



# Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

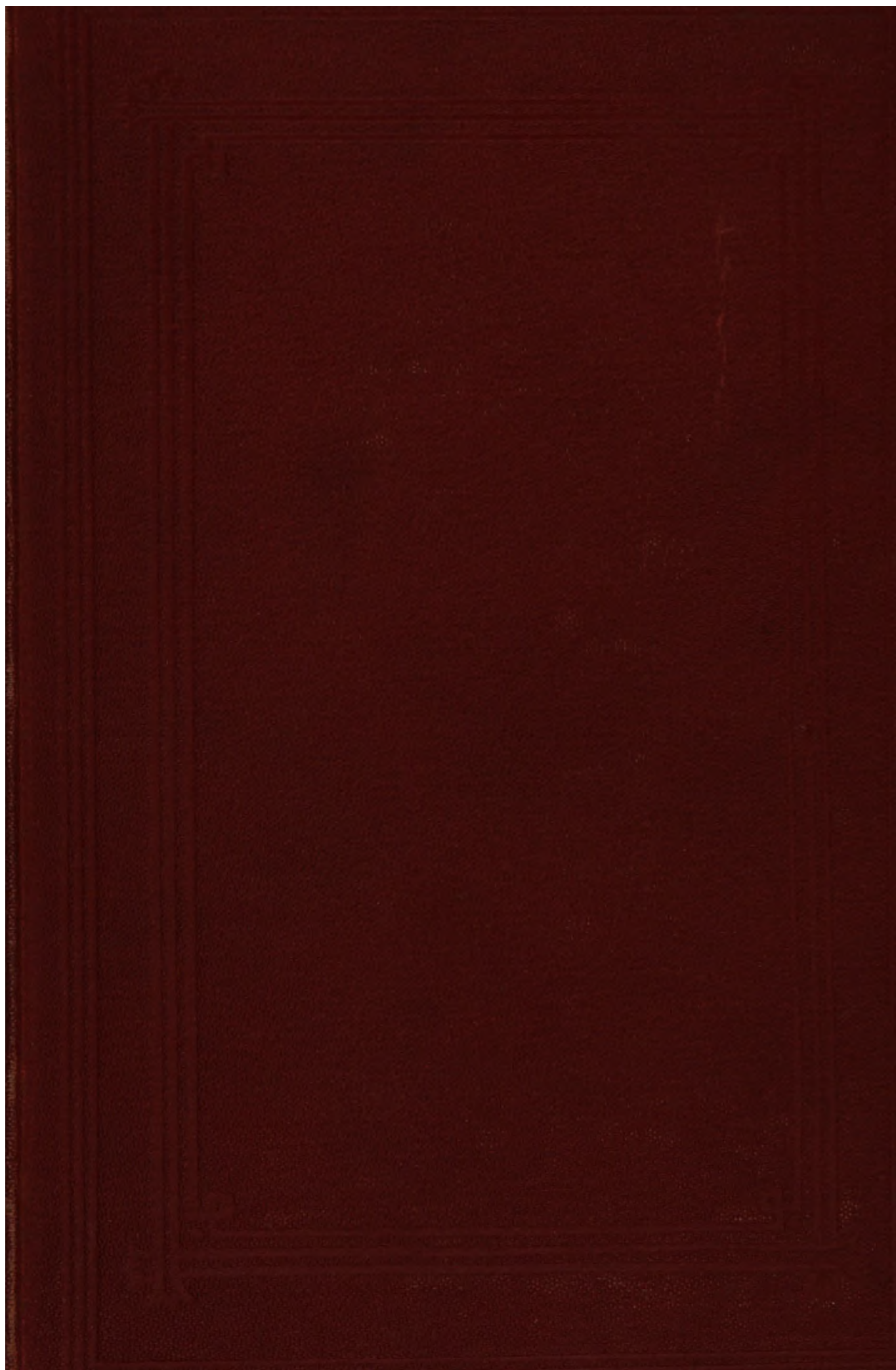
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.



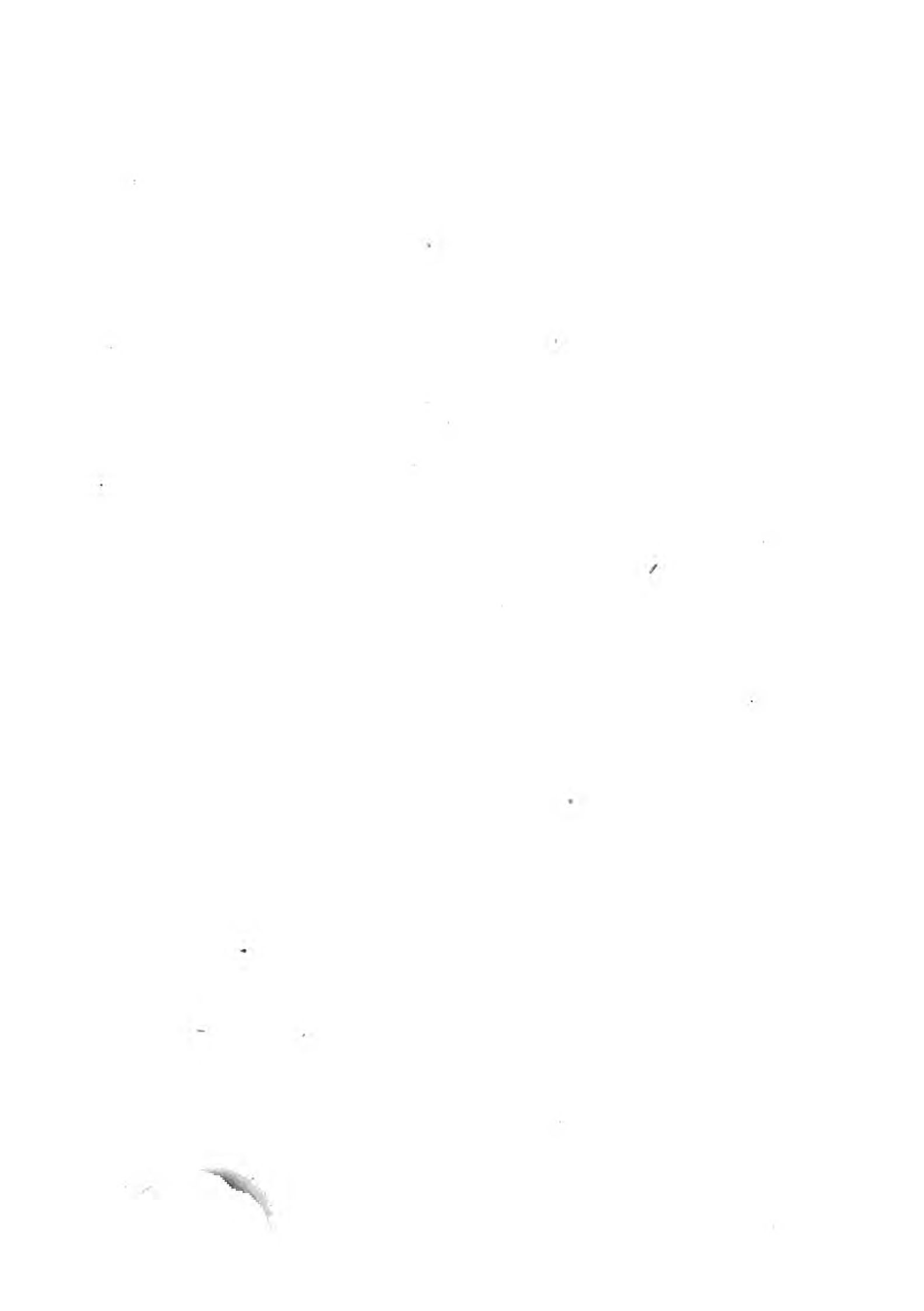


600039916Y









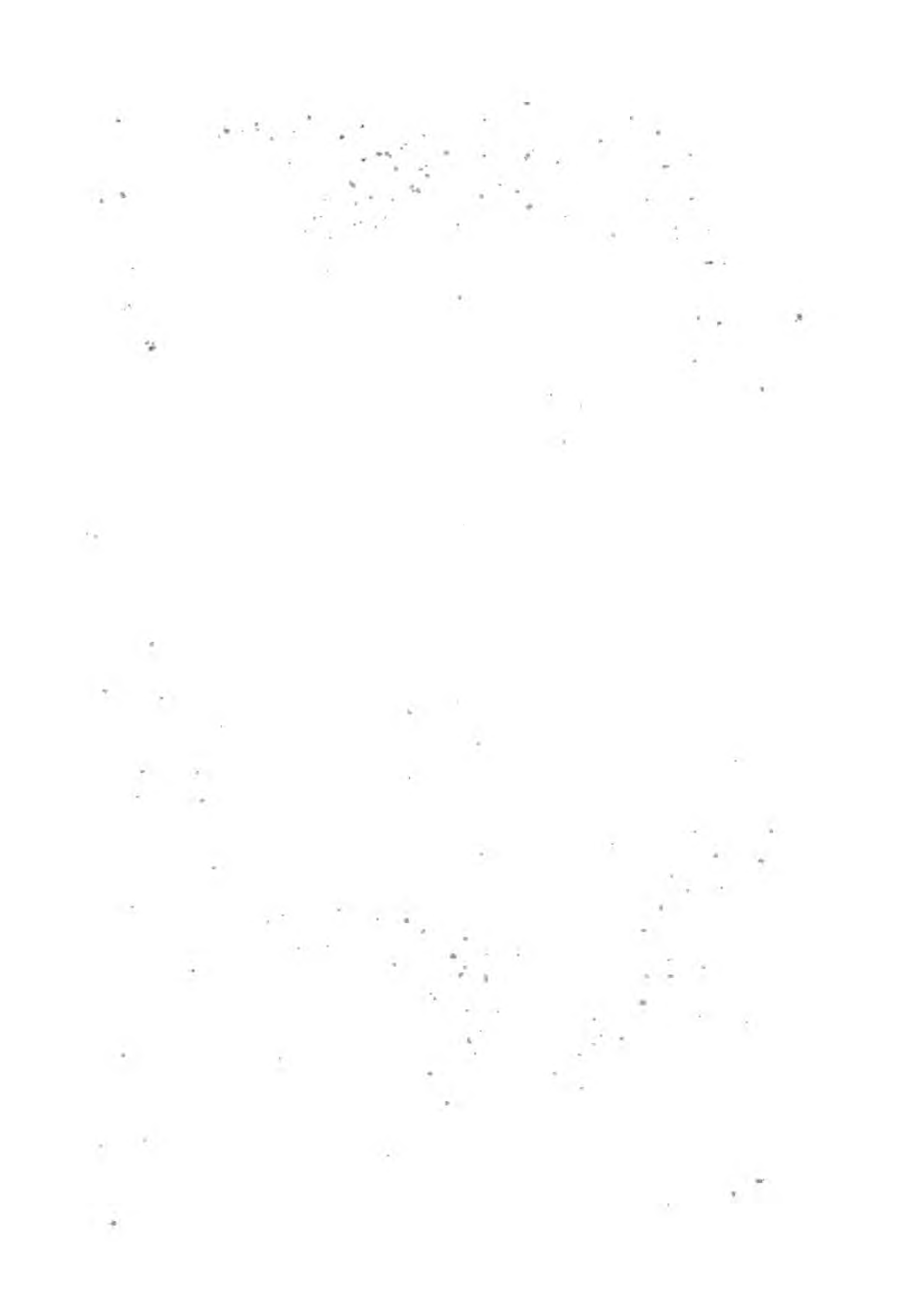
LUCREZIA BORGIA,

DUCHESS OF FERRARA.

—

VOL. I.







*Marianne Esten de Borghin*



# FLORIDA

IN SENATE

1901

January 15, 1901

1901

1901

1901

1901



REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
LANDS

LRS,

1901

1901

1901



# 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ILLUSTRATED BY RARE AND UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS.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.

VOL. I.



LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET

1869.

*[The right of Translation is reserved.]*

246. f. 45



CONTENTS  
OF  
THE FIRST VOLUME.

---

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Difficulty in arriving at a Just Appreciation of Lucrezia's Character—Betrothal when a Child to a Spanish Gentleman—Marries Giovanni Sforza—Marriage dissolved at Lucrezia's Request—Marries Alfonso, Duke of Bisceglie—Murder of Alfonso—Grief of Lucrezia at her Husband's Death—The Camera placed under her Superintendence—Jealousy of the Cardinals—Atrocities committed in Rome—Burchard—Probable Interpolations in his Diary—Guicciardini—Negotiations for a Marriage between Lucrezia and Alfonso of Este—Her Life as Duchess of Ferrara—Aldo Manuzio—Lucrezia's Letters . . . pp. 1—42

CHAPTER II.

THE BORGIA S.

Abuse of the combined Spiritual and Temporal Power by the Popes—Roderigo Lenzuoli—Perpetua Vanozza—Borgia a Candidate for the Popedom—Is elected Pope, and takes the Name of Alexander VI.—Lucrezia—Her excellent Education—Cesare Borgia murders his Brother—The Pope's Sorrow at the Death of his Son—



---

Cesare resigns the Cardinal's Hat—Proposal of a Marriage with the Daughter of the King of Naples declined—Marries Carlotta, Daughter of the King of Navarre—Murders Lucrezia's Husband, the Duke of Bisceglie—Carries on the War in Romagna . . . pp. 43—80

### CHAPTER III.

#### LUCREZIA'S WEDDING.

Alexander opens Negotiations with Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, for the Marriage of his eldest Son, Don Alfonso, with Lucrezia Borgia—The Duke of Ferrara declines the Alliance—Alexander requests the Intervention of the King of France—The Marriage Contract signed in Ferrara—The Ceremony performed by Proxy in Rome—Lucrezia's Wedding Dress—Valuable Presents made on the Occasion—Discontent in Rome at the Pope's lavish Expenditure on his Daughter—Lucrezia leaves Rome for Ferrara  
pp. 81—123

### CHAPTER IV.

#### DON ALFONSO OF ESTE.

Character and Disposition of Alfonso—His Personal Appearance—Great Rejoicings at Ferrara at his Birth—Belriguardo—Nicolo di Leonello's Conspiracy—Attacks Ferrara—Inhabitants refuse Aid to Leonello—His Attempts to seize the Duchess and her Infant Son—Venetian War—Alfonso's Early Introduction into Public Life—Marries Anna Sforza—Visits Venice with his Wife—Death of the Duchess Eleanora, Alfonso's Mother—Death of Anna Sforza . . . pp. 124—156

CHAPTER V.

LUCREZIA BORGIA'S ARRIVAL IN FERRARA.

Preparations for the Reception of the Wedding Guests—  
 Invites Ambassadors from all the Italian States—The  
 Duke's Letter to the Marchioness of Mantua—Lucrezia  
 arrives within twenty Miles of Ferrara—Alfonso privately  
 visits his Bride—Interview between the Marchioness of  
 Mantua and Lucrezia—Meeting between Ercole and  
 Lucrezia—Arrival at the Palace of Alberto d'Este—  
 Lucrezia's Entry into Ferrara—Singular Scenic Repre-  
 sentations—Liberation of Prisoners—Lucrezia's House-  
 hold . . . . . pp. 157—198

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE FESTIVITIES IN FERRARA—*continued.*

Public Festivals of Ferrara—Nicolo Cagnolo's Journey to  
 Ferrara—Visit of the French Ambassador to the Bleeding  
 Nun—Theatrical Representations—Ceremonies attending  
 the Presentation of the Ducal Cap and Sword of State to  
 Don Alfonso—Arrival of Cardinal di Libreth—Joust in the  
 Piazza—Presents from the Venetian and other Ambassa-  
 dors to the Bride—Lent—Departure of the Ambassa-  
 dors . . . . . pp. 199—254

CHAPTER VII.

FERRARA AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH  
 CENTURY.

State of Religion—The Lavanda—Singular Religious Pro-  
 ceSSIONS — Pilgrimages — Professional Mourners — Edict

---

against Blasphemers — Witchcraft — Astrology — Guidibaldo da Feltro—Liberty of Conscience—Jews in Ferrara —Protestantism—Fra Bernadino of Sienna—Francesco D'Argento—Extinction of the Reformation in Ferrara—Charitable Institutions—Usury forbidden—Repression of Mendicity — Prohibitions against carrying Arms — Laws against Duelling — Municipal Regulations — Severity of Laws against Disreputable Women—Thieves—Singular Punishments—Capital Punishments—Jews—Laws relating to Dress . . . . . pp. 255—343

# LUCREZIA BORGIA.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Difficulty in arriving at a Just Appreciation of Lucrezia's Character—Betrothal when a Child to a Spanish Gentleman—Marries Giovanni Sforza—Marriage dissolved at Lucrezia's Request—Marries Alfonso, Duke of Bisceglie—Murder of Alfonso—Grief of Lucrezia at her Husband's Death—The Camera placed under her Superintendence—Jealousy of the Cardinals—Atrocities committed in Rome—Burchard—Probable Interpolations in his Diary—Guicciardini—Negotiations for a Marriage between Lucrezia and Alfonso of Este—Her Life as Duchess of Ferrara—Aldo Manuzio—Lucrezia's Letters.

**I**N the whole range of mediæval history there is, perhaps, no question more difficult of solution than a just appreciation of the character of Lucrezia Borgia. From the descriptions given of her by many of the writers of her day, it would appear that a more infamous being never disgraced a woman's form; that there was scarcely

a crime she had not committed, nor a vice she had not revelled in ; no tie of consanguinity would appear to have been too close to offer the slightest impediment to her amours, and that the dagger and the poison-cup were the ordinary means she took to express her displeasure. Subsequent writers have even gone further, and invented crimes and vices for her which her worst contemporaneous enemies never dreamed of ; while poets and painters have frequently made her their victim when wanting a heroine on whom they might lay the blame of some deed of blood, and whose character was already sufficiently infamous to screen their inventions from the charge of improbability.

On the other hand, writers of at least equal eminence, both contemporaneous and modern, speak of her in precisely opposite terms. With these no praise can be sufficiently strong to do justice to her many virtues. By their descriptions she would appear to have been pious without bigotry, and charitable without ostentation, an



---

amiable and attached wife, and an excellent mother to her children, governing in the absence of her husband the States of Ferrara with strict justice tempered with mercy, condescending to all, respected by her subjects, and beloved by her dependents.

So widely indeed do authorities differ as to the real character of Lucrezia Borgia, that it would almost be an act of presumption on the part of an author definitely to decide between them. At the same time, it must be admitted that, if her panegyrists have been too loud in her praises, her detractors have decidedly been too unscrupulous in their accusations. To imagine that Lucrezia Borgia could have resided for several years in the pernicious atmosphere of her father's court without being contaminated, would perhaps be going too far. At the same time her enemies—or rather the enemies of her father and brothers—have, in their attempts to defame her, so often contradicted each other, and brought forward against her so many improbabilities,

as to neutralize in the eyes of any impartial judge a great portion of their evidence against her.

Of the early childhood of Lucrezia Borgia, little or nothing is known. Even the date of her birth is uncertain, there being a discrepancy of no less than three or four years in the age given her by different writers. She was the daughter of Alexander VI. before his elevation to the Papal throne, and of a certain Vanozza de' Cattanei. By Vanozza the cardinal had five children : Pier Luigi, who died in his infancy; Giovanni, Duke of Gandia, who was murdered, it is strongly suspected, by his brother Cesare; Gioffredo, Count of Cariati; Cesare, afterwards Duke of Valentinois, of whose career and crimes historians make frequent mention; and Lucrezia. As proved by many documents in her handwriting still in existence, Lucrezia seems to have received an excellent education, and to have been well instructed in religious matters. It is most probable that after having left her mother she was placed in a convent. Possibly Vanozza, her

---

mother, might have had some part in superintending her education. Although history knows but little of her, from some letters at present in the library at Modena it would appear that she was herself a woman of good education ; the more so, as several of these letters are held to be in her own handwriting, and not—as was frequently the custom in the correspondence of ladies in those days—in that of her secretary. That these letters are in the handwriting of Vanozza herself, is further corroborated by the fact that more than one are on strictly private family subjects, and such, indeed, as she would hardly have liked a third person to be acquainted with ; as misunderstandings with her son and other individuals, in which no indifferent person would willingly have interfered, or any one of whom Vanozza would have made a confidant.

At what age Lucrezia's education was considered to have been completed it would be impossible to surmise ; but it is certain that while she yet was very young, and her father only cardinal,

she had been betrothed to a Spanish gentleman. Her father, however, on obtaining the pontificate, immediately dissolved the connexion, under the plea of the extreme youth of his daughter, though evidently with the intention of making a match for her with some person of a more elevated rank in society. He appears to have had but little difficulty ; for on the 12th day of June, 1493, being the first of Alexander's pontificate, Lucrezia was married to Giovanni Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, grandson of a brother of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan.

It would be absurd to imagine that Lucrezia's tastes or affections were in any way consulted in the choice of a husband, or that she was anything more than a puppet in the hands of her father. At the time of her wedding she must have been a mere child. As before stated, there is considerable obscurity as to the exact age of Lucrezia Borgia, but assuming Zambotto,\* who

---

\* Cronaca Ferrarese.

---

makes her older than any of the others, to be correct, at the time of her marriage with Giovanni Sforza she could not have been more than sixteen years of age ; while from data given by a modern author of celebrity (Sig. G. Zuchetti), whose researches into the history of the house of Ferrara have been most profound, it would appear that she could at the time scarcely have attained the age of fifteen.

Little is known of Lucrezia's married life with Sforza, beyond that it was far from a happy one, and at the end of four years their union was dissolved by the Pope, on the plea of constitutional infirmity on the part of the husband. There is, however, but little doubt that this was simply a pretext on the part of the Pontiff to allow his daughter to make another match, and one which would tend far more to advance his political views, than that with a branch of the family of the Duke of Milan. It must not, however, be imagined that the marriage Alexander had contracted between his daughter and Giovanni Sforza

had been brought about without due consideration on his part as to the particular advantages to be drawn from it. At the time, the power of the Aragonese in Naples seemed almost extinguished, and Alexander imagined that by a union with the powerful house of Sforza, he might be able completely to overawe the kingdom of Naples. The marriage had hardly taken place, when the political intrigue which it was intended to bring about commenced its operations; and at the combined request of Ludovico Sforza and Alexander, the King of France invaded Italy. But the unfortunate Duke of Milan soon found that by the descent of the French into Italy he was in many respects a loser, without the slightest advantage accruing to him from his alliance with the French king; while the political combinations it occasioned opened fresh disputes between him and his neighbours. He not only saw his power decrease, but in proportion as it fell off the friendship of the Borgias became weaker, till at last they abandoned him altogether.



In the meantime, in Naples the power of the house of Aragon had been re-established on apparently a far securer basis than before, and the crafty Pontiff now found it his policy to secure their friendship. It is more than probable that, instigated by this wish rather than actuated by any other cause, he annulled the marriage between his daughter and the unfortunate Giovanni Sforza. For the purpose of strengthening the alliance between the Papal Court and the House of Aragon, Lucrezia was again made the instrument of a political intrigue. It was now proposed that she should marry Alfonso, Duke of Bisceglie, natural son of Alfonso II., King of Naples. As a dowry with his daughter, Alexander settled on her the perpetual government of the Duchy of Spoleto, and invested her with all the emoluments arising from the territory of Simoneta, which but a short time before he had wrested from the hands of the Gaetani family.

The marriage was celebrated in the year 1498, and in October in the following year Lucrezia

gave birth to a son. A scandalous rumour, though without the slightest apparent foundation, was afterwards spread, denying that Alfonso was the father of this child. Even Burchard, the Grand Master of the Ceremonies to the Pope, who appears to have lost no opportunity in bringing forward everything that could cast a stigma on the Borgia family, and who, from the official position he held in the palace, was perhaps better able to judge of the truth or falsehood of an accusation of the kind than any other writer of the day, admits that the Duke of Bisceglie's claims to the paternity of the child could not be disputed. Again, there is no reason to believe that Lucrezia was not sincerely attached to her husband. No proof or even suspicion to the contrary has ever been brought against her; while several circumstances connected with her union with Alfonso of Aragon may be quoted to show that she entertained for him a sincere affection.

Shortly after the birth of her child Lucrezia became a widow. One evening, as her husband was



---

leaving the church of St. Peter, he was attacked by several men, armed with swords and halberds. Although severely wounded, he managed to escape from his assailants, and was carried, some say to a chamber in the palace, some say to his own house. In either place he appears to have been nursed with the greatest solicitude by Lucrezia and her sister-in-law, Donna Sancia, the wife of the Duke of Squillace. From the wounds he had received Alfonso's life for some time appeared in great danger. The Cardinal of Capua received his confession, and extreme unction was administered. By the skill of his physicians, the unceasing attention of his wife and sister-in-law, and aided by a naturally good constitution, he gradually recovered till he had reached a state of convalescence. So far indeed from being indifferent to the fate of her husband, Lucrezia not only showed him great kindness, but appears to have taken every possible precaution against his life being tampered with by others. She not only sent to Naples for phy-

sicians to attend him, but she and her sister-in-law lived in the same chamber with him, cooking his food themselves, in a small saucepan they kept for the purpose, that he might not be poisoned by his enemies.

After thirty-three days' constant attention and nursing in the sick-room, Alfonso was pronounced sufficiently cured of his wounds to be no longer in danger, and Lucrezia and Sancia left him for a short time. During their absence he was murdered, it is said, by Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valentinois. Whether Cesare Borgia was really the murderer of his sister's husband, in all probability will never be cleared up. That he was fully equal to an atrocity of the kind, is certain ; but it is still likely that the known infamy of his character may have given more probability to the accusation than he deserved. Guicciardini asserts it as a fact, in which he is supported by Muratori, though the description of the details of the murder by these two authorities differs so considerably as to throw

---

great doubt on the truth of their statements. By the former it would appear that Cesare Borgia insisted on Lucrezia and her sister leaving the room, and then calling in the common executioner, ordered him to strangle Alfonso; while the latter asserts that he was made away with by secret poison. The Venetian Ambassador, Polo Capello, gives a somewhat minute description of Alfonso's death. He says "that during the time Alfonso lay in his sick-room recovering from his wounds, the Pope, knowing the hatred Cesare Borgia bore to his brother-in-law, had the house surrounded by guards, lest the Duke should kill him. On only one occasion when the Pope visited Alfonso, did Cesare Borgia accompany him; and then, on noticing how much his brother-in-law had recovered from the wounds he had received, he merely remarked, '*Quello che non è fatto a disnar, si fara a cena*' (What has not been done at dinner shall be done at supper). Accordingly, one day—it was the twenty-seventh of August—when he entered the room, he found

the patient had already arisen; and making some excuse for sending Lucrezia and Sancia out of the room, Michele (the common executioner) came in as if called, and strangled the said youth."

Strict inquiries were made by the Pope as to the cause of Alfonso's death, and the physicians, with an attendant who had waited on him, were arrested and examined; but no satisfactory conclusion appears to have been arrived at, and they were afterwards dismissed.

The principal cause for suspicion against Cesare Borgia appears to have been his unflinching hatred to the house of Aragon. Another circumstance may also be mentioned, which adds additional weight to the accusation. The persons who attempted to murder Alfonso, as he was descending the steps of St. Peter's church, were evidently protected by some one of importance, for to prevent their arrest they were afterwards escorted out of the city by a body of at least forty horsemen. Again, it may be urged in

---

Cesare Borgia's favour, that neither the Pope, who was really attached to his son-in-law, nor Lucrezia herself, who was overwhelmed with sorrow at her husband's death, and had retired to Nepi, where she remained till her grief was somewhat abated, appears to have borne him any ill-will. Possibly it might be urged that from the great love the Pope had for his son Cesare, as well as the dread he held him in, he might have been induced to forgive him a crime which could not be remedied. But this would hardly have been the case with Lucrezia herself—then only in her twenty-first year. In fact every circumstance relating to the death of Alfonso seems to be overwhelmed with doubts and obscurities.

After the return of Lucrezia Borgia from Nepi, and during the absence of the Pope from Rome, she appears to have acted as his private secretary, opening all his letters and informing him of their contents, as well as replying to those requiring an immediate answer. Muratori strongly comments on this fact, to Lucrezia's

disadvantage. Possibly, in a political point of view, Alexander was not justified in placing so much power in the hands of a woman as young as Lucrezia Borgia; but, at the same time, it certainly bears evidence in her favour, as to her trustworthiness and ability. Even Alexander's conduct in choosing his daughter as his private secretary, may not be altogether without an excuse. In the universal depravity and treachery which prevailed at his Court, it is not improbable that he may have come to the conclusion that the only person in whom he could place the slightest faith was his own daughter. Certainly no one appears to have accused Lucrezia of taking any undue advantage of the power placed in her hands, though the jealousy it occasioned at the Court contributed to increase the number of her enemies and those of her family.

Although Lucrezia certainly showed great sorrow at the death of her husband, she was not fated long to remain a widow. About a year after the death of Alfonso of Aragon, Alex-



ander, who appears never to have missed any means to aggrandize his family, entered into negotiations for the marriage of his daughter to Don Alfonso of Este, eldest son of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara. The marriage was in every respect advantageous, not only for carrying out the political views of the Borgias, but as ensuring an excellent husband for Lucrezia. Alfonso was one of the noblest and most popular princes of the day. His face, if not handsome, was highly intelligent; he was honourable and courageous, and exactly the person likely to form a suitable husband for as beautiful and accomplished a woman as Lucrezia Borgia. Muratori, writing of him says, he was a "*principe glorioso nel mondo che in senno e valore ebbe pochi pari al suo tempo.*" Here may be mentioned an injustice done to Lucrezia's memory by the historian Gibbon, generally so careful and correct, in his History of the House of Brunswick. He asserts that the marriage between Lucrezia and Alfonso D'Este was arranged

during the lifetime of Alfonso of Aragon. This, however, was certainly not the case. All contemporary writers in any way worthy of credit, admit that the subject was not entertained till nearly a year after her husband's death. But all doubt as to the time when the marriage was decided on is now set at rest by the discovery, a few years since, of a letter in the archives of Mantua, written by Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, to his son-in-law Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, informing him that a treaty of marriage had the day before been agreed on, between Lucrezia Borgia, sister of the Duke of Valentinois, and his eldest son, Alfonso D'Este. This letter is dated Ferrara, 11th September, 1501, more than a year after the death of the Duke of Bisceglie.

It would be difficult to trace to their source the too-generally-believed reports of Lucrezia Borgia's infamy during her residence in Rome. By many writers she is described as a wholesale murderess and poisoner, as well as an execrable



---

adulteress. Of the first of these accusations, there does not appear to be one murder in which there is even the slightest *prima facie* evidence to show she was in any way implicated. True, some of her more modern detractors have not hesitated to accuse her of having taken part in the murder of her husband; but it has been shown that after he was grievously wounded by the would-be assassins, Lucrezia nursed him herself for thirty-three days with the greatest solicitude, and other accounts say for two months. At any rate, it is certain she did not cease her surveillance till he had so far recovered as to be able to leave his bed. At his death, also, she showed the greatest sorrow. It will doubtless be urged that after his death she continued on friendly terms with her brother, Cesare Borgia; but then it should be remembered that there is no certainty that Lucrezia suspected Cesare of having been implicated in causing Alfonso's death.

Possibly, the absence of all proof of Lucrezia

Borgia's being concerned in a murder, may, after all, be considered but a negative compliment; but when it is remembered how slight was the value placed on human life in the days of Alexander VI., and the unlimited power in Lucrezia's hands, it almost seems to redound to her honour that no credible witness, or even rumour, can be brought against her, to show she had been implicated in a murder. Polo Capello, the Venetian Ambassador at Rome, writing home, gives, in graphic language, a proof how little the crime of murder was then thought of. After describing the assassination of M. Perotti, whom Cesare Borgia slew in the presence of the Pope, who in vain implored his son to spare the unfortunate man, he adds, "Every morning in Rome are found four or five dead bodies of those who have been murdered in the night."

From one of the Neapolitan historians, or even Guicciardini—from their well-known animosity to the Borgia family—some doubt might

---

have been thrown on a statement of the kind ; but coming as it does from the unprejudiced pen of the Venetian ambassador, there can be little doubt that the description is a faithful one. Leibnitz, speaking of the court of Alexander VI., says, “ It was a court than which perhaps Rome nor the universe ever saw anything more flagitious, and among the enormities prevailing in it were the three capital vices—lust, perfidy, and cruelty.” Muratori also bears testimony to the general depravity existing in Rome in the time of Alexander VI. When concluding his description of the fifteenth century, he says, “ Those of the present day may raise their hands to heaven and thank God they were not born in the century I have been describing, either as regards public affairs or private life.” If then Lucrezia Borgia has no—even probable—suspicion of murder hanging over her fame, it is only justice to her memory to admit her altogether innocent of the crime. Of Victor Hugo’s tragedy it is almost needless for us to

speak. Not only is there not the slightest historical proof of any event of the kind having taken place; but on the contrary, Lucrezia Borgia, when Duchess of Ferrara, was held in the highest estimation by the Venetians. All their authors speak of her as a model of amiability, virtue, and Christian conduct, and the news of her death was received with marked expressions of sorrow by the Venetian senate. Nay, more, there is not in the archives of any of the public libraries of Italy a single document to prove that Lucrezia Borgia ever resided in Venice.

It would certainly be a far more difficult task to clear Lucrezia Borgia during her residence in Rome from the suspicion of immorality than that of murder. On this head, charges of the most horrible description have been made against her: so horrible, indeed, as to make us believe they must have been gross exaggerations, if not fabrications, of the enemies of her family. Sannazarro and Pontano openly accuse her of incest. Yet, singularly enough, Burchard, who

---

from his official position in the palace, must have known far more of the affairs of the Borgia family than all the others put together, who by his writings has proved that no slander was too gross for him to promulgate if it would be likely to injure the Pope and his family, and who would have thought himself but too fortunate if he had been able to bring a charge of the kind against Lucrezia, is totally silent on the subject. Guicciardini speaks also of the general depravity of her life, but only from the statements of her enemies. Another feature in these accusations against Lucrezia deserves to be noticed. With the exception of the horrible specific charges brought against her by Pontano and Sannazarro, no individual has ever been pointed out as her lover during her residence at the Papal court.

Let us now inquire to what extent the traducers of Lucrezia Borgia are entitled to belief. The chief amongst them in point of credibility is undoubtedly Francesco Guicciar-

dini ; and yet no one can justly quote him as an unprejudiced authority. On the contrary, he wrote rather as the advocate for the party he was interested in, than as an historian. Heaping abuse as he does upon the heads of all who were adverse to Florence and the Medici, incorrect and untruthful as he has proved himself to be on so many historical points, is it just to believe him in the reckless statements he makes respecting Lucrezia, when his hatred to the whole Borgia family and their policy is so well known? Possibly he may have been misled by the furious invectives of Sannazarro and Pontano, but these, again, had more cause for hatred to Alexander VI. than Guicciardini himself.\* Faithful subjects and admirers of the princes of the house of Aragon, whom the Pope in so

---

\* Guicciardini, in his history, twice accuses Lucrezia of this crime ; yet singularly enough, in the earlier editions of his work these accusations are not to be found. Mr. Madden, in his *Life of Savonarola*, makes the same remark, and points to the edition of Guicciardini, printed in Venice, 1599, in proof.



