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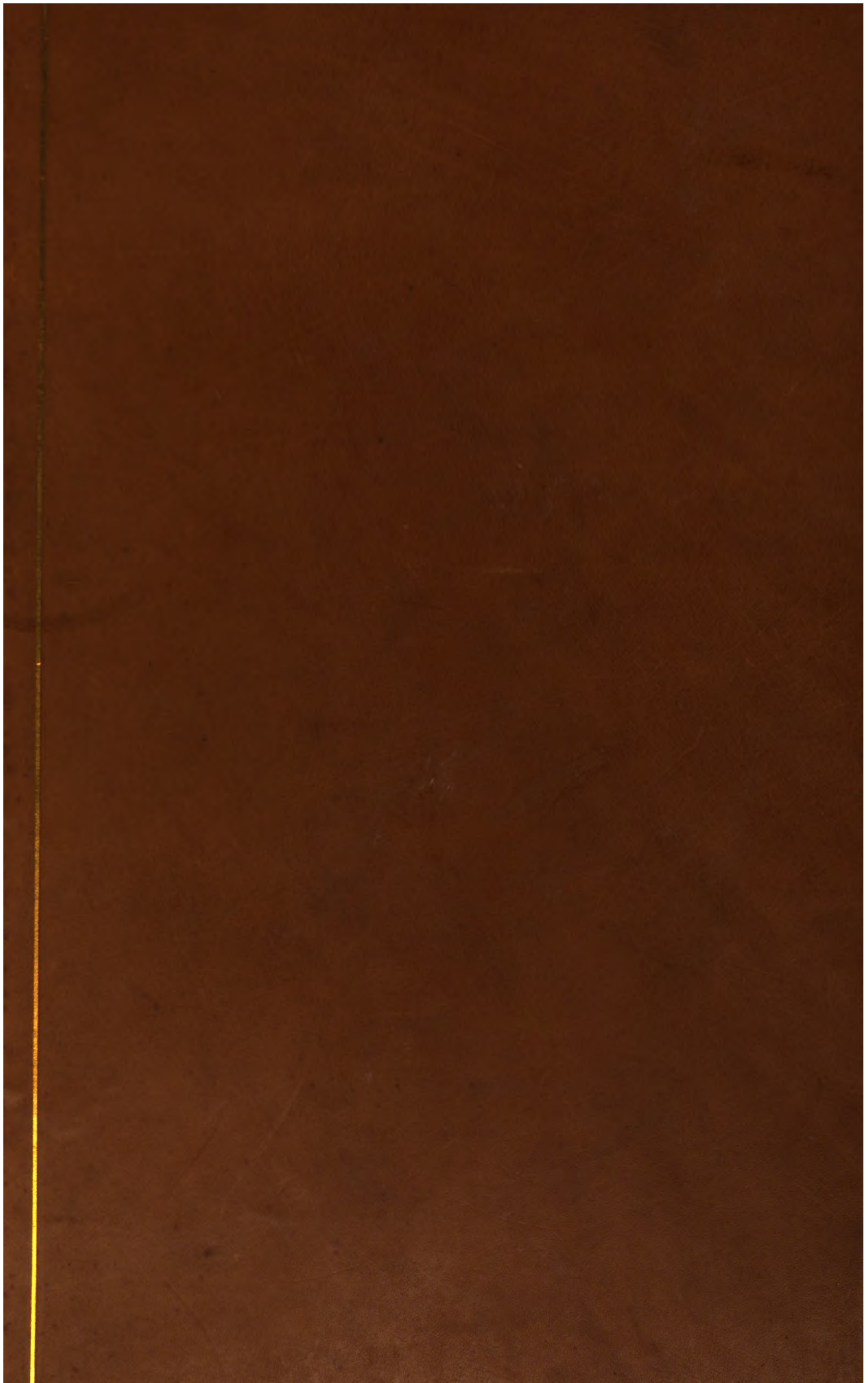
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LIBERTY

PLATE III

L I F E
OF
P E T R A R C H.

BY
THOMAS CAMPBELL, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
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ADVERTISEMENT.

I UNDERTOOK to write the Life of Petrarch more from accident than original design. It was known that the Rev. Archdeacon Coxe had bequeathed to the Library of the British Museum a MS. Life of the Poet, which he had written. Mr. Colburn caused a copy of it to be taken; and, intending it for publication, requested me to be the editor. I readily agreed; for, as the Archdeacon had considerable literary reputation, I could not imagine that he had left to a great public institution any work that was ill digested and not worthy of perusal: so I surrounded myself with as many books connected with the subject as I could obtain, and applied assiduously to the study of Italian literature, which I had neglected for some years.

Great, however, was my disappointment when, sitting down to the Coxe-Petrarchan MS., I found it an incomplete biography, that stops short of the poet's death by twelve years, written in a style so sprawlingly diffuse that, where three words would serve, the Archdeacon is sure to employ nine. I tried to remedy this fault by compression, but found that the reverend man's verbosity defied all power of packing. If any one suspects me of dealing unfairly with the Archdeacon, let him go to the library of the British Museum and peruse the work in question—his scepticism will find its reward. He will agree with me that the Coxeian MS. is placed in a wrong part of the Museum. It should not be in the library, but among the bottled abortions of anatomy, or the wooden visages of the South Sea idols. Nor will he blame me for saying that the entire MS. betrays a writer incapacitated by nature for disserting on poetry. His ability to compose matter-of-fact travels and political memoirs I call not in question; but, with regard to any spark of poetical sympathy, his mind was obtuse and a mere mortuum caput. I found no fault with him for

having drawn his materials almost entirely from De Sade, for that biographer is the only one who can be mainly depended upon for information respecting Petrarch; but I did blame the Archdeacon for doing so unavowedly, instead of acknowledging the debt, as Mrs. Dobson and myself have done, and for interspersing his clumsy translation of De Sade with still clumsier remarks of his own.

To have edited this foetus of biography would have done no good to either Petrarch, or Archdeacon Coxe, or myself.

I had employed, however, some time and trouble in consulting books and preparing notes for the proposed editorship; and, unwilling to throw them away, I undertook to write a Life of Petrarch, for which I should be solely responsible.

I have in general followed the text of De Sade, correcting, by the aid of his latest biographer Baldelli, the few inaccuracies in his memoirs, chiefly of dates, which the latter industrious author has detected in De Sade. I have made a departure from the nomenclature of De Sade and his English abridger, Mrs. Dobson, which, I think,

will be no disadvantage to the English reader. They both frenchify the names both of persons and places, so as half to disguise them from those acquainted with the Italian language. To this rule, which I have followed, there is one exception in my retaining the common English contraction of the poet's name. We are so accustomed to call the lover of Laura Petrarch, that I thought it would be as pedantic to call him Petrarca, as to name the Roman historian Livius, instead of Livy. I may have taken a few other liberties of this kind; but, in no instance, I apprehend, can they lead to obscurity. Even those who are little acquainted with the language of the Italians know that our name John is synonymous with their Giovanni; our James with their Giacomo; and our Joan with their Giovanna.

P R E F A C E.

REVIEW OF THE BIOGRAPHERS OF PETRARCH.

AFTER the death of Petrarch, there was a general call throughout Italy for some account of his life that should be worthy of his fame; and, first of all, Filippo Villani, Pietro Paolo Vergerio, and Domenico Aretino, and, not long afterwards, Sicco Polentono, Lionardo Aretino, and Gianozzo Manetti, sought to satisfy this demand. But all these writers were destitute of literary research; they were ample praisers, but negligent inquirers: their meagre and inaccurate accounts of the poet were almost all drawn either from his Epistle to Posterity, or compiled from vulgar traditions, which jumbled together the great and the trivial, the true and the false.

In the earlier part of the fifteenth century, the reputation of Petrarch greatly declined. The learned turned all their attention to the Greek and Roman writers, and they forgot their obligations to those who had been, as it were, their pioneers in classical literature. Their admiration of the earliest poetry in the vulgar tongue was suspended ; all who aspired to be called learned wrote in Latin, or, if they used Italian, they abandoned the simple graces of the past age for latinisms and falsely ambitious phraseology. Writers imbued with this bad taste, such as Panfilo and others, threw into the shade the patriarchs of the Tuscan tongue.

Some counteraction to this bad taste was found in the writings of Lorenzo, Benivieni, and Pulci ; and Poliziano revived a predilection for the old Petrarchan style. Not long afterwards, Bembo, though not a native of Tuscany, was so conversant with its dialect, that he brought back the vulgar tongue to its ancient beauty. Then, that is, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, the canzoniere of Petrarch resumed their past renown ;

and it was not eclipsed, but on the contrary heightened, by the glory of Ariosto and a host of highly imaginative and beautiful poets, who illustrated that period. It was then that Girolamo Squarciofico wrote the life of Petrarch with laudable zeal, though his style was diffuse, and his narrative disfigured by fables. Our poet's next biographer was Alessandro Vellutello, who, although he had the curiosity to visit the birth-place of Laura, in order to clear up doubts about her history which had become prevalent in Italy, instead of throwing light upon the subject, threw over it the darkness of an enigma. In the course of the century, Lelio dei Leli, the descendant of his namesake, Petrarch's faithful friend, thought of tracing the history of the poet's life out of his writings. Manuscript copies of this work lie in the Ambrosian and Riccardian libraries. Baldelli thinks this biography worthy of praise, though it is inelegantly written, and loaded with diffuse digressions into contemporary history.

Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo, the best commentator on the *canzoniere* of Petrarch, subjoined to

his commentaries a life of our poet by Giovanni Antonio Niccolini, which he published at Venice in 1533. In this edition, according to Baldelli, we see the first demonstrations of capacity for the task in those who wrote about Petrarch. The biography shews diligent research.

But the most esteemed life of our bard which was written in that age was that of Lodovico Beccadelli, archbishop of Ragusa, which, though composed in 1540, lay unpublished in the Vatican till it was edited by Tommasini. He was a learned and sagacious critic; but his work is not free from anachronisms and errors, and is so little illustrated by contemporary history, that Petrarch seems like a man isolated from any particular age.

After a golden age in Italian literature, which continued far into the sixteenth century, came a degenerate period, disgraced by the compositions of Casus Molza and Aretino, and the reign of bad taste was made despotic by the subsequent influence of Marino, who, though endowed with a fertile and original imagination, was infected with the conceits and false images that had marked the

first degeneracy of Italian poetry. The sectaries of the Marino school were rabid assailants of Petrarch's fame,* and, unhappily, they were so popular that, during the seventeenth century, there were but few and wretched editions of his *Canzoniere*. Filippo Tommasini among the Italians alone attempted to revive the reputation of our poet. Tommasini, as his champion, spared neither care nor research to furnish a full and accurate life of Petrarch; but, from his being an unskilful critic and a credulous narrator, diffuse in light matters, and inaccurate in those of importance, his "*Petrarca Redivio*" is a work not much to be commended, except for its notice of numerous unknown facts. Tommasini had the merit of bringing to

* The first of them who derided Petrarch and his imitators was Niccolo Franco, the friend and disciple, and afterwards the antagonist, of the infamous Aretino, whom he rivalled in bitter satire, as well as outrageous indecency. He ended his days very worthily on the gallows. He published a dialogue, entitled, "*Il Petrarchista presso il Ciolito*" (Venice, 1539), in which, mixing up lies and truth, he mocked the life, the writings, the love, and the worshippers of our poet. Ercole Giovannini followed his example, and wrote another dialogue, entitled, "*Il secondo Petrarchista*," which, together with that of France, was published by Barezzi, at Venice, in 1623.

light four ancient lives of the poet, which had been all but forgotten, together with that of Beccadelli, which lay a neglected MS. in the Vatican. The void in the succession of Petrarch's biographers after Tommasini is filled up by De Sade with the names of several writers, such as Andrea Schoderen, the German, Filippo di Maldeghen of Flanders, and Placido Catanusi, a Parisian. As Baldelli owns that he had never read these ultramon-
tanes, I need not be ashamed to make the same confession. But De Sade's opinion may console us, for he thinks them even worse than preceding biographers.

In process of time, the evil popularity of Marino and his school declined in Italy, and the nation returned to a just estimate of the writers of the fourteenth century. Writers of higher genius arose with the improved national taste. At this epoch, Lodovico Antonio Muratori undertook the biography of Petrarch. Great expectations were formed from his extensive knowledge and research ; but the literary public were disappointed in the great annalist's life of our poet. It

was his worst work : it was short and confused, and was found to be full of errors and anachronisms. Giuseppe di Bimard, baron of Bastia, who died in 1742, left a life of Petrarch unedited, but it was published by the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres at Paris, of which he was a member. A part of his work, and, perhaps, the most important, entitled the Library of Petrarch, was left unfinished by his sudden death. He was a sagacious critic, and is not unworthy of praise as Petrarch's biographer, though De Sade has exposed many of his errors and anachronisms. Luigi Bandinini resumed the task : he was a diligent inquirer respecting the ancestors of Petrarch, and he certainly brought to light, from original sources, some circumstances in Petrarch's life that had been unnoticed before. It is true that he has fallen into flagrant errors, and has many defects, though he may possibly have removed some from that part of his work which has not been published. De Sade often reproves his confusion of facts and chronology, but he is the first author who has written philosophically about Petrarch ; never-

theless, a sincere love of truth shines through his writings, and De Sade, his severe censor, has been much indebted to him.

But among the biographers of Petrarch the Abbé de Sade claims beyond all comparison the highest place. Proud of being descended from Laura, he undertook, for the sake of writing her lover's life, minute researches, and toilsome journeys, that consumed the greater part of his life. He thus acquired that vast knowledge of the literary and political history of Italy, which marks him out as the most accomplished foreigner who has ever written on the fourteenth century. From the MSS. of the Parisian library, and from other unedited literary treasures, he traced many letters of Petrarch's that had been previously unknown. Well versed in the Tuscan tongue, and in correspondence with the most learned men of Italy, he collected a rich store of materials which had till then lain buried in the libraries of Italy, and among others the Medicean, from which the celebrated Canon Bandini supplied him with valuable matter.

His Memoirs of the life of the poet show admirable sagacity in discovering, we may almost say, the chronology of Petrarch's life, his ecclesiastical preferments, his descendants, his relations and friends, his political and literary life. De Sade's work is, in fact, a deep and large reservoir of information respecting the manners and customs of Petrarch's age; and he has given, as it were, a new life to Laura, by bringing forward documents respecting that interesting woman from the archives of his own family, which he shows to coincide with passages in Petrarch's writings. So valuable an author is De Sade, that I have made him my textbook in my humble attempt to write the life of the poet; and my apology for following him as a guide is, that I could find no other worthy of so much confidence.

No doubt, De Sade, by speaking with rather unmeasured contempt of preceding biographers, and by taxing the whole Italian nation with profound ignorance about Petrarch, roused a hornet-nest of critics against him in Italy. Their angry accusations were, of course, exaggerated in some cases;

but in others they were disagreeably true. It is not to be denied, for instance, that there is such redundant information respecting the age and contemporaries of Petrarch, as often to make us forget the poet himself amidst the broad historical tablet. De Sade was, moreover, charged with misunderstanding Petrarch's Italian poetry, because he has not translated it at once literally and elegantly.

If, however, we subject to this ordeal all the translations of Petrarch's poetry that were ever made, we shall find that he has scarcely one genuine translator. The German translations of him are like rooks imitating a nightingale ; and the French language has still less harmony than the German. Our bold and sinewy English is too robust to adapt itself to the graces of Petrarch's poetry ; and, when we spin a Petrarchan sonnet, we find the short-haired wool of our speech very unlike the silky and ductile fleece of that of Italy.

The Abbé Arnaud of Avignon published, in 1778, a work entitled the Genius of Petrarch. He was reckoned a happier translator of Petrarch's

verses than De Sade ; but as a biographer he follows De Sade chapter and verse.

Other celebrated Italian writers of the last century illustrated the memory of Petrarch. Among these was the Abbé Mehus, who collected all the information that could be found respecting him in the vast treasures of the Florentine library, 1759. Next came the learned and clear Tiraboschi, an historian of literature who has no superior in that class of composition. He corrected several mistakes even in De Sade. Besides Mehus, Signor Andres, who gained celebrity in Italy by his General History of Literature, is praised by Baldelli for having written with sagacity and eloquence on the subject of Petrarch ; and Father Affo, in his account of the literary men of Parma, has added to our knowledge of many friends whom the poet possessed in that place, and has ascertained by distinct documents the precise dates of his promotion to the canonicate and archdeaconry of its cathedral. Bettinelli and Rubbi are the last writers whom Baldelli commends as learned eulogists of Petrarch.

Baldelli himself published in 1792 a work in four books on our poet's life and writings, which came to a second edition in 1837. He was a diligent searcher of libraries, and, by his own inquiries, as well as the aid of Mehus and other preceding biographers, he has rectified several erroneous dates in De Sade's Memoirs. He has added a chronological summary of the Life of Petrarch, which is made clear and useful to the student by the subjoined notes, containing arguments in favour of what he asserts in his text. Baldelli also adds to his four books an alphabetical list of the principal friends of the poet, and of the persons connected with his history. On the whole, literary history is certainly indebted to Baldelli. Yet he appears to me an incomparably less valuable biographer than De Sade, even after he has corrected his errors.

De Sade, with all his diffuseness, has a charm at once of freedom and distinctness, which I miss in Baldelli. The former puts on his margin at every page the Anno Domini of events in the poet's life; the latter, in what he calls his life of Petrarch,

has no marginal dates, but reserves his chronology for a separate chapter. This is bad taste, for it is not in an abstracted chapter that we wish to recollect a man's age when any interesting event befalls him; but we wish to be reminded of his age side by side with the anecdote itself.' The subject of biography said, or wrote, or did, so and so. The saying or action was very imprudent, or very prudent; how old was he when this happened? Surely we are more obliged to the biographer who puts the date upon his margin, than to him who refers us to a chronological chapter.

Again, Baldelli's notices of Petrarch's friends and persons connected with his history is far from comprehending half the names about which we may be curious. It is, in fact, an imperfect index. Baldelli, moreover, is a dry and short writer. He omits a great deal that is interesting in Petrarch's biography, particularly his travels. Of these travels Levati has given an account in a work in four volumes; and certainly Levati cannot be accused of being dry or abrupt; but, in his account of Petrarch's travels, he has introduced matter which

I violently suspect is not to be verified by any thing in the writings of Petrarch. I have quoted Levati, but I cannot warrant him to the reader as unquestionable authority.

To those who are particularly interested about the history of Petrarch and his times, the following information may possibly be acceptable. Professor Marsand of Padua collected a *Biblioteca Petrarchesca* — a Petrarchian library — consisting of nine hundred volumes, illustrative of the history of the poet. A catalogue of these works was published at Milan, in 4to.; but the collection itself was purchased in 1829 for the private library of the King of France, in the Louvre.

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himself to public affairs, and had several important commissions from government. At last, in the increasing conflicts between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines—or, as they now called themselves, the Blacks and the Whites—Petracco, like Dante, was obliged to fly from his native city, along with the other Florentines of the White party. He was unjustly accused of having officially issued a false deed, and condemned, on the 20th of October, 1302, to pay a fine of one thousand lire, and to have his hand cut off, if it was not paid within ten days from the time he should be apprehended. Petracco fled, taking with him his wife, Eletta Canigiani, a lady of a distinguished family in Florence, several of whom had held the office of Gonfalonier.

Petracco and his wife first settled at Arezzo, a very ancient city of Tuscany. Hostilities did not cease between the Florentine factions till some years afterwards; and, in an attempt that was made by the Whites to take Florence by assault, Petracco was present with his party. They were repulsed. This action, which was fatal to their cause, took place in the night between the 19th and 20th days of July—the precise date of

the birth of Petrarch. At the time when Petracco was exposing his life for the sake of what he considered to be the interests of his native state, his wife was in imminent danger of losing her's, whilst she gave birth to Francesco Petrarca.

During our poet's infancy, his family had still to struggle with an adverse fate; for his proscribed and wandering father was obliged to separate himself from his wife and child, in order to have the means of supporting them.

As the pretext for banishing Petracco was purely personal, Eletta, his wife, was not included in the sentence. She removed to a small property of her husband's, at Ancisa, fourteen miles from Florence, and took the little poet along with her, in the seventh month of his age. In their passage thither, both mother and child, together with their guide, had a narrow escape from being drowned in the Arno. Eletta entrusted her precious charge to a robust peasant, who, for fear of hurting the child's body, wrapt it in a swaddling cloth, and suspended it over his shoulder, in the same manner as *Métabus* is described by Virgil, in the eleventh book of the *Æneid*, to have carried his daughter Camilla. In passing the river, the horse of the guide, who car-

ried Petrarch, stumbled, and sunk down ; and in their struggles to save him, both his sturdy bearer and the frantic parent were, like the infant itself, on the point of being drowned.

After Eletta had settled at Ancisa, Petracco, moved by conjugal affection, often visited her by stealth, and the pledges of their affection were two other sons, one of whom died in childhood. The other, called Gherardo, was educated during his juvenile years along with Petrarch. Petrarch remained with his mother at Ancisa for seven years.

The arrival of the emperor, Henry VII., in Italy, revived the hopes of the banished Florentines ; and Petracco, in order to wait the event, went to Pisa, whither he brought his wife and Francesco, who was now in his eighth year. Petracco remained with his family in Pisa for several months ; but, tired at last of fallacious hopes, and not daring to trust himself to the promises of the popular party, who offered to recall him to Florence, he sought an asylum in Avignon, a place to which many Italians were allured by the hopes of honours and gain at the papal residence. In this voyage, Petracco and his family were nearly shipwrecked off Marseilles.

But the numbers that crowded to Avignon and its luxurious court rendered that city an uncomfortable place for a family in slender circumstances. Petrarco, accordingly, removed his household, in 1315, to Carpentras, a small quiet town, where living was cheaper than at Avignon.

De Sade tells us of Petrarch going to Carpentras in 1314; but Baldelli shows, from the poet's own epistle to posterity, that he must have gone thither a year later. From this authority it is clear that he went to Carpentras when he was eleven years old.

At Carpentras, under the care of his mother, he imbibed his first puerile instruction, and was taught by one Convennole da Prato as much grammar and logic as could be learned at his age, and more than could be learned by an ordinary disciple from so common-place a preceptor. This poor master, however, had sufficient intelligence to appreciate the genius of Petrarch, whom he esteemed and honoured beyond all his other pupils. On the other hand, his illustrious scholar aided him, in his old age and poverty, out of his scanty income.

Petrarch used to compare Convennole to a whetstone, which is blunt itself, but which sharpens

others. His old master, however, was sharp enough to overreach Petrarch in the matter of borrowing and lending. When the poet had collected a considerable library, his grammar-school master paid him a visit, and, pretending to be engaged in something that required him to consult Cicero, he borrowed a copy of one of the works of that orator, which was particularly valuable. He made excuses, from time to time, for not returning it; but Petrarch, at last, had too good reason to suspect that the old grammarian had pawned it. The poet would willingly have paid for redeeming it, but Convennole was so much ashamed, that he would not tell to whom it was pawned; and the precious manuscript was lost.

Petracco contracted an intimacy with Settimo, a Genoese, who was, like himself, an exile for his political principles, and who fixed his abode at Avignon with his wife, and his boy, Guido Settimo, who was about the same age with Petrarch. The two youths formed a friendship, which subsisted between them for life.

Petrarch manifested signs of extraordinary sensibility to the charms of Nature in his childhood, both when he was at Carpentras and at Avignon.

One day, when he was at the latter residence, a party was made up, to see the fountain of Vaucluse, a few leagues from Avignon. The little Francesco had no sooner arrived at the lovely landscape than he was struck with its beauties, and exclaimed, "Here, now, is a retirement suited to my taste, and preferable, in my eyes, to the greatest and most splendid cities."

A genius so fine as that of our poet could not servilely confine itself to the slow method of school learning, adapted to the intellects of ordinary boys. Accordingly, while his fellow pupils were still plodding through the first rudiments of Latin, Petrarch had recourse to the original writers, from whom the grammarians drew their authority, and particularly employed himself in perusing the works of Cicero. And, although he was, at this time, much too young to comprehend the full force of the orator's reasoning, he was so struck with the charms of his style, that he considered him the only true model in prose composition.

His father, who was himself something of a scholar, was pleased and astonished at this early proof of his good taste; he applauded his classical studies, and encouraged him to persevere in them;

but, very soon, he imagined that he had cause to repent of his commendations. Classical learning was, in that age, regarded as a mere solitary accomplishment, not much esteemed, and the law was the only road that led to honours and preferment. Petracco was, therefore, desirous to turn into that channel the brilliant qualities of his son; and for this purpose he sent him, at the age of fifteen, to the university of Montpelier. Petrarch remained there for four years, and attended lectures on law from some of the most famous professors of the science. But his prepossession for Cicero prevented him from much frequenting the dry and dusty walks of jurisprudence. In his epistle to posterity, he endeavours to justify this repugnance by other motives. He represents the abuses, the chicanery, and mercenary practices of the law, as inconsistent with every principle of candour and honesty.

When Petracco observed that his son made no great progress in his legal studies at Montpelier, he removed him, in 1323, to Bologna, celebrated for the study of the canon and civil law, probably imagining that the superior fame of the latter place might attract him to love the law. To Bologna

Petrarch was accompanied by his brother Gherardo, and by his inseparable friend, young Guido Settimo.

But neither the abilities of the several professors in that celebrated academy, nor the strongest exhortations of his father, were sufficient to conquer the deeply-rooted aversion which our poet had conceived against the law. Accordingly, Petracco hastened to Bologna, that he might endeavour to check his son's indulgence in literature, which disconcerted his favourite designs. Petrarch, guessing at the motive of his arrival, hid the copies of Cicero, Virgil, and some other authors, which composed his small library, and to purchase which he had deprived himself of almost the necessaries of life. His father, however, soon discovered the place of their concealment, and threw them into the fire. Petrarch exhibited as much feeling of agony as if he had been himself the martyr of his father's resentment. But Petracco was so much affected by his son's tears, that he rescued from the flames Cicero and Virgil, and, presenting them to Petrarch, he said, "Virgil will console you for the loss of your other MSS., and Cicero will prepare you for the study of the law."

It is by no means wonderful that a mind like Petrarch's could but ill relish the glosses of the Code and the commentaries on the Decretals.

At Bologna, however, he met with an accomplished literary man and no inelegant poet in one of the professors, who, if he failed in persuading Petrarch to make the law his profession, certainly quickened his relish and ambition for poetry. This man was Cino da Pistoia, who is esteemed by Italians as the most tender and harmonious lyric poet in the native language anterior to Petrarch. Cino da Pistoia, though a law professor, was a man of taste and gallantry; but neither of these qualities seduced him from the regular duties of his vocation.

Cino, De Sade tells us, had the honour of having for his scholars both Petrarch and Boccaccio. But here this valuable biographer has been misled, there being no proof that Boccaccio ever studied at Bologna.

During his residence at Bologna, Petrarch made an excursion as far as Venice, a city that struck him with enthusiastic admiration. In one of his letters he calls it "*orbem alterum.*" Whilst Italy was harassed, he says, on all sides by continual

dissensions, like the sea in a storm, Venice alone appeared like a safe harbour, which overlooked the tempest without feeling its commotion. The resolute and independent spirit of that republic made an indelible impression on Petrarch's heart. The young poet, perhaps, at this time little imagined that Venice was to be the last scene of his triumphant eloquence.

Soon after his return from Venice to Bologna, he received the melancholy intelligence of the death of his mother, in the thirty-eighth year of her age. Her age is known by a copy of verses which Petrarch wrote upon her death, the verses being the same in number as the years of her life. She had lived humble and retired, and had devoted herself to the good of her family; virtuous amidst the prevalence of corrupted manners, and, though a beautiful woman, untainted by the breath of calumny. Petrarch has repaid her maternal affection by preserving her memory from oblivion. Petracco did not long survive the death of this excellent woman. According to the judgment of our poet, his father was a man of strong understanding and character. Banished from his native country, and engaged in providing for his

family, he was prevented by the scantiness of his fortune, and the cares of his situation, from rising to that eminence which he might have otherwise attained. But his admiration of Cicero, in an age when that author was universally neglected, was a proof of his superior mind.

Petrarch quitted Bologna upon the death of his father, and returned to Avignon, with his brother Gherardo, to collect the shattered remains of their father's property. Upon their arrival, they found their domestic affairs in a state of great disorder, as the executors of Petracco's will had betrayed the trust reposed in them, and had seized most of the effects of which they could dispose. Under these circumstances, Petrarch was most anxious for a MS. of Cicero, which his father had highly prized. "The guardians," he writes, "eager to appropriate what they esteemed the more valuable effects, had fortunately left this MS. as a thing of no value." Thus he owed to their ignorance this treatise, which he considered the richest portion of the inheritance left him by his father.

But, that inheritance being small, and not sufficient for the maintenance of the two brothers, they were obliged to think of some profession for

their subsistence ; they therefore entered into the church ; and Avignon was the place, of all others, where preferment was most easily obtained. John XXII. had fixed his residence entirely in that city since October, 1316, and had appropriated to himself the nomination to all the vacant benefices. The pretence for this appropriation was to prevent simony—in others, not in his holiness—as the sale of benefices was carried by him to an enormous height. At every promotion to a bishopric he removed other bishops ; and, by the meanest impositions, soon amassed prodigious wealth. Scandalous emoluments, also, which arose from the sale of indulgences, were enlarged, if not invented, under his papacy, and every method of acquiring riches was justified which could contribute to feed his avarice. By these sordid means he collected such sums, that, according to Villani, he left behind him, *in the sacred treasury*, twenty-five millions of florins, a treasure which Voltaire remarks is hardly credible.

The luxury and corruption which reigned in the Roman court at Avignon are fully displayed in some letters of Petrarch's, without either date or address. The partizans of that court, it is true,

accuse him of prejudice and exaggeration. He painted, as they allege, the popes and cardinals in the gloomiest colouring. His letters contain the blackest catalogue of crimes that ever disgraced humanity. And it is no doubt easy to suppose that the same strength of fancy in Petrarch, which set every object before him in the strongest light, and which magnified every amiable quality of his friends, might also heighten his picture of papal depravities. But I believe that our poet told much truth. The exalted notions entertained of the popes and cardinals could not dazzle the eyes of Petrarch. He saw through the veil of ignorance which covered them from the eyes of the multitude: neither the purple of the cardinals nor the tiara of the pope could rescue their enormities from his reproaches, and he inveighed against them with a spirit of freedom that was never remitted.

But, if we consult contemporary historians, and those other writers who were not prejudiced against the Gallic popes, we shall find these descriptions scarcely at all exaggerated; and, with no great allowance for his ardour, we see the real picture of the court of Rome delineated in his

letters. Some prelates, indeed, of the highest rank were exempted from the almost universal contagion, whose protection of Petrarch, as well as his reciprocal attachment, prove that they were not included in those censures.

Petrarch was twenty-two years of age when he settled at Avignon, a scene of licentiousness and profligacy. The luxury of the cardinals, and the pomp and riches of the papal court, were displayed in an extravagant profusion of feasts and ceremonies, which attracted to Avignon women of all ranks, among whom intrigue and gallantry were generally countenanced. Petrarch was by nature of a warm temperament, with vivid and susceptible passions, and strongly attached to the fair sex. We must not therefore be surprised if, with these dispositions, and in such a dissolute city, he was betrayed into some excesses. But these were the result of his complexion, and not of deliberate profligacy. He alludes to this subject in his epistle to posterity, with every appearance of truth and candour.

From his own confession, Petrarch seems to have been somewhat vain of his personal appearance during his youth, a venial foible, from which

neither the handsome nor the homely, nor the wise nor the foolish, are exempt. It is amusing to find our own Milton betraying this weakness, in spite of all the surrounding strength of his character. In answering one of his slanderers, who had called him pale and cadaverous, the author of *Paradise Lost* appeals to all who knew him whether his complexion was not so fresh and blooming as to make him appear ten years younger than he really was.

Petrarch, when young, was so strikingly handsome, that he was frequently pointed at and admired as he passed along, for his features were manly, well formed, and expressive, and his carriage was graceful and distinguished. He was sprightly in conversation, and his voice was uncommonly musical. His complexion was between brown and fair, and his eyes were bright and animated. His countenance was a faithful index of his heart.

He endeavoured to temper the warmth of his constitution by the regularity of his living and the plainness of his diet. He indulged little in either wine or sleep, and fed chiefly on fruits and vegetables.

In his early days he was nice and neat in his

dress, even to a degree of affectation, which, in later life, he ridiculed when writing to his brother Gherardo. “Do you remember,” he says, “how much care we employed in the lure of dressing our persons; when we traversed the streets, with what attention did we not avoid every breath of wind which might discompose our hair; and with what caution did we not prevent the least speck of dirt from soiling our garments!”

This vanity, however, lasted only during his youthful days. And even then neither attention to his personal appearance, nor his attachment to the fair sex, nor his attendance upon the great, could induce Petrarch to neglect his own mental improvement, for, amidst all these occupations, he found leisure for application; and, as he had no longer to contend with the absolute commands of a father, he gave up the law, and devoted himself entirely to the cultivation of his favourite pursuits of literature.

Being now his own master, he applied himself afresh to the reading of the classics, because a suspended pleasure increases our desire to return to it. His love of Cicero having revived, he selected that author as his teacher and model in

the art of expressing thoughts with energy, with naturalness, and with dignity. Having made this first step towards good taste, he was at first censured and derided, and afterwards imitated by others. Inclined by nature to moral philosophy, he was guided by the reading of Cicero and Seneca to that profound knowledge of the human heart, of the duties of others and of our own duties, which shows itself in all his writings. Gifted with a mind full of enthusiasm for poetry, he learned from Virgil elegance and dignity in versification. But he had still higher advantages from the perusal of Livy. The magnanimous actions of Roman heroes so much excited the soul of Petrarch, that he thought the men of his own age light and contemptible.

His first compositions were in Latin: many motives, however, induced him to compose in the vulgar tongue, as Italian was then called, which, though improved by Dante, was still, in many respects, harsh and inelegant, and much in want of new beauties. Petrarch wrote for the living, and for that portion of the living who were least of all to be fascinated by the language of the dead. Latin might be all very well for inscriptions on

mausoleums, but it was not suited for the ears of beauty and the bowers of love. The Italian language acquired, under his cultivation, increased elegance and richness, so that the harmony of his style has contributed to its beauty. He did not, however, attach himself solely to Italian, but composed much in Latin, which he reserved for graver, or, as he considered, more important subjects. His compositions in Latin are *Africa*, an epic poem, his *Bucolics*, containing twelve eclogues, and three books of epistles.

Petrarch found that the greatest obstacles to his improvement arose from the scarcity of authors whom he wished to consult — for the manuscripts of the writers of the Augustan age were, at that time, so uncommon, that many could not be procured, and many more of them could not be purchased under the most extravagant price. This scarcity of books had checked the dawning light of literature.

The zeal of our poet, however, surmounted all these obstacles, for he was indefatigable in collecting and copying many of the choicest manuscripts; and posterity is indebted to him for the possession of many valuable writings, which were in danger

of being lost through the carelessness or ignorance of the possessors.

Petrarch could not but perceive the superiority of his own understanding and the brilliancy of his abilities. The modest humility which knows not its own worth is not wont to shew itself in minds much above mediocrity ; and to elevated geniuses this virtue is a stranger. Petrarch from his youthful age had an internal assurance that he should prove worthy of estimation and honours.

Nevertheless, as he advanced in the field of science, he saw the prospect increase, Alps over Alps, and seemed to be lost amidst the immensity of objects before him. Hence the anticipation of immeasurable labours occasionally damped his application.

But from this depression of spirits he was much relieved by the encouragement of John of Florence, one of the secretaries of the pope, a man of learning and probity. He soon distinguished the extraordinary abilities of Petrarch ; he directed him in his studies, and cheered up his ambition. Petrarch returned his affection with unbounded confidence. He entrusted him with all his foibles, his disgusts, and his uneasinesses. He says that he

never conversed with him without finding himself more calm and composed, and more animated for study.

The superior sagacity of our poet, together with his pleasing manners, and his increasing reputation for knowledge, ensured to him the most flattering prospects of success. His conversation was courted by men of rank, and his acquaintance was sought by men of learning. It was at this time, 1326, that his merit procured him the friendship and patronage of James Colonna, the third son of James Colonna, who belonged to one of the most ancient and illustrious families of Italy.

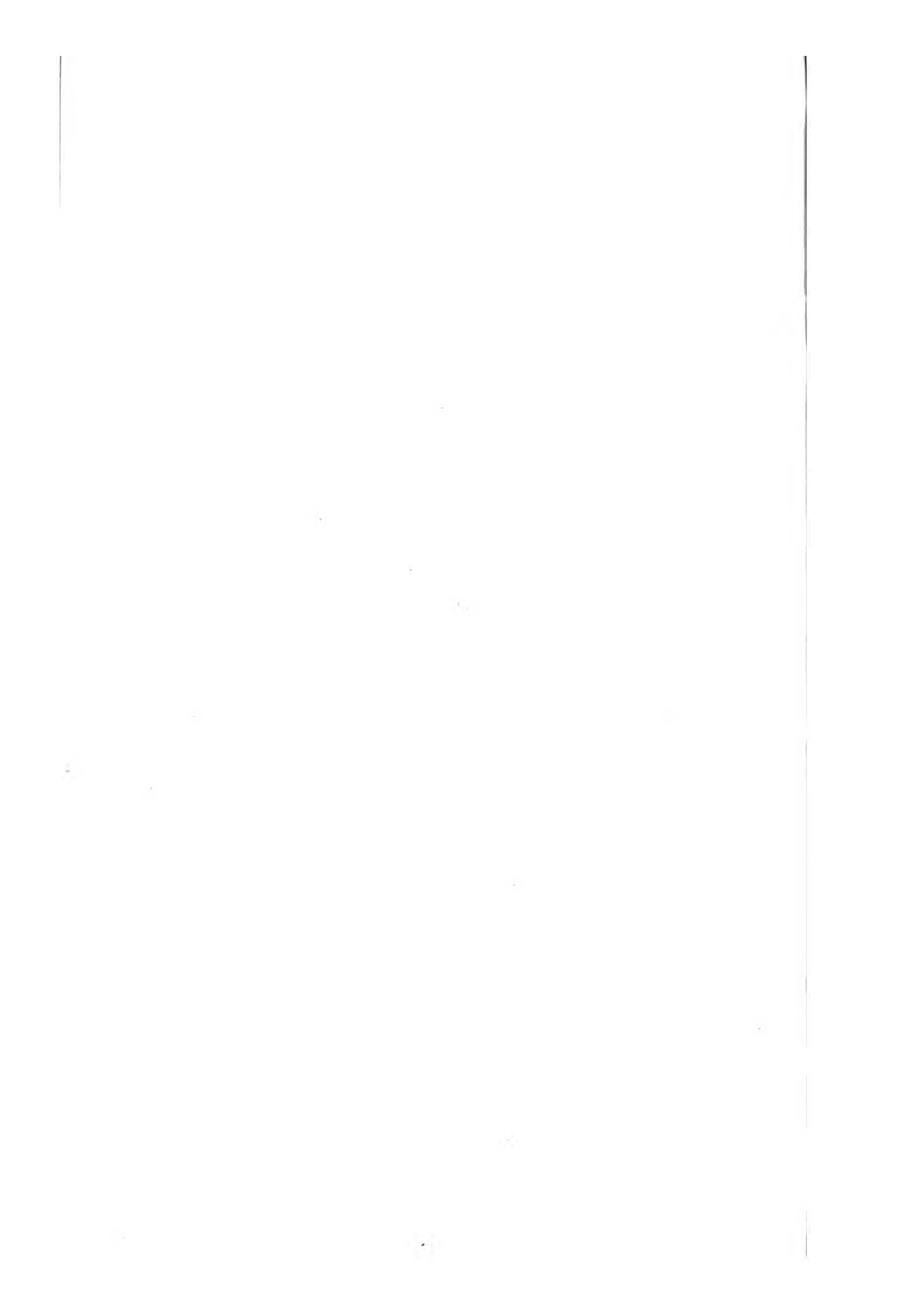
“ About the twenty-second year of my life (Petrarch writes to one of his friends), I became acquainted with James Colonna. He had seen me whilst I resided at Bologna, and was prepossessed, as he was pleased to say, with my appearance. Upon his arrival at Avignon, he again saw me, when, having inquired minutely into the state of my affairs, he admitted me to his friendship. I cannot sufficiently describe the cheerfulness of his temper, his social disposition, his moderation in prosperity, his constancy in adversity. I speak not from report, but from my own experience. He

was endowed with a persuasive and forcible eloquence. His conversation and letters displayed the amiableness of his sincere character. He gained the first place in my affections, which he ever afterwards retained."

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER III.

Petrarch falls in love with Laura — Absurd opinions about Laura entertained by the Poet's early biographers — He is invited by James Colonna to accompany him to his diocese at Lombes—Circumstances which drew the Pope's favour towards James Colonna—Petrarch accepts the Bishop's invitation, and travels with him through Languedoc—They visit Montpellier, Narbonne, and Toulouse— Provençal Poetry — Floral Games — Horrible Event in a Monastery of Toulouse — Their Tour to the highest Mountain of the Pyrenees, and their meeting with an hospitable old Saracen, who invites them to his Castle — Liberal idea of the Mussulman respecting the Prophet's Law about drinking Wine.



CHAPTER III.

SUCH is the portrait which our poet gives of James Colonna. A faithful and wise friend is among the most precious gifts of fortune ; but, as friendships cannot wholly feed our affections, the heart of Petrarch, at this ardent age, was destined to be swayed by still tenderer feelings. He had nearly finished his twenty-third year without having ever seriously known the passion of love. In that year he first saw Laura. Concerning this lady, at one time, when no life of Petrarch had been yet written that was not crude and inaccurate, his biographers launched into the wildest speculations. One author considered her as an allegorical being ; another discovered her to be a type of the Virgin Mary ; another thought her an allegory of poetry and repentance. Some denied her even allegorical existence, and deemed her a mere phantom beauty, with which the poet

had fallen in love, like Pygmalion with the work of his own creation. All these caprices about Laura's history have been long since dissipated, though the principal facts respecting her were never distinctly verified, till De Sade, her own descendant, wrote his memoirs of the Life of Petrarch.

Petrarch himself relates that in 1327, exactly at the first hour of the 6th of April, he first beheld Laura in the church of St. Clara of Avignon,* where neither the sacredness of the place, nor the solemnity of the day, could prevent him from being smitten for life with human love.† In that fatal hour he saw a lady, a little younger than himself,‡ in a green mantle sprinkled with violets, on

* Before the publication of De Sade's "Memoires pour la vie de Petrarque," the report was that Petrarch first saw Laura at Vacluse. The truth of their first meeting in the church of St. Clara depends on the authenticity of the famous note on the MS. Virgil of Petrarch, which is now in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. This subject will be discussed in another place.

† It has been generally supposed that the day was Good Friday. Baldelli thinks, from the evidence of astronomers as to the time of Easter occurring in 1327, that it must have been Good Monday. The question is of little importance.

‡ Petrarch, in his dialogue with St. Augustin, states that he was older than Laura by a few years.

which her golden hair fell plaited in tresses. She was distinguished from all others by her proud and delicate carriage. The impression which she made on his heart was sudden, yet it was never effaced.

Laura, descended from a family of ancient and noble extraction, was the daughter of Audibert de Noves, a Provençal nobleman, by his wife Esmesenda. She was born at Avignon, probably in 1308. She had a considerable fortune, and was married in 1325 to Hugh de Sade. The particulars of her life are little known, as Petrarch has left few traces of them in his letters; and it was still less likely that he should enter upon her personal history in his sonnets, which, as they were principally addressed to herself, made it unnecessary for him to inform her of what she already knew.

His contemporary and immediately succeeding biographers have imitated the poet in this obscurity, as if they, also, were desirous to conceal from posterity the name and family of Laura.

De Sade was the first writer who deserved the name of Petrarch's biographer. He has discovered as much about Laura as could be expected at the distance of centuries.

While many writers have erred in considering Petrarch's attachment as visionary, others, who have allowed the reality of his passion, have been mistaken in their opinion of its object. They allege that Petrarch was a happy lover, and that his mistress was accustomed to meet him at Vacluse, and make him a full compensation for his fondness.

No one at all acquainted with the life and writings of Petrarch will need to be told that this is an absurd fiction. Laura, a married woman, who bore ten children to a rather morose husband, could not have gone to meet him at Vacluse without the most flagrant scandal. It is evident from his writings that she repudiated his passion whenever it threatened to exceed the limits of virtuous friendship. On one occasion, when he seemed to presume too far upon her favour, she said to him with severity, "I am not what you take me for." If his love had been successful he would have said less about it.

