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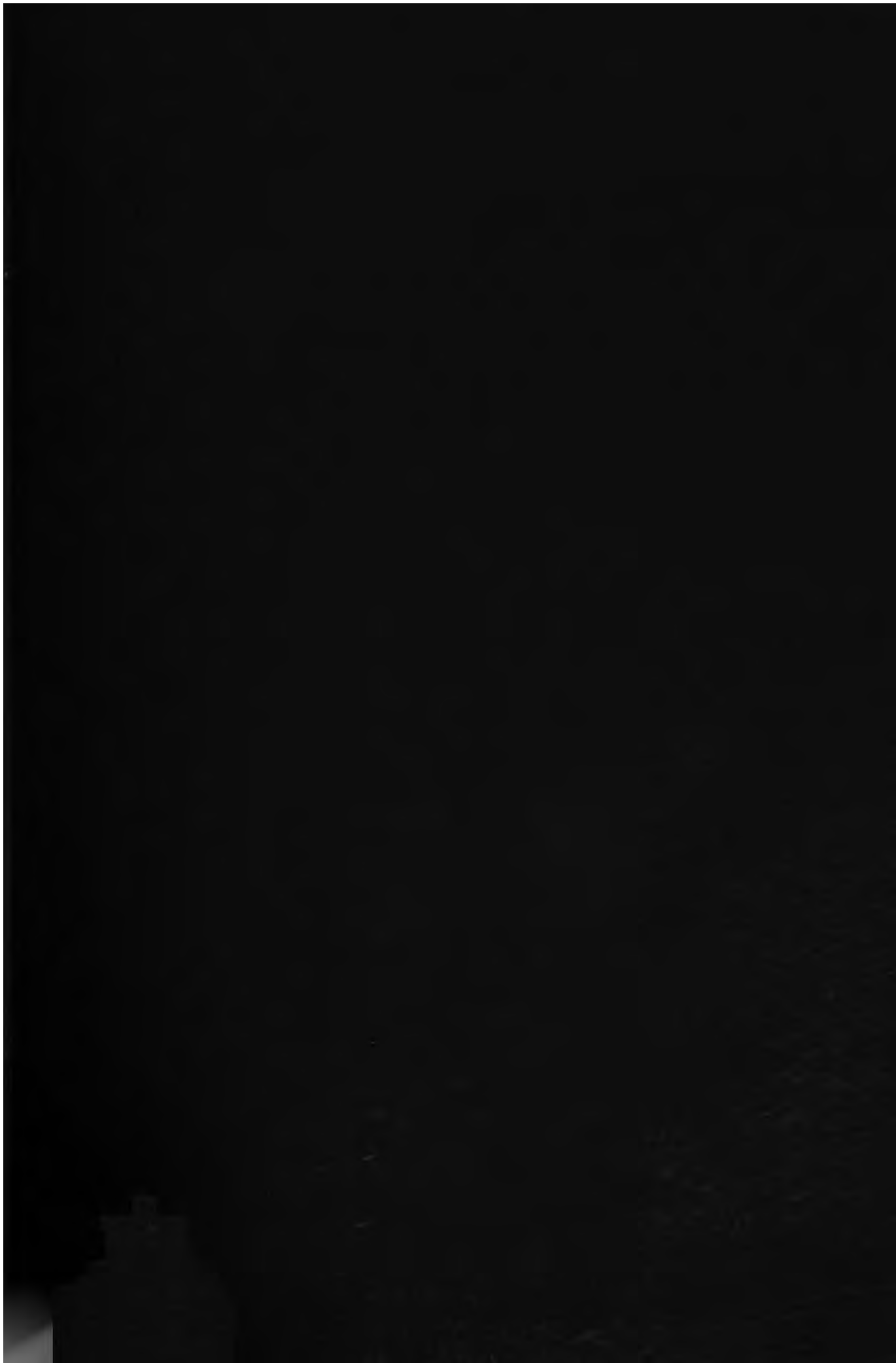
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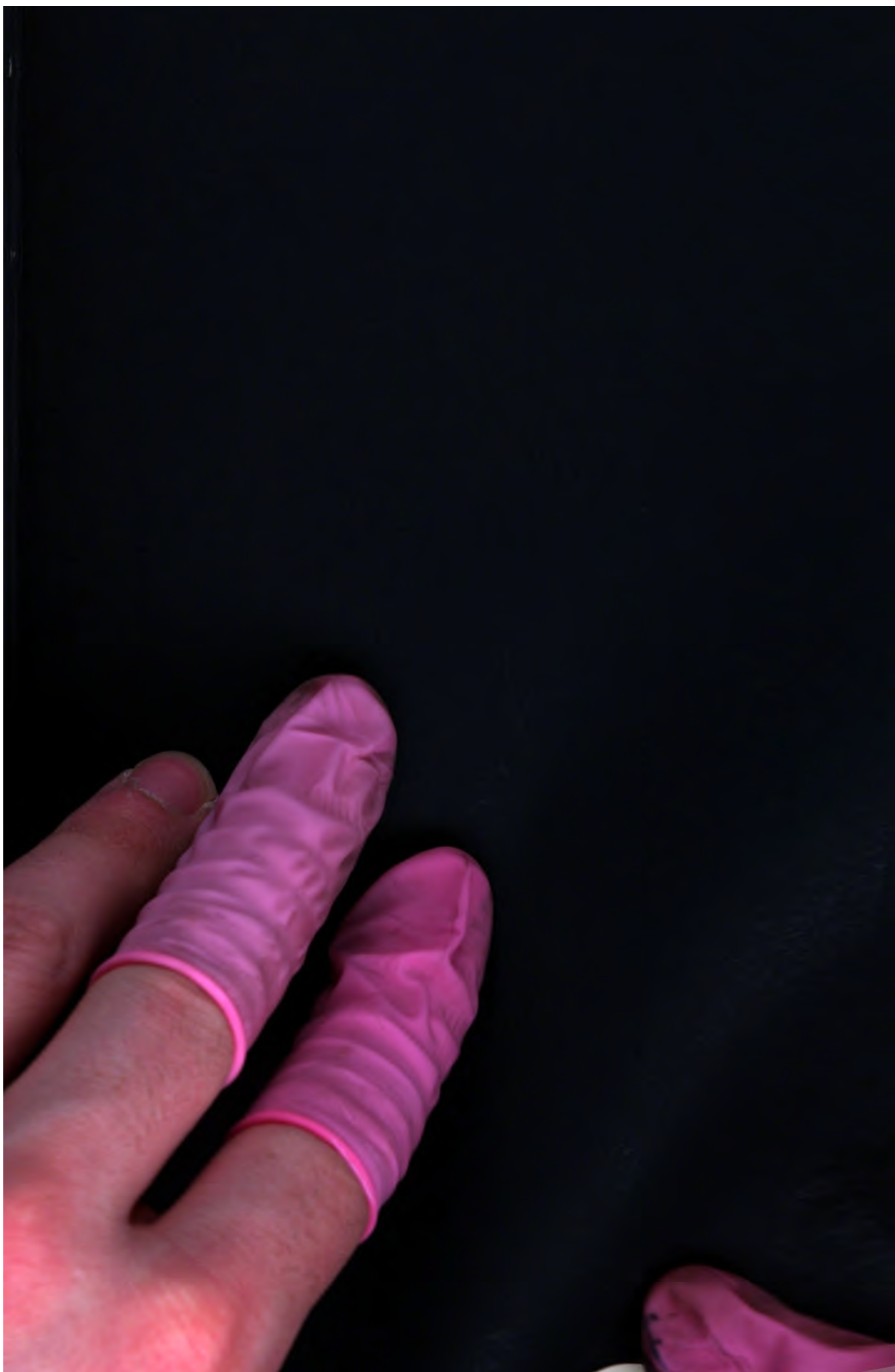
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LUCREZIA BORGIA,

DUCHESS OF FERRARA.



VOL. II.



LUCREZIA BORGIA,

DUCHESS OF FERRARA.

A Biography.

ILLUSTRATED BY RARE AND UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS.

BY

WILLIAM GILBERT,

AUTHOR OF

“SHIRLEY HALL ASYLUM,” ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LUCREZIA BORGIA.

CHAPTER I.

FERRARA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Hospitality of the Ferrarese Nobility—Love of Ostentation
— Banquets and Festivals — Public Games — Medical
Science—Its degraded State—Singular Diploma—Materia
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IT may easily be imagined that in a city where so much extravagance in dress was indulged in as in Ferrara, great luxury prevailed among all classes. The nobility appear positively to have vied with one another which should carry ostentation to the greatest extent. Of the splendour of the court of Ferrara, and the wealth and luxury of many of the Ferrarese nobility, some idea has been given in the description of Zambotto, Cagnolo, and Marin Sanuto of the fêtes in honour of Lucrezia's arrival. True,

they possibly exceeded in splendour anything that had hitherto been seen in Ferrara ; still, in the archives of that city, other festivals are mentioned of great magnificence and cost. As may easily be supposed, the habits of the court were imitated by the nobility, who again in their turn had their vices and follies not only copied by the burghers and gentry, but frequently caricatured and exaggerated. In lavish hospitality, as at the time of Lucrezia's wedding, the nobles seemed almost to have vied with that of the duke himself, and the number of guests entertained in their palaces proves the immense size of those buildings, as well as their magnificence. A singular law seems to have existed in Ferrara, evidently promulgated with the idea of increasing the splendour of the city. Any nobleman wishing to rebuild or enlarge his palace, or build a new one in another locality, was at liberty, after giving due notice, to destroy whatever houses might have been existing at the time belonging to burghers or others on the spot,

after duly compensating the owners to their full value. This law, which dates from the time of Borso, seems to have been based on equitable principles. On notice being given to the proprietors that their houses would be required, and the amount to be paid could not be agreed upon between them, two arbitrators were to be appointed. If these also failed to come to a decision, one of the twelve judges or *savii* was elected as umpire, and his award was final.

Although as a rule the Ferrarese nobility were exceedingly temperate in their ordinary manner of living, on all public occasions they seem to have competed with one another who could exhibit the greatest extravagance and profusion, and spend most money in rich dresses and feasting, and in the latter case who should provide the greatest amount of needless provisions. In speaking of the extravagance of the Ferrarese nobility in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,*

* Francesco Valentinelli—*Ragionamento sul Lusso, considerato nei suoi rapporti politici.*

a Ferrarese writer of eminence remarks, "that while the rich thus wasted their substance in riotous living a thousand artizans were working, and with the sweat of their brows were providing means for another hour's debauch." In their turn the lesser nobility, as well as the burghers, imitated on festive occasions the luxury indulged in by the higher nobles, and so prejudicial was the effect, that more than one law was made to restrain them. One of these went so far as positively to prescribe the maximum number of dishes allowed on their tables on festive occasions. "To obviate all excessive expenditure," the edict says, "it is ordered that at the banquet there shall be only two courses, and in these no more than two sorts of game, one a bird and the other a quadruped, (*una volatile e l'altra quadrupede*) and that during the whole feast there should be only three roast meats and three boiled. Between the courses there may be one sort of meat pastry, provided it is not made of game." Two sorts of soup were also allowed, and two tarts.

Ferrara appears above all other cities in Italy to have obtained so great a reputation for good cheer, that it may perhaps not be out of place to make a few observations on the subject. Several highly prized dishes seem not only to have been peculiar, but positively indigenous to Ferrara, and could not be transplanted without great loss both in flavour and delicacy. For salted and dried meats, they were especially famous, and among them may be named *salame de succo*, a sort of large dried pork sausage. This appears to have enjoyed a high reputation through all the neighbouring States, and many were the attempts made to imitate it, though without success. A Ferrarese in the sixteenth century who had fled to Rimini to escape the punishment due to a crime he had committed, attempted to make the highly prized salame, but he was not only unsuccessful, but severely punished "for smuggling salt to make *salame alla Ferrarese*." This salame was so much esteemed, that it was considered not unworthy to be sent as

a present from one prince to another. Capelli quotes a letter from Lorenzo the Magnificent to Ercole, first Duke of Ferrara, dated 14th February, 1481, thanking him for the salame he was kind enough to send him, and which he found excellent.* Many other Ferrarese comestibles of the time of Ercole I., enjoyed a wide-spread reputation. The dried ox-tongues of Ferrara were also well known in Europe before those of Russia had been heard of. The Ferrarese had even preparations of caviare taken from the roe of the sturgeon, which the dukes and nobles were accustomed to send as presents to their friends. The eels of Commacchio, celebrated in the present day, enjoyed even a higher reputation in the latter part of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. Capelli informs us that, prior to the season of Lent in each year, Ercole I. used to send as a present to the lord of Rimini

* *Io ringrazio la Ex^a. V. del salame che quelle sé degusta mandarmi—che mi è stato gratissimo. Capelli, Mem. di storia patria.*

a hundred salted eels, who in return forwarded annually to the duke a hundred *moggi* (bushels) of dried figs. The wines also of Ferrara were well known and much liked, although Benvenuto Cellini writes disparagingly of them.

The culinary art in every respect appears to have been carried, at the time of which we are writing, to great perfection. In confectionery, especially, they greatly excelled, and at their feasts their tables must have presented an extraordinary appearance, especially at the dessert. A description of one of these feasts given about the time of Ercole I., and since published by the Count Gordiano, conveys a good idea of these luxurious festivals. Often during a dinner a number of mountebanks or posture-masters for the amusement of the guests went through their performances in the room. The descriptions of some of the feats performed at these feasts are very curious. At one given by Lucrezia Borgia in 1502, the company witnessed the performance

of two rope-dancers armed as warriors. At another feast she gave, a mountebank performed "many wonderful leaps, and among others, that while holding the hilt of a sword in his hand and the point in his mouth, he leaped over twelve children without doing them or himself any harm. He afterwards performed many extraordinary tricks with a large stick. Then he went through several wonderful feats in rope-dancing, sometimes with a balancing-pole, and at other times without it, his head at the time being covered with a sack. He would then pretend to fall, but suddenly recover his equilibrium with wonderful dexterity, either by catching the rope with his arm or his leg. Then holding on to the rope by the hollow of his knee joints, he cut through the bone of a leg of mutton without wounding the man who held it in his hand, and performed besides many other feats of an equally wonderful description."*

* Cittadella—Notizie Relative a Ferrara.

Little gilt apples and other trifles were thrown from the windows to the people below ; while the fountain in the Piazza, from its twelve jets, ran with different sorts of wine. On the table were models of twenty-four castles made of sugar, while a train of young men, carrying gilt baskets, offered confectionery and candied fruits to the guests. Autensio Laudo, when describing the court of Ercole I., says,—“ What shall I tell you of this magnificent city of Ferrara, the first place in the world for salame, confectionery, herbs, fruits, and vegetables ; where alone you can obtain, in its perfection, the exquisite wine of Albernelli, and eat of the finest fish.”

Of the number of servants and dependents employed in the palaces of the Ferrarese nobility, some idea may be formed by the following list of the servants and their wages kept in the family of a certain Count Turco, who, though of a family of great respectability in Ferrara, was not of the highest nobility.

	Liv. Sol.		Liv. Sol.
House-steward . . .	19 10	Cook	5 10
Carver	3 18	Under-cook	3 0
Chamberlain	5 19	Steward	4 0
Head-groom	5 17	Governor of the boys.	3 16
Paymaster	6 0	Stable assistant . .	2 10
Dispenser	5 10	Another	3 10
Muleteer	4 0	Housekeeper	6 0
Coachman	2 10	Charwoman	2 0
Falconer	3 18	Superintendent of girls	3 18
Under-falconer . . .	3 0	Running footman . .	2 10
Butler	6 0	Ditto ditto	1 10
Cantineer	3 6	Keeper of the poultry	2 0

Among other honours claimed for their country by the Ferrarese historians, is the invention of carriages, which are said to have been the product of the fertile mind of Ercole I. Frizzi goes to some length into the subject, and claims for the duke the honour. How far he may be correct it is impossible to say, but certainly some of the earliest references to the *carroccio* or carriage, as distinguished from the *carretta*, are to be found in the Ferrarese chronicles. In these the first time we find the *carroccio* alluded to was at the marriage of Eleanora of Aragon with Ercole I., in 1473.

After all it seems to have been but a very primitive invention, in fact so much so as hardly to justify the length of time taken in its construction, for we find that Ercole gave the order in midsummer, 1472, while Eleanora arrived in Ferrara in 1473. The body of the carriage seems to have been simply an ordinarily shaped car, though on this occasion it was evidently much ornamented, as we find no fewer than three painters and two gilders employed in its construction. The difference between the *carretta* and the *carroccio* seems to consist of four poles at the different corners of the latter, over which a canopy was thrown. Afterwards they became more complicated affairs, and, as shown in the carriages of Lucrezia Borgia and Anna Sforza, large sums of money appear to have been spent on these unwieldy contrivances.

The love of ostentatious display among the Ferrarese was carried even to the grave. Many left large sums of money to be expended on

their funerals, and even when the defunct had made no provision for the ceremony, his heirs frequently incurred ruinous expenses to keep up the family reputation. So much money seems in fact to have been spent in these funerals, that more than one law was passed respecting them, and, singularly enough, the proclamations against them were generally comprised in edicts against excessive expenditure in marriage contracts.

Although Ferrara certainly might have been inferior to Venice in the gaiety of its festivals, there were few other cities which surpassed it. The carnival was generally exceedingly brilliant. As in all other Italian cities, it was a season of festivity and rejoicing, and it may easily be imagined that under such a potentate as Duke Ercole, who loved all amusements of the kind, it was not likely to fall off for want of patronage. At the same time a vast amount of that licence in which the neighbouring city of Venice indulged, was, to the credit of Ferrara, not permitted,

the whole of the amusements being placed under a more healthy restraint by the authorities. Ecclesiastical costumes, or, at any rate, those of monks and nuns, were frequently worn by maskers in Venice, not only thereby degrading the clerical profession, but also permitting a most dangerous amount of licence to monks and nuns themselves, who could, if masked, mix with the crowd without fear of detection. In fact, so much licence, under the disguise of clerical costumes, was carried on, as to create great scandal; and Ercole, naturally disposed as he was to encourage festivities and amusements among his subjects, found himself under the necessity of using strong measures for the repression of these ecclesiastical irregularities. In conjunction with the bishop, he passed an edict that not only prohibited ecclesiastics from wearing masks, but all civilians from disguising themselves as monks or nuns, under severe penalties.

Ercole even went further, and prohibited

the wearing of masks by any person in carnival time ; but so many complaints were made at this innovation on one of the most cherished privileges of the carnival, that he was afterwards obliged to modify it to a considerable extent. Many were the amusements of the carnival, and the year of Lucrezia's marriage they were especially numerous and brilliant. Nor did they diminish to any very great extent afterwards, for we continually meet with descriptions given by Ferrarese writers of the attractions of their carnivals. One of the regular amusements seems to have been a boat-race, rowed for by women, generally fishermen's wives from Comacchio. The number of boats was limited to six, and the crew of women to five for each boat, four to row and one to steer. The signal for the commencement of the carnival was hanging out a masquerade dress from one of the windows of the palace of the Podesta. Among the licences of the carnival was that of throwing the little white balls, made of lime, at the maskers

in the streets. The size of these pellets, however, gradually increased, and occasioned so many accidents and disputes, that their use was prohibited under a penalty of one hundred scudi. A change was afterwards made in the law, and ladies were allowed to throw at their acquaintances sugared almonds and other confectionery.

A singular amusement was practised at the Ferrarese carnivals which is said to have been the invention of Duke Ercole, called the *ventura*, and the first time it was put in practice was in the year 1472. Shortly after nightfall on the evening after the Epiphany, the duke, accompanied by an enormous train of nobles and courtiers, and attended by a vast number of carts, headed by a band of music, made a progress through all the principal streets of Ferrara, stopping as they went at the houses of all the chief nobles and citizens, who immediately brought out a quantity of different kinds of food, which was placed in one of the carts, and the procession then moved on. This was re-

peated the whole length of their road, the quantity and quality of these gifts being left entirely to the discretion of the donors. It was generally midnight before the procession returned to the palace, when a good supper took place on the food they had collected, the surplus being set apart for the poor the next morning. Absurd as the custom may appear it was not without its merits, for from the quantity of food collected there could hardly have been a poor family in Ferrara who did not receive provisions enough for more than one week out of the surplus. Equicola tells us that the year after the arrival of Lucrezia, the food collected on the first night of the *ventura* amounted to 15 lambs, 15 oxen, 13 calves, 5 goats, 5 rabbits, 2 pigs, 66 ducks, 1,521 capons, 22 turkeys, 73 partridges, 18 peacocks, 60 quails, 191 cheeses, 250 boxes of confectionery, and 190 large sausages. The ceremony was performed on two consecutive nights, and on the second night the contributions seem to have been quite as liberal as on the first.

Other favourite amusements of the Ferrarese were jousts and tournaments and athletic sports, which were of very frequent occurrence, as also shooting at the target, races, and other gymnastic exercises. Of the jousts and tournaments the Ferrarese Chronicles make frequent mention, and of course claim for their city not only a reputation for skill and bravery equal, if not superior, to any other city in Italy, but that in point of splendour of appointments none other could vie with them. Indeed, a Ferrarese writer in the sixteenth century, in a manuscript now in the city archives, speaks of the jousts and tournaments of his native city as "the delight of the world." At a tourney in 1487 Nicolo Postomo, known as the Invincible Knight, as champion of the god of Love maintained the field against all blasphemers of that deity's name, who on this occasion appear to have been numerous, and carried off the prize. Many other tournaments equally celebrated are mentioned, all of which seem to have been conducted with great mag-

nificence, especially in the reign of Duke Ercole, and with the exception of the time when Alfonso was duke, as he appears to have had but little love for any appearance of show or display, no opportunity was lost for exhibitions of the kind. Of such importance were these tournaments considered, that they appear to have had a literature of their own. Descriptions of tournaments, written in the usual bombastic style, are occasionally still to be met with at old book-stalls in Ferrara.

The warlike exercises and games which were common in the latter part of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries in Ferrara, seem to have been open to persons of all grades in society, from the highest of the nobility to the lowest workman. Bernadino Batista tells us that in 1486, on the feast day of St. John the Baptist, at the hour of twenty (four hours before sunset) a target was placed near the church of St. John the Baptist, that divers prizes were given to the best marksman with the cross-bow, that the competitors for the prize shot from

a spot near the Castle Tedaldo, and that the first prize, four yards of fine cloth, was carried off by the illustrious Signor Sigismondo d'Este, brother of Duke Ercole; the second prize being a cross-bow, with its wheel and appurtenances complete; and the third a handsome quiver filled with arrows. By way of encouraging skill and aptitude in the use of the cross-bow, the duke decreed that a similar competition should take place every year. In the different games and races the principal prizes seem always to have been pieces of stuff, cloth, or tissues of different lengths, the value of the prize increasing with the difficulty in obtaining it. The same kind of prizes were also given in horse and boat racing as well as shooting with the bow and arrow. For example, in a public edict given June 6th, 1476, the duke gave notice, that all who chose to compete at a tournament which was about to be held, should be welcome and have fair play; and that the first prize would be twenty-five yards of crimson satin, worth fifty golden ducats;

the second prize, twenty yards of mulberry satin, worth forty ducats of gold; the third, twenty yards of Alexandrine satin, worth thirty ducats in gold; the fourth, fifteen yards of cherry-coloured satin of twenty-five ducats; the fifth, ten yards of rose-coloured cloth, of twenty livres in value; and the sixth and last, a cap and a pair of trousers of a diamond pattern, with a doublet of white leather. In the foot-races, even among boys, the same rule was observed. On April 26th, 1476, the duke gave notice that any parents in Ferrara who might think fit to send their sons, who were above twelve years of age and honest and respectable, to compete in the foot-races, might do so; the prizes to be pieces of cloth of divers colours. On the 24th May, fifty-seven young women ran in a foot-race, and received as prizes pieces of cloth of different qualities and lengths.

In the description of the festivals given in honour of Lucrezia's arrival, the attention of the reader was called to the extraordinary mixture of

good and bad taste displayed in the different exhibitions, especially those connected with the theatrical representations,—comedies possessing the highest classical attributes being performed on the same stage, and the same evening, with interludes of the greatest buffoonery and absurdity. The same characteristic was met with in the organization of Ferrarese society. The fine arts received the highest protection and encouragement, a good knowledge of the classics was considered a portion of the every-day education for all persons in a good position in society, and military and civil engineering—both under the patronage of Duke Ercole and his son Alfonso—had attained the highest perfection known in the then civilized world. At the same time other subjects equally important seem to have been utterly neglected, or in the rudest state of development. To go to any extent into the subject would occupy too much space; but one or two instances in proof may suffice to show the reader that the accusation is a truthful one. At

the time of Lucrezia's arrival town-clocks seem to have been almost unknown. True, there was a large clock on one of the towers of the castle, which served to indicate the time to the whole city, but the hands were moved, not by machinery, but by a man who remained inside and turned the hands and struck the hours, his movements being regulated by an hour-glass beside him. Possibly there might have been some excuse for the want of machinery, from the fact that time was then calculated, as occasionally in the present day in the south of Italy, from sunset to sunset, and the machinery for a clock unaided by manual labour would have been far above the resources of the mechanical science of the time. In the municipal archives are frequent allusions to the salaries of the persons having charge of the clock, who seem to have been officials of no little importance, the remuneration they received being for that time a very liberal one. Any dereliction of duty on their part was punished with great severity. In the

criminal records of Ferrara, mention is made of a severe punishment inflicted on the officer whose duty it was to turn the hands of the clock, for having omitted to strike it at the Ave Maria, "thereby causing great scandal to the church and annoyance to the pious."

It would be impossible to imagine anything more degrading than the science of medicine in Ferrara as apart from surgery, not only during the time of Borso, Ercole, and Alfonso, but many years afterwards. It appears to have been an incongruous mixture of astrology, charlatanism, and quackery; indeed, so completely were the three mixed together, that it would be impossible to indicate the line where the one terminated and the other commenced. Among the higher orders, and even the middle classes, it was no uncommon occurrence to consult an astrologer as to the best time for commencing a course of spring medicine; and in cases of sickness, as much reliance—and possibly with as much reason—

was placed on the astrologer as on the physician. One only portion of the practice of medicine deserves to be complimented—the precautions taken to prevent the adulteration of food, as well as to insist on the observance of cleanliness in the streets and houses. All trades liable to create infection were under strict legal inspection, and the butchers' shops were carefully examined by proper officers appointed for the purpose, to ascertain that they were kept in a fit and proper condition.

The close connexion between the common conjurer and the physician, and the method by which diplomas were obtained, may be judged from the following description of an exhibition which took place in Ferrara nearly at the termination of the sixteenth century. A certain Generoso Marini wished to obtain the honour of a Ferrarese diploma in medicine. The judges, however, in whose hands the power of granting medical diplomas was invested, being men of too much honour and integrity to give a

document of the kind without the applicant showing himself worthy of it, ordered him to exhibit some efficient proofs of his capability to practise the science of medicine. Generoso Marini without the slightest hesitation offered himself for examination; and the results were duly entered on his diploma, lately discovered through the exertions of the historian Cittadella, in the archives of Ferrara.

It commences—

“ Cajetanus Modoni, comes, Judex sapientum, ac sapientes Magistratus Civitatis Ferrariæ.

“ Having publicly examined and approved the science and knowledge of medicine of Signor Generoso Marini, and his possession of the wonderful secret called *orvietano*, which he exhibited on the stage built in the centre of the Piazza of this our city of Ferrara, in presence of its entire population—so remarkable for their civilization and learning—and in presence of many foreigners, and other classes of people, we hereby

certify, that also in our presence as well as that of the city authorities, he took several living toads—not those of his own providing, which might have given suspicion of deception on his part—but from a great number of toads which had been caught in fields in the locality by persons who were strangers to him, and which were only handed to him at the moment of making the experiment. An officer of the court then selected from the number of toads collected five of the largest, which the said Generoso Marini placed on a bench before him, and, in presence of all the assembled spectators, he with a large knife cut all the said toads in half. Then taking a drinking cup, he took in each hand one half of a dead toad and squeezed from it all the fluids and juices it contained into the cup; and the same he did with the remainder. After mixing the contents together, he swallowed the whole; and then placing the cup on the bench, he advanced to the edge of the stage, where for some minutes he remained stationary.

Then he became pale as death, and his limbs trembled, and his body began to swell in a frightful and terrible manner, and all the spectators began to believe that he would never recover from the poison he had swallowed, and that his death was certain. Suddenly taking from a jar by his side some of his celebrated *orvietano*, he placed a portion of it in his mouth and swallowed it. Instantly the effect of this wonderful medicine was to make him vomit the poison he had taken; and he stood before the spectators in the full enjoyment of his health. The populace applauded him highly for the indisputable proof he had given of his great talent, and he then invited many of the most learned of those present to accompany him to his house, and he there showed them his dispensary, as well as his collection of many antidotes, and among them a powder made from little vipers (*una polvere della viperina*), a powerful remedy in curing every sort of fever, as he had proved by different experiments he made on people of

quality and virtue, all of whom he had cured of the fevers under which they were suffering. He also exhibited a wonderful balsam he had invented, which cured with great rapidity all bruises and wounds, as well as burns and scalds of every description. The said Generoso Marini has also great skill in drawing teeth, in which he exhibited an extraordinary dexterity. But that which most distinguished him was his wonderful power in restoring many persons to health who were suffering from divers incurable diseases (*da diversi mali incurabili aggravati*).

“ In consequence of the rare talent exhibited by Signor Generoso Marini, and as a proof of our love and respect for his wisdom, we have resolved by the authority placed in our hands (*con questo nostro privilegio*) publicly to reward him with our diploma, so that he may be universally recognised, applauded, and respected. In witness thereof we here set our hands and the public seal of the municipality of Ferrara.

*“Data in Ferrara, con grandissimo applauso,
il di 26 Luglio, 1642.*

*“JOANNES CAJETANUS MODONI,
Judex sapientum Civitatis Ferrari.
FRANCISCUS ALTRAMARI, Cancellarius.”**

Barbers were also considered, if not in the light of physicians, certainly in that of surgeons.

In fact, their right to practise medicine had been recognised by the State, for we find a man who had been accused of malpractice in medicine attempting to exculpate himself under the excuse that he was a barber. The question was submitted to the barbers for their decision, who without hesitation declared the man to be an impostor, and utterly destitute of scientific education. He was then sentenced to be twice flogged. In the municipal expenditure during the plague of 1513, is an entry of a sum of money to a certain Zoani Soncini (a barber) for having attended,

* This diploma, engrossed on parchment, is now in the library of Ferrara.

bled, and poulticed the infected. Generally, to the best of their ability, the barbers seem to have done their duty in all times of severe epidemics, quite as faithfully, and with as much ability, as the physicians themselves. Among the latter we find frequent mention of great rapacity as well as indifference, though certainly others seem to have done their duty in a most faithful and exemplary manner.

During the plague of 1520, a Spanish physician, one Pietro Castagno, discovered a celebrated nostrum called *olio contrapeste*. So much reputation did he gain by his invention, that the municipality not only took him regularly into their service at a high salary, but advanced him money to obtain considerable quantities of his celebrated oil. No sooner, however, did the said Doctor Castagno receive the money than he disappeared from the city. So high was the estimation his oil was held in, that the plague having reappeared in the city, and the municipality having discovered the doctor's address, they wrote

to him, offering to forgive his former peccadillo if he would return. This he agreed to do, and on his return he took the superintendence of the Lazaretto or depôt for those stricken by the plague, for which he received a handsome salary, he agreeing to treat all the poor gratuitously, with the exception of Jews and Portuguese (*gli Ebrei ed i Portoghesi*)! It would be difficult to know his reason for the objection, unless it arose from the fact that in Ferrara, as well as most other towns in Europe, the practice of medicine was common among the Jews, and that they could seek and obtain relief from those of their own persuasion. When the pestilence subsided, the municipality attempted to treat with Castagno for his secret, which, however, he refused to dispose of during his lifetime. He afterwards appears to have fallen into poverty, and to have disposed of his nostrum for an annuity of forty pence (*soldi*) per week for the remainder of his life. His oil, even when the secret was known, appears to have enjoyed considerable reputation

till the latter part of the sixteenth century, when it met with a formidable rival in an ointment called the *unto da Castello*, a secret in the hands of some lady, which appears to have possessed even higher virtues than the *olio contrapeste*.

Of the different nostrums used for the cure of the plague, which seems to have visited Ferrara with great frequency, is mentioned among others an oil invented by Michele Savonarola, an ancestor of the great reformer. The manner of using it was to anoint with it the pulse and the region of the heart, and to swallow two drops in a little white wine. Another nostrum, invented by a Mantuan physician, was in high vogue in Ferrara in 1483. The learned doctor appears to have had great faith in his invention. His directions were to mix strong acetic acid with lemon juice as an embrocation, with which the breast was to be rubbed every morning while fasting; and then, he adds, the patient may remain for the rest of the day in perfect security (*e poi vadi sicuramente!*) In the principles

adopted for the treatment of the plague there seems to have been as much division among the Ferrarese doctors as there was among the London physicians when the cholera first made its appearance in England. Russi of Ferrara, in his "Treatment of the Plague," published in 1522, proposes that the patient should be stripped and then bled; while another physician, who appears to have been equally eminent, but whose name is not recorded, advises that the patient should be kept warm and well fed.

Many other records are to be found in the municipal archives of the expenses incurred by the government of the city during the visitations of the plague. For example, an entry is made, on April 23, 1516, of expenses incurred for the relief of the plague-stricken in the Hospital of the Blessed St. Anne. Among the different items are the following:—

For 1000 scorpions purchased in Bologna at 25 soldi the hundred.

For 21 vipers, comprising 3 dead, bought in

Bologna at 7 soldi apiece ; and for the carriage of the same, 6 lires, 16 soldi.

For 180 scorpions bought in Modena, 1 lire, 16 soldi.

For 8 flasks to make infusions, and for candles to catch the 900 scorpions, omitted in the above amount, 1 lire, 16 soldi.

Another very mysterious account sent in for medicines supplied by the before-mentioned Pietro Castagno, and certainly one which would hardly have passed the auditors of one of our modern hospitals without remark, is—

	Liv.	Sol.
For 40 pounds of oglio contro- peste . . .	60	0
„ a new sort of cordial flowers . . .	1	8
„ a new sort of seed and a new sort of root brought from Bologna . . .	6	8
„ bags, boxes, and carriage . . .	0	7
„ Valvasia wine, in which to macerate above-named seeds and roots . . .	1	8
Carried forward . . .	68	31

	Liv.	Sol.
Brought forward	68	31
For 40 vipers at 15 soldi each	30	0
„ the carriage of the same to Fer-		
rara by a man on horseback	3	16
„ 4320 scorpions at 25 soldi the 100 .	56	25
different aromatic herbs ordered in		
Venice	58	18
„ 12 vases to hold the different medi-		
cines, and expenses for courier . .	6	0
	<hr/>	
	223	0

As a proof of the extent to which adulteration can be practised, even in articles which to the uninitiated would appear the most impracticable, it may be mentioned, to the disgrace of the medical profession in Ferrara of the sixteenth century, that the said Dr. Pietro Castagno was strongly suspected of adulterating his vipers with large earth-worms; though it was admitted, and possibly with very great truth, that the worms were nearly as efficacious as the vipers.

At the same time it must not be imagined that the absurd remedies we have mentioned comprised the whole of the *materia medica* of the Ferrarese doctors. They had, on the contrary, many valuable medicines which are in use in the present day. Among others may be mentioned Hepatic aloes, myrrh, and rhubarb. Again, much to the credit of the government, the shops of the druggists were inspected periodically to ascertain that the drugs were not adulterated, and an officer was appointed by the city authorities, whose duty it was to inspect the chemists' shops. Chemists were also forbidden to practise medicine under severe penalty. It may here be mentioned that in the time of Ercole I. one of the most celebrated chemists in Ferrara was a person of the name of Calamella, and that he was especially remarkable for having possessed a specific of his own invention, which in that day enjoyed a high reputation, and was called after his own name. Whether the etymology of the word calomel—the medicine at present in use among us—is derived from the Ferrarese chemist,

or whether the medicine itself bore any relation to that at present in use, may be a subject worthy of consideration by the Pharmaceutical Society.

