# THE LIFE

# OF

# LORENZO DE' MEDICI, A.D. 1449-1492,

# CALLED

# THE MAGNIFICENT.

BY

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PREFACE.

The close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century comprehend one of those periods of history which are entitled to our minutest study and inquiry. Almost all the great events from which Europe derives its present advantages are to be traced up to those times. The invention of the art of printing, the discovery of the great western continent, the schism from the church of Rome, which ended in the Reformation of many of its abuses, and established the precedent of reform, the degree of perfection attained in the fine arts, and the final introduction of true principles of criticism and taste, compose such an illustrious assemblage of luminous points, as cannot fail of attracting for ages the curiosity and admiration of mankind.

A complete history of these times has long been a great desideratum in literature; and whoever considers the magnitude of the undertaking will not think it likely to be soon supplied. Indeed, from the nature of the transactions which then took place, they can only be exhibited in detail and under separate and particular views. That the author of the following pages has frequently turned his eye towards this interesting period is true; but he has felt himself rather dazzled than informed by the survey. A mind of greater compass, and the possession of uninterrupted leisure, would be requisite to comprehend, to select, and to arrange the immense variety of circumstances which a full narrative of those times would involve; when almost every city of Italy was a new Athens, and that favoured country could boast its historians, its poets, its orators, and its artists, who may contend with the great names of antiquity for the palm of mental excellence; when Venice, Milan, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Ferrara, and several other places, vied with each other, not in arms, but in science and in genius, and the splendour of a court was estimated by the number of learned men who illustrated it by their presence; each of whose lives and productions would, in a work of this nature, merit a full and separate discussion.

From this full blaze of talents, the author has turned towards a period, when its first faint gleams afford a subject, if not more interesting, at least more suited to his powers; when, after a night of unexpected darkness, Florence again saw the sun break forth with a lustre more permanent, though perhaps not so bright. The days of Dante, of Boccaccio, and of Petrarca, were indeed past; but under the auspices of the House of Medici, and particularly through the ardour and example of Lorenzo, the empire of science and true taste was again restored.

After the death of Boccaccio, the survivor of that celebrated triumvirate who had carried their native tongue to a high pitch of refinement, and endeavoured, not without success, to introduce the study of ancient languages into Italy, a general degradation of letters again took place, and the Italian tongue in particular was so far deteriorated and debased, as, by the acknowledgment of the best critics, to have become scarcely intelligible. The first symptoms of improvement appeared about the middle of the fifteenth century, when Cosimo de' Medici, after having established his authority in Florence, devoted the latter years of a long and honourable life to the encouragement, and even the study of philosophy and polite letters. He died in 1464; and the infirm state of health of his son Piero, who was severely afflicted by the gout, did not permit him to make that progress in the path which his father had pointed out, which his natural disposition would otherwise have effected. After surviving him only about five years, the greater part of which time he was confined to a sick bed, he died, leaving two sons, to the elder of whom, Lorenzo, the praise of having restored to literature its ancient honours is principally due. In succeeding times, indeed, that praise has been almost exclusively bestowed on Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Leo the Tenth, the second son of Lorenzo, who undoubtedly promoted the views, but never in any degree rivalled the talents of his father.

Certain it is that no man was ever more admired and venerated by his contemporaries, or has been more defrauded of his just fame by posterity, than Lorenzo de' Medici. Possessed of a genius more original and versatile perhaps than any of his countrymen, he has led the way in some of the most valuable species of poetic composition; and some of his productions stand unrivalled amongst those of his countrymen to the present day. Yet such has been the admiration paid by the Italians to a few favourite authors, that they have almost closed their eyes to the various excellences with which his works abound. From the time of his death, no general collection was made of his writings for upwards of sixty years; and after their first publication by Aldus, in 1554, upwards of two centuries elapsed without a new edition. Neglected in Italy, they seem to have been unknown to the rest of Europe. A French historian, in whose narrative Lorenzo makes a conspicuous figure, assures his readers that the writings of this great man, as well in verse as prose, are irrecoverably lost; and that he would no longer be known as an author, were it not from the commendations bestowed upon him by his friends, and the attention paid to him by Paulus Jovius, who has assigned a place to his memory in his eulogies on the modern writers of Italy.

But we are not to consider Lorenzo de' Medici merely in the character of an author and a patron of Earning. As a statesman he was undoubtedly the most extraordinary person of his own, or perhaps of any, time. Though a private citizen and a merchant of Florence, he not only obtained the decided control of that state, at a period when it abounded with men of the greatest talents and acuteness, but raised himself to the rank of sole arbiter of Italy, and produced no inconsiderable effect upon the politics of Europe. Without attempting to subjugate his native place, he laid the foundation of the future greatness of his family. His son and his nephew were both, at a short interval from each other, raised to the pontifical dignity; and, in the succeeding centuries, his descendants became connected by marriage with the first European sovereigns. The protection afforded by him to all the polite arts, gave them a permanent foundation in Italy. In the establishment of public libraries, schools, and seminaries of learning, he was equally munificent, indefatigable, and successful; and these objects were all accomplished by a man who died at the early age of forty-four years.

It is not, however, the intention of the author of the following work to confine himself merely to the relation of the life of an individual, however illustrious. Of a family of whom so much has been said, and so little with certainty known, a more particular account cannot be uninteresting. In aiming at this purpose, he has been unavoidably led to give some account of the rise of modern literature, and particularly to notice many contemporary authors, whose reputation, at least in this country, has not yet been adequate to their merits. In an age when long and dangerous expeditions are undertaken to develop the manners of barbarians, or to discover the source of a river, it will surely not be thought an useless attempt to endeavour to trace some of those minute and almost imperceptible causes, from which we are to deduce our present proficiency in letters, in science, and in arts.

Among the several narratives heretofore published of the life of Lorenzo de' Medici, the most ancient is that of Niccolò Valori, a Florentine, eminent for his rank and learning, the contemporary and friend of Lorenzo. This account, written not inelegantly in Latin, and which composes a small octavo volume of sixty-seven pages, remained in manuscript till Laurentius Mehus gave it to the public in 1749. An Italian translation had indeed been published at Florence, as early as the year 1560. The principal events in the life of Lorenzo are here related with accuracy and fidelity; but upon the whole it gives us too distant and indistinct a view of him. Though sensible in some respects of the magnitude of his subject, Valori seems not to have been sufficiently aware of the distinguishing characteristics of Lorenzo,—the strength, extent, and versatility of his mind. Hence he has exhibited him only in one principal point of view, either wholly omitting, or at most slightly noticing, his many other endowments. Closely adhering to his purpose, he confines himself to too small a circle, and enters not into those discussions respecting collateral events and circumstances, which a full display of the character of Lorenzo requires. The

work of Valori may, however, be considered, not only as a well-written and authentic piece of biography, but as the foundation of all subsequent efforts on the same subject, although it wants that interest which it would have derived from a closer and more intimate examination of the temper, the character, and the writings of Lorenzo.

By what strange fatality it happened that the reputation of the most eminent man of his own age should have fallen into almost absolute neglect in the course of that which immediately succeeded, it is difficult to discover; particularly when we consider that the Italians have been by no means inattentive to their national glory; and that the memoirs of the lives of many of the contemporaries of Lorenzo, who were inferior to him in every point of view, have been fully and even ostentatiously set forth. Whatever was the cause, it is certain, that from the publication of the work of Valori in its Italian dress, till the year 1763, no professed account of Lorenzo de' Medici made its appearance in public; although few authors have touched upon the history of those times, without paying him the passing tribute of their applause. This is the more extraordinary, as the materials for enlarging and improving the narrative of Valori were obvious. In the year last mentioned, the poems of Lorenzo were reprinted at Bergamo, and a new account of the life of the author was prefixed to the work. From this, however, little is to be expected, when it is understood that the biographer, in his introduction, acknowledges that it is entirely founded on that of Valori, upon whose authority solely relies, and protests against being answerable for any fact alleged by him, further than that authority warrants. To an exertion of this kind, as he justly observes, neither the deep research of criticism, nor the assistance of rare books was necessary. In the few attempts which he has made to afford additional information, he has resorted principally to Negri, and Varillas, whose authority, nevertheless, he has himself deservedly impeached, and whose inaccuracy renders their testimony of little weight, when not expressly confirmed by other writers.

About twenty years since, several learned Italians united in drawing up memoirs of such of their countrymen as had distinguished themselves in different branches of science and arts; and the life of Lorenzo, amongst others, fell to the pen of P. Bruno Bruni, professor of divinity in Florence. Unfortunately, however, it was executed without any new researches, being entirely compiled from previous publications; and it must be owned that the work derives no advantages from the professional prejudices or opinions of its author. The conspiracy of the Pazzi is one of the most striking events that ever engaged the attention of the historian; and the circumstances which accompanied it compose a body of evidence as accurate and authentic as history can produce. But the delicacy of the biographer shrunk from the relation of an incident that involved in the guilt of premeditated assassination, the Vicar of Christ upon the earth! This event is accordingly passed over with a general reference to previous relations; and an annotation is subjoined, tending to impeach the evidence of one who was an eyewitness of the transaction, and whose narrative was laid before the public immediately after the event took place. No extraordinary number of pages was devoted to the work; and it may be enough to remark, that the resemblance of Lorenzo de' Medici does not well associate with a set of petty portraits, hung up by way of ornament, in frames of equal sizes. In order to do justice to such a subject, a larger canvass is necessary.