Of the two persons in this love affair, I am more inclined to pity Laura than Petrarch. Independently of her personal charms, I cannot conceive Laura otherwise than as a kind-hearted, loveable

woman, who could not well be supposed to be totally indifferent to the devotion of the most famous and fascinating man of his age. On the other hand, what was the penalty that she would have paid if she had encouraged his addresses as far as he would have carried them? Her disgrace, a stigma left on her family, and the loss of all that character which upholds a woman in her own estimation and in that of the world. I would not go so far as to say that she did not at times betray an anxiety to retain him under the spell of her fascination, as, for instance, when she is said to have cast her eyes to the ground in sadness when he announced his intention to leave Avignon; but still I should like to hear her own explanation before I condemned her. And, after all, she was only anxious for the continuance of attentions, respecting which she had made a fixed understanding that they should not exceed the bounds of innocence.

We have no distinct account how her husband regarded the homage of Petrarch to his wife — whether it flattered his vanity, or moved his wrath. As tradition gives him no very good character for temper, the latter supposition is the more probable.

Every morning that he went out he might hear from some kind friend the praises of a new sonnet which Petrarch had written on his wife; and, when he came back to dinner, of course his good humour was not improved by the intelligence. He was in the habit of scolding her till she wept; he married seven months after her death, and, from all that is known of him, appears to have been a bad husband. I suspect that Laura paid dearly for her poet's idolatry.

No incidents of Petrarch's life have been transmitted to us for the first year or two after his attachment to Laura commenced. He seems to have continued at Avignon, prosecuting his studies and feeding his passion.

James Colonna, his friend and patron, was promoted in 1328 to the bishopric of Lombes. In order to explain the cause of his promotion, I must necessarily allude to the contemporary politics of Italy. After the death of the emperor, Henry V., the succession to the empire was disputed by Lewis of Bavaria and Frederic of Austria. The contest at last terminated in the defeat and captivity of Frederic, who was constrained to cede the empire to his rival. The see of Rome claimed

the privilege of ratifying the choice of the electors ; without this approbation, the election was considered by the pope to be null and void.

In consequence of these pretensions, Pope John XXII. accused the Emperor Lewis of having assumed the title of king of the Romans without his approbation, and ordered him to submit his cause with humility to the decision of the pontiff, without whose confirmation he could not ascend the imperial throne. The independent spirit of Lewis could ill brook the ambition of the Roman pontiff: he disdained the pope's pretensions, and, regarding the confirmation of his authority as an idle ceremony, determined to free himself and his successors from a dependence so mortifying to the dignity of the empire.

Some religious disputes between the pope and the Franciscans widened the breach. John persecuted those monks with the fury of a bigot, while the emperor received and protected them. Thus religion was added to interest as a ground of hostility ; the quarrel became more personal, and the parties more implacable in their resentment. Meanwhile, Lewis hastened into Italy at the head of an army, and, after having received the iron crown at

Milan,* he besieged and took the city of Pisa. He then marched to Rome, where he was crowned amidst the acclamations of the people. Soon after his coronation, he summoned an assembly of the Roman people, accused John XXII. of heresy, and deposed him from the papacy. Upon the first entrance of Lewis into Italy, John published a bull, by which he deprived the emperor of all his dignities, declared him a rebel and a heretic, and forbade the citizens of Rome to receive him under pain of excommunication. It was an affair of great importance to have the bull published and posted up at Rome. But the danger of the enterprise was alarming, as the city was full of the emperor's soldiers. James Colonna, however, un-

* In the western empire the use of coronations began with Charlemagne; as the patriarch of Constantinople crowned the eastern emperors, so the pope crowned the western. They were crowned with the silver crown at Aix-la-Chapelle as emperors of Germany, with the iron crown at Milan as kings of Italy, and with the gold crown at Rome. All the emperors, fifty-five in number, till the year 1558, were crowned at Aix; and in the cathedral of that city, the chair of white marble, plated with gold, upon which many of them sat during the ceremony, is still preserved. Of the second coronation there are not so many examples. A great many, however, received the third coronation. Frederic III. was twice crowned at Rome, to supply the omission of a coronation at Milan.

dertook the business, and executed it with the coolest intrepidity. He arrived at Rome on the 22nd of April, 1328, with four attendants, and, after having read the bull before a large concourse of people, he maintained that John XXII. was the true catholic and legitimate pope, and that he who called himself emperor was not emperor, whom he excommunicated with all his adherents. At the conclusion of these words he offered to prove what he had asserted by arguments, and even by combat in a place of neutrality. He then posted up the bull without any opposition, and expeditiously retired to Palestrina.

The emperor, who was at St. Peter's while this transaction happened, burst into a rage when he was informed of it. On the following day he summoned a council, in which sentence of death was pronounced against the pope as guilty of treason. Accordingly, John XXII. was burnt in effigy, under the name of James of Cahors. Meanwhile, James Colonna had returned to Avignon, where he was welcomed with acclamations of joy. The pope was the more pleased with the gallantry of the enterprize, because the family of the Colonnas had generally sided with the emperors against the

see of Rome. He bestowed upon him the bishopric of Lombes in Gascony ; and in the year 1330 James went from Avignon to take possession of his diocese, and invited Petrarch to accompany him to his residence. No invitation could be more acceptable to our poet : they set out at the end of March, 1330. In order to reach Lombes, it was necessary to cross the whole of Languedoc, and to pass through Montpellier, Narbonne, and Toulouse. Petrarch already knew Montpellier, where he had, or ought to have, studied the law for four years.

Full of enthusiasm for Rome, Petrarch was rejoiced to find at Narbonne the city which had been the first Roman colony planted among the Gauls. This colony had been formed entirely of Roman citizens, and, in order to reconcile them to their exile, the city was built like a little image of Rome. It had its capitol, its baths, arches, and fountains ; all which works were worthy of the Roman name. In passing through Narbonne, Petrarch discovered a number of ancient monuments and inscriptions.

Our travellers thence proceeded to Toulouse, where they passed several days. This city, which was known even before the foundation of Rome, is called, in some ancient Roman acts, “ Roma

Garumnae." It was famous in the classical ages for cultivating literature. Martial gives it the title of Palladia, which it long retained. Ausonius, a poet famous in the fourth century, who was educated at Toulouse, tells us that it was a large and well-peopled city.

Nonnunquam altricem nostri reticebo Tolosam
Coctilibus maris quam circuit ambitus ingens.

AUS. DE CLAR. URB. 7. EP. 24.

Eloquence, rhetoric, and the Greek language, were here taught. The professors of its academy were highly reputed, and the most distinguished families of the empire, those of the emperors themselves, sent their children thither to be educated.

After the fall of the Roman empire, the successive incursions of the Visigoths, the Saracens, and the Normans, for a long time silenced the Muses at Toulouse; but they returned to their favourite haunt after ages of barbarism had passed away. De Sade says,* that what is termed Provençal poetry was much more cultivated by the Languedocians than by the Provençals, properly so called. The city of Toulouse was considered as

* Memoirs, &c., vol i., p. 153.—*Amsterdam edition.*

the principal seat of this earliest modern poetry, which was carried to perfection in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, under the patronage of the counts of Toulouse, particularly Raimond V., who was proverbially named the good, and his son, Raimond VI. Both these princes were despoiled of their estates for favouring the Albigenses.

Petrarch speaks with high praise of those poets in his *Triumphs of Love*. It has been alleged that he owed them this mark of his regard for their having been so useful to him in his Italian poetry ; and Nostradamus even accuses him of having stolen much from them. But Tassoni, who understood the Provençal poets better than Nostradamus, defends him successfully from this absurd accusation.

It is the opinion of the best judges that Petrarch owed very little to the Troubadours ; unless we account as an obligation the extravagant conceits with which he sometimes denaturalizes his poetry. Of this obligation, however, if it was such, the poet himself was not conscious.

Although Provençal poetry was a little on its decline since the days of the dukes of Aquitaine and the counts of Toulouse, it was still held in honour ; and, when Petrarch arrived, the Floral

games had been established at Toulouse during six years.*

Ere long, however, our travellers found less agreeable objects of curiosity, that formed a sad contrast with the chivalric manners, the floral games, and the gay poetry of southern France. Bishop Colonna and Petrarch had intended to remain for some time at Toulouse; but their sojourn was abridged by their horror at a tragic event † in

* “The Floral games were instituted in France in 1324. They were founded by Clementina Isaure, Countess of Toulouse, and annually celebrated in the month of May. The countess published an edict, which assembled all the poets of France, in artificial arbours, dressed with flowers; and he that produced the best poem was rewarded with a violet of gold. There were, likewise, inferior prizes of flowers made in silver. In the mean time, the conquerors were crowned with natural chaplets of their own respective flowers. During the ceremony degrees were also conferred. He who had won a prize three times was pronounced a doctor ‘*en gaye science*,’ the name of the poetry of the Provençal Troubadours. This institution, however fantastic, soon became common through the whole of France.” — *Warton’s History of English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 467.

† I have transferred the following anecdote, and another with which this chapter closes, from Levati’s *Viaggi di Petrarca*, (vol. i. p. 119 et seq.) It behoves me to confess, however, that I recollect no allusion in any of Petrarch’s letters to either of the anecdotes, and I have found many things in Levati’s book which make me distrust his authority.

the principal monastery of the place. There lived in that monastery a young monk, named Augustin, who was expert in music, and accompanied the psalmody of the religious brothers with beautiful touches on the organ. The superior of the convent, relaxing its discipline, permitted Augustin frequently to mix with the world, in order to teach music, and to improve himself in the art. The young monk was in the habit of familiarly visiting the house of a respectable citizen: he was frequently in the society of his daughter, and, by the express encouragement of her father, undertook to exercise her in the practice of music. Another young man, who was in love with the girl, grew jealous of the monk, who was allowed to converse so familiarly with her, whilst he, her lay admirer, could only have stolen glimpses of her as she passed to church or to public spectacles. He set about the ruin of his supposed rival with cunning atrocity; and, finding that the young woman was infirm in health, suborned a physician, as worthless as himself, to declare that she was pregnant. Her credulous father, without inquiring whether the intelligence was true or false, went to the superior of the convent, and accused Augustin, who, though

thunderstruck at the accusation, denied it firmly, and defended himself intrepidly. But the superior was deaf to his plea of innocence, and ordered him to be shut up in his cell, that he might await his punishment. Thither the poor young man was conducted, and threw himself on his bed in a state of horror.

The superior and the elders among the friars thought it a meet fate for the accused that he should be buried alive in a subterranean dungeon, after receiving the terrific sentence of "*Vade in pacem.*" "What!" exclaimed the victim, with justifiable fury, "am I condemned, innocent and without a trial, to suffer a hundred times the pain of an ordinary death; and you, ye impious butchers! dare ye call yourselves the ministers of a merciful God?" The horrific sentence was, however, put into execution. At the end of several days the victim dashed out his brains against the walls of his sepulchre. Bishop Colonna, who, it would appear, had no power to oppose this hideous transaction, when he was informed of it, determined to leave the place immediately; and Petrarch in his indignation exclaimed—

"Heu! fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum."—VIRG.

One morning, in the course of this tour, the bishop, together with Petrarch, his friend Lælius, and a sufficient suite of attendants, set out to visit the highest of the mountains that form the chain of the Pyrenees, from the summit of which can be descried both France and Spain, as well as the seas that wash their shores. As they were ascending to this mountain top by a steep and tortuous path, at its roughest part they stopped in sight of a picturesque castle. Its owner, an aged Arab, came out to meet them. He had made many campaigns in bygone years, during the war which his fellow-believers waged against the king of Castille and Granada. Afterwards, he had traversed France and Flanders as a merchant, and acquired wealth enough to purchase the lordship of this fief. The turban on his head marked him out as a Saracen, whilst the numerous suite that followed James Colonna shewed that he was a distinguished personage. The Arab courteously saluted the company, and, addressing himself to the bishop of Lombes, said, “ Welcome, illustrious cavaliero, and your worthy followers. It would delight me if you would please to accept the hospitality which I can offer you, and refresh yourselves in my cas-

tle." "I admire your courtesy," answered the bishop, "and your hospitality, which is not restricted to those of your own faith, but extended also to the followers of Christ. I see the truth of what was often told me by my father. In the course of his misfortunes and wanderings he met with men of opposite creeds, that seem calculated to cherish the deadliest hatred between them; but he found that this circumstance could not eradicate that sense of humanity and brotherhood which Nature has planted in the hearts of men." Comparing this circumstance with the live burial of poor Augustin, it forms a sad contrast between Christian and Saracenic charity.

When the Arab learnt the bishop's name and family, he exclaimed, "The son of Stefano Colonna! I knew that great man at the court of Paris, and he related to me himself the terrible persecutions that he underwent from the injustice of Pope Boniface."

James Colonna told the Arab that he and his party would visit him with the greatest pleasure on their return from the mountain top; and he kept his word. The guests were received in a spacious saloon, and found a table covered with

the richest viands, and silver tankards foaming with exquisite wines.* “How is this?” said the Colonna smiling. “In the mansion of a Mussulman there is an overflow of wine, which is so rigidly forbidden by the prophet of Mecca.” The Mussulman answered him, “Sir, the law of Mahomet which prohibits wine is accommodated to the climate of Arabia, where water is the natural and ordinary beverage. In warm climates, the aqueous part of the blood soon dissipates itself by perspiration; hence they drink the simple element, and not strong liquors, which make the globules of the blood coagulate. When the Arab therefore comes to a colder region, he may dispense with this law.”

* Levati Viaggi di Petrarca.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER IV.

Petrarch returns with the Bishop of Lombes to his diocese—Strong attachment formed by the Poet for two Friends whom he met under James Colonna's roof, and whom he afterwards distinguished by the names of Lælius and Socrates—Cardinal John Colonna arrives at Avignon—Petrarch is introduced to him, and takes up his abode with him—Sketch of the History of the Colonna Family—Concourse of learned and distinguished Strangers at John Colonna's House—Arrival of Richard de Bury at Avignon—Petrarch's acquaintance with him—The Education of Agapito Colonna, son of the younger Stefano, is entrusted to our Poet—His passion for Laura continues unprosperous, but undiminished.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the 26th of May, 1330, the bishop of Lombes and Petrarch quitted Toulouse, and arrived at the mansion of the diocese. Lombes—in Latin, Lombarium—lies at the foot of the Pyrenees, only eight leagues from Toulouse. It is small and ill-built, and offers no allurements to the curiosity of the traveller. Till lately it had been a simple abbey of the Augustine monks. The whole of the clergy of the little city, singing psalms, issued out of Lombes to meet their new pastor, who, under a rich canopy, was conducted to the principal church, and there, in his episcopal robes, blessed the people, and delivered an eloquent discourse. Petrarch beheld with admiration the dignified behaviour of the youthful prelate. James Colonna, though accustomed to the wealth and luxury of Rome, came to the Pyrenean rocks with a pleased coun-

tenance. "His aspect," says Petrarch, "made it seem as if Italy had been transported into Gascony." Nothing is more beautiful than the patient endurance of our destiny; yet there are many priests who would suffer translation to a well paid, though mountainous bishopric, with patience and piety.

The vicinity of the Pyrenees renders the climate of Lombes very severe; and the character and conversation of the inhabitants were scarcely more genial than their climate. But Petrarch found in the bishop's abode friends who consoled him in this exile among the Lombesians. Two young and familiar inmates of the bishop's house attracted and returned his attachment. The first of these was Lello di Stefani, a youth of a noble and ancient family in Rome, long attached to the Colonnas. Lello's gifted understanding was improved by study; so Petrarch tells us; and he could have been no ordinary man whom our accomplished poet so highly valued. In his youth he had quitted his studies for the profession of arms; but the return of peace restored him to his literary pursuits. Such was the attachment between Petrarch and Lello, that Petrarch gave him the

name of Lælius, the most attached companion of Scipio. The other friend to whom Petrarch attached himself in the house of James Colonna was a young German, extremely accomplished in music. De Sade says that his name was Louis, without mentioning his cognomen. He was a native of Ham, near Bois le Duc, on the left bank of the Rhine between Brabant and Holland. Petrarch, with his Italian prejudices, regarded him as a barbarian by birth; but he was so fascinated by his serene temper and strong judgment, that he singled him out to be the chief of all his friends, and gave him the name of Socrates, noting him as an example that Nature can sometimes produce geniuses in the most unpropitious regions.

After having passed the summer of 1330 at Lombes, the bishop returned to Avignon, in order to meet his father, the elder Stefano Colonna, and his brother the cardinal.

The Colonnas were a family of the first distinction in modern Italy. They had been exceedingly powerful during the popedom of Boniface VIII., through the talents of the late Cardinal James Colonna, brother of the famous old Stefano, so well

known to Petrarch, and whom he used to call a phoenix sprung up from the ashes of Rome. Their house possessed also an influential public character in the Cardinal Pietro, brother of the elder Stefano. They were formidable from the territories and castles which they possessed, and by their alliance and friendship with Charles, king of Naples. The power of the Colonna family became offensive to Boniface, who besides hated the two cardinals for having opposed the renunciation of Celestine V., which Boniface had fraudulently obtained. Boniface procured a crusade against them. They were beaten, expelled from their castles, and almost exterminated; they implored peace, but in vain; they were driven from Rome, and obliged to seek refuge, some in Sicily, and others in France. During the time of their exile, Boniface proclaimed it a capital crime to give shelter to any of them. Meanwhile, the pontiff was informed that the wife of Agapito, the elder Stefano's brother, was with child, and he therefore conjectured that his enemy was in Rome. In his wrath he summoned her before him, and, seeing her modestly trying to hide her condition, he exclaimed, "Shew yourself, strumpet, and say by

whom you are pregnant!" "Oh, holy father," she answered, "you took away from me my husband, and what could I do? I yielded to the impulse of youth and nature. Among the many pilgrims whom the jubilee brought hither, there came a man resembling my husband. I noticed him; he pleased me; and, in memory of my banished husband, I received him at night. He left me next morning to become in the plight you see." Boniface laughed at the woman's ready reply.

The Colonnas finally returned to their dignities and property, and afterwards made successful war against the house of their rivals, the Orsini.

John Colonna, the cardinal, brother of the bishop of Lombes, and son of old Stefano, was one of the very ablest men at the papal court. He insisted on our poet taking up his abode in his own palace at Avignon. "What good fortune was this for me!" says Petrarch. "This great man never made me feel that he was my superior in station. He was like a father or an indulgent brother; and I lived in his house as if it had been my own." At a subsequent period, we find him on somewhat

cooler terms with John Colonna, and complaining that his domestic dependence had, by length of time, become wearisome to him. But great allowance is to be made for such apparent inconsistencies in human attachment. At different times our feelings and language on any subject may be different without being insincere. The truth seems to be that Petrarch looked forward to the friendship of the Colonnas for promotion, which he either received scantily, or not at all; so it is little marvellous if he should have at last felt the tedium of patronage.

For the present, however, this home was completely to Petrarch's taste. It was the rendezvous of all strangers distinguished by their knowledge and talents, whom the papal court attracted to Avignon, which was now the great centre of all political negotiations.

This assemblage of the learned had a powerful influence on Petrarch's fine imagination. He had been engaged for some time in the perusal of Livy, and his enthusiasm for ancient Rome was heightened, if possible, by the conversation of old Stefano Colonna, who dwelt on no subject with so much interest as on the temples and palaces of the

ancient city, majestic even in their ruins. Stefano Colonna was a veteran inured to the practice of arms from his very infancy ; he possessed an undaunted intrepidity that supported him under every reverse of fortune.

During the bitter persecution raised against his family by Boniface VIII., old Stefano had been the chief object of the pope's implacable resentment. Though oppressed by the most adverse circumstances, his estates confiscated, his palaces levelled with the ground, and himself driven into exile, the majesty of his appearance, and the magnanimity of his character, attracted the respect of strangers wherever he went. He had the air of a sovereign prince rather than of an exile, and commanded more regard than monarchs in the height of their ostentation.

In the picture of his times, Stefano makes a noble and commanding figure. If the reader, however, happens to search into that period of Italian history, he will find many facts to cool the romance of his imagination respecting all the Colonna family. They were, in plain truth, an oppressive aristocratic family. The portion of

Italy which they and their tyrannical rivals possessed was infamously governed. The highways were rendered impassable by banditti, who were in the pay of contesting feudal lords; and life and property were every where insecure.

Stefano, nevertheless, seems to have been a man formed for better times. He improved in the school of misfortune — the serenity of his temper remained unclouded by adversity, and his faculties unimpaired by age.

Among the illustrious strangers who came to Avignon at this time, was our countryman, Richard de Bury, then accounted the most learned man of England. He arrived at Avignon in 1331, having been sent to the pope by Edward III. De Sade conceives that the object of his embassy was to justify his sovereign before the pontiff for having confined the queen-mother in the castle of Risings, and for having caused her favourite, Roger de Mortimer, to be hanged. It was a matter of course that so illustrious a stranger as Richard de Bury should be received with distinction by Cardinal Colonna. Petrarch eagerly seized the opportunity of forming his acquaintance, confident that De Bury could give him valuable information

on many points of geography and history. They had several conversations. Petrarch tells us that he intreated the learned Englishman to make him acquainted with the true situation of the isle of Thule, of which the ancients speak with much uncertainty, but which their best geographers place at the distance of some days' navigation from the north of England. De Bury was, in all probability, puzzled with the question, though he did not like to confess his ignorance. He excused himself by promising to inquire into the subject as soon as he should get back to his books in England, and to write to him the best information he could afford. It does not appear, however, that he performed his promise.*

De Bury's stay at the court of Avignon was very short. King Edward, it is true, sent him a second time to the pope, two years afterwards, on important business. The seeds of discord between France and England began to germinate strongly,

* D'Anville considers the Shetland Isles to have been the ancient Thule. Some German geographers place it at Thyle, or Theil, in Norway; others suppose it to have been Iceland, or even Greenland: and there are scholars who conjecture that Thule was an indefinite term, similar to our "World's-end."

and that circumstance probably occasioned De Bury's second mission. Unfortunately, however, Petrarch could not avail himself of his return so as to have further interviews with the English scholar.

Petrarch wrote repeatedly to De Bury for his promised explanations respecting Thule; but, whether our countryman had found nothing in his library to satisfy his inquiries, or was prevented by his public occupations, there is no appearance of his having ever answered Petrarch's letters.

Stefano Colonna the younger had brought with him to Avignon his son Agapito, who was destined for the church, that he might be educated under the eyes of the cardinal and the bishop, who were his uncles. These two prelates joined with their father in intreating Petrarch to undertake the superintendence of Agapito's studies. Our poet, avaricious of his time, and jealous of his independence, was at first reluctant to undertake the charge; but, from his attachment to the family, at last accepted it. De Sade tells us that Petrarch was not successful in the young man's education; and, from a natural partiality for the hero of his

biography, lays the blame on his pupil. At the same time he acknowledges that a man with poetry in his head and love in his heart was not the most proper mentor in the world for a youth who was to be educated for the church. At this time, Petrarch's passion for Laura continued to haunt his peace with incessant violence. She had received him at first with good humour and affability; but it was only while he set strict bounds to the expression of his attachment. He had not, however, sufficient self-command to comply with these terms. His constant assiduities, his eyes continually riveted upon her, and the wildness of his looks, convinced her of his inordinate attachment; her virtue took alarm; she retired whenever he approached her, and even covered her face with a veil whilst he was present, nor would she condescend to the slightest action or look that might seem to countenance his passion.

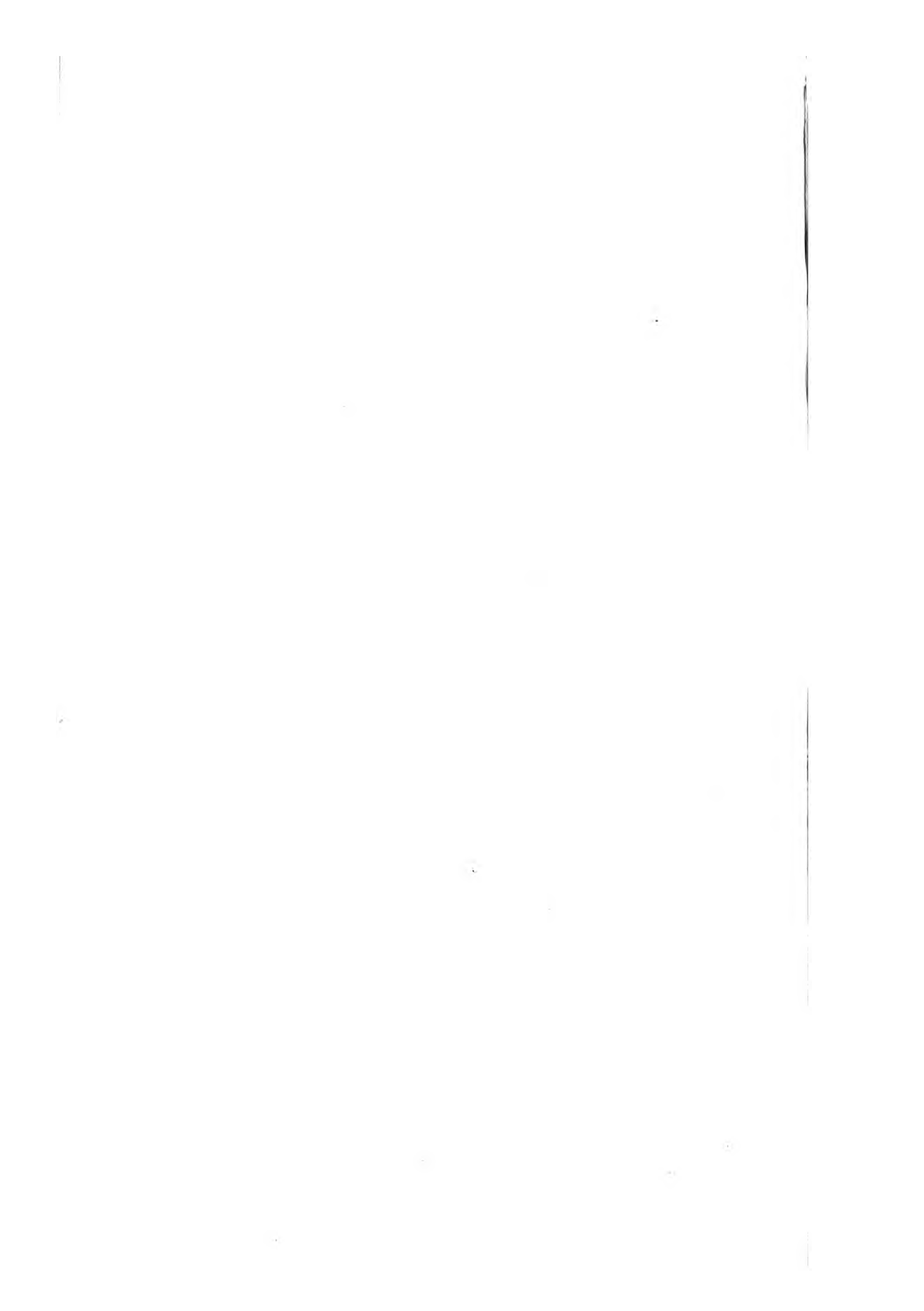
Petrarch complains of these severities in many of his melancholy sonnets. Meanwhile, if fame could have been a balm to love, he might have been happy. His reputation as a poet was increasing, and his compositions were read with universal approbation.

His affection for Italy was still fervid, and passing events kept it painfully alive. But, as our subject is that of an individual and not of Italy, let us defer noticing Italian politics, till we take a farther view of our poet's travels.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER V.

Petrarch makes a journey through the north of France, and visits Flanders as well as a part of Germany — Baldelli's correction of De Sade's mistake as to the date of this journey — His Letter from Paris to the Cardinal Colonna — His Description of the Parisians — He makes acquaintance with Roberto di Bardi—University of Paris—He proceeds to Ghent, where he complains of the high price of Wine, and thence to Liege, where, in spite of a vast number of Clergy, there was a great scarcity of Ink— Journeys on to Aix-la-Chapelle — His Letter from thence to Cardinal Colonna — He visits Cologne, and relates in a Letter a Superstitious Custom of the Inhabitants — He returns homeward, arrives at Lyons, and learns there that the Bishop of Lombes had gone to Rome — Writes to him in an irritated state of mind — Gets back to Avignon, and finds the cause of James Colonna's absence explained by his Brother the Cardinal.



CHAPTER V.

THE next interesting event in our poet's life was a larger course of travels, which he took through the north of France, through Flanders, Brabant, and a part of Germany, subsequently to his tour in Languedoc. But his biographers are not agreed as to the date of the latter journey. De Sade and Tiraboschi place it in the year 1333, whilst Baldelli contends that he set out two years earlier, namely, in 1331.

Baldelli shows, from the poet's *Senile Epistles* (Lib. 10, Ep. 11), that he journeyed into Languedoc four years after he had quitted Verona, which was in 1326, and that no great length of time could have elapsed between his Languedocian and his larger tour, since Petrarch says, in the above-mentioned epistle, "*inde (that is, from Languedoc) autem reversus, quarto idem anno, juvenili ardore,*

videndique cupidine Parisiorum urbem petii
extremos regni angulos, Flandriamque, et Hannoniam et inferiorem Germaniam circumivi." In another place Petrarch mentions that he undertook this journey about the twenty-fifth year of his age, "circa vigesimum quintum vitæ annum inter Belgas Helvetiosque festinans cum Leodium pervenissem"—Sen. Ep., Lib. 15, Ep. 5.

Petrarch was prompted to travel not only by his own natural curiosity to observe men and manners, by his desire of seeing monuments of antiquity, and his hopes of discovering the MSS. of ancient authors, but also, we may believe, by his wish, if it were possible, to escape from himself, and to forget Laura. He imparted his intention to the bishop of Lombes and Cardinal Colonna, who both approved of it. The latter requested him to write him an account of whatever he heard or saw, quoting the words of Cicero to Atticus, "*quod in buccam venerit scribito.*"

From Paris Petrarch wrote as follows to the cardinal. "I have visited Paris, the capital of the whole kingdom of France. I entered it in the same state of mind that was felt by Apuleius when he visited Hypata, a city of Thessaly, celebrated for

its magic, of which such wonderful things were related, looking again and again at every object, in solicitous suspense, to know whether all that he had heard of the far-famed place was true or false. Here I pass a great deal of time in observation, and, as the day is too short for my curiosity, I add the night. At last, it seems to me that, by long exploring, I have enabled myself to distinguish between the true and the false in what is related about Paris. But, as the subject would be too tedious for this occasion, I shall defer entering fully into particulars till I can do so *viva voce*. My impatience, however, impels me to sketch for you briefly a general idea of this so celebrated city, and of the character of its inhabitants.

“ Paris, though always inferior to its fame, and much indebted to the lies of its own people, is undoubtedly a great city. To be sure, I never saw a dirtier place, except Avignon. At the same time, its population contains the most learned of men, and it is like a great basket in which are collected the rarest fruits of every country. From the time that its university was founded, as they say, by Alcuin, the teacher of Charlemagne, there has not been, to my knowledge, a single Parisian of any

fame. The great luminaries of the university were all strangers; and, if the love of my country does not deceive me, they were chiefly Italians, such as Pietro Lombardo, Tomaso d'Aquino, Bonaventura, and many others.

“The character of the Parisians is very singular. There was a time when, from the ferocity of their manners, the French were reckoned barbarians. At present the case is wholly changed. A gay disposition, love of society, ease, and playfulness in conversation now characterise them. They seek every opportunity of distinguishing themselves; and make war against all cares with joking, laughing, singing, eating, and drinking. Prone, however, as they are to pleasure, they are not heroic in adversity. The French love their country and their countrymen; they censure with rigour the faults of other nations, but spread a proportionably thick veil over their own defects.

“Still, amidst the noise and infinite variety of objects which this magic capital offers at every instant to the view, my thoughts turn towards Rome and you. What joy would it not give me to be with the bishop of Lombes, seated together on the Tarpeian Rock! Farewell.”

At Paris our poet visited Roberto di Bardi,* chancellor of the University of Paris, and conversed with him respecting the disorders that prevailed in the court of Avignon. With no small joy Petrarch met his illustrious fellow-citizen, for Roberto was a Florentine, distinguished in philosophy and theology. Levati gives a long account of conversations between Petrarch and De Bardi, which may be probable, but which seem to me to be confirmed by no authentic quotations. I do not mean that Levati has falsified historical facts; but he has given dialogues between the poet and the university chancellor respecting those facts, whilst, in the epistles of Petrarch, I find no record of such dialogues.

Whilst Petrarch was at Paris, he must have

* Roberto Bardi, according to Philip Villani, who has written a life of him, published by Mazzucchelli, was of an illustrious and ancient family in Florence. After studying hard from his earliest youth, he went to Paris for theological instruction, where he gradually rose to the dignity of Chancellor in that university, and held it for several years, until his death in 1349. He collected several sermons of St. Augustin, and composed many himself, which are preserved in the Riccardian Library. In 1333, at the instance of Philip of Valois, he entered profoundly into the question so much debated in that age, namely, whether, at the day of judgment, the just will be permitted to see "the Beatific Vision."

looked with interest at its university, which was at that time the most important school of Europe, and the most numerously attended.

So vast a number of young men, different in dress and language, studied here, that the place seemed more like a city than a university. The best teachers that could be found in a semi-barbarous age came hither, secure of honours and rewards; and students, attracted by the fame of those professors, came from England, from Germany, and all the north, as well as from Italy and Spain. The grand object to which all the young learners aspired, was to obtain a doctorship in theology; but, before attending theological lectures, they were obliged to acquire grammar, rhetoric, logic, and moral philosophy. This concourse of youth was, however, unfavourable to their manners and discipline. It is true that some of the more favoured scholars of the university served as pages to the professors, in whose houses were to be seen the sons of some of the best families in Europe spreading the professor's table-cloth, and handing food and drink to his guests. Over these pages their teachers could easily hold beneficent domestic authority; and the conversation at the

tables at which they served might have been instructive to them. But the number of such pages must have been small, compared with the great mass of the students who lived independently in lodgings, and it appears that most of them led dissolute lives. They were prone to intoxication, and fond of cudgelling. The embryo doctors of divinity entered into controversy with whomsoever they met, and settled their disputes with sticks, and not with syllogisms. Towards the end of the twelfth century, they had broken so many heads of Parisian citizens, that Philip Augustus, in 1190, ordered the university to be surrounded by a deep moat, a high wall, and a hundred well-guarded gates, to confine the disciples of theology. It seems, however, that neither walls, gates, nor ditches were sufficient to protect the public against them. The students committed nuisances, and even crimes ; the civil power interfered to punish them ; but the professors shamefully took their part. In 1304, the provost of Paris caused a student convicted of outrageously criminal offences to be hanged. The clergy took up the cause, the professors complained of their privileges being violated, and they exhorted all the parsons to join them in attack-

ing the house of the provost with showers of stones. In their assault, those disciples of the benevolent Saviour cried out to the provost, "Get thee gone, accursed Satan! Confess thy rascality; honour thy mother church, the liberty of which thou hast injured; otherwise thy fate shall be like that of Dathan and Abiram, whom the earth swallowed up alive." All the schools were shut up; and this public-spirited magistrate was obliged to make an humble apology to the university, and perform a pilgrimage to Rome for absolution.

The discipline of the university, I fear, was not much better at the time when Petrarch paid it a visit; but he was received with honour, and saw the ceremony of students who had obtained the doctoral degree being saluted by the title of *divine masters in divinity*.

From Paris Petrarch proceeded to Ghent, of which only he makes mention to the cardinal, without noticing any of the towns that lie between. It is curious to find our poet out of humour with Flanders on account of the high price of wine, which was not an indigenous article. In the latter part of his life, Petrarch was certainly one of the most abstemious of men; but, at this period, it

would seem that he drank good liquor enough to be concerned about its price.

From Ghent he passed on to Liege. "This city is distinguished," he says, "by the riches and the number of its clergy. As I had heard that excellent MSS. might be found there, I stopped in the place for some time. But is it not singular that in so considerable a place I had difficulty to procure ink enough to copy two orations of Cicero's, and the little that I could obtain was as yellow as saffron!"

From Liege he proceeded to Aix-la-Chapelle, and, in a letter to Cardinal Colonna, he writes thus: "I have arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle, where Charlemagne fixed his residence. He was buried in a temple of marble, the priests of which edifice showed me an ancient manuscript, in which the following anecdote of that illustrious emperor was related; the story is curious and entertaining, though I do not vouch for its truth.

"Charlemagne was deeply in love with one of his mistresses, and so taken up with her charms, that he passed his whole time with her, regardless of every other concern. He sacrificed his honour and reputation; he neglected the government of

his kingdom; he despised the exhortations of his friends, and the remonstrances of his subjects. During this state of his infatuation his mistress died suddenly. Death, however, was not able to extinguish his passion; for his love became more extravagant, and rose to absolute madness. The dead body was embalmed, clothed with purple robes, and adorned with jewels. In this state the emperor continued to embrace it day and night, when he was overheard by his attendants speaking to his mistress as if she were alive, relating all his distresses, uttering sighs and groans, and shedding tears of affection, while he bestowed upon the putrid carcase every mark of the most endearing tenderness.

“The bishop of Cologne, a man of reputed wisdom and sanctity, from repeated acts of devotion and constant prayers, was at length informed, by a voice from heaven, that the cause of his master’s infatuation was contained under the tongue of the dead mistress. The bishop hastened to the apartment, which he entered, the emperor being fortunately absent, and, finding a small ring under the tongue of the deceased, took it out, and carried it away with him. The emperor, at his return, went as usual to embrace the dead body, but, upon his

near approach, was seized with horror at the sight of an object which now appeared in its real deformity. The passion of the emperor was transferred to the bishop. Charlemagne received him into the highest favour, consulted him on the most important affairs, and loaded him with continual caresses. The bishop disliked these imperial endearments, but was apprehensive that, if he should destroy the ring, some evil might happen to the emperor; and, to prevent it from falling into the possession of any other person, he threw it into a deep morass at Aix-la-Chapelle. Charlemagne immediately became devoted to that place; he fixed his residence there, and was so charmed with the odour of the morass, that he built in the midst of it a church and a palace at an immense expence. He passed there the remainder of his days, and was buried in the church. His affection for his favourite place of residence survived, in a manner, his decease, for he bound his successors in the empire to hold their coronation at Aix-la-Chapelle. I have dwelt longer on this anecdote than it deserves; but, as I had nothing more serious to divert your attention, I have filled my letter with trifling and common occurrences."

Petrarch was received at most of the places he visited, and more particularly at Cologne, with great marks of respect ; and he was agreeably surprised to find that his reputation had acquired him the partiality and acquaintance of several inhabitants.* He was conducted by his new friends to the banks of the Rhine, where the inhabitants were engaged in the performance of a superstitious annual ceremony, which, for its singularity, deserves to be recorded.

“The banks of the river were crowded with a considerable number of women, their persons comely, and their dress elegant. This great concourse of people seemed to create no confusion. A number of these women, with cheerful countenances, crowned with flowers, bathed their hands and arms in the stream, and they uttered, at the same time, some harmonious expressions in a language which I did not understand. I inquired into the cause of this ceremony, and was informed that it arose from a tradition among the people, and particularly among the women, that the impending calamities of the year were carried away by this ablution,

* “Ibi amicos prius mihi fama pepererat quam meritum.”
—*Fam. Epist.*

and that blessings succeeded in their place. Hence this ceremony is annually renewed, and the ablution performed with unremitting diligence.”

The ceremony being finished, Petrarch smiled at their superstition, and exclaimed, “ Oh! happy inhabitants of the Rhine, whose waters wash out your miseries, whilst neither the Po nor the Tiber can cleanse out our’s. You transmit your evils to the Britons by means of this river, whilst we send off our’s to the Illyrians and the Africans. It seems that our rivers have a slower course.”

Petrarch shortened his excursion that he might return the sooner to Avignon, where the bishop of Lombes had promised to await his return, and take him to Rome.

When he arrived at Lyons, however, he was informed that the bishop had departed from Avignon for Rome. In the first paroxysm of his disappointment he wrote a letter to his friend, which portrays strongly affectionate feelings, but at the same time an irascible temper. When he came to Avignon, the Cardinal Colonna relieved him from his irritation by acquainting him with the real cause of his brother’s departure. The flames of civil dissension had been kindled at Rome

between the rival families of Colonna and Orsini. The latter had made great preparations to carry on the war with vigour. In this crisis of affairs, James Colonna had been summoned to Rome to support the interests of his family, and, by his courage and influence, to procure them the succour which they so much required.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER VI.

State of Affairs in Italy from 1314 to 1333 — Competition for the Imperial Crown between Frederic of Austria and Lewis of Bavaria — Frederic supported by the Pope, the King of Naples, and the Guelphs of Italy, whilst the Italian Ghibellines, the Swiss Cantons, and John, King of Bohemia, support Lewis of Bavaria — Character of John of Bohemia — Death of Pope Clement V.— Is succeeded by John XXII.— Matteo Visconti excommunicated by the Pope—His Dotage and Death — Is succeeded in power by his son, Galeazzo Visconti— The Battle of Mühlendorf—Lewis of Bavaria begins to rule the empire as an independent and legitimate sovereign — He releases his captive rival, Frederic of Austria, from the prison to which he had been consigned, but, from his ingratitude to the Ghibellines, Lewis begins to decline in popularity among the Italians — John of Bohemia becomes a favourite throughout Germany and Italy — He approaches the frontiers of Italy, and is invited by several of its States

to protect them — Comes to a perfidious understanding with Pope John XXII. to suppress the Liberties of all Italy — Awakens the Jealousy of all the Italians, who unite, Guelph and Ghibelline, foil the Pope, and oblige the Bohemian monarch to retire.

CHAPTER VI.

I NOW revert to the affairs of Italy, which, from Petrarch's love of his country, were the constant objects of his intense interest ; and, to be silent respecting these in his biography would be to omit a part of the history of his mind.

Ever since the death of the emperor, Henry VII., in 1314, Germany had been divided into two great political parties, in supporting two rival claimants of the imperial crown. One of these was Frederic, Duke of Austria, grandson of the famous Rodolph of Hapsburg. The other aspirant was Lewis, the son of the duke of Bavaria, who succeeded to his father's power. Lewis was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle as emperor, and received the same compliment from the bishop of Cologne.

Out of ten electors, representing the German

empire, six voted for Lewis, and four for Frederic, so that the former was the legally elected emperor. A civil war, however, ensued in Germany, and battles were fought, in which Lewis had generally the advantage. Meanwhile, though there were two emperors and two kings of the Romans, neither of the rivals could carry his authority beyond the Alps. Italy, however, profited little by the cessation of imperial authority which followed the vigorous government of Henry VII., for the Italians, like the Germans, were divided in their attachment to one or other of the competitors. The pope, the French party, the Guelphs, and, at their head, the king of Naples, took the side of Frederic; whilst the princes of Lombardy and the Ghibellines embraced the cause of Lewis. Pope Clement V. was very truculent on this occasion. He cited to his tribunal at Avignon both of the aspirants to the Cæsarship, declaring that the empire depended on the Roman church, though his holiness himself durst not at that time set his foot in Rome. Clement appointed Robert, king of Naples, vicar of the empire in Italy, with the provision that his Neapolitan majesty should consider himself as the pope's vassal. He informed the world that,

during the vacancy of the imperial throne, he was the natural successor of the Cæsars, in virtue of the gift of Jesus Christ. It might have occurred to his holiness that, if the Messiah had anticipated and sanctioned such a claim on the part of Simon Peter's successors, he never would have said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

On the other hand, the majority of the Germans, a portion of the Italians, and the whole of the Swiss cantons, who covered themselves with glory by the victory of Morgarten, took up arms for Lewis, and a still more illustrious auxiliary presented himself in John, king of Bohemia. This extraordinary personage, who was chivalry itself personified, was the son of the German emperor, Henry VII., and might have been expected to be himself a candidate for the imperial crown. But, as he had an opponent in his succession to the kingdom of Bohemia in the duke of Carinthia, he was more anxious to secure his own dominions than to obtain the German throne. To that dignity he absolutely conducted Lewis of Bavaria, and for many years supported him as emperor, contributing even with his own arm to his victories over the Austrian Frederic.