Although the surgeon's profession in Ferrara was combined with the trade of the barber, the science of surgery seems to have been carried to a far higher degree of perfection than medicine. The operation for cataract, and other diseases of the eye, seems to have been practised in Ferrara as early as the time of Duke Borso. In a decree, dated June 5th, 1465, the duke takes into his service the famous Nicolo d'Olanda, whom he decorates with the equestrian order for his extraordinary skill in curing diseases of the eye, and his general great knowledge of his profession (*cujus fama per universum sparsa et seminata est per orbem*). And further, that he gives to the said Nicolo a salary of ten livres a month, as well as an annual pension of thirty livres and a house. As early as the year 1485, a work on the diseases of the eye was printed in Ferrara. In the sixteenth century surgery seems to have made astonishing progress in Ferrara. Not only

was the operation of cataract performed, but also lithotomy. A certain Romolo Carozzi was allowed a monthly salary of twelve livres by the municipality to perform these operations; under the strictly stipulated condition, however, that his operations should be performed gratuitously on the poor. We also find in the Ferrarese works on surgery published in the sixteenth century, reports of operations for the hare-lip and hernia. Both physicians and surgeons seem to have been much respected in Ferrara; and the profession generally, notwithstanding its alliance with the hair-dressers and the gross empiricism of its physicians, was held in high estimation. Many surgeons and physicians appear to have obtained high honours. On May 21st, 1508, the Duke Alfonso gave to Dr. Batista da Vercelli a vest of cloth of gold trimmed with ermine, and raised him to the dignity of a cavalier; and many professors seem to have acquired very considerable fortunes in the practice of the profession.

CHAPTER II.

ERCOLE I. DUKE OF FERRARA.

Personal Appearance and Manner—His Love of Ostentation
His Passion for Building—Frizzi's Description of Ercole
—His Superstition—The Bleeding Nun—Love of Hunt-
ing and Field Sports—Benvenuto Cellini—His Dislike to
the Duke and People of Ferrara—Fortifications—Improve-
ments in the City—Sale of Public Appointments—Revival
of the Legitimate Drama—Marriage Ceremonies—Lucre-
zia's Letters to her Father-in-law—Death of the Duke.

ERCOLE D'ESTE, second Duke of Ferrara,
was born October 24, 1431, and succeeded
to the dukedom on the death of Duke Borso,
August 17, 1471. The following year he mar-
ried Eleonora of Aragon, daughter of the King
of Naples, who died October 11, 1493, after
having borne him five children, two daughters
and three sons. The eldest was Isabella, Mar-
chioness of Mantua, and the second Beatrice,

married to the Duke of Milan. His eldest son was Alfonso, husband of Lucrezia Borgia, afterwards third Duke of Ferrara; the second son was the celebrated Cardinal Ippolito, and the third Don Sigismondo.

In person, Ercole was somewhat above the middle height, and powerfully made. Few men, even in the prime of life, could endure greater bodily fatigue. He was passionately addicted to all manly and athletic amusements, and was one of the most expert sportsmen of the age. Judging from his portrait painted by Dosso Dossi, though not handsome he had a remarkably intelligent cast of countenance. His brow was broad and open, indicative of great intellect; his complexion clear, his eyes dark and well placed in his head, his nose aquiline, and his features generally well formed. At the same time there was an appearance of effeminacy in his face, arising probably from the natural absence of beard and moustache, which, especially in his advancing years, was far from pleasing.

In manners he was amiable and condescending ; and he possessed to a remarkable degree the faculty of gaining the confidence and affection of all who surrounded him.

At the time of his son Don Alfonso's marriage with Lucrezia Borgia, Ercole was about seventy-two years of age. Time, however, had left but slight marks on his personal appearance, and certainly had in no way deteriorated his mental faculties. It would have been difficult to have found in Italy a potentate of greater shrewdness and ability. Yet, mixed with great acuteness of judgment and determination of character, he carried with him, even to his death, the mental buoyancy and love of pleasure of youth. Through the whole of his life he appears to have been the slave of three dominant passions—love of travelling, building, and display. The last he carried almost to the verge of monomania, frequently conducting his festivals with such lavish expenditure as to bring down on him the discontent of his subjects, which on more than

one occasion exhibited itself in a very serious manner. Fortunately, however, for the Duke, their anger was but of short duration; and thanks to his amiable and condescending manners, as well as the real interest on all other occasions he manifested for their welfare, he soon re-established himself in their favour.

Of his history prior to his elevation to the dukedom little is known; but the acts of few Italian potentates have been better recorded after he had succeeded to the government of Ferrara. Frizzi the historian, and the most reliable authority on all subjects connected with Ferrara, in summing up the character of Duke Ercole, says, with great naïveté, “The life of this prince offers a field of great eulogy. Of his piety, the number of churches he erected, the monasteries and convents he endowed, as well as the sumptuous private chapel he built in his own castle, are ample proof, without taking into consideration the numerous and excellent orchestra of foreign musicians — principally French—he maintained

for the performance of masses and musical services in the cathedral and other places of worship. He was also the first Duke of Ferrara who practised the ceremony of washing the feet of pilgrims. The different military sports he was engaged in, the privations he endured in war, and his behaviour on the field of battle, prove him to have been a man of great courage. Never before the time of Ercole, nor since, have such splendid festivals been held in Ferrara, as when the city was under his rule. Public shows, feasts and festivals succeeded one another (with the exception of the time when Ercole was engaged in the unfortunate Venetian war), with marvellous rapidity. Horse-races and tournaments were instituted, as well as donkey and bullock-races—the two latter principally for the populace—besides foot-races, in which not only young men, but also young women competed for the prizes. Into all these amusements the duke entered freely with his people, by whom he was, on the whole, greatly beloved. He mixed with them

on an equal footing in their masquerades and other entertainments, not in any manner claiming to himself greater respect on account of his elevated position. He frequently invited those of the burgher class who were known to him, to accompany him in his hunting expeditions, and would often call at the houses and dine or sup with those with whom he was the most intimate. It might perhaps be said that in consequence of the war, the immense cost of his various building enterprises, and his frequent festivals and shows, he was in the habit of taxing his subjects somewhat heavily; but then he returned the money to them again in the shape of magnificent churches, richly endowed monasteries, and numerous processions and public exhibitions."

"It should not be forgotten," Frizzi continues, "that he had a great respect for learning, which he proved by the liberal rewards he gave to men of merit, not—as many other potentates are accustomed to do—with vain promises, empty honours, or sterile parchment. His rewards

were in kind—money, employment, places, and lands. In public works he greatly benefited Ferrara. He drained the extensive marshes round the city, which had made it so unhealthy ; he built dykes to restrain the river Po within its proper limits ; he encouraged trade, and ordained just and equitable laws regulating commerce, which were drawn up under his special supervision. Agriculture also made great progress under his rule. As a proof of his excellent legislation, the population and wealth of the city rapidly increased under his government.

“ Artists, and men of letters of all political opinions, shared his hospitality. Never were there so many men eminent for their learning resident in Ferrara, or possibly in any other city in Italy, as under the rule of Ercole I. It has been stated by several writers that the duke himself was not a man of learning, and that he was unacquainted even with the rudiments of the Latin language ; while

others assert the contrary, and maintain that he had received an excellent education. Certainly during his rule more than one thousand Greek manuscripts were translated. To him also Europe is indebted for the revival of the regular drama. In his administration of justice he was impartial, and ordinarily most merciful, though on all necessary occasions he could show great severity."

If this description of Ercole, given by Frizzi, be strictly analysed, it must certainly be admitted that the historian's respect for the duke carried him somewhat beyond the bounds of discretion. In the first place, we can hardly admit that spending immense sums, raised by arbitrary taxation from his subjects, for the building and endowment of monasteries and convents, was in itself any very good proof of piety. On many occasions Ercole appears to have made his piety an excuse for indulging his passion for building, especially in the case of monasteries, when the supply, in more instances than one, considerably exceeded the demand. Frizzi, quoting from the

city archives, mentions a case in point. "I find," he said, "in this year 1493, the duke ordered a church and monastery to be built in the Via della Ghioia, by the side of St. Antonio, upon a piece of land bought of the municipality. The church was destined for the Benedictines, who were then dwelling at the convent of San Marco, at the further extremity of the city, but whatever might have been the cause, the edifice when finished was never occupied, the monks preferring to remain in their old habitation." The duke had apparently ordered the monastery to be built from no other reason than that his city of Ferrara should possess another new and magnificent edifice.

In more than one instance the piety of Ercole seems to have been strongly mixed with gross superstition, and in none was it more apparent than in the erection and endowment of the convent of St. Catherine of Siena, which he commenced in the year 1499. It appears that a woman of the name of Bocadilla, a member of a

respectable family, resident in Narni, had a daughter named Lucia, born September 13, 1476. The girl is stated to have been of considerable beauty, and to have received many offers of marriage, all of which she refused, having resolved to enter a convent and dedicate her life to prayer and meditation. For some time her friends attempted to dissuade her, but in vain. Having passed through her noviciate, she took the vows as a nun of the third order of St. Dominic. For two or three years after having taken the veil she remained at a convent in Rome, and from thence removed to another in Viterbo. Here, according to her biographers, her mode of life was of the most exemplary description, observing all the rites, regulations, vigils, fasts, and penances of her order so scrupulously, that in the year 1496, as a reward for her piety, she was honoured with a miraculous manifestation. On her hands, feet, and side were wounds exactly similar to those made by the nails and spear, as shown in pictures of the

crucifixion, and the stigmata of St. Francis. So perfect was this manifestation, that the wounds bled at stated intervals—a phenomenon which, on the authority of several of the most esteemed writers of the day, by whom it was rigidly investigated, was indisputably proved to be genuine.

The fame of this wonderful woman having reached the ears of Ercole, he invited her to visit Ferrara. But although it was for a visit only he sent the invitation, he had resolved that when once she had reached Ferrara, he would use every entreaty and argument to induce her to remain there permanently. This was evidently with the full conviction that unheard-of blessings would accrue to his subjects generally, and to his own family in particular, should she consent to reside in the city. But cunningly as he had laid his plans, both the lay and ecclesiastical authorities of Viterbo were on their part equally on the alert. The fame and sanctity of Lucia had reached every town in Italy, and the result was a great influx of strangers into Viterbo, who not

only made offerings to the churches and convents, but spent large sums of money in the city. To lose a prize of the kind, through any neglect on the part of the civic and ecclesiastical authorities of Viterbo, would not only have been showing an irreverent disregard to the blessings they had been enjoying, but a gross act of impolicy into the bargain. Both the laity and clergy now besieged Lucia with supplications to refuse the duke's invitation, and to remain with those by whom she was so much loved and venerated, and at last, ceding to their solicitations, Lucia declined the duke's invitation to visit Ferrara.

Ercole, however, was by no means a man to be daunted by a little opposition, and he determined not to lose so valuable a prize from having met with one rebuff. He now made an application to Pope Alexander VI. requesting him to use the authority in him vested, and order Sister Lucia to reside permanently in Ferrara, offering at the same time to build and endow a magnificent convent for the order of

nuns of which she was a member, if his prayer were granted. The Pope, wishing to please the duke, ordered Lucia to leave Viterbo and proceed at once to Ferrara. That Lucia herself would have obeyed without hesitation the order of His Holiness there can be no doubt, much as she might have been attached to her sister nuns. But not so the inhabitants of Viterbo. Notwithstanding the positive orders of the Pope for her departure, they as positively determined she should remain, and threatened violent proceedings should any attempt be made to remove her. The Pope's messenger was therefore obliged to leave the city in haste, to avoid the effects of their displeasure. It is not recorded whether the clergy took any active part in the disturbances, but certainly there is no mention made of their making any attempt to put it down.

What, however, could not be accomplished by force or by the effect of the Pope's authority in the daytime, was at last effected by stratagem

in the night. Some even go so far as to say that Lucia was smuggled out of the convent in a chest, and that those in charge of her contrived to leave Viterbo without being discovered. Once outside the walls she was placed under the escort of a powerful troop of horse sent by the duke and commanded by Alessandro Theorono, who succeeded in reaching Ferrara with his valuable prize in safety.

Lucia, who was at the time about twenty-three years of age, was accompanied on her journey by her mother, some religious women, several male relations, and her confessor. On her arrival at Ferrara the duke received her with much ceremony, and assigned her as a temporary residence a monastery at Cabianco. Here Lucia lost a cousin, a girl to whom she was greatly attached. The duke, sympathizing with her sorrow, collected a number of Ferrarese maidens, and maintaining them at his own cost, placed them in the monastery under the authority of Lucia, for the double purpose of occu-

pying her thoughts, and at the same time allowing them to profit by the pious example of the holy nun. The idea, though well intended, seems hardly to have had the desired effect, for we find that Lucia declined to remain longer in the monastery at Cabianco. Ercole, as soon as he was aware of her wish to remove, ordered the palace of Fiordilizzi Baraffa to be prepared for her reception, to which she with her sisterhood and family removed. In the meantime the monastery which Ercole had caused to be built for the nuns of her order, and of which he had laid the foundation as soon as he was certain she would reside in Ferrara, advanced rapidly towards completion, and in two years and two months after the first stone was laid, the duke's architects declared it to be fit for habitation. A magnificent procession was formed under the direction of the duke himself on August 5th, 1501, when Sister Lucia was conducted in great state to her new residence.

But although the convent had been built,

another subject had to be taken into consideration—its endowment on a lasting basis. The duke, however, was not a potentate likely to be arrested by a trifle of this kind, and he not only found funds for the purpose, but enough to maintain a hundred nuns, with a sufficient staff of assistants. In her new abode Lucia's sanctity seems for some time to have increased wonderfully, and many extraordinary stories are told of her, on the veracity of which the worldly-minded might be apt to cast considerable doubt. In the meantime Ercole, by means of his agents, discovered and brought to Ferrara many other holy women, whose claims to the respect and admiration of the pious were scarcely less honourable than the bleeding wounds of Lucia herself. Among these was a certain Sister Beatrice Denarni, who, with thirteen of her sisterhood, was with great difficulty induced to leave Rome and reside in Ferrara. What particular merits Sister Beatrice possessed have not been recorded by Frizzi, though doubtless they were

great, for he tells us that the duke at the head of a procession, and accompanied by Sister Lucia, went beyond the city gates to meet her, and escorted her in great state to the monastery of San Nicolo, which had been prepared for her reception, it being thought advisable, for some unexplained reason, that she should not reside in the same convent as Sister Lucia. Several men of peculiar sanctity are also mentioned as having been invited to reside in Ferrara, although no particular mention is made of their qualifications, or of any ceremonies having been prepared for their reception, which, taking into consideration the duke's willingness to accept any opportunity for a procession, seems rather to convey the idea that their importance was less in his eyes than that either of Sister Lucia or Sister Beatrice.

The reputation for sanctity of Sister Lucia, and the veneration offered her, appears to have remained unimpaired during the life of Ercole, who frequently visited her in company with his

daughter-in-law Lucrezia and her husband. After the death of Ercole, Lucia's fame appears somewhat to have declined, although great efforts were used to maintain her reputation. Still she was looked upon with respect till the death of Alfonso, when she seems to have fallen considerably in the estimation of the Ferrarese, and hints are darkly thrown out that she not only suffered from them great annoyance, but even persecution. Parisi, her biographer, tells us that notwithstanding the heroic virtue of Sister Lucia, and her gifts of prophecy, her persecutions continued unabated till her death, which occurred November 15, 1544. For many years after her death, her body remained in Ferrara, with little respect paid to it, when the people of Viterbo remembering the exalted piety of Lucia, sent a deputation to Ferrara to request they might be allowed to remove her remains to their own city. The request seems to have been granted with ready courtesy by the Ferrarese authorities, and preparations having been made, her remains, though

wanting a leg, were removed to Viterbo in safety. On examining the body it was found that although the mark of a wound remained in her side, those in the hands and the remaining foot had disappeared. This proof of the correct identification of the body, which would hardly have been accepted by a modern matter-of-fact coroner's jury, was in the year 1743 admitted as perfect by the authorities of Viterbo, and an elegant chapel from the designs of Agapito Poggi was built for the reception of the body.

That Ercole spent large sums of money in maintaining in a most efficient state a number of singers and musicians, whose ostensible duties were to assist at all solemn Church ceremonies, is true. But at the same time he, in common with most of the members of the Este family, was passionately fond of music ; and although this band certainly performed in all solemnities of the Church, he also employed them at his balls and masquerades, and on all other festive occasions,

which were quite as frequent as church ceremonies, numerous as they undoubtedly were.

While showing himself a true son of the Church, and ever ready to submit to its dogmas, even to the abnegation of reason, Ercole was by no means inclined to succumb tamely to any act which he considered priestly tyranny, and on more than one occasion he showed his independence in a manner which, considering the thralldom under which most temporal potentates were then held by the church, raises considerably our admiration of his character. In spite of all opposition on the part of the clergy, he passed a decree, dated March 24, 1480, in which he ordered "that all delinquents who should seek a sanctuary in the churches or monasteries, should, in case they were not freely surrendered by the priests or monks, be arrested and given up to justice in the same manner as if they had sought for refuge in private houses." This proclamation caused considerable indignation amongst the clergy, who threatened Ercole, unless it were re-

pealed, they would complain to the Pope on the subject. The duke, however, refused to give way, and the ecclesiastical authorities, equally determined, applied for protection to the Pope. To their great surprise they received a reply, ordering that the clergy should in all ways assist the authorities in arresting criminals, and that should any malefactor have sought refuge in a church or monastery, the bishop, on the complaint of the civil authorities, should order his immediate expulsion, or aid them in securing him. A proof may also be adduced of his liberality in respect to the religious opinions of others not of his own creed, by the protection he afforded the Jews, who were very numerous in Ferrara. Although during his rule we read of several executions for witchcraft, not one is recorded for heresy or schism.

To enumerate with any minuteness all the improvements which took place in the city under Ercole's administration—the churches he built, the streets he made, or the palaces he erected—would not only be too tedious, but would far

exceed our limits. One or two instances must suffice. The improvements and alterations he made in the Belfiore, a palace or rather country-seat near the walls of the city, was the first great work of any description he undertook. On Ercole's accession this palace, which had been built by the Marquis Alberto in the year 1392, was looked upon as a model of magnificence and good taste. It was, however, by no means sufficient to satisfy the desires of the duke. He not only almost entirely rebuilt the palace, but added immensely to the park and pleasure-grounds, in effecting which he caused the destruction of a vast number of houses situated in its vicinity, besides several churches. As he paid for all he required at a price far exceeding the value, he met with little difficulty or opposition either from the ecclesiastical authorities or the laity. The park of Belfiore was not only stocked by him with a plentiful supply of deer and other game, but he appears to have taken especial pleasure in rearing in it an immense flock of peacocks, their

flesh being then considered a favourite article of food among the nobility and gentry. Benvenuto Cellini during his stay in Ferrara resided in the Palazzo Belfiore. In his memoirs he tells us that, finding himself indisposed, he killed a young peacock every morning, so that he might always have the flesh fresh for dinner. As the killing of a peacock without the duke's permission was considered a high crime and misdemeanour, Cellini appears to have kept it a secret until after his departure. His method of killing the birds, he states, was by a gunpowder which made no noise in the explosion, and of the making of which he alone possessed the secret. It is more than probable, however, that the birds were caught simply by snaring them—a strict adherence to veracity being by no means a characteristic of that talented artist.

From Cellini's memoirs, he appears to have had but little love for the Ferrarese or their rulers, accusing them in very strong language of meanness; while the Ferrarese in their turn,

though fully admitting his immense talent, speak of him with great animosity, accusing him of avarice and ingratitude. And not without reason, for he certainly received from the Este family the most flattering attention. Although he did not visit Ferrara till the year 1530, he had been in frequent correspondence with Alfonso, and probably his father. When his arrival in Ferrara became known to the duke, he immediately requested him to remove from the inn in the Piazza where he had taken up his abode, and reside in the Palazzo Belfiore. When Cellini left Italy to visit France, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, Alfonso's brother, gave him a magnificent horse; and when he returned to Ferrara, the beautiful palace of Belfiore was again placed at his disposal, where he remained for several months, working at different commissions, such as vases and tazze, he received from the duke. For these, when completed, he not only received the full price named, but generally with it a present of large value. Among

other things given to him was a diamond ring worth 200 scudi, which seemed hardly to have contented him, and the duke ordered another worth 300 scudi. Even his workmen were rewarded with great generosity. And yet, notwithstanding this liberality, he speaks of the Ferrarese as of naturally most avaricious dispositions, "wishing to obtain the goods of their neighbours, but little liking to pay for them in return." An accusation more unfounded and unjust it would be difficult to imagine, and it can only be excused by the known irascibility of Benvenuto Cellini's temper, which sometimes appeared almost to amount to insanity. Although Belfiore was the principal hunting establishment of Duke Ercole, he had more than one other palace to which he retired to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, and among them those of Belriguardo and Belvedere, upon which he laid out immense sums of money, besides beautifying and extending the Este palace near the castle.

Some idea may be formed of the hunting

establishment kept up by Duke Ercole at the Belfiore palace alone, by an extract from the *Diario Ferrarese*, which states that the consumption of biscuits by the duke's dogs amounted annually to no less than three hundred and seventy bushels. It is only just to state, however, that in a year of scarcity, when this immense consumption was brought under the notice of the duke, he ordered the quantity to be reduced to fifty bushels, although, as soon as provisions became more abundant, it soon after rose to its original standard.

Besides a vast number of horses trained expressly for hunting, and an immense number of falcons, Ercole had several tame leopards, which he used for stag and hare hunting. To hunt with trained leopards had been a favourite amusement with his predecessor Duke Borso, who appears also to have had a strong passion for the chase, never keeping up a smaller stud than fifty hunters, besides several packs of hounds and an immense number of falcons.

When, in 1499, Ercole made a journey to Milan to meet the French king, that monarch expressed a wish to witness the performance of some of the duke's trained leopards and falcons. To oblige him, Ercole immediately sent to Ferrara for some of his best, which he presented to his majesty, who, after witnessing their performance, appeared to be much pleased with the gift. Ercole also attempted to form a collection of wild beasts in his park at Belfiore, but with little success. The year after his elevation to the dukedom of Ferrara, the first giraffe seen in Europe was brought to Italy by the sultan's ambassador. Ercole made many attempts to possess it, offering to give any price that might be named for it; but the ambassador declined parting with it.

Equicòlo tells us that on February 4, 1479, a Venetian gentleman, one Iachimo Abraam, brought to Ferrara a tame tiger, and an elephant about thirty-two months old. The duke was so pleased with them, that he immediately offered

to purchase them at Iachimo's own price. The Venetian asked twelve thousand gold ducats for the pair, which offer the duke without hesitation accepted. Somewhat surprised at the ready manner the duke caught at the bargain, the Venetian pretended he had been misunderstood, and that the sum he wanted for the two animals was twenty thousand ducats. Whereupon the duke, disgusted at the man's avarice and dishonesty, refused to enter into any further negotiation with him, but returning him the tiger and elephant, ordered him to immediately quit Ferrara.

The improvements and embellishments made by Duke Ercole in Ferrara—both secular and ecclesiastical—numerous and magnificent as they were, and greatly as the taste in architecture had been improved under his patronage, in point of importance sank almost into insignificance when compared with some of the great engineering works he undertook, and effectually carried out. To Ercole the Ferrarese were indebted for

the admirable line of fortifications which he built around the city, and that too after it had been so much enlarged as to be able to accommodate the enormous influx of inhabitants who, under his judicious government, had flocked to it. Before his elevation to the dukedom, the population of Ferrara did not exceed fifty thousand souls, but before the walls were terminated they had increased to more than one hundred thousand. The greater portion of these walls remains to this day; and although of little value in the present state of military science, they are still able to prove the enormous amount of care and labour bestowed upon them.

The benefits conferred on the state by Ercole's civil engineering and sanitary measures still remain unimpaired. Prior to his day the district around Ferrara was considered the most insalubrious in Italy. One large tract of land not far from the city—that of San Gio Battista—at certain seasons of the year was almost uninhabitable from the poisonous nature of the emanations

from the marshes which surrounded it. To drain these marshes was one of the first works of the kind that Ercole undertook. From the arguments brought forward at the time by his principal engineers, all tending to prove the impracticable nature of the undertaking, it was several years before Ercole had satisfactorily convinced himself that they were in error. At last he made the attempt and perfectly succeeded. So much so, in fact, that San Gio Battista, which had hitherto been considered as the most pestiferous district in his duchy, and in an agricultural point of view utterly valueless, afterwards became one of the most fertile and salubrious.

Pleased with the success which attended his experiments in the marshes around San Gio Battista, the duke next resolved to drain those in the district known as the Selva di Crespino, which he transformed from a malarious quagmire, tenanted only by wild boars and other game, into a rich grain-producing locality. Besides these he accomplished a far greater and

equally successful labour than either of those already mentioned,—that of reclaiming the woods and marshes of San Martino, which appears to have been a work of great importance in the city of Ferrara. In the valley of Commacchio he succeeded in effecting an improvement not only of great advantage to the district, but which also required a vast amount of skill to perform, even when measured by the state of engineering science in the present day,—that of separating in the marshes the fresh water from the salt, by means of banks, conducting the former through the salt marshes into the sea. Whether his son Alfonso, who seems to have inherited all his father's love of engineering, was in any manner engaged in these improvements it is impossible to say with any certainty, there being no record remaining of his having taken part in them. At the same time they must have been so completely to his taste, that it is difficult to believe he was not sufficiently interested in them as to take part in their construction.

The expense attending these vast operations was enormous, and the taxes imposed on the population to meet them were heavy in the extreme, occasionally creating great discontent among the wealthier classes, by whom the burden in the shape of direct taxation was most keenly felt. That portion contributed by the working classes, being levied from them by means of the indirect taxation of manifold droits or *dazio*, hardly appears to have been so well understood, though of course in the long run it must have been still more onerous than the more direct taxation levied on the wealthier classes. Nor was the cost of these improvements paid for at the time they were effected. Several of them left a large debt upon the city which took many years to pay off. The debt for the walls alone, which had been built by Ercole to surround the city, was not finally paid off till after the next two generations.

Nor did Ercole, to raise money for his improvements, always confine himself to a legiti-

mate mode of taxation. He occasionally used other means which should hardly have been exercised even when the general corruption in the management of public affairs which then existed in every Italian state is taken into consideration. Every government appointment was systematically sold by him to the highest bidder, nor was the slightest attempt made at concealment in these transactions. To do him justice, however, he never allowed the purchase to be completed unless he found the purchaser physically and mentally adapted for the appointment he wished to hold. Even the judges openly purchased their appointment, subject, it is true, to dismissal should any fault appear in their administration of justice. The taxes, too, were farmed out to the highest bidder. The result of farming the revenues, especially the tax on provisions, was the cause of occasional disturbances among the populace, who, unable to argue correctly on the subject, imagined that the high prices they paid for all the primary

necessaries of life were caused solely by a combination among the shopkeepers and wholesale dealers, and blindly attempted to revenge themselves by plundering the shops and stores. The comparative impunity which at first attended these disorders encouraged the many professional thieves at that time resident in Ferrara, who, profiting by the temporary absence of the duke and the inefficient state of the police, committed disorders of a most disgraceful character, and robberies of the most barefaced description were of daily occurrence in the city. A contemporary writer inimical to Ercole, speaking of the time when these abuses were at the highest, says,—“ He (Ercole) cares nothing for all this. He is occupied solely with his amusements, journeys, theatres, building, music, and even astrology, caring nothing for his people. Hence the affairs of the State go badly. Even in the broad daylight murder, robberies, and rifling of shops are perpetrated with impunity, and the treasury of the duke is at so low an ebb that even the ap-

pointments of the judges are sold to those who offer the most money for them.”

To do the duke justice, at the time these disorders are spoken of, 1499, he was absent from Ferrara on State business. As soon as he heard what was taking place he returned to the city, and after punishing the rioters with a very high hand, he soon after restored the police regulation to good order, and life and property became as secure in Ferrara as in the best regulated city in Italy.

After his Venetian war had terminated, Ercole seems to have entirely given himself up to his favourite amusements—the chase, building, and public spectacles. How far these were beneficial to the well-being of his subjects is very questionable. One especial honour has been claimed for him by the historians of Ferrara,—that under his auspices the taste for the legitimate drama was revived in Italy. Till his day the old Greek and Latin dramas appear to have been unknown to all, with the exception of a few

of the learned, and their void was supplied by troubadours, rope-dancers, jugglers, and mountebanks of different descriptions, who made journeys through various towns, selecting those in preference in which any great public festival was at the time going on. Mysteries, or representations of religious subjects, were also common, in which scenes were depicted and the action explained by poetical recitations.

Without claiming for Ferrara the honour of being the first among the Italian cities to re-establish the drama on a classical footing, it cannot be disputed that Ercole did much for its advancement. Prior to his elevation to the dignity of Duke of Ferrara, the drama seems certainly to have been in a very primitive condition in that city. We learn from Zambotto that in 1476 a religious performance in honour of the duke's marriage with the Duchess Eleanora took place on a stage erected in the Piazza, opposite the grand entrance of the cathedral, on which was represented St. James, with his father and

mother in family conclave, conversing affectionately together. Whether the conversation was in Italian or Latin, Zambotto does not inform us; but he mentions the performance as proving the skill of the Ferrarese in representations of the kind.

How rapid was the improvement in dramatic representations effected by Ercole may be judged by the fact, that ten years later, January 26th, 1486, one of the comedies of Plautus was performed in the hall of the palace, which, it appears, was so liberally got up by Ercole, and with such great care, that the appointments alone cost one thousand ducats. Many foreigners and persons of distinction were present on the occasion, as well as literary and artistic celebrities of the day, for among them we find the names of Boiardo, Pistoja, Guarini, Correggio, and Ludovico Ariosto, and all appear to have been delighted with the performance. Ariosto, from his boyhood, seems to have taken great delight in scenic representations. When not above ten

years of age he, assisted by his little brothers and sisters, was accustomed to arrange scenes in his father's house. In the year 1498 he completed his "Cassaria," which has been considered by many authors — among them Crescentini, Tiraboschi, and others—as the first specimen of the modern Italian drama. Tiraboschi considers the Ferrarese theatre the oldest in Italy, from which source it spread into other Italian cities, as well as into France; and that actors from the Ferrarese theatre were invited to other courts to instruct the native performers in the dramatic art. The frequent journeys taken by Ercole which Frizzi mentions, appear to have been carried out with great magnificence. It would occupy too much space to give a detailed account of them. One instance alone must suffice to show the inordinate love of display of the duke, even when suffering from the inconveniences and incommodities of travelling. Yet, as before stated, great as was his love of ostentatious display, he had sufficient shrewdness never to let it stand in the

way of his policy, though occasionally he mixed them together in a somewhat singular manner, of which the following may be adduced as a proof, combining as it does to an extraordinary degree, religious policy and love of public display.

Having given notice that he intended making a pilgrimage to a shrine, he summoned a number of the principal nobles of his court to attend him. All being in readiness,* on the day appointed for his departure he descended the grand staircase of the palace to commence his journey. His suite at the time consisted of no fewer than 150 of the nobility, learned men, and principal citizens, all magnificently dressed, wearing gold chains and jewels, besides a number of guards and servants on horseback, amounting to 350 persons, and 40 mules laden with luggage: and with this suite he proceeded towards Mantua, which was to be his first halting place.

Although Ercole had given but a very short

* Frizzi.

notice of his intention to fulfil this vow, even to those with whom he was most intimate, keeping it a profound secret till within a few weeks of his departure, the news of his intended pilgrimage caused no little excitement in the other Italian courts. As Ercole's predilection for mixing religion with politics was generally known, they excusably feared the Duke of Ferrara might possibly intend to enter into some treaty with the King of France, which might ultimately tend to disturb the existing peace of Italy, and bring down the French arms again upon them. To avert this danger, the Venetians, as well as some other of the Italian governments, earnestly impressed upon the Pope the necessity of placing some restraint on the exuberant piety of Ercole, so as at least to prevent him from leaving Italy. The Pope easily perceived that the fear of the memorialists was not without reason, and he immediately despatched to Ercole a brief, which he intrusted to the Bishop of Urbino with orders to deliver it personally to

the duke. The Pope, in his brief, not only requested Ercole, as an obedient son of the Church, not to leave Italy, but also impressed on the bishop to explain verbally to him how great would be his displeasure if his advice were not followed. The bishop found the duke in Mantua, and after delivering to him the Pope's brief, followed up his instructions by earnestly impressing upon him the necessity of attending to the warning given by His Holiness.

The duke seems to have received the Pope's brief with every mark of outward respect. He had, however, no difficulty in perceiving that, although the brief appeared to have been written by the Pope solely from the view he personally took in the matter, he had, in fact, acted under the suggestion of the other Italian potentates. Great as was Ercole's respect for the Pope, he determined still to go on with his pilgrimage, and sent to His Holiness a respectful letter, regretting that the vow he had taken was one of so solemn a character that it would be a gross

act of impiety on his part not to perform it. This letter was forwarded by the bishop to Rome, accompanied by another from himself, explaining all that had taken place respecting his embassy.

Immediately after the departure of a messenger for Rome, Ercole left Mantua for Milan, where he arrived without any impediment. While there he concluded a treaty of marriage between his eldest son Alfonso and Anna Sforza, daughter of Duke Galeazzo. Possibly knowing the Duke of Ferrara's love of display, the Duke of Milan entertained him with great magnificence, and Ercole, pleased with the reception he met with, allowed his pleasure to get the better of his prudence, and instead of hurrying on with his journey as he had intended when he quitted Mantua, he remained in Milan so long that the Pope's second brief reached him before his departure.

The Pope's new brief caused Ercole great annoyance and much anxiety. In it His Holiness very distinctly prohibited Ercole, under pain of ex-

communication, to leave Italy without his permission. At the same time, he complimented him on his earnest desire and determination to accomplish any religious vow he had once made; and as a proof that he had not the slightest wish to place any impediment in the way of the duke's fulfilling the obligation he had taken upon himself, he would, on the authority in him vested as sovereign pontiff, change the place at which the vow was to be performed from the shrine in France to an altar in the Vatican; and that there might be no delay, the Pope invited him to repair immediately to Rome in order to perform the vow.

Great as was the annoyance Ercole received from the Pope's letter, he was too consummate a politician to allow it to appear, and he immediately despatched, through the Bishop of Urbino, a grateful letter to His Holiness, thanking him for having relieved him of the dangers and fatigues of a journey which, beyond the fact of acquitting himself of a religious duty, was otherwise displeas-

ing to him, and that he would at once make preparations for his journey to Rome ; where he arrived about three weeks afterwards, and received from His Holiness a most cordial welcome, with many compliments on his obedience.

With all his admiration for Duke Ercole, Frizzi is obliged to admit that his love of ostentation was often indulged in to a very culpable degree, and was, moreover, frequently the cause of much discontent among the tax-paying portion of his people from the heavy burdens imposed upon them to cover the expenses incurred. This was especially the case after the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia with Don Alfonso. Although the population of the city highly enjoyed the festivities and shows which then took place, they strongly objected to the heavy taxation they occasioned, nor did they hesitate to express their dissatisfaction in a very unmistakable manner. And this was the more remarkable as the duke had a strong objection to any display of discontent on the part of his subjects, even when it showed itself merely

by words. In consequence of a disturbance which took place in the year 1499, he issued a proclamation, dated February 6, in the following year, in which, after moralizing on the impropriety of subjects canvassing the acts of their princes, he decreed that whoever should speak disrespectfully of the policy or deeds of the Dukes of Ferrara, should be subjected to a penalty of twenty-five ducats, or a lengthened imprisonment; and in case the culprits should be boys, he decreed that they should receive twenty-five blows with a whip, and that this punishment was to be inflicted in public, as a warning to others.