---

shameful a manner had abandoned and betrayed, it was not to be wondered at if they carried their hatred against the whole of the Borgia family. Their scandals against Lucrezia are more frequently quoted than those of any other contemporaneous writer, whether Tuscan or Neapolitan, possibly from the very pointed satire contained in their verses. Still it must be remembered that while satire frequently publishes the truth, though in an exaggerated form, it almost as frequently gives force to scandal utterly devoid of foundation.

We now come to Burchard, the most plausible of all the traducers of Lucrezia Borgia, although he, as before stated, makes no mention of the horrible crimes alluded to by Sannazarro and Pontano. There is no poetry or satire in Burchard's writings. His heavy German style entirely ignores all the graces of composition. He writes also with the most cynical indifference either to the taste of the reader or his own reputation. Disappointed in obtaining the

cardinal's hat, he seemed determined to revenge himself, even to his own prejudice, against his former patron; and by the plodding nature of his style, and his apparent incapability of invention, giving to his writings the appearance of truth, he has certainly to a great extent succeeded. But in one of his statements, Burchard has so completely overshot all bounds of probability, as not only to show himself perfectly capable of invention, but to cast a reasonable doubt over many of his narratives. In his well-known description of an orgie held in the Apostolic palace the evening before Lucrezia Borgia's marriage with Alfonso of Este, he has gone so far to injure her and her father, as to prove his whole description utterly false, if indeed (as is now generally supposed) the whole description is not an interpolation, and not the composition of Burchard himself. Unfortunately it would be impossible to give even a slight account of this revolting orgie beyond saying that the Pope, Cesare Borgia, and his daughter had invited



---

to sup with them in the Aulic chambers of the Apostolic palace a crowd of the most infamous wretches, male and female, that could be found in Rome, and that too when the three brothers of Alfonso of Este with their suites were at the moment not only in Rome, but positively lodged in the Apostolic palace, for the purpose of being present at the marriage ceremony, which was to take place (by proxy) the next day; and the Pope at the time, possibly with the intent of imposing on the ambassadors, was affecting an extraordinary amount of sanctity in his conduct. Marin Sanuto, Zambotto, Frizzi and all other authors who have given a description of the wedding, appear to have been in ignorance of this supper, although, from Burchard's account, it was carried on in the most open and undisguised manner.

But a stronger proof that such a supper never took place remains to be adduced. Among the escort in attendance on the brothers of Alfonso when they left Ferrara to be present

at Lucrezia's nuptials in Rome, was an individual sent by Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, Alfonso's sister, to report to her confidentially on all that took place, either at the marriage ceremonies or during the stay of the delegates at the Papal court. This man appears to have performed his duty in a most conscientious and indefatigable manner. His letters, signed S. el Prete, to the Marchioness of Mantua, and which are still in existence, go into the most minute details of all that occurred during the stay of the delegates in Rome, but do not allude in the most distant manner to any such supper, or in fact to any meeting or ceremony not conducted with the strictest propriety and decorum.

It must not, however, be imagined that all contemporaneous authorities are equally severe on Lucrezia Borgia during her residence at her father's court. On the contrary, many of the highest respectability and integrity bear strong witness to her excellent conduct at the very times her detractors were pointing her out as

---

an object for general detestation. Polo Capello, the Venetian ambassador, in one of his reports to the Senate, after writing in the darkest terms of the state of Rome generally, and especially the court of Alexander VI., speaks of Lucrezia as being "wise, discreet, and generous." Again, far more favourable and explicit are the reports of the Ferrarese ambassadors. One of them, Canale, in a letter he sent home in the year 1501, speaks of her as *Matronarum specimen et mulierum singulare ornamentum*. Gio Luca, Pazzi, and Gerardo Sareceno in writing of her say, "The more we converse with her, and the more we see of her manner of life, the higher is the opinion we have of her kindness, integrity, and discretion. In her house all live, not only in a Christian manner, but religiously as well." He goes on also to state that she seemed of a modest and retiring nature.

If Lucrezia's defamers are admitted as witnesses to her infamous character, surely, in common honesty, such evidence in her favour

as we have quoted should also have its weight. If these authorities were somewhat prejudiced in her favour, it should also be taken into consideration that all her detractors were the open, undisguised enemies of her family and their policy; and on summing up the evidence it is surely unjust to accept only that which paints her in the darkest colours, and reject the testimony given in her favour, fully as honourable and trustworthy.

As yet only that part of Lucrezia's life which was passed at the papal court has been spoken of; but a far longer period remains to be accounted for, that between her marriage with Alfonso, eldest son of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, and her death, comprising a period of nearly twenty years. If during her stay in Rome every action of her life is so veiled in obscurity as to render it doubtful whether all statements concerning her are little better than myths, during her union with Alfonso her history may be traced with

---

perfect certainty. If the records of her life previous to her marriage with Alfonso of Este are filled with accusations against her of the most atrocious crimes and vices, the remaining portions of her life—according to the statements of contemporaneous historians—appear to have been passed, not simply in a blameless manner, but with the display of such virtues as would render her a model for princesses to imitate.

Nor are the historians of her life during her residence in Ferrara less worthy of credit than those who so unsparingly attacked her reputation during her residence in Rome. It is also singular to remark how completely opposite are many of these writers in the descriptions they have given of Lucrezia's character. Sannazarro, when speaking of her, says that as the ancient Lucrezia might be quoted as all that was honourable in the type of the Roman matron, so might the modern Lucrezia be mentioned as a type of all that was infamous. Yet Ariosto says that

Rome ought to prefer the modern Lucrezia to the Lucrezia of antiquity, as well in modesty as in beauty—"a comparison," Mr. Roscoe observes, "which if the aspersions under which she had laboured had obtained the slightest credit, could only have been considered as the severest satire." But it is not only on this occasion that Ariosto speaks in high terms of Lucrezia. Her wedding with Alfonso of Este he celebrated in a Latin epithalamium of the most complimentary description, speaking of her as rivalling in the decorum of her manners as well as the beauty of her person all that former times could boast of. In the forty-second canto of his celebrated poem, "Orlando Furioso," he builds an imaginary temple to female excellence, in which he gives the first niche to Lucrezia as being the most worthy among women.\*

All the historians of Ferrara, as well as many

---

\* In the 42nd canto of his "Orlando" he also speaks of her as one—



others, mention her in terms of the highest praise. Giraldi described her as “a woman of uncommon excellence.” Sardi calls her “a most excellent and beautiful princess.” Libanori goes still further, and describes her as “a most beautiful and virtuous princess, endowed with every estimable quality of the mind and the highest polish of understanding, esteemed as the delight of the time and the treasure of the age.” Paulo Giovio,\* bishop of Nocera, says he never knew a more amiable, virtuous, or pious woman; and Pigna is quite as complimentary. Many other authors equally celebrated might be mentioned, such as Ercole Strozzi, Cavicco, and Antonio Tebaldeo. But perhaps the most honourable testimony

---

“La cui bellezza ed onestà preporre  
Deve all’antiqua la sua patria Roma.”

In alluding to her in one of his eclogues, he says;—

“Davano a lei quell’ inclita onestade  
Che giunta con beltà, par che si stime  
Al nostro tempo ritrovarsi in rade.”

\* Vita d’Alfonso primo.

borne to her excellent character by the authors of the day, is that of Aldo Manuzio in his address to her, prefixed to his edition of the works of Tito and Ercole Strozzi. "Your chief desire," he says, "as you yourself have so nobly asserted, is to stand approved of God, and to be useful, not only to the present age, but to future times, so that when you quit this life you may leave behind you a monument that you have not lived in vain." In another edition published some years after her death he adds, "What might I not say of her piety towards God, of her charity towards the poor, of beneficence to those about her, of justice to all? The marvel was, what an amount of misery she had been able to alleviate by the ministers of her bounty; what prudence she had exhibited in the transaction of public business and in the administration of justice; what care she had evinced in giving to all what appeared to be their due, so governing her State as to have the good rewarded, the evil-doers punished, and having affairs so well conducted in the senate as to exhibit



---

to her subjects the most excellent judgment and the greatest acuteness of intellect.”

But other records of the life of Lucrezia Borgia when Duchess of Ferrara, and of a far more authentic character than any hitherto alluded to, remain to be mentioned. These consist of no fewer than 339 of her letters, at present extant in different public libraries or private collections in Italy, and on the authenticity of which no possible doubt can be thrown. They extend over a period of nineteen years, in fact from December 1501, shortly before her marriage with Alfonso of Ferrara, till within about a fortnight before her death. Of these letters, nine—two in Spanish and seven in Italian—at present in the Ambrosian library at Milan, are frequently quoted to prove that during the time of her union with Alfonso of Ferrara her reputation was stained with a criminal intimacy with the celebrated Pietro Bembo, afterwards cardinal. But in these letters, which her detractors adduce as proofs of an intrigue with Bembo, her admirers

maintain there is not one which proves anything more than that a strong friendship existed between Lucrezia and the future cardinal. Certainly, the principal proof of anything beyond friendship to be found in them is an ambiguous expression in one, which, if read in one sense, conveys not the slightest immoral allusion, but in the other may be open to strong objection.\*

But a stronger argument still remains to be brought forward, in proof of the innocence of Lucrezia's intimacy with Bembo. Not only was Alfonso a nobleman of high integrity, and jealous

---

\* The words alluded to are, *desiderosa gratificarvi*, which precede her signature. They are followed by the word *servitore*, generally adopted towards those with whom the writer is not on terms of very great intimacy, which tends to prove them rather a hasty expression than one made use of with a covert meaning. In a note in Mr. Rawdon Brown's "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Marin Sanuto," he justly says—"Non si può dannare come vizio positivo quello che forse in fatto solamente degno di riprensione come caricatura iperbolica, e degno di castigo dalla Crusca come delitto grammaticale, ossia mala applicazione di termini."

of his honour, but during the first five years after Lucrezia's marriage with Alfonso she was on terms of great intimacy with her father-in-law, Duke Ercole: and from the letters still extant, which passed between them, it would seem that scarcely a week elapsed without their being in each other's society. In fact, the Duke seems to have entertained for Lucrezia a strong paternal affection; while she, on her part, returned it with the respect due from a dutiful daughter to a father. Is it to be supposed, then, that under such constant surveillance a criminal intimacy, carried on as openly as that of which Lucrezia is accused with Bembo, should not have come under the notice of her husband, or her father-in-law, especially as Bembo did not reside in Ferrara after Duke Ercole's death? Again, in judging of the guilt or innocence of this intimacy between Lucrezia and Bembo, the latter's letters, which extend from the year 1503 to 1516, should also be taken into consideration. In these letters, not one word can be found which

would tend to prove that a criminal intimacy ever existed between them. In some he alludes only to his own affairs, and in others he either congratulates her on the birth of her children, or mentions subjects of interest, with apologies for not having replied to her communications sooner, in none of which does he overstep the bounds of respectful friendship. In many of his poems, as well as his dedication to the Assolani, he mentions her with profound and respectful admiration.

But if an ambiguous expression in Lucrezia's letter to Bembo may be considered to cast a suspicion on her character, it would be unjust not to give her the benefit of whatever may be found to her advantage in the remaining three hundred and thirty of her letters. From these it would be utterly impossible to draw any but the most favourable conclusions; and if they would be allowed to bear evidence in her favour, it would be difficult to imagine a woman who led a more amiable or exemplary life than she did during

---

her residence in Ferrara. There is not one among them from which a line can be quoted to her prejudice, while the majority tend highly to her praise. Some are filled with appeals for mercy, to be accorded to persons under sentence of death or severe punishment; others contained liberal donations to the sick poor. Many are to her husband, written in terms of strong affection, frequently describing family details of the health of her children, and other similar matters, which, at any rate, prove her to have been not only a good mother, but attentive to the domestic arrangements and good organization of her palace at Belriguardo, where she appears in general to have resided. Others are to her father-in-law, for whom, as before stated, she seems to have entertained a high respect. Others show that during the absence of her husband, the Duke Alfonso, either in France or at the wars, the whole government of the State was placed in her hands, and that she exercised the power intrusted to her with great discretion,

maintaining strict discipline mixed with perfect justice. Again, others are to her sister-in-law, the Marchioness of Mantua, in which their family affairs are talked over in a manner which, apart from the ceremonious expressions in the headings and terminations, could not have been more affectionate or explicit if written between two married ladies, relatives, in the present day.

But one of the most singular features in Lucrezia's correspondence, is the tone of piety, unmixed with the slightest taint of bigotry, to be found in all her letters ; proving that even were she a hypocrite, she must at least have been when young well instructed in the elements of her religion.

Several modern authors have attempted the rehabilitation of Lucrezia Borgia. The most powerful of these is undoubtedly our own historian Roscoe. True, he has been accused by many of being prejudiced in her favour, but anyone who will take the trouble to read his



---

dissertation on her character in his life of Leo X. must surely acquit him of anything like an unfair bias in her behalf. In Italy his advocacy was well received ; but in Germany even his own translator seems hardly convinced by his arguments, believing rather that Lucrezia had in the latter part of her life amended her conduct, and that her piety had increased in proportion as she found her end approaching, an opinion which has been endorsed by several other German and French writers. But this surely is hardly just to the character of Lucrezia Borgia. From the descriptions of her life in Ferrara by different historians at the time, there is not the slightest reason to believe that her respect for religious observances was greater in the latter part of her life than on the first day of her arrival. Prior to a few days before her death, which occurred in childbed, she had no reason to believe that her end was approaching. She was then little more than past the prime of life, having barely entered her forty-first year, and consequently that strong



inducement to continued religious practices, which the certainty of approaching death is likely to produce in the aged, was at the time wanting in her. Altogether it would appear impossible that the Lucrezia Borgia described by Sannazarro and Pontano could have been the same individual painted in such high colours by Aldo Manuzio, Ariosto, Tito and Ercole Strozzi, Frizzi, and others. Of so rapid and distinct a change in the character of any human being, history makes no other mention. In the words of Roscoe,—“ If Lucrezia was guilty of crimes of which she stands accused, the prostitution of her panegyrists is greater than her own; but of such degradation, several of the authorities before cited were incapable; and we may therefore be allowed to conclude that it is scarcely possible, consistently with the known laws of moral character, that the flagitious and abominable Lucrezia Borgia and the respectable and honoured Duchess of Ferrara could be united in the same person.”

## CHAPTER II.

## THE BORGIA S.

Abuse of the combined Spiritual and Temporal Power by the Popes — Roderigo Lenzuoli — Perpetua Vanozza — Borgia a Candidate for the Popedom — Is elected Pope, and takes the Name of Alexander VI. — Lucrezia — Her excellent Education — Cesare Borgia murders his Brother — The Pope's Sorrow at the Death of his Son — Cesare resigns the Cardinal's Hat — Proposal of a Marriage with the Daughter of the King of Naples declined — Marries Carlotta, Daughter of the King of Navarre — Murders Lucrezia's Husband, the Duke of Bisceglie — Carries on the War in Romagna.

**B**EFORE speaking of the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia with Alfonso D' Este, some more particular description should be given of her father and family, not only to give the reader a clearer knowledge of her history, but that it may act in some degree as a mitigating circumstance in any adverse opinion he may form of

her ; as showing the detestable character of those by whom she was immediately surrounded, and whose example, if not followed by her, must so far have accustomed her to acts of perfidy, murder, and infamy, as probably to deprive them in her eyes of a portion of their naturally hideous aspect. Her father seems in his person to have accumulated all the vices that could possibly arise from a combination of unlimited spiritual and temporal power, without retaining one of the virtues which might have emanated from it. That gross immorality and injustice were occasionally to be found among the Popes long before the time of Alexander VI. is perfectly true, but by none were they practised in so unblushing and unconcealed a manner. It is singular to remark how gross was the sophistry occasionally brought forward by ecclesiastical authorities, to excuse the vices likely to emanate from a combination of the temporal and spiritual authority. One of the speakers of the council of Basle, who afterwards assisted at the election of Pope Felix,

---

when maintaining the union of the spiritual with the temporal power, says,—“ I once thought that the secular power should be wholly separate from that of the Church, but I have had cause to change my opinion. I have now learnt that virtue without strength is but slightly respected, and that the Pope without the patrimony of the church would be merely the servant of kings and princes.” Had the speaker gone no further, and not afterwards enlarged upon the subject, there might have appeared, especially in Roman Catholic eyes, a great amount of reason in his arguments. But when he goes on to admit the possible advantage of Popes having sons that may be able to defend them against the attacks of tyrants, it is a stumbling-block which even the most ardent admirers of popery in the present day would find it difficult to surmount.

Ranke, in speaking of this question from the point of view in which it was regarded by the Italians in the Middle Ages, says :—“ It was held to be a matter of course that a Pope should

provide for his own family, and promote its interests. Nay, a Pontiff neglecting to do this would be exposed to injurious remarks." He then quotes a letter of Lorenzo de' Medici to Innocent VIII. without date, but evidently written in the year 1489. "Others," writes Lorenzo, "have not so long postponed their efforts to attain the papal chair, and have concerned themselves little to maintain the retiring delicacy evinced by Your Holiness. Now is Your Holiness not only exonerated before God and man, but this honourable conduct may cause you to incur blame, and your reserve may be attributed to less worthy motives. Zeal and duty lay it on my conscience to remind you that no man is immortal. Be the Pontiff as important as he may in his own person, he cannot make his dignity nor his importance hereditary; he cannot be said absolutely to possess anything but the honours and emoluments he has secured to his kindred." Nor were these remarks of Lorenzo de' Medici a mere compliment paid to the

---

sovereign Pontiff. He had a direct personal interest in the question—he had given his own daughter in marriage to an illegitimate son of the Pope. So far from this letter of Lorenzo de' Medici being considered at all scandalous, it was held by the potentates of Italy of the day as replete with sound sense and honourable feeling.

The earlier portion of the life of Alexander VI. is veiled in great obscurity. Before he is mentioned in history as one of the College of Cardinals, little more is known of him than that his real name was Lenzuoli, and that he was a member of a family of some respectability in Valencia in Spain, his mother being one of the Borgia family, whose uncle Alfonso Borgia was elected to the Popedom under the name of Calixtus III. As soon as Lenzuoli had heard of the dignity which had accrued to his family, he immediately despatched his son Roderigo to Rome, where Calixtus appears to have received him with great kindness, giving him shortly after his arrival the appointment of Archbishop of Valencia. He



continued to heap favours on him till at last he appointed him Cardinal of St. Nicolo, Roderigo being then only in his twenty-fifth year. It would be difficult to imagine the Christian virtues of poverty, humility, and chastity more completely set at defiance,—or rather perverted from their original meaning—than by Roderigo Borgia, for he had now changed his name from Lenzuoli to the family name of his uncle the Pope. Possibly he might have considered that the numerous ecclesiastical appointments he had received, having been given him by the Pope, the head of the Church, were no infringement of his clerical vow of poverty. Humility seems to have been considered by him as synonymous with deception. He fawned on those above him, or from whom he wanted a favour, yet was ready to indemnify himself for any painful feeling which his subserviency might have occasioned him, by a total absence of gratitude for the favours done him, and his perfect readiness to injure his benefactor as soon as he found it his interest to do so, or



---

possibly sooner if he could accomplish it without danger. Of his chastity the only proof he gave was abstaining from the marriage vow. Without admitting all that is said against him to be true, there is no doubt that a man more utterly profligate it would be impossible to name. He was the first of the Popes who ever acknowledged his children, the others concealing their paternity by conventionally terming their offspring nephews, considering that, slight as the deception might be, it was a portion of that respect which vice occasionally pays to virtue.

Although many women are named as having been the mistresses of Roderigo Borgia when cardinal, to the one mentioned in the preceding chapter, Vanozza, he seems to have been particularly attached, and by her he had several children. Of this woman very little is known. Roscoe (but without quoting his authority) states that she was very beautiful, and possibly this might have been true. Certainly all her children are spoken of as being remark-

ably handsome. That she was a woman of education, especially for her day, may be proved by her letters at present in the archives of the Este family at Modena, but which at the same time show her to have been of a most unamiable character. Of her family nothing is known beyond that she was born in Catania. What her Christian name was appears somewhat doubtful, as she is sometimes spoken of as Rosa Vanozza, though in her letters to her daughter Lucrezia, when Duchess of Ferrara, she signs herself Perpetua Oratrice Vanozza. Even the right method of spelling her surname is uncertain. Sometimes she is described as Vanozza, and at others as Vanoza. At the commencement of his intrigue with Vanozza, Roderigo Borgia appears to have shown some of the conventional respect for decency which the higher dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church were accustomed to show in their amours. He seems to have had a nominal marriage contracted between her and a man of the name of

---

Domingo Arrignon, and the first children Roderigo had by Vanozza passed under her husband's name, though at last, when his advancement was perfectly secure, he unhesitatingly admitted them as his own. At what time of the cardinalship the acknowledgment of his paternity of Vanozza's children was made public, it is impossible to say, but Mariana in his history of Spain makes mention that Alexander VI., on elevating Cesare Borgia from the archbishopric of Valencia to the cardinalship, designates him as a legitimate son of Domingo Arrignon and Perpetua Vanozza.

On the 5th day of August, 1492, a series of tumults occurred among the Roman people, which for every species of outrage and licentiousness could hardly have been exceeded had the city been taken by storm by some unscrupulous potentate of the Middle Ages, and given over to the soldiery for plunder. The funeral obsequies of Pope Innocent VIII. had that day been performed, the new Pope had not yet been elected, and as usual every species of license was indulged in

by the populace till another was chosen. The two principal candidates for the honour were Ascanio Sforza and Roderigo Borgia, each being powerfully supported, and for some time it appeared doubtful which would be successful. Sforza, who was of a noble family, had great interest and powerful friends. Borgia, being destitute of these aids, had to rely on his profound dissimulation, long experience, and the enormous wealth which he had amassed from the different lucrative appointments he held. In fact, so great were his riches, that there is little doubt that long before he was proposed as a candidate for the Popedom he had mentally determined to arrive at that dignity; and knowing from experience that in Rome no bonds could secure friends to him more strongly than those made of gold, when still young he commenced hoarding money, not with the feeling which actuates the miser, but solely that it might ultimately be his stepping-stone to the chair of St. Peter. Nor was he in error in his calculation. No sooner was it known that

---

Borgia was lavishing gold with a profuse hand, than so many of Ascanio Sforza's friends quitted him that in a short time he easily perceived the contest would be hopeless. Like a prudent man, he considered it better to resign an impracticable attempt rather than to be certainly defeated, and he resolved to retire from the field. He now despatched a confidential agent to Borgia to negotiate for terms. Borgia, although he bore Sforza no love, could easily perceive that he might still make a dangerous competitor if he determined to stand the risk of the election. He appears to have been too shrewd, however, to make an offer openly, but in the evening he sent to Ascanio four mules laden with silver. The mules returned unloaded, and Borgia accepted it that the amount had been sufficient. Before the day of the election, Ascanio Sforza openly retired from the field, and Roderigo was declared Pope, under the title of Alexander VI. So openly was bribery practised on the occasion, that Burchard says there were only

five of the cardinals who did not sell their votes.

It would occupy too much space to go even in the slightest manner into the political complications which ensued in Italy after the election of Alexander VI. Notwithstanding the brilliant festivals which took place in his honour, and which were so magnificent as to have been hitherto unequalled in the annals of Rome, a strong suspicion became latent in the minds of all, that the election was but the advent of years of misery for Italy. Even many of the cardinals who had accepted his bribes could not disguise the fact from their minds, although they might have consoled themselves by the remembrance of the rich presents they had received. For some short time, however, after his election to the Papal chair Roderigo Borgia conducted himself with considerable discretion and affected amiability; but this soon wore off, and his natural characteristics rapidly began to develop themselves. To use the emphatic words of Corio, a contemporary



---

historian, he entered on his office with the assumed meekness of an ox, but with the fierceness of a lion. But mild as he might have been at the commencement, he appears to have been too well known among his brother cardinals, for those who had offended him not to accept his election as a signal for them to quit Rome.

Setting aside the intrigues carried on with different potentates in Italy, as well as in France and Germany, which in succession plunged every part of Italy into war, we find that Alexander still kept up his intimacy with Vanozza, by whom he had several children. The first, Piero, died in his infancy, the second, the Duke of Gandia, the third Cesare Borgia, and the fourth Lucrezia, and some time after her birth another child, Gioffredo, afterwards married to Sancia of Aragon. There is no record to show the date of Lucrezia's birth, but most probably it took place about the year 1478. The ages of the other children are tolerably well defined. The superintendence, advancement, and aggrandize-



ment of these children seem to have been the great end and aim of Alexander's existence, and to secure it he allowed neither honour, mercy, nor gratitude to be the slightest impediment in his way. One compliment, certainly, must be paid him. Although apparently a man of somewhat restricted education himself, at least judging from those of his letters at present extant, he took great care of the education of his children, and of Lucrezia's especially, though where she obtained it, it is impossible to say. She evidently understood Latin, and could write in that language; she could also both speak and write Italian and Spanish with fluency, and although there is no record to be found which mentions her knowledge of the French language, from the many conversations we find her holding with the different French ambassadors at the court of her father, and at her own, when Duchess of Ferrara, there is little doubt she was well acquainted with that language. She was also well instructed in the principles of her religion, tending

---

to show that, profligate as Alexander might have been himself, he still had sufficient of the principles of decency left in him to give his daughter a religious education. And this is continually proved by her letters, which, even admitting that the pious expressions so frequently made use of in them were merely those of hypocrisy, prove at the same time that she had been so well grounded in the principles of her religion, that she could use her hypocrisy in such a manner as to make it pass—and among keen judges too,—as the genuine emanation of a pious mind. There is little doubt, also, that she must have been principally educated in a convent, for even admitting that her mother Perpetua Vanozza was a woman of superior education, it is hardly to be imagined that the strong religious tone and phraseology to be found in Lucrezia's letters could have been learnt in the house of her mother.

• But Alexander, much as he loved his children, and carefully as he protected them, was

doomed to have a great example that his own family were not proof against those weapons—treason and assassination—of which he had so frequently made use himself. Of his two eldest sons, the Duke of Gandia appears to have been decidedly the favourite. Alexander also seems to have been more interested in his welfare than in that of his brother, Cesare Borgia, whose ambition knew no bounds. Finding the duke an impediment in his way—for it would be absurd to imagine that a man so destitute of every human weakness could have felt any jealousy at the preference shown by his father to the Duke of Gandia—Cesare determined to make away with him, and thereby himself receive the whole of the benefits which might be derived from the power and political influence of the Pope. Like a true son of his father, Cesare had his feelings perfectly under control, and even on the day preceding the night of the murder he lavished on his brother every expression of affection. Burchard's description of the

assassination is nearly as follows.\* “On the 8th day of June, the Cardinal of Valenza (Cesare Borgia), and the Duke of Gandia, sons of the Pope, supped with their mother, Vanozza, near the church of St. Pietro in Vincoli, several other persons being present at the entertainment. A late hour approaching, and the cardinal having reminded his brother that it was time to return to the apostolic palace, they mounted their horses and mules, with only a few attendants, and proceeded together as far as the palace of Ascanio Sforza, where the duke took leave of Cesare, saying that he had to pay another visit that evening. Dismissing, therefore, all his attendants, excepting his *staffiere*, or footman, and a person in a mask who had paid him a visit while at supper, and who during the space of a month or thereabouts previous to this time had called on him almost daily at the apostolic palace, he took this person behind

---

\* Quoted also by Roscoe in his “Life of Leo X.”

him on a mule, and proceeded to the street of the Jews, where he quitted his servant, directing him to remain there till a certain hour, when, if he did not return, he might proceed to the palace. The duke then seated the person in a mask behind him, and rode I know not whither, but on that night he was assassinated and thrown into the river. The servant, after having been dismissed, was also assaulted and mortally wounded, and, although he was attended with great care, yet he could give no intelligible account of what had befallen his master. In the morning, the duke not having returned to the palace, the servants began to be alarmed, and one of them informed the Pontiff that he had not made his appearance since he left the palace the evening before. This gave the Pope no small anxiety, but still he took no further steps in the matter. When, however, the evening arrived, and he found himself disappointed in his expectation that his son would return, he became deeply afflicted, and began to

make inquiries of different persons whom he had appointed to attend him for that purpose. Among these was a man of the name of Giorgio Schiavone, who, having discharged some timber from a barque in the river, had remained on board the vessel to watch it. On being interrogated whether he had seen any one thrown into the river on the preceding night, he replied that he saw two men on foot, who came down the street, and looked diligently about to observe whether any person was passing; that seeing no one, they returned, and a short time afterwards two others came and looked round in the same manner as the former. No persons still appearing, they gave a sign to their companions, when a man came, mounted on a white horse, having behind him a dead body, the head and arms of which hung on one side of the horse, and the feet on the other, the two persons on foot preventing the body from falling. They now proceeded towards that part where the filth of the city is usually discharged into the



river, and turning the horse with his tail towards the water, the two persons took the dead body by the arms and feet, and, with all their strength, flung it into the river. The person on horseback then asked if they had thrown it in, to which they replied, *Signor, si* (yes, sir). He then looked towards the river, and saw a mantle floating on the stream. He inquired what it was that appeared black, on which they answered it was a mantle, and one of them threw stones upon it, in consequence of which it sank. The attendants of the Pontiff then inquired of Giorgio why he had not revealed this to the governor of the city, to which he replied that he had seen in his time a hundred dead bodies thrown into the river at the same place, without any inquiry being made respecting them, and he had not, therefore, considered it a matter of any importance."

Alexander's anxiety as to the fate of his son now became overwhelming, and he ordered every means to be employed to discover if possible



---

the body of the murdered man, so that he might at least be relieved from the horrible state of doubt he was then in. Boatmen and others accustomed to the river were set to work, not only on the immediate spot from which the body had been thrown in, but for a considerable distance down the stream as well. The following evening they succeeded in finding the body of the duke, pierced with nine wounds, one of which was in his throat, and others on different parts of the body. On the clothes of the corpse being examined, they were not in any manner torn so as to indicate a struggle, while his purse, which was still on his person, was found to contain thirty golden ducats, a clear proof that he had not been murdered by robbers. Burchard tells us that the Pope was for some time inconsolable, locking himself up in his chamber and giving unrestrained sway to his grief. In this manner he continued for more than a day, when the Cardinal Segovia, with whom he was intimate, determined to expostulate with him on his un-

reasoning ebullition of sorrow. It was some hours before he succeeded, but at last he had sufficient influence with the Pope to get him to leave his chamber, though it was some days afterwards before Alexander could collect his thoughts sufficiently to attend to business.

From the affection the Pope still continued to show to his second son, Cesare Borgia, it has been argued by many that Alexander did not believe him to be implicated in the murder. Whether Alexander might have considered it possible that Cesare was his brother's murderer, or if he had his suspicions on the subject, what were the pleas Cesare Borgia urged in his own defence, it is impossible now to determine. Probably, inefficient as his defence may have been, Alexander was biassed by that feeling which induces us all to accept more readily those arguments which tend to establish a point we wish to arrive at, without examining too minutely their plausibility and veracity, than any others. Certain it is that not the slightest sus-

---

picion was shown by Alexander that he considered Cesare was the murderer, although little doubt was cast upon his guilt by the Roman public at large.

Soon after the death of the Duke of Gandia, Cesare Borgia relinquished the title of cardinal, and, with the exception of retaining the revenues attached to his different church appointments, he completely separated himself from the ecclesiastical profession. Being now without a rival in his father's favour, Cesare's ambition became boundless, and the Pope appears to have made himself a willing instrument in his son's hands. Cesare's great aim was first to obtain the title of Duke of Romagna, and for this purpose he made war upon those of the Roman barons who were likely to oppose his views. For some time he not only concealed his hatred for the house of Aragon, but he so far allowed his interest to supersede his aversion as to request the Pope to solicit Frederigo to give him one of his daughters in marriage, and suggested at the same time that

her dowry should consist of the Duchy of Tarentum. The King of Naples, however, unhesitatingly declined the proposed alliance, and that too in a manner so decided as to cause great displeasure to the Pope, while Cesare's anger on the occasion knew no limits, and he vowed he would revenge himself for the affront offered him. He had not long to wait. The Pope now resolved at all hazards to form an alliance with the King of France, and by his help to indemnify himself for the slight which had been offered him. He despatched Cesare to France on a mission to the king, to advise him to prosecute the claims which, as King of France, he had on the kingdom of Naples, and to assure him that the Pope would assist him by every means in his power to recover his just rights. Cesare appears to have had but little difficulty in inducing Louis XII. to listen to him.

During the time of his residence in France, Cesare met with a recompence for the disappointment he had sustained in the refusal of the

King of Naples to the marriage of his daughter with the illegitimate son of the Pope—he made the acquaintance of Carlotta, daughter of Jean D'Albret, King of Navarre, and a near relation of Louis XII. He proposed for her hand, his offer was accepted, and on May 12, 1499, Cesare having previously been created Duke of Valentinois, the marriage took place, and the union between the Pope and the King of France was now considered complete. One of the articles in the marriage compact was that Louis should assist the Pope in placing the States of Imola, Forli, Faenza, and Pesaro, all then governed by their respective lords, under the sole dominion of Cesare Borgia; and another, the conquest of the Duchy of Milan, which was to be ceded to the French king. These two points having been obtained, Cesare would be more fully at liberty to carry on his designs against the King of Naples.

Another impediment which might have stood in the way of Cesare Borgia's ambitious views

on the kingdom of Naples, he had already removed by the assassination of his sister Lucrezia's husband, the Duke of Bisceglie. It was stated in the previous chapter that Lucrezia, after the annulment of the marriage contracted between her and the Spanish gentleman, married Gio Sforza, Lord of Pesaro. Of the wedding or the ceremonies attending it nothing is known, nor in fact are any reliable records to be found of her life from the time of her marriage with Sforza till she was, at her own request, divorced from him in the year 1497. It is not even certain whether during that interval she resided in Rome; most probably she did not, as Burchard mentions in his Diary that in January, 1496, Lucrezia Borgia arrived in Rome, having quitted her husband, although there is no mention made either by Verri, or any other historian of Milan, of her residing during her absence in Lombardy. Beyond the fact that Giovanni Sforza was a distant member of the family of the Duke of Milan, little more seems to be



---

known of him. Possibly the real reason of Lucrezia's divorce from Sforza was that the Pope considered it would be more advantageous for him, in a political point of view, to form a union with the house of Aragon, whose fortunes now appeared to be in the ascendant, than one with a man like the Lord of Pesaro, without either ability or influence. It is certain that the year after the divorce, she married Alfonso, Prince of Bisceglie, a natural son of Alfonso II., King of Naples. In what manner the marriage was brought about is unknown, and all the circumstances connected with it appear to have been of a very mysterious character. Alfonso at the time, according to Burchard, could not have been more than seventeen years of age, and would therefore have been younger than Lucrezia; but most probably the Grand Master of the Ceremonies was in error, although there was no doubt of his being then very young. According to Burchard, when Alfonso left Naples for Rome on the invitation of His Holiness, there was no



suspicion that a marriage between the illegitimate daughter of the Pope and the illegitimate son of the King of Naples was intended. Instead of the ostentatious display generally made by the nobility of that day when on the road from one city to another on some special mission, Alfonso seems to have left Naples attended only by three or four gentlemen. On his arrival in Rome he was met by a messenger who invited him to the palace of the most reverend Lord Cardinal Santa Maria in Portico, with whom Lucrezia at the time was staying. The Pope for some days took no notice of the young duke's presence in Rome, and Cesare Borgia remained incognito in the cardinal's palace. Here he doubtless had the opportunity of being daily in the company of Lucrezia. After he had remained in Rome for some days, four or five gentlemen sent by His Holiness called on him, with whom he held a long consultation; the result of which, though not published, may be easily inferred from the fact that a week later the marriage contract was

---

drawn up. The wedding was not only a private one, but those who assisted at it were especially bound to secrecy.\* The Pope himself was present, though he did not perform the ceremony, standing the whole of the time by the bridegroom.