The character of John of Bohemia, as I have said, was eminently chivalrous. He had often defeated his enemies of the north, and driven them back into their Polish and Prussian boundaries. It was not till late in his life, and long after the period when he first supported the Ghibellines, that he totally lost his sight. It is, therefore, anticipating an historical date to record at present the last act of his military valour. The events at which we have glanced occurred between 1314 and 1331. Eighteen years later was fought the battle of Cressy, in which John of Bohemia was present in person, as an ally of the French king. His state of blindness was then complete; but, at his desire, the reins of his horse were fastened to the head-stalls of two of his bravest knights. When the enemy came close to him, his knights directed him where to cut and thrust, and he is said to have wounded more than one antagonist whom he could not see. Next day he was found dead upon the field, with all his military attendants slain around him.

In the mean time, long before the Bohemian warrior had entered Italy, Clement V., the foremost ecclesiastical opponent of Lewis of Bavaria,

had paid the debt of Nature. The bulls which he had issued, declaratory of his right to decide on the election of a German emperor, were the last acts of his papal government. This pontiff, who had basely sold the interests of the church and his own conscience to Philip of France, and who had sacrificed the entire order of the Templars, died on the 20th of February, 1314, in the same year with Philip himself. Among the Templars whom the French king had put to death, there was one who was cruelly burnt, and, before he expired in the flames, he summoned both of the tyrant potentates, Pope Clement and Philip of France, to appear with him before the tribunal of God. The death of both soon afterwards seemed in the eye of popular superstition to be in obedience to this citation.

A tradition in Italy reported that Clement, anxious to know the secrets of the other world, consulted one of his most faithful chaplains. This religious confidant, who appears to have been as complaisant as the character of whom Pope says,

“ And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes,”

procured a necromancer, who took him down to the infernal regions, and there showed him a red hot

habitation which the devils were constructing for his master, Clement. After this intelligence it is said that the pope never smiled during the rest of his life. It is certain that he died with a troubled conscience.

Clement V., during his feeble and profligate reign, amassed enormous riches by the sale of ecclesiastical benefices and by other scandalous means. He had enriched his relations and his dependents; but he had not secured their gratitude. The moment that his death was announced in the papal palace, all its inmates rushed upon his treasures as if they had been their lawful booty. Amongst his numerous household, not a single servant remained to watch the dead body of their master. The wax candles that lighted his bed of state fell upon the bed-clothes, and set them on fire. The flames spread over the whole apartment, but the palace and wardrobe were so plundered, that only a miserable cloth could be found to cover the half-burnt remains of one of the richest popes who had ever governed the church.

Two years elapsed before a successor was appointed to the chair of St. Peter. At last, at the instance of Philip, count of Poitou, afterwards

known as king of France by the name of Philip le Long, a new pope was elected by the cardinals, namely, James d'Euse, at that time cardinal bishop of Porto. He took the papal name of John XXII. He had been the chancellor of Robert, king of Naples, and was his creature. He was of low origin, but certainly redeemed it by his talents. His partiality for the Tramonantes, his base dependence on the courts of Paris and Naples, his determination to fix and to continue the seat of the church in Provence, and the evils which his ambition and venality brought upon Italy, excited so much hatred against him among the Italians, that perhaps we should take the most scandalous reports of him given by his contemporaries with a grain of allowance.

After the death of the emperor, Henry VII., Robert, king of Naples, remained by far the most potent prince in Italy. To the kingdom of Apulia he joined the sovereignty of several cities of Piedmont, and the alliance of all the Guelphs of the Ecclesiastical State, as well as of Tuscany and of Lombardy, who recognized him as the imperial vicar, according to the concession of Clement V. Robert was at the same time sovereign of Pro-

vence; he held the pope in absolute dependence, and had unlimited influence at the court of France. His bond of union with all these states was their interest in the cause of the Guelphs, which Robert appeared to have at heart above all things; and he profited by the interregnum in the empire and the civil war in Germany to crush the Ghibellines in Italy.

But the Ghibelline party had now at their head men of rare talents and determined zeal; men whom the certainty of ruin, if their implacable enemies should prevail, bound over to union and consistency. Those chiefs had raised themselves to sovereignty in their respective states. Among them was Matteo Visconti, lord of Milan and of a part of Lombardy; Cane de la Scala, lord of Verona and of a part of the Venetian territory; Passerino Bonacossi, lord of Mantua; Castruccio Castracani; and Frederic of Montefeltro, lord of Urbino, and captain of the Ghibellines in the March of Ancona and the duchy of Spoleto. Other nobles, less celebrated and powerful, were attached to the cause, though they had not supreme dominion in their fortified castles and villages, which they held as dependents of the Ghibelline league.

Matteo Visconti, on account of his advanced age and of his superior forces and military talents, was regarded as the chief of all the Ghibellines of Italy. He was the first, therefore, whom Robert of Naples attacked. In 1314, Robert's general, Hugh de Baux, gained a victory over the army of Visconti—but it was a fruitless victory. The Guelphs of Provence and Lombardy quarrelled; they afflicted the peasants of the Milanese territory by many oppressions, till the whole population, joining Visconti's army, drove them with disgrace out of the country.

In the same year hostilities were continued, but with disadvantage to the Guelphic cause. The subsequent year, 1315, began with promises of success to the Guelphs; but it ended otherwise, and saw the Ghibellines triumphant almost over the whole of Lombardy.

Such was the state of factions in Italy when James d'Euise was elected pope at Lyons, and took the name of John XXII. Robert of Naples supported him, but the Italian princes who opposed him seemed likely to be more than his match. The latter declared themselves invested with the authority of the empire. In order to frustrate this

claim, John XXII. declared by a pontifical bull that he was paramount sovereign as head of the church over all earthly powers. "God has given me," he said, "authority in this world as well as in heaven." At this time the lower world was so disloyal to John XXII., that he durst not have shown himself in the streets of Rome.

Matteo Visconti was unwilling to declare himself an enemy of the church, yet he was at the same time loth to be despoiled of his authority. He renounced the title of imperial vicar, which the emperor Henry VII. had bestowed upon him, and which Clement V. had transferred to Robert of Naples, but he obtained from the people whom he governed the confirmation of his authority, and, with *their* approbation, he took the new title of captain and defender of the liberty of the Milanese.

This act of deference, however, in renouncing the title of the imperial vicar, could not save the Visconti from the wrath of the pope, who, in 1317, pronounced against him a sentence of excommunication, and put the city of Milan under interdict. In the mean time, Genoa had for many years been a scene of discord, two of their four chief

families, those of Doria and of Spinola, being Ghibellines, and the two others, the houses of Grimaldi and Fieschi, being Guelphs. The former two, namely, the houses of Doria and Spinola, were at first successful in expelling the Grimaldi and Fieschi, but they quarrelled between themselves, and the Dorias, calling back the exiled Guelphs, drove the Spinolas out of the city. The Guelphs, on their return, showed the Dorias that they had brought in auxiliaries stronger than themselves, and obliged them to be reconciled with the Spinolas, and to re-admit them into Genoa. The restored Spinolas, however, soon found themselves as uncomfortable under Guelphic reconciliation as their friends, the Dorias. The two Ghibelline families, therefore, withdrew from the city in disgust, and left the sole dominion of it to the Grimaldis and Fieschis.

The exiled Dorias and Spinolas were now reconciled in earnest. They seized and fortified Savona and Albenga, and reunited their troops. Other Ghibellines from the mountains of Liguria joined those emigrants from Genoa. Early in the following year, Marco Visconti, the son of the lord of Milan, approached the gates of Genoa with a

besieging army, whilst a Ghibelline fleet, armed by the emigrants at Savona, appeared before the port, and Visconti pushed on to the suburbs. The affrighted Guelphs sent prayers for assistance to Robert of Naples. To Robert the possession of Genoa was an object of vast importance, as it in some sort commanded the whole Tuscan Sea and the communication between his dominions in Provence and Naples. He therefore came in person to the relief of Genoa, with a fleet of twenty-five galleys, and so charmed the assembled people by his declaration that he had come to save them, that they gave to him, conjointly with the pope, the sovereignty of the city for ten years, and swore fealty to that effect.

All this, however, discouraged not the besiegers, whose camp soon received the auxiliar banners of Montferrat, of Lucca, of Pisa, of Frederic, king of Sicily, and even of the emperor of Constantinople. Robert was superior to his foes in cavalry; but those heavy armed troops, though they decided the fate of battles on level plains, were of little use in a war of posts amidst steep and savage mountains, so that Robert determined on a bold sally, and was successful. He got between the besiegers and

their head-quarters at Savona, and, routing the Visconti, chased him to the gorges of the Apennines.

Robert encouraged the Guelphs of Genoa to abuse this victory. He permitted the furious multitude to set fire to the magnificent palaces of the Ghibellines, which had been the ornaments of the city, and to raze them to the ground. Their country-houses, girt with delicious gardens, in the rich valleys of Bisagno and Polsevera, were pillaged and destroyed; and, after this work of destruction, the king, clergy, and citizens carried in procession the relics of John the Baptist, and offered up thanks to God in their churches for the blood which they had shed.

When his Neapolitan majesty quitted Genoa, the besiegers came back and renewed the siege, whilst their party pursued the war with activity in other quarters. Amidst these hostilities, the pope remained in perfect security at Avignon, where his tranquillity was disturbed only by his wrath against the Ghibellines. He sent the prelate, Bertrand de Poiet, cardinal of St. Marcel, commonly supposed to be the son of Pope John XXII., as legate into Lombardy, with a commission to pro-

secute all the Ghibellines as heretics, to summon Matteo Visconti to Avignon, and to bid him resign the government of Milan, a proposal which Matteo of course declined. Finding his spiritual fulminations unavailing, his holiness invited Philip of Valois, cousin of the king of France, to bring an army into Italy, and attack the heretics; and the French, as well as Robert of Naples, supported the invasion. But Philip, with all his counts, knights, bannerets, men-at-arms, and numerous forces, suffered himself to be shut up between the Po and the Tesino, made a sorry treaty with the Visconti, and retired with shame from the scene where he had promised himself glory.

Soon afterwards, Raimond of Cardona, another general of the Guelphs, was defeated by the Visconti.

The pope had then recourse to Frederic of Austria, offering to recognize his election as emperor, if he would assist him against the Ghibellines. He had so far succeeded as to induce Frederic to collect an army for this purpose, when the Visconti enlightened the Austrian prince as to the crafty policy of the pontiff, and dissuaded him from supporting him.

It was now twenty years since Matteo Visconti had been at war with the church ; indeed, he owed the attachment of his followers chiefly to their hatred of priestly government. He had been every other year excommunicated as a heretic and an enemy to God and Christianity. All this he bore with calm dignity, and contrived to keep well with Catholics even while combating the pope. But all of a sudden, in his old age, he was seized with a panic about the salvation of his soul, and thought to eschew hell flames by coming to an understanding with the pope. His dotage, however, was not of long duration ; he died at Monza, on the 22nd of June, 1322. His friends concealed his death, as well as the place of his sepulture, fearing that it might be violated, and his ashes scattered to the wind, according to the sentence of the pope. His eldest son, Galeazzo, in the mean time, sought eagerly for partizans, both in the city and the army, and assumed the title of captain-general of the Milanese. He was at first forced out of Milan by a rebellion that broke out on the 8th of October, when the streets resounded with cries of “ *Peace, and long live the church!* ” but his party put down the insurgents, and he was

enabled to return and resume his authority at the end of a month.

Hitherto, the two claimants of the empire, Frederic of Austria and Lewis of Bavaria, had maintained war only by the agency of their respective partizans. It was not till the 8th of September, 1322, that they came to personal encounter at Mühldorf on the Danube. The country is level, and well fitted for the movements of cavalry, of which both armies almost entirely consisted; so that they mutually broke lances, retired, and returned to the charge, with all the regularity of a tournament. The imagination, if we could forget the guiltiness of war, might be allowed to take an admiring interest in so splendid a spectacle as this combat must have been, when we picture to ourselves the double league-long array of warriors clad in armour from head to heel, with their banners, plumage, and panoply flashing in the sunrise, and their hearts glowing with chivalry within, their visors and beavers down, a lance or battle-axe in every hand, whilst the trampling and neighing of their horses were heard as they bounded to the first onset. Morning saw their battle begun, and the noon-day heard their trum-

pets still sounding the reiterated charge. It was not till the end of ten hours that the tragic tournament ceased, when four thousand chevaliers lay dead on the field, the blood issuing from their visors or their cloven mail.

Frederic of Austria was defeated in this battle, made prisoner, together with his brother Henry, and confined in the fortress of Trausnitz, where he lingered a couple of years; nor were all the efforts of his Austrian brothers efficient to relieve him, till his deliverance came from a quarter whence it was least expected.

John of Bohemia, who had not yet lost his sight, took a part in this battle, and much contributed to the victory.

After the battle of Mühldorf, Lewis of Bavaria began to rule the empire as an independent and legitimate sovereign. He sent immediate notice of his victory to Pope John XXII. at Avignon, and his holiness answered him in friendly terms; but the pope suddenly displayed very different feelings towards the victor of Mühldorf. In 1321, Raimond of Cordona had besieged Milan with an army of Guelphs. The city was but slightly fortified, but the Milanese showed him that brave

men are better defenders of places than ramparts of stone; and Raimond was beaten back by the Visconti. When Pope John discovered that Lewis had sent succours to the besieged, he flew into a passion, excommunicated the emperor, and deposed him, as far as a papal bull could effect that object. This pontific fulmination was launched in 1323. It failed either to dethrone or terrify Lewis of Bavaria, whose party was still strong among the Ghibellines of Italy, although the Guelphs too had had their successes, from the support of Robert, king of Naples, as well as from the Florentines, and from Bologna opening its gates to the pope's legate, Cardinal Poiet.

Still, upon the whole, the advantage was on the side of Lewis, and he improved it by a conduct towards his rival which was certainly politic, and may be called magnanimous, if we consider those barbarous times, when murders sat lightly on men's consciences. Frederic of Austria had been immured after the battle of Mühldorf in the fortress of Trausnitz. Lewis visited him in the prison, where he might have caused him to die a pretended natural death with no great scandal; but he offered him his liberty, asking in return only his friend-

ship and alliance. Frederic was touched by this treatment ; they shook hands ; the Austrian recognized Lewis as his emperor, and pledged himself to defend his deliverer against all his enemies, “ *even against him who gave himself the title of pope !*” He sanctioned the marriage of his own daughter with the son of Lewis. They became sincere friends. In vain the old fox at Avignon tried to annul their treaty ; in vain Leopold, brother of the Austrian duke, continued the war ; their friendship remained inviolable.

In 1327, Lewis of Bavaria arrived at Trent, and presided at a congress of the Ghibellines of Italy. He took the iron crown as king of the Romans at Milan, and seemed secure against the pope and all his Guelphs.

But in Italy, Lewis relaxed from the frank and honourable conduct which he had so often shewn in the German wars. He was ungrateful to the Ghibellines, who had supported him, and, above all, to Galeazzo Visconti, the most intrepid champion of their party. To Galeazzo he behaved in the most shameful manner, at the very time when he was receiving his hospitality. In a public assembly, on the 6th of July, 1327, he reproached

him bitterly for having withheld contributions which he had promised to pay; he arrested the Milanese chief himself, his son, and two of his brothers. He extorted from Galeazzo by threats the keys of all his fortresses, and sent him with all his family to a frightful prison.* He afterwards gave Milan the semblance of a republic; but he retained in his own hands the power of oppressively taxing the people. Lewis held a popular diet, and pretended to justify himself by blackening the characters of the Visconti. Against that house he certainly raised an animosity in many of his hearers that would have been latent if the unfortunate chiefs had been still in power; and, as Sismondi happily says, he exculpated himself in the eyes of those who wished to find him innocent. But his proceedings were little calculated either to command the Ghibellines or to conciliate the Guelphs.

In 1328, two deaths occurred that were unpropitious to the prospects of Lewis. The first was that of Castruccio Castracani, the lord-usurper and tyrant of Lucca. Castruccio had a bold, intelli-

* It is but justice to notice that Lewis, at the request of the Duke of Lucca, released Galeazzo and his family from prison. The ex-lord of Milan served in the pay of Lewis till his death, the next year, in 1328.

gent, indefatigable spirit burning within him, which, conspiring with the incessant weight of armour outside his body, made him an old man at forty-seven, and disabled his constitution for resisting an epidemic fever. He was, with all his talents, a merciless character, who thought little of burying alive twenty of his enemies at one time with their heads downward. Lewis, however, had cause to be sorry for losing Castruccio as an ally, for he was the first Italian chief who had invited him into Italy, and he was the inveterate foe of the Florentines, who, being generally attached to the Guelphs, were, even more than Robert of Naples, the formidable opponents of the new emperor. Another death, in the same year, which might be reckoned a misfortune to Lewis, was that of Cane de la Scala, the lord of Verona, whom, for twelve years, the Ghibelline confederates assembled at Soncino had elected as their chief. Cane, at an epoch when Lombardy was rich in great commanders, merited the first rank among them. To unflinching bravery he added constancy in his principles, frankness in his intercourse, and faith in his engagements. The first of the Lombard princes, he protected the arts and sciences; his court was the asylum of the

exiled Ghibellines, among whom were some of the first poets, painters, and sculptors of Italy; and several noble monuments, with which he adorned Verona, still attest the patronage which he afforded to architecture.

The Emperor Lewis returned to Germany just at the time when those Italian chiefs of the Ghibellines, who had so nobly defended him against the pope and King Robert of Naples, had been either laid in their graves, or were hard pressed by their enemies; and the cause of the Ghibellines had been still farther compromised by Lewis's conduct in Italy. He had shamelessly sacrificed his partizans to his avarice and to the interests of the passing day. He had been a true friend to nobody, and left no friends behind him.

The party of the church, which was opposed to Lewis, had chiefs who were equally odious. Pope John XXII. was a creature and tool of the French king. Luxurious, avaricious, and revengeful, he made ambitious pretensions, the injustice of which his own party confessed. He troubled the peace of the church by idle disputes with the Franciscan friars about the poverty of Jesus Christ, and with the cardinals and Sorbonne about the Beatific

Vision. He sold the dignities of the church, encouraged corrupt manners, and made his court the scandal of Christianity. His representative in Italy, the legate, Cardinal de Poiet, called his nephew, but believed to be his son, was a bad soldier and a worse priest, whose perfidy occasioned the revolt of the principal cities of Cispadane Lombardy. The Italians, in fact, were now grown weary both of the emperor and the pope, though they still preserved the names of their factions, the Ghibellines and the Guelphs.

At this crisis, a chivalrous prince, already mentioned, whose only objects seemed to be glory and the public good, appeared on the frontiers of Italy. This was John, king of Bohemia, the son of the late emperor, Henry VII., and hereditary prince of the states of Luxemburg. John of Bohemia had conducted Lewis of Bavaria to the imperial throne, and defended his possession of it with all his might. Lewis owed the victory of Mühldorf in some degree to his bravery. He reconciled the dukes of Austria with Lewis, and undertook to pacify Germany, and to obtain from the pope the absolution of the emperor. He was now come to the zenith of his reputation, when, at the end

of the year 1330, he arrived at Trent, in order to espouse his son to the heiress of the duke of Carinthia and the Tyrol, who had been his competitor for the kingdom of Bohemia.

While John was at Trent, he received an invitation from one of the cities of Italy, Brescia, to accept the sovereignty of their state, and to protect them from Mastino de la Scala, with whom they were at war.

The king of Bohemia gladly seized on this opening to shine on a new theatre of glory, and he repaired to Brescia on the last day of December, 1330; he induced Mastino de la Scala to withdraw his troops, and restored peace and prosperity to Brescia. The people of Bergamo, neighbours of the Brescians, followed their example in requesting John of Bohemia to adjust their quarrels, and he restored peace. These were Guelphic states; but the Ghibelline states were not slower in showing their obedience. In short, the king of Bohemia was every where popular, and party spirit itself would have seemed to be extinguished before his progress, if the cities that submitted to him, both Guelphic and Ghibelline, had not bargained with him, before submitting, that their exiled enemies

of the opposite party should not be re-admitted to their respective cities. All this time it was not exactly known for what particular object John of Bohemia had come into Italy. Some said that he intended to support the Ghibellines; whilst others thought that he had been invited by the pope to protect the Guelphs.

Whatever was his object, it is certain that his entry into Italy had at first the most brilliant success. He made himself master of many considerable cities almost without striking a blow. Bergamo, Cremona, Parma, Pavia, and others, welcomed him across their drawbridges. He made the Florentines raise the siege of Lucca. All those states were so infatuated as to believe that, by surrendering themselves to this prince, they could put an end to their agitations.

These rapid successes gave great uneasiness to the pope and the Emperor Lewis, who both disavowed having authorized the king of Bohemia to enter Italy. The pope was in terror lest he should totally overwhelm the Guelphs, and make himself master of many places over which the papal chair held rights or pretensions. He therefore directed his legate in Lombardy by all sorts of

means to bring John of Bohemia into the interests of the holy see.

The legate succeeded with great adroitness in this commission. He dissuaded the Bohemian monarch from making war for the interests of Lewis of Bavaria, and exhorted him to labour for himself, and for the aggrandizement of his own house ; and it may be guessed that this advice was easily inculcated, as John had evidently entered Italy more with a view to his own advantage than to suppress either Guelphs or Ghibellines. The legate further told him that the pope would consent to his retaining, but only under the sovereignty of the holy chair, the places of which he had made himself master. The king of Bohemia entered easily into these ideas of the legate ; and, according to a plan that was distinctly traced, they agreed to unite their forces for the entire subjugation of Italy, and for destroying the feeble remnants of the imperial authority. But the secret conferences of the legate and the king of Bohemia were discovered, and spread a general alarm among the Italians, who feared that they were about to be devoted to new fetters. A spectacle was then exhibited which had never been witnessed before,

namely, that of the Guelphs and Ghibellines uniting to defend their common country. A league was formed between the factions of Italy. Fear produced in a moment what the popes had vainly tried to effect during two ages. Robert, king of Naples, the chief of the Guelphic party, the Florentines, and the lords of Mantua and Ferrara, in forming this confederacy, bound themselves to unite their forces for recovering the cities of which the king of Bohemia had taken possession. It was decided that Cremona should belong to Azzo Visconti, lord of Milan, Parma to Martino della Scala, lord of Verona, Modena to Obizzo d'Esté, lord of Ferrara, Reggio to Ludovico di Gonzagua, lord of Mantua, and Lucca to the Florentines.

John of Bohemia left his son, Charles of Luxemburg, to manage the wars of Italy, and repaired to Paris, in order to confirm his alliance with France by marrying his daughter to the heir to the French crown. In passing through France he paid his respects to the pope at Avignon, although that city belonged to Robert of Naples, his principal enemy. He had there several conferences with the pope about the means of destroying the Italian league; and that there was an understanding be-

tween them could not be kept a secret, in spite of all the pontiff's profound dissimulation.

The old knave intimated in confidence to the king of Bohemia that he wished for the success of his enterprize, and he was probably in so far sincere; but he wished the public to believe that he was inimical to his Bohemian majesty. He received him before witnesses with affected coldness, and even reproached him for having brought war into Italy. But the Italians were not to be duped by his holiness's hypocrisy, and least among them was Petrarch. The poet's eyes were ever open to the destinies of his countrymen, and he never forgave the pope for this attempt to crush their liberty.

The king of Bohemia, after passing a fortnight at Avignon, went to Paris to demand troops from the king of France, who granted him the auxiliary forces which he demanded.

The king of Bohemia re-entered Italy at the beginning of the year 1333, bringing with him the constable of France and the flower of the French nobility.

Upon the first news of his invasion, Petrarch gave vent to his indignation, in an epistle in Latin verse, addressed to Æneas Tolomei of Siena, a poet who had considerable reputation in his day.

Fired with enthusiasm, Petrarch enumerates the former conquests of the Romans over those very nations who were now preparing to subdue their original masters. The conquest of Italy by the French and Germans seemed to him as unnatural a circumstance as if the stars should sink into perpetual obscurity, and night usurp the place of day. He lamented the fatal divisions between the several cities; he wished to rouse their ancient spirit and magnanimity, and he exhorted all the powers of Italy to lay aside their rival animosities, and to unite against those insolent invaders.

On this occasion, the rival powers acted as if they had been influenced by the spirit of Petrarch. The several parties united in the common cause of Italy. The standards of states so lately hostile were hoisted in friendly array to fight the dispirited hosts of the legate and the king of Bohemia's French auxiliaries. The red and azure armorials of Guelph and Ghibelline,* the viper of Milan,†

* Azure was the colour generally used by the Guelphs in their devices. That of the Ghibellines was mostly red.

† The device of the Visconti of Milan was an enormous viper swallowing a man. It was copied from a standard which they had taken from the Saracens. The Visconti were called, and not always very unjustly, the Vipers of Milan.

and the lions rampant and crowned eagles of Correggio, stood victorious on the same side of the battle. The legate was defeated, and John of Bohemia, putting his chivalric valour in abeyance, and selling his sovereignty over several states to their respective chieftains for as much money as he could obtain, determined on quitting Italy. He sent his son Charles to govern Bohemia, while he repaired to Paris to amuse himself with its tournaments.

This was a glorious, though, alas! a transitory triumph for Italy. Who that has ever felt Virgil's electrifying apostrophe to that mighty land, "*Salve magna parens rerum Saturnia tellus*" — who that thinks of her arts, her monuments, and her men of genius, can forbear to lament her present prostration, and to exclaim with Petrarch, "Unite, O Italy! and be once more free." But the day of her emancipation cannot be for ever deferred. She has a common language, the most beautiful in the world. She has a robust population, whose forms afforded models to Raphael and Michael Angelo. She has fires within her which, like those of her *Ætna* and *Vesuvius*, are not to be repressed by human power. Italy will one day, and ere long, be a great commonwealth to defy the invading world.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER VII.

Petrarch remains at Avignon—Illness of Laura in the year 1334—His Sonnets on the subject—Projects of the old Pope, John XXII.—He wishes to revive the Crusades—Petrarch's zeal for the absurd scheme is kindled, and he inveighs against the Christian Powers for their inactivity against the Moslems—The Kings of France and Bohemia pledge themselves to an Expedition to the Holy Land, but it never takes place—The Pope talks of replacing the Holy Chair at Rome—He enters Italy; but, fearing to trust himself in the Roman Capital, repairs to Bologna to wait for quieter times—Petrarch writes with enthusiasm on this subject also—Endeavour of the Pope to establish a New Doctrine respecting the "Beatific Vision," namely, that we shall not see God face to face till after the Resurrection—John, finding his Doctrine universally condemned, recants it—His Death—He is succeeded by Benedict XII.—Letter of Petrarch to the new Pope in the Character of the City of Rome—Benedict declines old Mother Rome's

Invitation, but praises Petrarch, and gives him the **Canonicate** of Lombes — Azzo da Correggio comes to Avignon with an appeal to the Pope's Tribunal — His Cause is pleaded by Petrarch, and triumphantly carried—Satirical Letter of the Bishop of Lombes to Petrarch, and the Poet's answer.

CHAPTER VII.

IN spite of his dislike of Avignon, Petrarch continued to reside in that place for several years after returning from his travels in France and Flanders. It does not appear from his sonnets, during those years, either that his passion for Laura had abated, or that she had given him any more encouragement than heretofore. But in the year 1334, an accident renewed the utmost tenderness of his affections. A terrible affliction visited the city of Avignon. The heat and the drought were so excessive that almost the whole of the common people went about naked to the waist, and, with frenzy and miserable cries, implored Heaven to put an end to their calamities. Persons of both sexes and of all ages had their bodies covered with scales, and changed their skins like serpents.

Laura's constitution was too delicate to resist this infectious malady, and her illness greatly

alarmed the fears of Petrarch. One day he asked her physician how she was, and was told by him that her condition was very dangerous; on that occasion he composed the following sonnet.

This lovely spirit, if ordained to leave
 Its mortal tenement before its time,
 Heaven's fairest habitation shall receive
 And welcome her to breathe its sweetest clime.
 If she establish her abode between
 Mars and the planet-star of Beauty's queen,
 The sun will be obscured, so dense a cloud
 Of spirits from adjacent stars will crowd
 To gaze upon her beauty infinite.
 Say that she fixes on a lower sphere,
 Beneath the glorious sun, her beauty soon
 Will dim the splendour of inferior stars—
 Of Mars, of Venus, Mercury, and the Moon.
 She'll chuse not Mars, but higher place than Mars;
 She will eclipse all planetary light,
 And Jupiter himself will seem less bright.

I trust that I have enough to say in favour of Petrarch to satisfy his rational admirers; but I quote this sonnet as an example of the worst style of Petrarch's poetry. I make the English reader welcome to rate my power of translating it at the very lowest estimation. He cannot go much further down than myself in the scale of valuation, especially if he has Italian enough to know that

* *Quest' anima gentil che si disparte*, Sonnet xxiii.

the exquisite mechanical harmony of Petrarch's style is beyond my reach. But, giving my English critic every advantage on that score, and even supposing him to be a lover as deeply in love as I ever was myself, I would ask him whether, in predicting that the beauty of a pale poor woman, after supporting herself on her bolster, and swallowing anti-febrile draughts from her apothecary, was likely to eclipse the light of the stars, be not a language bordering on that of insanity. It has been alleged that this sonnet shows how much the mind of Petrarch had been influenced by his Platonic studies; but if Plato had written he would never have been so extravagant. One might imagine that the poet got it among the mummies of Egypt, with which it is equally destitute of life and nature.

Petrarch, on his return from Germany, had found the old pope, John XXII., intent on a speculation, which, though engendered by his dotage, for he was now between eighty and ninety, would have required all the vigour of his freshest years. This was an attempt to renew the crusades.

Europe had reposed from those pious insanities for a hundred years. Indeed, ever since the capture of Acre by the sultan of Babylon, in 1291,

the Christians had been chased out of the Holy Land ; and there remained not a single place where invaders from the west could land with safety, so that crusading ought now to have appeared a chimerical project to any sensible person.

Petrarch himself was not blind to the difficulties of such an enterprize ; but his enthusiasm carried away his judgment, and his imagination co-operated with his wishes. Accordingly, we find him in his writings bitterly reproaching the Christian powers for their inactivity against the common foe. In the course of the year 1333, the kings of France, Bohemia, and Arragon, together with many barons, princes, and even prelates, shewed symptoms of preparation for invading the Holy Land. But, in spite of all this display of zeal, the projected crusade never took place. Europe had too many troubles at home to require oriental amusements.

Another project was talked of by Pope John, though it was suggested by others, and not the offspring of his own wishes. This was the transfer of the holy seat to Rome. The execution of this plan, for which Petrarch sighed as if it were to bring about the millennium, and which, as we shall see, was not accomplished by another pope without

embroiling him with his cardinals, was nevertheless more practicable than capturing Jerusalem. We are told by several Italian writers that the aged pontiff, moved by repeated entreaties from the Romans, as well as by the remorse of his conscience, thought seriously of effecting this restoration ; but the sincerity of his intentions is made questionable by the fact that he never fixed himself at Rome. He wrote, it is true, to Rome in 1333, ordering his palaces and gardens to be repaired ; but the troubles which continued to agitate the city were alleged by him as too alarming for his safety there, and he repaired to Bologna to wait for quieter times.

On both of the above subjects, namely, the insane crusades and the more feasible restoration of the papal court to Rome, Petrarch wrote with devoted zeal ; they are both alluded to in his twenty-second sonnet.*

Il successor di Carlo, che la chioma
 Con la corona del suo antico adorna ;
 Prese ha già l'arme per fiaccar le corna
 A Babilonia, e chi da lei si noma :
 Il vicario di Christo con la soma
 Delle chiavi, e del manto al nido torna.

One of this pontiff's projects, quite unconnected with political ambition, was to establish, entirely by

* De Sade, i., 243.

his own papal authority, a new theory respecting the period after death at which the souls of the just obtain a sight of their Maker. His opinion was that we shall not see God, face to face, according to the apostle's expression, till after the day of judgment and the resurrection of the body. In the interval between death and the day of judgment we shall remain, Pope John alleged, under the protection of the human nature of Jesus Christ. One can see nothing in this doctrine that either invades the moral spirit of Christianity, or point-blank contradicts the Scriptures; for, though the malefactor on the cross was promised by Christ that he should be that night in Paradise, an exception might be made in his case to the general rule; and, to the pious man, the unconscious interval of a million years would not abate the joy of his hope in a resurrection. How far the inferred doctrine, that those who are to see the devil face to face will have so long a respite, might be too consolatory to impenitent sinners, is a different question, the prospect of prompt punishment being a cogent argument.* Yet, upon the whole,

* I remember, when I was a young student of divinity at the University of Glasgow, that an old man, by his own confession and by general reputation *a great sinner*, called upon me, and

a great deal may be said in defence of this opinion, and I suspect that Petrarch leaned to it.

But John XXII. took the old and wrong way of enforcing his doctrine — he erred right and left as a prosyletizer — he petted and promoted those who embraced his creed, and he punished those who rejected it, forgetting that men's rewarded belief is never half so conscientious as their persecuted disbelief. The bishop of Meaux, one of the most learned churchmen of the age, was cited and examined as a doubter of the new doctrine; and a poor Dominican friar was put into a dungeon, that he might arrive at a better understanding of the beatific vision in solitude and darkness. The result of all this was that the king of France, begged me to explain the scripture doctrine as to future punishments. His anxiety was to ascertain whether they were to commence immediately after death, or only after the day of judgment. I told him that I was but a raw student of theology, but I conceived it to be the general opinion of divines that no punishments would commence till after the day of judgment, or the general destruction of the world. "And how long will it be," he asked, "till that period comes?" — "Why, I cannot positively tell you," said I, "but I believe astronomers conjecture that our globe will be safe for a million years." — "Oh, come then," said the old sinner, "I shall have a million years to rest in my grave—and *there is no saying what may happen in that time.*"

alarmed by a general outcry against Pope John's theory, assembled his doctors of theology, by whom it was condemned.

This decision of the Parisian divines, together with the remonstrances of John's cardinals and the exhortations of the king of Naples, compelled our pontiff, before his death, to make a solemn recantation of his so-called heresy.

The death of John XXII. left the cardinals divided into two great factions. The first was that of the French, at the head of which stood Cardinal Taillerand, son of the beautiful Brunissende de Foix, whose charms were supposed to have detained Pope Clement V. in France.

The Italian cardinals, who formed the opposite faction, had for their chief the Cardinal Colonna. The former, or French party, being the more numerous, were, in some sort, masters of the election; they offered the tiara to Cardinal de Commenges, on condition that he would promise *not* to transfer the papal court to Rome. That prelate showed himself worthy of the dignity, by refusing to accept it on such terms.

To the surprise of the world, the choice of the conclave fell at last on James Fournier, said to be

the son of a baker at Saverdun, who had been bred as a monk of Citeaux, and always wore the dress of the order. Hence he was called the White Cardinal. He was wholly unlike his portly predecessor John in figure and address, being small in stature, pale in complexion, and weak in voice. He expressed his own astonishment at the honour conferred on him, saying that they had elected an ass. If we may believe Petrarch, he did himself no injustice in likening himself to that quadruped ; but our poet was somewhat harsh in his judgment of this pontiff. He took the name of Benedict XII.

Shortly after his exaltation, Benedict received ambassadors from Rome, earnestly imploring him to bring back the sacred seat to their city ; and Petrarch thought he could not serve the embassy better than by publishing a poem in Latin verse, exhibiting Rome in the character of a desolate matron imploring her husband to return to her. He makes Rome, I think rather injudiciously, confess herself to be a tottering old lady, with dishevelled hair* and faded beauty, for runaway husbands are hard to be won back by aged wives.

* Squalida

. multisque malis lassata senectus.

Epistol. Lib. 1.

Benedict applauded the author of the epistle, but declined complying with the prayer of old lady Rome. The majority of the cardinals dissuaded him from trusting himself among the Italians. Instead of revisiting Italy, his holiness ordered a magnificent and costly palace to be constructed for him at Avignon. Hitherto, it would seem, that the popes had lived in hired houses. In imitation of their pontiff, the cardinals set about building superb mansions, to the unbounded indignation of Petrarch, who saw in these new habitations not only a graceless and unchristian spirit of luxury, but a sure indication that their owners had no thoughts of removing to Rome.

In the January of the following year, Pope Benedict presented our poet with the canonicate of Lombes, with the expectancy of the first prebend which should become vacant. This preferment Petrarch is supposed to have owed to the influence of Cardinal Colonna. In the bull which conferred this appointment, his holiness expresses, in the most marked manner, his respect for the literary and personal character of our poet; but, from what Petrarch says of Benedict, it would not appear that the esteem was reciprocal.

The troubles which at this time agitated Italy drew to Avignon, in the year 1335, a personage who holds a pre-eminent interest in the life of Petrarch, namely, Azzo da Correggio, who was sent thither by the Scaligeri of Parma. The state of Parma had belonged originally to the popes; but two powerful families, the Rossis and the Correggios, had profited by the quarrels between the church and the empire; and, having usurped the government, began to quarrel about the possession of it.

During five and twenty years, Gilberto Correggio and Rolando Rossi alternately lost and won the sovereignty, till, at last, Cardinal Poiet, the legate of Lombardy, under pretence of reconciling the two families, took possession of Parma, in the name of the church, in 1329; and, fearing that Rolando's influence with the inhabitants might induce them to revolt, he invited him to Bologna, that he might make peace between him and the children of the lately deceased Gilbert Correggio. The Rossi, trusting to the legate's honour, repaired to Bologna; but, instead of being led to amicable embraces with the family of his rival, he was clapped into prison, and embraced within strong walls. Having contrived to get out of these, he

vowed vengeance on the perfidious legate, and induced the city to surrender itself to John of Luxemburg, king of Bohemia, when he entered Italy in 1330. That monarch's failure among the Italians has been already described. When he quitted Italy, he left the sovereignty of Parma to Rolando Rossi and his brothers, upon their engaging to pay him thirty-five thousand florins of gold.

After the departure of the Bohemian, the confederate princes took the city, and conferred the government of it on Guido Correggio, the greatest enemy of the Rossis.

Gilbert Correggio left at his death a widow, the sister of Cane de la Scala, and four sons, Guido, Simone, Azzo, and Giovanni. It is only with Azzo that we are particularly concerned in the history of Petrarch.

Azzo was born in the year 1303, being thus a year older than our poet. Originally intended for the church, he preferred the sword to the crozier, and became a distinguished soldier. He married the daughter of Luigi Gonzagua, lord of Mantua. He was a man of bold original spirit, and so indefatigable that he acquired the name of Iron-foot; nor was his energy merely physical, but equally

intellectual. He read much, and forgot nothing—his memory was a library. Azzo's character, to be sure, even with allowance for turbulent times, is not invulnerable at all points to a rigid scrutiny; and, notwithstanding all the praises of Petrarch, who dedicated to him his treatise on a solitary life in 1366, his political career contained some acts of perfidy. But we must inure ourselves, in the biography of Petrarch, to his over-estimation of favourites in the article of morals.

Azzo's judgment, however, was acute, and, considering his accomplishments, it is not surprising that he should have been a favourite both with John Colonna and our poet, whose reputation made him ambitious of his acquaintance; and it matured into friendship.

It was not long ere Petrarch was called upon to give a substantial proof of his regard for Azzo. After the seizure of Parma by the confederate princes, Marsilio di Rossi, brother of Rolando, went to Paris to demand assistance from the French king. The king of Bohemia had given over the government of Parma to him and his brothers, and the Rossi now saw it with grief assigned to his enemies, the Correggios. Marsilio could obtain no succour

from the French, who were now busy in preparing for war with the English; so he carried to the pope at Avignon his complaints against the alleged injustice of the lords of Verona and the Correggios in breaking an express treaty which they had made with the house of Rossi.

Azzo had the threefold task of defending, before the pope's tribunal, the lords of Verona, whose envoy he was, the rights of his family, which were attacked, and his own personal character, which was charged with some grave objections. Revering the eloquence and influence of Petrarch, he impertuned him to be his public defender. Our poet, as we have seen, had studied the law, but had never followed the profession. "It is not my vocation," he says, in his preface to his Familiar Epistles, "to undertake the defence of others. I detest the bar; I love retirement; I despise money; and, if I tried to let out my tongue for hire, my nature would revolt at the attempt."

But what Petrarch would not undertake either from taste or motives of interest, he undertook at the call of friendship. He pleaded the cause of Azzo before the pope and cardinals; it was a finely interesting cause, that afforded a vast field for his

eloquence. He brought off his client triumphantly ; and the Rossis were defeated in their demand.

At the same time, it is a proud trait in Petrarch's character that he showed himself on this occasion not only an orator and a lawyer, but a perfect gentleman. In the midst of all his zealous pleading, he stooped neither to satire nor personality against the opposing party. He could say, with all the boldness of truth, in a letter to Ugolino di Rossi, the bishop of Parma, " I pleaded against your house for Azzo Correggio, but you were present at the pleading ; do me justice, and confess that I carefully avoided not only attacks on your family and reputation, but even those raileries in which advocates so much delight."

On this occasion, Azzo had brought to Avignon, as his colleague in the lawsuit, Guglielmo da Pastrengo, who exercised the office of judge and notary at Verona. He was a man of deep knowledge in the law ; versed, besides, in every branch of elegant learning, he was a poet into the bargain. In Petrarch's many books of epistles, there are few, if there be any, letters addressed by him to this personage ; but it is certain that they contracted a friendship at this period which en-

dured for life. Guglielmo was a gay and gallant man, fond of the ladies, as well as the muses—and wooed neither of them without success; yet his erudition was so great that he conceived, even in that obscure age, the bold design of a universal library; and compiled from the most original authorities an historical and geographical dictionary, the MS. of which is still preserved in the library of St. John and St. Paul, at Venice.*

All this time the Bishop of Lombes still continued at Rome; and, from time to time, solicited his friend Petrarch to join him. “Petrarch would have gladly joined him,” says De Sade; “but he was detained at Avignon by his attachment to John Colonna and his love of Laura;” a whimsical junction of detaining causes, in which the fascination of the cardinal may easily be supposed to have been weaker than that of Laura. In writing to our poet, at Avignon, the bishop rallied Petrarch on the imaginary existence of the object of his passion. Some stupid readers of the bishop’s letter, in subsequent times, took it into their heads that there was a literal proof in the prelate’s

* Baldelli says that it saw the light (I suppose that it was printed) at Venice, in 1547.

jesting epistle of our poet's passion for Laura being a phantom and a fiction. But, possible as it may be, that the bishop in reality suspected him to exaggerate the flame of his devotion for the two great objects of his idolatry, Laura and St. Augustine, he writes, in a vein of pleasantry that need not be taken for grave accusation. "You are befooling us all," says the prelate, "my dear Petrarch; and it is wonderful that at so tender an age (Petrarch's tender age was at this time 31) you can deceive the world with so much art and success. And, not content with deceiving the world, you would fain deceive Heaven itself. You make a semblance of loving St. Augustine and his works; but, in your heart, you love the poets and the philosophers. Your Laura is a phantom created by your imagination for the exercise of your poetry. Your verse, your love, your sighs, are all a fiction; or, if there is any thing real in your passion, it is not for the Lady Laura, but for the laurel—*that is*, the crown of poets. I have been your dupe for some time, and, whilst you shewed a strong desire to visit Rome, I hoped to welcome you there. But, my eyes are now opened to all your rogueries, which nevertheless, will not prevent me from loving you."

Petrarch, in his answer to the bishop,* says, "My father, if I love the poets, I only follow, in this respect, the example of St. Augustine. I take the sainted father himself to witness the sincerity of my attachment to him. He is now in a place where he can neither deceive nor be deceived. I flatter myself that he pities my errors, especially when he recalls his own." St. Augustine had been somewhat profligate in his younger days.

"As to Laura," continues the poet, "would to Heaven that she were only an imaginary personage, and my passion for her only a pastime! Alas! it is a madness which it would be difficult and painful to feign for any length of time; and what an extravagance it would be to affect such a passion! One may counterfeit illness by action, by voice, and by manner, but no one in health can give himself the true air and complexion of disease. How often have you yourself been witness of my paleness and my sufferings! I know very well that you speak only in irony: it is your favourite figure of speech, but I hope that time will cicatrize these wounds of my spirit, and that Augustine, whom I pretend to love, will furnish me with a defence against a Laura who does not exist."

* Dated 21st December, 1335.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.



CHAPTER VIII.