The passion of Duke Ercole for display exhibited itself immediately after his elevation to the dukedom. Greatly attached to his predecessor, Duke Borso, he indulged his sorrow and his passion for display at the same time, by organizing and superintending perhaps the most superb funeral ceremony that has ever taken place in Ferrara,—one, in fact, which for taste and magnificence could not have been surpassed

by the most accomplished undertaker of the present day, not excepting the celebrated *Pompes Funèbres* of Paris.

The funeral procession of Duke Borso took place by torch-light. Each mourner (of whom there were no fewer than 850) carried a lighted torch. Of these mourners, 300 were nobles and courtiers. All were dressed in black, and so desirous was Ercole that there should be no mixture of colours among them, that those who from want of means were unable to supply themselves with new mourning-dresses, were provided with them at the Duke's own expense, rather than they should be absent on the occasion.

The procession formed at the castle, and, preceded by the duke in person, marched to the Certosa monastery, where the corpse was to be buried. The funeral oration was spoken by Tito Morelli, a Ferrarese, and Bishop of Adria, with great eloquence; but, as Frizzi justly observes, his task was rendered the easier, as the deceased had well merited the eulogiums so

gracefully bestowed upon him by the orator. The funeral ceremonies were continued in the churches for several days. Food and clothing were distributed in abundance to the poor, and the ceremonies concluded by another oration in honour of the deceased in the church of the Certosa, spoken by the poet laureate, the celebrated Ludovico Carboni.

To attempt any detailed account of the different magnificent ceremonies which took place during the time that Ercole held the reins of power, would not only far exceed our limits, but trespass too much on the patience of the reader. Suffice it to say that not on any single occasion, either of a marriage, death, victory, or the visit to Ferrara of some potentate, did the duke miss the opportunity of indulging his favourite passion. His greatest pleasure seems to have been in arranging marriage festivals, and, singularly enough, the first he had to superintend was his own, on the occasion of his marriage with Eleanora of Aragon, in the year 1471. The

happiest year however of his existence, not excepting that of the year 1502, in which he undertook the festivities in honour of Lucrezia's arrival in Ferrara, was the year 1490, for he then had to superintend the festivals given in honour of no fewer than four marriages which took place in his family, all of which were conducted with great splendour. The first of these was in the month of February, between his daughter Isabella and Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, a wedding which had been agreed on ten years previously. Equicola tells us that the duke gave as a dowry with his daughter Isabella 15,000 gold ducats, and 300 more in jewels, besides other presents of great value. Among these there was more than one article which would be thought useless in the present day, for example, a gilt coach, lined with gold brocade, and drawn by four horses; a bucentoro, or state barge, covered with gilding, and four smaller bucentoros, somewhat less ornamented, but still presenting a very splendid appearance.

Isabella left Ferrara for Mantua in the principal barge, her ladies and gentlemen in the four smaller ones, which again were followed by fifty-two boats, with her servants and those of her own suite.

The second marriage was between the Princess Beatrice and Ludovico il Moro, of which there are no details beyond this, that all the ceremonies were conducted in a sumptuous manner. - The third was the union of his eldest son Alfonso with Anna Sforza, daughter of Galeazzo, Duke of Milan; and the fourth between the son of Sigismondo of Este with another member of the Sforza family. Frizzi states that the expenses attendant on these marriages reduced the duke's exchequer to the lowest ebb, and necessitated the imposition of a heavy tax on his subjects to make up the deficiency.

Whatever might have been the feeling of Ercole towards Lucrezia when first the match between her and his eldest son Don Alfonso was proposed to him, it is certain that on his becoming better

acquainted with her, he conceived for her a most sincere affection. In the archives at Modena are many original letters which passed between them, fully proving the influence she exercised over him. A singular example of his love for Lucrezia is shown in a letter, dated October 18, 1503, addressed to Flaveti, his principal agent in Ferrara. It appears that, in consequence of the enormous expense attending the festivals given during the time of Lucrezia's wedding, and the popular discontent which followed them (although, it should be stated, not the slightest disrespect or animosity was directed against Lucrezia herself), Ercole insisted on a rigid system of economy to be carried out in all public departments, as well as in the private expenses of his own palace. His agent Flaveti, who appears to have had the management of his domestic expenditure, seems to have obeyed his master's instructions to the letter, cutting down all expenditure in every department under his control to the lowest possible point; and, among others, that of Lucrezia's establish-

ment — a somewhat hard procedure, when the enormous dowry she brought with her is remembered. Lucrezia, who evidently submitted for some time without complaint to a system of economy she had hitherto been totally unused to, at last desired her chamberlain to complain to the duke, who immediately wrote a somewhat indignant letter to his agent on the subject. It begins:—

“ *Dilectissime nostri Flaveti*,—Notwithstanding our express orders that you should provide our daughter-in-law, the Illustrissima Madonna Lucrezia, with everything she might require, I find that you have this year sent her only three thousand ducats, and in consequence the Count Ludovico Dal Barco (Lucrezia’s chamberlain) has again written to complain to me on the subject. Now I tell you, and I command that you immediately make her such provision that she may be able to live according to her station, and not stinted, so that she may be able to keep soul and body together ;*

* *E non stenti che de spirito sancto la non puo vivere.*

and that you will in every way show her the same respect as you would do to our own person."

A singular feeling is produced in reading the correspondence between Lucrezia and her father-in-law. Apart from the conventional court-like phraseology used in addressing each other, her letters might have been written by any lady in the middle class of society to a father-in-law whom she both respected and loved. It would be difficult indeed to realize the idea, that the woman who wrote these letters was the execrable wretch it has pleased Pontano, Sannazzaro, Burchard, Victor Hugo, and others to paint her. In some of these letters the most trifling details of domestic arrangements are spoken of with an amount of natural feeling which goes far to dispel the idea that the writer could have been the hardened wretch who had made "evil her good," and then revelled in it. One letter written the day after her first arrival at Belriguardo (a palace some few miles from Ferrara, which Ercole had

placed at her disposal as a country-seat), is to the duke, then in the city, and is addressed to her most illustrious signore and father the Duke of Ferrara :—

“I have this moment received by your messenger your most kind letter, together with some fish, which you have sent me. They fortunately arrived in good time, and, moreover, in good condition, and I shall eat them with the better appetite from the love I bear you. I thank you greatly for your remembrance of me. I yesterday evening arrived in Belriguardo, which I found far more beautiful than I had anticipated. To your Excellency I subscribe myself, in the hope of your continuing your kind feelings towards me, your most obedient daughter and servant,

“LUCREZIA ESTENSE DE BORGIA.”

The reason of Lucrezia's taking up her residence in Belriguardo was, that for some time she had been suffering from ill health in Ferrara, and it was thought that the country air might

be beneficial to her. It hardly, however, seems to have had the effect desired. So anxious was the duke respecting her health, that he appears to have made Lucrezia write to him daily on the improvement she made. She seems to have faithfully obeyed, and on August 10, 1502, she writes to him—

“ Although last night I suffered greatly from fever, to-day I certainly feel better than I did yesterday. Altogether I slept about five hours during the night, and only awoke once during the time. Sleep greatly refreshes me, as afterwards I always find myself much relieved and comforted. I trust our Lord God will kindly allow me daily to improve (*de bene in meglio*). I shall continue daily to write to you on the state of my health, as you desired me. Your Excellency’s obedient servant and daughter, &c. &c.”

On the following day she writes—

“ By the Divine grace I passed last night very comfortably, and to-day I feel myself so much better that I hope in a short time to be restored

to health, so that your Excellency may be reassured on my account, and no longer be under any anxiety as to the state of my health, and in this my physicians are of the same opinion, &c. &c.”

Lucrezia appears, however, to have suffered a relapse, for a few days afterwards, in a letter to the Duke, she says—

“ I heard with much sorrow that your Excellency is in a state of great anxiety respecting the return of my illness, which I would willingly have hidden from you rather than that it should have given you any annoyance, although by my silence I might not have fulfilled my duty towards you. But now, having heard that you have received intelligence that I am already better, which I am sure has given you great consolation, I console myself with the conviction that you will forgive my disobedience. I sincerely thank you for your affectionate letter, and the hope that it gives me. And now, through the bounty and grace of God, and of the most

glorious Virgin, my advocate and protectress, I am again convalescent, as your Excellency has already heard, and quite free from fever (*sonneta da febre*), and as other distressing symptoms have also disappeared, I hope soon to gain strength, and that my health will soon be perfectly re-established. Your Excellency's obedient servant and daughter,

“LUCREZIA ESTENSE DE BORGIA.”

In another letter, in which she sympathizes with the duke in his illness, she tells him she has sent him a few cakes which had been made by her young ladies (*mie donzelle*).

“I beg your Excellency will condescend to eat them for the love you bear me, and that you will take great care of yourself and return to us as quickly as possible. Kissing your hand, I subscribe myself your most obedient daughter and servant,

“LUCREZIA ESTENSE DE BORGIA.”

This letter, without date or address, was evi-

dently written to the duke while in Mantua, a short time before his death.

After the marriage of Lucrezia, the duke, with the exception of his love for dramatic performances, seems to have led a comparatively quiet life. He died June 15, 1505. He had been for some time in failing health, and his physicians had in consequence advised him to remain quietly in his palace, and to take but little exercise—an order which the duke (who, although at an advanced period of life, possessed a mind as active as when in youth) received with some displeasure. Thanks, however, to the influence Lucrezia had over him, he followed the advice given him with tolerable regularity, till the news reached him that his son-in-law, the Marquis of Mantua, was on the point of giving some magnificent fêtes. The temptation to be present on the occasion was too great for the duke to resist, and in spite of the advice of his son and daughter-in-law, he resolved to visit Mantua, where he arrived February 15, 1505. Here, in conse-

quence of the fatigues of the journey, his health fell off rapidly and to such an extent that he could not disguise from himself the danger he was in, and he resolved to return home. Instead, however, of proceeding direct to Ferrara, he determined first to visit Florence, to fulfil at some particular shrine in that city a vow he had taken some years before. Preparations were now made for his journey, and when all was in readiness he took an affectionate farewell of his daughter and her husband. When, however, his horse was brought to him he was found to be too weak to mount it. A litter was then prepared for him, and he was carried on men's shoulders to Florence. Having fulfilled his vow, he left Florence to return home, and succeeded, though almost in a dying condition, in reaching Ferrara. He lived but a few weeks afterwards, and was buried in the church of Santa Maria degli Angioli.

CHAPTER III.

LUCREZIA DOMICILED IN FERRARA.

The Castle of Ferrara—Lucrezia gains the Goodwill of the Citizens—Her Love for the Marchioness of Mantua—Francesco Gonzaga—Belriguardo—Lucrezia's Letters—The Rival Doctors—Bembo—The Lock of Hair—Letters in the Ambrosian Library.

BEFORE speaking of Lucrezia's manner of life in Ferrara, a short description of her residence may not be out of place. There are few ancient palaces in Italy of such immense magnitude, in a more perfect condition, or which give a better idea of the power exercised by the Italian potentates of the Middle Ages than the castle of Ferrara in the present day. Hardly a single room in it is not in as complete repair as when it was occupied by Lucrezia, and many of the ornaments, especially the paintings of the

celebrated Dosso Dossi, which adorned the great hall, are almost in as perfect a condition as the first day they were painted. The exterior is perhaps more suggestive of the great power the feudal lords of Ferrara exercised than any description we could give. There is something not only grand, but almost fearfully sombre in the appearance of its drawbridges, its battlemented walls, strong towers, and the deep moat surrounding all. Few who behold it leave it without having its outline well fixed on their memory.

The castle of Ferrara was originally constructed after the plans of Bertolino Ploti of Novara, but before it was completed so many additions were made to it that when terminated it bore but little resemblance to the designs of the original architect. The external walls, as they appear at the present day, hardly date further back than the year 1570, as they were then so much damaged by the earthquake which occurred in that year that a considerable portion

of the battlements and the whole of one of the towers had to be rebuilt. Prior to 1506 the moat which at present surrounds the castle had no external wall to separate it from the road, when the one at present standing was built by Alfonso, the year after his accession, in consequence of an accident which occurred to Count Turchi. This nobleman, with his wife and three ladies, was passing in front of it in a carriage, when the coachman's attention was attracted by the sight of a man who was then in the pillory. Giving no heed to his horses they advanced too close to the edge of the moat, when the carriage fell into the water and two of the ladies were drowned. To prevent the recurrence of an accident of the kind Alfonso ordered a dwarf wall to be built, which is the one at present surrounding the castle.

But notwithstanding the gloomy and almost prison-like appearance of this enormous palace, fortunately for the Ferrarese, possibly fewer crimes have been perpetrated in it than in any other

feudal castle in Italy. Though occasionally terribly severe in their judgments to those who merited punishment, few acts of deliberate cruelty or tyranny can be laid to the score of the dukes of Ferrara. In their punishments they were seldom guilty of the crime of cruelty—a characteristic peculiar to themselves among all other powerful nobles in Italy. The historian Cittadella, in describing the castle, speaks in praise of its owners by saying, “that there is no record of a fratricide having been committed, nor an assassination of a father or mother, nor the poisoning of a wife,—an honour which can be applied to few other feudal castles in our country.”

Besides the principal entrances and the gallery which communicated with the Estense palace, there was a subterranean passage, built, it is said, to allow the dukes to escape from the castle should they find themselves under the necessity of so doing. In an entry in the account books of the castle, in the year 1487, mention is

made of money paid to some workmen for forming a secret door and passage under the moat of the castle, and for the wages of a certain Erasmo, the porter, who kept the key not only of the door in the castle, but of that in the church of St. Marco, into which the passage opened. Of what use in a military point of view this passage could have been it would be difficult to determine. Possibly after all it was merely made for the purpose of allowing the dukes and their families to attend the functions of the church without attracting the attention of those they might meet on the road. After the elevation of Alfonso to the ducal dignity both he and Lucrezia paid great attention to the adornment of the principal apartments in the castle. During a portion of the life of Ercole the greater part of the building seems to have been used more as an arsenal than for any other purpose, but on Lucrezia's taking up her abode there it was fitted up with great luxury and good taste.

After the festivities connected with the mar-

riage were over, Lucrezia for some months appears to have led a very quiet life, little mention being made of her or her husband in the Ferrarese annals. Though appearing but seldom in public, she seems to have made herself much beloved from her gentle, amiable, and attractive manners. Her principal friend and confidante appears to have been the person who, more than any other, had held her in suspicion before her marriage—her sister-in-law, the Marchioness of Mantua. This lady, who was certainly one of the most celebrated women of her day, of excellent education and refined taste, a great patroness of arts and artists, and a warm friend to all literary men of ability, seems to have been as much fascinated by Lucrezia as even Don Alfonso or his father. Nor was her intimacy with the Gonzaga family confined solely to the marchioness. Her husband seems to have entertained for Lucrezia a brotherly affection, and many were the letters which passed between them, several of which are still extant. One of

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these, at present in the municipal library at Milan, is curious, as tending to clear up a disputed point in the list of Lucrezia's accomplishments, whether, as has been stated by some, she was one of the poetesses of Italy of her day, or, as others have maintained, that there is no proof extant of her poetical abilities. This, however, is certainly wrong. Among the most respectable authors who claim for her the honour of being a poetess, are Tiraboschi and Quadrio, both of whom maintain that she not only wrote verses, but wrote them well. Others who uphold Lucrezia's claims, point to the frequent allusions she makes in her letters to the verses she was sending (*qualche pochi versi*). Her opponents, on the contrary, maintain that the expression *versi* was merely synonymous with "lines," as Lucrezia occasionally, in her phraseology, made use of hyperbolic and poetical expressions. The letter, however, alluded to, as having been addressed to the Marquis of Mantua, seems to show that Lucrezia was in the habit of writing poetry.

This letter is addressed to her most illustrious signore and brother-in-law the Marquis of Mantua. In it she informs him that she has sent him a sonnet of her writing. In another she acknowledges the receipt of his letter, which gave her great pleasure to find that he was recovering from the indisposition under which he had been lately labouring, and which had given her great uneasiness. She trusts when he has recovered he will not forget to send her the sonnets which he promised. She hopes he will not fail to write frequently, to let her know the progress he is making in his health, and in the meantime she will pray for his recovery as warmly as in a case of her own illness she would do for herself. These letters are doubly curious, as not only tending to prove that Lucrezia herself wrote verses, but that good feeling existed between her and her brother-in-law.

On the 15th May, of the same year, Lucrezia wrote another letter to her sister-in-law, Isabella, which is curious as tending to show the affection

she held her in. In it she informs her that the celebrated sculptor, Joanne Jacomo, who is the bearer of that letter, has lately arrived from Rome, bringing with him some excellent portraits he had taken. "Knowing your kindness, as well as your desire to please me," she continues, "I should esteem it a great favour if you would allow him, if it would not cause you too great inconvenience, to take your Excellency's portrait, as I have a great wish to possess it. By obliging me in this matter you will do me a singular favour. Your obedient servant and sister.

"(Signed)

"LUCREZIA ESTENSE DE BORGIA."

On the 23rd of the following month, she writes another letter to the Marchioness of Mantua, introducing and recommending to her the podesta of Ferrara, speaking of him in high terms, and asking Isabella to interest herself with the marquis to give him a certain official position then vacant in Mantua, his term as podesta in Ferrara

having expired. This letter was the first of a numerous series which afterwards passed between Isabella and her husband and Lucrezia, and which it would occupy too much space to quote in detail. None have ever doubted the amiability and excellent heart of Isabella. The world, on the contrary, has assigned to Lucrezia every attribute which could disgrace a woman. Yet the numerous letters extant of Lucrezia's handwriting — even far more numerous than those of Isabella—all tend to show that one of the greatest pleasures of her life was in assisting and benefiting her fellow-creatures. In the words of Signor G. Zuchetti, in his clever pamphlet on the "Life of Lucrezia Borgia," when speaking of her he says—"Of the number of similar letters, recommendations written by the Borgia, there are enough and to spare to prove her to have been a most amiable person, willing to assist every one who deserved it, and to comfort, help, and defend the sorrowful, the needy, and the weak. No one was in a position so

humble to whom Lucrezia would not lend a willing ear and a ready hand to help them. Those letters continually relate to protection given to young girls, to preserve them from the dangers of their youth and inexperience; to establish peace between litigants; for the liberation of the prisoner; the annulling of a sentence of banishment, or the remission of a capital punishment. And not only by her own exertions, but in the extraordinary influence she exercised over the minds of Isabella and Francesco Gonzaga, who appear to have found it impossible to resist any appeal made to them by Lucrezia for the furtherance of a pious and benevolent object.”*

On Francesco Gonzaga's literary ability no

* “*Lucrezia Borgia, Duchessa di Ferrara.*” *G. Zuchetti* — *Mantova*, 1860. This little work, in other respects of a most interesting description, contains one unpardonable blemish—its brevity. After raising the curiosity and interest of the reader to the highest pitch, and showing the extraordinary depth of observation and research of the author, it breaks off, leaving on the mind the full conviction that the author might have written much more, and in an equally interesting manner, on the subject.

doubt has ever been thrown, as there were few princes of the day who applied themselves more earnestly to the study of polite letters than he. Roscoe says, there is reason to believe that he is the author of many sonnets, *capitoli*, and other verses, which were printed in the collections of poetry in the ensuing century. His wife Isabella was not less distinguished for her elegant accomplishments and refined taste; and her collection of statues, cameos, and medallions was among the most celebrated of the day in Europe; but which was plundered by the Austrians in the seventeenth century, on their taking possession of Mantua. Both the marquis and his wife appear to have been held in high estimation by the literary men and poets of the day; and Ariosto, in his thirty-seventh canto of his "Orlando Furioso," speaks of them in terms of high praise.

The first letter Lucrezia wrote after the dispersion of the wedding guests, as well as her last, written shortly before her death, were addressed

to the Marchioness of Mantua; and during the whole nineteen years which elapsed between them, there was not one in which several letters—many of them extant in the present day—did not pass between them. There seems to have been no subject of any interest connected with their families in which they did not make confidants of each other; while the majority of the remainder bear equal and honourable testimony to the charitable and pious feeling of the two princesses. Nothing was more common, when one was not able to succeed single-handed in some pious or charitable work, than to call in the assistance of the other; and in no instance does the application seem to have been refused. Their correspondence commenced as early as February 22, 1502, shortly after the arrival of the marchioness in Mantua, after the festivities in Ferrara. Although the letter was one merely of compliment, it is remarkable as containing in it that tone of piety distinguishable throughout the whole of her correspondence with the mar-

chioness, clearly proving how unjust is the accusation made by Gibbon—and more especially by some French writers—that Lucrezia's habits of piety and respect for religion increased in proportion as she found herself advancing nearer her grave. The letter is addressed to her most honourable and illustrious sister and sister-in-law (*cognata e sorella honorandissima*). In it she merely states that according to her promise she commences her correspondence. She fills up the body of the letter—which is a very short one—by simply expressing the great pleasure and satisfaction she had in hearing of her Excellency's safe arrival in Mantua, and that she will pray to God to take her into His most holy keeping; and also to obey the request of her Excellency, she has much pleasure in stating that she herself is at that moment in good health. She subscribes herself, her loving sister, Lucrezia Estense de Borgia.

On the 11th of the following April, Lucrezia wrote another letter, and this time to the Mar-

quis of Mantua, which goes far more to show the religious tendency of her mind than the profound religious hypocrisy of which her enemies accused her. In it she tells him that she was on the point of going to confession when she received his letter, for which she kisses his hand (*baso la mano*). For her tardiness in replying she hopes he will pardon her, inasmuch as it was caused by her unwillingness to disturb his thoughts at that holy season (it was Easter week). She goes on to speak of some interesting subject, of which the thread has been lost, nor do any of her other letters allude to it. She then hopes that they may all walk in the fear of the Lord and devote themselves to His service like good children of St. Francis (Lucrezia had entered the third or tertiary order of lay nuns of St. Francis, and Francesco Gonzaga was also a lay member of the brotherhood), of whose daughters I am an unworthy sister. She signs herself his affectionate servant and sister, Lucrezia Estense de Borgia.

Lucrezia appears to have resided quietly and unostentatiously in the Castle of Ferrara till the month of May, when she was attacked by low fever and ague, which, in spite of all the efforts of her physicians, continued unabated. The duke, her father-in-law, becoming anxious as to the state of her health, insisted on her quitting Ferrara and taking up her residence at his country palace at Belriguardo, some ten miles distant, as the air was there considered to be purer than in the city, which, in spite of all the ameliorations and engineering improvements which had been made in the neighbourhood, still maintained the reputation of a very unhealthy locality. In the last chapter several letters were mentioned which passed between Lucrezia and her father-in-law. Whether Alfonso resided with Lucrezia at Belriguardo or remained in Ferrara is uncertain, little mention being made of him during the time, either in the letters at present in the different libraries or in the public records. It is more than probable that in consequence of the

failing state of health of Duke Ercole, no inconsiderable portion of the duties of the State were thrown on his hands. Again, it is evident he was at the time much occupied in his engineering studies and experiments, especially in improvements in his artillery. In fact, to bring the Ferrarese artillery to perfection appeared to be one of the greatest objects of his life. From the short distance between Ferrara and Belriguardo, there is no doubt that he and Lucrezia were frequently in each other's society, and this is the more probable as Lucrezia at that time was giving promise of becoming a mother—a subject of no little importance for a man of so affectionate a disposition as Alfonso. Lucrezia certainly at the time appears on all matters connected with her own family affairs to have acted rather under the direction of her father-in-law than her husband. Whether this arose from any dislike to the Borgia family on the part of Alfonso it would be difficult to say. Certainly his name but very rarely appears in any letters which

passed between Lucrezia and her family, even on subjects connected with State affairs, unless occasionally he is distantly alluded to in some conventional term of courtesy. One letter of the description may be quoted. It is written by Lucrezia to her most illustrious signore and father, the Duke of Ferrara, in which she tells him that she has received his communication relative to the arrival of the ambassador, the illustrious Marquis Saluzzo. "Immediately on the messenger's arrival," she says, "I received and welcomed him, and in obedience to your wishes I wrote to His Holiness and to the illustrious duke my brother in strong and explicit terms. Having finished my letters, I gave the messenger orders to use all expedition, and to return as soon as possible. Beyond this I have no further news to inform you of." The letter is signed, "Your most obedient servant and daughter, Lucrezia Estense de Borgia."

Another letter in the library at Modena is from Alexander VI. to his daughter. Though

of only a few lines it is a singular compound of Spanish, Italian, and Latin words jumbled into the same sentence, and that without any particular import or idea of quotation. It is simply addressed to his dear daughter. He merely says that her letter, which he duly received, had given him great pleasure to find her in good health. "We, by the grace of God and His glorious mother, are quite well (*estamo molto bene*). I also inform you that I have received your letter by the hands of our nuncio, concerning the affairs of Ceuto and Pieve, on which I will communicate my answers to your ambassador (*ali toy Embaxatori*), and you may be certain that we think day and night in what way we can augment and benefit your condition." This letter was written from Civita Castellana, and signed, "Alexander, Pp. VI., manu ppra."

Lucrezia appears to have received considerable benefit from her residence at Belriguardo, and, the time of her expected accouchement approaching, it was considered desirable for her to return

to Ferrara, where everything was prepared for the coming event. Great as were the hopes entertained, they were doomed to be disappointed, Lucrezia having in the commencement of September been confined of a dead child, greatly to the sorrow of her husband and father-in-law. Alfonso remained in the castle with his wife till she had nearly recovered, and he then left her for Urbino, which he visited on some political affairs. Lucrezia, however, had hardly recovered from the effects of her confinement when she was again attacked by low fever. She was now too weak to be removed to Belriguardo, and remained in the castle under the care of the duke's physician, Dr. Ludovico Carri. The disease seems to have resisted all the remedies, and Lucrezia's state of health was such as to create considerable uneasiness in the minds of Duke Ercole and the Pope, with whom he communicated on the subject. The only time that Alexander seems to have shown the slightest interest in the person or happiness of Lucrezia

since her marriage was on the receipt of the letter from Ferrara, informing him of the serious state of her health. Without delay he immediately ordered his own physician, Monsignore the Bishop of Venosa, to depart for Ferrara, where he was to arrive as speedily as possible. The worthy bishop to the letter followed the Pope's instructions, and travelling day and night reached Ferrara four days after he had received the Pope's orders. He immediately presented himself at the castle, where he had a short interview with the Duke of Ferrara, who afterwards conducted him into Lucrezia's chamber. It is said that there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and the scene which now occurred in Lucrezia's chamber might almost be brought forward in proof of the statement. An altercation took place between the doctors which fully equalled that so graphically described by Le Sage, between Dr. Sangrado and his rival in "Gil Blas." Dr. Ludovico* Carri was a practi-

* Frizzi.

tioner of the pure antiphlogistic Sangrado school, and adopted the warm water and bleeding theory to its fullest extent; while, on the contrary, the bishop seems to have had equal faith in the stimulating treatment at present adopted in fever cases.

At the moment of the bishop's entrance into the sick-room, he found Lucrezia propped up with pillows on her bed, a bandage on her arm, and Dr. Carri, lancet in hand, on the point of bleeding her. The bishop rushed forward and seized Carri's hand, when a violent dispute, in presence of the patient, took place between them.* The bishop openly accused Carri of an attempt to murder his patient, while the Ferrarese, on his part, maintained that there would not exist the slightest hope of Lucrezia's recovery, if bleeding were not allowed to take place. It was in vain that those present attempted to pacify the two doctors, each holding stoutly to his own opinion, and refusing to listen to the arguments of his

* *Avviene un gran lite con Carri per un salasso che questo volle fare all' inferma.—Zambotto.*

opponent, while the patient remained helplessly in her bed, waiting till the two learned doctors should finish their dispute. Of this, however, there appeared no immediate probability, and Ercole took upon himself to interfere. Judging, possibly, from the certainty that, as hitherto, Carri's method of treatment had not been of the slightest benefit to Lucrezia, it would do as well to adopt another course, he ordered Carri to leave the room, placing Lucrezia under the care of the bishop. The latter immediately reversed all Carri's treatment. The bandage was taken off his patient's arm, and, instead of bleeding and warm water, he prescribed a generous diet, and in the end Lucrezia recovered. Alfonso, when he heard of the danger his wife was in, had returned to Ferrara, though on the day of the bishop's arrival he was absent from the castle. He was overjoyed at the improvement Lucrezia rapidly made after she had been placed under the care of the bishop, and, by way of hastening her cure, he made many vows to Santa Maria.

Dolorata, to whose altar in Loretto, after his wife's recovery, he made a pilgrimage.

In the commencement of the year 1503, Pietro Bembo, afterwards cardinal, visited Ferrara, and took up his abode in the Casa Strozzi. It is stated that, at the time of the marriage festivities, he quitted Venice, where he was then residing, to pay a visit to Ferrara, where seeing Lucrezia, he fell desperately in love with her. Beyond bare rumour, there is not the slightest proof of a circumstance of the kind, or that he ever saw Lucrezia till 1503, when he was first introduced to her by the Strozzi. The connexion between Lucrezia and Bembo has been frequently brought forward against her as a proof that, during her union with Alfonso, her life was not always passed in as strictly virtuous a manner as it ought to have been, and that a criminal intrigue existed between her and the future cardinal; and they point to her letters, at present in the Ambrosian library of Milan, in proof of the truth of their statement. Her ad-

mirers, on the contrary, maintain there is nothing whatever in these letters which might not have been written by a perfectly virtuous woman, especially when due allowance is made for the manners and habits of the times she lived in, and the licence then accorded to married women. Few married women in those days, in any position in society, were without their *cavaliere servente*, and even those who had sufficient regard for their reputation to abstain from a follower of this kind, permitted themselves an amount of liberty in their conversation with gentlemen which would hardly pass current without a reproof in the present day. We have already mentioned the supper given by Isabella of Mantua—a woman against whose name not a breath of scandal was ever uttered—to Monsignore della Rocca Berti, the French ambassador, during the festivities in honour of Lucrezia's arrival in Ferrara. Zambotto tells us that during the meal the conversation was carried on with many loving words, and, the supper over,

the marchioness, accompanied by two of her young ladies, conducted the ambassador to her chamber, and there remained with him for more than an hour in secret conversation, and then lovingly, and with many gracious words and acts, drew from her hands the gloves she had on, and presented them to the ambassador.*

Platonic affections between married ladies and gentlemen, without scandal arising therefrom, were common in Italy even before the time of Lucrezia Borgia, as witness the loves of Petrarch and Laura, as well as others mentioned in Italian mediæval history. Certainly if any love existed in the breast of Lucrezia for Pietro Bembo, and the oft-quoted letters in the Ambrosian library are brought forward in proof, the language in which a profligate woman expressed her adul-

* *E fatta la cena con l'intervenzione di molte parole amoroze, e atti suavissimi e accostumati. . . . Finalmente ed egli stetti quasi per un ora in diversi colloqui segreti, e poi amorosamente con accomodate parole, e atti gli dono li suoi guanti (che) avea in mano quali accetto il signor oratore con riverenza e amore.*

terous love for a man was very different from that, judging from many of our modern novels, in use in the present day. In the whole of the letters from Lucrezia to Bembo there is not one line which, apart from her being the wife of another man, can really be objected to, with the exception of one or two expressions, which, as before stated, may admit of an equivocal interpretation, but which, her detractors insist, contain an indelicate allusion.

The first letter was addressed "*Al mio magnifico Misser Pietro Bembo,*" and she heads it, "*Misser Pietro mio cordialissimo.*"

The first letter is remarkable merely for some pious allusions in it, which would have been totally out of place in a communication from a profligate woman to her lover, and is merely signed "*La vostra Duchessa di Ferrara.*" The second is also without interest. The third is one of those against which the accusations are founded. She says in it that with singular pleasure and consolation she had received his letter. She thanks

him for it, though on the other hand she is pained at the disappointment he has experienced in not having received a letter signed "ff." To ease his disquietude she sends him a few lines in her own handwriting, which she hopes will afford some consolation to his mind, and that she shall always be disposed to assist him by every means in her power. The letter is dated 28th March, but without the year, and terminates, *Desiderosa gratificarvi.*

In this letter the two mysterious letters or monograms "ff" are certainly difficult to understand, as the only two letters in which she signs herself with this monogram contain in them nothing whatever any more than a vain woman, as Lucrezia Borgia certainly was, would write to a person whose admiration she wished to retain. The first contains some very warm expressions of attachment or strong friendship, certainly to the extreme point that a platonic love would go, though hardly overstepping the limit. The other is in Spanish, in which she acknowledges the

receipt of his letter and regrets his illness, which prevented him writing before, and for which she felt great sorrow. Knowing his great wish to receive letters from her hand, she writes a few lines. She begs him especially to have great care of his health, and to inform her by the bearer of that letter of the improvement he was then making. These two letters are the only ones with the mysterious monograms affixed on them. The others are signed with her name. Another of her letters is also in Spanish, which, however, contains not one objectionable line or sentiment, and the three remaining are equally unobjectionable. The last, perhaps, is curious as being written as late as the month of August, 1517, two years before her death, showing that their intimacy could not have continued for less than fifteen years. In it she goes on in a half serious, half joking style to make excuses for her neglect in not having sooner answered his last letter. She tells him that, knowing that the pleasure of anticipation was considered equal to

the reality—unfortunately it often proved more so—she had resolved to let him indulge in that pleasure, which, in addition to that he will feel when he receives her letter, will be so much greater than had she answered him immediately. She then goes on in the same half-jesting style, attempting to excuse herself for the tardiness of her reply. She concludes that after all it would be irregular in her to be both judge and advocate in her own case. She will place the ultimate judgment in the hands of His Eminence, and abide by his decision. “(Signed) Duchessa de Ferrara.” A portion of the address at the back of the letter is destroyed, but the words * * * *etro Bembo mio carissimo*, are distinguishable, and beneath it, in another handwriting, evidently Bembo’s, is the date 7th August, 1517.

In looking carefully over these letters, the impression they give is, that they were written by a woman holding a pure platonic affection for some individual. There is hardly a sentence in them—perhaps not one—that might

not be written from an affectionate sister to her brother. Judged by our modern ideas of propriety one or two of them may certainly be considered as highly imprudent, but in Italy, in the sixteenth century, they would hardly have been criticized so severely.

The question of the lock of hair, at present in the Ambrosian library, in the same case with Bembo's letters, has still to be considered. The received opinion is, that it is a lock of hair given by Lucrezia to Bembo. How far this may be true would be, in the present day, a very difficult question to answer. Certainly but little doubt has hitherto been placed on the subject. It is true that at the time the letters were discovered among the manuscripts of the library, the lock of hair was found with them; and very naturally the conclusion arrived at is, that it was one of the tresses belonging to the writer of the letters. At the same time there was no writing on the envelope containing the lock of hair, nor is the slightest allusion made to it in any of the

letters. While Lucrezia's enemies bring forward this lock of hair as conclusive evidence that a criminal intrigue had been carried on between herself and Bembo, some of her admirers have gone so far as to dispute that the lock of hair even belonged to Lucrezia. They advance that Bembo's reputation, during his residence in Venice, as well as that which he brought with him to Ferrara in the year 1503, was that of a great admirer of the fair sex; and the number of his conquests—real or imaginary—was stated to be very great. Why, then, they argue, should not the lock of hair have been given to Bembo by some other lady? True, the colour of the hair somewhat resembles that of Lucrezia's; at the same time, whether natural or dyed, that colour was common in the Ferrarese and Venetian districts of that day. There is no proof whatever, they maintain, to show that the tress of hair in question was given to Bembo by Lucrezia more than by some other of the many ladies he had admired. In fact, long before his acquaintance with Lucrezia

Borgia he had admired and written in terms of great affection of a lady having yellow hair.