The next notice we have of Lucrezia is also in Burchard's Diary. He merely says, "On October 31, 1499, the Lady Lucrezia was brought to bed of a male child, which was by the Pope's order baptised by the name of Roderigo, that being His Holiness's own name." Little is known of Lucrezia's behaviour during the life of Alfonso of Aragon, beyond the fact that both she and her sister-in-law, Sancia, Duchess of Squillace, were two of the most celebrated beauties of the day, and are occasionally mentioned as being magnificently attired at the different festivals at which they were present, though no jealousy appears to have existed between them.

---

\* Burchard's Diary.

On June 15, 1500, as Alfonso was leaving the church of St. Peter's he was attacked by a body of assassins, and desperately wounded. He, however, recovered ; but some weeks afterwards, as before stated, he met his death by unfair means, whether by poison or strangulation it is impossible to decide. After Alfonso's death Lucrezia retired into the country for some time, apparently inconsolable at his loss. Time, however, had the effect of mitigating her grief and some months after she returned to Rome and took up her residence in the apostolic palace, the Pope not only having placed his Camera under her charge, but also the current business of the day, authorizing her to open all his letters and reply to them ; and if any circumstances of great difficulty arose she was to apply for assistance to the most reverend Cardinal Olisponensis, of Lisbon. He also authorized her to call in the assistance of the other cardinals should she require it.

The fortunes of the house of Aragon in

---

Naples, which had been gradually waning before the death of Lucrezia's husband, the Duke of Bisceglie, now sank so rapidly as to leave but little hopes of their recovery. Cesare Borgia and his father seem to have watched their fall with great satisfaction, knowing perfectly well that shortly they would become an easy prey ; and at the same time, with the cunning which showed how thoroughly Cesare had imbibed the doctrines of Macchiavelli, he allowed the blows to be struck on Naples by the King of France, calculating that through the relationship which now existed between him and Louis, he should in time be master not only of the Romagna, but of the Neapolitan territory as well. In his conquest of Romagna Cesare Borgia found far greater difficulty than he had anticipated. At first the French seem to have rendered him but very little assistance, although it must be admitted that their army had fully its own share of the work to perform in conquering the Milanese. At last with some difficulty the French general

succeeded in effecting a union with the troops under the command of Trivulzio, who though an Italian held the rank of General in the French service. He was at length successful, and after having reduced most of the Milanese towns to submission, he attacked and took the capital. Louis now placed a body of his troops under the command of Cesare Borgia, who immediately attacked the city of Imola, which he easily conquered. The capture of Forli was, however, a far more difficult task, it being defended by Caterina Sforza—a woman of great courage—on behalf of her son, who was then a child. All her courage and energy were unavailing against the superior forces opposed to her, and Caterina was sent a prisoner to Rome. Thanks, however, to the mediation of a French general who commanded under Cesare Borgia, she was shortly afterwards liberated.

After the capture of Forli, Cesare was deprived of the assistance of the French troops, who were obliged to join the main body of their

---

---

army, disturbances having broken out in the Milanese. Cesare, however, still persevered for some time longer, using every means in his power to conquer the other portions of the territory ; but finding it more than he was able to accomplish single-handed, he returned to Rome, which he entered in February, 1500, in great state ; and as a reward for his achievements the Pope conferred on him the post of the Gonfalonier or Standard-bearer of the Church,—an honour at that time much coveted by the princes of Italy.

Quiet having been restored in the Milanese, Cesare Borgia again attempted the reduction of the other cities in the Romagna, and, thanks to the assistance of the French troops, he soon became master of Pesaro and Rimini. He next attacked Faenza, which offered a brave resistance. The Lord of Faenza, Astorre Manfredi, though only a lad of seventeen years of age, had made himself much beloved by his subjects, who defended him with extraordinary courage and per-



tinacity. For more than a year did the siege continue, but the inhabitants at last, being worn out by famine, surrendered. At the same time, their surrender was an honourable one; possibly, thanks to the French commander, Cesare Borgia being little accustomed to show much sympathy to those who opposed him, no matter how honourable their opposition might have been. In this transaction Cesare exhibited his true colours. While a feeling of intense hatred and revenge raged in his bosom on account of Manfredi's determined resistance, he received the youth on his surrender with every mark of affection and respect, and complimenting him on his gallant behaviour, offered him an appointment in his own service, which Manfredi readily accepted. No sooner was the youth in his power than he found an excuse for detaching him from the supervision of the French general, by sending him and his natural brother on a mission to Rome, where he had already forwarded instructions to arrest them on their arrival. His order was carried out to the

---



letter. No sooner had the two youths arrived in Rome than they were seized and thrown into prison, and the next morning both were strangled. In the meantime, by the perpetration of treachery fully equal to or surpassing anything that had yet been attempted even by Cesare Borgia himself, the French obtained possession of Naples.

Both Alexander and his son had now an opportunity of gratifying a portion of their hatred against the Aragon family. The Pope made no objection whatever to the French occupying Naples, and even went so far as to publish a bull depriving Frederigo of his dominions. But Cesare Borgia, who had been already created by his father Duke of Romagna, determined to carry his conquests still further, and he made preparations for attacking Bologna, in which city he had already many spies, who had contrived by rich bribes to induce many of the leading nobles in the city to promise they would declare themselves in his favour as soon as they appeared before the walls. But Cesare had to meet with a more skilful and

courageous opponent than he had calculated on. Cunningly as his spies had conducted their operations, every step they took was reported to Gio Bentivoglio, who then commanded the city, and as soon as he found the conspiracy was ripe for crushing, he seized the conspirators, who were immediately executed. Cesare Borgia soon found that, great as was his power, it was not equal to the conquest of Bologna—a subject which gave him great annoyance, as he had evidently determined on making that city the capital of his new dominions. Another subject also began to give him great uneasiness, the increase of the Venetian power in Italy. Although the Republic had hitherto hardly seemed to take much interest in the affairs which were then progressing in Italy, he knew them too well not to be aware that they were by no means uninterested spectators. Again, he could easily foresee that as his own power increased in the Romagna, the greater would become the jealousy of the Venetians ; and powerful as a combination of the

---

French and Papal arms might be—even assuming the certainty of its lasting—the haughty Republic might prove itself at any time a most formidable enemy. Cesare now appears to have looked around him to find what alliance he could make in Italy, by which he could ward off any opposition on the part of Venice, and possibly secure to himself an ally in his attack on Bologna, and no plan which could suggest itself to him appeared more plausible than a union with the house of Ferrara. In fact, everything seemed prepared to smooth the way for a combination of the kind. Lucrezia Borgia had now been a widow nearly twelve months, and Alfonso of Este, the eldest son of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, was a widower, and if a matrimonial alliance could have been formed between the two houses, it would tend more to strengthen his (Cesare's) power in Italy than even the immediate capture of Bologna itself. Cesare hastened to Rome to combine matters with the Pope. The result of the interview between father and son was that

negotiations were immediately to be entered into with Ercole, second Duke of Ferrara, for a marriage between his son Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia.

## CHAPTER III.

## LUCREZIA'S WEDDING.

Alexander opens Negotiations with Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, for the Marriage of his eldest Son, Don Alfonso, with Lucrezia Borgia—The Duke of Ferrara declines the Alliance—Alexander requests the Intervention of the King of France—The Marriage Contract signed in Ferrara—The Ceremony performed by Proxy in Rome—Lucrezia's Wedding Dress—Valuable Presents made on the Occasion—Discontent in Rome at the Pope's lavish Expenditure on his Daughter—Lucrezia leaves Rome for Ferrara.

THE marriage between Lucrezia Borgia and Don Alfonso of Este, having been decided on by Cesare Borgia and his father, they determined immediately to open negotiations with the Duke of Ferrara. In no way whatever do Lucrezia's wishes or feelings appear to have been consulted in the matter; nor beyond the fact that she was to be the bride, is any mention

made of her by the historians of the period. They all seem to have regarded her as merely an instrument in a political intrigue for the advantage of her family. What Lucrezia's real feelings were on the subject, it would be difficult positively to determine. At the same time, it is by no means improbable she willingly agreed to the match. Without attempting her rehabilitation, enough is known of her to be certain that, whatever her faults may have been, she was not destitute of many natural good qualities ; and it would be hard indeed upon her to imagine that, even without bearing any positive love for Alfonso, whom, in all probability, she had never seen, she could have objected to change her unenviable position in her father's Court, to become, after the death of the reigning duke, the Duchess of Ferrara.

Although both the Pope and his son appear to have made up their minds that it would be impossible for the Duke of Ferrara to consider an alliance with their house in any other light

---

than an honour, at the same time, taking into consideration the haughty temper and dignified position of the duke, it was necessary that preliminaries should be conducted with tact and discretion, and for this purpose the Pope despatched Cardinal Francesco Ferrara, of Modena, to the ducal court. It must have required considerable courage on the part of the cardinal to give, on his return to Rome, an account of his mission. He had in every respect been unsuccessful. True, the duke had received him with great courtesy, and had admitted the validity of his testimonials, but at the same time had positively declined the honour offered him.

The anger as well as astonishment of the Borgias, on receiving this intelligence, may be easily imagined. Unaccustomed to be thwarted in any of his designs, passionate and vindictive in the extreme, and capable of any atrocity, the rage of Cesare Borgia must have been overwhelming. The Pope himself, though less



demonstrative than his son, must have felt both anger and humiliation at the unsuccessful termination of an intrigue which had cost him so much thought to concoct. But though disappointed, Alexander by no means gave up his design. On the contrary, Duke Ercole's refusal seemed only to make him the more determined to effect a marriage between Lucrezia and Alfonso. With this intent, he immediately wrote to the King of France, informing him that the Duke of Ferrara had, on the part of his son Alfonso, declined the proffered match, and urging that monarch to use all his influence with the duke to induce him to reconsider the subject. Louis required no stimulus. He earnestly entered into the Pope's views, the more so as his own personal interests were mixed up in the question. An alliance between the Courts of Rome, France, and Ferrara would go far to secure for Louis the Duchy of Milan, which otherwise he might find great difficulty in holding. Without delay, he sent the Cardinal

---

de Rohan as an ambassador to the Court of Ferrara, with strict injunctions to use every means in his power to bring about a marriage so desirable for all parties. The cardinal seems to have fulfilled his task with great zeal and ability. He laid before the duke the great advantages which would accrue to him by a union between his family and the powerful house of Borgia. It would secure the dukedom of Ferrara to the Este family, thus rendering it an almost independent State, instead of being, as it then was, little better than a fief of the Papedom. He also hinted that there was little doubt that through the influence of His Holiness, considerable additions might be made to the Ferrarese territory. To add force to his arguments, the cardinal pointed out that the political horizon was daily becoming more cloudy, and that everything foreboded a coming storm. Should it occur, he urged, it would be impossible for the King of France, with the heavy stake he had in Italy, to remain an in-

different spectator of the struggle ; in fact, he must side with one of the contending parties : and though his ardent wish was to take part with Rome and Ferrara—whose interests he held to be identical—should he find it necessary for his own safety and the better security of the Duchy of Milan, he might be brought into collision with the Court of Ferrara, unless the three powers could be united together by some strong bond of union. His Majesty's ardent wish was to unite the interests of France with those of the Courts of Rome and Ferrara, and he could imagine nothing that would contribute more to that end than the proposed marriage.

The arguments of the French cardinal had the effect of destroying all opposition to the match on the part of the Duke of Ferrara, and he assured Louis that it should take place as soon as all preliminaries were arranged.

It was now the Duke of Ferrara's turn to meet with a disappointment. Flexible and obedient as he had hitherto found his son Alfonso, he now

---

met with the most determined opposition from him. In vain did the old man plead—in vain did he show him how great were the advantages to be derived from the match, and even stated that had it not been for his advanced age, he would have married Lucrezia himself. Alfonso for some time still remained inflexible.\* What his reason was for refusing the match would be difficult to determine. Possibly many elements might have entered into it. In the first place, the memory of his first wife, whom he had tenderly loved, might have been too vivid to allow him to think so soon of another attachment. The idea, with his proud spirit, of being made a mere tool in a political intrigue, might have had its weight, as well as his aversion to the house of Borgia. Whether he had any personal dislike to Lucrezia herself, is a question more difficult than all the rest to answer. That he might have heard rumours to her prejudice is likely; but on

---

\* Frizzi “*Memorie per la Storia de Ferrara.*”

the other hand he must have heard from authorities far better entitled to credit—such, for example, as Canali, Gio Lucca, and others—than the known implacable enemies of her family, that “her method of life was Christian-like, and her character irreproachable.”

Although greatly disappointed at his son's rejection of the proposed match, the duke still persevered with his entreaties and arguments, and in the end succeeded. No sooner did Alexander receive the intelligence, than he dispatched Don Romiro de Remolino with two procurators to Ferrara to settle the marriage contract and make preliminary arrangements for the wedding ceremony. Great as may have been the expectations of the Duke of Ferrara in his estimation of the temporal benefits his family would receive by an alliance with that of the Pope, they could hardly have come up to the reality. Lucrezia's dowry consisted of the Duchy of Spoleto, which had been settled on her by her father at the time of her marriage with the Duke of Bisceglie ;

---

the territories of Pieve and Ceuto, appanages to the church of Bologna, which, by a decree of the Pope, and to the intense displeasure of the Bolognese clergy, were now to be added to the Duchy of Ferrara ; a sum of 20,000 ducats in gold, to be paid at the time of signing the contract, and 100,000 more at the completion of the marriage ceremony at Rome ; with gems, jewellery, gold plate, and other paraphernalia of, at least, equal value.\* The Pope had also ordered a bull to be drawn up, which was afterwards issued and witnessed by twenty-three cardinals, greatly altering the tenure under which the Duchy of Ferrara was held of the Popes. The bull commenced with a long compliment paid to the many virtues and good actions of Duke Ercole, stating that he had built many religious houses

---

\* The Pope had also settled on her on the same occasion the territory of Sermoneta, with its revenues, which had been taken from the Gaetani family ; but this had been wrested from her by her brother, Cesare Borgia, under the pretext that as a woman she would not be able to defend it—“ *È donna, non lo potra mantener.*”



in Ferrara, endowed churches, erected fortifications, and improved the value of the territory by confining the river Po within bounds, and proving himself in every respect a worthy son and subject of the Church ; and as a reward the Pope now confirmed him in his dukedom, with reversion to his son Alfonso and the heirs male that he might have by Lucrezia. He further reduced the tribute of 4000 golden ducats, paid annually by the Duchy of Ferrara to the court of Rome, to 100 florins during the lives of Ercole and Alfonso, but which after their deaths was to be increased to 1000.

Again, in looking at the match between Alfonso and Lucrezia in a political point of view, it was not only a most advantageous one for the families of Este and Borgia, but it also greatly strengthened other houses as well. In fact the union between Alfonso and Lucrezia was another mesh in the network of marriages connected directly or indirectly with the Court of Ferrara. Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, was



already married to Isabella of Este, the daughter of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, and sister of Alfonso, while Elizabetta, sister of the marquis, was the wife of Guidabaldo da Montefeltri, Duke of Urbino, which, with the present addition of the Borgia family, formed altogether one of the most powerful combinations that Italy had ever seen.

No sooner had the marriage been determined on and the articles signed at Ferrara, than the same day the duke officially communicated the news to his son-in-law, Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. In his letter\* he informs the marquis that a treaty of marriage had that day been concluded between his eldest son Alfonso and the "illustrissima Madonna" Lucrezia Borgia, sister to the Duke of Romagna and Valentinois. Although the wording of the letter is that of ordinary court phraseology, it had evidently been drawn up with great caution by the Duke of Ferrara; for in it is an emphatically worded clause, inti-

---

\* The original letter is still in the archives of Mantua.

mating that the match had been brought about through the medium of His Majesty the King of France, thereby evidently wishing the marquis to suppose that the marriage was rather one forced on him by political considerations than from any direct choice of his own. He further goes on to state that the articles had already been drawn up and signed under the advice and in the presence of the ambassadors and procurators of France and Rome, who had visited Ferrara for that purpose. The letter concludes by stating that the news would now be made public, but from the great love which existed between the marquis and himself, he considered it only right to give him the first official notice.

The news of the intended marriage seems to have been received with satisfaction both in Rome and Ferrara, and great public rejoicings took place on the occasion, all parties seeming to consider it not only as a marriage between two illustrious families, but almost as a pledge of a future lasting peace to the whole of Italy.

---

In Rome especially the news was hailed with great joy, and many were the fêtes and religious ceremonies which took place on the occasion. Lucrezia herself, possibly ignorant of the aversion at first exhibited both by Alfonso and his father when the match was proposed to them, made no attempt to conceal her satisfaction. The morning after the news reached Rome she left the palace magnificently attired, and mounting a richly caparisoned palfrey, and attended by a brilliant suite of nobles and ladies, she proceeded in solemn procession to the church of the Madonna del Popolo to offer up thanks, and crave the blessing of heaven on her approaching nuptials. Cannon were fired at intervals from the castle of St. Angelo during the whole of the day, bells were rung, and prayers offered up at all the churches. In the evening there was a grand display of fireworks from the castle of St. Angelo, and different places in the city.\* On

---

\* Tomaso Tomasini, "Vita di Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valentinois."

the authority of Burchard, Lucrezia's joy seems to have developed itself in one respect in a very extraordinary manner. The day the news reached Rome, an actor to whom the day before on account of his talent she had given a rich tunic, now rode through all the principal streets and passages of the city, crying out with a loud voice, "Viva l'illustrissima Duchessa di Ferrara, viva Papa Alessandro,—viva, viva!" The Donna Lucrezia was so pleased at the man's enthusiasm that she sent for him to her presence and rewarded him with a purse of gold. Another actor, hearing of her liberality, also ran through the city making the same cry, and he likewise received from Lucrezia a handsome present.

The festivities were continued for several days without intermission, and were in fact greatly augmented by the intelligence which at the time reached Rome of Cesare Borgia's victories over his late allies the Neapolitans. One feature in these festivities which merits notice is the first mention of the introduction into Rome of the

---

bull-fight as practised in Spain, though bull-hunting had already been a favourite amusement of Cesare Borgia's. On the authority of Polo Capello, the Venetian ambassador, Cesare appears to have acquired prodigious skill in this barbarous amusement. In one of his reports to the Senate he says,—“ He (Borgia) killed six wild bulls, fighting with the spear on horseback, and in regard to one, he struck off its head at one blow, which seemed a prodigy to all Rome.”\* The bull-fight on the occasion alluded to, took place in an amphitheatre erected in the Piazza di Spagna, but further details are wanting.

All preliminaries having now been arranged, both the Pope and the Duke of Ferrara considered it advisable that the marriage should take place without delay. As it had been

---

\* *Amazzo sei tori salnadge combatendo a cavallo a la zanela, e a uno li taglio la testa a la prima bota, cosa che paresse a tutta Roma grande.*

resolved that the ceremony should be performed by proxy in Rome, the duke, wishing to do all honour to the occasion, determined on sending his three younger sons, the Cardinal Don Ippolito, Don Ferdinando, who was to act as his brother Alfonso's substitute, and Don Sigismondo the youngest, accompanied by a numerous cortege as an embassy. All being in readiness, on Thursday, December 9, 1501, the procession started from the palace of Duke Borsa, lately made over to the monks of Certosa as a monastery. The procession, which was headed by Duke Ercole, consisted of his second son the Cardinal Don Ippolito, his two brothers, and a train of bishops and nobles, while a crowd of gentlemen of good families in Ferrara, many wearing gold chains, brought up the rear; the whole, with the servants and followers, amounting to no fewer than five hundred and seventy persons, besides five hundred and eighty horses and mules, and fifty waggons containing luggage and requisites for the journey. Duke Ercole ac-



---

accompanied the procession for some distance, and then taking leave of his sons returned home, while the others continued their journey, which, from the unfavourable state of the weather, appears to have been a most unpleasant one. Notwithstanding all the inconveniences and impediments they experienced on their road, they arrived safely, though travel-stained and fatigued, at Monte Rosso, a castle belonging to the Pope, about fifteen miles distant from Rome.\* Here, according to the instructions they had received, the cortege halted, partly with the intent of recovering from the fatigues of the journey, and partly to make such preparations as would allow them to appear in a fitting manner in the splendid processions and ceremonies which they knew would take place to give prestige to their entrance into Rome. The Cardinal Ippolito, who appears to have had the sole management and arrangement of the embassy, here sent a herald

---

\* Zambotto.



accompanied by a trumpeter to Rome, to inquire at what gate of the city it would please His Holiness that the embassy should enter. In due time the cardinal received an answer that arrangements had been made to meet the embassy by the Porto del Popolo; and the next day (December 27) the cardinal and his suite left Monte Rosso, and proceeded at a gentle pace till they reached the Ponte Molle, where they waited for the deputation which the Pope had there ordered to meet them.

After remaining a short time stationary, the sound of drums and trumpets was heard, and presently the governor of Rome appeared, attended by a numerous cortege of nobles, senators, and gentlemen, some on horseback but more on foot, the whole numbering at least two thousand. On meeting the embassy, those on horseback, as a mark of respect, immediately dismounted. After a short speech of welcome on the part of the governor, as well as some preliminary ceremonies, were over, all again mounted their horses and

proceeded towards the city till they had arrived within half a bow-shot of the gates, where they were met by six pages of the Duke of Valentino, dressed alike in silk tunics of the duke's colours, one side black, the other yellow. Following these were a hundred gentlemen of the duke's service, who in their turn were followed by two hundred Swiss guards, armed with halberds, all dressed alike, and wearing hats from which hung plumes of black and yellow feathers. Their tunics in form and colour resembled those worn by the pages, one side black and the other yellow. When these had formed by the side of the road, Cesare Borgia, preceded by a band of excellent musicians all superbly dressed, and followed by a numerous train, advanced to meet the cardinal. Cesare Borgia's appearance seems to have excited great admiration in the minds of all who beheld him. According to Marin Sanuto, the Venetian ambassador, not only was he magnificently dressed in a tunic of the French fashion, fastened

with a gold belt, which set off his graceful yet athletic form to great advantage, but he rode a powerful charger so splendidly caparisoned that the trappings of the horse alone were valued at 10,000 ducats. "Nor," continues Sanuto, "did the valuation appear at all excessive, inasmuch as the harness was completely covered with gold, pearls, and other jewels."

The duke, as well as the cardinal and his two brothers, now dismounted from their horses. Having warmly embraced the Cardinal Ippolito as well as the brothers Ferdinando and Sigismondo, Cesare Borgia expressed in a pleasing speech the great satisfaction His Holiness would have in receiving them. This speech having been replied to in appropriate terms by the cardinal, they again mounted their horses and proceeded onwards, the duke riding at the left hand of the Cardinal Ippolito, and the two brothers Ferdinando and Sigismondo of Este immediately following. As the procession entered the city gates it was met by nineteen cardinals,

each of whom, it is stated, was attended by two hundred magnificently dressed followers, and after the ceremonies of introduction were gone through, the immense cortege proceeded towards the apostolic palace.

On the road the Duke of Valentinois behaved in the most courteous and amiable manner to the cardinal and his brothers, allowing them to take precedence of him on all occasions. This was looked upon by all as highly complimentary to the embassy, for since Cesare Borgia's marriage with a French princess his pride had so much increased that he allowed neither ambassadors from crowned heads, nor any of the princes of Germany, nor even cardinals, to take precedence of him in any way, forming an exception only in favour of the blood-royal of France. Yet on the present occasion he not only ceded his claim to the Cardinal Ippolito, but to his two brothers as well. In fact through the whole stay of the embassy in Rome, Cesare Borgia appears to have taken every means of showing

respect and attention to the family of his future brother-in-law, paying them not only open but almost ostentatious civility.

The cavalcade proceeded with less difficulty than might have been expected considering the immense number and incongruous mixture of individuals who composed it, till they arrived opposite the castle of St. Angelo. Here, to do honour to the embassy, a salvo of artillery was fired from the walls, which had the effect of startling the horses of the cardinals and others, who, as a rule, being bad equestrians, the whole cavalcade was thrown into the greatest disorder, thereby occasioning many, though fortunately not serious, accidents. With great difficulty order was again restored, at any rate among the embassy and their immediate followers, who proceeded onwards without further difficulty till they had reached the apostolic palace.

After quitting their horses the cardinal and his brothers were conducted by Cesare Borgia into

---

the apartments of His Holiness. On arriving at the second chamber, they were met by Alexander with a suite of twelve cardinals. After having embraced the Cardinal Don Ippolito and his bishops, the Pope conversed with them with great kindness and familiarity, warmly expressing the pleasure he felt at their visit, irrespective of the auspicious mission they had come on. He also made many inquiries into the particulars of their journey, expressing sorrow for any little inconveniences they mentioned as having occurred to them on the road. Alexander continued discoursing with his visitors for some time, evidently making by his condescending and amiable manners a most pleasing effect on them. He then proposed that they should pay a visit to Madonna Lucrezia, who was expecting them in her own apartments—a proposition which the ambassadors willingly accepted. He afterwards even carried his amiability so far as to volunteer to accompany them in their visit to his daughter, whom they found in her palace surrounded by



many of her ladies, in readiness to receive them.

The cardinal and his brothers having been introduced to her, the report of S. El Prete, the confidential messenger of the Marchioness of Mantua, goes on to describe, in this as in all other of his communications with the greatest minuteness, everything that occurred during the ambassadors' visit. He states that some little difficulty had arisen before the introduction as to the manner in which the cardinal and his brothers were to address Lucrezia, so that while in the ceremony a proper amount of family love should be exhibited, an equal amount of respect should be shown to her dignified position. So much difficulty did they appear to have in coming to a decision, that the question was at last gravely referred to the Grand Master of the Ceremonies as to the proper form to be observed on the occasion. He advised that "the brothers should not kiss her, but merely accost her in the manner ladies of the blood-royal of

---



---

France were accustomed to be addressed in public by their relatives." S. El Prete, possibly with an acute knowledge of the sort of intelligence most acceptable to the feminine idiosyncracies of his illustrious patroness, then proceeds to describe Lucrezia's dress. "She wore," he says, "a mulberry coloured gown embroidered with gold. The sleeves were tight, as it was the fashion to wear them two years since, and cut in the cross-way of the stuff. Her *sbernia* (outward robe), which reached nearly to her feet, was lined with ermine, and made without sleeves, apertures being cut in the sides to allow her arms to pass through. Her head-dress consisted of a cap (*scofia*) of green velvet, trimmed with alternate stripes of gold fringe, ornamented here and there with pearls, but none of them very large. Around her neck she wore a string of pearls, with a pearl ornament in the centre, but none particularly large or of a good colour. At the time of the introduction she was leaning on the arm of an old gentleman,

dressed in black velvet with a thick gold chain round his neck, and wearing a cloak lined with very beautiful ermine."

When the embassy were introduced to Lucrezia she received them most graciously, and conversed with them for some time in a most friendly manner, and on their leaving her she accompanied them as far as the middle of the ante-room. Marin Sanuto, though agreeing generally with S. El Prete in his description of the ceremonies which took place in Rome and Ferrara, gives a somewhat different account of the visit to Lucrezia. "She received the ambassadors," he says, "not only in a most amiable manner, but very hospitably, as she had prepared for them an elegant collation. When they rose from the table she made many little presents to the envoys, such as small silver tazze, bronzes, cameos, *etc.*, after which she allowed them to retire from her presence." After the visit of ceremony to Lucrezia was over, the cardinal, his brothers, and all belonging to the house of Este, were accommodated

with apartments in the apostolic palace, while the other members of the embassy were lodged in different houses of the Roman nobility, by whom they were warmly welcomed and hospitably entertained.

On December 20, 1502, the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia with Alfonso of Este was performed by proxy, Don Ferdinando acting on the occasion as substitute for his brother Alfonso. Some little difficulty appears to have taken place as to the proper manner in which the ceremony should be performed. Alexander had wished it to take place in Rome, principally that it might be considered as a greater honour to the bridegroom if solemnized by the head of the Christian Church, and in the apostolic palace. He had even given orders to the cardinal in charge of the chapel of St. John the Evangelist, which was situated in the palace, to prepare it for the ceremony, when a legal question arose whether the ceremony had not already been performed in Ferrara. On the subject being brought under

the notice of the Pope, in order that there might not be any mistake on the point he applied to some of the cardinals learned in ecclesiastical law for their opinion. The Cardinal of Sienna, who formed one of the committee, unhesitatingly expressed his opinion that, from the particular nature of the ceremony which had taken place in Ferrara, the marriage had already been performed; and as marriage was a sacrament, it could not be repeated.

On hearing the answer of the cardinals, the Pope, who pretended on all occasions to have a great dread of interfering with any of the rites and ceremonies of the Church, immediately ordered the preparations which were being made in the chapel to be discontinued, resolving that the wedding should now take place in a room in his own apartments, and that it should partake partly of a civil and partly of a religious character.

The day having arrived for the celebration of the marriage, Lucrezia left her palace, which was

---

but a short distance from that of the Pope, and attended by a splendid procession of ladies and cavaliers, among whom were Don Ferdinando and Don Sigismondo, her future brothers-in-law, proceeded to the apostolic palace, where dismounting from her palfrey, and attended by her suite, she entered the first Pauline chamber, where they found the Pope, his son Cesare Borgia, and many of the cardinals, waiting to receive them. After the ceremonies of reception were over, the Pope seated himself at a table in the middle of the room which had been prepared for the occasion. Having placed the bride on one side of him, and Don Ferdinando, as procuratore of Prince Alfonso, on the other, the latter presented the wedding ring to the Pope, who placed it on the bride's finger, and immediately afterwards the Cardinal Ippolito D'Este advanced and gave Lucrezia four other rings set with rich gems. At the same time he presented her with a rich jewel case (*una cassetta*), in which were many jewels and chains, as well as a necklace

of pearls and other ornaments equally precious, whether judged by the intrinsic value of their material or that of the artistic skill shown in them. The presents given by the cardinal on the occasion are said to have exceeded in value 10,000 ducats. On presenting them to the bride he begged of her "to use them till the time when Don Alfonso could give her others still more beautiful and still more proportionate to her merits."

In this description of the marriage ceremony in Rome, which somewhat differs from that of Sanuto and others, the account given by Gregorio Lete, who wrote under the name of Tomaso Tomasini, has been followed. Not that, as an historian, his veracity is more to be depended upon, but that he has evidently copied on this as on many other occasions the descriptions given by Burchard, who, from his official position as Grand Master of the Ceremonies to the Papal palace, had a better opportunity of being acquainted with the exact facts than any other writer on the subject.



Again, a letter lately discovered in the archives of Modena tends to prove that not only was the ceremony in Ferrara considered as a marriage, but that Lucrezia herself looked at it in the same light. The letter alluded to is from Lucrezia to Ercole, Duke of Ferrara. It relates to some questions respecting the marriage settlements. In it she states that, "having heard the duke's great desire that the investiture of the territories of Ceuto and Pieve should be in perpetuity, it is her wish as his devoted and most obedient daughter, to act in everything as he should desire her to do, it not only being her duty but her pleasure as well." She goes on to say that "she had already applied to His Holiness on the subject, who told her the question was overladen with great difficulties in a legal point of view. However, as it is her wish to prove to him how strong was her desire to please and serve him in every respect, she had that morning requested the reverend Cardinal of Modena to visit His Holiness, who was then absent from Rome, and speak to



him again on the subject, and on his return she hoped to have a favourable reply." In this letter she signed herself, "his excellency's *most dutiful daughter* and servant, *Lucrezia Estense de Borgia.*"

S. El Prete, in his report of the wedding to the Marchioness of Mantua, as usual describes the dress Lucrezia wore. "The Borgia," he said, "at the marriage ceremony was dressed in an overcoat (*soprabito*) of gold tissue (*stoffa d'oro*) made in the French fashion with open sleeves. Beneath this was a vest of crimson silk bordered with ermine. Around her throat was a necklace of large pearls, from which hung a pendant of precious stones of great value. At the back of her head she wore a cap of dark-coloured silk, shot with gold thread. Her hair, which was drawn back and fell over her shoulders, was merely fastened by a thin black silken cord. She was accompanied by fifteen bridesmaids and many ladies of mature age. Nicolo Cagnolo, who had frequent opportunity of being in Lucrezia's society,

speaks of her as being at the time about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, of middle height and graceful figure, her face somewhat long, her nose Grecian and delicately shaped, golden hair, grey eyes, a somewhat large mouth with beautiful white teeth, well-formed neck and bust, and the expression of her countenance amiable and lively. Cagnolo, however, is evidently wrong in her age, as she could not at the time have been more than twenty-two. Although there is no document extant to prove the date of her birth, it can be shown by the records of Ferrara that she died June 24, 1519, aged 41, her marriage with Alfonso having taken place in December, 1501. In other respects Cagnolo's description of Lucrezia corresponds in a great degree with her portrait on the medal in the public museum at Ferrara. A doubt has arisen in the mind of some writers as to the real colour of her hair, in consequence of its being represented of different shades of black in some portraits of her on majolica dishes, but in other respects the face corresponds with the

description given above. Two specimens of this description are at present in Venice, in the collection of Mr. Rawden Brown, the historian, in both of which the colour of her hair is dark, though of different shades. An attempt has been made to account for this fact, it being the fashion for ladies of quality in Italy, in the latter part of the fifteenth and commencement of the sixteenth centuries, to dye their hair; but this would hardly have been a habit with Lucrezia, who seems to have been very proud of her hair, always wearing it drawn off her forehead and falling loose down her shoulders. Most probably the pigments used for colouring the hair in the majolica portrait had undergone a change by the action of the heat while being baked in the furnace.

In the evening a magnificent ball and supper were given in Lucrezia's palace, in which His Holiness, most of the cardinals, and the principal nobility with their ladies were present, which was kept up till nearly daybreak, while the populace were amused by displays of fire-

---

works in different parts of the city. The festivities continued for several days, consisting of horse-races and a review of the troops. Some of the manœuvres, which represented an attack upon a castle, seem to have been carried on with too much an appearance of reality, inasmuch as five of the besiegers were killed. Public theatres were thrown open and comedies acted. There was also a tournament in which combats took place with swords and shields. These, El Prete mentions, were fought solely for the honour of conquering; but in an attack upon a vessel the conquerors were to receive a reward of two hundred ducats, which the vanquished were to pay; and these festivities were continued till the departure of Lucrezia from Rome.

Little mention is made by the Ferrarese and other historians of the discontent which prevailed in Rome at the enormous expense incurred by these festivities, pressing as it did on the already over-taxed population of the city, and

that too in a season of great scarcity. This circumstance caused the Pope and his son Cesare Borgia no little annoyance ; not but that they were totally indifferent to the miseries of the people and their complaints so long as they did not manifest them in any formidable manner, but that they had a strong aversion to the truth of the condition of the city becoming known to the foreign ambassadors. The Pope, however, left to Cesare Borgia the task of putting down all insubordination, while he, by his urbanity and condescension, as well as great hospitality, occupied the attention of the ambassadors and their suites.