In enumerating the labours of my predecessors, it may not be improper more particularly to notice the singular work of Varillas, to which I have before had occasion to refer. This book, written in a lively style, with great pretensions to secret information from manuscripts in the French king's library, has more the resemblance of a romance than of an authentic narrative; and if we may judge of the author's private anecdotes, from his misrepresentations and mistakes in matters of more general notoriety, we shall frequently be compelled to consider them rather as the offspring of his own imagination, than as substantiated facts. The absurdities of this author have frequently been exposed by Bayle, who has in many instances pointed out his glaring perversions of the relations of Paulus Jovius, the veracity of whom as an historian is itself sufficiently equivocal. The accuracy of Varillas may in some degree be determined by the singular

list of books and manuscripts from which he professes to have derived his information, the very existence of some of which yet rests on his own authority.

Such, however, being the attempts that had been made to exhibit to the public the life and labours of Lorenzo de' Medici, I conceived that there could be no great degree of arrogance in endeavouring to give a more full and particular account of them : nor was I deterred from this undertaking by the consideration, that Providence had placed my lot beyond the limits of that favoured country,

"Ch' Appenin parte, e'l mar circonda, e'l Alpe."

The truth is, that even in a remote part of this remote kingdom, and deprived of the many advantages peculiar to seats of learning, I saw no difficulty in giving a more full, distinct, and accurate idea of the subject than could be collected from any performance I had then met with. For some years past, the works of the Italian writers had amused a portion of my leisure hours; a partiality for any particular object generally awakens the desire of obtaining further information respecting it; and from the perusal of the Italian poets, I was insensibly led to attend to the literary history of that cultivated nation. In tracing the rise of modern literature, I soon perceived that everything great and excellent in science and in art, revolved round Lorenzo de' Medici, during the short but splendid era of his life, as a common centre, and derived from him its invariable preservation and support. Under these impressions I began to collect such scattered notices respecting him as fell in my way; and the Florentine histories of Macchiavelli and Ammirato, the critical labours of Crescimbeni, Muratori, Bandini, and Tiraboschi, with other works of less importance, of which I then found myself possessed, supplied me with materials towards the execution of my plan. I had not, however, proceeded far, before I perceived that the subject deserved a more minute inquiry; for which purpose it would be necessary to resort to contemporary authorities, and, if possible, to original documents. The impracticability of obtaining in this country the information of which I stood in need, would perhaps have damped the ardour of my undertaking, had not a circumstance presented itself in the highest degree favourable to my purpose. An intimate friend, with whom I had been many years united in studies and affection, had paid a visit to Italy, and had fixed his winter residence at Florence. I well knew that I had only to request his assistance, in order to obtain whatever information he had an opportunity of procuring, from the very spot which was to be the scene of my intended history. My inquiries were particularly directed towards the Laurentian and Riccardi libraries, which I was convinced would afford much original and interesting information. It would be unjust merely to say that my friend afforded me the assistance I required; he went far beyond even the hopes I had formed, and his return to his native country was, if possible, rendered still more grateful to me, by the materials he had collected for my use. Amongst these I had the pleasure to find several beautiful poems of Lorenzo de' Medici, the originals of which are deposited in the Laurentian library, although the former editors of his works appear not to have had the slightest information respecting them. These poems, which have been copied with great accuracy, and, where it was possible, collated with different manuscripts, will now for the first time be given to the public. The munificence of the late Grand Duke Leopold, and the liberality of the Marquis Riccardi, had opened the inestimable treasures of their collections to every inquirer. Under the regulations of the venerable Canonico Bandini, to whose labours the literary history of Italy is highly indebted, such arrangements have been adopted in the Laurentian library, that every difficulty which might retard research is effectually removed; and an institution founded by Cosimo, and promoted by Lorenzo de' Medici, yet subsists, the noblest monument of their glory, the most authentic depository of their fame.

Amongst a number of printed volumes, immediately or remotely connected with my principal subject, which were supplied by the attention of my friend, were two works of which he had given me previous information. These were the life of Lorenzo de' Medici, written in Latin, by

Monsignor Fabroni, a learned Italian prelate, and published in the year 1784, in two volumes in quarto; and the life of his grandfather Cosimo, by the same author, published in one volume in quarto in the year 1789. On receiving these extensive productions, it became a subject of consideration, whether it might not be advisable to lay aside my own narrative, although it was then far advanced, and satisfy myself with a translation of the former of these works, adding such remarks as my previous researches had enabled me to make. The perusal of these volumes, whilst it afforded me considerable gratification, soon, however, convinced me that the purpose I had in view could not be obtained by a translation. The leading object of Fabroni is to illustrate the political, rather than the literary life of Lorenzo. It appeared to me, that the mere historical events of the fifteenth century, so far as they regarded Italy, could not deeply interest my countrymen in the eighteenth; but I conceived that the progress of letters and of arts would be attended to with pleasure in every country where they were cultivated and protected : many other motives, some of which will appear in the course of the work, determined me to prosecute my original plan : and the history now presented to the public bears no more resemblance to that of Fabroni, than his does to that of his predecessor Valori. The general incidents in the life of Lorenzo are indeed nearly the same in all; but for most of the sentiments and observations that may occur in the ensuing volume, and for a considerable part of the narrative, particularly such as relates to the state and progress of letters and of arts, the responsibility must fall on myself.

But although I have not thought it eligible to rest satisfied with a mere translation of the works of Fabroni, I have derived from them very important assistance and information. The numerous and authentic documents which he obtained by diligent researches through the archives of Florence, and which occupy two-thirds of his work, are a treasure, with which, in the infancy of my undertaking, I little expected to be gratified. The assistance derived from these sources did not, however, supersede my exertions in procuring such additional information as other parts of the continent and this country could supply. The Crevenna library, lately exposed for sale at Amsterdam, and the Pinelli in London, furnished me with several publications of early date, for which I might otherwise long have inquired throughout Europe to no purpose. The rich and extensive catalogues published by Edwards, Payne, and other London booksellers, who have of late years diligently sought for and imported into England whatever is curious or valuable in foreign literature, have also contributed to the success of my inquiries; and I may justly say, that I have spared neither trouble nor expense in the acquisition of whatever appeared to be necessary to the prosecution of my work.

# THE LIFE OF LORENZO DE MEDICI.

## CHAPTER I.

### 1448—1464.

Florence has been remarkable in modern history for the frequency and violence of its internal dissensions, and for the predilection of its inhabitants for every species of science, and every production of art. However discordant these characteristics may appear, it is not difficult to reconcile them. The same active spirit that calls forth the talents of individuals for the preservation of their liberties, and resists with unconquerable resolution whatever is supposed to infringe them; in the moments of domestic peace and security seeks with avidity other objects of employment. The defence of freedom has always been found to expand and strengthen the mind; and though the faculties of the human race may remain torpid for generations, when once roused into action they cannot speedily be lulled again into inactivity and repose.

Of the rise of Florence little can be traced with certainty, although much research has been employed on the subject. If we give credit to its historian Machiavelli it derives its origin from the ancient and venerable city of Fiesole, whose walls yet remain at the distance of about three miles from Florence. The situation of Fiesole, on the summit of a steep hill, induced its inhabitants, many of whom were early devoted to commerce, to erect habitations for the convenience of traffic on the plain below, between the river Arno and the foot of the mountain. During the continuance of the Roman republic this infant establishment was reinforced by colonists from Rome. The popular tradition of the place, countenanced by Landino and Verini, refers this event to the times of the dictatorship of Sylla, whilst Politiano places it under the triumvirate of Octavius, Antonius, and Lepidus.

In the frequent irruptions of the northern nations that subverted the Roman state, Florence followed the fate of the rest of Italy; but about the year 1010 it had acquired some degree of strength and independence, which was first exerted in attacking and demolishing the place from which it sprung. Fiesole retains few traces of its former importance: but its delightful situation and pure air still render it an agreeable and healthy residence.

For some centuries previous to the commencement of the present history, the government of Florence had fluctuated between an aristocratic and a popular form. The discord and animosity that arose from this instability may well be conceived. When either of the contending factions had obtained the ascendancy, the leaders of it soon disagreed in the exercise of their power; and the weaker party, attaching themselves to the body of the people, speedily effected a revolution. The frequency of electing their magistrates, at the same time that it was favourable to the preservation of their liberties, fomented a continual spirit of opposition and resentment. A secret enmity even in the most tranquil days of the republic, subsisted among the leaders of the different factions, and the slightest circumstance, whether of a foreign or domestic nature, was sufficient to kindle the latent spark into an open flame. The contests between the Ghibellini and the Guelfi, and between the Bianchi and the Neri, were entered into by the Florentines with an eagerness beyond that of any other people in Europe. For a great length of time Florence was at continual war with itself; and a number of citizens under the name of Fuorusciti, or refugees, were constantly employed in attempting to regain their native residence, for which purpose they scrupled not, by all possible means, to excite the resentment of other powers against it. If their attempts proved successful, the weaker party left the city, till they in their turn could expel their conquerors.

