by it, and if I can or ought to deserve this title, I may let their highnesses see, as often as it shall please them to give

me an opportunity of discussing such subjects in their presence with those who are most esteemed in this knowledge."

During the progress of this negotiation, Galileo went to Venice, on a visit to a friend, in the month of April or May, 1609. Here he learned, from common rumour, that a Dutchman, of the name of Jansen, had presented to prince Maurice of Nassau an optical instrument, which possessed the singular property of causing distant objects to appear nearer and larger to the observer. A few days afterwards, the truth of this report was confirmed by a letter which he received from James Badovere at Paris, and he immediately applied himself to the consideration of the subject. On the first night after his return to Padua, he found, in the doctrines of refraction, the principle which he sought. He placed at the ends of a leaden tube two spectacle glasses, both of which were plain on one side, while one of them had its other side convex, and the other its second side concave, and having applied his eye to the concave glass, he saw objects pretty large and pretty near him. This little instrument, which magnified only three times, he carried in triumph to Venice, where it excited the most intense interest. Crowds of the principal citizens flocked to his house to see the magical toy; and after nearly a month had been spent in gratifying this epidemical curiosity, Galileo was led to understand from Leonardo Deodati, the doge of Venice, that the senate would be highly gratified by obtaining possession of so extraordinary an instrument. Galileo instantly complied with the wishes of his patrons, who acknowledged the present by a mandate conferring upon him for life his professorship at Padua, and generously raising his salary from 520 to 1000 florins.

Although we cannot doubt the veracity of Galileo, when he affirms that he had never seen any of the Dutch telescopes, yet it is expressly stated by Fuccarius, that one of these instruments had at this time been brought to Florence. In a letter from Lorenzo Pignoria to

Paolo Gualdo, dated from Padua, on the 31st of August, 1609, it is expressly said, that, at the re-election of the professors, Galileo had contrived to obtain 1000 florins for life, which was alleged to be on account of an eye-glass like the one which was sent from Flanders to the Cardinal Borghese.

In a memoir so brief and general as the present, it would be out of place to discuss the history of this extraordinary invention. We have no hesitation in asserting that a method of magnifying distant objects was known to Baptista Porta and others ; but it seems to be equally certain that an *instrument* for producing these effects was first constructed in Holland, and that it was from that kingdom that Galileo derived the knowledge of its existence. In considering the contending claims, which have been urged with all the ardour and partiality of national feeling, it has been generally overlooked, *that a single convex lens*, whose focal length exceeds the distance at which we examine minute objects, performs the part of a telescope, when an eye, placed behind it, sees distinctly the inverted image which it forms. A lens, twenty feet in focal length, will in this manner magnify twenty times ; and it was by the same principle that Sir William Herschel discovered a new satellite of Saturn, by using only the mirror of his forty-feet telescope. The instrument presented to prince Maurice, and which the marquis Spinola found in the Dutch optician's shop, performing the part of a philosophical toy, by exhibiting a magnified and inverted image of a distant weathercock, must have been a single lens such as we have mentioned, or an astronomical telescope consisting of two convex lenses. Upon either of these suppositions, it differed entirely from that which Galileo constructed ; and the Italian philosopher will be justly entitled to the honour of having invented that form of the telescope which still bears his name.

The interest which the exhibition of the telescope excited at Venice did not soon subside : Serturi describes it as amounting almost to phrensy. When he himself

had succeeded in making one of these instruments, he ascended the tower of St. Mark, where he might use it without molestation. He was recognised, however, by a crowd in the street; and such was the eagerness of their curiosity, that they took possession of the wondrous tube, and detained the impatient philosopher for several hours, till they had successively witnessed its effects. Desirous of obtaining the same gratification for their friends, they endeavoured to learn the name of the inn at which he lodged; but Serturi fortunately overheard their inquiries, and quitted Venice early next morning, in order to avoid a second visitation of this new school of philosophers. The opticians speedily availed themselves of this new instrument. Galileo's tube,—or the double eye-glass, as it was then called, for Demisiano had not yet given it the appellation of a *telescope*,—was manufactured in great quantities, and in a very superior manner. The instruments were purchased merely as philosophical toys, and were carried by travellers into every corner of Europe.

The art of grinding and polishing lenses was at this time very imperfect. Galileo, and those whom he instructed, were alone capable of making tolerable instruments. It appears, from the testimony of Gassendi and Gærtner, that, in 1634, a good telescope could not be procured in Paris, Venice, or Amsterdam; and that, even in 1637, there was not one in Holland which could show Jupiter's disc well defined.

After Galileo had completed his first instrument, which magnified only *three* times, he executed a larger and more accurate one, with a power of about *eight*. "At length," as he himself remarks, "sparing neither labour nor expense," he constructed an instrument so excellent, that it magnified more than *thirty* times.

The first celestial object to which Galileo applied his telescope was the moon, which, to use his own words, appeared as near as if it had been distant only two semidiameters of the earth. He then directed it to the

planets and the fixed stars, which he frequently observed with "incredible satisfaction." *

The observations which he made upon the moon possessed a high degree of interest. The general resemblance of its surface to that of our own globe naturally fixed his attention; and he was soon able to trace, in almost every part of the lunar disc, ranges of mountains, deep hollows, and other inequalities, which reflected from their summits the rays of the rising sun, while the intervening hollows were still buried in darkness. The dark and luminous spaces he regarded as indicating seas and continents, which reflected, in different degrees, the incident light of the sun; and he ascribed the phosphorescence, as it has been improperly called, or the secondary light, which is seen on the dark limb of the moon in her first and last quarters, to the reflection of the sun's light from the earth.

These discoveries were ill received by the followers of Aristotle. According to their preconceived opinions, the moon was perfectly spherical, and perfectly smooth; to cover it with mountains, and to scoop it out into valleys, was an act of impiety which defaced the regular forms which nature herself had imprinted. It was in vain that Galileo appealed to the evidence of observation, and to the actual surface of our own globe. The very irregularities on the moon were, in his opinion, the proof of divine wisdom: and had its surface been perfectly smooth, it would have been "but a vast unblest desert, void of animals, of plants, of cities, and of men; the abode of silence and inaction; senseless, lifeless, soulless, and stripped of all those ornaments which now render it so various and so beautiful."

In examining the fixed stars, and comparing them with the planets, Galileo discovered a remarkable difference in the appearance of their discs. All the planets appeared with round globular discs like the moon; whereas the fixed stars never exhibited any disc at all, but resembled lucid points sending forth twinkling rays.

* *Incredibili animi jucunditate.*—*Sid.*

Stars of all magnitudes he found to have the same appearance ; those of the fifth and sixth magnitude having the same character when seen through a telescope, as Sirius, the largest of the stars, when seen by the naked eye. Upon directing his telescope to nebulae and clusters of stars, he was delighted to find that they consisted of great numbers of stars which could not be recognised by unassisted vision. He counted no fewer than *forty* in the cluster called the *Pleiades*, or *Seven Stars* ; and he has given us drawings of this constellation, as well as of the belt and sword of Orion, and of the nebula of Præsepe. In the great nebula of the Milky Way, he descried crowds of minute stars ; and he concluded that this singular portion derived its whiteness from still smaller stars, which his telescope was unable to separate.

Important and interesting as these discoveries were, they were thrown into the shade by those to which he was led during an accurate examination of the planets with a more powerful telescope. On the 7th of January, 1610, at one o'clock in the morning, when he directed this telescope to Jupiter, he observed three stars near the body of the planet ; two being to the east and one to the west of him. They were all in a straight line, and parallel to the ecliptic, and appeared brighter than other stars of the same magnitude. Believing them to be fixed stars, he paid no great attention to their distances from Jupiter and from one another. On the 8th of January, however, when, from some cause or other *, he had been led to observe the stars again, he found a very different arrangement of them : all the three were on the west side of Jupiter, *nearer one another than before*, and almost at equal distances. Though he had not turned his attention to the extraordinary fact of the mutual approach of the stars, yet he began to consider how Jupiter could be found to the east of the three stars, when only the day before he had been to the west of two of them. The only explanation which he could give of this fact was, that the motion of Jupiter was *direct*

* Nescio quo fato ductus.

contrary to astronomical calculations; and that he had got before these two stars by his own motion.

In this dilemma between the testimony of his senses and the results of calculation, he waited for the following night with the utmost anxiety: but his hopes were disappointed; for the heavens were wholly veiled in clouds. On the tenth, two only of the stars appeared, and both on the east of the planet. As it was obviously impossible that Jupiter could have advanced from west to east on the 8th of January, and from east to west on the 10th, Galileo was forced to conclude that the phenomenon which he had observed, arose from the motion of the stars, and he set himself to observe diligently their change of place. On the 11th, there were still only two stars; and both to the east of Jupiter; but the more eastern star was now *twice as large as the other one*, though on the preceding night they had been perfectly equal. This fact threw a new light upon Galileo's difficulties, and he immediately drew the conclusion, which he considered to be indubitable—"that there were in the heavens three stars which revolved round Jupiter, in the same manner as Venus and Mercury revolve round the sun." On the 12th of January, he again observed them in new positions, and of different magnitudes; and, on the 13th, he discovered a fourth star, which completed the four secondary planets with which Jupiter is surrounded.

Galileo continued his observations on these bodies every clear night till the 22d of March, and studied their motions in reference to fixed stars that were at the same time within the field of his telescope. Having thus clearly established that the four new stars were satellites or moons, which revolved round Jupiter in the same manner as the moon revolves round our own globe, he drew up an account of his discovery, in which he gave to the four new bodies the names of the *Medicean Stars*, in honour of his patron, Cosmo de' Medici, grand duke of Tuscany. This work, under the title of "*Nuncius Sidereus*," or the "*Sidereal Messen-*

ger," was dedicated to the same prince; and the dedication bears the date of the 4th of March, only two days after he concluded his observations.

The importance of this great discovery was instantly felt by the enemies as well as by the friends of the Copernican system. The planets had hitherto been distinguished from the fixed stars only by their relative change of place; but the telescope proved them to be bodies so near to our own globe as to exhibit well-defined discs; while the fixed stars retained, even when magnified, the minuteness of remote and lucid points. The system of Jupiter, illuminated by four moons performing their revolutions in different and regular periods, exhibited to our proud reason the comparative insignificance of the globe we inhabit, and proclaimed in impressive language that that globe was not the centre of the universe.

The reception which these discoveries met with from Kepler is highly interesting, and characteristic of the genius of that great man. He was one day sitting idle, and thinking of Galileo, when his friend Wachenfels stopped his carriage at his door, to communicate to him the intelligence. "Such a fit of wonder," says he, "seized me at a report which seemed to be so very absurd, and I was thrown into such agitation at seeing an old dispute between us decided in this way, that between his joy, my colouring, and the laughter of both, confounded as we were by such a novelty, we were hardly capable, he of speaking, or I of listening. On our parting, I immediately began to think how there could be any addition to the number of the planets, without overturning my 'Cosmographic Mystery,' according to which Euclid's five regular solids do not allow more than six planets round the sun. * * * I am so far from disbelieving the existence of the four circumjovial planets, that I long for a telescope, to anticipate you, if possible, in discovering *two* round Mars, as the proportion seems to require, *six* or *eight* round Saturn, and perhaps *one* each round Mercury and Venus."

In a very different spirit did the Aristotelians receive the "Sidereal Messenger" of Galileo. The principal professor of philosophy at Padua resisted Galileo's repeated and urgent entreaties to look at the moon and planets through his telescope; and he even laboured to convince the grand duke that the satellites of Jupiter could not possibly exist. Sizzi, an astronomer of Florence, maintained, that as there were only *seven* apertures in the head—*two* eyes, *two* ears, *two* nostrils, and *one* mouth—and as there were only *seven* metals, and *seven* days in the week, so there could be only *seven* planets. He seems, however, to have admitted the visibility of the four satellites through the telescope; but he argues, that as they are invisible to the naked eye, they can exercise no influence on the earth; and being useless, they do not therefore exist.

A *protégé* of Kepler's, of the name of Horky, wrote a volume against Galileo's discovery, after having declared, "that he would never concede his four new planets to that Italian from Padua, even if he should die for it." This resolute Aristotelian was at no loss for arguments. He asserted that he had examined the heavens *through Galileo's own glass*, and that no such thing as a satellite existed round Jupiter. He affirmed, that he did not more surely know that he had a soul in his body, than that reflected rays are the sole cause of Galileo's erroneous observations; and that the only use of the new planets was to gratify Galileo's thirst for gold, and afford himself a subject of discussion.

When Horky first presented himself to Kepler, after the publication of this work, the opinion of his patron was announced to him by a burst of indignation which overwhelmed the astonished author. Horky supplicated mercy for his offence; and, as Kepler himself informed Galileo, he took him again into favour, on the condition that Kepler was to show him Jupiter's satellites; and that Horky was not only to see them, but to admit their existence.

When the spirit of philosophy had thus left the in-

dividuals who bore her sacred name, it was fortunate for science that it found a refuge in the minds of princes. Notwithstanding the reiterated logic of his philosophical professor at Padua, Cosmo de' Medici preferred the testimony of his senses to the syllogisms of his instructor. He observed the new planets several times, along with Galileo, at Pisa ; and when he parted with him, he gave him a present worth more than 1000 florins, and concluded that liberal arrangement to which we have already referred.

As philosopher and principal mathematician to the grand duke of Tuscany, Galileo now took up his residence at Florence, with a salary of 1000 florins. No official duties, excepting that of lecturing occasionally to sovereign princes, were attached to this appointment; and it was expressly stipulated that he should enjoy the most perfect leisure to complete his treatises on the constitution of the universe, on mechanics, and on local motion. The resignation of his professorship at Padua, which necessarily followed his new appointment, created much dissatisfaction in that university: but though many of his former friends refused at first to hold any communication with him, this feeling gradually subsided; and the Venetian senate at last appreciated the views, as well as the powerful motives, which induced a stranger to accept of promotion in his native land.

While Galileo was enjoying the reward and the fame of his great discovery, a new species of enmity was roused against them. Simon Mayer, an astronomer of no character, pretended that he had discovered the satellites of Jupiter before Galileo, and that his first observation was made on the 29th of December, 1609. Other astronomers announced the discovery of new satellites: Scheiner reckoned five, Rheita nine, and others found even so many as twelve: these satellites, however, were found to be only fixed stars. The names of *Vladislavian*, *Agrippine*, *Uranodavian*, and *Ferdinandotertian*, which were hastily given to these common telescopic stars, soon disappeared from the page of science, and

even the splendid telescopes of modern times have not been able to add another gem to the diadem of Jupiter.

A modern astronomer of no mean celebrity has, even in the present day, endeavoured to rob Galileo of this staple article of his reputation. From a careless examination of the papers of our celebrated countryman, Thomas Harriot, which baron Zach had made in 1784, at Petworth, the seat of lord Egremont, this astronomer has asserted* that Harriot first observed the satellites of Jupiter on the 16th of January, 1610; and continued his observations till the 25th of February, 1612. Baron Zach adds the following extraordinary conclusion:—“Galileo pretends to have discovered them on the 7th of January, 1610; so that it is not improbable that Harriot was likewise the first discoverer of these attendants of Jupiter.” In a communication which I received from Dr. Robertson, of Oxford, in 1822†, he informed me that he had examined a class of Harriot’s papers, entitled, “*De Jovialibus Planetis* ;” and that it appears, from two pages of these papers, *that Harriot first observed Jupiter’s satellites on the 17th of October, 1610.* These observations are accompanied with rough drawings of the positions of the satellites, and rough calculations of their periodical revolutions. My friend, professor Rigaud‡, who has very recently examined the Harriot MSS., has confirmed the accuracy of Dr. Robertson’s observations, and has thus restored to Galileo the honour of being the first and the sole discoverer of these secondary planets.

The great success which attended the first telescopic observations of Galileo, induced him to apply his best instruments to the other planets of our system. The attempts which had been made to deprive him of the honour of some of his discoveries, combined, probably, with a desire to repeat his observations with better telescopes, led him to announce his discoveries under the

* Berlin Ephemeris, 1788.

† Edin. Phil. Journ. vol. vi. p. 313.

‡ Life and Correspondence of Dr. Bradley. Oxford, 1832, p. 523.

veil of an enigma ; and to invite astronomers to declare, within a given time, if they had observed any new phenomena in the heavens.

Before the close of 1610, Galileo excited the curiosity of astronomers, by the publication of his first enigma. Kepler and others tried in vain to decipher it ; but in consequence of the emperor Rodolph requesting a solution of the puzzle, Galileo sent him the following clue : —

“ *Altissimam planetam tergemina observavi.*”

I have observed that the most remote planet is triple.

In explaining more fully the nature of his observation, Galileo remarked that Saturn was not a single star, but three together, nearly touching one another : he described them as having no relative motion, and as having the form of three o's, namely, oOo, the central one being larger than those on each side of it.

Although Galileo had announced that nothing new appeared in the other planets, yet he soon communicated to the world another discovery of no slight interest. The enigmatical letters in which it was concealed, formed the following sentence : —

“ *Cynthiae figuras æmulatur mater Amorum.*”

Venus rivals the phases of the moon.

Hitherto, Galileo had observed Venus when her disc was largely illuminated ; but having directed his telescope to her when she was not far removed from the sun, he saw her in the form of a crescent, resembling exactly the moon at the same elongation from the sun. He continued to observe her night after night, during the whole time that she could be seen in the course of her revolution round the sun, and he found that she exhibited the very same phases which resulted from her motion round that luminary.

Galileo had long contemplated a visit to the metropolis of Italy, and he accordingly carried his intentions into effect in the early part of the year 1611. Here he was received with that distinction which was due to his

great talents and his extended reputation. Princes, cardinals, and prelates hastened to do him honour ; and even those who discredited his discoveries, and dreaded their results, vied with the true friends of science in their anxiety to see the first wonder of the age.

In order to show the new celestial phenomena to his friends at Rome, Galileo took with him his best telescope ; and as he had discovered the spots on the sun's surface in the month of March, 1611, he had the gratification of exhibiting this new wonder to his admiring disciples. He accordingly erected his telescope in the Quirinal garden, belonging to cardinal Bandini ; and in April, 1611, he exhibited them to his friends in many of their most interesting variations. From their change of position on the sun's disc, Galileo at first inferred, either that the sun revolved about an axis ; or that other planets, like Venus and Mercury, revolved so near the sun as to appear like black spots when they were opposite to his disc. Upon continuing his observations, however, he saw reason to abandon this last opinion. He found, that the spots must be in contact with the surface of the sun ; that their figures were irregular ; that they had different degrees of darkness ; that one spot would often divide itself into three or four ; that three or four spots would often unite themselves into one ; and that all the spots revolved regularly with the sun, which appeared to complete its revolution in about twenty-eight days.

Previous to the invention of the telescope, spots had been more than once seen on the sun's disc with the unassisted eye. But even if these were of the same character as those which Galileo and others observed, we cannot consider them as anticipations of their discovery by the telescope. As the telescope was now in the possession of several astronomers, Galileo began to have many rivals in discovery ; and it is now placed beyond the reach of doubt, that he was not the first discoverer of the solar spots. From the communication which I received from the late Dr. Robertson, of

Oxford*, it appears that Thomas Harriot had discovered the solar spots on or before the 8th of December, 1610. His manuscripts, in lord Egremont's possession, incontestably prove that his regular observations on the spots commenced on the 8th of December, 1610,—at least *three* months before Galileo discovered them; and that they were continued till the 18th of January, 1613. The observations which he has recorded are 199 in number; and the accounts of them are accompanied with rough drawings representing the number, position, and magnitude of the spots.†

Another candidate for the honour of discovering the spots of the sun, was John Fabricius, who undoubtedly saw them previous to June, 1611. The dedication of the work ‡ in which he has recorded his observation, bears the date of the 13th of June, 1611; and it is obvious, from the work itself, that he had seen the spots during the year 1610: but as there is no proof that he saw them before the 8th of December, 1610, and as it is probable that Harriot had seen them before that date, we are compelled to assign the priority of the discovery to our distinguished countryman.

The claim of Scheiner, professor of mathematics at Ingolstadt, is more intimately connected with the history of Galileo. This learned astronomer having, early in 1611, turned his telescope to the sun, necessarily discovered the spots which at that time covered his disc. Light flying clouds happened, at the time, to weaken the intensity of his light, so that he was able to show the spots to his pupils. These observations were not published till January, 1612; and they appeared in the form of three letters, addressed to Mark Velser, one of the magistrates of Augsburg, under the signature of *Apelles post Tabulam*. Scheiner, who, many years afterwards, published an elaborate work on the subject, adopted the same idea which had at first occurred to Galileo,—that

* See page 22.

† Edin. Phil. Journ. 1822, vol. vi. p. 317.

‡ Joh. Fabricii Phrysi de Maculis in Sole observatis, et apparente earum cum Sole conversione, Narratio. Wittemb. 1611.

the spots were the dark sides of planets revolving round and near the sun.*

On the publication of Scheiner's letters Velser transmitted a copy of them to his friend Galileo, with the request that he would favour him with his opinion of the new phenomena. After some delay, Galileo addressed three letters to Velser, in which he combated the opinions of Scheiner on the cause of the spots. These letters were dated the 4th of May, 1612; but though the controversy was carried on in the language of mutual respect and esteem, it put an end to the friendship which had existed between the two astronomers. In these letters, Galileo showed that the spots often dispersed like vapours or clouds; that they sometimes had a duration of only one or two days, and at other times of thirty or forty days; that they contracted in their breadth when they approached the sun's limb, without any diminution of their length; that they describe circles parallel to each other; that the monthly rotation of the sun again brings the same spots into view; and that they are seldom seen at a greater distance than 30° from the sun's equator. Galileo, likewise, discovered on the sun's disc *faculae*, or *luculi*, as they were called, which differ in no respect from the common ones but in their being brighter than the rest of the sun's surface.†

* It does not appear from the history of solar observations, at what time, and by whom, coloured glasses were first introduced for permitting the eye to look at the sun with impunity. Fabricius was obviously quite ignorant of the use of coloured glasses. He observed the sun when he was in the horizon, and when his brilliancy was impaired by the interposition of thin clouds and floating vapours; and he advises those who may repeat his observations, to admit at first to the eye a small portion of the sun's light, till it is gradually accustomed to its full splendour. When the sun's altitude became considerable, Fabricius gave up his observations; which he often continued so long, that he was scarcely able, for two days together, to see objects with their usual distinctness.

Scheiner, in his "Apelles post Tabulam," describes four different ways of viewing the spots: one of which is by the *interposition of blue or green glasses*. His first method was to observe the sun near the horizon; the second was to view him through a transparent cloud; the third was to look at him through his telescope with a blue or a green glass of a proper thickness, and plane on both sides, or to use a thin blue glass when the sun was covered with a thin vapour or cloud; and the fourth method was to begin and observe the sun at his margin, till the eye gradually reached the middle of his disc.

† See *Istoria e Dimostrazioni, intorno alle macchie solari*. Roma, 1613. See *Opere di Galileo*, vol. v. p. 131—293.

In the last of the letters which our author addressed to Velsar, and which was written in December, 1612, he recurs to his former discovery of the elongated shape, or rather the triple structure, of Saturn. The singular figure which he had observed in this planet had entirely disappeared; and he evidently announces the fact to Velsar, lest it should be used by his enemies to discredit the accuracy of his observations. "Looking on Saturn," says he, "within these few days, I found it solitary, without the assistance of its accustomed stars, and, in short, perfectly round and defined like Jupiter; and such it still remains. Now, what can be said of so strange a metamorphosis? Are the two smaller stars consumed like the spots on the sun? Have they suddenly vanished and fled? or has Saturn devoured his own children? or was the appearance indeed fraud and illusion, with which the glasses have for so long a time mocked me, and so many others who have often observed with me? Now, perhaps, the time is come to revive the withering hopes of those who, guided by more profound contemplations, have followed all the fallacies of the new observations, and recognised their impossibilities. I cannot resolve what to say in a chance so strange, so new, and so unexpected; the shortness of the time, the unexampled occurrence, the weakness of my intellect, and the terror of being mistaken, have greatly confounded me." Although Galileo struggled to obtain a solution of this mystery, yet he had not the good fortune of succeeding. He imagined that the two smaller stars would reappear, in consequence of the supposed revolution of the planet round its axis; but the discovery of the ring of Saturn, and of the obliquity of its plane to the ecliptic, was necessary to explain the phenomena which were so perplexing to our author.

The ill health to which Galileo was occasionally subject, and the belief that the air of Florence was prejudicial to his complaints, induced him to spend much of his time at Selve, the villa of his friend Salviati. This eminent individual had ever been the warmest friend of

Galileo, and seems to have delighted in drawing round him the scientific genius of the age. He was a member of the celebrated Lyncean Society, founded by Prince Frederigo Cesi; and though he is not known as the author of any important discovery, yet he has earned, by his liberality to science, a glorious name, which will be indissolubly united with the immortal destiny of Galileo.

The subject of floating bridges having been discussed at one of the scientific parties which had assembled at the house of Salviati, a difference of opinion arose respecting the influence of the shape of bodies on their disposition to float or to sink in a fluid. Contrary to the general opinion, Galileo undertook to prove that it depended on other causes; and he was thus led to compose his discourse on floating bodies*, which was published in 1612, and dedicated to Cosmo de' Medici. This work contains many ingenious experiments, and much acute reasoning in support of the true principles of hydrostatics; and it is now chiefly remarkable as a specimen of the sagacity and intellectual power of its author. Like all his other works, it encountered the most violent opposition; and Galileo was more than once summoned into the field to repel the aggressions of his ignorant and presumptuous opponents. The first attack upon it was made by Ptolemy Nozzolini, in a letter to Marzemedici, archbishop of Florence†; and to this Galileo replied in a letter addressed to his antagonist.‡ A more elaborate examination of it was published by Lodovico delle Colombe, and another by M. Vincenzo di Grazia. To these attacks, a minute and overwhelming answer was printed in the name of Benedetti Castelli, the friend and pupil of Galileo; but it was discovered, some years after Galileo's death, that he was himself the author of this work.§

* Discorso intorno alle cose che stanno in sa l'acqua, o che in quella si muovono. Opere di Galileo, vol. ii. pp. 165—311.

† Opere di Galileo, vol. ii. pp. 355—367.

‡ Ibid. 367—390.

§ These three treatises occupy the whole of the third volume of the Opere di Galileo.

The current of Galileo's life had hitherto flowed in a smooth and unobstructed channel. He had now attained the highest objects of earthly ambition. His discoveries had placed him at the head of the great men of his age ; he possessed a professional income far beyond his wants, and even beyond his anticipations ; and, what is still dearer to a philosopher, he enjoyed the most perfect leisure for carrying on and completing his discoveries. The opposition which these discoveries encountered, was to him more a subject for triumph than for sorrow. Prejudice and ignorance were his only enemies ; and if they succeeded for a while in harassing his march, it was only to give him occasion for fresh achievements. He who contends for truths which he has himself been permitted to discover, may well sustain the conflict in which presumption and error are destined to fall. The public tribunal may neither be sufficiently pure nor enlightened to decide upon the issue ; but he can appeal to posterity, and reckon with confidence on " its sure decree."

The ardour of Galileo's mind, the keenness of his temper, his clear perception of truth, and his inextinguishable love of it, combined to exasperate and prolong the hostility of his enemies. When argument failed to enlighten their judgment, and reason to remove their prejudices, he wielded against them his powerful weapons of ridicule and sarcasm ; and in this unrelenting warfare, he seems to have forgotten that Providence had withheld from his enemies those very gifts which he had so liberally received. He who is allowed to take the start of his species, and to penetrate the veil which conceals from common minds the mysteries of nature, must not expect that the world will be patiently dragged at the chariot wheels of his philosophy. Mind has its inertia, as well as matter ; and its progress to truth can only be insured by the gradual and patient removal of the obstructions which surround it.

The boldness — may we not say the recklessness ? — with which Galileo insisted upon making proselytes of

his enemies, produced the very opposite effect. Errors thus assailed, entrenched themselves in general feelings, and were embalmed in the virulence of the passions. The various classes of his opponents marshalled themselves for their mutual defence. The Aristotelian professors, the temporising Jesuits, the political churchmen, and that timid but respectable body who at all times dread innovation, whether it be in religion or in science, entered into an alliance against the philosophical tyrant who threatened them with the penalties of knowledge.

The party of Galileo, though weak in numbers, was not without power and influence. He had trained around him a devoted band, who idolised his genius and supported his views. His pupils had been appointed to several of the principal professorships in Italy. The enemies of religion were on this occasion united with the Christian philosopher; and there were, even in these days, many princes and nobles who had felt the inconvenience of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and who secretly abetted Galileo in his crusade against established errors.

Although these two parties had been long dreading each other's power, and reconnoitring each other's position, yet we cannot exactly determine which of them hoisted the first signal for war. The church party, particularly its high dignitaries, were certainly disposed to rest on the defensive. Flanked on one side by the logic of the schools, and on the other by the popular interpretation of Scripture, and backed by the strong arm of the civil power, they were not disposed to interfere with the prosecution of science, however much they may have dreaded its influence. The philosophers, on the contrary, united the zeal of innovators with the firmness of purpose which truth alone can inspire. Victorious in every contest, they were flushed with success, and they panted for a struggle in which they knew they must triumph.

In this state of warlike preparation Galileo addressed

a letter, in 1613, to his friend and pupil, the abbé Castelli, the object of which was to prove that the Scriptures were not intended to teach us science and philosophy. Hence he inferred, that the language employed in the sacred volume in reference to such subjects should be interpreted only in its common acceptation ; and that it was in reality as difficult to reconcile the Ptolemaic as the Copernican system to the expressions which occur in the Bible.

A demonstration was about this time made by the opposite party, in the person of Caccini, a Dominican friar, who made a personal attack upon Galileo from the pulpit. This violent ecclesiastic ridiculed the astronomer and his followers, by addressing them in the sacred language of Scripture ; “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking up into heaven ? ” But this species of warfare was disapproved of even by the church ; and Luigi Maraffi, the general of the Dominicans, not only apologised to Galileo, who had transmitted to him a formal complaint against Caccini, but expressed the acuteness of his own feelings on being implicated in the “ brutal conduct of thirty or forty thousand monks.”

From the character of Caccini, and the part which he afterwards played in the persecution of Galileo, we can scarcely avoid the opinion that his attack from the pulpit was intended as a snare for the unwary philosopher. It roused Galileo from his wonted caution ; and stimulated, no doubt, by the nature of the answer which he received from Maraffi, he published a longer letter of seventy pages, defending and illustrating his former views respecting the influence of scriptural language on the two contending systems. As if to give the impress of royal authority to this new appeal, he addressed it to Christian, grand-duchess of Tuscany, the mother of Cosmo ; and in this form it seems to have excited a new interest, as if it had expressed the opinion of the grand-ducal family. These external circumstances gave ad-

ditional weight to the powerful and unanswerable reasoning which this letter contains ; and it was scarcely possible that any man, possessed of a sound mind, and willing to learn the truth, should refuse his assent to the judicious views of our author. He expresses his belief that the Scriptures were given to instruct mankind respecting their salvation, and that the faculties of our minds were given us for the purpose of investigating the phenomena of nature. He considers Scripture and nature as proceeding from the same divine author, and, therefore, incapable of speaking a different language ; and he points out the absurdity of supposing that professors of astronomy will shut their eyes to the phenomena which they discover in the heavens, or will refuse to believe those deductions of reason which appeal to their judgment with all the power of demonstration. He supports these views by quotations from the ancient fathers ; and he refers to the dedication of Copernicus's own work to the Roman pontiff, Paul III., as a proof that the pope himself did not regard the new system of the world as hostile to the sacred writings. Copernicus, on the contrary, tells his holiness, that the reason of inscribing to him his new system was, that the authority of the pontiff might put to silence the calumnies of some individuals, who attacked it by arguments drawn from passages of Scripture twisted for their own purpose.

It was in vain to meet such arguments by any other weapons than those of the civil power. His enemies saw that they must either crush the dangerous innovation, or allow it the fullest scope ; and they determined upon an appeal to the inquisition. Lorini, a monk of the Dominican order, had already denounced to this body Galileo's letter to Castelli ; and Caccini, bribed by the mastership of the convent of St. Mary of Minerva, was invited to settle at Rome for the purpose of embodying the evidence against Galileo.

Though these plans had been carried on in secret, yet Galileo's suspicions were excited ; and he obtained leave from Cosmo to go to Rome about the end of

1615.* Here he was lodged in the palace of the grand duke's ambassador, and kept up a constant correspondence with the family of his patron at Florence ; but, in the midst of this external splendour, he was summoned before the inquisition to answer for the heretical doctrines which he had published. He was charged with maintaining the motion of the earth, and the stability of the sun, with teaching this doctrine to his pupils, with corresponding on the subject with several German mathematicians, and with having published it, and attempted to reconcile it to Scripture, in his letters to Mark Velser in 1612. The inquisition assembled to consider these charges on the 25th of February, 1615 ; and it was decreed that Galileo should be enjoined by cardinal Bellarmine to renounce the obnoxious doctrines, and to pledge himself that he would neither teach, defend, nor publish them in future. In the event of his refusing to acquiesce in this sentence, it was decreed that he should be thrown into prison. Galileo did not hesitate to yield to this injunction. On the day following, the 26th of February, he appeared before cardinal Bellarmine, to renounce his heretical opinions ; and, having declared that he abandoned the doctrine of the earth's motion, and would neither defend nor teach it, in his conversation or in his writings, he was dismissed the court.

Having thus disposed of Galileo, the inquisition conceived the design of condemning the whole system of Copernicus as heretical. Galileo, with more hardihood than prudence, remained at Rome for the purpose of giving his assistance in frustrating this plan ; but there is reason to think that he injured by his presence the very cause which he meant to support. The inquisition had determined to put down the new opinions ; and they now inserted among the prohibited books Galileo's letters to Castelli and the grand duchess, Kepler's epitome of

* It is said that Galileo was cited to appear at Rome on this occasion ; and the opinion is not without foundation.

the Copernican theory, and Copernicus's own work on the revolutions of the heavenly bodies.

Notwithstanding these proceedings, Galileo had an audience of the pope, Paul V., in March, 1616. He was received very graciously, and spent nearly an hour with his holiness. When they were about to part, the pope assured Galileo, that the congregation were not disposed to receive upon light grounds any calumnies which might be propagated by his enemies, and that, as long as he occupied the papal chair, he might consider himself as safe.

These assurances were no doubt founded on the belief that Galileo would adhere to his pledges; but so bold and inconsiderate was he in the expression of his opinions, that even in Rome he was continually engaged in controversial discussions. The following very interesting account of these disputes is given by Querenghi, in a letter to the cardinal D'Este: —

“Your eminence would be delighted with Galileo if you heard him holding forth, as he often does, in the midst of fifteen or twenty, all violently attacking him, sometimes in one house, sometimes in another. But he is armed after such fashion that he laughs all of them to scorn, — and even if the novelty of his opinions prevents entire persuasion, at least he convicts of emptiness most of the arguments with which his adversaries endeavour to overwhelm him. He was particularly admirable on Monday last in the house of signor Frederico Ghisilieri; and what especially pleased me was, that before replying to the contrary arguments, he amplified and enforced them with new grounds of great plausibility, so as to leave his adversaries in a more ridiculous plight, when he afterwards overturned them all.”

The discovery of Jupiter's satellites suggested to Galileo a new method of finding the longitude at sea. Philip III. had encouraged astronomers to direct their attention to this problem, by offering a reward for its solution; and in those days, when new discoveries in science were sometimes rejected as injurious to man-

kind, it was no common event to see a powerful sovereign courting the assistance of astronomers in promoting the commercial interests of his empire. Galileo seems to have regarded the solution of this problem as an object worthy of his ambition ; and he no doubt anticipated the triumph which he would obtain over his enemies, if the Medicean stars, which they had treated with such contempt, could be made subservient to the great interests of mankind. During his residence at Rome in 1615 and 1616, Galileo had communicated his views on this subject to the comte di Lemos, the viceroy of Naples, who had presided over the council of the Spanish Indies. This nobleman advised him to apply to the Spanish minister, the duke of Lerma ; and, through the influence of the grand duke Cosmo, his ambassador at the court of Madrid was engaged to manage the affair. The anxiety of Galileo on this subject was singularly great. He assured the Tuscan ambassador that, in order to accomplish this object, "he was ready to leave all his comforts, his country, his friends, and his family, to cross over into Spain, and to stay as long as he might be wanted at Seville or at Lisbon, or wherever it might be convenient to communicate a knowledge of his method." The enthusiasm of Galileo seems to have increased the lethargy of the Spanish court ; and though the negotiations were occasionally revived for ten or twelve years, yet no steps were taken to bring them to a close. This strange procrastination has been generally ascribed to jealousy or indifference on the part of Spain ; but Nelli, one of Galileo's biographers, declares, on the authority of Florentine records, that Cosmo had privately requested from the government the privilege of sending annually to the Spanish Indies two Leghorn merchantmen free of duty, as a compensation for the loss of Galileo !

The failure of this negotiation must have been a source of extreme mortification to the high spirit and sanguine temperament of Galileo. He had calculated, however, too securely on his means of putting the new

method to a successful trial. The great imperfection of the time-keepers of that day, and the want of proper telescopes, would have baffled him in all his efforts, and he would have been subject to a more serious mortification from the failure and rejection of his plan, than that which he actually experienced from the avarice of his patron, or the indifference of Spain. Even in the present day, no telescope has been invented which is capable of observing at sea the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites ; and though this method of finding the longitude has great advantages on shore, yet it has been completely abandoned at sea, and superseded by easier and more correct methods.

In the year 1618, when no fewer than *three* comets visited our system, and attracted the attention of all the astronomers of Europe, Galileo was unfortunately confined to his bed by a severe illness ; but, though he was unable to make a single observation upon these remarkable bodies, he contrived to involve himself in the controversies which they occasioned. Marco Guiducci, an astronomer of Florence, and a friend of Galileo's, had delivered a discourse on comets before the Florentine Academy, which was published in 1619.* The heads of this discourse were supposed to have been communicated to him by Galileo, and this seems to have been universally admitted during the controversy to which it gave rise. The opinion maintained in this treatise, that comets are nothing but meteors which occasionally appear in our atmosphere, like halos and rainbows, savours so little of the sagacity of Galileo that we should be disposed to question its paternity. His inability to partake in the general interest which these three comets excited, and to employ his powerful telescope in observing their phenomena and their movements, might have had some slight share in the formation of an opinion which deprived them of their importance as celestial bodies. But, however this may have been, the treatise of Guiducci

* Printed in the *Opere di Galileo*, vol. vi. pp. 117—191.

afforded a favourable point of attack to Galileo's enemies, and the dangerous task was entrusted to Oratio Grassi, a learned Jesuit, who, in a work entitled *The Astronomical and Philosophical Balance*, criticised the discourse on comets, under the feigned name of Lotario Sarsi.

Galileo replied to this attack in a volume entitled *Il Saggiatore*, or *The Assayer*, which, owing to the state of his health, was not published till the autumn of 1623.* This work was written in the form of a letter to Virginio Cæsarini, a member of the Lyncean Academy, and master of the chamber to Urban VIII.†, who had just ascended the pontifical throne. It has been long celebrated among literary men for the beauty of its language, though it is doubtless one of the least important of Galileo's writings.

The succession of the cardinal Maffeo Barberini to the papal throne, under the name of Urban VIII., was hailed by Galileo and his friends as an event favourable to the promotion of science. Urban had not only been the personal friend of Galileo and of prince Cesi, the founder of the Lyncean Academy, but had been intimately connected with that able and liberal association; and it was, therefore, deemed prudent to secure his favour and attachment. If Paul III. had, nearly a century before, patronised Copernicus, and accepted of the dedication of his great work, it was not unreasonable to expect that, in more enlightened times, another pontiff might exhibit the same liberality to science.

The plan of securing to Galileo the patronage of Urban VIII. seems to have been devised by prince Cesi. Although Galileo had not been able for some years to travel, excepting in a litter, yet he was urged by the prince to perform a journey to Rome, for the express

* Printed in the *Opere di Galileo*, vol. vi. pp. 191—571.

† This work is said to have been dedicated to Urban VIII. himself (*Lib. U. Knowledge, Life of Galileo*, chap. vii.), but there is no dedication prefixed to the edition we have referred to; and it is, besides, unusual to dedicate a volume to any person when that volume has the form of a letter to another.

purpose of congratulating his friend upon his elevation to the papal chair. This request was made in October, 1623; and, though Galileo's health was not such as to authorise him to undergo so much fatigue, yet he felt the importance of the advice; and, after visiting Cesi at Acqua Sparta, he arrived at Rome in the spring of 1624. The reception which he here experienced far exceeded his most sanguine expectations. During the two months which he spent in the capital he was permitted to have no fewer than six long and gratifying audiences of the pope. The kindness of his holiness was of the most marked description. He not only loaded Galileo with presents*, and promised him a pension for his son Vincenzo, but he wrote a letter to Ferdinand, who had just succeeded Cosmo as grand duke of Tuscany, recommending Galileo to his particular patronage. "For we find in him," says he, "not only literary distinction, but the love of piety; and he is strong in those qualities by which pontifical good-will is easily obtained. And now, when he has been brought to this city to congratulate us on our elevation, we have very lovingly embraced him; nor can we suffer him to return to the country whither your liberality recalls him, without an ample provision of pontifical love. And that you may know how dear he is to us, we have willed to give him this honourable testimonial of virtue and piety. And we further signify, that every benefit which you shall confer upon him, imitating or even surpassing your father's liberality, will conduce to our gratification."

Not content with thus securing the friendship of the pope, Galileo endeavoured to bespeak the good-will of the cardinals towards the Copernican system. He had, accordingly, many interviews with several of these dignitaries; and he was assured, by cardinal Hohenzoller, that in a representation which he had made to the pope on the subject of Copernicus, he stated to his holiness, "that as all the heretics considered that system as un-

* A fine painting in gold, and a silver medal, and "a good quantity of agnus dei."

doubted, it would be necessary to be very circumspect in coming to any resolution on the subject." To this remark his holiness replied,—“that the church had not condemned this system ; and that it should not be condemned as heretical, but only as rash ;” and he added, “that there was no fear of any person undertaking to prove that it must necessarily be true.”

The recent appointment of the abbé Castelli, the friend and pupil of Galileo, to be mathematician to the pope, was an event of a most gratifying nature ; and when we recollect that it was to Castelli that he addressed the famous letter which was pronounced heretical by the inquisition, we must regard it also as an event indicative of a new and favourable feeling towards the friends of science. The opinions of Urban, indeed, had suffered no change. He was one of the few cardinals who had opposed the inquisitorial decree of 1616, and his subsequent demeanour was in every respect conformable to the liberality of his early views. The sincerity of his conduct was still further evinced by the grant of a pension of one hundred crowns to Galileo, a few years after his visit to Rome ; but there is reason to think that this allowance was not regularly paid.

The death of Cosmo, whose liberality had given him both affluence and leisure, threatened Galileo with pecuniary difficulties. He had been involved in a “great load of debt,” owing to the circumstances of his brother’s family ; and, in order to relieve himself, he had requested Castelli to dispose of the pension of his son Vincenzo : but he was now alarmed at the prospect of losing his salary as an extraordinary professor at Pisa. The great youth of Ferdinand, who was scarcely of age, induced Galileo’s enemies, in 1629, to raise doubts respecting the payment of a salary to a professor who neither resided nor lectured in the university ; but the question was decided in his favour, and we have no doubt that the decision was facilitated by the friendly

recommendation of the pope, to which we have already referred.

Although Galileo had made a narrow escape from the grasp of the inquisition, yet he was never sufficiently sensible of the lenity which he experienced. When he left Rome in 1616, under the solemn pledge of never again teaching the obnoxious doctrine, it was with an hostility against the church, suppressed but deeply cherished; and his resolution to propagate the heresy seems to have been coeval with the vow by which he renounced it. In the year 1618, when he communicated his theory of the tides to the archduke Leopold, he alludes in the most sarcastic manner to the conduct of the church. The same hostile tone, more or less, pervaded all his writings, and, while he laboured to sharpen the edge of his satire, he endeavoured to guard himself against its effects, by an affectation of the humblest deference to the decisions of theology. Had Galileo stood alone, his devotion to science might have withdrawn him from so hopeless a contest; but he was spurred on by the violence of a party. The Lyncean Academy never scrupled to summon him from his researches. They placed him in the forlorn hope of their combat, and he at last fell a victim to the rashness of his adventure.

But, whatever allowance we may make for the ardour of Galileo's temper, and the peculiarity of his position; and however we may justify and even approve of his past conduct, his visit to Urban VIII. in 1624, placed him in a new relation to the church, which demanded on his part a new and corresponding demeanour. The noble and generous reception which he met with from Urban, and the liberal declaration of cardinal Hohenzoller on the subject of the Copernican system, should have been regarded as expressions of regret for the past, and offers of conciliation for the future. Thus honoured by the head of the church, and befriended by its dignitaries, Galileo must have felt himself secure against the indignity of its lesser functionaries, and in the pos-

session of the fullest licence to prosecute his researches and publish his discoveries, provided he avoided that dogma of the church which, even in the present day, it has not ventured to renounce. But Galileo was bound to the Romish hierarchy by even stronger ties. His son and himself were pensioners of the church, and, having accepted of its alms, they owed to it, at least, a decent and respectful allegiance. The pension thus given by Urban was not a remuneration which sovereigns sometimes award to the services of their subjects. Galileo was a foreigner at Rome. The sovereign of the papal state owed him no obligation; and hence we must regard the pension of Galileo as a donation from the Roman pontiff to science itself, and as a declaration to the Christian world, that religion was not jealous of philosophy, and that the church of Rome was willing to respect and foster even the genius of its enemies.

Galileo viewed all these circumstances in a different light. He resolved to compose a work in which the Copernican system should be demonstrated; but he had not the courage to do this in a direct and open manner. He adopted the plan of discussing the subject in a dialogue between three speakers, in the hope of eluding by this artifice the censure of the church. This work was completed in 1630, but, owing to some difficulties in obtaining a licence to print it, it was not published till 1632.

In obtaining this licence, Galileo exhibited considerable address, and his memory has not escaped from the imputation of having acted unfairly, and of having involved his personal friends in the consequences of his imprudence.

The situation of master of the palace was, fortunately for Galileo's designs, filled by Nicolo Riccardi, a friend and pupil of his own. This officer was a sort of censor of new publications, and when he was applied to on the subject of printing his work, Galileo soon found that attempts had previously been made to thwart his views. He instantly set off for Rome, and had an interview

with his friend, who was in every respect anxious to oblige him. Riccardi examined the manuscript, pointed out some incautious expressions which he considered it necessary to erase, and returned it with his written approbation, on the understanding that the alterations he suggested would be made. Dreading to remain in Rome during the unhealthy season, which was fast approaching, Galileo returned to Florence, with the intention of completing the index and dedication, and of sending the MS. to Rome, to be printed under the care of prince Cesi. The death of that distinguished individual, in August 1630, frustrated Galileo's plan, and he applied for leave to have the book printed in Florence. Riccardi was at first desirous to examine the MS. again, but after inspecting only the beginning and the end of it, he gave Galileo leave to print it wherever he chose, providing it bore the licence of the inquisitor-general of Florence, and one or two other persons whom he named. Having overcome all these difficulties, Galileo's work was published in 1632, under the title of "The System of the World of Galileo Galilei, &c., in which, in four dialogues concerning the two principal systems of the World,—the Ptolemaic and the Copernican,—he discusses, indeterminately and firmly, the arguments proposed on both sides." It is dedicated to Ferdinand, grand duke of Tuscany, and is prefaced by an "Address to the prudent reader," which is itself characterised by the utmost imprudence. He refers to the decree of the inquisition in the most insulting and ironical language. He attributes it to passion and to ignorance, not by direct assertion, but by insinuations ascribed to others; and he announces his intention to defend the Copernican system, as a pure mathematical hypothesis, and not as an opinion, having an advantage over that of the stability of the earth absolutely. The dialogue is conducted by three persons, Salviati, Sagredo, and Simplicio. Salviati, who is the true philosopher in the dialogue, was the real name of a nobleman whom we have already had occasion to mention. Sagredo, the name of another noble

friend of Galileo's, performs a secondary part under Salviati. He proposes doubts, suggests difficulties, and enlivens the gravity of the dialogue with his wit and pleasantry. Simplicio is a resolute follower of Ptolemy and Aristotle, and with a proper degree of candour and modesty, he brings forward all the common arguments in favour of the Ptolemaic system. Between the wit of Sagredo, and the powerful philosophy of Salviati, the peripatetic sage is baffled in every discussion; and there can be no doubt that Galileo aimed a more fatal blow at the Ptolemaic system by this mode of discussing it, than if he had endeavoured to overturn it by direct arguments.

The influence of this work on the public mind was such as might have been anticipated. The obnoxious doctrines which it upheld were eagerly received, and widely disseminated; and the church of Rome became sensible of the shock which was thus given to its intellectual supremacy. Pope Urban VIII., attached though he had been to Galileo, never once hesitated respecting the line of conduct which he felt himself bound to pursue. His mind was, nevertheless, agitated with conflicting sentiments. He entertained a sincere affection for science and literature, and yet he was placed in the position of their enemy. He had been the personal friend of Galileo, and yet his duty compelled him to become his accuser. Embarrassing as these feelings were, other considerations contributed to soothe him. He had, in his capacity of a cardinal, opposed the first persecution of Galileo. He had, since his elevation to the pontificate, traced an open path for the march of Galileo's discoveries; and he had finally endeavoured to bind the recusant philosopher by the chains of kindness and gratitude. All these means, however, had proved abortive, and he was now called upon to support the doctrine which he had subscribed, and administer the law of which he was the guardian.

It has been supposed, without any satisfactory evidence, that Urban may have been influenced by less creditable motives. Salviati and Sagredo being well-

known personages, it was inferred, that Simplicio must also have a representative. The enemies of Galileo are said to have convinced his holiness that Simplicio was intended as a portraiture of himself; and this opinion received some probability from the fact, that the peripatetic disputant had employed many of the arguments which Urban had himself used in his discussions with Galileo. The latest biographer of Galileo* regards this motive as necessary to account for "the otherwise inexplicable change which took place in the conduct of Urban to his old friend;" — but we cannot admit for a moment the truth of this supposition. The church had been placed in hostility to a powerful and liberal party, which was adverse to its interests. The dogmas of the Catholic faith had been brought into direct collision with the deductions of science. The leader of the philosophic band had broken the most solemn armistice with the inquisition: he had renounced the ties of gratitude which bound him to the pontiff; and Urban was thus compelled to entrench himself in a position to which he had been driven by his opponents.

The design of summoning Galileo before the inquisition, seems to have been formed almost immediately after the publication of his book; for even in August, 1632, the preliminary proceedings had reached the ears of the grand duke Ferdinand. The Tuscan ambassador at Rome was speedily acquainted with the dissatisfaction which his sovereign felt at these proceedings; and he was instructed to forward to Florence a written statement of the charges against Galileo, in order to enable him to prepare for his defence. Although this request was denied, Ferdinand again interposed; and transmitted a letter to his ambassador, recommending the admission of Campanella and Castelli into the congregation of ecclesiastics by which Galileo was to be judged. Circumstances, however, rendered it prudent to withhold this letter. Castelli was sent away from Rome, and Scipio Chiaramonte, a bigotted ecclesiastic,

* Library of Useful Knowledge, *Life of Galileo*, chap. viii.

was summoned from Pisa to complete the number of the judges.

It appears from a despatch of the Tuscan minister, that Ferdinand was enraged at the transaction ; and he instructed his ambassador, Niccolini, to make the strongest representations to the pope. Niccolini had several interviews with his holiness ; but all his expostulations were fruitless. He found Urban highly incensed against Galileo ; and his holiness begged Niccolini to advise the archduke not to interfere any farther, as he would not " get through it with honour." On the 15th of September the pope caused it to be intimated to Niccolini, as a mark of his especial esteem for the grand duke, that he was obliged to refer the work to the inquisition ; but both the prince and his ambassador were declared liable to the usual censures if they divulged the secret.

From the measures which this tribunal had formerly pursued, it was not difficult to foresee the result of their present deliberations. They summoned Galileo to appear before them at Rome, to answer in person the charges under which he lay. The Tuscan ambassador expostulated warmly with the court of Rome on the inhumanity of this proceeding. He urged his advanced age, his infirm health, the discomforts of the journey, and the miseries of the quarantine*, as motives for reconsidering their decision : but the pope was inexorable ; and though it was agreed to relax the quarantine as much as possible in his favour, yet it was declared indispensable that he should appear in person before the inquisition.

Worn out with age and infirmities, and exhausted with the fatigues of his journey, Galileo arrived at Rome on the 14th of February, 1633. The Tuscan ambassador announced his arrival in an official form to the commissary of the holy office, and Galileo awaited in calm dignity the approach of his trial. Among

* The communication between Florence and Rome was at this time interrupted by a contagious disease which had broken out in Tuscany.

those who proffered their advice in this distressing emergency, we must enumerate the cardinal Barberino, the pope's nephew, who, though he may have felt the necessity of an interference on the part of the church, was yet desirous that it should be effected with the least injury to Galileo and to science. He accordingly visited Galileo, and advised him to remain as much at home as possible, to keep aloof from general society, and to see only his most intimate friends. The same advice was given from different quarters; and Galileo felt its propriety, and remained in strict seclusion in the palace of the Tuscan ambassador.

During the whole of the trial which now commenced, Galileo was treated with the most marked indulgence. Abhorring, as we must do, the principles and practice of this odious tribunal, and reprobating its interference with the cautious deductions of science, we must yet admit that, on this occasion, its deliberations were not dictated by passion, nor its power directed by vengeance. Though placed at their judgment-seat as a heretic, Galileo stood there with the recognised attributes of a sage; and though an offender against the laws of which they were the guardian, yet the highest respect was yielded to his genius, and the kindest commiseration to his infirmities.

In the beginning of April, when his examination in person was to commence, it became necessary that he should be removed to the holy office; but instead of committing him, as was the practice, to solitary confinement, he was provided with apartments in the house of the fiscal of the inquisition. His table was provided by the Tuscan ambassador, and his servant was allowed to attend him at his pleasure, and to sleep in an adjoining apartment. Even this nominal confinement, however, Galileo's high spirit was unable to brook. An attack of the disease to which he was constitutionally subject contributed to fret and irritate him, and he became impatient for a release from his anxiety as well as from his bondage. Cardinal Barberino

seems to have received notice of the state of Galileo's feelings ; and with a magnanimity which posterity will ever honour, he liberated Galileo on his own responsibility ; and in ten days after his first examination, and on the last day of April, he was restored to the hospitable roof of the Tuscan ambassador.

Though this favour was granted on the condition of his remaining in strict seclusion, Galileo recovered his health, and to a certain degree his usual hilarity, amid the kind attentions of Niccolini and his family ; and when the want of exercise had begun to produce symptoms of indisposition, Niccolini obtained for him leave to go into the public gardens in a half-closed carriage.

After the inquisition had examined Galileo personally, they allowed him a reasonable time for preparing his defence. He felt the difficulty of adducing any thing like a plausible justification of his conduct ; and he resorted to an ingenious, though a shallow artifice, which was regarded by the court as an aggravation of the crime. After his first appearance before the inquisition in 1616, he was publicly and falsely charged by his enemies with having then abjured his opinions ; and he was taunted as a criminal who had been actually punished for his offences. As a refutation of these calumnies, Cardinal Bellarmine had given him a certificate in his own handwriting, declaring that he neither abjured his opinions, nor suffered punishment for them ; and that the doctrine of the earth's motion, and the sun's stability, was only denounced to him as contrary to scripture, and as one which could not be defended. To this certificate the cardinal did not add, because he was not called upon to do it, that Galileo was enjoined *not to teach in any manner* the doctrine thus denounced ; and Galileo ingeniously avails himself of this supposed omission, to account for his having, in the lapse of fourteen or sixteen years, forgotten the injunction. He assigned the same excuse for his having omitted to mention this injunction to Riccardi, and to the inquisi-

tor-general at Florence, when he obtained the licence to print his dialogues. The court held the production of this certificate to be at once a proof and an aggravation of his offence ; because the certificate itself declared that the obnoxious doctrines had been pronounced contrary to the Holy Scriptures.

Having duly weighed the confessions and excuses of their prisoner, and considered the general merits of the case, the inquisition came to an agreement upon the sentence which they were to pronounce, and appointed the 22d of June as the day on which it was to be delivered. Two days previous to this, Galileo was summoned to appear at the holy office ; and on the morning of the 21st, he obeyed the summons. On the 22d of June he was clothed in a penitential dress, and conducted to the convent of Minerva, where the inquisition was assembled to give judgment. A long and elaborate sentence was pronounced, detailing the former proceedings of the inquisition, and specifying the offences which he had committed in teaching heretical doctrines, in violating his former pledges, and in obtaining by improper means a licence for the printing of his Dialogues. After an invocation of the name of our Saviour, and of the Holy Virgin, Galileo is declared to have brought himself under strong suspicions of heresy, and to have incurred all the censures and penalties which are enjoined against delinquents of this kind ; but from all these consequences he is to be held absolved, provided that with a sincere heart, and a faith unfeigned, he abjures and curses the heresies he has cherished, as well as every other heresy against the Catholic church. In order that his offence might not go altogether unpunished, that he might be more cautious in future, and be a warning to others to abstain from similar delinquencies, it was also decreed that his Dialogues should be prohibited by public edict ; that he himself should be condemned to the prison of the inquisition during their pleasure, and that during the next

three years he should recite once a week the seven penitential psalms.

The ceremony of Galileo's abjuration was one of exciting interest, and of awful formality. Clothed in the sackcloth of a repentant criminal, the venerable sage fell upon his knees before the assembled cardinals ; and laying his hands upon the Holy Evangelists, he invoked the divine aid in abjuring and detesting, and vowing never again to teach, the doctrine of the earth's motion, and of the sun's stability. He pledged himself that he would never again, either in words or in writing, propagate such heresies ; and he swore that he would fulfil and observe the penances which had been inflicted upon him.* At the conclusion of this ceremony, in which he recited his abjuration word for word, and then signed it, he was conveyed, in conformity with his sentence, to the prison of the inquisition.

The account which we have now given of the trial and the sentence of Galileo, is pregnant with the deepest interest and instruction. Human nature is here drawn in its darkest colouring ; and in surveying the melancholy picture, it is difficult to decide whether religion or philosophy has been most degraded. While we witness the presumptuous priest pronouncing infallible the decrees of his own erring judgment, we see the high-minded philosopher abjuring the eternal and immutable truths which he had himself the glory of establishing. In the ignorance and prejudices of the age, — in a too literal interpretation of the language of Scripture, — in a mistaken respect for the errors that had become venerable from their antiquity, — and in the peculiar position which Galileo had taken among the avowed enemies of the church, we may find the elements of an apology, however poor it may be, for the conduct of the inquisition. But what excuse can we

* It has been said, but upon what authority we cannot find, that when Galileo rose from his knees, he stamped on the ground, and said in a whisper to one of his friends, "*E pur si muove.*" "It does move, though."
—Life of Galileo, Lib. Use. Knowledge, part ii. p. 63.

devise for the humiliating confession and abjuration of Galileo? Why did this master-spirit of the age — this high-priest of the stars — this representative of science — this hoary sage, whose career of glory was near its consummation, — why did he reject the crown of martyrdom which he had himself coveted, and which, plaited with immortal laurels, was about to descend upon his head? If, in place of disavowing the laws of nature, and surrendering in his own person the intellectual dignity of his species, he had boldly owned the truth of his opinions, and confided his character to posterity, and his cause to an all-ruling Providence, he would have strung up the hair-suspended sabre, and disarmed for ever the hostility which threatened to overwhelm him. The philosopher, however, was supported only by philosophy; and in the love of truth he found a miserable substitute for the hopes of the martyr. Galileo cowered under the fear of man, and his submission was the salvation of the church. The sword of the inquisition descended on his prostrate neck; and though its stroke was not physical, yet it fell with a moral influence fatal to the character of its victim, and to the dignity of science.

In studying with attention this portion of scientific history, the reader will not fail to perceive that the church of Rome was driven into a dilemma from which the submission and abjuration of Galileo could alone extricate it. He who confesses a crime and denounces its atrocity, not only sanctions but inflicts the punishment which is annexed to it. If Galileo had declared his innocence, and avowed his sentiments; and if he had appealed to the past conduct of the church itself, to the acknowledged opinions of its dignitaries, and even to the acts of its pontiffs, he would have at once confounded his accusers, and escaped from their toils. After Copernicus, himself a catholic priest, had *openly* maintained the motion of the earth, and the stability of the sun: after he had dedicated the work which advocated these opinions to pope Paul III., on the express ground

that the *authority of the pontiff* might silence the calumnies of those who attacked these opinions by arguments drawn from Scripture : after the cardinal Schonberg and the bishop of Culm had urged Copernicus to publish the new doctrines ; and after the bishop of Ermeland had erected a monument to commemorate his great discoveries ; how could the church of Rome have appealed to its pontifical decrees as the ground of persecuting and punishing Galileo ? Even in later times, the same doctrines had been propagated with entire toleration ; nay, in the very year of Galileo's first persecution, Paul Anthony Foscarinus, a learned Carmelite monk, wrote a pamphlet, in which he illustrates and defends the mobility of the earth, and endeavours to reconcile to this new doctrine the passages of Scripture which had been employed to subvert it. This very singular production was dated from the Carmelite convent at Naples ; was dedicated to the very reverend Sebastian Fantoni, general of the Carmelite order ; and, sanctioned by the ecclesiastical authorities, it was published at Florence, three years before the second persecution of Galileo.

By these acts, tolerated for more than a century, the decrees of the pontiffs against the doctrine of the earth's motion were virtually repealed ; and Galileo might have pleaded them with success in arrest of judgment. Unfortunately, however, for himself and for science, he acted otherwise. By admitting their authority, he revived in fresh force these obsolete and obnoxious enactments ; and, by yielding to their power, he riveted for another century the almost broken chains of spiritual despotism.

Pope Urban VII. did not fail to observe the full extent of his triumph ; and he exhibited the utmost sagacity in the means which he employed to secure it. While he endeavoured to overawe the enemies of the church by the formal promulgation of Galileo's sentence and abjuration, and by punishing the officials who had assisted in obtaining the licence to print his work,

he treated Galileo with the utmost lenity, and yielded to every request that was made to diminish, and almost to suspend, the constraint under which he lay. The sentence of abjuration was ordered to be publicly read at several universities. At Florence the ceremonial was performed in the church of Santa Croce, and the friends and disciples of Galileo were especially summoned to witness the public degradation of their master. The inquisitor at Florence was ordered to be reprimanded for his conduct ; and Riccardi, the master of the sacred palace, and Ciampoli, the secretary of pope Urban himself, were dismissed from their situations.

Galileo had remained only four days in the prison of the inquisition, when, on the application of Niccolini, the Tuscan ambassador, he was allowed to reside with him in his palace. As Florence still suffered under the contagious disease which we have already mentioned, it was proposed that Sienna should be the place of Galileo's confinement, and that his residence should be in one of the convents of that city. Niccolini, however, recommended the palace of the archbishop Piccolomini as a more suitable residence ; and though the archbishop was one of Galileo's best friends, the pope agreed to the arrangement, and in the beginning of July Galileo quitted Rome for Sienna.

After having spent nearly six months under the hospitable roof of his friend, with no other restraint than that of being confined to the limits of the palace, Galileo was permitted to return to his villa near Florence under the same restrictions ; and as the contagious disease had disappeared in Tuscany, he was able in the month of December to re-enter his own house at Arcetri, where he spent the remainder of his days.

Although Galileo had now the happiness of rejoining his family under their paternal roof, yet, like all sublunary blessings, it was but of short duration. His favourite daughter Maria, who along with her sister had joined the convent of St. Matthew in the neighbourhood of Arcetri, had looked forward to the arrival of her

father with the most affectionate anticipation : she hoped that her filial devotion might form some compensation for the malignity of his enemies ; and she eagerly assumed the labour of reciting weekly the seven penitentiary psalms which formed part of her father's sentence. These sacred duties, however, were destined to terminate almost at the moment they were begun. She was seized with a fatal illness in the same month in which she rejoined her parent, and before the month of April she was no more. This heavy blow, so suddenly struck, overwhelmed Galileo in the deepest agony. Owing to the decline of his health, and the recurrence of his old complaints, he was unable to oppose to this mental suffering the constitutional energy of his mind. The bulwarks of his heart broke down, and a flood of grief desolated his manly and powerful mind. He felt, as he expressed it, that he was incessantly called by his daughter, — his pulse intermitted, — his heart was agitated with unceasing palpitations, — his appetite entirely left him, and he considered his dissolution so near at hand, that he would not permit his son Vincenzo to set out upon a journey which he had contemplated.

From this state of melancholy and indisposition, Galileo slowly, though partially, recovered ; and, with the view of obtaining medical assistance, he requested leave to go to Florence. His enemies, however, refused this application, and he was given to understand that any additional importunities would be visited with a more vigilant surveillance. He remained, therefore, five years at Arcetri, from 1634 to 1638, without any remission of his confinement, and pursuing his studies under the influence of a continued and general indisposition.

There is no reason to think that Galileo or his friends renewed their application to the church of Rome ; but, in 1638, the pope transmitted, through the inquisitor Fariano, his permission that he might remove to Florence for the recovery of his health, on the condition that he should present himself at the office of the inquisitor to learn the terms upon which this indulgence was granted.

Galileo accepted of the kindness thus unexpectedly proffered ; but the conditions upon which it was given were more severe than he expected : he was prohibited from leaving his house, or admitting his friends ; and so sternly was this system pursued, that he required a special order for attending mass during Passion week.

The severity of this order was keenly felt by Galileo. While he remained at Arcetri, his seclusion from the world would have been an object of choice, if it had not been the decree of a tribunal ; but to be debarred from the conversation of his friends in Florence, — in that city where his genius had been idolised, and where his fame had become immortal, was an aggravation of punishment which he was unable to bear. With his accustomed kindness, the grand duke made a strong representation on the subject to his ambassador at the court of Rome. He stated that, from his great age and infirmities, Galileo's career was near its close ; that he possessed many valuable ideas, which the world might lose if they were not matured and conveyed to his friends ; and that Galileo was anxious to make these communications to father Castelli, who was then a stipendiary of the court of Rome. The grand duke commanded his ambassador to see Castelli on the subject ; to urge him to obtain leave from the pope to spend a few months in Florence, and to supply him with money, and every thing that was necessary for his journey. Influenced by this kind and liberal message, Castelli obtained an audience of the pope, and requested leave to pay a visit to Florence. Urban instantly suspected the object of his journey ; and, upon Castelli's acknowledging that he could not possibly refrain from seeing Galileo, he received permission to visit him in the company of an officer of the inquisition. Castelli accordingly went to Florence ; and, a few months afterwards, Galileo was ordered to return to Arcetri.

During Galileo's confinement at Sienna and Arcetri, between 1633 and 1636, his time was principally occupied in the composition of his " Dialogues on Local

Motion." This remarkable work, which was considered by its author as the best of his productions, was printed by Louis Elzevir, at Amsterdam, and dedicated to the count de Noailles, the French ambassador at Rome. Various attempts to have it printed in Germany had failed ; and, in order to save himself from the malignity of his enemies, he was obliged to pretend that the edition published in Holland had been printed from a MS. entrusted to the French ambassador.

Although Galileo had for a long time abandoned his astronomical studies, yet his attention was directed, about the year 1636, to a curious appearance in the lunar disc, which is known by the name of the moon's libration. When we examine with a telescope the outline of the moon, we observe that certain parts of her disc, which are seen at one time, are invisible at another. This change or libration is of four different kinds ; viz. the diurnal libration, the libration in longitude, the libration in latitude, and the spheroidal libration. Galileo discovered the first of these kinds of libration, and appears to have had some knowledge of the second ; but the third was discovered by Hevelius, and the fourth by Lagrange.*

This curious discovery was the result of the last telescopic observations of Galileo. Although his right eye had for some years lost its power, yet his general vision was sufficiently perfect to enable him to carry on his usual researches. In 1636, however, this affection of his eye became more serious ; and, in 1637, his left eye was attacked with the same disease. His medical friends at first supposed that cataracts were formed in the crystalline lens, and anticipated a cure from the operation of couching. These hopes were fallacious. The disease turned out to be in the cornea, and every attempt to restore its transparency was fruitless. In a few months the white cloud covered the whole aperture of the pupil, and Galileo became totally blind. This sudden and unexpected calamity had almost

* These phenomena are explained in the volume on "Astronomy."

overwhelmed Galileo and his friends. In writing to a correspondent he exclaims, "Alas! your dear friend and servant has become totally and irreparably blind. These heavens, this earth, this universe, which by wonderful observation I had enlarged a thousand times beyond the belief of past ages, are henceforth shrunk into the narrow space which I myself occupy. So it pleases God; it shall, therefore, please me also." His friend, father Castelli, deploras the calamity in the same tone of pathetic sublimity:—"The noblest eye," says he, "which nature ever made, is darkened; an eye so privileged, and gifted with such rare powers, that it may truly be said to have seen more than the eyes of all that are gone, and to have opened the eyes of all that are to come."

Although Galileo had been thwarted in his attempt to introduce into the Spanish marine his new method of finding the longitude at sea, yet he never lost sight of an object to which he attached the highest importance. As the formation of correct tables of the motion of Jupiter's satellites was a necessary preliminary to its introduction, he had occupied himself for twenty-four years in observations for this purpose, and he had made considerable progress in this laborious task. After the publication of his "Dialogues on Motion," in 1636, he renewed his attempts to bring his method into actual use. For this purpose he addressed himself to Lorenzo Real, who had been the Dutch governor-general in India, and offered the free use of his method to the states-general of Holland.* The Dutch government received this proposal with an anxious desire to have it carried into effect. At the instigation of Constantine

* It is a curious fact, that Morin had about this time proposed to determine the longitude by the moon's distance from a fixed star, and that the commissioners assembled in Paris to examine it, requested Galileo's opinion of its value and practicability. Galileo's opinion was highly unfavourable. He saw clearly, and explained distinctly, the objection to Morin's method, arising from the imperfection of the lunar tables, and the inadequacy of astronomical instruments; but he seemed not to be conscious that the very same objections applied, with even greater force, to his own method, which has since been supplanted by that of the French savant. See *Life of Galileo*, Library of Useful Knowledge, p. 94.

Huygens, the father of the illustrious Huygens, and the secretary to the prince of Orange, they appointed commissioners to communicate with Galileo; and while they transmitted him a gold chain as a mark of their esteem, they at the same time assured him, that if his plan should prove successful it should not pass unrewarded. The commissioners entered into an active correspondence with Galileo, and had even appointed one of their number to communicate personally with him in Italy. Lest this, however, should excite the jealousy of the court of Rome, Galileo objected to the arrangement, so that the negotiation was carried on solely by correspondence.

It was at this time that Galileo was struck with blindness. His friend and pupil, Renieri, undertook, in this emergency, to arrange and complete his observations and calculations; but before he had made much progress in the arduous task, each of the four commissioners died in succession, and it was with great difficulty that Constantine Huygens succeeded in renewing the scheme. It was again obstructed, however, by the death of Galileo; and when Renieri was about to publish, by the order of the grand duke, the "*Ephemeris*," and "*Tables of the Jovian Planets*," he was attacked with a mortal disease, and the manuscripts of Galileo, which he was on the eve of publishing, were never more heard of. By such a series of misfortunes were the plans of Galileo and of the states-general completely overthrown. It is some consolation, however, to know that neither science nor navigation suffered any severe loss. Notwithstanding the perfection of our present tables of Jupiter's satellites, and of the astronomical instruments by which their eclipses may be observed, the method of Galileo is still impracticable at sea.

In consequence of the strict seclusion to which Galileo had been subjected, he was in the practice of dating his letters from his prison at Arcetri: but after he had lost the use of his eyes, the Inquisition seems to have relaxed its severity, and to have allowed him the freest

intercourse with his friends. The grand duke of Tuscany paid him frequent visits; and among the celebrated strangers who came from distant lands to see the ornament of Italy, were Gassendi, Deodati, and our illustrious countryman Milton. During the last three years of his life, his eminent pupil Viviani formed one of his family; and in October, 1641, the celebrated Torricelli, another of his pupils, was admitted to the same distinction.

Though the powerful mind of Galileo still retained its vigour, yet his debilitated frame was exhausted with mental labour. He often complained that his head was too busy for his body; and the continuity of his studies was frequently broken with attacks of hypochondria, want of sleep, and acute rheumatic pains. Along with these calamities, he was afflicted with another still more severe — with deafness almost total; but though he was now excluded from all communication with the external world, yet his mind still grappled with the material universe, and while he was studying the force of percussion, and preparing for a continuation of his “*Dialogues on Motion*,” he was attacked with fever and palpitation of the heart, which, after continuing two months, terminated fatally on the 8th of January, 1642, in the 78th year of his age.

Having died in the character of a prisoner of the Inquisition, this odious tribunal disputed his right of making a will, and of being buried in consecrated ground. These objections, however, were withdrawn; but though a large sum was subscribed for erecting a monument to him in the church of Santa Croce, in Florence, the pope would not permit the design to be carried into execution. His sacred remains were, therefore, deposited in an obscure corner of the church, and remained for more than thirty years unmarked with any monumental tablet. The following epitaph, given without any remark in the Leyden edition of his *Dialogues*, is, we presume, the one which was inscribed on a tablet in the church of Santa Croce: —

GALILÆO GALILÆI Florentino,
 Philosopho et Geometræ vere lynceo,
 Naturæ Œdipo,
 Mirabilium semper inventorum machinatori,
 Qui inconcessa adhuc mortalibus gloria
 Cælorum provincias auxit
 Et universo dedit incrementum :
 Non enim vitreos spherarum orbes
 Fragilesque stellas conflavit :
 Sed æterna mundi corpore
 Mediceæ beneficentiæ dedicavit,
 Cujus inextincta gloriæ cupiditas
 Ut oculos nationum
 Sæculorumque omnium
 Videre doceret,
 Proprios impendit oculos.
 Cum jam nil amplius haberet natura
 Quod ipse videret.
 Cujus inventa vix intra rerum limites comprehensa
 Firmamentum ipsum non solum continet,
 Sed etiam recipit.
 Qui relictis tot scientiarum monumentis
 Plura secum tulit, quam reliquit.
 Gravi enim
 Sed nondum affecta senectute,
 Novis contemplationibus
 Majorem gloriam affectans
 Inexplebilem sapientiæ animam
 Immature nobis obitu
 Exhalavit
 Anno Domini
 MCXLII.
 Ætatis suæ
 LXXVIII.