Both father and son appear to have executed their self-assigned duties in an energetic and indefatigable manner. Records of the day are filled with the accounts of splendid feasts and pageants given by the Pope, and of daily shows and horse-racing, till the day fixed for his daughter's departure ; while Cesare, by means of his hired bravos and secret agents, exercised terrible

---

vengeance on all who complained, whether those who were disgusted at the enormous and reckless extravagance carried on during the season of such want, or others who cried aloud under the pressure of their miseries. Not only were Cesare Borgia's punishments severe, but he appears to have mixed with them a satirical sort of cruelty which rendered his behaviour still more odious. Gregorio Lete relates the case of a man who was seen pointing his finger at Cesare Borgia. Under the bare suspicion that the gesture was made to give weight to some complaint he was uttering, Cesare had him immediately arrested and thrown into prison, where his finger was struck off and tied to the iron bars of the jail window, as a warning to others to be less demonstrative. Another unfortunate man was not only seen pointing his finger at Cesare Borgia, but was heard at the moment by a spy to utter some insulting remark respecting the heartlessness shown in such a display of wealth in the midst of so much misery.



The man was arrested, and both his finger and tongue were amputated, and exhibited by being tied to the bars of the prison window.

Another case was even stronger. A young Venetian of good family, the brother of Giovanni Lorenzo, happening to be at Rome at the time, wrote home an account of the money lavished at these festivals, making some very severe remarks on the conduct of the Pope and his son. The affair coming to Alexander's ears, the youth was arrested and thrown into prison. The news of his incarceration reached the ears of Giovanni Lorenzo, who implored the intercession of the Republic for his brother's release, and in consequence the Venetian ambassador at Rome received instructions to demand his immediate liberation. The Pope, on receiving the ambassador, not only expressed his ignorance of any arrest of the kind, but also his great regret that the circumstance should have occurred, promising that he would give immediate orders for his release. The next day the ambassador



received a message from the Pope, requesting his attendance. On entering his presence the Pope received him with great cordiality, though with an expression of profound sorrow on his countenance. He told the ambassador that he regretted to say he found that the young man had died in prison. On further inquiries, however, the ambassador discovered that the youth had been strangled the day before by order of Cesare Borgia, and his body thrown into the Tiber.

Lucrezia's public departure from Rome to Ferrara seems to have been conducted in a magnificent manner. His Holiness had ordered Francesco Borgia, known as the Cardinal of Cosenza, to accompany her to the confines of the Papal territories. The procession when it left Rome is thus described by Ferdinando of Este, brother to Alfonso, in a letter addressed to his sister, the Marchioness of Mantua. "On the sixth of the present month (January 1502) we left Rome, great honour being shown us on our departure. According to your instructions, I

now proceed to give you a description of the dress as well as the appearance our sister-in-law made on the occasion. She rode on a beautiful mule, which was covered with a housing embroidered in silver and edged with gold fringe. She wore a tight vest of crimson silk, with a *sbernia* (or loose robe) of gold tissue, with large hanging sleeves, and lined with ermine. On her head she wore a hat of crimson silk with a feather, and beneath the hat on the left side hung a pendant of pearls which reached to her ear. Altogether she made a magnificent appearance."

A certain Giovanni Lucido, who appears to have been sent to Rome by Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, on a mission somewhat similar to that which had been intrusted to El Prete by his wife, in writing home an account of what took place during the marriage ceremony in Rome, gives a minute description of Lucrezia's outfit and paraphernalia, as well as her dowry, which altogether, he says, could not have amounted

---

in value to less than 300,000 ducats, not comprising the presents which were daily being made to her. First, there were 100,000 ducats in ready money, next silver plate for more than 30,000 ducats, jewels, dresses, body-linen, bed-furniture, sheets, and other linen, as well as trappings for mules and horses of a most magnificent description, altogether amounting to another 100,000 ducats. Among other things she had a flounce (though of what description he does not state) worth 15,000 ducats or more. She had moreover 200 chemises\* of excellent quality, and among them several that were worth 100 ducats apiece, the sleeves alone of many of them having cost 30 ducats, being trimmed with gold fringe and similar work, besides gold jewelry made at Naples to the amount of another

---

\* “E ducento camicie eccellenti in le quale multe hanno pretio de cento ducati l’una e le manige solum valeno trenta ducati l’una cum frisi d’oro e lavoro simile.”—*From Gio Lucido’s manuscript report, in the Archives of Mantua.*

100,000 ducats. His letter is dated from Rome, December 13, 1501.

In a postscript to this letter he adds that the number of horses and mules which the Pope had given his daughter for her journey could not have been less than 1000, with 200 carriages, as many ladies and nobles of Rome, by way of doing honour to the bride, offered to accompany her on her road to Ferrara.\* Lucrezia's journey to Ferrara occupied a considerable time, in consequence of the defective state of the roads owing to the bad weather. She appears to have remained one day in Urbino, where she was received with great affection by the duke and duchess. Ferdinando of Este wrote to his sister, the Marchioness of Mantua, a full account of the reception given to Lucrezia on the occasion, and

---

\* Frizzi quotes the number of Lucrezia's suite sent by the Pope at six hundred, which, added to the Ferrarese Embassy, comprising five hundred and eighty persons, gave to the whole the appearance rather of an army than of a marriage procession.

---

as usual describes minutely the dress she wore at a ball given in the evening. It was, he says, "of black velvet, made after a fashion of her own, and embroidered in gold. She also wore a necklace of jewels, which we had given her, with a thin gold band round her hair, in the front of which was one large diamond." The next morning she continued her journey till she had nearly reached the frontier of the Ferrarese territory.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DON ALFONSO OF ESTE.

Character and Disposition of Alfonso—His Personal Appearance—Great Rejoicings at Ferrara at his Birth—Belriguardo—Nicolo di Leonello's Conspiracy—Attacks Ferrara—Inhabitants refuse Aid to Leonello—His Attempts to seize the Duchess and her Infant Son—Venetian War—Alfonso's Early Introduction into Public Life—Marriage Anna Sforza—Visits Venice with his Wife—Death of the Duchess Eleanora, Alfonso's Mother—Death of Anna Sforza.

ALTHOUGH the world knows but little of Lucrezia's first and second husbands, few of the princes of Italy have left their history better known, or an excellent reputation more justly earned, than Alfonso of Este. Even those writers of his day who have attacked the character of Lucrezia Borgia with so much venom, which, without the slightest authority to

---

go upon, later authors have industriously endeavoured by all means in their power to increase, all speak either with high praise of Alfonso—with the exception of a sneer of Gibbon's, who when speaking of him says that he flattered himself he was the father of three children by Lucrezia Borgia—or, at any rate, say nothing against him. In fact, while the best historians of his day speak of him in high terms of commendation, later writers of the greatest eminence seem to vie with one another who should extol him in the highest terms. Frizzi says of him that the acumen of his ingenuity, and the honesty and kindness of his heart, made him beloved by all. He was eminently courageous, and proved it in all times of danger, either of war, pestilence, or secret conspiracy. He was generous and courteous to all. Unaffectedly religious himself, and a faithful son of the Church in Rome, he treated with great respect the religion of others. He was charitable in the extreme, not only giving with a liberal



hand, but using great discretion in the distribution of his alms. He was a liberal subscriber to the Ferrarese charities, of which there were many, and before his marriage with Lucrezia he had already adopted means for the establishment of a hospital for contagious diseases, which was not, however, finished till after his accession to the dukedom.

Although obliged to take part in the gorgeous ceremonies of the day, they seem to have been strangely at variance with his natural taste and disposition, being much addicted to study and scientific employments. He was the patron and warm friend of poets, painters, and musicians of any ability. His greatest pleasure seems to have been in the society of men of science, especially engineers, whom he appears to have held in the highest respect, not only treating them with great liberality, but advancing to places of honour and emolument those among his workmen whom he found of sufficient talent. In fact, to such an extent did he carry

---

his patronage and condescension among his artisans, that it sometimes reached almost to undignified familiarity. Shortly after his elevation to the dukedom, a circumstance, however, occurred—to be narrated in a future chapter—which induced him, while exercising the same amount of patronage and liberality, to allow less familiarity to exist between them.

In person he was somewhat above the middle height, and well formed. Though not handsome, he had a remarkably intelligent expression of countenance, as may be seen in his portraits both in the Vienna and Berlin galleries. His complexion was dark, and his eyes black and piercing. His hair was short and curly, and his face partially concealed by a thick black beard. His forehead was broad and open, his eyebrows thick and strongly marked, and his nose aquiline. Nor was his face a bad index to his mind. It showed determination of purpose, deep thought, and considerable sternness; yet withal calm, and not destitute of

amiability. The expression of his face was that of a man who would not act on any subject, however trifling, without giving it due thought before he commenced, and whom, once having made up his mind, nothing could turn from his purpose. He was slow to take offence, but severe when offended. Yet all this was mixed with a certain tone of kindness and homeliness, which rather encouraged the weak and oppressed to apply to him for aid and protection ; while the evil-doer whom he had adjudged guilty had little mercy to expect at his hands.

Alfonso, afterwards the third Duke of Ferrara, was born July 14th, 1476, in the Este palace in that city, and was by some two or three years Lucrezia Borgia's senior. Great rejoicings took place on the occasion ; bells were rung at all the churches, masses were performed, and food and clothing given to the poor. In the evening the city was illuminated, and a singular custom indulged in, of which it would be impossible to trace the origin, but which appears to have been

---

practised on similar occasions for many generations—that of tearing up the seats of the law courts and public schools to make bonfires. At Alfonso's birth, so great was the exultation of the populace—possibly increased by the liberality of the duke, who had ordered that the fountains of the Piazza should run with wine instead of water—that they insisted on tearing the doors from the shops and private houses for the same purpose. The idea was no sooner conceived than it appeared to have been acted upon, and a furious attack was made on those doors which promised, from their appearance, to yield a considerable amount of fuel, as well as to burn easily. It may, however, be imagined that the proprietors of the houses and shops did not enter into the idea with the same enthusiasm as the populace. On the contrary they showed so determined a resistance to the attacks made on their property, that a desperate riot was the consequence. No sooner did the intelligence reach the ears of the duke than the military

were ordered out, for the purpose of restoring order. This, however, was no easy matter, for the populace, generally most tractable, but now inflamed by wine and excited by the opposition they had met with from the nobles and burghers, vigorously resisted the military, and a very severe street fight took place between them, which ended, however, by the military gaining the victory, and order at last was completely restored.

Alfonso might almost be said to have been accustomed to danger from his birth, for the Duchess Eleanora, his mother, had hardly recovered from her confinement when she and her new-born infant nearly fell victims to a conspiracy, which, had it not been for the fidelity of the Ferrarese to their sovereign, might also have been attended with the ruin of her husband and family. A certain Nicolo di Leonello conceiving that in right of his father he was entitled to the Dukedom of Ferrara, resolved on making a desperate attempt to obtain it. Nor was he

altogether without some reason to expect success, for among the most powerful princes of Italy he had friends who, if they would not openly assist him, certainly did so in secret. Among these were Gio Maria, Duke of Milan, and Ludovico, the second Marquis of Mantua, and Nicolo's own cousin, with whom he was residing before making his attempt on Ferrara.

Having received information from his spies in the city, that Duke Ercole had resolved to remain during the time of his wife's accouchement at Belriguardo, a palace or rather hunting-seat he had about ten miles from Ferrara, Nicolo collected a body of seven hundred soldiers, whom he armed and kept in readiness till a convenient opportunity should offer. Having placed two wealthy gentlemen of Padua of the name of Groppi, who out of friendship for him had engaged to assist him, at the head of the expedition, he embarked his men on board some large barges which had been constructed for the occasion, and covering the soldiers with branches of trees and



hay, so as to avoid suspicion, he descended the river till he came in sight of Ferrara. Some of his spies having entered the city by means of a breach in the walls of the Castle Tedaldo while the masons who were repairing it were absent, they forced the lock of the city gates at San Marie, near the castle, and seizing the guards, opened the gates to Nicolo Leonello, who now with his men entered without difficulty. Here Nicolo placed a guard to make good his retreat if necessary, and advanced into the city, calling on the citizens to join him. The people, attracted by the sight of the strange soldiers, thronged the streets, but few of them joined the banner of Nicolo, although he made the most liberal offers both of riches and honours to those who should be the first to take up his cause.

Nicolo, however, nothing dismayed at their coolness, proceeded onwards till he came to the house of a friend, the Count Rinaldi dal Sacrato, who had promised to assist him whenever he made



the attempt. But the count's courage seems to have escaped him when the moment for action arrived, and instead of receiving Nicolo as he had expected with open arms, he ordered his servants to close the front door while he escaped by the back.

The alarm bell now began to sound, but little attention appears to have been paid to it by the populace, who would neither join the standard of Nicolo, nor in any way mix themselves up in the dispute. Nicolo now proceeded onwards till he reached the Piazza, where his course was for the moment arrested by the captain of the guard, who had succeeded in collecting together a few men ; but being in point of numbers totally unable to cope with Nicolo, he retreated into the cathedral, where the priests were at the time performing mass. No sooner did the intelligence of Nicolo's arrival reach the ears of the priests, than they immediately fled from the altar and made their escape through a secret door, considering, as Zambotti quaintly

---

remarks, "that it would be better for them to live to tell the tale."

Nicolo now made an attack upon the prisons and liberated the prisoners, thinking they would be certain to join him. He was, however, doomed to be disappointed even there. A few of the prisoners, animated by the hope of plunder, promised to stand by him; the remainder fled and escaped. Nicolo, now almost driven to despair by the apathy of the citizens, sent men into different parts of the city to tell them that the Venetian Doge had promised to assist him, and that an army of 14,000 Venetian soldiers were within a day's march of the city. His commands were faithfully executed by his messengers, but still few voices were heard in his favour. Nicolo, however, determined to proceed, and for the moment was somewhat encouraged by the arrival of a few recruits, headed by a man of the name of Christoforo de' Cappilleti. Nicolo, who at the time was seated on a bench in the Piazza, rose to welcome Cappilleti, when he

was killed by a shot or cross-bow bolt from a window in the municipal palace, and he fell at Nicolo's feet, who retired a short distance from the spot. He had no sooner done so than three notaries who had taken refuge in the palace, rushed hurriedly down the grand staircase, and seizing the hardly dead body of Cappilleti, bore it away with them, and shortly afterwards hung it from a window overlooking the Piazza as a warning to other traitors.

This strong proof that the Ferrarese were not quite so apathetic in the matter as Nicolo had imagined, made him easily perceive that something decisive must immediately be done, and to this conclusion he was still further urged by the intelligence that his men, driven to desperation by the pangs of hunger, were attacking the provision shops, and that the citizens in consequence, fearing a general plunder of their property, were beginning to arm themselves.

Nicolo now heard that the Duchess Eleanora,

who, he had imagined, was in the castle, was instead in the Este palace, and that she had no guards with her. Although it would have been madness in him to attack as strong a fortress as the castle with as small a force as he had at his command, it was different with the palace, as of that he could make himself master after a slight resistance. Cursing his ill-luck in not having heard sooner of the defenceless position of the duchess, he immediately made preparations to attack the palace. He found the doors closed against him, but these with little difficulty he broke open. But the noise occasioned by bursting open the doors gave notice to the duchess, who at the moment was in bed with her infant son, then not three weeks old, that no time was to be lost. Starting from her bed in her nightdress, she gave the two little princesses Isabella and Beatrice into the care of two of her ladies, and hurried as fast as she was able through a door at the further end of the room, while Nicolo was forcing open the other, and entered the secret passage leading to the

castle, which had been constructed by the orders of her husband a few years before. She was now under the care of her brother-in-law Sigismondo, who she found had contrived to collect around him a few soldiers and was waiting anxiously for more, having heard most exaggerated accounts of the number of men Nicolo had with him.

This outrageous attempt, however, to seize the duchess so exasperated Sigismondo, that he resolved, no matter what odds against him, to resent it, and ordering the drawbridge to be lowered, he sallied out at the head of a small body of horsemen and vigorously attacked the conspirators. He was now joined by many of the citizens, who, enraged at the excesses committed by Nicolo's men, had armed themselves. The fight was continued with varied success, though on the whole in favour of the Ferrarese, till the next day, when tidings of the arrival of Nicolo having reached the Duke at Belriguardo late at night, he immediately started for Ferrara, and

arrived at the city at daybreak. His presence animated his subjects, who finding that he was not dead as they had been informed, joined with fresh animation in the affray; and the result was that in the short space of an hour every partisan of Nicolo who remained in the city was made prisoner.

The insurrection being entirely subdued, the duke returned to the Este palace, where he had the pleasure of seeing his duchess with her two little daughters by her side, and her infant son in her arms, standing on a balcony in the castle, expecting his arrival. Without waiting for him to enter, she descended the staircase, and after embracing her husband, they proceeded to the cathedral to give thanks to God for their escape.

The following days were devoted to the trial and punishment of the prisoners. Severe indeed was their fate when measured by our modern ideas of criminal jurisprudence. The two Groppi who had been in command of the attacking party were hanged, one at each extremity of the



Palazzo della Ragione or law courts, eighteen others from the bars of the windows, and five more from the battlements of the castle. The same night by torch-light the unfortunate Nicolo was beheaded in the courtyard of the castle, and the next morning Azzo of Este, who had been in the conspiracy, shared the same fate. Both were buried with the honours due to their rank in the family vault in the church of San Francesco. A Franciscan priest, who it was proved had also corresponded with Nicolo, was first brought out on a scaffold in the Piazza, and then after being degraded from his clerical capacity by the bishop, was delivered up to the secular power and hanged. About two hundred and eighty of the prisoners, who declared they were ignorant for what purpose they were engaged by Nicolo, were given over to divers of the nobility to be ransomed. To the honour of the nobles,\* however, to whom they had been

---

\* Frizzi.



assigned, they were all liberated without any ransom having been exacted from them.

Whatever rashness Nicolo may have shown in his attempt, it cannot be denied that he was much beloved by many of his followers. A singular proof of this was given by an old man, Mastro Lucco, who was his cook, and taken prisoner with him. Ercole, touched at the sight of the old man's grey hairs, and the sorrow he showed on hearing that Nicolo was dead, sent word to him that if he would cry 'Viva Ercole!' he should be forgiven, if not that he should die. When the message reached the old man he was standing on the scaffold with others, with the priest by his side, waiting his turn. At first he seemed hardly able to understand the message, and it was repeated to him. Lucco now fully comprehended his position, and advancing to the edge of the scaffold, called out in a loud firm voice, 'Viva Nicolo di Leonello!' and then turning round to the executioner who was waiting for him, he laid his head on the block, and the

---

next moment was a corpse. Several other anecdotes of a similar description are recorded, showing how greatly Leonello was esteemed by those around him.

The next danger which threatened Alfonso, and from which he was delivered by the presence of mind and intrepidity of his mother, was possibly more alarming than that just described. It happened in the year 1484, Alfonso then being in his sixth year. The wars between the Ferrarese and the Venetians had been for some time raging with great fury, with very variable success, the Ferrarese perhaps on the whole having somewhat the advantage. But whatever might be the success of the Ferrarese on the field of battle, a terrible famine was within the city, which if it continued to rage much longer would certainly terminate the war in favour of the Venetians, they having the command of the river above the city, and thereby hindering supplies from reaching it, though the fortifications of the Ferrarese on the banks of the river,

as well as their own galleys, prevented for the time the advance of the enemy. The lower orders of the city, who had greatly suffered from the scarcity of provisions, had hitherto been kept down by the efforts of the burgher and upper classes, assisted by the police and the better affected of the artisans ; but the scarcity increasing, the latter in their turn joined the mob, and the shops of the dealers in provisions, as well as the houses of several of the nobles, were pillaged. Strong as were the efforts to put a stop to the disturbances, it was found impossible to carry them out, while the duke, who was generally looked up to for advice, had been for some days confined by a fever to his bedroom, and from the severity of the malady was totally unable to take any part in public affairs. The duchess, who had taken upon herself to issue the orders which were asked for, which duty she performed with great coolness and determination, could not gain that peculiar feeling of confidence which the people placed in her husband's

administrative abilities, and good as might have been her counsels, they were little heeded by the authorities.

To add to her troubles, on November 20 she received information that the Venetians had succeeded in passing the defences of the Ferrarese, and aided by a body of troops which were advancing by the land, were rapidly approaching the city. For a moment, and but for a moment, Eleanora was overwhelmed with the news. With the city in a state of anarchy within, with the enemy almost within sight of the walls, and no soldiers to defend them, and her husband, on whose wisdom she generally relied for advice, now so utterly incapacitated by his illness as to be unable to move, his physicians having prognosticated that the slightest excitement might occasion his death, her position was a difficult one indeed. But Eleanora possessed to an eminent degree a faculty frequently found in women, her courage and energy increasing in proportion with the danger that surrounded her.

The woman who a short time before was hardly equal to the exigencies of the occasion, now that her fortunes appeared desperate, rose above the danger and conquered it.

Eleanora hastily summoned the magistrates and other authorities, with as many of the people as could be got together, to assemble in the garden of the palace ; and placing herself, with her little children by her side, on the steps of the door leading from her private apartments, she addressed the assemblage with that overwhelming spontaneous eloquence which women can occasionally use in difficult situations, and which tells with so much power over even the roughest and most disorderly. With great feeling, yet with great dignity, she informed them of the distressing state of her husband's health and his present inability to take part in public affairs. She did not disguise from them the alarming intelligence she had that morning received, and the utterly helpless state the city would be in unless they immediately united together for its defence. She

---

reminded them of the many advantages the city of Ferrara had received from the house of Este ; she dwelt—rightly or wrongly—on the injustice of the Venetians in provoking the war ; she expatiated on the humanity and integrity of the duke's government, the prosperity which—till the breaking out of this unhappy war—they had always enjoyed, and the rights and privileges which had been accorded them, and which they would infallibly lose if they surrendered the city to the enemy.

Such in substance were the arguments Eleanora used, and great was the effect they had on her auditors. They replied to her with shouts and acclamations, and cries of, *O casa d'Este o morte*, and all volunteered their services in defence of the city, if they were first assured that the duke was living, as reports had been spread abroad of his death. Dangerous as the experiment might be, Eleanora was advised to allow the people to enter her husband's sick-room and judge for themselves. Without delay she adopted



the suggestion. The doors of his chamber were thrown open, and the populace had the satisfaction of proving by ocular demonstration that their beloved duke was alive. The experiment, while it had the effect of animating the people, nearly cost the duke his life, so great was the excitement their visit caused him. Before half those who applied for admittance had been able to reach his presence, his physicians, fearing for his life, were obliged to order the doors to be closed. Great as was the disappointment of those who could not enter, they united with the rest, and with considerable difficulty the safety of the city was secured by the courage and energy of its citizens.

The young Alfonso was at a very early age introduced by his father into public life. When Ercole determined on making a pilgrimage to the shrine of San Giovanni di Galizia, he sent ambassadors to the different surrounding courts, informing them of his intention to quit Italy for some time, and he chose his eldest son Alfonso,



*Alfonso's Marriage with Anna Sforza. 147*

---

then only eleven years of age, accompanied by Count Bonifazio and two hundred attendants, as his ambassador to Venice, with which he was again at peace. He was received by the Senate with much courtesy, and Alfonso recited with great clearness the message with which he had been intrusted by his father. He remained in Venice for a week, having great attention shown him and receiving an immense number of presents, and he then returned in safety to Ferrara.

In the month of June, 1491, Alfonso was married to Anna Sforza, sister to the Duke of Milan, to whom some years before he had been betrothed. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp in Milan, and afterwards Alfonso conducted his new bride to Ferrara, which they reached in safety. The festivities in Ferrara on the occasion even surpassed in magnificence those of Milan. Although Frizzi makes but little mention of her entrance, and the festivals which then occurred, the archives of Ferrara, with singular minuteness, contain a list of the different

expenses disbursed by the city on the occasion, and the amounts paid to different artificers. Among others we find a sum paid to "Perinato and his company for their labour in remaining up many nights to break the ice in the river above the Ponte di Castello, so as to be able to send the Bucentoro or state barge to receive the illustrious Signora Anna on her arrival." Equicola goes to a greater length than Frizzi in his description of her entrance into Ferrara. "There was," he says, "a great pomp of ambassadors, musicians, and cavaliers, &c., and they passed through four triumphal arches erected for the occasion. The first, on the shore, represented the goddess Venus on a pedestal, the second, at the Schivanoja palace, were two unbridled horses, which dragged the chariot of the Sun; a third, at San Francisco, with horses dragging the car of Cupid; and another between the cathedral and the ducal palace, of two gilt giants with a caparisoned horse between them."

Of Anna Sforza, history makes but little

---

mention, beyond that she was an amiable and affectionate wife, and much beloved by those around her.

After his marriage with Anna, Alfonso seems to have taken but little part in public affairs, living a quiet retired life, and giving himself up to his favourite studies—civil and military engineering. We read of him constantly visiting his relations, but beyond that little mention is made of him. In the summer of 1493, in company with his wife, he paid a lengthened visit to Milan, and afterwards returned to Ferrara. In the autumn of the same year the Duchess Eleanora was visited by her two daughters Beatrice and Isabella, with their husbands, and the court of Ferrara never passed happier hours than during their sojourn. Jousts, tournaments, balls, races, and other amusements followed each other rapidly. Among other methods of enjoyment the duchess invited her family to visit the château of Belriguardo, the hunting-seat of the duke. During their stay all state and ceremony

seem to have been abandoned, and the time passed in uninterrupted happiness.

On their return to Ferrara, the Duchess Eleanora proposed to visit Venice, which was readily acceded to by her family. Preparations were rapidly made for their journey, which was to be conducted with all that magnificence for which the Duke of Ferrara was so celebrated. Notice had been given to the Venetians of their intended arrival, and the Doge and the Senate had determined to receive their guests with every mark of respect and attention. In his robes of state, and accompanied by the Senate, the Doge entered the Bucentoro to meet them. There were also present on the occasion one hundred and twenty ladies of the first families of Venice, who were to act as ladies of honour to the Duchess Eleanora and her family. Balls in the great hall of the ducal palace, banquets, boat races, both by men and women, and other amusements occupied the family during their stay in Venice ; and when they quitted that city

---

they were treated with the same honours which had been offered them when they entered it. Instead of returning to Ferrara the Duchess Eleanora proposed that they should visit Milan, where Duke Ercole would join them, and where they would remain for some weeks. They all arrived safely in that city, where they were met by the Duke of Ferrara, who was accompanied by the afterwards celebrated Ludovico Ariosto and many other men of genius. While in Milan they received the gratifying intelligence that Don Ippolito, the duke's second son, though then only in his fourteenth year, had been created cardinal.

The unmingled happiness which was then the lot of the Este family was doomed to be soon changed into sorrow. The Duchess Eleanora was attacked with some slight malady, which at first gave but little uneasiness to her family, but on its increasing she proposed to return to Ferrara, which city she reached, apparently but little fatigued by her journey. Still her health

became weaker, and on October 11th in the same year she died. Few princesses were ever more sincerely lamented than Eleanora of Aragon, the wife of Duke Ercole, and her memory is always spoken of with respect by all Italian historians.

After the death of the Duchess Eleanora, Alfonso and his wife Anna Sforza remained quietly in Ferrara. He seems to have taken but little part in public affairs, occupying himself, as before stated, principally with engineering studies, in experiments in the casting of artillery and the manufacture of steel. He applied himself especially to the manufacturing of cannon, not content with superintending the workmen, but working with them himself, and that with so much diligence and application that at last he became a most skilful mechanic (*artifice excellentissimo*\*). Nor were his studies in the art of war solely confined to the foundry and workshop.

---

\* Frizzi.



In the year 1495 he commanded a company of men-at-arms in the service of the King of France, who was then engaged in war with some of the Italian States, and on more than one occasion he signalized himself by his bravery. He proved himself during the dangers of the field of battle to be possessed of that calm intrepidity and coolness of judgment which afterwards he used with so much skill and good fortune in his celebrated war with the Republic of Venice.

The campaign over, he again returned to Ferrara, where he remained quietly with his wife Anna, to whom he appears to have been strongly attached, and again entered with full zest into his engineering studies.

The year 1497 was a sad one indeed for Alfonso. On January 2nd of that year he lost his sister Beatrice, wife of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, to whom Alfonso was tenderly attached. The shock was a sad one to all, as Beatrice was a woman of extraordinary beauty and great ability, not solely in accomplishments,



but in natural intelligence as well. Besides being the companion and secretary of her husband, she was his chief counsellor ; and Verri, the historian of Milan, as well as several other writers, attribute to her influence over her husband the desperate efforts he made against such terrible odds, in defending his duchy of Milan from the attacks of his enemies. Verri states that on more than one occasion, had it not been for the encouragement and advice of his energetic partner, Ludovico would have given up all hope and sought safety in flight. The body of Beatrice was buried in one of the churches of Milan, though funeral ceremonies were also conducted with great pomp in Ferrara.

Great as had been the sorrow of Alfonso at his sister's death, another still more terrible awaited him, and that too at a time when his hopes of having an heir—for hitherto Anna Sforza had had no children—appeared on the point of being realized. When her accouchement took place, for some days both mother and child

seemed to be going on satisfactorily, but puerperal fever set in, and the unfortunate Alfonso was bereft in the same day of both wife and infant son.

Little of Alfonso appears to be known from the death of his wife till his marriage with Lucrezia Borgia was proposed to him, beyond the fact that he took a somewhat lengthened journey to France, where he remained a guest at the court of the French King. From the intense affection Alfonso had borne to his wife Anna Sforza, there is good reason to believe that the aversion which he at first expressed to the match with Lucrezia Borgia was occasioned by it. Judging by the few letters extant which were written by him, he appears to have been of an exceedingly affectionate disposition, and from his peculiar temperament likely to have suffered acutely from the loss of his beloved sister and his wife and child in one year. However, be that as it may, and admitting that his acceptance of the match with Lucrezia Borgia was dictated

solely by ambition, and without a particle of genuine affection in it, as was too frequently the case in those days, as well as in the present time, among princes, he awaited in Ferrara the arrival of his new bride, if not with any marks of impatience, at any rate with apparent satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

LUCREZIA BORGIA'S ARRIVAL IN FERRARA.

Preparations for the Reception of the Wedding Guests—  
Invites Ambassadors from all the Italian States—The  
Duke's Letter to the Marchioness of Mantua—Lucrezia  
arrives within twenty Miles of Ferrara—Alfonso privately  
visits his Bride—Interview between the Marchioness of  
Mantua and Lucrezia—Meeting between Ercole and  
Lucrezia—Arrival at the Palace of Alberto d'Este—  
Lucrezia's Entry into Ferrara—Singular Scenic Repre-  
sentations—Liberation of Prisoners—Lucrezia's House-  
hold.

WHILE the festivities in honour of Lucrezia's  
marriage with Alfonso of Este were being  
carried on with so much magnificence in Rome,  
the Duke of Ferrara was busily employed in  
making preparations not only for the reception  
of the bride into the Ferrarese territory, but also  
for her public entrance with her husband into

Ferrara, and for the fêtes which were to take place in honour of her arrival, all of which he had resolved should be conducted with great magnificence. Numerous indeed were the guests invited to the wedding. Not simply contenting himself with the different members of his own family, directly or indirectly allied with other potentates in Italy, Ercole also invited ambassadors from all the other Italian States as well as from several foreign powers. The most honoured guest, however, appears to have been Monsignore Filippo della Rocca Berti, the ambassador from the French king. In this invitation, as well as to the great honour shown to the French ambassador on his arrival, Ercole was doubtless instigated by a political motive, evidently wishing to show that he had not only obeyed the advice of the French King in bringing about the marriage of Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia, but also that the union was a source of rejoicing to him as well, hoping thereby to cement still more firmly the interests of his own family with those of the king of France.

Among the invitations to members of his own family the one most worthy of notice was that to his daughter Isabella, the Marchioness of Mantua, as conveying an idea that the Gonzaga family, while admitting the policy of the match, hardly liked the connexion with the Borgias, who seem to have been as thoroughly detested in Mantua as elsewhere. In his letter to the marchioness, dated January 7, 1502, the duke informs her that the marriage between his son Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia having already been celebrated by proxy at Rome, the bride and her cortege were about starting for Ferrara. He earnestly begs of the marchioness to be present on her arrival, saying he was certain her husband the marquis would offer no objection, as he was always willing to agree to anything he thought would please him (the duke), and he concludes his letter by begging she would not disappoint him, as he wished his family to show every respect in their power to the bride on her arrival.

That Isabella required a strong appeal from her father to be present in Ferrara on Lucrezia's arrival is very probable, as also that she had a stronger aversion to the match than her husband, possibly arising from a doubt as to the character of the lady with whom she was so soon to be so closely allied. It was evidently with the idea of being fully advised as to Lucrezia's character and deportment before she finally accepted the invitation, that she despatched her mysterious correspondent S. El Prete to Rome to inform her of all which took place during the marriage ceremony. Whether his report, which appears to have been written even in the minutest particular in a spirit of great candour, had the effect of allaying any uneasy feeling on the part of Isabella, or whether she acted merely in obedience to the wishes of her husband and father, it would be difficult to determine; but she accepted the invitation, and promised to be in Ferrara on the day appointed.

Great indeed must have been the anxiety of



---

Duke Ercole to determine in what manner he would provide for the immense number of guests he expected shortly to arrive in Ferrara; for besides the members of his own family and the ambassadors he had invited, others, to do honour to the occasion, had also volunteered their presence, swelling up the gross number of guests, with their officials, suites, and servants, to no fewer than two thousand souls. Fortunately Ercole's energy and courage rose in proportion with the difficulties thrown in his way. Having taken the responsibility of superintending the whole of the arrangements on himself, he now set to work with a spirit of determination which resolved to conquer all obstacles. It should, however, be here stated that he received great and willing assistance from the Ferrarese nobility, who, less with the intention of doing honour to the expected guests, than with the wish to assist their duke in a moment of difficulty, proffered their aid, which was gladly accepted. Zambotto, in his description of the

ceremony, gives a detailed list of the different noblemen who volunteered to receive the duke's guests, and the preparations they made for the occasion. The list and its details are exceedingly curious, as not only proving the great willingness of the Italian nobility to show every respect and hospitality to the friends of their prince, but also their immense wealth and resources, as well as the size, splendour, and magnificence of their palaces in the sixteenth century. The illustrious Cavaliere Bonifacio Bevilagua invited the French ambassador and his suite, composed of fifty persons, and entertained them during the whole of the time with the most profuse hospitality. Zambotto also adds that the Cavaliere had refurnished his palace for the occasion with so much taste and magnificence that it excited the surprise and admiration of all who saw it.

The Cavaliere Ugucione de Coutrarij, son-in-law of the illustrious Signor M. Sigismondo, brother to the duke, invited the two Venetian ambassadors with their suites of one hundred and

fifty. During the residence of the ambassadors in his house they were waited on by the sons of Ferrarese noblemen. The ambassadors from Cesare Borgia, brother to the bride, were lodged in the Schivanoja palace, the most magnificent in the city. Zambotto does not mention the number of their suite, but states they were very numerous, and that during their stay they were treated with every mark of respect and hospitality. The Florentine ambassadors, with their suite of one hundred and fifty persons, were lodged in the palace of the Count Antonio Maria Guaniero, grand steward of the duke. The ambassadors from Lucca were guests of the Count Bartolomeo del Sagrato. The number of their suite appears to have been only thirty. Zambotto, evidently thinking that the few guests resident in the Sagrato palace hardly kept up the reputation for munificence of that illustrious family, one of the most noble in the city, when compared with the number resident in the palaces of the other nobility, seems to have thought it

---

necessary to form some excuse, and particularly eulogizes the elegant hospitality shown to the ambassadors, and the extraordinary preparations made for their reception. "So much care, good taste, and attention," he adds, "had been shown, that the whole palace appeared a delicious paradise" (*uno paradiso delizioso*). The Sienese ambassadors were lodged in the palace of Borsa Pendaglia,\* with their suite of forty persons. Count Annibale Bentivoglio, son-in-law of the duke, with sixty followers, was lodged in the palace of the Cavaliere Francesco da Castello, where they received every attention and respect.