Another and stronger argument has been adduced against the lock of hair having been the gift of Lucrezia, and that is, that the colour considerably differs from the description given of Lucrezia's hair by writers of the day. All of them, without exception, speak of the golden tinge (at least, those who do not speak positively of her golden hair), while the colour of the tress in the library at Milan is of a pale, dead yellow hue, without the slightest tinge of gold in it. One enthusiastic admirer of Lucrezia states there was in it an unpleasant greenish tinge, plainly perceptible to the eye of an artist. Others go so far as to say that the absence of gloss or brilliancy in the colour leads one to suspect that it was cut from the head of a corpse. Whether Lucrezia's detractors or admirers be in the right, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, that the lock of hair is there; it is placed with the letters as a proof of its authenticity, and tra-

dition has so firmly established the fact, that it would appear almost useless in the present day to doubt it.

But a far better proof that the intimacy between Lucrezia and Bembo was not of a criminal description, is afforded by the behaviour of Bembo on the occasion. Like most other Italians of the day, he made no secret of his conquests. Yet, with one solitary exception—and that in confidence to his friend Ercole Strozzi—he never seems to have mentioned to any one his love for Lucrezia. Even that he made Strozzi a confidant has been disputed ; and that remark made by Bembo to Strozzi, appearing to bear on the subject, related to another woman. Bembo was a voluminous correspondent, and an enormous number of his letters—both diplomatic and friendly—are still extant. In many of the letters he mentions the name of the Duchess of Ferrara, yet not in a single instance does he do so without speaking of her in terms of profound respect and admiration. His dedication to the Asolani

has already been spoken of as a proof that his admiration and respect for her were both on the highest footing. Nor is there a single instance ever quoted in which, even with his most intimate friends, he ever let drop an expression concerning Lucrezia, other than might be used when speaking of any lady whose reputation in every respect was beyond suspicion.

It is only fair, however, when deciding whether Lucrezia's intimacy with Bembo was criminal or otherwise, to inquire into the tone of his letters to her. Of these there are no fewer than six-and-twenty extant, and in the whole of that number there is not to be found one objectionable expression. Nor are they written in a warmer tone than that in which he was in the habit of addressing other ladies of celebrity with whom he was on intimate terms, and whose reputations were unblemished. If the language was occasionally somewhat inflated, nothing can be gathered from them that the slightest improper intimacy ever existed between him and Lucrezia. Of that great

test of love, jealousy, he does not exhibit the least particle, although he must have known at the time that Lucrezia was greatly beloved by all who knew her. So far, indeed, to the contrary, that once, in sending a letter to her by the hand of Ercole Strozzi, "he trusts that she will give him as kind and warm a reception as if he had himself been the bearer of a letter to her from Strozzi." Again, there is far more of gratitude than of love in Bembo's letters to Lucrezia, which may be accounted for from the patronage and kindness she showed him when he arrived in Ferrara. Bembo was about twenty-eight years of age when he first made Lucrezia's acquaintance, and was then in the suite of a Venetian gentleman who had been appointed as ambassador to the court of Duke Ercole. Bembo's reputation as a man of learning was well known, and his society much courted by the Ferrarese nobles as well as by Alfonso of Este and his wife Lucrezia, who frequently invited him to the palace and treated him with the greatest

hospitality. Bembo, in speaking of Alfonso, describes him as a nobleman full of courage and intelligence.

Bembo had been but a short time in Ferrara when he was attacked with fever. During his illness, which was a long and painful one, Lucrezia frequently visited him and sent her own physician to attend him. In the first letter he wrote to her, dated August 2nd, 1502, he speaks very touchingly of the kindness and interest she had taken in him, and describes the soothing effect her presence had on him at the time when his spirits were at the lowest. In a letter written to her September 23, 1505, congratulating her on the birth of her son, which he hopes will compensate her for the disappointment she had received the year before, he says,—“Praise be to the Lord, who always benignantly listens to the prayers of those who address him with a sincere heart.” In his letters he also generally sends messages to Alfonso, thereby clearly proving that the duke was perfectly cognizant of a

correspondence existing between Bembo and Lucrezia.*

On September 27, 1514, he writes her a letter thanking her for a cap (*cufiotto*) and some other presents she had made him. He says,—“ I kiss your Excellency’s hands, and will leave to the courtesy of Monsignore di M. Latino, nuncio of His Holiness, to make my excuses for my long silence, and also to return you my sincere thanks for the cap you were so kind as to send me, and also to speak in my name on other subjects. I do this because he will be able to speak more eloquently than I could write, and my neglect of your kindness renders a skilful advocate necessary to excuse me.” He concludes his letter by

* The following are examples of Bembo’s method of subscribing himself to Lucrezia :—

August 2, 1502. *Perche faro fine raccomandomivi.*

November 2, 1503. *Alla cui buona grazia bascio la mano.*

October 3, 1504. *A vostra Sig^{ra}. Illustrissima bascio la mano.*

December 4, 1505. *In questo mezzo raccomandomivi e reveremente la mano basciandomi.*

saying, — “To the kind consideration of your Excellency I earnestly recommend myself.”

In this letter he also sends a respectful message to Duke Alfonso, again proving that the friendship existing between Bembo and Lucrezia was with the perfect knowledge and consent of her husband. There are many other letters written by Bembo to different ladies, in all of which is used the same free, yet respectful, phraseology. Those to Isabella Gonzaga, Marchioness of Mantua, are fully as freely expressed as those he wrote to Lucrezia; and others addressed to Veronica Gambara, of Correggio, are even more warmly worded. Yet it would be difficult to name a lady of more unblemished reputation. Veronica was the wife of Giberto, Lord of Correggio, who died a few years after their marriage, leaving her a young widow, with two sons, Ippolito and Gerolamo, the latter of whom entered the priesthood, and subsequently became a cardinal. Bembo, it appears, for some time resided at her house, as tutor to her children, and

had therefore far more frequent opportunities of being in her society than he had with Lucrezia. Yet no one has ever accused her of carrying her intimacy with Bembo beyond the bounds of propriety.

Before Bembo became acquainted with Lucrezia, he seems to have been greatly enamoured of a beautiful Venetian girl. His intimacy with her continued during his acquaintance with Lucrezia. The date of the girl's death is unknown, but most probably it occurred about the year 1505, two years after Bembo quitted Ferrara. Judging from many of his letters to her, which are still extant, he seems to have entertained a sincere and warm affection for this girl. Some of the sonnets he wrote to her memory are exceedingly beautiful, and by many—even among the Italians—are considered fully equal to any of Petrarch's. As a specimen of amatory correspondence, many of his letters to this girl are very beautiful, mixing with the most ardent expressions of love a gentle and delicate tone

which totally relieves them from the just accusation of indelicacy, or at any rate too much warmth of expression, to be found in much of his amatory correspondence. Again, long before Bembo had terminated his correspondence with Lucrezia, which, it is supposed, did not cease till her death, in the year 1519, he was deeply attached to a woman known as the Morisina, who resided with him as his wife, in his palace at Padua, and by whom he had several children.

Altogether, if the extent to which the intimacy between Lucrezia Borgia and Bembo was carried cannot be thoroughly cleared up, at least there is sufficient reason to believe that, not merely judging from the respectable tenor of her life, but from the circumstances in her favour which have been adduced, nothing more than a warm friendship existed between them, which friendship was not only known to but permitted by Lucrezia's husband, who, judging from the general tenor of his life, was not a man to allow his honour to be injured with impunity.

CHAPTER IV.

LUCREZIA DOMICILED IN FERRARA—(*continued.*)

Death of Alexander VI.—Obscurity respecting its Cause—His Character—Roscoe—Fuller—Decay of the Fortunes of the Borgia Family—Cesare Borgia—Julius II.—Lucrezia's Sorrow for her Brother's Misfortune—Implores the Intercession of Francesco Gonzaga in his favour.

ON 12th August, in the year 1503, Lucrezia lost her father, Pope Alexander VI. Like most other circumstances connected with this pontiff, there exists a vast amount of obscurity as to the manner of his death, so much so, in fact, that it is almost impossible to come to any settled conclusion on the subject. Of the many who have written respecting it, the two most worthy of credence, not only from their official position enabling them to judge, but from their matter-of-fact style, are Marin Sanuto and Bur-

chard. These totally disagree on the subject. Sanuto gives a most circumstantial and minute description of the Pope's death, few ever accusing him of any intentional want of veracity—a virtue hardly attributable to Burchard.

“The death of Pope Alexander VI.,” Sanuto says, “occurred in the following manner. The Cardinal Datary Arian de Corneto, having one morning received a message from the Pontiff, stating that he intended, in company with his son Cesare, the Duke of Valentinois, that evening to pay the cardinal a visit and to sup with him, and that they would bring their supper with them, was terrified at the intelligence, being fully impressed with the conviction that His Holiness or his son intended poisoning him in order to possess his treasure, the said cardinal being very rich. Thinking rapidly over the matter, he saw but one means of saving his life. He immediately sent to the head-carver of the Pope, requesting he would oblige him by visiting him as soon as possible. The carver obeyed the request,

and the cardinal, having conducted him to a private room, placed in his hand ten golden ducats, which he requested the said carver to accept as a proof of the love he bore him. After many objections and simulated repugnance, the carver accepted the gift, stating he did so from obedience to the orders of his Eminence. The cardinal then, finding the carver willing to lend a ready ear to anything he might say, addressed him in the following manner:—‘ You perfectly well know the intentions of the Pope, and that he and his son, the Duke of Valentinois, have determined that I shall die by poison, which will be administered to me this evening, and I now humbly beg of you to spare my life.’ ”

After some demur, stimulated doubtless by the promise of reward on the part of the cardinal, “ the carver told him the manner in which it had been agreed between them that the poison should be administered. After supper was over he had been ordered to place on the table three boxes of confectionery, one of which was to be

placed before the Pope, another before the cardinal, and the third before the Duke of Valentinois, taking care to place the one containing the poison before his Excellency. The cardinal begged and implored the said carver to change the manner the confectioneries were to be placed on the table, so that the one containing the poison should be put before the Pope, that he might eat of it and die. The carver at first was horrified at the suggestion, but on the cardinal offering him 10,000 ducats in gold as a reward, he relented, and agreed that the box of poisoned sweetmeats should be placed before the Pope.

“ In the evening of the same day the Pope, accompanied by the duke, arrived at the palace of his Eminence, who, as soon as His Holiness had seated himself, flung himself on the ground before him and kissed his feet. Then with most affectionate words he begged His Holiness would grant him a favour, saying he would never rise from his knees should His Holiness refuse to oblige him. Surprised at the extreme earnest-

ness of the cardinal, the Pope asked him to rise from his knees and explain his request. The cardinal, however, persisting, the Pope was surprised at the perseverance of his Eminence, and promised to grant him any request he might make. The cardinal then rose from his knees and said, 'It is not respectful that, when the lord honours his servant with a visit, his servant should eat at the same table with his lord, and the favour I ask of you is just and honest. It is that you will allow me during your repast to wait on you as your servant.' His Holiness, to please the cardinal, granted his request. After the supper was over, the cardinal placed on the table the boxes of sweetmeats, having first received information from the carver which was the one containing the poison, and that the cardinal placed before the Pope, who, under the impression that the one before him did not contain the poisoned sweetmeats, ate of them gaily, and of the other, which he believed contained the poison, the Pope pressed the cardinal to

eat, who obeyed him without hesitation. Shortly after His Holiness had departed he fell ill, and the next morning died ; while the cardinal, who still having some fear that the sweetmeats he had eaten might have been poisoned, took an emetic, and thus escaped the danger with which he had been threatened."

Burchard* informs us that the Pope was attacked by a fever on August 12, 1503, and on the sixteenth he was bled, the disorder seeming to become tertian. On the seventeenth he took medicine, but the following day he became so ill that his life was despaired of. He then received the viaticum during mass, which was celebrated in his chamber, at which five cardinals assisted. In the evening extreme unction was administered to him, and a few minutes afterwards he died. Muratori has produced many authorities to show that the death of Alexander was not occasioned by poison. Among them,

* Quoted from Roscoe's "Life of Leo X."

that of Beltrando Costabile, then ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara at Rome, seems to be the most decisive. "The Court of Ferrara," adds Muratori, "which was then the residence of the daughter of Alexander, may be presumed to have been well informed of the cause of his death."

Certainly no Ferrarese writers appear to have had the slightest suspicion that Alexander died by poison, which would doubtless have been the case, had his death occurred from any cause other than a natural one. That poisoning was frequent in the Middle Ages in Italy there can be no doubt, yet it was by no means carried to the extent generally believed. It is absurd to imagine that where the science of medicine was in so developed a condition as it was in Italy during the fifteenth century, the science of poisoning could have arrived at the refinement and perfection accorded to it. That persons accused of poisoning, as well as of witchcraft, did, under the torture of the rack, frequently admit their guilt, is certain. At the same time many of the

confessions of guilt extorted from criminals accused of poisoning were as utterly incredible as those of witchcraft. A case in point is that of the Untori, who admitted that during the plague in Milan, they had communicated the plague to the inhabitants of the city by rubbing it on the walls of the cathedral, and on the pavement of the chambers. There are besides many other cases of a similar description. Doubtless many persons who were imagined to have died from poison were merely victims to attacks of sporadic diseases, or some similar causes, arising from defective ventilation and bad sanitary regulations. Any one at all acquainted with the science of medicine, and who has visited any of the houses of the Italian nobility which were built so recently as the last century, can easily imagine how frequently deaths might have occurred from malignant fevers, which, in the state of medical ignorance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, would give good grounds for believing that the patients had died from the effects of poison.

There is no record left us to show in what manner Lucrezia received the intelligence of her father's death. Possibly little real affection existed between them. Indeed, it would have been difficult even for a daughter to love or respect such a man. There seems hardly an imaginable crime he had not either committed or allowed to be perpetrated with impunity—nay, even with reward, if it tended either to his own interest or that of any member of his family. Never was murder so common in Rome as during his pontificate, and the victims were often those whose sole provocations were that their virtues were obnoxious to the vices of their murderers. Had Guicciardini, Pontano, and Sannazzaro alone painted Alexander VI. as a monster, insatiable in his lust, inordinate in his avarice and cruelty, and unforgiving and relentless to all who had offended him, some doubt might have been thrown on their veracity. The first of these three writers, a strong partisan of the house of Medici, would not have been likely

to spare their inveterate enemy, and the two latter, justly indignant at the infamous treachery of the pontiff to the house of Aragon, heaped on him and his family such an amount of abuse—and that of so scurrilous a description—as to throw great doubts over their statements. But no impartial writer of any weight has been found bold or dishonest enough to attempt a direct defence of the character of Alexander VI. Singularly enough, perhaps, among the authors worthy of attention, the one who has gone furthest in his attempts to offer some palliation for his conduct, is our own historian, Roscoe. In his *Life and Pontificate of Leo X.*, when speaking of Alexander VI., after quoting several criticisms unfavourable to the pontiff, he says,

“ It may justly be observed that the vices of Alexander were accompanied—although not compensated for—by many great qualities, which in the consideration of his character ought not to be passed over in silence. Nor if this were not the fact would it be possible to account for the

peculiar good fortune which attended him to the latest period of his life, or for the singular circumstance recorded of him, that during the whole of his Pontificate no popular tumult ever endangered his authority or disturbed his repose. Even by his severest adversaries he is allowed to have been a man of elevated genius, of a wonderful memory, eloquent, vigilant, and dexterous in the management of all his concerns. The constant supply of the city of Rome was an object of his unceasing attention, and during his Pontificate his dominions were exempt from that famine which devastated the rest of Italy. In his diet he was peculiarly temperate; and he accustomed himself to but little sleep. In those hours which he devoted to amusement, he seemed wholly to forget the affairs of state; but he never suffered those amusements to diminish the vigour of his faculties, which remained unimpaired to the last. Though not much devoted to the study of literature, Alexander was munificent towards its professors, to whom he not

only granted liberal salaries, but with a punctuality very uncommon among the princes of that period, he took care that those salaries should be paid. That he for some time attended the representations of the comedies of Plautus, has been placed in the black catalogue of his defects; but if his mind had been more harmonized by the cultivation of polite letters, he might, instead of being degraded almost below humanity, have stood high in the scale of positive excellence. To the encouragement of the arts he paid a more particular attention. The palace of the Vatican was enlarged by him, and many of the apartments were ornamented with the works of the most eminent painters of the time; among whom may be particularized Torrigiano, Baldassare, Perrizzi, and Bernadino Penturicchio. As an architect, his chief favourites were Giuliano and Antonio di San Gallo; nor does his choice in this respect detract from his judgment. By their assistance the mole of Hadrian, now called the Castle of St.

Angelo, was fortified in the manner it yet remains.”

Certainly few writers have treated the memory of Alexander VI. with so much respect. Even of those professors of literature of whom Roscoe speaks, none ever went so far in his defence; and this is the more remarkable when it is remembered what fulsome adulation literary men of the period were wont to bestow on their patrons, no matter how false it might have been. Even many of Roscoe's statements respecting the quiet and abundance existing in Rome are hardly borne out by facts. That disturbances were comparatively rare is possible; but when we remember the extreme severity with which the slightest expressions of hostile—or even discontented—feeling were punished, that is hardly to be wondered at. We have seen that, during the festivities which took place on the occasion of Lucrezia's marriage, one unfortunate man, who only pointed his finger at Cesare Borgia, though he said nothing, was thrown into prison, and his

finger amputated. Another, who used a similar gesture, accompanied by a disrespectful remark, had not only his finger amputated, but his tongue cut out. A young Venetian nobleman, in a private letter he wrote home, drew a comparison between the misery existing among the poor of Rome and the lavish expenditure of the papal court. A spy gave information, the youth was imprisoned, and then by the order of Cesare Borgia murdered, and his body thrown into the Tiber. With such examples of severity before their eyes—with a powerful guard under the orders of so ruthless a miscreant as Cesare Borgia—and with spies in every house, it is little to be wondered at if political disturbances were of but rare occurrence.

Again, it would be difficult to understand how, if “Alexander’s mind had been more humanized by the cultivation of polite letters he might have stood high in the scale of positive excellence.” If, as the head of the Christian Church, and as such no doubt a liberal scholar, he would have been

less cruel and profligate had he been better acquainted with classical literature, is difficult indeed to understand. Of his religious opinions it would be impossible to form any just opinion. In one portion of his creed he certainly appears to have had a profound conviction—the close affinity between the temporal and spiritual power of the popedom. He had also an unswerving reliance on his own infallibility as head of the Church, his unlimited powers of absolution, and his right “to bind and to loose” at his own discretion. One singular feature in his belief of the power of a Pope to make evil his good may be shown in his recognition of his illegitimate children. Before he was raised to the dignity of Cardinal he appears to have kept his amours sufficiently concealed from the public eye to show he had some idea of decency. When Cardinal he was less circumspect, and when Pope he seems to have thrown off all disguise and openly acknowledged his children. As Thomas Fuller, the eccentric prebendary of Sarum, in his

“Holy and Profane State” says, “This Alexander was the first of the Popes who openly owned his bastards, and whereas his predecessors, counting fig-leaves better than nothing to cover their nakedness, disguised them under the names of nephews and godsons, he was such a savage in depravity as openly to acknowledge his base children.” Roscoe mentions a singular instance of Alexander’s patronage of the fine arts, which seems clearly to prove how utterly degraded was both his sense of decency and his respect due to sacred subjects. In a picture he commissioned the artist Pinturicchio to paint, a certain Julia Farnese, sister to the Cardinal and a lady whose reputation was by no means without reproach, is represented in the sacred character of the Virgin, whilst Alexander himself appears as supreme pontiff paying her the tribute of his adoration.

With the death of Alexander VI., with the exception of the fortunate marriage of his daughter Lucrezia to so honourable a man as Alfonso of Este, the fortunes of the house of

Borgia were wrecked, hardly bearing out the compliment paid to him by Roscoe, that had it not been for some good qualities possessed by that pontiff it would be impossible to account for the peculiar good fortune which attended him to the latest period of his life. On the contrary, never were fortunes founded on a more unstable basis than those that formed the groundwork of the general policy of Alexander VI. The man appears to have had but one redeeming point in his character, and that was his love for his family and his desire for the welfare of his children, though this qualification was again spoiled by the unscrupulous villainy he exhibited in his method of obtaining their advancement. Instead of Alexander building the fortunes of his family on a sure basis, the house built by a child with a pack of cards could not have been more fragile. The finger of Providence seems to have been clearly distinguishable in the events which followed his death. At the time of his father's decease, Cesare Borgia, his

beloved son, was labouring under an acute fit of illness which confined him to his bed. This malady is supposed to have been caused by a portion of the same poison which is said to have been administered to his father ; Cesare having unconsciously eaten from the same box of sweetmeats, and not suspecting any danger, had omitted to carry out the advice of Macchiavelli to have always an antidote by him. More probably Cesare Borgia was at the time suffering from the effects of some fever. Ill as he was, however, he showed himself sufficiently alive to the difficulty of his position, and saw the necessity for immediate action. Being unable from his indisposition to leave the house, he sent one of his emissaries with several armed attendants to the palace, with orders to take possession of it and not to allow any one to enter. Some opposition was at first offered by one of the cardinals who was the Pope's treasurer, but Cesare's myrmidons without hesitation threatened to strangle him and throw his body into the Tiber if he

did not immediately deliver to them the keys of the Pope's treasure-chests and all the valuables in his possession. The cardinal, perhaps knowing full well that those acting under the command of Cesare Borgia seldom made a threat of the kind without carrying it into execution, gave up possession of the whole of the money which had been lodged in his hands, amounting to some ten thousand ducats. Roscoe mentions a singular feature in Cesare Borgia's behaviour, as tending to prove how little either of love or affection he bore for his father, notwithstanding all the benefits he had received at his hands, and the indisputable proofs of affection which the Pope had lavished on him. Not once during his illness did Cesare Borgia visit the old man, although he showed by his alertness in seizing his father's treasure almost the moment he had expired, that he was perfectly well aware of the mortal illness under which he laboured.

After his father's death, and apart from the eagerness he showed to possess his treasure,

Cesare Borgia appears to have conducted himself in a very politic manner. Although at the time he had under his command a powerful body of soldiers, composed of the most unscrupulous ruffians and hirelings that Italy could furnish, he behaved with extraordinary humility and courtesy to the Sacred College, pledging himself to abide by their wishes in every particular. The result was that a treaty was concluded between them, in which Cesare Borgia bound himself to protect the College from all attacks that might be made on it, under the condition that he should receive their patronage and support in return. But Cesare had enemies to contend with of a very different class from the cardinals. The barons of the Roman States, whom Alexander, for the advancement of his son Cesare, had so unscrupulously deprived of their estates, now took up arms to recover them. Cesare, finding their opposition becoming formidable, attempted by all means in his power to conciliate them, but with very little success. The Colonna

and Orsini families, the two most powerful of the barons, uniting together, made a compact that neither should enter into any terms of friendship with Cesare Borgia.

Some desperate riots now took place between the soldiers in the pay of the Roman barons and their adherents and Cesare's mercenaries, during which both sides seem principally to have exerted themselves in attacking and pillaging the dwellings of those opposed to them. So strong was the feeling of those against him, that Cesare found it would be impossible to continue the dispute, and he applied to the Sacred College to arbitrate between him and his enemies. A negotiation suggested by the College was entered into, by which it was agreed that Cesare should be allowed to quit the Ecclesiastical States, together with his followers, ammunition, and baggage train, and that he should be allowed to retain his territories in the Romagna. Three days were given him to quit the city; while the leaders of the Colonna and Orsini factions also

engaged to leave Rome, and not to approach within ten miles of the city till the new Pope should be elected. After the election of Pius III., Cesare Borgia returned to Rome, and the disputes between him and the Orsini and Colonna families, as well as many other barons, again burst out with even greater fury than before, both parties seeming to indulge in the most unbridled licence. For this they had still further scope, in consequence of the death of the new Pope (who had assumed the name of Pius III.) in twenty-six days after his election to the Papal throne, leaving Rome in the usual state of anarchy under which it habitually suffered till the election of a new pontiff. Notwithstanding the desperate manner in which he resisted the attacks made upon him, Cesare could not shut his eyes to the fact that the fortune of war was turning against him. He withdrew his soldiers from the city and shut himself up in the Castle of St. Angelo, with six of the cardinals with whom he remained friends, while many of

the barons whom Alexander VI. had deprived of their territories returned to them again, and among them the Duke of Urbino, and the Lords of Pessaro, Camarino, Piombino, and Sinigaglia. Still, however, Cesare was not without friends, for several of the cities in the Romagna remained faithful to him, although this has been accounted for rather from the strict administration of justice by those he had placed as their governors, than from any affection for Cesare himself.

A new Pope, Julius II., was now elected, in whom Cesare Borgia met a far more dangerous opponent than Pius III. would have proved had he continued to live. Never had the Papal throne been occupied by a more politic, vindictive, or warlike sovereign than Julius II. One of his first measures was to maintain intact the territories of the Church; and by way of securing the fidelity of the cities of Romagna, he determined to visit his old ally the King of France, and for that purpose he contrived to quit Rome

and reach Ostia, where he had already engaged a ship to convey him to Marseilles. The Pope, however, was fully as shrewd and active as Cesare Borgia himself, who was seized and made prisoner the day prior to his intended embarkment, and was afterwards confined as a prisoner in the Torre Borgia. Here fresh negotiations were entered into between Cesare and the Pope, in which both parties seem to have tried which could outwit the other. Whether the Pope was naturally the more cunning of the two, or whether Cesare Borgia, in consequence of the long illness from which he had been suffering, had not his faculties as fully under control as formerly, it would be difficult to say, but certainly in every move of the game of duplicity played by such adepts, Cesare was a loser. A treaty was entered into between the Pope and Borgia, in which it was agreed that the latter should be liberated as soon as the governors had ceded to the Pope the cities in the Romagna which Cesare held. Several of them

having obeyed the orders he had sent them to deliver up the cities to the Pope, Cesare received permission to proceed to France. But although he had formerly wished to visit that country, he had now greatly modified his views on the subject, and without giving information to the Pope, he hired some Spanish galleys, intending to proceed to Naples. Unfortunately for him the person whom he had chosen to command the galleys was secretly a creature of the Pope's, and immediately Cesare had left the Torre Borgia, and set his foot on one of the galleys he had collected in the port of Ostia, he was seized by the Pope's emissaries, and the galleys having been placed under the command of his old enemy Colonna, Cesare was sent a prisoner to Spain, where he was by orders of the king confined in the Castle of Medina del Campo.

It can hardly be imagined that these family misfortunes passed over Lucrezia without causing her great sorrow. Although Sanuto and others seem to consider, from the manner in which he

had robbed her of the duchy of Simonetta, and from other transactions equally dishonourable, that Cesare had but little affection for his sister, there can be no doubt that Lucrezia was warmly attached to her brother, and the news which had reached her, not only that his hopes were ruined, but that he was now confined in a Spanish prison, was made more poignant by the contrast it afforded with his high position and hopes the preceding year. In a letter he wrote to her from Urbino,* dated July 2nd, 1502, and addressed Alla Ill^{ma}. Ex^{ma}. Signora Duchessa Donna Lucretia de Borgia da Este, Germana nostra carissima, he says—" Holding it for certain that there is no medicine more efficacious and salubrious for the present indisposition of your Excellency than to hear good and happy news, I now inform you that I have this moment received certain tidings of the capture of Camerino." He sincerely trusts the news will have a good effect upon her health,

* The original letter is in the library at Modena.

but if not he is certain that it will afford her pleasure. He further requests her to communicate the intelligence to the illustrious Signor Don Alfonso, her husband, and his much-loved brother-in-law, to whom at the present from press of business he is unable to write. This letter is signed—Your brother who loves you as he loves himself, Cesare. (*Fratello quanto come si medesimo l'ama,—Cesare.*)

There must have been a singular difference in Lucrezia's feelings at the time she received that letter, and when, a few months afterwards, she wrote to her brother-in-law the Marquis of Mantua, imploring him to use the influence of the Gonzaga family for the liberation of her brother Cesare, as well as to her friend and confidant the Marchioness Isabella, begging of her, from the love she knew Isabella bore her, to induce her husband to exert himself in Cesare's behalf.

To add to her troubles, her husband Alfonso was at that time absent from Ferrara. The poli-

tical complications of Italy were then exciting the attention of all Europe, and considerable agitation in all the principal courts was the result, which terminated in the league of Cambray. In bringing this about, Alfonso was one of the principal agents, and at the time of Cesare Borgia's ruin, he was absent at the court of the King of France on his political mission. Lucrezia also earnestly implored her husband to use his intercession in Cesare's behalf. The letter, however, does not appear to have reached him; or if it did, it must have placed him in a most embarrassing position. That he bore no love to Cesare Borgia may easily be believed; for with one exception—that of courage—it would have been impossible to find two men of tempers and dispositions more completely antagonistic. Cesare was cunning, cruel, subtle, and vindictive, and in every respect a true disciple of Macchiavelli; Alfonso, on the contrary, though demonstrative in his manner, was calm, honest, and inflexible in his determination, even to

obstinacy. Cesare Borgia would bend before any danger he saw approaching, or mould his policy to a form directly opposite to his own wishes—resolving the while to revenge himself on the first opportunity for the obligations which had been thrust upon him—proffering his solemn assurance to the truth of statements he knew to be false, and promising, under every pledge of honour and religion, to perform acts which at the time he had no intention of carrying out, but most probably of acting in a directly contrary manner. Alfonso, on the contrary, never gave a promise that he did not keep, even though he might have found an easy way to escape had he wished. It is hardly to be supposed that Alfonso, unless out of love to his wife, could have felt much interest in Cesare's fate; but even if he did exert himself in his behalf, no good effect seems to have attended his efforts, for there is nothing on record to show that the Most Christian King with any cordiality interested himself in Cesare's favour.

Again, it is probable that Alfonso did not receive Lucrezia's letter until long after it was written, for we find that after leaving the court of France he proceeded to that of the Archduke Charles, who was then residing at Brussels, and after remaining there for some time, quitted Brussels and proceeded to London, where he was for some time a guest at the court of King Henry VII.

The only reason—and certainly one not devoid of plausibility—for the belief that Alfonso intended interesting himself in behalf of Cesare Borgia, is the fact stated by Frizzi and others, that on quitting the court of Henry VII. he had resolved to take a journey into Spain. He was met, however, by a messenger who had arrived from Ferrara to inform him of the alarming state of health of Duke Ercole. Alfonso immediately relinquished his intended journey to Spain, and returned home, where he found not only that there was no hope of even the temporary recovery of his father, but that Lucrezia had had another miscarriage.

CHAPTER V.

LUCREZIA, DUCHESS OF FERRARA.

Death of Duke Ercole—Alfonso proclaimed Duke of Ferrara—Famine in Ferrara—Alfonso visits Venice to purchase Food—Lucrezia's Exertions to relieve the Miseries of the Poor—Governs in her Husband's Absence—Her Edict in Favour of the Jews—The Plague—Alfonso returns to Ferrara—Letters—Dangerous Conspiracy—Its Suppression—Death of Cesare Borgia—Lucrezia's Sorrow.

THE morning after the death of Duke Ercole, the twelve judges or *savij* in their robes, headed by the celebrated Tito Strozzi, carrying the Ducal staff of office and the sword of State, proceeded to the castle to salute Alfonso as Duke, and afterwards to conduct him to the cathedral, where the oaths usually taken by the Dukes of Ferrara on their accession to the dignity were to be administered to him. Having arrived in the great hall, they found Alfonso

dressed in a white robe, and with the ducal cap on his head, waiting to receive them. Strozzi addressed him in a speech of considerable eloquence, in which, after eulogizing in high terms the virtues of the deceased Duke Ercole, and dilating on the love and respect in which he was held by the citizens of Ferrara, he proceeded to express his own good fortune and that of his fellow citizens in having their sorrow mitigated by the satisfaction they felt in hailing his beloved son Don Alfonso as Duke of Ferrara. Alfonso briefly acknowledged the compliment, and then, preceding the judges, descended the staircase, where he found a number of the notables of Ferrara waiting in the courtyard to pay him their compliments. Alfonso mounted a richly caparisoned horse, and preceded by his chamberlain, Count Giulio Tassone, and escorted on one side by his brother, the Cardinal Ippolito, on the other by the Venetian Ambassador, and followed by the twelve judges, headed by Strozzi — after whom came a brilliant train of

noblemen — proceeded through a heavy fall of snow to the cathedral. On arriving at the entrance gates, a baldacchino was brought out, under which Alfonso placed himself, and the company, still in procession, continued onwards till they arrived at the grand altar, near which a throne had been prepared for the duke, on which he took his seat while the preliminary ceremonies were gone through. These being ended, a cushion was brought forward, on which Alfonso knelt, and the oath being administered to him, the whole cortége left the cathedral in the same order in which it had entered it, and returned to the castle, where Alfonso found Lucrezia waiting to welcome him.

Preparations were now made for the funeral of Duke Ercole, which was carried out with great magnificence, Alfonso being possibly actuated by the wish to show the world the great respect he entertained for his father, and not by any personal love of ostentation. Besides the magnificent funeral procession and the different

ceremonies attending the interment of the corpse, Alfonso signalized the event by liberating all prisoners whose crimes were not of any very great magnitude, by bestowing abundant alms among the poor, as well as by granting, for one year, to all those who chose to claim the indulgence, exemption from the municipal taxes levied for repairing and building the fortifications of the city.

If Lucrezia had imagined that the accession of her husband to the ducal dignity would confer any happiness on them she was doomed to be signally disappointed, for few Italian potentates experienced, during their rule, more troubles and anxieties than fell to the lot of Alfonso and his wife. For a few months after the death of Ercole, affairs went on with great regularity and smoothness, and although the winter was a particularly severe one, the populace appear to have endured but few hardships. The spring, which commenced considerably later that year than usual, was a very dry one, and the supply of fresh vegetables

as well as meat to the markets, fell off considerably. This was the more felt in consequence of the last year's crop having been somewhat defective, besides which the unusual severity of the weather occasioned a greater consumption than usual of the necessaries of life. About the month of April, the weather still continuing without rain, Alfonso began to be greatly alarmed as to its effects, should a change not soon set in. His first care was to send agents into the country districts to ascertain what amount of food was in store, and the quantity of cattle ready for the market. The reports they brought back were of the most alarming description—that not only had the peasants and farmers, even in the best-favoured localities, but little stock on hand which they could send to the city, but that in many parts the peasantry were already in a state of utter destitution. Alfonso, perceiving that no time was to be lost, determined to start without delay to Venice, to purchase food for the city, so that there might

be neither the loss of time nor that chicanery which too frequently happens on similar occasions when agents are employed. Taking all the disposable money in the treasury, and collecting as much more as he could then conveniently raise, he left Lucrezia in charge of the government and at once commenced his journey.

On arriving in Venice he found the stock of provisions there remarkably small, in fact scarcely more than was necessary for the supply of the inhabitants, and that the senate had it in contemplation to pass a law prohibiting the exportation of food. By dint of persuasion and incessant applications Alfonso obtained permission to make the purchases he proposed. But another difficulty arose. There was but little corn in Venice, and that of a very inferior quality, while the price the merchants asked for it was exorbitant in the extreme. Still he had no alternative, and he purchased a considerable quantity, which he forwarded to Ferrara by way of Commacchio, to be distributed, under the

supervision of his wife and the municipal authorities, to the most needy of the populace. Lucrezia's behaviour on this occasion was such that no blame could be cast on it even by her most bitter enemies. Though in ill-health, she refused to quit Ferrara, and assisted in the relief of the poor by every means in her power, not only through the agents of the government, but also by the aid of the different religious bodies, especially those of the sisterhood of the Corpus Christi.