At his death, in 1703, Viviani purchased his property, with the charge of erecting a monument over Galileo's remains and his own. This design was not carried into effect till 1737, at the expense of the family of Nelli, when both their bodies were disinterred, and removed to the site of the splendid monument which now covers them. This monument contains the bust of Galileo, with figures of Geometry and Astronomy. It was designed by Giulio Foggini. Galileo's bust was executed by Giovanni Battista Foggini; the figure of

Astronomy by Vincenzo Foggini, his son ; and that of Geometry by Girolamo Ticciati.

Galileo's house at Arcetri still remains. In 1821 it belonged to one Signor Alimari, having been preserved in the state in which it was left by Galileo ; it stands very near the convent of St. Matthew, and about a mile to the S. E. of Florence. An inscription by Nelli, over the door of the house, still remains.

The character of Galileo, whether we view him as a member of the social circle, or as a man of science, presents many interesting and instructive points of contemplation. Unfortunate, and to a certain extent immoral, in his domestic relations, he did not derive from that hallowed source all the enjoyments which it generally yields ; and it was owing to this cause, perhaps, that he was more fond of society than might have been expected from his studious habits. His habitual cheerfulness and gaiety, and his affability and frankness of manner, rendered him an universal favourite among his friends. Without any of the pedantry of exclusive talent, and without any of that ostentation which often marks the man of limited though profound acquirements, Galileo never conversed upon scientific or philosophical subjects except among those who were capable of understanding them. The extent of his general information, indeed, his great literary knowledge, but, above all, his retentive memory, stored with the legends and the poetry of ancient times, saved him from the necessity of drawing upon his own peculiar studies for the topics of his conversation.

Galileo was not less distinguished for his hospitality and benevolence ; he was liberal to the poor, and generous in the aid which he administered to men of genius and talent, who often found a comfortable asylum under his roof. In his domestic economy he was frugal without being parsimonious. His hospitable board was ever ready for the reception of his friends ; and, though he was himself abstemious in his diet, he seems to have been a lover of good wines, of which he received always

the choicest varieties out of the grand duke's cellar. This peculiar taste, together with his attachment to a country life, rendered him fond of agricultural pursuits, and induced him to devote his leisure hours to the cultivation of his vineyards.

In his personal appearance Galileo was about the middle size, and of a square-built, but well-proportioned, frame. His complexion was fair, his eyes penetrating, and his hair of a reddish hue. His expression was cheerful and animated, and though his temper was easily ruffled, yet the excitement was transient, and the cause of it speedily forgotten.

One of the most prominent traits in the character of Galileo was his invincible love of truth, and his abhorrence of that spiritual despotism which had so long brooded over Europe. His views, however, were too liberal, and too far in advance of the age which he adorned ; and however much we may admire the noble spirit which he evinced, and the personal sacrifices which he made, in his struggle for truth, we must yet lament the hotness of his zeal and the temerity of his onset. In his contest with the church of Rome, he fell under her victorious banner ; and though his cause was that of truth, and hers that of superstition, yet the sympathy of Europe was not roused by his misfortunes. Under the sagacious and peaceful sway of Copernicus, astronomy had effected a glorious triumph over the dogmas of the church ; but under the bold and uncompromising sceptre of Galileo all her conquests were irrecoverably lost.

The scientific character of Galileo, and his method of investigating truth, demand our warmest admiration. The number and ingenuity of his inventions ; the brilliant discoveries which he made in the heavens, and the depth and beauty of his researches respecting the laws of motion, have gained him the admiration of every succeeding age, and have placed him next to Newton in the lists of original and inventive genius. To this high rank he was doubtless elevated by the inductive

processes which he followed in all his inquiries. Under the sure guidance of observation and experiment, he advanced to general laws; and if Bacon had never lived, the student of nature would have found, in the writings and labours of Galileo, not only the boasted principles of the inductive philosophy, but also their practical application to the highest efforts of invention and discovery.

GUICCIARDINI.

1482—1540.

GUICCIARDINI was the contemporary and intimate friend of Machiavelli, but their several careers bore small similitude ; for worldly prosperity attended the first, while the other was depressed by neglect and penury ; and while his intellect struggled with these chains, the nobler parts of his disposition yielded to them. Machiavelli was a republican in principle, of humble fortunes, and dependent on his friends for their favour and encouragement. Guicciardini was a courtier ; he was the servant of a prince, not of a state ; in birth and position in life he had the advantage of his friend ; and these combining circumstances rendered him more confident in himself, while at the same time it inspired him with an avowed dislike for popular governments.

The Guicciardini formed one of the noblest families of Florence : it was of ancient origin, and possessed several magnificent mansions in Florence. One of the streets is named de' Guicciardini, from containing a palace belonging to them ; and they had large possessions in the Val di Pesa.

Francesco, the subject of this memoir, was the son of Piero de' Guicciardini, a celebrated advocate, and at one time commissary-general to the Florentine army. Francesco was one of eight children. His mother was Simona, daughter of the cavaliere Bongiani Gianfigliuzzi, a noble Florentine. He was born on the 6th of March, 1482.*

* It was a habit among the Florentines to keep memoranda of the principal events of their lives, which they called Ricordi. The date of the birth of Guicciardini has been disputed, but it is ascertained from a MS. book of his ricordi, or records, which Manni cites. He thus writes concerning himself : — "I record that I, Francesco di Piero Guicciardini, now doctor

He was educated with care by the best masters, and taught Greek and Latin. He applied himself, as he grew up, to the study of logic and of civil law, as he was destined for the robe. He was sent to Ferrara by his father, not merely for the sake of attending the teachers there, but that his parent might have a place of refuge, where to send his property, in the event of civil disturbance or external attack upon Florence. Large sums of money were remitted to him, and he boasts of the trustworthiness of his conduct on this occasion, despite his extreme youth. It was in agitation at one time to make him a priest, as, through the interest of an uncle, who was rich in benefices, a prosperous career was opened to him in the church. He was himself inclined towards the clerical profession, as one full of honour and dignity; but his father decided against it, and resolved that none of his five sons should enter the priesthood; partly induced by the notion that the papal power was on the decline, and partly from a conscientious feeling of the impropriety of adopting the sacred calling, merely for the sake of temporal advantages. Instead, therefore, of assuming the sacerdotal garb, Francesco took a doctor's degree in law, and at an early age was appointed by the government to read the Institute in the university of Florence. He married the following year. His wife was Maria, daughter of Alamanno di Averardo Salviati, one of the first men of the city. Several law offices were bestowed on him, and he prides himself at this success in early life. But he felt himself still more honoured, when he was sent by the republic as ambassador to Ferdinand, king of Aragon. Italy was then the arena on which the adverse powers of France, Germany, and Spain contended for mastery. Florence adhered to the French party, but the timid

of civil and canon law, was born on the 6th March, 1482, at ten o'clock. I was baptised Francesco, from Francesco de Nerli, my maternal grandfather, and Tommaso, out of respect for St. Thomas Aquinas, on whose festival I was born. Messer Marsiglio Ficino held me at the baptismal font, who was the greatest platonic philosopher then existing in the world, and by Giovanni Canacci and Piero del Nero, both philosophers also.

gonfaloniere Soderini, desirous of currying favour on all sides, thought it right to preserve a good understanding with Ferdinand. Francesco, feeling his inexperience, shrunk from the responsibility of this mission, and did not accept it, till his father added his commands to those of the state.

He remained two years at Burgos, in attendance on the Spanish court, conducting himself in such a way as to acquire the esteem of Ferdinand, who presented him with a number of silver vessels of great value on his departure. This was no good school for the acquirement of political integrity. The Italians were proverbially treacherous, but Ferdinand emulated them in the arts of deception. It is related of this monarch, that when he heard that Louis XII. complained of having been twice deceived by him, he exclaimed, "The fool lies, I have tricked him above ten times."

Meanwhile the aspect of affairs changed at Florence. The French were driven from Italy, and the republic paid the penalty of the weak and disarmed neutrality which it had preserved, by being forced by the allied armies to receive back the exiled Medici. The consequence of this return was a change of government, from that of a free state, to subjection to the will of a single family. Guicciardini acted with a prudence that acquired for him the favour of the new rulers; and, on his return from Spain, was received with every suitable mark of distinction. His joy, however, on returning to his native town, was clouded by the recent death of his father.

On the event of the visit of Leo X. to Florence, attended by a numerous retinue of cardinals, Guicciardini, who had lately filled the office of magistrate, was sent, with others, to receive the pope at Cortona. Leo was so struck by him, that the next day he named him his consistorial advocate, of his own accord, without solicitation: nor did his patronage stop here; he soon after took him entirely into his service, and finding that his prudence and sagacity were equal to the good opinion

he had formed of him, he made him governor of Reggio and Modena. He acquitted himself with great credit in this high office. Having been educated for the robe, instead of the career of arms, the enemies of the pope cherished the notion, that he might be surprised and frightened in his government; but his firmness and judgment disconcerted all their stratagems.

When Leo X. died, the merits of Guicciardini became yet more conspicuous. The papal power was very infirmly established in Lombardy, and the duke of Ferrara, who claimed Modena and Reggio as his own, was on the alert to take advantage of the interval of weakness caused by a delay in the election of a new pope; but Guicciardini foiled him in all his attempts. His most memorable action on this occasion was his defence of Parma. He relates it with conscious pride in his history. He had been sent by cardinal Julius de' Medici to defend Parma from an attack made by the French. Guicciardini's chief difficulty was, to inspire the citizens with resolution and martial enthusiasm. He convoked them together, distributed pikes among them, and causing the defenceless part of the town, on one side of the river, to be abandoned, made strenuous efforts to intrench the other. The enemy entered the deserted portion, and the people were eager to surrender. Guicciardini pointed out to them the fact, that the hostile forces were unprovided with artillery, and so succeeded in inspiring them with some degree of resolution: he led the attack himself, and the success that attended their sortie increasing their courage, the enemy was driven, off and the siege raised. Federigo da Bozzole, who commanded the attack, had made sure of success, and declared that he had been deceived in nothing during the expedition, except in the notion that a governor, who was not a soldier, and who had newly come to the city, should carry on the defence at his own peril, when he might have saved himself without dishonour.

When cardinal Julius became pope, under the name of Clement VII., he showed his approbation of Guic-

ciardini, by naming him president of Romagna, with greater powers than had been enjoyed by any predecessor in that office: thus, a large portion of Italy north of the Apennines was under his rule. It was a situation of honour, but attended with an equal portion of difficulty and labour, from the unsettled state of the country. Prudence and firmness, and even severity, were the characteristics of Guicciardini's administration; he was unrelenting towards criminals, but at the same time became very popular, in Modena especially, by the attention he paid to the comfort and pleasures of the people, and the embellishments he bestowed on the city.

At this time the French were again, after the battle of Pavia, driven from Italy, and Clement VII., afraid of the overweening power of Charles V., formed a league against him. The duke of Urbino was chief over the army of the league, and Guicciardini was named lieutenant-general of the pontifical army in the ecclesiastical states. The choice that had been made of the duke of Urbino, as chief leader, was injudicious. He had been driven from his states by Leo X.; Lorenzo de' Medici had been gifted with his duchy, and he naturally was inimical to his rival's family. His irresolute, shuffling conduct during the disastrous advance of the constable Bourbon on Rome, was doubtless a principal cause of the sack of that city. Guicciardini, as general of the papal army, exerted himself in vain to induce him to more energetic measures: instead of throwing himself before the advancing army of the imperialists, he slowly followed it. When Bourbon was in the neighbourhood of Arezzo, the duke of Urbino entered Florence.

The power of the Medici was odious in that city. A formidable party, whose watchword was liberty, regarded with triumph the dangers to which Clement VII. was exposed. A number of the younger nobility among them took occasion of the alarm excited, to seize on the palace of government. The duke of Urbino prepared to attack it, but first sent Federigo da Bozzole

to treat with the party who held it. Full of enthusiasm and courage, the young men refused all terms, and Bozzole left them, enraged at their obstinacy and their personal ill-treatment of himself. Guicciardini perceived the dangers that threatened his country. It was an easy task for the duke of Urbino to attack the palace of government, to destroy it and all those within; but an act of violence and bloodshed was to be avoided. Guicciardini hastened forward to meet Bozzole as he left the palace, and represented to him briefly how displeasing such a contest would be to the pope, and how detrimental to the confederates; and how much better it would be to calm, instead of exasperating, the mind of the duke of Urbino. Bozzole yielded, and gave hope to the duke that quiet might be restored without recourse being had to arms; pacific means were in consequence resorted to, and the insurgents induced to quit the palace. Guicciardini relates this circumstance and his interference with pride, in the belief that he had done his country as well as the pope good service, but he adds, that he got no thanks from either side; the Medici party accusing him of preferring the lives and safety of the citizens to the firm establishment of that family; while the other party declared that he had exaggerated their difficulties, and caused them needlessly to yield their advantages.

It had been well for the fame of Guicciardini, if he had submitted to the blame of his contemporaries, and secured the approbation of posterity, by adhering to a line of conduct so impartial and patriotic. Although the fall of the Medici was suspended for a short time on this occasion, the taking of Rome decided their expulsion. When the duke of Urbino went southward to deliver the pope, besieged in the Castel Sant' Angelo, the Florentines seized the opportunity to drive out the Medici, and to restore the freedom of their government. The wars carried on by Clement VII. had weighed heavily on the republic, since he drew from it his chief resources; the people were thus exasperated against his

rule, and now that they possessed the power, displayed their hatred of his family by many acts of outrage. To have served them was to share their disgrace, and the odium with which they were regarded. It has been related how Machiavelli, republican as he was, and personally attached to many of the leaders of the popular party, was unable to overcome the prejudice excited by his having entered the service of the Medici. Guicciardini was visited by more open marks of the dislike of the new leaders; and he was the more angry because he had displayed a wish to join them. He neither loved nor esteemed Clement, whom he represents as timid, avaricious, and ungracious. He regarded his imprisonment by the imperialists with very lukewarm interest, and even raised soldiers for the defence of Florence: but these demonstrations did not avail to acquire for him the confidence of his countrymen, and he was forced to fly the town during a popular tumult. Hence seems to spring his hatred of free institutions, and his subsequent conduct in aiding in the destruction of the liberties of his country. From this time he entered with all the zeal of personal resentment into the cause of the Medici. His name has thus received a taint never to be effaced. He became the abettor of tyrants, the oppressor of his fellow citizens; and that equity and firmness which he before exercised, by establishing order in the districts over which he presided, were changed to the persecution of the martyrs of liberty.* It is impossible to slur over this portion of his life as he does himself. For it is remarkable that the only events recorded in his history, which are narrated in a slovenly and confused manner, are those in which he took a principal share,—the second restoration of the Medici, and the final overthrow of the liberties of Florence.

When a reconciliation had been patched up between Charles V. and Clement VII., the force of their united arms was turned against Florence. The republic was

* See a clever pamphlet, entitled "Saggio sulla Vita e sulle Opere di Francesco Guicciardini," by Rosini, a professor of the University of Pisa.

headed by gallant spirits, who, seeing their last hope of freedom in a successful resistance, exerted every nerve to defend themselves. They were willing to suffer any extremity, rather than submit to a slavery which must crush for ever the proud independence and free institutions of their native city. Guicciardini had been named by the pope, governor of Bologna, and took no part in the war against his country; but he is accused of participating in the iniquitous proceedings which followed the surrender of the city. The pope acted with the utmost treachery. He granted generous terms; but when in possession, held a mock assembly of the people, keeping off, by means of the troops he introduced, all the citizens, except those prepared to receive law at his hands. He thus, as it were, obtained a legal decree, which changed the form of government, and denounced its late leaders. Executions and confiscations became the order of the day; the chief power was placed in the hands of Vettori, Guicciardini, and two others, and their conduct entailed on them the execration of their fellow citizens.

So zealous did Guicciardini show himself, that the pope entrusted him with the office of reforming and restricting the list of candidates, who were selected to be members of government, and he displayed his prudence and sagacity for the reigning family at the expense of the lives and liberties of the most virtuous among his fellow citizens. Under his auspices, the office of gonfaloniere, which had subsisted for 250 years, was abolished, and Alessandro de' Medici was named duke, which title was to descend in perpetuity to his successors. This miserable man was the son of a negro woman, and regarded as the offspring of Lorenzo, the son of Piero de' Medici: but it was more probable that he owed his existence to Clement VII.; at least the latter claimed the honour of paternity. His disgraceful birth stamped him with contempt; his profligacy and cruelty acquired the hatred of the people over whom he ruled.

Guicciardini endeavoured to restrain him in the indulgence of his vices, but without avail. He was now wholly devoted to his service. When Clement VII. died, his successor wished him to continue governor of Bologna, but he refused. While the see was vacant, he had yielded to the entreaties of the senators, and remained to prevent popular disturbances. They promised him every assistance to maintain his authority; but his enemies took occasion to display their disrespect. Geronimo Pepoli, and others, who some years before had retired from Bologna in distaste, took this occasion to return, accompanied by armed followers and public bandits. Guicciardini's haughty spirit was in arms against the insult. Among the followers of Pepoli were two outlaws under sentence of death; these he caused to be seized, led to prison, and put to death. Pepoli manifested the utmost indignation, and was only restrained by the authority of the senators from giving public token of his resentment. When the new pope was elected, and another governor appointed, Guicciardini prepared to quit the city. Pepoli threatened to attack him on his departure; but he, undismayed, set out at noon-day, accompanied only by a few attendants on horseback. His road led him past the palace of the Pepoli, nor would he diverge from it on this account, but passed under their windows with a firm and intrepid countenance, and was permitted to pursue his way unmolested.

He soon after displayed this energy and firmness of character in a very bad cause. The Florentines, unable any longer to endure the tyranny and vices of duke Alexander, appealed to Charles V., whom they regarded as lord paramount of their state. The emperor summoned Alexander to Naples, where he then was, to answer the charges made against him. He obeyed: but the emperor was so incensed that he began to fear the result, and was on the point of retreating, had not Guicciardini exhorted him to remain. He drew up a defence for him, and by a judicious distribution of bribes, succeeded

in obtaining his acquittal ; and Florence was again subjected to his yoke.

Two years after, Alexander was murdered by Lorenzino de' Medici, who considered that he had a better right to be considered the head of the family. But this act, undertaken without the participation of any accomplice, was not followed by the results that might have been anticipated. Lorenzino, frightened by his very success, fled the city, and his cousin Cosmo was raised to the supreme power, and afterwards named grand duke of Tuscany. Guicciardini assisted materially in his elevation, and hoped to be real chief of the state, while the other held the nominal rank. But Cosmo was of a crafty, cold, and ungrateful disposition, and treated his benefactor with such neglect, that he withdrew himself from public life, and retired to his country seat at Montici, in the neighbourhood of Florence.

From this time he occupied himself wholly in the composition of his history. It is a fine monument of his genius and industry. It commences with the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII., and goes down to the exaltation of Cosmo. The fault attributed to him as an author is prolixity, and to this he must plead guilty. He dwells with the most tiresome and earnest minuteness on the most trivial incidents ; and the taking of an insignificant castle, followed by no important results, is attended by the same diffuseness and exactitude of detail as events of the greatest magnitude. But no historian surpasses Guicciardini when the subject is worthy of his pen. His animated descriptions of battles, the chances of war, and conduct of princes and leaders ; his delineations of character, and masterly views of the course of events, all claim the highest admiration. The orations, which he intersperses, have been cavilled at, but they are eloquent, full of dignified exhortation, or sagacious reasoning. His account of the rise and formation of the temporal power of the popes excited great censure in catholic countries ; and throughout he is accused of showing himself the enemy of the Ro-

man church. It is true, that the pages of no other historian afford such convincing proofs of the pernicious effects resulting from the union of spiritual supremacy and temporal possessions. His powerful character of the infamous pope Borgia; his description of the fiery vehemence of Julius II.; his unveiling of the faults of Leo X., and the exposure he makes of the mistakes and weakness of Clement VII., present the very men and times to our eyes, and form as it were a school in which to study the philosophy of history. We perceive no partiality till the last few pages, which record the downfall of the republic of Florence. His language is, in the eyes of Italian critics, nearly pure; it is forcible, without being concise; and the clearness and majesty of the expressions in his best passages carry the reader along with him.

Guicciardini was solicited by pope Paul III. to leave his retreat, and to enter again on public life, but he refused. The disappointment of his ambitious views on the exaltation of Cosmo, and the duke's ingratitude, struck him to the heart. He did not live to complete his history, and died on the 27th of May, 1540, in the fifty-eighth year of his age. He expressly ordered that his funeral should be unattended by any pomp; and his directions were so strictly followed, that for some time no stone even commemorated the spot of his sepulture.

Little is known of his private life. His letters have all perished, except a few addressed to Machiavelli. They are lively in their style, and very friendly. He had no son, and seven daughters, and wrote to the secretary to ask his advice in settling them in marriage. Machiavelli advised his applying to the pope for a dowry; counselling him by all means to marry the eldest well, as the others would follow her example; and he quotes a passage from Dante, referring to a duke of Provence, "who had three daughters and each a queen. And the cause of this thing, was Romeo, a poor wandering man," who had advised the duke to be

unsparing in his dowry to his eldest daughter, so to command a splendid alliance, as the best means to advance her sisters also. He gave her half his duchy, and she married the king of France. Guicciardini in reply says, "You have set me on ransacking Romagna for a copy of Dante, and at last I have found one." But he was too high-spirited to apply for a gift from the pope.

Guicciardini was tall and of commanding aspect ; rather squarely made, and not handsome ; but robust, and with an animated, intelligent countenance. He was ambitious, and even haughty, so that he could endure neither contradiction nor advice. Prudence, industry, sagacity, and a penetrating understanding, recommended him to his employers ; and he was frequently entrusted with carrying on and correcting the correspondence of the pope and other princes.

The last six books of his history are considered unfinished. No portion of it was published till some years after his death, and then the passages considered injurious to papacy were omitted. A complete edition was first printed at Basle ; but, even in this, the objectionable passages appeared under the disguise of Latin. His first idea had been to write only memoirs of his own life ; and it was by the advice of Nardi, it is said, that he enlarged his plan into a history of Italy during his own times.

VITTORIA COLONNA.

1490—1547.

It would be giving a very faint idea of the state of Italian literature, or even of the lives led by the learned men of those times, if all mention were omitted of the women who distinguished themselves in literature. No slur was cast by the Italians on feminine accomplishments. Where abstruse learning was a fashion among men, they were glad to find in their friends of the other sex, minds educated to share their pursuits and applaud their success. In those days learning was a sort of wealth ; men got as much as they could, and women, of course, were led to acquire a portion of such a valuable possession.

The list of women who aspired to literary fame in Italy is very long. Even in Petrarch's time, the daughter of a professor of Bologna, gave lectures in the university behind a veil, which has been supposed was used to hide her beauty, and which at least is a beautiful trait of modesty, where a young girl was willing to impart her knowledge to the studious, but shrunk from meeting the public gaze. The mother of Lorenzo de' Medici is celebrated for her sacred poems, and her patronage of literature. Ippolita Sforza, daughter of the duke Francesco, and married to Alfonso II., king of Naples, was learned in Greek and many other languages. A manuscript copy of a translation of Tully's *de Senectute* is preserved of hers at Rome, and marked as having been written in her youth ; and two of her Latin orations are to be seen in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. Alessandra Scala, to whom Politian was

attached, wrote Greek verses, which have been printed, appended to the Latin poetry of her learned lover. There was an Isotta of Padua, whose letters are models of elegance, and who composed various poems of merit. The noble house of Este boasted of a learned princess. Bianca d' Este has been celebrated by one of the Strozzi in Latin verses ; he speaks of her Greek and Latin compositions with great praise. Damigella Torella, we are told, was numbered among the most distinguished women of her time. She was profoundly versed in the learned languages, particularly in Greek ; she was an admirable musician, and as beautiful as she was wise. Cassandra Fedele, however, excelled all her sex in her acquirements. She was of a noble family, originally of Milan ; born at Venice in 1465 : she was, by her father's desire, instructed in all the abstruse studies — Greek, Latin, philosophy, and music — with such success, that even in girlhood she was the admiration of all the learned men of the age. There is a letter from Politian to her, which praises her Latin letters, not only for their cleverness and elegance of style, but “for the girlish and maiden simplicity” which adorned them. “I have read also,” he says, “your learned and eloquent oration, which is harmonious, dignified, and full of talent. I am told that you are versed in philosophy and dialectics, that you entangle others by the most serious difficulties, and make all plain yourself with admirable ease ; and while every one loads you with praise, you are gentle and humble.” This kind of knowledge would not suit these days : but those were times when men tried to puzzle themselves by scholastic learning, and when the noble Pico della Mirandola took pleasure in disputing on nine hundred questions. Isabella of Spain, Louis XII. of France, and pope Leo X. all warmly solicited Cassandra to take up her abode at their several courts. She showed willingness to accept the queen's invitation ; but the Venetian republic set so high a value upon her, that they would not permit her to leave their state. She married Mapelli, a physician,

who was sent to Candia by the republic, and Cassandra accompanied him. She became a widow late in life, and lived to extreme old age. She was elected when ninety years old to be the superior of a religious house in Venice; and died at the age of one hundred and two.

This list might easily be much enlarged; but we have no space for further dilation; and therefore turn from names less illustrious, to Vittoria Colonna, the woman of all others who conferred, by her virtues, talents, and beauty, honour on her sex.

Vittoria Colonna was the daughter of Fabrizio Colonna, grand constable of the kingdom of Naples, and of Anna di Montefeltro, daughter of Frederic duke of Urbino. She was born at Marino, a castle belonging to her family, about the year 1490. At the infantine age of four she was betrothed to Ferdinando Francesco d'Avolos, marquess of Pescara, who was not older than his baby bride. She was educated with the most sedulous care, and was sought in marriage by various princes—but that fidelity of disposition which was her beautiful characteristic through life, prevented her from breaking her contract with her young lover. They were married at the age of seventeen. He competed with her in talents and accomplishments. They loved each other with the utmost tenderness, and lived for four years succeeding to their marriage, in solitude, in the island of Ischia, where Pescara had a palace.

But this happiness was of short duration; at the time when Julius II. leagued all Italy against Louis XII., the marquess of Pescara joined the army of the emperor. Vittoria was full of chivalric feelings; her enthusiasm, as well as her tenderness, were gratified by the occupation of embroidering banners for her hero, who, at the early age of one-and-twenty, was made general of cavalry at the battle of Ravenna. That disastrous day was adverse to him. He was taken prisoner and sent to Milan, where he remained a year, and wrote a dialogue on love, addressed to his wife, in a dedication in which he laments that he can no longer

visit her as he was used, whenever the duties of his station permitted his absence. As a kind of answer to this testimony of his affection, Vittoria designed an emblem—Cupid within a circle, formed by a serpent, with the motto "*Quem peperit virtus, prudentia servet amorem*"—"May prudence preserve the love, which originated in virtue."

After the French were driven from Italy, that unhappy country enjoyed a short interval of peace, interrupted by the invasion of Francis I. Pescara was present at the battle of Pavia, and distinguished himself by his intrepidity, and mainly contributed to the success of the emperor's arms. He was not rewarded as he deserved, and the opposite or French party thought that his consequent discontent afforded an opening for a reconciliation with them. Geronimo Morone was employed by them to seduce him from his fidelity to Charles V. He was offered the kingdom of Naples as a reward, and every argument was used that might have most weight;—the honour he would acquire by driving the barbarous nations from Italy, and the favours which the pope and other princes would shower upon him. These were, however, but specious reasonings. Pescara lent too ready an ear to them; but Vittoria at once detected their fallacy, and the disgrace that would befall her husband if he abandoned his imperial master. She wrote him a letter full of earnest persuasion to refuse the dazzling offers of Morone. She spoke of the glory acquired by fidelity and unblemished honour, as far outweighing any that a crown could bestow, saying, that for herself, she desired to be called the wife, not of a king, but of that great and glorious soldier, whose valour and generosity of soul had vanquished the greatest kings. Pescara's conduct on this occasion is wholly unworthy of the precepts of his admirable wife. He continued faithful to the emperor, but acted the base part of a spy and informer: by his means Morone's designs were betrayed, and he was thrown into prison. There is no doubt that the high-minded Vittoria continued to the

last entirely ignorant of this ignoble action ; and praised her husband for having listened to her exhortations, and rejected a crown.

But while the marquess was acting so as to cast an eternal stigma on his honour, death was at hand to terminate every ambitious project. His many wounds, and the fatigues he had endured during the long wars, had so shaken his health, that neither his good constitution nor the skill of physicians were any longer able to afford relief. While preparing to die, he desired to take leave of his wife, and sent for her to join him at Milan ; but when he found that he should not survive long enough to see her, he sent for his cousin, the marchese del Vasto, and recommended Vittoria to him with the warmest affection. Vittoria, on hearing of her husband's illness, had left Naples to join him. She passed through Rome, where she was received with the greatest honours, but on arriving at Viterbo, she received intelligence of Pescara's death : her grief caused her to forget her religious resignation and fortitude ; its excess overwhelmed her with tears and the bitterest anguish.

From that time this illustrious lady never ceased to spend every faculty of her soul in lamenting her lost husband. They had been married seventeen years, but had no child ; she gave herself up entirely to sorrow ; and her faithful heart, incapable of a second attachment to replace one which had begun with her life, cherished only the image of her past happiness, and the hope of its renewal in another life. Her active mind could not repose tranquilly on its misery ; she continued to cultivate it, so to render it more worthy of Pescara, and she exercised and amused it by the many sonnets she wrote in his honour. An Italian author has named her second only to Petrarch. Her verses are full of tenderness, of absorbing passion, of truth and life. They fail in poetic fancy ; and yet, so much does the reader sympathise in the intense and fond sorrows of this extraordinary woman, that none can criticise, while all are

touched by her laments. The best poem in her volume has been attributed to Ariosto, I do not know on what authority ; but if written by her, has that elegance of style and concentration of expression, which characterises true poetry. It begins with the affecting exclamation, " I am indeed her you loved ! Behold how bitter and eating grief has changed me ! — Scarcely could you recognise me by my voice. On your departure, that charm which you called beauty, and of which I was proud, since it was dear to you, left my cheeks, my eyes, my hair ! — Yet, ah ! how can I live, when I remember that the impious tomb and envious dust contaminates and destroys thy dear and beautiful limbs ! " These verses may in their original be very justly compared in pathos and grace to Petrarch : —

Io sono, io son ben dessa ! or vedi come
 M' ha cangiata il dolor fiero ed atroce
 Ch' a fatica la voce
 Può di me dar la conoscenza vera.
 Lassa ! ch' al tuo partir partì veloce
 Dalle guancie, dagli occhi, e dalle chiome
 Questa a cui davi come
 Tu di beltade, ed io n' andava altera,
 Che me 'l credea, perchè in tal pregio t' era.
 * * * * *
 Com' è ch' io viva, quando mi rimembra,
 Ch' empio sepolcro, e invidiosa polve
 Contamina e dissolve
 La delicate alabastrine membra ?

For seven years she gave up her whole heart to sorrow. Her relations, thinking her too young at the age of thirty-five to continue unmarried, pressed her to accept one of the many offers of marriage which she received. But, wedded as all her thoughts had been since her earliest infancy to one object, she felt unconquerably averse to any second nuptials. She lived in retirement either at Ischia or Naples, dedicating herself wholly to memory. Her active mind, refusing to find comfort in any sublunary blessing, had recourse to religion for consolation. She now employed herself in writing sacred poetry, and her enthusiastic disposition led her to project a pilgrimage to Jerusalem ; but the marchese del Vasto opposed her putting it into execution.

She now left Naples on a tour to the north of Italy,

and visited Lucca and Ferrara. She afterwards took up her residence at Rome, and became the intimate friend of the cardinals Bembo, Contarini, and Pole, and various distinguished prelates. A love of yet greater retirement induced her a few years after to retreat to a convent at Orvieto ; from whence she removed, after a short time, to the convent of Santa Caterina, at Viterbo. Our countryman, cardinal Pole, resided in this town, and an intimate friendship subsisted between him and Vittoria. There is a resemblance in their characters that renders this intercourse interesting ; they were both single-minded, enthusiastic, and noble. Vittoria added feminine tenderness to these qualities, while religious fervour formed a bond of sympathy between them. The companions of cardinal Pole were Flaminio and Pietro Carnesecchi : the latter having afterwards become a protestant, doubts have been raised concerning the orthodoxy of Vittoria ; but there is every evidence that she never fell off from her adherence to the catholic church.

A short time before her death she returned to Rome, and took up her abode in the Palazzo Cesarini ; where she died, in the year 1547, at the age of fifty-seven. During her last moments her attached friend, Michael Angelo, stood beside her. He was considerably her junior, and looked up to her as something superior to human nature, and entitled to his most fervent admiration. He has written many sonnets in her praise ; and there is extant a letter, in which he states how he stood beside her lifeless remains, and kissed her cold hand, lamenting afterwards that the overwhelming grief and awe of the moment, had prevented him from pressing her lips for the first and last time.

This almost divine woman was held by her contemporaries in enthusiastic veneration. Her name is always accompanied by glowing praises and expressions of heartfelt respect. Ariosto joined with all Italy in celebrating her virtues and talents, and has addressed several stanzas to her in his *Orlando Furioso*.

GUARINI.

1537—1612.

BATTISTA GUARINI was descended from a family illustrious for its literary merits. One of his ancestors, known as Guarino of Verona, was conspicuous among the restorers of learning of the fifteenth century ; and his descendants emulated his labours. Battista was born at Ferrara, in 1537. His mother was Orsolina, the daughter of count Baldassare Machiavelli. We are nearly in ignorance with regard to any of the circumstances of the early youth of Guarini. He studied at Pisa and Padua, and visited Rome while very young. On his return to Ferrara, he gave lectures on Aristotle in the university. He was made professor of belles lettres, and was already known to his friends as a poet. He married young, Taddea Bendedei, of a noble Ferrarese family.

But Guarini was not contented with a life of literary labour, and preferred the distinction of a court to poetic fame. There is a letter of his, dated 1565, which gives token that he had already made the paltry ambition of serving a prince the aim of his life. This letter is written to a friend at Pisa, who had asked his advice on the subject of whether he should enter on the service of his sovereign. Guarini establishes the doctrine, that in private life a man is as far from tranquillity as in public ; he is equally pursued by envy and pride, without the compensation he might find in courtly favour. In his own person he acted on these ideas, and reaped the usual harvest of disappointment and mortification. His wishes were, however, at first gratified. He was

sent, by the duke Alfonso, to Venice, about this very time, to congratulate the new doge, Pietro Loredano; and, his oration being printed, he acquired a reputation for talent and learning. He was for some time resident at Turin, as ambassador to Emanuel Philibert, duke of Savoy. In 1571, he was sent to Rome, to pay homage to Gregory XIII., who had succeeded to Pius V. He arrived in the evening, after a hasty journey, and passed the night in composing his speech, which he delivered the next morning in consistory. Two years afterwards, the duke sent him to Poland, to congratulate Henry of Valois on his accession to the throne. On his return, he was named counsellor and secretary of state. After an interval, he was a second time sent to Poland, on a mission of the highest importance. Henry of Valois succeeded to the crown of France, and Alfonso was desirous of being chosen in his room to the Polish throne. Guarini was sent to negotiate his election. He felt the weight and responsibility of his errand fall heavily on him. His letter to his wife during the journey has been several times quoted, but it is too interesting to be omitted here. It is dated from Warsaw, November 25. 1575, and is as follows: —

“ This which you read is my letter and not my letter; it is mine, for I dictate it, — it is not mine, because I do not write it. But you must not so much grieve that I have not a hand to write with, as rejoice that I have a tongue to recount that which, from vain compassion or negligence, another might conceal. I know you must have been complaining of my dilatoriness in writing, but I shall find no difficulty in excusing myself, since the cause has been worse than the effect; and, instead of lamenting my silence, you may thank God that you at last hear from me. I set out, as you know, more in the fashion of a courier than an ambassador; and it would have been well if my body alone had laboured, while my mind reposed. But the hand used by day to whip on my horses, was put to service at night in turning over papers. Thus, formerly, I ar-

rived at Rome in the evening by post, and the next day presented myself at the consistory. Nature gave way under the double fatigue of body and mind, especially as I travelled by the road that passes through Saravalle and Ampez, which is inexpressibly disagreeable and incommodious, as well from the rudeness of the inhabitants as the state of the country; the want of horses, scarcity of provisions, and, in short, of every necessary of life; so that, on my arrival at Hala, I fell ill of a fever, in spite of which I hurried on to Vienna. I leave you to imagine what I suffered from fever, weariness, and thirst: unable to procure remedies or medical treatment; cast upon bad lodgings, bad food, and into beds that smothered me with their feathers; devoid of all those conveniences and comforts which are necessary to the sick. My malady increased, and my strength grew less; and every thing, except wine, became distasteful to me, so that I had small hopes of life, and turned with disgust even from the few days I expected to live. While I navigated the Danube, we were nearly overwhelmed by a rapid and dangerous stream, and should not have escaped had not the sailors made use of the assistance of the strong and active men of the country, who are accustomed to contend with this danger, being always on the spot to give aid, and who, by force of oars, stemmed the torrent. But for their help no vessel could escape wreck; and the place is worthy of the infamous reputation it has gained, and the name of the Pass of Death, which is bestowed on it. The boldest travellers fear the passage, and disembark, and proceed by land, till the boat has got beyond the danger, for it is really frightful; but I was so ill, that I had lost all sense of peril, and remained on board with the brave boatmen,—I will not say whether from stupidity or intrepidity,—yet I may say that I was intrepid, since I felt no fear when but two steps from certain death.

“ I arrived at last at Vienna, where a physician, without considering the symptoms of my illness, gave me a medicine that poisoned me, and my malady grew

worse. You will all say that I ought to have stopped short, and taken care of my life: my common sense, my sufferings, the failure of strength, and a natural wish to live, love for my fellow creatures and my family, suggested the same counsel; but my honour forced me to proceed, and obliged me, since I was at the head of this embassy, and as the whole weight of so important a negotiation rested on me, to prefer the interests of my prince to my own safety; and I acted so that I might testify to all Poland my fidelity to my sovereign by my death, rather than, by preserving my life, give room to the suspicion that I feigned an illness so to break my promises, the fulfilment of which was expected with anxiety; which false notion among those selfish and distrustful men would at once have discredited our negotiation, and deprived our prince of the crown which we are endeavouring to place on his head.

“ It is impossible to form an idea of what I suffered during a journey of more than 600 miles, from Vienna to Warsaw; dragged and torn along, rather than conveyed, by my incommodious carriage. I do not know how I survived: beset by continual fever, without rest, or food, or remedies; enduring excessive cold and infinite inconveniences, while I passed through an uninhabited country, where I often found it better to remain for the night in my uncomfortable carriage, than to expose myself to the stench of the inns or, rather, stables, where the dog, the cat, the fowls, the geese, the pigs, the calves, and sometimes squalling children, kept me awake all night. The difficulties of the journey were increased also by the robbers, who, during this interregnum, infest the country, robbing whatever they can; so that it was impossible to proceed without a strong escort; and, although I took infinite pains to avoid them, I had twice nearly fallen into their hands, escaping rather through Divine Providence than human foresight. I arrived at last at Warsaw, a great deal more dead than alive; nor have I gained any relief to my sufferings by being here, except that I am no longer in movement,

nor dragged along by my carriage ; for the rest, I enjoy no repose, either night or day. My fever is now my least evil ; the objects by which I am surrounded are worse : the place, the season, the food, the drink, the medicines, the physicians, the servants, the inquietude of my mind, and other troubles, are greater ills than the fever, which would soon quit me but for these annoyances. Indeed, I have not yet discovered whether my sleepless nights arise from illness, or the constant noise around me. Imagine a whole nation assembled in a little village, and I lodged in the middle of it. There is no spot above, below, to the right nor to the left,—there is no room by day or by night, that is not full of noise and disturbance. No particular time is set apart for business here ; they are always at work, because they are always drinking, and without wine all transactions grow cold. When business is ended visits begin, and when these are over, drums, trumpets, cannons, shouts, cries, quarrels, and every other species of tumult, fill up the interval till I am distracted. If I suffered these things for the glory and love of God, it would be called a martyrdom ; and yet, to render service without hope of reward, almost deserves the same name. God knows what is to become of me ! I should feel that my life was no longer in danger if I could take any care of myself. Prepare your mind for every evil. It is the part of a silly woman to lament a husband who is content to die. Let others honour my memory with their tears ; do you honour it by your courage. I recommend our children to you ; for if I die, you must be a father as well as a mother to them. Arm yourself with reflection and manly fortitude ; guarding them from those who have reduced me to this state, and teaching them to imitate their father in any thing rather than in his fortunes.”*

* There is another letter of Guarini, dated from Cracovy, during his first visit to Poland, written with less personal feeling, and greater toleration : — “ I have viewed the climate and manners of this country,” he writes, “ with infinite pleasure ; mitigating the annoyances resulting from unusual things, by the enjoyment of unusual sights. The country and its inhabitants are certainly much less barbarous than is generally supposed ; and in

This letter presents a lively picture of Guarini's disposition ;—his energy in struggling with evils ; his ambition to please his prince, and his fears lest he should not be fitly recompensed ; the fervour of imagination, which magnified ill fortune, and which, while it gave him strength to meet it, yet doubled its power over him. Although he failed in the object of the embassy, yet, after all the dangers to which he had exposed himself, he felt that he had sacrificed his life to his prince, and yet that he should go unrewarded. He was not deceived ; but he was incapable of meeting the fulfilment of his anticipations with any patience or fortitude.

His mind was naturally turned to poetry ; but he pretended to disdain such occupation. On the subject of his *Pastor Fido*, he writes to a friend : — “ This is the work of one who does not profess the poetic art, but writes for his own amusement, as a recreation from more serious studies ; and who would willingly burn his works when they do not appear good to good judges.” The fame and favour which Tasso was enjoying made him depreciate himself, since he could not excel his rival. Tasso and he had been friends for many years ; they quarrelled at this time, but the discord did not result from any literary contest, but from rivalry in the favour of a lady. They both loved the

my opinion there would be no fault to be found, if the former was gifted with wine, and if the latter abstained from it. But I am afraid that my words will scarcely find credit with you, prejudiced as you are by the accounts given by the French who have been here. Yet I am sure you would agree with me, if you ever visited the country. The kingdom is extensive, rich, powerful, united, abundant, and peopled by a brave population. The senators display great talent during peace—the cavaliers valour in war : their aim is glory—their support liberty. The form of the government is mixed, like that of Sparta, but better than that. For the kingdom is neither oppressed by the tyranny of one, nor the insolence of a few, nor the baseness of the many ; but having mingled the best parts of all three modes of government, one has resulted, in which the kingly power cannot intrench upon liberty, nor licence endanger the monarchy. The nobles cannot oppress the people, nor the people injure the nobles. Valour holds the first rank, nobility the second, riches the third ; and every one, however lowly born, may nourish the expectation of rising by merit to the highest honours. How I wish that you had an opportunity of visiting it : I am certain that you would be highly pleased. A journey to France is more fatiguing ; and after arriving in Poland, I, to whom an excursion to Rome used to appear an arduous undertaking, begin to think that travelling is a natural state for every man.”

countess of Scandiano. Tasso wrote a sonnet, accusing Guarini of lightness and inconstancy in his passion, as well as of the greater sin of boasting of his triumphs over the ladies of his love. Guarini replied, with bitterness, in another sonnet, accusing his rival of uttering falsehoods that mirrored his own faithlessness, which enabled him to nourish love for two objects at the same time.* This contention broke off their friendship; but Guarini was no ungenerous enemy; he possessed a loyal and noble spirit, and never did any thing to injure his unfortunate rival. On the contrary, some years after, when the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso was about to be published in a very defective and erroneous state, he took great pains to furnish a correct copy.

1582. After struggling with his discontents at court for
Ætat. some time, he requested his dismissal from the duke;
45. and retired to his villa in the Polesine of Rovigo, named La Guarina, having been bestowed upon an ancestor by a former duke of Ferrara. He now congratulated himself on having escaped from the tempests of public life into port; yet his disappointments, and the duke's ingratitude, rankled at his heart, and overflowed upon paper, even when the subject immediately before him was not in accord with the pervading feeling of his mind. He occupied himself at La Guarina by writing the *Pastor Fido*; and he makes one of the characters of the pastoral complain of wrongs similar to his own. Carino, narrating his story, says, —

How I forsook
Elis and Pisa after, and betook
Myself to Argos and Mycene, where
An earthly God I worshipped, with what there
I suffered in that hard captivity,
Would be too long for thee to hear, for me
Too sad to utter. Only thus much know; —
I lost my labour, and in sand did sow:
I writ, wept, sung; hot and cold fits I had;
I rid, I stood, I bore, now sad, now glad,
Now high, now low, now in esteem, now scorn'd;
And as the Delphic iron, which is turned
Now to heroic, now to mechanic use,
I fear'd no danger—did no pains refuse;
Was all things—and was nothing; changed my hair,
Condition, custom, thoughts, and life — but ne'er

* Abate Serassi, *Vita di Tasso*.

Could change my fortune. Then I knew at last,
And panted after my sweet freedom past.
So, flying smoky Argos, and the great
Storms that attend on greatness, my retreat
I made to Pisa — my thought's quiet port.

* * * * *

Who would have dreamed 'midst plenty to grow poor ?
Or to be less, by toiling to be more ?
I thought, by how much more in prince's courts
Men did excel in titles and supports,
So much the more obliging they would be,
The best enamel of nobility.
But now the contrary by proofs I've seen :
Courtiers in name, and courteous in their mien
They are ; but in their actions I could spy
Not the least transient spark of courtesy.
People, in show smooth as the calmed waves,
Yet cruel as the ocean when it raves :
Men in appearance only did I find,
Love in the face, but malice in the mind :
With a straight look and tortuous heart, and least
Fidelity where greatest was profest.
That which elsewhere is virtue, is vice there :
Plain truth, fair dealing, love unfeign'd, sincere
Compassion, faith inviolable, and
An innocence both of the heart and hand,
They count the folly of a soul that 's vile
And poor, — a vanity worthy their smile.
To cheat, to lie, deceit and theft to use,
And under show of pity to abuse ;
To rise upon the ruins of their brothers,
And seek their own by robbing praise from others,
The virtues are of that perfidious race.
No worth, no valour, no respect of place,
Of age, or law — bridle of modesty,
No tie of love, or blood, nor memory
Of good received ; nothing 's so venerable,
Sacred, or just, that is inviolable
By that vast thirst of riches, and desire
Unquenchable of still ascending higher.
Now I, not fearing, since I meant not ill,
And in court-craft not having any skill,
Wearing my thoughts charactered on my brow,
And a glass window in my heart — judge thou
How open and how fair a mark my heart
Lay to their envy's unsuspected dart.

FANSHAWE'S *Trans. of Pastor Fido*.*

*

Come poi per veder Argo e Micene
Lasciassi Elide e Pisa, e quivi fussi
Adorator di deità terrena,
Con tutto quel che in servitù sofferesi,
Troppo noiosa istoria a te l' udirlo,
A me dolente il raccontarlo fora.
Si dirò sol, che perdei l' opra, e il frutto.
Scrissi, piansi, cantai, arsi, gelai,
Corsi, stetti, sostenni, or tristo, or lieto,
Or alto, or basso ; or vilipeso, or caro.
E come il ferro Delfico ; stromento
Or d' impresa sublime, or d' opra vile,
Non temei rischio e non schivai fatica :
Tutto fei, nulla fui : per cangiar loco,
Stato, vita, pensier, costumi e pelo,
Mai non cangiai fortuna : alfin conobbi,
E sospirai la libertà primiera.

The Pastor Fido is the principal monument of Guarini's poetic genius. Despite his pretended carelessness, he was animated by the spirit of poetry, and emulation spurred him on to surpass the Aminta of Tasso ; and he took pains even to compose whole passages in opposition, and manifest rivalry, of that drama. A pastoral presents in its very nature a thousand difficulties. It has for its subject the passions in their primitive simplicity, and the manners are deprived of all factitious refinement ; and yet the most imaginative thoughts and the softest and noblest sentiments are to

E dopo tanti strazi, Argo lasciando
E le grandezze di miseria piene,
Tornai di Pisa ai riposati alberghi.

* * *

Ma chi creduto avria di venir meno
Tra le grandezze, e impoverir nell' oro ?
Io mi pensai che ne' reali alberghi
Fossero tanto più le genti umane,
Quant' esse han più di tutto quel dovizia
Ond' ha l' umanità sì nobil fregio.
Ma vi trovai tutto il contrario, Uranio,
Gente di nome e di parlar cortese,
Ma d' opre scarsa e di pietà nemica :
Gente placida in vista e mansueta,
Ma più del cupo mar tumida e fera ;
Gente sol d' apparenza, in cui se miri
Viso di carità, mente d' invidia
Poi trovi, e in dritto sguardo animo bieco,
E min or fede allor, che più lusinga.
Quel ch' altrove è virtù, quivi è difetto.
Dir vero, oprar non torto, amar non finto,
Pietà sincera, inviolabil fede,
E di core e di man vita innocente ;
Stiman d' animo vil, di basso ingegno
Sciocchezza e vanità degna di riso.
L' ingannare, il mentir, la frode, il furto
E la rapina, di pietà vestita,
Cescer col danno e precipizio altrui,
E far a sè, dell' altrui biasmo onore,
Son le virtù di quella gente infida :
Non merto altrui, non valor, non riverenza,
Nè d' età, nè di grado, nè di legge,
Non freno di vergogna, non rispetto
Nè d' amor nè di sangue, non memoria
Di ricevuto ben, nè finalmente,
Cosa sì venerabile, o sì santa.
O sì giusta esser può, che a quella vasta
Cupidigia d' onori, a quella ingorda
Fame d' avere, inviolabil sia.
Or io, che incauto e di lor arti ignaro
Sempre mi vissi, e portai scritto in fronte
Il mio pensiero, e disvelato il core,
Tu puoi pensar se a non sospetti strali
D' invida gente fui scoperto segno.

Pastor Fido, atto v. scena 1.

flow from the lips of the untaught shepherds and shepherdesses. Thus its foundation being purely ideal, our chief pleasure must be derived from the poetry in which it is clothed. Guarini endeavoured to overcome the want of interest inherent in this species of composition, by a plot more complex than that usually adopted. A portion of this is sufficiently clumsy, and the bad character of the piece, the coquette Corisca, is managed with very little art or probability. There is much spirit and beauty, however, in the final development, — in the discovery that the priest makes that he is about to sacrifice his own son, and the joy occasioned by the conviction suddenly flashing on his mind, that the oracle, on which the whole depends, is happily fulfilled. Still the chief charm of the *Pastor Fido* is derived from its poetry ; the simplicity and clearness of its diction, the sweetness and tenderness of the sentiments, and the vivacity and passion that animate the whole. No doubt he was satisfied with the result of his labours, and found pride in communicating it. While affecting to despise his poetic productions, their genuine merit, and his own vanity, which was great, caused him to collect with pleasure the applauses which his *Pastor Fido* naturally acquired for him. He read it at the court of the duke Ferrante di Gonzaga, to a society composed of courtiers, ladies, and eminent men. It was acted at Turin on occasion of the festivals to celebrate ^{1585.} the nuptials of Charles Emanuel, prince of Savoy, with ^{Ætat.} Catherine, daughter of Philip II., king of Spain. The ^{48.} drama excited the greatest admiration ; and Guarini was looked on henceforth with justice, as second only to Tasso among the poets of the age.

But he was not fortunate enough to be allowed to dedicate his whole time and thoughts to poetry ; and he might bring forward his own experience in proof of his assertion, that private life is not more exempt than public, from cares and the influence of evil passions. He was perpetually plunged in lawsuits, his first being against his father, who had married a second time, it

was said out of spite, and disputed his just inheritance. He had a family of eight children to provide for ; and unrewarded by his prince, he found himself, after struggling for fourteen years to advance himself at court, overwhelmed by debt and embarrassment. His time and attention were taken up by exertions to extricate himself, and to settle his affairs ; while his warm, impatient disposition ill endured the delays and disappointments, and the contact with selfish or dishonest men, which are the necessary concomitants of pecuniary difficulties.

1586. Perhaps these annoyances rendered him less un-
Ætat. willing to accept the invitation, or rather to obey the
49. commands, of the duke of Ferrara, and to return to his post at his court. Alfonso, perceiving the esteem in which he was held by other princes, with his usual selfishness resolved to appropriate the services of a man, which others also were desirous of obtaining: he made him secretary of state, and sent him on missions to Umbria and Milan. His stay, however, was short: very soon after his children had advanced to manhood, those dissensions occurred between them and him, which form a painful portion of Guarini's life. It is difficult to say who was most to blame. The poet's temper was impetuous, and he perhaps showed himself tyrannical in his domestic circle, at the same time that his nature was without doubt, on most occasions, generous and artless. His son had married a lady named Virginia Palmiroli, and continued, as is so usual in Italy, to reside with his wife under the paternal roof. But this arrangement became, it is conjectured, from the pride and imperiousness of the father, quite intolerable ; and the young pair left the house, and instituted a suit at law to obtain such a provision as would enable them to live in independence. The suit was decided against Guarini ; and his indignation, and assertion that his defeat was occasioned by the partiality of the duke towards his son, seem to evince that he had more justice on his side than we are enabled to discover. However this

may be, he was so angry at what he considered the injustice of the sentence pronounced against him, that he again requested permission to retire from Alfonso's court. The duke granted his request, but not without such tokens of displeasure, as induced Guarini to leave Ferrara privately and in haste. He betook himself to the court of Savoy, where the prince willingly took him into his service; but the poet found that the change of masters benefited him little, and he was so constantly employed, that he had not even time to write a letter. Alfonso also set on foot some intrigues against him, disliking that any dependant of his should find protection elsewhere. His tranquillity being thus disturbed, he hastily quitted 1590. Savoy and took up his abode at Padua. He here lost *Ætat.* his wife, whom he affectionately names in his letters 53. as the better part of himself; and, by the separation of his eldest son, and the absence of his daughters, who were either married or had places in the palaces of various princesses of Italy, his family circle was reduced to one son of ten years of age, whom he calls "the hope of his house, and the consolation in his solitude." This change gave birth to new projects in his restless mind. "This sudden alteration and transformation of my life," he writes to the cardinal Gonzaga, in a letter dated from Padua, the 20th of November, 1591, "appears to me to be brought about by the will of God, who thus calls me to a new vocation. I am not so old nor so weak as to be unfit to make use of those talents which God has bestowed on me; and it appears to me that I act ill in spending without profit those years, which by the course of nature I could turn to the advantage of my family, and of my young son, whose inclination for the priesthood I am desirous of assisting; and I would willingly spend the remnant of my days at Rome, if I could obtain such preferment, as would enable me to proceed honourably in the advancement of my moderate expectations." This idea, however, was but the offspring of disappointed hopes, and it vanished when other prospects were opened to him; yet these

were variable and uncertain. His life, both from the ingratitude of Alfonso and his own restlessness, was destined to be passed stormily ; discontent and distrust had taken root in his mind, and existence wore a gloomy aspect.

At length Alfonso died, and this circumstance, and the death of a daughter, assassinated by a jealous husband, caused him to quit Ferrara, and to establish himself at Florence, where he was honourably received by the grand duke Ferdinand. Here doubtless he might have remained in peace, but for the irascibility of his temper, the indignation he felt when his views were thwarted, and his tendency to consider himself an ill-used man. His younger son, whom he mentions in the letter quoted above with so much interest, was placed at Pisa for the sake of his education, where he contracted an imprudent marriage with a young, beautiful, and dowerless widow. Guarini was transported by rage : he accused the duke of abetting his son in this act of disobedience, and indulged in implacable anger against the youth himself, to whom he refused any assistance, when reduced to the most necessitous circumstances. Guarini exalted the paternal authority, and exacted filial obedience, in a manner that displayed more pride than affection. Now in his old age, he was at variance with nearly all his children ; his violent expressions is a proof that he suffered ; but his heart did not relent nor open towards them, even when death snatched them from him ; and it is impossible to sympathise in passions, which thus centred and ended in himself.

On leaving Florence, he visited Urbino ; but, dissatisfied with his reception, he retired to Ferrara. The citizens deputed him to Rome to congratulate Paul Usur on his being created pope. It was on this occasion that cardinal Bellarmino reproached him for having done more harm to the Christian world by his Pastor Fido, than Luther and Calvin by their heresies — a singular denunciation — since, though the softness and tenderness of love, which pervades the poem, may

tend to enervate ; yet the fidelity, the devotion, and purity of sentiment, exhibited in the actions of the chief personages, certainly do not lay it open to excessive censure. Guarini retorted by a witty reply, which the respect paid to the cardinal by the historians, has not permitted to be transmitted to us.

This was the last public service of Guarini. A few 1608.
years after he was invited to be present at the nuptials *Ætat.*
of Francesco Gonzaga and Marguerite of Savoy, during 71.
which a comedy of his was represented with great splendour. Chiabrera wrote the interludes, and the architect Viamini arranged the scenery and decorations.

The last years of his life were taken up by the law-suits, which so strangely chequered his career. He hired a lodging at Venice, where many of his causes were decided, as near as possible to the courts, and frequently visited that city to attend the proceedings ; and he made a last journey to Rome at the time that two suits were decided in his favour. On his return to Venice he was seized by a fever, of which he died, after an illness of seventeen days, on the 7th of October, 1612, at the age of seventy-five.

TORQUATO TASSO.

1544—1595.

“ Tu che ne vai in Pindo,
 Ivi pende mia cetra ad un cipresso,
 Salutala in mio nome, e dille poi
 Ch' io son dagl' anni e da fortuna oppresso.”

“ Thou, who to Pindus tak'st thy way,
 Where hangs my harp upon the cypress tree,
 Salute it in my name, and say,
 I am bow'd down with years and misery.”

THESE few lines, which, in the simple and beautiful original, show what a burthen of thought and power of feeling may be compressed within the smallest compass that language will allow, were written by Torquato Tasso, during his second confinement as a lunatic in the hospital of St. Anne, at Ferrara, by the duke of Alfonso, his patron and his oppressor. They were written when all Europe was listening to the voice of his song, but heard not that of his complaint; in the meridian of his glory as a poet, and in the depth of his humiliation as a man. A spectacle more deplorable and repulsive could hardly be presented to the eye of humanity; nor a fame more enviable and attractive be contemplated by young “spirits of finer mould,” to tempt them to hazard all perils of such suffering for the acquisition of such renown. This fragment—a specimen of thousands of fancies, no doubt, equally exquisite and affecting, which were continually passing through the darkened chamber of his mind, more dreary than the gloom of his prison-house—has been quoted at the commencement of this memoir, as letting the reader at once into the whole mystery of the poet's life, by a single flash of his genius affording a glance at his afflictions. What these were, a long and melancholy tale must unfold; what their effect was may be painfully conceived, when we recollect that he was scarcely turned upon *forty*, at

the time that he sends the message to his forlorn harp in the woods of Pindus, that he is "oppressed with years and ill fortune,"—"dagl' anni e da fortuna oppresso."

If ever man was born a poet, it might be said so of Tasso; while his whole manner of life, not less than its remarkable vicissitudes, exemplified the poetic character, as it has been idealised in our minds from infancy, by the impressions left upon them, both from fabling traditions and authentic records, concerning these privileged, but on the whole (perhaps) unhappy, beings. The price of greatness must be paid, in labour or suffering, by every man who would distinguish himself in any way above his fellow-creatures; and the poet (*no* more, it may be, though apparently *much* more, than the prince, the warrior, the statesman, or the philosopher,) must endure hardships, mental and personal, in proportion to his enjoyments, and be humbled in the same degree that he is exalted above the common lot. Among any ten names, which might be mentioned as having secured an imperishable pre-eminence beyond the probability of revolution, in the same walk of polite literature, Tasso's undoubtedly would be one. At what an expense it was acquired, we proceed to show in a train of events, almost as romantic, and a thousand times more touching, than any thing in his own diversified fictions. He was a poet in every thing and at all times, from infancy (if we may believe his biographers) till he died in extreme old age (if we measure his life by his own testimony above quoted), in his fifty-second year! Smiles and tears, rapture and agony, hope and despondency, a palace and a dungeon, were the alternations frequently crossing in the course of one who was the companion of princes, the delight of ladies, the admiration of the world,—an outcast, a wanderer, clothed in rags and asking bread, or the lonely tenant of a maniac's cell. Such was he, and such were the changes of his state.

Torquato was the son of Bernardo Tasso, himself a

poet of first rank in his generation, and who has left works, both in prose and verse, to which posterity is yet willing to give honour ; but which suffer more eclipse by proximity to the surpassing splendour of his son's, than might have been their lot had he appeared by himself, the single one of his race, who had proved how hard, and yet how possible, it is to climb

“ The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar.”

Bernardo was the descendant of an honourable line of ancestors,—one of whom, nearly two centuries before him, had been a benefactor to the public, by first introducing the method of epistolary intercourse through the medium of posts ; and, leaving to his children the reputation which he had acquired in the conduct of these, they became his successors, not only in establishments for that purpose in their own country, but some of them in lands beyond the Alps. It is said that noble alliances were formed by various branches of the Tasso family, in Spain and in Flanders, while others became sovereign princes in Germany, that menagerie for potentates of all genera and species, from the two-headed eagle of Austria to the wren of * * * *. It would be invidious to set down one out of a hundred who might contend for the honour of filling up the blank, as the least of the little among the great. But, whatever were the hereditary glories of a name,—drawn like a golden chain out of the darkness of the past, and connected, as that of the obscurest peasant in a civilised country may be presumed to have been, with all the varieties of rank, all the gradations of intellect, and all the changes of good and evil fortune,—of all the links which formed that chain, those of Bernardo and Torquato were and have remained the most illustrious, though the consecutive or collateral series has been continued to the present day, when the representatives are still found at Bergamo.

Bernardo, who was born in 1493, being left an orphan in early youth, with two dependent sisters to provide for out of a very slender patrimony, was com-

pelled to quarter himself on the patronage of sundry princes and prelates, who, according to the fashion of the times — some from parade, and others from attachment to the noble arts, — loved to have men of genius and letters in their train. Many of these, indeed, were kept, not only to adorn their courts and swell their pomp, but were employed as secretaries and counsellors, as well as occasionally entrusted with important embassies, which, both in war and peace, were frequent between the commonwealths and principalities into which Italy was divided, and by whose conflicting interests, or under the malignant influence of whose petty intrigues (the rank growth of such a state of society), it was continually more or less distracted. Bernardo was, therefore, from the pressure of circumstances, a restless and homeless man through the principal part of his life, serving the great without serving himself, for precarious bread; and at once pursuing fortune and fame, in the vain hope of being at length — and at length — and at length rewarded for his fidelity to his masters with the former, and leaving an inheritance of the latter, which should as much exalt his family by distinction in literature, as others had aggrandised it by the acquirement of riches and alliances with rank, at home and abroad.

At the age of forty-one, after a youth of liberal study, sanguine anticipation, and cherished but ill-directed love for a lady of great beauty and no less celebrity, having been praised by Ariosto — in the unsuccessful pursuit of which he compensated himself and delighted his countrymen with the blandishments of poetry, — he was at length appointed secretary to Ferrante Sanseverino, prince of Salerno. Him Bernardo accompanied through many strange vicissitudes of prosperity and misfortune, in the court and in the battle-field; till, at the end of a few years, he shared so grievously, yet so magnanimously, in the ruin of his patron, that, the latter being involved in a conspiracy against the viceroyal government of Naples, and compelled to flee into

France, the poet followed him thither at the sacrifice of his small estate, and an income which had just raised him above want. Before this ebbing in the tide of his affairs, which, "taken at the flood" (had that not been arrested in its advance), he might reasonably have expected would have led on to fortune, he had married a lady of Naples, named Portia Rossi, an heiress in expectation, and of great personal and mental accomplishments. This was the golden age of Bernardo's life. After the revelry of fancy and romance which had carried him away during his former passion, wherein his heart had little share, the love of affection endeared him to his home, and he felt the transition like one who exclaims, "How sweet is daylight and fresh air!" after the midnight splendour of the ball-room, with the dream-like fascinations of music, dancing, and spectacle, which vanish as effectually as fairy palaces conjured up in the wilderness, and leave the heart desolate.

While Bernardo was at Naples, he commenced a poem of the romantic class on the adventures of Amadis de Gaul, or "Amadigi," as the work is entitled. This he projected upon the regular plan of a fable, having a beginning, middle, and end; but he was not of sufficient authority to establish, by his example, a classical form of epic, though his more successful and more gifted son seems to have borrowed the idea of doing that from him. When he read the first cantos of this performance, as originally constructed, he observed, that though the presence chamber of the court of Salerno was well filled at first with eager and expecting auditors, before he had done nearly all of them had disappeared. From this he concluded (not suspecting any deficiency of power in himself), that the unity of action prescribed by the severer critics was, in its very nature, not agreeable to *nature in art*, knowing that he had punctiliously observed all the rules of the latter. This failure, enforced by the persuasions of his friends, and the commands of the prince, induced him to remodel what he had written, and elaborate the remainder after the

precedents of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto. The work was extended to a hundred cantos, and, when published, was so well received, that the author had cause to congratulate himself on having met the public taste and gratified it; but it was the public taste of the day only, for his poem passed away with the fashion of it, and is now remembered among "things that were," while the three productions of his afore-named predecessors still keep their graduated rank of ascent, and find readers in every age, notwithstanding all the defects and excesses that may be charged upon them. Bernardo's failed; less, perhaps, because of its inferiority, than because it did not display the proportionate superiority which the others had each in turn manifested over all its respective forerunners.

It was while Bernardo resided at Sorrento, a city in the vicinity of Naples, where he occupied a palace overlooking the sea, happy in his home, and prosperous, or rather promising himself prosperity in his fortune, the prince of Salerno having released him from all burdensome duties in his service, that his son Torquato, the second of that name (the first having died young), was born, on the 11th of March, 1544. Sorrento is here put down as the birth-place of the poet, among other cities contending for that honour, like those seven

— "that strove for Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begg'd his bread."
Ath. I. 384.

For of Tasso, in the sequel, a sarcasm as bitter might be recorded. A daughter, elder than either of the boys, was at this time growing up under the eyes of their parents. A letter of the father's (previous to *our* Torquato's birth) to his sister Afra, who had retired into a convent, gives a lively glimpse of Bernardo's affectionate and domestic character.* "My young daughter is very beautiful, and affords me great hopes

* The translation is from Dr. Black's valuable *Life of Tasso*, from which other occasional quotations may be hereafter made, with this brief but grateful acknowledgment.

that she will lead a virtuous and honourable life. My infant son" — Torquato the first — "is before God our Creator, and prays for your salvation. My Portia is seven months gone with child; whether a son or a daughter, it shall be supremely dear to me; only may God, who gives it me, grant that it may be born with his fear; pray together with the holy nuns that the Almighty may preserve the mother, who in this world is my highest joy." It is ludicrous, yet affecting, to observe what little circumstances are eagerly laid hold upon after death, respecting the personal history of men who, during their lives, were neglected in their hardest trials, or oppressed in their helplessness by those who were bound to protect and foster them. The very hour of Tasso's birth, as well as the place, has been contested against his own authority: he says that it was four o'clock in the morning; Serassi, that it was mid-day. "He ought to have been born at Naples," says Manso, "though he happened first to appear at Sorrento." It may be settled that he was a native of Italy rather than of any place where he may first have seen the light, in a country throughout which he was a stranger and a pilgrim all his days. Indeed, he ought to have been born on the sea; so little claim, on the ground of paternal kindness shown to him, had any city in the peninsula to the glory of his birth.

Scarcely had he been welcomed into the world under auspices so cheering as those recently mentioned, than the fortunes of his family took an adverse turn. Bernardo was summoned away from the delightful retirement of Sorrento, to join his patron in the war which had just broken out between the emperor Charles V. and Francis I., and in which the prince brilliantly distinguished himself. Meanwhile, if we are to believe his nursery traditions, the little Torquato was giving, even from his cradle, proofs of the spirit that was in him, scarcely less extraordinary than if, like Hercules, he had strangled serpents, or like another poet of old, attracted bees to his lips, whether to gather or to de-

posit sweetness there we need not stay to enquire. Manso, his latest and most munificent patron, his first and most encomiastic biographer, (whose memoir, like Boccaccio's of Dante, reads more like romance than reality in many passages, and no where more than in this instance,) says, that the child, even during his first year, gave evidence of the divinity of his genius. For scarcely had he attained his sixth month, when, contrary to the usage of children, he began not only to let loose his tongue (or to prattle *a snodar la lingua*), but even to speak outright, and that in such a manner that he was never known to lisp (or clip) his syllables, as all other infants do, but formed his words complete, and gave them perfect utterance. If this be true, his marvellous faculty of speech, like the produce of a premature spring, must have suffered an early blight: for he himself records that, in speaking, he was little favoured by nature, having an unconquerable impediment of tongue; whence he preferred to communicate his thoughts rather in writing than by the audible voice, when he meant to win attention or produce impression. His own testimony is so far at variance with the assertion of his friend Manso respecting his early fluency, that he appeals for confirmation of the fact that he is a stammerer (probably to no very inconvenient degree) to some of his correspondents. But we are told, on the same authority, that the infant was equally precocious in the faculties of the mind; that he could reason, explain his thoughts, and answer questions with surprising intelligence. Moreover, to crown the climax, it is said that he seldom cried, and never laughed; the only exception, it may be presumed, of a healthy child since the world began; but that he was grave, dignified, and sage, and announced by his behaviour that he was destined for some great design.

On the return of Bernardo from the army, he enjoyed a brief prolongation of his domestic quiet at Sorrento, during which all that a romantic father and a passionately tender mother could do to awaken, cherish,

and confirm the early intimations of transcendent intellect in their darling son, was employed ; and such discipline, by its natural effect, no doubt, coloured and characterised their son's mind, in the sequel, to the end of life. In one of Bernardo's letters to Portia, during his late absence, he says, that, while he leaves to her the delicate task to adorn their daughter Cornelia with every virtue and accomplishment which becomes a maiden, he intends himself to train up their young Torquato for his more arduous station in society, when he should be of proper age. This purpose was never realised.

In 1552, the prince of Salerno and his adherents being declared rebels, Bernardo, as one of the most attached of his friends, was included in the proscription : his estate was confiscated, and an income of 900 scudi lost ; leaving him utterly destitute of resources, with the exception of a few valuable trinkets, and the hope of some time recovering his wife's dowry — a hope which outlived himself, and which he bequeathed as a perpetual plague of expectation and disappointment to his son, who, as will be seen, obtained a decree to have it, against his mother's brothers, nearly at his own last hour. Bernardo being thus driven into exile, his wife remained with the children at Naples, in very narrow circumstances, though amongst wealthy relatives, who seem always to have treated her and her offspring with unnatural hard-heartedness. Torquato, meanwhile, under her superintendence, was making progress in the general rudiments of knowledge ; but especially in the acquisition of languages, in rhetoric, and in poetry, proportioned to the promise of his earlier years. His principal tutor was one Angeluzzo, at a college of the Jesuits, recently established in that city. So eager and intent was he in quest of knowledge (such as lay within his reach), that his mother, so far from having to urge or bribe him onward, was obliged, for his health's sake, to restrain him. Early and late he was at his books ; and on the winter's mornings he was sent

from his home to the school with a lantern and servant to conduct him. At seven years of age he was already a considerable proficient in the Greek and Latin tongues, and had begun to exercise himself in oral eloquence and written composition ; but no genuine specimens of either of these have been preserved.

The following beautiful and touching lines, in which he alludes to the worst period of his life, — his separation from his mother, when called away from Naples to join his father at Rome, — have been absurdly attributed to him as actually penned at this date. Hoole, and even Hunt, two of his modern translators, have fallen into this error ; whereas a moment's consideration would convince any man, who understood the difference between *adult* poetry and puerile attempts at rhyming, that such verses, at such an age, (nine years !) would have been sufficiently remarkable to justify belief in the fables of his babyhood, when he sat talking pretty unbroken Italian on his mother's knee, before he was twelve months old.

The passage occurs in a figurative canzonet on the river Metauso, but addressed to the duke of Urbino, imploring refuge and protection in his adversity. Though left unfinished, the fragment is acknowledged to be one of the most exquisitely wrought of all the author's lyrics : —

“ Me dal sen della madre empia Fortuna
Pargoletto divelse : ah ! di que' baci,
Ch' ella bagnò di lagrime dolenti,
Con sospir mi rimembra, e degli ardenti
Pregghi, che sen portar l' aure fugaci,
Ch' io giunger non dovea più volto à volto
Fra quelle braccia accolto
Con nodi così stretti, e sì tenaci.
Lasso ! e seguii con mal sicure piante,
Qual Ascanio, o Cammilla, il padre errante.”

“ Me, from a tender mother's breast,
Stern Fortune, while an infant, tore ;
Ah ! I remember how she press'd,
Press'd me, and kiss'd me, o'er and o'er,
Bathed with her tears, with doleful sighs,
Breathed for me many a fervent prayer,
Which, ere it reach'd the skies,
Was scatter'd by the passing air.

“ For I was never more to meet
That parent face to face,
Clasp'd in her dear embrace,
With folds so strait, so binding and so sweet.
Alas! 't was mine thenceforth to roam
With ill-supporting feet,
And, like Ascanius o'er the trackless floods,
Or young Camilla, cast on wilds and woods,
Follow a wandering father without home.”

These lines—breathing forth such grateful recollections of maternal tenderness, watching, weeping, praying, over a most beloved and affectionate child, from whom she was parting for ever, and who was destined to be far greater than even she, in her fondest entrancement, could have hoped—remind us of our own Cowper's filial reminiscences, in “ words that weep,” translating “ tears that speak,” on receiving, at a more distant period of a suffering life, his mother's picture: at sight of which, for a while, he lived over again, with a thousand times more intense delight, the scenes of infancy, renewed, like a vision of pre-existence in some happier state than that which had intervened since he had borne the burthen and heat of a long day of life consumed in anguish of spirit, for which, on this side of the grave, he found no solace, and beyond it, no hope for his bewildered mind; dark as Egypt under the ninth plague in that quarter, though, in every other, light as the land of Goshen. Between Tasso and Cowper there were many traits of sad as well as noble resemblance—kindred genius, a kindred malady, and kindred misfortunes; but not kindred alleviations: the advantage here was on our countryman's side; but his disease lay deeper than that of the former, and the symptoms, if not so violent after the first terrible attack, were more inveterate; so that, contemplating the fate of the glorious Italian under eclipse, and pitying him with a sympathy which no man living but himself could feel, Cowper might have drawn the same comparison between Tasso's case and his own, as he has done in those heart-wringing verses (the last which he is recorded to have composed) under the title of “ The Castaway.” These were founded upon a cir-

cumstance mentioned in Anson's Voyage, of a sailor who fell overboard in a storm, when the ship could not be stayed to rescue him, but who followed in its wake, crying after it, and being heard by his companions, while he

— “lived an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried ‘adieu.’”
* * * * *
“At length he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.”}

The melancholy poet adds, in reference to himself, that

“Misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.
* * * * *
No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, *each alone*;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And 'whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.”