Petrarch, hopeless of appeasing his passion for Laura, resolves once more to travel — Difference of his Biographers respecting the date of his First Journey to Rome — Baldelli, the most likely to be right, fixes it in 1335—The state of his mind borders on distraction before he can wind up his resolution to depart—His emotion at seeing a Country Girl washing the veil of Laura — Leaves Avignon ; embarks at Marseilles for Civita Vecchia — The friends whom he expects to see in his travels ; among whom were Dionisio dal Borgo and Roberto Bardi — Allusion to the History of the latter — Lands on the Coast of Tuscany ; sees a Laurel Tree, and is thrown into ecstasies — Difficulty of getting to Rome — He takes refuge in the Castle of Capranica—Writes to the Bishop of Lombes, at Rome, and to Cardinal Colonna, at Avignon, describing to the latter the Dreadful State of the Country — The Bishop of Lombes, and his brother Stephano Colonna, come to Capranica, and conduct our poet to Rome—He is lodged in the Capitol—Caressed by the whole Colonna Family, and shewn the Antiquities of the City by Giovanni da S. Vito, brother of the

elder Stephano Colonna — Leaves Rome, and voyages even into the British Seas—Flatters himself that he has conquered his Passion—Returns to Avignon and finds his mistake—Has a Son born to him by a Woman whose Name and History are unknown—Retires to live at Vacluse.

CHAPTER VIII.

YEARS had now elapsed since Petrarch had conceived his passion for Laura ; and it was obviously doomed to be a source of hopeless torment to him as long as he should continue near her ; for she could breathe no more encouragement on his love than what was barely sufficient to keep it alive ; and, if she had bestowed more favour on him, the consequences might have been ultimately most tragic to both of them. His own reflections, and the advice of his friends, suggested that absence and change of objects were the only means likely to lessen his misery ; he determined, therefore, to travel once more.

As to the date of his commencing the new course of his travels which brought him to Rome, his biographers disagree. La Bastie places that

date in 1334. De Sade corrects La Bastie, and makes Petrarch set out for Rome in 1337. Baldelli again corrects De Sade, and fixes the date of our poet's first journey to Rome in 1335. In the first place, Baldelli observes that this journey of Petrarch's into Italy was earlier than his excursion to Mount Ventoux, which was made in 1336. Petrarch's own words regarding the latter excursion are these: "This day concludes the tenth year since I left my youthful studies at Bologna (Fam. Epist. Lib. iv. Ep. 1)." Further he says, (Sen. Lib. x. Ep. 11), "four years after returning from my first gallican peregrination." Now, his gallican journey took place in 1331, which agrees with Baldelli's date.

Moreover, in writing to Boccaccio, during the year of the jubilee 1350, Petrarch says "it is now the fourteenth year since I first visited Rome;" and Baldelli remarks, that if he had first gone to Rome in 1337, only thirteen years would have elapsed between his Roman journey and the jubilee.

The wish to assuage his emotions towards Laura, by means of absence, was his principal motive for going again upon his travels; but, before he could wind up his resolution to depart, the state of his

mind bordered on distraction. One day he observed a country girl washing the veil of Laura; a sudden trembling seized him — and, though the heat of the weather was intense, he grew cold and shivered. For some time he was incapable of applying to study or business. His soul, he said, was like a field of battle, where his passion and reason held continual conflict. In his calmer moments, many agreeable motives for travelling suggested themselves to his mind. He had a strong desire to visit Rome, where he was sure of finding the kindest welcome from the Bishop of Lombes. He was to pass through Paris also; and there he had left some valued friends, to whom he had promised that he would return. At the head of those friends were Dionisio dal Borgo and Roberto Bardi, the latter of whom the pope had lately made chancellor of the Church of Paris, and given him the canonship of Notre Dame.

Dionisio dal Borgo San Sepolcro was a native of Tuscany, and one of the Roberti family. His name in literature was so considerable that Filippo Villani thought it worth while to write his life. He became an Augustine friar, and taught theology at Paris. Leaving that place, he re-

paired to Avignon, and contracted a friendship with Petrarch, who had known him before by correspondence. From King Robert he obtained the bishopric of Monopole, in the kingdom of Naples; but the cares of his diocese did not prevent him from being a constant attendant at the Neapolitan court, where he edified King Robert by his skill in astrology. Petrarch wrote his funeral eulogy, and alludes to Dionisio's power of reading futurity by the stars. If our poet could have divined the future by the light of common sense, he would have foreseen that he was lowering his own character by this part of his praises of Dionisio. Petrarch had not a grain of faith in astrology; on the contrary, he has himself recorded that he derided it. After having obtained, with some difficulty, the permission of Cardinal Colonna, he took leave of his friends at Avignon, and set out for Marseilles. Embarking there in a ship that was setting sail for Civita Vecchia, he concealed his name, and gave himself out for a pilgrim going to worship at Rome. Great was his joy when, from the deck, he could discover the coast of his beloved Italy. It was a joy, nevertheless, chastened by one indomitable recollection—that of the idol he had

left behind. On his landing he perceived a laurel tree ; its name seemed to typify her who dwelt for ever in his heart : he flew to embrace it ; but in his transports overlooked a brook that was between them, into which he fell—and the accident caused him to swoon. Always occupied with Laura, he says, “ on those shores washed by the Tyrrhene sea, I beheld that stately laurel which always warms my imagination, and, through my impatience, fell breathless into the intervening stream. I was alone, and in the woods, yet I blushed at my own heedlessness ; for, to the reflecting mind, no witness is necessary to excite the emotion of shame.”

It was not easy for Petrarch to pass from the coast of Tuscany to Rome ; for war between the Ursini and Colonna houses had been renewed with more fury than ever, and filled all the surrounding country with armed men. As he had no escort, he took refuge in the castle of Capranica, where he was hospitably received by Orso Count of Anguillara, who had married Agnes Colonna, sister of the Cardinal and the Bishop. In his letter to the latter, Petrarch luxuriates in describing the romantic and rich landscape of Capranica, a country believed by the ancients to have been the first

that was cultivated under the reign of Saturn. He draws, however, a frightful contrast to its rural picture in the horrors of war which here prevailed. "Peace," he says, "is the only charm which I could not find in this beautiful region. The shepherd, instead of guarding against wolves, goes armed into the woods to defend himself against men. The labourer, in a coat of mail, uses a lance instead of a goad, to drive his cattle. The fowler covers himself with a shield as he draws his nets; the fisherman carries a sword whilst he hooks his fish; and the native draws water from the well in an old rusty casque, instead of a pail. In a word, arms are used here as tools and implements for all the labours of the field, and all the wants of men. In the night are heard dreadful howlings round the walls of towns, and in the day terrible voices crying incessantly to arms. What music is this compared with those soft and harmonious sounds which I drew from my lute at Avignon!"

On his arrival at Capranica, Petrarch despatched a courier to the Bishop of Lombes, informing him where he was, and of his inability to get to Rome, all the roads to it being beset by the enemy. The

bishop expressed great joy at his friend's arrival in Italy, and directed him to wait his coming.

The bishop, accordingly, went to Capranica, with Stephano Colonna, his brother, senator of Rome. They had with them only a troop of one hundred horsemen; and, considering that the enemy kept possession of the country with five hundred men, it is wonderful that they met with no difficulties on their route; but the reputation of the Colonnas had struck terror into the hostile camp.

They entered Rome without having had a single skirmish with the enemy. Stefano Colonna, in his quality of senator, occupied the Capitol, where he assigned apartments to Petrarch; and the poet was lodged on that famous hill which Scipio, Metellus, and Pompey, had ascended in triumph. Petrarch was received and treated by the Colonnas like a child of their family. The venerable old Stephano, who had known him at Avignon, loaded our poet with kindness. But, of all the family, it would seem that Petrarch delighted most in the conversation of Giovanni da S. Vito, a younger brother of the aged Stefano, and uncle of the cardinal and bishop. Their tastes were congenial. Giovanni had made a particular study of the anti-

quities of Rome; he was, therefore, a most welcome cicerone to our poet, being, perhaps, the only Roman then alive, who understood the subject deeply, if we except Cola di Rienzo, of whom we shall soon have occasion to speak.

In company with Giovanni, Petrarch inspected the relics of the “eternal city:” the former was more versed than his companion in ancient history, but the other surpassed him in acquaintance with modern times, as well as with the objects of antiquity that stood immediately before them.

What an interesting object is Petrarch contemplating the ruins of Rome! He wrote to the Cardinal Colonna as follows:—“I gave you so long an account of Capranica that you may naturally expect a still longer description of Rome. My materials for this subject are, indeed, inexhaustible; but they will serve for some future opportunity. At present, I am so wonder-struck by so many great objects that I know not where to begin. One circumstance, however, I cannot omit, which has turned out contrary to your surmises. You represented to me that Rome was a city in ruins, and that it would not come up to the imagination I had formed of it; but this has not

happened—on the contrary, my most sanguine expectations have been surpassed.” By the way, the poet Gray made the same remark:—“High as my expectations were,” says Gray, in one of his letters, “the magnificence of Rome infinitely surpassed them.” “Rome,” continues Petrarch, “is greater, and her remains are more awful, than my imagination had conceived. It is not matter of wonder that she acquired universal dominion. I am only surprised that it was so late before she came to it.

In the midst of his meditations among the relics of Rome, Petrarch was struck by the ignorance about their forefathers, with which the natives looked on those monuments. The veneration which they had for them was vague and uninformed. “It is lamentable,” he says, “that no where in the world is Rome less known than at Rome.”

It is not exactly known in what month Petrarch left the Roman capital; but, between his departure from that city, and his return to the banks of the Rhone, he took an extensive tour over Europe. He made a voyage along its southern coasts, passed the straits of Gibraltar, and sailed as far northward as the British shores. During his wanderings, he

wrote a letter to Tommaso da Messina, containing a long, geographical dissertation on the island of Thule.

Petrarch approached the British shores; why were they not fated to have the honour of receiving him? Ah! but who was there, then, in England that was capable of receiving him? Chaucer was but a child. We had the names of some learned men, but our language had no literature; and, in Petrarch's eyes, the English were barbarians, who had lately been beaten by the "*vile Scotch*," as he called my countrymen. Time works wonders in a few centuries; and England, *now* proud of her Shakespeare and her Verulam, looks not with envy on the glory of any earthly nation. During his excitement by these travels, a singular change took place in our poet's habitual feelings. He recovered his health and spirits; he could bear to think of Laura with equanimity, and his countenance resumed the cheerfulness that was natural to a man in the strength of his age. Nay, he became so sanguine in his belief that he had overcome his passion as to jest at his past sufferings; and, in this gay state of mind, he came back to Avignon. This was the crowning misfortune of his life. He

saw Laura once more; he was enthralled anew; and he might now laugh in agony at his late self-congratulations on his delivery from her enchantment. With all the pity that we bestow on unfortunate love, and with all the respect that we owe to its constancy, still we cannot look but with a regret amounting to impatience on a man returning to the spot that was to rekindle his passion as recklessly as a moth to the candle, and binding himself over for life to an affection that was worse than hopeless, inasmuch as its success would bring more misery than its failure. It is said that Petrarch, if it had not been for this passion, would not have been the poet that he was. Not, perhaps, so good an amatory poet; but I firmly believe that he would have been a more various and masculine, and, upon the whole, *a greater poet*, if he had never been bewitched by Laura. However, *he did* return to take possession of his canonicate, at Lombes, and to lose possession of his peace of mind.

In the April of the following year, 1336, he made an excursion, in company with his brother Gherardo, to the top of Mount Ventoux, in the neighbourhood of Avignon; a full description of

which he sent in a letter to Dionisio dal Borgo a San Sepolcro ; but there is nothing peculiarly interesting in this occurrence.

A more important event in his life took place during the following year, 1337—namely, that he had a son born to him, whom he christened by the name of John, and to whom he acknowledged his relationship of paternity. With all his philosophy and platonic raptures about Laura, Petrarch was still subject to the passions of ordinary men, and had a mistress at Avignon who was kinder to him than Laura. Her name and history have been consigned to inscrutable obscurity : the same woman afterwards bore him a daughter, whose name was Francesca, and who proved a great solace to him in his old age. His biographers extol the magnanimity of Laura for displaying no anger at our poet for what they choose to call this discovery of his infidelity to her ; but, as we have no reason to suppose that Laura ever bestowed one favour on Petrarch beyond a pleasant look, it is difficult to perceive her right to command his unspotted faith. At all events, she would have done no good to her own reputation if she had stormed at the lapse of her lover's virtue.

Whatever charity we may extend to Petrarch's violation of his clerical vow, his frailty ought to have taught him charity to that of others, and softened his asperity in speaking of the western Babylon. Even in that sink of iniquity there were moralists who descanted on the difference between his theory and practice of virtue, and made little allowance for the instincts of nature, which scorn artificial restraints.

I am more inclined to blame him for his total silence respecting this mother of his children, than for the lapse of his purity. His unnatural obligation to celibacy, as a churchman, is at least some palliation for the latter fault. But who knows what sacrifice of reputation this unknown frail one, who made him twice a father, may have incurred by her connection with him ! There is a heartlessness on the part of Petrarch, in consigning her very name to oblivion, which I dislike worse than all the conceits of his poetry. It may be alleged that he was ashamed of his illegitimate paternity ; but, on the same principle, he ought to have been equally averse to publishing his distraction for a woman who was already the mother of an increasing family.

Laura, as I have said, from regard for her own character, if not from indifference, abstained from reproaching him ; but, in a small city like Avignon, the scandal of his intrigue would naturally be a matter of regret to his friends and of triumph to his enemies. Petrarch felt his situation, and, unable to calm his mind either by the advice of his friend Dionisio dal Borgo, or by the perusal of his favourite author St. Augustine, he resolved to seek a rural retreat, where he might at least hide his tears and his mortification. Unhappily, he chose a spot not far enough from Laura — namely, Vaucluse, which is fifteen Italian, or about fourteen English, miles from Avignon.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER IX.

Description of Vacluse, where Petrarch buys a Cottage and Field, and settles—His account of his Mode of Living—His friends come seldom to see him, but he is visited sometimes by Philip of Cabassoles, Bishop of Cavaillon, and by Guido Settimo, his friend from Boyhood — His Literary Undertakings — He makes the Acquaintance of Humbert II., Dauphin of Vienne — They Visit the Cavern at Beaume, said to have been the Residence of Mary Magdalene — His Letter to the Dauphin — His friends Azzo da Correggio and Guglielmo da Pastrengo come to Avignon—Petrarch's passion for Laura continues unabated—Mention of the Sonnets which he wrote to her in 1339 — Simone of Siena comes to Avignon, and executes for him a Portrait of Laura — Bernardo Barlaamo, a Greek Monk, arrives in Avignon, and, either on his first or more probably on his second visit to Avignon, becomes Petrarch's Teacher in the Greek Language—Barlaamo is, unfortunately for our poet, recalled from Provence—Dionisio dal

Borgo passes through Avignon, and has an interview with the Poet—Petrarch's Letter to Dionisio, with complimentary allusions to Robert King of Naples — The King writes to Petrarch—Petrarch's Answer.

CHAPTER IX.

VAUCLUSE, or Vallis Clausa, the shut-up valley, is a most beautiful spot, watered by the windings of the Sorgue. Along the river there are on one side most verdant plains and meadows, here and there shadowed by trees. On the other side are hills covered with corn and vineyards. Where the Sorgue rises, the view terminates in the cloud-capt ridges of the mountains Luberoux and Ventoux. This was the place which Petrarch had visited with such delight when he was a schoolboy, and at the sight of which he exclaimed "that he would prefer it as a residence to the most splendid city."

It is, indeed, one of the loveliest seclusions in the world. It terminates in a semicircle of rocks of stupendous height, that seem to have been hewn down perpendicularly. At the head and centre of the vast amphitheatre, and at the foot of one of its enormous rocks, there is a cavern of proportional

size, hollowed out by the hand of Nature. Its opening is an arch sixty feet high; but it is a double cavern, there being an interior one with an entrance thirty feet high. In the midst of these there is an oval basin, having eighteen fathoms for its longest diameter, and from this basin rises the copious stream which forms the Sorgue. The surface of the fountain is black, an appearance produced by its depth, from the darkness of the rocks, and the obscurity of the cavern; for, on being brought to light, nothing can be clearer than its water. Though beautiful to the eye, it is harsh to the taste, but is excellent for tanning and dyeing; and it is said to promote the growth of a plant which fattens oxen and is good for hens during incubation. Strabo and Pliny the naturalist both speak of its possessing this property.

The river Sorgue, which issues from this cavern, divides in its progress into various branches; it waters many parts of Provence, receives several tributary streams, and, after reuniting its branches, falls into the Rhone near Avignon.

Resolving to fix his residence here, Petrarch bought a little cottage and an adjoining field, and repaired to Vacluse with no other companions than

his books. To this day the ruins of a small house are shown at Vacluse, which tradition says was his habitation.

If his object was to forget Laura, the composition of sonnets upon her in this hermitage was unlikely to be an antidote to his recollections. It would seem as if he meant to cherish rather than to get rid of his love. But, if he nursed his passion, it was a dry-nursing; for he led a lonely, ascetic, and, if it were not for his studies, we might say a savage life. I find some of his biographers treating with contempt all who presume to doubt his supreme felicity in this shut-up valley. One of them remarks that "those who are employed upon trifles, who are engaged in a circle of everlasting amusements, and whose abilities stagnate without company, look with wonder upon a man retiring from the world to lead a solitary life. Their *little* understandings cannot comprehend the infinite resources which an imaginative and instructed mind can derive from its own resources, from reading and from meditation." *

I abominate all this slang about solitude; if the

* I copy this twaddle from Archdeacon Coxe, though even with him it was not original. Perhaps the Doctor cannot

word means a man living without wife, child, or domestic society, or the accessible conversation of friends. I have no doubt that Petrarch had great resources in his own imagination ; and his seclusion, having been voluntary, is a proof that it was not intolerable to him. But I regard this fact rather as a phenomenon in the history of a man of genius, than a proof that the love of protracted solitude indicates genius itself. I have generally found the devotees of loneliness among the most stupid of their species. Nature never meant us to live in solitude. It is against her laws. She compels the very atoms of matter to congregate, and gives her spiritual creation the same bond of social attraction from the gregarious insect to the noblest animal. How beautiful is the sentiment which Cowper ascribes to Alexander Selkirk in his *Desert Island* :—

Society ! Friendship, and Love !
 Divinely bestowed upon men ;
 Oh ! had I the wings of a dove,
 How soon would I find you again !

exactly be called Petrarch's biographer, as he made an attempt on the life of the poet, but *did not finish him*. Yet, as his MSS. are still in the British Museum, let him have the title by courtesy. It is well for him to talk of little minds.

It is but fair, however, to take Petrarch's account of his own condition. In one of his letters, written not long after his settling at Vacluse, he says, "Here I make war upon my senses, and treat them as my enemies. My eyes, which have drawn me into a thousand difficulties, see no longer either gold or precious stones, or ivory, or purple; they behold nothing save the water, the firmament, and the rocks. The only female who comes within their sight is a swarthy old woman, dry and parched as the Lybian deserts. My ears are no longer courted by those harmonious instruments and voices which have so often transported my soul: they hear nothing but the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the warbling of birds, and the murmurs of the river.

"I keep silence from noon till night. There is no one to converse with; for the good people, employed in spreading their nets, or tending their vines and orchards, are no great adepts at conversation. I often content myself with the brown bread of the fisherman, and even eat it with pleasure. Nay, I almost prefer it to white bread. This old fisherman, who is as hard as iron, earnestly remonstrates against my manner of life; and

assures me that I cannot long hold out. I am, on the contrary, convinced that it is easier to accustom one's-self to a plain diet than to the luxuries of a feast. But, still I have my luxuries—figs, raisins, nuts, and almonds. I am fond of the fish with which this stream abounds, and I sometimes amuse myself with spreading the nets. As to my dress, there is an entire change; you would take me for a labourer, or a shepherd.

“My mansion resembles that of Cato or Fabricius. My whole house-establishment consists of myself, my old fisherman and his wife, and a dog. My fisherman's cottage is contiguous to mine; when I want him I call, when I no longer need him, he returns to his cottage.

“I have made two gardens that please me wonderfully. I do not think they are to be equalled in all the world. And I must confess to you a more than female weakness with which I am haunted. I am positively angry that there is any thing so beautiful out of Italy.

“One of these gardens is shady, formed for contemplation, and sacred to Apollo. It overhangs the source of the river, and is terminated by rocks, and by places accessible only to birds. The other

is nearer my cottage, of an aspect less severe, and devoted to Bacchus; and, what is extremely singular, it is in the midst of a rapid river. The approach to it is over a bridge of rocks; and there is a natural grotto under the rocks, which gives them the appearance of a rustic bridge. Into this grotto the rays of the sun never penetrate. I am confident that it much resembles the place where Cicero sometimes went to declaim. It invites to study. Hither I retreat during the noontide hours; my mornings are engaged upon the hills, or in the garden sacred to Apollo. Here I would most willingly pass my days, were I not too near Avignon, and too far from Italy. For why should I conceal this weakness of my soul? I love Italy, and I hate Avignon. The pestilential influence of this horrid place empisons the pure air of Vaucluse, and will compel me to quit my retirement.”

Here Petrarch confessed the weakness of his soul, but, probably, unconscious of what constituted his own debility, namely, a perpetual belief that he should be happier in some other place than where he chanced to be. To talk of Avignon fourteen miles off poisoning the pure air of Vaucluse, in a moral sense, is inconsistent with his own

account of the simple rustics around him; or, if he means that the conception of impurities which were passing in the western Babylon haunted him with horror, this was squeamish sensibility in a priest who had an illegitimate child at nurse, and who lived to be the father of another.

From this last expression of fear that the pestilential influence of Avignon would compel him to leave his retirement, it is clear that he was not supremely contented in his solitude with those self-drawn mental resources which the great mind of Archdeacon Coxe conceives to be incommunicable to little minds. His friends at Avignon came seldom to see him. Travelling even short distances was difficult in those days. Even we, in the present day, who can travel by steam as swiftly as the wind, can remember when the distance of fourteen miles presented a troublesome journey. The few guests who came to him could not expect very exquisite dinners, cooked by the brown old woman and her husband the fisherman; and, though our poet had a garden consecrated to Bacchus, he had no cellar devoted to the same deity. His few friends, therefore, who visited him, thought their angel visits acts of charity. If he saw his friends

seldom, however, he had frequent visitants in strangers who came to Vacluse, as a place long celebrated for its natural beauties, and now made illustrious by the character and compositions of our poet. Among these there were persons distinguished for their rank or learning, who came from the farthest parts of France and from Italy, to see and converse with Petrarch. Some of them even sent before them considerable presents, which, though kindly meant, were not acceptable.

Vacluse is in the diocese of Cavaillon, a small city about two miles distant from our poet's retreat. Philip de Cabassoles was the bishop, a man of high rank and noble family. His disposition, according to Petrarch's usual praise of his friends, was highly benevolent and humane; he was well versed in literature, and had distinguished abilities. No sooner was the poet settled in his retirement, than he visited the bishop at his palace near Vacluse. The latter gave him a friendly reception, and returned his visits frequently. Another much estimated, his friend since their childhood, Guido Sette, also repaired at times to his humble mansion, and relieved his solitude in the shut-up valley.*

* Guido Sette of Luni, in the Genoese territory, studied law together with Petrarch; but took to it with better liking. He

Without some daily and constant occupation even the bright mind of Petrarch would have rusted like the finest steel when it is left unscoured. But he continued his studies with an ardour that commands our wonder and respect; and it was at Vaucluse that he either meditated or wrote his most important compositions. Here he undertook a history of Rome, from Romulus down to Titus Vespasian. This Herculean task he never finished; but there remain two fragments of it, namely, four books, *De Rebus Memorandis*, and another tract entitled *Vitarum Virorum Illustrium Epitome*, being sketches of illustrious men from the founder of Rome down to Fabricius. Now-a-days that classical history has been explored for five centuries by hundreds of writers, we must look on these works of our literary patriarch with every allowance for their being crude and elementary. I must defer the subject, however, till I come to more specific remarks on his writings.

About his poem, *Africa*, I shall only say for the devoted himself to the business of the bar at Avignon with much reputation. But the legal and clerical professions were then often united; for Guido rose in the church to be an archbishop. He died in 1368, renowned as a church luminary.

present that he began this Latin epic at Vacluse, that its hero is his idolized Roman, Scipio Africanus, that it gained him a reputation over Europe, and that he was much pleased with it himself, but that his admiration of it in time cooled down so much, that at last he was annoyed when it was mentioned to him, and turned the conversation, if he could, to a different subject. Nay, it is probable that, if it had not been for Boccaccio and Coluccio Salutati, who, long after he had left Vacluse, importuned him to finish and publish it, his *Africa* would not have come down to posterity.

Petrarch alludes in one of his letters to an excursion which he made in 1338, in company with a man whose rank was above his wisdom. He does not name him, but it seems clearly to have been Humbert II., dauphin of the Viennois.* The Cardinal Colonna forced our poet into this pilgrimage to Baume, famous for its adjacent cavern, where, according to the tradition of the country, Mary Magdalen passed thirty years of repentance. How old and ugly she must have been when the term of her penitence was finished! In that holy but horrible cavern, as Petrarch calls it, they re-

* De Sade, vol. i., 368.—Amsterdam edition.

remained three days and three nights, though Petrarch sometimes gave his comrades the slip, and indulged in rambles among the hills and forests; he composed a short poem, however, on St. Mary Magdalen, which is as dull as the cave itself. The Dauphin Humbert was not a bright man; but he seems to have contracted a friendly familiarity with our poet, if we may judge by a letter which Petrarch indited to him about this time, frankly reproaching him with his political neutrality in the affairs of Europe. It was supposed that the Cardinal Colonna incited him to write it. A struggle that was now impending between France and England engaged all Europe on one side or other. Our English Edward III. meditated war with France, because she refused him her throne, and gave it to Philip of Valois; and he allied himself with the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria. The notes of martial preparation sounded all over France and England, and in Germany the clang of arms still continued. The Emperor Lewis had intimated to Humbert that he must follow him in this war, he, the dauphin, being arch-seneschal of Arles and Vienne. Next year, the arch-seneschal received an invitation from Philip of Valois to join him with his troops at

Amiens as vassal of France. The dauphin had no stomach for fighting; he had the look and manners of a woman, and a more than feminine dislike of war. He tried to back out of the dilemma between his two suitors by frivolous excuses to both, all the time determining to assist neither. In 1338 he came to Avignon, and the pope gave him his palace at the bridge of the Sorgue for his habitation. Here the poor craven, beset on one side by threatening letters from Philip of Valois, and on the other by importunities from the French party at the papal court, remained in Avignon till July, 1339, after Petrarch had let loose upon him his epistolary eloquence.

This letter, dated April, 1339, is, according to De Sade's opinion, full of powerful persuasion. I cannot say that it strikes me as such. After calling Christ to witness that he writes to the dauphin in the spirit of friendship, he reminds him that Europe had never exhibited so mighty and interesting a war as that which had now sprung up between the kings of France and England, nor one that opened so vast a field of glory for the brave. "All the princes and their people," he says, "are anxious about its issue, especially those between

the Alps and the ocean, who take arms at the crash of the neighbouring tumult ; whilst you alone go to sleep amidst the clouds of the coming storm. To say the truth, if there was nothing more than shame to awaken you, it ought to rouse you from this lethargy. I had thought you," he continues, " a man desirous of glory. You are young, and in the strength of life. What, then, in the name of God, keeps you inactive ? Do you fear fatigue ? Remember what Sallust says—' Idle enjoyments were made for women, fatigue was made for men.' Do you fear death ? Death is the last debt we owe to nature, and man ought not to fear it ; certainly he ought not to fear it more than sleep and sluggishness. Aristotle, it is true, calls death the last of horrible things ; but, mind, he does not call it the most horrible of things." In this manner, our poet goes on moralising on the blessings of an early death, and the great advantage that it would have afforded to some excellent Roman heroes if they had met with it sooner. The only thing like a sensible argument that he urges is, that Humbert could not expect to save himself even by neutrality, but must ultimately become the prey of the victor, and be punished like the Alban Metius,

whom Tullus Hostilius caused to be torn asunder by horses that pulled his limbs in different directions. The pedantic epistle had no effect on Humbert.

Meanwhile, Italy had no repose more than the rest of Europe, but its troubles gave a happy occasion to Petrarch to see one more his friend, Guglielmo Pastrengo, who, in 1338, came to Avignon, from Mastino della Scala, lord of Verona. The power of this prince was now sufficiently established to overawe the surrounding Italian republics. He ruled over nine cities, which had been, at one time, the respective capitals of as many sovereign states. From these he received 700,000 florins of gold, a sum amounting in value probably to nine millions sterling of modern money, and equalling the income of any king in Christendom, except that of France. Mastino naturally added to this revenue the less wished-for tribute of hatred from all his neighbours. The Florentines abhorred him for his competition with their commerce, and the Venetians for his preventing them from making salt on the coast between Padua and Chioggia, which belonged to his dominions.

For reducing the lord of Verona, his allied ene-

mies resorted to stratagems that would have done honour to the cunning of an old fox. They corrupted Bartholomeo della Scala, bishop of Verona, to open the gates of the city to their army, and leave them to murder Mastino, the bishop's own cousin-german. But Azzo da Correggio discovered the treachery, and revealed it to Mastino, who, repairing to the episcopal palace, met Bartolomeo, and plunged a sword into his body. Killing a bishop at that time was held to be almost as irreligious as slaughtering a thousand ordinary men would be thought at present. The pope launched a thunderbolt of excommunication against Mastino, who immediately despatched Azzo da Correggio to Avignon, together with Guglielmo da Pastrengo, to make his apology at the papal court for his episcopicide. The eloquence of those envoys obtained absolution for Mastino; but the pope made Azzo declare himself vicar of Verona, Vicenza, and Parma, conditioning that he should pay his holiness five thousand florins of gold, and maintain in his vicariate, for the pope's service, two hundred horsemen and three hundred infantry.

The moment Petrarch heard of his friend Gugli-

elmo's arrival in Avignon, he left his hermitage to welcome him ; but scarcely had he reached the fatal city when he saw the danger of so near an approach to the woman he so madly loved, and was aware that he had no escape from the eyes of Laura but by flight. He returned, therefore, all of a sudden to Vacluse, without waiting for a sight of Pastrengo. Shortly after he had quitted the house of Lælius, where he usually lodged when he went to Avignon, Guglielmo, expecting to find him there, knocked at the door, but no one opened it—called out, but no one answered him. He therefore wrote him a little billet, saying, “ My dear Petrarch, where have you hid yourself, and whither have you vanished? What is the meaning of all this?” The poet received this note at Vacluse, and sent an explanation of his flight, sincere indeed as to good feelings, but prolix as usual in the expression of them. Pastrengo sent him a kind reply, and soon afterwards did him the still greater favour of visiting him at Vacluse, and helping him to cultivate his garden.

Petrarch's flame for Laura was in reality unabated. One day he met her in the streets of Avignon ; for he had not always resolution enough

to keep out of the western Babylon. Laura cast a kind look upon him, and said, " Petrarch, you are tired of loving me." This incident produced one of his finest sonnets, beginning—

Io non fu d'amur voi lassato unquanco,
 Madonna, nè saro, mentre ch'io viva :
 Ma d'odiar me medesimo giunta a riva,
 E del continuo lagrimar son stanco
 E voglio anzi un sepolcro bello e bianco ;
 Che'l vostro nome a mio danno si scriva
 In alcun marmo ove, di spirto priva
 Sia la mia carne, che può star seco anco.
 Però s'un cor pien d'amoroso fede
 Può contertarvi senza farne strazio—
 Piacciavi omai di questo aver mercede :
 Se'n altro modo cerca d'esser sazio
 Vostre sdegno erra ; e non fia quel che crede
 Di ch'amor, e me stesso assai ringrazio.

Tir'd, did you say, of loving you? Oh, no!
 I ne'er shall tire of the unwearying flame.
 But I am weary, kind and cruel dame,
 With tears that uselessly and ceaseless flow,
 Scorning myself, and scorned by you. I long
 For death : but let no gravestone hold in view
 Our names conjoined ; nor tell my passion strong
 Upon the dust that glow'd through life for you.
 And yet this heart of amorous faith demands,
 Deserves, a better boon ; but cruel, hard
 As is my fortune, I will bless Love's bands
 For ever, if you give me this reward.

In 1339, he composed, among other sonnets, those three, the lxii., lxxiv., and lxxv., which are confessedly masterpieces of their kind, as well as three canzoni to the eyes of Laura, which the Italians call the three sister Graces, and worship as divine.* The critic Tassoni himself could not censure them, and called them the queens of song. At this period, however seldom he may have visited Avignon, he evidently sought rather to cherish than subdue his fatal attachment. A celebrated painter, Simone Martini of Siena, came to Avignon.† He was the pupil of Giotto, not exquisite in drawing, but famous for taking spirited likenesses.

He persuaded Simone to favour him with a miniature likeness of Laura; and this treasure the poet for ever carried about with him. In gratitude he addressed two sonnets to the artist, whose fame, great as it was, was heightened by the poetical reward. Vasari tells us that Simone also painted the pictures of both lovers in the chapel of St. Maria Novella at Florence. Simone was a

* Canzoni, 8, 9, and 10.

† I follow De Sade in giving him this name. Levati, after Vasari, calls him Simone Memmi.

sculptor as well as a painter, and that he (Simone) copied those pictures in marble which, according to Baldelli, are still extant in the house of the Signore Pruzzi.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER X.

Anecdote illustrating Petrarch's love of Literary Occupation — Arrival of Dionisio dal Borgo at Avignon — The high favour of this ecclesiastic with Robert King of Naples — Petrarch writes to Dionisio, evidently hinting his wish to be patronized by his Neapolitan Majesty — His ambition to be crowned as Poet Laureate is gratified—Two letters reach him on the same day, the first from the Roman Senate, inviting him to come and be crowned at Rome; the other from Roberto Bardi, giving him the same invitation to Paris — He consults Cardinal Colonna on the subject, who advises him to go to Rome — He repairs to Naples—He selects the King of Naples as the Examiner of his competency for the Laurel — King Robert's Qualifications for the office of Examiner—He wishes Petrarch to be Crowned at Naples: but the Poet decides on receiving that honour at Rome—Favours bestowed on him by the King—Petrarch proceeds to Rome—Ceremonies attending his Coronation— He goes to Pisa.

CHAPTER X.

AN anecdote relating to this period of Petrarch's life is given by De Sade, which, if accepted with entire credence, must inspire us with astonishment at the poet's devotion to his literary pursuits. He had now, in 1339, put the first hand to his epic poem, the *Scipiade*; and one of his friends, De Sade believes that it was the Bishop of Lombes, fearing lest he might injure his health by overzealous application, went to ask him for the key of his library, which the poet gave up. The bishop then locked up his books and papers, and commanded him to abstain from reading and writing for ten days. Petrarch obeyed; but, on the first day of this literary Ramazan, he was seized with ennui, on the second with a severe headache, and on the third with symptoms of fever; the bishop relented, and permitted the student to return to his books and papers.

Petrarch was at this time delighted, in his solitude of Vacluse, to hear of the arrival at Avignon of one of his dearest friends, namely, Dionisio dal Borgo a San Sepolcro. This worthy scholar and ecclesiastic, whose biography Filippo Villani thought it worth while to write, was of the family of the Roberti, and a native of that place in Tuscany. He was an Augustine monk, and taught theology in Paris. Having left that capital, he came to Avignon, and there contracted a strict friendship with Petrarch, whom he had before known only by letters. Long and confidential communications Petrarch had had with Dionisio, whom he consulted about the regulation of his mind, under the visitations of its fatal passion. But love laughs at consultations.

The wise Dionisio, being now advanced in years, had resigned his pulpit in the University of Paris, in order to return to his native country, and came to Avignon with the intention of going by sea to Florence. Petrarch pressed him strongly to visit him at Vacluse, interspersing his persuasion with many compliments to King Robert of Naples, to whom he knew that Dionisio was much attached; nor was he without hopes that his friend would speak favourably of him to his Neapolitan majesty.

In a letter from Vacluse he says :—“ Can nothing induce you to come to my solitude? Will not my ardent request, and the pity you must have for my condition, bring you to pass some days with your old disciple? If these motives are not sufficient, permit me to suggest another inducement. There is in this place a poplar tree of so immense a size that it covers with its shade not only the river and its banks, but also a considerable extent beyond them. They tell us that King Robert of Naples, invited by the beauty of this spot, came hither to unburthen his mind from the weight of public affairs, and to enjoy himself in the shady retreat.” The poet added many eulogies on his majesty of Naples, which, as he anticipated, reached the royal ear. It seems not to be clear that Father Dionisio ever visited the poet at Vacluse; though they certainly had an interview at Avignon. To Petrarch’s misfortune, his friend’s stay in that city was very short. The monk proceeded to Florence, but he found there no shady retreat like that of the poplar at Vacluse. Florence was more than ever agitated by internal commotions.

In July, 1339, there was an eclipse of the sun in the sign of Cancer, which happens, says

Villani, only once in a hundred years, and announces, according to astrologers, very heavy calamities. Whether these calamities would have happened or not, if the sun had been pleased to be eclipsed in a different quarter, I presume not to say; but so it was that the city of Florence was this year afflicted by plague and famine. This dismal state of the city determined Dionisio to accept an invitation from King Robert to spend the remainder of his days at his court. His royal host gave him apartments in his own palace.

As the poet so soon afterwards became intimate with this monarch, it is not digressing from our subject to take a brief glance at Robert's history.

Robert, King of Naples and Count of Provence, succeeded his father, Charles II. of Anjou, and, in spite of his relation, Carlo Uberto, King of Hungary, who alleged a right to the throne of Naples, was crowned by the Pope at Avignon, in 1309. Robert immediately put himself at the head of the Guelphic faction in Italy, and, keeping the papal court as his vassals at Avignon, which was within his Provençal dominions, succeeded in making himself master of several imperial cities in Monferrato, Romagna, and Tuscany.

The Emperor Henry VII., incensed at his inva-

sions, marched into Italy; and, notwithstanding Robert's efforts to the contrary, caused himself to be crowned at Rome, in 1313. Thence he proceeded at the head of a formidable army against Naples; but his sudden death, in the same year, saved its king from a perilous conflict.

The warlike Robert, always intent on enlarging his dominions, attempted several expeditions against Sicily, but without success. By skilful management, however, he contrived to bring Genoa under his protection, that is to say, under his power; having hastened in person to its defence when it was closely besieged. He occupied the territories of Florence and Brescia, and engaged in vigorous warfare with the Visconti and the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria; but he was driven out of Florence and Brescia, and was utterly foiled in his design of conquering all Italy. As a warrior, he seems not to deserve the encomiums which historians have lavished upon him, because he attained his ambitious ends by fraud, and by exciting mutinies among his enemies. But he deserves reputation for his love of learning, and for the protection which he gave to the learned. Boccaccio relates that, in his youth, Roberto shewed rather a dull understanding; but that he afterwards made such

proficiency in philosophy, divinity, and the liberal arts, that an ignorant age bestowed on him the name of *the modern Solomon*. Well-intentioned in behalf of literature, he collected a copious library, the care of which he entrusted to Paolo da Perugia, ordering him to purchase books wherever he could find them. He invited and remunerated the greatest literary men of the age.

This monarch had the happiness of giving additional publicity to Petrarch's reputation. That the poet sought his patronage need not be concealed; and if he used a little flattery in doing so, we must make allowance for the adulatory instinct of the tuneful tribe. We cannot live without bread upon bare reputation, or on the prospect of having tombstones put over our bones, prematurely hurried to the grave by hunger, when they shall be as insensible to praise as the stones themselves. To speak seriously, I think that a poet sacrifices his usefulness to himself and others, and an importance in society which may be turned to the public good, if he shuns the patronage that can be obtained by unparasitical means. As to the difficulty of obtaining the patronage of the powerful by honest means, that is another and a more delicate question; and how far Petrarch ducked down

from the lofty natural bearing of genius, in obtaining patronage, is a farther corollary appended to the problem.

Father Dionisio, upon his arrival at Naples, impressed the king with so favourable an opinion of Petrarch that Robert wrote a letter to our poet, enclosing an epitaph of his majesty's own composition, on the death of his niece Clementina. This letter is unhappily lost; but still more unhappily is the answer to it preserved, in which Petrarch tells the monarch that his epitaph rendered his niece an object rather of envy than of lamentation. "O happy Clementina!" says the poet, after passing through a transitory life, "you have attained a double immortality, one in heaven, and another on earth." He then compares the posthumous good fortune of the princess to that of Achilles, who had been immortalized by Homer. It is possible that King Robert's letter to Petrarch was so laudatory as to require a flattering answer. But this reverberated praise is too loud for sincerity; and it might be omitted in the history of his life, if veracity were not the first duty of a biographer.

Petrarch was now intent on obtaining the honour of Poet Laureate, though he still doated on one, for the possession of whom he would have probably ex-

changed a thousand laurels. But the co-existence in the human breast of two passions so apparently different as devotion to beauty and desire of glory is by no means unaccountable, and justifies the words of the old song :

Ambition cannot banish love,
Nor love shut out ambition.

On the contrary, they inflame each other — at least, love makes a man more covetous of distinction in his mistress's eyes ; and our poet's love of Laura, no doubt, heightened his eagerness for the poetic crown. His wishes were at length gratified, and in a manner that made the offer more flattering than the crown itself.

Whilst he still remained at Vacluse, at nine o'clock in the morning of the 1st of September, 1340, he received a letter from the Roman senate, pressingly inviting him to come and receive the crown of Poet Laureate at Rome.* He must have little notion of a poet's pride and vanity, who cannot imagine the flushed countenance, the dilated eyes, and the joyously throbbing heart of Petrarch, whilst he read this letter.

* Baldelli corrects De Sade as to the date of the reception of this letter, announcing the proffered honour. Petrarch's answer to it is dated in the kalends of September.

To be invited by the Senate of Rome to such an honour might excuse him for forgetting that Rome was not now what she had once been, and that the substantial glory of his appointment was small in comparison with the classic associations which formed its halo.

As if to keep up the fever of his joy, he received the same day, in the afternoon, at four o'clock, another letter with the same offer, from Roberto Bardi, Chancellor of the University of Paris, in which he importuned him to be crowned as Poet Laureate at Paris.

When we consider the poet's veneration for Rome, we may easily anticipate that he would give the preference to that city. That he might not, however, offend his friend Roberto Bardi and the University of Paris, he despatched a messenger to Cardinal Colonna, asking his advice upon the subject, pretty well knowing that his patron's opinion would coincide with his own wishes. The Colonna advised him to be crowned at Rome.

The custom of conferring this honour had, for a long time, been obsolete. In the earliest classical ages, garlands were given as a reward to valour and genius. Virgil exhibits his conquerors adorned with them. The Romans adopted the custom

from Greece, where leafy honours were bestowed on victors at public games. This coronation of poets, it is said, ceased under the reign of the Emperor Theodosius. After his death, during the long subsequent barbarism of Europe, when literature produced only rhyming monks, and when there were no more poets to crown, the discontinuance of the practice was a natural consequence.

At the commencement of the thirteenth century, according to the Abbé Resnel,* the Universities of Europe began to dispense laurels, not to poets, but to students distinguished by their learning. The doctors in medicine, at the famous university of Salerno, established by the Emperor Frederic II., had crowns of laurel put upon their heads. The bachelors also had their laurels, and derived their name from a baculus, or stick, which they carried.

When there began to be poets in Europe, they put in their claims for the same distinction. Bonaventura relates that St. Francesco admitted into his cloister an ingenious composer of profane songs, who was called the king of song, after receiving the poetic crown from the emperor. In 1314, Albertino Mussato, an historian and poet of Padua,

* Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, vol. 15, p. 238. Amsterdam 12mo. ed. 1741.

was laurelled in presence of the university and an immense crowd of other spectators. Bonno di Castione obtained the same honour in Padua; Convennole, the schoolmaster of Petrarch, had his head begirt with laurel in his own country; but no one had hitherto been crowned at Rome, or in the Capitol. *That* honour was reserved for Petrarch.

Cardinal Colonna, as we have said, advised him, “*nothing loth,*” to enjoy his coronation at Rome. Thither accordingly he repaired early in the year 1341. He embarked at Marseilles for Naples, wishing previously to his coronation to visit King Robert, by whom he was received with all possible hospitality and distinction.

Though he had accepted the laurel amidst the general applause of his contemporaries, Petrarch was not satisfied that he should enjoy this honour without passing through an ordeal as to his learning. Laurels and learning had been for one hundred years habitually associated in men’s minds; and Petrarch probably imagined what Buchanan expressed in a subsequent age.

Sola doctorum monumenta vatum
Nesciunt Fati imperium severi;
Sola contemnunt Phlegethonta et Orci
Jura superbi.