One point in her administration is singularly worthy of praise, showing as it does that, ardent Roman Catholic as she was, she could not only feel for the miseries of those of a different religion from her own, but in the absence of her husband, could act with strict and impartial justice to all her subjects, irrespective of creed. It appeared that as soon as the famine began to be felt with any severity by the lower classes of the populace, they naturally looked around them to find on whom the blame could be thrown, and being unable to carry their views further than

those with whom they were directly connected, they conceived the idea that the dealers in provisions were withholding them from the market in order to enhance the price. Rioting commenced and several shops were plundered, but the authorities put down the commotion with a strong hand, and severely punished the leaders. For some time order was maintained with tolerable regularity, when the populace, noticing that the Jewish portion of the inhabitants appeared to suffer less than the Christian, attacked their houses, robbing them of all they possessed, besides personally maltreating them, as well as setting fire to many of their houses and shops. This event, comparatively trifling in itself, developed a trait in Lucrezia's character which possibly those who had hitherto known her only as energetic in charitable works, or taking a principal part in splendid festivities, were little prepared for. The morning after the attack on the Jews' quarter, she wrote a letter to the podesta, telling him that in the absence of her

illustrious consort she had read with great displeasure the letter the podesta had written the evening before, informing her of the wicked outrages perpetrated by some felons against certain Jews. In reply she commands him to use all the means in his power with great energy, to repress immediately all such outrages, telling him to arrest, try, condemn, and punish all who shall in any way injure an Israelite, in the same manner and form that he would use against Christians who should have ill-treated other Christians. She insists in the present case that the Jew shall receive the same protection from the law that would be afforded to a Christian ; and that under no pretext whatever shall an injury be done to any of that people. In the meantime she hopes he will not delay to punish severely those who shall be found guilty, and on her side nothing shall be wanting to support him in his efforts.

The first supply of corn sent by Alfonso was exhausted some time before the arrival of the second, which was even of a worse quality than

the first, so great was the difficulty he had in purchasing provisions. In the meantime the famine pressed with terrible severity, both on the inhabitants of the city and on the country districts, and great as were the efforts made to relieve it, many hundreds perished from want. But severely as the affliction was felt in the territory of Ferrara, it was still more so in Modena, where many of the population attempted to support life by boiling the roots of grass and the leaves of young trees for food. The famine lasted during the whole of the summer, and it was not till the autumn had somewhat advanced that its severity began to diminish.

But great as was Lucrezia's satisfaction at the subsidence of the famine, another evil, possibly even more terrible, awaited the unfortunate inhabitants of the district. The plague, which so frequently follows in the footsteps of famine, made its appearance in Ferrara. The first notice on record of this terrible visitation is in the second part of a letter in Lucrezia's own hand-

writing to her husband, who was still in Venice. It commences in the usual style of her letters to Alfonso, in which she designates him, *Ill^{mo} Principe et Ex^{me} Domine Consors et Domine mi observandissimo*, and has on the address the words "Haste, haste, haste."* In the first part of her letter she mentions that she had received a communication relating to the exertions made for the liberation of her brother, which she seemed to think were progressing favourably, that she had sealed the letter with an impression of the seal which he (Alfonso) had sent her, and that she had despatched it to his address. She then expresses her pleasure that her husband is in good health and spirits, as he stated in his letter, as she is at that time, thanks to the goodness of God (*cussisto ancora Io cum li mei per Dio gratia*). She then goes on to speak of the fact of the plague, which had been mentioned in her last letter, having broken out in the house of a certain Valentine, who had since died; "and that the

* *Cito, cito, cito.*

following evening, in another house, a girl named Marguerita had been seized with the disease. She speaks also of a Signor Barbiero and a certain Piero, father of Tomaso Grata, living in different houses, both of whom had died. That morning also (she states) two women living in the house of Alessandro Valentino (not the Valentine before mentioned), had been seized ;” expressing further her belief that though living in different residences, all the cases she had named had originated from the house of the first-named Valentine, as she found he had lent linen and different articles to the others.

On the receipt of his wife’s letter, Alfonso seems to have hastened back to Ferrara, where he found the plague raging with great violence. Here again we have cause to admire the behaviour both of Lucrezia and her husband. Alfonso first set apart a small island in the river called Il Boschetto, on which some buildings had already been erected, which were now enlarged and made into a commodious lazaretto. Cordons

were placed round the parts of the city most seriously affected, and none were allowed to go either in or out without permission. Daily carts went through the infected localities to carry all the plague-stricken to the river side, where they were placed in a boat and ferried over. Black flags with death's heads woven on them were placed on the carts used to remove the sick, to warn people to avoid them, and the men who collected them wore a particular costume, that no one might come in contact with them. As the cart made its rounds, a guide went before it ringing a bell to warn all those not infected to keep out of the way. Strict cleanliness was ordered to be kept in every part of the city, and the punishment of death was threatened to all who should attempt to enter it without a bill of health. An entry is made in the books of the municipality, now in the library of Ferrara, stating the expenses which the city was put to on the visit of the plague. One entry may be quoted as tending particularly to the honour of **Lucrezia and her husband.**

“The reward of fifty livres is given as a mark of respect to Jacomo Davento, notary of the twelve judges, for his exertions during the whole time of the plague in assisting the said judges, not only in writing an infinite number of letters (*infinite lettere*), but in personally inspecting the treatment of those infected with the plague, both in the city and in the lazaretto at Il Boschetto. Again, in regulating the ministrations of the ecclesiastics, the doctors, and the barbers ; in keeping the account of the number of those who were plague-stricken ; and *in carrying daily a report of the progress the plague was making, as well as of the condition of the sick, to the illustrious duke, or his consort the Duchess Lucrezia.*”

Nor did Lucrezia, in her exertions, escape without mischief to her own health. Although at the time pregnant, she continued at Ferrara till she was herself struck down by sickness, but of what nature no mention is made. As soon as she had somewhat recovered, she was removed to Mutinæ, where, a fortnight afterwards, she was confined of a dead child. During the absence of

Alfonso in Venice, for the purchase of food for the starving population of Ferrara, and his second absence, after the cessation of the plague and famine, Lucrezia seems to have kept up a constant correspondence with him, informing him minutely, not only of the progress of public events, but of the private affairs of her family as well, especially of her own health,—for she appears, since her arrival in Ferrara, to have been a frequent invalid. These letters are curious, not simply as historical documents, but as showing the close affection which existed between Lucrezia and her husband, as well as proving her to be an obedient wife in carrying out to the letter the strict injunctions he seems to have given her, not only with respect to political events, but even the administration of justice and police affairs.

Many of these letters are at present in the archives of the Este family, now in the library at Modena. Among these, one dated the 11th July, about the commencement of the cessation of the famine, is addressed in the usual style to

her husband, and under the address is written, as a direction to the bearer, the word *cito*,* three times repeated, which she was in the habit of using only in those letters which she considered would be of great interest or importance to Alfonso. In it she tells him that she had that day received his letter of the 8th of that month, informing her of the sorrow he felt at the illness she was suffering from, and his offer to send her another physician, should she consider it necessary. She thanks him greatly (*summamente*) and informs him that it has pleased God that her illness has not increased, but on the contrary, that she feels herself better and freer from fever. Thanking him for his offer of sending her another physician, should she require it, she thinks that at the present time there would be no occasion for it. Should she, however, consider it necessary, she will inform him. Although it would give her great pleasure and satisfaction again to behold

* Quick.

his Excellency, nevertheless she will endeavour to remain contented and obedient to his wishes, and hopes that he will not in any way allow her pleasure and wish to stand in the way of such a course as he may think right. She is very happy to hear that he is in good health, although she regrets the annoyances (*delle fastidie della mente*) from the unfortunate state of affairs in Ferrara, and she prays the Lord God will preserve his Excellency in good health and spirits (*lungamente sana et gagliarda cum letitia*). She continues,—“Last night I slept better than the night before, although this was the third and the one to be dreaded.* To-day I am much better than yesterday, and without fever, and I am altogether in better condition, so that my physician considers me convalescent (*me mette in boni termini*), as he will also inform you in a letter to your Excellency, and for this His bounty may the Lord God be praised. Recommending

* She appears to have been suffering from a tertian ague and fever.

myself to the good grace of your Excellency, I subscribe myself your Excellency's most obedient consort, Lucrezia."

The next letter is dated the following day, July 12, 1505. In this she informs him that on the Tuesday of the last week a gamekeeper of his Excellency, a certain Zoanne Maria, had been killed by a bailiff of the procuratore of Abbadia. The captain or superintendent of the district, who had given her the information, also informed her that he had prohibited the brothers or relatives of the said Zoanne to follow the bailiff to Abbadia, where he had taken refuge, so as to avoid all appearance of private license or revenge on the occasion. She also mentions that the commissary of Abbadia has himself written to her, giving a totally different description of the case, and stating that the said bailiff had been furiously attacked by the gamekeeper, whom he had killed in his own defence, and begging of her that she would allow no violence to be committed on the said bailiff and falconer to the reverend cardinal,

who had inquired into the affair, and had decided that the death of the gamekeeper was not voluntary homicide. She had sent the chancellor of the commissaries to Nonantola to inquire into the case. Upon hearing evidence, and especially that of a Modenese witness unconnected with the dispute, he found that the said gamekeeper had commenced the quarrel, threatening the bailiff with a dagger, and that he (the witness), not having any arms, ran away, and the bailiff and the gamekeeper continued fighting. She delays further proceedings, before laying the report of the commissary before his Excellency, that she may have his opinion thereon. Afterwards she goes on to state that the commissary of Abbadia had called on her that morning, and told her that the captain of the district had desired, on the part of his Excellency, that the prisoner should be given up, when it was urged on the other side, that Abbadia had certain privileges which took the prisoner out of the jurisdiction of the duke. As the case appeared

very complicated, the letter (which is a very long one) concludes by saying that, as she was afraid of doing anything that might show a want of proper respect to the dignity of the cardinal, she thought it better to receive his (the duke's) instructions before taking further steps in the matter. The letter, which was commenced on the 12th and finished on the 13th of July, was dated from Mutinæ, and signed, his Excellency's *obsequentissima consors*, Lucretia.

The next letter is dated the 26th July, and is marked on the address *subito* (haste). She merely writes to inform the duke that the *magnifico messer* Michel Bizo, ambassador from the King of France, had visited Ferrara, and as there were but few servants in the castle, he had been lodged in the palace of the Conte Nicolo Rangoni, where he would be better served, and that the ambassador had already left. She regrets that the duke had not written to her in answer to her last letter, as she much wished to hear of his health and the progress he was making in

the affair he was occupied with, and begging that as soon as possible he would write to her.

Two days after, Lucrezia, who appears to have been in a state of great anxiety at her husband's silence, had the satisfaction of finding that he had answered each of her letters, but that they had been delayed by the courier in the transmission.

“Yesterday morning,” she writes, “a messenger arrived at Mutinæ, bringing with him three letters from your Excellency, dated respectively 23rd, 24th, and 25th of the present month, and answers respecting the case of del Moro and some other letters which I have written to your Excellency, and this morning I have received your letter of the 27th. For your letters, believe me I am most grateful, for they have given me so much consolation and pleasure as would be impossible to express. I rejoice to hear that your Excellency is in good health and spirits, and that you have taken good precautions for your health and security, and so I pray God

long to preserve you in health and happiness.

“The expressions of comfort and courage your letters contained, written with so much kindness of heart, have given me incredible delight, and in the highest manner (*summamente*) I thank you for it. I am in good health and spirits, and I shall now pass my time happily.” She concludes by saying, that the efforts of her husband having terminated so successfully, she hopes that he will take no further proceedings against certain delinquents (but whom, or of what class, she does not mention, though possibly some who, for political reasons, had incurred the duke’s displeasure), and for so doing she should be most grateful to him. The letter is dated from *Mutinæ*, July 28, 1505, and signed as usual, the *obsequentissima consors* Lucretia.

That Lucrezia’s life, judged by our modern ideas of propriety, might not have been altogether as strict as it ought to have been is possible. At the same time it would be difficult to

believe that these letters, written in the fulness of heart, and evidently the genuine expression of her sentiments at the time of writing, could have emanated from the flagrant adulteress and profligate woman described by some of her contemporaneous enemies, or the hardened murderess and poisoner painted by later historians and poets. Contaminated she may have been, but evidently not to such an extent as to have deprived her of some of the noblest attributes of womanhood.

After the cessation of the famine the duke, who had acted so admirably and energetically during the whole of those calamities, again, to the great discontent of his nobles, took but little interest in public affairs, but applied himself to his favourite studies, spending whole days together in the society of his more experienced artisans, and seldom appearing in public. Frequently he would carry his condescension so far that when dining in a room in his laboratory, as he was occasionally in the habit of doing, he would invite the more skilful among them to

take a seat at his table. He seems to have bestowed immense pains in the technical training and education of his workmen; personally seeing that every possible arrangement was made for their comfort and convenience. He even went so far as to fit up for them in the foundry a sort of club-room, and furnished it with books, tables, and chess-boards, as well as flutes and other instruments of music, which he encouraged them to learn, and being an excellent musician himself he soon succeeded in forming a good band from the most intelligent among them. Alfonso also established a manufactory for porcelain and a school of design for its patterns and ornamentation. He did not disdain even to paint with his own hand many of the figures, arabesques, and portraits on the productions in his workshops. By degrees the Ferrarese porcelain, under his patronage, arrived at considerable perfection, though certainly not to the extent claimed for it by Paolo Giovio, who goes so far as to say that the majolica of Ferrara

in the time of Alfonso had arrived at a pitch of excellence at least equal to that produced in any other town in Italy. By such an assertion the learned Bishop of Nocera proves that his good taste was not on a par with his great learning. There are still many specimens extant of Ferrarese pottery, and judging from these, all the better class of majolica Ferrara ever produced must have been lost or destroyed, or Giovio must have absurdly overrated the ceramic productions of the city of Ferrara.

The attention paid by Alfonso to the manufacture of porcelain was trifling when compared with that he gave to the casting of metals and the improvement of his artillery, working at the experiments himself till, according to Zambotto, there were few of his artisans who could equal him in dexterity as a workman. However low-bred and ignoble his pursuits might have appeared in the eyes of his brothers and the prouder of the nobility, Alfonso certainly succeeded in not only making his artillery the best in Italy,—

if not in Europe,—but through its means he, on more than one occasion, succeeded in gaining battles, in which from the superior number of his enemies, he would otherwise have certainly been worsted. At the same time the biographers of Alfonso, including both Frizzi and Paolo Giovio, both of whom certainly held him in high admiration, mention that, in pursuing his mechanical studies and carrying out his experiments, he seemed to forget, both by the neglect of his dress and indifference to the external attributes of his princely position, the dignity of demeanour he ought to have maintained.

The year following the famine a family misfortune befell Alfonso, which, though trifling enough in its origin, afterwards brought on such domestic troubles as not only to produce lasting dissension and separation among the hitherto united children of Duke Ercole, but to cause Alfonso great trouble and distress of mind, from which he never fully recovered. In the suite of

the Duchess d'Urbino, when she arrived at Ferrara to attend the wedding festivities which took place on the occasion of the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia with Alfonso, was a young lady of great beauty, named Angela, who, according to Mario Savonarola, was somewhat nearly related to the duchess herself. The wedding festivities over, the duchess conducted Angela with her to Rome, where they met the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, son of the Duke of Ferrara, who now hastened to renew his acquaintance with the beautiful Angela, which had begun during his sister's wedding festivals. A warm intimacy soon sprang up between them, and the cardinal became deeply enamoured of Angela. His affection, however, was not returned by the beautiful girl, who, content with having made a conquest of a man of so much importance, and one generally so much admired, afterwards not only treated him with indifference, but also, with bad taste, held him up to ridicule. The cruelty of the damsel, instead of extinguishing Ippolito's

love for her, rather seemed to increase it, while the jests of his friends on his ill success so stimulated him that he now pursued her with even greater ardour than before, endeavouring by all the arts in his power to induce her to look favourably on his suit. All, however, was in vain. So far from becoming less obdurate, Angela not only candidly told him that she had no love for him whatever, but that her affections were engaged to another. Thoroughly enraged, Ippolito resolved to indemnify himself for the loss of Angela's affections by revenging himself on his rival, and he endeavoured, though for some time in vain, to discover the fortunate man who possessed her love. At last, through the agency of a spy who had contrived to gain an intimacy with one of the domestics of the Duchess d'Urbino's establishment, Ippolito heard that his rival was no other than his illegitimate brother Giulio. No sooner had he received the intelligence than he called at the house of the Duchess d'Urbino and obtained an

interview with Angela, at which he informed her that he had been told she had conceived an attachment for his base-born brother Giulio, and requested to know whether such a statement was correct. To his great annoyance Angela unhesitatingly avowed her preference for Giulio, upon which the cardinal seems to have lost his temper, and a violent altercation ensued between them, during which Angela went so far as to inform him that the beautiful eyes of Giulio were dearer to her than all the world besides.

This last avowal so irritated the cardinal, that he rushed from her presence, declaring vengeance against his rival. Nor on maturer consideration did his determination in any way flag. On the contrary, his desire for revenge seemed to increase in proportion as the possibility of obtaining Angela's love became more hopeless. Finding that Giulio was at that time in Ferrara, Ippolito quitted Rome and hurried northwards, determining to delay his revenge no longer. On his arrival at Ferrara, he con-

cocted his scheme of revenge, which, if the accounts given by some historians be true, was one seldom surpassed for cold-blooded cruelty and malignity. Without showing any familiarity to Giulio, though at the same time conducting himself in such a manner as not to give rise to the slightest suspicion that he entertained any ill-feeling towards him, he hired four ruffians, and choosing his opportunity, waylaid his brother as he was in the evening returning to Ferrara, after a hard day's hunting at Belriguardo, where Lucrezia was staying. The order that Ippolito gave the bravos he had hired, was to spare Giulio's life, but to destroy in him, by putting out his eyes, those attractions which had caused so much admiration in the breast of Angela. Whether the ruffians fully succeeded is very doubtful, in fact it is almost certain that they did not, though undoubtedly they attempted to blind him. Muratori, while strongly reprobating the act, says that the cardinal only *attempted* to put out Giulio's eyes, and Guicciardini states that the

attempt was a failure, although he admits the eyes were severely injured at the time, but afterwards, by the skill of his surgeon, were cured.

When the news was brought to Alfonso, he not only expressed the greatest indignation, but threatened to have the perpetrators severely punished for the infamous and cowardly assault they had committed. Rising from the table where he was sitting at dinner when the news was brought him, he ordered Ippolito immediately into his presence, and a very stormy scene ensued between the brothers, which ended by Alfonso banishing Ippolito from the Ferrarese territory. A more severe punishment would have been difficult, the cardinal's high ecclesiastical grade doubtless saving him from one of greater severity; while the ruffians who had taken part in the exploit afterwards paid the penalty of their crime on the gallows, after which the interest taken in the affair by the population of Ferrara gradually subsided.

The banishment of Ippolito, who was much loved by the Ferrarese nobility, caused great anger in the breasts of his friends, and loud indeed were their complaints at what they were pleased to call the despotism of Alfonso. But even if the complaints they uttered reached his ear, he appeared utterly indifferent to them, his whole attention being engaged in his foundry, and in the perfection of his artillery, neglecting the while all the splendours of his court, which he appears to have left entirely to the discretion of Lucrezia. She, however, from the state of her health at the time, as well as her family misfortunes, hardly seems to have entered into them with the energy she usually displayed on occasions of the kind; or at least, if any of the brilliant festivities which had been so often seen in the days of Ercole had taken place since Alfonso's accession, the Ferrarese writers make no mention of them. Many of the Ferrarese nobles who had been accustomed to the magnificence of the court of Ercole, were loud in their

expressions of disapproval of the conduct of Alfonso, which they reasonably enough considered in bad taste ; and many were the unmistakable expressions of opinion which now reached his ear, without, however, his making the slightest alteration in his mode of life.

But if these opinions fell unheeded on the ear of Alfonso, they had a very different effect on his younger brother Ferdinando, who appeared as eager to mix in the society of the nobility and the gaieties of the city as Alfonso to avoid them. Ferdinando, who had been brought up in the fastidious frivolities of the court of Naples, looked upon what he considered the low mechanical tastes of his brother with disgust, and readily admitted the truth of the objections which the gayer of the nobility made to them. Naturally ambitious and unscrupulous, it was not to be wondered at if Ferdinando, encouraged as he was by the strong expressions of discontent he heard from a few of the leading members of the nobility at Alfonso's behaviour, conceived the idea

of murdering or deposing him, and reigning in his stead. To carry out this iniquitous idea he engaged, under promises of rich rewards and honours, the services of four persons attached to the palace of the duke—Albertino Boschetti, Count Jean Cesarea de Gharrario, Nicolo Roberto, the son-in-law of Albertino, and a captain of the duke's body guard, and a certain Gianni Guasconi, a French musician. This Guasconi, in joining the conspiracy, seems to have acted towards the duke with extraordinary ingratitude. Some years before, when Alfonso was making a journey in France, he heard a mendicant singing in the streets in one of the southern towns. Alfonso, who was keenly alive to the attractions of music, was so struck with the beauty of the man's voice, that he entered into conversation with him, and was so pleased with his address and manners, that he agreed to take him into his service, and on his return to Ferrara placed him under a master of eminence to have him taught singing scientifically. Guas-

coni, who by no means lacked talent, improved rapidly; and Alfonso was so pleased with the progress his protégé made, that he got him admitted into the service of Duke Ercole as one of the ducal singers. After the death of his father, Alfonso continued his patronage of Guasconi, and in time promoted him to a place of trust in the palace, for which he received a liberal salary.

Much as he was indebted to Alfonso for the kindness shown to him, Guasconi's ideas of integrity and gratitude were so small, that on the first offer from Ferdinando he entered heartily into the conspiracy against his benefactor. Another conspirator also joined the plot. Giulio, who since the attack had been made upon him, had remained quietly in Ferrara, appears to have considered himself aggrieved by Alfonso's not having punished Ippolito with greater severity. Giulio having one day overheard a conspirator speaking of the plot, Ferdinando invited him to join the conspiracy, which he agreed to do under

the condition that the cardinal—for whom the duke, although he was not yet reconciled with him, was secretly believed to entertain a strong attachment—should first be put to death; which condition Ferdinando, who was most anxious to procure Giulio's co-operation, readily agreed to. But after all, the introduction of Giulio into the plot did not seem to advance it. A misunderstanding soon occurred between the brothers, Giulio insisting that Ippolito should be first murdered and the duke afterwards deposed; while Ferdinando, with equal pertinacity, insisted that the first victim should be Alfonso. The result was that the conspiracy remained for some time in abeyance, neither liking to carry it on single-handed. At length Ferdinando becoming impatient, he again made overtures to Giulio, and succeeded in inducing him to give his consent that the duke should first be murdered or deposed, and that Ippolito should suffer afterwards.

All preliminaries being now arranged, it was

determined among the conspirators to carry out the plot without delay. Knowing full well the determined character of Alfonso, it was considered better to despatch him secretly if they could, as Ferdinando would thus be enabled to seize the reins of government before any opposition could be organized against him. The person selected to perpetrate the murder was no other than Guasconi. He, it was considered, would have better opportunities than others, from the easy access he had to the duke's presence, and the facilities it afforded him of mixing poison with his food. Guasconi soon afterwards appears to have made the attempt, but without success, the poison, beyond causing some temporary inconvenience, having been inoperative on the constitution of the duke. Whether or not Alfonso's suspicions were aroused it is impossible to say. Certainly they did not fall on Guasconi, who still continued in his appointment in the castle, and on the same terms of intimacy with his patron as formerly. From the sudden relin-

quishment by the conspirators of the design of despatching the duke by poison, the impression is conveyed that some suspicion had been aroused in the mind of Alfonso.

The conspirators now determined to assassinate the duke at a masked ball, hoping that in the confusion of the scene, and among the various disguises which were worn, the murder might be perpetrated without the conspirators being detected. The ball alluded to was to take place in the palace of one of the nobles, and to it both Alfonso and Lucrezia had been invited; but whether Lucrezia attended is uncertain, no mention being made of her presence. Whether from want of opportunity or nerve among the conspirators it is impossible to say, but they delayed making any attack on Alfonso during the ball, asserting that it could more conveniently be done as he returned home to his palace. Here again good fortune befriended Alfonso. As he was leaving the palace of the nobleman, he took off his mask and conversed in a friendly

manner with some nobles, and on his wishing them good night, they demanded permission to escort him to the castle. Not only would it have been dangerous for the conspirators to have attacked Alfonso in the company of his friends, but he was also attended by a troop of his body-guard, thus unconsciously avoiding the danger to which he had been exposed during the whole of the evening.

Several other plans for the assassination of the duke were now projected, but all failed, partly through some fortuitous circumstance occurring at the time which prevented the murder, partly through want of courage in the conspirators, whose nerve seems to have diminished at each separate escape of their intended victim, and partly through the love of the populace for the duke, who, although he might have given offence to some of the nobility, was greatly beloved by the great mass of the working population of the city. Naturally of an unsuspecting temperament, Alfonso seems to have re-

mained in happy ignorance of the formidable conspiracy which not only existed in his own palace, but which had been concocted by his own brothers. Not so, however, the Cardinal Ippolito. In some obscure manner he seems to have received information of the excessive familiarity which had lately sprung up between Ferdinando and Giulio, and reasonably judging that the latter could bear him but little love, he conceived the idea that they were entering into a conspiracy against him. To discover the truth he despatched a trusty agent from Rome, where Ippolito was then residing, with instructions to discover the cause of the present strong affection between Giulio and Ferdinando, and to inform him of the result. With little difficulty the spy discovered the whole plot, and communicated it to Ippolito, who lost no time in bringing it under the notice of his brother.

The intelligence fell on the mind of Alfonso like a thunderclap, and for a short time it appears to have had the effect of depriving him of

his wonted energy. In the meantime each of the conspirators, finding that all had been discovered, attempted to secure his own safety by flight, indifferent to the fate of his accomplices. Roberto fled to Carpi, Giulio to Mantua, where the Marchioness Isabella, believing him to be innocent, promised him her protection, and Gianni Guasconi to Rome. Ferdinando had not time to escape, but was seized and brought before Alfonso, who had now fully recovered his usual presence of mind. Ferdinando, on being admitted into his brother's presence, threw himself on his knees at Alfonso's feet, and confessing his guilt, abjectly implored forgiveness, but Alfonso sternly thrust him from him, and ordered him immediately to be confined in one of the dungeons of the castle. Boschetti, who had been arrested, found means in the night to escape from the castle, and succeeded in reaching the fields outside the walls, where he was discovered by some of the peasants the next morning, torn and bleeding, and dressed only in

his shirt, in which he had escaped from his prison. Notwithstanding Boschetti's promises of remuneration and his intercessions for mercy, his captors conveyed him to Ferrara to be again immured in the same prison to await his trial, though this time a stricter guard was kept over him than before.

The conspiracy being now fully crushed, thanksgivings were offered up in all the churches of Ferrara for the fortunate escape of the duke and his wife, and great rejoicings took place in the city, which were continued throughout the whole of the night, the streets being illuminated and bonfires made in all the public places.

Preparations were now made for securing those of the conspirators at large, and for the trial of those already imprisoned. The Marquis of Mantua was first appealed to by the duke to give up Giulio, in order that he might be tried with his fellow-conspirators. To this request Francesco Gonzaga somewhat demurred, urging that without a strong *primâ facie* proof of Giulio's

guilt, it would be incompatible with the laws of hospitality to surrender him after the Marchioness had promised him her protection. At the same time he assured Alfonso that if strong presumptive evidence could be brought forward to show that Giulio had been engaged in so execrable a plot, without further hesitation he would deliver him into the hands of justice. These proofs were furnished, and they appeared to Francesco so strong against Giulio that he no longer hesitated, but sent him under a strong escort to Ferrara; and as the other prisoners, with the exception of Gianni Guasconi, were secured, the trial immediately commenced. Great, indeed, was the excitement which, on the day of the trial, reigned in Ferrara; and the Hall of Justice was crowded with spectators eager to catch a glance of the prisoners. So strong, in fact, was the popular indignation against them, that with difficulty could they be saved from the fury of the people. When brought into court and in the presence of the judges, without any exception,

they all pleaded guilty, and threw themselves on the duke's mercy.

Although generally most lenient in his judgments, when thoroughly aroused by the perpetration of any great crime, it was impossible to find a potentate sterner than Alfonso. When the plea of the prisoners was brought before him he listened calmly to it, and then, with an expression of cool severity in his tone which destroyed all hope of mercy, he refused the application, and ordered Boschetti, the two Robertos, and another conspirator to be decapitated in the Piazza, while Giulio and Ferdinando were to be reserved for a more effective example. The scaffold was erected the same day, on which the four conspirators, who were executed as common felons, suffered. A few days after the execution of these men, the duke ordered a large stage to be erected in the court-yard of the castle, with scaffolding and seats around to accommodate as many of the spectators as possible. On the stage was placed the whole appa-

ratus for the execution. Alfonso then sent invitations to all the principal nobles and burghers to be present at the punishment. At the time appointed the court-yard was densely filled with spectators.

Presently Alfonso, wearing an expression of great sternness on his countenance, made his appearance, and seating himself on a temporary throne which had been erected in front of the stage, ordered the prisoners to be led out, and shortly afterwards they ascended the scaffold, accompanied by the common executioner with his axe. The block was placed in its position and Ferdinando was led towards it, when Alfonso, rising from his throne, in a loud and stern voice ordered the proceedings to stop. Addressing his brothers he told them that, infamous as had been the behaviour of the other conspirators, theirs had been worse, for, bound as they were by the ties of consanguinity to him, it was their duty to have protected him instead of entering into a plot against him. Still, although they had shown no

hesitation, without offence or provocation on his part, to shed a brother's blood, he would not follow their example, gross as had been the provocation which he personally had received. From respect to the holy tie of brotherhood, and not to have even the slightest taint of the sin of Cain upon his head, he commuted the punishment of death into that of imprisonment for life. At the same time they would be treated in their confinement with the respect due to their rank. The speech of Alfonso, as well as their narrow escape from death, so completely stunned the senses both of Ferdinando and Giulio, that they were unable to make a reply, and were led, or rather carried, in a fainting condition, from the scaffold to the dungeon, and from there afterwards to the rooms set apart for their incarceration.

Gianni Guasconi, the greatest culprit of the whole, still remained at liberty. For some time after his arrival in Rome, he appears to have concealed himself and nothing was known of him, but at last some one having heard him

sing, he received an offer to enter the service of the Cardinal San Giorgio. Without hesitation, Guasconi accepted the offer, for poor as the appointment might be after the one he had held in Ferrara, he knew perfectly well that, being in the service of an eminent ecclesiastic, an amount of protection would be afforded him which it would be difficult for him to obtain elsewhere. Nor was he altogether in error in the conclusion he had arrived at, for Alfonso, hearing from his brother Ippolito that Guasconi was in the service of the Cardinal San Giorgio, immediately wrote to demand his surrender—a demand which the cardinal positively refused to accede to. Alfonso made several other applications, but without success, and, his patience being now thoroughly exhausted, he submitted the matter to the Pope, who immediately ordered Guasconi to be arrested, and the preliminary examination to be gone through, to ascertain whether there was sufficient evidence against him to warrant his being given into the custody of the agents of the Duke of

Ferrara. Of course Alfonso had even an easier task to bring forward *prima facie* evidence of Guasconi's guilt than he had in the case of Giulio, when under the protection of the Marquis of Mantua, and Guasconi was sent a prisoner to Ferrara.

On reaching the gates of the city, the miserable wretch had a narrow escape of his life, for while a messenger was being sent to inform the authorities of his arrival, and to inquire in what prison he was to be lodged, the populace, who had now collected in great numbers, made so furious an attack on him that the few men who held him in their custody had the greatest difficulty in protecting him. Fortunately, however, a band of soldiers had been sent from the castle, into whose charge he was delivered, and who conducted him, amid shouts of execration, till he had arrived at the drawbridge. The following day Guasconi was placed in a sort of pillory, made like an iron cage, and hung from one of the balconies of the castle, in such a position

that he could be exposed to the taunts and insults of the populace without their being able personally to injure him. It was during this punishment that the Count Turchi with his wife and family were passing the castle, and the coachman, while watching Guasconi, allowed his carriage to go too near to the edge of the moat, and the result was, as mentioned in a former chapter, that it fell in and two of the ladies were drowned. After Guasconi had submitted for seven days to the punishment, the miserable wretch could support it no longer. On the morning of the eighth day, the keeper on going to his cell, found that, by tearing up a tablecloth, he had made a sort of rope with which he had succeeded in strangling himself.

The following year was a memorable one in Lucrezia's history, it being marked by an event which caused her inexpressible sorrow—the death of her brother, Cesare Borgia. Notwithstanding all the remonstrances and requests—more or less real—(for very possibly those who pretended to

interest themselves in Cesare's behalf with the King of Spain were really acting rather to please Lucrezia than from any interest they felt in the subject themselves, or even against their own convictions) he remained a prisoner for more than two years. At the expiration of that time he made his escape, whether from negligence on the part of the guards, or from secret instructions from the King of Spain to the governor of the castle, who, not wishing openly to liberate Cesare, was not sorry to be relieved from his presence in his dominions, it is impossible to say. One thing is certain, that by allowing Cesare to escape, there was no dread of his again disturbing the peace of Europe or of Italy, for never had a tyrant fallen lower than had Cesare Borgia since the time of the death of his father, Pope Alexander VI. Broken down in health, for he had never completely recovered from the illness under which he was suffering at the death of his father, and which had returned with full violence more than once during his imprisonment in Spain, he seems

entirely to have lost that immense energy which had formerly been one of his principal characteristics. Added to this, he was utterly devoid of those means by which a man of his character is likely to secure the assistance of unscrupulous friends—he was destitute of money.

After the death of his father, and while the disputes which occurred after the succeeding election to the papacy were being carried on between him and the Roman barons so desperately on both sides, Cesare, true to the teachings of his great counsellor, Macchiavelli, resolved to provide the means of again re-establishing himself, in case he should meet with a temporary defeat. He had therefore determined to send the whole of his treasure to Ferrara, there to be placed under the care of his sister Lucrezia. But, as in many other of Macchiavelli's principles, more than one weak point was discovered in this. By sending his treasure from Rome, Cesare not only deprived himself of the means of attaching his adherents to him in case he should meet with

reverses, but he had not calculated on the contingencies which might occur to the escort in charge of his treasure, or on the failure of their fidelity while on the road to Ferrara. While passing through the Duchy of Urbino the guard was attacked by some partisans of the Orsini family, who contrived to possess themselves of the whole of the treasure. Whether this was done really by force of arms or by treachery on the part of those who had it in their care is not certainly known. Most probably the latter, as we read of no resistance having been made in its defence.

On his arrival in France, Cesare Borgia determined to apply to the king for assistance, but the aid of Cesare being no longer of any value, he received an unmistakeable intimation that it would be far better for him to apply to Jean d'Albret, the King of Navarre, who, from having married Cesare Borgia's wife's sister, would be able to afford him protection without any suspicion of political intentions arising from it. The reception given to Cesare Borgia by Jean d'Albret.

could hardly have been cooler than that which was offered him by the King of France. He received him it is true, and to Cesare's entreaty to give him some post of honour in his service, the king awarded him the poor command of a troop of horse in a small army he had despatched to reduce one of his rebellious subjects to submission. Cesare had hardly arrived at the scene of operations when a fight ensued under the walls of the castle of Vianna, in which it appears that a few hundred men were engaged on either side. In this obscure skirmish Cesare was killed. The soldiers of the King of Navarre were beaten, and made a hasty retreat from the field of battle, while the conquerors retired into the castle. On receiving intelligence of the death of Cesare, the King of Navarre immediately sent messengers to obtain the body. They found it on the field of battle, though with some difficulty, for so little idea had his opponents of the duke's dignity, that they contented themselves with merely stripping his corpse and leaving it on the

field. Having ascertained his identity to a certainty, a horse was obtained, across which the naked body of one of the most reckless, cunning, unscrupulous tyrants that Europe had beheld was thrown, and carried to a farmhouse, where it was placed till a coffin could be obtained for it. It was then sent, without any pomp or ceremony, or even a mourner to accompany it, to the Cathedral of Pamplona, in which it was quietly interred, that bishopric being, by a singular coincidence, the first church preferment which had been awarded to Cesare by his father.