The remaining ambassadors were lodged in

---

\* This palace was formerly considered one of the most splendidly furnished and richly appointed in the city. It was generally used for the temporary residence of any foreign potentates who might at the time be residing in Ferrara. More than one Pope, the Emperor of Germany, and the King of Hungary, have at different times resided in the Pendaglia palace. It still remains, though terribly shorn of its ancient splendour, one portion of it being used as the barrack of the fire-brigade (*pompieri*), and the other as an infant school for girls.

---

palaces of the other Ferrarese nobility. With great delicacy Ercole insisted that those of the nobles who received his guests, and whose means were not of the amplest, should be at no cost for their maintenance. To prevent any expenditure on their part, he greatly enlarged the kitchens in the Estense palace and the castle, and engaged almost an army of cooks, by whom the food of the guests resident in the last-mentioned houses was prepared.

A considerable portion of his guests having been provided for by the kindness and liberality of the Ferrarese noblemen, Ercole had now to make provision for the remainder, and great indeed was the labour still on his hands. The commissariat alone presented great difficulties, as he had resolved that nothing should be wanting on his part to set before his guests such abundance of good things as should keep up to the full the well-earned reputation of Ferrara and its dukes for lavish hospitality. Nor was it any light matter he had undertaken, for the

number of guests still to be provided for was certainly not fewer than 1000. Yet the preparations made by the duke were quite equal to the occasion. We read in the printed 'Diario Ferrarese,' as well as in more than one manuscript, that as early as December 22, 1501, 14 bushels (*moggia*) of confectionery and sweetmeats had already been prepared, and by Christmas-day had been collected 300 oxen and calves, and as many large cheeses. By January 27, the duke had succeeded in collecting no fewer than 15,000 head of poultry, and the same quantity of game. Frizzi, in speaking of the abundant supply of provisions, states that it was so much in excess of what was necessary, that a considerable portion of it was spoiled, and had to be thrown into the river. This he quotes with pride, as showing the inexhaustible means and wonderful productiveness of the Ferrarese territory, but the learned historian appears to have arrived at his conclusion without sufficient data to go upon, for the quantity of butcher's



---

meat required was greater than Ferrara was capable of producing. In a letter written by Ercole to his son-in-law, the Marquis of Mantua, dated December 22, 1501, he pathetically informs him "that he fears the ducal table will at the approaching festivities be but badly supplied with veal, and that if the illustrious marquis, his much-loved brother\* and son-in-law, would kindly lend him 100 calves, which he feels from the love he bears him he will do without hesitation, they shall be returned at the earliest opportunity."

In the meantime Lucrezia remained at the castle of the Duke d'Urbino, near the frontiers, till she had received notice that all preparations had been made in Ferrara for her reception.

---

\* Among the Italian nobility of the period, as among crowned heads, even in confidential communications it was the habit to address one another as brother or sister, no matter whether any or no degree of relationship existed between them.—*Letter in the Archives of Mantua.*

Duke Ercole seems to have been a very liberal caterer. At the marriage of his son Alfonso with Anna Sforza,



During her residence in this castle the time seems to have passed with great gaiety, not an evening having been spent without some fresh amusement being invented for her entertainment. At length she received a message from Duke Ercole, that all was in readiness for her reception in Ferrara. The next morning, accompanied by the Duchess d'Urbino and her husband, Lucrezia left the castle, and proceeded to another belonging to the Bentivoglio family, which was situated about twenty miles from Ferrara, and where she was to remain until she had received further orders from the duke as to the order of the ceremonies

---

February 12, 1491, he collected for the wedding feasts—200 lbs. of oil, 400 cheeses, 50 fat oxen, 200 calves, 150 sheep, 230 goats, 2000 pair of capons, 2300 pair of fowls, 10 pair of peacocks, 500 pair of turkeys, 150 fat grouse, 10 wild boars, 600 quails, and 20 pair of pheasants. The quantity of game appears small in proportion to the other eatables, especially when its extreme abundance in the Ferrarese districts is considered. But perhaps this may be accounted for by the great severity of the winter of 1491. The Po was then frozen over for many weeks, and most probably partially stopped the supplies to the city.

---

which had been determined on for her reception. Here a singular change appears to have come over the spirit of Alfonso. From the time when, in accordance with the wish of his father he had agreed to the marriage with Lucrezia Borgia, he seems to have taken but little interest in the matter, either remaining quietly passive or occupying himself in his laboratory, and occasionally assisting his father in the preparations which were being made. On January 30th, 1502, he received notice that Lucrezia had arrived at the above-named castle of the Bentivoglio family, and orders were given by the duke that all the suite should be in readiness to proceed, on February 1st, to meet her at Mal Albergo, and from thence to conduct her in state into the city. But undemonstrative as Alfonso might have appeared when he received the intelligence, it was rather from his habitual reserve of manner than from any indifference in the matter. As soon as he had quitted his father's presence, he retired to his own apartments, where he re-

requested the immediate attendance of four of his gentlemen in whom he had the greatest confidence, and told them to disguise themselves as common soldiers, as he wished them to accompany him on some journey he was about to take. He then made some hasty changes in his own dress, so that he should not be recognised, and quitting the city in the evening, he and his friends arrived at the village of St. Prospero, about ten miles from Ferrara, where he remained for the night in a castle belonging to the Bevilagua family. The next day he sent one of his gentlemen as a messenger to the castle to inform Lucrezia of his arrival, and requesting an interview with her. Without the slightest hesitation, Lucrezia appears to have accorded it, and a short time afterwards Alfonso was ushered into her presence, and they remained in conversation together.

It would be curious to speculate on the feelings of the bridegroom before making the acquaintance of his bride, whom he had not seen,

---

and certainly for whom he had hitherto shown not the slightest spark of interest. But whatever might have been his feelings before the introduction, there was no doubt afterwards of the effect that Lucrezia had made on him. That peculiar sort of fascination which she seemed to possess over all those in whom she was interested, was no doubt felt with its full force by Alfonso. When he left her he entertained for her as ardent a love as was the aversion he felt when first the marriage was proposed to him, and that love continued unabated till her death, which occurred nineteen years afterwards.

Although Alfonso had evidently wished to keep the visit to his bride a profound secret, like most other secrets confided to many confidants it soon became generally known. Zambotto, in his quaint style, tells us that the visit of Alfonso to his bride soon spread abroad in Ferrara, and was a source of great satisfaction to all, especially to the Illustrissima Madonna herself, as he had now shown, from his great desire to see her,

that he would willingly accept her as his bride, and treat her kindly.\* After the private interview with his bride was over, Alfonso stayed with her for the remainder of the day, in company with the Duke and Duchess d'Urbino. During the time he appeared in high spirits, greatly to the satisfaction of the duchess, who, like many others, had been somewhat doubtful in what manner Alfonso would have received her.

On Tuesday, February 1, 1502, the illustrious Madonna Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, attended by the ladies and gentlemen of her suite, quitted Ferrara and went on board the state barge—or bucentoro, as they had named it after the celebrated state barge of Venice—and proceeded up the river as far as Mal Albergo, where it had been agreed they should meet the bride, whom

---

\* E questo piaque a tutto il popolo, e molto più a la Sposa e a tutti i suoi che Sua Signoria la desiderasse vedere, ed anche la togliesse di buon cuore che fu indizio la saria ben ricevuta e meglio trattata.

they found in her barge,\* in company with the Duchess d'Urbino, awaiting her arrival. Whatever might have been the repugnance which the Marchioness Isabella had felt to the match between her brother and the daughter of the Pope, she had the good-breeding to conceal it on the present occasion; and quitting the bucentoro she entered the state barge of the bride, and embracing her tenderly, expressed her great satisfaction that they had at last met. Her demonstrations of affection were fully returned by Lucrezia, and they remained for some time talking most amicably together.

They then left Lucrezia's barge and landed, and when the marchioness had introduced the different members of her suite, the whole company went on board the bucentoro, which proceeded towards Ferrara. During the short interview which had passed between Isabella and Lucrezia, the latter appears to have exercised over

---

\* Marin Sanuto.



her somewhat suspicious sister-in-law the same influence which the day before she had exercised over her brother Alfonso, and even if it had been less profound it was fully as lasting. From that meeting till Lucrezia's death the utmost affection, without the slightest interruption either of coldness or anger, appears to have existed between the sisters-in-law. Not only did it remain uninterrupted through the many vicissitudes of fortune, the dangers with which each in her turn was surrounded, and their domestic joys and sorrows, but each seems to have specially applied to the other for sympathy in her sorrow, or to rejoice with her on any happy occurrence. In the archives of Mantua are many letters from Lucrezia to Isabella extending over the whole time of her union with Alfonso, and all are written in a tone of strong attachment. Those from Isabella to Lucrezia have unfortunately been lost, but there is no difficulty in judging from the allusions made to them that to the last she entertained for her the warmest



affection. Whatever view of Lucrezia's character may be taken by the reader, it is impossible to deny that she had a peculiar facility of engaging the affections and esteem of all who conversed with her, noble or peasant, rich or poor. Nor is the remembrance of the respect the poor held her in extinct among the Ferrarese peasantry of the present day; and traditions, with more or less foundation, of her kindness and charity are often met with among them, especially in the vicinity of Belriguardo, her country palace, in which she spent the greater portion of her time.

When the bucentoro had arrived at the Torre della Fossa, a short distance from Ferrara, they perceived the duke with Alfonso (who had returned to Ferrara the evening after his interview with Lucrezia), attended by an escort of seventy-five mounted crossbow-men, dressed in uniforms—one side white and the other rose—the colours of the Este family, and a crowd of ambassadors and nobles. As soon as the bucentoro was moored to the shore, the duke went on board,

followed by the ambassadors. He addressed Lucrezia with great kindness, and after having kissed her, he introduced her to the ambassadors. Then taking her hand he conducted her on shore, where she was presented to the nobles and others who had not accompanied him on board the bucentoro. Nicolo Cagnolo of Piacenza, who had been invited to accompany Messer Filippo Della Rocca Berti, who acted on the occasion as ambassador from Louis XII., King of France, and was present at her landing, speaks of her appearance and manners in terms of high approbation. As usual with all who have written any account of the ceremonies and fêtes which took place at Lucrezia's marriage, he gives a minute description of her dress. "She wore," he says, "a *camora*, or short camisole, cut somewhat in the fashion of a loose-fitting vest without waist, of crimson satin bordered with gold lace, a loose robe or *sbernia* of dark-coloured satin, lined with beautiful ermine and having very long and wide open sleeves. On her head she wore

---

a cap or hat of gold tissue artistically embroidered with pearls, from which hung a pendant of jewels of the purest water, and of immense value." The party now continued their way on land, and at sunset reached the palace of Alberto d'Este, outside the walls, where Lucrezia and her husband were to sleep that night, so as to be able to make their public entry into Ferrara the next morning. On arriving at the palace they were received by Madonna L. Bentivoglio, with many others of the wives of the Ferrarese nobles who had been selected as her ladies of honour. After the ceremonies of introduction were over, Lucrezia was introduced to Madonna Teodora, the lady who was appointed to superintend her palace. Madonna Teodora was attended by twelve young ladies all dressed alike in *camoras* of crimson satin, worn under *robboni* (or loose gowns without trains, with wide falling open sleeves) of black velvet, trimmed with black lambskin.

The duke now made his daughter-in-law a

present of five carriages\* (*carrete*). The first was covered with a canopy of gold brocade, and drawn by four white horses worth fifty ducats each. The canopy of another was of mulberry-coloured velvet, and the carriage was drawn by four horses, and the third, which had a canopy of mulberry-coloured satin, was drawn by four horses of different colours; while the two remaining carriages were equally handsome. In the evening the dress of the bride was a vest (*vesta*) of crimson satin shot with gold. The sleeves of her bodice were worn nearly to the elbow (*alla Castigliana*). Over the bodice she wore a loose short coat (*albernia*) of mulberry-coloured satin, trimmed with ermine and open at the sides. Her bust was covered with a bodice richly embroidered by her own hands.† Around her throat was a necklace of large

---

\* Marin Sanuto.

† Lucrezia appears to have been greatly celebrated for her skill in embroidery.

---

pearls, with a ruby pendant from the centre, in which a pearl was inserted. On her head was neither diadem nor ornament, but a small cap of gold tissue. The dress of the Marchioness of Mantua was a vest of green velvet embroidered in gold, a short gown (*robbone*) of black velvet. On her head she wore a circlet of gold: and another, with a diamond set in its centre, round her throat. Madonna the Duchess d'Urbino was dressed in a vest of black velvet, embroidered with gold.\*

The next day, Wednesday, February 2nd, Lucrezia made her solemn entry into Ferrara. In point of magnificence, this ceremony exceeded anything of the kind that had ever taken place in Ferrara, accustomed as the people had been to sights of this description. Such exhibitions seem to have been an especial amusement, or rather study, of Duke Ercole, and this may, perhaps, in some way account for the minute

---

\* Marin Sanuto.

description given of them by historians of his time. It might almost at first sight appear strange that a politician of the shrewd nature of the Duke of Ferrara, who had done so much and succeeded so well in raising his dukedom to a state of the first importance in Italy, as well as in advancing the material prosperity of his city, should have employed himself in a labour better fitted for a master of the ceremonies, or rather the ballet-master of a theatre, than that of the potentate of a powerful State. But occupations of the kind appear to have been then regarded as so far from derogatory to a nobleman, that they were looked upon rather as a proof of artistic genius, and as being worthy of the attention of the most highly cultivated mind.

The order of the ceremonies of the day was as follows. Don Alfonso, who had left the palace of Alberto d'Este early in the morning, now returned, accompanied by a brilliant suite of noblemen and gentlemen, and escorted by seventy-five mounted



---

crossbow-men of the duke's guard, dressed in uniforms of white and rose, and headed by three captains dressed in the same colours. Both in Cagnolo's description and that of Marin Sanuto, the dress of the bridegroom must have been magnificent in the extreme, although possibly at variance with our modern ideas of taste, unless on the stage, in an opera or a melodrama. His costume consisted of a tunic (*alla Francese*) of crimson velvet; his cap, black velvet covered with scales of gold; his shoes also (*alla Francese*) were of black velvet; and he rode a bay charger, with housings of crimson velvet embroidered with gold.

Before arriving at the palace of Alberto d'Este, Alfonso, accompanied by the French ambassador, went into the chapel to hear mass, and they then continued their journey. At the palace they found Duke Ercole, who entered with them into the presence of the bride, by whom they were received with great ceremony. After they had partaken of a sumptuous repast,



they proceeded towards the city. Lucrezia was attired for her entry with great magnificence. She wore a *camora* of dark-coloured satin trimmed with gold lace, over which was a loose robe or *sbernia* of gold tissue. On her head was a small cap so richly ornamented with gold and pearls\* as entirely to conceal the material of which it was made, while her hair, which was drawn back, fell loosely from under the cap over her neck and shoulders. Around her throat was a necklace made alternately of large pearls, diamonds, and rubies, from the centre of which hung a pearl and a ruby, both of great size and immense value. The horse Lucrezia rode was a splendid white charger (a present from the duke), covered with a crimson-cloth housing, richly ornamented in relief with gold and pearls. The saddle was of black velvet, covered with scales of gold. Marin Sanuto states that he was informed

---

\* Zambotto says that the jewels of this cap alone were valued by jewellers at 30,000 ducats.

---

the trappings of the horse were valued at 6000 ducats : Frizzi places them as high as 8000. The Duchess d'Urbino and the Marchioness of Mantua were both also richly dressed, but far less so than the bride—possibly with the intention of not entering into rivalry with her on the occasion. The latter wore a vest of green velvet trimmed with fur, and on her head a small cap of gold tissue. Her hair was confined with a thin band of gold, and another with a large diamond in the centre—possibly the one she had worn the previous evening—encircled her neck. The duchess was simply dressed in a robe of black velvet, the body of which was ornamented with gold lace.

The procession having been marshalled into proper order, proceeded towards the city by a bridge across the river, so as to enter the gate of the Castle Tedaldo. When they had nearly reached the bridge they were met by six Ferrarese gentlemen, richly dressed and wearing thick gold chains round their necks, who preceded them to

the gate of the city. Here it appears that the procession was re-formed. After the troop of crossbow-men already mentioned, followed a band of eighty trumpeters, among whom were six belonging to the regiment of the Duke of Romagna, dressed in tunics half of gold brocade and half of mulberry and white satin, and twenty-four pipers (*pifferari*) and trombones. Then came eight halberdiers, dressed in tunics of gold-cloth and dark-coloured velvet, with close-fitting pantaloons, one leg of black cloth and the other of flesh colour. These were followed by the gentlemen in attendance on the bride, among whom were ten Spaniards in vests of gold brocade and tabards of black velvet, and several others more quietly dressed. Many among them wore gold chains, though Sanuto tells us none were large or of much value. Next came five bishops, two of whom were from Rome, and the others were the bishops of Adria, Commachio, and Sienna. The three last were dressed in long mantles trimmed with fur, while those from Rome had mantles of

\*

---

gold brocade lined with silk. After these were six drummers. Then came the bride, under a baldacchino of rich silk borne by eight doctors of the university. By the side of the baldacchino rode two of the Roman ambassadors, wearing long mantles of gold brocade open from the shoulder, with thick gold chains round their necks and large black velvet caps on their heads. They were mounted on very fine horses.

The next in order were the ambassadors from the different States, among whom were four others from Rome and two from Venice, the ambassador of the King of France bringing up the rear. A troop of soldiers came next in order, and after them Don Alfonso riding on one side of the Duchess d'Urbino, and the Duke of Ferrara on the other. Then came a train of fourteen open carriages filled with Ferrarese ladies of the best families, all splendidly dressed and wearing pearls or other jewels as well as gold chains. Two of the carriages were covered with gold brocade and drawn by white horses. The canopies of the

others were of silk or embroidered cloth. Then came two beautiful white mules for the illustrious bride, led by grooms, and two magnificent white horses. One of the mules had a housing-cloth of mulberry velvet ornamented with silver embroidery, the other of crimson velvet studded with gold ornaments in relief. The saddle of one of the horses was of dark satin shot with gold, and the other of crimson satin with gold fringe. Next came the mules belonging to the bride, eighty-six in number. They were covered with mulberry and yellow coloured housings. These were followed by a hundred and fifty common mules of burden.

On entering the city the procession was thrown into some disorder in consequence of an accident which happened to the bride, trifling enough as it turned out to be, but which might have been of very serious consequence. Wishing to speak with the French ambassador, Lucrezia turned her head to see if he was near, but not perceiving him she sent one of her attendants to request

---

him to advance. Her order was immediately obeyed, and Monsignore Della Rocca Berti at once rode forward, and in a few minutes reached the bride. As soon as she saw him she leant forward in her saddle to address him. The cheers and acclamations of the populace rendered it difficult to make herself heard, and she bent still more forward, when the sound of a cannon which had been fired as a salute near her, frightened her horse. Lucrezia attempted to calm him, but without effect, for he became so restive as to be quite ungovernable. Seeing the danger she was in, all rushed forward to assist her, but Lucrezia, with great presence of mind and some little difficulty, disengaged herself from the saddle and leapt upon the ground. She was immediately surrounded by a crowd of nobles and courtiers, all anxious for her safety. Having assured them that she was not in any way hurt, she professed her willingness again to mount the horse. This, however, her father and her husband, who had now come up, would not allow. One of the



white mules already spoken of was sent for, and Lucrezia having been assisted into the saddle, the procession again proceeded.

The bride now continued her progress through the principal streets of the city. Apart from the numerous triumphal arches and other structures which had been erected in her honour, four different stages had been built in different parts, before which the bride halted to witness scenic representations which were considered appropriate to the occasion. These were possibly the invention of the duke, who prided himself not a little on his good taste. If so, they did his ingenuity great credit, although it might be somewhat difficult to make the representations offered to Lucrezia agree with our modern ideas of good taste. On the first stage were three goddesses, each with a golden apple in her hand, singing verses in praise of the illustrious bride. Lucrezia, whose patience appears to have been inexhaustible, listened with the greatest attention; and after thanking the per-



---

formers, the order was given to advance, and the procession once more started on its road till the second stage was reached, on which was the god Hercules attended by Cupid, both singing verses of a similar description to those which Lucrezia had last heard.

As soon as Hercules and Cupid had finished, they also received the compliments of the bride, and the procession again went on its way till it reached the third stage, on which was the god Mercury attended by nymphs who welcomed Lucrezia with singing and dancing. The fourth was the strangest of the whole. The representation here consisted of a nymph astride on a red ox, attended by eight other nymphs with darts in their hands, each standing by an ox, while eight satyrs leaped and danced around them. After the nymphs had addressed Lucrezia in some complimentary verses, the procession moved on through the different principal streets of the town. At every house of any importance to which she came, flowers—real or arti-

ficial—were thrown on her, and the people testified their joy by continued shouts and acclamations.

All the principal streets of the city having now been passed through, the procession wended its way towards the Piazza. When arrived opposite the principal gate of the cathedral Lucrezia witnessed an extraordinary feat which had been prepared in her honour, and which certainly surpassed in originality of conception all she had hitherto seen. Two large ropes had been fixed on the ground exactly in front of the spot where her mule stood. One of these ropes reached to the summit of the Rigobello tower, which stood opposite the cathedral at one angle of the Piazza, and the other to the Arringo tower at the opposite angle.\* As soon as Lucrezia's attention

---

\* The two towers from which the rope-dancers descended have long since disappeared. That of the Arringo was destroyed by the earthquake in 1570; the other, which had fallen into a ruinous state, was taken down some years previously. The elegant modern illuminated clock-tower in the Piazza, now

---

had been called to the performance she was about to witness, and order had been established in the immense assembly, a signal was given, and on the summit of each tower appeared a rope-dancer fantastically dressed. Both at the same moment, stooping forward, leaned their breasts upon the cord, and then with arms extended descended the rope with great velocity till they had reached the earth, when they made their obeisances to the bride, who graciously thanked them for the pleasure they had afforded her. Zambotto says the feat gave great satisfaction to all

---

stands on the site of that of the Arringo. The tower in the castle, under which are the dungeons where Hugo and Parisina were confined, is frequently pointed out as the tower of the Rigobello, the name being held to be a corruption of Hugobello. This, however, is entirely erroneous. In the first place Rigo is a diminutive of Frederigo. The tower of Rigobello, which was certainly a portion of the Palazzo Estense, stood at the corner of the present Via degli Orifici. Besides, the name of Rigobello was formerly by no means rare in Ferrara, and among them more than one were architects. Possibly the tower may have been built by an architect of the name.—*Cittadella, Notizie relativo a Ferrara.*

who witnessed it, on account of the great danger which attended it.

The procession and the ceremonies attending it being now concluded, Lucrezia, assisted by her husband, descended from her mule, and accompanied by the Marchioness of Mantua and the Duchess d'Urbino, the ambassadors of the different courts and their suites, with a numerous body of Ferrarese nobility and courtiers, entered the cathedral to be present at the benediction. During the time they were in the cathedral, a scene of considerable disorder was going on at the Piazza. By some obscure traditionary title the crossbowmen of the duke claimed as their own the mule on which Lucrezia rode, and attempted to seize it by force, while those of the body-guard of Don Alfonso, as husband of the bride, maintained they had a better right to it. The result was, that a fight took place between them, which threatened to become serious, both the populace and the soldiers being too much amused by the fray to interfere. In the end, however, all,

fortunately, was peaceably terminated. Some one in authority—but whom, Zambotto does not inform us—decided the dispute by giving the baldechino to the cross bow-men of the duke, and the mule to Alfonso's body-guard.

The benediction over, Lucrezia and her husband, attended by the Marchioness of Mantua, the Duchess d'Urbino, and a lady the wife of Count Annibale Bentivoglio of Bologna, with some of the ladies and gentlemen of the court, left the cathedral and ascended the grand staircase of the Estense palace, which had been richly ornamented for the occasion with statues and tapestry of great value. As they approached the grand hall the trumpeters gave notice of her arrival, and the duke (who appears to have quitted the procession before the termination of the ceremonies), as Lucrezia and her husband entered, advanced to meet them, and embracing them with great tenderness, he told them they were welcome. He then led Lucrezia and her husband to the farther end of the hall where

a throne had been erected under a canopy of gold brocade, and the different officers of Lucrezia's household were introduced to her. The duke, after remaining for some time longer in conversation with Lucrezia, led her out of the hall, which Zambotto tells us had been decorated for the occasion with five great master-pieces of tapestry representing different subjects of holy writ, worked in gold, silver, and silk, and conducted her to the head of the staircase opening into the courtyard, at the foot of which had been erected on pedestals two immense gilt giants with clubs in their hands. It now being night, the court was brilliantly illuminated by torches held by soldiers standing round it. And now was performed a more pleasing ceremony than any which had taken place during the day, and which certainly did great credit to Ercole's good taste and kindly feeling. Determined that his daughter-in-law should inaugurate her residence in Ferrara by an act of charity and mercy, all the prisoners whose crimes had not



---

been of any very atrocious description, were collected in the centre of the court, and Lucrezia, as requested, descended the steps till she was near enough to be heard by them, and then addressing them with great kindness in her tone and manner, she expressed her hope that in future their conduct would be that of honourable men and good citizens, and she gave them their liberty.

Her father-in-law then led her into another hall where a grand banquet had been prepared, to which the whole of the ambassadors at the time in Ferrara and the principal of the nobility, with their wives, were invited. During the banquet Zambotto tells us the company were amused with exquisite music, composed of cithern players pipers, drummers, trumpeters, and all the conjurers and posture-masters, who were then very numerous in Ferrara. When their performances were terminated they were all presented with rich gifts by Lucrezia, which they received with great satisfaction, thanking her for her



liberality and wishing her uninterrupted happiness and long life. They then left the palace, and shortly afterwards the company separated for the night.

The description given of Lucrezia's appearance by Zambotto, corresponds, with the exception of making her a little younger, with that already mentioned. "She appears," he says, "between twenty-three and twenty-four years of age, has a beautiful face, lively sparkling eyes, is very graceful, and has a good figure. She is courteous, wise, and cheerful, and made a most pleasing effect on all who saw her. All augured that she would not only be a personal blessing to the people, but that by her marriage with the future duke she would secure for the territory of Ferrara the lasting friendship of the Pope, who dearly loved his daughter, and which," he shrewdly enough concludes, "His Holiness proved by the rich dowry he gave her."

There now only remained in the hall Duke Ercole, the bride and bridegroom, the Cardinal Ippolito, Don Sigismondo, and Don Ferdinando.

Lucrezia then took an affectionate farewell of her relatives, and accompanied by her husband left the Estense palace, and retired to the castle which was to be her principal home during the remainder of her life. Duke Ercole resided till his death in the Estense palace, one portion of which extended to the palace of Justice, or della Ragione, the other almost to the castle, with which it communicated by a gallery which the duke had built shortly after his elevation to the dukedom. On arriving in her own apartments Lucrezia was formally introduced to the different officials of her establishment, all of whom Zambotto describes, not only mentioning their different names and offices, but of what families in Ferrara the principal among them were members. Without detailing the whole, the following is a list of some of the principal :

Madama Teodora Angelina, principal lady of the palace, with six ladies of honour, together with six young girls, daughters of the first families in Ferrara, all under eighteen years of age.

Two gentlemen of the duke's bedchamber.

A steward.

A major domo.

Two head grooms.

A lady of the wardrobe.

Two principal doorkeepers.

A principal running footman.

Lucrezia's private secretary.

An almoner.

Two physicians.

A head cook.

A keeper of the plate.

A goldsmith.

A master of the ceremonies, and a number of others, such as grooms, footmen, pages, lady's maids, &c.

## CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE FESTIVITIES IN FERRARA—(*continued*).

Public Festivals of Ferrara—Nicolo Cagnolo's Journey to Ferrara—Visit of the French Ambassador to the Bleeding Nun—Theatrical Representations—Ceremonies attending the Presentation of the Ducal Cap and Sword of State to Don Alfonso—Arrival of Cardinal di Libreth—Joust in the Piazza—Presents from the Venetian and other Ambassadors to the Bride—Lent—Departure of the Ambassadors.

GREAT indeed have been the changes in the manner of conducting marriage ceremonies among princes since the days of Lucrezia Borgia. In her time, instead of the happy couple quitting their palace after the ceremonies were over, and not reappearing in public till the conventional time allowed by fashion had expired, the festivities, at which the bride and bridegroom were present, were generally kept up with great pomp

and show for many days afterwards. Many of these marriage ceremonies between the families of different potentates in Italy have been recorded, but no court appears to have acquired a greater reputation for festivities of the kind than that of Ferrara, and of the Ferrarese wedding ceremonies none could compare in splendour with those given at the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia. In fact, they seem to have attained almost a world-wide reputation. In Italy many of their national historians have recorded them, quoting them not simply as models of unbounded liberality and hospitality, but also of good taste; and in the description given by contemporaneous writers who were present on the occasion, so little difference exists among them that we are obliged to admit, almost against our better judgment, that they must have been faithful ones. That prodigal liberality was shown on the occasion of Lucrezia's marriage festivities none can doubt, yet, although proverbially useless to dispute on matters of taste,

it would be difficult indeed, looking at many circumstances which took place on the occasion from a modern point of view, not to object to them on that score.

The three most trustworthy historians who have described these festivals were Bernardino Zambotto, Nicolo Cagnolo, and Marin Sanuto. The description of Zambotto so perfectly coincides with Cagnolo's, that any comparison between them is needless, but Cagnolo's, being by far the most minute, will be taken as the principal authority for the following description, aided occasionally by short extracts from Marin Sanuto, though only in those parts in which he throws some light on the narrative of Cagnolo. Another reason for selecting Cagnolo's description is, that he had evidently a better opportunity of being acquainted with all which took place on the occasion. He was a native of Parma, a man of good education, and had been appointed as secretary to Monsignore Filippo della Rocca Berti, French Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court

of Ferrara on the occasion of Lucrezia's marriage with Alfonso of Este, and in that capacity was a guest at all the entertainments given by the duke on the occasion. And his account may be considered all the more authentic, inasmuch as he was especially requested by the ambassador to write a full, true, and particular description of all that occurred; and it is but fair to him to admit that he obeyed his instructions to the very letter. To do justice to Cagnolo's quaint method of description would be impossible, and the reader must therefore bear in mind that our narrative is not a literal translation, but simply follows the order of the worthy secretary's details.

Cagnolo's account commences from the time when Monsignore Filippo della Rocca Berti, governor of Piacenza, was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary from the King of France, as Duke of Milan, to the Court of Ferrara, on the occasion of the marriage of the Illustrissimo Signore Don Alfonso of Este and Madonna Lucrezia



Borgia. After a flattering dedication to the ambassador, in phraseology of the highest adulation, his memoir goes on to describe the journey of the ambassador from Piacenza to Ferrara. His description of the journey, which in the present day might be accomplished by a railway running in a straight line in about an hour and a half, is given with an extraordinary minuteness of detail which would be perfectly ludicrous were it not for the profound gravity of Cagnolo's style. So profound in fact is it as not only to deprive it of its absurdity, but almost to render it interesting. To accompany the worthy secretary through the events of his journey would far exceed the limits of this work, and we shall therefore merely touch upon a few of the principal points in it.

He begins by stating, that on January 23, 1502, the reverend ambassador quitted Piacenza with a numerous and splendidly dressed cortége who were to accompany him to Ferrara. On arriving at Cortemaggiore, Count Pompeo Da Lando and his eldest son joined the party.

At Cortemaggiore they dined with the Count Rolando Pallavicino, who, with great demonstration of affection and respect, had met the reverend ambassador a mile before they reached that place. On their arrival at the count's castle, they found a magnificent dinner *alla Francese*, comprising a diversity of food all cooked with great delicacy. Dinner being over, the ambassador mounted his horse, and was accompanied by the count to the confines of his estates. The ambassador that evening slept at Borgo San Donino, where on his arrival he received visits from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Among others, one from a Dr. Di Muzula, who had brought a message from Madonna Veronica di San Vitale to invite the ambassador to dine with her the next day at Fontanellate. The ambassador at first declined the invitation, but at last yielded to the supplications of that "magnificent Madonna," and the next morning he left San Donino and continued his journey to Fontanellate. On

---

his arrival he found the "magnificent Madonna," with her two little boys and several ladies, waiting to receive him, one of the little boys being upon the smallest pony the worthy secretary ever saw in his life. In a most graceful manner the "magnificent Madonna Veronica" conducted the ambassador into the castle, and introduced him to her daughter, the Marchioness Soragna. She then led him into a hall, where a solemn repast was prepared for him (*un solenne pasto*). Dinner being over, the ambassador took leave of Madonna Veronica, and continued his journey to Parma, where he found a deputation of several French gentlemen waiting to receive him. At Parma he remained the night, and the following morning a deputation of two gentlemen from the Duke of Ferrara waited on him, and who were now to accompany him on his road to Ferrara. After quitting Parma, he stopped to rest for a quarter of an hour at Reggio, where he was met by the Illustrissima Madonna Cassandra da Correggio, who came to beg that he would deign

to sleep that night at her castle at Correggio. The ambassador was unable to refuse an invitation from so amiable a lady, and acceded to her request. On arriving at Correggio, Madonna Cassandra, accompanied by six beautiful young ladies all dressed in black vests, with great ceremony introduced the ambassador into her palace, and with much wise conversation (*parole sapientissime*) entertained him till supper time. During the learned conversation, however, it appears that they had time for no fewer than six dances in the great hall, and afterwards all sat down to supper, each lady having a gentleman by her side, while the ambassador and the "gloriosa Madonna" were seated at the head of the table, "discoursing together in a loving manner, though with the greatest prudence and discretion." The supper being over, they again danced till the seventh hour (about midnight), "in a most graceful and modest manner." In the dance, many distinguished themselves, but particularly the son of the hostess, a youth about

---

ten years of age, beautiful as an angel, most courteous, and eloquent as a Tully,\* who danced four dances with an agility and dexterity which it would be impossible to surpass. During the whole of the ball the illustrious ambassador occupied the seat of honour.

The next morning being Friday, they heard mass at the chapel of St. Francesco, and afterwards, it being a fast day, Madonna Cassandra entertained His Excellency with a sumptuous meagre repast (*magro sontuoso*), and then with many compliments and respectful ceremonies, she conducted them into the pleasure grounds around the house, which His Excellency politely said appeared a terrestrial paradise, and then taking his leave of Madame Cassandra, he continued his road towards Modena, in which city he was received by the authorities with the greatest respect. He remained for the night at Modena, and the next day continued his road to Ferrara.