These disadvantages were however amply compensated by the great degree of freedom enjoyed by the citizens of Florence, which had the most favourable effects on their character, and gave them a decided superiority over the inhabitants of the rest of Italy. The popular nature of the government, not subjected to the will of an individual, as in many of the surrounding states, nor restricted, like that of Venice, to a particular class, was a constant incitement to exertion. Nor was it only on the great body of the people that the good effects of this system were apparent; even those who claimed the privileges of ancestry, felt the advantages of a rivalship which prevented their sinking into indolence, and called upon them to support, by their own talents, the rank and influence which they had derived from those of their ancestors. Where the business of government is confined to a few, the faculties of the many become torpid for want of exercise; but in Florence, every citizen was conversant with, and might hope, at least, to partake in the government; and hence was derived that spirit of industry, which, in the pursuit of wealth and the extension of commerce, was, amidst all their intestine broils, so conspicuous and so successful. The fatigues of public life, and the cares of mercantile avocations, were alleviated at times by the study of literature or the speculations of philosophy. A rational and dignified employment engaged those moments of leisure not necessarily devoted to more important concerns, and the mind was relaxed without being debilitated, and amused without being depraved. The superiority which the Florentines thus acquired was universally acknowledged, and they became the historians, the poets, the orators, and the preceptors of Europe.

The family of the Medici had for many ages been esteemed one of the most considerable in the republic; nor have there been wanting authors who have derived its eminence from the age of Charlemagne: but it must be remembered, that these genealogies have been the production of subsequent times, when the elevation of this family to the supreme command in Florence, made it necessary to impress on the minds of the people an idea of its antiquity and respectability. It appears, however, from authentic monuments, that many individuals of this family had signalised themselves on important occasions. Giovanni de' Medici, in the year 1351, with a body of only one hundred Florentines, forced his way through the Milanese army, then besieging the fortress of Scarperia, and entered the place with the loss of twenty lives.

Salvestro de' Medici acquired great reputation by his temperate but firm resistance to the tyranny of the nobles, who, in order to secure their power, accused those who opposed them of being attached to the party of the Ghibelines, then in great odium at Florence. The persons so accused were said to be admonished, *ammoniti*, and by that act were excluded from all offices of government. This custom was at length carried to such an extreme as to become insufferable. In the year 1379, Salvestro, being chosen chief magistrate, exerted his power in reforming this abuse; which was not however effected without a violent commotion, in which several of the nobility lost their lives. After the death of Salvestro, his son, Veri de' Medici, continued to hold a high rank in the republic, and, like the rest of this family, was always in great favour with the populace.

The person, however, who may be said to have laid the foundation of that greatness which his posterity enjoyed for several ages, was Giovanni de' Medici, the great grandfather of Lorenzo, the subject of our present history. By a strict attention to commerce, he acquired immense wealth; by his affability, moderation, and liberality, he ensured the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens. Without seeking after the offices of the republic, he was honoured with them all. The maxims which, uniformly pursued, raised the house of Medici to the splendour which it afterwards enjoyed, are to be found in the charge given by this venerable old man on his death-bed to his two sons, Cosmo and Lorenzo: “I feel”, said he, “that I have lived the time prescribed me. I die content; leaving you, my sons, in affluence and in health, and in such a station, that whilst you follow my example, you may live in your native place honoured and respected. Nothing affords me more pleasure, than the reflection that my conduct has not given offence to anyone; but that, on the contrary, I have endeavoured to serve all persons to the best of my abilities. I advise you to do the same. With respect to the honours of the state, if you would live with security,

accept only such as are bestowed on you by the laws, and the favour of your fellow citizens; for it is the exercise of that power which is obtained by violence, and not of that which is voluntarily given, that occasions hatred and contention". He died in the year 1428, leaving two sons, Cosimo, born in the year 1389, and Lorenzo in 1394, from the latter of whom is derived the collateral branch of the family, which, in the beginning of he sixteenth century, obtained the absolute sovereignty of Tuscany.

Even in the lifetime of his father, Cosimo had engaged himself deeply, not only in the extensive commerce by which the family had acquired its wealth, but in the weightier concerns of government. Such was his authority and reputation, and that in the year 1414, when Balthasar Cossa, who had been elected pope, and had assumed the name of John XXIII, was summoned to attend the council of Constance, he chose to be accompanied by Cosimo de' Medici, amongst other men of eminence whose characters might countenance his cause. By this council, which continued nearly four years, Balthasar was deprived of his pontifical dignity, and Otto Colonna, who took the name of Martin V, was elected pope. Divested of his authority, and pursued by his numerous adversaries, Balthasar endeavoured to save himself by flight. Cosimo did not desert in adversity the man to whom he had attached himself in prosperity. At the expense of a large sum of money, he redeemed him from the hands of the duke of Bavaria, who had seized upon his person; and afterwards gave him an hospitable shelter at Florence during the remainder of his life. Nor did the successful pontiff resent the kindness shown to his rival; on the contrary, he soon afterwards paid a public visit to Florence, where, on the formal submission of Balthasar, and at the request of the Medici, he created him a cardinal, with the privilege of taking the first place in the sacred college. The new-made cardinal did not long survive this honour. He died in the year 1419, and it was supposed, that the Medici at his death possessed themselves of immense riches which he had acquired during his pontificate. This notion was afterwards encouraged for malevolent purposes, by those who well knew its falsehood. The true source of the wealth of the Medici, was their superior talents and application to commerce. The property of the cardinal was scarcely sufficient to discharge his legacies and his debts.

After the death of Giovanni de' Medici, Cosimo supported and increased the family dignity. His conduct was uniformly marked by urbanity and kindness to the superior ranks of his fellow-citizens, and by a constant attention to the interests and wants of the lower class, whom he relieved with unbounded generosity. By these means he acquired numerous and zealous partisans, of every denomination; but he rather considered them as pledges for the continuance of the power he possessed, than as instruments to be employed in extending it to the ruin and subjugation of the state. "No family", says Voltaire, "ever obtained its power by so just a title".

The authority which Cosimo and his descendants exercised in Florence during the fifteenth century, was of a very peculiar nature; and consisted rather in a tacit influence on their part, and a voluntary acquiescence on that of the people, than in any prescribed or definite compact between them. The form of government was ostensibly a republic, and was directed by a council of ten citizens, and a chief executive officer called the *Gonfaloniere* or standard-bearer, who was chosen every two months. Under this establishment the citizens imagined they enjoyed the full exercise of their liberties; but such was the power of the Medici, that they generally either assumed to themselves the first offices of the state, or nominated such persons as they thought proper to those employments. In this, however, they paid great respect to popular opinion. That opposition of interests so apparent between the people and their rulers, was at this time scarcely perceived at Florence, where superior qualifications and industry were the surest recommendations to public authority and favour. Convinced of the benefits constantly received from this family, and satisfied that they could at any time withdraw themselves from a connexion that exacted no engagements, and required only a temporally acquiescence, the Florentines considered the Medici as the fathers, and not as the rulers of the republic. On the other hand, the chiefs of this house, by appearing rather to decline than to court the honours bestowed on them, and by a singular

moderation in the use of them when obtained, were careful to maintain the character of simple citizens of Florence, and servants of the state. An interchange of reciprocal good offices was the only tie by which the Florentines and the Medici were bound, and perhaps the long continuance of this connexion may be attributed to the very circumstance of its having been in the power of either of the parties, at any time, to dissolve it.

But the prudence and moderation of Cosimo, though they soothed the jealous apprehensions of the Florentines, could not at all times repress the ambitious designs of those who wished to possess or to share his authority. In the year 1433, Rinaldo do' Albizi, at the head of a powerful party, carried the appointment of the magistracy. At that time Cosmo had withdrawn to his seat at Mugello, where he had remained some months, in order to avoid the disturbances that he saw were likely to ensue; but at the request of his friends he returned to Florence, where he was led to expect that an union of the different parties would be effected, so as to preserve the peace of the city. In this expectation he was however disappointed. No sooner did he make his appearance in the palace, where his presence had been requested on pretence of his being intended to share in the administration of the republic, than he was seized upon by his adversaries, and committed to the custody of Federigo Malavolti. He remained in this situation for several days, in constant apprehension of some violence being offered to his person; but he still more dreaded that the malice of his enemies might attempt his life by poison. During four days, a small portion of bread was the only food which he thought proper to take.

The generosity of his keeper at length relieved him from this state of anxiety. In order to induce him to take his food with confidence, Malavolti partook of it with him. In the meantime his brother Lorenzo, and his cousin Averardo, having raised a considerable body of men from Romagna and other neighbouring parts, and being joined by Niccolò Tolentino, the commander of the troops of the republic, approached towards Florence to his relief; but the apprehensions that in case they resorted to open violence, the lite of Cosimo might be endangered, induced them to abandon their enterprise. At length Rinaldo and his adherents obtained a decree of the magistracy against the Medici and their friends, by which Cosimo was banished to Padua for ten years, Lorenzo to Venice for five years, and several of their relations and adherents were involved in a similar punishment. Cosimo would gladly have left the city pursuant to his sentence, but his enemies thought it more advisable to retain him till they had established their authority; and they frequently gave him to understand, that if his friends raised any opposition to their measures, his life should answer it. He also suspected that another reason for his detention was to ruin him in his credit and circumstances; his mercantile concerns being then greatly extended. As soon as these disturbances were known, several of the states of Italy interfered in his behalf. Three ambassadors arrived from Venice, who proposed to take him under their protection, and to engage that he should strictly submit to the sentence imposed on him. The Marquis of Ferrara also gave a similar proof of his attachment. Though their interposition was not immediately successful, it was of great importance to Cosimo, and secured him from the attempts of those who aimed at his life. After a confinement of nearly a month, some of his friends, finding in his adversaries a disposition to gentler measures, took occasion to forward his cause by the timely application of a sum of money to Bernardo Guadagni, the Gonfaloniere, and to Mariotto Baldovinetti, two of the creatures of Rinaldo. This measure was successful. He was privately taken from his confinement by night, and led out of Florence. For this piece of service Guadagni received one thousand florins, and Baldovinetti eight hundred. “They were poor souls”, says Cosimo, in his Ricordi; “for if money had been their object, they might have had ten thousand, or more, to have freed me from the perils of such a situation”.