Both of Tasso's parents had early and deeply impressed upon his mind and his affections veneration and love to God. In his tenth year the Jesuit fathers, following up the religious instructions of this child of promise according to their views of the Gospel, admitted him to the sacrament; on which occasion, though he acknowledges, in one of his epistles, that he could not enter into the mystery of “the real presence,” according to the Roman interpretation of the true and simple scripture doctrine of “the *communion* of the body and the blood of Christ,” yet, impressed with awe by the pomp of the spectacle, and elevated almost to transport by sympathy of devotion with the surrounding multitude, he received the symbol, according to his own ingenuous account, with “a certain indescribable and unwonted satisfaction.” This circumstance deserves particular mention, because, assuredly, by such a course of domestic and school discipline the boy was trained up in what he understood to be genuine piety, and of which, through after life, he became a zealous professor, however lax on some other subjects his writings, and

even his actions, may have been. In the latter respect, however, he was countenanced by the licentious manners of the age, and especially of that class of society, refined and exalted as it was, in which his lot was cast, but in which he was rather entertained as a guest than recognised as a member of the privileged order. His father, in one of his letters to his mother, says, "It is of the utmost importance to impress, with all your influence and authority, upon the infantine mind the name, the love, and the fear of God, that the child may learn to love and honour Him from whom he has received, not life only, but all the benefits and mercies of providence and grace, which can render man happy in this world, and blessed in that which is to come." In the same letter he says, "I condemn those who beat their children, not less than if they should dare to lay hands on the image of God."

It was after the expatriated party to whom Bernardo belonged had planned an attack upon Naples, by the combined fleets of France and Turkey, which miscarried in a miserable piratical descent upon the neighbouring coast, and a disgraceful re-embarkment, that Portia and her daughter were received into a convent, and Torquato was sent to his father at Rome; who, an exile, on a bed of sickness, and in deep poverty, was solacing himself, amidst his misfortunes, with preparing a volume of his *Rime* for the press, and unweariedly labouring to complete his *Amadigi*. In "the eternal city," young Tasso prosecuted his studies with indefatigable assiduity, and having for companion a cousin of his own name, Christofero Tasso, a lad of indolent habits and slow capacity. He, by his example and influence, for a while happily stimulated the latter to become a worthy competitor of himself; but he soon growing tired in the course, Torquato left him, and every rival beside, far behind in every learned and liberal accomplishment.

In 1556 Portia died, at Naples, never having seen her husband since his original proscription. Her illness

was so brief and so violent, that Bernardo doubted whether it was poison or a broken heart that had cut her off in the prime of her years,—most of which, however, had been so melancholy, since her happiness first seemed consummated by her union with the man of her choice, and in the children of their love, that there needed no auxiliary, in this instance, for Nature to do her work in the shape of death. Meanwhile Bernardo, not being permitted to return to Naples, was compelled, by the stress of hard circumstances, to leave his daughter in the hands of those whom he had but too much reason to call her enemies, though the nearest of kin to her deceased mother. These—probably from motives of rapacity, though political rancour may have added its malignity to the cold venom of avarice—instituted a process against young Torquato, to disinherit him, under a pretence which a fiend incarnate (had such a wanderer from the abyss of lost spirits been permitted to darken the earth with his shadow) might have blushed to advance in a court of justice,—that, having followed his miserable parent to Rome, the boy (at ten years of age!) had made himself partaker of his father's imputed treason, and thereby righteously exposed himself to the same penalties of exile and confiscation. The issue of this iniquitous proceeding does not appear, except it may be gathered from the fact, that the uncles contrived to withhold Torquato's portion of his mother's dowry from him till the last year of his life: and, further to secure the control, at least, of the property by themselves, they married her daughter Cornelia, who, at fifteen years, had grown up into a beauty, to a gentleman of Sorrento, of narrow fortune, but honourable birth, in spite of the protestations of her father, whose ambition had destined her for a higher and more wealthy alliance; his hopes and his plans being even a day's march beyond his power of overtaking them by performance. There is extant a letter written on this occasion by Torquato (probably at the dictation of his father) to Signora Vittoria Colonna, in

which the lad bitterly complains against the cruelty of his uncles in forcing this match upon his sister ; and implores her interference to prevent the entailment of poverty and disgrace upon the young Cornelia, by such a sacrifice of her person and property to the mercenary views of her relatives. "It is hard," says the reputed writer, "to lose one's fortune ; but the degradation of blood is much harder to bear. My poor old father has only us two ; and, since fortune has robbed him of his property, and of a wife whom he loved as his own soul, suffer not rapacity to deprive him of his beloved daughter, in whose bosom he hoped to finish tranquilly the few last years of his old age. We have no friends at Naples ; our relations are our enemies, and, on account of the circumstances of my father's situation, every one fears to take us by the hand." These stern but tender sentiments, wrung in the agony of heart-sickness from the father, were written, not only by the hand of the son upon the paper of the epistle, but on his own heart, and became identified with his personal feelings through life. Though he never suffered the escutcheon of his family to be blemished by a humbling connection, yet he paid dearly, both in his affections and in his pride, to preserve it ; and, if the tradition of his love for a princess of the house of Este be founded in truth, he must have felt that he was himself, in that case, playing the part of "some poor gentleman," whose alliance would be a degradation of the most ancient blood of Italy. Both the father and the son, in the sequel, were reconciled — first for Cornelia's sake, and afterwards for his own — to her husband ; who proved a worthy and kind consort, with whom she lived happily, though not long, and by whom she had several children.

In a letter addressed by Bernardo to his daughter, while she was yet a girl, occurs the following affecting day-dreams of the comforts of old age which he hoped to realise in her filial attentions. After exhorting her to mind her lessons, and promising in due time to provide a

husband worthy of her, with whom she should live near himself, he thus fondly adverts to that closing scene of a troubled life, to which many a sufferer like him, to the last moment, looked on as a forlorn hope — forlorn, yet inexpressibly soothing, and cherished even in the heart of despair: — “Sweet and tranquil to me will be old age, when I shall see (as I hope it may be the will of God) myself perpetuated in your little ones, with my very features impictured on their countenances. Death will then appear to me less terrible, when, beholding you in honour and in peace, enjoying the love of your husband, and the delights derived from the affections of your children, you shall close with pale hands these eyes of mine. And surely it is due to a dear father to receive the last kisses, the last tears, and every other pious and tender office, from a dutiful and loving daughter.”

Fresh commotions in Italy rendering Rome an unsafe sojourn for the homeless Bernardo, he removed his son and his nephew to Bergamo, and fled himself to Ravenna, with two shirts and his *Amadigi* yet uncompleted; as destitute as his contemporary Camoëns, when he escaped from shipwreck with his *Lusiad* in one hand, and with the other buffeting the waves — thus saving at once his life and his immortality! On as troubled a sea, by land, as any breadth of water between Lisbon and Canton, not excepting that round the Cape of Storms, Bernardo was tossed to and fro throughout Italy; and continued to the last as poor, yet as sanguine, as the only genius that Portugal had hitherto produced, and proved itself unworthy to give birth to another by its neglect, if not its ingratitude and inhumanity, to that one. But here a gleam of sunshine broke upon Bernardo, amidst the darkness of his flight from Rome. The duke of Urbino invited him to Pesaro, and afforded him a welcome but temporary asylum there from the persecution of his enemies, and the pressure of indigence — a retreat, indeed, which he himself acknowledged was such as might give inspiration to any poet,

and where he, himself, in quiet and amidst that comfort to which he had lately been a stranger, might complete his long poem.

Torquato for a little time was pleasantly situated at Bergamo, in the family of his cousin and fellow-student, where, being a boy of exceedingly prepossessing appearance, amiable disposition, and manifestly brilliant talents, he was much noticed and even caressed by many of the principal persons in the neighbourhood. Bernardo, however, anxious to have him under his own eye and direction, soon reclaimed him. At Pesaro, Torquato, as might be expected, won attention from the whole circle of his father's acquaintance; and the duke d'Urbino himself was so delighted with his graceful modesty and rare accomplishments, that he introduced him to his own son as a suitable companion in his studies and his pleasures. The young noble of fortune at once became attached to the young noble of genius, and a friendship, so natural to kindred minds early associated — the dawn of affection preceding the day-star of passion in the order of Providence — speedily sprang up, and amidst all the splendour of station which through life distinguished the one, and the sufferings by adversity which were the subsequent lot of the other, was never forsworn or forgotten by either. And well was the lustre, so transiently shed by the prince, in the court of his father, upon the humble son of the exile there, imperishably reflected upon himself, in after years, even from the dungeons of Ferrara, by the glory of the author of "*Gerusalemme Liberata*."

Bernardo having at length put the finishing stroke to his *Amadigi*, looked to the munificence of the king of France and the prince of Salerno for the means of printing it. In these reliances he was disappointed; and it appears that his patron, the prince, was himself so impoverished, that the pension to the poet of 300 crowns (a poor compensation for all his services and sacrifices) was about this time withdrawn. So utterly perished were Bernardo's resources, in this extremity,

that, according to his own lamentable statement, had it not been for the bounty of the duke d'Urbino, he must have been almost reduced to the necessity of begging bread for himself and his son. The duke liberally supplied him, not with bread only for himself and his son, but presented him with 300 ducats, to which were added a hundred gold crowns by the cardinal de Tournon. Hereupon he repaired to Venice, to publish his work. Being received with great respect by the literary characters of that city, then eminent for noble arts as well as victorious arms and prosperous commerce, he was adopted by them, and made secretary to their academy. To this office was annexed a salary so considerable, that, with his wonted improvidence, he immediately established himself in a handsome house, sumptuously furnished, and adorned with what seems to have been his delight, *rich tapestry*, the poetry of the needle and the shuttle, and which at best is but to painting what painting itself sometimes is to nature — a copy reminding the spectator of an original, of which one of the greatest merits of the imitation is the difficulty overcome in achieving it.

Bernardo's vicissitudes would present a touching but melancholy contrast to those of Gil Blas of Santillane, if written in a style of seriousness and sympathy with what is most sacred in suffering, and trying in hope deferred, equal to the pungent humour and heartless indifference to what is "virtuosest, discreetest, best," in the characteristic adventures of that gay footman of fortune. But such transitions as both Bernardo and Torquato experienced, strange as they seem to us, were events of common occurrence, arising out of the state of society in the petty principalities and commonwealths of Italy in the middle ages, and long after the revival of learning, when those who followed the profession of letters were too often dependent for the means of subsistence upon the precarious patronage of haughty nobles and ostentatious ecclesiastics. The part which Torquato had to bear in the diversities of circumstance,

scene, and company, into which he was thrown with his parent, was too well calculated to cherish and confirm all his natural aspirings; while those patrician sentiments, which had been instilled into him from his cradle, amidst poverty, ignominy, and all the wretchedness of ephemeral favour, ever sustained in him a lofty self-esteem, on the ground of honourable birth, the consciousness of innate genius, and the pride of acquired learning, to which had been carefully added those gentlemanly accomplishments which rendered him a fit companion for people of the highest rank in an age of extraordinary display of personal conduct and ceremonial bearing. Tasso, in addition to his peculiar advantages, excelled in all these conventional ones, except in self-control — that especially which degenerates into servility — for (though the most exquisite flatterer in the world, as thousands of panegyrical verses prove him to have been) he never learned the meaner, but more profitable, art of being a court-minion.

While he was thus pursuing his studies with indefatigable application, he was not less diligent in cultivating those talents, which had given such extraordinary signs of power within him. It is stated that while, for the latter purpose, he was reading with intense devotion the poets both of old Italy and new, as well as the relics of the nobler bards of ancient Greece, like most of his countrymen, (perhaps, from secret nationality of feeling,) he preferred the Latins to these, and among the Latins Virgil beyond every other bore the palm in his youthful imagination. In fact he grew so enamoured of the graces and excellences of the *Æneid*, that his own epic became just such a work as, it might be presumed, Virgil himself would have composed in the same age, and under the same influences, as Tasso lived; while, on the other hand, had their births been exchanged, Tasso might have been the glory of the court of Augustus, and flourished then in splendour amidst the greatest and most intellectual society of men of talents that were

ever contemporary, instead of being an almoner, an exile, a prisoner, beholden for food and raiment, in his best estate, to the bounty—or rather to the parsimony—of “the Great Vulgar” of Italy in the sixteenth century, whose names are more illustrious from having been connected with his, than for any record of themselves or their ancestors, which could render their families illustrious beyond the little boundaries of their domains. This supposition, in reference to Virgil and Tasso, may be deemed impertinent; hazardous it certainly is, and once would have been deemed heretical by the idolaters of the Roman poet. Though this is not precisely the place, yet, in a discursive memoir like the present, it may be allowable, to remark upon a line of Boileau, which has done more injury to the reputation of Tasso than all the splenetic criticisms of Sperone, and the verbal persecutions of the Della Crusicans. Ridiculing the bad taste of certain personages who haunt courts, and from their rank and assurance are permitted to judge as foolishly as they please of the merits of authors with impunity, he says (and in a note gives a special instance of such aristocratic wrong-headedness*) that these will prefer “à Malherbe, Théophile,” “Theophile to Malherbe,”—

“Et le clinquant du Tasse à tout l’or de Virgile;”

“And Tasso’s tinsel to all Virgil’s gold.”

This flippant antithesis, which, from its sparkling ambiguity, might itself be quoted as a specimen of sheer “tinsel” (*clinquant*), amounts to no more than that there are “fools,” as the satirist calls them, who prefer what is *false* in Tasso to what is *true* in Virgil; but that the whole, the half, or even a tenth of the “*Gerusalemme Liberata*,” of which he himself speaks elsewhere with sufficient commendation, is composed of “*clinquant*,” without a greatly overbalancing weight of gold even in its worst parts, he has not dared to affirm, though by a pitiful insinuation, not less unworthy of

* See note, page 117.

the author than unjust to the object, he has had the left-handed luck to fix a stigma to that effect upon the fair fame of one, in comparison with whose magnificent creations of thought his own finely elaborated productions are but as "French wire" to "solid bullion." The feeble confirmation of Boileau's equivocal sentence, by the elegant but prejudiced Addison, is of little weight. The critic, who, in tracing Milton's obligations to some of his great forerunners, acknowledges that among these he might have included Tasso, but that he does not deem him "a sufficient voucher," could be but very imperfectly acquainted with the authority which he affected to disparage, but which the poet of "Paradise Lost" held in very different estimation. Try Boileau, when he attempts a strain of heroics, as in the "Ode on the taking of Namur," or Addison, in his celebrated "Campaign," by any page that may be first opened in all Tasso's multifarious compositions in verse, and the "white plume" on the crest of Louis XIV., which the court poet mistook for a star, and the destroying "angel," which the court critics of queen Anne's reign hailed as descending from "the highest heaven of invention," and the feather metamorphosis, in the first instance, will be pronounced a puerile and pedantic conceit; and the "angel," in the second, a piece of commonplace machinery, which scarcely escapes the charge of profaneness in its main attribute. Marlborough, a mortal man, burning to avenge his country's wrongs, may well be imagined as slaughtering, with terrible delight, the thousands and tens of thousands of her enemies; but that an angel should be "*pleased*" (as the cold and heartless phrase is) in executing judgments upon unresisting victims of divine wrath (righteous as the vengeance may be) is utterly inconceivable; nor can the poet shelter himself under the doubtful interpretation of the context,—

"Pleased *the Almighty's orders to perform,*
Rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm,"—

because the first, last, and only impression upon the read-

er's mind will be, that the destroyer is "pleased" with the *destruction*, though the Almighty himself declares that "*He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*" Both these passages might have escaped carping criticism; but, when Boileau and Addison mislead the public to believe that Tasso's writings are "all tinsel," it is fair to show that their own are not "all gold." *

Torquato's mind now feeling strength, and gaining confidence to undertake things beyond his years, he diligently gave his days and nights, in the intervals of severer exercises, to reading and meditating upon the works of his great Italian predecessors, that he might form, after their models, a style of verse and manner of composition which should rival theirs, and yet be all his own. Unconsciously, it is probable, at first, but gradually as he grew up, through an undefined period, he conceived, and, before he reached the age of eighteen, had executed, what Dr. Black calls "the most wonderful work that ever was written by man," when the youth of the author, and the short time in which it was composed — ten months, it is reported — are taken into the account. The "*Joan of Arc*," by our illustrious countryman, Southey, produced in a less compass of time, and at an age not much more advanced than Tasso's, may fairly be put in competition with the "*Rinaldo*," without disparagement to either. Nothing connected with the existence of man, in this mysterious world, at once living within and beyond himself, exceeds, either in purity or intensity, the delight of youth when framing poetry at first according to the extent of new-formed powers, and anticipating *poetry to come*, when years shall have matured his faculties, and his wings, after their first moulting, shall have acquired full vigour of

* It is curious and provoking to observe in how momentary and contemptible a circumstance originated this enduring injury to the reputation of one of the greatest poets by one of the greatest critics. In a note to the clause in *Satire IX.*, Boileau says, "*Un homme de qualité fit un jour ce beau jugement en ma présence.*" So, because "a fool of quality" ("*un sot de qualité*," as he words it in the verse) once happened to say, in the hearing of a wit, that he preferred the "*Gerusalemme*" to the "*Æneid*," "all Europe" has been made to "ring from side to side," for a century and a half, with the *cliquant* of Tasso against the gold of Virgil.

plume to bear him "with no middle flight" above the Aonian mount, while he pursues

"Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

Among real "curiosities of literature" there yet remain copies of Dante and Petrarch, with marginal notes in Torquato's handwriting, which prove with what microscopic minuteness he examined and studied the productions of those masters of that language, to which he himself was destined to give consummate grace as well as power of expression — the strength of Dante, modified from the muscular proportions of Hercules to those of the fine-limbed Apollo, — the delicacy of Petrarch veiled, like the Medicean Venus, in the mantle of Minerva. It may here be noticed, that Tasso was no more an expert penman than a fluent speaker; his manuscripts, according to his own acknowledgment, being very indifferently recommended either by the fashion of the letters, or the correctness of the spelling. The numberless erasures, interpolations, and new readings, with which many of his best works, preserved in the library of the house of Este, are disfigured to the eye, are interesting marks of that process of elaboration by which he slowly but as effectually brought out all the hidden beauty of his thoughts, as though they had been suddenly conceived and perfectly expressed in the ardour of inspiration.

During their residence at Venice, Torquato was much employed by his father in transcribing his own multitudinous poems and letters, as well as in preparing for the press the enormous length of the "*Amadigi*." By this exercise the son himself became daily more familiarised with the means and artifices by which those who excel others in the productions of their genius, form their peculiar style according to their peculiar standard of intellect, and identify their whole cast of thinking with their whole structure of language. To put a passage of an eloquent author to the nicest test of *touch* (if the expression may be allowed for the inter-

course of mind with mind, in the communication and reception of ideas splendidly conceived and felicitously bodied forth by the one, and by degrees only apprehended by the other,) — to put to the nicest test of *touch*, as it were, any eloquent passage of poet or orator, let the admirer copy it out at length, and he will find that the progress of mind, hand, and eye, going all together, and through every part, will give him the most distinct possible possession of the whole in its full proportion, minutest details, and utmost effect.

But while thus the amanuensis of his father, Torquato was not less assiduously cultivating his own talents, and meditating the composition already alluded to, in which he was soon not only to rival the former, but even while a boy, and upon the enchanted ground of romance itself, to prove a greater magician than he. This the sudden and passionate admiration with which his “Rinaldo” was hailed throughout Italy, and beyond the Alps and Pyrenees, irreversibly established. The failure of Bernardo’s hopes, in the neglect with which both sovereign princes and the reading public, after the first effervescence of applause, treated his “Amadigi,” was nearly contemporaneous with the first triumph of his more fortunate son, who, so far as fame could gratify or reward his literary labours, may be said to have succeeded in all that he attempted, either in prose and verse, thenceforward, though some of his performances had but an ephemeral popularity, being welcomed at first, and afterwards formally honoured from the courtesy due to their author, and the measure of kindred excellence by which they were all allied to the happier offspring of his too prolific mind. Bernardo, after he found that the stupendous monument of labour in vain, which he had spent so many years in accumulating, was likely to be left to moulder away and fall of itself into oblivion, — having at its first appearance excited neither enough of envy or admiration to render it extensively attractive to public curiosity, — lay down in despondency at its base, amidst his perished hopes;

and though he made several attempts afterwards to rise, these were all equally unavailing, and the latest solace of his life was the contemplation of that glory descending upon his son which had departed from him.

In considering the fate, by a natural death (so to express it), after a date somewhat longer than that of a natural life, of those who have been renowned in their own age, but have dwindled into insignificance, or become utterly extinct in that which followed, it may be said of the far greater number of those who flourish among contemporaries, not, indeed, that they,

“are born to blush unseen,
And waste their sweetness on the desert air,”

but that they are flowers which bloom in their season, and charm with their fragrance the passers by of one generation, then disappear, and are remembered no more. This is the order of Providence, and it is wise and good ; for were the Almighty less liberal of his gifts, though the possessors being “few and far between” might be more admired and longer, the world would be less benefited than by that perpetual succession and supply (according to the demand for literature) of minds worthy, perhaps, of any age, but formed peculiarly to suit the taste, the manners, and the society of their own. Among Chalmers’ “English Poets,” for example, how many names, once illustrious, now merely *catalogued*, are prefixed to works, unread though unforgotten, on which talents as diversified and as well cultivated as the circumstances of the times would allow were painfully expended, to delight and improve mankind ; each of whose possessors hoped, besides serving his own generation, to leave something behind which the world would not willingly let die. Yet it may be questioned whether some of these, had they lived in other periods, or under different orders of things, might not have taken far higher rank among the candidates for fame, and established permanent claims to the veneration of posterity. Is not great genius, as we call it, when fortunately developed, and

favoured by many contingencies, without which it never would have been so developed, more common than is generally imagined? Is there not at all times and every where a class of intelligences which may be trained up to become generals and captains in literature, in comparison with the rank and file out of which they may be called by peculiar events in their own or their nation's history, and without which they could not have risen above the ordinary state of their less distinguished, but, perhaps, equally capable companions; as the working bees in a hive, as some naturalists tell us, when their queen is lost or taken away from the little community, by a particular regimen, may be nourished up into queens, and from labourers become perpetuators of the race? There seems some probability for this hypothesis, fanciful as it may be deemed, because in all extraordinary emergencies, whether in the world of politics or of literature, minds of the first order are invariably brought into activity from the motives, the means, and the opportunities then afforded to them, though they could never have risen above the depression, mediocrity, or neutral indifference to which they were born, in which they had long lived, and must assuredly have died, had it not been for those apparently accidental opportunities which gave them distinction and pre-eminence, by a change in themselves resembling a new creation, but in reality only an awakening of latent powers.

While Torquato was thus continually giving new pledges, and redeeming old ones of equal lustre, or surpassing the proudest names in his country's literature, the old man, from bitter but unprofitable experience as regarded himself, having proved the precariousness of the favour of princes, and the vanity of expecting fortune to follow fame in verse, determined to indemnify his son for the loss of both his parents' property by bringing him up to a profession in which wealth and honour might more readily be acquired by common industry than by idly looking for the golden

rewards of genius at the hands either of aristocratic patrons, who bestow them as bounties, or of the multitude that compose the public, and who care little about the good or ill fare of those on whom their transient applauses are lavished.

“ So praisen babes the peacock’s spotted trayne,
And wondren at bright Argus’ golden eye :
But who rewardes him e’er the more for thy,
Or feedes him once the fuller by a graine ? ”

SPENSER, *Ecl. X.*

In his seventeenth year, therefore, Bernardo placed his son at Padua, to study jurisprudence, as Petrarch and Ariosto had been condemned to do before him, by prudent parents, and like each of those hopeful sons, who were

“ born a father’s hopes to cross,
And pen a stanza when he should engross,”

Torquato (though it is said that he dutifully and diligently applied with his head to the study of the law) gave his heart and his hand in secret to the unportioned muse. The issue of this affiance, while he was yet embroiled in the nets of legal precedents and practice, was the “ Rinaldo ” already mentioned, a romantic poem, in twelve cantos. The hero is not his own champion of that name, the glory of his later poems, but one of “ the million ” that figure in the “ Orlando Furioso ” — a work which so possessed the mind of young Tasso, while he was at Venice, that he tells us he could not sleep for the fame of Ariosto. This juvenile performance is written more after the manner of that inimitable master than the “ Gerusalemme ; ” but, though deficient in the humour and vivacity which constitute the all-binding and assimilating spell of Ariosto’s tissue of episodes, and by which the reader is reconciled to wink at all the author’s incongruities and caprices, Tasso’s poem, nevertheless, by a more serious kind of magic, laid hold upon public feeling, and so happily hit the expiring taste of his countrymen for the extravagances of chivalrous fiction, that where

his father, after years of hard toil in the same field, had miscarried, the son, in ten months, achieved a triumph, of which the trophies remain to this day; "Rinaldo" being yet one of the metrical romances which are interwoven with the partycoloured staple of Italian literature.

Well might Bernardo be astonished and delighted, yet humbled and chagrined (in some measure), when the manuscript of his son's poem was presented to him, seeing himself already eclipsed in his meridian altitude (which he fondly imagined he had attained in the "Amadigi") by this morning-star of promise just "flaming in the forehead of the orient sky;" and perceiving, as he must have done, that his purpose was for ever thwarted, of placing the boy in that path where fortune scatters her golden apples before the feet of competitors in the race for her favour, rather than indulging them with golden dreams under the shadows of laurels planted by the wayside, the most precious rewards which she bestows on the most successful among poets. The father, however, was too great a lover of song to ruin a good poet in making a bad lawyer, as might have been the case had he persevered in his former views with his son. Wherefore, after some delay, he reluctantly, yet willingly, (a state of mind perfectly possible, though hard to reconcile,) gave his consent to the publication of the "Rinaldo." He who, in the letter to his daughter formerly quoted, so tenderly and beautifully anticipated the happiness of being himself, with his very features, perpetuated in her infant progeny, could not but be transported to see himself, with the features of his very soul, perpetuated in the glorious offspring of his son's congenial yet surpassing mind. With a smile and a sigh, therefore, he permitted the poem to appear, surrendering at the same time his cherished expectation of seeing that son as eminent in the law as he was now likely to be in that which is remotest from law practice and law profits. "Let who will make the laws," said Fletcher of Sal-

toun, "let me make the songs of a people, and by these I will govern them." Tasso's songs have assuredly had larger dominion, and had deeper, wider, more enduring influence in modifying the subsequent character of his countrymen than any legislative enactments, in which it may be imagined that he would never have been concerned, could have exercised. But then he might have enriched and ennobled himself; he might have escaped most of the calamities which hunted him to death in the midst of life; and he might not only have been happier himself, but a more useful member of that society in which he was born, which he served in his day, and in which he died without any monument except some splendid sculpture to record his name. It came otherwise to pass; and whether the world has been made better or worse by his labours, it must be acknowledged that the fame which he sought, and for which he sacrificed all beside, was dearly purchased to himself by the sufferings which it cost him to win. It is reported that when Bernardo remonstrated with him on his indiscreet preference of philosophy (for with him philosophy and poetry were identified) to jurisprudence, and angrily demanded, "What has your philosophy done for you?" he replied, "It has taught me to bear with meekness the reproofs of a father."

The appearance of Torquato's "*Rinaldo*" was not only the dawn of his own day of glory, but the dawn of a new day in the literature of his country. The age of absolute romance was succeeded by one of transition in public taste, during which what was most truly wonderful and meritoriously captivating in the wild fictions of knight-errantry was engrafted upon a stock of classical invention, design, and execution. This was in fact the nearest recurrence that could be made in epic poetry to the models of the ancients, — for the mythological machinery of Greece and Rome could not again be revived in poetry any more than in religion; Jupiter could never again re-

sume his thunder and his throne ; Neptune his trident ; Pallas her ægis, or Venus her cestus ; nor could the supernatural interposition of the supreme God, the agency of angels and sainted spirits, or of Saturn and his legions, be extensively employed (without constructive irreverence, not to say rank blasphemy) as auxiliaries in heroic fable, disguised as true history, or true history disguised as heroic fable. Tasso, Marino, Camoëns, and Milton have indeed presumed upon the perilous experiment of enlisting the armies of heaven and hell in conflict with each other, and intermeddling with earthly affairs ; yet, with the exception of our countryman—and he would be a bold critic who should dare to arraign him for impiety in the use of what nothing but the most signal, unexampled, and inimitable felicity of success could justify, — it may be added, that he would be a critic not less bold, who, as a believer in the Christian faith, should venture to defend even Milton to the extent in which he has exercised this questionable, though hitherto unlitigated, license of fiction ;—with the exception of our countryman, the authors aforementioned have, for the most part, grievously miscarried in the management of their agents of this class, whether good or evil, these being among the most indifferent and ineffective personages in their respective poems. Epic poetry, indeed, either upon classic or romantic precedent, may be said to have become extinct from the time of Tasso. “ Paradise Lost ” cannot be classed with either ; he having achieved the only work of the kind, which, being neither the one nor the other, but combining the merits of each, touched the point beyond which improvement could not be carried. He may be said to have lived in the last age in which supernatural agents and miraculous interventions could be successfully introduced into narrative verse, as being consistent with popular credulity or superstitious belief — an absolutely indispensable requisite for the employment of such means to illustrate human affairs. For example, a

poem equal to Homer's or Ariosto's, written *now* on the plan, and with the gods of the one or the enchantments of the other, would be insufferable: no power of genius could create an interest in behalf of Apollo and Venus, no longer believed in by the poet or by his readers; nor would the achievements of giants and witches, if celebrated by one born in this "age of reason," find mercy from criticism, or indulgence even from the vulgar students of our *penny* literature. Monk Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*, and the monstrosities of the German drama, have been long ago forgotten; the "Michael Scott" of the great minstrel "of that ilk" alone keeps his ground; but all the other preternatural machines of the same creative hand would have perished utterly, had they not been associated with records of the doings and sufferings of beings of flesh and blood like ourselves, though existing in a state of semi-barbarous society exceedingly different from our own.

The "Rinaldo" was the first form of the abstract conception of a regular poem, at once to rival Virgil and Ariosto, which originated in the mind of Torquato while yet a youth of seventeen, but was not wholly developed till, at twice that age, he had produced the "*Gerusalemme Liberata*." All the characteristics of his peculiar genius are perceptible in the incidents, style, embellishments, and conduct of this juvenile essay; which, contrasted with the matured form and perfect majesty of that later offspring of his genius, is, as his own Gabriel, sent to comfort Godfrey, at the opening of the siege of Jerusalem:—take the image in Fairfax's version,—

"A stripling seem'd he, thrice five winter's old,
And radiant beams adorn'd his locks of gold,"—

compared with Milton's "Raphael," "in prime of manhood, where youth ended," alighting on the eastern cliff of Paradise, where,—

"like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his wings, that heavenly fragrance fill'd
The circuit wide."*

* Milton, in the context, has manifestly imitated both Tasso and Fairfax;—Tasso in the description of the angel's descent, and Fairfax in the lively circumstance here quoted, and which is not in the original:—

This prodigy of youthful genius no sooner appeared than it was hailed with acclamation throughout Italy, and eager inquiries from every quarter were made concerning the author — that prodigality of praise might be lavished upon him by the learned, and parsimony of recompense, doled out to him by princes, ambitious of attaching so great a “natural curiosity” to the collection of live rarities about their palaces. For the great of those times coveted the glory, little as they liked the expense, of retaining men of talents in the train of their sycophants and dependents, even when they regarded them only as remarkable among their species, in the same manner as the lions, tigers, eagles, peacocks, and other strange and beautiful animals in their menageries were in comparison with the meaner ranks of brutes. Ariosto, who had experienced all the bitterness of such favour, and felt keenly the ignominy of such distinction, plainly tells us, that the patrons of his day loved those of their parasites who would minister to their personal necessities, pull off and on their boots, share in their orgies, and pander to their vices, — rather than those, whose proud stomachs disdained to allow them to be any thing less than themselves within the precincts of courts, — poets among princes, who could give enduring lustre to the names of inglorious patrons, which otherwise would have found no better memorial than the registers of their births, marriages, and deaths in their family genealogies.

After Torquato's emancipation from the trammels of law by the hand of the parent who had so carefully involved him in them, — flushed with the new wine of liberty, obtained at the surrender of every thing else in prospect, and with nothing but itself in possession, — he repaired to Bologna, to pursue his philosophical studies

“On Libanon at first his foot he set,
And shook his wings, with rory May dews wet.”

The “fragrance” is Milton's own; and here we have the process of one thought, carried onward by three poets, to consummate beauty and perfection in the last.

and indulge in his poetical passion ; — for poetry was truly to him a passion, and the ruling one of his existence, — honour, fortune, ease, pleasure, were all in turns but ministers *to* this, while *by* this he aimed at the acquisition of each of them, as the one or the other were, for the moment, the object of desire or the subject of lamentation for having lost it. But from Bologna he was expelled for a literary squib, the only thing of the kind by which he has gained any celebrity, whether it were his own or not. Some anonymous censor had been amusing himself with publishing pasquinades, ridiculing the principal people of the city, as well as the students of the college, with “much malice and a little wit.” Those who were exposed to these sarcasms were exceedingly galled by the firing from this ambushade of the pen, and the more so as they knew not on whom to wreak their vengeance. Torquato, in the reckless gaiety of a youth of twenty, on a certain occasion making himself merry among his companions by repeating one of these, was immediately pounced upon as the author, not only of the unlucky lines, with which he had been caught in his mouth, but he was assailed as being the secret manufacturer of all the rest. It was in vain that he denied the charge indignantly, and challenged his accusers for the proofs, urging that he himself had been the butt of the sharp-shooter’s shafts, flying out of darkness and hitting in broad day. His papers were seized and examined before the criminal magistrate ; but nothing being discovered to fix the imputation upon him, he was nominally acquitted, though the suspicion was not so easily effaced from the minds of the offended individuals. He took the matter himself in such dudgeon, that he precipitately left Bologna, and removed to Padua, whither he had been invited by his early friend Scipio Gonzaga, who had lately established in the latter city the academy *Degli Eterei*, of which Tasso — certainly one of the most congenial spirits of the age — was worthily enrolled a member, and, according to the pedantic fashion of

those pompous but puerile institutions, assumed the name of *Pentito* — for some fanciful reason not well explained, though there has been no small wrangling about it.

To enlarge his mind, to exalt his imagination, and to enrich his eloquence, Torquato now devoted much of his attention to the works of Aristotle and Plato; but while the former subjected his reason to the severest discipline in the ascertainment of principles of truth, he gave his whole soul to the guidance of the latter, whose visionary splendour and profound speculations, on subjects the highest that created intelligences can conceive, and of which comparatively so little can be learned without “light from heaven” to illumine the “light of nature,” — while infinite space is afforded for everlasting conjectures, showing at once the capabilities and the limitations of the human intellect, — these peculiarly suited the young student’s cast of thought and intense delight in contemplating the things that are invisible and eternal, as associated with things seen and perishable. Nor was the philosophical poet an unworthy disciple of the poetical philosopher, even upon his own ground and in his own style. Many of Tasso’s sublimest compositions are in the form of dialogues, in which he discourses with an elevation of sentiment and a power of diction which might have gained admiration in the school of his master himself.

Meanwhile the germ of his great poem, which had been quickened, probably not later than the publication of the “*Rinaldo*,” was growing up in his thought, — for Tasso, by the necessity of his nature, was ever ruminating on some premeditated or progressive theme; and some mightier conception followed the disburdenment of every matured production of his inexhaustibly inventive genius. While this new and magnificent project was gradually assuming shape and character before he entered upon the deliberate execution of it, he prepared himself for the task by composing his

“Discourses on Heroic Poetry,” which place him among critics in as high a rank as that which he holds among poets. The merit of these essays, indeed, is so remarkable, that his principal English biographer, Mr. Black, is almost seduced by them to assert the universality of the author’s genius, in the following plausible remark and happy quotations from high authority concerning another extraordinary poetic genius, which seemed capable of excelling in whatever it undertook, whether in prose or rhyme: — “Of the ‘Discourses on Heroic Poetry’ there appear to have been four, only three of which have been printed. Though composed at the age of twenty, and published without the knowledge and corrections of the author, they are exceedingly valuable; and while they display a most refined taste, discover also much metaphysical acuteness and geometrical precision. Indeed, I am more and more of opinion that what Mr. Stewart says of Burns is true in general of every great poetical genius, ‘All the faculties of Burns’s mind,’ says he, ‘were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition.’”

In this year, 1564, Torquato visited his venerable father, now literally “*dagl’anni e da fortuna oppresso*,” “borne down by years and evil fortune.” The transport of affection with which two of the greatest men of their age, in the most seductive walk of human ambition, met at Mantua, in the relationship of parent and offspring, must have been chastened, yet rendered more exquisitely endearing, when the father, from his own sad experience, must have foreseen, by “his prophetic soul,” the sorrows to come which his son would encounter in the course that he had chosen; while the son, with emotions not less painful, must have looked upon his father, remembering the sorrows past, which he had endured in the vain pursuit of fame from the multitude, and fortune from patrons, in whose cause he

had sacrificed two sources of competence — his own small patrimony, and his wife's dowry.

During this visit the youth was attacked by a dangerous illness, from which being rescued by the skill of a physician named Coppino, the grateful father rewarded the doctor with the fee of a stanza to his honour in a new poem, entitled "*Floridante*," which the aged minstrel, whom no medicine could cure of the disease of rhyme, was composing in his seventy-third year. This daughter, as she might be called, of his "*Ama-digi*," to which it is a sequel, and his own last child of imagination, proved as short-lived as its romantic, and almost as its natural, parent, though the dutiful Torquato endeavoured himself to revive it, in his own dark days; but "*Floridante*," of whom it could not be said that "she had no poet," died though she had two, and those of no mean name. Bernardo Tasso himself survived for five years, dying in 1669, at the age of seventy-six. However undervalued by posterity, he was unquestionably the greatest poet who had appeared between Ariosto and his son Torquato.

About this time Torquato received an intimation that the cardinal d'Este, brother to the duke of Ferrara, had nominated him one of his personal attendants, and expected him forthwith in that city. Notwithstanding the warnings of his father's old friend, Sperone, and afterwards his own, Zoilus, who, exasperated by the disappointment of hopes of preferment which he had cherished when he went to Rome, gave loose to the most violent invectives against courts and courtiers, and earnestly dissuaded Torquato from trusting himself where nothing but allurements to ruin would be placed in his way, from which it was hardly possible for virtue to escape unscathed or uncorrupted, the young poet, however, determined not to profit by the experience of the old one, but to learn for himself what experience alone can teach, and what he indeed learned at an awful cost in the issue. He resolutely, therefore, determined to put both his virtue and his fortune to the

hazard of temptation, not doubting that he could secure the former and advance the latter, where the most illustrious court in Italy was held by a descendant of the patron of Ariosto. Accordingly he hastened to Ferrara, anticipating every thing that *never* came to pass, except the one thing on which, indeed, his mind was most bent, that there he should complete his contemplated epic, and establish a name which should associate him with the most renowned of his predecessors. What a bright morning was that, forerunning a day of darkness and despair, on which he entered the city, happily unsuspecting the troubles that awaited him there! The kings of England, of the house of Hanover, are lineally descended from the family of Este. These much celebrated princes, in the best period of their ascendancy, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were the magnificent, if not the liberal, patrons of most of the men of genius in the finer arts who were contemporary with them; and none was more so than the reigning duke, Alfonso II., under whose benign influence for a while, but under whose blighting displeasure afterwards, poor Tasso flourished and faded.

On the last day of October, 1565, Torquato arrived at Ferrara, where the most superb preparations were making for the nuptials of Alfonso with Barbara, daughter of the emperor Ferdinand, and sister to Maximilian II. He was cordially welcomed, and immediately received into the service of the duke's brother, cardinal Luigi, whose establishment consisted of nearly 800 persons, ministering to his pleasure or subsisting on his bounty. This prince was not less dignified than his brother, but altogether more amiable and engaging. On the 2d of December the queen (as she was styled from her imperial lineage) entered Ferrara, crowned, and accompanied by a gorgeous retinue. The marriage was celebrated by a succession of the most imposing spectacles and profuse festivities, which continued for six days, when they were suddenly broken off on the

arrival of intelligence of the death of the pope, Pius IV. Among the throng of the great and the small, who had assembled from all parts of Italy to witness the tournaments, the pantomimes, the balls, and the banquets given on this occasion, Torquato was but a solitary unit; observing and treasuring up in his memory all that he saw and heard, as materials for celebration in another form of the same scenes of luxury and splendour upon a grander scale, and, though in an ideal field, of more enduring exhibition. Myriads of eyes may have glanced upon the contemplative youth, and passed over him as one of the most insignificant personages in the city; but, after the lapse of nearly three centuries, even these gorgeous ceremonials are principally subjects of interest because he was present at them. Not a human being in existence at this remote period (one might imagine) can feel any personal sympathy with the bridegroom, the bride, or any other actor or spectator, native or stranger, upon the spot; yet even "the representation of the *Temple of Love*, which was erected in the ducal gardens, with a stupendous scenery of porticoes and palaces, of woods and mountains," is worthy of being remembered, because of the far-surpassing glory of imaginative palaces and gardens which were suggested to the admiring poet by the tawdry pageant, "which lasted six hours *without appearing tedious to the spectators*," as Muratori states; though, according to the pithy remark of Gibbon, the latter is "the most incredible circumstance" connected with the whole account.

During the four months which intervened between the demise of Pius IV. and the election of a new pope, who assumed the name of Pius V., Torquato's patron, the cardinal Luigi, being absent, he was left at Ferrara to make his way into favour wherever an opening might be presented; and it was then that he became more particularly acquainted with the princesses Lucretia and Leonora of Este, by whom he was brought under the

notice of their brother the duke, who, after all that has been said and conjectured, seems never to have regarded him otherwise than with stately or selfish condescension. That a youth so gifted with genius, so early distinguished among his countrymen, favoured by nature with more than ordinary personal advantages, and in many other ways gallantly accomplished, should have attracted the esteem of these illustrious ladies, who appear to have been more than mere court beauties, both in intellect and sensibility, delighting in poetry, and occasionally exercising themselves in it, was almost a necessary consequence of the parties becoming acquainted. Under such circumstances, nothing could be more natural than that, on either side, secret presentiments of the most gratifying kind should unconsciously spring up and be covertly cherished by the several individuals; never, indeed, as must be inferred from the sequel, to be fully disclosed, nor even, perhaps, perfectly understood by themselves. If, in the age of chivalry, it was imperative upon true knights to assert the beauty and maintain the honour of their ladies in all due seasons, and in all proper places, it was, in the seventeenth century, equally the duty of true poets to celebrate the same virtues and adornments in their verses upon those of the better sex, who were either their mistresses or their patronesses. Torquato, dazzled by the transition from schools, law offices, and colleges of philosophy, to the court region of enchantment, has described his own emotions and the influence of the change upon him in the language which he puts into the mouth of *Tirsi* (the representative of himself in his "Amintor"), where, after taking vengeance on his father's friend, but his own very questionable one (Sperone), for having dissuaded him from going to the city, which, he assured him, was given up wholly to deceit, voluptuousness, avarice, and ambition, the shepherd tells his companions how bravely he was disabused when he beheld the marvellous reality; for there, "as gracious heaven would have it, I happened to pass near the blissful dwelling,

whence issued sweet, harmonious voices of swans, of nymphs, of syrens — heavenly syrens ! and sounds of music soft and clear, with other ravishments so strange, that for a while I stood entranced with joy and admiration." Being courteously invited to enter by one of noble aspect, who appeared the guardian of the enchanted spot, he exclaims, " O then what saw, what felt I ? I beheld nymphs, goddesses, and minstrels — luminaries new and beautiful — all without veil or cloud, as to the immortals, scattering silver dews and golden rays, Aurora seems ; Apollo and the Muses, too, I saw, and in that moment felt myself as growing greater. Filled with new virtue, new divinity, I sang of wars and heroes, disdaining my rude pastoral pipe. But though I soon returned to these calm shades (to please another), I still retained a portion of that nobler spirit ; my simple reed no longer warbled as before, but, rivaling the trumpet, filled the woods with notes more lofty and sonorous. Mopso (Sperone) heard it, and, with evil eye, looked on me and bewitched me, so that I grew hoarse, and long continued mute. The shepherds thought I had been glared at by a wolf — a wolf, indeed, he was to me !" The last allusion is to Sperone's savage criticisms on the "*Gerusalemme*," when submitted to his examination in manuscript. Torquato, however, had reason to think, after years of disappointing experience, that Sperone's notions of courts and courtiers were quite as near the truth as his own, during his first visit and sojourn at Ferrara.

Of the duke, his brother the cardinal, and their three sisters, it is recorded that thirteen years before this date, on a public occasion, in presence of their father, Hercules II., and pope Paul III., the "*Adelphi*" of Terence, in the original, was recited by them with great spirit and effect, the parts being sustained by the princesses Anna, aged twelve, Lucretia, eight, Leonora, six, the princes Alfonso, ten, and Luigi, five years of age. Mr. Black observes, with apparent justice, that the court

of Alfonso united, "like the poems of Tasso, classic elegance with the richness of romance ; and every thing conspired to kindle the fancy and refine the taste of the youthful bard."

Anna, the eldest of the three sisters above named, in 1548 was married to the celebrated Francis, duke of Guise, and, after his decease, to James of Savoy, duke of Nemours. Lucretia, some years later than Tasso's arrival at her brother's court, was married to the prince of Urbino, only fifteen years old, when she herself was thirty-seven. This was one of those state alliances which so little resemble treaties of peace, that they deserve to be branded as treaties of discord, in which royal and noble parents sacrifice their children, if not to Moloch, at least to Mammon — nay, too often to both, — for purposes of family aggrandisement, by adding territory to territory, and confounding blood with blood. On the occasion of these unhappy nuptials, Tasso, "as in duty bound," wrote an epithalamium, which had, in its predictions of felicity, the equivocal qualification for excelling in that kind of poetry which Waller, with experienced adroitness, hinted to Charles II., when rallied by his majesty on having composed a far finer panegyric on Cromwell than on himself — the qualification of fiction ; for scarcely had the ill-paired couple had time to fall out, when the gallant prince left his bride to volunteer in a crusade against the Turks, with whom everlasting warfare, in every petty form of hostility, was wont to be carried on by the states of Italy. The union ultimately was dissolved, without the intervention of death ; and Lucretia, as duchess of Urbino, returned to Ferrara. For many years afterwards, she was, more openly than either her brother or her younger sister, the patron of Tasso, and to her are some of his most graceful lyrics addressed.

Leonora, the third and younger sister, remained unmarried. Being highly attractive in person, in manner, and in mind, it is no wonder if Torquato, having many

opportunities of ingratiating himself in her favour, should be gradually betrayed, under the guise of that romantic strain of adulation to rank and beauty (especially in verse) which the fashion of the times not only tolerated but sanctioned, to insinuate all the fervour of a passion which, though hardly aware of it himself, and altogether unacknowledged by its sensitive object, might yet be harboured in the bosoms of both, though so secretly, that each more complacently and jealously watched the symptoms of a tender attachment in the other, than cared to examine the reality of the same in themselves. The mystery, thus cherished, for the tantalising delight of a hope too remote to be fulfilled, except at the sacrifice of every thing but that love, for which, if true, nothing might be deemed too much to be sacrificed, has never been cleared up, and all reasoning and conjecture on the subject, at this distance of time, must be vain. It has been with equal confidence both affirmed and denied, that the poet imprudently aspired to the hand of the princess, and that the princess as imprudently surrendered her heart to the poet, though, from necessity, she withheld her hand. From the numberless *canzoni* and *sonetti*, of which love is the theme, among the *rime* of Tasso, no premises towards the solution of this problem can be drawn. Dante and Petrarch, in all their effusions of the kind, are constant each to his respective mistress. Beatrice and Laura are the perpetual idols of their amorous devotion ; but to so many — or, if to one, under so many different names and characters, — are Tasso's adorations addressed, that he may have had fifty fits of passion for as many flames, and been as true in turn to each and equally volatile to all. It is, however, a remarkable circumstance, that three of the greatest poets of Italy should owe as much of their posthumous renown to their questionable love as to their acknowledged genius, having been avowedly attached to ladies whose very existence is unascertained at this day, though

volumes have been written, proving nothing more than (to borrow the comprehensive judgment of sir Roger de Coverley) that "much may be said on both sides."

In the mean time, whatever was the subsequent conduct of Alfonso towards Tasso, there seems to be no doubt that, for a considerable period during which the poet was engaged upon his great work, the duke countenanced him in the way most agreeable to his literary ambition and his personal vanity; for he loved rich apparel, splendid apartments, sumptuous fare, and to be associated with persons of the highest rank — feeling that he could adorn and dignify the circle in which he moved, both as a man of genius exalted above competition by intellectual endowments, and as a man of the world qualified to shine in external demeanour among gentlemen and soldiers as well as among students and men of letters. During this prosperous period — when the smiles of princesses, who were pleased to receive the homage of his muse, flattered his gentler affections, and the favour of sovereigns gratified the pride of a heart easily elevated to an eminence of self-satisfaction, from which the fall when it came was the more terrible, and the dashing to pieces of its hopes and its claims the more humiliating and deplorable — Tasso accompanied the cardinal Luigi as legate to the court of France. Here his fame had prepared the way for his reception with peculiar honour by Charles IX., himself both a lover of verse and a versifier. It is said that the king offered the poet some splendid presents, which the latter declined to accept, though he was so scantily provided with a wardrobe, that he left the kingdom, at the end of twelve months, in the same suit of clothes in which he entered it. The snake has but one skin, but while that is wearing out another is forming beneath: it would be well for poets, who live on court expectations, if they were as well provided.

As not many personal anecdotes are related of our poet, two or three indifferent ones may be given here as

specimens of the tone of his conversation and address in public. A poet of some repute having committed a crime for which he was condemned to die, Tasso resolved to obtain, if possible, a mitigation of the punishment. At the palace he learned that the sentence was about to be executed immediately. Undiscouraged, however, he pressed forward; and being admitted to the presence, he thus addressed the king: — “May it please your majesty, I am come to implore you to put to death a wretch, who has brought disgrace upon philosophy, by showing that she cannot stand out against human depravity.” The king, struck with the turn of the request, spared the criminal. Being asked by his majesty one day, “Whether men most resembled God in happiness, in sovereign power, or in the ability to do good?” Tasso replied, “Men can resemble God only by their virtue.” — Again, before the same monarch a discussion was held to determine what condition in life is most unfortunate. “In my opinion,” said Tasso, “the most deplorable condition is that of an impatient old man, borne down by poverty, who has neither fortune to preserve him from want, nor philosophy to support himself under suffering.”

In the course of this journey, whatever he may have gained in honour at the French court, gratification in the society of eminent contemporaries, and knowledge of the country and people of his hero, Godfrey, Torquato lost the favour of cardinal Luigi, as Ariosto forfeited that of the cardinal's kinsman and predecessor, Hippolyto of Este; though not for the same reason — want of servility to his highness (Luigi probably not exacting such base homage as Ariosto's barbarian patron had done), but for having manifested more zeal for the catholic faith than, in the opinion of some of his confidants, was deemed politic at a time, when, for the most treacherous purposes, previous to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the protestants were treated with unwonted indulgence, to throw them off their guard. Hereupon he returned to Italy, though not immediately

to Ferrara ; for, travelling in company with Manzuoli, the secretary of the late embassy, we find that he arrived at Rome in January, 1572. Here he was cordially welcomed by many of his father's old acquaintances, as well as greatly distinguished for his own sake. Pope Pius V. honoured him with an audience, and the privilege of kissing his foot.

Through the mediation of the duchess of Urbino and Leonora, he was soon afterwards formally admitted into the service of Alfonso, with a pension of a hundred and eighty gold crowns a year, and the understanding that no personal duties would be required of him ; but that he should be at liberty to pursue his studies and finish his poem at his own leisure. Generous as this provision undoubtedly was, it yet made him a captive in golden chains, too weak to bind the limbs, but strong enough to enthrall the soul and enslave the mind. So, at least, Torquato found his obligation ; and even when on both sides it had been broken, after his second imprisonment, he was never in spirit enfranchised from the yoke of Alfonso, till death set him free. His own testimony concerning his patron's munificence at this time, long after he had lost his favour, is honourable to both :—
“ He raised me from the darkness of my low estate to the light and glory of his court ; he removed me from penury to abundance ; he exceedingly enhanced the value of my works, by often and willing listening while I read, and treating their author with every mark of esteem. He placed me at his table, and countenanced me with his personal attention ; and he never denied me a favour which I requested.”

Under these auspices, while Tasso was still vigorously prosecuting that splendid crusade of his muse, the poetical siege of Jerusalem, and had now nearly made himself master of it for an everlasting stronghold of his poetical sovereignty, his exuberant mind poured out multitudes of sonnets, canzoni, and other miscellanies in verse and prose—almost entirely on transient themes, love fancies, and panegyrical attempts—

—— “to give a deathless lot
To names inglorious, born to be forgot.”

Among these, in the composition of which it might be questioned whether he was wasting his genius or cultivating it, he produced something more excellent, in the form of a pastoral drama. Accordingly, the most beautiful offspring of his imagination—so far as refers to exquisite grace of diction, and consummate skill in adorning a subject altogether artificial, and feigning a state of society that never did, never could, never ought to exist,—in a story not very natural though the incidents are few, nor very happily connected or intelligibly developed,—his “*Aminta*” appeared, written in flowing verse of various measures without rhyme, and enriched with lyric chorusses of extraordinary elegance. How the public exhibition of such a drama could be tolerated, before the most exalted personages of the state, ladies of the highest character, and religionists of the most plausible professions, is very difficult for us, in our cold climate, and with our severer as well as juster sentiments of decorum, to imagine. All that can be said in extenuation of the audience, and perhaps of the poet, comes to this presumption, that, though the piece abounds with descriptions and allusions the most voluptuous and fascinating to awaken the most perilous passions in youth, and which no gravity of age ought to endure, such were the manners of the day, and so little of evil was apprehended, where the serpent, that allured Eve with his wiles of beauty among the flowers of paradise, put on this pastoral disguise of the innocence of the golden age, that the fair and the virtuous alike imagined themselves as guiltless in listening to his blandishments, as Milton represents the mother of mankind to have been unsuspecting of danger, when she followed the tempter to the forbidden tree, and entered into a parley with him there, till at length, beguiled by his subtilty, “she plucked, she ate.” And here a subject too delicate to be handled on the present occasion must be left to every one’s conscience who in-

dulges in the luxury of such reading as the work under consideration furnishes. It is remarkable that the author, designating himself under the name of *Tirsi*, seems to have been forewarned of the malady which soon afterwards overwhelmed him, and to which, no doubt, from constitutional temperament he had been prone from his youth upward, and which, in premature old age, cast such clouds of mystery over the gloom and splendour of his latter life. "Knowest thou not what *Tirsi* wrote, when, fired with frenzy, he wandered through the forest, at once moving laughter and pity among the lovely nymphs and shepherds? Nor wrote he even then 'things worthy to be laughed at, although he *did* such things.'"

The duchess of Urbino being absent from Ferrara, when Tasso's muse, like Habington's "halcyon," produced

"The happy miracle of this rare birth,"

invited him to her delightful retirement of Casteldurante, where she heard the pastoral strains from his own lips, which, though not eloquent from natural infirmity, would yet convey the soul and passion, the delicacy and pathos, of every passage, with an impression which no actor on the stage, nor indeed any reader but himself, could give. The living voice, in this case, would be the actual language of the spirit that conceived the thoughts, speaking to the spirit of her who received them through the ear, fresh and flowing from the fountain in his heart; for the written copy, to the eye, would be but a translation, wanting the incommunicable accompaniments of tone, look, expression, and perfect intelligence of the whole in all its bearings and meanings, such as the original author alone could possess; for, as Dr. Johnson said, "no words can convey *sounds*;" and both sounds *and* words were requisite to do justice to such verse as his. Tasso remained several months with the duchess.

All Italy soon echoed with the fame of this poetical phenomenon, which, though not the first of the kind,

(an indifferent model having been produced six years before, by one Arienti,) it was the first that had power to compel almost universal admiration, and establish a precedent and authority for that fantastic species of literary composition. Imitations, by the most gifted of his contemporaries, sprang up in rapid succession, and passed away as rapidly, with the exception of one, the "*Pastor Fido*" of Guarini, which not only maintained its ground, but even disputed that on which its forerunner stood, and from which no rivalry has ever yet been able to remove it. The renown which Tasso acquired by the "*Aminta*" naturally exasperated envy in proportion as it commanded applause, and among the multitude of competitors who could not soar to his elevation, there were not wanting those who employed every artifice to bring him down to their level, that they might trample him under foot. Whatever were the causes, Tasso to the end of his life was persecuted as much by unmerciful critics as he was oppressed by hard-hearted patrons.

But the "*Aminta*" was not the only episodal enterprise of Tasso, while he was slowly but unweariedly proceeding with the "*Gerusalemme*." Flushed with the success of his pastoral drama, he set earnestly about the construction of a regular tragedy; but he had not advanced far in the second act, when the project was suspended, and the fragment of fine promise which remains, compared with the completed performance long afterwards, when his faculties were on the decline, exhibits a brilliant but melancholy contrast of "the change" that had come "o'er the spirit of his dream"—his dream of life, love, and glory, blighting his "May of youth," and causing him in the prime of manhood to "fall into the sere and yellow leaf." His "*Torindo*," as this failure was styled, was less a failure than the "*Torrismondo*," as the resumed and perfected task was called.

Towards the conclusion of his toils on his main work (as he fondly hoped), but the beginning of a series

of miseries consequent upon it, from which he found no end but in the grave, Tasso was seized with a violent fever. This left him in such a state of bodily exhaustion, that it was not till the following spring (1575), that from the last lines of his poem he could look back upon all the intervening ones to the first, as the links of a chain, more subtle than air, yet stronger than adamant, which should deliver his thoughts as he had bound them in his words, from generation to generation, to delight millions of minds, so long as his country's language should be understood. He had already enjoyed such exhilarating foretastes of fame by the circulation in manuscript of portions of the poem, as they came completed from his hands, that he was the less prepared to encounter the enmity and opposition, which rancorous and intriguing rivals, or fanatic and supercilious ecclesiastical censors of the press, immediately commenced, and inveterately continued to manifest towards him to the close of life. There was in Tasso — conscious as he must have been of his powers, and confident as he must have felt in the exercise of his own judgment — a readiness to submit to learned and candid criticism, and a willingness to concede to dissentient opinions on minor points of taste, so far as was consistent with manly independence, — which can rarely be found among men of first-rate talents, but yet might be expected from a court poet, accustomed in other matters to defer to superiors, be compliant towards equals, and condescending to inferiors. This disposition, however, which ought to have conciliated envy herself, only provoked her the more to assume every shape of candour or malignity, as best suited her humour, to torment and distract him, that she might revel over his wretchedness, if she could not accomplish his fall. Years intervened while the "*Gerusalemme Liberata*," in its finished form, was undergoing as many ordeals almost as he had friends, and its author suffering almost as many martyrdoms as he had enemies. Into the particulars of these per-

secutions it is not necessary to enter here. The poet was certainly induced by the force of arguments used by some, and the terror of inquisitorial powers exercised by others of his critics, to alter, expunge, and amend many parts of the poem, which, after all, suffered little from the processes to which it was thus exposed before its publication. That publication, however, was long delayed by such vexatious hinderances, and at last was effected surreptitiously, to the great offence and injury of the author, then in confinement as a lunatic.

Tasso's malady was grievously aggravated by these excruciating criticisms, when he found himself, on the one hand, charged with heresy against Aristotle and good taste, and, on the other, with heresy against the church and good morals. Fevers, headaches, strange dreams, waking suspicions, restlessness, disappointment, dissatisfaction with his patron, to whom he had dedicated his poem, and in honour of whom he had created his imaginary hero, Rinaldo, — perhaps, too, the bitterness of desponding passion, though that is questionable, — suggested to him the idea of absconding from Ferrara and taking refuge at Rome, where he purposed to bring out the "*Gerusalemme*," at his own pleasure, and hoped to reap a considerable pecuniary benefit from the sale. Alfonso, however, was not willing to lose the glory of the dedication to himself, though he seems to have wanted the generosity, the humanity, the justice to deal with the author except as an impotent creature in his power, who could do him much honour by flattering his pride, but to whom he showed at best but stinted kindness. To secure his selfish object, he made the poet a prisoner near his own person, — both at Ferrara, and at his palace of Belriguardo in the country, — a prisoner at large, indeed, but under perpetual observation. Of this the sufferer was aware; and the very idea¹ of a human eye for ever upon him, restraining his looks, words, and actions, poring over him while he slept, haunting his dreams, and entering

into his very thoughts—for so he must have felt as though it did—this alone was enough to madden a man of iron heart and millstone brain, much more a poor hypochondriac, as Tasso had already become.

Notwithstanding the jealousies of Alfonso, and the fascinations of his sisters to detain him, the capricious bard escaped from his splendid captivity to Rome,—and escaped even with the permission of the duke; who gave him a letter of recommendation to the cardinal Hippolyto, to befriend him as a stranger there, for the avowed purpose of obtaining the accustomed indulgence granted to visitors during the jubilee. Here he met with the cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici, afterwards grand duke of Tuscany, who renewed to him in person the tender of an honourable asylum (formerly intimated to him in private), should he be disposed to leave altogether the service of Alfonso. The offer was gratefully acknowledged, but not formally accepted; and after six weeks of holydays (as he felt them to be) spent in the luxury of literary intercourse, and the renewal of the impressions which the scene of Rome's posthumous glory in her magnificent ruins, and her not less imposing revival in her hierarchal pomp, had left on his mind in youth, he returned by way of Sienna and Florence to Ferrara. Here, while his poem was going through a second round of critical purgatory, and his soul was sinking under the burden of censures laid upon him, like the spirits of the proud in Dante, condemned to bear enormous stones along the uneven uphill road, he received the appointment of historiographer to the house of Este, with a small stipend, which laid upon him another cobweb obligation to remain at Ferrara. What were the duties of this office it is of no consequence to inquire; he does not seem even to have performed any, nor perhaps did he owe any; his fable of the origin of that family from his hero Rinaldo—the Rinaldo of his "Gerusalemme"—had already conferred on it more of that glory which princes covet, than the true history of all its ancestors might have done. When the results of

the aforesaid second revisal of his poem were communicated to him, in despair of conciliating his critics, and determined not to yield altogether to their incompetent authority, on points where he felt himself strong in poetical power to produce the very effects which they deprecated, but which he had aimed at and achieved most triumphantly, he composed an interpretation of the whole as an extended allegory, spiritualising its heroes and its scenes, with more perverse ingenuity than felicity of success. Of this it may be fairly said, that if the original were mainly fiction, the moral was wholly so. His censors, however, persisted in condemning the voluptuous passages to which he himself was most attached, because he knew them to be the most beautiful, and recked not that they were the most seductive. In this respect the poet himself was the Rinaldo of his sorceress muse, who by her enchantments had wholly captivated his heart, and carried him away to her "limbo of vanity;" from which Sperone and Antoniano, his remorseless critics, in vain endeavoured to deliver him; as Carlo and Ubaldo had rescued his hero from the thralls of Armida in her island of sensual delights. He never yielded all, though he conceded many things, and sacrificed several extravagant inventions, by which the poem was rather mended than mutilated.

An incident occurred about this time, which exhibited Tasso not less in the character of a hero than he had hitherto figured in that of the laureate of heroes. Suspecting one of his friends to have been guilty of opening his trunks with false keys, to pry into his secrets among his papers, he gently remonstrated with the offender, who resented the charge by giving him the lie, and received in return a blow upon the face. This rencontre took place in the court of the palace, and was therefore sufficiently notorious. The cowardly aggressor — one Maddalo, a notary — walked away with the dishonour on his brow, but meditating in his heart the most atrocious vengeance. Accordingly, having enlisted three of his kindred in the quarrel, they sallied forth, armed, to

assail the poet ; and finding him abroad in the street, they fell upon him from behind. Tasso promptly turned round, drew his sword, and dealt so dexterously with it, that the ruffians were soon put to flight ; though their fears of being apprehended, no doubt, to their “ speed lent wings,” till they found refuge under the roofs of various friends. The circumstance gained him no small reputation, and gave rise to a couplet which was often repeated:—

“ Con la penna e con la spada
Nessun val quanto Torquato.”

“ With the sword and with the pen,
Tasso beats all other men.”

It is not practicable, in this succinct memoir, to trace the sufferer through all the details which have been recorded of his miseries from penury, pride, ambition, and disappointment, the wrongs inflicted on him by patrons and rivals, and above all, those growing symptoms of a mind diseased, occasioning suspicions, jealousies, misunderstandings, and quarrels with his friends and contemporaries ; while that insidious malady, which no medicine can reach, was making its unchecked ravages upon his constitution, and inveterately fixing upon him its evil influences, so that, with brief and distant lucid intervals, his remaining days were passed in horror and despondency, whether amidst the darkness of the dungeons of Ferrara, or wandering amidst the broad sunshine on foot, and depending for bread and shelter upon casual hospitality, from province to province throughout Italy. Imagining that his enemies — enemies as imaginary, in this case, as were his fears of them — had accused him to Alfonso of treason, and to the pope of heresy, he at length grew so outrageous, that, one day, for some unaccountable provocation, he drew a dagger upon a servant, and assaulted him in an apartment of the duchess of Urbino. Being instantly disarmed, he was confined, by order of the duke, within the precincts of the palace. Here, when for the first time he found himself a prisoner, he was overwhelmed with anguish, and bitterly bewailed his fate. As soon

as he could again command his passion, he wrote a very penitential letter to Alfonso, suing for pardon and release. Both were granted to him; and he was removed, under the eye of the duke himself, to the palace of Belriguardo, in the country, that he might recover his health and spirits, amidst scenes and with the society in which he had formerly delighted to be placed. With a delicate regard to one of his most grievous temptations — that he had been guilty of heresy, Alfonso introduced to him the head of the holy inquisition at Ferrara, who, after duly examining him, fully absolved him from all imputations of the kind, and assured him that he was yet a good catholic. Not contented with this, he suddenly left Belriguardo, and took refuge in a convent of St. Francis, from which he sent word to his patron, that as soon as he should be sufficiently restored he intended to enter himself among the fraternity. But nothing could calm the troubled waters of his mind; he still conceived himself under the displeasure of the duke, and that his acquittal by the inquisitor was invalid. In this turmoil of doubts and self-reproaches, he importuned Alfonso and the duchess of Urbino with letters concerning his imaginary offences, and imploring comfort and assurance which they could not give, because he would not receive. With Leonora he appears never to have had that freedom and frequency of correspondence which he had hitherto been permitted to hold with her elder sister. Whether this be in favour of his presumed passion or not must be left to those who are skilled in the mysteries of love-making between unequal parties. On this subject, as on the poet's strange melancholy, and the severity with which it was visited by his patron, whether for the punishment of the lover or the cure of the maniac, it would be futile to argue here. After all the explanation and mystification by Tasso's biographers, the general impression has been, is, and probably will remain, that his love for Leonora was real; that his imprisonment was vindictive on the part of her

brother, and that his frenzy was the effect of hopeless passion and impotent resentment against oppression. "Historians," says Ugo Foscolo, "will be ever embarrassed to explain aright the reasons of Tasso's imprisonment: it is involved in the same obscurity as the exile of Ovid. Both were among those thunder-strokes that despotism darts forth. In crushing their victims they terrified them, and reduced spectators to silence. There are incidents in courts, that, although known to many persons, remain in eternal oblivion — contemporaries dare not reveal, and posterity can only divine them."

In the following summer, Tasso, bewildered and desperate, and not knowing whither to turn, or in whom to confide, at length fled secretly from Ferrara to visit his sister at Torrento, whom he had not seen since they were children together. She was now a widow, the mother of two sons, and dependent upon her uncles, who still withheld her mother's dowry, for the means of subsistence. With that caution to do every thing by stealth, which characterises the hallucination of one who fancies all the world conspiring to do him harm, he presented himself before her in the habit of a shepherd, affecting to be the bearer of certain letters from himself. He found her alone; her children being absent. The letters represented her brother at Ferrara as surrounded by enemies, and in the most imminent danger of his life, unless she interposed in his behalf, and rescued him from their machinations. When she had read the distressing intelligence, she implored the supposed messenger to tell her all, the worst, at once. He answered by a recital of miseries so aggravated, in a tone so earnest and impassioned, that, whether she suspected him or not, she fainted with alarm. When she had been sufficiently recovered, the cunning minstrel changed the hand that played upon her, like Timotheus on his harp, and, from excess of pity for her brother's sufferings, gently awoke all her tenderness of affection, by old and beautiful recollections of former days, and hopes yet possible to be

realised in years to come. At length, when she was well prepared, he discovered himself fully to her, and they were brother and sister again in a moment, and thenceforth to the end of life. With her he remained in comparative tranquillity for several months, being all the while unacknowledged in the neighbourhood, except as Cornelia's cousin from Bergamo, who, coming to Rome, had availed himself of the opportunity to visit her.

But, as might be expected, his self-tormenting mind became unquiet amidst scenes of repose, which, from day to day, delighted him at first, but, from day to day, presenting little change of aspect or incident, he sighed again for Ferrara, choosing rather the agony of life to that rest which was no longer supportable. Thither, then, he returned, on the assurance of pardon from the duke, and the restoration of his papers. It was soon after his arrival, that an act of indiscretion attributed to him by some, and denied by others of his biographers, is said to have caused him to be put in ward as a person of deranged intellect. Being in company with Alfonso and his sisters, in the presence of the court, in reply to a question from Leonora, Tasso gave her an involuntary salute, their faces being so near together that he felt attraction to be irresistible. The duke, astonished and indignant, turned to his attendants and exclaimed, "See to what a lamentable condition this great man has been brought by the loss of his reason!" But the date of this circumstance happens to be as disputable as the fact; for it is certain that the poet had not long resided at Ferrara, when, still unsatisfied with the duke's conduct towards him, he again withdrew from the city, and successively sought temporary refuge at Mantua, Urbino, Florence, Padua, Turin, and Venice. Being ill at ease every where, by a fatality of instinct, as it might be deemed, he returned to Ferrara, and thence departed no more till after a confinement of seven years. For, imagining himself coldly received at court, and unworthily repulsed when

he sought an audience, he vented his anguish of disappointment in bitter invectives against the duke, who, amidst the festivities of his new nuptials with a young bride, his third wife, a daughter of the duke of Mantua, was little inclined to hearken to the complaints and supplications of one whom he had long looked upon as insane. On this ground he was committed to St. Anne's hospital, as a lunatic, which in those days of medical ignorance of the proper treatment of such patients was to be punished as a criminal for his misfortune. The following extract must stand in place of multifarious details of the poet's feelings under this long restraint. His imprisonment commenced in March, 1579. Soon afterwards he thus expressed himself in a letter to his friend Scipio Gonzaga : —

“ Ah me ! I had intended to compose two heroic poems of noble argument, and four tragedies, of which I had contrived the plots. Many works in prose also, on the most exalted and useful subjects, I had contemplated ; purposing so to unite philosophy and eloquence, that I might leave an eternal monument to my memory in the world. Alas ! I hoped to close my life with glory and renown, but now, borne down under the load of my misfortunes, I have lost all prospect of fame and distinction. Indeed I should consider myself abundantly happy, if, without suspicion, I could but quench the thirst with which I am tormented ; and if, as one of the multitude, I could lead a life of freedom in some poor cottage, if not in health, which I can no longer be, yet exempt from this anguish. If I were not honoured, it would be enough for me not to be abominated ; and if I could not live like men, I might at least quench the thirst that consumes me, like the brutes which freely drink from stream and fountain. Nor do I fear so much the vastness as the duration of this calamity ; and the thought of this is horrible to me, especially as in this place I can neither write nor study. The dread, too, of perpetual imprisonment increases my melancholy, and the indignities which I

suffer exasperate it; while the squalor of my beard, my hair, and my dress, the sordidness and the filth of the place, exceedingly annoy me. But, above all, I am afflicted by solitude, my cruel and natural enemy; which, even in my best state, was sometimes so distressing, that often, at the most unseasonable hours, I have gone in search of company. Sure I am, that if she who so little has corresponded to my attachment, if she saw me in such a condition, and in such misery, she would have some compassion upon me."

Though such statements must be received with some allowance for the power of self-torturing which he possessed in no small degree, and exercised with as little forbearance as though he were his own most implacable enemy, yet, according to Tasso's representation, the treatment which he experienced under the hands of his brother-poet, Agostino Morti, formerly a disciple of Ariosto, the keeper of the hospital, was almost as bad as that which he received at his own. He says that by this man he was not allowed the necessaries of life, the medicines which his bodily disease required, nor the spiritual consolations which his heart-sickness needed: moreover, that his meditations were disturbed by the inmates of the house, so that he could not proceed with the preparation of his works for the press; but above all, that he was under the power of witchcraft, Morti being in league with certain magicians to destroy him by enchantments; and as this was a capital crime, he threatens to accuse the keeper to the duke.*

* Well might Collins, a kindred spirit, both in his powers of song and in his "moody madness," thus celebrate the great Italian, whose "Godfrey of Bulloigne" he only knew through Fairfax's translation:—

— "In scenes, which, daring to depart
From sober truth, are still to nature true,
And call forth fresh delight to fancy's view,
The heroic muse employ'd her Tasso's art.
How have I trembled when, at Tancred's stroke,
Its gushing blood the gaping cypress pour'd;
When each live plant with mortal accents spoke,
And the wild blast upheaved the vanish'd sword;
How have I sat, when piped the pensive wind,
To hear his harp by British Fairfax strung!
Prevailing poet! *whose undoubling mind*
Believed the magic wonders which he sung."

Ode on the Highland Superstitions.

His sonnets to the cats of the hospital, imploring them to lend him the light of their eyes to write by, are specimens of that *kind* of mirth which suits and sets off melancholy, in a certain "humorous sadness." Their genuineness, however, is not certain, and they are hardly translatable.