Shakespeare and Burns, how durst ye contrive

your Falstaff and Tam o' Shanter without a vestige of learning!

The person whom Petrarch selected for his examiner in erudition was the king of Naples. Robert *the Good*, as he was in some respects deservedly called, was, for his age, a well-instructed man, and, for a king, a prodigy. He had also some common sense, unlike our own King James I., whom Sully pronounced to be the most learned fool in Europe. But in classical knowledge he was more fit to be the scholar of Petrarch than his examiner, so that the poet at least made a safe choice. When I conceive the examination, I cannot help comparing its farce to scenes which I have sometimes seen in a poor village theatre, where the paucity of actors compels the manager to allot the parts to performers, just as he can find them. I have seen the gay young lover personated by a fat old man of sixty, who, at the end of the comedy, kneels, along with his bride, before his venerable father for forgiveness of their youthful rashness, the stage father being all the while a palpable stripling, in spite of a wig and face besmeared with whiting.

If Petrarch, however, learned nothing from the king, the king learned something from Petrarch.

Among the other requisites for examining a Poet Laureate which Robert possessed, was *an utter ignorance of poetry*. He was like the algebraist who, after hearing some beautiful verses, asked what they proved. He had been a sound utilitarian in his faith that poetry was a pretty thing, but of no moral use. But Petrarch couched his blindness on the subject, so that Robert saw, or believed he saw, something useful in the divine art. He had heard of the epic poem, Africa, and requested its author to recite to him some part of it. Petrarch at first refused, but at length consented. The king (how could it be otherwise?) was charmed with the recitation, and requested that the work might be dedicated to him. Petrarch assented, but the poem was not finished or published till after King Robert's death.

His Neapolitan majesty, after pronouncing a warm eulogy on our poet, declared that he merited the laurel, and had letters-patent drawn up, by which he certified that, after a *severe* examination (it lasted three days), Petrarch was judged worthy to receive that honour in the Capitol. Robert wished him to be crowned at Naples; but our poet represented that he was desirous of being distinguished on the same theatre where Virgil and

Horace had shone. The king accorded with his wishes; and, to complete his kindness, regretted that his advanced age would not permit him to go to Rome, and crown Petrarch himself. He named, however, one of his most eminent courtiers, Barrilli, to be his proxy. Boccaccio speaks of Barrilli as a good poet; and Petrarch, with exaggerated politeness, compares him to Ovid.

When Petrarch went to take leave of King Robert, the sovereign, after engaging his promise that he would visit him again very soon, took off the robe which he wore that day, and, begging Petrarch's acceptance of it, desired that he might wear it on the day of his coronation. He also bestowed on him the place of his almoner-general, an office for which great interest was always made, on account of the privileges attached to it, the principal of which were an exemption from paying the tithes of benefices to the king, and a dispensation from residence.

In all this kindness of a potentate to a man of genius there is a warmth of heart that relaxes our severity towards the mutual flattery which accompanied it as a human foible.

Petrarch proceeded to Rome, where he arrived on the 6th of April, 1341, accompanied by only

one attendant from the court of Naples, for Barrilli had taken another route, upon some important business, promising, however, to be at Rome before the time appointed. But, as he had not arrived on the 7th, Petrarch despatched a messenger in search of him, who returned without any information. The poet was desirous to wait for his arrival; but Orso, count of Anguillara, would not suffer the ceremony to be deferred. Orso was joint senator of Rome with Jordano degli Orsini; and, his office expiring on the 8th of April, he was unwilling to resign to his successor the pleasure of crowning so great a man.

Petrarch was afterwards informed that Barrilli, hastening towards Rome, had been beset near Anagnina by robbers, from whom he escaped with difficulty, and that he was obliged for safety to return to Naples. In leaving that city, Petrarch passed the tomb traditionally said to be that of Virgil. His coronation took place without delay after his arrival at Rome.

The morning of the 8th of April, 1341, was ushered in by the sound of trumpets; and the people, ever fond of a show, came from all quarters to see the ceremony. Twelve youths, selected from

the best families of Rome, and clothed in scarlet, opened the procession, repeating as they went some verses, composed by the poet, in honour of the Roman people. They were followed by six citizens of Rome, clothed in green, and bearing crowns wreathed with different flowers. Petrarch walked in the midst of them; after him came the senator, accompanied by the first men of the council. The streets were strewed with flowers, and the windows filled with ladies, dressed in the most splendid manner, who showered perfumed waters profusely on the poet.* He all the time wore the robe that had been presented to him by the King of Naples. When they reached the Capitol, the trumpets were silent, and Petrarch, having made a short speech, in which he quoted a verse from Virgil, cried out three times, “ Long live the Roman people ! long live the Senators ! may God preserve their liberty ! ” At

* Valery, in his Travels in Italy, gives the following note respecting our poet. I quote from the edition of the work published at Brussels in 1835. “ Petrarque rapporte dans ses lettres latines que le laurier du Capitole lui avait attiré une multitude d’envieux ; que, le jour de son couronnement, au lieu d’eau odorante qu’il était d’usage de répandre dans ces solennités, il reçut sur la tête une eau corrosive, qui le rendit chauve le reste de sa vie. Son historien Dolce raconte même qu’une vieille lui jetta son pot de chambre rempli d’une acre urine, gardée, peut-être, pour cela depuis sept semaines — (*servata in sabbata septem.*”) ”

the conclusion of these words, he knelt before the senator Orso, who, taking a crown of laurel from his own head, placed it on that of Petrarch, saying, "This crown is the reward of virtue." The poet then repeated a sonnet in praise of the ancient Romans. The people testified their approbation by shouts of applause, crying, "Long flourish the Capitol and the poet!" The friends of Petrarch shed tears of joy, and Stefano Colonna, his favourite hero, addressed the assembly in his honour.

The ceremony having been finished at the Capitol, the procession, amidst the sound of trumpets and the acclamations of the people, repaired thence to the church of St. Peter, where Petrarch offered up his crown of laurel before the altar. The same day the Count of Anguillara caused letters patent to be delivered to Petrarch, in which the senators, after a flattering preamble, declared that he had merited the title of a great poet and historian; that, to mark his distinction, they had put upon his head a laurel crown, not only by the authority of King Robert, but by that of the Roman senate and people; and that they gave him, at Rome and elsewhere, the privilege to read, to dispute, to explain ancient books, to make new ones, to compose poems, and to wear a crown

according to his choice, either of laurel, beech, or myrtle, as well as the poetic habit. At that time a particular dress was affected by the poets. Dante was buried in this costume.

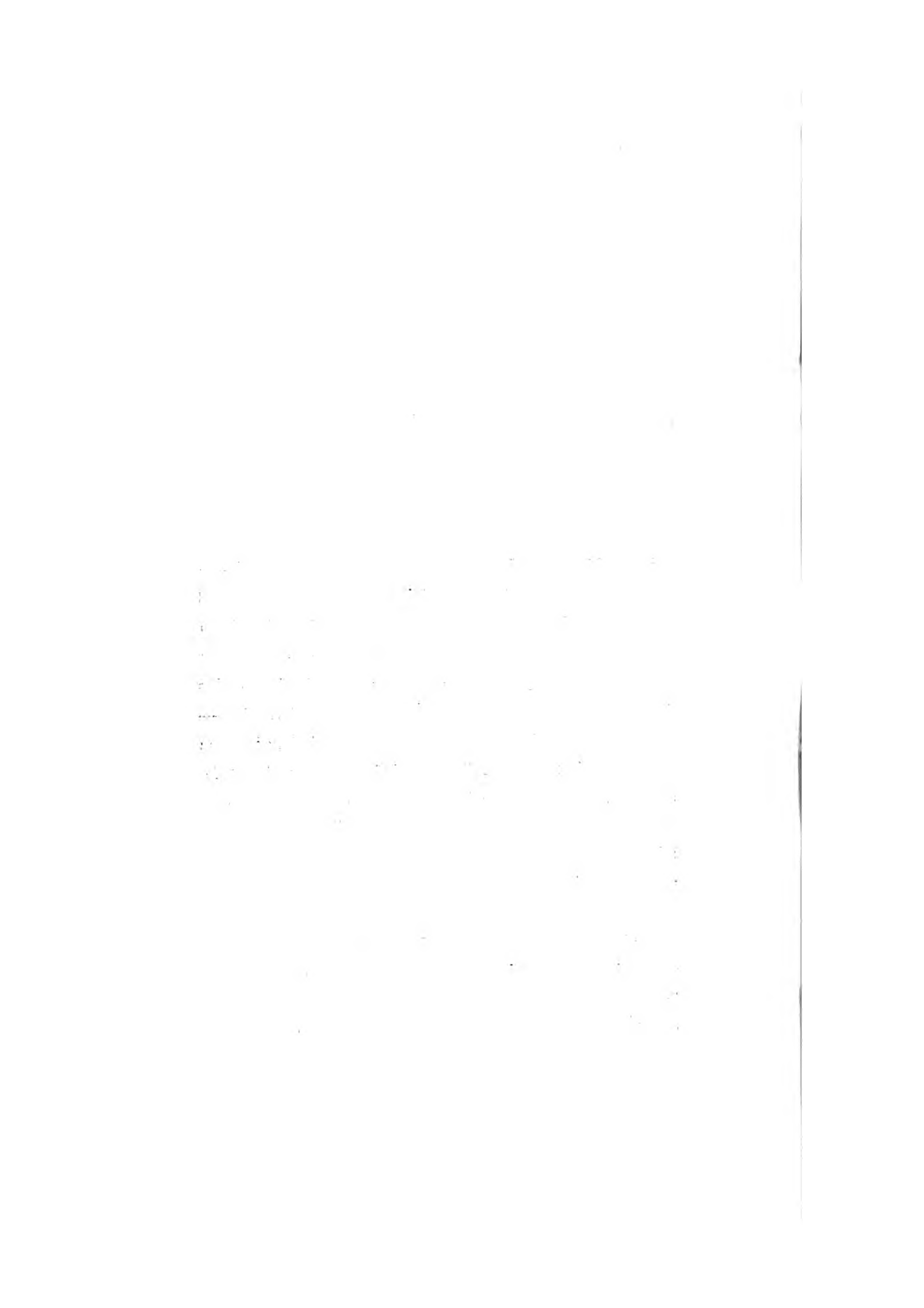
Maffeo exclaims on this subject, “ What folly in a poet, who drew his glory from the general suffrages of mankind, to establish his reputation on the certificate of a notary ! But it is plain that Petrarch merits no such reproach. He never dreamt of establishing his celebrity on the certificate of a notary, but only complied with customary forms. If he had revolted against this custom he would have displeased the citizens of Rome, as well as its senators, of whom Orso wished for a little nook in popular fame by connecting his name with that of Petrarch. By this certificate Petrarch was made a Roman citizen.

He continued only a few days at Rome after his coronation ; but he had scarcely departed when he found that there were banditti on the road waiting for him, and anxious to relieve him of any superfluous wealth which he might have about him. He was thus obliged to return to Rome with all expedition ; but he set out the following day, attended by a guard of armed men, and arrived at Pisa on the 20th of April.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XI.

Petrarch's Letter from Pisa to King Robert of Naples — He goes thence to Parma, and is welcomed by his friend Azzo Correggio — Mark of his popularity in the visit paid to him by the blind old Schoolmaster of Pontremoli — The Poet hires a house at Parma — He has to mourn the loss of his friends Tommaso da Messina, and the Bishop of Lombes — His dream respecting the latter — He is commissioned by the Roman people to go to Avignon as their advocate to Pope Clement VI., the successor of Benedict XII. — Contrast of character between the two Popes — Petrarch is joined in this commission with the subsequently famous Cola di Rienzo — He repairs to Avignon — Speeches of the two advocates to Clement — Petrarch vents his indignation at the Pope's refusal to go to Rome in his *Liber Epistolarum sine titulo* — Petrarch's brother Gherardo retires to a Monastery — Laura's manner to Petrarch is more complacent — Barlaamo comes again to Avignon, but remains but for a short space — Petrarch resides chiefly at Avignon, seldom visiting Vaucluse — Birth of his daughter Francesca.



CHAPTER XI.

FROM Pisa Petrarch wrote to King Robert a letter, thanking him for his many favours; but at the same time complaining in rather peevish terms of the ignorance and perverseness of the age, and of its superstitious reverence for antiquity, which depressed all living merit, and honoured those authors alone whose defects had been softened by time. Surely a complaint of excessive love of the classics came ill from Petrarch, who had been the hierophant of classical worship. He taxes, too, with insensibility to living merit, an age in which he had been crowned as its greatest genius, and here he confounds public opinion with the voice of those malignants who have ever been, and for ever will be, detractors from merit.

It is a strange contradiction in human nature, that men will brave death and danger to acquire enviable distinction, and yet, when they have attained it, they will wince at the envy which is as

inseparable from it as the shadow from a substance illuminated by the sun. At the same time, I give Petrarch credit for sincerity in his doubts whether his coronation was a substantial advantage to him. Real fame, no less than real charity, will find its triumph in public opinion without processions and trumpets. In his later years, he thus expresses himself. "This laurel was conferred on me at an improper time of my life." One would imagine from these words that he had accepted the laurel at the age of eighteen, whereas, he was a boy approaching the age of eight and thirty. "Had I been in more advanced years," he continues, "I should have refused it, for old men look only to things which are useful; whilst the young seek only what is specious and splendid. This crown has neither made me more learned nor more eloquent; it has deprived me of repose, and forced me to be always upon my guard."

From Pisa he went to Parma, to see his friend Azzo Correggio, and soon after his arrival he was witness to a revolution in that city of which Azzo had the principal direction. The Scalas, who held the sovereignty of Parma, had for some time oppressed the inhabitants with exorbitant taxes, which excited murmurs and seditions. The Correggios,

to whom the city was entrusted in the absence of Mastino della Scala, profited by the public discontent, hoisted the flag of liberty, and, on the 22nd of May, 1341, drove out the garrison, and made themselves lords of the commonwealth. On this occasion, Azzo has been accused of the worst ingratitude to his nephews, Alberto and Mastino. But, if the people were oppressed, he was surely justified in rescuing them from misgovernment. To a great degree, also, the conduct of the Correggios sanctioned the revolution. They introduced into Parma such a mild and equitable administration as the city had never before experienced. Some exceptionable acts they undoubtedly committed; and when Petrarch extols Azzo as another Cato, it is to be hoped that he did so with some mental reservation. Petrarch had proposed to cross the Alps immediately, and proceed to Avignon; but he was prevailed upon by the solicitations of Azzo to remain some time at Parma. He was consulted by the Correggios on their most important affairs, and was admitted to their secret councils. In the present instance, this confidence was peculiarly agreeable to him; as the four brothers were, at that time, unanimous in their opinions; and their designs were all calculated to promote the welfare of their subjects.

Soon after his arrival at Parma, he received one of those tokens of his popularity which are exceedingly expressive, though they come from an humble admirer. The poet Gray, one day chancing to stop with a friend and fellow-traveller at a smith's forge, whilst a horse's shoe was repairing, observed a copy of Thomson's Seasons on the shop-window, blackened, of course, by the thumbs of its dusky perusers. "Look there!" said Gray to his friend, "that is true popularity!" The truth is, that neither sovereigns nor poets can be pronounced great until their popularity has struck its roots among the vulgar. Petrarch experienced this sign of popularity when he was at Parma, from the circumstance of a blind old man, who had been a grammar-school master at Pontremoli arriving at Parma, in order to pay his devotions to the laureate. The poor man had already walked to Naples, guided in his blindness by his only son, for the purpose of finding Petrarch. The poet had left that city; but King Robert, pleased with his enthusiasm, made him a present of some money. The aged pilgrim returned to Pontremoli, where, being informed that Petrarch was at Parma, he crossed the Apennines, in spite of the severity of the weather, and travelled thither, having sent

before him a tolerable copy of verses. He was presented to Petrarch, whose hand he kissed with devotion and exclamations of joy. One day, before many spectators, the blind man said to Petrarch, "Sir, I have come far to see you." The bystanders laughed, on which the old man replied, "I appeal to you, Petrarch, whether I do not see you more clearly and distinctly than these men who have their eyesight." Petrarch gave him a kind reception, and dismissed him with a considerable present.

The pleasure which Petrarch had in retirement, reading, and reflection, induced him to hire a house on the outskirts of the city of Parma, with a garden, beautifully watered by a stream, *a rus in urbe*, as he calls it; and he was so pleased with this locality, that he purchased and embellished it.

His happiness, however, he tells us, was here embittered by the loss of some friends who shared the first place in his affections. One of these was Tommaso da Messina, with whom he had formed a friendship when they were fellow-students at Bologna, and ever since kept up a familiar correspondence. They were of the same age, addicted to the same pursuits, and imbued with similar sentiments. Tommaso wrote a volume of Latin poems,

several of which were published after the invention of printing. Petrarch, in his *Triumphs of Love*, reckons him an excellent poet. Mongitore, in his *Bibliotheca Siculana*, thought himself sharp-sighted in discovering that there were two persons of this name, both of them contemporaries and friends of Petrarch's. But Mongitore was only double-sighted; for Baldelli has shown that the supposed couple were one and the same individual.

This loss was followed by another which affected Petrarch still more strongly. Having received frequent invitations to Lombes from the bishop, who had resided some time in his diocese, Petrarch looked forward with pleasure to the time when he should revisit him. But he received accounts that the bishop was taken dangerously ill. Whilst his mind was agitated by this news, he had the following dream, which he has himself related. " Methought I saw the bishop crossing the rivulet of my garden alone. I was astonished at this meeting, and asked him whence he came, whither he was going in such haste, and why he was alone. He smiled upon me with his usual complacency, and said, ' Remember that when you were in Gascony the tempestuous climate was insupportable to you. I also am tired of it. I have quitted Gas-

cony, never to return, and I am going to Rome.' At the conclusion of these words, he had reached the end of the garden, and, as I endeavoured to accompany him, he in the kindest and gentlest manner waved his hand ; but, upon my persevering, he cried out in a more peremptory manner, ' Stay ! you must not at present attend me.' Whilst he spoke these words, I fixed my eyes upon him, and saw the paleness of death upon his countenance. Seized with horror, I uttered a loud cry, which awoke me. I took notice of the time. I told the circumstance to all my friends ; and, at the expiration of five-and-twenty days, I received accounts of his death, which happened in the very same night in which he had appeared to me."

On a little reflection this incident will not appear to be supernatural. That Petrarch, oppressed as he was with anxiety about his friend, should fall into fanciful reveries during his sleep, and imagine that he saw him in the paleness of death, was nothing wonderful — nay, that he should frame this allegory in his dream is equally conceivable. The sleeper's imagination is often a great improvisatore. It forms scenes and stories ; it puts questions, and answers them itself, all the time believing that the responses come from those whom it interrogates.

That the bishop should have died so near the time of Petrarch's dream must be attributed to chance.

It was at this period, according to De Sade, that he was presented with the archdeaconry of Parma ; but Baldelli has shown, from the writings of Father Ato, that he did not attain that promotion till the year 1350.

Petrarch, deeply attached to Azzo da Correggio, now began to consider himself as settled at Parma, where he enjoyed literary retirement in the bosom of his beloved Italy. But he had not resided there a year, when he was summoned to Avignon by orders which he considered that he could not disobey. Tiraboschi, and after him Baldelli, ascribe his return to Avignon to the commission which he received in 1342, to go as advocate of the Roman people to the new Pope Clement VI., who had succeeded to the tiara on the death of Benedict XII., and Petrarch's own words coincide with what they say.*

The feelings of joy with which Petrarch revisited Avignon, though to appearance he had weaned himself from Laura, may be imagined. He had

* De Sade makes Petrarch arrive in Avignon before the death of Benedict XII. ; but the death of Benedict was certainly near, and the prospect of it may have brought our poet to Avignon.

friendship, however, if he had not love, to welcome him. Here he met, with reciprocal gladness, his friends, Socrates and Lælius, who had established themselves at the court of the Cardinal Colonna. "Socrates," says De Sade, "devoted himself entirely to Petrarch, and even went with him to Vaucluse." It thus appears that Petrarch had not given up his peculium on the Sorgue, nor had any one rented the field and cottage in his absence.

Benedict XII. died at Avignon in 1342. He was a man of strict principles, and of an understanding that was at least fortified by integrity of purpose. That he lacked subtlety of intellect to command the vast machine of ecclesiastical policy which was submitted to him was candidly acknowledged by himself; but he was an honest man, and Petrarch is no where more uncandid than when he rails at his errors without remembering his virtues. It is attested that he was disinterested in promoting to benefices. It was a memorable saying of his that a pope has no relations. He was particularly anxious to reform the monastic societies; for which good wishes the men of the cowl bestowed on him their boundless execration. Petrarch hated him because he would not remove the papal seat to Rome; and, for the same reason,

he was disliked by all the Italian party of the church. Benedict was at times indiscreet in manifesting his aversion to Italy. He had a present of some fine and prodigiously large eels sent him from the lake of Bolsena, which he distributed among his cardinals, reserving only a small portion for himself. Some days afterwards, when the cardinals waited upon him at court, the eels were talked of — a very natural subject for church-cormorants — and then his holiness remarked that, if he had known how exquisitely the eels tasted, he would not have distributed them so freely ; but that he had no idea of Italy producing any thing so good. This remark, though it might have passed for a joke, roused the wrath of Cardinal Colonna, who exclaimed to the pontiff, “ It astonishes me that a man so learned as you are should not know that Italy excels in every thing.”

Benedict's successor, Clement VI., was conversant with the world, and accustomed to the splendour of courts. Quite a contrast to the plain rigidity of Benedict, he was courteous and munificent, but withal a voluptuary ; and his luxury and profusion gave rise to extortions, to rapine, and to boundless simony. His artful and arrogant mistress, the Countess of Turenne, ruled him so absolutely, that

all places in his gift, which had escaped the grasp of his relations, were disposed of through her interest; and she amassed great wealth by the sale of benefices.

The Romans applied to Clement VI., as they had applied to Benedict XII., imploring him to bring back the sacred seat to their capital; and they selected Petrarch to be among those who should present their supplication. Our poet appealed to his holiness on this subject, both in prose and verse. The pope received him with smiles, complimented him on his eloquence, bestowed on him the priory of Migliorino, but, for the present, consigned his remonstrance to oblivion.

In this mission to Clement at Avignon there was joined with Petrarch the famous Nicola Gabrino, better known by the name of Cola di Rienzo, who, very soon afterwards, attached the history of Rome to his biography. He was for the present comparatively little known; but Petrarch, thus coming into connexion with this extraordinary person, was captivated with his eloquence, whilst Clement complimented Rienzo, admitted him daily to his presence, and conversed with him on the wretched state of Rome, the tyranny of the nobles, and the sufferings of the people.

Cola and Petrarch were the two chiefs of this Roman embassy to the pope; and it appears that the poet gave precedency to the future tribune on this occasion. They both pleaded the cause before Clement VI. Cola elaborately exposed the three demands of the Roman people, namely, that the pope, already the acknowledged patron of Rome, should assume the title and functions of its senator, in order to extinguish the civil wars kindled by the Roman barons; that he should return to his pontifical chair on the banks of the Tiber; and that he should grant permission for the jubilee, instituted by Boniface VIII., to be held every fifty years, and not at the end of a century, as its extension to the latter period went far beyond the ordinary duration of human life, and cut off the greater part of the faithful from enjoying the institution.

Cola's speech was immediately followed by Petrarch's. I am sorry that the attorney seems to have been the better speaker of the two, at least if we may trust Levati, who nevertheless gives no reference to any author in whom he had found our poet's harangue to the pope formally given. Levati, without quoting any authority, only says that he modelled his harangue upon an epistle to Benedict

XII., which he had indited some years before, a composition which has been already noticed. If this was the case, the speech must have been a bad one, since the arguments employed to induce the popes to leave Avignon are, in Petrarch's poetry at least, sufficiently absurd. The allurements held out to them are the sacred relics which they would see at Rome, among which are enumerated the cradle of Christ, and that part which was sacrificed at his circumcision, a lock of hair of the Blessed Virgin, and a piece of her petticoat; the rod of Aaron, the ark of the covenant, a finger of St. Agnes, with the nuptial ring.*

None of the popes was ever more attached than Clement VI. to the charms of living women; but he

* Levati, Viaggi di Petrarca, vol. ii., p. 109.

Dr. J. B. Friedrich, of Wurzburg, in his elaborate and most useful "General Diagnosis of Mental Diseases," says: "A nun, named Agnes Blanbeckin, was incessantly tormented by the idea what could have become of that part which was cut off at the circumcision of Christ;" and he quotes as his authority for the fact a publication entitled *Agnētis Blanbeckin Vita et Revelationes*. Vien. 1731: "Eam aliquando scire desiderasse cum lacrymis et mœrore maximo, ubinam esset præputium Christi. Ecce vero in instante sensisse eam illud, et dulcissimi quidem saporis in ore." Whether the poor nun's ignorance of Petrarch's works tended more to her comfort or annoyance, it would be difficult to decide.

was the least likely to be fascinated by the dried fingers of deceased ones, or by rags from their petticoats. He nevertheless praised both orators, and conceded that the Romans should have a jubilee every fifty years; but he excused himself from going to Rome, alleging that he was prevented by the disputes between France and England. "Holy father," said Petrarch, "how much it were to be wished that you had known Italy before you knew France." "I wish I had," said the pontiff, very coldly.

Petrarch gave vent to his indignation at the papal court in a writing, entitled, "A Book of Letters without a title," and in several severe sonnets. The "*Liber Epistolarum sine Titulo*" contains, as it is printed in his works, (Basle edit. 1581), eighteen letters, fulminating as freely against papal luxury and corruption as if they had been penned by Luther or John Knox. From their contents, we might set down Petrarch as the earliest preacher of the Reformation, if there were not, in the writings of Dante, some passages of the same stamp. If these epistles were really circulated at the time when they were written, it is matter of astonishment that Petrarch never suffered from any

other flames than those of love; for many honest reformers, who have been roasted alive, have uttered less anti-papal vituperation than our poet; nor, although Petrarch would have been startled at a revolution in the hierarchy, can it be doubted that his writings contributed to the Reformation.

It must be remembered, at the same time, that he wrote against the church government of Avignon, and not that of Rome. He compares Avignon with the Assyrian Babylon, with Egypt under the mad tyranny of Cambyses; or rather denies that the latter empires can be held as parallels of guilt to the western Babylon; nay, he tells us that neither Avernus nor Tartarus can be confronted with this infernal place.

“The successors of a troop of fishermen,” he says, “have forgotten their origin. They are not contented, like the first followers of Christ, who gained their livelihood by the lake of Genesareth, with modest habitations, but they must build themselves splendid palaces, and go about covered with gold and purple. They are fishers of men, who catch a credulous multitude, and devour them for their prey.” This “*Liber Epistolarum*” includes some descriptions of the debaucheries of the

churchmen, which are too scandalous for translation. They are nevertheless curious relics of history.

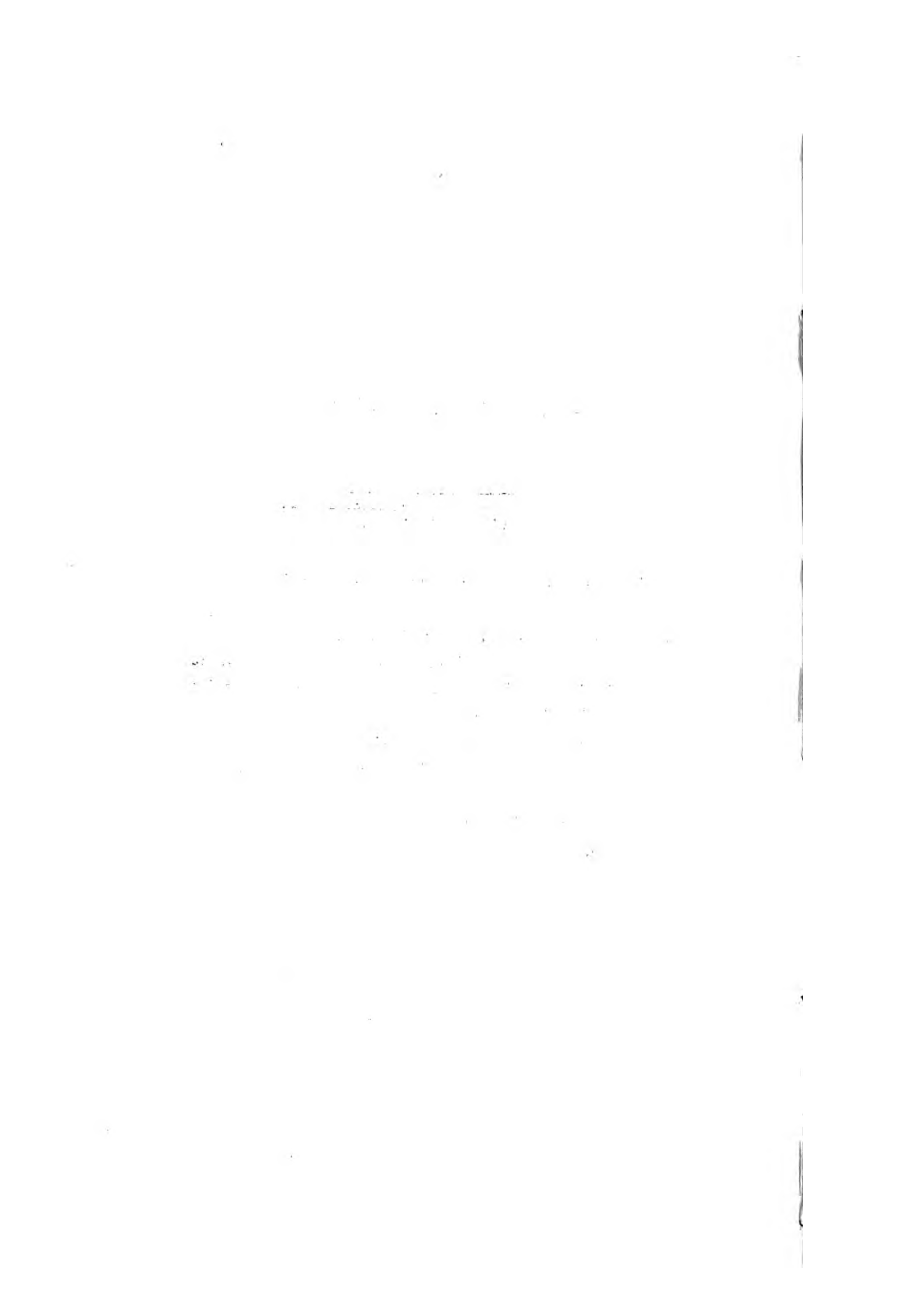
In this year, Gherardo, the brother of our poet, retired, by his advice, to the Carthusian monastery of Montrieux, which they had both visited in a pilgrimage to Baume three years before. Gherardo had been struck down with affliction by the death of a beautiful woman at Avignon, to whom he was devoted. Her name and history are quite unknown, but it may be hoped, if not conjectured, that she was not married, and could be more liberal in her affections than the poet's Laura.

The name of Laura has been little mentioned in the course of the present chapter; but, amidst all the incidents of this period of his life, the attachment of Petrarch to her continued unabated. It appears, too, that, since his return from Parma, she treated him with more than wonted complacency. He passed the greater part of the year 1342 at Avignon, and went to Vacluse but seldom, and for short intervals.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XII.

Petrarch commences the Study of the Greek Language — His Instructor Barlaamo—Mission of Barlaamo to the papal court — Proposed union of the Greek and Latin churches — Boccaccio's description of Barlaamo—Petrarch begins to learn Greek by reading Plato — Glance at the Hamiltonian system of learning languages; its general inutility — Usefulness of a Latin translation to the Greek student in certain cases — Opinion of Porson and Heyne on the subject — In reading Plato Petrarch imbibes much of his spirit — He assists his instructor to obtain a bishopric — Birth of his daughter Francesca.



CHAPTER XII.

IN the mean time, love, that makes other people idle, interfered not with Petrarch's fondness for study. He found an opportunity of commencing the study of Greek, and seized it with avidity. That language had never been totally extinct in Italy; but, at the time on which we are touching, there were not probably six persons in the whole country acquainted with it. Dante had quoted Greek authors, but without having known the Greek alphabet. The person who favoured Petrarch with this coveted instruction was Bernardo Barlaamo, a Calabrian monk, who had been three years before at Avignon, having come as envoy from Andronicus, the eastern Emperor, on pretext of proposing a union between the Greek and Roman churches, but, in reality, for the pur-

pose of trying to borrow money from the pope for the emperor. Some of Petrarch's biographers date his commencement of the study of Greek from the period of Barlaamo's first visit to Avignon; but I am inclined to postpone it to 1342-43.

Barlaamo was born at Seminara, in Calabria, and became a Basilian monk, for the purpose of learning the Greek language. He passed first into Ætolia, next to Salonicchi: in 1327 he settled at Constantinople, and, through the friendship of Giovanni Cantacuzeno, was made abbot of the church of the Holy Ghost. But, emboldened by the good-will of the emperor, he threw disparagement on the knowledge of the Greeks in matters of science; and this roused against him powerful enemies—among whom he tells us that Necefora Gregora vilified him before the public in the bitterest terms. Barlaamo shut himself up for some time in Salonicchi, but re-appeared at court with fresh credit, when two legates from Pope John XXII. arrived at Constantinople, to treat of a union between the two churches, Greek and Roman; and Barlaamo was selected to confer with them. But presently a new war was got up against poor Barlaamo, for having censured the monastic institu-

tions of the Greeks. This combat was suspended, however, in consequence of Barlaamo being sent by the Emperor Andronicus on a mission to the western courts, and particularly to that of Avignon, in 1339, under colour of negotiating for a reunion of the churches; but, in reality, to obtain succours for Greece against the Turks.*

Barlaamo's assumed object, in his mission to the Papal court, was to effect a re-union of the Greek and Latin churches, which had separated in the ninth century. The great difficulty was their divided opinion about one of the persons of the Holy Trinity; the Greeks believing that the Holy Ghost proceeded immediately from the Father, whilst the Latins insisted that he came from the

* Barlaamo's subsequent history was, that, disappointed in the object of his embassy, he returned to Constantinople, and renewed his controversy with the Greeks. His principal adversary, one Palana, summoned him as a heretic before the patriarch of Constantinople, who condemned both him and his adversary. He returned to the west, and settled in Avignon, in 1342; and, according to Baldelli, gave lessons in Greek to Petrarch. From Baldelli's mode of mentioning these instructions, a reader would imagine that they were the first that Petrarch received from Barlaamo. And I rather distrust De Sade's date when he states that Petrarch studied with Barlaamo in 1339.

Father and Son. Another theological dispute, in which Barlaamo embarked with much zeal, was one respecting the light that appeared on Mount Tabor at the transfiguration; namely, whether it was created or uncreated light, or, in other words, God himself. Strange madness of mankind, who, with little more power of comprehending the stupendous nature of their Creator than if they were animalcules wriggling in a drop of water, dogmatize as if they had the intellects of archangels!

But to return to our Greek envoy: Boccaccio, who knew Barlaamo at Naples, thus describes him:—
“He was a little man, of great knowledge and understanding (by the way, he was a considerable author.) He wrote many works, which are copiously noticed by Mazzucchelli and Fabricio). Greece had not, for many years, produced so wise a man. He was profoundly versed in history, philosophy, and the Greek language, and perfectly understood Euclid, Aristotle, and Plato. So at least thought John Boccaccio, though he himself understood little Greek, and less mathematics; but he adds that the envoy expressed himself with difficulty. Petrarch courted his acquaintance, and

eagerly sought to be instructed in Greek. Barlaamo, on his side, wished as much to be acquainted with the Latin tongue. These views soon united them. They began studying Greek by the reading of Plato. One might imagine, from this mode of commencing, that the Hamiltonian system of learning languages, by plunging at once instead of wading into the stream, had been thus early anticipated; and certainly to plunge the Greek disciple into Plato, was attempting to teach him, at the same time, both to dive and to swim. In point of fact, Petrarch never obtained instruction sufficient to make him a good Grecian.

I have great doubts if Petrarch, supposing that he had continued tuition in the Greek language, set about learning it in the right way. Whatever disdain he might feel towards grammars and dictionaries, he was no more above the need of them than any other mortal learner of a dead language. In my humble opinion, the Hamiltonian system is like entering the church by the belfry, instead of the church door. The Hamiltonians say: What time is lost by a poor youth thumbing a dictionary, whilst an English word, placed above a Greek one, would in a few seconds expound its meaning, and allow him, with the lesson full in his

memory, to refresh his health by joining his play-fellows on the cricket-ground! All this seems plausible doctrine, but it is practically unsound. The learner of Greek forgets the English interpretation in proportion to the facility with which he obtains it, and remembers a Greek word in proportion to the fatigue which it has cost his thumb and fingers to explore his lexicon. I speak with some experience on this subject, having studied Greek both in Scotland and in Germany, and in neither of those countries did I ever find a sagacious Greek teacher (Heyne's opinion I had from his own mouth), who was not averse to the student of Greek depending on a Latin translation, page by page. I remember, at College, that students who were observed to turn their eyes to the opposite Latin page, were infallibly set down as the worst scholars; and I have no doubt that their squinting at the translation was not only a symptom, but a re-acting cause, of their debility in Greek. It would be a false inference from this misuse of Latin translations to say that they are useless to the Grecian student, or even to the accomplished scholar. No; neither a Porson nor a Heyne ever neglected them as useful sticks with which to

poke into some obscurity, and to compare former opinions ; but they never used them as crutches for their daily progress.*

Petrarch, nevertheless, imbibed much of the spirit of Plato from the labour which he bestowed on his works. He learned from him several important facts ; namely, that when we are strictly in love, personal charms have, corporeally speaking, nothing to do with our admiration, and that we worship them only as typical emanations of the divinity from a human being, and that our souls transmigrate and take themselves off to the stars when they are disentangled from their bodily bonds. A fondness for this *useful* knowledge is apparent in the writings of Plato.

Petrarch was very anxious to continue his Greek readings with Barlaamo ; but his stay in Avignon was very short ; and, though it was his interest to detain him as his preceptor, Petrarch, finding that he was anxious for a settlement in Italy, helped him to obtain the bishopric of Geraci, in Calabria.

* Porson used to say that a Latin translation, in reading Greek, could be useless to no man, unless he was ignorant of Latin.

The next year was memorable in our poet's life for the birth of his daughter Francesca. That the mother of this daughter was the same who presented him with his son John there can be no doubt. Baldelli discovers, in one of Petrarch's letters, an obscure allusion to her, which seems to indicate that she died suddenly after the birth of Francesca, who proved a comfort to her father in his old age.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XIII.

Death of Robert King of Naples—Petrarch's Letter to Barbato di Sulmona on the subject, predicting the evils likely to result to Naples—The Pope sends Petrarch on an embassy to Naples, where he is at the same time commissioned by the Colonna family to plead for the liberation of some of their friends who had been imprisoned by the late King Robert—Petrarch's interview with the Queen Dowager, with Andrew, (the young queen's husband) and with his minister Roberto, an Hungarian Monk — Unkindness of Andrew to Giovanna, who succeeds to her grandfather's throne—Insolence of the Hungarian minister and his faction — History of Fillippa the Catanese, the young queen's favourite — Petrarch's Letters to Cardinal Colonna, describing his efforts at negotiation in Naples, and his excursions to the neighbouring scenery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE opening of the year 1343 brought a new loss to Petrarch in the death of Robert King of Naples. The character and history of this monarch have been already alluded to. John Villani calls him "the wisest king that Christendom had produced for five hundred years; as he not only possessed strong natural sense, but the deepest knowledge in theology, an accomplishment that would be little prized in a modern monarch." The royal library of Paris possesses a treatise which he wrote "On the Apostles, and on those who imitate their evangelical poverty." *

Petrarch, as we have seen, had occasion to be grateful to this monarch; and we need not doubt that he was much affected by the news of his death; but, when we are told that he repaired to Vaicluse

* Baldelli, p. 282, ed. 1837.

to bewail his irreparable loss, we may suppose, without uncharitableness, that he retired also with a view to study the expression of his grief no less than to cherish it. He wrote, however, an interesting letter on the occasion to Barbato di Sulmona, in which he very sensibly exhibits his fears of the calamities which were likely to result from the death of Robert, adding that his mind was seldom true in prophecy, unless when it foreboded misfortunes; and his predictions on this occasion were but too well verified.

Robert was succeeded by his granddaughter Giovanna, a girl of sixteen, already married to Andrew of Hungary, her cousin, who was but a few months older.

Robert by his will had established a council of regency, which was to continue until Giovanna arrived at the age of twenty-five. The Pope, however, made objections to this arrangement, alleging that the administration of affairs during the queen's minority devolved upon him immediately as lord superior. But, as he did not choose to assert his right till he should receive the most accurate information respecting the state of the kingdom, he gave Petrarch a commission for that purpose; and

entrusted him with a negotiation of much importance and delicacy.

Petrarch received an additional commission from the Cardinal Colonna. Several friends of the Colonna family were, at that time, confined in prison at Naples, and the cardinal flattered himself that Petrarch's eloquence and intercession would obtain their enlargement. Our poet accepted the embassy. He went to Nice, where he embarked; but had nearly been lost in his passage. He wrote to Cardinal Colonna the following account of his voyage.

“I embarked at Nice, the first maritime town in Italy (he means the nearest to France). At night I got to Monaco, and the bad weather obliged me to pass a whole day there, which by no means put me into good humour. The next morning we re-embarked, and, after being tossed all day by the tempest, we arrived very late at Port Maurice. The night was dreadful; it was impossible to get to the castle, and I was obliged to put up at a little village, where my bed and supper appeared tolerable from extreme weariness. I determined to proceed by land; the perils of the road appeared less dreadful to me than those by sea. I left my

servants and baggage in the ship, which set sail, and I remained with only one domestic on shore. By accident, upon the coast of Genoa I found some German horses which were for sale; they were strong and serviceable. I bought them; but I was soon afterwards obliged to take ship again; for war was renewed between the Pisans and the Milanese. Nature has placed limits to these states, the Po on one side, and the Apennines on the other. I must have passed between their two armies if I had gone by land; this obliged me to re-embark at Lerici. I passed by Corvo, that famous rock, the ruins of the city of Luna, and landed at Murrone. Thence I went the next day on horseback to Pisa, Siena, and Rome. My eagerness to execute your orders has made me a night-traveller, contrary to my character and disposition. I would not sleep till I had paid my duty to your illustrious father, who is always my hero. I found him the same as I left him seven years ago, nay, even as hale and sprightly as when I saw him at Avignon, which is now twelve years. What a surprising man! What strength of mind and body! How firm his voice! how beautiful his face! Had he been a few years younger, I should have taken him for Julius Cæsar,

or Scipio Africanus. Rome grows old; but not its hero. He was half undressed, and going to bed; so I staid only a moment, but I passed the whole of the next day with him. He asked me a thousand questions about you, and was much pleased that I was going to Naples. When I set out from Rome, he insisted on accompanying me beyond the walls.

“I reached Palestrina that night, and was kindly received by your nephew John. He is a young man of great hopes, and follows the steps of his ancestors.

“I arrived at Naples the 11th of October. Heavens, what a change has the death of one man produced in that place! No one would know it now. Religion, Justice, and Truth are banished. I think I am at Memphis, Babylon, or Mecca. In the stead of a king so just and so pious, a little monk, fat, rosy, barefooted, with a shorn head, and half covered with a dirty mantle, bent by hypocrisy more than by age, lost in debauchery whilst proud of his affected poverty, and still more of the real wealth he has amassed—this man holds the reins of this staggering empire. In vice and cruelty he rivals a Dionysius, an Agathocles, or a Phalaris. This monk, named Roberto, was an Hun-

garian cordelier, and preceptor of Prince Andrew, whom he entirely sways. He oppresses the weak, despises the great, tramples justice under foot, and treats both the dowager and the reigning queen with the greatest insolence. The court and city tremble before him ; a mournful silence reigns in the public assemblies, and in private they converse by whispers. The least gesture is punished, and *to think* is denounced as a crime. To this man I have presented the orders of the sovereign pontiff, and your just demands. He behaved with incredible insolence. Susa, or Damascus, the capital of the Saracens, would have received with more respect an envoy from the holy see. The great lords imitate his pride and tyranny. The Bishop of Cavillon is the only one who opposes this torrent ; but what can one lamb do in the midst of so many wolves ? It is the request of a dying king alone that makes him endure so wretched a situation. How small are the hopes of my negotiation ! but I shall wait with patience ; though I know beforehand the answer they will give me.”