From Florence, Cosimo proceeded immediately towards Venice, and at every place through which he passed, experienced the most flattering attention, and the warmest expressions of regard. On his approach to that city he was met by his brother Lorenzo, and many of his friends, and was received by the senate with such honours as were bestowed by that stately republic only

on persons of the highest quality and distinction. After a short stay there, he went to Padua, the place prescribed for his banishment; but on an application to the Florentine state, by Andrea Donate, the Venetian ambassador, he was permitted to reside on any part of the Venetian territories, but not to approach within the distance of one hundred and seventy miles from Florence. The affectionate reception which he had met with at Venice induced him to fix his abode there, until a change of circumstances should restore him to his native country.

Amongst the several learned and ingenious men that accompanied Cosimo in his banishment, or resorted to him during his stay at Venice, was Michellozzo Michellozzi, a Florentine sculptor and architect, whom Cosimo employed in making models and drawings of the most remarkable buildings in Venice, and also in forming a library in the monastery of St. George, which he enriched with many valuable manuscripts, and left as an honourable monument of his gratitude, to a place that had afforded him so kind an asylum in his adversity.

During his residence at Venice, Cosimo also received frequent visits from Ambrogio Traversari, a learned monk of Camaldoli, near Florence, and afterwards superior of the monastery at that place. Though chiefly confined within the limits of a cloister, Traversari had, perhaps, the best pretensions to the character of a polite scholar of any man of that age. From the letters of Traversari, now extant, we learn that Cosimo and his brother not only bore their misfortunes with firmness, but continued to express on every occasion an inviolable attachment to their native place.

The readiness with which Cosimo had given way to temporary clamour raised against him, and the reluctance which he had shown to renew those bloody rencounters that had so often disgraced the streets of Florence, gained him new friends. The utmost exertions of his antagonists could not long prevent the choice of such magistrates as were known to be attached to the cause of the Medici; and no sooner did they enter on their office, than Cosimo and his brother were recalled, and Rinaldo, with his adherents, were compelled to quit the city. This event took place about the expiration of twelve months from the time of Cosimo's banishment.

From this time the life of Cosimo de' Medici was an almost uninterrupted series of prosperity. The tranquillity enjoyed by the republic, and the satisfaction and peace of mind which he experienced in the esteem and confidence of his fellow-citizens, enabled him to indulge his natural propensity to the promotion of science and the encouragement of learned men. The study of the Greek language had been introduced into Italy, principally by the exertions of the celebrated Boccaccio, towards the latter part of the preceding century, but on the death of that great promoter of letters it again fell into neglect. After a short interval, another attempt was made to revive it by the intervention of Emanuel Chrysoloras, a noble Greek, who, during the interval of his important embassies, taught that language at Florence and other cities of Italy, about the beginning of the fifteenth century. His disciples were numerous and respectable. Amongst others of no inconsiderable note, were Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini, the two latter of whom were natives of Arezzo, whence they took the name of Aretino, Poggio Bracciolini, Guarino Veronese, and Francesco Filelfo, who, after the death of Chrysoloras, in 1415, strenuously vied with each other in the support of Grecian literature, and were successful enough to keep the flame alive till it received new aid from other learned Greeks, who were driven from Constantinople by the dread of the Turks, or by the total overthrow of the eastern empire. To these illustrious foreigners, as well as to those eminent Italians, who shortly became their successful rivals, even in the knowledge of their national history and language, Cosimo afforded the most liberal protection and support. Of this the numerous productions inscribed to his name, or devoted to his praise, are an ample testimony. In some of these he is commended for his attachment to his country, his liberality to his friends, his benevolence to all. He is denominated the protector of the needy, the refuge of the oppressed, the constant patron and support of learned men. "You have shown", says Poggio, "such humanity and moderation in dispensing the gifts of

fortune, that they seem to have been rather the reward of your virtues and merits, than conceded by her bounty. Devoted to the study of letters from your early years, you have by your example given additional splendour to science itself. Although involved in the weightier concerns of state, and unable to devote a great part of your time to books, yet you have found a constant satisfaction in the society of those learned men who have always frequented your house". In enumerating the men of eminence that distinguished the city of Florence, Flavio Blondo adverts in the first instance to Cosmo de' Medici. "A citizen, who, whilst he excels in wealth every other citizen of Europe, is rendered much more illustrious by his prudence, his humanity, his liberality, and what is more to our present purpose, by his knowledge of useful literature, and particularly of history".

That extreme avidity for the works of the ancient writers which distinguished the early part of the fifteenth century, announced the near approach of more enlightened times. Whatever were the causes that determined men of wealth and learning to exert themselves so strenuously in this pursuit, certain it is, that their interference was of the highest importance to the interests of posterity; and that if it had been much longer delayed, the loss would have been in a great degree irreparable; such of the manuscripts as then existed, of the ancient Greek and Roman authors, being daily perishing in obscure corners, a prey to oblivion and neglect. It was therefore a circumstance productive of the happiest consequences, that the pursuits of the opulent were at this time directed rather towards the recovery of the works of the ancients, than to the encouragement of contemporary merit; a fact that may serve in some degree to account for the dearth of original literary productions during this interval. Induced by the rewards that invariably attended a successful inquiry, those men who possessed any considerable share of learning, devoted themselves to this occupation, and to such a degree of enthusiasm was it carried, that the discovery of an ancient manuscript was regarded as almost equivalent to the conquest of a kingdom.

The history of the vicissitudes which the writings of the ancients have experienced, is little less than the history of literature itself, which has flourished or declined in proportion as they have been esteemed or neglected. A full and accurate detail of these circumstances, whilst it would be highly interesting to the scholar, would discharge in some degree the debt of gratitude due to those who have devoted their labours and their fortunes to this important service. In relinquishing an inquiry too extensive for the nature of the present work, it may be here allowed to advert to such remains of the ancient authors as were brought to light during the period in question, by the munificence of Cosimo de' Medici, and the industry of those who so earnestly seconded his endeavours.

Of all the learned men of his time, Poggio seems to have devoted himself the most particularly to this employment, and his exertions were crowned with ample success. The number of manuscripts discovered by him in different parts of Europe, during the space of near fifty years, will remain a lasting proof of his perseverance, and of his sagacity in these pursuits. Whilst he attended the council of Constance in the year 1415, he took an opportunity of visiting the convent of S. Gallo, distant from that city about twenty miles, where he had been informed that it was probable he might find some manuscripts of the ancient Roman writers. In his place he had the happiness to discover a complete copy of Quintilian, whose works had before appeared only in a mutilated and imperfect state. At the same time he found the first three books, and part of the fourth, of the *Argonautics* of Valerius Flaccus. Some idea may be formed of the critical state of these works from the account that Poggio has left. Buried in the obscurity of a dark and lonely tower, covered with filth and rubbish, their destruction seemed inevitable. Of this fortunate discovery he gave immediate notice to his friend Leonardo Aretino, who, by representing to him the importance and utility of his labours, stimulated him to fresh exertions. The letter addressed by Leonardo to Poggio on that occasion is full of the highest commendations, and the most extravagant expressions of joy. By his subsequent researches through France and Germany, Poggio also recovered several of the orations of Cicero. At that time only eight of the comedies of

Plautus were known. The first complete copy of that author was brought to Rome at the instance of Poggio, by Nicholas of Treves, a German monk, from whom it was purchased by the cardinal Giordano Orsini, who was afterwards with great difficulty prevailed upon to suffer Poggio and his friends to copy it; and even this favour would not have been granted without the warm interference of Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo de' Medici. The monk had flattered the Italian scholars that he also possessed a copy of the work of Aulus Gellius, and of the first book of Quintus Curtius; but in this they were disappointed. From a Latin elegy by Cristoforo Landino, on the death of Poggio, we are fully authorized to conclude that he also first discovered the beautiful and philosophic poem of Lucretius, that of Silius Italicus, and the valuable work of Columella: and from a memorial yet existing in the hand-writing of Angelo Politiano, it appears that the poems of Statius were brought into Italy by the same indefatigable investigator. In the opinion of Politiano these poems were indeed inaccurate and defective, yet all the copies which he had seen were derived from this manuscript.