Of the character of Cesare Borgia, notwithstanding the praises lavished on him by two writers of eminence—Macchiavelli and Ercole Strozzi*—little good is really known; and these authors, high as their eulogiums may have been, have told but little in his favour. Macchiavelli

* “ Ille diu, qui dum cœlestibus auris
Vescitur, implet onus laudis, cœlumque meretur,” &c.
Cæsaris Borgiæ Ducis Epicedium,
per Herculem Strozzam Ald. 1513.

in all probability entertained for him the sort of affection a professor will feel for a pupil who had brought the science he taught into great notoriety. The poem by Ercole Strozzi in his favour—one of the most beautiful Latin compositions in the Middle Ages—was evidently written rather to please his patroness Lucrezia Borgia than from any real feeling of his own. Of those who have written against Cesare Borgia—and their name is legion—it is almost useless to speak, so unanimous have they been in their verdict. Perhaps the most unbiassed in the expression of their opinions are the English critics, party feeling being less likely to influence them than others, from their not being politically interested in the events which occurred. Roscoe says, strangely enough, after admitting the immense amount of opprobrium which had been heaped upon Cesare Borgia to have been justly deserved, “Nor was he without qualities which in some degree compensated for his demerits. Courageous, munificent, elegant, and accomplished

in all the exercises of arts and arms, he raised an admiration of his endowments which kept pace with and counterbalanced the abhorrence excited by his crimes."

Fuller, who though he can hardly be quoted as an historian, says of him, "He was a perfect master in the art of dissembling, never looking the same way he rowed. He exactly knew the operations of all hot and cold poisons which could surprise nature on a sudden, or which would weary it out with a long siege. He could contract the poison of a hundred toads to one drop, and cunningly infuse the same into any pleasant liquor, as the Italians have poisoning at their fingers' ends. By a fig, which restored Hezekiah's life (2 Kings xx. 7), he took away the lives of many. In a word, if he is not a practical atheist, I know not who was. If any desire to know more of his traducers, let them read Macchiavelli's 'Prince,' where Borgia is brought in as an instance of all villany. And though he deserves to be hissed out of all Chris-

tendom who will open his mouth in defence of Macchiavelli's precepts, yet some have dared to defend his person ; so that he, in his book, shows not what princes should be, but what they were, intending that work, not for a glass for future kings to dress themselves by, but only therein to present the monstrous face of the politicians of that age. Sure he who was a devil in this book is a saint in all the rest." After all, perhaps the best summary of the character of Cesare Borgia, is that given by Dr. Aikin, in his "Biographical Dictionary :"—"Such was the end of this man, who for his abilities in forming, and his vigour in carrying out great schemes for his own aggrandizement, unmoved from his purpose by any consideration of justice, honour, or humanity, has been held up to admiration by Macchiavelli as the perfect specimen of a great man. Hated in prosperity, deserted in adversity, stripped of all his honours and possessions, even such as he might fairly have claimed, leaving behind him a name consigned to universal detestation,

it would seem that he gained little by being a villain."

But whatever his good or bad qualities might be, one person grieved bitterly at his death, and that was his sister Lucrezia Borgia. A letter without signature, though evidently written by the Marchioness of Mantua to her brother Alfonso, who was then in Rome, and dated April 18, 1507, gives some description of the manner in which Lucrezia received the news of Cesare's death. From the wording of the letter, it would almost appear that Alfonso, having heard of Cesare's death, had written a letter to his wife containing the intelligence, as well as his expressions of sympathy at the sorrow he knew it would cause her. In her letter the Marchioness says—"Having by indirect intelligence received the news of the death of the Duke of Valentinois, I some days back broke it to the Ill^{ma}. Sig^{ra}. Duchessa. She immediately went to the monastery at the Corpo di Cristo to offer up prayers for his soul. At the monastery she

remained for two nights, and having left it she found herself so much indisposed that her physician for security insisted on her keeping her bed, to which she is still confined. And for this cause, and no other, I have delayed informing her of the receipt of your letter, so that I may not again awake her sorrow. I will wait till she has recovered, and then I will tell her all in the most dexterous manner possible; and when I have fully prepared her, I will place in her hand your letter, which will doubtless afford her great comfort." Sannazzaro, excellent poet as he was, had the singularly bad taste to compare Lucrezia in her sorrow to a heifer bereft of her mate, wandering solitarily on the banks of the Po.

CHAPTER VI.

LUCREZIA DUCHESS OF FERRARA—(*continued*).

Lucrezia's Accouchement—Great Rejoicings in Ferrara—Lucrezia's Court—Extract from the Book of her Household Expenses—The Strozzi—Assassination of Ercole Strozzi—Escape of the Murderers—League of Cambray—Alfonso appointed Gonfaloniere of the Allied Armies—Courage of the Venetians—Atrocities committed on both Sides—Siege of Padua—Francesco Gonzaga made Prisoner.

GREAT as had been the sorrow of Lucrezia for the death of her brother, the following year a circumstance occurred which caused her so much joy that, if it did not make her forget his death, it at least had the effect of diverting her mind from it. On the 4th day of April, in the Castle of Ferrara, Lucrezia was safely delivered of a son and heir, who was baptized in the name of his grandfather, and on the death of

Alfonso was elevated to the dukedom under the title of Ercole II. The intelligence of the birth of a son caused much joy to the inhabitants of the city.. Great were the rejoicings on the occasion. Prayers were offered up in all the churches, and as usual the benches in the law courts and the schools were seized, and the window-frames of the public buildings torn out to make bonfires. They even went so far as to burn the women's benches in the cathedral, a fact, Cittadella observes, which clearly decides a disputed point which existed as to the manner divine service was performed in the cathedrals—whether the congregation of men and women sat promiscuously together, or separated from one another. Alfonso seems to have been greatly delighted at the birth of his son. He was absent from Ferrara at the time, but returned immediately the news reached him. Lucrezia, notwithstanding her ill state of health, appears to have recovered satisfactorily from her confinement, and she remained in Ferrara in charge of the govern-

ment, as the duke, shortly after the birth of the child, was again obliged to leave the city on affairs of importance. During this year, with one exception which will presently be mentioned, nothing particularly worthy of notice occurred. Lucrezia conducted the affairs of State with great discretion. Her name is rarely mentioned, and, when it is, it is invariably in connexion either with some charitable object, or in patronizing literature or the fine arts. Occasionally the two occur together. In this year we find Michele Costa, father of the celebrated Costa, the painter, entered in the palace records among the list of pensioners on Lucrezia's bounty. In the same year we find a certain Francesco di Parma, who, in consequence of great poverty, not only received assistance from her, but was exempted from all taxes for the year. The principal painters of Ferrara, as well as literary men, were guests at her court. Among the numerous commissions she is said to have given to the different artists of eminence, a singular feature may

be noticed—they were invariably connected directly or indirectly with her religion.

With all the cares of State upon her during the frequent absences of her husband, Lucrezia apparently superintended the domestic arrangements of her palace with an amount of personal supervision which would somewhat surprise the ladies of our English nobility of the present day. Allowance being made for the manners of the times, her establishment seems to have been regulated on a most satisfactory footing. In the archives of the Este family in Modena, is a book of her household expenses kept by her steward. It appears that these accounts were periodically submitted to the duchess for approval, and when she had signed them as correct, the money for their payment was drawn from her treasurer. A few extracts from this book may perhaps be interesting to the reader:—For example, in the year 1507, an entry is made on the 27th January, “for 3 soldi, 10 denari, for one yard of cloth purchased of Siviero, the mercer, at 80

denari the yard, and also one yard and a half of common stuff to make a pair of trousers for Il Turchetto, who played the buffoon (*folo*), in the Dance of the Shepherds, in the ball given by Her Highness."

"Also to the said Siviero, 30 soldi 10 m. for a piece of satin damask, which was afterwards made up with a hood by Master Angelino; and for black braid for a vest to be worn by the said Turchetto in the ball."

"On the 28th of January, 10 livres 5 soldi more to the same mercer, for 12 yards of common cloth—possibly serge—to make 8 hoods for the shepherds, in the same ball given by Her Highness."

These items evidently relate to some fancy ball given by the duchess during the carnival of that year, of which unfortunately no further record exists.

On the 11th day of February, 8 soldi 15 m. paid to Benedetto Caligarino for money given by him to Zohain, the head cook of Her Highness,

for him to purchase sundry goods and food, as well as for money he had paid to Maestro Francesco Tassiero for the different works done in the kitchen at Castelnova.”

“ On the 23rd of February, to Benedetto Caligarino, he having paid to Maestro Mordio, a painter, for an infant Christ, which he painted at the command of Her Highness, with hands and feet complete; the same picture being sent by Her Highness as a present to Naples.”

Unfortunately the amount paid for the painting is illegible, and it is the more to be regretted as it would be curious to know what sort of remuneration an artist received in those days for the productions of his pencil. It would also be interesting to learn who was the Caligarino spoken of, as in Ferrara, about the same time, there was an artist of that name of considerable ability, though it could hardly have been the individual above mentioned. As his name so frequently occurs in connexion with money payments, this Caligarino might have been her treasurer.

Possibly as Lucrezia was fond not only of patronizing artists and their families, Caligarino might have been some relative of the painter of that name, he having had many commissions from both Lucrezia and her husband. Caligarino, the artist, was, according to both Vasari and Lanzi, originally a shoemaker in a very small way of business, and kept a cobbler's stall. His real name, it appears, was Gabrielli Cappellino, and one of the Dossi having given him a commission for a pair of shoes, he made them so well that the artist said "they appeared to have been painted." The shoemaker took the hint, and relinquishing his awl and the lapstone commenced the study of painting. The name of Caligarino was afterwards given him in jest as indicative of his former occupation.

"On the 8th of March, 18 soldi to Siviero, the mercer, for one yard and a half of mulberry-coloured c'oth to place at the foot of a black damask gown with black velvet trimmings belonging to Her Highness."

To understand this purchase is somewhat difficult. Whether the duchess at the moment was influenced by some ultra ideas of economy, and was determined to make an old black gown last as long as possible, whether it was for some fantastic sort of trimming then in fashion, or to gratify some original idea of her own, must be left to lady readers to decide.

“On the 27th October,* 233 soldi, being the price of a piece of brocade purchased for Her Highness, and 23 yards of gold lace for trimming, the whole having been bought of Maestro Ledaiole.”

“In — day of November, 182 lire on account for damson-coloured satin. Also for 52 yards of yellow satin which had been unpaid in a former account.”

“On account of gold brocade purchased on 8th June, 217 lire, being the value of 70 ducats, purchased at the order of the Illustrissima

* The different items mentioned are taken almost at hazard from the accounts, and not consecutively.

Duchessa to be presented by Her Highness to the Magnifico Messer Ercole Strozzi."

Then followed four other purchases of gold brocade and satin shot with gold, to be presented by the duchess to Ercole Strozzi.

"To Maestro Francesco da Carpi, tailor, on the 17th July, 7 lire for cloth bought of him by order of the Illustrissima Madonna Duchessa, which she purchased to make up for clothes for the poor, and which were to be distributed by the nuns of the convent of the Corpo di Cristo to the poor in want of clothing."

"For white spotted brocade, 160 soldi, purchased at the order of the Illustrissima Duchessa, which was to be made into a gown for Her Highness."

On the 15th June, in the year 1508. To Mazzolino the Jewess, 15 lire, and 47 soldi for work done for Her Highness from 1st June, 1507, to the 15th June, 1508."

Who this Jewess was it would be difficult to say. Most likely some person employed to

superintend Lucrezia's wardrobe, and the amount named meant twelve months' wages.

"To Maestro Ludovico, physician to Her Highness, 110 lire for the balance of his salary in the year 1507."

"On the 31st December, 240 lire as a year's salary for Her Highness's physician, Maestro Ludovico, at the rate of 20 lire a month."

"To Joanne Jacomo the goldsmith, 5 lire, 7 soldi; the money erroneously deducted from his last account in 1507."

Then follows the rectification of a similar error in the account of some other tradesman.

On the 31st December is an item of 140 lire, 16 soldi, to her steward, as salary for having served Her Highness for the whole of the year, at the rate of four ducats a month.

"To Pietro the son of Martin Caxaia, 33 lire, for having served Her Highness during the whole of the year;" but in what capacity it does not state. He appears to have been employed solely as assistant to his father. Then follows rather

a singular entry of a present made to her major-domo.

“To Siviero, the mercer, the sum of 28 lire, 10 soldi, ordered by the Illustrissima Madonna, our Duchess, for 10 yards of black cloth for a large cloak and doublet, to be made *alla Francese*, for Johanne di Formento, Her Highness’s major-domo.”

This year was memorable for one of the most cruel atrocities ever perpetrated in Ferrara—the murder of Ercole Strozzi, the poet. The two Strozzi—Tito Vespasiano, the father, and Ercole, the son—were alone sufficient to place Ferrara in the highest literary rank among the cities of Italy, although in the district of Ferrara, according to Prignani, “poets were as plentiful in the city as frogs in the meadows surrounding it.” Although both father and son resided in Ferrara, their family was not only of foreign descent, but Tito himself was born in Florence, and had held a military appointment in the service of Nicolo III. He afterwards accepted an appoint-

ment under Duke Borsò d'Este, and when Ercole was invested with the dukedom, one of the first appointments he made was that of naming Tito Strozzi as his ambassador to the court of Rome. He held several other appointments under Ercole, and among them that of the Chief Justice, or head of the twelve *Savij*. In the latter appointment he occasionally gave great dissatisfaction, possibly from a too severe administration of the law. At the same time, not a single instance, not even an accusation, of want of integrity in the performance of his duties has ever been brought against him. In the midst, however, of his judicial and political functions, Tito Strozzi continued to apply himself with great diligence to the study of literature, the history of his own country, and especially the composition of Latin poetry, in which he arrived at great excellence. On the authority of Tiraboschi, many of his unpublished Latin poems still remain among the archives of the Este family at Modena. If so, it is to be hoped that one of the many Modenese

men of learning—several of whom have earned a just reputation for their literary ability and researches into the history of their country—will some day bring these productions to the light.*

One of the grandest works attempted by Tito Strozzi was the *Life of Duke Borso d'Este*, of whose abilities and character he was a great admirer. At the time of his death he had succeeded only in finishing ten of the books, but he left their completion to his son Ercole, requesting him to publish them with a collected edition of his other works. Ercole, however, was assassinated before he had terminated his labours, and the task was intrusted to the celebrated printer Aldo Manuzio, who published a complete edition in the year 1513.

Ercole Strozzi appears to have been a man of immense promise, but unfortunately his early

* Among the most eminent of the modern literary men in Italy, may be named the Marquis di Camporre, whose researches into the literature of his own country have not been surpassed by any historian of the day.

death, at the age of twenty-eight, deprived literature of the benefit which might have accrued from his labours. From all records left of him—for, strange to say, he had none but admirers—he is spoken of as a man of unsurpassed genius. Before he had completed his twentieth year he had made himself celebrated by his skill in Latin versification. At the time of Lucrezia's arrival in Ferrara, Strozzi must have been twenty-two years of age. She immediately took him under her patronage, her attention, it is said, having been first called to him by some elegant complimentary verses with which he had presented her on the occasion of her marriage, though doubtless a name so celebrated as that of his father, who had formerly been ambassador at Rome, must have been well known to her.

Ercole Strozzi seems to have been much gratified by Lucrezia's patronage, and many were the sonnets he wrote on her beauty, accomplishments, and condescending manners. Among other accusations made against Lucrezia by her

enemies is that, if not positively in love with Ercole Strozzi herself, she encouraged the young poet to such an extent as to make him desperately in love with her. Of this there is not one single proof to be discovered, nor is there one letter or document of any kind in existence to show that she ever wrote to him. Although many of the sonnets contain metaphors which would be considered by modern writers as preposterous, and although he invariably speaks of her in terms of the highest laudation, not a single line can be found in any of his verses which could convey the impression that the feelings he entertained for her were any other than those of the purest gratitude and respect.

Some presents she made him after he had been elevated to the post formerly occupied by his father—the chief of the twelve judges—are held by some to be proofs of the affection she held him in, and of the intimacy which existed between them. But this appears an unfair method of reasoning, when it is considered that Lucrezia

was really, in the absence of Alfonso, the sovereign of the territory of Ferrara, and in that capacity there was nothing whatever extraordinary in her making presents to the different officials of the State. Had Lucrezia given presents solely to Ercole Strozzi there might have been some reason for the accusation, but she was notorious for her liberality, and she gave with a generous hand to all. Again, it has been urged that the peculiar class of presents she was known to have made to Strozzi were proofs of a great, if not criminal, intimacy existing between them. In the list of her household expenses for the year 1507, are three or four entries to Siviero the mercer, and others, for gold brocade and satin shot with gold thread, given to the Magnifico Ercole Strozzi. But setting apart the absurdity of the supposition, if too great an intimacy had existed between them, would she have allowed the mercer Siviero, her major-domo and treasurer, to be cognizant of the presents she made Strozzi? The making presents of rich clothing to persons in

high position was a common practice among Italian potentates of Lucrezia's day. At the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia, it may be remembered, the Venetian Ambassador presented her, on the part of the Doge of Venice, with two mantles, one of which was lined with rich ermine. The French Ambassador also gave a rich cap to her husband. Again, there is no proof that these dresses, though ordered by Lucrezia, were not given by Alfonso himself, as there are several instances on record of different rich dresses given by him to officials of his Court or in his service. Strozzi, again, seems to have been the intimate friend and associate of Bembo, for whom Lucrezia—and possibly with better reason than in the case of Ercole Strozzi—was imagined to entertain a strong affection. On the occasion of Bembo's first visit to Ferrara, he lived for some time in the house of his friend Strozzi, by whom he was introduced to Lucrezia. The two friends seem to have vied with each other which could praise Lucrezia in the highest man-

ner, yet without the slightest jealousy appearing to exist between them, which could hardly have been the case if either one or the other had been really in love with her.

The circumstances attending Strozzi's death are nearly as follows. When about twenty-six years of age, he fell desperately in love with Barbara Torelli, a young and beautiful woman, the widow of Ercole Bentivoglio. The marriage did not take place till the latter end of May, 1508, whether owing to indifference on the part of the widow, or to an inability to choose between two offers which appear to have been made her about the same time—one from Ercole and the other from a Ferrarese nobleman—it is impossible to decide. At any rate, the widow at last resolved on marrying Ercole, notwithstanding a hint which appears to have been given him, that in case the nuptials took place he would be assassinated by his rival.*

* Roscoe, in corroboration of this, points to the fact that Strozzi in one of his sonnets alludes to the possibility of an event of the kind occurring.—*Life of Leo X.*

On the night of the thirteenth day after their wedding, Ercole Strozzi had left home on his mule to pay some visits in the neighbourhood, and at daybreak the next morning he was found lying dead in the streets, his clothes nearly torn to pieces, the pavement strewn with locks of his hair, and twenty-two dagger wounds in different parts of his person.

It should also be remarked in Lucrezia's favour, that the accusation against her of having been in love with Strozzi never arose till after his death. The earliest mention made of the possibility of an intrigue existing between the Duchess of Ferrara and Ercole Strozzi, is to be found in the lines of a scandalous and contemptible poet, Casio de' Medici, who in his "Epitaphii," printed in 1525, says that Ercole Strozzi met his death for having written of Lucrezia Borgia.* In the first place it would be absurd to imagine that Lucrezia herself should have instigated the murder. Not the slightest proof

* "*Hercole Stroci, a cui fu dato morte,
Per aver di Lucretia Borgia scritto.*"

exists of her ever having had any cause of displeasure with Strozzi, or of her having ever shown him more intimacy than the patronage a princess might show without any scandal to a talented young poet, her subject. Some have attempted to prove that Strozzi had latterly spoken disrespectfully of her in consequence of her refusing to assist him to obtain a cardinal's hat. In the year 1503, twelve months after Strozzi first made the acquaintance of Lucrezia Borgia, Pope Alexander VI., her father, died, and the political influence of her family in Italy perished with him. Possibly after his death there was hardly a princess in Italy who had not more power at the court of Rome than Lucrezia Borgia; yet the most complimentary stanzas written by Strozzi in her favour were composed after the demise of the Pope. It has been suggested that Alfonso himself might have been the murderer of Ercole Strozzi, but it is hardly possible that he should have shown his jealousy after Strozzi had married Barbara

Torelli, and not while he was openly complimenting the duchess on her beauty and acquirements. On the contrary, during the time when Strozzi was most lavish of his praises of Lucrezia Borgia, Alfonso gave him the appointment occupied by his father as chief of the twelve judges. In a letter written twenty-four days after the murder, by the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to a friend of his, narrating the death of Strozzi, he points out Alessandro Pio, a member of a noble family in Ferrara, as the instigator of the murder, and Mesino del Forno as the actual murderer. One reason for imagining that the murder was committed by some person high in authority is the little pains taken to punish the murderer. This, however, possibly may have arisen from the fact that at the time it was committed a marriage was contemplated, which afterwards took place, between a brother of Alessandro Pio and a natural daughter of the Cardinal Ippolito.*

* The present Palazzo Pio di Savoja, in Ferrara, was a portion of the Cardinal's daughter's dowry. The palace had

Another reason for believing that Alfonso was totally innocent of any complicity in the matter, arises from the fact that he was at the time too much occupied in political matters to give much attention to what was passing in Ferrara. The terrible death-struggle originating from the league of Cambray was just on the point of commencing; and, in the wars which followed it, Alfonso seems to have devoted himself heart and soul in maintaining the integrity of his dominions, especially in resisting the Venetians. Amid the disturbances which had taken place in Italy through the intrigues of Cesare Borgia and Ludovico il Moro, and the different famines and pestilences which had afflicted Italy, the Venetian republic seems not only to have remained undisturbed, but its rulers apparently looked with comparative complacency on what was taking place around them, under the full conviction that the wars

formerly belonged to Giulio d'Este, but was confiscated after his conspiracy against Alfonso, and given to Nicolo di Correggio, of whom it was purchased by the Cardinal.

then carried on weakened their neighbours and increased the strength of Venice, not only by favouring her commerce and naval power, but by augmenting her territories in Italy as well. Even during the time that she was at war with any neighbouring states, she generally contrived to fight her battles with the arms of others, leaving her own subjects to profit by the conquests which were made. In 1507 she possessed the cities of Trani, Brindisi, Gallipoli, and Otranto, which she contrived to hold even after the Spaniards had gained possession of Naples; and Julius II. had guaranteed to her the cities of Faenza and Rimini, while her position and territories were so powerful that the French possessions in the Milanese districts were liable to be crushed by her on the first quarrel which might arise between them.

It would occupy far too much space, as well as be beyond the limits of the present work, to enter into the political complications of the time which culminated in the celebrated League of

Cambray. It is sufficient to mention that a treaty was concluded by the representatives of the different powers there assembled to attack and dismember the republic of Venice. Nothing could be more explicit or more perfectly arranged than the way this dismemberment of the Venetian territory was to be made. Maximilian was to possess Roveredo, Verona, Padua, Vicenza, Trivigi, the Friuli, and Aquileia. The King of France claimed the cities of Brescia, Bergamo, Cremona, and the district of Ghiaradadda; Ferdinand of Spain, the maritime cities of Naples; and the Pope, Romagna, which, since the fall of Cesare Borgia, had been occupied by the Venetians; and which included the celebrated cities of Ravenna, Rimini, and Faenza. It was also agreed to permit the Duke of Ferrara, the Marquis of Mantua, and the Duke of Savoy to become parties to the league, if they pleased—an offer they afterwards accepted with great readiness, especially Alfonso, who had been one of the principal concocters of the league. So resolved

were the potentates assembled at Cambray that nothing should be left undone to destroy the power of Venice, that ambassadors were despatched both to Hungary and England to invite them to join in the coalition against the common enemy of Europe.

Roscoe points out,* when describing the organization of the League of Cambray, an amusing instance of the extreme ductility of conscience occasionally possessed by potentates, as well as a specimen of that mathematical line which frequently separates a plausible political movement from one of gross dishonesty. Maximilian, it should be stated, had lately entered into a treaty of amity with the Venetians, which he had solemnly sworn to maintain, and, as no offence had been given by them which could possibly be construed into a justification of hostilities on his part, it became necessary to resort to some measures which might afford, in the eyes

* "Life of Leo X."

of the world, a sufficient reason for the part which he intended to perform. For the accomplishment of this object, and to satisfy the *honour* and *conscience* of Maximilian, it was therefore expressly agreed that Julius II., who it seems stood in no need of any pretext for infringing a similar treaty which he himself had entered into, should call upon the emperor elect, as defender of the rights of the church, to assist in asserting its claims, and that Maximilian should, within forty days after the 1st April, 1509—the day particularly agreed upon for the commencement of the hostilities—enter the Venetian territories at the head of his army, without further obligation either to his allies or to his oath. Maximilian readily bowed to the infallibility of the church, and acting on principles which the more worldly-minded potentates of the present day might have considered adverse to every principle of honour and integrity, bowed with submission to the decree of the church, and without further hesitation annulled every promise he had

made and compact he had entered into with the Venetians. Without any compunction, he volunteered to fight under the banners of the church, under the condition that he should receive for his part of the spoil those portions of the Venetian territory which had been set apart as his when the clauses of the league were being agreed on.

When first the intelligence reached Venice of the possibility of a union between the different States in Europe against the Republic, the idea was treated with the greatest contempt, and songs were sung in the Piazza of St. Marco and other places, ridiculing the supposition that Europe combined could bring forward such power as should crush the Lion of St. Mark. Nor was this idea confined to the lower and more ignorant classes, vast numbers of the more educated entertaining the opinion as confidently as the ignorant. When, however, the Senate received certain intelligence that the league had been formed, although undismayed at the magnitude of the

danger which was likely to be brought against them, they determined to oppose the combined powers to the last. Determined as they were, the Senate thought it wise, however, first to try whether the terrible calamities which a war of the kind would occasion might not be averted by negotiations. With this intent they offered to surrender up to the Pope some of the places they occupied in the Romagna. The utmost skill of their diplomats was used to prove to the Emperor Maximilian that by every tie of honour it was impossible for him to quarrel with them without first receiving some offence, and they had given none, as well as to create a jealousy between the King of France and the King of Spain. All, however, was useless. The bribe of the cities of the Romagna was too small to tempt the Pope to enter into terms with them. The King of France would not quarrel with the King of Spain, and the Emperor Maximilian triumphantly brought forward the absolution he had received from the head of the Christian Church to justify him in

the course he was about to commence. Finding all attempts at negotiation fruitless, the Venetian Senate determined to defend their possessions to the last. Their first idea, as usual with them, was to seek for other powers to assist them. Strongly indeed did they attempt to impress upon the King of England the admirable opportunity it would be for him to attack the French coast at the time when the flower of the French army would be engaged in the Italian wars, but he was deaf to all their arguments. They even went so far as to seek the alliance of the Turks, but with no better success than they had met with from England.

The Venetians now determined, as no better course could be adopted, to carry on the war single-handed, and grand indeed were the efforts they made on the occasion. Their plan of campaign seems to have been to defend the frontier towns on the land side as determinately as possible, and to tempt their enemy to the seaboard, where their powerful naval resources might assist

their land troops in all the principal operations. At the very outset of their campaign two terrible misfortunes occurred to them. When their fleet was about to leave Venice, a fire took place in the arsenal, which not only destroyed an immense amount of military stores, but twelve of their largest and most powerful galleys were also burnt, and a few days afterwards a mine, which had been formed under the castle of Brescia, exploded, not only causing great damage in a military point of view, but also destroying an immense number of the archives of the Republic which had been sent there for security. Notwithstanding all the impediments, accidentally or purposely thrown in their way, the Venetian army, comprising 40,000 men, and commanded by two generals—the Count of Pitigliano and the Count d’Alviano—were ready to take the field. Nor did they do so one moment too early, for immediately afterwards they were attacked by the combined forces of the allies. Although the Venetians defended themselves with great courage and with varied suc-

cess, on the whole the balance was somewhat against them. Francesco de la Rovere, Duke of Urbino, took from the Venetians the town of Brisinghalla, where he massacred more than two thousand persons. The Marquis of Mantua invaded the Veronese territory, but was for some time successfully opposed by d'Alviano. The French army, with Louis XII. at their head, after crossing the Adda, took the towns of Rivolto and Triviglio; but in an action which occurred between them and Pitigliano, although he had not been beaten, Louis had suffered so severely that after placing a garrison in the fortress of Triviglio, he retreated again across the Adda. The Count immediately commenced the bombardment of the citadel, and after a brave resistance on the part of the garrison, they surrendered. The unfortunate inhabitants of the town seem to have suffered severely on the occasion, the Venetian soldiery, following the example set them by their enemies, committing every atrocity in their power.

If the French army had been unsuccessful in their first engagement with the troops of Venice, a different result attended the next action, which took place in the Ghiaradadda in the month of May, 1509. After a desperate battle, which lasted only three hours, no fewer than ten thousand men, according to Muratori, were left dead on the field. The French were completely successful, and Louis XII. determining to give a proof of his gratitude to the Almighty for the success of his arms, erected on the spot a church dedicated to Santa Maria della Vittoria. Louis had now for some time a comparatively easy march before him, and without difficulty he obtained the surrender of the cities of Cremona, Bergamo, Brescia, and Crema, which without hesitation opened their gates to the conqueror. Peschiera resisted for some time, and then surrendered; and, contrary to all usages of war, the whole garrison, including the commander and his son (the two latter were hanged from the walls), were put to death.

The Venetian senate, finding the power of the combined armies too great to resist, now proposed terms of surrender. They offered to the Pope to give up the whole of the Romagna; to Ferdinand of Spain, all the cities they held on the Neapolitan coast; and to Maximilian they sent an ambassador, informing him that they had given orders to the garrisons of Verona and Vicenza to surrender the cities to him as soon as he should make his appearance before them.

We must now return to Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara. Although his name did not appear among those potentates who first signed the league of Cambray, he had been one of the most active instruments in bringing it about. In fact, he had perhaps received far grosser provocation, and was more completely open to an attack from the Venetians, than any other of the contracting parties, his military power being inconsiderable when compared with the enormous resources of the republic. So great was his importance as a member of the league when compared with the

other members, that the Pope at their request, and from his own wish to show honour to Alfonso, made him the Gonfaloniero or standard-bearer of the church; and two days later, the banner, which had been solemnly blessed at St. Peter's, was taken to Ferrara by Ludovico da Carpi, a nuncio from the Pope, and placed in the possession of the duke, who received it with every mark of respect. The following day a procession was formed, and the standard was carried in great state to the Duomo, where religious services were offered up with great devotion, that Heaven would prosper the cause which the church was about to undertake. As usual in every public event of any importance which occurred in Ferrara, the people made it a cause of rejoicing, and the festivities and bonfires were kept up the whole of the following night.

As soon as the Duke of Ferrara heard of the arrival of the French king in Italy, he hurried to Milan for the double purpose of paying him respect, and consulting with him on the plan of

the campaign. After remaining with the king for some days, he returned to Ferrara to superintend the organization of his army; and his brother the cardinal, whom he had left as his deputy in all military matters during his absence, now proceeded to Milan, and had an audience with Louis, who received him with great affection. These visits of the brothers to the French king may possibly be regarded as the first indication of weakness in the formidable combination of potentates, parties to the league of Cambray against the Venetians, whom they thought fit to consider as their common enemy. The friendly reception given by the French king to the Duke of Ferrara and his brother began to excite the jealousy of the Pope, inasmuch as it seemed to place Louis at the head of the league—a post of honour the fiery old pontiff had reserved for himself. Beyond some angry expressions and somewhat uncourteous messages, however, he exhibited no open signs of hostility to the Duke of Ferrara.

Leaving the different states to carry on the war as had been agreed on, Alfonso now commenced that portion of it which had been assigned to him—that of attacking the Venetians in the Romagna. His first step was to destroy the outposts they had raised on the borders of the Ferrarese territory, which he succeeded in doing after some sharp fighting, and afterwards captured the towns of Monselice and Este. In his attack on the latter town he has been accused of showing great severity to some Venetian nobles who were residing in it at the time, the particulars of which have not been recorded. Whether it was really a fact, or whether the Venetians afterwards brought it forward as an excuse for the horrible atrocities committed by them at Commacchio, it would be difficult to say. Possibly if the accusation were a true one, disgraceful as it may appear to our modern ideas of warfare, any cruelties he committed could not have surpassed the habitual atrocities on both sides which marked the warfare occasioned by

the league of Cambray. Hardly a town was captured by either side in which the inhabitants were not ruthlessly subjected to every brutality and to the profligacy of the soldiery.

In the meantime the Marquis of Mantua satisfied himself with remaining in his city collecting supplies and provisions, and training his army for the war which had already commenced. His delay was occasioned by no want of sympathy in the cause, his love for the Venetians being no greater than that borne them by his brother-in-law Alfonso, but that he might wait the arrival of Maximilian, the emperor elect, who was to descend through the Tyrol to Verona, so that they might carry on operations together. At length the armies of the Marquis of Mantua and Maximilian joined, and after a consultation between the emperor and the marquis, they resolved to attack Padua, considering that if they succeeded, from its vicinity to Venice it would be a more powerful blow inflicted on the republic than any other that could be attempted, as it would

shut out the great point of communication with their possessions in Lombardy. The plan having been agreed on, Padua was attacked and taken by the allies, and leaving the marquis to the command in it, with a somewhat weak garrison of German soldiers, the emperor again retired into Germany.

The different misfortunes which had fallen upon the Venetian republic appeared completely to overwhelm them with dismay, so much so that they seemed almost willing to give up all their possessions in the land, if they might only be allowed to hold Venice and the Lagunes unmolested. They sent another ambassador to Julius II., again offering to give up, unconditionally, the whole of the Romagna, and to Spain their territories on the Neapolitan coast. Neither Spain nor the Pontiff, however, would accept the offer; possibly considering that the territories in question would soon be their own without any consent on the part of the Venetians being included in the surrender. But the refusal of the Pope,

as well as of the Spanish court, to accept the senate's terms, seems to have acted prejudicially to their own interests. The Venetians were thoroughly humiliated when they made the offer, but the refusal again aroused their courage—and the most effective of all courage—that of despair. Without further hesitation they ordered their troops garrisoning the cities on the Neapolitan coast and the Romagna, to repair immediately to Venice, which they were determined to hold to the last, justly considering that while that was safe their power in Italy could never be altogether crushed.

The war was now again commenced with great vigour. The first action which took place was with a body of the Imperialists near Trevisi, whom the Venetians completely defeated, and that too by a small army composed principally of mercenaries whom they had recruited from Greece. The next victory was one of far greater importance. Encouraged by their success over the Germans at Trevisi, the Count Pitigliano determined to

make an attack on Padua. The garrison of the city, being entirely Germans, and possibly having heard exaggerated accounts of the late defeat of their fellow-countrymen, hardly offered any resistance, but fled precipitately, and Pitigliano entered as conqueror into the town. Search was now made for the Marquis of Mantua, but for some time ineffectually, as he had succeeded in making his escape with some German troops under his command to the island of Scala, where he made preparations for an effective defence. The Venetians, however, hardly gave him breathing time, for they attacked the island in the night, and the few troops Francesco Gonzaga had with him surrendered without opposition, the marquis himself escaping with great difficulty in his night-dress from a window into the fields, where he was found two days afterwards almost famished, and brought in that condition a prisoner before the Venetian General, Pitigliano, who sent him a captive to Venice, where he remained for some time in confinement.