It is plain from Petrarch's letter that the kingdom of Naples was now under a miserable subjection to the Hungarian faction, and that the young

queen's situation was any thing but enviable. She had been married by state-command to her Hungarian cousin, whose coarse mind had had a barbarous education. Andrew soon let her know his opinion that the throne of Naples belonged to him in his own right, no thanks to his marriage with her. She resented his brutality; so that Andrew and Joan lived less happily in a palace, than Darby and Joan in a cottage.

Few characters in modern history have been drawn in such contrasted colours as that of Giovanna, Queen of Naples. She had been charged with every vice, and extolled for every virtue. Petrarch represents her as a woman of weak understanding, disposed to gallantry, but incapable of greater crimes. Her history reminds us much of that of Mary Queen of Scots.

Beautiful in her person, and lively in her disposition, she was suspected of an intrigue during the lifetime of her loathed husband; but, placed as she was, the most perfect innocence was no security against detraction. From the circumstances of Andrew's subsequent death, it appears that the brute slept with her on the very night of his assassination, a circumstance which seems to me a presump-

tion, that, though they might be, like many sleeping partners, on bad terms, he did not regard her as an adultress.

She was very much governed by a female dependent, who was called the *Catanese*, because she was born at Catanea, in Sicily. Her rise was remarkable. When King Robert, then Duke of Calabria, was besieging Trapani, his wife Violante was delivered of a son; and Filippa, the Catanese, who was married to a fisherman, and was laundress to the ducal family, had the child consigned to her care. She soon caught the airs and manners of a court, and so much insinuated herself into the good graces of the duchess, that, upon the death of her husband, the fisherman, her patroness gave her in marriage to a favourite courtier, Raimondo di Catano, high-steward of Naples. Raimondo himself had been originally a Saracen slave, but Filippa made his fortune by her address. Upon their union he was knighted, and made high-steward. After the death of Violante, the Catanese, by her pleasing manners, won the favour of Sancia, the second wife of Robert, and also the friendship of his son Charles's widow, the Duchess of Calabria, and mother of Giovanna, who entrusted her with

the care of that princess. By Raimondo the Catanese had a son named Roberto, who succeeded his father in the high-stewardship, and inherited the riches he had amassed. He was in high favour with Giovanna, and, as he was graceful in his person, it was surmised that he was her gallant; but those suspicions came from a pestilent quarter, and Giovanna's regard for one whom she had known from her infancy might not only be innocent, but amiable.

It was, no doubt, the interest of both the Catanese and her son to oppose the Hungarian cabal; and they were not likely to mitigate the queen's known dislike to her spouse. If they tried to inflame it, as they were accused of doing, they certainly undertook a needless trouble, which they might have left to Andrew and his Huns. The former allowed his barefooted monk-minister to insult Giovanna; he himself insulted her; and to prejudice an injured wife against her husband is like applying the bellows to a blazing fire. That Andrew's enemies conspired against him was proved by the event; and, among the many conspirators, the young queen had many friends; but her privacy to their worst designs is a totally different question. Her youth and her character, gentle

and interesting in several respects, entitle her to the benefit of our doubts as to her assent to the death of Andrew. Many circumstances seem to me to favour those doubts, and the opinion of Petrarch is on the side of her acquittal.

The Neapolitan princes of the blood were also violent in their opposition to Andrew and his Hungarian minister. Of these the two sons of Philip Prince of Tarentum, Roberto and Ludovico, were supposed to entertain a more than kindred partiality towards their kinswoman, and the queen, it subsequently appeared, was not indifferent towards Ludovico. Nor were the nobles of Naples less indignant at the Hungarian cabal. Many of them left the city in disgust, and, offering their services to the Prince of Tarentum, accompanied him in an expedition to Greece.

Such was the state of Naples on Petrarch's arrival. He had an audience with the queen dowager; but her grief and tears for the loss of her husband made this interview brief and fruitless with regard to business. When he spoke to her about the prisoners, for whose release the Colonnas had desired him to intercede, her majesty referred him to the council. She was now, in reality, only a state cipher.

The principal prisoners for whom Petrarch was commissioned to plead, were the counts Minervino, di Lucera, and Pontenza. They were brothers, and the grandsons of a public notary of Burletta, who had left them a large fortune. They kept in their pay a number of armed followers, who committed outrages on the family of Mara, with whom they were at variance. King Robert had them arrested, confiscated their fortunes, and condemned them to perpetual imprisonment. Whether there were any favourable circumstances in their case we know not, but Petrarch pitied them, and thought them innocent; though they were possibly only the chiefs of banditti.

Petrarch applied to the council of state in their behalf, but he was put off with perpetual excuses. While the affair was in agitation he went to Capua, where the prisoners were confined. "There," he writes, to the Cardinal Colonna, "I saw your friends; and, such is the instability of Fortune, that I found them in chains. They support their situation with fortitude. Their innocence is no plea in their behalf to those who have shared in the spoils of their fortune. Their only expectations rest upon you. I have no hopes, except from the

intervention of some superior power, as my dependence on the clemency of the council is out of the question. The queen dowager, now the most desolate of widows, compassionates their case, but cannot assist them."

Petrarch, wearied with the delays of business, sought relief in excursions to the neighbourhood. Of these he writes an account to Cardinal Colonna.

" I went to Baiæ," he says, " with my friends, Barbato and Barrilli. Every thing concurred to render this jaunt agreeable—good company, the beauty of the scenes, and my extreme weariness of the city I had quitted. This climate, which, as far as I can judge, must be insupportable in summer, is delightful in winter. I was rejoiced to behold places described by Virgil, and, what is more surprising, by Homer before him. I have seen the Lucrine lake, famous for its fine oysters; the lake Avernus, with water as black as pitch, and fishes of the same colour swimming in it; marshes formed by the standing waters of Acheron, and the mountain whose roots go down to hell. The terrible aspect of this place, the thick shades with which it is covered by a surrounding wood, and the pesti-

lent odour which this water exhales, characterize it very justly as the Tartarus of the poets. There wants only the boat of Charon, which, however, would be unnecessary, as there is only a shallow ford to pass over. The Styx and the kingdom of Pluto are now hid from our sight. Awed by what I had heard and read of these mournful approaches to the dead, I was contented to view them at my feet from the top of a high mountain. The labourer, the shepherd, and the sailor, dare not approach them nearer. There are deep caverns, where some pretend that a great deal of gold is concealed; covetous men, they say, have been to seek it, but they never return; whether they lost their way in the dark valleys, or had a fancy to visit the dead, being so near their habitations.

“ I have seen the ruins of the grotto of the famous Cumæan sybil; it is a hideous rock, suspended in the Avernian lake. Its situation strikes the mind with horror. There still remain the hundred mouths by which the gods conveyed their oracles; these are now dumb, and there is only one God who speaks in heaven and on earth. These uninhabited ruins serve as the resort of birds of unlucky omen. Not far off is that dreadful

cavern which leads, *they say*, to the infernal regions. Who would believe that, close to the mansions of the dead, Nature should have placed powerful remedies for the preservation of life? Near Avernus and Acheron are situated that barren land whence rises continually a salutary vapour, which is a cure for several diseases, and those hot springs that vomit hot and sulphureous cinders. I have seen the baths which Nature has prepared; but the avarice of physicians has rendered them of doubtful use. This does not, however, prevent them from being visited by the invalids of all the neighbouring towns. These hollowed mountains dazzle us with the lustre of their marble circles, on which are engraved figures that point out, by the position of their hands, the part of the body which each fountain is proper to cure.

“ I saw the foundations of that admirable reservoir of Nero, which was to go from Mount Misenus to the Avernian lake, and to enclose all the hot waters of Baia.

“ At Pozzuoli I saw the mountain of Falernus, celebrated for its grapes, whence the famous Falernian wine. I saw likewise those enraged waves of which Virgil speaks in his *Georgics*, on which

Cæsar put a bridle by the mole which he raised there, and which Augustus finished. It is now called the Dead Sea. I am surprised at the prodigious expence the Romans were at to build houses in the most exposed situations, in order to shelter them from the severities of the weather; for in the heats of summer the valleys of the Apennines, the mountains of Viterbo, and the woods of Umbria, furnished them with charming shades; and even the ruins of the houses which they built in those places are superb.”

Our poet's residence at Naples was evidently disagreeable to him, in spite of the company of his friends, Barrilli and Barbato. His friendship with the latter was for a moment overcast by an act of indiscretion on the part of Barbato, who, by dint of importunity, obtained from Petrarch thirty-four lines of his poem of Africa, under a promise that he would shew them to nobody. On entering the library of another friend, the first thing that struck our poet's eyes was a copy of the same verses, transcribed with a good many blunders. Petrarch's vanity on this occasion, however, was touched more than his anger — he forgave his friend's treachery, believing it to have arisen from excessive admira-

tion. Barbato, as some atonement, gave him a little MS. of Cicero, which Petrarch found to contain two books of the orator's Treatise on the Academics, "a work," as he observes, "more subtle than useful."

Queen Giovanna, as we have said, was fond of literature. She had several conversations with Petrarch, which increased her admiration of him. After the example of her grandfather, she made him her chaplain and household clerk, both of which offices must be supposed to have been sinecures. Her letters appointing him to them are dated the 25th of November, 1343, the very day before that nocturnal storm of which I shall speedily quote the poet's description.

Voltaire has asserted that the young queen of Naples was the pupil of Petrarch; "but of this," as De Sade remarks, "there is no proof." It only appears that the two greatest geniuses of Italy, Boccaccio and Petrarch, were both attached to Giovanna, and had a more charitable opinion of her than most of their contemporaries.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XIV.

Tremendous Storm at Naples—The Council of Government are moved by Petrarch to take the case of the prisoners, Colonna's friends, into consideration—Cause of one of their sittings being closed by the advance of evening—Atrocious Customs of the Neapolitans—Petrarch obtains the Liberation of the Prisoners—Leaves Naples—Repairs to Parma; is well received by his friend Azzo Correggio—Hopes to settle at Parma; but War breaks out between the Correggios and the Lords of Milan—Parma is besieged, and Petrarch, leaving it, sets out for Avignon—He is beset by Robbers near Rheggio—He and his Companions pass a dreadful night in their flight to Scandiano—He proceeds to Bologna, and finally reaches Avignon—Rumours of His Death spread over Italy—Absurd Poem composed on the imagined event—Affairs of Naples—Murder of Prince Andrew—Laura's kind reception of the Poet on his return to Avignon.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOON after his return from the tour to Baiæ, Petrarch was witness to a violent tempest at Naples, which most historians have mentioned, as it was memorable for having threatened the entire destruction of the city.

It is pretended that a bishop of one of the neighbouring islands had foretold that, on the night of the 25th of November, 1343, the city of Naples would be destroyed by an earthquake. It is added, in tradition, that this prophecy filled the inhabitants with terror, and that streets and churches were filled with supplicants, before the sea and the air had begun their insurrection. But, as I object to miracles on common historical evidence, I demur to believing in the fact of the bishop having predicted any thing on the subject; for his fortelling any mighty convulsion of nature

would have been miraculous, even though he anticipated by mistake an earthquake instead of a storm.

The night set in with uncommonly still weather ; but suddenly a tempest rose violently, in the direction of the sea, which made the buildings of the city shake to their very foundations. “ At the first onset of the tempest (Petrarch writes to the Cardinal Colonna), the windows of the house were burst open. The lamp of my chamber (he was lodged at a monastery) was blown out—I was shaken from my bed with violence, and I apprehended immediate death. The friars and prior of the convent, who had risen to pay their customary devotions, rushed into my room with crucifixes and relics in their hands, imploring the mercy of the Deity. I took courage, and accompanied them to the church, where we all passed the night, expecting every moment to be our last. I cannot describe the horrors of that dreadful night ; the bursts of lightning and the roaring of thunder were blended with the shrieks of the people. The night itself appeared protracted to an unnatural length ; and, when the morning arrived, which we discovered rather by conjecture than by any dawn-

ing of light, the priests prepared to celebrate the service; but the rest of us, not having yet dared to lift up our eyes towards the heavens, threw ourselves prostrate on the ground. . . At length the day appeared—a day how like to night! The cries of the people began to cease in the upper part of the city; but the shrieks were redoubled from the sea-shore. Despair inspired us with courage. We mounted our horses, and arrived at the port. What a scene was there! the vessels had suffered shipwreck in the very harbour; the shore was covered with dead bodies, which were tossed about and dashed against the rocks, whilst many appeared struggling in the agonies of death. Meanwhile, the raging ocean overturned many houses from their very foundations. . . Above a thousand Neapolitan horsemen were assembled near the shore to assist, as it were, at the obsequies of their countrymen. I caught from them a spirit of resolution, and was less afraid of death from the consideration that we should all perish together. On a sudden a cry of horror was heard; the sea had sapped the foundations of the ground on which we stood, and it was already beginning to give way. We immediately hastened to a higher place, where

the scene was equally impressive. The young queen, with naked feet and dishevelled hair, attended by a number of women, was rushing to the church of the Virgin, crying out for mercy in this imminent peril. At sea, no ship escaped the fury of the tempest: all the vessels in the harbour—one only excepted—sunk before our eyes, and every soul on board perished. * * *

“ I must earnestly entreat you never to order me to expose my life to the uncertainty of the winds. Indeed, in the event of such an order, I would obey neither you nor the pope, nor even my own father, were he still alive; for I have so often narrowly escaped shipwreck that I assent to the proverb — ‘He who suffers shipwreck a second time unjustly accuses Neptune.’ ”

By the assiduity and solicitations of Petrarch, the council of Naples were at last engaged in debating about the liberation of Colonna's imprisoned friends; and the affair was nearly brought to a conclusion, when the approach of night obliged the members to separate before they came to a final decision. The cause of this separation is a sad proof of Neapolitan barbarism at that period. It will hardly, at this day, seem

credible, that, in the capital of so flourishing a kingdom, and the residence of a brilliant court, such savage licentiousness could have prevailed. At night, all the streets of the city were beset by the young nobility, who were armed, and who attacked all passengers without distinction, so that even the members of the council could not venture to appear after a certain hour. Neither the severity of parents, nor the authority of the magistrates, nor of Majesty itself, could prevent continual combats and assassinations.

“But can it be astonishing,” Petrarch remarks, “that such disgraceful scenes should pass in the night, when the Neapolitans celebrate, even in the face of day, games similar to those of the gladiators, and with more than barbarian cruelty? Human blood is shed here with as little remorse as that of brute animals; and, while the people join madly in applause, sons expire in the very sight of their parents; and it is considered the utmost disgrace not to die with becoming fortitude, as if they were dying in the defence of their religion and country. I myself, ignorant of these customs, was once carried to the Carbonara, the destined place of butchery. The queen and her husband, Andrew,

were present ; the soldiery of Naples were present, and the people flocked thither in crowds. I was kept in suspense by the appearance of so large and brilliant an assembly, and expected some spectacle worthy of my attention, when I suddenly heard a loud shout of applause, as for some joyous incident. What was my surprise when I beheld a beautiful young man pierced through with a sword, and ready to expire at my feet ! Struck with horror, I put spurs to my horse, and fled from the barbarous sight, uttering execrations on the cruel spectators.

“ This inhuman custom has been derived from their ancestors, and is now so sanctioned by inveterate habit, that their very licentiousness is dignified with the name of liberty.

“ You will cease to wonder at the imprisonment of your friends in this city, where the death of a young man is considered as an innocent pastime. As to myself, I will quit this inhuman country before three days are past, and hasten to you who can make all things agreeable to me except a sea-voyage.” He might have added the barbarities of Naples.

Petrarch at length brought his negotiations

respecting the prisoners to a successful issue; and they were relieved by the express authority of Andrew. Our poet's presence being no longer necessary, he left Naples in spite of the strong solicitations of his friends Barrilli and Barbato. In answer to their request that he would remain, he said, "I am but a satellite, and follow the directions of a superior planet; quiet and repose are denied to me."

From Naples he went to Parma, where Azzo Correggio, with his wonted affection, pressed him to delay; and Petrarch accepted the invitation, though he remarked with sorrow that harmony no longer reigned among the brothers of the family. He stopped there, however, for some time, and enjoyed such tranquillity that he could revise and polish his compositions. But, in the following year, 1345, his friend Azzo, having failed to keep his promise to Luchino Visconti,* as to restoring to

* Luchino Visconti was the brother of Giovanni, archbishop of Milan. He succeeded to the Lordship of Milan, in 1339. His disposition was fierce and vindictive; but he gave the Milanese most useful laws, and exercised severe justice. He made war upon the Estensi and the Pisani, and enlarged his territories by the conquest of Asti, Tortona, and other places. He died of *the plague*, in 1339. It was surmised, however, that

him the Lordship of Parma—Azzo had obtained it by the assistance of the Visconti, who avenged himself by making war on the Correggios—he invested Parma, and afflicted it with a tedious siege. Petrarch, foreseeing little prospect of pursuing his studies quietly in a beleaguered city, left the place with a small number of his companions; but, about midnight, near Rheggio, a troop of robbers rushed from an ambuscade, with cries of “Kill! kill!” and our handful of travellers, being no match for a host of brigands, fled and sought to save themselves under favour of night. Petrarch, during this flight, was thrown from his horse. The shock was so violent that he swooned; but he recovered, and was remounted by his companions. They had not got far, however, when a violent storm of rain and lightning rendered their situation almost as bad as that from which they had escaped, and

he was carried off not by *the plague*, but by poison. His consort, Isabella of Fiesco, went, on pretence of fulfilling a religious vow, to Venice, where she satisfied an irreligious passion; and, fearing her husband's resentment, gave him a dose on her return. Luchino cultivated poetry, and Crescimbeni has given a specimen of his sonnets. He was fond of the learned, and requested some verses from Petrarch, which the poet sent to him from Parma.

threatened them with death in another shape. They passed a dreadful night without finding a tree, or the hollow of a rock, to shelter them, and had no expedient for mitigating their exposure to the storm but to turn their horses' backs to the tempest.

When the dawn permitted them to discern a path amidst the brushwood, they pushed on to Scandiano, a castle occupied by the Gonzaghi, friends of the lords of Parma, which they happily reached, and where they were kindly received. Here they learned that a troop of horse and foot had been waiting for them in ambush near Scandiano, but had been forced by the bad weather to withdraw before their arrival; thus "*the pelting of the pitiless storm*" had been to them a merciful occurrence. Petrarch made no delay here, for he was smarting under the bruises from his fall, but caused himself to be tied upon his horse, and went to repose at Modena. The next day he repaired to Bologna, where he stopped a short time for surgical assistance, and whence he sent a letter to his friend Barbato, describing his misadventure; but, unable to hold a pen himself, he was obliged to employ the hand of a stranger. He was so im-

patient, however, to get back to Avignon, that he took the road to it as soon as he could sit his horse. On approaching that city he says he felt a greater softness in the air, and saw with delight the flowers that adorn the neighbouring woods. Every thing seemed to announce the vicinity of Laura. It was seldom that Petrarch spoke so complacently of Avignon.

Clement VI. received Petrarch with the highest respect, offered him his choice among several vacant bishoprics, and pressed him to receive the office of pontifical secretary. He declined the proffered secretaryship. Prizing his independence above all things, excepting Laura, he remarked to his friends that the yoke of office would not sit lighter on him for being gilded.

In consequence of the dangers he had encountered, a rumour of his death was spread over a great part of Italy. The age was romantic with a good deal of the fantastical in its romance. If the news had been true, and if he had been really dead and buried, it would be difficult to restrain a smile at the sort of honours that were paid to his memory by the less brain-gifted portion of his admirers. One of these, Antonio di Beccaria, a physician of

Ferrara, when he ought to have been mourning for his own deceased patients, wrote a poetical lamentation for Petrarch's death. The poem, if it deserves such a name, is allegorical ; it represents a funeral, in which the following personages parade in procession and grief for the Laureate's death. Grammar, Rhetoric, and Philosophy are introduced with their several attendants. Under the banners of Rhetoric are ranged Cicero, Geoffroy de Vinesauf, and Alain de Lisle. It would require all Cicero's eloquence to persuade us that his comrades in the procession were quite worthy of his company. The Nine Muses follow Petrarch's body ; eleven poets, crowned with laurel, support the bier, and Minerva, holding the crown of Petrarch, closes the procession.

We have seen that Petrarch left Naples foreboding disastrous events to that kingdom. Among these the assassination of Andrew, on the 18th of September, 1345, was one that fulfilled his augury. The particulars of this murder reached Petrarch on his arrival at Avignon, in a letter from his friend Barbato.

The enmity between Giovanna and her savage husband had continued ; and it appears that, though

the young queen still shared his bed, she obstinately refused him any share in the government. This made Andrew the more furiously impatient to be crowned king; and both he and his Hungarian partizans uttered threats that indicated some impending enterprise on their part. The pope, at their instance, fixed the coronation of Andrew for the 20th of September, and named the bishop of Chartres to be Internuncio at the ceremony, stipulating at the same time that the prince, by obtaining royalty, should not acquire any personal and hereditary right to the kingdom of Naples, which was to descend to the Princess Maria, duchess of Durazzo, if Queen Giovanna should die without an heir.

Every thing was arranged; the Internuncio had arrived. The Catanese and her party, seeing that there was no way but one of averting Andrew's coronation, made up their consciences to take him off. They achieved their object at the time that the court was removed to Aversa, a little town, beautifully situated between Naples and Capua. One fatal night, when the unfortunate monarch was going to bed with the queen, he was called out to a conference, on pretence of a courier having

arrived with important despatches. As soon as the queen's chamber-woman had shut the door of the sleeping-room, and the king had passed into an adjoining chamber, the murderers flew upon him, and whilst one of them, whose hands were armed with gauntlets, tried to stifle his cries, others fastened a rope about his neck, and suspended him from a balcony that looked into the garden. Others, who were in the garden, pulled him by the feet with such force that the blood flowed from his eyes and nostrils. Finally, they let him fall into the garden, where they were beginning to inter him, when the cries of an Hungarian woman, the prince's nurse, raised an alarm, and put them to flight.

Giovanna was violently suspected of being an accessory to this deed, from her known antipathy to her husband, her general connexion with Andrew's enemies, and her believed attachment to Lewis of Tarento, whom she afterwards married. Her accusers even asserted that the rope which strangled Andrew was a tissue of silk and gold, wrought by her own hands; but it is quite possible that she might make the rope, without intending it for her consort's neck, to pull a bell, or to hoist a curtain. De Sade says that the queen was dilatory in dis-

covering and prosecuting the murderers; but she certainly either would not, or could not, protect those who were accused of being concerned in the murder, several of whom were publicly executed, and, among these, the Catanese, after she had been put to the torture.

It is revolting to believe that a young woman of nineteen was an accessory before the fact to an act of atrocity that would seem to require a heart hardened by habitual crimes, and the rest of whose life displayed no depravity of nature; accordingly, there was much division of opinion as to her guilt or innocence. The grand consistory, held at Avignon in 1348, in presence of the pope, the cardinals and the foreign ministers, pronounced her innocent. She made her defence with so many arguments, and with so much pathos, that her accusers, the ambassadors from Hungary, were confounded; and her judges unanimously declared that she ought not even to be suspected of the guilt alleged. Sterner advocates against her allege that she fascinated her judges by the sight of a young and beautiful queen pleading her own cause with tears in her eyes; and De Sade agrees with Muratori in thinking that an attempt to exculpate her

is like trying to wash a negro white. These are formidable opinions against any that I can offer, if mere *doubt* can be called an opinion. I cannot, however, but lean to the side of charity in thinking that, confronted as she was with her accusers, her acquittal makes her guilt considerably apocryphal.

The bishop of Cavaillon, who was the pope's minister at Naples at the time of the assassination of Andrew, was so shocked that he demanded his leave, and embarked on board a galley to return to Avignon. The next day, his vessel was overtaken by a tempest, which drove her back to Herculano; and there the bishop had scarcely landed, when a courier arrived from the queen, inviting him to come and baptise an infant of which she had been delivered. The prelate immediately set out for Naples, performed the ceremony without delay, departed again by sea, and arrived safely at Avignon in January 1346. It may be guessed with what joy Petrarch received him, much as they differed about Giovanna's guilt; but our poet did not long enjoy his friend's society, the bishop being sent by the pope on another embassy.

Our poet, as I have said, returned to Avignon

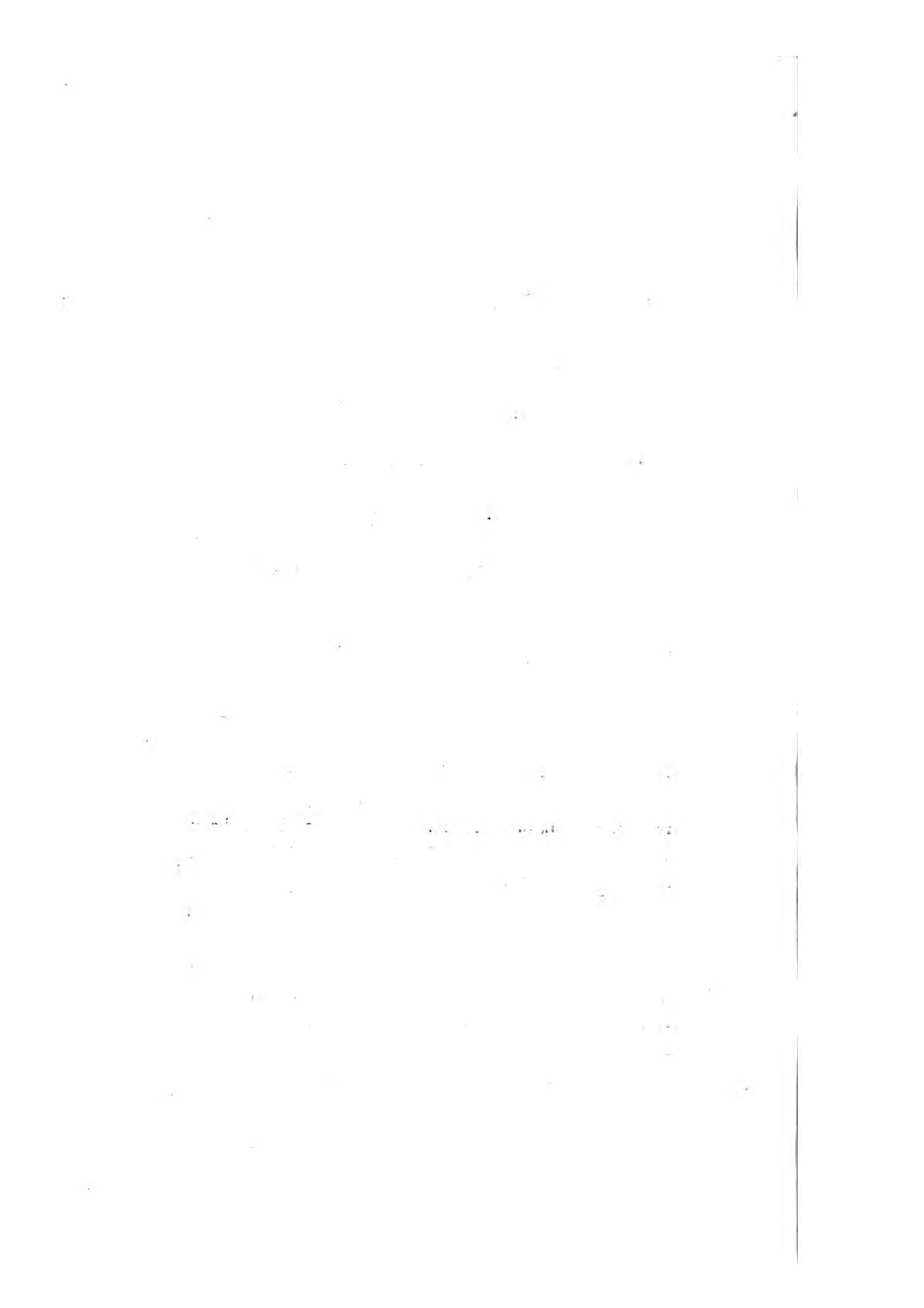
towards the end of 1345, and continued to reside there, or at Vacluse, for more than a year. From his sonnets, which he wrote to all appearance in 1345 and 46, he seems to have suffered from those fluctuations of Laura's favour that naturally arose from his own imprudence. When she treated him with affability, he grew bolder in his assiduities, and she was again obliged to be more severe. See Sonnets cviii, cix, cxiv, and ccl.

During this sojourn, though he dates some of his pleasantest letters from Vacluse, he was projecting to return to Italy, and to establish himself there, after bidding a final adieu to Provence. When he acquainted his nominal patron, John Colonna, with his intention, the cardinal rudely taxed him with madness and ingratitude. Petrarch frankly told the prelate that he was conscious of no ingratitude, since, after fourteen years' delay in his service, he had received no provision for his future livelihood. This quarrel with the proud churchman is, with fantastic pastoral imagery, made the subject of our poet's eighth Bucolic, entitled *Divortium*. I suspect that Petrarch's free language in favour of the Tribune Rienzo was not unconcerned with their alienation.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XV.

Petrarch spends the winter of 1346 at Avignon—Witnesses the Fêtes given to Charles of Luxemburg—That Prince distinguishes Laura at a Grand Ball—Petrarch's Sonnet upon the incident—Feuds in the Papal Conclave—Danger of a Boxing Match between two Cardinals—Charles's promise to the Pope in the event of his Election to the Empire—He is Elected—Petrarch's Visit to the Bishop of Cavaillon—He commences his Treatise on a "*Solitary Life*"—His Description of his War with the Water Nymphs of the Sorgue—Petrarch's Sonnet respecting Laura supposed to have been addressed to a Lady who was their mutual friend—Laura is seized with Ophthalmia—He visits her—She recovers—His Sonnet on the occasion—He is made Prebendary of Parma—His Letter to Ugolino de' Rossi—He makes an Excursion to Vacluse in company with Socrates, and they visit together the Bishop of Cavaillon—His pleasing Letter from Vacluse to Guglielmo di Pastrengo—Visits his Brother at the Carthusian Convent of Montrieux—Is enthusiastically welcomed by the Monks—Returns to Avignon, and writes his Treatise, "*De Otio Religioso.*"



CHAPTER XV.

NOTWITHSTANDING Petrarch's declared dislike of Avignon, there is every reason to suppose that he passed the greater part of the winter of 1346 in his western Babylon; and we find that he witnessed many interesting scenes between the conflicting cardinals, as well as the brilliant fêtes that were given to two foreign princes, whom an important affair now brought to Avignon. These were the King of Bohemia, and his son Charles Prince of Moravia; otherwise called Charles of Luxemburg.

This subject requires a reference to earlier events. A bitter quarrel between Pope John XXII. and the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, had been carried, on both sides, to the utmost extremities. Lewis had made several but fruitless attempts to reconcile himself with the church; their failure is

attributed to the influence of Philip of Valois, King of France. Lewis of Bavaria, on learning the election of Clement VI., sent ambassadors with unlimited powers to effect a reconcilment; but the pope proposed conditions so hard and humbling that the states of the German Empire, who assembled at Frankfort, peremptorily rejected them. On this, his holiness confirmed the condemnations which he had already passed on Lewis of Bavaria, and enjoined the electors of the empire to proceed to a new choice of the King of the Romans. "John of Luxemburg," says Villani, "would have been emperor if he had not been blind." A wish to secure the empire for his son and to further his election brought him to the pope at Avignon.

Prince Charles, though much will be found blameable in his subsequent conduct with regard to Italy, shewed himself, on every other stage of action, wise and gallant.* He had been educated in

* Charles had to thank the pontiff for being elected Emperor. Rehdorf, in his Annals, calls him a man of the deepest circumspection in all his views and actions, and commends him as the pacificator of Germany. Matthew Villani tells us that he used to dress in decent clothes, without any ornament; that he was sparing in expense, a lover of money, and an ungrateful rewarder of those who had served him in arms; but that he was shrewdly intelligent, and that he always couched

France, and had distinguished himself in the Italian wars. Clement VI. had known Charles in France, and, at the time when he was himself a cardinal, had foretold the prince that he should, one day, be king of the Romans. Charles replied, you will be pope before I am king of the Romans. Both predictions were verified.

The affair of the election was treated, in the conclave, with much animosity. The sacred college was divided into two parties; Cardinal Taillerand,*

his answers in a few pithy words without delay or hesitation. From what historians have said, it may be generally inferred that he was one of the greatest princes of his age. The failures which he made are not to be attributed to folly or cowardice; for he made war in Germany with sense, valour, and success. Many are the obligations which the empire professes to owe him. In 1356, having succeeded in pacifying Germany, he published the famous "Golden Bull," which is still regarded as the basis of public rights among the Germans. He did still more for Bohemia, in reducing its barons to obedience by the severe justice which he administered at the gates of Prague, where he summarily settled the longest litigations. He corrected and arranged the Bohemian laws; promoted agriculture, planted the first vines in Bohemia, explored the mines of the country, discovered the springs of Carlsbad, and there constructed baths. He promoted the arts, and greatly honoured the learned.

* Cardinal Taillerand, of the house of the Counts of Perigord, was raised to the purple by Pope John XXII. He was uncle

at the head of the French faction, warmly supported Charles of Luxemburg; the Cardinals of Gascony as violently opposed him; their chief was the Cardinal de Commenges. Petrarch compares those two prelates to two bulls feeding in the pasturage of St. Peter, who butted each other with their horns, and made the forests resound with their bellowing. In full consistory, and without regard to the presence of the pope, they loaded each other with the most scurrilous abuse, reciprocally bestowing such appellations as traitor to the church and patron of cut-throats. De Commenges reproached Taillerand with having shed the blood of Andrew of Hungary. The opponent bull bellowed out that it was a lie, and, starting up, was about to gore and toss his accuser, not with words, but with blows. The other venerable priest rose in a boxing attitude, and would have given him battle to Carlo di Durazzo, of the royal family of Naples. In 1348 he was sent to make up the differences between the kings of France and England. He prevented John Birelli, General of the Carthusians, a holy anchorite, from being raised to the tiara, because he would have curbed the dissolute manners of the cardinals; but the election of a pope less to his liking made him repent of what he had done. He was present at the defeat of Poitiers, after which he went over to England. He returned to Avignon, where he died in 1361.

manual, if the pope and their brother prelates had not separated them. The same day the dependants and domestics of those imitators of their peaceful Saviour flew to arms; their hotels were barricaded, and, if a shew of reconciliation had not been effected, blood would have been shed.

This disturbance prevented not the churchmen from proceeding in the election; but, before bringing it to a conclusion, his holiness wished to make sure of Prince Charles's repaying the honour intended for him by a promise of submission to the church. He, therefore, made him sign, on the 22d of April, 1346, in presence of twelve cardinals and his brother William Roger, a declaration of which the following is the substance.

“ If, by the Grace of God, I am elected King of the Romans, I will fulfil all the promises and confirm all the concessions of my grandfather Henry VII. and of his predecessors. I will revoke the acts made by Lewis of Bavaria. I will occupy no place, either in or out of Italy, belonging to the Church. I will not enter Rome before the day appointed for my coronation. I will depart from thence the same day with all my attendants, and I will never return without the permission of

the holy see." He might as well have declared that he would give the pope all his power, as king of the Romans, provided he was allowed the profits; for, in reality, Charles had no other view with regard to Italy than to make money.

This concession, which contrasts so poorly with the conduct of Charles on many other occasions, excited universal indignation in Germany, and a good deal even in Italy. Petrarch exclaimed against it as mean and atrocious; for, catholic as he was, he was not so much a churchman as to see without indignation the papal tiara exalted above the imperial crown.

In July, 1346, Charles was elected, and, in derision, was called, "the Emperor of the Priests." The death of his rival, Lewis of Bavaria, however, which happened in the next year, prevented a civil war, and Charles IV. remained peaceable possessor of the empire.

"It is astonishing," De Sade remarks, "that Charles of Luxemburg, who had a cultivated mind, who was fond of letters, and who subsequently courted the friendship of Petrarch, should not have made his acquaintance during his residence at Avignon. We should not credit the circum-

stance, if it were not verified in one of Petrarch's Familiar Epistles.* De Sade conjectures that the poet's displeasure at the prince's mean compromise with the pope made him scorn to be presented to him. But, if such were Petrarch's feelings, they seem to have been mollified by a circumstance which he commemorates with many compliments to the prince in his two-hundredth sonnet, beginning—

Real Natura, angelico intelletto—

Among the fêtes that were given to Charles, a ball was held at Avignon, in a grand saloon brightly illuminated. Thither came all the beauties of the city and of Provence. The prince, who had heard much of Laura, through her poetical fame, sought her out and saluted her in the French manner.

Petrarch went, according to his custom, to pass the term of Lent at Vacluse. The bishop of Cavillon, eager to see the poet, persuaded him to visit his recluse residence, and remained with Petrarch as his guest for fifteen days, in his own castle, on the summit of rocks, that seemed more adapted for the perch of birds than the habitation of men. There is *now* scarcely a wreck of its remains.

It would seem, however, that the bishop's con-

* Fam. Ep. L. 15, Ep. 4.

versation made this retirement very agreeable to Petrarch; for it inspired him with the idea of writing a *Treatise on a Solitary Life*. Of this work he made a sketch in a short time, but did not finish it till twenty years afterwards, when he dedicated and presented it to the Bishop of Cavaillon.

Our poet spent the greater part of the summer of 1346 at Vacluse. During his former residence, he had, by confining the stream of the Sorgue, gained a small piece of ground which he converted into a garden; but the river, having lately overflowed its artificial bank, he now employed himself in forcing back the stream and recovering his ground, which the Naiads of the Sorgue had reclaimed, as if indignant at his delay in Italy. This incident he made the subject of an epistle in Latin verse, describing his war with the nymphs. At the same time he invites his friend, the Bishop of Cavaillon, to come and visit him in his retirement. Petrarch, with all his love of seclusion, was neither an anchorite nor a misanthrope. He seems to have anticipated a sentiment expressed, centuries later, by one of Zimmermann's readers, who, after perusing the German sage's praises of solitude, remarked—
“Yes, solitude is sweet; particularly so when we

have a friend beside us to whom we can say, 'how sweet is solitude!'" This war of his with the nymphs, who were jealous of his devotion to the Muses, ended, according to Petrarch's own confession, in a compromise between the belligerents, which, upon the whole, was favourable to the aquatic ladies. The nymphs, true to their sex, *would have their way*, and, accordingly, in winter they broke down the rampart, which he had built up in summer. The poet, finding it a fruitless attempt to confine the stream of the Sorgue, contented himself with a small portion of land at the foot of a rock, which, with a little artificial defence, could never be overflowed, unless the river should overturn the rock itself.

In a second invitation to his friend the Cardinal, he says, "If your momentous engagements will permit you, pray come and see me here. You will find me grown a fisher. Having made peace with the Naiads, I have now no other arms than nets and tridents, with which I harpoon the fishes in a kind of labyrinth, made with canes, into which the water passes, and is detained." It appears that the cardinal paid more than one visit to Vaucluse during this season, and, on one occasion, made the poet a present of a dog, whose playful qualities Petrarch

describes. This quadruped became his amusing and constant companion.

It is agreeable to meet, in Petrarch's life at the shut-up valley, with any circumstance, however trifling, that indicates a cheerful state of mind ; for, independently of his loneliness, the inextinguishable passion for Laura never ceased to haunt him ; and his love, strange to say, had mad, momentary hopes, which only deepened at their departure the returning gloom of despair. Petrarch never wrote more sonnets on his beloved than during the course of this year. Laura had a fair and discreet female friend at Avignon, who was also the friend of Petrarch, and interested in his attachment, which she wished to be successful, as far as virtue and honour would permit. The ideas which this amiable confidante entertained of harmonizing success in misplaced attachment with honour and virtue must have been Platonic, even beyond the feelings which Petrarch, in reality, cherished ; for, occasionally, the poet's sonnets are too honest for pure Platonism. This lady, however, whose name is unknown, strove to convince Laura that she ought to treat her lover with less severity. "She pushed forward," says De Sade, "and kept back Petrarch." One day she recounted to the poet all the proofs

of affection, and after these proofs she said, "You infidel, can you doubt that she loves you?" It is to this fair friend that he is supposed to have addressed his ninetieth sonnet.

This year, his Laura was seized with a defluxion in her eyes, which made her suffer much, and even threatened her with blindness. This was enough to bring a sonnet from Petrarch (his xciv), in which he laments that those eyes which were the sun of his life should be for ever eclipsed. He went to see her during her illness, having now the privilege of visiting her at her own house, and one day he found her perfectly recovered. Whether the ophthalmia was infectious, or only endemic, I know not; but so it was, that, whilst Laura's eyes got well, those of her lover became affected with the same defluxion. It struck his imagination, or, at least, he feigned to believe poetically that the malady of her eyes had passed into his; and, in one of his sonnets, he exults at this welcome circumstance.* "I fixed my eyes," he said, "on Laura; and that moment a something inexpressible, like a shooting star, darted from them to mine. This is a present from love, in which I

* Sonnet cxcvi.

rejoice. How delightful it is thus to cure the darling object of one's soul!"

The twentieth year of his devotion to Laura had now elapsed; and, in viewing an attachment so deep and permanent, our sympathy begins to get ahead of our strict morality, and to admire, at least, the poet's consistency. The philosopher Hume has asserted that violent passions always exhaust themselves speedily; but Hume had never felt the most exquisite of all passions, and could not be a true judge of it. I have always thought this assertion unphilosophical. There is no saying, to be sure, what furious caprices may burn but for a short time in weak minds, and disappear like shot stars; but, speaking generally of human nature, and of minds even ordinarily constituted, I am convinced that our *intense passions alone* are of long duration. Still more permanent are the biasses of strong sensibility. Our poet's love was an example of this truth.

Petrarch received some shew of complacency from Laura, which his imagination magnified; and it was some sort of consolation, at least, that his idol was courteous to him; but even this scanty solace was interrupted. Some malicious person communicated to Laura that Petrarch was imposing

upon her, and that he was secretly addressing his love and his poetry to another lady under a borrowed name. Laura gave ear to the calumny, and, for a time, debarred him from her presence. If she had been wholly indifferent to him, this misunderstanding would have never existed; for jealousy and indifference are a contradiction in terms. I mean true jealousy. There is a pseudo species of it, with which many wives are troubled who care nothing about their husbands' affection; a plant of ill nature that is reared merely to be a rod of conjugal castigation. Laura, however, discovered at last, that her admirer was playing no double part. She was too reasonable to protract so unjust a quarrel, and received him again as usual.

I have already mentioned that Clement VI. had made Petrarch canon of Modena, which benefice he resigned in favour of his friend, Luca Christino, and that this year his holiness had also conferred upon him the prebend of Parma. This preferment excited the envy of some persons, who endeavoured to prejudice Ugolino de' Rossi, the bishop of the diocese, against him. Ugolino was of that family which had disputed for the sovereignty of Parma with the Correggios, and against whom Petrarch had pleaded in favour of their rivals. From this

circumstance it was feared that Ugolino might be inclined to listen to those maligners, who accused Petrarch of having gone to Avignon for the purpose of undermining the bishop in the pope's favour. Petrarch, upon his promotion, wrote a letter to Ugolino, strongly repelling this accusation. This is one of the manliest epistles that ever issued from his pen. It is self-possessed, and bears an air of convincing sincerity, whilst he asserts the independence of his disposition and his attachment to literary retirement. "Allow me to assure you," he says, "that I would not exchange my tranquillity for your troubles, nor my poverty for your riches. Do not imagine, however, that I despise your particular situation. I only mean that there is no person of your rank whose preferment I desire; nor would I accept such preferment if it were offered to me. I should not say thus much, if my familiar intercourse with the pope and the cardinals had not convinced me that happiness in that rank is more a shadow than a substance. It was a memorable saying of Pope Adrian IV., 'that he knew no one more unhappy than the sovereign pontiff; his throne is a seat of thorns; his mantle is an oppressive weight; his tiara shines splendidly indeed, but it is not without a devouring fire.' If

I had been ambitious," continues Petrarch, "I might have been preferred to a benefice of more value than your's;" and he refers to the fact of the pope having given him his choice of several high preferments.

I have little doubt that, if Petrarch had loved leisure and study less, and preferment more, he might have obtained a cardinal's hat.

In the above letter, he alludes to the absurd calumny that he was a magician, because he read Virgil and was fond of solitude.