Poggio had once formed the fullest expectations of obtaining a copy of the Decades of Livy, which a monk had assured him he had seen in the Cistercian monastery of Sora, comprised in two volumes in large Lombard characters. He immediately wrote to a friend at Florence, requesting him to prevail on Cosimo de' Medici to direct his agent in that neighbourhood to repair to the monastery, and to purchase the work. Some time afterwards Poggio addressed himself to Leonello d'Este, marquis of Ferrara, on the same subject, but apparently without any great hopes of success. His attempts to recover the writings of Tacitus were equally fruitless. After long inquiry he was convinced that no copy of that author existed in Germany; yet, at the distance of nearly a century, the five books of his history were brought from thence to Rome, and presented to Leo X. In prosecution of his favourite object, Poggio extended his researches into England, where he resided some time with the cardinal bishop of Winchester; and from whence he transmitted to Italy the Bucolics of Calphurnius, and a part of the works of Petronius.

The researches of Guarino Veronese, of Giovanni Aurispa, and of Francesco Filelfo, were directed towards another quarter. For the purpose of procuring ancient manuscripts, and of acquiring a competent knowledge of the Greek language, they visited Constantinople, and other parts of the east, where their perseverance was repaid by the acquisition of many valuable works. Guarino on his return to Italy was shipwrecked, and unfortunately for himself and the world, lost his treasures. So pungent was his grief upon this occasion, that if we may believe the relation of one of his countrymen, his hair became suddenly white. Aurispa was more successful; he arrived at Venice in the year 1423, with two hundred and thirty-eight manuscripts, amongst which were all the works of Plato, of Proclus, of Plotinus, of Lucian, of Xenophon, the histories of Arrian, of Dio, and of Diodorus Siculus, the geography of Strabo, the poems of Callimachus, of Pindar, of Oppian, and those attributed to Orpheus. In one of his epistles to Traversari, many other works are particularly enumerated, some of which are not at present known, and have most probably perished. The large sums of money which Aurispa had expended in purchasing so considerable a number of books, and the charges of conveying them to Venice, had exhausted his finances, and he was obliged to apply to Traversari to procure him the sum of fifty florins to relieve him from his embarrassments. This was readily supplied by Cosimo de' Medici and his brother Lorenzo, to whom Aurispa expresses his obligations with great warmth, and apparent sincerity.

Filelfo was about twenty years of age when he undertook his expedition to Constantinople, where he remained about seven years, and married the daughter of the noble and learned John Chrysoloras. In 1427 he returned to Italy with a great number of manuscripts which he had collected; and made a conspicuous figure amongst the literati there during the chief part of the fifteenth century, having been successively engaged as professor of different branches of science, at most of the universities and seminaries of education throughout that country. With all his learning, Filelfo had not acquired the art of controlling his own temper, which was in a high degree petulant, suspicious, and arrogant. His whole life was passed in quarrels and dissensions. At some

times he narrowly escaped the public punishment due to his excesses at others, the effects of the private resentment of those whom he had offended. He was even accused of having conspired against the life of Cosimo de' Medici, and of having engaged a Greek assassin to murder him. Their disagreement seems to have taken place during the exile of Cosimo at Venice. Amongst the letters of Filelfo there are some to Cosimo, in which he falls greatly short of the respect which he owed him for his patronage; and wherein he inveighs with much rancour against Niccolò Niccoli, and Carlo Aretino, the particular friends of Cosimo. From several of these letters he appears to have had frequent apprehensions of assassination; and even affects to accuse Cosimo of favouring the attempt. How much Cosimo was superior to such imputations, appeared in the moderation of his conduct, which at length overcame even the arrogance and resentment of Filelfo himself; who lived to receive innumerable favours from him and his descendants; and died at Florence in the year 1481, in the eighty-third year of his age.

The productions of Filelfo are very numerous, and in almost every branch of literature. His industry in collecting manuscripts was, however, of more indisputable service to the cause of learning. Of the particular works brought by him into Italy he has not left a very explicit account, but it appears that he had sent a considerable number to his friend Leonardo Giustiniani at Venice, from whom he found some difficulty in obtaining them after his return. The letters of Filelfo contain, indeed, innumerable complaints of the injustice of his friends, in withholding the books which he had lent for their use or intrusted to their care. “Perhaps”, says Tiraboschi, “they acted upon the same principle as the enthusiasts of the darker ages, who considered the stealing the relics of a saint not as a theft, but as a pious and meritorious act”. Such was the high estimation in which these works were held, that a manuscript of the history of Livy, sent by Cosimo de' Medici to Alfonso, King of Naples, with whom he was at variance, conciliated the breach between them; and although the King’s physicians insinuated that the book was probably poisoned, Alfonso disregarded their suspicions, and began with great pleasure the perusal of the work.

In the year 1488, a general council was held by Eugenius IV at Ferrara, for the purpose of settling some contested points, both of doctrine and discipline, between the Greek and Roman churches, preparatory to their proposed union; but the plague having made its appearance at that place, the council was in the following year transferred to Florence. On this occasion not only the pope and several of his cardinals, the Greek patriarch and his metropolitans, but the emperor of the east, John Paleologos, attended in person. Shortly before their arrival, Cosimo had been invested a second time with the office of *Gonfaloniere*; and the reception he gave to these illustrious visitors, whilst it was highly honourable to his guests, was extremely gratifying to the citizens of Florence, who were as remarkable for the magnificence of their public exhibitions as for their moderation and frugality in private life. As the questions agitated at this council would not admit of illustration from reasoning, and could only be argued from authority, the longer the dispute continued, the more were the parties at variance; but the critical situation of the eastern empire, then closely attacked by the Turks, and the expectations which the emperor had formed of procuring succours from the pope, and from other European princes, reconciled what the efforts of the school-men had only served to perplex. The proposed union accordingly took place, and the pope was acknowledged by the whole assembly as the legitimate successor of St. Peter. Little advantage was, however, derived by either of the parties from this remarkable transaction. The emperor was disappointed in his expectations of support, and with respect to the supremacy of the Roman church over the Greek, the ecclesiastics of the latter refused to obey the decree, and even many who had been present, and signed it at the council, publicly retracted at Constantinople.

For the purpose of conducting these important debates, each of the parties had selected six disputants, eminent for their rank and learning. Amongst those chosen on the part of the Greeks was Gemisthus Pletho, who was then at a very advanced period of a life which had been devoted to the study of the Platonic philosophy. As often as his public avocations afforded him an

opportunity, he employed himself in the propagation of his opinions, which were not only new to the scholars of Italy, but were greatly at variance with those doctrines which had long obtained an uninterrupted ascendancy in all the public schools and seminaries of learning. So powerful was the effect which the discourses of Gemisthus had upon Cosimo de' Medici, who was his constant auditor, that he determined to establish an academy at Florence, for the sole purpose of cultivating this new and more elevated species of philosophy. With this view he selected Marsilio Ficino, the son of his favourite physician, and destined him, though very young, to be the support of his future establishment. The education of Ficino was, as he has himself informed us, entirely directed to the new philosophy. The doctrines and precepts of the Grecian sage were assiduously instilled into his infant mind, and as he increased in years, he applied himself to the study, not of the works of Plato only, but also of those of Plotinus, a distinguished promoter of the doctrines of that philosopher in the third century. Nor were the expectations which Cosimo had formed of Ficino disappointed. The Florentine academy was some years afterwards established with great credit, and was the first institution in Europe for the pursuit of science, detached from the scholastic method then universally adopted. It is true, the sublime and fanciful doctrines of Plato were almost as remote from the purposes of common life and general utility, as the dogmatic opinions of Aristotle; but the introduction of the former was nevertheless of essential service to the cause of free inquiry, and substantial knowledge. By dividing the attention of the learned, they deprived the doctrines of Aristotle of that servile respect and veneration which bad so long been paid to them; and by introducing the discussion of new subjects, they prepared the way for the pursuit of truths more properly within the sphere of the human intellect.

As the natural disposition of Cosimo led him to take an active part in collecting the remains of the ancient Greek and Roman writers, so he was enabled by his wealth and his extensive mercantile intercourse with different parts of Europe and of Asia, to gratify a passion of this kind beyond any other individual. To this end, he laid injunctions on all his friends and correspondents, as well as on the missionaries and preachers who travelled into the remotest countries, to search for and procure ancient manuscripts, in every language, and on every subject. Besides the services of Poggio and Traversari, Cosimo availed himself of those of Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Antonio da Massa, Andrea de Rimino, and many others. The situation of the eastern empire, then daily falling into ruins by the repeated attacks of the Turks, afforded him an opportunity of obtaining many inestimable works in the Hebrew, the Greek, Chaldaic, Arabic, and Indian languages. From these beginnings arose the celebrated library of the Medici, which, after having been the constant object of the solicitude of its founder, was after his death further enriched by the attention of his descendants, and particularly of his grandson Lorenzo; and after various vicissitudes of fortune, and frequent and considerable additions, has been preserved to the present times, under the name of the *Bibliotheca Mediceo-Laurentiana*.

Amongst those who imitated the example of Cosimo de' Medici was Niccolò Niccoli, another citizen of Florence, who devoted his whole time and fortune to the acquisition of ancient manuscripts; in this pursuit he had been eminently successful, having collected together eight hundred volumes of Greek, Roman, and Oriental authors; a number in those times justly thought very considerable. Several of these works he had copied with great accuracy, and had diligently employed himself in correcting their defects and arranging the text in its proper order. In this respect he is justly regarded by Mehus as the father of this species of criticism. He died in 1436, having by his will directed that his library should be devoted to the use of the public, and appointed sixteen Curators, amongst whom was Cosimo de' Medici. After his death it appeared that he was greatly in debt, and that his liberal intentions were likely to be frustrated by the insolvency of his circumstances. Cosimo therefore proposed to his associates that if they would resign to him the right of disposition of the books, he would himself discharge all the debts of Niccolò; to which they readily acceded. Having thus obtained the sole direction of the manuscripts, he deposited them, for public use, in the Dominican monastery of S. Marco at Florence, which he had himself erected at an enormous expense. This collection was the

foundation of another celebrated library in Florence, known by the name of the *Bibliotheca Marciana,* which is yet open to the inspection of the learned, at the distance of three centuries.