Whatever were the actual circumstances of Tasso's mental alienation and corporal sufferings from disease or ill usage, his life, from the period of his first imprisonment, was to himself like one of *the opium-eater's dreams* — splendours and horrors, alternations of agony and rapture, changes sudden, frequent, and strangely contrasted : he inhabited a world of *unrealities*, of which the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, were the more real in proportion as they were ideal, and therefore incurable ; acting upon the soul itself like that effect upon the bodily senses, excruciatingly susceptible of impressions of pain, so happily imagined, and not less felicitously expressed by the most polished of our own poets : —

" Say what their use, were finer optics given ?
To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven ;
Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
To smart and agonise at every pore ;
Or, quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain ;
If nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that heaven had left him still
The whispering zephyr and the purling rill."

POPE's *Essay on Man*, Epist. i.

And such a being, too exquisitely sensitive, is every poet, whose imagination or whose passion overmasters his reason and his judgment. Tasso was eminently such — a poet in every thing, and all life long.

Meanwhile editions of his "*Gerusalemme*" were multiplying throughout Italy, and beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees ; while the mind that conceived and produced it was wandering, like a lost star through the infinity of space, unaccompanied by any kindred planet, and unattracted by any parent sun ; and the poet himself — he whom monarchs had delighted to honour, the associate of sovereigns, who had been the favourite of princesses, and the admiration or the envy of the

highest intellects of his age — was treated as a brute, out of whose living frame the rational soul had departed, and whose animal appetites were to be subdued by severe abstinence, or controlled by harsh discipline.

Yet in his solitude, when the first rigours of his imprisonment had been relaxed, and an apartment of less discomfort was allotted to him, he pursued, with unabated ardour and intensity, his studies, so far as he had the means, and poured out, as he was ever wont, his sorrows and his hopes, his remembrances and his imaginations, in every form of verse. Indeed, many of his most beautiful compositions are dated within the term of his captivity. In course of time, as he grew calmer, his friends, and illustrious strangers attracted by his fame, were permitted to visit him. Occasionally, too, a day of light and liberty was granted, and he was brought out of his prison-house to those splendid mansions which he loved to inhabit, and which he was so well qualified to adorn. Marfisa of Este, cousin to the duke, especially befriended him in this manner, and entertained him at her delightful villa, where, in company with her distinguished household and visitors, he looked abroad again in sunshine, with all a poet's transport and all an invalid's delight, when mere existence, void of suffering, is enjoyment.

“ See the wretch, who long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again :
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common air, the earth, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.”

So sang Gray, and so felt Tasso for a few hours of freedom, — but soon remanded back to his lonely abode, he relapsed into despondency ; and though one such day, while it lasted, might seem to compensate for all the past, yet when it was gone, its pleasures appeared too dearly purchased by the misery of another day rendered more bitter by the transient change.

Having collected a volume of his fugitive verses,

principally composed in prison, he published it with a dedication to the princesses, the duchess of Urbino and Leonora; but the latter lived not to receive this mournful proof of the fidelity of his gratitude, if not of his love. She died, after a long illness, in 1581, aged 43 years. Tasso enquired earnestly after her during her sickness, and offered to do any thing in the power of his muse to beguile that part of her suffering which song might soothe, while patiently bearing the rest, for which there was no relief but from Heaven. After her death he became mute on that theme, which most of his biographers would fain prove to have been the real though covert one of many an amorous effusion among his sonnets and lyrics. "Great griefs are silent."

Among his wild imaginations, Tasso thought himself haunted in his prison by a sprite — something akin to our old English Robin-good-fellow — who (probably in the very person of his knavish attendant) played all manner of petty mischievous pranks to plague him. One extract from a letter on this subject will show how little command of his reason he had at this time. He says, "The little thief has stolen from me many crowns, I know not what number — for I do not, like misers, keep an account of them — but perhaps they may amount to twenty. He turns all my books topsy-turvy, opens my chests, and steals my keys, so that I can keep nothing. I am unhappy at all times, especially during the night, nor *do I know if my disease be frenzy, or what is its nature.*" Far more frightful visitations he complains of during this dreadful interval, all which seem to prove a lamentable derangement of intellect, of which he was himself sometimes so conscious, that he rouses all his powers of reasoning to convince himself that he has not really lost his wits. To a friend he writes — "I cannot defend any thing from my enemies, nor from the devil, *except my will*, with which I will never consent to learn any thing from him or his followers, or have any *familiarity with him or with his magicians.*"

* * * * Amidst so many terrors and pains, there ap-

peared to me in the air the image of the glorious Virgin, with her Son in her arms, encircled with clouds of many colours, so that I ought by no means to despair of her grace. *And though this might be an illusion, because I am frenetic*, — troubled with various phantasms, and full of infinite melancholy, — yet, by the grace of God, I can sometimes *cohibere assensum* (withhold my assent), which, as Cicero says, being the act of a sound mind, I am inclined to believe it was a miracle of the Virgin." — This vision he celebrates in one of his most brilliant sonnets, and also in an elegant madrigal, ascribing to her grace the marvellous cure of his mental affliction.

In whatever way that cure may have been temporarily effected, Tasso, after more than seven years' confinement, was liberated in 1586, at the special intercession of the prince of Mantua. Alfonso refused to allow him an audience, and he left Ferrara like a transport released from prison, to go into perpetual banishment; for the duke remained inexorable, and, indeed, implacable, to the end of his victim's life. For a while Tasso enjoyed the sudden transition, again being lodged in the palace of Mantua, faring sumptuously, and being admitted to the high, amiable, and intellectual society of nobles, ladies, and scholars. This pleasant season was not, however, without relapses of his fearful disease: the evil spirit came upon him at times, and all the enchantment of his harp could not drive it away.

During several years afterwards, the poet wandered about, as his father had done, from city to city, and from court to court, experiencing all the vicissitudes of what is called fortune, but which, in his case, appears to have been the lot which he chose and cut out for himself. Princes were ever ready to open their doors to him, and wherever he was known, he was honoured according to the reputation which he had so painfully but unprofitably acquired; his patrons having only afforded him hospitality while he abode with them,

and booksellers having been enriched at his expense by the spoils of his genius, in a country where the property of literary men in their own works was little acknowledged and less respected. His controversy with the *Della Cruscan* academy during his imprisonment, the members of which had invidiously prejudiced the public mind against him, the living, whom their favour might have benefited, by exalting Ariosto, the dead, whom their preference could not serve, — while it grievously galled him, rather tended to spread the knowledge, and, necessarily with that knowledge, the fame of his “Gerusalemme,” than permanently to injure his fair fame. But he himself, from scruples of conscience and infirmity of mind, became dissatisfied with it, and employed no small portion of his brief remaining life in remodelling it, under the title of “Gerusalemme Conquistata,” — a scheme in which he utterly miscarried. His last great poetical attempt, and worthy of him in his palmy state, was a work on the creation, entitled the “Sette Giornate” (the Seven Days), which he left unfinished. It was composed in *versi sciolti*, which nearly correspond to English blank verse. There are many passages in this magnificent fragment, which were evidently so familiar to Milton’s mind, that he fell into the same trains of thought, and imitated them in the style peculiar to himself, repaying as much as he borrowed, “stealing and giving odours.”

Tasso, soon tiring of Mantua, and even languishing for Ferrara, though never permitted to return thither, wore away the residue of his desultory life, principally at Bergamo, Florence, Rome, and Naples. In the latter city (his sister being dead), when it was too late for him to enjoy the possession of it, he recovered his mother’s long-disputed dowry, or such a portion of it as, at an earlier period, might have rendered him independent of those eleemosynary supplies from precarious hands, on which he generally subsisted. About the same time the pope also settled a pension upon him, and consented to allow him the honour of a coronation,

such as had been granted to Petrarch, two centuries before. But wealth and honour, such as mortal hands could confer or withhold at pleasure, came too late for him. In his latter years, too, he became acquainted with Manso, marquis of Villa, his last patron, and his first biographer; known in this country as, in his old age, befriending our Milton, then a youth, on his travels in Italy, as, in his own youth, he had befriended Tasso sinking to the grave under premature decay.

One of the most remarkable circumstances of the last days of Tasso was the imagination, that he was occasionally visited by a spirit—not the mischievous Robin-good-fellow of his prison, but a being of far higher dignity, with whom, alone or in company, he could hold sublime and preternatural discourse, though of the two interlocutors none present could see or hear more than the poet himself, rapt into ecstasy, and uttering language and sentiments worthy of one who, with his bodily, yet marvellously enlightened eyes and purged ears, could distinguish the presence and the voice of his mysterious visitant. Manso gives a strange account of such an interview, when he himself stood by, yet perceived nothing but the half-part which the poet acted in the scene.

“One day,” says the marquis, “as we were sitting alone by the fire, he turned his eyes towards the window, and held them a long time so intensely fixed, that when I called him he did not answer. At last, ‘Lo!’ said he, ‘the courteous spirit, which has come to talk with me; lift up your eyes and you shall see the truth.’ I turned my eyes thither immediately; but though I looked as keenly as I could I beheld nothing but the rays of the sun, which streamed through the window-panes into the chamber. Meanwhile Torquato began to hold, with this unknown being, a most lofty converse. I heard, indeed, and saw nothing but himself; nevertheless his words, at one time questioning, and at another replying, were

such as take place between those who reason closely on some important subject. * * * * Their discourse was marvellously conducted, both in the sublimity of the topics, and a certain unwonted manner of talking, that exalted myself into an ecstasy ; so that I did not dare to interrupt Torquato about the spirit which he had announced to me, but which I could not see. In this way, while I listened between transport and stupefaction, a considerable time elapsed ; at length the spirit departed, as I learned from the words of Torquato, who, turning to me, said, 'From this day forward, all your doubts will be removed.'—'Rather,' I replied, 'they are increased ; for though I have heard many wonderful things, I have seen nothing to dispel my doubts.' He smiled, and said, 'You have seen and heard more of him than perhaps—' here he broke off, and I, unwilling to trouble him, forbore to ask further questions ; as it was more likely that his visions and frenzies would disorder my own mind, than that I should extirpate his true or imaginary opinion."

Throughout the year 1594 the poet was so manifestly breaking down, both in his bodily and mental faculties, that his early dissolution was anticipated by all his friends. He arrived at Rome on the 10th of November ; when on being introduced to the pope, his holiness, in the most condescending terms, told him that he intended to bestow upon him "the crown of laurel, that from him it might receive as much honour as, in times past, it had conferred on others." The winter proving very tempestuous, the ceremonial was deferred till the succeeding spring. As the time approached when all his dreams of ambition were to be thus consummated, Tasso drooped daily both in spirits and in strength, so that from the 10th of April, when he was seized with violent fever, no hope could be entertained of preserving his life. Being informed of his danger, he thanked the physician for communicating tidings so welcome. Instead, then, of the vain

glories of coronation in this world, he set himself to prepare, according to his religious views, for his last change to that eternal state, where nothing could avail him but to have found that mercy, which is the only hope of sinful man beyond the grave. On the 25th of April he quietly expired, with the words upon his lips (of which the last were inaudible), "*Into thy hands, O Lord! I commend my spirit.*" He was aged fifty-one years.

The personal and poetical character of Tasso are so strikingly betokened in the incidents of his life, that, in a memoir, necessarily so circumscribed as the present, no further remark on either need be introduced here. To enter into a critical examination of his writings, which should at all do justice to their extent, their diversity and their excellence, of various kinds whether in prose or verse, would require a distinct essay, equal in length to the whole of this article. This, however, is little to be regretted, for, of all the Italian poets, Tasso is the best known in our country; indeed, he has been almost naturalised, for his greatest work has been oftener translated than any other continental poem,—so that the style, the story, the sentiments, the actors, the scenes, the whole fable, with all its embellishments and adjuncts, are better known to general readers than those of the "*Faerie Queene*," and, perhaps, it may be said, than those of "*Paradise Lost*" itself, except among that "*fit audience*," which, "*though few*," Spenser and Milton must for ever "*find*," while English poetry holds its place—and that the highest, hitherto—in the literature of Christendom.

Besides several inferior versions, those of the "*Jerusalem Delivered*," by Fairfax, Hoole, Hunt, and Wiffin, have each some peculiar merit, though it must be confessed, that, in each, so far as regards the diction, that peculiar merit belongs rather to the translation than to the author, the grace and harmony of whose verse, unsurpassed in his own language, is absolutely unap-

proachable in ours. Fairfax's version, in the original stanza, is masculine and free; Hoole's, in the heroic couplet, is easy and commonplace, but as a mere entertaining tale, the most *readable* of the four; Hunt's, in the same measure, may lay great claim to indulgence for any defect in vigour, on the score of the classic taste and learning which it displays. Wiffin's is unquestionably the best; and it is his own fault that it is not as good as any reasonable judge could desire a translation of Tasso to be: but, having chosen to hamper himself, and to encumber his author, with the intricate stanza of Spenser, containing an extra-Alexandrine line beyond the Italian octave, he has been compelled to amplify his original *one eighth*, which must deduct at least in the same proportion from the compactness, precision, and symmetry of every corresponding section. How could a master of versification like Mr. Wiffin, himself a genuine poet, choose to run such a race, carrying such a weight? He has won it, nevertheless, though not in the style that might have been wished; yet he that shall hereafter beat him must be a rival, who, beyond the Alps, would have been a worthy competitor with Tasso himself, had they been countrymen and contemporaries.

CHIABRERA.

1552—1637.

GABBRIELLO CHIABRERA was born at Savona, a town on the sea-shore, not far from Genoa, on the 8th of June, 1552. He was born fifteen days after his father's death, and his mother, Gironima Murasana, being young when she was left a widow, married again; which circumstance caused Chiabrera to be brought up by an uncle and aunt, brother and sister to his father, who were both unmarried. At the age of nine, his uncle, who resided at Rome, took him thither, and gave him a private tutor, who taught him Latin. He was twice during childhood assailed by dangerous fevers, which left him so weak and spiritless, that his uncle placed him at the Jesuits' college, that he might regain vigour and hilarity in the company of boys of his own age. The experiment succeeded, and Chiabrera became robust and healthy to the end of his long life. During his juvenile years, his application, memory, and studious habits attracted the applause of his instructors; and the Jesuits were desirous of inducing him to become one of them. The youth showed no disinclination; but his uncle watched over him, and prevented that sacrifice of liberty and independence, which would have rendered him miserable through life. When he was twenty this good uncle died; but he had emancipated himself from monkish influence, and after paying his relations at Savona a short visit, he returned again to Rome, where coming accidentally into contact with the cardinal Comaro Camerlingo, he entered his service, in which he remained some years.

His residence at Rome, however, came to a disastrous termination : he was insulted by a Roman gentleman, and being forced by the laws of honour to avenge himself, the consequences obliged him to quit the city ; nor was he permitted to return till eight years after. He now took up his abode in his native town, and grew to love the leisure and independence of his life. At one time his tranquillity was disturbed by another quarrel, in which he was wounded ; but with his own hand, as he tells us, took his revenge. He was forced, on this, to absent himself from Savona ; and remained, as it were, outlawed for several months, when at last a reconciliation being brought about, he returned and enjoyed many years of complete tranquillity.

Chiabrera had been born rich, but he was negligent of his affairs, so that at last his fortune was reduced to a mere competence ; and this was at one time even endangered by a lawsuit at Rome, all his property there being confiscated ; but it was returned to him, through the intervention of cardinal Aldobrandini. At the age of fifty he married, but had no children. With the few interruptions above recorded, he passed a life of peaceful leisure, content with his fortunes, honoured and esteemed by every body, and rendered happy by the exercise of his talents and imagination. While at Rome in his early life, he had cultivated the friendship of literary men ; and during his leisure, on his return to Savona, he occupied himself by reading poetry as a recreation. His own genius developed itself as he studied the productions of others. The Greek poets particularly delighted him ; and perceiving how much they excelled all other writers, he made them his study, till, his emulation being awakened, he wrote some odes in imitation of Pindar : these being much admired, he was encouraged to continue, still making the Greek lyrical poets his models, though he did not confine his admiration to them only. Homer he preferred to all other writers ; he was charmed by the versification and imagery of Virgil ; and appreciated in

Dante and Ariosto, the power which they possessed of felicitously describing and representing the objects which they desire to bring before their readers.*

Chiabrera had the ambition of forming a new style ; as he expressed it, he meant to follow the example of his countryman, Columbus, and to find a new world, or be wrecked in the attempt. His wish was, to transfuse the spirit of the Greeks into the Italian language. He perceived that the fault common to the poets of his day, was a certain cowardice of style, and an obedience to arbitrary laws, which limited and chilled the poetic fervour. He shook off these trammels, and adopted every possible mode of versification, and even bent the dialect of Petrarch and Tasso to new and unknown forms of expression. He was no lover of rhyme, preferring to it a majestic harmony in the arrangement of syllables and sound, which he found more musical and expressive than the mere jingle of a concluding word. His style thus became at once novel and exalted. He adorned his verses with pompous epithets and majestic turns of expression : he was harmonious and dignified, fervent and spirited.†

As he dedicated nearly the whole of his long life to the composition of poetry, he has left a vast quantity, much of which has never been printed,—narrative poems, dramas, odes, canzoni ‡, sonnets, &c.; but his canzoni, or lyrics, far excel all the rest. This results from his style being at once more original and beautiful than his ideas. We are apt to say, as we read, we have seen this before, but never so well expressed. He does not, like Petrarch, anatomise his own feelings, and spend his heart in grief : even in his love poetry, while he complains, he does not lament, and there is a sort of laughing and vivacious grace and a liquid softness diffused over these poems in particular, which is in-

* Vita di se stesso.

† Muratori.

‡ There is no English word that gives the exact idea of a canzone ; we call such lyrical poems ; yet in Italian they form a class apart.

finitely charming. One of his most celebrated, beginning —

“ Belle rose porporine,”

is in praise of his lady's smile. It is impossible for any thing to be more airy and yet heartfelt — he speaks of how the earth is said to laugh, when, at the morning hour, a rivulet or a breeze wanders murmuring amid the grass, or a meadow adorns itself with flowers; — how the sea laughs, when a light zephyr dips its airy feet in the clear waters, so that the waves scarcely play upon the sands; — and how the heavens smile when morning comes forth, amidst roseate and white flowers, adorned in a golden veil, and moving along on sapphire wheels. “ When the earth is happy,” he says, “ she laughs; and the heavens laugh when they are gay: but neither can smile so sweetly and gracefully as you.” The flowing measure, the admirable selection and position of the words render this and other similar poems models of lyrical composition. A fairy-like colouring, and a thrilling sweetness, like the scent of flowers, invest them, and render them peculiar in their aerial vivacity and spirited flow.

These lighter and more animated productions have not been translated; but, as a specimen of his more serious style, we select one of the epitaphs or elegiac poems among those which Mr. Wordsworth has translated, with his usual accuracy and force of diction: —

There never breathed a man who, when his life
Was closing, might not of that life relate
Toils long and hard. The warrior will report
Of wounds, and bright swords flashing in the field,
And blast of trumpets. He, who hath been doom'd
To bow his forehead in the court of kings,
Will tell of fraud and never-ceasing hate,
Envy, and heart-inquietude, derived
From intricate cabals of treacherous friends.
I, who on shipboard lived from earliest youth,
Could represent the countenance horrible
Of the vexed waters, and the indignant rage
Of Auster and Boötes. Forty years
Over the well-steer'd galleys did I rule:
From huge Pelorus to the Atlantic pillars,
Rises no mountain to mine eyes unknown;
And the broad gulphs I traversed oft and oft;
Of every cloud which in the heavens might stir
I knew the force; and hence the rough sea's pride
Avail'd not to my vessel's overthrow.

What noble pomp, and frequent, have not I
 On regal decks beheld ! Yet in the end
 I learn that one poor moment can suffice
 To equalise the lofty and the low.
 We sail the sea of life — a *calm* one finds,
 And one a *tempest*—and, the voyage o'er,
 Death is the quiet haven of us all.*

The tranquil life of Chiabrera was agreeably varied by his love, not exactly of travelling, but of visiting the various cities of Italy, and by the honours paid him by its princes, in recompence for his poetry, which was enthusiastically admired by all his countrymen. He never made any long stay away from home, except at Genoa and Florence, and there he possessed friends who were glad to welcome him ; for if he was of an irascible, he was of a placable disposition, and though serious of aspect, he was gay and good-humoured in society. The grand duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I., held him in high esteem, and employed him in arranging various dramatic representations on the marriage of Mary de' Medici with the king of France. Charles Emanuel, duke of Savoy, made him generous offers of remuneration, if he would take up his abode at his court ; but Chiabrera wisely preferred his independence. It has

*

Per il Signor Giambattista Feo.

Uomo non è, che pervenuto a morte
 Non possa raccontar della sua vita
 Lunghi travagli. Il cavalier di Marte
 Dirà le piaghe, e lo splendor de' brandi,
 Ed il suon delle trombe : il condannato,
 Nelle gran Reggie, ad inchinar la fronte,
 De' Re scettrati, narrerà le frodi,
 Le lunghe invidie, ed i sofferti affanni
 Infra le schiere de' bugiardi amici.
 Io, che mi vissi in su spalmate prore,
 Potrei rappresentar l' orribil faccia
 Del mar irato, ed i rabbiosi sdegni
 E d'Austro e di Boöte. Anni cinquanta
 Commandai su galere a buon nocchieri :
 Dal gran Peloro all' Atlantei colonne
 Non sorge monte a gli occhi miei non noto,
 E gli ampj golfi veleggiai più volte :
 D' ogni nube, che in ciel fosse raccolta,
 Seppi la forza, onde marino orgoglio
 A' legni miei non valse fare oltraggio.
 Che nobil pompa non mirai sovente
 Su regie poppe ? E pure io provo al fine,
 Che le disuguaglianze un' ora adegua.
 Tutti quaggiuso navighiamo in forse.
 Altri ha tempesta, ed altri ha calma, e poscia
 Nel porto della Morte ognun dà fondo.

been mentioned that he arranged the interludes of a comedy of Guarini, when it was represented on occasion of the marriage of the son of the duke of Mantua with a princess of Savoy. All these princes rewarded him with gifts, or honours, which he seems to have set a still higher value upon; lodging him in their palaces, sending their carriages for his conveyance, and permitting him to remain covered in their presence. He had been the intimate friend of cardinal Barberini, and when the latter was created pope, under the name of Urban VIII., Chiabrera often visited Rome, though he would never reside there; and the pope made him priestly gifts of *agnus dei* and medallions, and in the year of the jubilee wrote him a brief, or letter of compliment, similar to those sent to sovereign princes and men of the highest rank.

Chiabrera was always an orthodox catholic, "a sinner," he expresses it, "but not without christian devotion. He had Santa Lucia for his advocate, and during a space of sixty years, he never failed twice a day to devote himself to pious thoughts, which continued uppermost in his mind all his life." His moderate desires and temperate habits assisted to preserve him in uninterrupted good health. He died at the advanced age of eighty-six, and was buried in his own chapel in the church of San Giacomo.

TASSONI.

1565—1635.

ALESSANDRO TASSONI was born at Modena, in 1565, of a noble and ancient family. He was so unfortunate as to lose both parents in early childhood; nor had he any near relative to watch over his tender years and guard his interests. In consequence, scarcely had he emerged from boyhood, than his inheritance was attacked by lawsuits, and he was involved in the most annoying struggles with private enemies, while long and painful illnesses unfitted him to cope with these evils. Still a love of knowledge rose above the multiplied disasters that beset him, and from his earliest years he was a student. He learnt the Greek and Latin languages under Lazzaro Labadini, a learned and worthy man, but somewhat of the Dominie Sampson species: simple-hearted and abstracted, he was exposed to ridiculous mistakes; and his pupil records in his celebrated poem, how, when a servant informed him of the death of a cow, he sent to the apothecary's shop for drugs to cure her.* While yet under this master's tuition, he wrote a Latin poem named *Errico*, which displayed an extraordinary smoothness of versification and command of language. At the age of eighteen he took the degree of doctor of laws, and in 1585 he entered the university of Bologna, where he continued five years, applying himself to philosophy, under the most celebrated masters. He afterwards studied jurisprudence at Ferrara, and acquired a reputation for his learning and critical acumen.

It was not till past thirty years of age that he ap-

* *La dove il Labadin, persona accorta,
Fe' il beverone alla sua vacca morta.*

1597. appears to have seriously entered on the task of bettering his moderate fortunes. He visited Rome, and entered the service of cardinal Colonna. He accompanied his patron to Spain, and two years after was sent by him to Rome, to obtain permission from pope Clement VIII. to accept the viceroyalty of Aragon. Succeeding in his mission, Tassoni returned to the cardinal. It was during these journeys that he amused himself by composing his "Considerations on Petrarch," which afterwards occasioned so much controversy. The cardinal sent him again to Rome to manage his affairs there; but a few years after, for some reason, with which we are unacquainted, Tassoni quitted his service.

32. Restored to independence, he visited Naples, and then took up his abode at Rome. He now published his "Considerations on Petrarch," and his "Thoughts on various Subjects," which exposed him to the attacks of the literati of Italy. Tassoni was of a bold and original turn of mind; he hated literary prejudices, and loved to set himself against received opinions, merely because they were supported by the greater number. Thus he attacked Homer, Aristotle, and Petrarch. He was singularly acute in discovering minor defects, and his sarcastic and witty talent rendered his criticisms doubly poignant. He was attacked for his publications and he replied with a mixture of humour and bitterness peculiarly galling.

He had thus become well known in Italy, when his reputation was raised to its highest pinnacle by the "Secchia Rapita," or Stolen Bucket, a serio-comic or mock-heroic poem, the first of the kind that had appeared. A work of this nature is adapted only to the very region in which it is composed; and even then, there are certain minds which never relish travesti. How much more is Hudibras spoken of than read, and to how many, except in select and peculiar passages, does it prove heavy and tedious. To an English reader the "Secchia Rapita" must appear greatly inferior to the work of Butler; it is coarser and more long-winded; besides that

the rhymes, the wrenching and transformation of language, the vulgarisms and idioms fall coldly on the ears of those, who have not been habituated from infancy to their use or abuse.

The "*Secchia Rapita*" is founded on those petty wars between two towns, so common in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries. The people of Modena had, in 1325, discomfited the Bolognese at Zoppolino, and the vanquished fled with such precipitation, that their pursuers entered their town with them. The Modenese were driven out again, but carried off, as token of their triumph, the bucket belonging to the public well of the city. The Bolognese made an expedition to recover it, and this forms the basis of the poem. The plebeian names of the "unwashed artificers" who compose the several armies, their ridiculous proceedings, their combats, mocking those of belted knights, are all infinitely relished by the Italians. Tassoni is praised also for the various fancy he displays in individualising the combatants, their combats, and the modes by which they die, as well as for the dignity with which he invests the really noble personages who take a part in the warfare. There are episodes also, some more dignified, others more burlesque even than the main subject of the poem; the gods and goddesses take part, and the kings of Naples and Savoy are brought in on either side. The chief satire of the poem falls on an unfortunate count di Culagna, under which name Tassoni held up to ridicule count Paolo Brusantini, a noble of Ferrara, who had provoked him by instigating a violent and infamous attack on one of his works. Tassoni was unable to avenge himself openly, as Brusantini was a favourite of his prince, but vowed future vengeance, and writing to a friend he exclaims, "If God lends me life, he shall learn, in one way or another, that he has furnished a work to the devil." The count di Culagna falls in love with the Amazon of the poem, and resolves to poison his wife: he makes a confidant of one Titta, a Romagnole, a courtier of the papal court, who was in fact the lover

of the countess, and betrays to her the murderous design. The lady accordingly deceives her husband, changes her soup plate with him, and then flies to the tent of Titta. The count's physician, however, who had been applied to for poison, has only furnished physic, and Culagna recovers. He hears of the infidelity of his wife, and defies Titta to mortal combat. Titta is not brave, but Culagna is trebly a coward. When his challenge is accepted, he takes to his bed, makes his will, and declares that he is going to die. His friends cannot inspire him with any valour, but his doctor, by administering three or four large cups of wine, imparts the necessary courage. The opponents meet; Titta's spear strikes the throat and chest of the count, who falls to the ground, and is carried to his tent, to bed, while Titta exults in his overthrow and death. The surgeon visits Culagna's wound; but, to the surprise of all, the skin even is not scratched: "Yet I saw something red," cries the count, "it was assuredly my blood!" On this they examine him with more attention, and discover a red riband hanging from his throat to his girdle. The blow of Titta disordering his dress, had exposed this unfortunate silk of sanguineous hue to the eyes of the frightened combatant, who at once believed that he had received a mortal wound. Now, perceiving how he had been deceived, the count thanked God most fervently, and, in his artless, pious gratitude, pardoned his friend and his wife all the injuries they had done him. Such is the outline of the principal episode of the "*Secchia Rapita*," which concludes by a peace brought about by the pope's legate; the bucket remaining, however, with the Modenese; and there it probably is to this day. Goldoni saw it, in 1730, suspended by an iron chain from the belfry of the cathedral.

This poem was hailed with rapture, even in manuscript: for some time, indeed, it was only known thus, and numerous copies were made at the price of eight crowns each. As Tassoni had not spared his countrymen or his contemporaries, great obstacles were thrown in

the way of its publication ; and even when printed at Venice and Padua, no edition was really on sale till 1622, when it was published at Paris, under the inspection of Marini.

Tassoni's slender fortunes meanwhile did not permit him to preserve his independence: he accepted the offers of Charles Emanuel, duke of Savoy ; but scarcely had he entered on his new service, than a series of persecutions was commenced against him, which ended by his taking 1625. refuge in private life. Again free from all slavery, *Ætat.* 50. disgusted by the inconstancy of men and the intrigues of courts, he took up his abode at Rome, where he had a house and vineyard, giving himself up to the enjoyment of solitude and study, and deriving his chief pleasure from hunting and the cultivation of flowers. Still he was not wholly weaned from the world, nor content to be neglected : he said that he reminded himself of Fabricius expecting the dictatorship ; and to follow up this truly mock-heroic similitude, he accepted the offer of cardinal Ludovisio, nephew of pope Gregory XV., and entered his service, in which he remained till his patron's death. He afterwards returned to his native town, and being taken into favour by its reigning prince, he passed the remnant of his life prosperously, under the shadow of that fame, which his works, his arduous studies, and great talents caused to gather thick around him. After a few years spent in peace and honour, he died on the 5th of April, 1635, in the seventy-first year of his age.

MARINI.

1569—1625.

GIAMBATTISTA MARINI was born at Naples on the 18th of October, 1569. His father, a celebrated jurisconsult, was desirous of bringing up his son to the same profession ; but the youth felt an unconquerable distaste to the career of the law. Marini possessed a fervid and lively imagination, and a facility in the composition of poetry which determined, without a question, his destiny in life. There are many poets even, we may say, of a higher class than Marini — many more sublime, more earnest, more pathetic — but, in his degree, Marini is a genuine poet, and gave himself up with confidence and ardour to the pursuit of that fame of which he reaped so large a harvest. His father, angry at his resistance to his wishes, was doubly indignant when he gave open testimony of his new career, and actually published a volume of poetry : he turned him from his house, and refused to supply him with the necessaries of life.

But Marini was born under a more fortunate star than usually smiles upon men who give themselves to the fervent aspirations of genius. Amiable and generous as he was, he did not possess that stern independence of disposition, nor that self-engrossed intensity of feeling, which often render poets an intractable race. Several noblemen stepped forward to assist and patronise the young adventurer in the groves of Parnassus. The duke of Bovino, the prince of Conca, and the marquess of Manso, the friend of Tasso, offered him protection and shelter. He became acquainted with Tasso, who encouraged him to pursue his poetic career ; and he published
 1589. *Ætat.* his *Canzoni de' Baci*, which acquired for him a great
 20. reputation.

He was concerned in some youthful scrapes ; and having assisted a friend to escape, who had been imprisoned on account of a love adventure, he was himself thrown into a prison. He amused himself there by writing gay and light-hearted verses ; but soon after he escaped from confinement, and fled to Rome, where he took up his abode with monsignore Crescenzi. With him he visited Venice, but returned to Rome after a short absence, and entered the service of cardinal Aldobrandini. At Venice he published a volume of lyrical poetry, which established his fame.

Marini was always a popular man, and beloved and esteemed by his friends. When Paul V. was created pope, his patron, cardinal Aldobrandini, was sent as legate to Ravenna, and Marini accompanied him. He frequently visited Venice and Bologna, and formed intimacies with the men of reputation and talent residing in those cities. He was devoted to the cultivation of poetry ; and here he first conceived the idea of the " *Adone*." He accompanied the cardinal to Turin, where Charles Emanuel, duke of Savoy, received him at his court with the most flattering marks of distinction. Marini repaid him by a panegyric, which he called " *Il Ritratto*," or the Portrait, and was rewarded by the gift of a gold chain, and made cavalier of the order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. When cardinal Aldobrandini returned to Ravenna, the poet was invited to remain at the Piedmontese court ; and, with the consent of his former patron, he accepted the offer.

Marini's life was chiefly diversified by literary quarrels, in which he came off with his usual good fortune. He had already sustained several skirmishes with various authors, when the most deadly war was declared against him by Gasparo Murtola, a Genoese, and secretary to the duke. He believed himself to be the first poet of the age, and was indignant at the favour shown to Marini. He levelled an attack of epigrams and satirical sonnets against him, which Marini answered, and was considered to have the best of the battle : they pub-

lished these collectively afterwards, under the title of the *Murtoleide* and the *Marineide*: but Murtola, still more angry at the advantages gained by his adversary in this paper hostility, took a more injurious mode of showing his enmity: he shot at him as he was walking in the public square, but, missing his aim, wounded a favourite of the duke who was with him. Murtola was thrown into prison, and condemned to death. Marini generously interceded in his favour, and at his solicitation he was pardoned and liberated. Murtola, more angry and envious than ever, brought forward a poem of his enemy, which satirised the duke of Savoy. In vain Marini represented that this work had been written at Naples in his youth, many years before. He was thrown into prison, nor liberated till the marchese Manso sent his testimony of the truth of what he had declared, as to the period of its composition. His tranquillity does not appear to have suffered by this persecution. He continued to devote himself to learning and poetry: he applied himself to the study of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, and published his poem on the Murder of the Innocents, which he considered his best production.

His fame, spread beyond the Alps, had induced queen Marguerite of France to invite him to her court. Marini accepted her invitation; but by the time he arrived in Paris his patroness had died. Queen Mary de' Medici stepped forward, however, in her room, and the place of gentleman to the king, with a pension of 2000 crowns, was bestowed on him. He became very popular among the French nobility; many learnt Italian for the express purpose of reading his works. He lived a happy and honourable life. His great pleasure consisted in forming a valuable and extensive library, and collecting pictures by the best artists. The queen showed him many marks of favour: if she met him in the street, she was in the habit of stopping her carriage, for the sake of conversing with him; and such generosity was shown him by her, and his other noble

patrons, that he was enabled to buy a villa near Naples, on Mon Posilippo, whither he intended at some future time to retire, and end his days. No doubt, in the chill climate of Paris, under the dusky atmosphere of the north, his lively imagination recurred with yearning to the beautiful and genial land of his nativity.

He published his "Adone" while at Paris. The popularity of this poem was extraordinary; nothing was spoken of but it and its author, and the rapid sale enriched Marini, though it also exposed him to much literary enmity, and the censures of the church. Italian critics have since become exceedingly indignant, and consider it the origin of the false taste, the conceits, and flowery style of the seicentisti. But, while it must be allowed that the imitators of Marini form a school of poetry remarkable for its corrupt style, its mannerism, and false and metaphoric imagery, it is impossible not to admit that the "Adone" itself is a work of great beauty and imagination: it wants sublimity, and deep pathos and masculine dignity; but its fancy, its descriptions, its didactic passages, are animated by the undeniable spirit of poetry. Marini possessed an extreme ease of versification, and a versatility and fecundity of style that carries the reader along with it. The "Adone" is founded on the well-known mythological story of Venus and Adonis. Cupid, having been chastised by his goddess mother, in revenge, resolves to wreak on her the miseries of love. He brings the son of Myrrha to the shores of Cyprus, and while the Queen of Beauty is regarding the beautiful youth as he sleeps, her wily son pierces her heart with his love-poisoned arrow. She falls in love on the instant, and Adonis, on awakening, is not slow to return her passion. Venus conducts him to her palace, where Cupid relates to him his adventures with Psyche, and Mercury those of Narcissus, Hylas, Actæon, and other victims of love. He is then led through the gardens of pleasure, into the tower of delight; but the loves of the goddess and her favourite are interrupted by the jealousy of Mars, and Adonis

flies in alarm from the angry god. He falls afterwards into the hands of a fairy, who imprisons and annoys him: he escapes, and, after many wanderings and adventures, returns to Venus. It is then that he departs on that fatal hunting expedition which brings on the catastrophe. Mars and the malicious fairy unite in sending the boar against him, by which he is destroyed: his death — the grief of Venus — his interment — and the combats with which the goddess celebrates his funeral, conclude the poem. Its chief fault is, that it is terribly wiredrawn, even in the particular descriptions; for as to the story itself, that forms but a slender portion of the whole composition. Besides this, we are told that an allegory of youth is contained in the temptations, pleasures, and fatal catastrophe of the young lover; and this, as well as the unreal and fantastic nature of the personages, deprives it of all vivid interest. It is far removed from the fire of Ariosto, or the pathos and dignity of Tasso; still it is pleasing, varied, and imaginative, and but for its length would to this day be a more general favourite.

The cardinal Ludovisio, nephew of pope Gregory XV., earnestly entreated Marini to forsake Paris and repair to Rome. The king and queen of France permitted him to accept the invitation; and he returned to Italy, unterrified by the accusation that hung over his head, on account of the licentiousness of his work. He was received at Rome with enthusiasm, and his society was courted by every person of distinction. Here, as elsewhere, however, he was involved in literary squabbles; so that at last he resolved to retreat to the home he had prepared for himself at Naples. The tribunal, meanwhile, demanded alterations in his poem, accused of licentiousness and a tendency to impiety. Two of his friends appeared to answer for him; but he permitted two stanzas only to be altered. The poem of Marini is certainly in its very texture soft, effeminate, and amorous; but there are no passages so reprehensible as many in Ariosto: the "*Orlando Furioso*" was never de-

nounced; and it is singular that so pertinacious an outcry should have been raised against the "Adone."

Its author, however, was not destined to suffer persecution, nor to enjoy his success for any long time. Soon after his return to Naples, he established himself at his delightful villa at Posilippo, where his life came to a sudden close: he fell ill of a painful malady, and died on the 25th of March, 1625, aged fifty-six. He was buried in the cloister of the Theatin Fathers, to whom he had bequeathed his valuable library.

FILICAJA.

1642—1707.

VINCENZO DA FILICAJA was born at Florence, on the 30th of December, 1642. The families of both his parents were noble; his mother being the daughter of Christofano Spini, one of the most distinguished families of Tuscany. His father educated him with care, and he attended the public schools of Florence. He gave early token of his literary and poetic genius: his memory was tenacious, and his industry indefatigable; while the seriousness of his disposition rendered retirement and study natural and easy to him. Perceiving his inclination for learning, his father sent him to the university of Pisa, to fit him for pursuing the legal profession. Filicaja attended the lectures of the professors on this subject; yet he could not induce himself to bestow his whole time on the law, but applied himself also to philosophy and theology, and to the imbuing himself with a perfect knowledge of the Latin and Italian languages. He was naturally inclined to piety, and spent much of his time in prayer and devout exercises. His habits were regulated by strict principles of morality; and so devoted was he to the cultivation of his intellect, that he always rose two hours before dawn, finding his mind clearer, and more capable of grappling with the abstruse subjects of his contemplation, in the early hours of morning.

While yet a student at Pisa, when on a visit to his home during the vacation, he fell in love; and his poetic talent first developed itself in verses addressed to the beautiful and noble girl who was the object of

his affection. She died soon after, and he lamented her death in poetry; but the exact moral discipline to which he subjected his inclinations reproached him for giving himself up to the influence of passion; and he burnt all his love poetry, and made a resolution, which he kept to the end of his life, of dedicating his genius to the celebration only of moral and sacred subjects.

After a residence of five years at Pisa, having taken the degree of doctor of laws, he returned to Florence, and was placed under Giovanni Federighi, a jurisconsult of eminence, that he might add to his theoretical, a practical knowledge of law. At the age of thirty-two, he married Anna, the daughter of the marchese Capponi. Soon after his father died; and, freed from all restraint, he followed the bent of his disposition, by retiring into the country, where he spent the greater part of each year in domestic retirement, devoting himself to the education of his two sons.

Hitherto his poetic merits were unknown beyond the limits of a small circle of friends; but public events called his genius to higher flights. The Turkish army overrunning Hungary, laid siege to Vienna, and filled Christendom with alarm. The enthusiastic piety of Filicaja added to the natural disquietude inspired by such a disaster; and while the fate of the war was in suspense, and afterwards, when victory drove the infidels from the gates of the capital of Austria, he poured out his terrors and his exulting triumph in odes, which breathe a pure and elevated lyric spirit.

At the time when he wrote, Italian poetry had received a check from that unfortunate propensity men have to shackle the free course of genius by rules and precedent. There was a distinction made between the poetic and prosaic style; the former was founded upon Petrarch, and it became a law to use no expressions but such as had his authority. The language of Italian verse was thus becoming, as it were, a dead idiom; repeating itself, and incapable of any original expressions.

Filicaja disdained these shackles, and revived his poetic diction by transfusing into it many elevated and energetic modes of speech, hitherto reserved for prose only. Facility, dignity, and clearness are his characteristics; and the grandeur of his ideas gives force to the originality of his expressions; which, emanating spontaneously, as they did, from a mind full of his subject, found an echo in the hearts of his readers.

His friends alone had hitherto been aware of his talent; but the enthusiasm they felt on reading these spirited odes led them to give copies; and they got into the hands of those princes who, as the leaders of the armies against the Turks, were celebrated in them. One of his finest odes he had addressed to John, king of Poland; who acknowledged the honour in letters full of praises and thanks. Christina, queen of Sweden, displayed in a more kind and liberal manner her admiration: hearing that Filicaja had two sons, she insisted upon providing for their education; declaring that she would bring them up as her own children. She showed herself so generous, that the poet was accustomed to say, that he could not look on his home and family without perceiving the marks of her favour. While her modesty was such, that she insisted that her bounty should be kept a secret; declaring she was ashamed it should be known that she did so little for a man, whom she esteemed so much; and her benevolence remained unknown till after her death. Filicaja's life was not, however, wholly prosperous: on the death of Christina, he became involved in pecuniary embarrassments, and he was attacked by a dangerous malady. He lost, also, his eldest son, who, since the queen's death, had been appointed page of honour to the grand duke of Tuscany. The high opinion entertained of him by Cosmo III. extricated him from a part of his difficulties. This prince named him to the command of the city of Volterra. Ancient feuds and old and almost irremediable abuses of various kinds, afflicted the town; and it re-

quired all the influence which Filicaja obtained by his justice, his benevolence, and urbanity to put an end to these evils. Volterra enjoyed tranquillity and plenty under his direction; trade and the arts flourished; and this venerable city was restored to a portion of its former splendour: he thus became so dear to the citizens, that they twice petitioned the grand duke to continue him in the government. Their request was accorded; and when, at last, he was recalled, he carried with him the universal regret.

On his removal from Volterra, he was, for two years, governor of Pisa, — a situation of high trust. On his return to Florence, he filled several law offices of great power and emolument. He was popular and beloved throughout: equitable, but benevolent; diligent and conscientious, his virtues were adorned by his pleasing and affable manners. His piety caused him to devote much of his leisure to devotional exercises; and his taste led him to cultivate poetry. His industrious habits enabled him to compose a great deal when his time was otherwise much taken up by his public duties. He wrote much in Latin, a small portion only of which has been published; and it displays a deep knowledge and command of that language. He employed himself also in correcting and adding to his Italian poetry. He was a severe critic on his own works; and yet, mistrusting his judgment, he submitted them to the further censorship of four selected friends. He was much beloved, as well as admired, by all who knew him; and belonged to the Della Crusca academy, and to the Arcadian, — of both of which he was the brightest ornament. His last work was an “Ode to the Virgin,” which occupied him but a few days before his death. Filicaja was not only devout, but a rigid catholic. One of the acts of his life previous to entering on a new career, had been a pilgrimage to Loretto; and, in his dying moments, a picture of the Virgin excited his pious and poetic thoughts. There is great spirit and sweetness in this ode, in which he recurs

to the love of his earlier days; and how, on losing the object, he transferred his devotion, entire and for ever, to the mother of his Saviour.

While thus employed, he was seized by an inflammation of his lungs. His religious faith supported him in his sufferings, and did not forsake him to the last. He died on the 24th of September, 1707, at the age of sixty-five. He was buried in his family tomb in the church of San Piero, at Florence.

METASTASIO.

1698—1782.

METASTASIO was of obscure origin. He owed his prosperity, in the first place, to the talents with which nature had endowed him ; and, in the second, to singular good fortune ; while his amiable disposition and excellent character gave a scope to the course of felicitous circumstances ; which, among men of genius, is frequently checked by their impetuosity and thoughtlessness, or by the proud sense of independence attendant upon their organisation. The name of the poet's father was Felice Trapassi, a citizen of Assisi. His poverty had forced him to enter into the Corsican regiment of the pope ; and he added to his slender means by acting as copyist. He married Francesca Galasti, of Bologna ; by whom he had two sons and two daughters. Later in life, he saved money enough to enter into partnership in a shop of *l'arte bianca*,—a sort of chandler, where macaroni, oil, and other culinary materials, are sold. His younger son, Pietro, was born at Rome, on the 13th of January, 1698. The child gave early indications of genius ; and his father resolved to bestow on him the best education in his power ; and placed him, at a very early age, with a watchmaker, that he might learn a respectable art.

But the boy was born to pursue a nobler career. He was already a poet ; and, when only ten years old, attracted an audience in his father's shop by his talents as improvisatore. It happened, one summer evening, that Vincenzo Gravina, a celebrated jurisconsult, and renowned for his learning and love of letters, was walking with the poet Lorenzini in the streets of Rome.

Passing by Trapassi's shop, he was attracted by the childish voice of the juvenile poet, who was in the act of reciting extempore verses. He joined the audience; and, being perceived by Pietro, the little fellow introduced some stanzas in his praise into his effusion. Gravina, charmed by his talent and prepossessing appearance, offered him money, which the child refused. The lawyer continued to question him, and was so satisfied by the propriety and spirit of his answers, that he immediately proposed to adopt him as his son; promising to give him a good education, and to facilitate his career in the same profession as himself. No objection could be raised to so generous and beneficent an offer. The boy was not to be taken from his native town, nor were his duties towards his parents to be interfered with.

One of Gravina's first acts was to change his adopted son's name from the ignoble one of Trapassi to the better sounding appellation of Metastasio, which was a sort of translation of his paternal name into Greek. Gravina did not delay to cultivate the boy's understanding, so as to fit him for a literary career. Being an idolater of ancient learning, his first care was to initiate his pupil in the languages of the writers of Greece and Rome, and then to imbue him with a knowledge of their works. Metastasio showed himself an apt scholar: at the age of fourteen he wrote a tragedy, which, in a letter written in after years, he freely criticised. "My tragedy of 'Giustino,'" he says, "was written at the age of fourteen, when the authority of my illustrious master did not permit me to diverge from a religious imitation of the Greek models; and when my own inexperience prevented me from discerning the gold from the lead in those mines whose treasures were but just opened to me." The tragedy, written thus in strict imitation, is necessarily frigid; nor does the language bear the stamp of the ease and grace which so distinguished Metastasio's after writings.

He still continued to improvise verses in company. This attractive art renders the person who exercises it

the object of so much interest and admiration, that it is to be wondered that any one who has once practised it, can ever give it up. The act of reciting the poetry that flows immediately to the lips is peculiarly animating: the declaimer warms, as he proceeds, with his own success; while the throng of words and ideas that present themselves, light up the eyes, and give an air of almost supernatural intelligence and fire to the countenance and person. The audience — at first curious, then pleased, and, at last, carried away by enthusiastic delight — feel an admiration, and bestow plaudits, which, perhaps, no other display of human talent is capable of exciting. The youth, the harmonious voice, and agreeable person of Metastasio added to the charm: yet, fortunately, he gave up the exercise of his power before it had unfitted him for more arduous compositions. He gives an account of his success, and his quitting the practice, in a subsequent letter to Algarotti. “I do not deny,” he writes, “that a natural talent for harmony and rhythm displayed itself in me earlier than is usually the case; that is, when I was about ten years of age. This strange phenomenon so dazzled my great master, Gravina, that he selected me as soil worthy to be cultivated by so celebrated a man. Until I was sixteen, he brought me forward to improvise verses on any given subject; and Rolli, Vanini, and Perfetti, then men of mature years, were my rivals. Many people tried to write down our effusions while we extemporised, but with no success; for, besides that they were no adepts in short-hand, it was necessary to deceive us cleverly, otherwise the mere suspicion of such an operation would have dried up my vein. This occupation soon became burdensome and injurious to me; burdensome, because I was perpetually obliged, by invitations which could not be refused, to task myself every day, and sometimes twice a day, — now to gratify some lady’s whim, now to satisfy the curiosity of some high-born fool, and now to fill up a blank in some grand assembly, — losing thus miserably the greater part of the time necessary for my studies.

It was injurious, because my weak and uncertain health suffered. It was perceptible to every one that the agitation attendant on this exercise of the mind, used to inflame my countenance and heat my head, while my hands and extremities became icy cold. Gravina consequently exerted his authority to prohibit me from making extempore verses, — a prohibition which, from the age of sixteen, I have never infringed, and to which I believe that I owe the remnant of reasonable and connected ideas that are to be found in my writings.” He goes on to state the evils that result to the intellect perpetually bent on so exciting a proceeding ; when the poet, instead of selecting and arranging his thoughts, and then using measure and rhyme as obedient executors of his designs, is obliged to employ the small time allowed him in collecting words, in which he afterwards clothes the ideas best fitted to these words, even though foreign to his theme : thus the former seeks at his ease for a dress fitted to his subject ; while the latter, in haste and disturbance, must find a subject fitted to his dress.

On withdrawing his pupil from the exercise of this fascinating art, Gravina became aware that his education could not be carried on with success amidst the pleasures and idleness of his life at Rome ; and he sent him to study under his cousin Camporese, who lived near the ancient Cortona, a town of Magna Græcia, famous in antiquity for its schools of philosophy. Metastasio was very happy at this period of his life ; and, in a letter written at an advanced age, he recurs to it with yearning fondness. “Of how many dear and pleasing ideas, my friend,” he writes to Don Saverio Mattei, “you have awakened the recollection, by causing me to go over in my thoughts the happy time I spent, not less usefully than delightfully, between boyhood and adolescence, in Magna Græcia. I saw again as if they were present all those objects which pleased me so much at that time. Again I inhabited the little chamber, in which the sound of the breakers of the neighbouring sea so often lulled me into the sweetest

sleep ; and, by force of my imagination, I revisited in my boat the shores of neighbouring Scalea ; and the names and aspects of many places recurred to me, before forgotten. I heard again the venerable voice of the renowned philosopher Camporese ; who, stooping to instruct one so young, led me, as it were, by the hand among the vortexes of the then reigning Descartes, of whom he was a strenuous advocate, and attracted my boyish curiosity, by showing me in wax, as if in a game, how globules were formed from atoms, and filling me with admiration of the bewitching experiments of philosophy. It seems to me as if I again saw him labouring to persuade me that his dog was formed upon the same principle as a watch ; and that the trinal dimension is a sufficient definition of solid bodies. And I behold him smile, when, having kept me long plunged in a dark reverie, by forcing me to doubt of every thing, he perceived that I breathed again, on his assertion, ‘ I think, therefore, I am ;’ the invincible proof of a certainty which I had despaired of ever again attaining.” Camporese died, unfortunately, in the midst of these studies, and Metastasio returned to Rome.

It was soon after his lot to lose his adopted father, Gravina. He expresses, both in letters written at the time, and in after years, his deep grief on the death of his benefactor. Gravina kept his word, of considering him as his son ; and, with the exception of a legacy to his mother, left him heir to all that he possessed, to the amount of about fifteen thousand crowns. Finding himself thus independent, and even rich in his own eyes, Metastasio gave himself up to the study of poetry. Hitherto the rules of Gravina had limited his reading : now he emerged into freedom ; and, having been before allowed only to peruse Ariosto, among the Italians, he read the “ Jerusalem Delivered” for the first time. He was enchanted by the order and majesty of a single action, conducted with art, and terminated with dignity. The grandeur of the style, the vivid colouring and fervid imagination of Tasso, transported him with delight.

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Ovid was also an especial favourite; and it is recorded that he regarded Marini with an approbation which that poet, indeed, deserves, but of which, as the original corrupter of the Italian style, and the leader of the degenerate Seicentisti, he is usually deprived.

Unfortunately, independence and youthful thoughtlessness led Metastasio into other deviations from Gravina's lessons, less praiseworthy than reading Tasso. The poet was warm-hearted, hospitable, and gay. He was surrounded by companions ready to share the pleasures and luxuries which his money procured; while he believed his future prospects secured by the promises he received from influential protectors. Two years had not passed before he was undeceived. He had squandered the greater part of his fortune; he had made many enemies, and his friends fell off. With a firmness worthy of his education, he stopped short of actual ruin; and, disgusted with the society of Rome, and the treatment he had suffered, he changed, on a sudden, his whole plan of life, following up his new designs with zeal and perseverance.

"There lived at Naples," says his biographer, Venanzio, "a rough incult lawyer, called Castagnola, covered with rust and dust, and an enemy to every thing that was not allied to forensic struggles and turmoils." Wishing to place a barrier between his will and his inclinations, Metastasio went to Naples, and chose this man for his master, believing that his asperity and detestation of poetry would serve to guard him against having again recourse to an art towards which nature impelled him. For nearly two years he submitted to the control of Castagnola, and devoted himself to the severest study. But he was well known at Naples, and his talents were appreciated. He was perpetually solicited to compose epithalamiums, theatrical pieces, and occasional verses. He resisted the temptation as long as he could: at last, commanded by the viceroy, he consented to write a drama, to celebrate the birthday of the empress Elizabeth Christina, wife of Charles VI.

He, however, obtained a promise of secrecy, and hoped to conceal his crime from his master. To accomplish this, he was obliged to steal for his work the hours usually devoted to sleep ; but his natural vein, checked for some time, flowed with such felicity, that he accomplished his task before the appointed time. The "*Orti Esperidi*" charmed his august employer, who bestowed on it the highest praise, and presented the author with a purse containing two hundred ducats.

The success of this interlude on the stage confirmed the judgment of the viceroy. It was admirably set to music, and the decorations were most splendid. All Naples flocked to the representation — all Naples resounded with its praises, and every one was eager to thank and applaud the author. But Metastasio, reluctant to quit his legal studies, shrank from the censures of his master, and continued to preserve the concealment he had at first adopted : he even angrily denied the charge when he was accused of being the writer, and put enquiry to fault ; till at last the discovery was made by the prima donna, Marianna Bulgarelli, usually called *La Romanina*, from her native city. She had received the greatest applause in the character of *Venus*, in this drama ; and her gratitude and admiration made her eager to learn to whom she owed her success. Despite all his efforts, she discovered that Metastasio was the author, and she lost no time in spreading the report throughout Naples.

Castagnola was highly indignant. He treated his pupil with severity and disdain ; while, on the other hand, the *Romanina* used every argument to inspire him with self-confidence, and to induce him to follow the career for which he was formed by nature. He consented at last : he quitted the angry lawyer, who refused even to listen to his farewell ; and, at the earnest invitation of his new friend, took up his abode at her house. Marianna Bulgarelli had a society around her of distinguished men and accomplished artists, and among these Metastasio found every encouragement to pursue

his new career. He studied the science of music under Porpora, the first composer of the day, and acquired a knowledge of the art which greatly assisted the melody of his verses ; so that, he tells us, he never wrote any lyrical poetry without imagining an accompaniment at the same time, which regulated its cadences and modulated the sounds. His natural inclination led him to desire to write tragedies ; but, on reflection, he found that it was not sufficient that tragedies should be written, if there were no actors to represent them, nor an audience which could take interest in the representation. His association with musical people, and a prima donna, led him to consider the opera as the natural drama of Italy. Operatic dramas owed their origin to Florence, the birthplace of so much that is great and admirable, and were first brought forward in 1594. After that time they fell into disrepute, till Apostolo Zeno, choosing in ancient mythology and history the groundwork of his plots, brought out pieces that acquired great popularity. To this species of composition Metastasio accordingly turned his thoughts. Marianna encouraged him to proceed ; and, when he received the commission to furnish the Neapolitan theatre with an opera for the carnival of 1724, she suggested the subject of " *Didone Abbandonata*," or the desertion of Dido. In this, she filled the part of the unfortunate queen ; and her dignity, pathos, and musical powers imparted an attraction to the piece, which filled the audience with enthusiasm, while her heart warmed with gratitude towards the poet, whose admirable conception and execution gave a scope to her talents, before denied to them. The reputation of Dido spread through Italy : during the carnival of the following year, it was acted at Venice, *la Romanina* being still engaged to fill the principal part. Metastasio accompanied his friend, and wrote, while in that city, another opera, called " *Siroe*."

This was the last appearance of Marianna on the stage : she was no longer young, and retired from her

profession. She took up her residence at Rome, and with some difficulty persuaded her friend to return to his native city. The two families resided under the same roof—Marianna and her husband—Metastasio with his father, elder brother, and two sisters. The relations of the poet were indigent; but he possessed some property, and his friend was comparatively rich. The household was in common; Marianna acting as steward and housekeeper, while she still kept her station beside the poet; encouraging him in moments of despondency; suggesting subjects for his muse; and displaying, at all times, that active and generous affection which so distinguished her.

Metastasio did not, however, meet with the encouragement at Rome which hailed his first exertions. He wrote his drama of "Cato," which was acted in 1727; but it was not attended with his accustomed success. The austere character of the Roman hero—the cold loves—and disastrous ending—displeased the morbid tastes of the spectators, who were unable to appreciate the simplicity of the plot, or the grandeur of the sentiments. Metastasio had a true tragic bias for an unhappy catastrophe; but his audience did not relish it, and, subsequently, he adapted himself better to their tastes, and his operas have usually the happy ending, then supposed more consonant to the inherent lightness of musical dramas, or, probably, to the talents of the singers: as, in our days, the sublime acting of Pasta has induced composers to bring forward tragedies of the deepest dye, "Medea" and "Otello," as the subjects best fitted for their art.

Metastasio was discouraged: he was poor, and he had many enemies at Rome, who prejudiced the pope against him, and rendered his abode very disagreeable. At this moment, fortune came to his aid, and his whole future life became prosperous and stable. In November, 1729, he received a letter from prince Pio of Savoy, director of the imperial theatricals, inviting him to become the court poet of Vienna. Apostolo Zeno was at

that time poet laureate to the emperor Charles VI.; but he also, with praiseworthy liberality, seconded the emperor in his wish to invite Metastasio to his court; and the way was opened to him by the absence of envy in one, who might have looked on him as a rival, but who generously preferred regarding him as a fellow-labourer, or rather, successor, to his own exertions. Metastasio at once accepted the offer with many expressions of gratitude. He was allowed to delay his journey to Vienna till the spring of 1730, and to fulfil his engagement of supplying the Roman theatre with two pieces for the carnival. These were "Alexander in India," and "Artaxerxes." The latter was a favourite from the first: the poet considered it the most fortunate of his productions, and was accustomed to say that he owed it more obligations than any other of his dramas; since, even when set to indifferent music, it never failed to meet with success.

Metastasio thus made his appearance at Vienna, surrounded by the halo of a recent triumph. He left Rome with pleasure; but he quitted his family with regret: more than all he must have lamented his separation from his generous and affectionate friend, Marianna, the encourager of his youthful timidity, the chief promoter of his fortunate choice of a profession, and his unwearied comforter during adverse circumstances. He went to new scenes and to a new people, and adapted himself at once to the change. He was kindly received by the emperor, and his heart overflowed with gratitude for his condescension and beneficence.

It is a strange fact, how little we are contented with negative qualities in our fellow-creatures; and, indeed, how amiability, and even generosity, become slight in our eyes, if unaccompanied by energy, independence, and pride. Metastasio was the most amiable of men: his disposition was affectionate and constant; yet he was derided in his own time for his courtier-like qualities, and the gratitude he naturally evinced towards his

imperial benefactors; and censured for a coldness of heart of which we can find no trace in his writings or actions. There is one circumstance that renders posterity more just, and, in particular, induces those who write his biography to regard him with a favourable eye: this is the publication of his letters. We possess a series from the age of thirty to that of eighty-four, when he died, which let us into the secrets of his heart, and display his good sense, his friendly disposition, his justice, and the ready sympathy that he afforded to those to whom he was attached, in a more undisguised manner than could be known to his contemporaries. These letters prepossess the reader in his favour; and, while the biographer finds few events to record, and little of misfortune or error to mark his pages with high-wrought interest, he may envy the tranquil career of the fortunate poet, and wish that fate had made him the friend of such a man.

Metastasio entered on his employments at Vienna in the year 1730, at the age of thirty-two. He took up his abode in the house of Niccolo Martinetz, who held a place in the court of the apostolic nuncio, and with whom he remained to the end of his life. The dramas that he brought out during the year succeeding to his arrival were eminently successful. These were "Adriano," and "Demetrio;" and, during the three following, he wrote the "Olimpiade," "Demoofonte," and "Issipile." Each, as it appeared, excited still renewed admiration and applause. After the representation of "Issipile," the emperor broke through his habitual majestic reserve, and expressed his satisfaction to the poet, who was enraptured by the unusual condescension. His imperial master soon after testified his approbation in a more solid manner, by bestowing on him the place of treasurer to the province of Cosenza in Naples, worth annually 350 sequins. Unfortunately, the war of the Spanish succession deprived him of this income, after he had enjoyed it but for a few years.

The poet's heart and soul were in his profession, and his operas were written with that fervent and exalted

spirit which marks the compositions of genius; while his modesty engendered doubts concerning their reception, which were delightfully dissipated by the triumph of their success. His feelings are all ingenuously expressed in his letters to Marianna Bulgarelli, who, together with her husband, still remained at Rome with the poet's family. "I did not believe," he writes, "that I should have been able to send you the good news I now give—I was so entirely prepared for the contrary. My *Demetrio* was brought out last Sunday, and with so great success, that the old people here assure me they never witnessed such universal applause. The audience wept at the Addio—my august master was not unmoved—and, notwithstanding the respect paid to the imperial presence, the public could not restrain themselves from giving marks of applause. My enemies have become my applauders. I cannot express my surprise, for this opera is so delicately touched, without any of that strong colouring that strikes at once, that I feared that it was not adapted to the national taste. I was mistaken—every one seems to understand it, and passages are recited in conversation, as if it were written in German." While composing the "*Olimpiade*," he thus addresses his friend:—"Here is a moral sonnet which I wrote in the midst of a pathetic scene, that moved me as I wrote it: so that, smiling at myself, when I found my eyes humid from pity at a fictitious disaster, invented by myself, I expressed my feelings in the sonnet I send. The idea does not displease me; and I did not choose to lose it, as it will serve as an incitement for my piety." The thought of the sonnet is, that, while he smiles at himself for weeping over dreams and fables of his own invention, he may remember that every thing that he fears and hopes is equally fictitious,—that all is false, his existence a delirium, and his whole life a dream;—and it ends with a prayer that he may awaken and find repose in the bosom of truth.

Again, he writes, "Will you suggest the subject of an opera? Yes or no? I am in an abyss of doubt.

Oh! do not laugh, and say that the disease is incurable; for indeed, the choice of a subject merits all this inquietude and scepticism. It is my lot to be forced to make a choice, and I cannot avoid it, otherwise I should continue to doubt until the day of judgment, and then begin again. Read the third scene of the third act of my 'Adrian;' remark the character which the emperor gives of himself, and you will see my own.* From this you may conclude, that I know my faults, but not that I can correct them. This pertinacity in a fault, which torments me without the recompence of any pleasure, and which I clearly perceive, without being able to remedy, makes me often reflect on the tyranny which the body exercises over the mind. If my understanding is convinced, when reasoning calmly, that this excess of indecision is a troublesome, tormenting, and useless vice, and an obstacle to the execution of any design, why do I not get rid of it? Why not abide by a resolution, so often taken, to doubt no more? The answer is clear; that the mechanical constitution of the soul's imperfect habitation gives a false colouring to objects before they reach it, as rays of the sun appear yellow or green or red, according to the hue of the substance which they traverse to meet our eyes. Hence it is clear, that men for the most part do not act from reason, but from mechanical impulse, subsequently adapting, by the force of their un-

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" Ah, tu non sai
Qual guerra di pensieri
Agita l' alma mia.

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Trovo per tutto
Qualche scoglio a temer. Scelgo, mi pento;
Poi d' essermi pentito
Mi ritorno a pentir. Mi stanco intanto
Nel lungo dubitar, tal che dal male
Il ben non distinguo: alfin mi veggio
Stetto dal tempo, e mi risolvo al peggio."

" Ah, thou knowest not the war of struggling thoughts
That agitates my soul. I find in all
Some peril still to dread. I choose; and then,
My choice repent—and then again regret
Having repented; while protracted doubt
Wearies my mind, so that the ill from good
No longer I distinguish; till at length
The flight of time impels me to the worst."

derstanding, their reason to their actions, so that the cleverest frequently appear the most reasonable. Do not get weary, because I play the philosopher with you ; I have none else with whom to play it ; and doing it thus by letter, I call to mind conversations of this kind, which made us spend so many happy hours together.— O, how much more matter for such has my experience in the world given me ! We will again talk on these
 July 4. subjects, if fortune does not, through some caprice, en-
 1733. tangle the thread of my honourable but laborious life.”

A few months after fortune cut, rather than entangled, the thread of these prospects ; Marianna died, and, true to her feelings of friendship* to the end, she left the poet heir to her possessions, to the amount of thirty thousand crowns. Metastasio writes thus to his brother, on receiving this sad intelligence: —

“ In the agitation I feel from the unexpected death of the poor and generous Marianna, I cannot long dilate. I can only say, that my honour and my conscience have both induced me to renounce her bequest in favour of her husband. I owe it to the world to undeceive it from a great mistake, — that of fancying that my friendship was founded on avarice and interested motives. I have no right to take advantage of the partiality of my poor friend to the injury of her husband, and God will by some other means make up for what I now renounce. I need nothing for myself ; I possess sufficient at Rome to maintain my family in decency, and if Providence preserves to me my property in Naples, I will give my

* We have made no remark on the nature of this kind-hearted and generous woman's attachment. In Italy it is customary to look on such as formed by friendship only, and to consider that they are rendered respectable by constancy. The Italians lavish the greatest praise on Marianna Bulgarelli for her perception of the poet's merits, her zeal in persuading him to, and assisting him in, his arduous career ; and the disinterested affection which caused her at once to make a sacrifice of her own feelings, and to advise his journey to Vienna. Her errors are those of her country. Any one who has visited Italy must at once censure, and deeply deplore, the social system there carried on—a system which blights the affections, degrades the moral feeling, and causes almost universal unhappiness. But it is unjust to heap the censure of a system belonging to a whole country, and carried on for centuries, on the head of an individual, whose virtues, we may presume to say, redeemed an error, the very existence of which is, after all, uncertain.

relations other marks of my affection, and think seriously of you in particular. Communicate my resolution to my father, as I have not time to write to him. Assure him of my intention always to contribute as heretofore to his comfort, and even to increase my assistance, if my Neapolitan income does not fail me. In short, make him enter into my feelings, so that he shall not imbitter them by disapproving of my honest and Christian determination.

“ You will continue to live with signor Bulgarelli, who will, I hope, display towards you that friendly kindness which my conduct with regard to him deserves. All will go on as before ; only poor Marianna will never return, nor can I hope for any consolation, and the rest of my life will be insipid and painful.”

“ I feel,” he wrote to another friend on this occasion, “ as if I were in the world as in an unpeopled solitude ; desolate as a man would feel, if, transported in his sleep among the Chinese or Tartars, he should, on awakening, find himself among a people whose language, manners, and customs are alike unknown to him. In the midst of such fancies, so much reason remains, as permits me to be aware how without foundation they are, and how produced ; but reflection has not yet sufficed to dissipate them. You will have heard that I have renounced the bequest. I know not whether this renunciation will be approved of by all, but I know that neither my honour nor my conscience permit me to take advantage of the excessive partiality of a woman to the injury of her relations, and that the want of the riches which I refuse, is more tolerable than the shame which they would produce in me.”

Metastasio was, with his accustomed modesty, disturbed by the fear, lest his honourable conduct would be disapproved of by his friends and the world ; and he was agreeably surprised when, on the contrary, it met with the general approbation it deserved. “ I should be insincere,” he writes to the same friend, “ if, affecting philosophy, I pretended to be annoyed by the kind ap-

proval which my country has universally yielded to my renunciation of Marianna's bequest. It delights me in the first place, and like a vow, confirms me in my opinion of the justice of the act; and in the second, it surprises me, as being the testimony of the affection of so great a mother for the least of her sons."

This, during the space of ten years, from the time of his first arrival in Vienna, was the only event that disturbed Metastasio's life. These ten years are the period during which his poetic powers flourished most vigorously, and during which his best as well as the greater number of his works were produced. The favour they met confirmed his situation at court, while they caused him to labour unintermittingly. It is difficult to give one not versed in the Italian language a correct idea of the peculiar merits of his poetry, and the excellences of his dramas. They are not absolute tragedies: their happy conclusions, the introduction of airs, and their being compressed into three acts, give them a lightness and a brevity unlike the heavier march of tragedy. They are to a great degree ideal, and yet possess the interest which passion and plot, described and developed with masterly skill, necessarily impart. His command of language is singularly great, and he adapted poetic diction to dramatic dialogue with wonderful felicity. A long and profound study of the genius of his native tongue gave him such extreme facility, that the perfection of art takes the guise of the most unadorned nature; and the flow and clearness of his verses so excite our sympathy, as to make us feel as if the thoughts and sentiments which we find in his pages were the spontaneous growth of our own minds. The magic of his style renders sensible and distinct the most delicate and evanescent feelings, so that it has been remarked*, that many of the movements of the human soul, which the ablest writers have scarcely been able to indicate in prose, and which, from their subtlety, are almost hidden from our consciousness, are brought home

* Baretti.

to us in his verses with a lucid felicity of expression, that leaves no portion of them either obscure or vague. He thus formed a language peculiarly his own. In his airs the words flow in so unforced a manner and with such extreme propriety, that they appear to place themselves: not one can be changed, not one omitted. There is no pedantry, no affectation; simplicity is his principal charm; it seems as if a child might utter them, — they are so unstudied; and yet no other poet possesses to an equal degree the art of clothing his ideas with the same easy grace.

When we reflect on the singular perfection of his style, we are not surprised that he preserved it with the most jealous watchfulness. He was careful not to accustom his mind to the use of any language except Italian, and never knew more of German than the few words “sufficient,” as he forcibly expresses it, “to save his life.” Many nobles of Vienna paid him the compliment of learning his language for the sake of conversing with him, and Italian being in common use among the well-educated, he did not lose so much as might be expected: yet he must have felt the privation. He was right, however, in adhering to his resolution. He was settled at Vienna for life, while at the same time his present occupation and his future glory depended on his preserving uninjured that delicacy of taste, and felicity of expression in his native language, which characterises his compositions. But to return to his operas.

He himself has said, that if he were forced to select one of his dramas to be preserved, while all the rest were annihilated, he should fix upon “*Attilio Regulo*.” The principal action of this play, founded on the well-known heroism of Regulus, in dissuading his countrymen from an exchange of prisoners, and his consequent return to servitude and a cruel death in Carthage, is conducted with dignity and pathos. But the interest of the piece is somewhat marred by an underplot, and the airs interspersed are not among his best. Perhaps

we are inclined to give the preference among them to "Themistocles:" the dignity of the subject raises it to this pre-eminence; but in pathos, tenderness, and impassioned dialogue, the "Olimpiade" is unequalled. Devoted friendship forms the action; the personages are placed in the most interesting situations, and the language is sustained to the height of those emotions which the clash of heroic feelings would inspire. There are scenes in "Demofonte" as fine as any to be found in Metastasio, but there is a reduplication of plot which mars the unity of the action; as, after deeply sympathising with the hero in his fears concerning his wife's fate, through nearly four acts, we are somewhat exhausted, and cannot well reawaken other sentiments, to mourn over the relationship that he imagines that he has discovered to exist between them. Voltaire and others have praised the scene between Titus and Sestus in the "Clemenza di Tito," as surpassing the representation of any similar struggle of feeling in any other dramatic poet; and the airs in that piece are among his happiest compositions. It was the poet's aim and pleasure, in all his writings, to make virtue attractive, and to paint patriotism, self-sacrifice and the best affections of the soul, in glowing and alluring colours. This gives a great charm to his dramas. We live among a better race, and yet the sorrows and passions and errors of the personages are represented in a manner to call forth our liveliest sympathy. A heartfelt pathos reigns throughout, and if passages of sublimity are rare (though there are several which merit that name), the elevated moral feeling acts on our minds to prevent the enervating influence of mere tenderness and grief.*

* There is a curious instance in Metastasio of a poet using the same image adopted by a preceding writer, which yet, it is probable, that the later one had not read. The explanation may be, that both drew it from an ancient writer; but we have been unable to find it. The passages are subjoined as, if both are unborrowed, it forms a curious though natural coincidence of thought.

And as goodly cedars,
Rent from Oeta by a sweeping tempest,
Jointed again, and made tall masts, defy

Besides his dramas, Metastasio composed at this period two canzonetti, which are among the best of his productions. The "Grazie agli inganni tuoi," or thanks of a lover to his lady for having disenchanted him by her caprices, is written at once with feeling and spirit. The "Partenza" is yet more beautiful. It was founded on the unfortunate attachment of a Viennese nobleman for a public singer, who at last yielded to the entreaties of his friends, in detaching himself from her, on condition that Metastasio should write some verses of adieu. The lover must have been satisfied, and the lady charmed, despite regret, by the passion, tenderness, and beauty of the poem which celebrates their separation.

Metastasio's tranquil and prosperous life was broken in upon in 1740, by the death of the emperor Charles VI., who fell a victim to either poison or indigestion, after eating mushrooms. The poet was unfeignedly attached to his imperial master, whose moral and religious character was congenial to his own; and the disturbed state of Europe, immediately after, added to his regret. This prince had no son, and his daughter, Maria Teresa, succeeded to him as queen of Bohemia and Hungary. Her husband aspired to the imperial crown; but the influence of France caused the duke of Bavaria to be elected, under the title of Charles VII. This disappointment was not the only misfortune of the queen; the king of Prussia invaded Silesia almost immediately after her father's death, and Vienna being threatened with a siege, she was obliged to quit it, and to

Those angry winds that split 'em, so will I
New pieced again,
And made more perfect far,
Stand and defy bad fortunes.