---

\* *Bello come un angelo, accostumatissimo, ed eloquente come un Tullio.*

At about ten miles distant from the city he was met by the duke, attended by a number of noblemen and cavaliers, wearing large gold chains round their necks, besides a body-guard of two hundred cross bow-men, dressed in uniforms one side white and the other red. A slight accident here occurred, which appears somewhat to have disturbed the imposing effect which Duke Ercole evidently intended his meeting with the French ambassador should make. When the duke came in sight of his excellency he halted, and sent forward in advance a page magnificently dressed, riding a splendid bay horse. When the page had nearly reached the ambassador, his highness's musicians gave a flourish of trumpets, which so animated the page's charger, that it began rearing and capering about in a most extraordinary manner. The page attempted to control it, but without success. Not content with performing a variety of absurd antics, this ill-conditioned brute thought fit to leap from the banks into the river at a spot



---

where a vast quantity of thick mud had accumulated. The horse now struggled violently to relieve himself, and in so doing completely covered the unfortunate page, and all those who had rushed to his assistance, with mud. Duke Ercole seems to have been greatly annoyed at the event, destroying as it did much of the solemnity of the scene. In fact, says Cagnolo, it would be impossible to exceed the angry feelings of the duke at the whole occurrence.\* Order, however, was soon restored. The unfortunate page and those bespattered with mud thrown over them by the struggles of the horse, dropped out of the line of march, and the procession without further accident reached Ferrara. On entering the gates, the ambassador was met by the Marchioness of Mantua, surrounded by many brilliantly dressed young ladies, who, joining the others, accompanied him to the Palazzo Bevilacqua. His Excellency was conducted by

---

\* *Il signor Duca ebbe tanta dispiacenza che maggior non la poteva avere avuto.*



the duke and some of the nobles as far as his private chamber, which had been fitted up expressly for his reception with rich satin hangings, and on quitting him the duke saluted with great courtesy and condescension all the gentlemen who composed the ambassador's suite.

Cagnolo's description of Lucrezia's entry into Ferrara has been already given in the last chapter. He now goes on to relate that the next morning, Thursday, the 3rd February, His Excellency the French Ambassador went to hear mass in the church of Santa Maria Angioli. The service being over he mounted his horse, and minutely inspected the engineering works at that time being carried on by order of Duke Ercole for the enlargement of the city of Ferrara, and which were then almost completed. After dinner he attended the court, where there was an elegant fête in the grand hall, which was ornamented for the occasion with many magnificent pieces of tapestry. At one extremity of

---

the hall was raised a throne (doubtless the one spoken of in the last chapter), and over it a sumptuous canopy of gold brocade and other rare and precious stuffs. The ambassador, on his entry, found the illustrious bride seated on the throne. She was dressed at the time in a camora of gold shot brocade, made with large sleeves (*alla Francese*), and a *sbernia* or over-robe of rich brocade, on which, in place of fringes at the neck and armholes of the sleeves, were many jewels and pearls of great value. She wore also a necklace of large pearls, with a pendant from the centre. The bride (*Madama Sposa*) danced many Romanesque and Spanish dances to the sound of the tambourine. Sanuto states that at this ball so many guests had been invited that dancing was a matter of great difficulty. At the twenty-fourth hour (sunset) the duke invited the whole of the company to a dramatic representation which was to be given in the Palace of Justice (*della Ragione*), which had been arranged for the occasion, a stage having been built at

one extremity of the great hall, with a proscenium and scenery complete, with raised seats in the form of a semicircle in front for the audience, while behind the scenes were dressing-rooms for the different actors, who altogether numbered not fewer than 110 persons. Immediately in front of the stage was the orchestra, behind which were placed seats for the duke, with the bride and bridegroom, while the ambassadors, the nobles, and other guests invited to the performance were ranged according to their rank behind them. The first evening's performance seems to have been merely a show or parade of the different actors and actresses in their costumes who were to take part in the amusements, while two of the actors—one dressed as Plautus and the other Epidicus—stood on each side of the stage, and described in verse the different duties the actors who presented themselves were to perform. Altogether there were to be five performances on successive evenings, the amusements of the first evening being solely occupied by the parades.

Between each act of the comedies a moresca\* was to be performed. The first of these represented ten warriors, who marched forward and presented themselves to the audience. They were armed after the manner of the ancients, some with large knives, others with maces and two-handed swords, and all with daggers. Having made their obeisance, they commenced a dance to the sound of music; then suddenly they divided themselves into two parties, and in pantomime they expressed their wish to kill each other, and immediately fell to blows, each blow being struck in time with the music. Then those who were armed with maces threw them away, and all drawing their swords, stabbed (*colpi di punta*) at each other with great dexterity, dancing the whole of the time. At a given signal they threw down their swords, and taking their daggers, attacked each other. At another signal of

---

\* A sort of dance, partaking partly of the qualities of a modern dance and partly of a sort of Pyrrhic dance then in vogue in Italy.

---

music, one half of the number fell on the earth as if wounded, while the others, with their daggers in their hands, stood over them. The conquerors then bound their prisoners, and conducted them off the stage. The actors in the second comedy then presented themselves to the audience, and their different parts having been described by the actor who represented Plautus, they made their obeisance and retired from the stage, and the dancers in the second *moresca* made their appearance. These consisted of twelve men dressed as warriors, their performances strongly resembling those of the first *moresca*, with the exception that they seemed to possess even greater skill; so much so in fact as to make Cagnolo declare that by their courage and dexterity they all appeared to be "true sons of Mars." The parade of the third comedy having appeared and disappeared, another *moresca* of a very singular description was exhibited. On a car, drawn by a horse disguised as a unicorn, and guided by a young girl, were men bound to a

---

log, and covered with branches of trees. The young girl having cut the cords which bound the four men, they came forward to the front of the stage, and, accompanied by a lute which one of them carried, they each sang a verse of a song in praise of the illustrious bride, and then again mounting their car they were led off the stage.

The parade of the fourth comedy was next represented, and having quitted the stage the dancers in the fourth *moresca* presented themselves. The present performance was possibly even more singular than the last. It consisted of ten men dressed as Moors, each holding between his teeth a lighted candle ; and thus, "with graceful gestures and movements," they danced together for some time, and then quitted the stage. The parade of the fifth comedy was represented after this performance, and having retired, the fifth *moresca* came forward. It consisted of ten men in splendid dresses, with feathers on their heads, and each carrying a large spear in his hand, on the head of which was some composition which burned



---

like a torch. They all carried their spears in their right hand, and coming forward and standing on their right leg, presented themselves to the audience. They then danced a *moresca* together for some time with much agility, when suddenly appearing to quarrel, they divided themselves into two parties, and attacking each other with the blazing spears, fought with great courage and dexterity. The *moresca* being over, one of the actors came forward and made a long speech in verse appropriate to the occasion, and after another *moresca* the audience separated, the performance having lasted more than four hours.

In the morning of Friday, the 4th February, Duke Ercole, attended by a numerous suite of noblemen and gentlemen, called at the palace of the French ambassador, and they proceeded together to the chapel of St. Catherina, in the convent of the nuns of St. Dominico, where, after having heard mass, they were introduced to a holy woman who at that time as a bleeding nun enjoyed a high reputation of sanctity in



Ferrara, the Suor Lucia da Viterbo, on whose person the *stigmata* appeared to have been as visible as in that of St. Francis, the wounds of the nails in the hands and feet, as well as that from the spear in the side, being fully as perfect as those on the saint himself. To this pious woman the duke introduced the French ambassador, who conversed with her for some time "with much profit." His Excellency then examined her, discreetly omitting to inspect the wounds on her side. The day for the ambassador's visit seems to have been well chosen by Duke Ercole, as on every Friday the wounds were more apparent than on other days; and they were so on the present occasion in so marked a manner, that one of the sisters procured some small pieces of linen, which, by pressing on the wounds, became coloured with the blood. Afterwards one of these small pieces of linen was presented to the French ambassador, who gratefully received it, and others were given to different members of his suite.

The visit to the convent being over, the duke

accompanied the ambassador to the castle, where together they inspected the artillery, which appeared in admirable order. After dinner a certain Androvandino Piatese was introduced by the Count Bentivoglio to the French ambassador, the said Piatese being one of the champions in a sort of tourney which was to take place in the piazza between him and a certain Guido Vaino da Imola.

No further ceremony seems that day to have taken place till the evening, when all assembled to witness the comedy of Plautus, the "Bacchides," which was to be performed. After the second act a *moresca* was danced. In it there were ten male performers, dressed in tight flesh-coloured cloth (*panno incarnato*), wearing tunics, and their heads adorned with garlands of flowers and long ass's ears of tinsel, each carrying in his hand the stem of a small yew tree, with the branches on the top, to which were affixed four small lighted torches made of some composition which gave out as they burnt delicious perfumes. The two

other acts of the comedy were now performed, and afterwards another *moresca*, in which were ten men dressed in white, with blue hats, "after the fashion of the Turks." Having danced gracefully for some time, they quitted the stage. A young girl, apparently in great alarm, then rushed forwards pursued by a large winged dragon, evidently with the intention of devouring her; before, however, he had succeeded in reaching her, a man in armour sprang forward, and attacking the dragon with a lance wounded him in the neck, and passing a chain round him led him to the front of the stage. The young girl and the knight testified their joy by dancing for some time on each side of the dragon, and they then led the monster from the stage. The performances being over the company retired. The illustrious bride was that evening dressed in a *camora* of crimson velvet laced with gold, a cap embroidered with gold and pearls, and round her neck a beautiful necklace of pearls and jewels.

The next day the French ambassador, accom-

---

panied by the duke and Don Alfonso, went to hear mass in the cathedral, after which there was an exposition of many holy relics; among others, a thorn from the crown which encircled the head of our Saviour, and an arm of St. George. In the afternoon, the French ambassador, accompanied by his servants carrying some presents, went to the Este palace, where he remained for some time, waiting the arrival of Madonna Lucrezia, who, Sanuto, with that minuteness of detail characteristic of a Venetian ambassador, somewhat indiscreetly tells us, had remained in her room during the whole of the morning, writing letters and having her head washed.\* Shortly after the arrival of the ambassador, Lucrezia, with her husband, entered the hall, where they were joined by Don Sigismondo and the Cardinal Ippolito, as well as divers members of their suite.

The ambassador then presented to the duke a

---

\* *La Sposa occupata tutte il giorno in lavarsi la testa, et scrivere.*

---

shield plated with gold, on which was represented a St. Francesco of exquisite workmanship and of great value. To the illustrious Madonna Lucrezia, the bride, he gave a rosary of perforated gold beads, beautifully worked, the perforations being filled with musk of exquisite odour. To the illustrious signor Don Alfonso, the bridegroom, another shield was presented, plated with gold, upon which was represented, in relief, the figure of St. Mary Magdalene, the ambassador gallantly stating at the same time that the figure on the shield was intended to indicate to Don Alfonso that he had married a lady of equal amiability and virtue.

To Signor Don Ferdinando he gave a gold-plated shield, with a St. Francesco in relief, similar to the one he had presented to the duke. The ambassador also made many other presents to different persons. Sanuto says that on the same day the bride privately presented to the Duke of Ferrara, on the part of Pope Alexander VI., the deed containing the libera-

---

tion of the duchy of Ferrara from all feudal rights of the Church.

Afterwards the different members of the court mounted their horses to visit the principal places in the city. In the cavalcade were many beautiful girls and noble ladies, and among them the Marchioness of Mantua. Here Cagnolo gives us a good insight into the court manners of the times. The marchioness, he says, invited the ambassador to sup with her, who, he adds somewhat drily, not being able to refuse, accepted the invitation. The supper was conducted with great solemnity (*fu solennissima*). The ambassador was seated between the Illustrissima Duchessa d'Urbino, a lady of most elegant manners, and the marchioness. During the meal the conversation was carried on with many loving and polite speeches, as well as courteous expressions on the part of the hostess. After supper, the marchioness, accompanying herself on the lute, sang many songs with a clear voice and great taste and expression,



which she did for the purpose of showing greater politeness and honour to His Excellency. In conclusion, and accompanied by two of her young ladies, she conducted His Excellency into her chamber, where he remained with her for some time in private conversation; and when he rose to leave her, she drew from her hands the gloves she had worn and made them a present to him, accompanying the gift with many affectionate and polite words. The ambassador received the gloves with great reverence, as coming from so sweet a source, and promised that he would keep them "in sanctuario usque in consumationem sæculi" (*sic*).

On Sunday, February 6th, the French ambassador received a messenger from the duke, bringing with him a small case (*casseta*), which on being opened was found to contain a collar of gold, beautifully worked, from which hung a gold pendant set with four rubies and four diamonds of great value, and to the pendant hung by little chains twelve large pearls. His



Excellency the Ambassador was greatly struck by the beauty of the present, and warmly expressed his gratitude. He further made the messenger a present of twenty-five scudi, and requested him to inform the duke how much he felt flattered at the kind gift he had sent him. Immediately afterwards the French ambassador quitted his palace to call on the illustrious Don Alfonso, whom he found surrounded by a cortége of noblemen, ambassadors, and gentlemen, all very splendidly dressed. Don Alfonso wore a doublet of black satin, *alla Francese*, ornamented with gold lace, and over this a long cloak of mulberry-coloured velvet, with large hanging sleeves lined with damask, made after the fashion of a *sbernia*, the insertions of the sleeves and collar ornamented with gold embroidery. On his head he wore a *berretta*, or cap, of black velvet, with a plume of white feathers, also made in the French fashion, and which had been presented to him the day before by the French Ambassador. Don Alfonso warmly welcomed the ambassador, tell-

ing him how great would have been his sorrow had he not been present at the ceremony which was about to be held. A procession was formed, and the whole company then quitted the palace. On their road to the cathedral they were met by the Venetian ambassadors, accompanied by their suites. On arriving near the entrance, they found a mace-bearer (*mazziero*) of His Holiness the Pope, with many bishops and gentlemen, awaiting them. The *mazziero* carried on a cushion a ducal berretta, or cap, made of black satin, with rays of gold on the top, and on each side was embroidered in pearls a dove with extended wings, the sign of the Holy Ghost. The cap was bordered with ermine, and on each side, hanging over the ear, was an ermine lappet, and a gold band hanging down the back. On the same cushion with the ducal cap was a long sword, the sheath covered with gold ornaments in relief.

The *mazziero*, having made his obeisance, turned round, and with the bishops and gentle-

men in his train who were with him when he met Don Alfonso, he headed the procession, which now moved on to the cathedral, and, accompanied by a band of many trumpets, they entered into the building. As soon as all the company had assembled in the cathedral, the military music ceased, and a chorus of the ducal singers, accompanied by the organ, commenced, which lasted till they had all arrived in front of the grand altar, and occupied the different places which had been arranged for them, according to their several ranks. A high mass was then celebrated by a Spanish bishop, one of the chancellors of the Pope.

The mass over, two chairs, or thrones, covered with crimson velvet, were placed in front of the altar, Don Alfonso being seated in one to the left, and the French ambassador to the right, the former at the time holding a long white wand in his hand, and the ambassador with his staff of office. After conversing for some time with those around him, the mace-bearer of His Holiness came for-

---

ward, carrying the papal bull, which he handed to the secretary and requested him to read it aloud. The secretary then unfolded the bull, and while a breathless silence reigned in the whole of the cathedral, he read it aloud. The bull invested Don Alfonso, after his father's death, with the Dukedom of Ferrara, with all its rights and privileges: and further, in sign thereof, he also presented him with the cap and sword which had been blessed by His Holiness on Christmas-day, it being the custom of the Pope, Sanuto says, to do so on the same night every year, and that the sword and cap so blessed were afterwards "sent to some well-beloved Christian prince who had merited well of the Church." This year, Cagnolo adds, the cap and sword had been sent to Don Alfonso, not more from the dignity and honour he wished to show to the house of Este than in personal respect for Don Alfonso himself, the sword being for the defence of the Christian faith, and the cap a proof of his personal dignity.

The secretary's speech being over, two bishops

advanced to Don Alfonso and conducted him to the Spanish bishop, who was standing by the grand altar, where he had celebrated the mass. Don Alfonso then knelt before the bishop, who made him a long speech explanatory of the duties of a Christian prince in defending his religion, and his obligation to do justice to all. He now placed the cap on the head of Don Alfonso, and the sword in his hand. The ceremony terminated with a short prayer, and Don Alfonso, calling to him his secretary, Giulio Tassoni, placed in his charge the ducal cap and sword. The procession was then reformed to return to the palace. This time it was headed by the aforesaid Giulio Tassoni, carrying erect the sword, on the top of which was placed the ducal cap, and followed by a band of trumpeters. The procession crossed the Piazza and entered the Estense palace, where a sumptuous repast awaited them.

The repast being over, a grand procession was again formed for the purpose of meeting the Car-

---

dinal di Libreth, the ambassador from the Pope, who was expected that day to arrive in Ferrara. The procession was headed by Duke Ercole himself, who was followed by his sons Don Alfonso, Don Ippolito, and Don Sigismondo, as well as most of the ambassadors and principal nobility. Having reached the gates, they waited for some time the arrival of the very reverend cardinal, when a message reached them with the intelligence that the said cardinal had been delayed on the road from illness, and that it was uncertain how long he might have to remain. The whole assembly expressed great sorrow at the intelligence, possibly as much from the useless trouble and fatigue they had been put to, as from any particular interest in the health of the very reverend cardinal, who appears to have been by no means a general favourite with the inhabitants of Ferrara.

Nothing more took place that day till evening, when the Marchioness of Mantua, accompanied by the Duchess d'Urbino, called at the



---

castle to pay a visit to the bride. The Marchioness wore a vest of black velvet *alla Francese*, trimmed with crimson satin, the seams embroidered with gold thread. The vest was fastened up the front with a row of rubies instead of buttons. On her head she wore a cap of black velvet, striped with gold, and embroidered with pearls, and round her neck a string of large pearls, and another of gold beads. The Duchess wore a vest of black velvet, striped with gold, and a cap of the same material on her head. Lucrezia was dressed in a vest of mulberry-coloured satin, embroidered with gold in imitation of fish bones (*spine di pesce*), each bone being the breadth of two fingers, and wearing on her head a small cap or *cufia*, with an ornament containing many jewels, and a valuable necklace encircling her throat. After conversing together for some time, the Duchess d'Urbino and the Marchioness of Mantua accompanied the bride to the grand hall of the castle, which had been prepared for the ball, and which, Sanuto tells us, was very bril-



---

liant, the bride and her young ladies of honour dancing many dances *alla Francese*.\*

The ball having continued for more than two hours, the company proceeded to the Palazzo della Ragione to witness the performance of Plautus' comedy of the "Miles Gloriosus," accompanied by recitations explanatory of the action of the piece, and *morescas* or *divertissements* between the acts. Of the three *morescas* exhibited that evening, in the first were twelve actors, dressed in a most grotesque manner, each

---

\* The grand hall in the castle in which this ball took place is in perfect order in the present day, and is used for the meetings of the municipal and other councils. The roof, as well as that of the ante-chamber, is ornamented by some exquisite paintings of Dosso Dossi, one of the best of the Ferrarese artists. In this hall was, until very lately,—and possibly may exist even in the present time,—a looking-glass in which the intrigue between Parisina and Azzo was detected, their reflection in the mirror being seen by the duke as he was approaching from the gallery. It would be useless to speculate how much truth there might be in the report. It is greatly to be feared that were the date of the invention of glass mirrors to be compared with the date of the detection of Azzo and Parisina, it might tend to destroy the interest which is at present felt in the legend.

having on his head a large transparent lantern, shaped like a ball, as well as one in each hand. In each of these balls were five lighted candles, and they all danced together with so much agility and rapidity, "that the scene appeared one mass of fire, causing great wonder and admiration in the minds of all the beholders." In the second *moresca* were twelve men dressed as shepherds, with goats' horns on their heads, who danced together with great dexterity. In the third *moresca* were two singers, with a Cupid between them, having a bow and arrow and a lighted torch, and they sang some verses in honour of the bride.

After the comedy was finished, a fourth *moresca* was performed, which appears to have been the grandest scene that evening. It consisted of twelve young men dressed in doublets, one side of black cloth and the other of silver brocade, who, carrying spears in their hands, danced together for some time with great grace. Afterwards they went through certain

warlike exercises, and then choosing different sides they fought together, somewhat in the manner of one of the *morescas* already described—one-half of their number at the same moment dropping their spears and falling on the ground as if wounded, and then defending themselves with their daggers with great dexterity.

The *moresca* being finished, the bride complimented the actors on their grace and skill, and the company separated for the night.

Monday, February 7th, Lucrezia and her husband, together with the Reverend Monsignore Nicolo Maria da Este, Bishop of Adria, attended mass in the church of San Francesco, and they afterwards returned to their own dwellings, where His Excellency the French Ambassador received visits during the whole of the morning. At the nineteenth hour (five hours before sunset) His Excellency having then dined, and accompanied by many cavaliers and honourable young ladies, he proceeded to the palace, where he was met by Duke Ercole, Don Alfonso, and many

noblemen and gentlemen who were then going to witness a passage-at-arms between the two celebrated fencers already mentioned, Guido da Imola, an officer in the service of the Marquis of Mantua, and Androvandino Piatese, of Bologna, whose patron was the Duke of Urbino. The French ambassador joined the duke, and they proceeded together to the Piazza, where a space had been enclosed for the lists, with seats at one extremity for the duke and the court. The conditions of the combat having been read, the duke reserved to himself the right of stopping the duel when he thought fit.

As may easily be imagined, not only the Piazza, but the windows and balconies of the palaces and of all the houses which could command a view of the locality, were crowded with spectators eager to view the fight, the combatants having the reputation of being two of the most famous fencers in Italy. Many were the speculations entered into as to which would be the conqueror, and anxiously were they inspected

---

and minutely criticised by their friends and supporters who had gathered around them in the arena, waiting, as had been agreed upon, for the third sound of the trumpet to mount their horses.

At last the duke gave the signal, and the combatants on horseback, armed with lance, sword, mace, and dagger, were led to their appointed places. For some time each regarded the other without moving. At last, as if by mutual consent, each pointed his spear at his adversary and put spurs to his horse. The shock seems to have been a very severe one, Androvandino receiving his adversary's lance on the armour covering his shoulder with so much violence as almost to throw him from his horse. Imola's lance, however, was broken by the concussion, and throwing away that portion of it which remained in his hand, he drew his sword, and Androvandino, who had now recovered his seat in the saddle, again levelled his lance and galloped forward to attack Piatese, who

waited to receive him with his sword in his hand, and with great dexterity not only parried his adversary's spear, but succeeded in wounding his horse severely in the neck. Androvandino fearing his horse might lose strength by the loss of blood, also drew his sword, and a hand-to-hand fight ensued. After fighting for some time, the blade of Androvandino's sword broke, and he then drew his mace to continue the combat. Guido, however, was fully prepared to receive him. Not only did his adversary's horse appear to grow faint from loss of blood, but the mace seemed to be of little value when used against the long sword or *stocca* of Guido, who succeeded in giving his adversary's horse two other wounds, one in the shoulder and a second in the neck, and in consequence, from loss of blood, it fell under its rider.

Androvandino would now have been an easy prey to his conqueror, had it not been for the merciful interposition of the duke, who through his whole life seems to have had but little plea-



---

sure in displays of the kind, rather permitting them in accordance with the fashion of the day, than taking any pains to encourage them. Rising from his seat, he threw the white wand which he held in his hand as badge of his authority as umpire, on the ground. The combat immediately ceased. Guido of Imola was declared the conqueror, and the affair terminated. Altogether, although Sanuto speaks of the exhibition as having been a successful one, other witnesses mention it in by no means flattering terms. Cagnolo, who all through his description of the fêtes seems to have been determined, if possible, to find everything worthy of admiration, makes but little mention of it; but Zambotto plainly hints that the whole affair was but little better than a failure, that neither of the combatants received a scratch, and there was little courage or skill exhibited on the occasion.

The duke, Don Alfonso, and the ambassadors now quitted the lists, and the French ambassador, the Marchioness of Mantua, and the Duchess



---

d'Urbino returned to the palace, where they remained talking pleasantly and in a lively manner, when a messenger entered, bringing news of the arrival of the most Reverend Cardinal di Libreth. Don Alfonso and many of the company immediately quitted the palace to meet him. In the evening they all again went to hear the comedy, which was the "Asinaria" of Plautus, and which occupied five hours.

After the first act was represented, a *moresca* commenced, in which fourteen men were dressed as satyrs—one performer having on his shoulder an ass's head covered with plates of silver, playing a pipe and tabor. The *moresca* began by the player of the pipe and tabor first appearing on the stage. At the sound of the music the others came forward, each having a reed pipe between his lips, which he pretended to play, but which gave out no sound. After they had danced for some time, the actor with the ass's head gave the signal, and the satyrs commenced a new dance, accompanied by bells,

---

on which they performed with great dexterity. Presently the sound of a horn was heard, when the satyrs, fearing they might be dogs and huntsmen, concealed themselves in a wood and remained listening. Finding no one approach, they again left the wood, and immediately afterwards a number of live quails, partridges, pheasants, and rabbits rushed out of the woods ; and those birds which did not fly away among the audience were soon killed by the satyrs, who struck them down with branches of trees.

Again the horn sounded, and again the satyrs concealed themselves. Finding no huntsman approach they left their place of concealment, and a number of goats and hares rushed upon the stage, which were chased and caught by the satyrs. The horn sounded a third time, and after the satyrs had concealed themselves for a few minutes as before, a number of men dressed as panthers, lions, tigers, and leopards rushed upon the stage, and were also chased by the satyrs. The said beasts of prey, notwithstanding that

they defended themselves with great courage and dexterity, were at last all taken and bound, and brought in triumph to the front of the stage, when the satyrs danced round them to the sound of music, receiving the while the applause of the audience for their admirable performance. Then came another act of the comedy, and afterwards a concert of eight singers. Among them was a woman from Mantua with three lutes, who sang in a very mellifluous manner three stanzas in honour of the bride, accompanying each with a different lute.

This was followed by the third part of the comedy, and when that was over, there was a concert of pipes of reed, which was played with great elegance. After the fourth part of the comedy had been acted, was represented a totally different class of *moresca*. Twelve countrymen came on the stage with spades on their shoulders, and after having danced, commenced digging, all keeping time. In a little while came on twelve other countrymen with baskets on their arms, and

---

they commenced sowing the earth with seed, dancing the *moresca* the while. Then came twelve other peasants with reaping hooks in their hands and pretended to reap the corn. These were followed by twelve others with flails, making semblance to thrash the corn, all keeping exact time to the music. Then came six women with plates, bottles, spoons, bread and meat, and they gave the reapers and thrashers the food. These were succeeded by twelve other women. After they had finished their meal, some pipers came upon the stage, and choosing the women as their partners, they danced together in a pastoral manner. The fifth act of the comedy finished about four hours after sunset, and then all retired to supper.

That evening the illustrious bride was dressed in a *camora* of gold brocade. It was cut after the French fashion with large sleeves, and a *sbernia* without sleeves, but cut in such a manner as to allow the arms to pass through, with fringes round the armholes, cunningly worked with gold

and gems. Around her neck was a string of large pearls, from which hung a pendant of jewels of great value, and on her head was a small cufia or cap, ornamented with precious stones. The Marchioness of Mantua was dressed in a vest of crimson velvet, edged round the bottom with gold brocade, and on her forehead a diadem of large diamonds. The Duchess d'Urbino wore a vest of black velvet crossed with stripes of silver brocade, and on her head an ornament with many pearls of great size.

On Tuesday, February 8th, the French ambassador, accompanied by many gentlemen, went to hear mass at the Church of St. Paolo, near the convent of the Carmelite friars, and after taking a stroll round the city they returned to dinner. When the dinner was over, they visited the Court, where they found the different ambassadors being ushered into the chamber of the bride. After having presented the duke with many jewels of great beauty and value, the Venetian ambassadors first commenced by ad-

dressing Lucrezia in a very amiable manner, praising her highly. They gave her two mantles with hoods of crimson velvet lined with ermine.

The Florentines followed, and presented her with thirty-five yards of a gold tissue having something the appearance of velvet, but with a very long pile of gold thread, which was very beautiful.

The Siennese ambassadors presented her with two silver vases of large size, and of great beauty of workmanship. The ambassadors from Lucca presented her with a beautiful basin of bronze, plated with silver. Lastly, the French ambassador gave the bride a present of a string of artificial pearls made in Venice.\*

---

\* The difference between the presents of the French and Venetian ambassadors, that is, between the Ducal mantles lined with precious fur and the paltry false pearls manufactured in the neighbourhood of Murano, near Venice, certainly appears extraordinary, considering the friendly feeling existing at the time between the courts of France and Ferrara. The idea of the ambassador from the King of France pre-



After the gifts had been presented by the different ambassadors, the company met in the great hall of the castle, where they danced till nightfall, and then all went to see the last comedy—the “Casina” of Plautus. After the first act, two musicians came forward and sang verses in praise of the illustrious Alfonso and Madonna Lucrezia his wife. On the termination of the second act of the comedy, a young girl rushed on the stage in a terrified manner, followed by a wild man with a horn; and afterwards by several other wild men, who danced together in a graceful manner. Next appeared the God of Love, who drove away the savage men, and he and the young lady sang together “in a very sweet manner, and with great skill.” An enormous ball or globe was then rolled forward on the stage. When it had reached nearly to the edge, it opened into two, and from its centre

---

sending the bride with a gift of such trifling value, almost leads us to suppose that Sanuto, from whose report the above description is copied, must have made some error in his description.



---

came forth delightful music and the sound of many voices singing with great skill and sweetness. Another act of the comedy followed, and afterwards twelve persons dressed in uniform, each with a halberd in his hand (with the exception of the leader, who carried a banner), danced together with great dexterity.

A change now took place in the music, and choosing different sides, the actors fought together with great skill and courage, without the slightest accident occurring to any of them. After the third act came the music of six violins, their leader being Don Alfonso himself, who was an excellent musician, and played on the violin in a very delightful manner. Last of all, and after the comedy, twelve men, dressed in splendid uniforms, and bearing long torches, came on the stage, who went through many skilful evolutions in a very graceful manner, and this terminated the theatrical performances.

The actors finally came forward to receive the compliments of the audience, who also made

them many presents. The Marchioness of Mantua seems to have been particularly liberal on the occasion, not only giving away a large sum of money, but also vests to the trumpeters, bassoons, drummers, pipers, and other musicians. Among other gifts, she gave to one of the three Spanish buffoons a vest of gold brocade, and to the other two vests of mulberry-coloured satin.

All the company went to supper at the palace of the bride, who was dressed in a camora of gold brocade and dark satin, worked together like the squares on a chess-board, (*a scacchi*) with a sbernia of crimson satin, with a flounce\* of rich lace of immense value. On her head she wore a small cap encircled with diamonds, pearls, and rubies, and on her neck a collar of pearls, from which hung a large balas ruby. The Marchioness of Mantua wore a vest of mulberry

---

\* Possibly this was the flounce worth 30,000 ducats mentioned by Giovanni Lucido as a part of Lucrezia's wedding outfit.

---

velvet, bordered round with gold lace; on her neck was a row of large pearls with a ruby in the centre, and on her forehead a beautiful circlet of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. The Duchess d'Urbino wore a dress of black velvet trimmed with gold fringe, and a necklace of rich jewels.

On Wednesday, February 9th, being the first day of Lent, the ambassadors from Florence and Lucca visited the palace to take their leave, which was done with great ceremony, at the same time thanking the duke for the elegant hospitality he had shown them. After dinner, the duke, with a cortége of noblemen and gentlemen, and accompanied by the French ambassador, called at the residence of the Cardinal di Libreth, who offered to return with them to the palace. On their road, and while passing through the Piazza, they stopped to witness the feats of a rope-dancer, who in their honour performed many wonderful tricks. In the evening the Duchess d'Urbino invited Lu-

crezia, her husband, and the French ambassador to sup with her, and showed them great courtesy.

Thursday, February 10th, the duke, with his suite, called at the house of the French ambassador, and they proceeded together to the convent of the before-mentioned Suor Lucia, and again examined the wounds in her hands and feet, at which they expressed great wonder. After this they returned to the cathedral, where they heard mass. In the afternoon the duke, attended by Don Alfonso, accompanied the cardinal some distance on his way to Rome. The duke and the French ambassador then returned to the palace, and remained closeted together for more than an hour. The ambassador next called on the bride to take his leave, and remained with her for an hour, talking most amicably together.

Friday, February 11th. — Immediately after his breakfast, came many gentlemen and cavaliers to the house of the French ambassador, to accompany him on a portion of his road, as he

---

was that day to leave the city. Before quitting Ferrara, however, he again insisted on taking leave of the bride, which he did in very affectionate terms and with expressions of regret. The duke then, with a numerous cortége of nobles on horseback, accompanied the French ambassador for more than two miles on his road, when taking respectful leave of him they returned to Ferrara. The next morning the Duchess of Urbino and the Marchioness of Mantua took leave of Lucrezia, and shortly afterwards the remaining ambassadors did the same, and Lucrezia had the satisfaction of passing the evening of that day with her husband and father-in-law, without the intrusion of any strangers.

To trace those singular amusements, the morescas, to their origin, would be somewhat difficult. Had they been all of a warlike nature, the Pyrrhic dance might have been considered as their great ancestor; but beyond the fact that soldiers occasionally appeared in them, not much similarity existed between them. The pleasant

Italian ballet appears to be merely an amplification—or, possibly, it might be thought by some a refinement—of the *moresca* of the Middle Ages. Certainly in many respects a strong similarity exists between them. Every act in the *moresca* seems generally to have been performed in the same pantomimic action, and that always in time with the music; or should—as in some of the *morescas* we have just narrated—two sides be taken, each party appears to have followed exactly the same movement as their leader. They seem also, as in the Italian ballet of the present day, to have had their movements divided into two separate classes—those of convention and those natural; the latter, such as striking a blow or embracing an individual, being indicative, not of suiting the action to the word, but to the sentiment. Those of convention are a far more difficult and complicated affair. In fact, fully to comprehend their meaning appears to a foreigner almost as difficult as learning a new language. The Italians, however, accustomed to them from their



---

youth, read with perfect facility the whole of the different movements, and what appears to the uninitiated as a series of absurd actions without the slightest meaning, is in fact a mute expression of ideas as perfect in its way as any of the systems in use in schools for the deaf and dumb.