Petrarch passed the winter of 1346-47 chiefly at Avignon, and made but few and short excursions to Vacluse. In one of these, at the beginning of 1347, when he had Socrates* to keep him company at Vacluse, the bishop of Cavaillon invited

* In the unedited edition of Donato degli Albanzani, (says Baldelli) still existing in the Medicean library, we have these words: "Socrates a magno Socrate dictus, quidam Germanus, nomine Levisius, in Musica peritissimus, ei poetæ consocius atque amicissimus." Petrarch, in a letter published by De Sade, (Pieces Just. No. iv.) states that this friend, whom the poet named Socrates, was born in a place called Annea Campinieæ, a tongue of land between the Rhine and Holland and Brabant, which he conjectures to be Ham, near Bois le Duc, an humble birthplace, but fortunate, according to Petrarch, in having given birth to so great a genius. In a passage of his *Vita Solitaria*, he extols the poetical talents of Socrates, who, he says, united with jocose and cheerful conversation mature

them to his castle. Petrarch returned the following answer :

“Yesterday we quitted the city of storms to take refuge in this harbour, and taste the sweets of repose. We have nothing but coarse clothes, suitable to the season and the place we live in ; but in this rustic dress we will repair to see you, since you command us ; we fear not to present ourselves in this rustic dress ; our desire to see you puts down every other consideration. What matters it to us how we appear before one who possesses the depth of our hearts. If you wish to see us often you will treat us without ceremony.”

His visits to Vaucluse were rather infrequent ; business, he says, detained him often at Avignon, in spite of himself ; but still at intervals he passed a day or two to look after his gardens and trees. On sense and steadiness of character ; adding that the admired serenity which shone on the forehead of Socrates, the ancient, brightened on his face. By his musical talents he got admitted into the house of Colonna, where he made acquaintance with Lelio, and afterwards with Petrarch. So scrupulous was their friendship for Petrarch, that he was an arbiter in their friendly feelings towards each other. Lelio, when residing at Rome, was falsely informed by some busy, malicious person, that Socrates had attempted to lower him in Petrarch's estimation, and was resolved to throw off all intercourse with him. But the poet inquired into the matter, and, bringing about an explanation, reconciled them.

one of these occasions, he wrote a pleasing letter to William of Pastrengo, which we must thank De Sade for having quoted. It was written in Latin verse, and displays liveliness and warmth of heart.

“ My disgust at the city, and my love of the country, have brought me to this fountain, which has the virtue of giving wings to the imagination. You recollect that field formerly covered with stones ; at present it is become a garden enamelled with flowers. The river Sorgue refreshes it on one side : I have enclosed it with high walls on the south, and high rocks on the other, to shade it from the morning sun. On these rocks the birds build their nests : some construct them with moss, others with the leaves of trees. It is a charming thing to see those tender animals just peeping from their eggs, and soon after, with fear and trembling, trying their little wings and seizing with their timid beaks the food that is brought to them. When I walk in the meadows, on the banks of my river, when I examine the trees which I have myself engrafted, and the laurels which I have transplanted from foreign countries, the image of you, my dear friend, appears on every side. Here was the hillock on which we sat, the bank on which we reposed, the water flowing at our feet, on which we

diverted ourselves with making ducks and drakes. Here we entertained ourselves with recalling the Muses from their long exile, and with comparing the Greek and Latin poets. It was here that, giving ourselves up to the delights of an unrestrained conversation, we should have forgotten our supper, if the coming on of night had not reminded us of it. Whilst all that I see recalls these agreeable ideas, the time flies rapidly, and the day passes unobserved."

He then alludes to a meeting that he had had in one of his evening excursions; he met with a group of ladies, to one of whom his friend Guglielmo Pastrengo was tenderly attached. He says, "I had scarcely left the outlets from the rocks which surround this valley, when I perceived a number of men and women approaching me. The French effeminate fashion, which confounds the dresses of the two sexes, would not allow me to distinguish them at a distance; but, when we came nearer, the ambiguity disappeared, and I discovered the fair ones by their ribbons, pearl necklaces, rings, head-dresses, and habits bordered with purple. We saluted each other. What an agreeable surprise, my dear Guglielmo! I recognized the object of your affection, with whose

beauty I have seen you so often captivated. How fine an air and countenance ! If she had carried a bow and quiver, I might have taken her for Diana. After saluting me, she took my arm, and we conversed. I addressed myself at first to the whole group. ‘ May I ask,’ said I, ‘ without indiscretion, what is the object of your walk ?’ The answer was, ‘ We are going to see this fountain, which is so famous.’ But I was not to be duped by the reply ; and I have strong misgivings that the party had another object. Love sharpens the wits of lovers, and suggests a thousand stratagems to satisfy the heart’s desire. Your handsome sweetheart was not unaware that you had come to this place, and, missing you elsewhere, she made this visit to the fountain a pretty pretext for coming to see you. Her manner was lively, and she had a look of gladness in looking round these places which could only proceed from love. We talked of you, and I could not have parted from her, but that the night came on.”

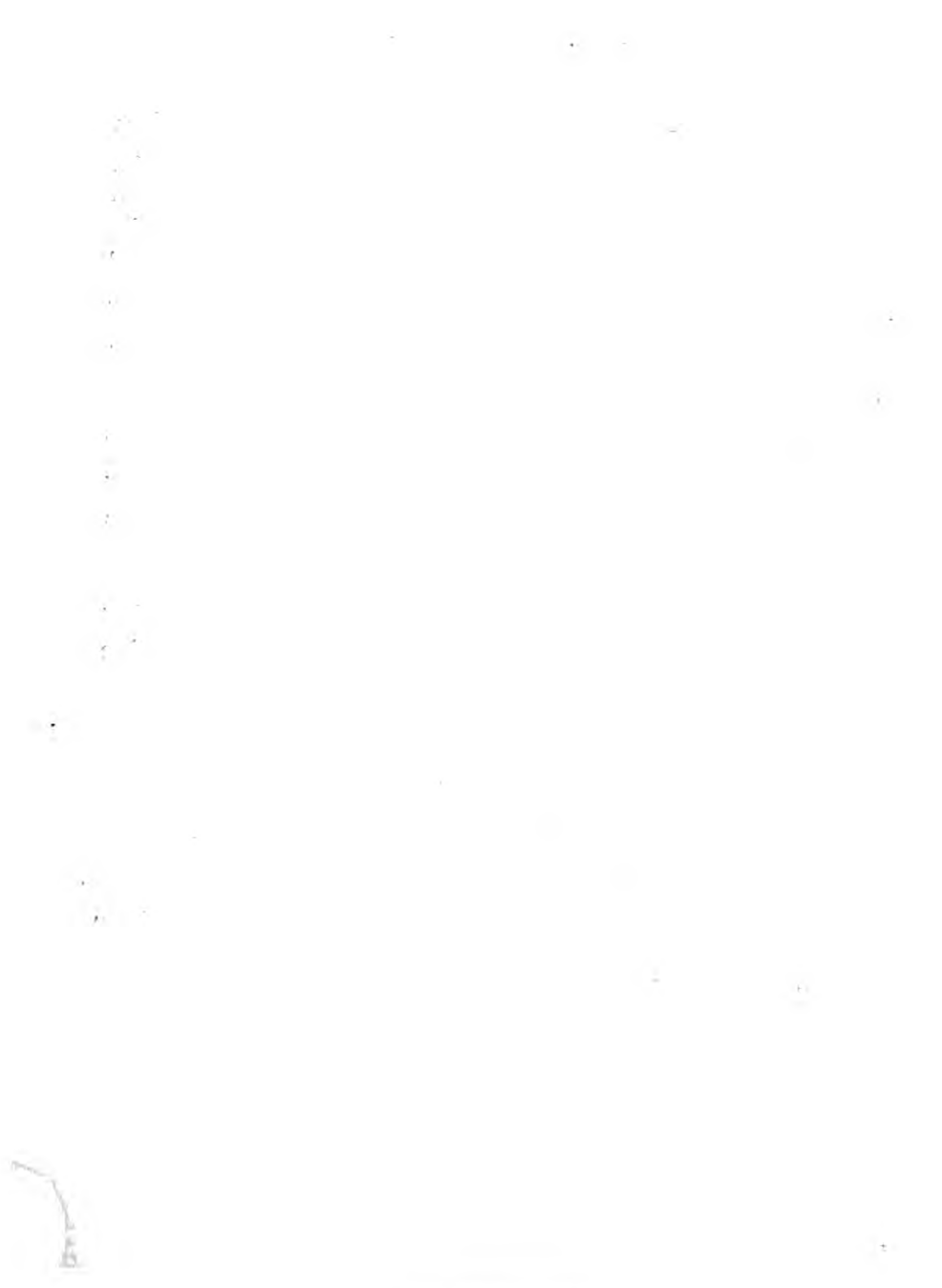
Petrarch’s susceptible mind passed lightly from gay and gallant feelings to reflections the most serious and devout. What a difference of tone in this smiling, delightful letter, and in that which he soon afterwards wrote to the Carthusians of Mont-

rieux. He had not seen his brother since the latter had taken the cowl in the Carthusian monastery, some five years before. To that convent he paid a visit in February 1347, and he was received like an angel from heaven. He was delighted to see a brother whom he loved so much, and to find him contented with the life which he had embraced. The Carthusians, who had heard of Petrarch, renowned as the finest spirit of the age, were flattered by his showing a strong interest in their condition; and, though he passed but a day and a night with them, they parted so mutually well pleased, that he promised, on taking leave, to send them a treatise on the happiness of the life which they led. And he kept his word; for, immediately upon his return to Vacluse, he commenced his essay "*De Otio Religioso*—On the leisure of the Religious," and he finished it in a few weeks. The object of this work is to show the sweets and advantages of their retired state, compared with the agitations of life in the world. He sent the good Carthusians a letter, together with his treatise, in which he hails them as divine beings on earth, and remarks how rapidly the time had passed in their company. It might well be so; for he remained with them only twenty-four hours.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XVI.

Revolution at Rome accomplished by Cola di Rienzo—Birth and History of that Extraordinary Man—The abuses prevailing at Rome before he proposed “*The Good Establishment*” —His means of awakening the attention of the Romans—The rise of his popularity—He seizes the opportunity of Stefano Colonna’s departure from Rome to proclaim a new Constitution, and make the Romans swear to support it—He is invested with the supreme executive power as Roman Tribune —He overawes the Roman Barons—Establishes peace and security in the City and all its Vicinity—Sends an embassy to the Pope at Avignon—His Couriers are every where respected —Foreign Potentates acknowledge Rienzo’s authority—Petrarch is filled with enthusiastic admiration of him — Decline of prudence in the Tribune’s character — Laura makes an exception to her general severity towards Petrarch — Farther proceedings of Rienzo —Insurrection of the Roman Nobles— They are repulsed in their attack on Rome, with the loss of six warriors of the Colonna Family — Petrarch determines to leave Avignon and repair to Italy—His last Interview with Laura.



CHAPTER XVI.

FROM these monkish reveries Petrarch was awakened by an astounding public event, namely, the elevation of Cola di Rienzo to the tribuneship of Rome. This extraordinary man, whose father kept a tavern, and whose mother was a laundress, notwithstanding the lowness of his birth, received an excellent education. He was a rapid and assiduous reader: he made himself intimately acquainted with Livy, Cicero, Seneca, Valerius Maximus, and Cæsar: he was perpetually exploring the inscriptions on marble, that are to be seen in Rome and its precincts; and he was the only one who could read and explain them. Tiraboschi ranks him among the best antiquaries of the fourteenth century.

He was a handsome man, and exceedingly eloquent. At the outset of his career he studied great amenity of manners, smiling continually; though it was alleged that there was something

fantastic in his smile. His brothers having been slain in one of those affrays which occurred so frequently at Rome, from the lawlessness of the aristocratic factions, he was deeply moved by the event; though he had not the present means of avenging it. But he conceived a strong desire of reforming the government of Rome, and his classical knowledge of the history of his country heightened his hatred of its oppressors. He was a notary by vocation.

His mission to the pope at Avignon has been already noticed, as well as the congenial acquaintance which he formed with Petrarch. On his return to Rome, he found the city still as it had long been, indeed ever since the absence of the popes, a scene of all the miseries resulting from anarchy and dissension. The Roman barons had fortified all the strong places and castles of the Ecclesiastical States, and seized all the palaces in the city belonging to the popes. They had placed garrisons in all the ancient buildings that were capable of being changed into fastnesses; and as, within the vast extent of the walls of Aurelian, one half of the quarters was deserted, those barons were sole masters of many streets, where

they established themselves, surrounded by ruins. How perishable is human glory! I have seen a similar instance of it in the desolated city of Oran, in Africa, where you may hear the hyæna barking in the halls of the old Spanish castle that once resounded with the dance and songs of Castilian chivalry, but which are now crumbling to dust, verifying the words of the quaint epitaph still preserved, I believe, in Melrose Abbey :

Earth walked the earth glittering in gold !
Earth went to earth sooner than 'twould ;
Earth built on earth temples and towers ;
Earth said to earth, " *all shall be our's !*"

Perhaps I am not justified in the comparison of the Roman barons with the hyænas of Oran, for none of the latter can either read, or write, or patronise learned men. Nevertheless, the former, I except not even Petrarch's friends, the Colonnas, had something like a distant resemblance to savage animals inhabiting the ruins of civilization. They were sufficiently rich to have maintained regular troops in their pay ; but, instead of these, they employed brigands, and men who were the refuse of jails, to guard their fortresses, and to them they gave their protection and impunity to live as freebooters.

It is true that there still existed in Rome the mock remains of a papal government. Each of the thirteen quarters of the city appointed a chief, and there were magistrates, called Caprioni, who were elected by the citizens; but neither authority nor force was found to belong to them. The pope still retained the power of electing the senator of Rome; but he confided this high privilege to one of the nobles, so that the judicial power and the armed force were at the disposal of that class, against whom force and justice ought to have been principally directed.

The senator shut his eyes to the disorders of the gentry, and was rarely known to punish their crimes, unless the delinquent was his personal enemy. The nobles sometimes humbled themselves before the court of Avignon, in order to obtain benefits from the pope; but they never acknowledged his sovereign authority; and the feudatories of the Church thought that they had a right to still more independence than even the feudatories of the empire. The rivalship of the two houses of Colonna and Orsini divided the whole of the nobility. At every new outrage, at every robbery, murder, and conflagration, Cola di Rienzo had new grounds for

accusing the nobles of the anarchy endured by Rome. He felt inspired as with the hereditary fire of the Gracchi, and with more reason than the ancient tribunes, since the patricians of his own time, much beyond those of antiquity, were deserving of popular vengeance.

Cola, it has been mentioned, when he was joined with Petrarch in the deputation to Avignon, took the lead in public speaking. Clement VI. was not to be swayed by popular oratory, but he remarked the talents of Rienzo. He spoke openly to the pope concerning the Roman barons. He described them as the disturbers of the streets, as the perpetrators of murder, robbery, and all sorts of evils. These truths were offensive to Cardinal Colonna, and he prevailed with the pope for a while to discountenance Rienzo, who was reduced at one time to such poverty that he was on the point of being carried to an hospital. But his spirit was unconquerable under affliction. He remonstrated with his principal enemy, Colonna, till the cardinal formed a better opinion of him, and generously restored him to the favour of the pope. The slight concession which Clement made to the petition presented by Rienzo has been already men-

tioned. Cola, on his return to Rome, found himself possessed of the respect of his fellow-citizens from the integrity with which he had exercised his commission. He formed at first a party around him of a few men on whom he thought he could thoroughly depend; but he speedily found that they were self-interested, and he perceived that, in order to bring back Rome from anarchy to glory, and to that justice and power which he emphatically denominated "*the Good Establishment*," he must appeal to the people themselves.

To make an impression on the multitude, he spoke at first to their eyes. His office called him habitually to the Capitol. There he caused a large picture to be exhibited at the side of the market-place. In that painting was represented an extensive sea raging with fury, and in the midst of it was a vessel without helm or sails, which seemed on the point of foundering. A woman, bearing every mark of wretchedness, with her robe torn upon her breast, her hair dishevelled, and her hands folded, knelt on the deck in the attitude of prayer to obtain deliverance from danger. Above her was written "*Rome*." Around this vessel were four others, which had already suffered shipwreck; their sails

had fallen, their masts were broken, their rudders shattered. On each of them was seen the corpse of a woman, with the respective names of Babylon, Carthage, Troy, and Jerusalem. Whilst the people were contemplating this picture, Rienzo came forward, and with his wonted eloquence declaimed against the nobles, who had brought the state into this abyss.

Some days afterwards, he caused an iron tablet with a beautiful Latin inscription, which he had lately discovered among the ruins of the city, to be placed in the choir of the church of St. Giovanni di Laterano. He invited the learned, accompanied by the people at large, to come and inspect it. When the learned, as they were called, could not decipher it, he interpreted the inscription himself. It was a "*Senatus Consultum*," by which the senate conferred on Vespasian the different powers of emperor of Rome, in which act the forms of liberty were still preserved. Cola, after expounding the text, turned towards the people and said, "You see here what was the ancient majesty of the people of Rome. It was they who conferred authority upon their emperors as the vicars of their rights. These emperors derived their

being and their power from the free will of your ancestors ; but you have consented that the eyes of Rome should be torn out, and that the pope and the emperor should abandon your walls, and have no more dependence upon you. Hence, peace has been banished from our land ; the blood of your nobles and your citizens has been uselessly shed in private quarrels ; your strength is paralyzed by discord ; and the city that was formerly the queen of nations is become their mockery. Romans, I conjure you to reflect that you are about to be a spectacle of the universe. The jubilee approaches, when Christians from the farthest ends of the earth will come to visit your city. Do you wish that they should find it nothing but a scene of weakness, ruins, oppression, and crimes ?”

The nobles, when Rienzo attacked them so vehemently, listened to him, unfortunately for themselves, with a curiosity that was mingled with contempt, for they believed him to be a man of only superficial influence amongst the lower people, and they laughed at him as a sort of eloquent charlatan. They remarked that the state of Rome could never be changed by harangues over pictures and allegories. Nevertheless, the people began to be moved ; and even persons superior to the populace, some of

the nobles themselves, who had gone to hear him as a mountebank, came away deeply impressed with the truths which he inculcated.

Rienzo now thought that it was time to advance in his project. On the first day of Lent, 1347, he affixed to the gate of the church of St. Georgio di Velabra a writing with the following words. “In a few days the Romans will return to their ‘ancient Good Establishment.’” In the mean time, he collected on Mount Aventine all the men whom he supposed to be animated by the same patriotic sentiments. Merchants, men of letters, and even nobles of the second order, assisted at this conventicle. Rienzo implored them, as true Romans, to concur with him in saving their country. He described to them the ancient extent and dominion of Rome — the once faithful submission of those cities of Italy which were now wholly revolted. He wept as he spoke, and his audience wept with him; but, drying his tears, he reanimated their courage, assuring them that Rome still retained the elements of her pristine power, and that the imposts which they paid, year by year, were alone sufficient to restore force to the Roman government, and to reduce their rebel subjects.

He told them that the pope approved of his efforts for "*the Good Establishment*," and that they might reckon upon his holiness's assistance. He then administered to all whom he had convoked on Mount Aventine an oath upon the Evangelists, that they would aid him with all their might in the restoration of Roman liberty.

It was necessary to seize on the first favourable moment for snatching their sovereign authority from the nobles. Cola learned that, on the 19th of May, Stefano Colonna was to proceed with a great number of gentlemen to Corneto, in order to convoy a quantity of grain. Rienzo waited no longer. He proclaimed by sound of trumpet throughout the city, that every Roman citizen was to repair to him on the morrow, without arms, in order to take measures for "*the Good Establishment*." From midnight till nine the next morning he listened to thirty masses in the church of St. Agnolo Pescicvendolo, and on Ascension day, the 20th of May, he left the church, armed, but with his head uncovered. Young men surrounded him, and rent the air with acclamations. Raimondo, the bishop of Orvieto, the pope's vicar at Rome, walked beside him. Three of the best Roman patriots carried their standards

before him, on which were depicted allegoric images of Liberty, Peace, and Justice. One hundred men-at-arms formed his escort, and these were followed by an immense crowd of citizens without arms.

The whole procession advanced in the most peaceable manner towards the Capitol. Arrived at the bottom of the grand staircase, Cola stopped before the lion in basalt, and, turning towards the people, demanded their approval of the laws that had been laid down for the "*the Good Establishment,*" which he caused to be read to them in a loud voice. This first rough draught of the constitution provided rather for the public security in general than for the different orders of the state. A guard of five hundred horsemen and of a hundred infantry were quartered in that part of the city, and cruisers were stationed in the Tiber for the protection of the trade and shipping. The right of the nobles to keep fortresses was formally annulled, whilst the people and their delegates recovered the right of guarding the bridges, the harbours, and all other strong places. Granaries were established throughout the city; the poor were assured of alms; and the magistrates were bound to guarantee the promptitude of trials and punishments.

These laws were received with enthusiasm by the assembled people, who authorized Rienzo to put them into execution ; and, for this purpose, they invested him with sovereign power. The elder Stefano Colonna, on hearing at Corneto of this popular movement, returned in haste to Rome with his troop of gentlemen. Stefano was at once the most powerful of the Roman barons, and the one who chiefly possessed the confidence of the pope. Cola, the day after his arrival, sent him an order to quit the city. The old baron contemptuously tore his order in pieces, saying, " If this upstart does not behave himself better, I will have him thrown out of a window." On this Rienzo caused the alarm-bell in the Capitol to be rung. The citizens immediately rose in arms, and the old aristocrat learned in his turn that, unless he behaved himself better, he might find it difficult to make his exit by a door. The Colonna had scarcely time to escape with a single valet to Palestrina.

The other Roman barons were also commanded to quit the city, and they complied. All the fortified places, all the gates and the bridges, were consigned to companies of the militia. The most notorious bandits, who for many years had braved

law and justice, were consigned to punishment; and the people, assembled in full convocation, conferred on Cola di Rienzo the title of Tribune and Liberator of Rome. The same titles were conferred upon the bishop of Orvieto, the pope's vicar, who, carried away by the eloquence of his extraordinary colleague, concurred with him in the overthrow of the oligarchy and the institution of "*the Good Establishment.*"

The Tribune, having caused his authority to be recognized within the precincts of the city, prepared to make the surrounding country obedient to the Roman people. The country places were in a state of absolute dependence upon the nobles, who had bristled them with fortifications, and could count upon the submission of the peasants as their vassals. Rienzo sent an order to all gentlemen of rank to repair to the Capitol, and take an oath for the support of the new constitution. One of the young Colonnas presented himself before the Tribune, less from any wish to obey him than from a desire to observe what was passing in the city. When he saw Rienzo in the Capitol, encompassed by an immense concourse of people, who were receiving justice at his hands, and ready

to execute his minutest orders, the young scion of nobility thought it wisest to take the oath that was prescribed. Soon afterwards, there arrived three other Colonnas, an Orsini, a Savelli, and several other distinguished barons, who swore also to support "*the Good Establishment.*" They all pledged themselves to send provisions to the market of Rome, to watch over the safety of the roads, to protect widows and orphans, and to appear at the Capitol, either armed or unarmed, according to the summons that should be sent to them. They promised never to attack the people or the Tribune of Rome, never to give refuge to robbers and malefactors, and to abstract nothing from the revenues of the commonwealth. The inferior gentry, the notaries, and the merchants, were called upon in their turn to take this constitutional oath.

After a dreadful anarchy, during which men sullied with the blackest crimes had dared to walk about with fearless fronts, to the terror of peaceful citizens, the Romans, now seeing that murders and robberies no longer passed with impunity, believed that they had recovered their liberty. Sentences that were arbitrary, though just, filled the guilty with dismay; and order was re-established in

Rome. The public could scarcely be expected to distinguish between the justice of a despot and that of a free people ; yet, in this first and pure morning of his career, it seems unfair that Rienzo should be called a despot.

Meanwhile, he sent ambassadors to the court of Avignon, to give the pope an account of what he had done, and to demand his approbation. The Tribune's protestations of obedience and submission in some degree appeased the alarm excited at the pontifical court by the first rumours of the revolution. Cola soon found partizans among the learned, who still clung to the classical idea that Rome had a right to eternal dominion ; and among these there was not a more zealous partizan than Petrarch.

The security that was restored to the highways in the vicinity of Rome was considered throughout Europe as a benefit to the whole Christian world ; because the passion for pilgrimages still continued, and the jubilee that was announced for the year 1350 was likely to attract vast crowds of the faithful to the city.

The couriers of Rienzo carried each a little silver rod, marked with the arms of the pope and the Tribune. Every where they were treated with

respect the moment they showed these badges of their office.* “I have carried my silver rod,” said one of them, “into the city, as well as into the depths of the forests; and thousands of persons have thrown themselves upon their knees, and kissed the badge of my authority with tears of gratitude for the safety of the highways and the expulsion of robbers.” The Tribune’s couriers, in fact, traversed the greatest part of Europe. They were sent to the cities and commonwealths of Tuscany, Lombardy, Campagna, and the Romagna; to the Doge of Venice; to the Lords of Milan and Ferrara; to the Princes of Naples, the King of Hungary, the pope, and the two elected emperors. To these high personages they announced the new order of things at Rome, in the name of Nicola, “*the severe and merciful, the Tribune of Liberty, Peace, and Justice, and the illustrious Deliverer of the Holy Roman Republic.*” These were the express titles which he at first assumed; he afterwards took others still more vain-glorious.

In his letters to all these powers he invited them to send to Rome deputies furnished with sufficient

* Frammenti di Storia Romana, Lib. xi. Ch. II. quoted by Sismondi.

instructions, in order to deliberate with him in a grand council respecting the welfare of Europe. He added, that all the high-roads were already free, as well for the pilgrims as for the envoys of princes who might repair to Rome. These messages from the Tribune were well received, above all in Tuscany. The Florentines were flattered by Rienzo calling them "the children of Rome," and "a colony of the Romans." They sent him a hundred horsemen, and promised to forward more, if he should require them. The Perugians sent him sixty men-at-arms; the Siennese fifty; and the whole of Italy appeared ready to second, if not to obey, his commands.

Rienzo was now at the zenith of his true greatness; and, though the title of the august Tribune, which he had assumed, exhibited a symptom of the vanity that finally ruined him, there was hitherto, with this exception, nothing censurable in his conduct. His putting to death Martino di Puerto, a man of the first distinction, is related as an instance of his cruelty, because his widow came to witness his execution; but it was, in truth, only an act of justice. Martino was a robber and an oppressor, well worthy of his fate. Rienzo also

caused a lord of the family of Annibaldi to be beheaded for disobeying his orders, and imprisoned Pietro Agapito Colonna, who had been senator during the same year. These severities admitted of justification. Their best apology was that the Roman territory was now cleared from cut-throats and robbers; that agriculture, though it had been long neglected, began to flourish under legal protection, and that commerce was restored to the city. Historians assure us that under Cola's administration carriers might safely leave their merchandise in the open streets, and that travellers passing through the Roman territories might publicly convey large sums of money without fear of being plundered.

Among the embassies which Rienzo received from foreign states, those from Giovanna of Naples and the King of Hungary were not the least flattering to him. To his tribunal, those two potentates referred their cause respecting the assassination of Andrew; and they appealed to Cola as an impartial dispenser of justice. On the day appointed for the hearing of the cause, Rienzo was seated upon his throne, with all the ensigns of tribunitial authority, attended by his officers of

state, and encircled by the people of Rome. After he had given a full hearing to the advocates on either side, he postponed the final adjudication of the case to a future day, and thus shewed his prudence in withholding a decision on a subject so interesting and delicate.

Hitherto we have seen the Tribune, upon the whole, sustaining a part of unquestionable usefulness and glory. From the earliest accounts of this revolution, Petrarch was animated with as much enthusiasm as if he had been himself engaged in the enterprize. Under the first impulse of his feelings, he sent an epistolary congratulation and advice to Rienzo and the Roman people. This letter breathes a strongly republican spirit. In later times, we perceive that Petrarch would have been glad to witness the accomplishment of his darling object—Rome restored to her ancient power and magnificence, even under an imperial government. Our poet received from the Tribune an answer to his epistolary oration, telling him that it had been read to the Roman people, and received with applause. A considerable number of letters passed between Petrarch and Cola.

When we look back on the long connection of

Petrarch with the Colonna family, his acknowledged obligations, and the attachment to them which he expresses, it may seem, at first sight, surprising that he should have so loudly applauded a revolution which struck at the roots of their power. But, if we view the matter with a more considerate eye, we shall hold the poet in nobler and dearer estimation for his public zeal than if he had cringed to the Colonnas. His personal attachment to *them*, who were quite as much honoured by *his* friendship as *he* was by *their's*, was a consideration subservient to that of the honour of his country and the freedom of his fellow-citizens; "for," as he says, in his own defence, "we owe much to our friends, still more to our parents, but every thing to our country."

Rienzo, having at length reduced the nobles to a state of dependence, failed not to convey an account of their humiliation to the court of Avignon; for, though his absolute power was utterly subversive of the pope's immediate authority, he still kept up a show of acting with his holiness's concurrence. The Tribune's letters to Clement VI., I find, in the MS. of Archdeacon Coxe, denounced as proofs of Cola's insincerity. This management

of the pontiff, however, appears to me to evince only his prudence. The world was at that time by far too young for Rienzo to attempt open resistance to the popedom.

“I admire,” says Petrarch, in a letter to the Tribune, “the art with which you avoid any expression that might subject you to reproach, and I entreat you always to be attentive on this point. I am in doubt whether there is more confidence or moderation in your style of writing.” But, in the same epistle, quite forgetting his own praise of moderation, he tells Rienzo “that he writes like Cicero.”

Retiring during this year for some time to Vaucluse, Petrarch composed an eclogue in honour of the Roman revolution, the fifth in his *Bucolics*. It is entitled “*La Pietà Pastorale*,” and has three speakers, who converse about their venerable mother Rome, but in so dull a manner, that, if Petrarch had never written better poetry, we should not, probably, at this moment, have heard of his existence.

In the midst of all this political fervour, the poet's devotion to Laura continued unabated. De Sade remarks, that Petrarch never composed so

many sonnets in one year as during 1347. They are still, for the most part, indicative of sadness and despair. In his 116th sonnet, he says :

“Solco onde, e'n rena fondo, e scrivo in vento.

I plough in water, build on sand, and write on air.”

If any thing were wanting to convince us that Laura had treated him, during his twenty years' courtship, with sufficient rigour, this and other such expressions would suffice to prove it. A lover, at the end of so long a period, is not apt to speak thus despondingly of a mistress who has been kind to him.

It seems, however, that there were exceptions to her extreme reserve. On one occasion, this year, when they met, and when Petrarch's eyes were fixed upon her in silent reverie, she stretched out her hand to him, and allowed him to detain it in his for some time. This incident is alluded to in his 218th sonnet. An exception to her severity is mentioned by De Sade, vol. ii. p. 364.

If public events, however, were not enough to make him forget his passion for Laura, they were sufficiently stirring to keep his interest in them alive. The head of Rienzo was not strong enough to stand the elevation which he had attained. By

physical strength and boldness, men have been known to scale precipitous heights, from which, when attained, they could not look down without dizziness. Even so it was, morally speaking, with Rienzo. His head was turned by his success. He had made an impression on the people of Rome by his allegories: in this he followed the taste of the age, and the spirit of the nation; he studied also to strike men's minds by public spectacles, by his gorgeous robes, and by the crowns and standards that were borne before him. In his processions, he carried a globe in his hand, as a symbol of the destined sway of the resuscitated Roman empire. It seems, however, that all this pageantry intoxicated himself more than his people, and that he multiplied fêtes and ceremonies more from conceit than policy. He vulgarized his greatness by aping hereditary sovereigns. He delighted to be served by great lords, and took a pleasure in their humiliation. His wife was waited upon by the ladies of court, of baronial rank, who fanned the air before her, to cool it, and to keep off the flies. He kept an exquisitely luxurious table, and, in short, revelled in the imitation of royalty. Demagogues themselves are often strangely destitute of

tact with regard to the character of the common people, and often blame the versatility of their attachment, when the cause has been only some act of imprudence in the complainants themselves. The veriest vulgar have a keener sense of propriety than they are apt to get credit for.

The most fatal of all blunders that a popular leader can commit, is touching the sense of ridicule in the people—and that sense has always a hawk's eye upon the plumes of vanity. Rienzo's relations, connected with the house of a vintner and a washerwoman, were raised to the highest dignities. Among these was his uncle, who had followed the calling of a barber, but who now never paraded the streets without being attended by a cavalcade of the principal citizens, whose chins he had so lately shaved. When the people saw Strap, with a sword instead of a razor, and a helmet instead of a basin of soapsuds, they naturally indulged in a hearty laugh.

All this had a bad effect; and Rienzo made it worse by his mania for being made a chevalier; not reflecting that this title was inconsistent with his office of Tribune.

The ceremony took place on the first of August,

1347, in the church of St. Giovanni di Laterano. It was preceded by a festival, given to the whole court, the most sumptuous that was ever seen, which attracted to Rome an incredible multitude of spectators. The luxury was unexampled, as well as the order that prevailed.

It was usual for those who were to be made chevaliers to be bathed on the evening preceding their installation. That evening the Tribune bathed in the vessel of porphyry in which, according to tradition, Constantine washed himself after he had been cured of the leprosy by Pope St. Sylvester. He slept that night in the temple of St. Peter. Next morning he presented himself, clad in scarlet and the finest fur, and in presence of the people was girt with the sword of chivalry by Vico Scotto, a chevalier and a Roman gentleman. He then heard mass in the chapel of Pope Boniface, seated on a throne, and surrounded by the most distinguished men of Rome. At the celebration of this mass, all the solemnities were observed that are customary at the consecration of kings.

In the midst of these sacred ceremonies, Rienzo advanced towards the people, and said, with a loud voice, "We summon you, Messere Pope Clement

VI., to come to Rome, the seat of your church, with your whole college of cardinals. We summon you, Lewis of Bavaria, and Charles of Bohemia, who call yourselves kings and emperors of the Romans, and with you the whole college of German electors, that you may show to us what right you have to the empire, and by what law you assume to dispose of it. We declare, in the mean time, that the city of Rome, and all the cities of Italy, are free, and ought to remain free. We grant to the citizens of those cities the rights of Roman citizens; and we take the world to witness that the election of the Roman emperor belongs to the city of Rome, to its people, and to all Italy." After these words, he drew his sword, and, striking the air with it in the direction of the three parts of the world, repeated, "This is mine, this is mine, this is mine."

He immediately afterwards despatched couriers with his summonses to the court of Avignon, and to the two emperors.

The pope's vicar, the bishop of Orvieto, who had assisted at the whole of the above ceremony, continued thunderstruck by this unexpected boldness. He appealed, however, to the public notary to pro-

test that the Tribune assumed so much power without his (the vicar's) consent, and without that of the pope. But Cola commanded drums and trumpets to drown the hearing of his protest.

The poor vicar, nevertheless, did not refuse to attend the festival that followed this ceremony, and to eat alone at the marble table with the Tribune, whilst Cola's wife presided, in the new palace, at the head of the noble dames. Other tables at the old palace were served for people of all classes without distinction — abbots, monks, chevaliers, who had been invited to the ceremony. Never had such magnificence been seen at a banquet.

But these festivities wasted the revenue of Rome, and all sensible persons foresaw the consequences. At a repast which Rienzo gave, some weeks afterwards, to the chiefs of the Roman nobility, old Stefano Colonna suggested a question, “whether it was better for a people that those who governed them should be prodigal or avaricious.” Stefano, in the course of the argument, lifted the hem of the Tribune's mantle, which was garnished with gold and embroidery, and said, “You yourself, Tribune, ought you not to wear the modest garment of your equals, rather than these pompous

ornaments?" Cola was stung with the reproach; he sallied forth from the hall without replying, and, in the first movement of his wrath, gave orders to arrest all the nobles who were in the hall. To justify this sudden rigour, he pretended to have discovered that they were framing a conspiracy against the people and himself. He convoked a general assembly in the Capitol, which met on the 17th of September; and there he announced that, in order to deliver the people for ever from the yoke of the oligarchy, he intended to cut off the heads of all the nobles whom he had found guilty of treason. Every thing seemed prepared for the execution of this threat. The hall of judgment was lined with white satin cloth, crossed with blood-coloured stripes. A minorite friar was sent to each baron to take his confession, and give him the sacrament; and the bell of the Capitol sounded to assemble the citizens. The old Stefano Colonna dismissed the priest who was sent to him, declaring that he was not prepared to take the sacrament; and that the concerns of his soul, as well as those of his family, were not so well arranged as to make him wish to take leave of the world. But whether the Tribune intended only to frighten the nobles, or whether he was

moved by the supplication of others, and by his own better reflections, when he next harangued the people, he took for his text these words of the Lord's prayer — "Dimitte nobis peccata nostra;" and he interceded with his hearers for the imprisoned barons. He declared, in their name, that they had repented of their errors, and that henceforward they would serve the Roman people with fidelity. The prisoners appeared one after another before the assembly, and received their pardon with dejected heads. Immediately, as if all doubt of their devotion was out of the question, Cola conferred on them important commissions, as prefects and dukes, in Campania and Tuscany.

But the clemency which succeeds lawless anger excites little gratitude. The nobles were no sooner out of their prisons, and beyond the walls of Rome, than they thought of avenging themselves. The Colonnas and the two Orsinis attempted to fortify the castle of Marino, and collected men-at-arms, and munitions, before Cola could take measures for arresting their hostilities. They raised the standard of revolt; they demolished a number of castles, and extended their devastations to the very gates of Rome. The restorer of

the Roman Republic was any thing but an able warrior. For a long time he tried to intimidate his enemies by summonses and threats before he took up arms against them. At last, the clamours of the people, who saw their fields laid waste and their cattle driven away, obliged him to call out the Roman militia. Eight hundred horsemen and twenty thousand infantry marched out under Cola's command, and devastated the territory of Marino. After eight days of bravadoing rather than fighting, the Tribune led back his army to the city, where he appeared in the Dalmatian mantle, which had hitherto been worn only by emperors; and, in this costume, he received a legate whom the pope had sent for the purpose of asserting his own authority.

In the mean time, the Colonnas had incited Palestrina to revolt; and many of their partisans in Rome invited them thither, with assurances that they would open the city gates to them the moment they should see them arrive with sufficient forces. The Colonnas, accordingly, collected six thousand men-at-arms, and four thousand foot, and advanced as far as a place called the Monument, four miles from the gates of Rome. But Roman valour was now as much extinct in the nobles as in the people;

and the struggle was pusillanimously maintained on both sides.

Though the Tribune had considerable forces, he had not courage to sally out of the city, but every morning he sounded the bell for assembling the citizens, and, to inspire them, he regularly related the dreams which he had had the preceding night, and the promises of succour which his visions held out. Nor were the nobles behind him in dreaming. Pietro Agapito Colonna wished to persuade his companions in arms to retire, because he had seen in his sleep a woman clad in mourning. In spite of this sad presage, however, old Stefano Colonna presented himself at one of the gates of Rome, accompanied by only a single attendant, and required that the gate should be opened. The guards refused, and threatened him, though, strange to say, without arresting him, which might have been easily done. The army of the oligarchs was now advanced on the side of Monte Testaccio, nearly to the gate of St. Paul. There the Colonnas could hear the bell of the Capitol incessantly sounding to arms. Perceiving, however, that they were expected, they renounced the idea of an attack on the city till they should be able to

attempt a surprise. But, before retiring, they resolved to defile close to the gates, as if to defy the Tribune. Their troops were divided into three brigades, the two first of which passed without molestation; but, when the third advanced, a gate was opened as if to return bravado for bravado. John Colonna, son of the younger Stefano, rashly concluding that an entrance was offered to him by his own partisans, put spurs to his horse and dashed alone into the city. He was presently surrounded and put to death. Scarcely had he breathed his last when his father arrived at the gate, anxiously inquiring for his son. Hearing no tidings of him, he made his way into the entrance, where he beheld John's body lying stripped and bleeding. The sight made him frantic; and he rushed into the city. Finding that all was lost there, he endeavoured to retreat, but was surrounded and killed.

Upon the death of these warriors, the Romans rushed out from all quarters of Rome, and attacked the army without the walls. Their onset was decisive; Rienzo's victory was complete; Agapito Colonna and eleven other principal nobles were found among the slain.

The Tribune, who, during this fluctuation of

events, had shown many signs of weakness, now passed to the opposite extreme of insolence in his prosperity. He returned in triumph to the Capitol; he there deposited, before the image of the Virgin, in the church of Anceli, his tribunitial sceptre, and his crown of silver with olive leaves. He then harangued the people, and boasted of having crushed those oligarchs whom neither popes nor emperors could ever curb. Finally, he forbade funeral honours to be paid to the dead bodies of the Colonnas. But, instead of following up his victory by laying siege to Marino, which the nobles would have abandoned in their first panic, he wasted his time in shews and ceremonies. He armed his son as a knight of victory on the spot where Stefano Colonna had been killed; and he augmented his imposts on the people by squandering on those foolish pageantries the money that was due to his soldiers.

In a letter to the Archdeacon of Liege, dated but a few weeks before his fall, the Tribune says vain-gloriously: "Six tyrants of the Colonna family have perished. There now remains only one unfortunate old man, Stefano; he is half dead, and he makes the seventh. Observe how Heaven has

equalled the number of the Colonnas, who are killed with the seven crowns which I received at my coronation, together with the branches of the fruit-tree, in remembrance of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Old Stefano Colonna, whom Rienzo reckoned among the dead on account of his great age, was now more than ninety. When he was informed of the deaths of so many relations, he neither shed tears nor uttered any complaint; but, fixing his eyes for some time upon the ground, he said: "The will of the Lord be done! It is better to die than to bear the yoke of this Tribune."

Our sympathies are here so much moved by the calamity of a brave old man, and so much alienated by the follies of Rienzo, that we are in danger of judging too mercifully of the oligarchs. It should be remembered that the Colonnas, whatever traits of worth shone forth in some of their personal characters, were, in reality, a family of tyrants; and that the Romans, upon the whole, fared much worse under the nobility than under the Tribune.

Petrarch had hitherto regarded the reports of Rienzo's errors as highly exaggerated by his enemies; but the truth of them, at last, became too palpable; though our poet's charitable opinion of the

Tribune considerably outlasted that of the public at large.

When the papal court heard of the multiplied extravagances of Rienzo, they recovered a little from the panic which had seized them. They saw that they had to deal with a man whose head was turned. His summonses had enraged them; and they resolved to keep no measures with him.

Towards the end of August, 1347, one of his couriers arrived without arms, and with only the symbol of his office, the silver rod, in his hand. He was arrested near Avignon; his letters were taken from him and torn to pieces; and, without being permitted to enter Avignon, he was sent back to Rome with threats and ignominy.

This proceeding appeared atrocious in the eyes of Petrarch, and he wrote a letter to Rienzo on the subject, expressing his strongest indignation at the act of outrage.

Petrarch passed almost the whole of the month of September, 1347, at Avignon. On the ninth of this month he obtained letters of legitimation for his son John, who might now be about ten years old. John is entitled, in these letters, "a scholar of Florence." The pope empowers him to possess

any kind of benefice without being obliged, in future, to make mention of his illegitimate birth, or of the obtained dispensation. It appears from these letters that the mother of John was not married; a circumstance which makes one of his biographers exclaim, "Who can charge Petrarch with the crime of adultery?" No; nobody can—thanks to his cruel Laura! He left his son at Verona under the tuition of Rinaldo di Villa Franca. Before he had left Provence in this year, for the purpose of visiting Italy, he had announced his intention to the pope, who wished to retain him as an honour to his court, and offered him his choice of several church preferments. But our poet, whose only wish was to obtain some moderate benefice that would leave him independent and at liberty, declined his holiness's *vague* offers. If we consider that Petrarch made no secret of his good wishes for Rienzo, it may seem surprisingly creditable to the pontiff's liberality that he should have even *professed* any interest in the poet's fortune; but, in a letter to his friend Socrates, Petrarch gives us to understand that he thought the pope's professions were merely verbal. He says: "To hold out treasures to a man who de-

mands a small sum is but a polite mode of refusal." In fact, the pope offered him *some* bishopric, knowing that he wanted only *some* benefice that should be a sinecure.*

If it be asked what determined him now to leave Avignon, the counter-question may be put, what detained him so long from Italy? It appears that he had never parted with his house and garden at Parma; he hated every thing in Avignon excepting Laura; and of the solitude of Vacluse he was, in all probability, already weary.