FLETCHER, *Tragedy of "Valentinian."*

Spezza il furor del vento
Robusta quercia, avezza
Di cento verni, e cento
L' ingurie a tollerar.
E se pur cade al suolo
Spiega per l' onde il volo,
E con quel vento istesso
Va contrastando il mar *Adriano.*

take refuge in Presburg. After a reign of four years, Charles VII. died, and the husband of Maria Teresa, then grand duke of Tuscany, was elected emperor in the year 1745, under the name of Francis I. : but the war still continued, and its various success, and the disasters, with which it was attended, gave the court little leisure or inclination for amusement, until the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.

On the death of Charles VI., several of the European sovereigns invited Metastasio to their courts, and made him advantageous and honourable offers ; but, as Maria Teresa still continued him in the place he held under her father, the poet felt that fidelity and gratitude alike forbade him to change masters during her adversity. His naturally sensitive mind was strongly agitated by the various success of the empress queen's arms. His susceptibility of disposition did not allow him to regard the course of events with a stoical eye ; and to the disquietude he suffered is attributed the bad state of health into which he fell after the year 1745, when he was forty-seven years of age. His malady was chiefly nervous ; hysterical affections, and a rush of blood to the head, were brought on by the slightest mental exertion, followed by a total temporary inability to write, or even to think : he was thus obliged entirely to suspend his poetic labours ; and when he forced himself to them, they bear the mark of a falling off in his powers. It cannot be doubted that this unfortunate state was brought on in a great degree by climate. He was a native of Rome, and, till the age of thirty-two, had resided constantly in the south of Italy. What a dreary contrast did Vienna present to the enchanting land in which he passed his youth ! The clear skies, the perpetual summer, the cheerful feelings produced by the habits of a southern life, were injuriously changed for the gloom of the freezing north. The very precautions which the natives take to protect themselves from cold during the interminable winters, the stoves, closed windows, and consequent want of fresh air and healthy exercise, being

in diametrical opposition to the more hardy habits of southern nations, are injurious to the health and spirits of those who are accustomed to regard the "skiey influences" as friendly instead of inimical to their comfort and well-being. Metastasio never left Germany after he first entered it. A part of his occupation, in the sequel, became the teaching the arch-duchesses, daughters of Maria Teresa, Italian: this was an office he felt that he could not desert, with any grace, even for a limited number of months. The kindness of the empress in yielding to the total suspension of all theatrical composition on his part, forced on him by ill health, bound him yet more devotedly to her. As he grew older, he became a man of habit, and consequently averse to travelling. It is impossible, however, not to believe, that if he had varied his residence in Germany by occasional visits to his native country, the disease under which he laboured, which embittered though it did not shorten existence, would have been dissipated and cured.

Metastasio's life, we are told, is only to be found in his letters, yet these detail no event; one of them contains, indeed, an offer of marriage to a lady, whose name is omitted: it is well written, and with considerable delicacy of sentiment; but, as he had no acquaintance with the object, and aspired to her alliance on account of her character, and his friendship for her father, his feelings could not be very deeply interested. Many of his letters are addressed to his brother, and they display a warm interest for his family. After the death of Marianna, the management of his affairs in Italy devolved on his relatives, and many are taken up with directions and advice. Leopold, and the rest of Metastasio's family, fell into the common error of supposing, that since he was in favour at court, the greatest prosperity would flow in upon him. The poet endeavoured to undeceive him:—"Princes and their satellites," he writes, "have neither the will nor power to confer benefits correspondent to the notions people are pleased to form. I do

not know what definition merit bears among them ; and I religiously abstain from inquiring, placing it among those mysteries which are beyond, though not contrary to, our understanding. Following these principles, I do all that is enough to prevent my feeling remorse for sins of omission ; but I never allow hope to interfere in the guidance of my cautious line of conduct. It is a long time since I have ceased to be the dupe of hope, and it would be shameful to become such at our age. Expect less, therefore, on my account, and you will find the scales more even. This letter speaks more freely than any other, as I write only for you, and among other earthly goods, I desire for you the most useful of all, — a clear perception, if not of all, of the greater part of those innumerable errors, contracted through our lamentable education, and our intercourse with fools.”

These sentiments did not float merely on the surface of Metastasio’s mind,—he made them the guides of his actions. As he says, gratitude and duty regulated his conduct, but no servile hunting after greater benefits mingled with the deference he manifested towards those in power. He acted on the defensive in his intercourse with courts, with such consistency of purpose, that he refused the honours chiefly valued there, and declined the various orders, and the title of count, which the emperor Charles VI. had offered to bestow on him.

It is from passages such as these, interspersed in his letters, that we can collect the peculiar character of the man — his difference from others — and the mechanism of being that rendered him the individual that he was. Such, Dr. Johnson remarks, is the true end of biography, and he recommends the bringing forward of minute, yet characteristic details, as essential to this style of history ; to follow which precept has been the aim and desire of the writer of these pages.

In other letters Metastasio writes concerning his works, and explains his views in the developement of his dramas ; but he never makes himself the subject-matter without an apology. “Never in my life,” he

writes on one occasion, "did I before write so much concerning myself. I perceive this at the end of my letter, and blush, not because I feel myself guilty of too great self-love, but because I shall appear so to you. Remember that few people distrust themselves to a fault, as I do; and in communicating to you the perfection which I desire to attain, I do not fancy that I am exempt from those defects, to which human nature and my own weakness expose me."

All his letters to his brother express the most earnest and affectionate interest. It is the more necessary to mention this, as one of the calumnies propagated against him was, an aversion to render service to his relatives. "You know," he writes to his brother, "that your honour and welfare have always been the objects of my solicitude, and that I never proposed to myself any reward, except the agreeable consciousness that my endeavours to introduce you and sustain you in the career of letters, have not failed of success; if you think that you owe me any gratitude, pay it by increasing my self-satisfaction on this account. You can never show yourself more generous to me than by meriting that esteem which begins to be your due."

On the death of their father he writes with great feeling: — "The loss of our poor father did not surprise, while it filled me with the liveliest grief. I measure your sorrow by my own. I feel that it will require time to render me reasonable. I thank you for your fraternal kindness in the midst of your affliction. Dear brother, you now fill the place of a father in his stead: do it worthily, and if there is any thing that I can do to comfort you, demand it from me without reserve: your consolation will produce mine. My poor sisters! — how lost they will feel themselves! take care of them, dear Leopold: reflect how much fewer supports they have than we against the assaults of passion, especially of that feeling which is derived from the most sacred of nature's laws. Adieu. If I have always

loved you, consider how this affection is augmented by the loss of him who possessed before so large a proportion of it. Let yours increase also."

His brother distinguished himself afterwards by some writings in favour of religion; and it appears that he even had the design of writing the poet's Life. Metastasio, while he praised Leopold for occupying himself in a praiseworthy manner, advised him against publishing controversial arguments, which would occasion him to be attacked by the cleverest men of Europe; and which, doubtless, were not stamped with that talent which could insure success. Metastasio, while deprecating the spread of unbelief occasioned by the French philosophers of those days, yet joined with the throng in fearing their attacks, and in flattering Voltaire,—showing in how great awe he stood of the enmity and sarcasm of that wonderful man. It is supposed that Leopold died in 1770, after which date no more letters appear addressed to him.

One of the principal correspondents of Metastasio, and to whom his most agreeable letters are addressed, is Farinelli. The poet and the singer were nearly of the same age; both began their career at Naples at the same time; which causes Metastasio to give his friend the affectionate appellation of his *twin*. Both met with immediate and complete success; and they formed a friendship, which the letters of the poet prove to have been maintained on his side with sentiments of the warmest affection, and the most active wish to render service. After having met with the greatest applause in the various theatres of Europe, Farinelli was invited to Spain, in 1737, where his voice had the peculiar effect of calming and solacing the accesses of malady to which the king, Philip V., was subject. On this account he was retained at the Spanish court, a large income was settled on him, and he never sang again on the public stage, being, to please the Spanish notions of etiquette, made cavalier of the orders of St. Jago and Calatrava, that he might be

considered of rank sufficient to attend the private hours of the monarch. Philip V. died in 1746, but Farinelli continued in equal favour with his successor. His prosperity continued till the accession of Charles III., in 1763, when he was ordered to quit Spain, and, with singular cruelty, not permitted to make choice of an abode. At last, Bologna was prescribed to him as the place that would best please the Spanish monarch, — we are not told for what reason, except that Farinelli was as a foreigner in that city, and cut off from all personal intercourse with his friends.

An interesting volume might be formed out of Metastasio's letters to the singer. They are full of enthusiastic friendship; now dwelling on alterations made to operas for the peculiar benefit of Farinelli, — now on more personal topics. Metastasio's days were clouded by ill health, and his genius impaired through the same cause; but it did not check the overflow of his kind heart, nor injure the happy influence of his contented disposition. It is difficult, however, to select passages, since the interest consists in the openness, friendship, and warmth of the whole, and mere isolated extracts would be devoid of attraction. The whole correspondence is replete with frank exhibitions of the writer's mind, and the style is remarkable for its vivacity as well as elegance.

With the exception of his physical sufferings, which were rather annoying than painful, and that sensibility of character which could not fail to checquer his life with a thousand various emotions, Metastasio's latter years was singularly prosperous, and perfectly monotonous. A few weeks spent each autumn in Moravia was his only change. The empress kindly excused him from forcing his powers to compose new dramas, and his occupation principally consisted in the easy task of instructing the archduchesses in Italian. When the empress Maria Theresa died, the emperor Joseph II. continued to him his protection; and the esteem and

even affection in which he was held at the imperial court prevented the death of his benefactress from injuring his fortunes, or disturbing his repose.

He filled, however, a place in the public eye which exposed him to a good deal of trouble. As the first Italian poet of the day, each minor aspirant to the laurel sent their verses for his criticism, or rather approval. He has been accused of lavishing praise without moderation or judgment. It is difficult for one author not to flatter other authors, since severity of criticism will be attributed to envy or ill-humour; and, besides, the Italian genius is singularly inclined to superlative panegyric. But it may be remarked that, though Metastasio gilds the pill, he never fails, particularly to his friends, to point out the weak points of their works, and to bestow sagacious and valuable observations.

When Dr. Burney visited Vienna in 1772, Metastasio was an old man; and his life, uninterrupted by any events, flowed on in one unbroken and quiet stream. "He lives," writes the doctor, "with the most mechanical regularity, which he suffers none to disturb. He has not dined from home these thirty years. He studies from eight o'clock in the morning till noon. Then he is visited by his acquaintance. He dines at two; and at five receives his most intimate friends. At nine, in summer, he goes out in his carriage, pays visits, and sometimes plays at ombre. He returns at ten o'clock, sups, and goes to bed before eleven. In conversation he is constantly cheerful; fanciful, playful, and sometimes poetical; never sarcastic or disputatious; totally devoid of curiosity concerning the public news or private scandal in circulation; the morality of his sentiments resembles that of his life. In confidence with few, but polite to all, his affection to his countrymen is great, and extends to ecclesiastics, painters, musicians, poets, and ministers from the Italian states, who are all sure of his kindness and good offices. I was no less astonished than delighted to find him look so well;

he does not seem more than fifty years of age. There is painted on his countenance the genius, goodness, propriety, and benevolence, which characterise his writings. I could not keep my eyes off his face,—it was so pleasing and worthy of contemplation.”

He thus spent in ease and peace the last years of his life. It has been said that, like Dr. Johnson, he had a great aversion to any allusion being made to death in conversation, and carefully avoided all lugubrious subjects. He continued to live with his friend Martinetz, whose daughter, Marianne, being educated by Gluck, became a celebrated musician; and in this family he met with that respect, attachment, and attention that rendered old age easy.

His last letter was written to Farinelli. He complains of the “dreadful season,” and says, that he “cannot find a friend or acquaintance who does not complain of ill health.”—“We are all equally obliged,” he writes, “to have recourse to resignation. My neighbour prays for me, and I pray for my neighbour; and we all are wishing better health to our afflicted friends. My complaints obstinately defend their posts, and I my patience.”

This letter is dated in March, 1782, and was written but a short time before he died. Though advanced to the age of eighty-four, his death was unexpected, as the vigour of his constitution, and his vivacity and unbroken powers, promised several years more of life; nor did his nervous indispositions threaten dissolution, for they neither interfered with his sleep nor appetite, nor the enjoyment he both conferred and received in his domestic circle. A fever, attended with weakness and loss of speech, and lethargy, carried him off after an illness of only twelve days. He died tranquilly, and without pain, on the 12th of April, 1782. He left the family of Martinetz his heirs to considerable wealth; his property consisting of about 130,000 florins, in addition to many valuables presented to him by sovereign

princes. He was sincerely regretted at Vienna; and Martinetz struck a medal in his honour. Nor was he forgotten in his native country; and the various literary academies of Italy vied with each other in offering poetic testimonials of veneration to his worth and genius.

GOLDONI.

1707—1792.

THE life of Goldoni, written by himself, is, as well as his comedies, a school, not of crabbed philosophy, but of Italian manners, in their gayest, lightest guise. At a time when it is hoped that a change is taking place in the system of society in that country, resulting in a great degree from the concourse of English, it is interesting to observe what they were anterior to the French revolution, and to remark the state of the Italians before they awoke to the sense of their oppression, or, rather, while oppression was in exercise only of the first of its effects—the demoralisation of its victim, before the second stage of its influence, that of producing a noble and impatient disdain of servitude.

Carlo Goldoni was born at Venice, in the year 1707, in a large and good house, situated between the bridge of Nomboli and that of Donna Onesta. The Venetians, who, when on land, spend their lives in running up and down the bridges that cross the canals, make them the chief land-marks of their directions. The family of Goldoni came originally from Modena. His grandfather, while studying at Parma, formed an intimacy with two Venetian nobles, who persuaded him to accompany them to Venice; and the death of his father rendering him soon after independent, he established himself in the native city of his friends. He had an employment under government, and was sufficiently rich, but not at all economical. He loved the drama; comedies were played in his own house; the most celebrated actors and singers were at his orders; and he was for ever surrounded by a concourse of theatrical people. His son had married a lady of the

Salvioni family, and resided with his father. Carlo was born in the midst of all the bustle and hilarity attendant on a predilection for actors and acting: his first pleasures were derived from plays; his first recollections were of histrionic gaiety; and his future life retained the colouring imparted by the amusements of his early years.

He was the delight of the family. His mother devoted herself to his education, and his father to his amusement. He made a puppet theatre for him, and, with two or three friends, drew the cords and acted plays to the boy's infinite delight. But a change soon came over this holiday life. His grandfather died, in 1712, from the effects of a cold, caught at an assembly. His extravagance had dissipated his fortune; and, from abundance and luxury, the family fell into the narrowest circumstances. The prospects of the father of Goldoni were dark. He had no employment and no profession, and his inherited property was all sold or mortgaged. In the midst of this distress, his wife gave birth to a son: this added to the solicitude of the father; but, unwilling to be the prey of useless gnawing cares, he set out on a visit to Rome, for the sake of diverting his thoughts. His wife remained at home with her sister, and two sons. The second, never a favourite, was put out to nurse; and she devoted herself to Carlo. He was gentle, obedient, and quiet. At the age of four he could read and write and say his catechism; on which they gave him a tutor. He grew to love books, and made progress in grammar, geography, and arithmetic; but the old instinct survived, and plays were his favourite reading. There were a good many in his father's library: he pored over them at his leisure hours, copied the passages that pleased him most; and, incited by a noble hardihood, at the age of eight, wrote a comedy. Some laughed at it; his mother scolded and kissed him at the same time; while others insisted that it was too clever to have been written by a child of his age, and that his tutor must have helped him.

Meanwhile his father, instead of returning after a short visit, remained four years at Rome. He had a rich friend there, who received him cordially, lodged him in his own house, and introduced him to Lancisi, physician and private attendant to Clement XI. He attached himself warmly to Goldoni, who was clever and agreeable, and sought to advance himself. Lancisi advised him to study medicine. The advice was taken. After attending lectures and hospitals for four years at Rome, he took his doctor's degree; and his patron sent him to Perugia to exercise his profession. He became in vogue in this town: if he were not the best physician in the world, he was an agreeable man, and quickly gained the esteem and friendship of the first families. Thus fortunately situated, he resolved to have his son with him. He does not appear to have thought of inviting his wife also; and the mother and child were separated, to the deep grief of the former. Carlo quitted Venice for the first time, in a felucca. He disembarked at the mouth of the Marecchia, and it was proposed that he should continue his journey on horseback. Carlo had never seen a horse except at a distance: he was frightened when placed on the saddle, confused when told to hold reins and whip; but, as the novelty wore off, he made acquaintance with this new and strange animal, and fed him with his own hands.

On arriving at Perugia he was placed at school. His first trial by the masters, for the purpose of judging what progress he had made in Latin, was infelicitous; he became the ridicule of his companions; his masters conceived a slight opinion of his abilities; his father was in despair, and Carlo fell ill from mortification. The holidays drew near, when it was usual for the scholars to present a Latin composition, as a specimen of their powers, on which their advancement to a higher class was determined upon. Carlo had no hope of any such promotion. The day came: the master gave out the theme; the pupils wrote. The boy summoned all his powers; he thought of his honour, his father, his

mother ; he saw his companions look at him and laugh ; rage and shame animated him to redoubled exertions ; he felt his memory clear—his thoughts free : he finished, sealed, and delivered his paper before any of his comrades. Eight days after, the school was assembled—the decision announced : Goldoni had the first place—his translation was without a fault. He now received compliments on all sides, and his father was desirous of rewarding him. He was aware of his love for theatricals, and shared it. He assembled a company of young actors in his own house, and erected a theatre. A play was got up, in which Goldoni took the part of prima donna, and was much applauded ; but his father told him that, though not devoid of talent, he would never make a good actor, and after experience proved the justice of his decision.

The signora Goldoni bore her husband's absence very philosophically ; but she could not consent to continue separated from her son : she entreated her husband to return ; and, on his refusal, removed herself to Perugia. But, accustomed to the soft air of Venice, the climate of that city, placed on the summit of a hill, and surrounded by mountains, disagreed with her : other circumstances tended to disgust her husband with Perugia ; and, as soon as Carlo had finished his course of education at the school, they resolved to return to Venice. Passing through Rimini in their way, they were received kindly by a friend, who persuaded them to leave Carlo for the sake of his pursuing his studies under a celebrated professor. His parents embarked for Chiozza. Chiozza is a town twenty-five miles from Venice, built, like that city, upon piles in the midst of the sea ; it contains 40,000 inhabitants ; the population were divided between rich and poor ; the rich wore a wig and a cloak ; the poor, a cap and a capote. These last, who were fishermen and sailors, while their wives fabricated lace, had often more money than many individuals of the class named rich. The signora Goldoni took a liking to this place ; and her husband was averse to return to Venice till

his circumstances should have become more easy. To further this end, he was obliged to make a journey to Modena: he proposed to his wife to establish herself at Chiozza till his return; and she consented.

Carlo, meanwhile, remained at Rimini. He did not like his master, who, bigotted to rules and systems, wearied him to death: he escaped from him, to read Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and the fragments of Menander; and soon the incarnate spirit of drama arriving at Rimini, he was wholly turned from his abstruser studies. A company of actors made their appearance, and Goldoni became familiar with them: he went behind the scenes; joined in their parties of pleasure; and they, being all Venetians, were happy to find a countryman. One Friday it was announced that they were leaving Rimini, and that a boat was engaged to carry them to Chiozza. "To Chiozza!" said Carlo, "My mother is at Chiozza!"—"Come with us, then," cried the director. "Yes, come with us," cried the whole company, "come in our boat; you will have a pleasant passage; it will cost you nothing: we shall laugh, dance, and sing, and be as happy as the day is long." A boy of fourteen could scarcely resist so strong a temptation. His master refused leave, and the friends of his family interfered with objections. There was but one resource: Carlo put two shirts in his pocket, and hurried to hide himself in the boat. It made sail, and he was on his way to Chiozza. The light-hearted rambling life of strolling comedians was alluring beyond measure to a mirthful lad, who loved plays better than any thing in the world. The company consisted of twelve, besides scene-shifters, mechanists, and prompters; there were eight men servants, and four women, two nurses, a quantity of children, dogs, cats, apes, parrots, birds, pigeons, and a lamb. The prima donna was ugly, clever, and cross; the suicidal drowning of her cat diversified the time; and, after a prosperous and merry voyage, the whole cargo, with the exception of poor puss, arrived safe at Chiozza.

The signora Goldoni received her son with a mixture of gladness and scolding, which evinced no violent disapprobation of his truant disposition ; but he himself began to regret it, and to reflect seriously on the consequences, when he read a letter just received from his father. Business had taken Goldoni from Modena to Pavia. The governor of Pavia was named the marchese di Goldoni-Vidoni. On hearing of the arrival of a namesake in his town, he sent for him, and invited him to dinner. The governor belonged to one of the best families of Cremona ; but he considered that Cremona and Modena were not far distant from each other, and he had the whim of finding out and assisting a poor relation : he promised to get a presentation for Carlo to a college of the university of Pavia, and the father gladly consented to accept it. He set out to seek his son with this news, and found him sooner than he expected, and was by no means pleased at a scrape which promised little for his future steadiness ; but Carlo was penitent, and Goldoni loved actors, and was acquainted with several of this very company in question : so, good easy man ! he forgave the runaway, and accompanied him to thank the companions of his voyage.

Goldoni's fame as a physician had spread to Chiozza, and he found it worth his while to establish himself, and to enter upon practice there : while waiting for the presentation for the university of Pavia, he resolved to initiate his son in the rudiments of a profession which he intended him hereafter to pursue. He did not put him to the more difficult part of the medical science ; but made him accompany him in his visits to his patients, as the easiest mode of giving him a superficial knowledge. Carlo did not like this plan, though he was forced to submit. But passive obedience of will does not conquer the mind : with all his gaiety, the youth was subject to fits of hypochondria and low spirits, and under the paternal discipline he lost his appetite, and grew thin and serious. His mother easily ex-

tracted from him the cause of his dejection, and sought to bring a remedy. She represented to her husband, that the patronage of the marchese Goldoni could be of no possible service to their son in a medical career; while, on the contrary, if they brought him up to the bar, a senator of Milan could without difficulty open to him the road of fortune. She advised his going to study under an uncle at Venice, proposing to accompany him herself, and to stay with him till his removal to Pavia. Goldoni resisted for a long time, but at last he became aware that her representations were reasonable: poor Carlo listened to the discussion with tearful eyes and a beating heart; and his indisposition vanished as soon as his father's consent was given. Four days after, he and his mother set out for Venice. They were kindly received by signor Paolo Indric, who had married his father's sister; and Carlo found his home with him perfectly delightful. The study of law was infinitely to be preferred to his father's medical initiation at Chiozza; he fulfilled his duties with exactitude, and his uncle was satisfied with him.

Meanwhile he enjoyed his residence at Venice. "Oh! la triste ville que Vénice!" Madame de Genlis exclaimed, on entering the sea-paved city. Scarcely any but a French person would echo her exclamation; and *we*, who people the palaces and bridges with the shades of Othello, Desdemona, Pierre, and Belvidera, find a peculiar charm in its strange and beautiful appearance. There is something charming to the imagination in the wide-spread lagunes, in the palaces rising from the waves, the sea that flows through the streets, and the sombre-looking but luxurious gondolas: no picture, no description, can convey an idea of Venice, that is, of the impression made by its singular aspect, and the modes and machinery of daily life — dissimilar to those of every other city in the world. The young Goldoni, as a native, yet returning to it after so long an absence, was enchanted by the novelty of all he saw. His stay, however, was short; the presentation to a College at

Pavia arrived : he was forced to quit Venice ; and, after a hurried visit to Chiozza to join his father, they set out together.

1723. On arriving at Milan, several obstacles presented them-
 Ætat. selves to impede his entrance into the university, which,

16. being under clerical jurisdiction, required a number of attestations and documents, with which the travellers were wholly unprovided, and which could only be obtained at Venice. Signora Goldoni hastened thither to get them, while the father and son enjoyed themselves at Milan, hospitably entertained by their kind and noble soi-disant relation ; till, the necessary papers having arrived, they pursued their way to Pavia, and Goldoni left his son at his college.

The university of Pavia was on a more expensive and luxurious footing than is usual in Italy, and dissipation and liberty were the order of the day. The students were regarded in the town like officers in garrison : the men hated, and the women welcomed them ; while the studies principally followed up were dancing, fencing, music, and games of hazard : the latter were prohibited, and, therefore, the more sought after. Carlo's youth, gaiety, and Venetian dialect pleased generally ; and he easily suffered himself to be seduced from study to pleasure.

His success caused him to make many enemies among his fellow-students, augmented by the distinction derived from the kindness of the marchese Goldoni ; still he passed two years happily enough, returning to Chiozza during the vacations, and spending his time between unforced studies and pleasant society. But misfortune was at hand to blight his happiness. The time approached when he was to take his degree ; and this very moment was seized upon by his college enemies to ensure his disgrace. He had been admitted into the university at sixteen : the legal age was eighteen. He was a boy among men, and an easy prey. A serious quarrel arose between the inhabitants of Pavia and the students : four among the latter, who had conspired to

ruin poor Carlo, persuaded him to revenge himself and his comrades by a satire. The verses of which he was the author attacked and insulted many families: his four false friends dispersed them and betrayed him: the outcry was prodigious; and, despite every exertion made by his protectors, Goldoni was expelled. The youth repented very bitterly at once his imprudence and the easiness of his disposition. Shame and regret overwhelmed him, and the idea of his parents' reproaches filled him with terror. To escape these he meditated plans of flight, resolving to seek his fortunes at Rome. It appeared of slight import to him that he should go on foot without money or resources, so that he could fly from those who were justly offended. This idea was frustrated by the vigilance of those about him: he was sent back to his family under the especial care of the master of the boat, who never lost sight of him; and a good monk, who was a passenger with him, comforted him by his pious but kind admonitions. His mother's affection and his father's easiness of nature led them to pardon his fault, from which he had suffered severely enough. A few days after he accompanied his father to Friuli. Goldoni exercised his profession as physician at Udine, and Carlo studied the law under an eminent advocate; after a short time, the former proceeded to Gorizia, to the house of count Landieri, lieutenant-general of the army of the emperor Charles VI. The count was ill, and having heard of the skill of Goldoni, sent for him. Carlo, left behind at Udine, got into several youthful scrapes, very little to his credit: he found himself deceived and betrayed; and, fearing a dangerous termination, he hurried away, and found his father at Vispack, where count Landieri had a mansion. They remained there for some months, till the count was convalescent, hospitably entertained, and very happy. A dramatic puppet-show was got up, which exercised the theatrical talents of Carlo; and afterwards he made a tour to Laubeck, Gratz, and Trieste, with the count's secretary. On his

return to Vispack, he and his father set off on their journey home, the latter having happily effected the cure of his patient, who rewarded him handsomely for his trouble. "We arrived at Chiozza," said Goldoni, "and were received as a fond mother receives a son, and a wife a beloved husband, after a long absence. I was delighted to see again a virtuous mother who was tenderly attached to me. After having been deceived and betrayed, I needed the consolation of being loved. This, indeed, was another species of attachment, but, until I felt a virtuous and engrossing passion, my mother's love formed my greatest happiness." Soon after his arrival at Chiozza, his father received a letter from a cousin at Modena, to inform him that the duke of that state had revived an ancient decree, which forbade the possessor of any landed property within it, to absent himself without an express permission from the sovereign, which it was very expensive to obtain. This relation added, that his best course would be to send his son to Modena, which would satisfy the law, and he might there pursue his legal studies. The advice was followed, and the youth sent to Modena.

He went by water ; and the master of the boat was a very religious man : each evening he invited the passengers to join him in prayers. When Goldoni arrived at Modena, this man, whose name was Bastia, asked him where he meant to lodge, and, learning that he had his lodgings to seek, asked him to select his house as his place of abode ; and, with the assent of his cousin, who had been the cause of his journey, Goldoni agreed to the proposal. He found that the family of Bastia was equally devout with himself ; father, sons, and daughters, all were given up to pious exercises. No great amusement could be derived from their society ; but, as they were respectable people, and lived in concord, Goldoni was satisfied and happy under their roof. He grew as religiously inclined as themselves, while, as is often the case in youth, this sentiment was accompanied by feelings of despondency and even terror. One day he hap-

pened to pass through the public square while an unfortunate churchman was doing public penance for his conduct towards a female penitent. The sight struck him in the most painful manner: he brought it home to his own heart; he thought of his past life, his expulsion from college, his adventures in Friuli: the world seemed beset with multiplied dangers, and there was no refuge from them, except in total retirement. He wrote to his parents to express a part of these feelings, and to declare his resolve of entering the order of Capuchin monks. His parents acted on this occasion with prudence: they were both, especially his mother, pious, but without bigotry. They wrote in answer, that he should do exactly as he pleased, but in the mean time entreated him to return to them without delay. He immediately obeyed: he was received with caresses, and no opposition was made to his project. His father proposed to take him to Venice, and he refused with that boldness which the fancy of acting in immediate obedience to God, alone inspires; but, on being told that he was to be introduced to the guardian of the Capuchins, he consented. They went to Venice, visited their relations and friends, dining with one and supping with another: he was even tricked into going to the theatre. His low spirits and ascetic vocation vanished insensibly, and he returned to Chiozza cured of every wish to shut himself up in a cloister.

It became matter of anxiety to know what to do with him. His brother, an adventurous, gallant youth, had entered the army, and was in garrison. But Carlo was nothing; the plaything of fortune, all the expense gone to on his account had been of no avail; the only resource seemed to be to obtain an employment under government; and, at the moment when it appeared impossible to succeed in so doing, one presented itself to them. The republic of Venice governed the towns under their dominion through an officer called a *podestà*, who had under him a chancellor, or criminal judge, who was assisted in his duties by a vice-chancellor, or, as he was

called, a coadjutor ; and where there was much to do, this officer also had an assistant. These places were more or less lucrative, but were always desirable, since they included the privilege of dining at the governor's table, and making one of his society. The father of Goldoni was intimately acquainted with the governor of Chiozza, and with the judge, and through their means Carlo was employed to assist the coadjutor.

Goldoni was not of a noble and enterprising disposition, but he possessed great integrity, and that habit of scrupulously examining his own motives, and those of others, which makes a part of the nature of one whose bent it was to enter into and describe character. On this occasion he was earnest to do his duty, and interested to observe the variety of human action and motive, which presented themselves to his enquiry in the exercise of his office as assistant to the criminal judge. He acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his superiors ; and, when the governor of Chiozza was changed, and the chancellor was appointed to go to Feltri, the latter offered Goldoni the place of coadjutor, which was eagerly accepted.

Feltri is at a distance of 180 miles from Venice, high up among the mountains, whose snows besiege it during the winter, and block up the streets and houses. Goldoni found plenty of amusement here, for there was a company of comedians ; and he also fell in love. He assures us that this was his first passion, and a sincere one ; but the future writer of comedies had not that tenderness and passion of soul which creates a profound and engrossing attachment. He made parties of pleasure for the lovely girl, who returned his affection, and got up a tragedy for her amusement, which did not amuse her at all ; for, too bashful to act herself, with all the delicacy of love, she was pained at witnessing her lover's familiar conduct with other women. " Poor girl ! " exclaims Goldoni, with naïveté ; " she loved me tenderly and sincerely, and I loved her with all my heart ; and I may say that she was the first person for whom I felt

a sincere attachment. She was desirous of marrying me ; and would have become my wife, but for some considerations which prevented my proposing for her." These considerations were a notion he formed that her beauty was of a delicate, evanescent species, and that she would soon fade and become old, while he remained in the pride of youth. Such was the force of his first passion, that it was at once overcome by selfish foresight, and the habit, innate in him, of dissecting the materials of life, despoiling them of their sunny gloss, and handling the most frail, yet precious, among them with a roughness that iron and rock could not have resisted. This dry, analytical spirit is very apparent in his comedies : he dignifies it with the name of morality and honour ; but its root is often in coldness and tameness of feeling and fancy.

On his return from Feltri his father had accepted a medical situation at Bagnacavallo, a town of Romagna, near Ravenna. Carlo joined him ; but, after a short time, the elder Goldoni fell ill of a malignant fever, and died in the month of March, 1731, when his son was four and twenty years of age. He was sincerely lamented by his wife and son, who wept together over their loss. As soon as the funeral was over, Goldoni accompanied the widow to Venice, and established her with her sister at the house of a relation. She was most anxious to have her son resident with her, and her persuasions, and those of other friends, induced him to yield, and to enter on the profession of barrister at Venice. The profession of advocate at Venice was exceedingly honourable ; the first men of the city practised it : but there were 240 registered barristers, and few among them rose to eminence ; the rest spent their time in running after briefs. Goldoni, however, was of a sanguine disposition, and did not doubt that he should rank among the most celebrated pleaders at the bar. He calculated how much could be gained, and found that a barrister might make an income of 2000*l.* a year, — a large fortune at Venice, which at that time, before it

fell under the Austrians, whose aim is to ruin it by the imposition of a vexatious taxation, was one of the cheapest places in the world. It is true that the beginning of a forensic career is in all countries trying to the patience ; and, while Goldoni indulged in castles in the air with regard to future eminence, he spent his time attending the courts without a brief, or in waiting for clients, who did not appear: still he might hope for better success than the major part of his brethren of the robe, since, during the first six months of his being at the bar, he carried on and won a cause ; but his destiny concurred with the genius still unformed and dormant within him to draw him another way.

At the very moment of triumph on gaining his suit, and when he might fairly hope for an influx of clients, an incident occurred to destroy his prospects, causing him to form the resolution to quit Venice.

He had fallen in love with a lady at Venice, who, though forty years of age, was as fair and beautiful as a girl. She was rich and unmarried: the affection was mutual, and he already looked forward to their union, when the attentions of a noble awakening the ambition of the lady, she jilted him for his patrician rival. This lady had a married sister with two daughters, one deformed and the other ugly, but not without attraction ; she had beautiful eyes, a laughing countenance, and graceful, fascinating manners. She had often deprived her beautiful aunt of lovers, and inspired her with jealousy. She tried to win Goldoni from her ; and, on her tergiversation, vengeance induced him to make the niece an offer. Her mother entered into her plans, and the contract of marriage was drawn up and signed ; but when the moment came to fulfil it, a variety of doubts presented themselves to Goldoni's mind. He was himself in debt, and several years must pass before he could hope to make an income at the bar. The mother of his promised bride was wholly unable to fulfil the conditions of the marriage contract, and he found that he should be burdened with the expense of his wife's family. He consulted his mother, and his own

sense of prudence: he had become very much in love but, in his light heart, every motive and impulse was stronger than the strongest affection: frightened at the prospect before him, he made a sudden determination; paid his debts, threw up his profession, and quitted Venice; leaving a letter for the unfortunate girl's mother, attributing to her his sudden departure, and promising to return if she would fulfil the conditions of the contract. He received no answer.

Again he was thrown on the world, and all his prospects of future subsistence were centred in a tragedy, called "*Amalassunta*," which he had written in his leisure hours. It has been mentioned how, born amidst theatricals, his early pleasures had all been derived from plays. When he first went to Pavia, he had studied the ancient drama; and, finding that Italy had no theatre, he had already conceived the idea of bestowing one on her, on a more enlarged plan, more intricate as to plot, and more diversified as to character, than those of Plautus and Terence. In the course of his youth, to get up a play was his chief pleasure; and now, with "*Amalassunta*" in his pocket, he felt sure that his fortune would be made at Milan, at the theatre of which city he intended to offer it; and, with this expectation, his happy disposition caused him easily to forget prospects, friends, love, and disappointments,—all but his mother; while the pleasure of freedom easily consoled him for the loss of his bride.

Poor and almost friendless, the first piece of good fortune that happened to him was finding at Bergamo the noble who had been governor at Chiozza when he was vice-chancellor. He presented himself at his palace, and was kindly received. The governor perceiving that he was depressed in spirits, enquired the cause; and Goldoni confessed that he was penniless: his kind protector offered him his purse and a home at his house. Goldoni contented himself with borrowing ten sequins, and, in lieu of the latter offer, asked for letters of introduction at Milan, which were instantly

given him. These served him in good stead in that capital. The Venetian resident received him kindly, asked the object of his journey, and, when Goldoni had recounted his adventure, offered to lend him money, which was declined.

"Amalassunta" was the anchor of his hope, and he lost no time in seeking the actors and directors of the theatre. He paid a visit to the first ballerina, whom he had formerly known, and offered to read his opera to her circle of actors, and musicians, and theatrical patrons. His offer was accepted: he took the manuscript from his pocket, and commenced—"Amalassunta!" The chief actor, Caffariello, began to object, in the first place, to so long and ridiculous a name. Every one joined in the laugh thus raised, except the poor author, who went on to read the list of dramatis personæ. New censure followed the too great number of persons introduced; and, when it was found that the opera commenced by a scene between the two principal actors, he was told that that would never do: the chief singers would never consent to begin during all the bustle of the first entrance of the audience. The criticisms multiplied as he went on, till a kind amateur, count Prata, took him by the hand, and, leading him into another room, asked him to read the opera to him alone. Poor Goldoni consented, and the whole piece was gone through. When finished, the count pointed out its defects, not with regard to plot and situation, but to operatic rules; how he had given airs of passion and interest to secondary personages, and curtailed the first of what they considered their just proportion. The count would have gone on to find more fault, but Goldoni begged him to take no more trouble, and took his leave. He returned, mortified and miserable, to his inn. His first impulse was to burn his unlucky opera. The waiter asked him if he would sup. "No," he replied, "no supper, only a good fire." While this was making, he looked over his poor "Amalassunta:" it appeared to him very beautiful, and worthy of a better fate: the actors were in fault, not

it. Yet, after all his pains, his hopes were fallen ; and, in a fit of desperation, he cast it on the flaming brands, glad to see it burn, and busy in collecting all the fragments, that none might escape destruction. While thus employed, he began to recollect that no disaster which had yet happened to him, had ever caused him to go to bed supperless. He recalled the waiter, ordered his repast, ate it with a good appetite, and went to bed to sleep till morning. It is no wonder that love could exercise so little power over so well-regulated an appetite!

The next morning he was obliged to reflect seriously on his desperate situation, and he paid Signor Bartolini, the Venetian resident, a visit, that he might consult with him. He asked for a private interview, and it was granted ; and then he related the occurrences of the previous evening, the impertinent criticisms of the actors, and the decisive judgment passed by count Prata, and ended by declaring that he was totally at a loss what to do. Bartolini laughed at his recital, and asked to see the opera. "The opera?" cried Goldoni, "I have not got it!"—"Where is it, then?"—"I burnt it; and with it my hopes, my possessions, and my whole fortune." The minister laughed still more at this *dénouement*, and ended by offering him the situation of gentleman in his palace, with a good suite of rooms. Goldoni now found that he had gained by his loss: without doubt, as he declares himself, he was a lucky man, and it was his own fault whenever he fell into misfortune. Yet he did this so frequently, that the best part of his luck was that cheerful buoyant disposition which never allowed him to be overwhelmed by adversity, and an integrity that always kept him from any dishonourable scrape.

"Amalassunta" was burnt, but Goldoni's predilection for theatricals continued as strong as ever. There arrived at Milan a singular man, named Buonafede Vitali, who had talents and knowledge enough to practise as a regular physician, but who preferred strolling as a mountebank, under the name of the Anonymous. As a part of the paraphernalia of his trade, he had with him a com-

pany of comedians. Goldoni sought out this man, who availed himself of his protection, to obtain leave for his company to act on the Milanese theatre. There were several good actors among them, but their representations were made on the old Italian plan. Goldoni was particularly scandalised by a travestie of the story of "Belisarius," given out as a tragedy; and, to prevent the future degradation of historical names and sentiments, he promised to write a tragedy on the subject, but was interrupted by events of greater moment.

The king of Sardinia allying himself with France against the Austrians, in the war of 1733, he sent an army of 15,000 men, to which was added some French troops, to occupy Milan. That city being too wide in circuit for defence, it was forced to receive the soldiers; who immediately entered on the siege of the citadel. On this event, the Venetian resident was ordered by his government to quit Milan, and to take up his abode at Crema: he had before quarrelled with his secretary, and he took this opportunity to dismiss him, and to install Goldoni in his place. He was now fully employed, and his situation was at once honourable and lucrative; but soon after he lost the good graces of the minister, though not from any fault of his own. His brother had quitted the Venetian service, and, seeking employment, visited him at Crema. He introduced him to the governor, who gave him the situation of gentleman of his chamber, formerly occupied by Goldoni; but both were violent and irritable, and they did not agree. The resident dismissed his gentleman, and no longer regarded Goldoni with the same favour as heretofore. They had a quarrel; Goldoni asked for his dismissal, and set out for Modena, where his mother was residing.

The country through which he passed on his way was the seat of war; robbers took occasion of the unsettled state of the country, and the roads were unsafe: Goldoni was the sufferer; the little carriage in which he travelled was attacked by five men, who robbed him of his money, watch, and effects, while he escaped across

the country, glad to preserve the clothes he had on. After running a long way, he came to an avenue of trees, by which flowed a rivulet. He drank of its waters in the hollow of his hand, and then, fatigued in body, but more composed in mind, he proceeded quietly along the avenue, till he encountered some peasants, to whom he related his misfortune, and who in return told him that there were a set of outlaws who took advantage of the war to attack not only travellers, but gentlemen's seats and cottages; while a number of men of some wealth near, who had formed themselves into a company to purchase the spoils of war, became their accomplices by becoming the purchasers of the stolen goods. "Such," exclaims Goldoni, "are the miseries of war, which fall alike upon friends and enemies, and ruin the innocent!" The sun was now declining, and the peasants offered Goldoni a part of their supper, of which, notwithstanding his disaster, he partook with appetite. They then guided him to a village, and recommended him to the care of the curate, who received him hospitably. To him he related his adventures, making his manuscript tragedy of "Belisarius," then in his pocket, the principal hero of the tale. He was invited to read it. The curate, two abbés, and the servants of the house, were his audience; and they all applauded it with enthusiasm. The offers and kindness of these good simple-hearted people filled Goldoni with gratitude. Unwilling, however, to burden them with his maintenance, he hastened to take leave; the curate lent him his horse, and sent his servant with him to defray the expenses of the day's journey to Brescia.

From Brescia, Goldoni proceeded to Verona. He was in a deplorable situation; he only possessed a few sequins, lent him by an adventurer whom he met by accident at Brescia; but with "Belisarius" in his pocket, he did not fear the enmity of fortune, and "Belisarius" did not prove so false a friend as "Amalassunta." When at Verona, he went to the celebrated amphitheatre, a portion of which was arranged as a theatre, and here a

drama was about to be performed. To his infinite joy, he discovered in the principal actor a man who had formed one in the companions of the mountebank at Milan, and for whom he had promised to write "Belisarius." He instantly went behind the scenes, and was welcomed with joy. He was on the moment installed poet to the company. "Belisarius" was read, approved, and the parts distributed. In the month of September they proceeded to Venice. Goldoni was presented to the proprietor of the theatre, who received him with kindness. On the 24th of November, 1734, he being then twenty-seven years of age, "Belisarius" was acted, and met with the most complete success. All actors in Italy are strollers, and looked upon with a good deal of contempt. Goldoni might have been expected to regret the exchange he had made from the honourable profession of an advocate, for that of poet to a theatre; but his light heart and easy temper were not to be afflicted by trifles of this nature, and the talent that perpetually impelled him to take interest in theatricals, prevented him from feeling degraded by his association with the professors of the art: and their existence and all its vicissitudes bear another aspect under a sunny sky, and amidst a laughter-loving people, unspoilt by pride. Goldoni had much of the spirit of Gil Blas in his disposition, and possessed in his own person all the talent which belongs, not to the hero of that book, but its author. Several pieces, operas, and interludes of his were brought out; and in the spring he accompanied the actors to Padua and to Friuli, where, leaving them, he returned to Venice to see his mother, who had arrived there from Modena. His success as an author, and the talent he displayed, raised him in the estimation of his fellow-citizens. His relations crowded around him; and he repaid their kindness by relating his adventures to his old uncles and aunts, making those laugh, who had never laughed before. In September the actors returned to Venice, and he recommenced his labours, which were not all literary, but interspersed by those

occasioned by the jealousy of the actors, or rather of the actresses. After the winter season had passed, he consented to accompany the manager to Genoa and Florence, and was glad, without expense, to visit two of the most celebrated cities of Italy.

He was delighted with the aspect of Genoa ; and the first good fortune that happened to him, was to gain 200 crowns in the lottery ; the second, to marry a girl, " who," he tells us, " was beautiful, virtuous, and prudent, and who, after all he had suffered from the treachery of women, reconciled him to the sex."

His acquaintance began in the true Italian style : he saw her at an opposite window, and, pleased with her appearance, saluted her. She curtsied, and hastily withdrew, nor again presenting herself at the window. His curiosity was thus excited ; he made enquiries, and learnt that her father's name was Corrio ; that he was a notary, with a large family and small fortune. He contrived to make acquaintance, and within a month asked permission to marry his daughter. The affair was soon concluded : he was married in July ; and, omitting the promised visit to Florence, returned to Venice at the beginning of September.

Hitherto Goldoni's pieces had been *rifaccimenti* of old dramas. " *Griselda*," " *Don Giovanni*," and " *Rinaldo di Mont' Albano*," were melodramas or tragedies, written in the old style. But at this time, finding that the company of actors at Venice, through various changes, had become one of great excellence, he began to think the time arrived when he might enter on the reform of the Italian theatre, which he had long meditated : he commenced writing comedies of character, which are the genuine source of the dramatic merit, following the example of Moliere, who had surpassed all ancient models, and even now stands alone, as the first comic writer in the world. " Was I wrong," he asks, " in presuming to enter upon such an undertaking ? for my natural bent leading me to write comedies, excellence in the art was the proper aim of my endeavours."

The old comedy in Italy was on a singular system : there were four masks on which all the farcical incidents turned. Pantaloon, a Venetian merchant, who was the father of the heroine ; a garrulous, kind-hearted old gentleman. The doctor, a Bolognese, also an old man, whose learning was opposed to Pantaloon's simplicity : and two Bergamese servants, Brighella and Harlequin. Brighella, a clever rogue ; Harlequin, a greedy simpleton ; his many-coloured clothes symbolising the poverty that forced a patched garment. The actors who filled these respective parts seldom played any others. It required ready wit and cleverness ; for the plot only being sketched, and the scenes indicated, the dialogue was left to their own invention. Of course, no great refinement could be expected : practical tricks and broad jokes were sure to command the laughter and applause of the audience ; while, there being in the Italian character something peculiarly adapted to extempore exercises of the intellect, and a vivacity that renders them good actors, many people regarded this rude but amusing effort at drama, as something at once so national and so genuine, as rendered it preferable to the studied productions of the closet. Goldoni, on the contrary, saw farce take place of comedy, and the whole action and conduct of the piece often sacrificed to the petulance of a favourite mask ; while no real sentimental interest, nor any comic incident out of the common routine, could be introduced. He proceeded, however, slowly in the reform he meditated. At first writing only the more serious portions of his plays ; then the parts of the masks themselves, and only after some time, and at intervals, dispensing with them altogether. Nor, at the time of which we are writing, did he bring out any of his best dramas ; though those which he did produce were eminently successful.

To add to the respectability, and, as he hoped, to the emoluments of his situation, the relations of his wife obtained for him the Genoese consulship at Venice. This office, however, turned out more honourable than

lucrative: no salary attended it, and the fees did not amount to more than 100 crowns a year. To do the republic he served honour, he had taken a better house and increased his number of servants, and found himself considerably embarrassed. To add to these annoyances, his income from Modena failed him; and he came to a resolution to make a journey, with the triple object of bringing out a comedy with a part for a favourite actress at Bologna, to solicit a salary at Genoa, and to look after his possessions at Modena: the first object failed before he set out, through the sudden death of the actress, while an unexpected disaster rendered the two latter even more imperative than before. His brother, who was out of employ, introduced to him a Ragusan of agreeable and gentlemanly manners. He asserted that he was sent on the secret service of raising a regiment of 2000 men for his state. He showed his commission as colonel, offered a company to Goldoni's brother, and the office of auditor, or judge, to the author. Goldoni, always easy-tempered and credulous, though a little frightened by the danger incurred if the Venetian state should come to suspect these proceedings, was soon talked over, and, on an alleged emergency, lent the man a large sum of money. The fellow was an adventurer: he ran off with the money, and left Goldoni so disagreeably implicated by his tricks, that he judged that his only resource was to quit Venice on the instant. The Ragusan had disappeared on the 15th of September, and on the 18th of the same month Goldoni and his wife embarked for Bologna.

Their journey was full of "many accidents of flood 1741. and field." The melancholy and thoughtfulness occasioned by his disaster vanished under the influence of his happy temperament; and his wife was even better skilled than he in that best philosophy which makes light of worldly misfortunes. On their arrival at Bologna, he was surrounded by the directors of theatres, who asked for comedies. He gave them three, and wrote another on the subject of the Ragusan swindler, in which he

comforted himself, and dissipated the rest of his regrets, by representing to the life all the actors in that too real drama. This task concluded, he was about to proceed to Modena, when he heard that the duke was absent at the Spanish camp at Rimini, and that his best chance of pursuing his claims was to accompany Ferramonti, a celebrated pantaloon, to the latter town; where, in default of justice being done him by his sovereign, he might have a further resource in the company of actors to which this comedian belonged. This latter staff turned out the stoutest of the two: the duke changed the conversation when Goldoni mentioned his claims on the ducal bank; but as long as the carnival lasted, he supplied the actors with dramas, and lived a comfortable life at Rimini. At length it became necessary to depart for Genoa. The armies which then occupied the country rendered it impossible to get horses; and he and some other travellers agreed to embark for Pesaro. The sea was high, the passengers suffered: weary of their sea voyage, they disembarked half way, at Cattolica, and, leaving their effects to the care of servants, proceeded in a cart to Pesaro.

A new misfortune here awaited him. The Spanish army had changed quarters, and were replaced by their enemies, the Austrians. The soldiers entered Cattolica, and seized on the boat, the servants, and the effects of the unlucky passengers. All was lost: trunks and band-boxes, dresses and jewels, were the spoil of the ravagers: even the signora Goldoni was moved by so overwhelming a calamity: but some remedy was to be found. Goldoni resolved to apply in person to the Austrian officers for the restitution of his property; and his wife, with great cheerfulness, prepared to accompany him. Pesaro is ten miles distant from Cattolica: with great difficulty they hired a carriage to take them. The vetturino was very averse to the job, but showed no signs of discontent. When three miles from Pesaro, the pair alighted to walk a short distance; and the cunning fellow, seizing the opportunity, turned his horses' heads, and galloped

back to Pesaro, leaving them in the middle of the road. No house, no living being was to be seen; the inhabitants had fled on the arrival of the armies. Signora Goldoni began to cry. "Courage!" said the husband; "it is but six miles to Cattolica: we are young and strong; it will not do to turn back; let us walk on." The journey was not, however, an easy one; the road was crossed by several torrents, and the bridges were broken. Goldoni carried his wife over the swollen streams; but they had been obliged to make a circuit in search of a ford, and found themselves fatigued beyond measure. At length they arrived at the first advanced post of the Austrians. Goldoni presented the passport with which he came provided, and they were conducted to the commanding officer. The colonel at first took them for two wandering pedestrians; but, reading the passport, he made them sit down, and, looking kindly on them, said: "What, are you signor Goldoni?"—"Alas! Yes," replied the other. "Author of 'Belisarius?'"—"I am indeed."—"And this lady is the signora Goldoni?"—"She is the last good I possess in the world."—"I hear you came on foot."—"Alas! sir, you heard the truth." Goldoni now explained the nature of his expedition, and the officer reassured him: he restored his luggage, and liberated his servant, and, happy in the recovery of their property, Goldoni and his wife returned to Rimini.

After spending some weeks happily in this town, he set out on a tour through Tuscany, meaning to proceed afterwards to Genoa. He visited Florence, Siena, Volterra, and then arrived at Pisa. While walking about to see the "licns" of this town, he passed by a palace, and, perceiving that a great concourse of people were entering its gates, he looked through, and saw a large court, and the company all seated in a circle round. He asked a servant in livery, who waited, what the occasion was of so large an assembly. "That assembly," replied the man, "is a colony of the Arcadians of Rome, called the Alphean colony; that is, the colony of Alpheus, a celebrated river of Greece, which flows near the ancient Pisa of

Aulis." Goldoni asked if he might make one of the audience, and the servant ushered him to a seat. After a variety of pieces of poetry had been read, he sent the servant round to ask if a stranger might be permitted to recite ; and, on being answered in the affirmative, he repeated an old sonnet of his, which, with a little alteration, seemed extemporised à propos for the occasion. The Pisans, charmed at once by the compliment and the talent of the stranger, crowded round him. He made many acquaintances, was invited to their houses, and their cordial kindness seemed at one time to change the whole tenour of his life for ever. For, invited and pressed by them, and promised protection and patronage, he became a pleader once again, and for three years practised at the Pisan bar. Briefs flowed in, clients were numerous, all were satisfied, and Goldoni, content with his lot, abjured the theatre. He was too well known to be without temptations to break his resolution : actors wrote to him for plays, and he tried to refuse, and then, yielding to the desire, he wrote pieces for them in hours borrowed from sleep, and gave his days entire to his profession. Still law and the drama contended for him, and his heart was with the latter, though he tried to turn his back on her, and to devote himself to her rival. But he lost the game. A manager, named Mendebac, arrived at Pisa with a company. Goldoni went to see the representations. They acted his comedy of " La Donna di Garbo," which he considered his best piece : he had written it for a favourite actress ; but she died, and he had never seen it acted. The wife of the manager was young, beautiful, and a good performer, and she took the part of the Donna di Garbo. It is difficult exactly to translate, in one word, this expression : as used by the Tuscans it means, the worthy woman — the woman whose conduct is upright and estimable. The heroine of the piece, however, deserves more the name of the cunning than the worthy ; and her chief merit consists in her success. Rosaura is the daughter of a lace-maker of Pavia ; and her mother's house being

frequented by many of the students and professors of the university, she acquires a good deal of the scholastic pedantry of the schools. She is seduced by a student, who deserts her ; on which, for the sake of revenge, she gets herself introduced as a servant into the house of his father, where, by pleasing every body, and adapting herself to their humours, and by great display of learning, she hopes to force her lover into a marriage, and succeeds. This is by no means one of the best of Goldoni's comedies, but it pleased on the stage ; and on this occasion the principal part being filled up by the wife of the manager, who was a clever actress, it met with the greatest approbation. Goldoni, warmed by success, enticed by the offers of the manager, and drawn on by the instinctive bent of his disposition, suddenly resolved to leave Pisa and the profession which he was pursuing with so much advantage, and returning to Venice, to enter again on the task of writing comedies for its theatre. Such a determination was sufficiently strange and imprudent ; but Goldoni's love for his art was such, that he never regretted the sacrifice he made ; on the contrary, being now wholly devoted to the drama, his enthusiasm rose, and, filled with projects for its reform, he worked with an ardour, which was rewarded by success, and which inspired his best pieces.

It is, perhaps, difficult for a person who has never visited Italy to enter with zest into all the merits of Goldoni. His perfect fidelity to nature, the ease of his dialogue, and the dramatic effect of his pieces, can only be entirely appreciated in the representation. The best of them have often a slight plot, but the interest is kept alive by the variety of the dialogue. It was only slowly, however, that he proceeded to the reform of the Italian comedy ; the substitution of natural incident for violent and forced situations, and the higher properties of comedy for the mere burlesque of farce. Obligated to bring out his plays in quick succession, they are, of course, unequal, and did not meet always with the same approbation. Unfortunately, his first season ended with a

piece which had no success. The company for which he wrote, had to contend with others, longer established in the city; and, at the end of the carnival, these circumstances combined to afford a dreary prospect for the following year. At this moment Goldoni stepped forward in the most singular manner, to the assistance of the manager. He publicly promised sixteen new comedies for the next season; and the audience, wondering and anxious, instantly engaged all the boxes. His enemies ridiculed, his friends trembled for him; but he felt secure that he could fulfil his engagement, although at the moment he had not conceived the plot or plan of one of the promised sixteen.

This certainly was a great stretch of invention and mental labour. Out of the sixteen, for he completed the whole number, there were not more than three or four mediocre ones, and some were among his best. The "*Donne Puntigliose*," or *Punctilious Ladies*, is exceedingly amusing. A Sicilian trader's wife from the country, desires to be received among the noble ladies of Palermo: she contrives to get herself invited to small parties, where there are many men, and no lady except the mistress of the house; but finds it impossible to get admitted to their ceremonious assemblies. At last, an old countess, high-born, but poor, promises to give a ball, to which she shall be invited, on certain conditions, to which the low-born lady readily consents, though they draw rather largely on her purse. But to her consternation, as soon as she enters the ball-room, every woman flies as if she brought infection with her, and leaves her alone with her hostess. The punctilious scruples of those who try to make use of her without derogating from their own dignity, and who are ever ready to receive, but never to confer favours, form a very amusing picture of manners. "*Pamela*" was among the most successful of these pieces. Richardson's novel of "*Pamela*" is a great favourite with the Italians; and Goldoni was often asked to write a drama on the subject. As the Venetian laws are severe against the children of a

mésalliance, he considers the catastrophe of the novel as not inculcating a recommendable line of conduct. He, therefore, transformed Gaffer Andrews into a Scottish lord of the rebellion of '45, and gave Pamela good blood to render her marriage with her lover a commendable act on his part. This comedy had the greatest success. "The Donna Prudente" was equally a favourite. The story is founded on a jealous husband, afraid of ridicule, who is tortured by the attentions of the cavaliere servente of his wife, yet who dares not encounter the laughter that would ensue if he forbade the service. The prudent lady exerts herself with success to get rid of her cavaliere without its being supposed that her conduct arises from her husband's jealousy. The last of his sixteen was a purely Venetian subject, written almost entirely in the Venetian dialect: it is called "I Pettegollezzi," or The Gossipings, and turns on the misfortunes brought on the heroine through the gossip of her female acquaintances. It was brought on the last day of carnival. "The concourse," Goldoni writes, "was so immense, that the price of the boxes was tripled and quadrupled; and the applause was so tumultuous, that those who passed near the theatre were uncertain whether the sound was that of mere plaudits, or of a general revolt. I remained tranquil in my box, surrounded by my friends, who cried for joy. When all was over, a crowd of people came for me, forced me to accompany them, and carried, or rather dragged, me to the Ridotto, and overwhelmed me with compliments, from which I would fain have escaped. I was too tired to support all this ceremony; and, besides, not knowing whence all this enthusiasm sprang, I was angry that the piece just represented should be more extolled than many others which were of greater merit. By degrees I discovered the true motive of the general acclamation: it celebrated the triumph of my fulfilled engagement."

Goldoni was now forty-three years of age. His invention had not yet fallen off, but he tried his strength too much. An illness was the consequence of this ex-

traordinary exertion, and he felt the effects of it all his life after ; yet during the ensuing season he brought out scarcely a smaller number, and, as he proceeded, attained a yet purer style of comedy ; and he became the censor of the manners, and satirist of the follies, of his country. The peculiar system of what is called service, paid by gentlemen to the ladies of their choice, all over Italy, would have presented an ample field both for ridicule and reprehension, could he have ventured on it openly ; but he was obliged to treat it with the same reserve, when bringing it on the stage, as is used when it is spoken of in society ; and he could attack only the ridicule, not the real evils of the system. This comedy, called the “ *Villeggiatura*,” which turns on this subject, is particularly amusing ; but it can scarcely be called an attack upon it. An Italian gentleman, returned lately from Paris, offers to serve a lady in the French manner : he is not to perform those thousand services required of the cavaliere servente, nor to attend on her, nor to be of any use or amusement to her : they are to be friends secretly ; and, to preserve their friendship more sacredly, they must abstain from nearly all intercourse with each other. The lady, accustomed to be constantly waited upon, and to find in her cavaliere a resource against the ennui of solitude, is at a loss to understand the good that is to result from a negative of all the ordinary uses of friendship. The “ *Smanie della Villeggiatura*” attacks another of the foibles of the Venetians. It is their custom, each autumn, to spend several weeks at their country seats ; but, instead of this being a period of economy and retirement, it was the fashion to invite their friends, and to transport with them the dissipation of the city. Besides this, it being necessary, as a mark of fashion, to retire to a villa, those who were poor, and did not possess one, fancied themselves obliged to hire a house, and to go beyond their wealthier neighbours in the number of their guests and the splendour of their entertainments : nor can any idea be formed out of the country of the sort of fanaticism with which this custom was pursued ;

even to the bringing ruin on those who imagined themselves forced to so unnecessary an expense. Goldoni wrote three comedies on this subject: the first consisted in describing the preparations for the *villeggiatura*, or visit to the country. It has for its subject the difficulties of a poor proud family, who were bent on following the general example; the thousand obstacles that rendered it almost impracticable; and the envy with which they view and vie with the preparations of their wealthier acquaintance. At length they depart triumphant, resolving to forget their debts and difficulties until their return. The second comedy consists of the adventures in the country; where, in the midst of gambling, pleasure, and apparent enjoyment, a thousand annoyances distract, and jealousy and envy prevent, all real happiness. The third comedy, of the return from the country, shows the unfortunate lovers of rural pleasures overwhelmed by debt; surrounded by a thousand difficulties, sprung up while there; and saved only, when on the verge of ruin, by a kind and prudent friend who assists them, on their promise never to undertake a *villeggiatura* again. These plays are without the masks, and give a perfect representation of Italian conversation and manners. As he wished to criticise the Venetians, he did not venture to place the scene at Venice; but the audience easily brought home to themselves the faults and follies of the Tuscans or Neapolitans. In thus making a detail of some of the best of his plays, it is impossible to do more than to indicate those which appear the best worth reading. The "*Vedova Scaltra*," or The Gay Widow, was a great favourite in Italy. A rich widow, with four lovers from four different nations, seeks from each a proof of love, and gives her hand to the Italian, who, by his jealousy, evinces, she imagines, the sincerest testimony of the tender passion. The "*Feudatario*" has in it more of farce than he usually admits, and is peculiarly amusing; as well as the "*Donna del Maneggio*," or Managing Lady, whose avaricious husband, after incurring a thousand ridiculous disasters, ends by

placing the disposal of his property in his wife's hands. It would be too long and uninteresting to enter on even this brief notice of more; but we may mention the titles of some of his best, to guide any one who wishes to read only a portion of the vast quantity he wrote: among these may be named "*Il Cavaliere e la Dama*," "*Il vero Amico*," "*La Moglie Saggia*," "*L'Avanturiere Onorato*," "*Moliere e Terenzio*," which he names himself as the favourite offspring of his pen.

He spent many years thus respectably and happily. He loved his wife and his domestic circle. The applause of a theatre perpetually ringing in his ears, he was gratified by the consciousness that he was reforming the national taste. Sometimes he was attacked for what he considered the chief merit of his dramas. The advocates of the old comedy condemned his new style as puerile and tame. He defended himself, and was satisfied that he obtained the victory. During the summer, when the theatres at Venice were closed, he visited the various cities of Italy; and his life was diversified, and his invention refreshed, by these occasional tours. He had reason to be dissatisfied with the manager, Mendebac, who had allured him from Pisa, as he not only was illiberal enough not to add to his salary on these extraordinary efforts, but appropriated the profits arising from the publication of his works. Goldoni was unwilling to enter into a lawsuit with him; he contented himself, therefore, by bringing out an edition of his play at Florence; and as soon as his five years' engagement with Mendebac was over, he transferred himself to the theatre of San Luca, on terms at once more advantageous and honourable.

With some few reverses, attendant on an entire change of actors, and his ignorance of the peculiar abilities of the company, to which he was not accustomed, his career on this new stage was equally successful. He wrote several comedies in verse, which became peculiar favourites. This success was the occasion of his being invited to Rome during the carnival: but his dramas

did not succeed so well there. The actors, unaccustomed to his style, were unable to give them with any effect, and the Roman audience called out for Puncinello.

In 1750, he received an offer from the French court of an engagement for two years, on very advantageous terms. Goldoni hesitated a little about accepting it. A few years before, his brother had returned to Venice, a widower, with two children. Goldoni gave up to him all his property in Modena, and adopted the children, having none of his own. He made a good income in Italy; but he had no provision for old age: still he was unwilling to leave his native country — whose climate and people were dear to him — where he was honoured, loved, and applauded. He made some enquiries with regard to the possibility of getting a pension from the Venetian government; but this appearing a vain hope, he considered it right to close with the offer of the king of France. He hesitated the more before taking this step, as, although the engagement in question was but for two years, he felt that, once in Paris, and acquiring an honourable maintenance, it was probable that he should never see Italy again.

During the carnival of 1761, the last pieces he wrote for the Venetian theatre were represented: one, the last acted, was a sort of allegorical leave-taking, which was so understood by the audience; and the acclamations and adieus of the public moved him to tears. He left Venice in April 1761, accompanied by his wife. His mother was dead; his niece he placed in a convent, under the superintendence of a respectable family at Venice; his nephew was soon to follow him. As he passed through Italy, on his way to France, he was received at the various towns with distinction and kindness. He spent some little time at Genoa, with his wife's relations, and then they proceeded by slow stages to Paris.

Goldoni's *débüt* as an author in the French capital was not a happy one. The Italian comedians there were not accustomed to regular comedies, which they were to

learn by heart, but to the old style of their native farce, where the plot and arrangement of the scenes were all that was written, and they filled up the dialogue themselves. Goldoni wrote two or three pieces for them on this plan without success. His stay in Paris was, however, decided by the post of Italian master to the daughters of Louis XV. being bestowed on him. He knew so little of French, that he gained as much knowledge from the princesses as he imparted to them. His salary was very slender, but it was increased in the sequel ; and his nephew also was provided for by the post of Italian teacher in the military school.

Goldoni was charmed by the French actors ; and his ambition was excited to write a comedy to be represented by the excellent comedians who then flourished. His desire was fulfilled to the utmost. He brought out "*Le Bourru Bienfaisant*," into which he endeavoured to instil the spirit of French dialogue and plot with great success ; so that Voltaire praises it as the best French comedy written since Molière. He wrote another on the same plan ; but it fell to the ground, and he at last desisted from adding to the immense number of pieces of which he is the author.

He lived tranquilly and content with his moderate means. His niece was married at Venice ; his nephew settled happily at Paris. The revolution did not, fortunately, disturb the repose of his last years. The National Convention confirmed his pension to him, and continued it to his widow after his death. Goldoni died in the year 1792, at the age of eighty-five. No man was ever more born for the career which he pursued. His heart was excellent, and his disposition gay. He never allowed himself to be cast down by adversity, and met the attacks of his enemies with good humour, or such replies as caused the laugh to be on his side. He is numbered by his countrymen as among the best of their authors,—an opinion confirmed by all those sufficiently cognisant with the Italian language and manners to enter into the spirit of his compositions.

ALFIERI.

1749—1803.

THE Italian poets of the early ages were eminently distinguished for their patriotism. The haughty spirit of Dante burst forth into indignant denunciations against the oppressors of his country; the gentler, but not less fervent, Petrarch was never weary of adjuring its rulers to bestow upon it the blessings of justice and peace; and the latter years of Boccaccio's life were ennobled by his public services, and his earnest endeavours to implant a love and reverence for literature in the minds of his countrymen. The pages of Roman history and the writings of Roman poets made them proud of the country which had given them birth, and which added to its moral grandeur, of having been once the sovereign and civiliser of the world, — the natural affection inspired by its being, from its fertility, the diversity of its woods, lakes, and mountains, and surrounding sea, the most beautiful country upon earth.

The national spirit died away in after times. The devastating wars carried on in the Peninsula by France and the emperor, the rise of minor principalities, and the struggles of rival states, so excited the passions and absorbed the interests of the Italians, that they became incapable of enlarged views for the good of their country. The depressing influence of courtly servitude checked the free spirit of the writers; Ariosto and Tasso were both conspicuous for personal independence of character; but they did not extend their love of liberty to any exertions for the redemption of Italy. A darker day was at hand. The Peninsula, divided and weakened, became a mere province. A Spanish viceroy

reigned over Naples, and the northern portion was controlled by France and Austria. The Italians were taught to take pride in the virtues of slaves ; in submission, patience, and repose. The prosperity of the country was gone, its trade destroyed, its armies annihilated. No scope was given to generous ambition ; no career offered, by entering on which a man might exercise the peculiar privilege of the free — that of instructing their fellow countrymen : to be inoffensive to the ruling powers was the aim of all. The love of money — not the love of gain, for to gain was impossible, but mere parsimony, arising from the necessity of regarding the domestic expenditure as the only business of life — engrossed the fathers of families ; the women were uneducated and degraded, and though they preserved, as is often the case in a depraved state of society, a nature more generous, artless, and kindly than the other sex, yet these virtuous feelings found no scope for their developement, except in the passion of love. While the law of primogeniture interested not only the large class of younger sons, but even the heads of families, who wished to prevent their children from marrying, to establish a system of society, which, beginning by subverting the best principles of morality, ended by destroying all social happiness. While the higher orders were thus occupied by money-saving and intrigue, the lower orders were tamed by hard labour, and rendered submissive by the priests. The writers were the servants of princes : they administered to the pleasures of their countrymen, without uttering one word that could call them from their state of debasement, or inspire a love of the active and disinterested virtues.

Full of talent as the Italians are, and formed by nature for the noblest scenes of action, doubtless “ many a village Hampden ” was born and died in obscurity and inaction ; and yet this expression gives rise to a false notion. The peasants of Italy have no education, and, although infinitely superior in talent, perhaps, to any other peasantry in the world, are incapable of that

generalisation of ideas which produces patriotism. But, among the better sort of gentry,—men of simple habits and strong good sense, among the men of science and the professors at the universities,—there were individuals who mourned over the ruin of Italy. These men did not so much dwell on the ancient greatness of Rome, as on the achievements of their countrymen during the middle ages. Literature had been revived by them; the arts had flourished among them: they were proud of the past, but they despaired of the present.

The voice of liberty was silent. The Italians hated and despised their masters, but never dreamed of rebelling against them. Tuscany was slothful under a mild sway, whose tyranny was never felt, except by the few who believed that they were not merely *fruges consumere nati*, and were bitten with a noble mania for benefiting their race. Piedmont was ruled by a prince, who, by cultivating in his subjects, not a martial, but a military spirit (a very different thing), gave his idle nobles something to do. Lombardy was crushed by foreign bayonets. The voice of liberty was silent, when the French revolution awoke the world, and the hope of freedom spoke audibly in the hearts of all; and, afterwards, when the victories of Napoleon crushed this hope, they could not impose a silence for ever broken. Its language is now felt and understood from one end of the country to the other, and the day must come when the oppressors will be unable to oppose the veto of mere physical force to the overpowering influence of moral courage.

It was while Italy yet reposed submissive and mute, that a poet was born, who dedicated all the powers of his mind to the awakening his countrymen from their lethargy — to strengthening their enervated minds, and spreading such knowledge and such sentiments abroad among them, as would at once reveal their degraded state, and give them energy to aspire to a better.

Vittorio Alfieri was born at Asti, in Piedmont, on

the 17th of January, 1749. His parents were noble, wealthy, and respected. To these three circumstances Alfieri attributes many of the prosperous circumstances that attended his literary career. "Since I was born noble," he says, "I could attack the nobility without being accused of envy; since I was rich, I was independent and incorruptible; and the respectability of my parents prevented my ever being ashamed of my rank."

His father was named Antonio Alfieri, and his mother was Monica Maillard de Tournon, whose family, originally from Savoy, had long been established at Turin. His father was a man of blameless life: he had never entered on any public office, and was without a spark of that ambition which might have led him to seek distinction at court. He was fifty-five when he married, and his wife, though very young, was already a widow. Their eldest child was a daughter. Two years after, to the infinite joy of his father, Vittorio was born. He was put out to nurse, at a village called Rovigliasco, two miles from Asti; but such was the tenderness of his father, that he went on foot each day to see the child. This was a strong mark of affection, and testified also his simple and unostentatious disposition: for the Italian nobility usually love repose beyond all things, and their greatest pride is never to go on foot. This solicitude unfortunately cost him his life: he caught cold on occasion of one of his visits, and died after a few days' illness, leaving his wife about to give birth to another son, who, however, died in his infancy. She was an amiable and excellent woman, and still young when her second husband died; so that she was induced to marry a third time. Her husband was a cadet, of another branch of the Alfieri family; but, by the death of his elder brother, he in process of time inherited the wealth of his family, and became very rich. This marriage proved a very fortunate one. The cavaliere Giacinto was handsome and amiable; the couple grew old together in happiness; and the lady, as

she advanced in years, gained the love and respect of all by her piety and works of charity and kindness.

On the marriage of his mother, Vittorio and his sister went to live in their father-in-law's house, who proved himself a kind parent to the orphans. Although his health was not robust, Alfieri's childhood was little interrupted by sickness; and his first grief was experienced at the age of seven, when his sister Julia was sent to a convent for her education. Although he was, at first, permitted to see her every day, yet he felt, on her removal from the parental roof, that violence of emotion and boiling of the blood which was apt to seize on him, in after life, when forced to separate from any one to whom he was warmly attached. Thus his sensibility developed itself early; and sensibility and pride, both exalted into passions rather than feelings, were always the prominent traits of his disposition, and which at last, from the excessive influence they exercised over him, generated that gloomy melancholy to which he was a victim.

Alfieri remained at home, under the tutelage of a worthy priest, named Don Ivaldi, with whose assistance he began to learn the rudiments of Latin. His disposition was, for the most part, taciturn and placid: now and then he became loquacious and gay in the extreme, and, at other times, the melancholy already nascent in his heart, filled him with strange and passionate thoughts. He was obstinate when treated unkindly, but readily yielded to affection; and, above all, he was susceptible, to a painful degree, of the sense of shame. When, as a punishment for childish faults, any sort of public penance was imposed on him, he endured such transports of agony as affected his health for weeks.