The news of the capture of Padua, and the imprisonment of the Marquis of Mantua, caused great terror and excitement in Ferrara. Immediately on receipt of the intelligence the Cardinal Ippolito, who was then in Ferrara, left the city to visit his sister in Mantua, and offer her all the consolation and assistance in his power, and should the necessity occur, to make preparation for the defence of the city, so great was the terror which the victories of the Venetians at Trevigi, Padua, and Scala had caused in the Ferrarese and Paduan districts. Ippolito found his sister overwhelmed with sorrow at her husband's captivity, as well as the danger he was in of losing his life by the hands of his captors—no unjustifiable alarm on her part, when the atrocities committed in that war by the conquerors on both sides are taken into consideration. Ippolito, a man of great courage and determination, assured her that, in case of the death of Francesco, her young son, then quite a boy, should immediately be proclaimed Marquis of Mantua, and that he and

his brother Alfonso would take him under their protection till he was able to assume the reins of government himself. After remaining some weeks in Mantua, Ippolito quitted his sister more resigned to her position, assuring her that on any approach of danger he would again visit her.

CHAPTER VII.

INVASION OF FERRARA.

Territories of the Duke of Ferrara threatened with an Attack from the Venetians—Alfonso prepares to resist it—Progress of the War—Venetians invade the Ferrarese Territory—Their Powerful Fleet—Atrocities of the Venetians—Gallant Action between the Ferrarese and the Venetians—Destruction of the Venetian Fleet—Distress in Ferrara—Treacherous Behaviour of Pope Julius II.—Alfonso's Escape from Rome.

IPPOLITO, on his return to Ferrara, found his brother Alfonso busily preparing for war, and using every means in his power to raise men and money, not only to defend his territory, but to assist Maximilian, who was expected to return in the spring by way of the Brenner into Italy, so that their armies might act together on the northern part of the Venetian territories,

and thus draw off the danger of any very powerful attack on the districts of Ferrara or Padua. To assist him in his endeavours, Alfonso made an energetic appeal to the nobles of Ferrara, showing them the danger they were in, and the necessity for immediate action on their parts to defend their country from the threatened invasion. And nobly was his appeal responded to by them, almost all of the nobility coming forward and tendering their services, both in purse and person to the duke. The Count Contrario volunteered to raise and maintain at his own cost a body of fifty horsemen and two hundred infantry, and Count Borso Calcagnini forty horse and one hundred and fifty infantry. Possibly the most liberal subscriber, both in money and arms, was the Cardinal Ippolito, whose wealth was great, and whose devotion to the cause was unbounded.*

* An analysis of the revenue of the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este affords a singular proof of the extent to which the system of pluralities was carried on in the fifteenth and six-

A large body of the levies raised by the Ferrarese nobility was one morning at the commencement of the month of September reviewed in the Piazza by the duke, attended by the cardinal, who now seemed to have thrown off all ecclesiastical bearing and duties, and to confine himself solely to those of a general in the service of his brother Alfonso. After marching through the ranks, inspecting the men, and speaking to many among them with that open

teenth centuries. In the year 1519, probably scandalized at the enormous amount of his own income, he gave up the archbishopric of Milan, with the greater portion of its revenues, reserving to himself *only*—

	Ducats.
Benefice of Strigonia . . . annual value	25,000
Bishopric of Ferrara . . . „ „	4,000
Archbishopric of Milan . . . „ „	4,000
Bishopric of Modena . . . „ „	800
Abbey of Felonica . . . „ „	1,000
Abbey of Codigoro . . . „ „	2,000
Abbey of Brescello . . . „ „	1,200
Pieve di Bondeno . . . „ „	100
Benefice of Castione . . . „ „	1,500
Bishopric of Capua . . . „ „	1,000
Abbey of Nonontola . . . „ „	1,000

condescension and familiar manner which some writers have considered a defect in the bearing of the duke, as being derogatory to his princely position, he addressed them with a speech of far longer duration than it was his custom to utter. He pointed out to them the difficult position—though only momentary—that the city and territories of Ferrara were in, and the necessity for energetic action. If they maintained the renown they had hitherto acquired for courage on the field of battle, he had no doubt of the speedy successful termination of the war, and he further reminded them, not only that their cause was a just one, but that they were fighting under the banner which had been blessed by His Holiness himself. The day was made memorable by another event—the accouchement of Lucrezia of a son, who was baptized Ippolito, after his uncle the cardinal.

On the opening of the campaign in the following year, a meeting took place between Alfonso, Ippolito, and the Emperor Maximilian,

who had again descended into Italy with a large army, composed of natives of all countries and languages, as well as a powerful train of artillery. Nadi, the historian, estimates that he had with him no fewer than two hundred pieces of cannon. It was now determined that the siege of Padua should take place without delay, and to render its capture the quicker, as well as the more certain, it was resolved that a heavy battery of artillery of Alfonso's own construction, which was imagined to be irresistible, should be added, under the command of Cardinal Ippolito, to that of the Emperor. Alfonso took leave of the Emperor to return again to Ferrara, and Ippolito remained with the latter. The second siege of Padua now commenced, and was carried on by the assailants with great vigour, but with little good effect. The Venetians were fully as determined and energetic in their defence as Maximilian was in the attack. Bembo tells us* that

* Roscoe also quotes the anecdote in his "Life of Leo X."

in order to inspire greater courage among the soldiers and inhabitants of Padua, Loredano, the Doge of Venice, applied to the senate for permission to send his own children to Padua, where they might share the dangers of the siege. Not only was his proposition received with joy, but three hundred of the young nobility of Venice insisted on accompanying the sons of their Doge to Padua. The siege continued for fifteen days with terrible loss on both sides. Frizzi, and other Ferrarese historians, tell us that the cannon of Alfonso effected a tremendous breach in the walls, but account for the ill success of the attack by the treachery of the German generals. On the last day of the attack, the Emperor Maximilian led the assault in person. In spite of all his courage and devotion it was unsuccessful, and Maximilian, finding his army thinned by desertions, casualties on the field of battle, and sickness, gave over the attempt and retired to Vicenza. He shortly afterwards dismissed the whole of the mercenaries in his force, and with

his artillery and native troops went to Vienna, leaving the Venetians in undisputed possession of the whole of their Lombard territory, which they now, being relieved from the presence of the Emperor, invaded, while the Cardinal Ippolito returned to Ferrara, having with difficulty contrived to save the artillery of his brother, of which he had taken the command.

The aspect of affairs now appeared gloomy indeed for the fortunes of the league, and especially for the interest of the dukedom of Ferrara and the marquisate of Mantua. Of all the enemies who had combined against them the Venetians showed the greatest animosity to Alfonso, whom they considered—and certainly with reason—as the most determined and dangerous foe they had.

They now began to turn the war especially on him, and Alfonso could not close his eyes to the fact that his position was becoming desperate. His troops had been driven on every side back into his own territories, which he felt assured

would be attacked the next year by the Venetians with great force; and his position was rendered the more difficult in consequence of the absence of his staunch friend and ally Louis XII., who had now returned to France. The jealousy of the Pope also began to develop itself in a most unmistakeable manner. The duke therefore made preparations for vigorously defending himself, collecting arms on all sides, and building galleys, as well as obtaining aid and military stores. He also had under his command a small body of French troops, sufficient, as he thought, to maintain his position till the ensuing year, when, he felt persuaded, his magnanimous ally the King of France would be able to afford him more powerful assistance.

But energetic as Alfonso was in making preparations for the war the next year, the Venetians were in advance of him. The senate had determined to give him no repose, but to attack him at once, before he should be able to put himself in such a position of defence as to impede

their advance up the river to the city of Ferrara, which they had determined to attack, justly considering that if they succeeded, it would not only be a death-blow to the power of the duke, but would place the whole of the Ferrarese district in their hands, and allow them afterwards to carry on the war against the territories of the Marquis of Mantua both from the north and south.

On December 15, 1509, a portion of the Venetian fleet left the arsenal to rendezvous with another fleet which had been drawn from the coasts of the Adriatic, and which was then anchored off the Fornaci mouth of the Po. The Venetian fleet consisted of eighteen galleys, two galleons, about three hundred smaller vessels, manned by five thousand slaves, and a full complement of sailors and marines. By way of making the attack irresistible, they had on board a considerable land army, furnished with excellent artillery, which was to embark as soon as the ships entered the river, thus to carry on the war at the same time both by sea and land

forces. The command of the whole expedition was given to the Count Angelo Trivigiano. A week after Trivigiano had quitted Venice, he ascended the Po as far as Corbola. Here he anchored, to begin his operations for carrying on the campaign with vigour. He disembarked his soldiers in about equal proportions on either side of the river, with orders to the officers to stretch their men as far inland as they could with safety, to devastate the country to the fullest extent in their power, and then to march forward, keeping as close as possible in a line with the fleet's ascent of the river. Fearfully indeed were the orders of the Venetian commander carried out. The troops spared nothing which came in their way, not even monasteries, nunneries, and churches, which, Frizzi tells us, were not only numerous, but beautiful monuments of architecture. Indeed, so ruthless were the barbarities practised by the Venetian troops as even to disgust the senate themselves, ill-inclined as they were to be merciful to any

who were subject to Alfonso. Bembo* tells us that the senate sent a despatch to Trivigiano, blaming him severely for the atrocities he had committed, and insisting that the war on his part should be carried on with greater humanity. Nor was their rebuke without some good effect; for Trivigiano seems afterwards to have spared the churches and religious buildings, contenting himself with appropriating, for the use of his army, the cattle and provender of the district, as well as destroying the remainder, and every other object that came in his way which by any use could be termed a munition of war.

Alfonso, who had been completely surprised by the rapidity of the Venetian movements, now made every effort in his power to meet them. He easily saw that not a day was to be lost, and that the nearer the Venetians approached to Ferrara the greater would be his difficulties, inasmuch as the city was already beginning to suffer

* "*Storia di Venezia.*"

considerably from want of the provisions which had been destroyed in that portion of his dominions ravaged by the Venetians. He now, assisted by his brother the cardinal, collected a very small body of regular troops, who were supported by a number of armed citizens. So small, indeed, was the force the brothers had been able to collect, that it would have been madness for them to attempt to stop the progress of the Venetians had it not been for the artillery, which Alfonso, as before stated, had brought into a state of the highest perfection. Remaining in Ferrara to collect further supplies and recruits, Alfonso placed his little army under the command of the cardinal, who, on leaving the city, divided his men into two bands, one on each side of the river, and with this small force, which almost might be considered as a forlorn hope, the cardinal advanced to meet the enemy. When day broke on the second day of his march, Ippolito perceived two heavy Venetian galleys, which were evidently acting as the pioneers of the rest of the fleet,

advancing up the river. The cardinal immediately planted on each side of the river a small battery of artillery, one of which he commanded himself, and a very severe action commenced, which continued for some time, comparatively little to the loss of the cardinal, and greatly to that of the Venetians. Although the Ferrarese were conquerors, the exact manner in which the engagement terminated is disputed, some historians maintaining that both galleys were sunk, others that they succeeded in making their retreat to the main body of the fleet. Whichever account is the correct one, it is certain that the Venetians were beaten.

Ippolito, on the evening of the battle, despatched a messenger to his brother Alfonso with the news of the victory, who, taking with him what small body of men he had been able to collect, as well as placing a quantity of provisions on board some boats, descended the river and joined the cardinal, who had remained stationary, to allow his men some rest

after the fatigues of the previous day's fight. When the brothers met, finding their men in high spirits at the success which had attended their arms, they proceeded onwards the next day without difficulty.

In the meantime the Venetian commander, enraged at the defeat his galleys had sustained at the hands of so small a body of Ferrarese, despatched two of his largest ships, accompanied by several smaller ones, though carrying heavy artillery, with orders to force a passage between the Ferrarese forces and ascend the river as rapidly as possible. But apart from the annoyance of his previous defeat, Trivigiano was doubtless instigated by another motive. He knew perfectly well that his mission must either be terminated quickly, or that Alfonso might probably receive reinforcements from the French, when his task would be a far more difficult one. He therefore despatched a detachment of his fleet of such strength as it would be difficult for Alfonso to cope with. In his calcu-

lations, however, Trivigiano was doomed to be disappointed, for no sooner had his ships ascended the river a distance of some ten miles, than turning a bend in the stream they discovered the Ferrarese army divided into two bodies, one on each bank, prepared to receive them. Although the number of men opposed to him was small, the Venetian commander easily discovered, from the position the Ferrarese artillery had been placed in, that the difficulties in his way were of no slight importance. His principal hope was to pass the batteries as rapidly as possible, rather than attempt to destroy them, and orders were given to the slaves to row with all their power. But he had ill calculated the range of Alfonso's artillery, and long before he had reached the batteries levelled against him, his fleet was terribly crippled. Still, he fought on with desperate courage, though ineffectually, for victory remained with the Ferrarese. Most of the Venetian ships were sunk or burnt, and the few that escaped to join

the main body of the fleet had, from their shattered condition, possibly a greater effect in damping the courage of the Venetians than the account given of the battle by the commander himself.

Added to the other misfortunes of the Venetians the winter had now set in with great severity. The country around was deluged with water, and the current of the Po was each day flowing stronger against them, should they again attempt to ascend the river.

Trivigiano, in these circumstances, considered it would be his best policy to descend the river as far as Policella, and there to wait for further orders from Venice. Having arrived at Policella, he stopped the passage of the Po by means of strong iron chains fixed around stakes which he had driven into the river, so as to impede any attack which might be made on him by water, in case Alfonso should be able to collect a sufficient flotilla to attack him. On each side of the river he erected a formidable rampart, which he armed with heavy

artillery, with huts built behind them in which he housed the soldiers. Altogether his position was a most formidable one, and, in fact, such as might easily have been considered sufficient to stop the progress of the victorious Ferrarese.

Alfonso himself appears to have had some doubt whether his army was sufficiently powerful to make the attack. In order to lose no time he returned to Ferrara, the internal government of which he had placed in the hands of the duchess, resolving to collect as many troops as he could obtain, as well as supplies for the army of Ippolito, whom he had left in command, and who now advanced to within a short distance of the Venetian batteries. Whether or not the duke had given instructions to his brother to attack the Venetian batteries is uncertain. Possibly he had not, for, although the courage of Alfonso was great, his prudence was on a par with it. This was, however, hardly the case with the cardinal, whose fiery valour sometimes carried him beyond the bounds of prudence. As

soon as he was within range he commenced a formidable attack on the Venetian batteries, and at first with considerable success. The Venetian commander, finding that Ippolito's power consisted rather in the admirable skill of his artillery than in the number of his men, and also that he had begun the attack without either trenches or earthworks in a sufficiently forward state to protect his soldiers, ordered a sortie, which fell with such fury on the Ferrarese troops that the cardinal was not only for some time obliged to abandon his position, but the peasantry, whom he had pressed into his service to form the earthworks, deserted in a body. With considerable difficulty Ippolito contrived to regain possession of the ground he had lost. Instead of immediately commencing operations against the Venetians, he contented himself by waiting the arrival of his brother Alfonso, in the meantime making what exertions he could once more to induce the peasantry to enter his service and complete the earthworks.

Alfonso, being informed of the ill success of his brother's manœuvre, hastened down the river with a considerable number of men whom he had contrived to collect together to support him, and preparations for an attack on the Venetian bastions, as well as the fleet, were carried on with great vigour. All being now in readiness to commence the fight, Alfonso himself headed the attack on the bastions. In his operations the weather itself seemed to favour him. From the continued rains the river had swollen to such a height as to allow the few Ferrarese galleys Alfonso had at his disposal to float over the impediments that the Venetians had placed in their way, and the night before the attack commenced, Ippolito had succeeded by a somewhat circuitous route, in passing round the Venetian ramparts with some heavy artillery, so as to attack the enemy in the rear.

The next day, perhaps, was the most glorious that ever occurred in the annals of Ferrara. Alfonso commenced his attack on the ramparts

soon after daybreak, and with such success as in a short time to dismount many of the enemy's artillery; while Ippolito, who had succeeded in getting to the rear of the Venetian batteries, with the artillery under his command attacked with terrible effect the Venetian galleys, which were again subjected to the fire of the Ferrarese galleys, now descending the river. The action was conducted with great fury on both sides, but with terrible loss to the Venetians, who are accused of having committed great atrocities on the prisoners that during the engagement fell into their hands. Among others, one may especially be mentioned, which, if the account be a true one, certainly inflicts a stigma of disgrace on the Venetian army. Some of their soldiers having attempted to land from the galleys, they were driven back by a small body of the Ferrarese cavalry, composed principally of citizens, and headed by two young noblemen of Ferrara, Ercole Cantelmo, a remarkably handsome youth of only twenty

years of age, and Alessandro Faruffino. After they had contrived to drive the Venetian soldiers back again into the river, they followed them so far that they themselves were caught in the current. Faruffino, being mounted on a very powerful horse, succeeded in reaching the bank of the river, while Cantelmo was taken prisoner by some Venetian soldiers, the Count Cantelmo, his father, watching the event from the shore. As soon as the young man was taken on board the ship, he was placed in such a position that he could be seen by his father, who was standing by the river side. The youth's helmet was then taken from his head, and he was beheaded before the eyes of his parent.* Such atrocities had the effect of stimulating the Ferrarese to more energetic action, and they redoubled the fury of their attack.

Ship after ship was sunk by the heavy fire of the Ferrarese artillery. One galley, laden

* See Ariosto—*Orlando Furioso* xxxvi. canto 5.

with powder, blew up, thereby increasing the general dismay of the Venetian army. The result of the battle was that, out of the whole Venetian fleet, only a few small craft, in a very shattered condition, succeeded in reaching Venice to tell the tale of misfortune which had befallen the armies of the Republic.

Messengers were now despatched by Alfonso to Ferrara, to inform the Ferrarese, through the duchess, of the glorious success which had attended their army. Great preparations were made in Ferrara to receive the conquerors. The citizens, accompanied by the clergy and different religious orders, as well as the judges and municipal authorities, headed by Lucrezia herself in a carriage, and followed by several carriages filled with the ladies of her court, left the city, and having reached the banks of the Po, awaited the arrival of the victors. In the afternoon of the 27th of December, 1509, less than a fortnight after the commencement of the campaign, those ships of the enemy's fleet which

had not been destroyed were seen approaching, headed by the largest of them, on the prow of which stood the Duke of Ferrara. Here may be mentioned a singular instance of brotherly love on the part of the Cardinal Ippolito. During the whole of the campaign he had been on active service without a day's intermission, and under such heavy fire that, according to Frizzi, on one occasion the head of his friend Count Mirandola Pico was struck off by a cannon ball as he was talking to him; and at the commencement of the second action the cardinal was himself wounded, and refused to quit the field, although advised to do so by his surgeons. He now, in the undress of a cardinal, placed himself unseen on board one of the smaller galleys, that he might not appear in any way to draw off even the smallest portion of the respect which he considered due solely to his brother for the admirable manner in which he had conducted the war. As soon as the fleet had reached the spot where the deputation were assembled, Alfonso quitted the

ship, and entering the carriage with Lucrezia, while the other generals mixed with the procession, proceeded to the gates of the city. Here Alfonso descended from the carriage, and mounting a white horse, took his place at the head of the procession, which was accompanied by a band of musicians. The procession passed through the principal streets of the city till it reached the Duomo, where, Lucrezia and the ladies of her court having joined them, they offered up thanks to God for their escape from the terrible calamity which so lately had threatened them. Great rejoicings took place in the streets that evening, and the usual bonfires were made. Ferrara was for the moment secured against any attack of the enemy. The Venetian galleys which had been captured remained for some time in the river on the spot where Alfonso had disembarked, and were visited by the citizens, all curious to see the effect of the Ferrarese artillery upon the ships, as well as to judge of the bravery and skill of their countrymen. After

remaining there for some months, the galleys were removed to another part of the river, where they would not impede the navigation. There they remained till the year 1601, when they were destroyed by order of the municipality, the figure-head of the admiral's galley alone being preserved in the museum of Ferrara, where it remained for more than a century an object of great interest.

The desperate struggle in which Alfonso and the Ferrarese had been engaged in defence of their territories, had had a most prejudicial effect upon the resources of Ferrara and the inhabitants of the city, who were now reduced to a state of great indigence, while the peasantry in those parts which had suffered from the devastations committed by the Venetians were almost in a starving condition. Alfonso's first care was to raise a sum of money to relieve the immediate distresses of his subjects, and for this purpose he applied earnestly to the nobility for assistance. Nor was the application made in vain. Their

contributions in money were of the most liberal description. Food was purchased and distributed to the starving inhabitants of the city, partly by means of municipal organizations, and partly through the agency of religious bodies, the duchess herself being the point of communication between the donors and the latter.

The lull in hostilities was but temporary, and the war again broke out the next year almost as furiously as before. The Venetians had, with great energy, prepared another fleet, while the Ferrarese, on their part, made equally energetic efforts to repel the coming attack; but happily, from the adverse fortune which attended the armies of the Republic in other parts, their fleet was only able to ravage the district at the mouth of the Po without advancing further.

It would far exceed our limits to enter into any description of the different events in Italian history which emanated from the League of Cambray, and the battles, misery, and slaughter which occurred therefrom. The war was con-

tinued with various success till the year 1512, sometimes the Pope and his party gaining the advantage, and at others the Duke of Ferrara and the French, although the balance of fortune was evidently turning against them. During this time, Alfonso was continually absent from Ferrara, engaged principally in the war. To his ability no inconsiderable degree of that share of the good fortune which attended the French arms at the siege of Ravenna and other places is due; his artillery, which in the different battles he was engaged in he generally commanded himself, being vastly superior to that which was brought against him. To the excellence of this arm in the French and Ferrarese armies might, in fact, be traced all the success which attended them.

During Alfonso's absence from Ferrara, the military affairs and defence of the duchy seem to have been confided to the care of his brother, the Cardinal Ippolito, and the civil administration of affairs to Lucrezia. And admirably

indeed did she fulfil the trust placed in her hands. In this, the historians who were most inimical to her are obliged to confess her conduct was unexceptionable, governing in the absence of her husband with great ability, tact, and justice. Indeed, judging from those facts known of her administration, she seemed to have afforded an admirable proof that strict justice is not incompatible with mercy and charity. While publishing edicts threatening severe punishments on all guilty of plunder or riot, and instigating the police of the city energetically to perform their duties, as well as inflicting heavy fines and punishments on those who should attempt to adulterate the food of the inhabitants of Ferrara, or to withhold it in an unjust manner from the poor with the intention of raising the market, Lucrezia still found sufficient time to interest herself in the affairs of the poor and sick, and to conduct her own private charity in a liberal though discreet manner, besides keeping up her correspondence with her beloved sister-in-law, Isabella,

Marchioness of Mantua. Her supervision of the affairs of the State—not solely those connected with the city, but those of the country districts as well—appears to have been carried on in the minutest manner. One of these edicts, still to be found in the library at Ferrara, goes to the extent of requesting the police at the gates of the city not to allow branches of trees and pieces of wood, which had been robbed from the fields around, to be brought into the city without first seeing that permission for their entrance had been received, and making due inquiries as to how they had been obtained, so that the supply of fuel for the winter might not be endangered.

One by one the Pope had lately succeeded in recovering the whole of the cities of the Romagna, and, in succession, each of the different potentates who composed the League of Cambray had dropped off from it, leaving Alfonso and the French king to carry on the war by themselves, till at last, the French having been driven from Italy, Alfonso was obliged to retreat into his own

territories, which he determined to defend to the last extremity. But there was a subject which gave him greater uneasiness than the army of the Pope and his allies—the bull of excommunication, which was still weighing over him. For some time he submitted, without much apparent sorrow, to this sentence of excommunication, possibly supported by a decision which had been arrived at by the French bishops when France was at the same time excommunicated—that the bull, being issued upon principles adverse to the doctrine of the church, was of no avail. But Alfonso now found that the King of France was endeavouring to be reconciled with the Pope, and feeling assured that, in that case, he would be left to maintain his position single-handed against the terrible power of the combined armies, he began to entertain the idea whether it would not be his best policy again to become friends with His Holiness. Possibly he might have been instigated to this by his wife, Lucrezia, who appears to have possessed a strong

ascendancy over her husband—a power, which, to do her justice, she exercised with great tact and moderation. And this is the more likely from the naturally inflexible disposition of Alfonso, who, though from the different records left of him, he appears to have been eminently religious, was possessed of a determination of purpose fully equal to his piety.

Having resolved on opening communications with the Pope, his next task was to find some one who could act as ambassador—an office attended with no little difficulty and danger when the fiery and vindictive character of the pontiff is taken into consideration. In fact, already Alfonso had had a specimen of the sort of treatment his ambassador would be likely to receive. He had formerly attempted to open negotiations with the Pope for peace, and had chosen for his ambassador a person of all others whom he considered the most likely to succeed in an embassy to an enlightened court—his brother Ippolito's secretary, the celebrated poet Ludovico Ariosto.

On his arrival at Ostia, where the Pope was then residing, he requested an audience with the pontiff. His request was complied with, and Ariosto was ushered into the presence of His Holiness. He had scarcely been introduced to him when the Pope sternly told him immediately to leave his presence, or he would order him to be thrown out of the window.

Ariosto was hurried out of the room by the attendants, who, knowing full well the temper of their master, advised the poet without delay to quit the Roman dominions, for, seeing the humour the Pope was in, it would be impossible to answer for his safety. Ariosto, without hesitation, took the hint, and mounting his horse, hurried back to Ferrara as rapidly as possible, to give an account of the ill success of his mission.

With such an experience of the manner in which Julius II. was likely to receive his ambassador, it may easily be imagined Alfonso had some difficulty in finding another who would have sufficient influence over the Pontiff to be able

to obtain a calm hearing for the explanation of the object of his mission. Fortune—or rather his own chivalrous and honourable behaviour—found him an ambassador in the person of an individual who a few years before was his bitter enemy—Fabrizio Colonna, one of the most expert generals in the service of the Pope. At the siege of Ravenna, Colonna defended the city against the attacks of the French under Gaston de Foix, and the Ferrarese under Alfonso, Gaston de Foix being General-in-Chief of the combined armies, and the honour of that celebrated conquest being generally given to him, although if strict justice were meted out, it should rather have been given to Alfonso, through whose efficient artillery, as before stated, the breach had been made in the walls which were impregnable against that of the French. At the surrender, Fabrizio remained as a prisoner of war with Alfonso, who conducted his old enemy to Ferrara, assigned him an apartment in the castle, and treated him with every mark of friendship and respect. An intimacy sprang up

between the duke and his prisoner, and the events arising from it seem rather like those of a chapter in romance than the more commonplace details of history.

On consultation with Colonna, Alfonso candidly explained to him the difficulty he had in finding an efficient ambassador to the Papal Court to treat for peace. Colonna reminded him of the inflexible temper of the pontiff, and the impossibility of obtaining from him any concessions unless the duke first acknowledged the supremacy of the church, and promised to cease his attacks on the cities of the Romagna, leaving them absolutely in the power of the Pope. Alfonso unhesitatingly declared his willingness to abide by such conditions, and Fabrizio then offered his services as ambassador to the Pope,—an offer which Alfonso gratefully accepted, being fully convinced that his cause could not be in more honourable or efficient hands. Fabrizio now left Ferrara and proceeded to Rome. Immediately on his arrival he obtained an audience with the Pope,

to whom he expressed Alfonso's desire for an interview and his willingness to become a good and obedient son of the Church. The Pope received Alfonso's message apparently with great satisfaction, merely insisting on conditions which were frequently imposed on potentates on their reconciliation with the Roman pontiff—viz., that he should appear at the Papal Court and publicly express his regret for his rebellious conduct. This easy condition, which, at the time, was considered far from derogatory, was immediately accepted by Alfonso, who quitted Ferrara the day he received Colonna's message, and hurried on to Rome. The morning after his arrival, he solicited an audience with the Pope, but it was some days before he received the order to attend at the Papal Court. When introduced to the Pope, Alfonso, throwing himself at the pontiff's feet, expressed his sorrow at having given His Holiness any offence. The Pope, in return, raised Alfonso from his knees, and assured him that he received his submission with joy and satisfaction. As for

the terms of peace, the Pontiff continued, he had no doubt they could be easily and satisfactorily arranged between them, and for this purpose he had already appointed a committee of six cardinals to confer with Alfonso on the subject.

The next day Alfonso presented himself to the cardinals, who received him with great courtesy, and the business of the day commenced. But what must have been the Duke of Ferrara's surprise when the only conditions which the Pope would hear of were proposed to him—that he should not only immediately deliver up the city of Ferrara and the whole of his territory to the Church, but that he and all his family should take up their residence in the small town of Asti, in Lombardy, engaging, moreover, that none of them should ever attempt to return to Ferrara, which for the future should be considered as one of the States of the Church.

On hearing these conditions, Alfonso unhesitatingly refused to accept them, and hastily leaving the chamber and seeking his lodgings, made

preparations for immediately quitting Rome. His departure, however, was delayed by a message he received from the committee of cardinals, requesting him not to act so hastily, but to give time to see whether some modification of the Pope's terms might not be made. Day after day passed, but still nothing was heard from the cardinals, when at last Alfonso received a message stating that, the day he had arrived at Rome, the troops of the Pope had entered the Ferrarese territories, devastating the country round and gradually advancing to Ferrara. Astonished and indignant at this intelligence, Alfonso resolved immediately to leave Rome and return to Ferrara, where the duchess and her young family were then residing in the castle, Lucrezia directing the affairs of the city, while Ippolito, with some French and Ferrarese soldiers, still under his command, was opposing as he best could the advance of the Papal army.

On attempting to leave his house in Rome Alfonso found he was a prisoner, guards having

been set round it, with orders not to allow him to quit it without permission from the court. It was now that Alfonso received a good return for his kindness to Fabrizio Colonna, who was scarcely less surprised and indignant at the behaviour of the Pope than was the Duke of Ferrara himself. Fabrizio found an opportunity of secretly communicating with Alfonso, and suggesting a plan for his escape, which was acted on. Fabrizio, having secured a few armed retainers on whose courage and fidelity he could rely, placed them one night in ambush near the house in which Alfonso was confined, which he secretly contrived to enter, carrying with him a bundle of clothes for his friend's disguise. It was nearly daybreak before Alfonso and Fabrizio had an opportunity of leaving the house, which fortunately, though with great difficulty, they did unobserved, when, joining the men whom Fabrizio had placed in concealment, they hurried on to the city gates of St. John of Lateran, which had a few minutes before been opened. Here, however, an impediment arose. The officer on guard

positively refused to allow them to pass, notwithstanding the threats of Colonna, and his offers to protect the captain should any question arise about disobedience of his orders. The captain was inflexible, and calling out the soldiers of the guard, he despatched one to seek for further aid, while he drew up the others to prevent Fabrizio and his companion from leaving the city. Fabrizio immediately saw there was but one hope left for them, and that was if possible to break through the guard and gain the country outside the walls, where the speed of their horses would for a short time be able to secure them against capture. In the attempt they completely succeeded, and arrived in safety at the fortress of the Colonna family at Marino. The most difficult part, however, of Alfonso's journey remained to be performed. Fabrizio now took leave of him, and placing him under the protection of a junior member of the family, Prospero Colonna, the two started off on their journey to Ferrara.

The adventures of Alfonso and his companion

were romantic in the extreme. The Pope, enraged at the escape of his prisoner, sent out messages to all parts, requesting the strictest surveillance might be kept up on the roads, and that the greatest vigilance should be employed by all the army, who had now almost reached the walls of Ferrara. Admirable as were the precautions taken to secure Alfonso, they were unsuccessful. The fugitives, however, appear to have endured occasionally on the road very great hardships. Frequently the disguises Alfonso was obliged to take, and the parts he had to play, were strangely antagonistic to our ideas of the conduct of a dignified prince. Occasionally he and his companion were dressed as two friars on their pilgrimage to a shrine. Then they assumed the disguise of huntsmen, and afterwards of two private soldiers going to join their regiment. The last character played by Alfonso was that of cook to Prospero, who passed as his master. All difficulties were at last surmounted, and the duke had the satisfaction of again arriving in safety at Ferrara.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCREZIA'S COURT IN FERRARA.

Lucrezia's Joy at her Husband's Escape—He restores Confidence in Ferrara—The Pope's Army retires from the Ferrarese Territory—Death of the Pope—Leo X.—Peace in Ferrara—Great Distress in Ferrara—Alfonso pledges his Plate to relieve the Distresses of the Poor—Lucrezia's Jewels—Lucrezia's Letters—Her Court—Her Patronage of Men of Letters and Artists—Vanozza—Death of Don Alessandro, Lucrezia's Youngest Son—Lucrezia's Death.

GREAT indeed was Lucrezia's joy at again beholding her husband, for terrible had been her anxieties during his absence; not solely from the great solicitude she had been in for his personal safety, but also—though in a minor degree—from her desire to receive his advice and instruction as to the domestic government of Ferrara, which, as stated in the last chapter, had been left entirely in her hands. Although she

had managed it with great discretion and admirable justice, it was a task requiring far greater strength of constitution—though neither of will nor mental ability—than she possessed to carry it out to her own satisfaction. Not only did the management of her children require her frequent superintendence—for it is indisputable that Lucrezia exercised over her offspring a far stricter surveillance, and took a greater personal interest in them, than at the present day is the fashion for princesses to exercise over their nurseries—but her health was in a very delicate condition, being continually subject to those attacks of low fever which seemed invariably to seize her with more or less severity whenever she attempted permanently to reside in Ferrara. Yet, notwithstanding these impediments, she appears to have been indefatigable in superintending the internal affairs of the State. Here one point in her favour can with difficulty be disputed. It could hardly have been possible for her to have exercised, during the absence of

her husband, the strict discipline she did over her subjects, yet without any display or exercise of severity, without having around her officials who were attached to her, not solely from their interest, but from the respectful love they bore her. Even the populace themselves, suffering as they were under the most terrible privations, and naturally disposed to be turbulent and undisciplined, appear to have submitted to her rule with such patience and obedience as tended to prove that the love they had for their sovereign entered not a little into the cause of their good behaviour.

Alfonso's appearance in Ferrara was not only a day of happiness to Lucrezia, but one of joy for the whole of the inhabitants of the city, who for some weeks before his arrival had been in a state closely bordering on despair. He immediately set himself the task of re-organizing those portions of the internal discipline which had been somewhat disarranged, as well as encouraging, with his brief, soldier-like eloquence, the

spirits of those who were fearful of the results of the war. Finding the state of distress his subjects were in, one of his first cares was to procure food for the starving inhabitants. He again appealed to his nobles, and again they liberally came forward to assist him; and in a short time the privations under which the citizens had laboured were much ameliorated. Alfonso's stay in Ferrara was, however, a short one; for the Pope, enraged at his escape, was pressing forward on the territory of Ferrara, not only with his own troops, but with those of his allies, determined to effect by force what he had been unable to do by treachery. Alfonso hastily gathered round him what troops he could collect, and placing them under the command of his brother Ippolito, despatched them to the seat of war to arrest the advance of the papal troops, remaining himself in Ferrara, and occupying himself in victualling the city, putting its defences in repair, collecting soldiers, and increasing by every means in his power his formidable train of artillery.

The heroic duke experienced far less difficulty than might have been imagined. The citizens of Ferrara, now animated by his presence, gathered around him, offering their services, while many of the French soldiers who still remained in his territory, joined his standard; and in a short time Alfonso found himself at the head of a force sufficiently strong to oppose effectually the papal army in its advance upon Ferrara.

In the meantime, the war continued in other parts of Italy so fiercely that the Pope was obliged to draw off a considerable part of his army from the Ferrarese territory. Alfonso was far too good a general to allow an opportunity of the kind to escape him, and by a rapid march, and more than one sharp engagement, he at last succeeded not only in clearing the territory of Ferrara of the papal troops, but in advancing into the Romagna as far as prudence would allow. The tide of good fortune which had for some time favoured the papal arms now turned

directly against them, although not to such an extent as to bear any promise of an immediate peace, when a circumstance occurred which greatly tended to clear the gloomy aspect of the political horizon,—the death of Pope Julius II. The health of the pontiff had been declining for some time, and at last he was thrown on a bed of sickness by an illness of such severity that his life was despaired of. Thanks to the natural excellence of his constitution, and the skill of his physicians, he had recovered so far as nearly to reach a state of convalescence, when the intelligence reached him of some French successes in Italy. On receiving the news, the passionate old man flew into such a violent paroxysm of rage as to occasion a relapse. Shortly afterwards delirium set in, and he expired a few days afterwards, his last words being—“ Out of Italy, French—out of Italy, Alfonso d’Este !”