In the arrangement of the library of S. Marco, Cosimo had procured the assistance of Tomaso Calandrino, who drew up a scheme for that purpose, and prepared a scientific catalogue of the books it contained. In selecting a coadjutor, the choice of Cosimo had fallen upon an extraordinary man. Though Tomaso was the son of a poor physician of Sarzana, and ranked only in the lower order of the clergy, he had the ambition to aim at possessing some specimens of these venerable relics of ancient genius. His learning and his industry enabled him to gratify his wishes, and his perseverance surmounted the disadvantages of his situation. In this pursuit he was frequently induced to anticipate his scanty revenue, well knowing that the estimation in which he was held by his friends, would preserve him from pecuniary difficulties. With the Greek and Roman authors no one was more intimately acquainted, and as he wrote a very fine hand, the books he possessed acquired additional value from the marginal observations which he was accustomed to make in perusing them. By the rapid degrees of fortunate preferment, Tomaso was, in the short space of twelve months, raised from his humble situation to the chair of St, Peter, and in eight years, during which time he enjoyed the supreme dignity, by the name of Nicholas V, acquired a reputation that has increased with the increasing estimation of those studies which he so liberally fostered and protected. The scanty library of his predecessors had been nearly dissipated or destroyed by frequent removals between Avignon and Rome, according as the caprice of the reigning pontiff chose either of those places for his residence; and it appears from the letters of Traversari, that scarcely any thing of value remained. Nicholas V is therefore to be considered as the founder of the library of the Vatican. In the completion of this great design, it is true, much was left to be performed by his successors; but Nicholas had before his death collected upwards of five thousand volumes of Greek and Roman authors, and had not only expressed his intention of establishing a library for the use of the Roman Court, but had also taken measures for carrying such intention into execution.

Whilst the munificence of the rich, and the industry of the learned, were thus employed throughout Italy in preserving the remains of the ancient authors, some obscure individuals in a corner of Germany had conceived, and were silently bringing to perfection, an invention which, by means equally effectual and unexpected, secured to the world the result of their labours. This was the art of printing with moveable types; a discovery of which the beneficial effects have been increasing to the present day, and are yet advancing with accelerated progress. The coincidence of this discovery, with the spirit of the times in which it had birth, was highly fortunate. Had it been made known at a much earlier period, it would have been disregarded or forgotten, from the mere want of materials on which to exercise it; and had it been further postponed, it is probable, that notwithstanding the generosity of the rich and the diligence of the learned, many works would have been totally lost, which are now justly regarded as the noblest monuments of the human intellect.

Nearly the same period of time that gave the world this important discovery, saw the destruction of the Roman empire in the east. In the year 1453 the city of Constantinople was captured by the Turks, under the command of Mahomet II after a vigorous defence of fifty-three days. The encouragement which had been shown to the Greek professors at Florence, and the character of Cosimo de Medici as a promoter of letters, induced many learned Greeks to seek a shelter in that city, where they met with a welcome and honourable reception. Amongst these were Demetrius Chalcondyles, Johannes Andronicus Calistus, Constantius and Johannes Lascaris, in whom the Platonic philosophy obtained fresh partisans, and by whose support it began openly to oppose itself to that of Aristotle. Between the Greek and Italian professors a spirit of emulation was kindled, that operated most favourably on the cause of letters. Public schools were instituted at Florence for the study of the Greek tongue. The facility of diffusing their labours by means of the newly-discovered art of printing, stimulated the learned to fresh exertions; and

in a few years the cities of Italy vied with each other in the number and elegance of works produced from the press.

Towards the latter period of his life, a great part of the time that Cosimo could withdraw from the administration of public affairs, was passed at his seats at Careggi and Caflaggiolo, where he applied himself to the cultivation of his farms, from which he derived no inconsiderable revenue. But his happiest hours were devoted to the study of letters and philosophy, or passed in the company and conversation of learned men. When he retired at intervals to his seat at Careggi, he was generally accompanied by Ficino, where, after having been his protector, he became his pupil in the study of the Platonic philosophy. For his use Ficino began those laborious translations of the works of Plato and his followers, which were afterwards completed and published in the lifetime and by the liberality of Lorenzo. Amongst the letters of Ficino is one from his truly venerable patron, which bespeaks most forcibly the turn of his mind, and his earnest desire of acquiring knowledge, even at his advanced period of life. “Yesterday”, says he, “I arrived at Careggi—not so much for the purpose of improving my fields, as myself — let me see you, Marsilio, as soon as possible, and forget not to bring with you the book of our favourite Plato, *de summo bono*—which I presume, according to your promise, you have ere this translated into Latin; for there is no employment to which I so ardently devote myself as to find out the true road to happiness. Come, then, and fail not to bring with you the Orphean lyre”. Whatever might be the proficiency of Cosimo in the mysteries of his favourite philosopher, there is reason to believe that he applied those doctrines and precepts which furnished the litigious disputants of the age with a plentiful source of contention, to the purposes of real life and practical improvement. Notwithstanding his active and useful life, he often regretted the hours he had lost. “Midas was not more sparing of his money”, says Ficino, “than Cosimo was of his time”.

The wealth and influence that Cosimo had acquired, had long entitled him to rank with the most powerful princes of Italy, with whom he might have formed connexions by the intermarriage of his children; but being apprehensive that such measures might give rise to suspicions that he entertained designs inimical to the freedom of the state, he rather chose to increase his interest amongst the citizens of Florence, by the marriage of his children into the most distinguished families of that place. Piero, his eldest son, married Lucretia Tornabuoni, by whom he had two sons, Lorenzo, the subject of our present history, born on the 1st day of January, 1448, and Giuliano, born in the year 1453. Piero had also two daughters, Nannina, who married Bernardo Rucellai, and Bianca, who became the wife of Gulielmo de' Pazzi. Giovanni, the younger son of Cosimo, espoused Cornelia de' Alessandri, by whom he had a son who died very young. Giovanni himself did not long survive. He died in the year 1461, at forty-years of age. Living under the shade of paternal authority, his name scarcely occurs in the pages of history; but the records of literature bear testimony, that in his disposition and studies he did not derogate from the reputation of that characteristic attachment to men of learning, by which his family was invariably distinguished.

Besides his legitimate offspring, Cosimo left also a natural son. Carlo de' Medici, whom he liberally educated, and who compensated the disadvantages of his birth by the respectability of his life. The manners of the times might be alleged in extenuation of a circumstance apparently inconsistent with the gravity of the character of Cosimo de' Medici; but Cosimo himself disclaimed such apology, and whilst he acknowledged his youthful indiscretion, made amends to society for the breach of a salutary regulation, by attending to the morals the welfare of his illegitimate descendant. Under his countenance Carlo became *proposto* of Prato, and one of the apostolic notaries; and as his general residence was at Rome, he was frequently resorted to by his father and brothers, for his advice and assistance in procuring ancient manuscripts and other valuable remains of antiquity.

The death of Giovanni de' Medici, on whom Cosimo had placed his chief expectations, and the weak state of health that Piero experienced, which rendered him unfit for the exertions of

public life, in so turbulent a place as Florence, raised great apprehensions in Cosimo, that at his decease the splendour of his family would close. These reflections embittered the repose of his latter days. A short time before his death, being carried through the apartments of his palace, after having recently lost his son, he exclaimed with a sigh, “This is too great a house for so small a family”. These apprehensions were in some degree realized by the infirmities under which Piero laboured during the few years in which he held the direction of the republic; but the talents of Lorenzo soon dispelled this temporary gloom, and exalted his family to a degree of reputation and splendour, of which it is probable that Cosimo himself had scarcely formed an idea.

The kindness and attention shown by Cosimo to men of learning were not without their reward. His virtues and his liberality were their most frequent topic. In every event of his life they were ready to attend him, to participate with him in his prosperity, and to sympathize with him in his misfortunes. The affectionate epistles addressed to him by Poggio on his banishment to Padua, and on his recall to Florence, exhibit a proof, not only of the sincere esteem, but of the high admiration of their author. Of the continued attachment of Leonardo Aretino to his great patron, innumerable evidences remain. Amongst the eminent men of the time, who endeavoured to console him for the untimely loss of his son, was Pius II, who addressed to him a Latin epistle, to which Cosimo replied with great propriety and dignity, and in a style not inferior to that of this learned pontiff. To the poem of Alberto Avogradi, we have before had occasion to refer. A considerable number of works, as well in verse as in prose, inscribed to him on different occasions, were, after his death, collected together by Bartolomeo Scala, and are yet preserved in the Laurentian Library, under the name of *Collectiones Cosmianae*.