At the age of nine, his uncle, the cavaliere Pellegrino Alfieri, who was his guardian, returned from a tour in France and England, and visited Asti, on his way to Turin. He found his nephew happy under the domestic roof, but learning little or nothing; accordingly,

he thought this a very bad state of things, and insisted that he should be placed at the public school at Turin, where ignorance, rather than knowledge, was taught, but where, as he would be neglected and enslaved, it was to be supposed that his education would prosper better than under the indulgent care of a fond mother. She was obliged to consent, and parted from her son with reluctance and tears. The boy's grief at the moment of separation was vehement; but it was quickly dissipated by the delight of travelling post, and the pleasure he took in bribing the postilions to go at their utmost speed. He was accompanied by a servant only; and, while the old man slept, the little fellow sat proud and gay in the carriage, as it whirled past village and town in quick succession. When arrived at Turin, his uncle received him kindly. He was at first depressed by the change of scene, and missed the caresses of his loving mother; but soon he became so joyous, and even riotous, that the cavaliere Pellegrino hastened to place him at the academy: and here he was, at the age of nine, torn from the domestic circle to which he was accustomed, at a distance from all his friends, isolated and abandoned. The only species of education, such as it was, entered upon at the academy, regarded their literary studies: the feelings were left to form themselves; lessons of morality and the duties of life making no part of the instruction afforded the pupils.

"The academy," Alfieri tells us, "was a large, handsome quadrangular building, with a large court in the middle; two sides of the square were occupied by the students, the other two by the king's theatre and royal archives. The side occupied by us, who were called of the second and third apartment, was opposite the latter; that occupied by the students of the first apartment being opposite to the king's theatre. The upper gallery on our side was called the third apartment, and was devoted to the younger boys and lower schools. The gallery on the ground floor was called the second, and occupied by the pupils rather

more advanced in age: a portion of these studied at the university, another edifice adjoining to the academy; the rest received their education in the military college. Every gallery contained at least four chambers, each occupied by eleven youths, over which an assistant, or usher, presided,—a poor fellow, whose only payment consisted in being boarded and lodged free of expense, while he studied theology or law, at the university; or, if he were not a poor student, he was an old and ignorant priest. A third portion of the side destined to the first apartment was occupied by the king's pages, to the number of twenty or twenty-five, who were totally separated from us of the second, at the opposite angle of the court, and close to the galleries of the archives. We, the younger pupils, could not have been worse placed. On one side, was a theatre which we were only permitted to visit about five or six times during the carnival; on the other, the pages who attended on the court, and who, continually hunting and riding, appeared to enjoy much freer and happier lives than the poor imprisoned boys; besides these, we overlooked the proceedings of the first class, which was composed almost entirely of foreigners, Russian and German, with a large proportion of English;—this class was restrained by no rule except that of being in by midnight; and their apartment was a mere lodging house to them, instead of being a place of education."

Alfieri was placed in the third apartment: he had the luxury of a servant to attend on him; but the fellow, unchecked by superior authority, became a sort of petty tyrant over his young master: in all other respects, he was on an equality with the rest of his comrades.

The basis of the system of education consisted in strict imprisonment, little sleep, and unwholesome food. To this was added a certain degree of parrot knowledge of the Latin language: the boys were taught to construe Cornelius Nepos; but so little pains were taken, or, rather, so little power was there in their instructors to enlarge their stores of real knowledge, that Alfieri

tells us, that not one of them knew who the men were whose lives they read; nor what the country, government, or times were in which they lived, nor even what thing government was. The boy made progress, however, in what he was taught: his emulation was excited, and his memory was cultivated; but, on the other hand, he grew sickly and stunted in growth, the effects of bad food and too little sleep. He had only his drunken, his dissipated servant to attend on him when he was ill; who often, on such occasions, left him half the day alone, which increased the constitutional melancholy of his disposition. His pleasures were few; and the want of all affectionate treatment blighted his life. It seems strange to us that his mother did not visit him, and that he never went home for a vacation: but such were the customs of the country, and he was brought up in conformity with them.

The spirit of emulation, caused him, in some degree, to distinguish himself, and he advanced to higher classes and attended lectures on philosophy, humanity, and mathematics; but such was the style in which they were taught, that, when he had gone through six books of Euclid, he was unable to demonstrate the fourth proposition; and, though he studied a whole year under the famous Beccaria, he did not comprehend a word of what he was taught. This is the less extraordinary, since, speaking the patois of Piedmont, Italian was as a foreign language; and, though he contrived to obtain a copy of Ariosto, he was unable to understand a word of it. His teachers were, for the most part, equally ignorant; so that while his time was devoted to Latin, his native language was a sealed book to him. He had a few relations at Turin, and when he became really ill, they interfered that he should have more sleep and better food; but he continued a puny and ailing boy.

Some few pleasures diversified his life. His uncle found that the education of his sister Julia was entirely neglected at Asti, and she was removed to a convent at Turin. She was fifteen — in love — and divided from the object of her affections. Her brother became her

confidant: he visited her twice a week, and tried to inspire her with constancy and resolution; but youthful spirits were of more avail than the lessons of romance, and, in short time, she was consoled. Another pleasure he enjoyed was, when a relation took him, on one occasion, to the opera buffa, sung by the best comic singers of Italy. The opera was the "*Mercante di Malmantile*." The spirit and vivacity of the music made a profound impression on him, leaving, as it were, a trail of harmony in his ears and heart, so that for many weeks after he remained immersed in an excessive, but not painful, melancholy. During this time he abhorred and nauseated his usual studies, while a world of fantastic images crowded his mind; and had he known how, he would have composed verses, and have expressed the most lively emotions, had not all language in which to express them been denied to him, through the ignorance of his teachers. This was the first time that music exercised so great an influence over him, and it remained long impressed upon his memory. At all times he was excessively susceptible to the impressions made by harmony, and he found that vocal music, especially female voices, possessed a peculiar power to disturb and agitate his mind. Nothing, he tells us, awakened in him more violent or various emotions; and almost all his tragedies were conceived while in the act of listening to music, or a few hours after. One other pleasure that he enjoyed during this period, was spending a fortnight with his uncle at Cuneo. This little journey did his health good, and occasioned him infinite delight. It was here that he wrote his first sonnet, addressed to a lady admired by his uncle, and who pleased him. As he knew nothing of Italian, or, as it is called, Tuscan, this sonnet must have been very bad. It pleased the lady; but his uncle, who was a soldier, and of an austere disposition, and who, though imbued with sufficient knowledge of history and government, despised poetry, ridiculed the boyish effusion, and put all thought of writing another out of his head.

At the age of fourteen, the circumstances of his life were considerably altered. His guardian uncle died. By the Piedmontese laws, children of fourteen are considered, to a certain degree, of age, and are allowed the entire disposal of their incomes ; while a trustee is appointed to prevent their alienating any part of the principal or real property. Alfieri was thus raised at once to independence ; and, to add to his comfort, his servant, who had tyrannised over him, and who, unwatched, and unchecked, had fallen into the worst vices, was dismissed. Alfieri parted from him with regret, despite his ill-treatment, and showed the kindness of his heart by visiting him twice a week, and giving him what money he could spare. He tells us that he can ill account for his attachment to one who had shown so little kindness to him : he could not attribute it to generosity on his part ; but partly to habit, and partly to the talents of the man, who, besides being singularly sagacious, was accustomed to tell him long adventures and tales full of imagination and interest.

The first fruit he reaped from the death of his uncle was being permitted to attend the riding school, which had been before denied. He was then of diminutive stature and weak of frame, and little able to control his horse ; but perseverance, and a great desire of success, supplied every other defect. To this noble exercise he owed the good health, robustness, and increase of stature, that he soon acquired. The next great event that followed was, his being removed from the second to the first apartment of his college. In the second, the students were mere boys, and they were kept in strict discipline ; in the first, entire freedom and idleness was the order of the day. He made his entrance on the 8th of May, 1763. His comrades were almost all foreigners, many were French, a still greater number were English. An excellent table was served in the best style, and all breathed luxury, comfort, and freedom. Much amusement, a great deal of sleep and of riding, gave Alfieri renewed health and spirits,

He spent his money on horses or dress. His trustee quarrelled with him for his extravagance, but that did not alter the state of things. With liberty and money he acquired friends and companions in every amusement and enterprise. "Yet," he says, "in the midst of this busy vortex, being little more than fourteen, I was not nearly so unreasonable as I might have been. From time to time, I felt a silent impulse within me to apply to study, and a good deal of shame for my ignorance, concerning the extent of which I never deceived myself, nor others. But, grounded in no one study, undirected by any, not really acquainted with a single language, I knew not how nor to what to apply myself. I read French romances, and conversed with foreigners, and forgot the little Italian I had before contrived to pick up from my Ariosto. At one time I took it into my head to immerse myself in the thirty-six volumes of Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, making extracts in French; but soon I threw it aside, and took to romances and the 'Arabian Nights.'"

Riding, and horses, and fine clothes were his passions. He and his friends went out in troops, leaping over every obstacle, fording rivers, and breaking down the unfortunate animals they rode, till at last no one would lett them any. But these active exercises invigorated Alfieri's health, strengthened his frame, and filled him with spirit and resolution; preparing his mind to support, and even to make good use of, the physical and moral liberty he afterwards acquired.

The youth of the first apartment were perfectly free, but they were all young men: Alfieri was as a boy among them, being only fifteen; and it was considered right that his servant should attend him constantly, and act as a check upon him. The man who had replaced his former tyrant was a foolish, good-humoured fellow, who easily yielded to bribery and persuasion, and let his young master do as he pleased. But this did not satisfy the youth's pride; he resolved to be on an equality with his comrades, and, without saying a word to his

valet, or to any one, went out alone. He was reproved by the governor, but repeated his offence immediately. On this he was put under arrest for a few days; but no sooner was his prison door opened, than, in open defiance, he went out again unaccompanied; and although, on the renewal of his offence, the term of his imprisonment was prolonged, it was without avail. At length he declared that his arrest must be perpetual, since as soon as he was set at liberty he should exercise the same privilege, being resolved not in any way to be on a different footing from his comrades; that the governor might remove him from the first, and replace him in the second apartment, but that he insisted upon being put in possession of all the rights of his companions. On this he was kept confined for more than three months; nor would he make any request to be liberated, but, indignant and stubborn, had died rather than have yielded. "I slept nearly all day," he tells us; "towards evening I got up from my bed, and, having a mattress placed near the fireplace, I stretched myself upon it on the ground. Not choosing to receive the usual college dinner, I caused food to be brought into my room, and cooked pollenta and similar things at my fire. I never dressed myself, nor allowed my hair to be touched, and became an absolute savage. Though I was not allowed to quit my room, my friends were permitted to visit me; but I was sullen and silent, and lay like a lifeless body, not replying to any thing that was said; and thus I continued for hours, with my eyes fixed on the ground, and full of tears, though I never suffered one to escape from them."

This obstinacy must have annoyed his masters considerably, and they were, no doubt, glad to make use of the first fair occasion for restoring him to liberty. The marriage of his sister gave them a pretext, of which they availed themselves. Julia married count Giacinto di Cumiano on the 1st of May, 1764: the wedding took place at the beautiful village of Cumiano, ten miles from Turin. Alfieri enjoyed the spring season and his

newly recovered liberty with intense delight, and, on his return to college, was admitted to all the privileges of the class of students to which he belonged. The control over his income being now almost entirely in his own hands, he launched out into a variety of expenses, the first of which was the purchase of a horse, a fiery but delicate animal, which he loved so passionately, that he could never after call him to mind without emotion: if it was ill, he could neither eat nor sleep. The delicacy of this beloved horse was the occasion of his buying another; and after that he bought carriage horses, and cab and saddle horses, till he had a stud of eight, to the great dissatisfaction of his trustee; but, as he could set his reprehensions at nought, he gave no ear to them, but plunged into every kind of expense, principally in dress, competing in extravagance with the English members of the university. In the midst of this vanity, the ingenuousness of his disposition manifested itself. He made display among the rich foreigners, who were his associates; but, when he was visited by his poorer friends and countrymen, who, though of noble birth, were yet straitened in means, he was accustomed to change his dress, to put on modest attire, and even to hide his finery, that he might not appear to possess any superiority over them: this delicacy of feeling extended itself to other parts of his conduct, and showed the genuine urbanity and benevolence of his disposition.

In the autumn of 1765, he made a short journey to Genoa with his trustee: this was the first time that he had left Piedmont; and here, for the first time, he saw the sea, the aspect of which transported him with admiration, and so exalted his imagination, that he says, if he had understood any language, or had had any poetry before him, he should certainly have composed verses. During this journey, to his infinite delight, he visited his native town, and his mother, whom, strange to say, he had not seen for seven years. There seems something incomprehensible in a state of society that should admit

of the propriety, or, rather, enforce the necessity, of a boy of nine being separated from all maternal care, and left to struggle as he might, during the precarious season of childhood and of adolescence, without a parent's eye to watch over his well-being, and administer to his health and happiness. On his return to Turin, he was not a little proud among his countrymen of his journey to Genoa ; but among the English, German, Polish and Russian students he felt the utmost rage and shame to think that they had seen countries so much more distant. This uneasy sense of inferiority inspired him with a passion for travelling, and made him resolve to visit the various lands of which his comrades were natives.

In the first impulse of expectant manhood, he had petitioned to be allowed to enter the army. As he grew older he began to find that his liberty was dearer to him than any military parade ; but, as he did not withdraw his request, he found himself admitted, in 1766, as ensign into the provincial regiment of Asti. He had chosen this, as the duties attendant on it were slight, it being only required to assemble for review for a few days twice a year : however, this necessity annoyed him, especially as it forced him to quit the university, where he would have been well pleased to remain ; but there was no help, and he left college, after an abode of nearly eight years. He took a small apartment in the same house with his sister, and spent all he could in horses and all sorts of luxuries, as well as in dinners given to his friends. A dislike of military discipline, and a love of travelling, made him soon after ask a year's leave of absence ; and he set out for Rome and Naples under the care of an English Catholic, who was about to make that tour, as tutor to two young Flemish gentlemen. It was with great difficulty that he obtained the necessary permission ; the king was averse to the nobles leaving the country, and it was only by a thousand petty artifices and intrigues that at last he succeeded in his wishes.

Agitated by an inexplicable disquietude of mind, ig-

norant of all with regard to literature and the arts, that could make travelling interesting, Alfieri had at this time but one pleasure in a journey, which was, going along the high road with the greatest possible speed. His companions were as little awake to rational inquiry as himself; and the only one among them, he tells us, who had common sense, was his valet, who also acted as courier, — a man named Elia, who served him for many years with the greatest fidelity. The first city at which the party stopped was Milan. They went to see the curiosities, and visited the Ambrosian library. The treasures of the collection were wasted upon Alfieri: when an autograph of Petrarch was shown him (perhaps the Virgil on whose cover the poet has recorded his passionate sorrow on the death of Laura), he, barbarian like, pushed it away, saying, it was nothing to him. This act did not arise from mere indifference; but partly from a grudge he felt against Petrarch, arising from his not being able to understand his poetry; and shame for his own ignorance took the guise of contempt of another's genius. On visiting Florence, the only object that called forth any emotion was the sight of Michael Angelo's tomb; when the recollection of the fame which had been acquired by this master of his art filled him with ideas that he could not define; and the thought rose in his mind, that those men only were truly great, who left some enduring monument of genius behind them. But these notions were vague and transitory; he lived only for the present hour, even while that afforded no one object to occupy or please him.

On leaving Florence, he hurried through Pisa and Siena; but such is the magic of the name, that the approach to Rome made his heart palpitate, and his torpid soul warmed into something like enthusiasm. He was charmed by the magnificent aspect which the eternal city presents as it is entered by the Porta del Popolo; and scarcely had he alighted at the hotel in the Piazza di Spagna, than he hurried off to behold the wonders of the place. Ignorance narrows the intellect, and takes the

living colours from the imagination. Alfieri, after all, regarded coldly those objects which render Rome a city of absolute enchantment. He was best pleased with St. Peter's. At each successive visit, the solemn vastness of the mighty aisles of the cathedral made a deeper impression; the splendour of the architecture, the sublime stillness of its incense-breathing atmosphere, and the soft twilight that reigns beneath its dome, kindled his soul to something like poetic inspiration. But even these feelings could only for a few moments appease the restlessness that pursued him, and he hurried away from Rome with all the impatience of one ill at ease in himself. At Naples he grew still more disturbed and melancholy: music, which he loved, only tended to increase his gloom; and his reserve prevented him from forming any intimacies. All day he drove from place to place, in those droll little Neapolitan *calesine*, which go at such a prodigious rate under the guidance of their Lazoni drivers, — "Not," he says, "that I wished to visit remarkable objects, for I had no curiosity nor knowledge about them, but merely for the sake of being on the road: I was never satiated of rapid motion, but a moment's quiescence filled me with annoyance." "And thus I lived, a riddle to myself, believing that I had capacity for nothing; feeling no decided impulse or emotion, except a continual melancholy; never finding peace nor quiet, yet not knowing what I desired; blindly obeying my nature, although I neither studied nor comprehended it. Many years afterwards I perceived that my unhappiness proceeded from the want, nay the necessity, which I have, to have at once my heart occupied by some worthy object, and my mind by some ennobling pursuit; for, whenever either of these two fail me, I remain incapable of the other, satiated and weary, and beyond all things miserable."

In the midst of this disturbed and unprofitable state, he nourished the ardent desire to travel on and on, beyond the mountainous boundaries of his country, uncontrolled and alone. For this purpose he applied to the

Sardinian minister; and, representing how correct his conduct was, and how capable he showed himself of managing his own affairs, he besought him to obtain leave from their sovereign, that he might detach himself from the tutor, and proceed alone. To his great joy, his request was complied with; and, with infinite delight, he left Naples for Rome, eager to make use of his entire independence, and to find himself solitary and lord of himself, on the high road, more than three hundred miles distant from his native Piedmont.

How little does mere freedom of will satisfy the mind, when not ministered to and filled by thoughts that go beyond the present moment. The aimless uneasiness of Alfieri was not to be dissipated by the mere ability of satisfying his craving for locomotion. He obtained leave of absence for another year, and permission to visit France and England: but the same spirit accompanied him of melancholy and ennui; and all objects were stale and unprofitable to his languid senses. Motive was absent; and his ardent feelings, left to prey on themselves, produced tears and regret but no power of finding a means of exercising them with advantage and happiness. If his ignorance was ever brought home to him, he was rendered uncomfortable, but felt no wish to improve. He tells us that, at Rome, he was accustomed to visit each day the count of Rivera, minister of Sardinia, — a worthy old man, who showed him every kindness, and gave him the best advice. One morning he found the count occupied in reading the sixth book of the *Æneid*; and when Alfieri entered, he signed to him to approach, and began to recite the beautiful lamentation for Marcellus. Six years before, Alfieri had translated, and known by heart, the greater part of Virgil; but he had now forgotten it, and felt thoroughly ashamed, but with little courage to amend; so that the result of this scene was only that he sullenly ruminated over his disgrace, and never went near the count again. The desire of some sort of interest drove him into a fit of avarice. He was slenderly provided with means for

his ultramontane journey; and he resolved to save all he could in Italy, that he might not be restricted when among foreigners. He followed up his system of parsimony with his usual ardour, and carried it to an excess which became its cure, since he got weary of the privations and annoyances he thus brought on himself.

From Rome he proceeded to Venice, passing through Ferrara without a thought of Ariosto or Tasso; and Padua, without visiting either living professors, or the tomb of the illustrious dead in the neighbourhood. What was Petrarch to him? he again asked himself; he wrote in an unknown tongue, of which, after all, he felt ashamed of being ignorant. He was pleased with Venice, and was diverted by its amusements; yet the spring season brought his usual annual fit of melancholy, and he spent many days brooding over he knew not what, and weeping he knew not why. Spurred on by restlessness, he hurried away from Venice: he passed solitarily and ennuied through the beautiful cities of Lombardy, seldom presenting letters of recommendation, and always keeping out of the way of acquaintances: proud and shy, he hated new faces; and besides, his desire of travelling made him avoid the ties of friendship and even of love, though once or twice the smiles of beauty almost softened his heart. All his desire was to hasten to France, and to enjoy the delights he there promised himself. He was destined to be disappointed; for his ill-regulated imagination always exaggerated the pains and pleasures of the future, while it did not possess the better power of exalting and adorning the objects which in anticipation had appeared so desirable, and which in possession grew contemptible and barren.

One of the singularities of Alfieri's character was the extravagant hatred of France which he cherished all his life. He attributed this, in the first place, to a vehement childish dislike of his French dancing-master. Still he read nothing but French books, French was the language he commonly spoke, and he left Italy in eager anticipation of the pleasures of Paris. But Alfieri

did not know his own nature; nor was he aware that he could find happiness through the medium of his passions and intellect only, while amusement and even dissipation had the effect of wearying and disgusting him. The circumstance of his first entrance into Paris sufficed to cloud his stay; nay, the feelings of his whole life were influenced by the painful impression then made. It was the month of August, in Italy so sunshiny and festal; a drizzling rain, accompanied by a chilling temperature of air, impressed him most disagreeably; the streets, houses, and people were all mean, dirty, and impertinent in his eyes; his illusions vanished, and, but for a sense of shame, he would on the instant have quitted the city he had come so far to visit. The lapse of a quarter of a century did not erase the profound traces of disgust and aversion that were then trenched in his mind. At the time, the principal effect of his disappointment was a little to diminish his passion for travelling; and to find that, beyond the Alps, he learned to appreciate the beauties of the divine country he had been so eager to quit.

He delayed his departure from Paris till January, and then hurried to London, which delighted as much as Paris had disgusted him; and he thus gives evidence of a fact of which many English, who have travelled, must be aware — that there is something in Italy and the Italians, in the rural beauty of the country, and in the unpretending but highly gifted natives, more congenial to our taste, than in the peculiar habits and manners of the French. Industry does here, in beautifying the landscape, what nature does beyond the Alps; while in France, there is a discomfort and a desolation apparent in the midst of its civilisation and plenty, which is singularly disagreeable. In this country, the roads, the inns, the horses, the women, all charmed Alfieri; the appearance of general competence, the activity of life, and the cleanliness and comfort of the houses, diminutive as they struck him to be, made an agreeable impression, which each successive visit re-

newed. Yet he led a strange life — avoiding society, although in the midst of it. He had been accompanied from Paris by a friend; and he amused himself, each morning, by driving him about town, and acting the coachman for him at night, sitting on the box for hours, and taking pride in his dexterity in extricating his carriage amidst the difficulties and confusion attendant on the vast multitude of equipages that throng round places of amusement during the London season. This did for a little while; then, in obedience to his wandering propensity, he made a tour to Portsmouth, Bristol, and Oxford. He was pleased with all he saw; and began to entertain a wish to settle in a country whose aspect was so agreeable, where the manners were simple, the women modest and beautiful, the laws equitable, and the men free. The enthusiasm he felt, made him disregard the melancholy generated by the gloomy climate, and the ruinous expense of living. He observes, and with justice, that Italy and England are the only countries in which it is desirable to live: the former, because there nature vindicates her rights, and rises triumphant over the evils produced by the governments; the latter, because art conquers nature, and transforms a rude ungenial land into a paradise of comfort and laughing abundance.

In June, he left England for Holland; and at the Hague for the first time became really in love, and at the same time his heart opened itself to friendship. The lady whom he admired, and who returned his affection, was unfortunately a married woman, but an Italian education and habits prevented any scruples of conscience from interrupting the felicity he enjoyed. His friend was Don José d'Alcunha, Portuguese minister in Holland. Alfieri describes him as clever and original, with a cultivated understanding and firm unbending character: with tact and efficacy the Portuguese awoke in his new friend shame for his idle, aimless life. It was a curious circumstance, he tells us, that he never felt a strong desire for mental improvement, except at

such periods as when he was passionately in love, and his time so employed that he could bestow none of it on literature. In process of time, when he became worthily attached, he may have perceived in this, the beneficent action of the passions in our nature, when their objects are what they ought to be—ennobling and permanent.

After a period of great happiness, he was forced to separate from the lady to whom he was attached,—she being obliged to join her husband, who had gone to Switzerland; and Alfieri suffered the mildest of the punishments that result from loving one to whom you cannot consecrate your life. But though a separation, attended neither by disastrous incident nor infidelity, is the gentlest penance for such an error, it visited the young Italian in no gentle manner. It was a natural wish, as any one will acknowledge who has attended to his own sensations, on first being subjected to passionate sorrow, that which he formed—for being bled: prevented by his friend and a faithful servant from allowing this bleeding to be fatal, his grief became gloomy and taciturn; Holland grew hateful to him; and he returned to Italy with the utmost speed—never resting till he found himself at Cumiano, in his sister's villa, after a three weeks' journey, during which time he saw nothing and said nothing, communicating only by signs with his faithful servant, Elia, who never lost sight of him, and bore with exemplary patience his caprices and heedless tyranny.

This state of melancholy regret augmented his love of solitude, and engendered, moreover, a desire to study: he passed the winter at Turin, in his sister's house, seeing absolutely no society, and spending his time in reading. He turned over the pages of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, and Montesquieu; but his chief delight was derived from the perusal of Plutarch's lives. His mind was strongly excited by the heroic virtues of the great men of whom he read, and tears of mingled admiration and indignation gushed from his eyes. He felt the misfortune it was to be a native of Piedmont; and to

have been born in a country, and at a time, when no scope was afforded for word or action, scarcely any for thought and feeling.

In the spring of 1769 he set out on another and a longer tour. He had been disappointed in a matrimonial project, proposed to him by his brother-in-law. The young lady was rich and beautiful, but she preferred a handsome young courtier to a man already remarkable for the eccentricity of his conduct and the sombreness of his disposition: for Alfieri, withdrawn from the common routine of society by his passionate and earnest nature, could but awkwardly and reluctantly fulfil the thousand minute duties which an Italian is accustomed to pay to his lady; nor, on this occasion, did love inspire him with that devotion of heart which might have proved acceptable in lieu of petty attentions. He was now twenty, and, according to the laws of his country, of age — so that his entire fortune was at his disposal: this consisted of an income of 2500 sequins, or about 1200*l.* a year, and a large sum of ready money; and, to augment the value of his possessions, he had acquired the habits of rational economy, which sprang from the scantiness of the allowance which his prudent trustee had made him. Thus he set out with “money in his purse,” and no love in his heart, except the tender recollection of his half-extinguished Flemish flame; and if with a head not much fuller of ideas, yet with a thousand sentiments awakened, which afforded matter for thought. As he drove along, he read Montaigne, or reflected on what he read — a little galled by finding that he could not construe the Latin quotations, and still more so by being obliged to skip the Italian ones. Vienna and Berlin were hastily visited, and seen without pleasure: he had beheld the results of liberty in England, and he had read of them in Plutarch, and his natural sense of independence made him revolt from the military despotisms of the north. Instinctive good sense served him better than the philosophy of Voltaire, and he recognised the

cloven foot of arbitrary power in the barrack capital of the philosopher of Sans Souci. He hurried away from these mockeries of liberalism, and found more pleasure in the simplicity of the Swedes: the contrast which barren nature afforded, in these frozen regions, to the luxuriance and glory of Italy interested and pleased him; the velocity of his sledge, as he proceeded through the silent pine forests, and over the ice-covered lakes, fostered an agreeable melancholy; and he describes his spring journey from Sweden to St. Petersburg with a vividness and beauty which it would spoil to abridge. Embarking at the first breaking up of the frost on the Gulf of Bothnia, his boat had to struggle through the floating ice; and the novelty of his situation was a source of amusement. "This is the country of Europe," he says, "most agreeable to me, from its savage rudeness; fantastic, gloomy, and even sublime, ideas are created in the mind by the vast, undefinable silence that reigns there, making you feel as if transported away from the globe." St. Petersburg disappointed him; nor would he see the empress Catherine, whom he regarded as the murderess of her husband, and whose conduct—having failed in her promise of bestowing a constitution on her subjects—was unredeemed, in his eyes, by any mitigating circumstances.

From Russia he traversed Germany to Holland, and again visited England. His time, during his second visit to this country, was engrossed by an attachment for a lady of rank, who proved herself not only unworthy of the affection of the husband whom she betrayed, but the lover to whom she was false. The more violent passions of Alfieri were all roused to their utmost vehemence by the various chances of this adventure, which was attended by all those hairbreadth escapes, menacing dangers, and final ruin and misery, which usually wait upon intrigue in England. First it was love, accompanied by the "sin and fear" which attends on mystery and deceit; then separation came to drive him to despair. The London season over, the

lady went to her country house near Windsor; and Alfieri could only visit her clandestinely, on such nights when her husband was absent in London. His impatience and agony during the periods of separation were only appeased by excessive exercise: he rode about all day, performing such feats of horsemanship as endangered his life. Leaping a five-barred gate, with his thoughts wandering to his lady, instead of being fixed on his bridle-hand, his horse fell on him, and dislocated his shoulder; but that did not prevent a visit to Windsor on the following evening, the last that he was destined to make. The servants observed and watched him, and the husband of the lady had intelligence of her infidelity; "and here," he writes, "it is impossible not to laugh at the contrast between English and Italian jealousy, so different are the passions in different characters, in another climate, and, above all, under other laws. Every Italian would now expect to hear of blows, poison, stabs, or, at least, of the imprisonment of the lady, under such violent provocation: nothing of all this happened, though the English husband adored his wife after his manner." It was much according to the present customs, that the English husband, besides instituting legal proceedings against his wife and her lover, called out the latter. The duel was, however, a very harmless proceeding: Alfieri could not fence, and his adversary was satisfied by merely drawing blood by a scratch in the arm, carefully abstaining from inflicting the wound or death which he had it in his power to bestow. A far deeper and more painful wound was reserved for the Italian, when he learned how grossly the lady had deceived him. A groom of her husband had formerly been her lover: he still lived in the house; and, fearing that his lord would risk his life in an encounter with Alfieri, he hastened to inform him that the lady was totally unworthy such a chivalrous encounter. All these disgraceful circumstances came out on the trial. Alfieri, maddened and enraged, was yet unable, at first, to separate from his

treacherous mistress. They travelled together in England, he furious at his own weakness, and perpetually struggling to vanquish it; till, seizing on a moment when shame and indignation were stronger than love, he left her at Rochester, on her way to France with a relative, and returned to London. In after times, the chief impression left on his mind from this adventure was, a feeling of mixed respect and gratitude towards her husband, who spared both his life and his purse, neither killing him, nor demanding damages: the first the English noble, apparently, had at his mercy; but it is unlikely, under all the circumstances, that the latter should have been awarded him, to any great extent.

After tempests like these, it was long before the impetuous and sensitive soul of Alfieri settled into any thing like calm: paroxysms of rage, love, grief, and despair succeeded one to the other, and his only relief was derived from locomotion. He left London, and after visiting his friend Alcinha at the Hague, he hurried on to Paris; he traversed France, and entered Spain, struggling with the passion that warred within him, and devoured by the gloomiest melancholy. At Barcelona he bought two Spanish horses, and with these resolved to proceed on his journey to Madrid. His carriage went on first, under the care of the servants and muleteers; and he followed, chiefly on foot, his beautiful Andalusian trotting beside him with the docility of a dog. This mixture of idleness and change — of solitude and independence — soothed his disturbed mind. He was given up to endless reverie, now engrossed by melancholy and moral trains of thought; now possessed by images wild, terrible, or gay. He knew no language, and could express nothing that he felt — all was confused and vague, and mingled with violent transports of grief and despair. He spoke to no one; and his taciturn, self-devouring misery irritated him almost to madness. His faithful servant, Elia, who followed him during all his journeys, had nearly become the victim to an explosion of the pent-up volcano. In combing the count's long

tresses, — which it was the fashion then to wear, — he accidentally pulled one hair ; and Alfieri, starting up like lightning, hurled a candlestick at his head, which struck him on the temple and inflicted a wound. Elia's Italian nature was roused, and he flew on his master. Other people interfered, and no more harm was done. Alfieri told his servant that he might kill him if he chose: he deserved it, and would take no precautions against his vengeance ; and he praises his own courage in thus exposing himself, and the magnanimity of the man for not rising in the night and murdering him as he slept. The whole scene is inexplicable to our northern imaginations, and borders on the excesses of savage nature. " It would be difficult for any one," says Alfieri, " to understand the mixture of ferociousness and generosity on both sides, who has not had experience of the manners and hot blood of the Piedmontese."

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23. After a journey through Spain and Portugal more savage, wild, and solitary than was even his wont, Alfieri returned to Turin ; and here he seemed to be in greater danger than he had ever been of losing all the exaltation of character and feeling that clung to him despite his excesses, his ignorance, and the total absence of all mental culture. He took a magnificent house, and fitted it up with luxury and taste. He had a circle of friends, who formed themselves into a society, with laws and regulations. One of their amusements was a sort of literary budget, to which the various members contributed writings for the recreation of the general society. Alfieri wrote several papers, which obtained a good deal of applause : he had a turn for satire, and that is always a popular style of writing in a coterie. These compositions were all in French.

A worse degradation than this sort of vegetative dissipation awaited the count : he became a cavaliere servente. The lady was of rank, a good deal older than himself, but of extraordinary beauty. She was noted for her gallantries ; and Alfieri, who was not in love, her style of beauty even not being exactly to his taste, was

drawn in, at first, by mere idleness, and a belief in the excessive attachment she bore him. Soon a most vehement passion engrossed him. Friends, diversions, even horses, were neglected; from eight in the morning till twelve at night he was continually with her—discontented with his servitude, but unable to stay away.

It is difficult to understand, and impossible to sympathise with, the sort of frenzy he describes. He did not esteem the lady, and he despised himself for the humiliating state to which he was reduced. The situation of a cavaliere servente is, we are told by high English authority in such matters, “no sinecure.” To be constantly in attendance is its chief duty. A cavaliere sits with his lady, drives with her, walks with her, goes to assemblies and the opera with her: he follows her like her shadow, and no matrimonial exigence can equal the total abnegation of all independent occupation to which the cavaliere must submit. The lady, indeed, may equally become weary; but an Italian woman is used to this excess of indolence. Her life is monotonous, her passage from one amusement to the other invariable, sameness forming the essence of her existence: nothing animates it except love, scandal, or quarrelling: these, and the natural vivacity of southern blood, which can diversify the indolence which would otherwise mantle over and incrust every faculty. But all this was torture to the fiery spirit of the count, who, born for better things, struggled with his fetters, and roared like a lion in the toils. His slavery lasted for two years. At one time, the nervous irritation produced a violent and inexplicable malady, which the wits of Turin declared he had invented exclusively for himself. He was unable for several days to swallow aliment in any shape; and the convulsions brought on by any attempt to force it on him almost deprived him of life. At another time, he acquired resolution enough to scheme a journey to Milan, and actually set out; but scarcely had he passed the gates of Turin than his heart failed him, and he returned, burning with indignation against himself, to resume his chains. His friends saw

and pitied his miserable state, and their compassion aggravated his sufferings, while it did not enable him to rise above the enthrallment. Day after day, month after month, he formed new resolves to extricate himself, and for a long time in vain.

At length, in the February of 1775, being now twenty-six years of age, he, in desperation, came to a determination to break off the disgraceful intercourse. His old remedy of change of place had proved of no avail, so he resolved to remain on the same spot; to shut himself up in his own house, which was opposite that of the lady, but to receive no letters, hear no messages, and to be induced by no failing of the heart ever to behold her more. In token of his fixed purpose, he cut off his long hair, and sent it to a friend, as a proof that he could not present himself in society so shorn and disfigured.

And now a better day dawned on the tempest of passion that darkened his soul. In Lisbon he had been acquainted with the abate Caluso, a man of learning and talent, who had, in some degree, awakened in him a desire for knowledge, while, with the utmost forbearance and kindness, he tried to lighten the shame inspired by every glimmering light that displayed his excessive ignorance. They had passed many long evenings together, and Alfieri preferred his instructive but unpretending conversation to the gaieties of society; and here he felt an awakening of that dormant power of composition which afterwards was to expand into worthy and perennial fruit. In Turin, also, he was acquainted with several literati; and now, a voluntary prisoner, and passing many long hours in entire solitude, unaware and almost unsought, a true, strong, and enduring love of knowledge sprang up within him, never after to be weakened or destroyed. The first token of the spirit of composition, was a sonnet in commemoration of the freedom he had acquired. Some years before, in Paris, he had bought a collection of Italian poets, and by reading them had gained a slight knowledge of versi-

fication, and of his native language; yet so ludicrously imperfect was this, that, when he showed his sonnet to a literary man, the first advice he received was to learn to spell. Orthography, grammar, and rhythm were alike defective in his production. He was not discouraged. This same friend, father Paciaudi, had given him the "Cleopatra" of cardinal Delfino. Alfieri fancied that he could write a better tragedy himself; and he began one on the same subject. He consulted his friends upon it, and tried to gain some instruction as to style and poetic laws, of which, hitherto, he had remained in profound ignorance. His house became a sort of academy; while he, desirous of learning, but proud and indocile, wearied himself and all around him by his alternate fits of industry and despondency. At length, a tragedy and a farce were the result of his endeavours, and both were acted on the same nights, at the theatre of Turin, with applause, on two consecutive evenings, and were given out for a third representation. But Alfieri by this time began to discover the entire want of merit of these productions: which prove, as we may judge from the passages he has preserved, that ideas and feelings are of no avail in composition, where there is a total absence of style, and an absolute incapacity of finding language in which to clothe the naked and unformed conceptions of the brain. On the third night, therefore, Alfieri prevented the representation; and on the same night he was seized by so vehement and burning a wish to deserve the applause of an audience, that, he tells us, no fever of love had ever assailed him with similar impetuosity.

"And thus," he says, "at the age of seven and twenty, I entered into the difficult engagement with the public and myself to become a writer of tragedies; and these were the props I had to sustain me in my undertaking,—a resolved, obstinate, and untamed spirit; a heart boiling over with all sorts of emotions, among which predominated the transports of love, and a profound and indignant abhorrence of every species of

tyranny ; a very slight recollection of the French tragedies I had seen acted, having read and studied none ; an entire ignorance of the rules of the drama ; and a total incapacity to command the language of which I made use ;—all this was surrounded by a husk, not so much of presumption, as of petulance, and an impetuosity of character which stood in the way of my ever, except with reluctance, acknowledging, investigating, or giving ear to truth."

The first thing he found he had to do, was to apply himself to a spelling-book and grammar : this necessity was not admitted without a struggle ; but the ardour of his enthusiasm enabled him to triumph over these petty but perplexing and irritating obstacles ; and he gave himself up to the study of language with a mixture of impatience and perseverance that kept his mind in a perpetual tumult. He was under the necessity of driving away all French words and forms of speech from his mind, and of imbuing his thoughts in the idiom of Tuscany,—a work of unspeakable labour, uniting the studies of a man with those of a child, and sufficient to have overcome the resolution of any temper less ardent and ambitious than his own. After all, it must be acknowledged that it was to a great degree an insuperable difficulty ; and, though overcome, in appearance, by Alfieri, yet in composition he had always two labours,—that of giving birth to ideas, and that of examining with the attention and scepticism of a foreigner the words in which he clothed them. This, perhaps, is the cause, that although, in process of time, his prose style became unexceptionable, and that of his tragedies full of fire and strength, his lyrics are such lamentable failures.

For nearly a year he was given up to the ungrateful task of clearing away the rubbish of another language, and placing the foundation stones of a pure and classic Italian. He retired to a village near Turin, that his attention might not be called off ; and there, with a literary friend, he laboured at all that nauseates

a schoolboy, with the still greater disgust of mere verbal difficulties which is felt by a man. After a year of much industry, he began to be aware that he should never attain his object as long as he merely translated himself from the French, which had become the language of his thoughts; and he resolved to pass six months in Tuscany, to learn, to hear, speak, think, and feel Tuscan only.

In this journey he sought the acquaintance of the first literary men, and exerted himself strenuously to acquire the knowledge of which he was so deficient. He never deceived himself by fancying his deficiencies were less than they were. He was born endowed with genius; uncultivated and empty of all knowledge as his mind was, yet it was filled with thought and feeling, and, during his solitary journeys and long incommunicative days of reverie, he had studied his own character. At one time he had kept a journal, in which he put down not only his actions, but their motives, investigating his moral nature in its inmost recesses. This was an exercise of mind which, joined to his natural talent, peculiarly adapted him to developement of feeling and motive, which is the essence of the tragic art; and it was towards this species composition that, from the first, he felt himself irresistibly impelled.

He had now fully entered on his dramatic enterprise. Several months before, he had written his tragedies of "Philip" and "Polinices," in French prose, which with unwearied industry, he put into Italian verse three or four several times; endeavouring to form a rhythm adapted to dialogue, and to concentrate and simplify his style as much as possible. While studying Italian, he had also applied himself to re-learning Latin; and the tragedies of Seneca suggested other subjects. "Antigone," "Agamemnon," "Orestes," and "Don Garzia," were all conceived, and in part written, while he was indefatigable in the labour, it cannot so well be said of polishing his language, as of modelling and remodelling

it, as his greater use of Tuscan, and his critical taste suggested.

He had now an aim in life, from the pursuit of which he never deviated, but followed it up with incredible enthusiasm and perseverance. His labours were great in literature, yet confined chiefly to the formation of style; and he translated Sallust, and other Latin authors, for the sake of improving in force and conciseness. He did not continue in one place: after a few months spent at Florence, he returned to Turin, recalled by the love of his friends and his stud: but during the following spring he obtained the necessary permission of the king to quit Piedmont and return to Tuscany, for the purpose of imbibing at the purest source that energetic and concise language, which he considered yielded in elegance and force of expression to no other in the world.

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28.

As the city where the purest Tuscan is spoken, Alfieri visited Siena, and spent the summer there. He there formed an intimacy which served to encourage him in his laborious pursuits; for he tells us he was never capable of arduous and sustained undertakings, except when the feelings of his heart were exercised by an intercourse of friendship or love. Francesco Gori was of ignoble birth, and his ostensible pursuits were those of traffic, which he pursued more for the sake of pleasing his family than for gain. In the obscurity of his warehouse he occupied himself with classical literature, and nurtured an admirable and delicate taste for the fine arts. Extreme philanthropy formed the essence of his character, and a warm-hearted sympathy, that led him to forgive and love all mankind. The idle and opulent nobles of the city could not, by their worthlessness, excite his hatred or contempt. With Tacitus in his hand, and the pure love of liberty in his heart, how could he hate the victims of tyranny? he might exclaim, with a poet of modern days, whose political principles were equally derived from the sensibility of his heart, —

" I hate thy want of love and truth :
How should I then hate thee ? "

Self-knowledge deracinated pride in himself, and contempt for others ; and thus, humbly occupied in his shop, he could extend forbearance to all, except the primal causes of the degradation of his countrymen ; while his only happiness was derived from books, and his chief grief from comparing himself and his times with the men and times of which he read.

There is a simplicity in Italian manners that renders the friendship between count Alfieri and Gori, the mercer, by no means extraordinary. To the sympathy produced by an agreement in opinions was added the respect which Alfieri felt for the virtuous qualities of his unpretending friend. Their talk was of the ancient glory of their country, and of the literary ambition of Alfieri. In the course of conversation, Gori suggested the conspiracy of the Pazzi as a good subject for a tragedy. Alfieri was ignorant of the history of the republic of Florence, and had never heard of the Pazzi. Gori placed the Florentine annals of Machiavelli in his hands. Machiavelli (whatever his motives were for writing "The Prince") was an enthusiastic republican. He tells us in his letters, that while writing the history, he delighted himself by exposing the conduct of the princes who had ruined Italy : his spirit of freedom found an echo in Alfieri's heart, and so sharpened his hatred of despotism, and his love of liberty, that, throwing aside his tragedies, he wrote a treatise on tyranny,—a work of eloquence, but rather a juvenile ebullition of feeling, than an argumentative essay.

On the advance of winter, Alfieri transferred himself to Florence ; and here an event happened that altered the colour of his future life, through the influence of a constant attachment, which, accompanied by esteem for the good qualities and talents of its object, remained fixed in his heart to the end of his life.

Louisa de Stolberg, countess of Albany, was at that time twenty-five years of age, beautiful and full of

talent. Her rank and wealth gave her a distinguished place in society. She was the wife of the last of the Stuarts who made pretensions to the throne of England, who unfortunately disgraced his illustrious house, and even the private station to which he was reduced, by habits the most deplorable. Alfieri now regarded his future prospects as fixed: he had long determined never to marry, considering that, under the despotic government to which he was a subject, the ties of husband and father would add weight to the chains imposed upon him: attached for life to a woman whom he esteemed worthy of him, and beyond all things ambitious of distinguishing himself as an author and a defender of the cause of liberty, he began to put into execution the schemes which had long presented themselves to his imagination, for acquiring entire personal freedom. The nobles of Piedmont were in a peculiarly enslaved state: they could not quit the territories of their sovereign except by especial leave, granted for a limited time; nor could they publish any writings in a foreign country, without the licence of their native prince, under penalty of a fine, and even imprisonment, "if" (so the law was expressed) "it was necessary to make a public example." These shackles were intolerable to a man of independent mind, bent upon giving testimony of his abhorrence of despotic rule: but few men would have freed themselves at the cost that Alfieri paid. He came to a resolve to make a donation of the whole of his property to his sister Julia, reserving to himself only the annual income of 1400 sequins, or about 600*l.* a year, the half of his actual receipt. To execute this design, the king's permission was necessary, who readily gave it, "being," says Alfieri, "as willing to get rid of me as I was to emancipate myself from his authority."

The transfer, however, was not completed without a good deal of annoyance; and Alfieri was irritated, at one time, into making a declaration, that, if his brother-in-law would not receive the donation, he must the

count's abandonment of his whole property ; and that he would resign his claim to every possession rather than be fettered by the laws attendant upon keeping it. In the exaltation of his imagination, he almost imagined that this latter offer would be acted on ; and, finding himself reduced to merely a few thousand sequins of ready money, he fell into his second fit of avarice, selling his horses, and all his superfluous plate, furniture, and even dress, renouncing the Sardinian uniform, to which he had adhered, from boyish vanity, even after quitting the service. He spent a good deal of money in books ; but this was his sole expense ; while his abstemiousness of living, directed by economy, became of the most rigid kind. Thus, even in extremes, resolved never to marry, resolved to be an author, he completed sacrifices, which a thousand circumstances might afterwards have caused him to regret, but which, he assures us, he never for a moment repented. He did not confide the secret of this change in his affairs to the countess until it was past recal ; for, as their ultimate effect was to render their union more stable and permanent, he felt that she might consider it right, as a mark of her disinterestedness, to oppose them. When all was over, her blame was of no avail, and she forgave the mystery he had practised.

These various annoyances, joined to the perturbations of love, and the ardour of his literary application, occasioned an illness from which he only recovered when the season of summer brought that healthiness of feeling, that lightness of spirit, and that energy for composition, which summer and its heats always imparted to his constitution. During this summer, Alfieri, as he tells us, " in a frantic delirium of a love of freedom," wrote his tragedy of the " Pazzi," and that of " Mary Stuart" (Mary Queen of Scots) ; the latter at the request of the countess of Albany. During the following year he completed these and made the first sketch of " Rosmunda," " Ottavia," and " Timoleon." Since his tragedies have become so numerous, and many of his best are written, it will be as well to

glance over them, and to give some account of his progress and success in an art to which he devoted his life and fortune.

Energy and conciseness are the distinguishing marks of Alfieri's dramas. Wishing to bring the whole action of the piece into one focus, he rejected altogether the confidantes of the French theatre, so that his dramatis personæ are limited to the principals themselves. The preservation of the unities of time and place also contributed to curtail all excrescences; so that his tragedies are short, and all bear upon one point only, which he considered the essence of unity of action. Thus, in the "Merope," there are but four interlocutors, the queen and her son, his foster-father, and the tyrant. Instead, therefore, as is the case in the French dramas, of the action being carried on by a perpetual talk about it, at once tedious and unnatural, the interest is always at its height between the parties themselves; and it is singular, in the "Merope" in particular, with what talent and success he keeps the action in perpetual progress, and the passions developed by such slender means. It was the turn of Alfieri's character to consider it a duty in an author rather to conquer difficulties than to acquire facilities. He would read no other tragedians, for fear of imitating them, and abstained from a perusal of the great master of the art, Shakspeare, from the same mistaken notion. Genius need not fear to be imitative; but genius, unaided by cultivation, and by a study of what has gone before, can never surpass what is already written: it were as if a scientific man were to refuse to be initiated in the discoveries of science, that he might pursue his labours in a new and original path. Thus he might, we will say, re-invent gunpowder and printing, but never a new law and a new power. To use a more homely illustration, it were as if an agriculturist refused to manure the ground, and was bent on forcing the native soil, to produce by labour what would arise with greater fertility and ease if aided by

extraneous nutriment. It is a law of mechanics, never to waste power, but to proportionate on all occasions the means to the end. If, instead of refusing to read the finest dramatic works, Alfieri had studied in them the genius and essence of the art, he might, instead of simply restricting his invention to the bald and inconclusive expedient of contracting the personages of his drama, have invented some original method of combining the simplicity of design consequent on an observance of the unities, with a more natural and enforced arrangement of plot, and with a greater variety and truth of character.

The great distinction between Shakspeare and almost every other dramatic writer arises from his developement and variety of character: all his personages are individuals. In other authors, we have a lover, an ambitious man, a tyrant, or a victim of tyranny; but in Shakspeare it is not the passion that makes the man, but the peculiar character of the person that gives reality and life to the passion. Thus Richard III. and Macbeth are both ambitious; but how differently do their respective dispositions modulate their conduct and feelings! The cruel, remorseless Richard can never, in a single line he utters, be mistaken for the weak, vacillating usurper, whose cruelties result from the necessities of his situation, and not from inborn ferocity of character. Juliet, Imogen, and Rosalind, are alike girls in love; but how variously do they display their sentiments! the ardent Italian, the fond, devoted wife, and the sprightly, spirited daughter of an exiled prince, are all individuals characterised by distinctive marks; so that a painter would give to each a physiognomy utterly dissimilar the one from the other. If Alfieri had read Shakspeare, he might have discovered and appreciated this incomparable mark of his excellence; and his knowledge of the human heart would have led him to imitate a model which, if succeeded in, could not, from its very nature, bear any resemblance to mere plagiarism. He himself felt that one tyrant should not quite resemble another, nor one lover be but the mirror of another:

but so it is with him, with few exceptions — situation, not character, forms the interest of his pieces.

Besides this, Alfieri was not an imaginative poet: his sonnets and longer poems are failures; his tragedies are vacant of ideal imagery; his sensible objects are never animated by a soul infused into them by the speaker; his daggers and poisons, and all the other tragic paraphernalia, are the mere things themselves — the poet's eye never gives "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." His inventive powers consisted in being able to conceive situations of passion and interest, and giving to his personages feelings and language at once natural, powerful, and pathetic.

His mode of writing his tragedies shows, indeed, how spontaneous was his conception of the action of a piece, how mechanical the effort by which he clothed it in verse. He was accustomed to throw off the design of the intended action in a sketch of a few pages, and then to lay it by: after an interval, he read this sketch, and, if it pleased him, he arranged the plot into acts, and scenes, and speeches, putting down every idea that presented itself, and the whole in prose; and again he put aside his labour for future consideration. If, on reading it over, he felt his imagination warmed and excited, and the ideas renew themselves in his mind vividly and forcibly, then he completed his work by versifying it. This is not the routine which a genuine poet follows: something of the improvisatore's art is inherent in him, and he writes "in numbers, for the numbers come."

"Philip" was the first of Alfieri's tragedies: it was originally written in French prose; and he was so well pleased with its conduct, that he was never weary of composing and recomposing it in Italian verse, till he was satisfied that the language was equal in vigour to the ideas it expressed. The subject of "Philip" is the death of don Carlos, prince of Spain; and the contrast of character in the three principal persons is finely conceived and well executed. There is the obdurate,

deceitful, cruel tyrant. His son, educated near him, in perpetual fear and suspicion, is never his dupe : he sees through all his subterfuges, and perceives the snares laid for him in his pretended mercies ; and love, while it causes him to expose himself to his father's vengeance, only renders him doubly watchful and cautious. Isabella, on the contrary, a daughter of France, at the same time that, from feminine delicacy, she is more restrained in her feelings, yet is unsuspicious, unguarded, and ready to give credit to the professions of those around. Her heart opens itself readily to hope ; while that of her lover is impassive to every delusion, and he regards with terror and grief the peril to which, in her generous trustingness of nature, she heedlessly exposes herself.

As the genius of Alfieri led him to depict the passions in their simplest though most energetic form, unaccompanied by the influence of manners, the metaphysical subtleties of Shakspeare, or the wild, but deeply interesting intricacy of plot of Calderon and our old dramatists, so classical subjects were treated by him with peculiar felicity. " Agamemnon " and " Orestes " are among his best dramas : the dignity and tenderness of Electra, the remorse and struggles of Clytemnestra, and the haughty, rash disposition of Orestes, have more of truth, of nature, and grace than is to be found among any modern tragedies on similar subjects : but this very simplicity becomes, to a certain degree, baldness in modern subjects ; and though the conspiracy of the " Pazzi " was written, he says, with a delirious enthusiasm for liberty, there is a want of developement and relief that renders it more like the sketch of a tragedy, than one filled out in all its parts. " Virginia," equally pregnant with the spirit of liberty, has more grace and more pathos.

While the mind of Alfieri was thus fully occupied by the composition of his dramas, he was happy in the enjoyment of the friendship and love of the persons dearest to him in the world. He was the *amico di*

casa of the countess of Albany ; that is, he spent his evenings in her society, and attended her in mornings during her visits and excursions : he kept up a constant correspondence with Gori, at Siena ; and the abbate Caluso, the friend who had first awakened his desire for literary composition, many years before, at Lisbon, and to whom he was warmly attached, came from Turin, and spent a whole year at Florence, that he might enjoy his society. But the tranquil course of happiness is seldom allowed to human beings, especially when they feel and acknowledge their perfect well-being, and repose content on the accomplishment of their desires. The conduct of the unfortunate prince, who was the countess of Albany's husband, poisoned every enjoyment, and, at last, forced his wife to separate herself from him. Given up to the most degrading vice, — in his drunken fits his ferocity and madness endangered her life, and she lived night and day, haunted by the terror inspired by his outrages. Alfieri exerted himself to obtain permission from the government for their separation ; and, that being obtained, she retired to a convent in Florence, and afterwards, under the sanction of the pope, she removed to another convent at Rome.

Alfieri found that thus he had succeeded in saving the life of his friend ; but the separation necessary to prevent any injurious opinions being formed as to the motives of his interference, was a cruel reward for his exertions. Florence grew hateful to him in her absence ; he became incapable of every occupation, and his whole thoughts were bent on contriving their re-union : it was matter of difficulty, but not insuperable to his earnest endeavours. After some months, the pope allowed her to quit her convent, and to take up her abode in the palace of cardinal York ; and Alfieri, having already quitted Florence and spent some time at Naples, ventured at last to fix himself at Rome also, having, as he tells us, paid court, made visits, and employed a thousand servile and humiliating arts, from which his nature revolted, to obtain the sufferance of the pope for his

residence in the same city as the countess. No honours, no glory, no worldly advantage, could have induced him to submit to what he considered the excess of meanness and degradation; love alone exalted the debasement in his eyes.

Now again he was happy: he lived at the villa Strozzi, near the baths of Dioclesian. He spent the long mornings in study, never leaving his house except to ride over the solitary and uncultivated country around Rome, whose immense and lonely expanse invited him to reverie and poetic composition. He spent the evenings with the countess, retiring at eleven to his tranquil home, which, divided from all others, rural though in the city, and surrounded by objects of antique grandeur and natural beauty, was an abode such as Rome only in the world can afford, and peculiarly adapted to the noble poet's temper, character, and occupations.

His imagination received its happiest inspirations during this period. Besides continual labour on his former compositions, he wrote the tragedies of "Merope" and "Saul," both conceived and executed with a fervour of inspiration that allowed him no pause between the various operations into which he divided the composition of a tragedy. The "Merope" was written in a sort of indignant burst, to prove that the tragedy of Maffei on the subject, could be easily surpassed. The "Saul" emanated from reading the Bible, in the study of which he at that time occupied himself, and which awoke in him a desire to write several dramas on scriptural subjects; had it not been that, fond of forming resolutions and of adopting voluntary chains, since he cast away and abhorred all others, he had determined to limit his tragedies to twelve. The "Saul" and "Merope" caused him to exceed this number by two; but he would not be allured to go beyond.

The "Saul" is, there can be little question, the chef-d'œuvre of Alfieri: character forms the basis of the interest, and the situations are deeply pathetic. Saul, in some degree, reminds the reader of king Lear. The

Hebrew king is not, like Shakspeare's dethroned monarch, thrust from his state, and turned out by his children, a victim to the pitiless elements, and, more bitter still, the sense of undeserved injury from those whose duty it was to foster and shelter him. The children of Saul, and his son-in-law David, surround him with protestations of duty and a heartfelt wish to soothe him by their affection and care ; but he is struck by God ; prosperity has departed from his house, victory from his banner ; and his vacillating reason discerns rebellion and dethronement in the very submissions of those around him. He struggles with the sense of ill-fortune, and the sad consciousness of the occasional aberrations of his intellect ; now lamenting the days of his prosperous youth, now melted to tenderness by the caresses of his children ; and again, seized upon by suspicion, envy, and pride, he wildly and madly casts from him every support and hope, to find himself, in the end, alone, defeated, lost ; till in a transport of shame and despair, he ends a life so tarnished and abhorrent. "Saul" is the best of Alfieri's tragedies ; and, if we were called upon to point out his best scene, we should select the second act of that play.

1782. Alfieri felt proud and happy when he had completed
 Ætat. his fourteen tragedies. "That month of October,"

33. he writes, "was memorable to me, since I enjoyed a repose no less delicious than necessary, after so much labour : full to the brim of vainglory, I breathed no word of my achievements to any but myself, and, with a sort of veiled moderation, to her I loved ; who, through her affection for me, probably, seemed well inclined to believe that I was capable of being a great man, and always encouraged me to do all I could to become one." His works, also, were becoming known. A few of the nobility of Rome formed themselves into a company, and acted his "Antigone," in which he took the part of Creon : the representation was crowned with success. He was, besides, in the habit of reading his tragedies in society, partly for the

sake of the mute criticism displayed by the attention and interest they excited in his audience ; and, under the superintendence of his friend Gori, four among his dramas were printed at Siena.

But this very celebrity was the cause of the disaster that hung over his head, and, by drawing attention to him, engendered enmity and disturbance. His familiar intercourse with the countess, and the daily habit of his life, in forming a part of the society she gathered around her, began to excite censure : this roused at once his fears and indignation. His mode of life was in strict accordance with the notions of propriety, as they rule manners in Italy. Injurious and to be deprecated as the system of society is, no individual thinks, when he follows the example of the whole of his countrymen, that he should be selected as an object for blame. However, in a moral and religious view, the so-named friendship of the countess and Alfieri was blameable, yet they scrupulously attended to the rules of decorum, which form the whole of an Italian's conscience, generally speaking, and believed that they had every right to be happy in each other. As we have said in another place, we are not inclined to bestow vehement blame on individual conduct, resulting from a system of manners which has endured for ages, while that system itself merits the utmost abhorrence, and, we are happy to be able to say, is in progress of being extirpated in Italy : until it is, there can be no hope of moral regeneration, or for the happiness and improvement of its inhabitants.

However, it must be remembered that though, especially in those days, no one would have been so unreasonable or barbarous as to prevent a lady from having a cavaliere servente, yet the peculiar cavaliere she selects is usually forbidden ; and as much misery is often produced by an interference in the lady's choice as by a total prohibition to be allowed a friend at all. In the present instance, the husband of the countess complained to his brother, the priests of the holy city were

roused to a perception of the scandal, and the pope induced to consider it right to interfere. Alfieri found only one mode of mitigating the violence of the menaced storm, which was to meet it: he voluntarily quitted Rome, and, to prevent any actual measures of prohibition and banishment, went into voluntary exile.

Affections and habits which had subsisted so long could not be thus rudely torn up without intense suffering. After several years of happiness, Alfieri found himself cast from the shelter he had selected, wherein to place his warm and sensitive heart, upon solitude, uncertainty, and bitter regret. Poetry and composition became distasteful to him; he could not even enjoy his friend Gori's society, whom he visited immediately upon quitting Rome: he was ashamed to annoy him by his melancholy, and his restlessness and desire for travel returned. He visited Venice, and wandered for some time in Lombardy, and then again returned to Siena, to attend to the printing of six other tragedies, although he had become indifferent even to the lately engrossing desire of fame; and then he suddenly resolved to visit

1783.
Ætat. 34. England, for the sole purpose of buying horses. He had long put himself on short allowance with regard to these favourite animals; but, having saved a large sum of ready money, during several years, at first of parsimony, and then of economy, he determined to spend it on the purchase and maintenance of a number of English horses of the best breed. A journey thus undertaken, with but one object, was executed with a mixture of impetuosity and persevering patience characteristic of Alfieri. He went to England; he bought his horses, fourteen in number, to equal that of his tragedies; he transported them safely across the straits of Dover, conducted them with unwearied care through France, and led them across Mont Cenis with a success — they being injured neither in wind or limb — on which he for the moment prided himself scarcely less than on his dramatic labours.

On his return to Italy, he remained a few weeks

at Turin ; and the king showed a disposition to employ him under government. His minister sounded the count : but he refused to entertain any proposition on the subject ; for, although he acknowledges that the sovereigns of the house of Savoy were not tyrannically inclined, but showed every inclination to benefit their subjects, his uncompromising, and even fierce, spirit of independence spurned every shackle, and he felt to breathe more freely when he had quitted the territories of Piedmont. The countess of Albany was now on her way to Baden for the summer. She passed northwards along the shores of the Adriatic, while Alfieri proceeded south, by Modena and Pistoia, to Siena. He had resisted the temptation of crossing the narrow portion of Italy between them, and obtaining a brief interview ; but when she had arrived at Baden, and he at Siena, this fortitude gave way, and he suddenly left his horses, and his friend Gori, and posted with all haste to Alsatia, there for three months to enjoy her society.

During the two years of absence which he had endured, Alfieri had forgotten poetry, study, glory, and his tragedies. But the countess's presence awoke every dormant energy, and scarcely had he arrived, before he conceived and wrote "Agis," "Sofonisba," and "Mirra." The last deserves to be particularly mentioned as one of the best of his dramas, particularly as he overcomes difficulties of the most appalling description. "I had never thought," he says, "either of Myrrha or Biblis as subjects for the drama. But, in reading Ovid's "Metamorphoses," I hit upon the affecting and divinely eloquent speech of Myrrha to her nurse, which caused me to burst into tears, and, like a flash of lightning, awoke in me the idea of a tragedy. It appeared to me that a most original and pathetic piece might be written, if the author could contrive that the spectator should discover by degrees the horrible struggles of the burning but pure heart of the more miserable than guilty Myrrha, without her betraying the half, nor scarcely

owning to herself so criminal a passion. My idea was, that she should do in my tragedy what Ovid describes her as relating, but do it in silence."

There is something touchingly beautiful in the first description of Myrrha, in a scene between her mother and her nurse. She is described as so gentle, docile, soft, and pliable of nature — so fearful of doing wrong — so sweetly earnest to please her parents — and now to be labouring under a melancholy so dark and gloomy, as to deface her beauty, and bow her in appearance to the grave. As the action is developed, the notion that she is under a supernatural curse adds to the awe and pity of the reader ; but, at last, it must be confessed, her violence and frenzy pass the bounds of modest nature, and the passion she nurtures fails in exciting our sympathy. This is the fault of the subject ; inequality of age adding to the unnatural incest. To shed any interest over such an attachment, the dramatist ought to adorn the father with such youthful attributes as would be by no means contrary to probability : but then a worse evil would ensue ; and the more possible such criminal passion becomes, the more violently does the mind revolt from dwelling on it.

While at Baden, Alfieri received the afflicting intelligence of the unexpected death of his friend Gori. This misfortune disturbed his enjoyment of the last days of his visit, which of themselves were sad, from the approximation of so painful and bitter a separation. With reluctance and grief he left the countess and returned to Siena ; but his sorrow was too acute to admit of a prolonged stay in a town where he had enjoyed the company of a friend lost for ever. He removed to Pisa ; while the countess took up her abode at Bologna. The Apennines only divided them, but he dared not cross them. The gossip of the small Italian towns is unconceivably eager and pertinacious ; and it was necessary for her future liberty to guard their conduct from all remark. Early in the following spring, the countess departed for Paris, resolving to fix herself

in France, where she had friends, relations, and resources. In the month of August she again visited Baden, and Alfieri joined her. Again his mind was vivified and warmed by happiness, and again two tragedies were the result of the inspiration. The subjects were the Brutus of the monarchy of Rome and the Brutus who died at Philippi. In the first he displays great force and energy ; but the second, we must be permitted to say, is a complete failure. To make a perfect equality of sacrifice between the two heroes, as Lucius Junius Brutus caused his sons to be decapitated, so he makes his descendant, Marcus, assassinate his parent. The idea that Cæsar was the father of Brutus is so totally devoid of foundation, and so little in consonance with the simple majesty of the character of the patriot, that it deteriorates from the interest of the drama, and, instead of exalting him, the discovery, the resolution he declares nevertheless to persist in the assassination, the sympathy and admiration he gains, is all so feeble, so puerile, and so false, that it is astonishing that Alfieri did not detect his mistake. To us, who possess the most admirable portrait ever drawn of magnanimous and single-minded virtue in Shakspeare's delineation of the character of Brutus, this failure becomes more glaring, and gives further proof of the Italian poet's error in not studying the pages of the greatest writer the world ever produced.

After some months spent at Colmar, the countess returned to Paris ; while Alfieri remained at the former place, writing letters and sonnets, mourning over his separation, and correcting his tragedies. He passed two or three years at this place, the countess joining him during the summers. In that of 1787, he had a most dangerous illness. His friend, the abbate Caluso, came from Turin to visit him ; and but for this illness, he had been perfectly happy. On the approach of winter that year, he accompanied the countess back to Paris, and established himself there. The death of her husband restored her to liberty ; but a number of circumstances

led them to continue for some time in France. Whether they were married now, is a secret that never has been revealed ; but their union was acknowledged, and it was understood that their constant, inviolable attachment had received from time a sanction which prevented any blame from being cast on it by their relations and friends. Alfieri mourned over the necessity that brought him back to his abjured Gallicisms ; but he was somewhat consoled, during a three years' residence in Paris, by superintending and bringing out an edition of his tragedies, on which he bestowed the last labours of correction with regard to style, and brought the language as near to his standard of perfection as he was capable of attaining.

The disagreeable and, to his sensitive temperament, irritating task of correcting the press, seems to have exercised an injurious influence over his temper and genius. According to his own account, it dried up his brain, quenched the fire of youthful enthusiasm, and prevented his ever again writing with equal vigour and felicity. After terminating the correction of his tragedies, he fortunately betook himself to writing the memoirs of his life, which are the groundwork from which the present pages are taken. It is written unaffectedly, and with great frankness and self-knowledge ; the style is unstudied, and the egotism of feeling which produced it imparts extreme interest to the details. After bringing down the history of his life till the year 1790, when he was forty-one years of age, he still felt an utter inability to any high flight in literature, and he occupied himself in translating the "*Æneid*" and the Comedies of Terence. He had long enthusiastically admired the versification of Virgil, and tried to model his own upon it, adapting it, at the same time, to dramatic dialogue. This circumstance is curious, since no style can be so opposite ; the mellifluous, dignified, and graceful flow of the Latin poet being a contrast to the rough and concise energy of the modern Italian. This observation regards, however, only his tragedies ; less

praise must be bestowed on his other productions in verse: his translation of the "Æneid" is feeble in the extreme; his longer original poems are devoid of even secondary merit; and his love sonnets are, to say all in a word, the very antipodes of his immortal master, Petrarch. Alfieri is a great tragedian: it is impossible to read his best dramas without being carried away by the eloquence and passion of the dialogue, and deeply interested by the situations of struggle or peril in which his personages are placed. The rapidity of the action, and the earnestness and life with which every scene is instinct, renders it impossible to close the volume till the catastrophe ends all. Alfieri was also an excellent prose writer: his treatise on "Princes and Literature" is full of power; the style is correct, flowing, yet simple, and without meretricious ornament. The pure spirit of independence burns like a holy lamp throughout, and gives a charm to every sentiment and expression. But never was line so distinctly drawn between the poetry of circumstance, so to speak, and ideal poetry: In all the pages of Alfieri there is not one imaginative image; and we feel this most in his lyrics, since ideality is the soul of lyric poetry. He seems never to have been conscious of this defect. He would readily have admitted that Dante and Petrarch were superior to him in genius; but he seems unaware that they possessed a quality of which not one glimmering ray is to be found in the whole course of the flood of rhymes to the composition of which he alludes frequently as being the overflowings of poetic inspiration. It is possible that Alfieri might have been a great novelist, had he ever turned his attention to that species of composition. Or had he continued to invent, instead of drying his brain up with the irksome task of correcting what he had already written, he might have bestowed on us tragedies finer than any we have of his, or, at least, several equal to the "Saul." But, with all his philosophy and self-examination, he did not understand the texture and capabilities of his intellect.

To return to his life in Paris. The disquietude arising from the French revolution added to the irritable state of Alfieri's mind. We all see the visible universe through a medium formed by our individual peculiarities; but it is curious to find the advocate of liberty lay most stress on his fear lest the tumults of Paris should interrupt the completion of Didot's edition of his works. Probably his intense abhorrence of the French prevented his fostering rational hopes for the ultimate advantages to be gained by the overthrow of the time-worn and corrupt monarchy of France, at the same time that it prevented his ever being blinded by any illusion as to the real character of the events passing around him. He prides himself on never having seen or conversed with any one of the revolutionary leaders, and on having always regarded the rise of a lawless democracy as the stepping-stone to military despotism. From the first, he was eager to get away from these scenes of bloodshed and horror, and in the spring of 1791 accompanied the countess of Albany to England. This country did not please her; and he, grown querulous and subject to the gout, was quickly disgusted by the climate, and annoyed by the peculiar habits of life of the English. A great portion of his and the countess's fortune was in the French funds; and the fall of the assignats made it advisable for them to live in the country where they still bore a value. This circumstance induced them to return to Paris; and, resolving to fix themselves there, they took a house, furnished it, and Alfieri collected a voluminous library: but the whirlwind that swept over unhappy France included them in its devastations. They became alarmed by the increase of lawless violence; and when, on the 10th of August, 1792, Louis XVI. was dragged from the Tuilleries and imprisoned in the Temple, they determined to fly from a city, where it appeared that no one of rank or wealth could remain in safety. The impetuosity of the poet's character was of great advantage on this occasion. With infinite difficulty passports were ob-

tained for the countess and himself; and they fixed on the 20th of August for their departure. The impatience of Alfieri caused them to anticipate their journey, and they set out on the 18th. With a good deal of difficulty they passed the barrier of St. Denis, and hastened to a place of safety. Two days after, on the 20th, the municipality of Paris sent to arrest the countess: had she remained, she would have been thrown into prison, and, in all probability, have fallen a victim during the massacres of the 2d of September. Not finding her, their income arising from the French funds was sequestered, their furniture, horses, and books confiscated, and though foreigners, they were both declared emigrants. Alfieri chiefly lamented his library, and the edition of his works. Some years after, a French general, then at Turin, with a good deal of ostentation, offered to obtain the restoration of his books, a list of which he sent him. Alfieri has left about 1600 volumes: the list contained the names of 150 of the least valuable. He refused to avail himself of what he ironically calls a "French restitution;" and surely, if national contempt and hatred is ever pardonable, it was to be excused in an Italian, who saw his country over-run by soi-disant liberators, who displayed their friendly intentions by a thousand acts of plunder and arrogance.

Burning with an unquenchable hatred for all things French, Alfieri returned to Florence with the countess of Albany, in which city he remained till his death. In the tranquillity of his position, his love of study awoke with renewed force. But whether it was that his fiery temperament burnt itself quickly out, or that the ardour of his studies, joined to ill health and intemperate abstemiousness, exhausted him, Alfieri appears to have grown prematurely old. The spirit of invention was dead within him; and nothing can be more deplorable than that which he mistook for such, under whose influence he wrote laughterless comedies and toothless satires, the most dolorous and innoxious that can be imagined. Still, though original invention was dead,

industry, perseverance, and fervour in the pursuit of learning were as warm as ever in his heart. He brought to a conclusion his translations of Terence, the "Æneid," and Sallust: the latter is an excellent specimen of style; but his poetic translations are languid and unworthy. As to the unlucky "Misogallo," in which he accumulates, in prose and verse, the whole force of his detestation of the French, it remains a monument of how little men know themselves, and the mistakes to which genius is liable, when it exchanges the nobler pursuit of the good and beautiful, to soil itself by the pettier passions of our nature.

While thus employed, a more genial pursuit occupied him for a short period, which he calls waste of time, but which, by linking him in agreeable intercourse with his fellow creatures, and wearing away the rust produced by despondency and over-excited feelings, would have made his latter years happier; but Alfieri, ever bent on fighting with difficulties, and thwarting his natural tendencies, cast from him the medicine offered to his diseased mind. Some friends of his, possessed of histrionic talent, got up his tragedy of "Saul:" Alfieri filled the part of the unfortunate king. Others of his plays were afterwards represented, in which he also acted; but he always preferred the part of Saul, which confirms our opinion, that it is, of all the characters he has portrayed, the best fitted for the stage, and the nearest approach to those unrivalled princes of the drama, the heroes of Shakspeare.

After some months had been occupied by these representations, Alfieri gave them up, and devoted himself exclusively to study. He had many plans for composition: the chief of these were what he called *tramelogédie*, or tragic melodramas, only one of which, "Abel," he found energy to write, and this is an entire failure. He entered on a new field, to which his genius was not adapted — the mingling of human beings and spirits, of the passions of the heart and the airy creations of our fancy; a species of composition which is to be found in

perfection in Calderon, and which Goethe, Byron, and Shelley have made familiar to us in modern times, and, according to their various capacities, adorned with the mystery, fire, and glowing imagery peculiar to each.— But of this creative power, that peoples our world with beings not of it, though in it, — Alfieri was wholly destitute. We have already remarked how entirely his writings are wanting in the more ideal attributes of imaginative poetry.

At the age of forty-six he applied himself with desperate ardour to the study of the Greek language. Forty-six is no advanced age: how many men are in their prime at that epoch! but it was not so with Alfieri; his very memory failed him, but he persevered with his accustomed energy, battling with difficulties as if they had been opponents, inspired with a sense of opposition. Thus he read the most difficult authors, with the notes of the scholiasts, learning an infinite multitude of verses by heart, and acquiring, in the end, by dint of unwearied industry, a considerable knowledge of the language.

His health was infirm and his quiet disturbed by the progress of the French armies. They came, they said, to liberate Italy, and, under this pretence, destroyed its native governments, introduced their own crude institutions, and then, on pretence of the opposition their tyranny met, despoiling the Italians of their works of art, endeavouring even to supplant their divine language, and treating with contempt and insolence their peculiar manners and customs; so that any welcome given by the Italians to these pretended friends only showed more plainly their insulting pretensions and rapacity. When the French first appeared in Florence, Alfieri and the countess hurried away as if it had been visited by the plague. They established themselves at a villa in the environs, having removed all their property from their house in the city; and here they remained till the French were temporarily driven from Tuscany. On their second invasion, Alfieri had no time to retreat, and he satisfied his feelings of scorn and hatred by never

speaking to a Frenchman, or admitting the visits of the leaders of its armies.