Before he left Avignon, he went to take leave of Laura. He found her at an assembly which she often frequented. "She was seated," he says, "among those ladies who are generally her companions, and appeared like a beautiful rose surrounded with flowers smaller and less blooming. Her air was more touching than usual. She was dressed perfectly plain, and without pearls or garlands, or any gay colour. Though she was not melancholy, she did not appear to have her wonted cheerfulness, but was serious and thoughtful. She did not sing, as usual, nor speak with that voice

* His motives for returning to Italy. De Sade, vol. ii. 381.

which used to charm every one. She had the air of a person who fears an evil not yet arrived. "In taking leave of her," says Petrarch, "I sought in her looks for a consolation of my own sufferings. Her eyes had an expression which I had never seen in them before. What I saw in her face seemed to predict the sorrows that threatened me."

This was the last meeting that Petrarch and Laura ever had.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XVII.

Petrarch returns to Italy for the fifth time—Writes from Genoa a letter of remonstrance to the Tribune — Proceeds to Parma, where he learns the unhappy fate of the Colonnas—Decline of the Tribune's Popularity — The Legate of Clement VI. conspires with the Roman Aristocracy against him — The Count of Minerbino brings a Gang of his Freebooters to Rome, who, encouraged by the disaffected nobles, bid defiance to Rienzo—Rienzo convokes the people, resigns his power, and shuts himself up in the castle of St. Angelo—Petrarch proceeds from Genoa to Florence; thence he repairs to Parma, and from Parma to Verona — Memorable Earthquake in Italy—Origin of the Great Plague — Moral influence of its destructiveness — Petrarch returns to Parma, where he fixes his son John—Receives the news of Laura's death—Death of Cardinal Colonna — Petrarch visits Giacomo da Carrara at Padua —

Allusion to the History of the Carrara family — His friends Luca Christiano and Mainardo Accursio come to Parma to see him, but find him absent — Untimely fate of those two individuals — The Florentines, at the call of Petrarch, avenge their death.

CHAPTER XVII.

PETRARCH set out for Italy, towards the close of 1347, having determined to make that country his residence for the rest of his life. De Sade ascribes this change of residence to that disposition in the poet's mind which made him always think, after he had remained a certain time in any place, that he should be happier somewhere else. I believe that Petrarch had this weakness to a certain degree; and yet, in his character, &c. how many traces do we find of a tenacity that is the very opposite of caprice. An ordinary lover of solitude would not have spent the tenth part of the time that he passed in the deep retirement of Vacluse; a capricious man would not have been so uniformly attached to his friends; a fickle man would have courted a hundred women with the tenth part of Petrarch's affection for Laura. I am, therefore, inclined to impute this migration not entirely to

caprice, but to his love of Italy, to the pressing invitation of several Italian princes, and to the necessity for his assuming the investiture of the canonship of Parma, which had been conferred upon him by Clement VI. He had some intentions of visiting Rome; but the increasing reports of the Tribune's misconduct made him change his purpose.

Upon his arrival at Genoa he wrote to Rienzo, reproaching him for his follies, and exhorting him to return to his former manly conduct. This advice, it is scarcely necessary to say, was like dew and sunshine bestowed upon barren sands.

From Genoa he proceeded to Parma, where he received the first information of the catastrophe of the Colonna family. He showed himself deeply affected by it, and, probably, was so sincerely, to a certain degree. But the Colonnas, though his former patrons, were still the enemies of a cause which he considered sacred, much as it was mismanaged and disgraced by the Tribune; and his grief cannot be supposed to have been immoderate. Accordingly, the letter which he wrote to Cardinal Colonna on this occasion is quite in the style of Seneca, and more like an ethical treatise than an

epistle of condolence. It was said of Petrarch, in his moral epistles, that he was the ape of Seneca.

It is obvious that Petrarch slowly and reluctantly parted with his good opinion of Rienzo. But, whatever sentiments he might have cherished respecting him, he was now doomed to hear of his tragic fall. The Tribune had outraged public feeling by expelling from the church of Santa Maria the female relatives of the slain Colonnas when they crowded thither to attend their funeral obsequies. He threatened even to drag their corpses ignominiously to the place into which the bodies of malefactors were thrown. To rescue them from this sacrilege, it was necessary to remove the deceased by stealth to the church of St. Sylvester, where the religious of that monastery interred them without ceremony, and without attracting public notice.

Other misdemeanours were attributed to Rienzo, but the rancour of his enemies may have possibly exaggerated them. It was plain, however, that his popularity was now far in the wane ; and that the holy church, after all his adroit management, had at last become his mortal enemy.

The legate, Bertrand de Deux, whom Clement VI. had sent to Rome, had connexions with the

Roman nobility; and, on his arrival at Siena, he declared to the magistrates who governed that town, that Cola di Rienzo was an enemy of the church, and that the pope was preparing a prosecution against him for the crime of rebellion. The legate, therefore, requested that republic to withdraw the troops with which they had hitherto furnished the Tribune.

Notwithstanding all this, the legate, on his entry into Rome, had been received by Cola with a shew of profound respect both for himself and the pontiff. He had been presented to the people in full assembly, and been assured of the obedience of the Roman republic to its chief, the pope. But if the Tribune thought that he could manage the court of Avignon, he deceived himself. Bertrand de Deux was not to be satisfied with these outward tokens of submission. He was, like the papal court, a decided friend of the Roman oligarchy. He concluded an alliance with its most distinguished members. He commenced an inquest of heresy against the Tribune, and pronounced sentence of excommunication against him.

But an enemy still more dangerous and enterprising armed himself at this time against Rienzo.

This was Giovanni Papino, Count of Minerbino, an exile from the kingdom of Naples, where, on pretence of avenging the death of his sovereign Andrew, he had amassed all the money he could as a freebooter. He repaired to Rome with some of his associates, who, like himself, were accustomed to despise all laws and order. The Tribune, apprised of their murders and robberies, wished to arrest them, or to chase them out of Rome; but the Count di Minerbino was fortified by his alliance with the legate and the Colonnas. He established himself, with 150 cavaliers, in the quarter where the Colonnas had their palace, and where he counted on the greatest number of partisans. There he fortified his abode with barricades, and sent back with contempt those who came with orders from the Tribune.

Cola attacked these barricades with a company of cavalry; the most unfit kind of force that he could have employed, and, at the same time, he sounded the alarm-bell. The Romans declined to combat either for or against Minerbino. They were become indifferent to "*The Good Establishment.*" They were tired with the theatrical shews of their Tribune, and wished to wait for events,

instead of deciding them. One half of the sums which Rienzo had squandered on his festivals and embroidered robes would have retained men-at-arms in his service more than sufficient to have demolished Minerbino and his barricades; but his finances were now exhausted, and he could only appeal to the enthusiasm of a people who had but yesterday laughed at his uncle the barber. A multitude assembled at the Capitol, but without arms, and evidently attracted by mere curiosity. It is true that when the Tribune harangued them, when he descanted on his own administration, on all the good that he had done and still intended to do, when he wept and sighed in speaking of the envy that was frustrating his best designs, the Romans, accustomed to be swayed by his eloquence, were partially moved. But they manifested no signs of courageous emotion, nor anything that promised a victory, which their aid could have so easily afforded him. Seeing this, Rienzo concluded his speech by saying: "After having governed for seven months, I am about to resign my authority!" Not a word was uttered to oppose his resignation.

After this Cola caused the silver trumpets to be

sounded, and, arrayed in all the badges of his office, and accompanied by his soldiers, as well as the few friends who were still attached to him, he pompously traversed Rome almost through its whole length, and repaired to the castle of St. Angelo, where he shut himself up. His wife followed him in disguise.

Three days after his retreat, the exiled barons returned to Rome; but the city, on their arrival, was replunged into a state worse even than the anarchy which had preceded the Tribuneship, and forming a terrific contrast to the too short reign of Rienzo's "*Good Establishment.*"

The revolution which overthrew the Tribune was accomplished on the 15th of December, 1347. That his fall was, in a considerable degree, owing to his faults, is undeniable; and by the most contemptible of all faults — personal vanity. How hard it is on the great mass of mankind that this meanness is so seldom disjoined from the zeal of popular championship! New power, like new wine, seems to intoxicate the strongest heads. How disgusting it is to see the restorer of Roman liberty dazzled like a child by a scarlet robe and its golden trimming! Nevertheless, with all his

vanity, Rienzo was a better friend to the republic than those who dethroned him. The Romans would have been wise to have supported Rienzo, taking even his foibles into the account. They readmitted their oligarchs; and, if they repented of it, as they did, they are scarcely entitled to our commiseration.

I must here suspend the episodic sketch of Rienzo's history to resume that of Petrarch.

Our poet had set out late in 1347 to visit Italy for the fifth time. He arrived at Genoa towards the end of November, 1347, on his way to Florence, where he was eagerly expected by his friends. They had obtained from the government permission for his return; and he was absolved from the sentence of banishment in which he had been included with his father. But, whether Petrarch was offended with the Florentines for refusing to restore his paternal estate, or whether he was detained by accident in Lombardy, he put off his expedition to Florence and repaired to Parma. It was there that he learned the certainty of the Tribune's fall.

From Parma he went to Verona, where he arrived on the evening of the 25th of January, 1348. His son, we have already mentioned, was placed

at Verona, under the tuition of Rinaldo di Villa Franca. Here, soon after his arrival, as he was sitting among his books, Petrarch felt the shock of a tremendous earthquake. It seemed as if the whole city was to be overturned from its foundations. He rushed immediately into the streets, where the inhabitants were gathered together in consternation; and, whilst terror was depicted in every countenance, there was a general cry that the end of the world was come. All contemporary historians mention this earthquake, and agree that it originated at the foot of the Alps. It made sad ravages at Pisa, Bologna, Padua, and Venice, and still more in the Frioul and Bavaria. If we may trust the narrators of this event, sixty villages in one canton were buried under two mountains that fell and filled up a valley five leagues in length. A whole castle, it is added, was exploded out of the earth from its foundation, and its ruins scattered many miles from the spot. The latter anecdote has undoubtedly an air of the marvellous; and yet the convulsions of nature have produced equally strange effects. Stones have been thrown out of Mount *Ætna* to the distance of eighteen miles.

This calamity, it was pretended, had been announced by the appearance of a comet in the preceding year, and by a column of fire which had been seen at sunrise, in Avignon, December 1347, and which remained more than an hour over the palace of the pope. This was a phenomenon as strictly natural as the rainbow, though of rarer occurrence; and it was no more wonderful that the electric column should be seen over the pope's house than over any other; but the courtiers who saw it, says Villani, were wisely convinced that it was a signal sent expressly from Heaven to portend momentous moral evils.

The earthquake, it is too true, was the forerunner of awful calamities; and it is possible that it might be physically connected with that memorable plague in 1348, which reached, in succession, all parts of the known world, and thinned the population of every country which it visited. Historians generally agree that this great plague began in China and Tartary, whence, in the space of a year, it spread its desolation over the whole of Asia.

Sismondi remarks* that the origin of this pestilence is traced to so many causes as to make it difficult to distinguish the real from the imaginary

* Histoire des Repub. Ital. vol. vi. p. 13.

ones. John Villani relates that in the kingdom of Casan it was preceded by violent earthquakes, which destroyed whole cities and villages; that streams of fire issued from the ground, which kindled the dry herbage all around, and that those who escaped from this desolation carried with them a contagious malady, which spread to the shores of the Tanais and to Trebizond. He adds, that at Sebastia the rains were accompanied with the fall of an enormous quantity of black insects with eight feet and a tail—some dead, some living. The bite of the latter was venemous; the corruption of the former infected the air: hundreds of similar fables were prevalent.

The symptoms of this pestilence were not every where the same. In the eastern countries bleeding at the nose announced its attack, and was a sure presage of death.

In Florence the malady commenced by swellings, as large as an egg, in the groin and in the armpits. Later in the disease those swellings were followed by black or livid spots, indicative of approaching dissolution. The most skilful physicians stood aghast at this disease. The charlatan rejoiced in it, unless it attacked himself, because it

put quackery upon a par with skill ; and compassionate women assisted both physicians and quacks in doing no good to their patients, who generally died within the first day of their ailment.

This was a dance of the king of terrors over the earth, and a very rapid one. To converse with the sick, or to approach them—nay, even to wear or touch whatever they had worn, was contagion and death. A writer of that day sported the horrible witticism, that for the first time in the history of the world medical men shewed no anxiety for practice.

Moral infection spread with the physical evil. People lost their sense of shame in their cowardice, if we may give so hard a name to the natural instinct of self-preservation. Citizen avoided citizen, neighbour avoided neighbour, brothers abandoned brothers ; the wife forsook her husband, and even mothers deserted their children. The innumerable sick had no aid but from a very few devoted friends, or from servants who were tempted by immense wages to brave the contagion. From this unusual state of things, there sprung up new manners and customs. It became customary, for instance, for a beautiful and modest young woman

to be the sick nurse of a handsome young man, and to strip herself in his presence of all her clothes, even as she would have done before a woman. It was the ancient custom at Florence for the relatives and neighbours of the deceased to assemble in his house, to lament along with the women, and to accompany the priests in the burial. The corpse was carried, by men of the same station with the defunct, to the church where he had expressed his wish to be buried. The priests, who sang and carried flambeaus, led the procession, which was closed by the citizens, who had met before the door. But these ceremonies ceased during the violence of the plague. Multitudes of the sick expired without one attendant in their last moments. It was the general persuasion that sadness accelerated the infection of the malady, and that pleasant amusements were the surest defence against it. People, therefore, hardened their hearts against grief for the dead by jokes and merriment. Very few corpses were carried to the grave by their friends. The corpse-bearers were no longer persons of the same condition with the defunct, but gravediggers, called *Bechini*. These were hired at a great price ; they hurried the bier

to the nearest church, and frequently tumbled it into the first ditch that they met with. Priests but rarely attended interments.

The consecrated grounds soon became insufficient for the burial of the dead individually, so that immense graves were dug in the cemeteries, where they were arranged in layers as they arrived, and afterwards covered with a little earth.

In the mean time, the living, being persuaded that diversions and songs of gaiety could alone preserve them from the pestilence, kept up their revels not only among themselves, but in the houses of strangers. This was easily done, because most people, hopeless of living, had abandoned all care of their effects, so that most houses had become common property. Thus was destroyed all respect for laws, human or divine. The administrators of justice were either dead or sick, or so bereft of guards and subalterns, that they could enforce no authority. So that every one was free to act as he liked.

The country was no more spared than the towns and castles; and villages were miserable small images of their capitals. Labourers perished like brutes in the fields, or on the highways. Men

ceased to solicit the earth for new fruits, and only consumed what had been already gathered. The cattle wandered over abandoned fields, in the midst of harvests that remained unreaped, and in the evening returned to their stalls, where there was no herdsman to superintend them.

This pestilence, as I have stated, began in the remotest east, whence, in the space of a year, it spread its desolation over the whole of Asia. Whether the earthquakes in Europe, by the eructation of sulphureous matter, facilitated the progress of infection I am not competent to judge, but we may suspect that they did not; for the atmosphere was infectious in regions where there had been no earthquakes.

The infection was supposed to have been brought to Europe by some Genoese and Catalonian merchants who traded to India, and came over to Syria. There they took shipping, and landed their infected goods at Genoa and Sicily, whence the contagion overran all Italy and Spain; and France became its prey in the course of 1348. During the three following years it made the tour of Europe, remaining in no place more than five months, but carrying off nine-tenths of the population,

more avaricious in exactions than even the tything clergy. In France and Germany, where the Jews were held in horror, that unfortunate race were accused of having gone to India for the purpose of bringing the infection westward, and of continuing it by poisoning the wells. They were barbarously persecuted. It does credit to Clement VI. that he rose above the prejudices of his age, and took the part of the Israelites with much warmth. He published two bulls, successively repelling the absurd accusation, and forbidding the Jews to be persecuted or dragged to baptism by force.

The frightful malady extended itself over Italy, early in 1348; but its severest ravages had not yet been made, when Petrarch returned from Verona to Parma in the month of March, 1348. He brought with him his son John, whom he had withdrawn from the school of Rinaldo di Villa Franca, and placed under Gilberto di Parma, a good grammarian. His motive for this change of tutorship probably was that he reckoned on Parma being henceforward his own principal place of residence, and his wish to have his son beside him.

Petrarch had scarcely arrived at Parma when he

received a letter from Luchino Visconti,* who had lately received the lordship of that city. The Visconti, to whom Petrarch was much attached, were one of the most ancient and powerful families of Italy. Luchino Visconti had acquired the sovereignty of Parma by purchase from Obizzo d'Este. Hearing of Petrarch's arrival there, the prince, being at Milan, wrote to the poet, requesting some orange plants from his garden, together with a copy of verses. Petrarch sent him both, accompanied with a letter, in which he praises Luchino for his encouragement of learning and his cultivation of the Muses.

* Luchino Visconti, brother of the famous Archbishop John Visconti, went through many troubles in early life, like the other members of his family. In 1339 he succeeded to the Lordship of Milan. He was a prince of fierce, vindictive spirit; and he inspired such terror by his castigation of conspirators that he kept the Milanese in timid tranquillity. He made war with the Estensi and the Pisans, and extended his principality by the conquest of Asti, Tortona, and other places. His letter to Petrarch was written only a year before his death by the plague, which took place in 1349. The common account is that he died of the plague; but another cause of his death has been surmised; namely, that his consort Isabella del Fiesco, under pretence of fulfilling a religious vow, repaired to Venice for the gratification of an unconjugal passion; and, on her return, fearing her husband's vengeance, gave him poison. Luchino, though fierce, was addicted to letters. Crescenbeni has published a specimen of his sonnets.

The plague was now increasing in Italy; and, after it had deprived Petrarch of many dear friends, it struck at the root of all his affections by attacking Laura. He describes his apprehensions on this occasion in several of his sonnets. The event confirmed his melancholy presages; for a letter from his friend Socrates informed him that Laura had died of the plague on the 1st of April, 1348. His biographers may well be believed, when they tell us that his grief was extreme. Laura's husband took the event more quietly, and consoled himself by marrying again, when only seven months a widower.

Petrarch, when informed of her death, wrote that marginal note upon his copy of Virgil, the authenticity of which has been so often, though unjustly, called in question. His words were the following:—

“Laura, illustrious for her virtues, and for a long time celebrated in my verses (the last expression betrays a displeasing vanity), for the first time appeared to my eyes on the 6th of April, 1327, in the church of St. Clara, at the first hour of the day. I was then in my youth. In the same city, and at the same hour, in the year 1348, this

luminary disappeared from our world. I was then at Verona, ignorant of my wretched situation. Her chaste and beautiful body was buried the same day, after vespers, in the church of the Cordeliers. Her soul returned to its native mansion in heaven. I have written this with a pleasure mixed with bitterness, to retrace the melancholy remembrance of 'MY GREAT LOSS.' This loss convinces me that I have nothing now left worth living for, since the strongest cord of my life is broken. By the grace of God, I shall easily renounce a world where my hopes have been vain and perishing. It is time for me to fly from Babylon when the knot that bound me to it is untied."

It is worthy of observation that Vellutello was the first author in Italy to call in question the genuineness of this memorial, whilst several older writers regard the autograph as authentic. The history of the MS., as it is related by Tommasini, confirms their opinion. The library of Petrarch, having been sold and divided after his death, this copy of Virgil passed to his friend Giovanni Dandi, who died in 1380. From him it passed to his brother, Gabriele, who left it to his son Gasparo

Dondi. It appears that Gasparo gave away the copy after having transcribed or caused to be transcribed the aforesaid memorandum in a collection of the canzoni of Petrarch, which belonged to him. It is found in the same folio with a memorandum entitled, "*Petrarch*," dated mcccxc, written, however, in a different hand; and it may be concluded that soon after the same year the MS. passed into the library of Pavia. That this was the case, appears from a very ancient MS. text of the letters of Petrarch, which is preserved in the Marsian library of Florence, a MS. which is believed by the Abbé Mehus to be the poet's autograph: and, though Baldelli differs, in this particular point, from the learned Mehus, he, nevertheless, believes that the hand-writing is of Petrarch's age. Now there is here written, in a hand-writing little posterior, the note itself, with this declaration: "Haec quae sequuntur, reperiuntur, ut dicitur, manu propria Domini Francisci Petrarchae, in Virgilio, olim suo, qui est in bibliotheca Papiæ illustrissimi Ducis Mandiolansis."

Besides this very ancient testimony, two others can be referred to, that are anterior to Vellutello, and of the fifteenth century, agreeing with that

which has been mentioned. One of them is a letter written by Pietro Candido Decembrio to Ludovico Casellio in 1468, which is preserved in the Ambrosian library. It says: "Est in papiensi biliotheca, Virgilii volumen cum servio, manu propria ejus (that is of Petrarch) exaratum; ut ipse dixit sub temporibus adoloscentiae suae, quod demum, cum senex, ipse revideret, multa per postillas in Servium addens, emendavit. Serviumque redarguit pluribus locis." Another testimony is that of Bernardo Illicinio, who cites the aforesaid memorandum as original.

Whilst these proofs suffice to authenticate the note in question, it may be added that this copy of Virgil is famous for a miniature picture expressing the subject of the *Æneid*; and that, by the common consent of connoisseurs in painting, it is the work of Simone Memmi. Mention has already been made of the friendly terms that subsisted between that painter and our poet; whence it may be concluded that Petrarch, who received this precious MS. in 1338, requested of Simone this mark of his friendship, to render it more valuable. Besides, in five MS. texts of the Medicean library, Baldelli found the above memo-

randum; and the Abbé de Sade refers to having read it in a very ancient MS. in the library of Paris. "I myself," says Baldelli, "being anxious to spare no pains in order to assure myself of the authenticity of the note, caused an imitation to be made of the hand-writing of Petrarch from his autograph epistles, which are preserved in the Medicean library, by that celebrated restorer of MSS., Signor Ciatti. This copy, being sent to Milan, was found to resemble much the original. Even those who do not know the hand-writing of Petrarch are unanimously agreed that it is the customary writing of the earlier part of the fourteenth century. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how the genuineness of this memorandum connected with Laura can be impugned; since, besides the place where Petrarch speaks of being first enamoured of her, there come out other particularities, which are corroborated either by the evidences of contemporary writers, or by Petrarch himself in his other writings.

It cannot be objected that we have no proof of Petrarch having been in Verona, and of his having shortly afterwards removed to Parma, when this catastrophe, the death of Laura, befell him; for

we have Petrarch's own testimony on the subject, in his Epistle to Posterity. "Cisalpinam hanc Galliam, quam tantummodo prius attigeram, totam vidi, non ut advena, sed ut accola urbium multarum, Veronae in primis, mox Parmae." And, in the 7th epistle of the eighth Book of his Familiar Letters, where he speaks of the death of Mainardo, he says: "Ut qui jam reverso anno pedem Parma non moveram;" and that this epistle was of the year 1349 is evident from his speaking of the death of Mainardo.

When the library of Pavia, together with the city, was plundered by the French in 1499, and when many MSS. were carried away to the library of Paris, a certain inhabitant of Pavia had the address to snatch this copy of Virgil from the general rapine. This individual was, probably, Antonio di Pirro, in whose hands or house the Virgil continued till the beginning of the sixteenth century, as Vellutello attests in his article on the origin of Laura. From him it passed to Antonio Agostino; afterwards to Fulvio Orsino, who prized it very dearly. At Orsino's death it was bought at a high price by Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, and placed in the Ambrosian library, which had

been founded by him with much care and at vast expense.

Until the year 1795, this copy of Virgil was celebrated only on account of the memorandum already quoted, and a few short marginal notes, written for illustrations of the text ; but, a part of the same leaf having been torn and detached from the cover, the librarians, by chance, perceived some written characters. Curiosity urged them to unglue it with the greatest care ; but the parchment was so conglutinated with the board that the letters left their impression on the latter so palely and weakly, however, that the librarians had great difficulty in making out the following notice, written by Petrarch himself: “Liber hic furto mihi subreptus fuerat, anno domini mcccxxvi, in Kalend. Novembr, ac deinde restitutus, anno mcccxxxvii, die xvii Aprilis, apud Aivin^c.”

Then follows a note by the poet himself, regarding his son: “Johannes noster, natus ad laborem et dolorem meum, et vivens gravibus atque perpetuis me curis exercuit, et acri dolore moriens vulneravit, qui cum paucos et laetos dies vidisset in vita sua, decessit in anno domini 1361, aetatis suae xxv., die Julii x seu ix medio noctis

inter diem veneris et sabbati. Rumor ad me pervenerat xiii^o mensis ad vesperam, obiit autem Mlni illo publico excidio pestis insolito, quae urbem illam, haec-tenus immunem, talibus malis nunc reperit atque invasit. Rumor autem primus ambiguus 8^{vo}. Augusti, eodem anno, per famulum meum Mlna redeuntem, mox certus, per famulum Domⁿⁱ Theatini Roma venientem 18^{mo}. mensis ejusdem Mercurii, sero ad me pervenit de obitua Socratis mei amici, sotii fratrisque optimi, qui obiisse dicitur Babilone seu Avenionee, die mense Maii proximo. Amisi comitem ac solatium vitae meae. Recipe Xte Ihu, hos duos et reliquos quinque in eterna tabernacula tua." He alludes to the death of other friends; but the entire note is too long to be quoted, and, in many places, is obscured by contractions which make its meaning doubtful.

The perfect accordance of these memoranda with the other writings of the poet, conjoined with historical facts, shew them incontestably to have come from the hand of Petrarch. Nor can it be fairly objected, as la Bastie has done, that any body might have imitated both his style and hand-writing, for what object could any one have in fabricating

such an imposture? Besides, all the writers of the Life of Petrarch, anterior to De Sade, were ignorant that he had a son. Of this son the poet speaks in an unpublished letter which remains in the Medicean library.

In a letter to Francesco Nelli, written in 1361, after thanking him for having tried to console him for the loss of Socrates and his son, Petrarch adds, alluding to the latter: "Quem viventem verbo oderam, defunctum mente diligo, corde teneo, complectorque memoria, quero oculis."

Petrarch makes mention of the death of Mainardo, in the seventh epistle of the eighth book of his "*Familiar Letters*." Of Mainardo more shall be said in a subsequent chapter. The atrocity of his murder is justly execrated by Filippo Villani. He was assassinated by order of the Ubaldini, the lords of some lands in Alugello, whilst he was returning to his native country, from Avignon.

The precious MS. of Virgil, containing the autograph of Petrarch, is no longer in Italy. Like many other relics held sacred by the Italians, it was removed by the French during the last conquest of Italy.

Not long after the death of Laura, on the 3rd of July of the same year, he lost Cardinal Colonna, who had been for so many years his friend and patron. By some historians it is said that this prelate died of the plague; but Petrarch and De Sade think that he sank under grief brought on by the disasters of his family. In the space of five years the cardinal had lost his mother and six brothers. In the same year Petrarch went to visit Manfredi Pio, the Padrone of Carpi. De Sade places this visit to Manfredi in the following year, 1349; but Baldelli has shewn, from Manfredi's sepulchral inscription, as it is copied from Tiraboschi, that he was dead at the time when De Sade alleges the poet to have visited him, so that his visit must have taken place in the preceding year. Carpi is a beautiful little city, of the Modenese territory, situated on a fine plain, on the banks of the Secchio, about four miles from Correggio. Manfredi ruled it with reputation for twenty years.

Among the incidents of Petrarch's life, in 1348, we ought to notice his visit to Giacomo da Carrara, at Padua. Tiraboschi has put off the date of this visit to the year 1350, wherein Baldelli proves

him to be erroneous, from the poet's own epistle to posterity. In writing the life of Petrarch, it is difficult to avoid digressions from his own adventures, strictly personal, to notices of public events, and of the political state of the communities which he visited ; for he was the intimate friend of almost all their different princes ; and, without knowing something of the history of those communities and their princes, we can take only a vague interest in his biography.

He came to Padua by the express invitation of Giacomo Carrara. This prince was the grandson of that Giacomo who had been appointed to the government of Padua by a general shew of the popular will in 1318. At the death of the first Giacomo, his son Marsiglio succeeded to the sovereignty, but was obliged to surrender his power and capital to Cane della Scala, the chief captain of the Ghibelline Italians, who entered Padua in triumph, and governed it with moderation. At his death, Cane's two nephews, Alberto and Mastino della Scala, succeeded to the principality, but, unfortunately for themselves, they took Marsiglio Carrara and his brother Ubertino for their prime ministers, and confided the government to their

discretion. Alberto, the elder brother of Mastino, was a stupid voluptuary, most unlike in talents to his uncle Cane, who had been the best general of his age. He seduced the wife of Ubertino Carrara; and, seeing that, for the present, the injured husband shewed no symptoms of anger, he concluded that the offence was forgotten, or forgiven. But Ubertino was too true an Italian to overlook such an injury; though he spoke not, he stifled not his resentment,

But nursed his wrath to keep it warm.

One token of it must have escaped the careless eye of Alberto, or it would have roused his alarm. Ubertino added to the Moor's head, which formed the crest of his helmet, a pair of gilded horns, in memory of his shame and of the vengeance which he meditated.

The Carraras were successful in dethroning the Della Scalas. Their partizans surrounded the palace of Alberto, seized his person, and sent him off to be kept a prisoner by the Venetians. Every friend of the unfortunate Alberto della Scala forsook him, excepting his fool Nicoletto, who volunteered to follow him into a dungeon. Fidelity, it is said, can ennoble even slaves. Here it does

more; it attaches us even to the memory of a fool.

Marsiglio da Carrara became by this revolution the Lord of Padua; and, since his decease, Giacomo the second had reigned in his stead. Petrarch was magnificently received by the Carraras; and, within two years afterwards, they bestowed upon him the canonicate of Padua, a promotion which was followed in the same year by his appointment to the Archdeaconry of Parma, of which he had been hitherto only canon.

LIFE OF PETRARCH.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Death of the Cardinal Colonna — Estimate of Petrarch's grief for his loss — Luca Christiani and Mainardo Accursio propose to live with Petrarch in Italy—They are murdered on their journey — Petrarch rouses the Florentine Republic to avenge their Death — Our Poet's devotion to the memory of Laura.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE biographers of Petrarch, and especially De Sade, make an exaggerated appeal to our sympathy when they mention his loss from the death of friends, as if that misfortune had been peculiar to him out of the whole human race, whereas no being of sensibility has ever existed without experiencing, in the progress of life, the severest affliction from that cause. No doubt he felt for the death of the cardinal; but the Colonna, though he might continue to be his friend, had ceased for many years to be his patron and protector, ever since the quarrel which they had had on Petrarch's declaring his intention to leave Provence and to settle in Italy.

He still, however, maintained an interest in the Colonna family, though that interest was against his own political principles, during the good behaviour of the Tribune. After the folly and fall of

Rienzo, it is probable that our poet's attachment to his old friends of the Roman aristocracy revived. At least he thought it decent to write, on the death of Cardinal Colonna, a letter of condolence to his father, the aged Stefano, who was now verging towards his hundredth year. This letter is dated from Parma, on the 8th of September, 1348, but, like many more of his consolatory epistles, it is more full of erudition and efforts at saying fine things than of grief and good feeling. Soon after this letter reached him, old Stefano fell into the grave.

The death of Cardinal Colonna was extremely felt at Avignon, where it left a great void, his house having been the rendezvous of men of letters and genius. Those Italians who composed his court could not endure Avignon after they had lost their *Mecænas*. Three of them were the particular friends of Petrarch, namely, Socrates, Luca Christiani,* and Mainardo Accursio.† Socrates, though not an Ita-

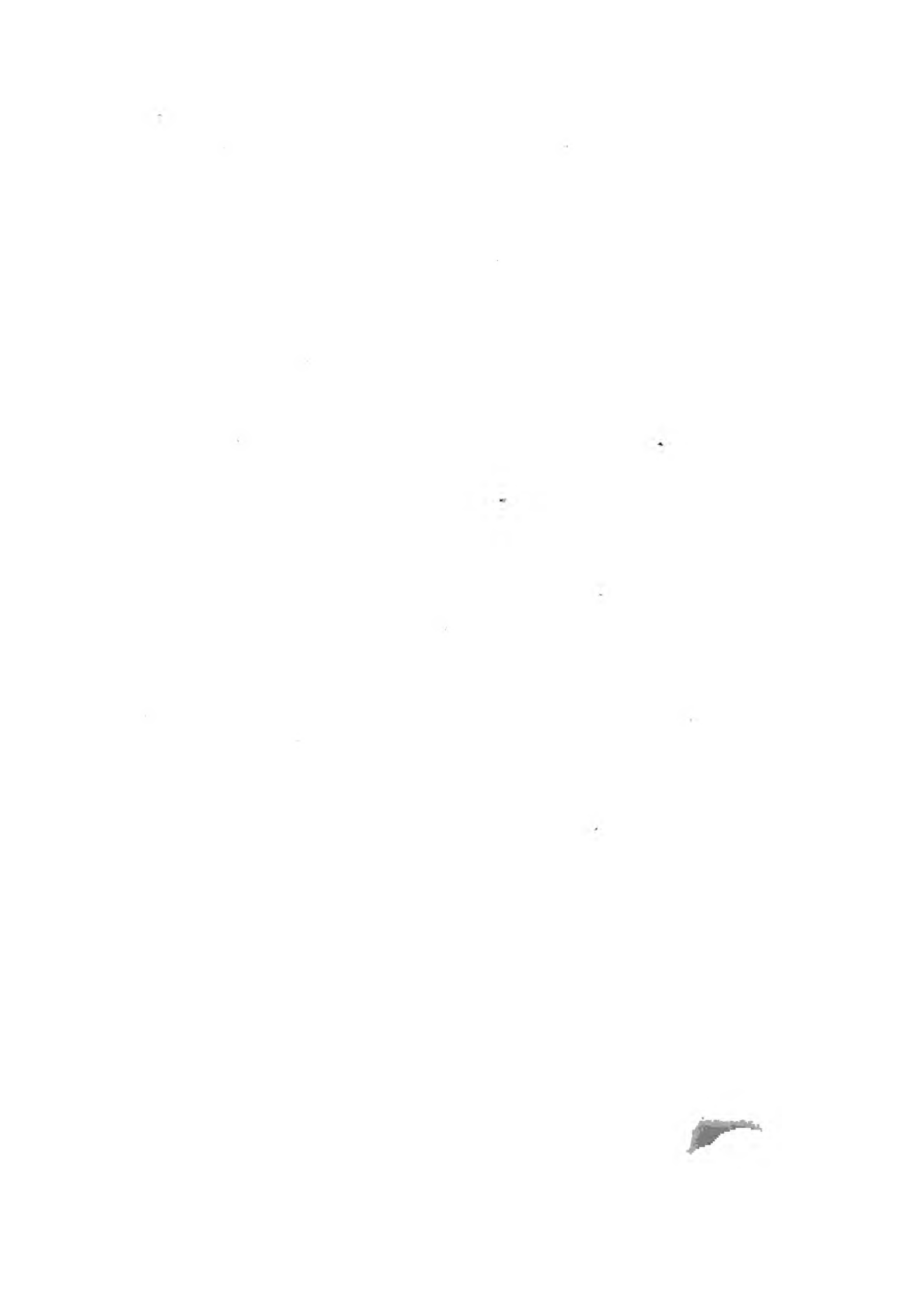
* Luca Christiani was born at Rome of a noble family. He had a benefice at Placenza, and Petrarch had given him the canonicate of Modena. He was a man of social temper and cultivated mind.

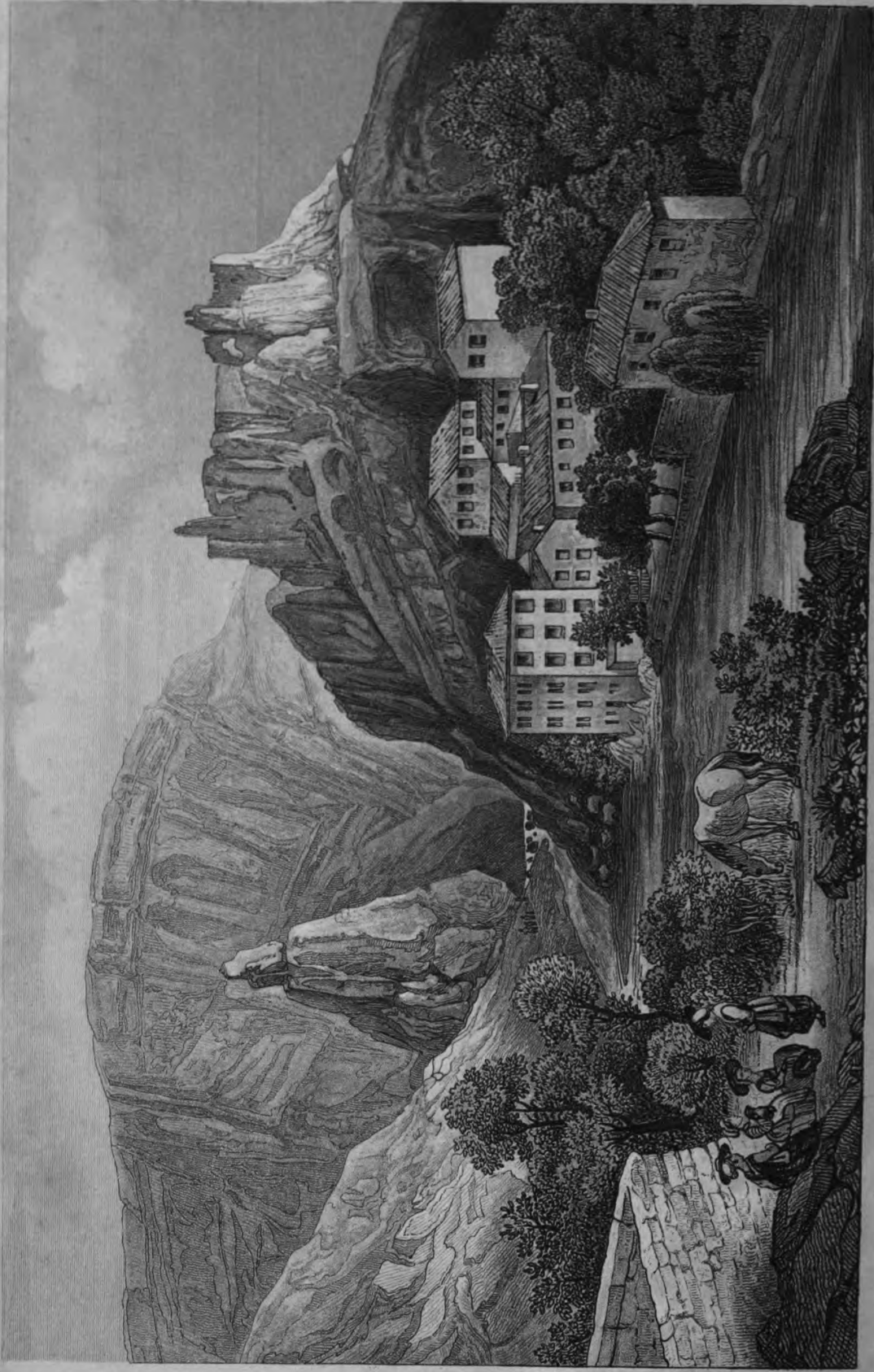
† Mainardo Accursio was descended from that great juriconsult of Florence, who was called the idol of jurisprudence.

lian, was extremely embarrassed by the death of the Cardinal. He felt it difficult to live separated from Petrarch, and yet he could not determine to quit France for Italy. He wrote incessantly the most pressing letters to induce our poet to return and settle in Provence. Luca and Mainardo resolved to go and seek out Petrarch in Italy, in order to settle with him the place on which they should fix for their common residence, and where they should spend the rest of their lives in his society. They set out from Avignon in the month of March, 1349, and arrived at Parma, but did not find the poet, as he was gone on an excursion to Padua and Verona. They passed a day in his house to rest themselves, and, when they went away, left a letter in his library, telling him that they had crossed the Alps to come and see him, but that, He was abbot of St. Antonio of Placenza. He became acquainted with Petrarch at Florence, towards 1346. Many were the letters addressed by Petrarch to Mainardo, whom he addressed under the name of Olympio. He was an illiterate man, but amply redeemed the defect by other agreeable qualities. Petrarch thus describes him, after his death, in a letter to Socrates—" Liberalium disciplinarum nescius, sed vir bonus et amicus esse didicerat, in cœtu nostro talis unus aptior erat, quam si omnes studio deditos caeterarum rerum omnium incuriositas habuisset."

having missed him, as soon as they had finished an excursion which they meant to make, they would return and settle with him the means of their living together. Petrarch, on his return to Parma, wrote several interesting letters to Mainardo. In one of them he says, "I was much grieved that I had lost the pleasure of your company, and that of our worthy friend, Luca Christiani. However, I am not without the consoling hope that my absence may be the means of hastening your return. As to your apprehensions about my returning to Vacluse, I cannot deny that, at the intreaties of Socrates, I should return, provided I could procure an establishment in Provence, which would afford me an honourable pretence for residing there, and, at the same time, enable me to receive my friends with hospitality ; but at present circumstances are changed. The Cardinal Colonna is dead, and my friends are all dispersed, excepting Socrates, who continues inviolably attached to Avignon.

"As to Vacluse, I well know the beauties of that charming valley, and ten years' residence is a proof of my affection for the place. I have shewn my love of it by the house which I built there.





Fountain of Marbach, and Castle of the Bishop of Saverne.

1

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2



There I began my *Africa*, there I wrote the greater part of my epistles in prose and verse, and there I nearly finished all my eclogues. I never had so much leisure, nor felt so much enthusiasm in any other spot. At *Vaucluse* I conceived the first idea of giving an epitome of the *Lives of Illustrious Men*, and there I wrote my *Treatise on a Solitary Life*, as well as that on religious retirement. It was there, also, that I sought to moderate my passion for *Laura*, which, alas, solitude only cherished. In short, this lonely valley will for ever be pleasing to my recollections. There is, nevertheless, a sad change, produced by time. Both the cardinal and every thing that is dear to me have perished. The veil which covered my eyes is at length removed. I can now perceive the difference between *Vaucluse* and the rich mountains and vales and flourishing cities of *Italy*. And yet, forgive me, so strong are the prepossessions of youth, that I must confess I pine for *Vaucluse*, even whilst I acknowledge its inferiority to *Italy*."

Whilst *Petrarch* was thus flattering his imagination with hopes that were never to be realized, his two friends, who had proceeded to cross the

Apennines, came to an untimely fate. On the 5th of June, 1349, according to De Sade, though Baldelli proves an earlier date, a servant, whom Petrarch had sent to inquire about some alarming accounts of the travellers that had gone abroad, returned sooner than he was expected, and shewed by his face that he brought no pleasant tidings. Petrarch was writing — the pen fell from his hand. “What news do you bring?” “Very bad news! Your two friends, in crossing the Apennines, were attacked by robbers.” “Oh God! what has happened to them?” The messenger replied, “Mainardo, who was behind his companions, was surrounded and murdered. Luca, hearing of his fate, came back sword in hand. He fought alone against ten, and he wounded some of the assailants, but at last he received many wounds, of which he lies almost dead. The robbers fled with their booty. The peasants assembled, and pursued, and would have captured them, if some gentlemen, unworthy of being called so, had not stopped the pursuit, and received the villains into their castles. Luca was seen among the rocks, but no one knows what is become of him.” Petrarch, in the deepest agitation, despatched fleet

couriers to Placenza, to Florence, and to Rome, to obtain intelligence about Luca.

These ruffians, who came from Florence, were protected by the Ubaldini, one of the most powerful and ancient families in Tuscany. As the murder was perpetrated within the territory of Florence, Petrarch wrote indignantly to the magistrates and people of that state, intreating them to avenge an outrage on their fellow-citizens. Luca, it appears, expired of his wounds.

Petrarch's letter had its full effect. The Florentine commonwealth despatched soldiers, both horse and foot, against the Ubaldini and their banditti, and decreed that every year an expedition should be sent out against them till they should be routed out of their Alpine caverns. The Florentine troops directed their march to Monte Gemoli, an almost impregnable rock, which they blockaded and besieged. The banditti issued forth from their strongholds, and skirmished with overmuch confidence in their vantage ground. At this crisis, the Florentine cavalry, having ascended the hill, dismounted from their horses, pushed forward on the banditti before they could retreat into their fortress, and drove them, sword in hand, within

its inmost circle. The Florentines thus possessed themselves of Monte Gemmoli, and, in like manner, of several other strongholds. There were others which they could not take by storm, but they laid waste the plains and cities which supplied the robbers with provisions ; and, after having done great damage to the Ubaldini, they returned safe and sound to Florence.

All this time our poet was not forgetful of his lost Laura ; on the contrary, we find him, in his strains addressed to her memory, pouring forth almost profane adoration. In his laudatory language, she was an accession to the holiness and attraction of Heaven itself.

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