But perhaps the most extraordinary production that solicited the patronage of Cosimo, was the *Hermaphroditus* of Antonio Beccatelli, or, as he is usually called from Palermo, the place of his birth, Antonio Panhormita. When the respectability and situation of Beccatelli are considered, our surprise must be excited on finding him the avowed author of a production so grossly indecent as the Hermaphroditus; when we advert to the age and character of Cosimo de' Medici, it is no less extraordinary that he should be the patron to whom it is inscribed.

Beccatelli did not however escape without reprehension, for thus indulging, at an advanced age, a pruriency of imagination not excusable at any time of life. Amongst others, Filelfo and Lorenzo Valla exclaimed against his licentiousness. Invectives against the author were likewise poured out from the pulpit, and he was burnt in effigy at Ferrara, and afterwards at Milan. Valla had the charity to hope, that the third time the author might be burnt in his proper person. Even Poggio, who in his Facetiae had not confined himself within the strict limits of decorum, thought it necessary to remonstrate with his friend Beccatelli on the indecency of his work, though he highly commends its elegance and latinity. Beccatelli attempted to excuse his performance by the authority of the ancient Greek and Roman writers, but his reply may rather be considered as a repetition than as a justification of his offence. On the contrary, there were men of known talents who expressed their thorough approbation of this performance. A commendatory epistle of Guarino Veronese is prefixed to the manuscript copy of it in the *Laurentian Library*, in which he defends Beccatelli, by alleging the example of St. Jerome.

One of the most striking, though not the most pleasing features in the history of the fifteenth century, is exhibited in the frequent and violent dissensions which occurred amongst the most distinguished scholars of the time. In some instances, these disputes arose between the chiefs of the two leading sects of philosophy; whilst in others the contest was more personal, and originated in the high opinion entertained by the disputants of their own respective merits. The controversy between Cardinal Bessarion and George Trapezuntius, or of Trebisond, was of the former kind. A Greek by birth, Bessarion had early imbibed the doctrines of Plato. Having attained the dignity of Bishop of Nice, he attended in his public capacity the council of Florence, and was one of the disputants on the part of the Greeks. Whether Bessarion was alarmed at the disorderly

state of his own country, or whether he found himself influenced by the arguments of his opponent, is uncertain; but soon after his return to Constantinople, he paid another visit to Italy, where he passed the remainder of his days. His learning and his integrity recommended him to Eugenius IV, who, in the year 1439, honoured him with the purple; and it has been said, that a mistake made by his secretary, prevented him from obtaining the pontifical dignity; but the futility of this tale of Jovius has been sufficiently exposed by Hody. That he had nearly arrived at that honour is however certain; and his more fortunate competitor Pius II endeavoured to console him for his disappointment, by bestowing upon him the empty title of Patriarch of Constantinople. In the year 1468, Bessarion gave a striking proof of his munificence and love of literature, by presenting his very valuable collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts to the state of Venice, to be deposited in the church of St. Mark. His letter to the senate on this occasion, gives us a most favourable idea of his temper and character. George, though called of Trebisond, was a Cretan by birth, who after having taught in different parts of Italy, was at length called to Rome by Nicholas V and nominated one of the apostolic secretaries. His arrogant and haughty temper soon offended the Pope, and he was compelled to spend the remainder of his days in seeking a precarious subsistence in different parts of Greece and Italy. The dispute between him and Bessarion was occasioned by Theodore Gaza, who published a treatise against the Platonic philosophy, and in commendation of the opinions of Aristotle, to which Bessarion opposed a temperate and well-written reply. Gaza, overpowered by the arguments, or the authority of his adversary, declined any further controversy; but George of Trebisond boldly came forward to the relief of the declining cause of Aristotle, and in several invectives against the Platonists, endeavoured to throw an odium on their doctrines and their morals; insomuch, that there is scarcely a crime with which he hesitates to charge them, or a public calamity which he does not ascribe to the prevalence of their system. This attack again called forth Bessarion, who, in his treatise 'In Calumniatorem Platonis', is considered as having obtained a victory over his joined in spectators Bessarion, overpowered academy, instituted by Cosmo, till by the countenance and support of his grandson Lorenzo, it arrived at its highest pitch of eminence.

A debate of this nature on an important subject, if kept within the bounds of decorum, affects not the disputants with any degree of opprobrium, except so far as it may attach to the erroneousness of their opinions, or the futility of their arguments; but this applies not to the other kind of controversy to which I have before alluded, and of which the age in question produced frequent instances. The turbulent and vindictive temper of Filelfo has already been animadverted on. Unwearied in soliciting the favours of the great, he often extorted promises which were never meant to be performed, but the breach of which infallibly brought down the weight of his resentment. Almost all the sovereigns of Italy were successively the subject of his indecent satire, or his exaggerated complaints. He did not however escape without full retribution for the abuse which he so liberally dealt around him. In Poggio, he met with an antagonist, that, if possible, exceeded him in rancour and scurrility. Their dispute commenced in an attack made by Filelfo on the character of Niccolò Niccoli, which, if we give credit even to his friend Leonardo Aretino, was not perfectly immaculate. This gave occasion to the *Invectivae* of Poggio against Filelfo. If we for a moment suppose there could have been the slightest foundation for the charges exhibited against Filelfo in these pieces, he must have been a monster of depravity. After reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, Poggio pursues his track from place to place, successively accusing him of fraud, ingratitude, theft, adultery, and yet more scandalous crimes. The voyage of Filelfo to Constantinople was undertaken to shelter himself from punishment. The kindness of Chrysoloras, who received him destitute and friendless into his house, he repaid by debauching his daughter, whom Chrysoloras was therefore obliged to bestow upon him in marriage. Not satisfied with serious invective, Poggio has also introduced his adversary in his Facet life; and Filelfo will long be remembered as the original Hans Carvel of Prior, and La Fontaine. The contentions of Poggio with Lorenzo Valla were carried on with an equal degree of rancour and licentiousness; and even his debate with Guarino Veronese on the comparative excellence of Scipio and Julius Caesar, was sufficiently acrimonious. By these quarrels the learned were divided into factions, and Leonardo Aretino, Poggio, Niccolò Niccoli, and Beccatelli, were opposed to

Valla, Niccolò Perotti, and others; but the leaders of these parties often disagreed amongst themselves, and scrupled not at times to accuse each other of the most scandalous enormities. As these imputations were however attended by no very serious consequences, charity would lead us to conclude that they were mutually understood to be rather contests of skill between these literary gladiators, than proofs of real criminality in their respective antagonists. The life of a scholar is seldom stained by atrocious crimes; but that almost all the learned men of the age should have disgraced themselves by so shameless a degree of moral turpitude, is surely a supposition beyond the bounds of credibility.

Cosimo now approached the period of his mortal existence, but the faculties of his mind yet remained unimpaired. About twenty days before his death, when his strength was visibly on the decline, he entered into conversation with Ficino, and, whilst the faint beams of a setting sun seemed to accord with his situation and his feelings, began to lament the miseries of life, and the imperfections inseparable from human nature. As he continued his discourse, his sentiments and his views became more elevated; and from bewailing the lot of humanity, he began to exult in the prospect of that happier state towards which he felt himself approaching. Ficino replied by citing corresponding sentiments from the Athenian sages, and particularly from Xenocrates; and the last task imposed by Cosimo on his philosophic attendant, was to translate from the Greek the treatise of that author on death. Having prepared his mind to wait with composure the awful event, his next concern was the welfare of his surviving family, to whom he was desirous of imparting, in a solemn manner, the result of the experience of a long and active life. Calling into his chamber his wife Contessina, and his son Piero, he entered into a narrative of all his public transactions; he gave a full account of his extensive mercantile connexions, and adverted to the state of his domestic concerns. To Piero he recommended a strict attention to the education of his sons, of whose promising talents he expressed his hopes and his approbation. He requested that his funeral might be conducted with as much privacy as possible, declaring and concluded his paternal exhortations with his willingness to submit to the disposal of Providence, whenever he should be called upon. These admonitions were not lost on Piero, who communicated by letter to Lorenzo and Giuliano the impression which they had made upon his own mind. At the same time, sensible of his own infirmities, he exhorted them to consider themselves not as children, but as men, seeing that circumstances rendered it necessary to put their abilities to an early proof. “A physician”, says Piero, is hourly expected to arrive from Milan, but for my own part, “I place my confidence in God”. Either the physician did not arrive, or Piero’s distrust of him was well founded, for, about six days afterwards, being the 1st day of August, 1464, Cosimo died, at the age of seventy-five years, deeply lamented by a great majority of the citizens of Florence, whom he had firmly attached to his interest, and who feared for the safety of the city from the dissensions that were likely to ensue.

The character of Cosimo de' Medici exhibits a combination of virtues and endowments rarely to be found united in the same person. If in his public works he was remarkable for his magnificence, he was no less conspicuous for his prudence in private life. Whilst in the character of chief of the Florentine republic, he supported a constant intercourse with the sovereigns of Europe, his conduct in Florence was divested of all ostentation, and neither in his retinue, his friendships, or his conversation, could he be distinguished from any other respectable citizen. He well knew the jealous temper of the Florentines, and preferred the real enjoyment of authority, to that open assumption of it, which could only have been regarded as a perpetual insult, by those whom he permitted to gratify their own pride, in the reflection that they were the equals of Cosimo de' Medici.