His melancholy increased with the irritation caused by political events, by unwearied study, and the physical weakness produced by his systematic abstinence. He was happy in the society of the countess of Albany, and that of his dear friend, the abbate Caluso: but many long hours he spent by himself in gloomy reverie. The bitterness and asperity of his mind was thus increased, and his dislike of society prevented the beneficial action of sympathy and mutual forbearance. He considered himself, to a great degree, a disappointed man in his literary career, and was ignorant of the universal applause bestowed upon his tragedies. He divided his time with the most scrupulous exactitude, and his horses were still dear to him. Many hours were spent in the aisles of Santa Croce, or other churches of Florence, listening to the music, and absorbed in reverie.

During the last years of his life, he was visited each spring by a fit of the gout, and each summer by a desire to employ himself upon original composition, to which he devoted himself with an ardour which brought on, each autumn, a dangerous illness. His six unlucky comedies were the principal objects of these ill-fated labours; and his life was at last their sacrifice. A theorist in all things, he imagined that, as the gout proceeded from inflammation, it could be starved out of his frame; and he commenced a system of abstinence that deprived him of the nutriment necessary to support life. The countess in vain implored him not to adhere to so senseless a plan: it has often happened that, by resisting the prescriptions of physicians, and the aid of medicine, a man has conquered inherent disease, and lived to an old age; but as soon as he begins to administer remedies to himself, and to act from theories, instead of from that long and arduous practice necessary to give the smallest insight into the delicate structure of our physical nature, he must become the victim: thus

it was with Alfieri ; hard study and abstinence reduced his life to a mere flickering spark ; he became a skeleton in appearance ; each day he took less nourishment, and the weaker he grew, the more resolutely did he apply himself to study, as the sole solace of his worn-out and burthensome existence. In the month of October, 1803, he was attacked by gout in the stomach. The physicians wished, by means of blisters and sinapisms, to draw it to the extremities ; but a childish dislike to the inconvenience which would ensue, and the impossibility of taking his daily walk, if these remedies were applied to his legs, caused him to refuse them. Opium was given instead, and his pain was moderated ; but still he sat up ; and his mind was rather excited than calmed by the narcotics administered : he remembered as in dreams, but with the utmost vividness, various incidents of his past life, or passages from his own writings and those of others ; and these he repeated to the countess, who sat by him watching. No idea of approaching death seems to have entered his mind ; and the priest, who came to offer the usual offices of the catholic religion to the dying, was sent away with an invitation to return on the morrow ; whether because he believed that by that time he should be beyond such interference, or as a mere excuse for delay, cannot be told. As he grew weaker, he sent for the countess, and when she came he stretched out his hand, saying “Stringetemi la mano, cara amica ; mi sento morire.” “Press my hand, dear friend ; I am dying.” These were his last words. He died on the 8th of October, 1803, at the age of fifty-five.

He was buried in Santa Croce, and the countess of Albany erected a tomb to his memory, sculptured by Canova. It is not one of his happiest efforts ; but the inscription, which has been called pretending, appears to me simple and affectionate. “Louisa de Stolberg, countess of Albany, to Vittorio Alfieri,” is surely no impertinent obtrusion of the name of his dearest friend ;

and it may be remarked, that, while the countess has been censured for recording her name so prominently, Alfieri, in the epitaph he himself composed for her, makes it her chief praise that she was "*quam unice dilexit*,"—the only love of the poet.

This account of the life of a man who was endowed with the chief attribute of genius,—that of spontaneously forming and manifesting itself, despite every obstacle or adverse circumstance,—may be concluded by the quotation of the sonnet in which he describes his own person; a faithful translation of which, which we also append, appeared, some years ago, in "*The Liberal*." It may be quoted with the more propriety at the end of his life, since it was written when time had robbed him of the graces of youth; giving instead those characteristic marks stamped by the action of his disposition and pursuits.

"Sublime specchio di veraci detti
Mostrami in corpo e in anima qual sono.
Capelli or radi in fronte, e rossi pretti;
Lunga statura e capo a terra prono;
Sottil persona su due stinchi schietti;
Bianca pelle, occhi azzurri, aspetto buono,
Giusto naso, bel labbro, e denti eletti,
Pallido in volto più che un re sul trono.

"Or duro, acerbo, ora pieghevol mite,
Irato sempre e non maligno mai,
La mente e il cor meco in perpetua lite,
Per lo più mesto, e talor lieto assai,
Or stimandomi Achille, ed or Tersite;
Uom, se' tu grande o vil? Muori, e il saprai." *

* "Thou lofty mirror, Truth, let me be shown
Such as I am, in body and in mind.
Hair plainly red, retreating now behind;
A stature tall, a stooping head and prone;
A meagre body on two stilts of bone;
Fair skin, blue eyes, good look, nose well design'd;
A handsome mouth, teeth that are rare to find,
And pale in face, more than a king on throne.

"Now harsh and crabbed, mild and pleasant soon;
Always irascible, no malignant foe;
My head and heart and I never in tune;
Sad for the most part, then in such a flow
Of spirits, I feel now hero, now buffoon;
Man, art thou great or vile?—die, and thou 'lt know."

MONTI.

1754—1828.

MONTI is, without question, the greatest Italian poet that has appeared since the golden days of its poetry : he alone emulates his predecessors in the higher flights of the imagination. It has been pronounced of Dryden, that if each of the princes of poetry surpassed him in their peculiar vein, yet his fire and originality give him a near place beside them. Thus Monti has not the sublimity of Dante, nor the tenderness of Petrarch ; neither the inventive flow of Ariosto, nor Tasso's epic conception and voluptuous grace : but he has a fervour, a power of imagery, an overflowing and redundancy of ideal thought, that mark the genuine poet.

He came to revive the languid and unnatural style that flourished under the reign of the Arcadians. Some few real poets had sprung up in Italy in the interval between Ariosto and Monti : they are recorded in this volume. Chiabrera and Filicaja are the chief. These men found in the inspiration of their own minds the power that led them to adopt a style of their own, and to bestow originality — which, in one shape or another, is the vivifying soul of composition, — on their productions. Metastasio carried clearness and grace of expression to a great perfection, but he wanted strength and daring : Alfieri had not a trace of that sunshiny and rainbow-like (so to speak) colour-giving power of fancy, without which there is no real poetry. For the rest, the poets of those days were Arcadians ; the very word seems to express volumes of inane affectation, and turgid, yet soul-less, language. It is thus that a clever Italian critic of the present day speaks of them : — “ To the hyperboles and conceits of the *seicentisti*, succeeded the follies and pastorals of the Arcadians. The subject

treated by these poets were restrained in narrow limits ; they were all futile, trite, vulgar, or silly, — adulatory, or false. A new-married pair, a nun, — the new-born babe of some sovereign or noble, — the election of a cardinal, or a bishop, or even of an abbé — a funeral or a feigned love ; such were the favourite themes of the Arcadians. Was a marriage in question, — Hymen was adjured to bring its chains to link two hearts ; and a new Hercules or Achilles was prognosticated as the future result of the union. If a girl shut herself up in the cloister, the poets expatiated on her happiness ; they described the heavenly bridegroom as descending and stretching out his hand to her, while the mischievous Cupid angrily threw away his golden quiver ; a censurable mixture of sacred and profane imagery was thus introduced, and their ideas were steeped in two fountains, in contradiction one to the other, the Bible and mythology. The most shameless flattery blotted their pages, as they praised one another, and depicted themselves on the heights of Parnassus, — beside the waters of Hypocrene, — in the company of Apollo and the Muses ; and the wonders of Orpheus and Amphion were renewed, to express the charms of each other's verses. No Arcadian dared imagine himself enamoured of a human being : she was no mortal woman, but a goddess, — a Venus sprung on the instant from the foam of the sea : lips, and eyes, and hair, had all their appropriate, still-repeated epithets : did their lady sigh, or did one word escape the paling of her ivory teeth, — tempests fled, the winds were stilled, and Jove was again tempted to transform himself into a bull for her sake.”*

Men can do strange things when they associate in companies, and keep each other in countenance by a wide-spread folly, that bars out the wholesome fear of ridicule. Thus, the Arcadians had colonies all over Italy. They gave feigned names to each other ; they lauded, and celebrated, and crowned each other. Good sense and good taste were sacrificed in the emulation

* Maffei ; Storia della Letteratura Italiana.

each felt to transcend his rivals in a sonorous and turgid system of words, in which neither passion nor thought appeared.* A new genius was wanted to trample on this overgrowth of vanity or folly, and to gift the tamed and chained language of Dante and Bojardo with wings and liberty. Such was the poet, the incidents of whose life we now proceed to detail.

Vincenzo Monti was born in Romagna, on the 19th of February, 1754. His father's simple, and even humble, but pretty and agreeable, house was situated among the vineyards and agricultural country which lies between Fusignano and the Alfonsine, in the Ravennese territory. The air is healthy and serene, the country fertile and diversified, and the style of life of his parents such as at once cultivated simplicity of taste and kindness of heart. Nothing can be more primitive and patriarchal than the mode of life of the smaller landholders in Italy; and to this class Monti's father belonged. The farm-house — or villa, as it is called, if a little better than a cottage — is situated amidst the ground they cultivate. The name of *podere* is given to these small farms, enclosed by hedges, within whose limits grapes, corn, vegetables, and fruits are all cultivated in a sort of picturesque confusion. The vines, trained on trellises, form covered walks; and the sound of the water-wheel is continually heard, and of the water trickling through the conduits that lead it to the various parts of the grounds. The Italian farmer works very hard, and the cottager still harder. He divides the produce of the land with his landlord, entertains few servants, and his habits are at once laborious and frugal. The parents of Monti were an excellent specimen of the virtues of this unpretending race. They are still remembered in the country by numbers of the poor whom they assisted and comforted. Their children were brought up to consider it a valuable privilege to bestow help upon those in want of the

* Bonetti.

necessaries of life, and Vincenzo in particular inherited from them a warm heart and a tenderness of feeling that caused him to be idolised in his domestic circle.

Monti passed his early boyhood in this rural retirement. To the end of his life he remembered with fondness the days of his childhood, which were spent gaily amidst a large family of three brothers, older than himself, and five sisters. The reward for good behaviour among them was a permission to distribute charity among the indigent,—a sacred, soul-saving duty with catholics. The well-known benevolence of his parents drew numbers to their house, where portions of food were distributed to them. His mother never felt so happy as when thus engaged; and it is related of her that, when, a few years after, the family removed to Majano, where their charitable habits were at first unknown, she complained in a sort of alarm that they were no longer visited by the poor. The same biographer relates a story of Vincenzo. On one occasion he was permitted to distribute the portions of food to mendicants, who entered at one door and went out at the other: some among them fancied that they could deceive the child, and returned twice; and he, with ingenuous shame, turned away, and gave to them twice without looking, that he might not be obliged to accuse them of their trick. “An anecdote,” continues his biographer,” perhaps scarcely worth relating, only that it describes the character, or rather, it may be said, the whole life of Monti, who, even in old age, frequently suffered himself voluntarily to be imposed upon.” Were a philosophical analysis of Monti’s disposition to be attempted, it might be discovered how this sensitiveness to the shame of others, this sparing of their feelings in preference to the assertion of truth and honesty, makes a part of the same weakness that led him always to regard as a secondary consideration moral truths and political integrity, when put in competition with the happiness and welfare of his domestic circle. We call this sort of

sensibility weakness, because, though usually united to great private rectitude of character, it is incompatible with the heroism of the patriot and the martyr.

For several years Monti had no instructors except his kind parents ; but, soon after their removal to Majano, he was sent to the seminary of Faenza, which enjoyed a good reputation for the solidity of its instruction ; there he learnt early and well the Latin language. His first attempts in Latin verse were, however, so singularly infelicitous, that his master thought it necessary to put him into a lower class than that in which he had first been placed. The boy, roused to indignation, made no complaints, but secretly learned by heart the whole of the *Æneid* ; and persevered so earnestly in conquering the difficulties, that his Latin verses soon became distinguished for a style and harmony that announced his poetic talent. His second trial was so different from the first, that his masters began to regard him as a sort of prodigy ; and he himself entered with delight and ardour on the study of the Roman poets. The full force of his impetuous and fertile imagination was early awakened by them, and he began to exercise the art peculiar to his country of extemporising verses ; but his master had the judgment to withdraw him from an exercise so pernicious to the strength and critical delicacy of poetry, and induced him to write with care and meditation. He was yet a boy when, under this tutelage, he composed a volume of elegies, several of which have been printed.

It is the usual custom among the smaller landholders of Romagna to destine their youngest sons to the agricultural labours of their farms ; and this was fixed as the career of Monti. He yielded to his father's commands, but with reluctance. His mind was opened to the necessity of cultivation, and mere manual labour and low-thoughted cares were infinitely distasteful to him. His heart was with the Latin poets, from whom he could not separate himself ; and his dislike to every occupation that was not intellectual grew to be insur-

mountable. His father thought it necessary to reprove him ; and a scene ensued similar to one recorded as having taken place, several centuries before, between Petrarch and his father. Vincenzo, moved by his parent's reproof to a belief that his literary predilections were reprehensible, made a resolution to renounce them. He led his father into his chamber, and there, before him, threw his favourite authors into a large fire. The good man, touched by this act of docility, gave him twelve sequins ; and the youth, unable to resist the temptation thus held out, hastened to the neighbouring fair of Luga, and spent the whole sum in buying over again the authors whose works he had left at home, still warm in the ashes of the fire into which he had thrown them. His father, seeing the inutility of combating with his inclinations, sent him to the university of Ferrara, wishing him to enter on the legal or medical profession. But, after a few vain attempts to apply himself to these studies, Monti gave up every other pursuit, and dedicated himself wholly to the cultivation of literature and poetry. He still continued to write in Latin, and always retained a predilection for this language, and later in life translated some of his own works into it. His first Italian poem was " The Prophecy of Jacob." It was, of course, inexact in versification, and unequal ; but when Jacob prophesies the future glory of the Lion of Judah, the style rises into vigour, and even sublimity. At this time the " Visions " of Varino and the sonnets of Minzoni, two Ferrarese poets, fell into his hands. They rose above the inanities of the Arcadians, and indicated to him the path he should pursue. Through reading them he was brought to the perusal of Dante, and his soul opened at once to the conception of all that Italian poetry contains of grand and beautiful. Henceforth Alighieri was his model and master, and he regarded at once with admiration and a sort of worship the elevated and godlike powers of this most inspired of poets. He wrote the " Vision of Ezekiel " in a sort of imitation of his favourite, in which he displayed that grandeur of

imagery and command of language which distinguish his compositions.

Cardinal Borghese was at that time legate at Ferrara. Admiring the youth's genius, he took him under his protection. On his return from his legation, he obtained the elder Monti's consent to his son's accompanying him to Rome. He was now eighteen. The first intimacy that he formed in the capital was with Ennio Quirino Visconti, a man of vast erudition; and under his direction Monti extended his classical knowledge. It happened, while he was at Rome, that the Erme of Pericles and Aspasia were discovered, — one in excavations made in the villa of Cassius at Tivoli, the other at Civita Vecchia. Visconti wrote a treatise on these marbles, and invited his friend to celebrate them in a poem; and he wrote the "*Prosopopea di Pericle*," which is preserved in the Vatican museum, written with great simplicity of style, and his usual easy flow, yet fervour, of language. This was the first time that he appeared in the character of a poet at Rome; and it was followed by several other attempts. He thus attracted attention; but, having no fixed situation, after remaining some years in the capital, he was on the point of complying with his father's frequent requests that he would return home, when a circumstance happened to change his plans. The Arcadians of the Bosco Parrasio celebrated the *Quinquenalli* of Pius VI. (1780, *ætat.* 26.); when Monti recited some of his compositions, which attracted so much applause that the duke of Braschi, the pope's nephew, sent for him the next day, and offered him the place of his secretary, which was at once accepted. Monti remained at Rome in the house of the prince, who treated him with all the kindness of friendship, and he enjoyed full leisure to pursue his literary studies.

Yet it is, perhaps, matter of regret that Monti should have been thus employed. It is very difficult to make rules for the education of genius, when, on the one hand, care and want may fetter, and even crush, its loftiest as-

pirations; or too much ease and leisure wean it from habits of industry, and foster the dissipation of thought and feeling which too frequently accompanies the poetic temperament. Monti's muse had surely not been silent if he had remained in his father's farm, surrounded by the luxuriant beauty of nature, and supported by conscious worth and independence. But no people need so much sympathy as poets. The interchange of thought and feeling, the fresh spirit of inquiry and invention, that springs from the collision or harmony of different minds, are with them a necessity and a passion. And though solitude is named the mother of all that is truly sublime, yet this solitude ought not to be that of desolation, but retirement to meditate on the stores heaped up in our intercourse with our fellow-creatures. Monti, among the uncultivated peasantry of Romagna, might have found his glowing enthusiasm grow cool from the absence of appreciation, and the want of sympathy and equal intercourse.

Yet servitude at the court of Rome was no good moral school. To the years he spent in the service of the pope's nephew, the habits of dependence, and his daily intercourse with courtiers, may be attributed that want of political integrity, and ready worship of ruling powers, which was the great blot of Monti's character. The genuine glow of real talent, the ambition natural to conscious genius, and the instinct of one, in whom invention and the power of expression were indigenous, to pour forth his ideas and sentiments, qualities which indefeasibly belonged to him, would, in almost any situation, have made Monti a writer. He might have been less refined in the farms of Romagna, but more useful as a moral and dignified asserter of truth and independence. Yet we must reflect that the germ of each man's character is born with him, to be checked or fostered by education, but still there to colour the tide of thought and influence the motives of conduct. And as independence and strength of principle never dis-

played themselves as a part of Monti's character, temptation might have found him as willing a slave in the poverty of his farm as in the luxurious servitude of papal Rome.

At Rome, at least, he continued to cultivate his poetic tastes. He produced several poems which kept alive his fame. On occasion of the marriage of his patron, the duke of Braschi, he wrote an ode entitled "Beauty of the Universe;" and he celebrated the journey of Pius VI. to the imperial court in a poem entitled the "Apostolic Pilgrim." But he aspired to signalise himself by some greater work, and long meditated writing a tragedy. As early as 1779 he writes to a friend,—“ I am weary of writing verses on frivolous subjects. A tragic drama is the notion that most delights me. But how can I satisfy the craving I have to write a tragedy, since I am not able to tranquillise my mind, and am occupied by affairs which have no connection with poetry? An hundred times I have begun, and as often broken off.” And in another letter he expresses a feeling which has often entered the mind of any one deeply interested in carrying on some literary labour :—“ I have a ravenous desire,” he says, “ to write tragedies, which preys upon me. This is my madness; and I am in despair, because I fear to die before I finish one.”

His ambition was further excited by the emulation inspired by Alfieri. This great tragedian was now residing at Rome; and Monti was present when he read his "Virginia" in a society composed of the most celebrated literati of the day. Monti listened with transport, and, burning with a desire to rival this production, he instantly began his tragedy of "Aristodemo," founded on a story he had read a few days before in Pausanias. He was the more eager to accomplish his purpose, as he perceived the faults of Alfieri's style, and hoped to avoid them. The fecundity of his imagination rendered it easy for him to rise above the baldness and unideal versification of his rival; so that it has been pronounced,

that a perfect tragedy would be produced, were "the grandeur and penetration of Alfieri adorned by the style of Monti." "Aristodemo" was acted with the greatest success at Rome in 1787. Monti writes to a friend,—"My tragedy was represented yesterday evening at the theatre of Valle. I was not present; but when it was over, my house was inundated by my acquaintances, who seemed mad with delight. I ought not to mention this, but I write to a friend, and I assure you that every one agrees that so great a success and so much enthusiasm was never known at Rome before."

And here it is impossible not to remark the different feelings of Alfieri and Monti. Alfieri entered upon his literary career when the more brilliant portion of the fire of youth was passing away. He had sufficient enthusiasm to animate him to mental labour, and to warm his imagination to the conception of fictitious situations, but not enough to foster the delusion of success. While he pretended stoicism and disdain, he was very sensitive to criticism; but when applause was afforded, he scanned the merits of his judges, was annoyed by the faults of the actors, and never reaped the just reward of his toils—the sense of triumph. While the more youthful Monti, early catching the spark of enthusiasm from his audience and his friends, enjoyed, to its full extent, the celebrity which a successful tragedy, more than any other species of literary composition, is able to confer.

The genius of Monti, however, was not that of a tragedian: lyrical and imaginative rhapsodies, rather than the concatenation of a plot and the impersonation of human passion, were the native bent of his mind. The story of "Aristodemo" is eminently simple in its construction; the interest is entirely confined to the principal character, and there is almost no action to support the piece. Aristodemo had, to acquire the popular favour, and his election to the throne of Mycene, resolved to sacrifice his daughter, when some angry god required that the blood of a virgin should be shed on his altar.

To save the girl, her lover declares that she has yielded to him, and is about to be a mother. In his fury the father destroys her, and afterwards discovers that she is innocent. To add to his misfortunes he loses his only other child, a little girl of three years old, in a skirmish with the Spartans. Henceforth he is pursued by remorse ; the spectacle of his murdered daughter for ever haunts him, and horror and despair darken his soul. The tragedy opens, fifteen years after these events, at the conclusion of a war with Sparta, with the discussion for a treaty of peace, when the prisoners on both sides are to be given up. Among those taken by Aristodemo is a girl, to whom he has attached himself with paternal fondness, and who devotes herself to mitigating his sufferings. She, of course, is discovered to be his long lost daughter ; but this is not made known to him till the last scene, when the agonies of remorse, joined to sorrow at losing his last consolation, have driven him to destroy himself. The pure but warm attachment between him and his unknown child is delicately and sweetly described, while his passionate and remorseful ravings, though they rise to sublimity, shock us by going beyond ideal terrors into images palpably disagreeable. From this sketch it may be seen how deficient in action the piece is. Aristodemo comes before us to lament and to rave. Still, despite his woe, he is a hero and a king ; and, when the interests of his country require it, he can dismiss his private griefs, and assert the majesty of the crown. His character is conceived in the truth and sublimity of tragic nature ; and the interest that hovers over him, the dim but harrowing horrors of his spectral visions, the mingled remorse, terror, and love that tear his heart, and the poetry in which these overpowering passions are expressed, take absolutely from the languor which the want of action might otherwise impart.

The success of "Aristodemo" induced Monti to write another drama. "Galeotto Manfredi" is, however, a failure. It is founded on the passion of jealousy. In his preface the poet mentions that it is wanting in tragic dig-

nity : such is not of necessity the fault of his subject, but it decidedly is of his method of treating it, and there is no poetry to redeem it from the charge of mediocrity.

He married, about this period, the daughter of the celebrated cavaliere Giovanni Pickler, who had died a short time before. It is a singular fact, that he made choice of his wife without having seen her, and not on account of her extraordinary beauty, of which he was ignorant, but from respect for the reputation of her father, and a wish to console his afflicted family ; while she accepted him on account of her admiration for the author of "*Aristodemo*." And now we enter on a new epoch of Monti's life, when he composed his most celebrated poem, and at the same time gave to his productions that political groundwork which, from his vacillation of principle, has not redounded to his honour.

The French revolution was at its height ; and the time-worn and absolute governments of every country of Europe were shaken, as by an earthquake, by the mere echo of the Parisian tocsin. The French, drunk with enthusiasm, were eager to call the whole world into a fraternity of liberty and equality ; and many were the warm young hearts, long bowed down by the yoke of the continental systems of slavery, that beat responsive to the call. One of the persons sent by the French to spread their revolutionary tenets beyond the Alps was Hugh Basseville. He was the son of a dyer at Abbeville ; the talents he early displayed induced his father to wish him to pursue a more dignified career, and he educated him for the church, as the only profession then open to the lowly born. But Basseville studied theology only to find doubts as to his creed ; he soon abandoned the clerical profession, and, going to Paris, gave himself up entirely to literature. He here fell in with two Americans, who engaged him as their companion, or tutor, in a journey they made through Germany. At Berlin, Basseville became acquainted

with Mirabeau. Leaving his Americans he visited Holland, and wrote a work on the Elements of Mythology, and a volume of amatory poems. When the revolution began, he attached himself to the royal, or rather constitutional, party, and instituted a journal which took that side. He wrote also a "History of the French Revolution," dedicated to La Fayette, with whom he was intimately acquainted; and the views he develops are moderate and rational. He was naturally eloquent, and his manners were agreeable, while he joined to these fascinating qualities the more solid ones of industry, intelligence, and boldness, so that he acquired the confidence and friendship of several of the Girondist leaders. General Demourier named him secretary to the embassy at Naples; and while there he visited Rome, for the purpose of secretly propagating revolutionary doctrines. This imprudence cost him his life. On the night of the 13th of January, 1793, he was assailed by the populace, and received a stab, of which he died thirty-four hours after. In his last moments, it is said that he was induced to regard his conduct, in endeavouring to raise sedition against the pope, as criminal, and to have exclaimed several times that he died the victim of folly.

Monti, who lived in the service of the pope's nephew, and was thus attached to the papal court, and without that ardour for liberty which is so natural to many hearts, and which appears at once senseless and even wicked to those who do not feel independence of thought to be the greatest of human blessings, of course looked on the French revolution as a series of crimes, and saw no redeeming good in the madness that urged a whole nation to so terrific a mixture of heroism and guilt. He was acquainted with Basseville, and, hearing the recantations of his dying moments, celebrated at once the repentance of his friend, and the awful tragedy acted almost at the same moment (Louis XVI. was beheaded on the 19th of January, 1793), in a poem entitled the "Basvilliana." In this he feigns that the great enemy of mankind contended with the angel of God for the

soul of the murdered man. His death-bed remorse caused the good spirit to remain triumphant ; but as the crime-tainted soul could not, according to the tenets of catholicism, be received at once into Paradise, the disembodied spirit of Basseville was condemned to visit once more the banks of the Seine, and to view the horrors there perpetrated, as the consequence of his guilty and impracticable theories. The imagination of Monti developed itself in the happiest manner in treating this theme ; and the mingled emotions of horror and grief that pervade the poem take a shape at once sublime and pathetic. The soul of Basseville hovers over Paris at the moment that Louis XVI. loses his head by the guillotine. The imagery with which he adorns the scene is original and majestic. Four mighty shadows rush on the scaffold, and hover over the dying monarch ; shadows of former regicides, who glory in the companionship of crime. Ravillac, Ankerstrom, Damiens, and one (the executioner of our Charles I.) who veils his face with his hand, proudly assist in giving the fatal blow. Louis dies, and before his beatified ghost Basseville prostrates himself ; but his penance is not got over, and he is forced to view other scenes of greater bloodshed and more frightful violence ; but as the poem enters upon these, it breaks off abruptly, and is left unfinished.

The style of this poem does not resemble modern Italian poetry, but is modelled on that of Dante ; so faithfully modelled, that many expressions, ideas, and even whole lines are, as it were, transfused, into Monti's verses. It is a singular fact that no poet was ever a greater plagiarist than the author of the "*Basvilliana* ;" but the verses of others, which he thus employs, are framed, as it were, so magnificently by original ones, and are placed with such propriety, and acknowledged with such frankness, that, as an English author observes, "so far from accusing him of plagiarism, we are agreeably surprised by the new aspect which he gives to beauties already familiar to every reader." And

thus transfusion expresses his imitations better than the word borrowing: for though the form of expression is the same, a new soul and a new sense — not better, certainly, but different from their former one — are breathed into them. In some sort Dante and Monti resembled each other in the cast of their ideas. They were both painters of the mind's images. Dante was the more faithful, delicate, and heartfelt; but there is a shadowy grandeur joined to a perfection of taste and fire of sentiment in Monti, which renders his poetry highly fascinating and beautiful.

The “Basvilliana” at once raised Monti's reputation higher than that of any poet who had for centuries appeared in Italy; and he might have been considered the laureate of royalty, but that his character was not adorned by that sincere and exalted enthusiasm, without which no man can, with any success, advocate any cause which embraces the interests of human nature.

The tide of French republicanism, checked a little in its first advances, now swelled by Bonaparte's victories, overflowed the Alps and deluged Italy. The Austrians, defeated at Montenotte, Lodi, and Arcoli, were driven from Lombardy: and the Italians hoped to exchange servitude to a foreign power for national independence; forgetting that liberty, when given, may also be withdrawn, and that it is only by force that any real freedom can be acquired. While resistance was made to the French arms, the requisitions of the victor, and the seizure of the finest works of art, might have opened their eyes to the real views of their *soi-disant* deliverers. Napoleon himself himself had but one idea with regard to liberty, which was a free scope to the exercise of his own will. When that was given him, he could be generous, magnificent, and useful; but when his measures were obstructed, no tyrant ever exceeded him in the combinations of a despotism which at once crushed a nation, and bore down with an iron hand every individual that composed it. Bonaparte's ambition, however, could only be gratified in France, and the

conquest of Italy was but the stepping-stone to the French empire. Still, when all the north of the peninsula was subjected to him, when the pope had submitted to his terms, and the haughty queen of Naples had been induced to enter into a treaty with her sister's destroyers, he could no longer with any grace refuse the shows of freedom so often promised. On the 3d of January, 1797, the Cisalpine republic was erected.

Monti had been before invited to accept a professor's chair in the university of Pavia, which he had refused. In the month of February 1797, general Marmont was sent to Rome on occasion of the treaty of Tolentino, to carry letters from Bonaparte to the pope. Monti became acquainted with him ; being then in a bad state of health, and advised to change the air of Rome for that of Tuscany, he accepted Marmont's invitation, who offered him a seat in his carriage, and proceeded to Florence. It may be imagined, that familiar intercourse with one of Napoleon's generals was the foundation of Monti's admiration for the French hero, and the cause of his opening his eyes to the good to be derived from adhering to the new order of things in his native country. At first he entertained the delusive hope that the blessing of liberty had really been conferred on Italy by the French arms, and that his countrymen would rise from chains and slavery to the enjoyment of national independence under national institutions ; and yet the extravagant praise of Napoleon, which he indulges in, in all his poems written at this time, does not bear the marks of a sincere patriotism. Besides this, he had to struggle with many personal mortifications. The "Basvilliana" was not forgotten. French exactions and French assumptions had already alienated the minds of the noble born among the Italians. They feared the conqueror, but disdained the masquerade of liberty in which they were invited to play a part : thus the better classes shrunk from forming a part of the new governments, and the offices devolved upon men who had little to lose either in possessions or

character. They regarded Monti with envy and aversion, and, instead of receiving him as a convert with open arms, his superior claims as a man of talent caused them to persecute him as an interloper and almost as a spy. The heads of the government, indeed, at first favoured him: he was invited to Milan, and elected central secretary of foreign affairs; but he was soon disturbed by persecutions. "My arrival," he writes several years afterwards, "was hailed by the usual abuse of the republican journals, who censured the directory for employing an enemy of the republic. I loved liberty; but the object of my love was the freedom described in the writings of Cicero and Plutarch: that which was adored on the altars of Milan appeared to me a prostitute, and I refused to worship her. Hence my excommunication, — hence the public burning of the 'Basvilliana.' On this I was obliged to prostrate myself before the idol. I sang her virtues, and became a revolutionary poet: I grew insane with the rest, and my conversion procured me patronage and grace."

It was not without a struggle that he stooped to these abject submissions, and several events first intervened. The hatred of the democrats, then the rulers of the Cisalpine republic, caused them to pass a law which decreed that no one should be permitted to hold any public employment who, since the year 1 of the French republic, had published any books tending to throw odium on democracy. Monti's poem was the principal object of this law; and one of his adversaries exclaimed, "Let us get rid, not of the author of some foolish sonnet in praise of kings, but of those who, with powerful enthusiasm and Dantesque imagination, have inspired a hatred for democracy." This law being passed, Monti lost his situation. He had published other poems since the "Basvilliana;" but even these were not considered sufficiently democratic.

The "Musogonia," or Birth of the Muses, is almost entirely mythological; but, in the concluding verses, he apostrophises Bonaparte. He implores him to be at

once the Alexander and Numa of Italy: he beseeches him to bestow laws upon her, and to unite her scattered members; and, with a noble voice, he calls upon the Italians to cultivate concord and unanimity. "Brothers!" he exclaims, "hear the voice of your brother! What do you hope from divided opinions and counsels? Ah, let there be in our country, in its danger, one mind, one courage, one soul, one life!" The republicans perceived a hankering for royalty and tyranny in his dislike of their measures.

The "Prometeo" is a finer poem, or rather fragment, for but few of the cantos are written. The subject of it is the history of Prometheus; but we have only a small portion of it in the poem as it stands. It opens with the foolish act of Epimetus. Jupiter had sent to him a casket containing the various intellectual attributes and moral qualities, to be distributed among the new creation on earth. Epimetus begins by bestowing various qualities on animals, and is so prodigal of his gifts, that when he comes to man he finds the casket empty. On this, he has recourse to his wiser brother Prometheus, who reprimands him for his folly. This opening is the weaker part of the poem. Lyrical outbursts were more accordant to Monti's genius. The appearance of Constancy before Prometheus is sublime, and the hero's prophecy of the future state of man is full of fire and grandeur. It ends, however, by a prophecy of Napoleon, on whom is heaped every epithet that admiration or adulation could suggest. Jupiter gives him his lightning, which loses none of its terrors in the young hero's hands. He shakes the bolts over Germany, and the Rhetian Alps resound with the hoofs of the Gallic cavalry. One after the other, Prometheus celebrates the glorious victories achieved in Italy, and hails with enthusiasm French Liberty, as the mother of heroes who shiver the chains that bound Ausonia, and wipe the tears from universal Europe — obstructed in its beneficent career only by the English robber. Bonaparte must have exulted in the bitter and venomous abuse that

Monti never fails to heap upon England. He tells us, in the preface to this poem, that its scope is to bring into favour the neglected literature of Greece and Rome, and to merit well from a free country by speaking in the accents of freedom. There is something in the applause heaped on the conqueror that jars with our notions of real independence and patriotism.

Monti, at this time, entertained the idea of returning to republicanised Rome. But his friends dissuaded him; and his reputation, and probably his adulation of the victor, caused him soon after to be named commissary of the province of the Rubicon. But a poet makes a bad politician; and Monti's integrity stood in the way of his success, and he was obliged to give up his office. He made many enemies, and, naturally timid and fearful for the welfare of his family, he was terrified into making a complete *amende* to the democrats of his country by writing odes, whose violent sentiments went beyond those of the most furious demagogues: and it is to these poems that he alludes when he speaks of the worship he was forced to pay to the mockery of liberty; and ever after he regretted his pusillanimity, and despised himself for his concessions.

At the time they gained this point, his enemies were pacified; and the survivorship of the professor's chair of belles lettres in Brera, then occupied by Parini, was bestowed on him. But scarcely had he overcome the enmity of the friends of liberty and equality, than their star was eclipsed, and their reign came to an end. During the absence of Bonaparte in Egypt, Suvaroff^{1799.} and the Austrians crossed the Alps, and the French ^{Ætat.} were driven from Italy. Her republics vanished like a^{45.} forgotten dream; and their partisans, Monti among them, were forced to follow the retreating army of France, and to take refuge beyond the Alps.

Monti fell into a state of deplorable destitution. He had left his wife and young daughter in Italy, and he roamed alone and friendless among the mountains of Savoy. His sufferings during the brief period of his

exile were frightful. He wandered about, subsisting on the fruit he picked up under the trees. Often seated on the rugged banks of a torrent, he satisfied his hunger with roots and nuts, and wept as he thought of Italy and his ruined fortunes. The benevolence of his heart manifested itself in the midst of this adversity. It is related of him, that, as he was wandering one evening in a narrow lane, near Chamberi, a stranger accosted him and asked charity, relating that he had a sick mother and five children. Monti's heart was moved: two sequins was all that he possessed in the world; he gave one of them to the suppliant. His health failed through the hardships that he endured; the labour of collecting his food became intolerable, and he forced himself to gather at one time sufficient for two days, so as to secure himself one of uninterrupted rest. His wife, who had remained to put their affairs in some order, now joined him. She found him stretched on a wretched bed, weak from inanition, but disdaining to apply to any one for relief in his need. She brought money with her, and proper food soon restored his strength; nor did he again fall into such an extremity of disaster, though it was long before the fickle goddess smiled upon him.

The minister, Mareschalchi, invited him to Paris; and the new victories of Bonaparte in Italy, on his return from Egypt in the following year, revived his hopes of better times. Mareschalchi obtained that he should be employed to write a hymn and an ode in celebration of the victory of Marengo, which had driven the allies from Italy and restored it to the French. He was to have been paid 1500 francs for these two poems, with the further reward of the professorship of Italian literature in the French university. But fortune was not weary of persecuting him; and this remuneration was withheld, on its being represented to government that he was, at heart, inimical to the French. Mareschalchi continued to befriend him, and obtained 500 francs, or about 20%. "No small relief to me," he writes, "in

my necessitous circumstances." He was very eager to return to Italy, and he writes to his brother, — "Of the many thousand refugees who were here, almost all have returned to their country, because all have instantly received the necessary succour from home. I alone find myself abandoned by my relations, in a strange country, without friends, and without resources; unless, indeed, I can make up my mind to renounce my country for the sake of earning my bread in some office. But an irresistible sentiment is linked to the name of my native land. I possess in Italy the objects dearest to my heart—my child, my mother, brothers, friends, studies, habits; all, in short, that renders life dear. I pant, therefore, to return; and I implore you to send me assistance in the shape of a remittance for my journey, and to discharge my debts here. Every delay injures my interests, particularly at this moment. Direct to 'Citizen Vincenzo Monti, Post-office, Paris.' I shall count the days and moments—make my account short, if my happiness is dear to you."

Soon after his wishes were fulfilled, and he celebrates his return to his beloved Italy by a beautiful hymn, which begins —

"Bella Italia, amate sponde,
Pur vi torno a riveder,
Trema il petto, e si confonde
L' alma oppressa di piacer."

He does not forget the victor in this song of joy and triumph. Marengo is mentioned with exultation; and Bonaparte celebrated with enthusiasm, as liberating Italy from the barbarians, and again bestowing upon her the blessings of freedom.

On his arrival at Milan, Monti employed himself in correcting his poem, entitled the "Mascheroniana," which he had begun amidst the Alps, when overwhelmed by misery, an exile, weeping over the disasters of his country and his own wrongs. Lorenzo Mascheroni, a celebrated mathematician as well as an elegant poet, was forced to quit Italy at the same time as Monti, and died in France shortly after. In this poem the

poet vents all his spleen against his democratic enemies. In his preface he exclaims, "Reader, if you really love your country, and are a true Italian, read! but throw aside the book if, for your and our misfortune, you are an insane demagogue, or a cunning trafficker in the cause of liberty." The poem opens with the death of Mascheroni, and the ascent of his soul to heaven. He here meets Parini, who laments the unhappy condition of Italy. "When I saw her misery," he cries, "I desired to die, and my wish was fulfilled. I first beheld her woe when dressed in her new freedom, which was called liberty, but which, in truth, was rapine. I then beheld her a slave, alas! a despised slave, covered with wounds and blood, complaining to heaven that she was betrayed by her own children—by the many foolish, base, and perverse tyrants, not citizens; while the few remained mute or were destroyed. Iniquitous laws were given her; discord waited on her, and pride, and hate, and madness, ignorance and error; while the tears and sighs of the people remained unheard. O, wretches! who spoke of virtue in high-sounding words, and called themselves Brutus and Gracchus, while they proved themselves traitors and monsters. But short-lived was their joy. I saw the Russian and the Austrian swords destroy the hopes of the fields of Italy, and the armed people commit crimes exceeding the supper of Atreus and the vengeance of Theseus!" While Parini is thus pouring out his angry and bitter denunciations, Mascheroni interrupts him. "Peace, austere spirit!" he exclaims, "your country is again saved. A deity has caught her by the hair, and drawn her from the abyss: Bonaparte!" At this name, the frowning Parini raises his head, and a smile illuminates his countenance. The victories of Egypt, of Marengo, and Hohenlinden, are commemorated; and the "British felon" assailed with the usual violence of hate. In the midst of the conversation of the friends, God appears with his cherubim,—one the herald of peace and pardon, the other of war and vengeance: they are sent out on the earth to assist

and wait on the Gallic hero. This poem, like so many others of Monti, which celebrated what was then the present, and is therefore truncated of its catastrophe, is a fragment. Such praise, dressed in all the magnificence of poetry, must have sounded sweetly in Napoleon's ear. The "*Mascheroniana*," whose chief object is to bestow on him new wreaths of victory, is one of Monti's finest compositions. It is full of strength, vehemence, and beauty. His imitation of Dante is even more apparent than in the "*Basvilliana*." The machinery of the poem, and the peculiar versification, are borrowed from the "*Divina Commedia*." But, as we have before observed, Monti's was too original a mind to be a plagiarist. What he took from another, he remoulded and brought forth in a new form, in fresh and brilliant hues, all his own. He has not the sublimity, the sweetness and pathos, nor the distinct yet delicate painting, of his prototype; but no one can read his verses without feeling that the true spirit of poetry breathes in every line, and that the author pours out the overflowings of a genuine and rapt inspiration.

His third tragedy of "*Caius Gracchus*" had been written at Paris, and he occupied himself in finishing and correcting it on his return to Milan. This tragedy has been praised by some as superior to "*Aristodemo*," but it is difficult to coincide in this opinion. It possesses fine passages and some energy, but it is wanting in poetry; and the characters want the simple heroism of antiquity, and resemble rather violent Italians of modern days. The defects of monotonous dialogue and often repeated situations flow also from an observation of the unities, which, by confining the subject in narrow limits, permit no variety of action, and, except in peculiar instances, force the poet to repeat himself; making one scene frequently little else than a repetition of what had gone before.

Monti had begun his literary and poetic life by servitude, when he became secretary of the duke of Braschi.

In his present desperate circumstances he saw no hope, except in conciliating the ruling power of the continent, and entering on the service of the man who looked on all men as merely engines to fulfil his vast and illimitable projects. Napoleon had by fresh victories driven the Austrians from Italy; and a congress, called the
 1802. Cisalpine, was held at Lyons, to fix on a form of
 Ætat. government for the north of the peninsula. This was
 48. a kind of mockery that Bonaparte was fond of encouraging in the early days of his elevation, since, under some of the forms of popular election, new powers were, with a show of legality, bestowed on him. The Italians of the congress fixed on a plan of government, at the head of which was to be a president: they entreated Napoleon to accept this office, as the disunited state of the country rendered it unadvisable to elect an Italian to it. Napoleon consented. This was a happy moment to bring himself before the supreme power, and Monti seized on it. He wrote an ode to Bonaparte, in the name of the Cisalpine congress; he chose the motto from Virgil, and it was a happy one, —

“ Victorque volentes
 Per populos dat jura.”

The verses are very beautiful, and worthy of a better cause than laying the liberties of his country prostrate at the first consul's feet. Still Monti was aware that, degraded by long servitude and disunited by petty passions, the Italians were ignorant of the nature of true liberty. He saw party spirit, oppression, and rapine as the result of any attempt on the part of his countrymen to govern themselves; he knew also how vain it was to contend with the conqueror, and he was very probably sincere in his belief that the welfare of his country was safest in his hands. Still, while we admire the harmony of the verses and the beauty of the imagery, we repine at the slavish spirit that lurks within them. Bonaparte, who loved to be borne up by the wings of men's imaginations into a superior sphere of glory and success,

must have been pleased by the halo of poetry with which Monti stooped to adorn his name.

He did not go unrewarded. When peace was restored to Italy, the institutions for public education became objects of interest to the government, and a professorship was offered Monti, either at Milan or Pavia, at his choice. Monti preferred the latter, for the sake of enjoying the society of the able professors who filled the chairs of that university. He was diligent and conscientious in his attendance to the duties of his situation, and his lectures were fully attended: the best of his prose writings being his inauguration lecture, which had for its subject the praise of the literary men of Italy, and the claiming for them the merit of many discoveries usually attributed to the natives of other countries. After three years spent at Pavia, he was invited by the governor to Milan, and a number of offices and honours were bestowed on him. He was made assessor to the minister of the interior for the department of literature and the fine arts; he was named court poet and historiographer, and made cavalier of the iron crown, member of the institute, and of the legion of honour. Monti was no laggard in fulfilling the duties of the first of these places. He wrote a variety of poems in praise of Napoleon, and in celebration of his victories. In the "Bard," a fictitious personage, Ullino, attended by the maiden Malvina, while watching with enthusiastic admiration the advance of the French arms, falls in with a young wounded warrior; they, of course, take him home, and watch over his recovery, when he relates, at their request, the events of the expedition to Egypt and the battles that illustrated Napoleon's return to Europe. There is the merit of enthusiasm and glowing description in portions of this poem. The canto on the expedition to Egypt contains the best passages.

When Napoleon was crowned king of Italy, Monti 1805. was commanded to celebrate the event. He writes *Ætat.* to Cesarotti, — "While you are robing the magnificent 51. spleen of Juvenal in beautiful and dignified Italian,

I am sounding the Pindaric harp for the emperor Napoleon. The government has commanded me, and I must obey. I hope that love of my country will not make my thoughts too free; and that I may respect the hero, without betraying my duty as a citizen. I am in a path where the wishes of the nation do not accord with its political necessities, and I fear to lose myself. St. Apollo help me! and do you pray that I may be endowed with sagacity and prudence." This poem, in which he tries to trim his sail so nicely between patriotism and servitude, is called "*Il Beneficio*;" or, *The Benefaction*, a vision. It has great merit. All that Monti ever wrote is graced with such a happy flow, and with so much beauty of imagery and expression, that it is impossible not to admire as we read. He describes Italy as appearing to him in a vision; she is personified by a woman, wounded and drooping, the victim of grief and slavery. The poet, struck with compassion and horror, evokes the shades of mighty Romans from their tombs to assist the degraded queen of the world; but they turn in scorn from the fallen and lost one. Then a warrior, godlike and majestic, descends from the Alps, — Victory attends him, — yet he disregards her, and prefers the olive to the laurel (a most unfortunate compliment to a man whose whole soul was war). He approaches the unfortunate prostrate being, — raises her, and bids her reign; nor could the livid glare cast by the British cannon over the Tyrrhene sea avail against him. The warrior smiles, and at his smile all danger vanishes. Then the austere and noble spirit of Dante arises and apostrophises Italy, telling her that the regal power of Napoleon was exactly the restraint and law he had wished her to fall under; and, taking the crown from her head, places it on that of the French emperor. Spain salutes the new diadem. The German, still crimson with his own blood, acknowledges the victor, and bends his eyes to earth; while the British pirate, powerful in fleets and fraud, curses aloud. "I send you a copy of the Vision," Monti

writes to a friend, "which I have written for the coronation of our king: it has succeeded perfectly, and no work of mine, since I began to write verses, has prospered so well." It is impossible not to congratulate him on his success in attaining prudence. Assuredly there was nothing too free in these verses; and Napoleon might accept them without an unpleasant thought being awakened as to his usurpation, tyranny, and rapacious, unbounded ambition.

Every fresh victory, every new conquest, was a theme for the venal muse of Monti; venal we have a right to call it, since he acknowledges the bond of a salary and the necessity of obedience. Thus, on occasion of the battle of Jena, he brought out the "*Spada di Federico*;" or, the Sword of Frederic, — the most popular of his odes of triumph. In this poem he images the spectral hand of the warrior king of Prussia disputing with Napoleon the possession of his sword, and yielding to the proud assumptions and tenacious grasp of the Gallic victor. Ten editions of this work were sold in the space of five months, and it was translated into the French and Latin languages.

The attempted usurpation of the Spanish throne did not go uncelebrated. The "*Palingenesi*" has for its subject the regeneration of mind and of political institutions wrought in Spain, under the auspices of the French emperor and his brother Joseph. If we could dismiss from our minds the truth, and fancy, as Monti assumes, that a great and generous nation had sunk into the depths of slavery and degradation through the evil influence of a corrupt government, and that Napoleon was bent on loosening its fetters and raising it to freedom and knowledge, it would be impossible not to be filled with enthusiasm by the noble ideas and grand imagery of this poem. But the taint of falsehood prevents any sympathy, and our admiration of the imagination displayed is checked by our contempt of the flatterer; while we smile at the bitter and violent curses poured upon the English, whose motives for

assisting the Spaniards in resisting the French are painted in the most odious colours.

We wonder as we read. There is fire, sublimity, and power in every line. Can these be inspired, as we are assured by Monti's friends, by the mere desire of acquiring the loaves and fishes, if not for himself individually, for his wife and daughter? Are the shadowy forms which he invests with so much beauty — the conceptions into which he infuses so much energy and seeming sincerity — the mere playthings of his thought, and not the genuine offspring of a mind teeming and overflowing with a sense of usefulness and truth? We cannot believe it; we are so apt to forget what our feelings were when the occasion that called them forth has vanished like morning mist. When Napoleon fell, men forgot the wonder and admiration with which they had regarded him during his prosperity. He had come on the time-worn world like an incarnation of the memories of antiquity. The greatest sovereigns, who traced their descent from the middle ages — the thrones of the world, so long the objects of worship and fear — the crowns and sceptres which had been looked upon as the sacred and inviolable symbols of divine right — were all at his feet, dispossessed, transferred, and broken. It could be no wonder that men looked upon the cause of these things as something prodigious and superhuman. Monti may be excused that he joined in the common feeling of awe and admiration; while, afterwards, seeing how little good arose from the breaking up of the ancient tyrannies, and how the indomitable will of one man was enforced by means of treachery and slaughter, he might forget that he could ever have been so blinded, and fancy that acknowledged fear was the cause of an inspiration which really sprung from the slavish worship of success, which is too naturally inherent in human beings.

Although Monti brought forward this disingenuous plea to excuse his celebration of the hero of the age, he was sincere in one feeling, — an attachment to the off-

spring of his brain, and in the indignation he felt against those who depreciated his poetic merits. The "Sword of Frederic" was attacked by the critics with great asperity, and he replied with still greater acrimony. He had been charged with mannerism and sameness, especially in the machinery of his poems, in which visions, spectres, and cloudy spiritual essences play for ever a principal part. He would not allow this to be a defect, and railed at the unimaginative minds who conceived it to be such. He tries to be jocose in his indignation, but his laugh is bitter; and he heaps the accusations of ill faith and envy, as well as of ignorance and bad taste, on those who attack him. There may be justice in this, but there is no dignity. There is always a degree of degradation in noticing the enmity of a race of ephemera, and not calmly relying on the award of the public.

Besides the poems above mentioned, Monti wrote several other poems in praise of the conqueror. "The Jerogamia" and the "Api Panacridi" were compositions which, whatever their apparent subject might be, turned, after all, on the praise of the emperor. They maintained, if they did not increase, the poet's fame. His best works were already written; and these may be named to be the "Aristodemo," the "Bassvilliana," passages in the "Prometèò," the "Mascheroniana," and the "Palingenesi;" and of his shorter odes, that to Bonaparte, on occasion of the Cisalpine congress, and his hymn on his return to Italy.

Years began to tame the fire of his imagination, and he felt the spirit of original composition fail him. His active mind turned to other subjects on which to exercise it: his love of classical learning led him to works of criticism and erudition, and he wrote "Remarks on the Winged Horse of Arsinoe." A want of knowledge of the Greek language must, however, have been a great drawback to this species of study; but we must regard with still greater wonder, considering this defect, his next enterprise, which was the translation of

the Iliad. He had been looking out for a subject, and meditating in what way he could employ his powers, when a word, spoken by chance by Ugo Foscolo, at once awoke in his mind the desire and the energy requisite for so arduous a task. Not being acquainted with Greek, he applied himself to every kind of literal translation, and was, besides, mainly assisted by his friend Mustoxidi, who explained passages, compared his version with the original, and bestowed a degree of labour which, barren as it was of reputation to himself, must be regarded as a singular proof of disinterested attachment. Monti applied himself so vigorously to the task, that, in spite of all his disadvantages, in less than two years he brought it to a conclusion.

This new labour yielded him a large harvest of reputation. Other Italian translations of the Iliad already existed: that of Salvini is valuable, from his profound knowledge of the Greek and Italian languages. It is elegantly and faithfully translated, but it wants spirit; and the sublime Homeric fire, which renders the Iliad the greatest of human works, glimmers feebly in his version. The translation of Ceruti is as faithful as is compatible with his ignorance of Greek; but, besides the want of the true spirit of the original, his style, modelled on that of Metastasio and Rolli, wants vigour and versatility.

Monti possessed, beyond any other poet, the faculty of warming himself with his subject, of penetrating himself with its soul, and imparting, by the vivacity of his language and the glowing brightness of his imagination, his own sentiments to the reader. The very act of versifying seemed to be to him what the sound of song is to the sensitive, in elevating and moving the soul. His mind possessed the qualities of the harp, which gives forth sweet music when swept by the breezes: thought with him was always pregnant with harmonious and animated expression, with glowing and various imagery. On this has been founded his excuse for writing with such apparent fervour on subjects that did not really interest his feelings; and this facility

is a good quality in a translator. Monti could conceive and imbibe the spirit of the original, and give it out, in his own language, with vigour and life. Visconti, in writing to the poet, says, "The choice and variety of diction and phrases, the equal and sustained tone of the verses, and the noble simplicity of the style, place your work among the few that transmit the poetic name with honour to posterity." This praise was accompanied by a few judicious criticisms which showed the care and zeal with which he had examined the translation. Monti paid attention to them, and endeavoured to amend all the errors pointed out in the subsequent editions of his work.

When Napoleon was overthrown, and the north of Italy fell under the yoke of the Austrians, Monti of course lost all his public employments, and he was menaced in his old age by the miseries of hopeless poverty. But his submissive disposition and plastic opinions were just of that sort which kings delight to honour; and the emperor of Austria bestowed such pensions on him as enabled him to pursue his studies in leisure and competence. No doubt Monti felt glad, in common with all his countrymen, to get rid of the anti-national sway of the French, and hoped that a better state of things would result from any change. His experience of popular rule in Italy had disgusted him with it. He had not that zeal and ardour of feeling resulting from a conviction that, however perilous the passage from slavery to liberty, it must be attempted and persevered in, with all its attendant evils, if men are to be brought back from that cowardice, indolence, and selfishness which mark the slave, to the heroism, patience, and intellectual activity which characterise the freeman. Besides this, the armies of Austria admitted of no reply from the unwarlike Italians. The remnants of their army which had returned, wasted and broken, from the Russian campaign had been forced, after some show of resistance, to capitulate: submission was their only resource, and submission was in accord-

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ance with Monti's disposition. Nor did he afterwards ever give umbrage to the jealous and revengeful government whose pay he received, when hopes of better times and of redemption warmed the hearts of all the nobler Italians to attempt the destruction of their tyrants. He was acquainted with many of the Austrian victims; and when we find in his letters complaints of sorrows and misfortunes, we must attribute these to the real sympathy he felt for these unhappy martyrs: but, though he sympathised with the men, it is probable that he disapproved of their attempts. He was hopeless, and a hopeless struggle presented to him only the too real picture of aggravated oppression in general, and frightful individual suffering; he did not feel that boiling of the heart, that fire of the spirit, which makes the great and good risk all, rather than live subject to a power which exerted all its leaden strength to press down genius, crush every exertion of mind, and to reduce men as nearly as possible to the condition of the herds who graze in the fields, without a thought beyond the food and rest which the fertility of the soil and the beauty of the climate afford. Monti was not one of these: his mind was active, and, in his way, he wished to benefit his country. So when a thousand hearts were convulsed by the throes arising from all the hopes and fears of a just rebellion, he turned his attention to the study of the Italian language, to the task of freeing it from the shackles which critics had thrown over it, and of gifting it with the new spirit and animation which must arise from the introduction of living forms of speech, instead of the classic and restricted limitations imposed by the Della Crusca society.

He composed few poems after the fall of Napoleon. When the emperor of Austria sent the archduke John to receive the oath of fealty from the provinces of Lombardy, he wrote, by command, a cantata, entitled "Mistico Omaggio," or the Mystic Homage, which was brought out at the principal theatre at Milan. When the emperor himself visited Italy he celebrated

the event by a poem, called "The Return of Astrea," and another, named "The Invitation to Pallas." His style in these later compositions joins harmony to dignity, and forms that mixture of strength and sweetness which is so delightful in Metastasio. His last poetic compositions were written at Pesaro, where he was debarred from his usual occupations, and dispirited by a disease that attacked one of his eyes; and he solaced himself by dictating various poems full of grace and beauty, which he afterwards published under the title of "*Sollievo nella Malinconia*," or "Relief of Melancholy."

One of the most fortunate incidents of his life was 1812. the marriage of his daughter to a man of singular merit. Costanza Monti was (is, we should rather say) remarkable for her beauty and her talents; her poetry, though there is little of it, is of a very high grade, and one poem, "On a Rose," has sufficed to establish her fame in Italy. Count Giulio Perticari sprung from a noble family of Romagna. His residence was at Pesaro, and he there filled successively the offices of podestà and judge. He devoted himself to literature, and had published works both in prose and verse, by which he acquired considerable reputation. It must be in the memory of all Italians, and all those strangers who visited Italy during his lifetime, how he was beloved by every one who knew him. No man was ever more popular, more universally pronounced the best of men; and this praise resulted from the goodness and singleness of his heart, the sweetness of his disposition, and his unpretending but attractive manners. Writing concerning this marriage to his friends, Monti speaks of it with pride and pleasure. He says, "Count Giulio Perticari, of Pesaro, is a young man well cultivated in literature. I say nothing of his moral qualities, which render him dear to all. It is the most delightful match that paternal love can desire."

After this period Monti's labours were chiefly confined to prose, and he is considered in this manner to have

greatly benefited the literature of his country. The chief among these are the considerations on the difficulty of well translating the poetry of the Iliad, and several dialogues on the Italian language, full of acute criticism and wit. A circumstance turned his attention still more entirely to the subject of language. The government of Lombardy, wishing to show some encouragement to literature, had ordered the Royal Institute of Milan to occupy itself in the reform of the national dictionary; and Monti was requested by his colleagues to publish his observations on the subject. He obeyed with alacrity. His son-in-law, count Per-ticari, had devoted much attention to this subject, and he became Monti's associate in the task.

The great question in Italy is, whether the pure and classical language, the only one not wholly barbarous and vulgar, is Italian or Tuscan; a mixture drawn from the various dialects of the peninsula, or solely founded on Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio, and other early Tuscan authors. The academy Della Crusca espoused the latter side of the question, and, forming a dictionary, expunged every word not to be found in the authors named the Trecentisti. Monti, on the contrary, attacked the *ipse-dixits* of this academy, and, pointing out innumerable errors in their dictionary, undertook, as he called it, a crusade against the Della Crusca.

This is a question that has divided all the talents of Italy, and in which it appears presumptuous in a foreigner to express any decision. Still we may reason from general grounds, and from analogy. Every portion of Italy has a distinct dialect. Immediately on leaving the precincts of any town, an acute ear will detect in the person who lives outside the gate a difference in the form of speech and pronunciation. Many of the towns use a mere *patois*, which has never been written. The Neapolitan, Romagnole, Genoese, and Milanese, each have a dialect, devoid of grace, cacophonous, truncated of vowels, and unintelligible to any but themselves; the Venetian being the only one distinguished for its own

peculiar charms. To a stranger the language of the Romans has a great charm: the *bocca Romana*, or Roman pronunciation, is clear, soft, and yet emphatic. Their language is unidiomatic, and therefore easily comprehended. You enter Tuscany, and come upon those terse and idiomatic forms of speech which enraptured Alfieri, and which give so much energy and animation to the expression of sentiment, so much clearness and precision to narration or reasoning. But even these are not admitted by the *Della Crusca*. The Florentine is still a dialect — the Pisan and the Siennese fall under the same denomination: the principal difference is that the grammar of all the Tuscans is pure, and that you may form your speech on that of the peasantry and servants, without running any risk of falling into errors and vulgarisms. Alfieri used to mingle in the crowds assembled in the market-place of Sienna, there to imbibe from unlearned lips the purest modes of the Italian language. The dictionary *Della Crusca* was founded therefore on Tuscan, omitting its peculiarities, and carefully registering any innovations that had crept in since the era of the *Trecentisti*. It is obvious, under this tutelage, that the Italian became, when written, virtually a dead language. No author could adopt the forms of speech he made use of in the common conversation. The language that they heard and spoke when moved by joy, by grief, by love, or anger, was to be modified, corrected, and, so to speak, translated, before it could be put in a book. The living impress of the soul was to be taken from it, and, instead of putting down the word that rose spontaneously to the lips, and ought to have flowed as easily from the pen, the author hunted in the *Della Crusca* dictionary for authorities, which shackled the free spirit of inspired genius with chains and bolts forged from the works of the old writers, who themselves wrote as they spoke, and created a language, simply by putting down the forcible and graceful expressions then in colloquial use.

Still a great difficulty arises from any deviation from

these rules. Was then the Florentine dialect, or the Siennese, or the Pisan, to be the written language of the country? Each city would have rejected its neighbour's, and still more would Lombardisms be regarded with disdain by the inhabitants of the south. Language, pronunciation, idiom, all form a habit to the eye and ear, which, beginning with our very birth, cannot be afterwards discarded. No Tuscan ever would or even could tolerate the introduction of any of the words or phrases belonging to other dialects; and they endure the mistakes of foreigners with less disgust than the uncouth pronunciation of their countrymen of the north and east of the peninsula. Nor will they allow that even the well educated among these use classic modes of speech. This is the point of contention; for their antagonists insist, that they are in as full possession as the Tuscans of pure Italian, drawing it from the same sources — namely, the best writers of the country; and assert that they are as well able to originate new modes of expression, and to turn with as much elegance and force those already in use.

Monti and Perticari both entered heart and soul into this dispute, which speedily roused every literary person in Italy to take one side or the other. The Tuscans, headed by the Della Crusca, were furious that their long-acknowledged supremacy should be questioned; while Monti, resting the merits of his opinion on the great authority of Dante, did not hesitate in his attack. Several letters to his friend Mustoxidi display his earnestness and sincerity in the cause. We extract passages from them, as explanatory of his ideas and characteristic of the man.

“The necessity of relaxing a little the intensity of the labour I have in hand, led me for a few days among these mountains, where yours of the 2d found me. To fulfil my duty towards government, I have been obliged to publish my remarks on the Della Crusca vocabulary, and the great distinction of which it is necessary to remind the Italians; the distinction I

mean between the plebeian dialects, and that dignified language spoken by all the well educated in the country, from the summit of the Alps to the Lilybæum promontory. Founding my opinion on the authority of Dante, in which both Petrarch and Boccaccio concur in a surprising manner, I have undertaken to advocate that dignified Italian which is not spoken but written ; and to vindicate the rights of fourteen provinces of Italy against the pretensions of a single one, which, contrary to the principles of the great father of Italian literature, has endeavoured to substitute the language in use in a single city, in short a peculiar dialect, which, however beautiful, is only a dialect, and can never fill the place of that universal language of which the country has need. I do not know whether I shall treat this great cause worthily ; but I am convinced that whoever impugns the principles which I establish, must begin by proving that Dante and the other two were mad. I dare not believe that I have obtained a complete victory ; but I have laid the foundation-stones on which others of greater talent may one day erect and finish the edifice."

To another friend he writes : — " The treatise of Pericari on the language of the Trecentisti, which will soon be published, is a *chef-d'œuvre*, displaying great philosophy and acute criticism. I promise you that it will make a great sensation, and that the Crusca with drooping head, *caudamque remulcens*, will not know what to answer."

" Grassi has written an excellent parallel of the Della Crusca dictionary with that of Johnson and the Spanish academy, which are similar in their plan ; and you will perceive the Gothic condition of our vocabulary in comparison with others. Assistance and support reach me from all parts of Italy, even from Tuscany ; so that I may say that the whole nation sides with me."

With more moderation he writes afterwards, — " We do not wish to rule ; but neither reason nor honour permit us to continue slaves. We only desire the right

to have a voice in the defence of national rights against municipal pretensions : for the rest, we will take the law from them."

In fact, Monti must have felt the extreme difficulty of the question. In England and France it is just to say, that the language of the well educated all over the country may serve for authority as to language. But the nobility and higher classes in Lombardy and Romagna all speak their unintelligible dialects among themselves ; it is only with strangers, and when they write, that they have recourse to Italian. It is impossible, therefore, that what they compose by rule, after study and practice, can be the living language of a people in opposition to a dialect, if you will, which, with few omissions and some change of pronunciation, is the admiration of all who can appreciate the true beauties of style ; which is remarkable for passion and fervour combined with concision and sweetness ; for idiomatic phrases that realise and stamp as it were the thought, instead of a periphrastic expression which speaks of an idea or notion rather than giving expression to these themselves. Monti was right in throwing aside the classical shackles of the *Della Crusca* ; but there is token in his letters that, in his heart, he at last acknowledged that there was more of the living spirit of true Italian abroad in the colloquial idiom of Tuscany, than in all the well-turned sentences and set phrases of the well educated of the rest of Italy.

We cannot help thinking that Monti must have been very happy during the prosecution of these labours. An active mind abhors repose, when it must "cream and mantle like a standing pool." The aid and sympathy of his amiable and cultivated son-in-law must have shed an infinite charm over his labours, the zeal of his partisans have flattered, the attacks of his enemies have animated him. He believed that he was delivering his country from a superstition which clogged the springs of her literature, and choked up its free course. To a great degree he was in the right, and the proof is in the

original and beautiful use made of his theory by the Italian authors of the present day.

Monti, loudly acknowledged to be the first Italian poet of his day, continued to reside at Milan, devoted to literary pursuits, surrounded by a circle of admirers, the chief not so much of a sect, as of Italian literature. Yet he was often attacked, and was by no means tolerant of criticism. His heart, however, was of better grain than his temper, and his violent literary disputes with distinguished contemporaries, with Mazza, Cesarotti, and Bettinelli, terminated in mutual friendship and esteem. Angry when offended, and unmeasured in his expressions of offence, yet the desire of reconciliation on the part of others was always met by him with cordiality and ready forgiveness. He was the more loved and admired the more he was known; one of the charms that attended his intercourse was the beauty of his recitation. To hear him read Virgil or Dante, was to find a deeper pathos in the laments of Dido, new energy in the complaints of Ugolino. Fond of, devoted to his art, there was no pedantry about him: he never thrust it upon the ignorant or frivolous; but with his friends he loved to analyse the essence of poetry, and to discuss the great question then in vogue in Italy of the classic and romantic schools. There is a letter of his to a friend on this subject, passages of which may be quoted as showing his opinions on this subject, opinions which bear the stamp of truth.

"A poet," he writes, "ought to paint the nature which he beholds. I applaud the poetry of the North, which is in perfect accord with the gloomy atmosphere from which it receives its inspiration. But Italian poetry, born of a glad and happy sky, is mad when she would robe herself in clouds, and study to paint a nature of which she can form no idea except from imagination. And besides, should poetry, whose chief use is to delight (and, in the miserable state of human beings, to delight is to serve), ought she to appear rough and frowning, ruled by pedantry and crabbed philosophy?"

Is it possible that no one knows how to distinguish the office of poet from that of philosopher? It is one thing to speak to the senses, another to speak to the intellect. Naked and dry truth is the death of poetry; for poetry and fiction are the same, and fable being only truth disguised, this truth must be ornamented by flowers to be gladly received. You scattered fresh and beautiful roses over your poetic meditations when you speak of Greece and Rome; but, when you leave these fields of perennial poetic beauty, and say that the thoughts of the Greeks ran around in a narrow circle of images, and after uttering this falsehood, you throw yourself with loosened reins into the praise of the romantic school, then, my noble friend (pardon me if I frankly declare my opinion), you are no longer the same. Had I been at your side when you wrote your tender adieu to the gods of Greece, I should have persuaded you not to continue it — nor to irritate the shade of Schiller — of that Schiller whom, next to Shakspeare, I admire. Do you not know that his best and favourite ode is entitled the ‘ Gods of Greece ? ’ in which he manifests his indignation against those who have expelled them from the kingdom of the muses, and prays that they may be recalled to adorn life and poetry. I conversed much with lord Byron during the fifteen days’ stay which he made at Milan. Do you know that he trembled with rage when any one chanced, fancying that they paid him a compliment, to praise the romantic school. Yet, in the sense in which we understand it, no one was more romantic than he. But he disdained the name, hating to find himself mixed up with the crowd of fools who dishonour that noble school. I do not wish to play the preceptor with you, but allow the true friendship that binds me to you to conclude with a counsel which for many years I have myself followed, *inter utrumque vola* ; and, leaving the squabbles of party, let us use our best endeavours to write good verses.”

We may add to this profession of the poet’s faith with regard to the classic and romantic schools, that

Monti considered Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare as the first poets of the world ; thus giving proof of the justness of his taste, and demonstrating that originality and truth were appreciated by him at their just value. Next to these three kings of the art he placed Virgil, whom he loved as the friend of his boyhood. He preferred Tacitus and Livy among the Latin prose writers, and Machiavelli among the Italians. His opinions on these subjects were delivered without arrogance, and without presuming to institute an unappealable decision.

The count and countess Perticari resided principally at Pescara ; but they held frequent intercourse with Monti at Milan. In the winter of 1821-22, Perticari having made some stay at Milan, Monti accompanied him on his return home. Several of his letters to his wife written during this excursion are published ; and we cannot resist the temptation of giving them to the reader, affording as they do demonstrations of his affectionate heart, and of the pleasure he took in the society of his amiable relative. The first of these is dated from Verona, 7th October, 1821.

“ I never made a merrier journey. We were six in company : a Brescian, a Veronese, a Paduan, Mercandante, and us two. Day had scarcely dawned, when we began to examine each other, and snuff-boxes went their amicable round. An instant confidence sprung up among us, which led to much chat and pleasantry. So gay were we, that we did nothing but laugh in chorus till we arrived at the gates of Verona. Perticari and I ordered that our luggage should be carried to the inn ; being determined to remain free. But the signore Mosconi, and Persica, had already left word at the best inns that there was no room for Perticari and Monti ; and, at the moment when we arrived in the diligence, the countess Clarina and her daughter, and the count, got into their carriage to meet and run away with us, as if we had been two beautiful birds. Poor Mariano, who was accompanying the porter with our luggage to

the hotel, was pounced upon by the son of the countess, ordered to turn right about and to follow him, he knew not whither; not daring to resist, and fearing that his commander was a custom-house officer. In short, it was not possible to resist the gentle violence put upon us, and the cordial entreaties of my dear friend the countess; and here we are welcomed, feasted, and honoured beyond measure.

“ It was our intention only to remain three days at Verona, but we have been obliged to promise not to go till Sunday. The countess means to accompany us half-way on the road to Vicenza, where we shall arrive by noon, and on Monday evening we shall be at Bassano, three hours’ journey only from Vincenza; thence to Passagno, and on to Padua, whence you shall hear from us.”

“ Venice, November 20. 1821.

“ Not to leave you any longer waiting for news of us, I seize a moment when every one is asleep (it being only five in the morning) to tell you that yesterday we arrived safely at Venice. It would be a too long-winded egotism to relate to you the kindness, the politeness, the friendly contests, with which we have been every where welcomed. We had been expected here for several days with impatience, and, at the moment of our arrival, chance brought us into immediate contact with the baron Tordero, who embraced us with indescribable delight. It being known that we were going to call on the countess Albrizzi, an assembly gathered together there; nor can I describe to you the demonstrations of joy with which we were welcomed by that celebrated lady, and all her agreeable friends. We remained till eleven, and should have staid longer had not hunger (for we had not dined) recalled us to our inn; that, and the circumstance that our friends, who had accompanied us from Padua, were waiting for us. The merriment at table was prolonged till one in the morning; so you see I have barely had three hours’ sleep, and yet I never was so well in my life.”

“ Pesaro, December 7. 1821.

“ At length, yesterday, at the stroke of the avemaria, we arrived, safe and sound, at Pesaro, to the immense joy of our Constance; a joy, nevertheless, mingled with bitterness, because her mother had not chosen to accompany us : a circumstance which grieves me also, because I fear that the severity of the winter, at Milan, which is here mild, may be injurious to you. But, since you have been pleased to disappoint our hopes, at least take particular care of your health, and do not expose yourself to cold.

“ Surrounded by visits and compliments, I have no time at present for more. Let it suffice that my health is flourishing, and that I hope that yours is the same. Constance and Giulio embrace you fondly. Addio, addio !”

The following letter does not concern personal topics ; but gives so lively a picture of Italian manners, that it is well worthy to be extracted : —

“ Pesaro, January 12. 1822.

“ You have reason to complain of the infrequency of my letters, but I study and write continually ; and when I am buried among my books, with a pen in my hand, you know how difficult it is to draw me away, and ought to forgive me.

“ I am delighted to hear that, notwithstanding the clouds and snow that infest Milan at this season, your health had not yet suffered. I entreat you to take the greatest care of it. Mine is perfect. I never enjoyed so benignant a winter. It is so mild, that I am dressed now as I am accustomed to do at Milan in October.

“ For the sake of making a longer letter, I will relate an anecdote which will make you laugh.

“ There is an ancient custom still existing at Fano, ten miles from Pesaro, of celebrating a bull-fight at this season ; to which a great concourse of people

resort from the surrounding towns. A few days ago the first celebration took place. A truly ferocious bull was turned into the arena. It is a law, that whoever chooses to attack the animal may descend into the lists. No one dared expose himself to this infuriated creature, and all the dogs who ventured to assail him were tossed and killed. At length a peasant presented himself, and, to the wonder of all, approached the tremendous animal. He boldly went close to him; and the bull became quite mild, allowing himself to be patted and stroked, while he licked the hand that caressed him; every one was astonished, when, all of a sudden, a fellow among the spectators starts up, and calls out, 'The man is a sorcerer!' 'A sorcerer! a magician!' exclaimed several others in a fury. 'Burn the magician! burn the magician!' every one exclaims. The president of the games is also persuaded that this prodigy can only be the work of the devil; and he sends four soldiers, who seize on the magician, drag him from the lists, and throw him into prison. The poor fellow asked the cause of this violence; he was told, 'You are a magician; you will be hanged and burnt!' 'What are you saying about a magician?' cried the man; 'does not his excellency and his reverence know that the bull let me touch him because he knew me? I am his master.' This testimony, being confirmed by several who knew the man to be the master of the bull, and who took oaths to this effect, ought to have cured the president of his folly; but the poor magician is still in prison, and they are still disputing what to do with him."