Doubtless in the days of Lucrezia Borgia these pantomimic actions were not carried to the degree of perfection they are in the present day; still, from the descriptions given of them by the writers of the period, continued conversations perfectly comprehensible to the audience or to the spectators were carried on by the actors in the *morescas* as in the modern ballets. Of the comic *morescas* exhibited during the festivals we are describing, the less said of them the better for the good reputation and taste of the audience. Not that there was any positive immorality in them. On the contrary, not solely in the ballets, but in the performances, the immorality in the present day frequently far exceeds that exhibited



in the *morescas* performed in the presence of Lucrezia Borgia and her friends, but their grossness could hardly be described without offence. And here a certain excuse should be offered for the comic *morescas* in Ferrara, for they never exceeded, or even came up to, some of the comedies of Molière and others exhibited on the French stage in the time of Louis XIV. and XV., such, for example, as "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac," and others of a similar description. Some idea may, however, be formed of the character of these *morescas* from one mentioned by Martin Sanuto of a fight between a number of madmen armed with inflated bladders tied by a string to sticks, and dressed with their trousers over their heads, and wearing their shirts in the guise of trousers. Another was even grosser, in which a peasant who had attempted to insult a young girl, is seized by some Turks, who taking from their mouths the long pipes they were smoking, inflicted with their stems on the person of the peasant a punishment similar to that formerly used

for the castigation of little children and boys at school.\*

Possibly the most extraordinary feature in the performances exhibited at Lucrezia's wedding is the singular mixture of refinement and excellent taste with all this gross buffoonery. Notwithstanding the effects of modern instruction in elevating and educating the minds of the population, it would be difficult to find an audience taken solely from the middle and higher classes who could have enjoyed, in Latin, five comedies of Plautus (which was the number represented during these festivals), with even the aid of the descriptions given by the actor, who, dressed as Plautus himself, stood by the proscenium to explain the more difficult and intricate passages. Even admitting that a considerable portion of the three thousand persons who are said to have witnessed these comedies, no more comprehended their meaning than a similar proportion of spec-

---

\* E lo tolsero a cavallo tirandogli giù le calze e lo percuotevano.

tators at our Italian opera understand the language in which it is sung, still it is certain that a very large proportion were capable of fully appreciating and enjoying the performance. In the letters still extant, not only of Lucrezia Borgia, but of the Marchioness of Mantua and the Duchess d'Urbino, from the frequent interpolation of Latin words and sentences—and all aptly made—it is evident they were well acquainted with the Latin language, and Lucrezia especially, eminently so. Yet how these could find the slightest amusement in buffoonery so gross as that exhibited in the *morescas*, it is difficult indeed to understand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FERRARA AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

State of Religion—The Lavanda—Singular Religious Processions — Pilgrimages — Professional Mourners — Edict against Blasphemers — Witchcraft — Astrology — Guidibaldo da Feltro—Liberty of Conscience—Jews in Ferrara — Protestantism—Fra Bernadino of Sienna—Francesco D'Argento—Extinction of the Reformation in Ferrara—Charitable Institutions—Usury forbidden—Repression of Mendicity — Prohibitions against carrying Arms — Laws against Duelling — Municipal Regulations — Severity of Laws against Disreputable Women—Thieves—Singular Punishments—Capital Punishments—Jews—Laws relating to Dress.

**A**LTHOUGH in the present day but little difference may be found in the habits and manners of the principal cities of Italy, it was far different in the days of Lucrezia Borgia. And great indeed must the change have appeared to her from the disturbances, midnight assassina-

tions, hypocrisy and intrigues of Rome, to the comparatively well-governed city of Ferrara. Although weighed in the balance with our municipal arrangements Ferrara might have been found wanting, when considered beside that of Rome its organization might have been regarded as perfect. Although possibly in Ferrara religion might have been too much mixed up with superstition, at any rate not only the dukes, but the nobles, burghers, and populace as well, entertained a high respect for the Church, although on more than one occasion they rebelled against any undue exercise of authority on the part of the clergy.

Both Ercole and his son Alphonso were strict observers of all rites and ceremonies of the Church. In the year 1478 Ercole instituted the ceremony of *lavanda*, or public washing of feet of the pilgrims and the poor, a ceremony which, unless absent from Ferrara, the duke performed annually during Holy Week until his death. At the commencement there were only twelve pil-

---

grims, that number being chosen as symbolical of the number of the apostles, though a few years afterwards they had increased to one hundred. On these occasions the duke, assisted by his brothers Sigismondo and Rinaldo, not only washed the feet of their poor guests, but waited on them afterwards at a dinner which was given to them in the great hall of the Estense palace. Their meal over, the duke presented each of his guests with a pair of thick shoes, a pair of blue trousers, a black cap, some stuff for a doublet and shirt, and half a ducat. After the marriage of Lucrezia, the number of poor present on these occasions was greatly increased. The year after her arrival in Ferrara they numbered no fewer than a hundred and sixty, at which she, her husband, her brothers-in-law, and all the gentlemen and ladies of the court, attended. There was also a similar ceremony performed at the Dominican monastery, at which the singers attached to the court sang the carol, *El Mandato di Cristo*.

On the following day the duke and his family

---

were present at a representation of the "Passion" in the cathedral, where a stage was erected in front of the grand altar, on which, in a scene representing a garden, our Saviour was discovered as if in deep sorrow. Suddenly the clouds opened, and an angel descended with the chalice. By the side scenes was a gulf or cavern, intended to represent the entrance into limbo (*bocca del serpente*),\* from which some of the ducal singers, dressed as saints newly relieved from purgatory, ascended and sang praises to God.

Scenic performances, or mysteries representing religious subjects, seem always to have been at this time in high favour with the Ferrarese, and especially so in the days of Duke Ercole, under whose care they were got up in a very magnificent manner, and large sums of money lavished on them. On January 6th, in the same year, there was represented in the cathedral the "Adoration of the Magi;" on March 25th, the "Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin;" and

---

\* Cittadella.



---

Zambotto tells us that again, on the 28th of the same month, platforms were erected in the cathedral, on which different portions of the life of our Saviour were represented. The grandest of these was erected in front of the great altar. On it was painted a scene which represented a castle, with a landscape in the background and clouds in the sky. The latter suddenly opened to show the glories of paradise, in which were discovered many angels (who were the duke's singers and musicians) singing praises to God and playing on their instruments. On this occasion the duke, with Lucrezia and her husband, and attended by all the principal nobility in Ferrara, were present in great state. "The representation occupied no less than two whole days," he continues, "and so much money was lavished on it, that it could not have cost the duke less than 1500 ducats." Mysteries of the kind not unfrequently took place in the palaces of the nobility and houses of the rich. In the year 1510, Isabella of Aragon, who had fled to Ferrara for protec-

tion, and was then residing in the Belvedere Palace, had a stage erected in one of her halls, on which was represented many angels standing round a relic of the true cross.

In the archives of Ferrara exist many singular documents respecting the expenses incurred in the religious representations and processions. Nothing is more frequent than to find among them an order to some painter for a given number of saints or angels, and to carpenters and scene-painters for representations of paradise, landscapes, and the infernal regions. Then again we meet with an account paid to a linendraper for white linen robes for boys who were to act as angels, to be suspended in the cathedral over the grand entrance; and a further sum for flowers, whether real or artificial it does not say, which they threw on the heads of those who entered. In 1490 an account was paid for waste or torn paper, to make wings for the angels in the procession; and another for painting them in different colours and gilding the wings.

---

Many of these processions, though doubtless originating in a strongly religious feeling, were conducted in such a manner, when judged by the estimation of religious matters in the present century, as to seem ridiculous, if not positively blasphemous. Frequently men and women appeared in them disguised as saints and angels, and not unfrequently even as the Almighty and the Blessed Virgin. In Lancellotti's Chronicle is a description of a religious procession the year before Lucrezia's arrival in Ferrara, which was ordered by the Pope to take place in all the cities and towns of Italy, to avert the danger to which the country was exposed from a probable invasion of the Turks. The processions at Modena and Ferrara commenced by a body of men dressed as prophets and angels, followed by the Father Almighty. Three donkeys with panniers filled with food, were followed by a giant, a bear, and three magi on horseback, the Virgin and her Child, and two devils. Envy walked after Virtue, who was being flogged by demons. Then came

St. Bernard and St. Paul, having in custody a group of demons. A dead Christ was followed by the disciples, nuns, monks, and a philosopher. St. Dominic, St. Francesco, and St. Sebastian came after, seated on a portable stage drawn by buffaloes, and were followed by St. Michael and a dead Virgin Mary, surrounded by the apostles. The procession was accompanied by a number of nobles on horseback, and a crowd of pedestrians, numbering about twelve thousand persons.

But if these processions can be defended on the plea that they originated in a sincere respect for religion, what can be said in excuse of the custom then prevalent of sending substitutes on pilgrimage, instead of the parties under the obligation of attending themselves? Whether intended by the clergy with a view of encouraging brotherly communications between the citizens of different towns, or merely from a religious motive, must remain in doubt; but it is certain that they were of frequent occurrence, and often conducted with considerable pomp and ceremony. Even if ex-

---

cuses may be formed for sending substitutes on these occasions, it would be difficult to defend the practice of having mourners to weep over the grave of deceased relatives, then so common an occurrence in Ferrara. At first, women, from their superior command of tears, were solely engaged as mourners and pilgrims. It even became among them an established profession, and they formed themselves into a body which went by the name of the Pignoni, and it was a common custom for them to be hired by the rich to weep at the anniversary of the death of their relatives over their graves. These women seem to have been paid according to the excellence, or rather the abundance of tears that they were able to shed. It was no uncommon custom also for dying persons, who feared that their relatives might not show a proper degree of respect for their memory, to leave sums of money in trust for the hire of men or women to pray at different altars for the release of their souls from purgatory, and to weep over their graves at the anniver-

saries of their death. Singularly enough, women seem to have been generally selected for weeping, and men for praying. To do the Ferrarese writers justice, they appear to have been indefatigable in their attempts to put down this abuse. Baruffaldi, for example, in his dissertation on the subject, speaks with intense disgust of seeing a crowd of women, who had been weeping all day over graves, returning laughing and romping in the evening to receive the reward of their sorrow.

Both Lucrezia and her husband are said to have had a profound respect for things holy, she being fully as strict an observer of all rites and ceremonies of the Church as her husband and father-in-law. On this point historians have frequently done her great injustice, stating that her religion developed itself in proportion as she grew older and found her death approaching. Gibbon even makes the same accusation against her. Yet not a single document exists to give an excuse for the statement, while many might



---

be brought forward to show that from the first day of her arrival in Ferrara till her death, she followed—though without ostentation—in the strictest manner, all outward ordinances of the Church. Judging also from her correspondence, it would be difficult to name any woman of celebrity in the Middle Ages, through whose life a more even current of piety ran than in that of Lucrezia Borgia during the nineteen years of her residence in Ferrara. It is to be perceived as fully in the first letters that she wrote to the Marchioness of Mantua after she had retired from the wedding festivities of Ferrara, as in those she wrote to the same lady shortly before her death—all are marked with the same singular tone of piety. To her father-in-law and husband, even when writing on matters either concerning the State or her private family affairs, the same religious tone may be detected, although never standing forth in an offensive or ostentatious manner.

During the lifetime of both Ercole and



Alfonso, the strictest respect for religion and its ministers was insisted on. Severe indeed was the punishment inflicted not only on blasphemers but on common swearers. In fact, Ercole appears to have determined that, in point of respect for religion and morality, no town in Italy—or perhaps in the world—should equal his own city of Ferrara. On April 12, 1496, he published an edict which set forth, “that the most illustrious Signore Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, desiring above all things that in this his city and Duchy of Ferrara, and in his dominions generally, all should live in accordance with the Christian faith; and wishing to make provision for those whose own sense of right and reverence or love for their Divine Maker was not strong enough to induce them to desist from their evil doings, who having no fear for the judgment and justice of God, continued in their accustomed evil method of life; and inasmuch by such persons temporal punishment, as being nearer, is more feared than a greater and more distant punishment, it is fit that they

---

should be constrained to leave their evil life and walk in the right way of virtue and holiness, as by so doing they would do that which is pleasing to his Divine Majesty. And, with a view of inducing the Almighty to look with favour on these his people, of whom He has given the said Duke the care and government, His Highness has determined totally to extirpate from the city and the rest of his dominions, all the vices—and especially those which create the greatest scandal, and to sow in their place the different virtues, as he hopes to do by the grace of the Holy Ghost. And inasmuch as His Excellency wishes first to put the spade to the root of those vices (*spada alla radice*) which are most likely to provoke the anger of God, and induce Him, in his divine Justice, to send upon the earth famines, earthquakes, plagues, and misfortunes by fire and water, by this present edict, which shall have the force of constitutional law, he commands that no person, of whatever sect or condition, profession or dignity, shall dare or pre-

sume to blaspheme God or the most glorious Virgin Mary His mother, or any male or female saint, neither in words clearly expressed or ambiguous, to the extent that if from the doubt of their meaning any blasphemous interpretation may be drawn. And he declares by this edict, that should it not be possible to discover whether the interpretation is blasphemous or otherwise, it shall be esteemed blasphemous. And that His Excellency resolves, that the laws at present imposed upon crimes of the kind shall be put in force in their full severity. And he exhorts all who shall hear any swearing, immediately to lay an accusation against the blasphemer, promising the informer, that beyond the merit and reward he will receive from Divine Providence, he will do a public benefit, and moreover he shall have part of whatever fines may be levied."

The choice of punishments which were placed in the hands of the judges was so numerous as to have required no little insight into ecclesiastical law, to decide what particular punishment

---

should be applied to the special crime committed. Among the punishments placed at the discretion of the judges were imprisonment, fine, death, mutilation, or otherwise, as they might think convenient. Severe as this edict may appear to us at the present time, when common swearing is of every-day occurrence, it was carried out with great barbarity by the judges. One of the most favourite punishments for this offence was nailing the tongue of the offender to a log of wood. Several instances of the latter punishment, under Duke Ercole, are recorded in the archives of Ferrara.

The punishments were afterwards no longer left to the discretion of the judges, but were distinctly specified and modified, though still very severe. Those who blasphemed God or the Virgin were to pay a fine of six livres, or, if only a blasphemy against a saint, three livres. For a repetition of the offence, the fine, in either case, was twenty-five livres, and for another relapse, one hundred. Those who were unable to pay

the fines—which, considering the value of money at the time, were very heavy, and far more than a vast proportion of the populace could meet, even in a first offence—were subjected to corporal punishments, and many instances are recorded of their being inflicted on defaulters. Prisoners who, for the first offence, were unable to pay the fine, were twice flogged and then banished from the city for six months. For the second, the tongue was publicly perforated by the common executioner with an iron nail, and the offender was banished from the city for ten years; and for the third, the penalty was amputation of the tongue and death.

A singular and perhaps the only redeeming feature in these laws against blasphemers and common swearers remains to be noticed—that of the severity of the punishment increasing the higher the rank in life of the offender. The fine which was levied upon a working man was doubled on an offender in the rank of a burgher; and in that of the courtier or noble

---

the fine was trebled, so that the crime should be considered the graver in proportion to the chance that the accused had received a good education, which would render the fault less excusable. These severe laws against blasphemers appear to have been in force in Ferrara to a comparatively late period, for it is recorded in the archives of the city, that in the middle of the eighteenth century, a certain Alberto Romano had his tongue pierced with an iron nail, and was afterwards hanged, for having in contempt fired an arquebuse at the statue of the Virgin.

But strictly in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of Rome as their own religious opinions and observances might be, Ercole, as well as Lucrezia Borgia and her husband, seem to have entertained a proper respect for the really religious opinions of others. At any rate they never allowed their private opinions—strong as they might be in favour of the Church of Rome—in any way to bias them to commit



an act of injustice to those holding religious opinions contrary to their own. And Lucrezia carried this liberality of opinion quite as far as her husband; whether it was natural to her, or whether she was influenced by her affection for him, it is impossible to say.

Jews, for example, were treated with more kindness and courtesy in Ferrara than they were in most other cities in Italy. At the same time they were governed by especial laws, which, if not severe, were degrading. They were not only condemned, as in Rome, to live in a certain part of the city marked out for them, but by a statute of Ercole I., dated April 12, 1496, it was ordained, "that in honour of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and that the Jews might be separated from the Christians, he withdrew any concessions which had hitherto been made to them respecting their dress, and that in future they should wear a yellow circle of at least four inches in breadth, embroidered on the left shoulder." Ercole, however, quaintly enough, in his edict, makes an ex-



---

ception in favour of bankers and principal persons employed in banks, as well as the leading doctors of medicine. This proclamation concludes with the somewhat singular clause, utterly independent of all that has gone before it, which sets out, "that, as it is the duty of all to honour God, not only in words and outward signs, but intrinsically to reverence Him, it is commanded that no butchers shall presume to sell meat on Sundays or feast-days appointed to be kept holy by the Church, or during Lent, either in the Piazza or other public place, or exposing it for sale in any way, but that they shall sell it secretly in their shops, where it shall be concealed, and that the doors of the shops shall not be opened for the purpose of selling meat, more than is necessary for a person to enter; and His Excellency further ordains that all infringement of this law shall be punished by fine, the fourth part of which shall be applied to the relief of the poor of the district of St. Martin's, another fourth to the maintenance of the police, another to the

Ducal Chamber, and the other to the informer.” The proclamation then goes on to say, “that, as it is hoped that all who have hitherto erred in this matter have already repented of their sins and been forgiven by God, His Excellency the Duke will also freely pardon all those who have till that day sinned in the matter, but for the future no mercy will be shown to those who shall disobey this present law.”

One imaginary crime against ecclesiastical authority was never forgiven, either by the clergy or Dukes of Ferrara, but was always punished with fearful severity—that of witchcraft. The belief in the existence and power of sorcerers was, in the commencement of the sixteenth century, carried to such an extent in Ferrara, as well as other European cities, as rather to assume the form of a monomaniacal epidemic than the effect of an erroneous religious belief. Nor was the faith in witchcraft confined to the lower and uneducated classes, the bigoted priest, or the superstitious nun in her cell. Theologians of intel-

---

lect and learning, who not only dissented from the doctrines of the Church in Rome, but had the courage to preach against them, had all a perfect belief in the power and evil deeds of sorcerers. Even physicians of eminence and natural philosophers—men who in religious matters doubted much of what we in the present day hold to be truth—fully believed in witchcraft, and used every means in their power to assist the authorities in repressing it. Even the Protestants, who in the latter part of the reign of Alfonso and the beginning of that of his son Ercole II., were powerful in Ferrara, were in principle as merciless against witches as were the Romish priests themselves. The Jewish rabble also, partly from the satisfaction of finding some human beings even more despised than themselves, rushed to the executions of the poor creatures condemned for witchcraft, as they would have done to a tournament or public fête. Even Lucrezia Borgia—in whose many letters still to be found in different libraries, public and private,

in Italy, are several pleadings for pity to be shown to a prisoner, and of whose acts of mercy all the Ferrarese authors of her day make such frequent and honourable mention—appears never to have interested herself in favour of a person accused of witchcraft, although many executions for the offence took place during her residence in Ferrara.

The particular crimes of which these witches were accused were equally as improbable as those for which witches were punished in our own and other European countries. A young nobleman fell violently in love with a girl of poor and ignoble parents, and no arguments of his family could induce him to leave her. So infatuated was he, that his relatives concluded he must have been under the influence of some magical spell which had been used by the girl. They obtained her arrest, and she was questioned on the subject. At first she positively denied having used any magical influence, but on being put to the torture, she acknowledged that an old woman

---

had given her a charm to swallow, which had the effect of not only making the nobleman fall deeply in love with her, but of keeping him faithful to her afterwards. On being further questioned she said that the charm consisted principally of herbs gathered on St. John's eve. The old woman was also put to the torture, "but so hardened was she in her sin, that even when suffering the greatest agony she denied the truth of the girl's statement." The evidence, however, was considered conclusive against her, and the old woman was burnt in the Piazza to the great joy of the beholders. So much interest did the populace take in these executions for witchcraft, and so strong was the indignation they occasionally would show against offenders who had been found guilty of any particularly impossible act of witchcraft, that they would tear the prisoner from the hands of the executioner and perform the punishment themselves. In 1513 a certain Agnesina, a diabolical witch and sorceress (*diabolica affaturatrice et incantrice*) was led to the

great door of the cathedral and there condemned for witchcraft, but the indignation of boys and children against her was so great, that they tore her from the officers who had her in custody, and dragging her to the river they there drowned her.

Another crime against ecclesiastical authority, for which temporal punishments were threatened in a scarcely less severe form than for witchcraft and sorcery, was astrology. All efforts, however, both of the church and temporal power seemed unable to put it down; partly from the fact that it was a favourite study and amusement of the higher orders and authorities, including judges, and also that it was practised to a considerable extent by the priesthood themselves. Indeed, it happened not unfrequently that those astrologers, possessing the highest reputation, were at the same time members of the clerical profession. Such being the case, it was not to be wondered at if, in spite of all ecclesiastical as well as temporal laws made on the subject, astrology not only flourished, but



---

was almost openly practised with impunity, or at any rate without any legal steps being taken against those who professed the art. Ercole himself was openly accused by a discontented writer of the time of practising astrology. Isabella of Gonzaga, Marchioness of Mantua, one of the most learned women of the day, implicitly believed in astrology, and consulted astrologers on all occasions. That Lucrezia Borgia herself should have been a firm believer in astrology is natural enough, and there is more than one proof extant of her faith in it. It is even believed that the cool shrewd sense of her husband, Alfonso, was not proof against the infatuation. A picture was formerly in the collection of the Monferini palace in Venice, painted by Giorgione, of a nobleman and his wife consulting an astrologer as to the future of their new-born child. From the white eagle (the crest of the house of Este) in the corner of the picture, and certain other indications, there is strong reason to believe that the couple con-

---

sulting the astrologer are intended to represent Lucrezia and her husband.\* Santou also states that Guidibaldo de Feltri, Duke of Urbino, quitted his castle for Naples on June 6, 1496, that being considered by his astrologers as a lucky day. He took with him on the journey several astrologers, among whom was the celebrated Paulo di Mindelburgo di Zealand, who was considered in his day the most expert astrologer in Europe.† Even the celebrated Renée, daughter of Louis XII. of France, and afterwards, as wife of Duke Ercole II., Duchess of Ferrara, Protestant as she was, not only believed in astrology, but studied it as a science under the unfortunate Luca Guarico.

So far indeed from divination by astrology,

---

\* It is stated that this picture has been purchased by an English gentleman, a Mr. Barker, and that it is now in London.

† Che in quel zorno adi dovea partirsi per andar in Reame, perho che erra bon zorno, et seguivà molto astrologi, et havia Mess. Paulo di Mindeburgo di Zelandia, che istis temporibus in l'astrologicha disciplina è primario."

---

proscribed as it was by the higher authorities of the church, being considered as infamous, it not only appears to have been openly practised, but as openly taught by professors. Many works were written and published on the science of astrology, and one of these—even by one of the Este family—Bianco Aurora—was called “The Replies of the Signora Leonora Bianco, in which she most ingeniously and with wonderful art, prognosticates and answers many curious questions respecting future things, &c. Venice, 1505, q<sup>o</sup>.” So far from any disgrace being attached to her either for the study of the occult sciences or the publication of her book, we are told that she enjoyed during her lifetime a great reputation for piety, learning, and scrupulous respectability. There were also other writers on astrology in Ferrara, whose works were held in as high estimation as those of Fanti, and the brothers Spadoni, many of these works shewing, if not learning, at least considerable ingenuity.

As a rule in Ferrara, when under direct go-

vernment of the dukes,—Catholic as they were—considerable latitude was allowed to those who professed other religious opinions, and it more than once happened that this very latitude was indirectly the cause of violent religious persecutions. Although Ferrara enjoyed a higher reputation for religious liberty than any other city in Italy, the Inquisition was established in it at a very early period of its history, though during the reigns of the three first dukes it appears to have been almost powerless. Occasionally, it is true, a man might suffer for holding religious opinions adverse to those of Rome, but then in these cases the ecclesiastical crime was found to be mixed up with some other of a temporal nature, so as to come under cognizance of the ordinary legal authorities. But these punishments for heresy in Ferrara, sunk into insignificance when compared with the wholesale persecutions carried on in other cities of the immediate vicinity. In the year 1413, in Piacenza alone, a number of heretics, and among them

---

twenty-five women, were burnt by order of the inquisitors.\*

Still, to the credit of Ercole and his son Alfonso, though strictly adhering to the Roman Catholic Creed, great latitude was allowed under their sway for the free indulgence of conscientious scruples on religious subjects. In fact, Ferrara in their day seems to have been an asile for all those suffering for their religious opinions, and driven from their homes in other parts of Italy. To this liberality on the part of Ercole and Alfonso may be traced the great influx of Jews into the city, who were more numerous in Ferrara, in proportion to the population, than in any other city or town in Italy. In Ferrara, under the rule of Alfonso, the Protestant religion first took firm root in Italy, and that without any harsh means being taken by him to prevent it. Unfortunately after his death a terrible change for the worse took place in

---

\* Per sententiam Inquisitoris hereticorum.—*Chronica Agazzari.*

Ferrara, though the persecution which then ensued had been for some years restrained by the influence the Protestant wife of Ercole II. (Renée) had over her husband, and the Inquisition which had hitherto (thanks to the former Dukes of Ferrara) been in abeyance, then burst out with great intensity. This institution appears to have been established in Ferrara as early as the fourteenth century, and was placed especially under an order of the Franciscan monks (*Minori Francescani*) who occasionally, even in the present day, claim the *honour* of being the original founders of the Inquisition. As before stated, though they had but little power in Ferrara, their inquisitorial organizations still existed, though the Franciscans were afterwards superseded by the Dominicans. The change seems to have taken place in consequence of the visit of Calvin to Ferrara, where he remained for some time under the protection of the Duchess Renée. His preaching appears to have had a powerful effect on the inhabitants of the city, and so many

---



of the population joined the Reformed religion, especially those of the more intelligent classes, that Rome took the alarm, and resolved to put down the heresy with a strong hand.

Unfortunately,\* the Inquisition succeeded but too well. The Dominicans on their arrival found that the Protestant religion was held in so much favour by the population of Ferrara—even of those who had not yet joined it—that it was necessary to proceed in the work of suppression with great caution. Their first step appeared to be directed solely against the Catholics, whom they accused of showing habitual disrespect to things holy. The Inquisition insisted on the municipality prosecuting and punishing with great severity trifling crimes against the Church authority and discipline, as if to inure them to the more terrible work which would shortly be thrown on their hands. At first the municipality seems to have been somewhat lukewarm in the matter, but a threat of excommunication aroused

---

\* Cittadella.

them to action, and they proceeded not only to put in force the absolute edicts which had been issued in the time of Ercole and Borso, but to promulgate others still more stringent. As a specimen of the severity exercised on offenders for what in the present day would have been considered as crimes of little importance, may be mentioned the case of Dominico Luniagno, a shoemaker, who was fined, flogged, and imprisoned for omitting to close his shop shutters on Rogation Sunday.

In 1540, a law was passed prohibiting passengers to walk by the churches during the celebration of the Mass, under the penalty of one gold crown, or a public flogging. This edict, however, appears not to have had the desired effect, and the public continued to walk past the churches at the prohibited time with as much indifference as if they were walking in the Piazza.\* In consequence, the penalty was in-

---

\* Perche legente passeggiavano lechiesce quale si fossero state in Piazza.

creased to two gold crowns and two floggings ; but whether the new edict had any better effect than the former, it is impossible to say. The punishment for common swearing, which had fallen somewhat into abeyance, was renewed with increased severity, and for that and other crimes of a similar description, the practice of nailing the tongue of the offender to a block of wood was a sight of every-day occurrence.

The Inquisition, however, seemed disinclined to declare open war with the Protestants, not from any feeling of liberality or compassion, but from the dread of giving offence to the Duchess Renée, as well as the King of France, who, although a Catholic himself, would not have been likely to submit with impunity to any indignity offered to his own daughter. A circumstance at last occurred which caused so much scandal that the Inquisition was obliged openly to take up arms against the followers of Calvin, no matter at what risk. A Capuchin monk, Bernardino of Sienna, was in the year 1537 en-

---

gaged to preach during Lent in the cathedral. He was not only a man of great talent, but an admirable orator. So courteous and attractive were his manners, that he became a general favourite. The duke was so much pleased with the Capuchin, that he requested him to take up his residence in Ferrara, and after a little real or simulated reluctance he consented to do so. So great did his fame now become, that he was elected general of the order. Shortly after his elevation, his enthusiasm in the cause of Roman Catholicism seemed to fall off rapidly; and before twelve months had elapsed, he suddenly resigned the dignity, and openly declared himself a Protestant. He now became as ardent an advocate in favour of the doctrines of Luther as he had hitherto been for those of Catholicism,—not only openly preaching in favour of the reformed opinions, but writing books filled with “Protestant errors and impiety” (*componendo libri piene d’errore e de impietta*).

The Inquisition now threw off all disguise, and

---

persecutions, which for severity could hardly have been surpassed, burst out with terrible frequency. Acting on the superstitious fears of Ercole II., the Inquisitors persuaded him to separate his wife from her daughters and place her in confinement, where, it is true, every indulgence was allowed her consistent with her safe custody. To neutralize any unpleasant effect that this despotic mode of proceeding might have on the mind of the King of France, the Pope was applied to for his interference; which he used so successfully, that Renée remained some years in confinement. After the death of her husband Renée left Ferrara, and the unfortunate Protestants having no longer a friend to protect them (for Renée, though in confinement, still exercised considerable influence over her husband), were given over to the Inquisition and its agents, who now with secret fraud and open violence set vigorously to work to extirpate Protestantism from Ferrara. While in public the prosecutions were carried on with unflinching severity, spies were introduced,

under the guise either of friends or servants, into the houses of those suspected, who carried information to the Inquisitors of all offences against Roman Catholicism which came under their notice. On those found guilty, the punishments inflicted were burning, perpetual imprisonment, or the galleys for life; and among the victims were some of the most eminent citizens in Ferrara.

As a proof of the merciless manner in which some of these executions were carried out, may be quoted the case of Francesco D'Argento, a physician of eminence and professor of natural philosophy at the university—one of the most eminent philosophers of his day. He was found guilty of heresy, and condemned to death. Being much beloved by his fellow-citizens, great interest was made to save him, and his sentence was commuted into imprisonment for life. D'Argento, however, considered that a gross injustice had been done him, as he had not positively joined the reformed religion, but had merely spoken



---

against some of the abuses of the Church of Rome, without quitting its bosom. He wrote a letter to the Pope, stating clearly his case, giving his reasons for considering he was justified in condemning the abuses he had spoken against, and denying that he had ever positively joined the religion preached by Luther. His Holiness, instead of replying, contented himself with forwarding his letter to the chief inquisitor in Ferrara. Actuated, doubtless, by a feeling of anger at this display of what he termed rebellion on the part of D'Argento, the inquisitor adjudged him to be a relapsed heretic, and with the consent of the Bishop of Ferrara and several other prelates, he handed him over to the secular power for execution. Although he was sentenced to be burnt alive, so much interest was still used for him, and that by the leading Catholics of the city, that the head inquisitor found it politic to exhibit some show of pity, and interceding with the secular authorities, D'Argento's punishment was changed into beheading. The

---

sentence was carried out in the Piazza, and his body afterwards burnt. In fact, so energetic were the efforts of the Inquisition in Ferrara, that before the commencement of the seventeenth century, when the territory again reverted to the Papal States, not a Protestant was left in the district. It may be mentioned, that the same day on which D'Argento was condemned, the inquisitors sentenced thirteen other Protestants, who at the time were incarcerated in the city prisons, for their religious opinions, to various punishments. The following is the list:—

Mark Antonio, physician—galleys for life.

Nicola de Beccari—seven years.

Don Antonio, a monk—unfrocked.

Antonio Finale di Modena—ten years.

Cesare Fiasco, a Ferrarese gentleman—ten years.

Aurelio Trevigi—seven years.

Alessandro Massi, of Ferrara—perpetual imprisonment.

Giovanni Cortallo—perpetual imprisonment.

Catarina della Dia—perpetual imprisonment.

---

Giovanni of Adria, a priest, Thomaso Sgurte, and Giovanni Pagnano, a Modenese, were condemned to be burnt, and the sentence was afterwards carried out.

It is agreeable to turn from the cruelty and persecutions of the ultra partisans of the Church of Rome, to the consideration of that most excellent gift of charity which it appears to have inculcated with so much success. There is hardly a town in Italy of any magnitude which does not possess some monument or institution proving how closely the practice of charity in mediæval times was connected with religion. And in no town is this more discernible than in Ferrara; not simply by the voluminous records at present existing in the libraries of that city, or in the library of Modena, into which the greater part of the archives of the Este family of Ferrara are now deposited; but in the magnificent remains of buildings at present in existence, originally dedicated to charitable purposes. Ferrara, in the time of the dukes, not only possessed a hospital

for orphan children, an asile for the aged and infirm, pilgrim establishments for both sexes, besides dinners for the indigent, and workhouses or *case d'industria*, to give work to those able-bodied who were in want, and an establishment for foundlings.

Some of the means by which subscriptions and contributions were obtained for the support of these institutions may appear somewhat singular. In the time of Ercole I. a law was passed, obliging every testator to bequeath a sum of five soldi to the hospital of St. Ann, not only to find food for the poor it sheltered, but also to form a fund to keep up the fabric itself. This law seems to have fallen somewhat into disuse, but was again brought into full force by Alfonso immediately after his accession to the dukedom. It may here be remarked, there was hardly a charity in Ferrara in which Alfonso and his wife Lucrezia not only appeared to take great interest, but personally to superintend.

Among other institutions organized by Alfonso,

---

was one for contagious diseases, especially prevalent at that time, and which were considered objectionable to be introduced into other hospitals. Among other documents in the library relating to the confraternity of St. Job, is a patent of Alfonso I., dated March 28, 1505, by which collections were ordered to be made throughout the whole of the duchy, towards building this hospital. Nor were these hospitals simply places to which the sick poor might be sent to linger and die, for we find it recorded that a certain Guglielmo, a Carmelite friar, and formerly confessor to Duke Borso of Este, was dismissed from his appointment as superintendent of the hospital, because he neglected and treated badly the sick poor under his charge.

One of the grandest and most useful institutions in Ferrara, and which, though traced out by Duke Ercole, was carried into effect by his son Alfonso, was the Monte di Pietà, for lending money on pledge. Nor, judging from the accounts of the Ferrarese historians, was the Monte di

---

Pietà instituted before urgent occasion had been shown for it. Prior to that time usury—especially among the Jews—seems to have been carried on in Ferrara to a disgraceful extent, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical laws against it. Not only were the rich, the noble, and the spendthrift victims of these money-lenders, but the extortionate amount of interest charged seemed to increase as the poverty of the borrower became greater; and the rigorous manner in which the pledges given as security for the miserable loans borrowed were confiscated, proves how truly antagonistic to every Christian feeling was the principle acted on by the money-lenders. Not only was 60 per cent. the ordinary annual interest taken on loans from the wealthier classes, but from the poorer 100 per cent. for one month appears not to have been uncommon. It is singular to note the strong similarity which existed formerly in the mode of evading the usury laws in all European countries. In Ferrara as elsewhere, not only was the unfortunate borrower



---

compelled to take money at a high rate of interest, but he was also obliged to take out no inconsiderable portion of the amount in goods utterly useless to him, and frequently almost valueless.

The commodity of "ginger and brown paper," mentioned by Pompey, in Shakspeare's "Measure for Measure," "The stuffed alligator" in Molière's "Avare," had also their equivalents in Ferrara, and to an extent not less usurious and cruel than either in London or Paris. The Monte di Pietà of Ferrara lent small sums of money to the poor without interest for six months on the security of pledges, though on the renewal of the loan a trifling interest was demanded. Great, indeed, were the benefits derived from it. No laws against usury that had ever been framed worked more admirably, certainly as far as the poorer borrowers were concerned. None, of course, now applied to the Jew or professional money-lender, who would demand interest for the loan which he could obtain without

interest from the Monte di Pietà, and thus the pressure of usury which had hitherto weighed so heavily upon the poor, was through its means abolished in Ferrara.

Other excellent institutions in Ferrara were societies *de mutuo succore*, which strongly resembled in their organization the benefit societies so common among our working classes in the present day, with the exception that they were frequent among all ranks of society. Many of them closely resembled our guilds in the Middle Ages, the different trades and handicrafts uniting together to assist the poor, the sick, and the aged of their respective trades. Some of them even went so far as to provide a dowry for the daughters of the poor of their craft, either for marriage or entrance into a convent.