The news of the pontiff’s death was a source of joy to all Italy, no matter on which side the different states had been engaged. All were now

thoroughly tired of the war, and utterly exhausted by the energies they had shown in it. At the same time, a short space had to elapse before any decided opinion could be arrived at, whether the promises of peace were not delusive. All would depend on the character of the individual elected as the new Pope. Should he be of a disposition similar to that of the late pontiff in his ideas as to the rights and prerogatives of the Church, and equally determined to maintain them, there would exist a strong probability of a war during the whole of another pontificate; unless, in fact, both sides should be so utterly exhausted as to prevent a continuance of hostilities. If, on the contrary, a man of peaceable disposition and more liberal views should be elected, there was a great probability of a longer duration of peace than had been enjoyed in Italy for many years.

Although it was still doubtful which way the election would turn, the majority devoutly hoped it might fall on the Cardinal de' Medici. Nor

were their hopes disappointed. Although he was strongly opposed by another cardinal, who, as proved at the scrutiny of votes, had no fewer than thirteen supporters among the cardinals, he was elected. Great indeed were the rejoicings over Italy at the news, although several of the potentates who were likely to gain by the war, took little pains in concealing their disappointment. Certainly, never had prospects of peace been brighter in Italy than they appeared at the accession of Leo X. It would have been difficult to find a potentate whose opinions and policy differed more widely from those of his predecessors, Alexander VI. and Julius II., than did those of the present Pope. Instead of the fiery courage and despotic disposition of the latter, and the unscrupulous ambition of the former, he was as strongly addicted to the arts of peace as Julius II. had been to those of war. The first acts of his government showed how much he was inclined to mercy, for he pardoned more than one political offender who had been condemned to

death. Pacific negotiations were entered into with all the potentates of Italy; and although perfect peace was not to be the lot of his country during the whole of his pontificate, it is certain that the wars which took place were decidedly adverse to his natural disposition.

The elevation of Leo X. to the Pontificate was a source of sincere rejoicing to the inhabitants of Ferrara, for although considerable success had attended Alfonso's efforts in defending his territories against the invasion of his enemies, the country was reduced to such a state of exhaustion as to be almost powerless against the attacks of a powerful force. On receiving intelligence that the Cardinal de' Medici had been elected to the papal throne, Alfonso immediately made a journey to Rome, to be present in the procession of the Pope to take possession of the Lateran See, which took place on the 11th day of April, the anniversary of the day on which Leo was made a prisoner at the battle of Ravenna. On his arrival at Rome, Alfonso was received with the

greatest cordiality by the Pope, who seemed not to entertain the slightest animosity against him. So far indeed to the contrary, that when the procession was about to take place, Alfonso had the honour of assisting the pontiff to mount his horse, and walked by his side the whole of the way. Alfonso remained for some days longer in Rome, receiving from the pontiff during his stay strong marks of favour, and when he left that city he bore with him the conviction that his territory, so lately torn by the miseries of war, would now again recover during profound peace.

Though the duke found himself free from the alarms and exigencies of war, two other subjects which caused him terrible anxiety were still before him—his exhausted exchequer and the poverty and misery of his subjects. He now not only again appealed to his nobles for assistance, but he set them, in his own person, a grand example of self-denial. Without the slightest hesitation, he sold off the whole of the silver

plate and rich furniture of his palace, contenting himself with the majolica earthenware from the manufactory which he had established, and many of the articles on his dinner table, Frizzi tells us, had been painted by his own hand. Here Alfonso was admirably aided by his consort, who behaved on the occasion with an amount of unselfishness and kindness of feeling which it would be difficult indeed for any of her detractors to depreciate. Lucrezia, who was now in her thirty-fifth year, and therefore at a time of life when a woman is apt to have great faith in the value of dress, unhesitatingly placed in the hands of her husband her jewels, which were celebrated for their beauty and immense value among all the princesses of Europe, to pledge as security for money to be advanced for the relief of the distresses of her subjects. At what time the debt was paid off and the jewels restored to her it would be difficult to state, but it was most probably in the year 1516, as there is at present in the archives of the Este family, in the library

at Modena, a list of her jewels, which were then confided to the care of her chamberlain, possibly on their restoration after the liability imposed upon them had been paid off. Many of these jewels have already been spoken of in the description of Lucrezia's dresses at her marriage, and at the wedding festivals afterwards held in Ferrara.

An abstract of some of the remainder (the whole collection amounted to about 300 articles) may possibly not be uninteresting to the reader, both as showing the class of jewelry in estimation among princesses in the early part of the sixteenth century, and the minute manner in which the domestic accounts of Lucrezia's household were kept. It may also be stated that the examples are taken partly at hazard and partly with design to show the conscientious manner in which Lucrezia acted when giving up her jewels for the debt, retaining for her own use not even those of trifling value. The list is headed—

“ *Al nome di Dio.* 19 *Gennaro*, 1516. List of jewels and valuables belonging to the Duchess Lucrezia Borgia, and signed by her Chamberlain :—

“ A beautiful rose diamond, set in a chestnut-shaped locket, with a fine pear-shaped pearl as a pendant.

“ A cluster of diamonds, set round with rubies, worn as an ornament in a cap. (*Occhio da coffiotto.*)

“ Five diamonds, set in a gold brooch, two of the diamonds having four facets, one triangular-shaped, one square, and the fifth with five facets. The brooch is enclosed in a little mother-of-pearl box.

“ A brooch consisting of two large rubies, joined together by a bar of gold of turquoise and green enamel. In the centre of the bar is a large table diamond of an oblong form.

“ Forty diamonds set in three rosettes, the centre diamond being very large. The said diamonds are now enclosed in a little wooden box.

“ A gold serpent for a bracelet, with seven diamonds in the head, and one in the tail.

“ A cross of pure gold, set with five large table diamonds and thirty small. The nails which fasten the hands and feet are represented by diamonds, and the wound of the spear in the side by a ruby. There are set in it also eight pearls, one for each corner of the cross, and above the crown of thorns is a large diamond in the shape of a heart.

“ A large and very beautiful tablet emerald of a square form, set in a brooch of gold filigree work, with a beautiful pear-shaped pearl as a pendant.

“ A large and beautiful tablet emerald brooch of an oval form, and set in gold.

“ Another chestnut-shaped locket of pure gold, with a large emerald set on one side and a ruby on the other ; with also a large pear-shaped pearl as a pendant.

“ Two large rubies set in gold and exquisitely enamelled with different colours, and worn as

buttons in the sleeves of the Signora Duchessa. Both are tablet rubies, and of a square form.

“ A ruby set in gold, and fixed in front of a State-cap, or *berettino*.

“ A circlet of jewels as an ornament to be worn round the State-cap of the Signora Duchessa. The circlet is of gold, with two diamonds and twenty rubies set in it. In the centre is a large diamond cluster set in gold enamel, red and green.

“ Eighty-four pearls, pendent from a white and red enamelled gold ornament.

“ A rosette of six diamonds set in white and red enamel gold, sewn upon a black *candale*; and on the same *candale* is also an ornament of three rubies, set in gold in the same manner as the rosette.”

This *candale** seems to have been a favourite article of female dress, not only with the Venetian

* Boerio, in his “ Dictionary of the Venetian Dialect,” in which the list of Lucrezia’s jewels is written, describes the *candale* as—*Un vestito nero che adattavasi con artificio appendato sul capo, che e con eleganza allontivigliase alla*

and Ferrarese ladies, but with women of all classes. It appears to have been made of silk gauze, and being fastened in some manner round the waist, could be thrown over the head either as a hood or a veil. It was as powerful a weapon in the hands of a Venetian or Ferrarese coquette, as a fan among the Spanish ladies. Much pains appears to have been taken to learn its proper use, and to acquire the power of employing it with the greatest effect either to show or conceal the countenance in such a manner as to render it more attractive, as well as to hide trifling blemishes which might otherwise mar the effect wished to be produced, allowing a male admirer at the same time to imagine that greater beauties were concealed than those that met his eye.

“Thirty-nine large and beautiful pearls set in a chain of gold,—alternately three links of the gold-chain and three pearls.

vita, il che dava il potere veramente magico de abbellire le brutte e di far vie maggiormente speccare le attrattive della belle.

“ Nine large and beautiful pearls folded up in a piece of paper, on which it is written that the said pearls were formerly worn on a beretta of silver-thread by the Signora Duchessa.

“ Sixteen large and beautiful pearls, also in a paper, on which it is written that they formerly belonged to a red and green enamelled brooch.

“ Thirty-four pearls, large and of a good colour, in a little bag of white linen (*sacchettino di tela bianca*).

“ A string of one hundred and sixty pearls, six of them very large and beautiful, which were worn on a berettina of the Signora Duchessa, and a tassel comprised of ninety pearls to hang by the side of the said berettina.

“ A brooch of white gold enamel set with eleven fine pearls, the whole to represent a group of white elderflowers, and which is enclosed in a little wooden box (*scatalino*).

“ A pair of gold bracelets set with fine cameos, some representing different animals, others the labours of Hercules. The gold in the bracelets,

without including the cameos, weighs two and a quarter ounces.

“A pair of bracelets, each in two pieces, enamelled in many colours, and weighing four and a quarter ounces.

“A pair of bracelets of chased gold, enamelled white and red, with a locket in the centre of each to hold musk (*pasta di mosco*). To one of these bracelets are four bands, and to the other three, one having been lost. The whole weighs three and a half ounces.”

Then follow several other pairs of bracelets, among them no fewer than four of red coral beads alternated with gold beads.

“A gold medal of St. Francisco.” Then follow several other gold medals to be worn as ornaments to caps, generally representing some subjects connected with Holy Writ. Of two of these medals, one, representing the sacrifice of Isaac, was worn in a cap of Don Ercole (Lucrezia's eldest son, then nearly nine years of age), and the other, representing St. Louis, in that

of Lucrezia's second son Don Ippolito. Two or three other gold medals are also mentioned which had been worn in the caps of her children.

“ A black fan covered with white feathers upon a framework of gold enamel, weighing thirteen and a half ounces.” A note says that the feathers were comprised in the weight.

“ A black fan, with a handle of chalcedony, ornamented with gold.

“ A gold ornament sewn on to a veil, no longer worn by the Signora Duchessa.

“ Twenty-two gold enamel eyelet holes of different colours, comprising six which are attached to a stomacher.

“ Eight flat scales of gold joined together, and which are now worn by the Signora Duchessa on her arm.”

Then are mentioned a number of gold chains, which are followed by different coral ornaments and several articles of apparently trifling value, such as a mother-of-pearl Agnus Dei set in gold

enamel, a breviary with silver ornaments, a small cap of netted silver thread, a girdle of white silk shot with gold thread, and other articles of a similar description.

Nor must it be imagined that the relinquishment for several years of her jewels was merely a spontaneous act of sympathy on the part of Lucrezia for the miseries the population of Ferrara were then enduring. Her letters still extant—and they are many—in the different libraries of Italy, show that during the whole of the wars the relief of the poor, the sick, and the unhappy was her constant occupation. And in this good work—notwithstanding the political complications which occurred during the wars of the League of Cambray, and the endeavours of the Pope to cause ill-feeling between the houses of Ferrara and Mantua—especially by depriving Alfonso of the office of Gonfaloniero of the States of the Church, and placing it in the hands of Francesco Gonzaga—the Marchioness Isabella was Lucrezia's constant correspondent and con-

fidante. Numerous indeed were the letters which passed between them, many of Lucrezia's being still preserved in the archives of Mantua, all of which bear the same impress of affection, charity, and piety. Sometimes a letter addressed from Lucrezia to the marchioness, promised aid and protection to some individual in whose welfare Isabella of Mantua was interested. In a second, Lucrezia asks the marchioness for assistance to obtain a dowry for some poor person entitled to it, and who had not received it; in a third, she requests her to assist a poor girl to enter a convent; and in a fourth, she writes to some girl advising her to consider well, before entering a convent, whether it was from the love of a religious life, and from no other cause, that she was induced to seclude herself from the world. Occasionally her letters are addressed to the marquis himself. One written congratulating him on his escape from the Venetians, and alluding to the unhappy state of the country, she concludes by saying—"I pray our

Lord God will long preserve your highness, and with His holy hand protect us in our troubles, and lead us safely out of them.”

And here again the reader is reminded that it is not with the immediate fear of death before her eyes, as Gibbon and others have stated, that Lucrezia is induced to become religious, for the period during which the greater portion of these letters were written comprised the full prime of her life, viz., from the year 1509 to 1513, that is to say, from the twenty-seventh to the thirty-fourth year of her age. Another singular feature in these letters remains to be noticed, as being strongly adverse to the received opinion of the general profligacy of Lucrezia's habits and manner of thinking, namely, that a large proportion of her letters relate to means to be adopted for protecting young girls from danger, either by placing them in a convent, or under some respectable protection. She appears from these letters also to have had many young girls in her own establishment, as well as in the convent, under the care of

the sisters and nuns of the Corpus Christi, an order she seems to have held in high favour, and whose convent in Ferrara was endowed by her.

During the continuance of the wars, it appears Lucrezia had two other children, both sons, one born on the 25th August, 1509, and baptized Ippolito, after his uncle. He afterwards arrived at the dignity of Archbishop of Milan and Cardinal. The other, the exact date of whose birth is not known, possibly about the year 1511, was baptized Alessandro, but died in infancy.

If Lucrezia's name during the wars appeared less frequently than formerly in political matters, it may be accounted for to a considerable extent by the domestic duties of her family; for whatever other faults she may have been accused of, no one has ever disputed the fact that she was a good mother, watching over her children with incessant care, and paying great attention to their welfare and education. In the year 1515, Lucrezia was brought to bed of a daughter, to

the great joy of both parents, as hitherto her children had been all sons. Lucrezia herself appears to have been particularly delighted at the event, for on the 4th of July, 1515, only one day after the birth of her child, she sends a short autograph letter, this time addressed both to the Marquis and Marchioness of Mantua, informing them of the event. In it she expresses her great delight, and, after stating that the child is a healthy one, she says, when speaking of her great satisfaction, that "she feels the blessing she has received almost as one of those proofs God occasionally gives of His kindness to those who love Him."

After the cessation of the war, the Court of Ferrara, under the patronage of Lucrezia and her husband, rapidly regained the prestige it had formerly acquired as the abode and focus of attraction to men of letters and to artists in the north of Italy. Brilliant indeed must have been the court of Lucrezia during the years in which the duke was not engaged in war, for, apart

from the personal interest he showed in men of letters and artists, Alfonso appears to have left the ceremonies of the court under the control of his wife. Among the men of letters who frequented her court, were, as we have already seen, Pietro Bembo, the unfortunate Ercole Strozzi, and Antonio Tebaldeo, poet, musician, and man of science, originally educated as a physician. He appears to have early quitted the profession, possibly disgusted with the degraded condition that medicine, apart from surgery, was in at the commencement of the sixteenth century in Ferrara. He then applied himself to the study of music, and attained considerable proficiency on the lute. He had a fine voice, and to music he added singing. Afterwards, he not only composed the music but wrote the words of his own songs, and succeeded so well in the poetry that he gave up music as a profession, applying himself solely to literature, in which he obtained considerable eminence as a poet, both in Italian and Latin versification. In the latter he appears to have

excelled more than in the former. After the election of Leo X. to the pontificate, Tebaldeo resided principally in Rome, occasionally visiting Ferrara. After the death of Leo, which took place two years after that of Lucrezia, there is no record of Tebaldeo's having again visited his native city, although he appears to have been greatly beloved and respected by his fellow-townsmen.

The celebrated Ludovico Ariosto, who held an official appointment in the suite of the Cardinal Ippolito, and who appears to have been equally esteemed both by the duke and duchess, resided nearly the whole of his life in Ferrara. If, as suggested by the scribbler Casio de' Medici, the murder of Ercole Strozzi was perpetrated by the orders of Alfonso himself, from jealousy caused by the compliments paid to Lucrezia in Strozzi's writings, he would have had far more cause for despatching Ludovico Ariosto, whose praises of the duchess greatly exceeded those of Strozzi, placing Lucrezia as he did in the first

niche in his temple of honourable women, as the most celebrated both for beauty and accomplishments, and taking every opportunity of offering her the incense of his adulation. Aldo Manuzio, the celebrated author and printer, was also a frequent visitor at the court of Ferrara. Indeed, it has been stated—and although it would perhaps be somewhat difficult to trace the rumour to its origin, it has been so frequently asserted without contradiction that we may probably rely more implicitly on its truth than on that of one-half of the statements we find recorded in Italian history—that Manuzio not only owed his first start in life to Lucrezia's liberality in supplying him with money, but also in a great measure his subsequent success to her continued patronage. And not only did she use her own efforts in his behalf. Through her means Aldo was introduced to her brother-in-law, the Marquis of Mantua, who appears frequently to have corresponded with him, though Aldo does not seem to have been such a favourite with him as

with Lucrezia. Possibly the most honourable testimony which has been brought forward in Lucrezia's defence may be found in the writings and books of Aldo Manuzio. While the poets, and those living upon her bounty, or in the sunshine of her patronage, might have praised Lucrezia in a higher manner than she merited, or than they believed she fully deserved, the case was different with Aldo. Habitually cool and shrewd, he was little likely to be biassed in favour of too liberal an appreciation of Lucrezia's merits. If he erred in any manner it arose solely from the gratitude he felt for the bounties he had received at her hands; and yet, that gratitude was never expressed in such a manner as to show the slightest particle of fawning or servility. The inflexible Duke Alfonso himself would have been as little likely to be biassed in any manner from the truth as Aldo Manuzio. And yet, long after Lucrezia's death, when Aldo himself was an old man, and certainly had nothing whatever to gain from the patronage of

the Este family, his reputation being so fully confirmed as to require no further protection or aid from the great, we find him, in his collected edition of the works of Tito and Ercole Strozzi, published in Venice more than twenty years after the death of Lucrezia, speaking of her in the highest terms, and especially vaunting her virtue, charity, and piety.

Gian Giorgio Trissino was also a frequent guest at Lucrezia's court, and her patronage of him requires some little explanation, especially as her enemies have again attempted, by associating her name with his, to cast another blot on her character. Trissino, a member of a noble family in Vicenza, was born about the year 1478, and received his education in Milan. In that city he married, but his wife died early, and he then proceeded to Rome, where he was received with great favour by Leo X. Several of his works are much admired, but what principally raised him to the just celebrity he attained was his introduction into Italian poetry of the *versi*

sciolti or blank verse. In the year 1516, several years before Lucrezia's death, letters passed between her and Trissino (the latter residing at the time at the Papal court) relative to the choice of a tutor for her eldest son, Don Ercole, then in his eighth year, and these were written at the request of Alfonso, whose name on more than one occasion is mentioned in them. The reason for asking Trissino for his advice arose from the fact that at the time he enjoyed in Ferrara a high reputation for learning. Moreover, both Lucrezia and her husband appear to have had a great respect for his integrity and ability. Five of these letters have been preserved, and in them, although she writes in a tone of condescending familiarity, there is not one syllable which could be construed into a sign that any warm intimacy existed between them. In the year 1602, nearly a century after Lucrezia's death, a letter, said to have been written by Trissino to Bembo, was inserted in a work printed in Venice. This letter is apparently an answer to one received

from Bembo. In it he merely states, in a somewhat jocose manner, his regret that the usual mild and forbearing temper of Bembo had been ruffled by his (Trissino's) refusal to give him a medallion portrait he possessed of the Duchess Lucrezia. He argues,—“ If the resemblance of this portrait to the lady you admire (*la donna amata*) justifies in your opinion the wish to possess it, why should it not equally justify me in the wish to retain it? Two strong ties, fidelity and affection, forbid my making you the gift you require.” These words, *donna amata*, appear to be the principal objectionable points in this letter. Apart from the possibility that Trissino might have admired Lucrezia without any return of affection on her part, it is not just to take an expression of the kind in its literal translation in the present day. In Italy in those days it meant little more than warm friendship, and was commonly used in the same sense as that in which Desdemona uses the word love when speaking of the feeling she entertained for Cassio. Beyond this one

expression not a syllable can be produced to throw the slightest suspicion that any improper attachment existed between Lucrezia and Trissino.

Among the artists patronized by Lucrezia and her husband were Panetti, Mazzolino, Titian, Giorgione, and Michele Costa. Fra Bartolomeo also painted several pictures for Alfonso and Lucrezia. The learned Marquis Giuseppe Campone has lately discovered, in the archives of Modena, a letter written by Fra Bartolomeo in the year of his death, to Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara. The letter, which is dated July 14, 1517, from Florence, is curious as not only showing that in this, as well as in most of the other known commissions given to painters by Lucrezia, the subject was a sacred one, but as being the only known letter extant of that celebrated painter. He merely states in it his great regret that he had been unable to finish the picture as quickly as his highness desired, but the state of his health he hopes will be accepted as an excuse. "Here-with," he continues, "I forward to your high-

ness the picture, which is that of the Virgin and other figures, and by the judgment of connoisseurs and painters, it is not considered a bad production of my pencil. In case there should be any portions of it which may not please your highness, and you will point out the particulars, I will take care they shall not occur in the other picture you have commissioned me to paint, and for which I have already purchased the canvas. I also now forward you the head of the Saviour, which I have painted at the request of the illustrious duchess. If I have not caught that affectionate expression in the face which she desired, I hope she will attribute it to want of ability on my part (*alla mia arida mente*), and not to indifference to her wish. ‘*Nemo dat quod non habet.*’ (*Sic.*) Trusting that your highness and the illustrious duchess will always consider me among the number of your servants. FRA BARTOLOMEUS, pictor.”

Ferrara in the present day possesses more of the works of Dosso Dossi than of any other artist.

Not a tithe, however, of the numerous productions of his pencil remain, many of the most beautiful having decorated the walls of the Belfiore and Belriguardo palaces, of the former of which not one stone remains upon another, while the latter is at present little better than a large farm-house, many of the portions of it in which Lucrezia Borgia formerly resided being now merely used as storerooms and receptacles for farm produce. Of Benvenuto Tisio, better known as Garofano—whether from his usually placing a pink in the hand of one of the persons in his pictures, or from the place of his birth, or both, it is impossible to say—still fewer paintings remain than of Dosso Dossi, although from the peculiar character of his portraits they were better adapted for apartments of a smaller description than those of Dossi; and to this cause, possibly, may be attributed the fact that so few specimens of his works are found now in Ferrara, the others having been bought up by speculators for foreign countries.

Although more than one picture of Raphael was formerly to be found in Ferrara, none now remain. He was, however, always on strict terms of friendship with Alfonso, and had been specially introduced to his notice after Ariosto's return from his embassy to Rome in the year 1513, Ariosto and Raphael having been on terms of great intimacy. It is certain that Raphael painted more than one picture for Alfonso, though only one is pointed out in the present day, and that probably is a counterfeit. A letter still exists from Raphael to the duke, accompanying three cartoons, of which Alfonso acknowledged the receipt, saying in his letter, 'that the picture (*la pictura*) is the only one now wanting to furnish our *camarino*.' The picture alluded to was a Bacchanal; and of the three which are at present in Ferrara, two are attributed to Dossi, and one to Titian. It is more than probable that the pictures which Raphael painted for Alfonso perished in the fire which destroyed the greater portion of the Estense palace. Again,

Alfonso commissioned Raphael to purchase for him many objects for his museum, such as antiques, sculpture, medals, heads, cameos, &c. The Marquis Campone, in his researches in the archives of the Este family at Modena, found, in one of the letters which Raphael wrote to the duke, a passage in which he says that he often thought of visiting Ferrara, and that one day he would come to stay a month with his Excellency.* Raphael was also in the habit of consulting Ariosto, for whose learning he appears to have had a great respect, as to the figures he would place in his pictures, and doubtless in these consultations Alfonso had his part. The duke wished Raphael to paint him a picture illustrative of the triumph of Bacchus in India, but Raphael finding that the subject had already been treated by another artist—Pellegrino di San Daniele—declined the commission. Several other artists of eminence were frequent visitors at

* *Che voleva venire un giorno a stare un mese con sua Excellentia.*

the Court of Ferrara, all of whom appear to have been welcome guests, and were treated with great hospitality and favour by the duke and duchess.

The year 1516 was a memorable one in Lucrezia's life. A letter is at present in the archives of the library at Mantua, dated 11th July in the same year, written by Lucrezia to the Marchioness Isabella at Mantua, in which she tells her that " the Ill^{mo} Don Alessandro, my youngest son, after a long and painful illness, in which remedies were of no avail, was seized with a cruel diarrhœa. His constitution having already been weakened by the effects of a long illness and many ulcerated wounds which had broken out on his head, he sank under the attack. The poor little fellow (*poverino*) yesterday, at about the fourth hour of the night, yielded his blessed soul into the hands of our Lord God, leaving me much afflicted and full of bitter sorrow, as your Excellency, being a woman and a tender mother yourself, may easily believe.

As we confide all the occurrences of our lives, whether of joy or of sorrow, to each other, I write to inform your Excellency of my misfortune, that you may compassionate me, and pray to the Almighty God to give me strength to bear patiently my dreadful sorrow. But what adds to my affliction is to hear of the great grief the illustrious duke, my consort, showed when he heard the news of our child's death." The letter is dated from Belriguardo, July 11, 1516.

On the 1st November, in the same year, an event occurred which, if it did not obliterate Lucrezia's sorrow at the death of her son Alessandro, gave her at least some consolation. She gave birth to another child, and this time a son, who was christened Francesco, after her brother-in-law, the Marquis of Mantua. This child appears to have been a healthy one, and survived both his father and mother many years. Another person connected with Lucrezia still remains to be spoken of—her mother, Perpetua Vanozza. This woman, the date of whose death is uncertain,

but who died before Lucrezia—the last of her letters in the library at Modena bearing the date of 1515—appears to have been of a cunning, querulous disposition, but, for the day in which she lived, evidently a well-educated person. From the few letters of hers still extant, there seems to have existed but little affection between her and her daughter, although, judging from Vanozza's letters, Lucrezia appears to have treated her with great respect. As these letters are dated from Rome, and no record exists of her ever having visited Ferrara, it is very probable Alfonso had no very great esteem for his mother-in-law. Vanozza's letters to Lucrezia are generally filled with family matters. One of these is a long one informing her that a portion of the jewels in her dowry had been given to her by mistake, and asking for their restitution. Another, dated in the month of February, 1515, is curious as indicative of the querulous temper of the old woman. The subject to which it refers is somewhat obscure, but it is principally a long

tissue of complaints against a certain Paolo Pagnano, whom she accuses of incessantly annoying her, and she requests the interference of Lucrezia and her husband to put a stop to it. In her letter to Lucrezia she says, " I thank you for the intelligence you sent me a few days since respecting what you had done in my cause with Paolo Pagnano, and although he might have been extremely civil to the Count Lorenzo (possibly some official of Lucrezia's court), I have no faith in him whatever, as already I have had experience of his malignity, and am persuaded that he thinks of nothing else but to give me trouble and annoyance as long as I shall live. I therefore most earnestly pray your Excellency to exert yourself, that I may at last be liberated from such annoyances, and that you will use such means that I shall no longer be in any fear that this man will be the cause of my total ruin, not only of my health, but of what little property (*facultate*) I possess. What I request of your Excellency, together with the illustrious Signor

Duca your consort, is to send some messenger from your court, who is a discreet person, and of courteous manners, to the illustrious Duke of Milan with a letter begging that his Excellency will impose his authority on the said Paolo, and condemn him to perpetual silence respecting my affairs, and command him to listen to my good reasons, and not further molest me. He (the said Paolo) might choose some other object to annoy than myself, but like a man little to be respected, he has always acted against me as if I had been the vilest person in the world, thinking perhaps that I was abandoned and deprived of every aid and friend, and that I could not find a man who would speak for me. But I thank God, neither He nor the men of this world have abandoned me; and so again with all my heart I beg the exertions of his Excellency in my behalf, and that he will not refuse me his aid and favour, for if you do not I certainly shall never see the end of his annoyance." In this style she continues for some time longer, and then

concludes by stating that she has nothing further to say than to recommend herself to her Excellency, the illustrious duke, and the children, and that she would continue to pray for the health of them all. The letter is signed, "Your happy and unhappy mother, Vanozza Borgia de Caneï."

Another letter is curious as showing the extreme duplicity of Vanozza. It is a letter of introduction to her of the nephew of a certain Agapito di Amelia, who considered himself entitled to some benefice in the arch-diocese of Capua, but whose claim was disputed, as the living was in the gift of the Archbishop of Ferrara. In her letter she earnestly begs Lucrezia to use her influence with the archbishop to procure the young man the living, stating in strong terms how great her gratitude would be should she succeed, as she (Vanozza) had the applicant's interest greatly at heart. The letter, dated from Rome, December 18th, 1515, is very

neatly written, and evidently by her secretary, though the signature—Perpetua Oratrice Vanozza—is no doubt genuine. Then in a hurried female hand, the same as the signature, is a postscript—“Your Excellency can act as you please in the matter, for I was forced to sign the letter (*mi è stato forza*), and therefore act in the matter as you please.”

A letter written to the Marquis of Mantua, dated January 15th, 1519, by Lucrezia, is a curious proof how closely gross superstition was mixed up not only in her mind, but in that of the intelligent Francesco Gonzaga himself, with the principles of pure religion. It relates to some supposed miracle, which, though of rare occurrence, can be accounted for from natural causes, that had been performed in Mantua, and of which, in a letter to Lucrezia, he had given a description. In it she thanks him for his letter describing the miracle he had seen performed, in which a dead nun grasped the arm of Sister Stephana, and she congratulates him on his good

fortune in having witnessed so great a proof of the power of God, and the more so that it had occurred in his own city. This was the last letter that Lucrezia ever wrote to her brother-in-law. In the month of March the same year she received intelligence of his death. On the receipt of the news Lucrezia immediately determined to visit her sister-in-law, and sent word to that effect. She was, however, doomed to be disappointed. She was seized with illness herself, and being more than six months advanced in pregnancy, she was obliged to change her resolution. She writes—"God is my witness that, if I had not found myself in the weak state I am, I would have kept my promise to your Excellency. I have done everything in my power to come and see you, and show you in this your terrible misfortune the great and cordial love I bear you, and my wish to serve you. Unfortunately it is out of my power, and instead I send in my name the bearer of this letter, M. Agostino, who will express to you more fully

my feelings. I beg you to submit with patience to this manifestation of the will of God, hoping that He, in His mercy, will bestow upon you some great good in compensation for the terrible loss you have sustained."

Two days afterwards, Lucrezia writes another letter to her sister-in-law. "The death of your excellent husband," she says, "has caused me so much grief, that I am rather in want of consolation myself than to offer it effectually to others; and especially to your Excellency, who must be suffering at this moment such terrible misery. I will therefore only sorrow with your Excellency in your misfortune, which is more painful to me than I can express. Nevertheless, as there is now no help, we must resign ourselves to the fiat of the Lord God, and I beg your Excellency to pray for resignation to His will."

The last letter written by Lucrezia—about a fortnight before her death—was to her nephew Federico Gonzaga, who had now succeeded his father. It is one of little importance, otherwise

than being characteristic of Lucrezia's continued desire to oblige. It merely recommends to the notice of the marquis a young man who is wishing to obtain some employment in his service, stating her gratitude should he be able to oblige her.

For some months past Lucrezia's health had been gradually declining, but not to such an extent as to cause any alarm either to herself, her husband, or her friends. Beyond appearing less frequently in public, her method of life seems to have differed but little from her ordinary routine. Her mornings were spent either in prayer or in superintending the domestic cares of her household; and her evenings* in summoning around her the young ladies of her court, and passing the time with them in conversation, music, and especially in embroidery—an occupation, as before stated, to which Lucrezia was exceedingly

* *La sera invitava le gentil donne in piu partite a vicenda al ricamo in cui riusciva piu che eccellente.*—Paolo Giovio and Frizzi.

partial. Her accouchement took place on the 21st June, 1519, when she was delivered of a dead child. Her confinement was long and difficult, and great fears were entertained as to the result. The domestics and others congregated at the foot of the grand staircase leading to her room, and in breathless silence received the intelligence from time to time given them, which was not of a reassuring description. In the fifth hour of the night of the 22nd, a certain Maestro Alberti, the court apothecary, was seen descending the grand staircase with an empty jug in his hand. All pressed forward to ask him on what errand he was going; and he replied, that it was to get some rose-water to wash the corpse of the duchess. Alfonso was with her at the time of her decease, and appears to have suffered terribly at his loss. Two days afterwards, he wrote to his nephew Federico Marquis of Mantua, a letter in which he says that, "it has pleased the Lord God to take to Himself the soul of the illustrious duchess, my much-beloved consort.

“ I take the earliest opportunity to inform you of it, knowing, from the good intelligence which exists between us, that my sorrow will be your sorrow, equally as that which pleases me pleases you. I cannot write without the tears coming into my eyes, so sad is it to find myself deprived of so amiable and good a companion ; so dear was she to me, not only from her excellent life, but from the tender love which existed between us. In my sad misfortune I might well be excused in asking consolation of your Excellency, but I know that you also will have your full measure of grief at my loss, and it will be more comforting to me to know that you will accompany me in my tears.” Signed, Alfonsus, Dux Ferrariæ.

A letter written by a cousin of Federico Gonzaga, who had been sent to Ferrara to be present at Lucrezia’s interment, says that, at the funeral of Lucrezia, Alfonso followed the dead body of his wife and saw it deposited in the vaults of the Convent of the Sisters of the Cor-

pus Christi, where it was placed beside the remains of the amiable Eleanora of Aragon, Alfonso's mother. The letter goes on to state that all the inhabitants of Ferrara seem deeply to grieve for the loss of the duchess, who appears to have been universally beloved, not only for the habitual piety of her life, but for her unbounded charity and kindness of heart.

One other letter remains to be quoted, which, perhaps, will tend more than any we have yet brought under the notice of the reader to destroy one of the most popular sources of the unbounded obloquy which has been heaped on Lucrezia's name—Victor Hugo's drama of "Lucrece Borgia." It is a letter* written by Leonardo Loredano, the Doge of Venice, to his old enemy Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, condoling with him on the death of Lucrezia. In it he says that he has heard with great sorrow of the death of his (Alfonso's) illustrious consort,

* From Mr. Rawdon Brown's "Ragguagli sulla Vita e sulle Opere di Marin Sanuto."

whom he loved and respected for her great benevolence and the general honourable tenor of her life; that he grieves for her loss as much as if she had been his own daughter (*perduto una propria figliuola*), though his sorrow is somewhat mitigated by the remembrance of the reward that awaits her for her religious and praiseworthy life.

In concluding the story of Lucrezia Borgia, and with no wish whatever to speak of her more highly than she deserves, we submit that it is impossible, from the data which we have placed before the reader—all of which are authentic—that Lucrezia could have been the execrable character she has so frequently been painted. That she could have lived for five or six years in the atmosphere of her father's court, and have quitted it without being contaminated, would, perhaps, be as impossible as for a man to touch pitch and not be defiled. Of those charges of specific acts of gross immorality which have been brought against Lucrezia during her residence in

Rome, not the slightest trustworthy evidence exists, nor do her bitterest contemporaneous enemies ever accuse her of being, directly or indirectly, implicated in a murder. And while the strong possibility is admitted that her reputation did not pass without blemish while she resided in Rome, it would be hardly fair to judge her conduct in that profligate age with the same severity we should use in criticising the reputation of a modern princess.

THE END.

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