At the same time that Monti writes thus to his wife, his letters to his other friends are equally full of the pleasure he enjoyed at this time. "You will like to know," he writes to one, "how I am passing my life. Most happily; but not in idleness. Happily, because I am with my children; and enjoy a season so mild and serene, that winter resembles the opening of spring.

Not in idleness, because I pursue my studies, and mean to give a last, short, critical treatise."

But a few months after, in the July of the same year, 1822, Monti again visited Pesaro, in circumstances that form a painful contrast with the tranquil and domestic happiness that occasioned him so much pleasure during his former one. Perticari had died suddenly, and Monti went to assist and console his sorrowing daughter. He thus writes, on this occasion, to his friend Mustoxidi, in a letter dated Pesaro, 30th July, 1822 : —

" You will have heard from my wife the pitiable state in which I found my poor Constance. My arrival has produced a happy change in this unfortunate creature : my coming was like a sunbeam on a flower beaten down by the tempest. But, again, her mind is distracted, sleep flies from her eyes, and her health suffers dreadfully. I must applaud the kind attentions of her mother-in-law, who is an angel of goodness. But I perceive that the only way to preserve her from the most dangerous consequences of excessive grief, is to take her from a place too full of shocking associations. And I would not delay my journey, but for the new regulation of the pontifical police, which does not permit any one to leave these states without a passport countersigned by the Austrian ambassador at Rome. As soon as I obtain this I shall set out, and conduct this dear object of my compassion to the arms of her mother."

This was a wound not easily healed, and never to be forgotten. In the spring of the following year Monti still alludes to his loss with the keenest grief. " Your letter," he writes to a friend, " afforded me infinite pleasure and consolation. For a long time I have lived a wretched life under the rod of adversity ; and it is only when I enjoy the society of some person dear to me, or hear from them, that I become a little cheerful, and my spirits revive. Such has been the effect, dear friend, of your letter to your poor Monti—

poor indeed in every way, and very unhappy. Unhappy in the death of Giulio; unhappy in the ill health of Constance, who is wasting away with grief; unhappy in myself, as I am deaf, old, and almost blind. For my eyes, owing to my over-use of them in reading and writing by candle-light, are fallen into their old state."

The last volume of the "Proposta" was published in July, 1823; and, this last prosaic labour finished, the imagination of Monti awoke again, and he turned his thoughts once more to the composition of poetry. He restored the true reading to the "Convito" of Dante, which he prized as the basis and authority of his own theories concerning the Italian language. He wrote, also, the idyl on the nuptials of Cadmus; and then contemplated the completion of his poem of the "Feroniade," which he had begun many, many years ago at Rome. When he was secretary to don Luigi Braschi, duke of Nemi, and nephew of Pius VI., he was accustomed to accompany his patron in his hunting expeditions: the usual course of these excursions was the Pontine marshes, near Terracina, a spot abundant in game. There is a fountain in that neighbourhood, supposed to be that anciently dedicated to the Diva Ferronia, at which the hunters were accustomed to drink to refresh themselves. The sight of that insalubrious marshy tract of land, the drainage of which had just been undertaken by the pope, for the purpose of restoring it to agriculture, awoke in Monti the idea of paying his debt of gratitude to the house of Braschi, by commemorating this munificent work; he instantly began his task, and named his poem from the guardian genius of the place. The circumstances of the times interrupted his design: it became more profitable to celebrate the ambition of Napoleon than the piety of a captive priest; and the work was neglected, thrown aside, and almost forgotten. During the last years of the poet's life, his friends solicited him to finish it. Perhaps,

when many years and many changes had made much of his past life appear like an unconnected dream, the memory of his early years came before him with all that charm and vividness which youth often assumes in the eyes of age ; and he was glad to recur to a forgotten monument of bygone times. He yielded, therefore, to the request of those about him, and had almost finished, when first disease, and afterwards death, put an end to all his designs. It was early in the year 1826 that he had thus renewed his poetic existence, resolving not again to abandon it while his imagination remained vigorous ; but in the very opening of this enthusiasm, while every fear was distant, and his active mind gladly met, each morning, the series of duties and labour which he imposed on himself, he was seized by an illness, through which every scheme and every hope was calamitously overthrown.

On the 9th of April, at about eleven o'clock, when he had retired, rather to study than repose, a sudden apoplexy attacked him ; and no medical aid, nor any care, could restore him again to health. He lost the use of his left side, and the vital powers appeared mortally attacked. The news spread through Milan, and struck every one with grief ; the population crowded round his door, and this public demonstration of kindness sensibly affected him. His mind remained clear and strong throughout the attack, nor was he without sanguine hopes of recovery. In the April succeeding his first seizure, we find him writing to a friend : " I burn with a desire to revisit Florence before I die ; consequently I have resolved, next June, to go to the mud baths of Albano, near Padua, whence I hope to receive a renewal of my strength sufficient for my journey." These mud baths, however, were pronounced hurtful instead of beneficial to his disorder, and he never went. Still hope was alive, and he lingered on until the autumn of 1828, his life being consumed in a slow martyrdom : his death-bed was attended by his

wife and disconsolate daughter, whom, even to the last, he sought to cheer by words of affection, and by smiles when he could not speak. He expired on the 13th of October, 1828, at the age of seventy-four.

The genius of Monti would, in times of less public excitement, have adorned his name with the highest praise ; and his faults would never have been called into view. The studious and imaginative bent of his mind would have led him to cultivate letters and poetry ; and we should glory in the exalted fancy of a creative poet, without any shame for the man. His domestic character was amiable ; he was zealous for his friends, grateful for benefits ; generous, kind, and true in all the ordinary intercourse of life : but neither reverence for genius, nor attachment to the man, ought to blind us to his political tergiversation, or to suppose that there is virtue in that inborn slavishness of spirit that could see no degradation in praising those whom he reprobated in his heart, and in commemorating with applause acts the most injurious to the common cause of humanity. There is retribution in our own consciences for all our faults, and Monti felt this : his love of glory was great, and he was often pained by being reminded of his political apostacies ; but too often, when irritated by censure, he was willing to cast the blame upon others, instead of admitting his own want of rigid public integrity.

But take away this error, and, as a private character, Monti merited the affection and esteem of all. The only fault of his disposition was irritability and an inclination to anger ; but he redeemed it by the candour of his acknowledgments, and the uprightness of his conduct. Warmth of heart and warmth of temper are too apt to be united in the same disposition ; but the kindness of his nature was rendered even more apparent by this defect of temperament. He was sensitive to injury, and his indignation was proportionate to his quick sense of injustice ; but, though his anger took the

appearance of sternness and severity, it never led him to injure another, but evaporated in words, and might be said to agitate the surface, but never penetrated into the depths, of his mind. He was never guilty of an act of revenge, — on the contrary, he often benefited those [who injured him. His mind was, in short, of a uniform texture; and what it wanted in dignity and grandeur was compensated for by gentleness, tenderness, and ready sympathy with the sufferings of others. He was beyond measure charitable to those in distress; and infinite and unwearied compassion, we are told by one who knew him well, was his prominent characteristic. The poor gladly celebrated the charities he strove to conceal. This virtue sprung, doubtless, from early habits acquired under the roof of his benevolent parents. He was simple as a child in the midst of worldliness, and the good faith and sincerity of his friendships were without a flaw.

“In person,” the same friend informs us who has furnished the public with the principal documents on which this memoir is founded, “he was tall and handsome: his forehead ample; the shape of his face regular; and his eyes, gleaming from beneath his arched and full brows, shone at once with a vivacious and soft light, which commanded both affection and respect. An air of melancholy was diffused over his countenance, to which the habits of reflection would have given a severe and even disdainful expression, had not the sweetest smile illuminated it with the gracious light of love. His carriage was dignified, his mien serious, and his whole aspect was that of a man of talent, and of one warmed and softened by the benevolence and affectionateness of his disposition.”

We may conclude with this description of the outward man, emanating from one who revered and loved him as a preceptor and a friend. The world, in the days succeeding to those of revolution and preceding those of reform, was much divided between those who despaired and those who hoped. The latter now

triumph ; but Monti died before the milder light dawned on the world, and while change appeared inevitably accompanied by bloodshed and misery. His compassionate heart preferred the peace of submission, both for himself and others, to the suffering attendant on defeated struggles ; and errors springing from so humane a source may be forgiven, even by those whose ardent natures lead them to overlook the toil and danger of the journey, in the hope of attaining the accomplishment of their desires.

UGO FOSCOLO.

1778—1827.

THE most necessary quality of an author is, that he should impress us with the conviction that he has something to say. In reading his pages, we ought to feel that he puts down the overflowing of his mind — ideas and notions which, springing up spontaneously, force a birth for themselves from the womb of silence, and acquire an existence through their own native energy and vitality. An author, therefore, is a human being whose thoughts do not satisfy his mind, ruminated on merely in his own isolated bosom: he requires sympathy, a world to listen, and the echo of assent from his fellow-creatures. But this is not all. Few men can be excited by a mere abstraction, by the images of their own mind, and the desire of communicating them for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. Pride or vanity mingle essentially in the fabric of a writer's mind: the pride which leads him to desire to build up an enduring monument for his name, formed from his own compositions; or the vanity that leads him to introduce himself to the reader, and to court the notoriety which usually attends those who let the public into the secret of their individual passions or peculiarities.

The three great authors of modern Italy form a singular contrast to each other, as to their apparent motives for authorship. Alfieri, proud, independent, and gloomy, sought at once to honour his own name, to exalt and refine his countrymen, and to produce such works as would benefit his species; while the vehement passions of his own soul were their primal source and inspiration. Monti was a poet of the imagination.

He wrote because the imagery, the melody, the aërial fabric of poesy were a part of his essence. The subjects of his poems were of less consequence, in his eyes, than the well treating them, or the variety, grandeur, and fantastic ideality displayed in his verses. Thus, at the word of command, he could celebrate the usurper, taint the struggles of a noble and free nation, and adorn the naked form of despotism with garments of beauty. Foscolo, on the contrary, was impelled to produce and reproduce himself: and yet to this assertion we must put some limit, for Foscolo was a man of learning and taste, and he was capable of giving light to compositions formed by the rules of art, and adorned by the graces culled from an intimate knowledge of the finest of human works. But vanity was still the mainspring, — a vanity accompanied by honesty of principle and independence of soul, and yet which was vanity — the worship of self — the making his own individuality the mirror in which the world was reflected.

Ugo Foscolo was born in the island of Zante, about the year 1778. The Ionian isles had long been under the dominion of Venice. The family of Foscolo was of Venetian origin; and his father was a surgeon in the navy of the republic. Little is known of his early years. He seldom mentioned them in conversation, though his imagination sometimes delighted to recur to the sunny land of his birth, and to regret it. In one of his sonnets he exclaims, —

Ne più mai toccherò le sacre sponde
Ove il mio corpo fanciulletto giacque
Zacinto mia, che te specchi nell' onde
Del Greco mar.

Tu non altro che il canto avrai del figlio,
O materna mia terra; a noi prescisse
Il fato illacrimata sepoltura.

O! never more shall I thy sacred shores
Approach, where my young limbs first sprung to life,
Beloved Zante! who look'st upon the waves
Of the Greek sea; and thou the song alone
May'st claim of thy lost son, maternal land!
For fate to him decrees an unwept tomb.

The Ionian islands were at that time held as colonies of the Venetian government, and tyrannised over by the most odious and oppressive laws. Among others, no schools nor colleges were allowed to exist, and the youth of the islands were sent to Venice for the purposes of education. At an early age, therefore, Foscolo repaired to the parent city. His father, it would seem, was at this time dead, for we hear only of his mother, to whom he was always tenderly attached; and it appears that she, also, transferred herself to Venice at the same period. Foscolo seldom mentioned his family, with the exception of his mother. He had two brothers, one who died, it is reported by his own hand, about the year 1797; the other enlisted as a soldier, and rose, from his good conduct and valour, to the rank of captain of dragoons.

When boyhood was passed, Foscolo was sent to the university of Padua, and studied under Cesarotti. There was great dissimilarity in the tastes and literary opinions of the master and pupil; and thus Foscolo soon displayed his original and independent turn of mind. Cesarotti explained and commented upon Homer, and undertook at the same time to emend and improve the verses of the father of poetry. He preferred Voltaire to Euripides, and Ossian to Homer. While a great portion of ridicule attaches itself to such paradoxes, the real learning and extensive reading of the professor benefited his scholars; and by liberating them from the narrow system of instruction which had subsisted for many years, he introduced them, as it were, from the paled and guarded park of classical literature, to the wilds, the moors, the incult mountains, in short, to all the vast variety of unfettered nature.

Foscolo, though taught by the advocate of Ossian, was all his life a worshipper of Homer. Studious, as well as ardent in his literary pursuits, he became a critical scholar; and, admiring not only Greek poetry, but the fabric and machinery which constitute its structure, he modelled his own poetic productions on them,

and made ancient mythology, and allusions to classical history, the props as well as the ornaments of his verses. At the same time he admitted Cesarotti's rules with regard to the Italian language, and abandoned the dialect of the Trecentisti, — so long held up as a model, and yet which had become a dead tongue, — to form an animated, simple, living language, introducing into it phrases and words of modern use ; expressions for ever on the lips of the Italians, though heretofore banished from their pens.

We are told that, on leaving college, Foscolo hesitated whether to enter the clerical profession, which held out the prospect of competency to its followers ; but he was fortunately turned aside from a profession whose narrow rules and arbitrary laws were in direct opposition to his impetuous and independent disposition. Instead of assuming the tonsure, Foscolo resolved to follow in the steps of Alfieri, and to acquire fame as a tragedian.

1797. He produced his drama of "Thyestes" at the early age
Ætat. of nineteen ; and it may be said to be a creditable pro-

19. duction for a youth. It is from his after works that we judge that it was not inexperience, but an absolute defect of a certain species of talent, that made this boy's tragedy a mere bald imitation of those of his illustrious predecessor. Alfieri was not a fanciful poet ; his talent lay in developing plot, animating dialogue, and interesting the reader by the clash of passion, or the concentrated feelings of a single person. Foscolo possessed far more of the peculiar spirit of poetry ; but it was of didactic poetry. He could not invent incident, nor describe any feelings but such as originated in his own heart. "Thyestes," founded on one of the domestic crimes of the unfortunate house of Pelops, possesses all the faults of Alfieri's tragedies. He imitated him in producing only a few personages on the scene ; so that, as a critic observes, it seems as if it were written just after the deluge, when the human race congregated by threes and fours : obscurity of plot is added to this simplicity of action, and the purpose and aim of the

poet is never clearly discerned. One scene follows another, not because produced by the antecedent one, but because it is necessary that something should be said and done, or all would be at a full stop. The language is clear and energetic ; but, as we are uninterested by the ideas which it conveys, this must appear a very secondary merit.

"Thyestes," however, succeeded in the theatre ; and, as success in representation is certainly the test of dramatic merit, we might suppose some latent energy in its concoction, unapparent to the reader, but that its success appears to have arisen from political feeling. It was acted for the first time on January 4. 1797, in the theatre of St. Angelo at Venice, to a vast concourse of spectators, and was repeated with applause for nine consecutive nights. The extreme youth of the author filled the audience with admiration, and he was called for after the representation. We cannot well discern the political allusions that gave it its chief interest, except that the name of king and tyrant are made synonymous ; a style, it might be imagined, neither distasteful nor injurious to a republican government, however aristocratic. It would appear, however, that this avidity for liberal sentiments was the cause of its temporary success ; for it was never again acted on any stage in Italy.

Adversity meanwhile was hanging over the head of the poet. The fall of Venice, which occurred in the autumn of the same year, deprived him of the very name of country. Hatred of the Austrian is a sentiment profoundly engraved in every Italian heart ; and when Venice was made over by treaty to the German despot, Foscolo became a voluntary exile. Whether he was in danger of being marked out in any of the lists of proscription does not appear ; but as it is evident that he is the hero of his "Letters of Jacopo Ortis," we gather from that book, that his friends feared for his personal liberty if he remained, and besought him to

shelter himself, while there was yet time, from the enmity of the new government. "I have left Venice," Ortis writes, "to avoid the first and most violent persecutions. How many victims remain! We Italians ourselves bathe our hands in Italian blood. Let what will happen to me! Since I despair of good, either for myself or my country, I can await in tranquillity a prison or death."

All these letters are full of the indignant struggles, and the sorrow, as well as of the opinions which ruled the heart of Foscolo, as he found himself driven a wanderer from his home, sometimes lamenting his own misfortunes, sometimes those of his country.

"How many of our fellow-citizens repent their flight from home," he writes, "and mourn! for what can we expect except indigence and indignity—or, at the best, that brief and sterile compassion which uncivilised nations offer to the stranger exile? And where shall I seek an asylum—in Italy? Unhappy land! and can I behold those who have robbed, scorned, and sold us, and not weep with rage? Oh! if the tyrants were one only, and if the slaves were less abject, my hand would suffice. But those who now blame me for cowardice would then accuse me of crime; and the prudent would lament over, not the heroism of one resolved, but the frenzy of a desperate man. What can be done between two powerful nations, who, from being sworn, ferocious, and eternal enemies, colleague to enslave us? and where force alone does not avail, the one cajoles us with the name of liberty, the other with that of religion; and we, debased by ancient servitude and new-born licence, groan, betrayed, enslaved, famished, and yet not roused, either by treason or famine. Ah! if I could, I would destroy my house and all dear to me, and myself with them; I would leave nothing for the tyrants to triumph over. Were there not people who, to escape the Romans, robbers of the world, gave to the flames their dwellings, their wives, their children, and themselves, burying their

sacred independence among the glorious ashes of their country?"

Thus passionately attached to liberty, Foscolo was not to be deluded by the false halo that then surrounded the name of Bonaparte, or by the fallacious promises of the French republican crusaders. "Another set of lovers of their country," he writes, "lament loudly. They exclaim that they are betrayed and sold; but, if they had armed themselves, they might have been conquered, but never had been betrayed; and if they had defended themselves to the last drop of blood, the conquerors could not have sold, nor would the conquered have sought to buy, them. Many of our countrymen imagine that freedom can be bought with money. They fancy that foreign nations come from a disinterested love of justice to slaughter each other mutually on our fields, for the sake of liberating Italy. But will the French, who have rendered the divine theory of public liberty execrable, become Timoleons for our sakes? Many, meanwhile, confide in the young hero, sprung from Italian blood, born where our language is spoken. But I expect nothing useful or noble from a cruel and base mind. What is it to me that he has the strength and roar of the lion, if he have the soul of a fox—and glories in it? Yes! base and cruel; nor are these epithets exaggerated. Has he not sold Venice, with open and boasted barbarity? Selim I., who caused 30,000 Circassian warriors, who had surrendered, confiding in his faith, to be massacred on the shores of the Nile; and Nadir Shah, who, in our time, massacred 300,000 Indians, are more atrocious, but less contemptible. With these eyes I saw a democratic constitution signed by the young hero; yes, it was subscribed by his own hand, and sent by Passeriano to Venice for acceptance; and at that very time the treaty of Campo Formio was already confirmed and ratified: Venice was sold; and the confidence which the hero fostered in us all, has filled

Italy with proscriptions and exiles. I do not blame the reasons of state, through which nations are sold like flocks of sheep; it was ever so, and so will it ever be: but I grieve for my country, which I have lost. '*He was born Italian, and will one day regenerate his country:*' others may believe this, — I never can. I replied, and shall always reply, 'Nature made him a tyrant, and a tyrant cares not for his country, nor does he possess one.'"

Ruminating on all these violent and bitter feelings, the offspring of patriotism and adversity, Foscolo took the road to Tuscany. "In this blessed land," he writes, "poetry and letters first awoke from barbarism. Wherever I turn, I behold the houses where were born, and the turf that covers, those renowned Tuscans; and I fear at every step to tread on their remains. Tuscany is a garden, its inhabitants are naturally courteous, the sky serene, and the air full of life and health; but I am not happy here. I hope always for better things on the morrow, when I shall reach another town: but to-morrow arrives, and I pass from city to city; and this state of exile and solitude grows each day more unendurable. We Italians are foreigners and exiles even in Italy; and scarcely do we leave our little native territory, than neither understanding, nor fame, nor blameless habits can shelter us; and we are lost if we endeavour to distinguish ourselves. Our very fellow-citizens look upon all Italians who are not natives of their own town, and on whose limbs the same chains do not hang, as strangers." Thus Tuscany afforded no asylum to the fugitive. He desired to see no one in Florence except Alfieri; and the retired and reserved habits of the count prevented his seeking his acquaintance. He saw him, as he describes in one of his poems, "wandering silently along the most solitary bank of the Arno, gazing anxiously on earth and heaven; but, finding nothing living that could warm his heart, he took refuge in the aisles of Santa Croce, while wished-for death overspread his countenance with pallid

hues." * The silence and the concentrated melancholy of Alfieri made a deep impression on the mind of his admirer ; and Foscolo sought afterwards to imitate it in his own person, forgetful that his natural impetuosity and vehemence were very dissimilar to the gloom and pride of his model.

From Florence, Foscolo pursued his way to Milan, which was then the capital of the Cisalpine republic, and imparted its rights of citizenship to all the wandering patriots of Italy. The new republic afforded a strange spectacle : formed upon notions of Greek and Roman liberty, picked up from learned priests, mingled with modern notions of freedom, it displayed the most ridiculous anachronisms ; and its members, all Italians, yet strangers to each other, and regarding with oblique looks all those born in a different city, met without amalgamating. The young found hope and life in the new stage on which they were permitted to act a part ; and though ridicule and blame might be attached to many of their public actions, still the more sanguine lovers of their country hoped that, when the first spring-tide of enthusiasm should ebb, prudence, unanimity, and strength would be the first born of national independence. Foscolo, however, was not among those. Irascible and misanthropic, and sensitively alive to the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, he saw the evils around him, and desponded.

One of the advantages derived from this new capital was, that it served to draw together the most distinguished Italians within the walls of the same city. Each town of the peninsula sent some man esteemed for his talents ; and names, scattered before over the surface of the country, now congregated together. Foscolo had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with all his more illustrious countrymen. In his "*Letters of Jacopo Ortis*," he mentions Parini especially with reverence and affection ; and he became intimate also with Monti, who then displayed fervour in the

* *Dei Sepolcri* di Ugo Foscolo.

cause of liberty, while his inward dislike for the members of the actual government must have accorded with the sentiments of Foscolo. Two decrees, passed at that time, served, indeed, to show that blame deservedly attached itself to them : one was the law enacted to deprive of office all those who had formerly written against liberty — an act of despotism levelled expressly against Monti ; the other was the sentence passed by the great council against the Latin language : whether it was because Latin was the language of their religion and the priests, or from mere stupid barbarism, they passed a decree to prohibit its being taught in the public schools. Foscolo saw, in the languages of the ancient world, not only the root of all our knowledge, but also the most splendid monuments of human intellect : he knew how fallacious and trivial all translations are ; he was imbued to the heart with a love of classic lore ; and he saw, in the suppression of the Latin, the paramount influence of the French language. No wonder that he, as well as every well-educated man, regarded such a law and its promulgators with mingled scorn and disgust.

To make the resemblance between Foscolo and his imaginary hero, Jacopo Ortis, the more exact, we are told that, at this very time, he fell in love with a young lady of Pisa : his passions, naturally vehement, were inflamed to their utmost by the influence of the most engrossing of them all. The object of his attachment was singularly beautiful ; her large black eyes, rich raven hair, her dignified stature and noble carriage, her whole person, in short, cast in the very mould of majestic beauty, was formed to inspire admiration and love. She possessed also all that natural talent which so usually falls to the lot of Italian women : her voice was harmonious, and her proficiency in music great. She was known afterwards to several of the biographers of her lover ; and, with the simplicity and frankness usual to the Italians, spoke openly of their mutual attachment. One among them, after calling the lady “ the flower

of all loveliness," adds, "We heard from her—for she yet lives—that the few lines cited as being written by Teresa, in a letter of Ortis, dated 17th September, 1798, were a part of a letter which she wrote to Foscolo."* Giuseppe Pecchio, in his *Life of Foscolo*, speaks of her with great enthusiasm: "I saw her," he writes, "several times after she was married, when, at a private theatre, she took the part of *Isabella* in the 'Filippo' of Alfieri; and I still remember, with pleasure, her dignified action and her expressive countenance, which filled the audience with enthusiasm, and carried their feelings along with her."

This attachment was not fortunate; and Foscolo suffered all the throes of disappointment and grief. Violent in all his feelings, love possessed his heart like a burning fire; he grew sullen and gloomy, only breaking silence by muttering a few sentences indicative of his ardent desire for self-destruction. He did not openly speak of his passion; but his feelings overflowed on paper, and he wrote and published "*The Letters of Two Lovers*," a sort of novel, which afterwards served as a foundation to the "*Letters of Ortis*." While thus occupied by literature and love, he added the duties of a more laborious profession. Bonaparte, having created the Cisalpine republic, strove to raise an Italian army for its defence. The Lombard legion formed the nucleus of these troops, and the sons of the noblest families in Italy accepted commissions: among others, Foscolo became an officer.

The absence, however, of Bonaparte in Egypt, and the invasion of the Austro-Russian army, put a sudden end to the existence of the new republic. At the same time that Monti fled across the Alps, and wandered, a famished exile, among the ravines and woods of Savoy, Foscolo, forced also to provide for his own safety, took refuge in Genoa, and joined the French garrison commanded by Massena. It was here that the French

1800.
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22.

* See the biographical notice of Foscolo, prefixed to the "*Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*." Londra, 1829."

made a last stand, endeavouring to stop the progress of the invading army. The siege of Genoa was formed ; and Foscolo, serving under the French banners, had an opportunity of studying at once the military art and the science of government during the various chances of a long and arduous struggle. While day lasted, there were perpetual combats along the whole line of mountains which surround Genoa to the north ; and the night was spent in popular assemblies, in which the leaders strove to inspire the citizens with resolution to endure the evils of the siege. These soon grew intolerable ; and famine, and consequent disease, made frightful ravages. Foscolo sometimes collected the people together in a spot of the city made famous by the act of an Austrian corporal, who (1748) struck with his cane a Genoese, who was striving in vain to move a cannon : he endeavoured to animate his audience to heroic deeds, by describing the magnanimous vengeance with which their ancestors had vindicated the insult. Nor was he less forward in the performance of his military duties ; and his name occurs in the lists of those who were most distinguished for their bravery.

During the siege, on occasion of Napoleon's return from Egypt, and being named consul, Foscolo addressed a letter to him from Genoa, which prophesied the height to which he would hereafter rise, and besought him to rest content with his present exaltation, nor to taint his well-merited renown by schemes of unmeasured ambition. This letter, which is of two pages only, is written with the freedom of a patriot and the dignity of a disinterested and noble mind. He incurred no danger by this address, but he displeased the ear of power ; and the truth and frankness of his representations form an honourable contrast with the general adulation, and the barefaced flatteries, which other writers addressed to the victor.

The energetic mind of Foscolo was not satisfied by the arduous duties of his profession, to which were added the not less exciting task of guiding and ani-

mating the minds of the citizens of Genoa, when they flagged under the visitation of the most frightful calamities. It was at this period that he wrote an ode to Luigia Pallavicini, on her falling from her horse, which betrays no signs of the sufferings which he was enduring, except its motto, taken from Horace: "*Sollicitæ oblivia vitæ.*" This poem is all grace, elegance, and classic allusion; but there is no originality nor poetic fire. The machinery is mythological, the imagery drawn from the same source; and it is rather the work of one imbued with the poetry of the ancients, and translating remembered ideas into his native language, than the outpourings of a mind inspired by passion and nature. It is strange that Foscolo should have found time to compose verses at a period when the town he inhabited was being bombarded by the English fleet, when the Austrians were making daily assaults, and the streets were filled by a famished and dying multitude. But while Foscolo shared the labours and dangers of the garrison, he did not partake their amusements; and while they were immersed in the grosser pleasures of the bottle, of cards, and smoking, he took refuge in his imagination, and found relief in the soothing and refined feelings generated by study and poetry.

Meanwhile Genoa, reduced by famine, surrendered on the 4th of June, 1800, with the condition that the garrison should be conveyed to France by the English fleet. Foscolo accompanied his fellow-soldiers, but he endured only a brief exile from his country. The battle of Marengo drove the Austrians from Italy; the Cisalpine republic was restored; and Foscolo, together with the rest of the Italian fugitives, returned to Milan.

Already known as an author and a man of letters, he increased his fame at this period by the publication of the "*Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis,*" a romance which at once acquired great popularity, and, as being the first that had been written in the Italian language, demanded the praise of some sort of originality. Yet its chief fault is, that it is an imitation. Foscolo could not in-

vent incidents, nor weave the artful texture of a well-told story. The plot of "Ortis" is similar to that of Goëthe's more celebrated romance of "Werter." A youth of disappointed expectations, and devoured by a morbid melancholy, falls in love with a girl who is already betrothed to another. He resolves to die as soon as the marriage shall take place; but, meanwhile, fosters his passion by frequenting the society of the young lady. She had never been attached to her intended husband, and is the victim of obedience to her father's will, who, besides that his honour is engaged, would have found an insuperable obstacle to the pretensions of Ortis in his plebeian birth. His sorrowing daughter, while she obeys, returns the affection of her passionate, adoring lover; her destined husband become jealous, her father uneasy; and Ortis, called upon by duty and friendship, absents himself from her society: he travels to Florence, to Milan, to Genoa; and then, hearing of Teresa's marriage, retraces his steps to the Euganean hills, the abode of his mistress, and fulfils his long-nurtured intention of putting an end to his existence. The slight differences between this story and "Werter" are founded on Foscolo's own attachment, before alluded to.

There is, indeed, this main difference between the work of Goëthe and that of Foscolo,—that the former is, so to speak, a dramatic, and the latter a didactic, author. Goëthe founded his story on the feelings of another. He delineated the sentiments and passions of his unfortunate young friend Jerusalem; and, putting himself in his place, filled out, from his own experience and imagination, the various portions of a picture, the most highly wrought, refined, and true that, perhaps, exists in the world of fictitious portraits. Foscolo painted a *beau idéal* of himself. So full was his mind of his own idea, that he prefixed a portrait of Ortis, which was only a favoured likeness of himself. Like the author, Ortis fled from Venice when it was made over to the Austrians. Like the author, his heart was tortured by patriotic sufferings, and his soul was in

arms against the oppressor. Ortis, like Foscolo, saw misery and evil rife around him : compassion rose with him into a passion ; and his heart bled and burnt alternately, as he pitied the victim, and abhorred the tyrant. Ortis, like Foscolo, meditated suicide as the cure for all evils, and regarded death as a harbour whence to retreat from the tempests of life. Yet Foscolo did not, like Ortis, destroy himself ; because, we are apt to say, he is in this greater than his prototype, since he felt powers and capacities within him that led him to continue to endure the evils of life, to raise for himself a name among his fellow-creatures, to benefit and to exhort them ; while Ortis, like a weak plant that wants all self-erecting power, fell prostrate, and was trampled on by the iron heels of destiny. Egotists, perhaps, are, of all people, the least likely to put an end to themselves ; yet they like to dwell on their own deaths, and, feeling that the drama of their lives is incomplete without a striking catastrophe, they ponder on it, and, if led to bring themselves forward, are pretty sure to adorn their lives by describing its disastrous conclusion.

This morbid shrinking from the woes of existence, this total want of fortitude, added to a lively sensibility, presents a picture which, a few years ago, was the model by which the youth of Europe delighted to dress their minds. Men need a career — an hope, an aim : the French revolution first gave new life to these natural instincts, and then, aided by Napoleon's despotism, blighted and tore them up. Since then, a better day has dawned, and men are glad to live for the morrow, since each day is full of spirit-stirring expectation. The influence of a book like "Ortis" is null now : it was pernicious at the time when it was written. And yet, in representing his hero as a self-destroyer, Foscolo was not without moral aim. The Italians fear death to the extent of the most contemptible cowardice ; they consider any one insane who engages in any actions that even remotely endanger his life ; and Foscolo was earnest to prove that death was not the worst of evils, but

that it might be sought voluntarily as a refuge from slavery or woe. We find, therefore, conjoined to intolerance of personal suffering, the most ardent patriotism, integrity, and independence of spirit; lively compassion for the physical evils of the poor, which are too often disregarded; and observations on life and our natural feelings, full of delicacy and profound truth. What more true than the remark, "that we are too proud to give our compassion, when we feel that we can give nothing else?" What can come more home to a man of sensibility than the exclamation of *Ortis*, — "I am always in perfect harmony with the unhappy, for indeed I always find something wicked in the prosperous?" And, again, when he says, "Let us gather up a treasure of dear and soothing feelings, which, during the course of years, destined, perhaps, to be sad and persecuted, may awaken the memory that we have not always been unhappy." Another merit which these letters have may be mentioned, which an Italian author has also discovered: they display a love for, and an observation of, nature, seldom found among their greatest writers. The Italians, generally speaking, are not lovers of nature: full of passion and talent, yet they do not ally themselves to the mighty mother, nor do their pulses beat responsive to her varied and living phenomena. *Dante* alone, perhaps, displays a true feeling for external objects, describing them as they are, and as they may be supposed to feel; while the others dilate rather on their beauty, as if they presented a scenic exhibition, than were in themselves animated beings to feel and have existence. The rambles of *Ortis* amidst the *Euganean hills*; the sentiments with which he contemplates a tempest and the succeeding calm; the glories of summer, or tyranny of winter; resemble those so often to be found in English authors, and give the work a charm peculiar to itself. The style, also, of these letters (and the Italians make style a chief merit) is pure, elegant, and forcible. It created a language hitherto unknown to his countrymen, uniting the familiar

and colloquial with the tasteful and the expressive. It is too rhetorical, even thus, for our ears; but the Italians easily pardon inflation.

The success of "Ortis" was immediate and striking. The Italians usually love to be amused and made laugh; but they were caught by the charm, and content to weep over the misfortunes of the victim of love. The author had artfully contrived to mingle himself inextricably with the image of his hero; and the ladies of Italy were interested by his appearance, uncouth as it was, and his manners, dissimilar to the inanity of their usual companions. He became what we call "a lion," and he himself fell in love with one of his fair admirers; but, as is too often the case where the author is more thought of than the man, this lady's love was more of the head than the heart, and Foscolo, after a short period, was dismissed. We are told that this lady was the daughter of the courteous Marchesa F., mentioned by Sterne in his "Sentimental Journey." True passion often enforces sympathy; otherwise, we cannot wonder that Foscolo did not create a sentiment in another as strong as that which he himself felt. In personal appearance he was not formed to excite tender admiration. Pecchio, who knew him at this time, describes him in vivid but no attractive colours. According to him, Foscolo was of middle stature, rather strong and muscular of frame; he had thick, reddish, rough hair, which added to his expression of wild vehemence, and rendered his fits of gloomy silence, or transports of rage, more horrible. His eyes were of a blueish grey, small, deep set, and intensely sparkling. His complexion was ruddy; his features well formed, except that his lips, though thin, protruded, having that animal-look about the jaw which is the opposite of the *beau idéal* of the human countenance: he wore his chin thickly covered with hair, which gave him a sort of resemblance to an oran-outang. There is a story told of him that a Frenchman said to him one day, "Vous êtes bien laid, monsieur;" to which Foscolo wittily re-

plied, "Oui, monsieur, à faire peur." On another occasion he was engaged in a duel with a friend, who impertinently compared him to the animal above mentioned. To add to the wildness and singularity of his appearance, he was fond, in an awkward sort of imitation of Alfieri, of appearing immersed in thought, maintaining a gloomy silence, interrupted only as he muttered, or rather growled forth, various quotations or verses, in a voice which made an Italian young lady once name him "a sentimental clap of thunder." Such was the outward appearance and manners of the Italian Werter; and if he met with success among the fair sex, it must be attributed to the ready sympathy they are apt to afford to sincere feeling, and to a generous, independent spirit.

1802. When Bonaparte, under the name of first consul,
 Etat. rose to supreme power in France, it became necessary
 24. to remodel the Cisalpine republic; and a congress of 450 deputies was held at Lyons, to decide on the new form of government. On this occasion Foscolo published an "Oration to Bonaparte." A good deal of uncertainty exists as to the exact circumstances under which this oration was composed. It has been supposed that it was delivered publicly at the congress; but there is no foundation for this idea, as Foscolo was not one of the deputies, and did not accompany them to Lyons. It is said, on one hand, that he wrote it at the desire of Bonaparte himself; and on the other, that the task was intrusted to him by the triumvirate, who, under the title of committee of government, were placed at the head of the Cisalpine republic; and it is said that the oration was delivered before the committee itself*, which, considering its nature, can hardly be believed. It commences with a grandiloquent eulogium of Napoleon; it then diverges into indignant and sarcastic representations of the mal-conduct of the heads of the republic. "Men," he describes them, "who are neither statesmen nor warriors, formerly slaves, now tyrants, and for ever slaves of themselves, and of circum-

* Pecchio, "Vita di Ugo Foscolo."

stances, which they neither will nor can command ; conscious of their own vices, and therefore timid and discordant ; cowardly with the bold, bold with the cowardly, they crush accusations by bribery, and complaints by menaces. Men who took the arms out of the hands of the militia soldiery, an army formed of citizens, to give them to bands of runaway felons and deserters." He then dilates on the miseries endured in Italy during the period of the success of the Austrians and Russians, and describes Bonaparte's return as the advent of a demigod ; and he calls on him to complete his work by assuming the supreme command, instead of leaving it to the triumvirate, who betrayed the cause of liberty and oppressed their countrymen. Independent as Foscolo was, we are surprised when he goes on to say, that every patriotic Italian would elect Bonaparte for their legislator, captain, father, and perpetual prince. But this surprise diminishes when we read on, and find that he expects this supreme ruler to gift the subject country with liberty. He entreats him not to entrust the state to men, but to laws ; not to the generosity of other nations, but to its own force. " Let such be your institutions," he exclaims, " such your example, such our strength, that no one shall dare rule us after you. Who, indeed, would be worthy to succeed to Bonaparte ? As you cannot live for ever for us, let the seal of our liberty be set ; you yourself leaving it inviolate : and, with the whole nation, I call freedom our not having (with the exception of Bonaparte) any magistrate who is not Italian, nor any general who is not our fellow-citizen. If, while you live, our liberty totters, what hope have we that it will endure after you are withdrawn from the earth ? No ! there is no liberty, no property, no life, no soul in any country, and under whatever form of government, when national independence is fettered !"

It is impossible that Foscolo, despite his assertions, and despite, perhaps, his hopes, should not have been aware that the strongest chain that can be imposed on the freedom of a nation is its having a foreign prince

at the head of government. Still he vindicated the cause he espoused, by demanding national institutions and a national army. The style of the oration is forcible, but too rhetorical ; and, though full of truths that intimidated the oppressors and did honour to the free spirit of the writer, calmer representations and closer reasoning would command more of our admiration. Not that such would have availed with the conqueror : Italy was, to him, only one other lever added to the vast engine of military force which was to raise him to the throne of the world.

Yet, though not gifted with liberty, the present epoch was a happy one for the north of Italy. After suffering from the persecutions of demagogues, and from the devastations of war, it reposed contentedly under the wise and liberal administration of Melzi. Foscolo continued to inhabit Milan : by day immersed in study, his evenings were spent in amusements. His sanguine disposition often led him to try the chances of a gambling table : when he won, he launched out into extravagant expenses ; he bought horses and dress, and hired the most magnificent apartments. When Fortune turned her back, all this show of prosperity as suddenly disappeared ; and he retired into a corner to study.* In one of these intervals of seclusion, he wrote a translation of the Hymn of Callimachus on the Hair of Berenice, accompanied by a whole volume of comments. The sort of learning which he here displayed obtained no applause ; but we are told that the erudition thus made show of had for its aim, not the instructing the ignorant, but the ridicule of pedants and book-worms. It is difficult, however, to cull wit from the dry bones of verbal criticism.

Under the presidency of Melzi, an Italian legion had been formed in which Foscolo held a commission. When Bonaparte formed the camp at Boulogne, for the avowed purpose of invading England, the division of the Italian army to which the poet belonged made part of

* Pecchio.

the vast assemblage of troops called together. He held the rank of captain, and was attached to the staff of general Tullière. The Italian troops were stationed at St. Omer and Calais, at which latter place Foscolo entered on the study of the English language. The spot which he selected for the purpose of study was curiously chosen: he was often seen writing with eagerness by the light of the lamp of the billiard-table, while his fellow-officers were playing, drinking, and conversing around.

To exercise himself in English, he undertook the translation of Sterne's "*Sentimental Journey*;" and it is much praised for the purity of its style. But the most curious part of the publication is a disguised account of the translator. Foscolo's excessive vanity shines very apparent in this account of himself, in which he indulges in an egotistical description of his own singularities; and, according to his old fancy, conducts himself to the grave, and writes his own epitaph. The title-page of the translation declares the translator to be one Didimo Chierico; and on the character of this Didimo (being himself) Foscolo fondly dilates; mentions various works of his, the manuscripts of which he says that he possesses; and records his eccentricities and opinions in a manner which excites a smile, when we remember that he is his own memorialist of trifles, which it would be hardly worth mentioning when appertaining to the greatest men. "Didimo entertained," he tells us, "strange systems, which, nevertheless, he did not defend by argument; and, as apology to those who brought forward irresistible reasons, he replied by the single word 'opinions.' He respected, also, the systems of others, and, from carelessness or some other motive, never tried to refute them; but always remained silent, without making sign of dissent, except that he uttered the word 'opinions' with religious seriousness. On these systems or notions he founded actions and words worthy of laughter. He called don Quixote happy, because he deluded himself with glory and love.

He drove away cats, because they appeared to him the most silent of all animals ; at the same time he praised them, because, like dogs, they took advantage of society, and enjoyed their liberty like owls. He did not believe that you could trust any one who lived next door to a butcher, or near the place destined for public executions. He believed in prophetic inspiration, and fancied that he was acquainted with its source. He accused the nightcap, dressing-gown, and slippers of husbands, as the cause of a wife's first infidelity. He gave no better specimen of his knowledge : asserting that the sciences were a series of propositions which had need of demonstrations apparently self-evident, but substantially uncertain ; and that geometry, in spite of algebra, would remain an imperfect science, until the incomprehensible system of the universe was known : and he maintained that the arts could render truth more useful to men than the sciences.

“ When travelling, he dined at the public tables : he easily became familiar, though he spoke dryly to the ceremonious, proudly to the rich, and avoided all sects and confraternities. He frequented mostly the society of women ; because he thought them more richly endowed by nature with pity and modesty, two pacific qualities which, he said, alone temper the combative propensities of human beings. He was listened to readily ; though I know not where he found matter of discourse, since he would talk a whole evening without uttering a word concerning politics, religion, or scandal. He never asked questions, that he might not lead others to answer falsely. He was glad to receive his acquaintances at home ; but when walking he liked to be alone, or with strangers to whom he took a fancy ; and if any of his acquaintance approached, he took a book from his pocket, and, in room of salutation, recited scraps from a modern translation of the Greek poets ; on which he was left alone.”

And thus he goes on, for several pages, describing eccentricities, partly natural, partly assumed, which he

wished should attract attention, as is evident by his thus introducing them to the public, who would otherwise have been ignorant of their existence.

On his return to Italy, he became intimate with ^{1805.} general Caffarelli, minister of war of the kingdom of Italy. Warmed by the recent sight of the encampment of Boulogne, he proposed to the general to make a new edition of the military works of Montecucoli, with notes. The text was furnished him by the marchese Trivulzio, and the edition was brought out with great splendour; but Foscolo is accused of having used his imagination, rather than critical acumen, in the emendation of his author.

The north of Italy was enjoying a great degree of prosperity at this time. Melzi gave encouragement to all undertakings that tended to elevate the Italian character; and literary men were held in that esteem which ensures their exerting themselves to bestow on their country the richest harvest of their talents. Foscolo, though he still held his captain's commission, was, in honour of his literary character, exempted from the toils of service; and, taking advantage of the liberty allowed him, he left Milan for a time, and took up his residence at Brescia. He resided in a small house, situated on an open hill, not far from the city. Here he was accustomed to study till sunset; and, whether alone or in company, he would recite the poetry of the ancients, or his own, which he was then occupied in composing. The Brescians are a happy, gay people; they live less in the town than the inhabitants of the rest of Italy, and take peculiar pleasure in rural amusements; they are hospitable and fond of festivity; not very refined, they are yet open-hearted and cordial, and noted for bravery when in the field. Foscolo's neighbours admired and visited him; persons of every sect and opinion, even the priests, flocked to his house; and often seated under a wide-spreading fig tree which was in his garden, he held forth to a numerous audience. The Brescians are naturally enthusiastic: he had the

art of inflaming the souls of the young, and they crowded round him as, with stentorian voice, he uttered his moral apophthegms. When night closed in, he left his rustic drawing room, and visited the theatres; and was often seen paying homage to the dark eyes of some Brescian beauty.*

It was here that he wrote the most perfect of his poems—his “Ode on Sepulchres.” The elegance and pure taste of this composition have caused it to be compared to Gray’s well-known “Elegy;” but it is more classical in its ideas and construction, and would rather remind the reader of Milton’s “Lycidas.” Every verse is harmonious music; and the melancholy that is cast over it is graceful and touching, not harrowing and sombre. A law had been passed at Milan instituting a public cemetery without the walls of the city, in which all the dead were to be promiscuously buried, without marks of distinction. The poet, addressing Pindemonte, begins by commenting upon the notion that funeral pomp and an honourable tomb are of no avail to the dead; and then he speaks of the sacred sentiment that leads us to live still with our lost friends, and makes the spot of their interment precious in our eyes. Alluding to the new law, he apostrophises the muse, asking her if she does not love to linger near the desecrated tomb of her Parini, whose venerated remains, cast among the bodies of criminals, are scarcely protected from the assaults of the houseless dog, while night birds hover, screaming, over it. He speaks of the pious sentiments with which the sad relics of mortality have ever been regarded since religion first instituted sacred and social laws; and describes, in heartfelt but poetic language, the various ways in which survivors love to pay homage to the beloved dead. From tender and pathetic pictures of domestic bereavement, he then rises to describe the ennobling sentiment inspired by a sight of the tombs of the great and good. He apostrophises Florence, and gracefully brings in the

* Pecchio.

well-known predilection of Alfieri for the aisles of Santa Croce ; and then, taking a still higher flight, he describes Providence and destiny as presiding over the graves of the worthy, and vindicating their unforgotten names, even from the silent turf that covers them ; and, carried away by his love for classic lore, with no forced digression, he concludes by speaking of the mounds that still mark the spot where the warriors of Greece died on the Trojan shore, and describes Homer, the poet blind and old, wandering around, and bestowing on them the immortal fame of which they would otherwise have been deprived.

This anatomy of a poem can convey but a slight and incomplete idea of its merits. The harmony of the versification—the tender and soft melancholy diffused throughout—the grace of the transitions—and the continual rising in his subject to the end, are all lost. Nor could a translation do justice to these, since, as evanescent as they are delicate, they would be lost in another language. The whole poem is Foscolo's masterpiece.

He also published at this time his translation of the first book of the *Iliad*. Monti was bringing out his version, and there was much hardihood in Foscolo's rivalry. His knowledge of Greek, contrasted with the other's ignorance, no doubt instigated him. To remove any unpleasant feeling, he dedicated it to Monti ; in which he speaks at once with modesty of his own attempt, and in high praise of Monti's genius. It is difficult for a stranger to judge between the merits of the translators ; but even if Foscolo's is the best, it is a mere fragment. He never published more than the first and third books ; while Monti went through the labour of the entire translation, and bestowed a complete work on his country.

In 1808, Foscolo was installed professor of eloquence in the university of Pavia—a chair formerly filled by Monti and Cesarotti. The choice was universally popular ; and his introductory oration, " On the Origin and Use of Letters," was listened to with enthusiasm.

He had refused to introduce any praise of Napoleon into it, and the whole was conceived in the spirit of personal and political independence. This fault was visited with singular severity ; since, after a short time, the professorship of eloquence at Pavia was entirely suppressed, under the pretence of a reform in the plan of studies, but in reality as a mark of disapprobation. Petty jealousy and the vain desire of ruling even the thoughts of the subject world, induced Napoleon on all occasions to punish severely any demonstration of independence. Nor was the vengeance confined to Foscolo and Pavia alone. The literary professorships at Bologna and Padua were also abolished, as well as those for the Greek and oriental languages ; for history, and, in short, all except those instituted to teach law, medicine, and the sciences. Several learned and excellent men were thus deprived of an honourable living. The nation was at once robbed of all easy access to a liberal education, and to the inappreciable knowledge of those languages which contain the most glorious monuments of man's genius : and thus Napoleon gave testimony to the Italians of the truth of Alfieri's axiom, that absolute monarchs hate the historian, the poet, and the orator, and give the preference to the sciences.*

Foscolo retreated from the university to the seclusion of the Lake of Como ; giving proof of his pure and ardent love of nature, so rare among Italians, by his retirement from cities to the sublime and luxuriant scenery of this lake. He took up his residence at a villa named the Pliniana, built on the site of the fountains whose periodical ebb and flow the younger Pliny records in his letters. The lake, paled in by mountains, bathes the walls of the villa ; and the neighbouring banks, clothed with myrtle and arbutus, overhang the waters, and cast their deep shade on the clear depths : the precipitous mountain rises behind, diversified by chestnut woods ; and here and there are seen huge cypresses, whose spires seem to pierce the skies, when

* Hobhouse's Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold.

regarded from the terraced garden of the villa. The flowing fountains keep up a perpetual murmur ; and, perhaps, in all the varied earth there is no spot which affords such a combination of the picturesque, the beautiful, the rich, the balmy, and the sublime. The house itself, without being ruinous, is huge and desolate ; but its vast cool halls are a pleasant refuge against the heats of mid-day. Here Foscolo studied through the morning, varying his life by spending his evenings with the family of count Giovio, a man of education and learning, whose young and gay family served to dissipate the fumes of melancholy in which the poet was rather fond of indulging.*

He here commenced his " Ode to the Graces : " this was a favourite composition, yet left unfinished. He was never weary of altering or improving—of softening its language, or adding new melody to the versification. It is purely classical in its idea, yet varied by the most beautiful touches of natural beauty. He occupied himself also by finishing his tragedy of " Ajax." The same faults are discoverable in this drama as in his juvenile production of " Thyestes." It is founded on the dispute between Ulysses and Ajax for the arms of Achilles, and the self-destruction of the latter. The action ends almost before it begins ; the scenes are frigid, the interest null ; still it excited a good deal of expectation ; and reading, as he did, speeches and scenes to various friends, its representation on the stage was looked forward to with eagerness at Milan. The theatre was crowded on the first night, and the audience sat patiently and listened for a long time to scene following scene, of sonorous words, high-sounding declamations, and vehement apostrophes, all leading to nothing, ending in nothing—exciting no sympathy, but wearying the ear. At length they grew tired ; and though they listened to the conclusion, it was evident that they were delighted to be dismissed.

It was a strange accident, that a drama which thus

* Pecchio.

failed of eliciting any interest in the audience, and the great fault of which was dulness, should have excited a persecution against its author. His enemies spread the report that the tragedy had a political aim ; that Napoleon was symbolised in Agamemnon, the king of kings ; and that general Moreau was pictured in Ajax, who deserved, but did not obtain, the arms of Achilles. There seems to have been no real foundation for this supposition, but Foscolo did not deny it : he preserved a mysterious silence ; whether from disdain, or from a covert pleasure in the annoyance of government, is uncertain. The ministers of Napoleon were inquisitorial and revengeful ; not to praise their emperor was sin sufficient to render any author obnoxious, and any expressions that could be distorted into blame were criminal. The cities of Italy, whose inhabitants are forbidden all political discussions, and who are shut out from the pursuits that naturally excite ambition, are singularly apt to diversify the monotony of their lives by gossiping. Such a supposition as the one above mentioned spread rapidly through Milan : men met together to wonder and dispute ; they worked themselves up into an idea that something had been done, and that something would ensue ; while the spies of the police excited and reported each unguarded expression. The city became disturbed by the notion of Foscolo's attempt to bring Napoleon on the stage as an object of censure, and in expectation of the punishment with which his boldness would be visited ; while he, silent and mysterious, refused to offer any explanation. It was intimated accordingly to him, that he would do well to change the air ; and, submitting to an exile from Milan, he again visited Tuscany.

He took the house at Camaldoli, near Florence, which had, in ages gone by, been inhabited by Galileo. He alludes to this in his "Ode to the Graces," in some verses which describe the nocturnal murmur of the distant Arno, which flowed clear yet hid beneath its willows, and visited the ear of the astronomer as he watched the

star of eve. It was here, he records, that dawn, and the moon, and the sun displayed to him, with various tints, the serene clouds that hung below the Alps, or illumined the plain which stretches to the Tyrrhene sea; a wide-spread scene of cities and woods, diversified by the labours of the happy husbandman, by temples; or the hundred hills with which, adorned by caverns, and olive groves, and marble palaces, the Apennines encircle the lovely city, where Flora and the Graces have garlands.* In one point, the poetry of Foscolo may be compared to the more didactic parts of Milton. He never omits a romantic or classical allusion; and, bringing forward all that ennobles and animates his subject, adorns it with human interest. Whoever reads in the original the verses I have so lamely translated into prose, cannot help remembering various passages inspired by the memory of Tuscany, which show like pictures of Claude in the pages of the most graceful as well as the most sublime of our poets.

We cannot refrain from observing, in this place, that we possess a proof, in the bent of Foscolo's genius, of how little the intellect is often in accord with the heart. Wild, vehement, gloomy almost to savageness, independent even to an incapacity of yielding to the common rules of society, he could not depict the wild furies of Ajax, nor, indeed, the more burning throes that often tore his own heart. His best compositions, on the contrary, seem to emanate from an impassioned but

* "Con elle (le Grazie)
 Qui dov' io canto Galileo sedea
 ——— a spiar l' astro
 Della loro regina, e il desviava
 Col notturno rumor l' acqua remota
 Che sotto ai pioppi della riva d' Arno
 Furtiva e argentea gli volava al guardo,
 Qui a lui l' Alba, la Luna e il Sol mostrava
 Gareggianti di tinte, or le serene
 Nubi sulle cerulee Alpe sedente
 Ora il piano che ——— alle tirrene
 Nereidi, immensa di città e di selve
 Scena — e di templi e d' arator beati,
 Or cento colli, onde Appenin corona
 D' ulivi e d'antri, e di marmoree ville
 L' elegante città, dove con Flora
 Le Grazie han serti, e amabile idioma.'

brooding spirit, nursed in soft melancholy and elegant and fanciful reverie. As we have before mentioned, he was purely a didactic writer; but perhaps no modern poet ever displayed so much harmony, grace, and truth of description. We have not the fantastic imagery nor the fire of Monti; neither the storms of the deep, nor the thunders of the sky; but an inland landscape, where the balmy air broods over waving forest and murmuring stream, and the heart of man reposing seems to take refuge

“ In that sweet mood where pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.”

1813. When the result of his Russian invasion shook
Ætat. Napoleon's throne, Foscolo returned to Milan. Public
35. events were undergoing a vast change. Napoleon, defeated by his own ambition, retired to what seemed to him the narrow circle of France, and appeared for a while to stand at bay, while a universal attack was made on him. His authority, every where shaken, tottered in Italy. The English, who had assisted so gloriously in the emancipation of Spain, sent emissaries to Italy, to invite the people to throw off the French yoke. It would have been of no avail to have invited them to exchange servitude under France for that under Austria, and the words liberty and national independence were pronounced as a spell to rouse them. Lord William Bentinck published a manifesto calling on them to assert their freedom; he conjured the soldiers to vindicate their country's rights, and to acquire for it that liberty which Spain, Portugal, and Holland reaped from the fall of Napoleon. His voice found an echo in every heart. We are told that “the name of independence was on the lips of all; nor at any crisis of any nation in the world were so much ardour and unanimity shown, as by the Italians at this moment.”* While thus the allies tried to win the Italians to their side, the treaty of Fontainebleau and the abdication of the French emperor placed the peninsula at their feet. The

* *Storia d' Italia*, scritta da Carlo Botta.

viceroy of Italy, prince Eugène, crossed the Alps ; the south of Italy fell into the hands of its old rulers ; while Milan, left to itself, assembled a senate to discuss a new form of government. The point disputed was, whether prince Eugène or a prince of the house of Austria should preside over them ; but they fancied that their independence was secure under the one or the other. The latter proposition carried the day ; for when the senate, recording the virtues of the viceroy, was about to solicit the allies to set him over them, a vast multitude surrounded their house, composed of every class—nobles, commonalty, artificers, rich and poor—even women of rank joined in the tumult—crying out for the independence of their country, and “No viceroy ! No France !” A placard went about, saying, “Spain and Germany have cast away the yoke of France from their necks—Italy must imitate them ;” while magistrates and people called aloud, “We will have electoral colleges, and no Eugène.” The senate fled—the people, roused to violence, rushed to destroy the partisans of the French, and the unfortunate Prini was torn to pieces. Liberty (alas ! blood-stained) seemed to win the day ; but it was a mock victory. The electoral colleges were convened, and they created a regency ; it was decreed that the allies should be solicited to grant the independence of the kingdom, and a free constitution with an Austrian but independent prince at its head. Legates were sent to the emperor Francis, at Paris, with these demands. He replied, that he also was Italian—that his soldiers had conquered Lombardy, and that the answer would be given at Milan. The Austrians entered Milan on the 28th of April. Bellegarde took possession of it in the name of Austria on the 23d of May. The kingdom of Italy was at an end ; its independence was crushed and exchanged for an ignominious and cruel servitude.*

At the commencement of these changes Foscolo remained unmoved. He pursued his studies in silence

* Carlo Botta.

and seclusion, and seemed to forget the political crisis among his literary occupations. But when Napoleon fell, he sided with the independents against the French party; though at the same time he gave proof of his courage and humanity by exerting himself vigorously, though vainly, to save the unfortunate Prini. At the same time he resumed his military duties; and when the regency was established, he was promoted to the rank of *capo squadrone*, or colonel. To the last he took an active part in asserting the liberty of his country. When the Austrian soldiers entered Milan, the city submitted peacefully, but not silently. Six thousand soldiers of the civic guard assembled, and, in presence of the occupying army, placed in the hands of the English general, Macfarlane, an address which they begged might be laid before the allies, claiming national independence and a constitution. Foscolo drew up this address. We are told that it was brief, energetic, and dignified*; a precious monument of the author's patriotism.

But Foscolo was not allowed to reap any good from his firm adherence to the cause of liberty. The Austrians looked on him with suspicious eyes, and he was not popular among his countrymen. He had quarrelled with Monti, and had many enemies. He saw no mode of maintaining himself: he foresaw that he should be persecuted, and perhaps entered into plots for the subversion of government. At this moment, some member of the Austrian government, knowing the benefit that would accrue to their cause if they could win Foscolo as a writer, asked him to furnish a plan for a public journal. He consented, refusing at the same time to write in it; but this slender act of civility was tortured into one of apostacy by his enemies, and too late he found that he had given room to calumny. Pecchio relates a conversation which he had with him, which, if he did not suspect Foscolo of treason to his country, was unkindly carried on by him. They met without

* Pecchio.

the eastern gate of the city, and Foscolo walked on for some time without speaking. At length he suddenly addressed his companion, saying, "You, who are accustomed to speak the truth both to friends and enemies, tell me what is said of me in public." Pecchio replied, "If you continue your intercourse with Austrians, your enemies will assert that you are their spy." This answer was as a thunderbolt to Foscolo—his countenance darkened—he quickened his steps, and said no more. The next day, without taking leave of any one, without passport, and without money, he set out in disguise for Switzerland. Whether his proud heart rebelled against continuing any longer among his suspicious countrymen, or whether, as some said, he was implicated in a plot among the soldiers, which was just then discovered, or whether, hopeless and sick at heart, he yearned for new scenes and a new life; whatever his motive was, he became henceforth a voluntary exile, and, leaving friends and country, began an untried career; adding one more to the number of unfortunate wanderers whom political changes had driven from their homes abroad on the earth.

At first Foscolo took refuge in Switzerland, and remained for two years in the city of Zurigo. He did little during that interval, except publish a sort of unintelligible Latin satire, called "*Dydymi Clerici Prophetæ Minimi Hypercalypseos, Liber singularis*;" which is written in imitation of the prophecies of the Bible, and satirises Paradisi and others who enjoyed offices in the fallen kingdom of Italy. Without a key it is impossible to understand it—alluding, as it does, to people little known, and to facts still more obscure; and when understood is not praised, even by his countrymen, who might be supposed to take some interest in a personal satire on men with whom they were acquainted.

Foscolo found tranquillity at Zurigo; and his disposition, not being inclined to intrigue, would have permitted him to remain there in peace; but he was

poor, and obliged to seek a country where he could turn his talents to some account. England, the refuge of exiles, was the place to which he repaired. There were liberal men there, who, ashamed of the part which the country had permitted lord Castlereagh to play, in sacrificing to despotism the very men whose desire of freedom he had sought to excite, readily and generously welcomed the victims of our foreign secretary's cruel policy. Foscolo, on his arrival, was visited by the most distinguished men of the country; the Whig party received him with open arms, and he made one of the circle assembled at Holland House. He was treated with all the cordiality considered due to a man of integrity and a patriot, banished by a foreign despot, and refusing to become the pensioner of the oppressors of his country; while, at the same time, he met with the mingled respect and curiosity which an author of acknowledged talents excites: and even lord Sidmouth, armed with the terrors of the alien act, assured him that he should remain unmolested during his sojourn.

A little time somewhat destroyed the illusion which first adorned his name. The English are very ready to receive any one as a lion, but not fond of fostering intimacies with any whose habits and manners do not perfectly assimilate with their own. The vehement gestures, wild looks, and loud voice of the Italian, were all in contradiction to the etiquette of English society; and no foreigner is capable of perceiving any thing but dulness and ice in the mild, high-bred, and unpretending manners of the aristocracy of this country. The English enjoy society in their own way; and there is a charm to us in the perfect liberty each one enjoys—no one encroaching, or being encroached upon. But the sensitiveness which leads us to give freedom to others, renders us jealous of any assumption of it on their part. Foscolo had no real hold on the society of which he made a part, except through his talents, and the respect his independence

and integrity commanded: but respect is a cold feeling, and can be indulged while we keep the object of it at a distance. His talents ceased to amuse, joined as they were to pride, to vehemence, and to habits which would not alter, but could not please.

Foscolo ceased to be a lion; and he retired to the neighbourhood of St. John's Wood, near the Regent's Park; and, surrounding himself by his books, and visited by a few friends, he led a life at once retired and eccentric. When Pecchio visited his friend in this retreat, in 1822, he was struck by the apparent desolation of the spot (South Bank) in which his house was situated; and at the same time by the appearance of three lovely sisters, who were the household servants of the poet,—named by his visitors the three Graces; in allusion at once to their beauty and Foscolo's poem.* He supported himself chiefly by writing in the Quarterly Review; and we owe to this mode of exercising his pen one of the most delightful of his productions, the "Essays on Petrarch." These are four in number; on the Love of Petrarch,—on his Poetry,—on his Character,—and a Parallel between him and Dante. On the whole, we are almost inclined to say that Foscolo scarcely does justice to the generous, amiable, and faithful lover of Laura. The pride and unbending disposition of Dante were more in accordance with his own character. But the discrimination, the taste, and enthusiasm of these Essays render them one of the most delightful books in the world. The volume in which they are collected is enriched, also, by several of lady Dacre's translations from Petrarch, which are unequalled for fidelity and grace; preserving the spirit and feeling of the original, and yet arraying them in flowing and melodious English verse.

* It was on account of one of these Graces that Foscolo believed himself obliged to challenge one Graham, an American. When they met in the field, the poet received, but did not return, his adversary's fire, and the affair terminated without a reconciliation. Graham was at that time a reporter to a newspaper, and had served Foscolo as translator of his works. He afterwards got into difficulties, committed a forgery, and was obliged to leave this country. Soon after, he fell in a duel in America.

Foscolo published also a translation of the third book of the *Iliad*; and his tragedy of "*Ricciarda*." Though founded on a story of the middle ages, there is no more interest in this last drama than his preceding ones: the feelings and situations are forced and unnatural. Fraternal hatred is the mainspring of the plot: Guelfo detests his half-brother, Averardo; and, on the death of their father Tancred, goes to war with him, to deprive him of his portion of their common heritage. As a further mark of hate, he betroths his daughter Ricciarda to Guido, the son of Averardo, merely to discover whether she loves her cousin or not; and, finding that she does, separates them with violent denunciations, and resolves to marry her to another. The drama opens while the brothers are at war. On account of the unfortunate unities—which force the author to bring all the persons together in one place, however improbable it may be that they should there meet—the poet causes Guido to leave his father's camp, and to secrete himself in Guelfo's palace, for the sake of watching over Ricciarda's safety, whose life he imagines to be menaced by her father. The action chiefly turns on Averardo first sending a friend, and then coming himself in disguise, to induce Guido to return to him; in Guelfo's denunciations against his daughter; and in scenes between the lovers. At length Averardo assaults and enters his brother's palace; and Guelfo, finding himself defeated, first kills Ricciarda, to prevent her marrying Guido, and then stabs himself; while Guido swears that he will soon follow his mistress to the tomb. The only beauty of the tragedy consists in the character of Ricciarda, her struggles between filial piety and love, her obedience to her father, and her devotion to her lover. But the whole is conceived in one unvaried tone of hate and unhappy love—of meditated murder and suicide. You neither perceive the end that the author has in view, nor that there can be any end except by their all dying. Foscolo dedicated this tragedy to lord William Russell. His politics naturally brought him into con-

tact with what was then the opposition party ; and this alliance was drawn closer when the exiles of Parga applied to him to draw up the petition to be presented to parliament. He assented gladly, and wrote four hundred pages without avail ; former treaties preventing the English from interference in behalf of the Pargiotes.

Foscolo found difficulty in obtaining the means of life, and lady Dacre in particular interested herself in pointing out some method by which he might turn his talents to account. She proposed, and zealously promoted, the course of lectures on Italian literature which Foscolo delivered in 1823. Mr. Stewart Rose was another of his real and anxious friends ; and Foscolo's acknowledged talents, and the interest excited by his exile, facilitated their endeavours. His lectures were numerously attended, and brought him a thousand pounds ; — a small sum, if on it he was to found a sufficient income to maintain him for the rest of his life ; a large one to an Italian, accustomed to look on a few hundred crowns as riches. And thus it was that the success that attended his undertaking was, in the end, fruitful of annoyance and disaster. The poet's head was turned — he fancied his treasure inexhaustible, and he set about spending it with as much knowledge as a child would have had of its real quantity and value. He built a house, furnished it expensively, and adorned it with all those luxuries that cost largely and are of least intrinsic value. His entrance hall was adorned by statues, and he had a conservatory filled with the rarest flowers ; while the three Graces still waited on him, and did not contribute to the economy of his household. As all the houses in the suburb of St. John's Wood, which he continued to inhabit, are distinguished by a name, he, to the no small puzzle of the common people, christened his Digamma Cottage ; in commemoration of a literary victory which he believed achieved by his "Essay on the Digamma." "I went to see him," Pecchio writes, "on my return from Spain, in August, 1823. I found him inhabiting a new house,

surrounded by all the luxury of a financier suddenly become rich. I was astonished, and could not account for this sort of theatrical change ; it appeared to me a dream. I thought to myself, Ugo Foscolo has followed in the steps of doctor Faustus, and has entered into some compact with the fiend Mephistopheles. He certainly displays good taste ; and if he be not rich, he deserves to be so ; and if all I see is not a vision, he deserves that it should be real. But too truly it was a vision : little or nothing of what I saw was paid for ; it was the palace of king Theodore, tapestried with promises to pay. His destiny was similar to that of him of whom Young says —

“ A man who builds, and wants wherewith to pay,
Provides a home from which to run away.” *

Poor Foscolo too soon paid the penalty of his inexplicable want of common sense ; he became pressed by his creditors, his goods were seized, and he, threatened by arrests, was obliged to leave his villa, which so resembled a castle in the air, and to hide in a lodging in an obscure corner of London. He was now obliged to provide for his daily necessities by writing articles for various reviews and magazines. The merit and success of his “ *Essays on Petrarch* ” suggested to Mr. Pickering, a London bookseller, the idea of an edition of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Tasso, with preliminary notices and critical notes by Foscolo. The offer was tolerably liberal, being 600*l.* for the whole work, if completed in two years. But even now Foscolo was ruined by another mistake. Had he provided *Essays* similar to the admired ones already written, adding a few critical and historical observations, it had been well ; he would have produced, at no great cost to himself, a popular work that had repaid the bookseller for his speculation. But Foscolo had already given token of a predilection for verbal and minute criticism. His prefatory notice to Boccaccio consisted of a critical history of editions, totally uninteresting to the general reader,

* Pecchio, Vita di Ugo Foscolo.

and of no value except to book collectors. The commentary on Dante is somewhat less confined in its topics ; and, with great subtlety and talent, he compares various readings, and gives reasons for his own selection. But even in this his observations are almost entirely grammatical and verbal, though interspersed by others of great acuteness on the meaning and intentions of Dante. Still his work, altogether, bore no similarity to his delightful Essays, which portray the character, spirit, and history of Petrarch and Dante in so new and attractive a manner.

Unfortunately, intense labour was required for a work so little alluring or profitable ; and Foscolo spent months collating, consulting, and emending : producing, in the end, a work to be read with tedium and fatigue. While thus diligently occupied, and at the same time harassed by many cares, ill lodged, and full of chagrin and mortification, he fell ill. He grew thin, and a tendency to dropsy manifested itself ; the consequence of an affection of the liver, from which he had long suffered. A few friends visited him ; and, dividing his time between them and his literary labours, he never left the house. Yet his work did not advance. He and his bookseller were at cross purposes. Mr. Pickering desired a popular and saleable publication, which he supposed would cost not much more time than the author's celebrated articles in the reviews. Foscolo wished to immortalise himself by a work of labour and erudition, which should become a text book and authority to all who hereafter read or wrote upon the poets in question.

Anxieties thus grew upon him. Economy, and a desire for tranquillity and better air, induced him to leave London ; and he hired a small house at Turnham Green. Here the last months of his life were spent. A few friends visited him : some of these were English ; but they consisted mostly of the exiles driven from the south of Europe by the ill success of the attempted revolutions of 1820-21. The canon Riego was one among them, who attached himself warmly to Foscolo,

admiring his independence and consistency. Meanwhile his disease gained ground, and it became publicly known that small hopes were entertained for his recovery. This announcement excited universal sympathy ; and his rich or noble English friends, who, from incompatibility of manners and character, had fallen from him, came forward to offer assistance. The friends around him declined receiving more than fifty pounds to meet the exigencies of the moment ; and even this supply was concealed from Foscolo, whose pride would have been deeply and uselessly mortified by the sense of pecuniary obligation. Money, indeed, was not the only kindness proffered : lord Holland sent wine, the duke of Devonshire, game ; but the kindness and services most deeply felt, were those of the canon Riego, who spared no trouble to assist and comfort his dying friend. Foscolo was sensible of his friendship, but feared that it might become officious ; and he wrote to him, thanking him warmly, but entreating him to do no more. “ I beg of you,” he writes, “ and it is my most earnest prayer, that you do not inform any one, man or woman, of my situation, for the purpose of obtaining assistance. I make this fervent request, because I heard of something of the kind from miss Florida. But your kindness on this point would only cruelly torture my heart, increase the sufferings of my mind, and the sickness of my body.”

He lingered two months after this letter. On the day of his death he was visited by his noble countryman, count Capo d'Istria, who, passing through London to assume the presidentship of Greece, paid the homage of a visit to the most renowned author of modern Greece. Foscolo was now in a state of torpor, and unconscious of the honour done him.

To the last he was patient, submissive to his medical attendants, and courageous ; commenting on the inevitable advances of death with fortitude and calmness. He died on the 10th of October, 1827. His funeral was private and modest ; his remains were followed to

the grave by five friends, and they were buried in the neighbouring churchyard of Chiswick, where, a little to the left of the church, amidst a crowd of tombstones, is to be found one, inscribed simply :

UGO FOSCOLO,
Obiit xiv. Die Septembris,
A. D. 1827.
Ætatis 52.*

The character of Foscolo, and his literary merits, may be gathered from the foregoing biography. Consistency was among his most prominent virtues, for his writings and actions were in strict accordance one with the other. He always rose superior to the blows of fortune, and preserved his independence in the midst of the disasters brought on him, either by the misfortunes of his country or his own imprudences. Vanity, that assumed the appearance of disdain, rendered him difficult of access, but compassion and warmth of heart were hidden by this outside. Fearful of being thought servile, he ran into the opposite extreme, and was little apt to praise even those to whom praise was due. Vehement in his opinions, yet he disliked dispute; and if ever led into it, in a few minutes sheltered himself again in silence. His heart was a stranger to the feeling of hatred, but neither was he very open to friendship; he was intimate but with few, and even with these he was reserved. He preferred the society of women, and in early life loved with sincerity and passion; and there was delicacy and refinement in all his feelings with regard to the fair sex. As he expresses himself, in *Ortis*, "I have been taught by some how to seduce and betray,

* There is an error in this inscription with regard to the day of Foscolo's death, and also probably of his age, since it is supposed that he was not more than forty-nine when he died. His countrymen also regret that instead of the above inscription, that was not adopted which he wrote for himself, under the feigned name of Didimo Chierico, which runs thus:—

Didymi Clerici
Vitæ : virtus : ossa
Hic : post : annos . . .
Conquiescere cœpere.

and I might perhaps have seduced and betrayed, but the pleasure I anticipated fell coldly and bitterly on my heart, which has never been tamed either by time or reason ; and thus you have often heard me exclaim, that all depends on the heart, which neither heaven, men, nor we ourselves can ever change." The sincerity of his feelings had their reward—since his affections had on some occasions met a return, which his uncouth appearance and strange manners would never have commanded, and which was due only to his truth. He loved solitude and study, was abstemious in his habits, but not of strong health, and was often devoured by the deepest gloom. He spoke well, and detested all artifice and deceit. To these virtues we may add his constant attention to and affection for his mother. Strange, wild, and imprudent, his faults chiefly hurt himself ; and even the impetuosity of his character seldom led him into any acts that injured or annoyed others.

As an author, he may be said to be a bad tragedian, and not a good novelist ; but he was an elegant writer, conversant with the depths and the refinements of the human heart. His subtle turn of mind led him too much to verbal and minute criticism—his love of the ancients sometimes injured the warmth and originality of his productions ; but we may name two among them as nearly perfect in their several species ;—the "Essays on Petrarch," in prose ; and, in verse, his "Ode on Sepulchres," which, for harmony, grace, sweetness, and pure taste, is perhaps unequalled by any other poem in the world.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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