One of the best institutions in Ferrara, founded in 1496 by the Duchess Eleanora of Arragon, wife of Duke Ercole, and which was afterwards greatly enriched by Lucrezia when Duchess of Ferrara, was the asylum and school of the bashful

---

poor (*poveri vergognosi*), under the spiritual patronage of San Martino. The object of this institution and school was to assist the families of those persons who had once enjoyed a respectable position in society, but who through unavoidable misfortunes had fallen into decay. Nor were the objects of this institution solely confined to the burgher and learned classes. In times of severe want they stretched out a helping hand to the general poor as well; at the same time the better quality of the relief was given to those who had formerly been in respectable positions. For example, at one time, shortly before Lucrezia's death, when the number of poor in the city had reached as high as ten thousand, bread alone was supplied to the working classes, but both bread and wine to poor gentlemen, citizens, and merchants. There were also several other charities for the relief of the poor, all excellent in their way.

Before quitting the subject of the charities of the Ferrarese, a compliment is due to them on

the discretion they showed while liberally assisting the poor, in the means they took to prevent imposture and mendicancy. Not only was begging prohibited in the streets, especially in the Piazza and at the doors of churches, but it was also as strictly prohibited for any person to give alms to a mendicant. For the first offence the mendicant was imprisoned, and for the second flogged, while any person detected in the act of giving him money was fined two scudi. At the same time all persons were enjoined, if they met with any case worthy of relief, to bring it under the notice of the deputies appointed to distribute alms, or to the municipality, that the case might be inquired into, and if deserving properly relieved. For those able to labour, work would be provided, while the sick, infirm, and aged would be properly cared for. It should also be remarked that, besides charitable contributions from the rich, certain taxes were imposed by the municipal authorities for the relief of the poor, among others a *quattrino* on every pound of oil brought into the city.

---

The police regulations of the city of Ferrara, at the time of Lucrezia's arrival, formed a singular contrast with those of the city she had left. In Rome, assassinations were of such frequent occurrence, that seldom a night passed without three or four taking place; in Ferrara, on the contrary, although street murders might occasionally happen, a case of the kind was but of rare occurrence. Unless on extraordinary occasions, such as scarcity of provisions or any excessive taxation on the part of the authorities, disturbances seldom happened; in Rome they were very frequent. Nor was this safety of life and property due to a gentler tone in the Ferrarese public, but rather to the admirable police regulations of the government. To prevent bloodshed from sudden quarrels, by order of Duke Ercole all citizens were prohibited to wear any arms either by day or night, whether carrying lanterns or without them, under the penalty of being immediately taken to the office of the captain of the guard, and there flogged and the

arms they carried confiscated. In the carnival time all masqueraders were forbidden to carry arms or sticks, that in case disputes might arise there should be no serious damage done.

Another edict of Duke Ercole prohibited all gambling, either in the Piazza or other public place, under penalty of a fine and one month's imprisonment. He further ordained that in case any quarrel should arise in any public place, and either of the disputants should attempt to draw a sword or knife, or produce any secret weapon, such as a ball of lead or stone tied to a cord (possibly a weapon something resembling a modern so-called life-preserver), he should be immediately flogged and afterwards imprisoned for two months, unless wounds or death ensued, and then the culprit should be punished with death without hope of mercy (*senza speranza di grazia*), and whoever attempted to rescue the prisoner from the custody of the police should receive the same punishment as that adjudged to the culprit himself. A law was also passed ordering the



points of daggers to be ground off within fifteen days from the time of issuing the edict, under pain of confiscation of the weapon or knife.

Terribly severe as these laws undoubtedly were, it was possibly necessary to maintain order in such lawless times, especially when the character of the Ferrarese population is taken into consideration. During the rule of Ercole alone it had been more than doubled, the greater portion of the increase arising from the immigration of lawless individuals from other cities in Italy to Ferrara for protection. In fact that city seemed almost to be considered as a sanctuary for the outlaws. In an address presented to Ercole shortly after his elevation to the dukedom, it speaks of the high reputation for hospitality of the city of Ferrara under the Duke's government, which had become the refuge for all Italians unwilling from some cause to remain in their own country.\*

---

\* *Che non potesse o non volesse per qualche respecto stare nela propria patria.*

With such a population to govern, it may easily be imagined that little less than the rigour of military law would be sufficient to maintain good order among them. Even with the great power placed in the hands of the magistrates, and an efficient police force, aided by the soldiery, the office of *Mastro di Giustizia* (under whose authority were the police of the city) was not without its dangers, as may be proved by the fate of Giorgio Zampante, who held that office in the year 1496. It appears that on June 18 of that year he had left the castle, and was proceeding homewards by the church of St. Giuliano, when a student in medicine from Reggio, of the name of Gerolamo Cassola, attacked the said Mastro di Giustizia with a dagger, which he had secreted on his person, and killed him on the spot by the first blow. On being arrested he did not attempt to deny his crime, but urged as an excuse that the Mastro had thrice unjustly flogged him. The student was shortly afterwards executed for the murder. "Although," said the Chronicle, "the

---

wife of the Mastro bitterly cried, yet the people rejoiced, for he was a very cruel man." Alfonso, in the absence of his father, had the body honourably buried in the church of St. Dominico, and allowed an annuity to his widow and little children.

Although these severe laws, promulgated by Ercole, had doubtless a very salutary effect in preserving the peace of the city from being endangered by sudden brawls and conflicts, duelling was carried on in Ferrara to a very great extent. Nor was Ercole to blame for this, for he issued more than one edict for its suppression, though with little good effect, for the custom had taken deep root among the higher classes, who, though willing enough to assist the duke in maintaining good order among the populace of the city, were little inclined to cooperate with him in establishing such laws as might in any way interfere with what might be considered the privileges of their order. The duke decreed, that if any person as a second,

should either by word of mouth, by letter, or any other writing, carry a challenge, he should be punished by a fine of 500 scudi, as well as be publicly flogged. In case the duel were fought without serious wounds, the same penalty was to be awarded to the combatants as if serious wounds or death had occurred, and their punishment to be proportionately severe. The duke's proclamation, however, appears to have soon become a dead letter, for we not only find the practice of duelling carried on with perfect impunity among the higher orders, but more than one celebrated duel was openly fought, if not with the duke's sanction, at least without any interference on his part. For example, a duel was fought in the month of July, 1489, at mid-day in the Piazza, between Antonino Rondinelli of Lugo, and an elderly gentleman from Mirandola, in which the latter was killed. In this duel the seconds—or rather the umpires—were three sons of the duke, Alfonso, Sigismondo, and Ferdinando.

---

On May 12, 1501, another duel was fought between Fidele Dogarolo, a Ferrarese in the service of Nicolo, son of Rinaldo of Este and Galvono of Cassi, the latter wounding his antagonist in his face and shoulder. This duel was fought with sword and buckler, and more than two hundred persons were present on the occasion. In September, 1517, a dispute arose between some Ferrarese and Spanish soldiers, the former accusing the latter of treachery or cowardice, which resulted in a duel being determined on between two of the chief disputants, one a Ferrarese named Rosso della Malvasia, and the other a Spanish captain. The Ferrarese having the choice of arms, selected the partisan, and the Spaniard having the choice of ground, insisted that the duel should be fought in Naples. Rosso, who was seconded by Giovannino da Medice, killed his adversary, and Alfonso was so pleased with his skill and courage that he gave him the command of a company of soldiers.

Another and vastly more celebrated duel was

---

fought, August 22, 1529, between Nicolo Doria, nephew of the celebrated warrior Andrea Doria, and Cristofero Fasco of Alessandria. This duel was fought in the presence of Alfonso. Nicolo Doria was carried from the field and died a few days afterwards. The affair, which created no little excitement at the time, had the honour of being described at length in a poem by Gabrielli Ariosto, which was considered by Borsetti so excellent that he thought it worthy of insertion in his history of Ferrara, as a model of fine writing. Several other celebrated duels fought in Ferrara are mentioned in the City archives, and from the many names of celebrated fencing masters of the day who were of Ferrarese origin, it is certain the practice was of frequent occurrence. At the same time, it is only due to the city police to state that unless formal permission had been obtained from the duke, as in the above-mentioned cases, duels were not only discouraged, but the combatants frequently severely punished.



---

Nor were the municipal regulations of Ferrara confined to the maintenance of an efficient police for the detection and suppression of great crimes ; the comfort, safety, and well-being of the inhabitants being cared for in a manner which would do no discredit to many of our civic laws in the present day. In 1517, a proclamation was issued, forbidding, under a heavy fine or imprisonment, carmen and horsemen to gallop their horses through the city ; and carmen were especially forbidden to ride on their carts, but were to walk at their horses' heads, and in case any persons should be killed through negligence or furious driving, the driver should be tried as for a case of murder.

In consequence of the influx of bad characters, Ercole went so far as to establish a kind of passport system, and several very stringent rules of his drawing up are still to be met with. Every boatman or carman bringing strangers into the city was obliged, under a penalty of fine or imprisonment, immediately to conduct the stranger

to the Police Office, or to give notice of his arrival. Among the rules for the conduct of the police, is one which admirably tended to insure their vigilance. Every stranger, on his arrival, had to pay one soldo to the podesta, and another on his quitting the city. Half this amount collected was to be given to the police, and the other half to the ducal chamber; and whoever allowed a stranger to remain in his house without giving notice to the authorities, made himself liable to a fine of no less than one hundred scudi.

Among many of the excellent municipal laws established in Ferrara, towards the latter end of the fifteenth century and the early part of the sixteenth, were those regulating the commissariat of the city, especially on points in which the interests of the working classes were principally concerned. The size and quality of every article of food seems to have been superintended with an amount of care fully equal to the regulations on subjects of the kind in European cities in the

present day. Provisions of every description had especial officers appointed to superintend their sale, and see that not only were they of just weight, but of good quality. In fact some of these laws showed a minuteness of inspection in the making of bread, which not only is not surpassed, but even equalled in the present day. An edict of Ercole was to the effect, "that inasmuch as it was known that there were bakers who kneaded the dough with their feet, which frequently were not clean, such practices were not to continue, under the penalty of a fine or imprisonment, but that they were to work the dough with clean hands and nails."\*

A tariff of assize was also established, regulating not only the price and weight of bread, but also the quality, and any infringement of the regulation was punished with great severity. To encourage competition among bakers, so that the poor might get the benefit of the cheapest

---

\* Cittadella—Notizie Relative a Ferrara.

---

market, any baker might sell bread at a lower price than the assize, or give heavier weight, but on no excuse was he permitted to ask more than the price allowed by law. Nor was he allowed to evade the law even if the wholesale price of corn was so high that he was unable to sell the bread at a profit. When the price of flour was higher than the tariff, a baker was not permitted to sell at an advance, and if he closed his shop for a period exceeding three months he was forbidden to open it again, or even to practise his trade in any other part of the city. The punishment for the offence of selling bread under the just weight was a severe fine for the first offence, and imprisonment with flogging for the second. Many other records are existing of bakers and others being punished for attempts to defraud the poor. Some of these attempts appear to have been very cunningly devised, and to have been practised for a considerable time with impunity, possibly through some secret understanding with the police. One man car-

---

ried on a large trade for some time by publishing that the loaves he sold weighed two ounces more than the government regulation, and his loaves on being weighed were found to carry out his assertion. It was afterwards discovered he had an oven at the back of the house where other loaves were made which weighed four ounces less, and that, after the Government inspectors had gone their round, and pronounced the loaves to be the full weight he stated, those he had secretly made were introduced into the shop and sold. He was at last detected and severely punished.

Equally severe were the laws against the adulteration of wine, whether white or red, and no colouring matter was allowed to be put into the latter. Every seller of wine had to procure a licence from the municipality, which none could obtain without bringing forward testimonials of good character. All wine on its entering into the city was tested, and if found to be of inferior quality, was immediately destroyed. The regulations

concerning the butchers' shops would also have done no discredit to any of our municipal arrangements on the subject in the present day. All meat of a bad description was destroyed, and a tariff of prices regulated the sale of different joints. In fact, every care seems to have been taken by the authorities, that the poor should in no manner be imposed upon by the provision dealers.

If the administration of the laws in Ferrara had been carried out in the spirit in which they were written, it would be difficult to mention a country in Europe in the sixteenth century in which justice was more fairly dealt. Unfortunately, however, excellent as were the laws, their administration was carried on in a manner little to be admired, for while the utmost severity was exercised on the poor, it was far different with the rich and noble. Justice, in those days, inexorable and severe against vulgar criminals, was proportionately vacillating and remiss against those in power, diminishing in severity as the



---

grade of the criminal became higher, till at last it reached to a height when crimes could almost be perpetrated with impunity. At the same time, it is but justice to state, we frequently find nobles, even in a high position, condemned to death for crimes,—though, it should be added, these were generally mixed with some political elements, which too frequently gave the punishment they received an appearance of vindictiveness on the part of the head of the State.

The administration of justice in Ferrara was placed in the hands of twelve judges (*Dodici Savii*), of whom one was selected as chief. In the hands of these judges every question at law, without exception, was placed, even to subjects of the most trifling importance. The laws they administered were promulgated at the pleasure of the duke, or, if away, his agents for the time being. The criminal jurisprudence seems first to have been brought down in a systematic code by Duke Borso, the immediate predecessor of Ercole, and was published shortly before the

latter's accession to power. One of the most singular portions of the last edict is the extreme severity with which all women of disreputable character were treated, and this comes into still stronger relief when compared with the unrestrained licence indulged in not only by the dukes themselves, but by the higher nobility as well.

The laws attempted to be put in force in Shakspeare's play of "Measure for Measure," were almost equalled in severity and were quite as ineffective as those contained in Duke Borso's celebrated edict. In it he decrees, that any woman of disorderly or disreputable life should, on its being proved before the judge, be punished by a fine of twenty-five livres, to be twice flogged, and to remain two months in prison. In case she were not able to pay the said fine, she should be placed in a pillory in some public part of the city. If after this she should return to her bad ways, she was to be banished from the city, as well as the keeper of the house in which she

lived, and their goods confiscated and sold, and the proceeds applied towards the repairs of the cathedral. The edict then goes on to say, that before quitting the city their noses should be cut off, in order that they might be the more easily recognised should they attempt to return. In case any citizen should visit at the houses of these women, or be in any way connected with the keepers thereof, they should be punished by amputation of the hand, and their goods confiscated in like manner for the repairs of the cathedral. The edict also regulates the punishments of those who should shelter women of this description or their male companions.\* With respect to the latter, it was permitted for any bystander to beat them with a stick or any other instrument which came under his hands, without incurring thereby either penalty or punishment. It was moreover permitted for any one not only

---

\* *Et chel siglia licito a ciascaduno offendere tali ruffiani cum botte percosse bastoni et armi et de omni altro istromento, senza patire pena alcuna.*

secretly to accuse another of a crime of the kind, but he was to receive for his trouble one-third of any pecuniary punishment inflicted.

Ercole, by no means particularly exemplary in his own behaviour, confirmed Borso's edict. Alfonso, at any rate for some years after his accession to the Ducal dignity, carried it out with considerable severity ; nor does Lucrezia—generally so mercifully disposed—ever appear to have interceded for any mitigation of the punishment awarded for offences of the kind. In 1507 we find that a Madonna Laura having been convicted of adultery, was immured (*murata*) in a corner outside the bishop's palace, near the entrance door of the cathedral, at the left side of the grand altar. In the cell, which was but a few feet square, there was only one small window through which she received her food. Immured in this cell, she remained till her death. The wall which enclosed it was then taken down, and the cell itself destroyed. Mario Equicola gives some particulars of Madonna Laura's crime,

---

which, however, will hardly bear repetition. Suffice it to say, if a punishment of the kind be justifiable, she certainly deserved it.

The ordinary methods of capital punishment in Ferrara were by no means marked with that cruelty which distinguished the administration of justice in many other cities in Italy. The two most frequently practised were beheading and hanging; the former being principally applied to those criminals in a respectable station in society, whose crimes were not marked with any particular atrocity. Decapitation was performed by the executioner with a large two-handed knife called a *mannaja*. This was, however, afterwards disused, and a machine strongly resembling the guillotine substituted in its place. In fact, some Ferrarese historians claim for their city the honour of having been the first to use the guillotine. Certainly there is an execution mentioned of a certain Giuseppe Ariani, in which "the executioner pulled a cord and the knife fell." Immediately after the elevation of Ercole to the

---

dukedom, executions were performed in a field outside the Borgo St. Giacomo, in which was erected a scaffold for decapitations and a gallows for thieves (*ad decapitandum malefactores et fures suspendendum*). The head of the "Dodici Savii" having bought a field near it for the recreation of his children, had the scaffold and gallows removed; and, when required for public executions, they were temporarily erected opposite the Municipal Palace.

Although the punishments by death inflicted by the Dukes of Ferrara were unmarked by those scenes of cruelty which took place in the administration of justice in the Middle Ages, a singular custom appears to have existed among them—that of inviting the nobility to witness the executions as if they were public festivals or theatrical representations. In all punishments for sedition or rebellion this was invariably the case, and not only men, but even ladies, seem frequently to have been present on the occasion. Punishments awarded for crimes not meriting death appear cer-



---

tainly to have been extraordinarily severe. There is hardly a single crime, no matter how trifling, that was not punished either by heavy fines and one or two and sometimes three floggings. Another and most cruel punishment seems to have been in common use—that of nailing the tongue to a piece of wood. In the records of Ferrara mention of this punishment is very frequently made, and in books still in the public library, entries are to be found for the purchase of wood and also for repairing the necessary apparatus. In 1536 we find an item for “four logs of wood for the punishment of nailing the tongue, &c. ;” another, “for four iron needles for the same purpose, as well as the cord to bind the hands of the prisoner.” Again, an item for a sum of money paid to the executioner for perforating the tongue of a man who had been guilty of perjury.

The publicity of the Ferrarese punishments seems to have had as little effect in reforming the manners of the populace as our public execu-

tions had at the Old Bailey in London. Hardly an execution took place in London but we read the next day of thieves being brought before the magistrates for thefts perpetrated under the gallows. In the municipal records of Ferrara we find many instances of a similar description. The frequent sight of these executions seems so completely to have deprived the people of the terror which the judges thought would attend them, that there are many instances not only of thefts taking place at the executions, but of the ministers of justice themselves being robbed. In the account-books of the Castle, in the year 1515, we find an entry for the purchase of a new bucket to be used to catch the blood at decapitations, and for a pair of handcuffs for the wrists of prisoners when led out to punishment, to replace those stolen at the last execution (*per eser state robate le altre doe quando il se fata justicia*).

Debtors were looked upon with more severity than in the present day. Not only were they subject to imprisonment in common with felons,

---

but they were liable also to the punishment of shame (*alla pena della vergona*). This punishment was performed something in the following manner:—The debtor was first placed in a car, and conducted by police officers, accompanied by a trumpeter, round the city, that he might be seen by all. By degrees this custom fell off, and the debtor was exposed on a pedestal for three days, wearing the while a green cap. When the debtor was able to prove any strong circumstance in mitigation, the punishment was reduced in severity, though always carried out. In the year 1520, a certain Signor Borso Ferri, a noble citizen of Ferrara, professor of medicine at the university, and one of the physicians of the Emperor Charles V., was relieved from the infamy of wearing the green cap by reason of his general honourable conduct, and was allowed instead to wear a black one.\* Several attempts

---

\* To the credit of the Ferrarese laws it may be mentioned that the evidence of all witnesses of respectability—no matter of what religion—was equally received by the judges. The

---

were made by different benevolent persons to draw a distinction between the unfortunate debtor and the common robber, but with very little effect till the year 1478, when a certain Fra Cesaria, of the order of the Servii, preached in the cathedral so eloquent a sermon on the subject, and described so distinctly the difference between the crime of a man who, through some unavoidable misfortune, had been reduced to poverty, and was unable to meet his liabilities—a contingency continually likely to happen to those engaged in mercantile affairs—and the

---

following form of affidavit, however, was drawn up expressly for the Jews:—“*Tu juras super decem preceptis Moysis, per Deum patrem omnipotentem Sabbahot, et per Deum qui apparuit Moysi in rubeo, et per Deum patrem Adonaij, et per Deum Oloij: et si tu perjuras sis dispersus inter gentes, et moriaris in terra inimicorum tuorum, et sic terra te absorbat sicut Dathan et Abiron, et sic lepra te apprehendat sicut Naaman, et fiat habitatio tua deserta, et veniant super caput tuum omnia peccata tua, et parentum tuorum, et omnes maledictiones, quæ in lege Mosayca prophetarum scripta sunt, et semper tecum maneat, et Deus tibi maledictionem det in exemplum cunctorum populo suo. Amen.*”

despicable robber who maltreats or perhaps murders the unfortunate traveller, unable at the time to defend himself. The result was, that a meeting of the inhabitants was called, and an urgent petition made to the judges to allow a separate prison to be built for the incarceration of insolvent debtors.

The judges, however, seemed to look with very little favour on the proposition; but not wishing to refuse a request, referred the matter to the municipal council. Here a strong objection was raised. Ferrara was already so severely taxed in order to get money for the new fortifications and enlargement of the city, that they unanimously refused the application, being unwilling to increase the burdens they were already labouring under. Fra Cesaria, however, was determined not to be stopped in his good work, and he applied personally to the municipality on the subject, who at last, by way of getting rid of the importunities of the monk, told him that they were perfectly willing to allow

the new prison to be built, provided he could obtain the funds, but that on the part of the municipality, they would contribute nothing. The courage of the worthy monk, which seemed to increase with his difficulties, induced him to commence a personal canvass among the nobility, and with such success that in two years' time he had succeeded in raising the whole sum necessary for the prison. Another difficulty now remained—the purchase of a site on which to erect the building. This was, however, soon overcome. A wealthy citizen, of the name of Negrosotti, generously gave the house he lived in, with a garden attached to it, to the monk; and the new prison was shortly afterwards erected from the designs of the municipal architect, and the debtors were removed from the felons' jail.

In the Ferrarese catalogue of crimes and misdemeanours, none seem to have embarrassed the legislators and officers of justice more than those relating to the sumptuary laws, especially among the female portion of the population.



---

Over and over again were edicts promulgated to restrain what the legislators were pleased to call "the insane love of women for dress." Nor was this confined solely to Ferrara. The subject seems to have been an equally embarrassing one to the neighbouring state of Venice, which in those days set the fashion to most of the other towns in Italy. In 1511 an edict was posted on the Rialto regulating, under severe fines as well as imprisonment, the dress ladies were allowed to wear. They might wear stuffs in which gold and silver were mixed, under the condition that the whole material in the gown did not exceed in cost fifteen ducats. They were not allowed to wear jewels or pearls on the head or neck, with the exception of one row of pearls, which should not exceed the value of fifty ducats. It then proceeded to limit the quantity of material in each dress, as well as the size of the shawls, handkerchiefs, aprons—either those fastened round the waist, or those the whole length of the dress with armholes.

With the men also it prescribed the extreme cost they were to go to in the purchase of their doublets, shirts, striped trousers, clogs, and shoes. In Ferrara its tyranny was even carried so far as to prescribe the quantity, quality, and value of ladies' wedding outfits. As early as the year 1434 a *prammatica* was issued by Nicolo, Marquis of Ferrara, against the extravagance of women in dress; and he drew up laws not only for the quality of their dress, but also its fashion, and published a scale of punishments for all those who should in any way disobey him. But all without the slightest good effect. We find that Leonello, his successor, was obliged again to take up the matter, proceeding, however, with more policy than Nicolo. Before commencing operations, he determined to secure a sufficient amount of strength to enable him to carry out the laws he should promulgate. He first called a private meeting of the principal men of the city, a large majority of whom, it may easily be supposed, were husbands and fathers. When the meeting had assembled, he addressed

---

them with great gravity, and impressed upon them the importance of the subject they had met to legislate upon. He asked if there was one man in the assembly who was not fully convinced that the expenditure of women on dress was at that time carried to a frightful and demoralizing extent. If any one in the meeting did entertain an opinion of the kind he certainly did not express it, for there was not a dissenting voice in the assembly. On the contrary, with perfect spontaneity they assured him they would assist him in the matter to the fullest extent in their power. A resolution was then proposed to the meeting, in which it was unanimously resolved to declare war against the long trains of the ladies' gowns, and their large open sleeves lined with costly fur, and every other useless and wanton expenditure on female personal adornment.\*

Women were now prohibited from spending

---

\* *Determinò d'intimare guerra alle lunghe code delle vesti delle donne, ed alle loro maniche aperte, e con troppo lusso guarinte di peli perigrine.*

more than a third part of their dowry, either at once or at a future time, on jewels and outfit, rendering it penal for notaries, modistes, tailors, or goldsmiths either to furnish them with goods on credit, or to assist them in evading the laws. All farmers' wives were forbidden to wear silk dresses, or even silk trimmings, or any ornaments of either gold, silver, or pearls. The edict prohibited ladies from wearing to their dresses trains or tails (*code*) which, when a lady stood upright, could be stretched out more than half a yard from her heels. But the most extraordinary portion of Leonello's decree,\* and at the same time the most objectionable, was the means adopted for discovering whether ladies evaded the law, for although in the public streets the misdemeanours of long tails or trains could be easily detected, it was far different in the house, where they would be able to indulge their extravagant propensities without

---

\* The two decrees are to be found in Barotte's "Mem. Estoriche de litterate Ferrase."

---

being seen. The plan alluded to was to enable fathers and brothers to give information against their wives and sisters, or daughters, without being detected, so that, without fear of female vengeance, any male member of a family might bring the transgressions of his wife or sisters under the notice of the authorities. For this purpose a box was placed by the entrance door of the cathedral, beside the font for the holy water, with a slit in the lid, into which all denunciations might be inserted against ladies who wore their trains too long, without the names of the informers being known.\* In the

---

\* To prevent any doubt in the mind of the reader as to the veracity of the above statement, the following is a verbatim copy of the original entry:—“*A Mastro Bonsignore per soa manufactura de haver lavorato et cavado uno pezio de uno ziocho de nogara, se fieze metere in opera a la cholona de lo Spargolo de l'acqua santa de zozo el batexemo grande del Veschoado al quale ziocho fe fato tre chiave, de le quale tene una l'Offizio de' xij Savij, una tene Messer lo Podestà de Ferrara, et una M. lo Sindicho del Palazzo, et questo solo per posere (potere) andare a loro piazimento a deschiavare, et vedere e in quello ziocho ge fosse stado butado alcuno boletino per acuxare quelli che contrafarono a le*

---

account-books of the cathedral, an entry is made for a sum of money paid to the carpenter who made the box, which appears to have had three keys, one of which was in the possession of an officer in the employ of the twelve judges, one in that of the podesta of Ferrara, and a third in that of the syndic of the parish, so that either might, at his pleasure, examine the box, and thereby be able to prosecute any lady guilty of setting the law at defiance. The success of this new movement, however, admirably as it had been arranged so as to secure the co-operation of all the citizens and fathers of families, was no better than that of other laws of a similar description, made either in Ferrara or elsewhere.

The box which had been so cunningly placed against the cathedral to give information against ladies who wickedly wore long sleeves and trains

---

*provisione et chride che fo fate per quello che non poseno portare Menege et veste de sede, per lo semele (simile) altri fornamenti da veste, como appare, etc."*—*Libro della fabbrica della Cattedrale.*



---

to their dresses, and other prohibited ornaments, and which for better opportunity had been fixed in such a position that the informer could secretly place in it his denunciation with one hand while taking the holy water with the other, as well as the attempt to invest it in female eyes with a certain sort of religious attribute, possibly may have received accusations without number. But all in vain! Neither podesta, judge, nor syndic of the palace seems to have had the courage to put the laws into force. Certainly no record exists of anybody having been punished for an offence of the kind.

And yet, while wishing to look upon such offences with a lenient eye, it seems impossible to deny that occasionally the ladies of that day were very extravagant in their dress, as may be judged by the somewhat tedious description we have given of the dresses at fêtes which took place in Ferrara. Sometimes they adopted fashions so extravagant as to be legitimately objected to on the score of good taste alone.

---

Marin Sanuto on one occasion tells us of the Marchioness of Mantua appearing at a dinner-table in a black velvet robe covered with astrological hieroglyphics embroidered in gold—a costume, according to our modern ideas, better adapted for that of the Queen of Night in Mozart's opera of the "Zauberflöte" than a lady of quality at her dinner-table. More extraordinary still perhaps was a dress of the Marchioness of Mantua, which she wore on a similar occasion, consisting of a robe of black satin embroidered over with notes of music (*note di musica*). Another lady we read of who was dressed in a robe on which were embroidered no fewer than six hundred figures exemplifying different episodes in the life of Christ. Others were covered with representations of wild beasts, panthers, lions, bulls, &c. In fact no pattern or device seems to have been too extravagant for their adoption so long as there was any novelty to be found in it,—a quality, judging from the enormous number of treatises on dress which have been

written in the Middle Ages, which must have been difficult indeed to discover.

So far from being defeated in the struggle, the ladies seem not only to have held their own, but in their turn to have induced the gentlemen to adopt extravagant dresses and fashions. The Cavalier Cittadella, in his admirable work on Ferrara, quotes a passage from a manuscript written in the year 1484, in which the writer bitterly laments the general extravagant habits of his day.

“All is now changed,” he says, “for the worse. The courtiers now wear black mantles with hoods of silk hanging down behind, made after the fashion of heralds’ tabards, with slits by the side through which they may place their arms. Others wear over their doublets large mantles, so long that they touch the ground, casting aside the handsome gold waistcoats in fashion in the time of Borso, and wearing instead waistcoats of satin. They also wear trousers which cover the whole of the foot, sole

and all (*calze a braga*), or if not, they wear shoes *alla Catalana*, of black leather instead of white, which was formerly the fashion. They wear bonnets (*berette*) of very showy appearance, and cavaliers and gentlemen wear gold chains *alla Neapolitana*, and other effeminate gallantries of the same description. And then the women! They wear long tails called *passatempo*. The married go with the backs of their heads uncovered (*coppe discoperte*) and widows with daintily-worked gloves of delicate dogskin (*guanti sottili di cani*). The young ladies wear long tails to their dresses and brocade bands with gilt buckles round their waists, and shoes *alla Catalana*, and even the little girls are dressed in the Venetian fashion. And what is the effect of all this extravagance? Is it not lamentable? See, in consequence, how few girls get husbands. Nor is it much to be wondered at that young men should object to choose those for their wives who in appearance and manners are so very little different from the

---

class to whom they pretend to hold themselves superior.”

From the above description it would appear that Ferrara, in the sixteenth century, possessed “a girl of the period,” as little admired by the steady-going portion of the population as the one who has obtained so much notoriety in the present day. The toilet table of “a lady of quality of the period,” possibly possessed as many cosmetics as are in use among ladies in the present day. The Cavalier Cittadella\* mentions a little tract in the library of Ferrara, without date, but evidently printed at the commencement of the sixteenth century, containing a list and a description of the cosmetics sold by two eminent perfumers in Ferrara, which they pretended to have purchased from “two merchants arriving from Soria, who had brought them from the East.” It would be difficult to know in what manner some of these were applied, or what

---

\* Notizie relative a Ferrara.

effect they were to produce, other than increasing the beauty of a lady, or more probably hiding her defects. Among these was a powder of white mushrooms, Cyprus powder, perfumes, scammony, powdered candied sugar, dark powder for colouring the eyelids, powder of white and red coral, and powdered talc, the latter being mixed as a sparkling for the hair. The tract also contains several recipes for turning black hair to a gold or yellow colour. Possibly Lucrezia Borgia might have introduced this coloured hair into fashion in Ferrara, although judging from numerous specimens of golden hair to be found in the ancient Venetian pictures, the art of dyeing the hair was known there before the date of her arrival. Many writers on subjects connected with the fine arts in Italy appear to imagine the habit in the north of Italy more frequent than it really was; a brilliant gold-coloured hair being very common among the women in the northern parts, and it may frequently be met with in the present day among



the peasantry in Lombardy. Possibly a distinction may be drawn between those whose hair was a perfect yellow, and those with a golden tinge in it, the former being principally artificial, the latter natural.

Nor was their excessive love of luxury in dress confined to the laity. The clergy, whose duty it was to preach against the vanities of the world, and the love of purple and fine linen, seem rather to have stimulated the general desire for ostentatious display than to have attempted to repress it, and that without any interference from the Popes Alexander VI. or Julius II. Leo X. was hardly a pontiff to be severe on such matters, and the abuse went on till at last the clergy, being possibly less under the direct action of the sumptuary laws than the laity, indulged in all the extravagances of fashion with perfect impunity. On the breaking out of the Reformation, the luxury of the Italian priesthood in matters of dress was a favourite theme with the Protestant preachers, and told with so much effect as

to cause no little anxiety in Rome, so completely were the ecclesiastical authorities unable to resist or defend the accusations brought against their clergy. But if the Church of Rome was unable to defend herself against the attacks made by the leaders of the Reformation on the extravagance and luxury of the priesthood, it had at any rate the effect of arousing later Popes to use strong efforts to abate the scandal. We find in a Brief of Pope Clement VII., sent to the clergy and monks of Modena (and Ferrara was so intimately connected with Modena, that a Brief sent to the clergy of one city might be considered equally applicable to the other), ordering them under penalty of excommunication and the loss of their benefices, to dress themselves in the costume of honest priests (*preti honesti*) without beards, and other ridiculous fashions, such as velvet shoes, shirts embroidered with silk, and long flowing sleeves. "And also we hear," it continues, "there are many young priests enamoured (*innamorati*), who would be more in their place

---

in the galleys than in a church; and Martin Luther frequently brings forward these facts in his preaching, especially in his sermon at Lamagna against the Pope. His Holiness," the Brief concludes, "has ordered all his court to dress with the simplicity of priests, and they no longer appear reprobates (*strichiæ*) as formerly."

From his first assuming the reins of government, Duke Ercole seems to have differed considerably from the views entertained on the subject of dress by his predecessors. With one solitary exception, he appears to have allowed his subjects ample opportunity to indulge their taste in dress without let or impediment on his part. On the contrary, he appears rather to have stimulated it by his example than otherwise. The exception alluded to was one of the four edicts he issued on his elevation to the dukedom, and is curious as being perhaps the only example in which a legislative enactment regulating female dress appears to have had any effect. The proclamation alluded to was issued April 2, 1476.

In it he forbids all women to appear in the streets or in public with their faces concealed either by veils or masks, inasmuch as there were many women of bad character in Ferrara, who, through having their faces concealed, were able to move in society with respectable people without being known, while, on the other hand, women of respectability were equally liable to be considered as disreputable. This edict appears to have been treated with marked respect by the Ferrarese ladies, not a single case of disobedience being on record.

Of the luxury of gentlemen in their dress, it would be impossible to give any detailed description, but some idea of the extravagance they indulged in may be formed from the list of the wardrobe of a young nobleman in the sixteenth century, mentioned in Cittadella's work on the antiquities of Ferrara. Among other things we find no fewer than three different sorts of trousers, some (*abraga*) enclosing the foot, others loose, and others like the modern knickerbockers;

doublets trimmed with fringe and gold embroidery, frocks or blouses (*saione*) handsomely trimmed, velvet, damask, and satin tunics. Waistcoats of gold brocade, mantles covered with pheasant skins, a dressing-gown of embroidered black velvet, tabards for the lackeys ornamented with flames embroidered in gold thread on the collars, and brown satin tunics for the running footmen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :  
SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS,  
CHANDOS STREET.