In affording protection to the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture, which then began to revive in Italy, Cosimo set the great example to those who, by their rank, and their riches, could alone afford them effectual aid. The countenance shown by him to those arts, was not of that kind which their professors generally experience from the great; it was not conceded as a

bounty, nor received as a favour; but appeared in the friendship and equality that subsisted between the artist and his patron. In the erection of the numerous public buildings in which Cosimo expended incredible sums of money, he principally availed himself of the assistance of Michellozzo Michellozzi and Filippo Brunelleschi; the first of whom was a man of talents, the latter of genius. Soon after his return from banishment, Cosimo engaged these two artists to form the plan of a mansion for his own residence. Brunelleschi gave scope to his invention, and produced the design of a palace which might have suited the proudest sovereign in Europe; but Cosimo was led by that prudence which, in his personal accommodation, regulated all his conduct, to prefer the plan of Michellozzi, which united extent with simplicity, and elegance with convenience. With the consciousness, Brunelleschi possessed also the irritability of genius, and in a fit of vexation he destroyed a design which he unjustly considered as disgraced by its not being carried into execution. Having completed his dwelling, Cosimo indulged his taste in ornamenting it with the most precious remains of ancient art, and in the purchase of vases, statues, busts, gems, and medals, expended no inconsiderable sum. Nor was he less attentive to the merits of those artists whom his native place had recently produced. With Masaccio a better style of painting had arisen, and the cold and formal manner of Giotto and his disciples had given way to more natural and expressive composition. In Cosimo de' Medici this rising artist found his most liberal patron and protector. Some of the works of Masaccio were executed in the chapel of the Brancacci, where they were held in such estimation, that the place was regarded as a school of study by the most eminent artists who immediately succeeded him. When the celebrated Michelangelo, when observing these paintings many years afterwards, in company with his honest and loquacious friend Vasari, did not hesitate to express his decided approbation of their merits. The reputation of Masaccio was emulated by his disciple Filippo Lippi, who executed for Cosimo and his friends many celebrated pictures, of which Vasari has given a minute account. Cosimo, however, found no small difficulty in controlling the temper and regulating the eccentricities of this extraordinary character. If the efforts of these early masters did not reach the true end of the art, they afforded considerable assistance towards it; and whilst Masaccio and Filippo decorated with their admired productions the altars of churches and the apartments of princes, Donatello gave to marble a proportion of form, a vivacity of expression, to which his contemporaries imagined that nothing more was wanting; Brunelleschi raised the great dome of the cathedral of Florence; and Ghilberti cast in brass the stupendous doors of the Church of St. John, which Michelangelo deemed worthy to be the gates of Paradise.

In his person Cosimo was tall; in his youth he possessed the advantage of a prepossessing countenance; what age had taken from his comeliness, it had added to his dignity, and in his latter years, his appearance was so truly venerable as to have been the frequent subject of panegyric. His manner was grave and complacent, but upon many occasions he gave sufficient proofs that this did not arise from a want of talents for sarcasm; and the fidelity of the Florentine historians has preserved many of his shrewd observations and remarks. When Rinaldo de' Albizi, who was then in exile, and meditated an attack upon his native place, sent a message to Cosimo, importing that the hen would shortly hatch, he replied. She will hatch with an ill grace out of her own nest. On another occasion, when his adversaries gave him to understand that they were not sleeping, I believe it, said Cosimo, I have spoiled their sleep.—"Of what colour is my hair?" said Cosimo, uncovering his head, to the ambassadors of Venice who came with a complaint against the Florentines. "White", they replied. "It will not be long, "said Cosimo, "before that of your senators will be so too". Shortly before his death, his wife inquiring why he closed his eyes. "That I may accustom them to it", was his reply.

If, from considering the private character of Cosimo, we attend to his conduct as the moderator and director of the Florentine republic, our admiration of his abilities will increase with the extent of the theatre upon which he had to act. So important were his mercantile concerns, that they often influenced in a very remarkable degree the politics of Italy. When Alfonso, king of Naples, leagued with the Venetians against Florence, Cosimo called in such immense debts from those places, as deprived them of resources for carrying on the war. During

the contest between the Houses of York and Lancaster, one of his agents in England was resorted to by Edward IV for a sum of money, which was accordingly furnished, to such an extraordinary amount, that it might almost be considered as the means of supporting that monarch on the throne, and was repaid when his successes enabled him to fulfil his engagement. The alliance of Cosimo was sedulously courted by the princes of Italy; and it was remarked, that by a happy kind of fatality, whoever united their interests with his, were always enabled either to repress or to overcome their adversaries. By his assistance the republic of Venice resisted the united attacks of Filippo duke of Milan, and of the French nation; but when deprived of his support, the Venetians were no longer able to withstand their enemies. With whatever difficulties Cosimo had to encounter, at home or abroad, they generally terminated in the acquisition of additional honour to his country and to himself. The esteem and gratitude of his fellow-citizens were fully shewn a short time before his death, when by a public decree he was honoured with the title of *Pater Patriae*, an appellation which was inscribed on his tomb, and which, as it was founded on real merit, has since been attached to the name of Cosimo de' Medici.

## CHAPTER II.

### 1464—1469.

Lorenzo de' Medici was about sixteen years of age when Cosimo died, and had at that time given striking indications of extraordinary talents. From his earliest years he had exhibited proofs of a retentive and vigorous mind, which was cultivated, not only by all the attention which his father's infirmities would permit him to bestow, but by a frequent intercourse with his venerable grandfather. He owed also great obligations in this respect to his mother Lucretia, who was one of the most accomplished women of the age, and distinguished not only as a patroness of learning, but by her own writings. Of these some specimens yet remain, which are the more entitled to approbation, as they were produced at a time when poetry was at its lowest ebb in Italy. The disposition of Lorenzo, which afterwards gave him a peculiar claim to the title of magnificent, was apparent in his childhood. Having received as a present a horse from Sicily, he sent the donor in return a gift of much greater value; and on being reproved for his profuseness, he remarked that there was nothing more glorious than to overcome others in acts of generosity. Of his proficiency in classical learning, and the different branches of that philosophy which was then in repute, he has left indisputable proofs. Born to restore the lustre of his native tongue, he had rendered himself conspicuous by his poetical talents before he arrived at manhood. To these accomplishments he united a considerable share of strong natural penetration and good sense, which enabled him, amidst the many difficulties that he was involved in, to act with a promptitude and decision which surprised those who were witnesses of his conduct; whilst the endowments which entitled him to admiration and respect were accompanied by others that conciliated, in an eminent degree, the esteem and affection of his fellow-citizens.

Tall in his stature, robust in his form, Lorenzo had in his person more the appearance of strength than of elegance. From his birth he laboured under some peculiar disadvantages; his sight was weak, his voice harsh and unpleasing, and he was totally deprived of the sense of smell. With all these defects his countenance was dignified, and strongly indicated the magnanimity of his character; and the effects of his eloquence were conspicuous on many important occasions. In his youth he was much addicted to active and laborious exercises, to hawking, horsemanship, and country sports. Though not born to support a military character, he gave sufficient proofs of his courage, not only in public tournaments, which were then not unfrequent in Italy, but also upon more trying occasions. Such was the versatility of his talents, that it is difficult to discover any department of business, or of amusement, of art, or of science, to which they were not at some time applied; and in whatever he undertook, he arrived at a proficiency which would seem to have required the labour of a life much longer than that which he was permitted to enjoy.

Under the institution of Gentile d'Urbino, who afterwards, by the patronage of his pupil, became bishop of Arezzo, Lorenzo received the first rudiments of his education, and from the instructions of his tutor, aided perhaps by the exhortations of his pious mother, acquired that devotional temper which is so conspicuous in some of his writings. This disposition was however only occasional, nor was the mind of Lorenzo overshaded with the habitual gloom of the professed devotee. In his hours of seriousness, or of sickness, the impressions made upon him by his early instructors became sufficiently apparent; but the vivacity of his temper often hurried him to a contrary extreme; and the levity, not to say the licentiousness, of some of his writings, is strikingly contrasted with the piety and seriousness of his other productions. The vigour of his intellect seems to have thrown an indiscriminate lustre on every object that presented itself. So various, yet so extensive were his powers, that they are scarcely reconcilable to that consistency of character with which the laws of human nature seldom dispense.

In superintending the subsequent progress of Lorenzo, several other persons eminent for their learning concurred. In the year 1457, Cristoforo Landino was appointed by the magistracy of Florence to the office of public professor of poetry and rhetoric in that city, and was soon afterwards entrusted by Piero de' Medici with the instruction of his two sons. Between Landino and his pupil Lorenzo a reciprocal attachment took place; and such was the opinion that the master entertained of the judgment of his scholar, that he is said frequently to have submitted his various and learned works to his perusal and correction. In the Greek language, in ethics, and in the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy, Lorenzo had the advantage of the precepts from the learned Argyropylus, and in those of the Platonic sect he was sedulously instructed by Marsilio Ficino, for whom he retained through life an unalterable friendship. But for many of his accomplishments he was not indebted to any preceptor. That exquisite taste in poetry, in music, and in every department of the fine arts, which enabled him to contribute so powerfully towards their restoration, was an endowment of nature, the want of which no education could have supplied.

With such qualifications, Lorenzo, soon after the death of his grandfather, entered on the stage of public life; for it was the laudable custom of the Florentines, early to habituate their youth to serious and important occupations. Besides, the infirmities of Piero de' Medici rendered such a coadjutor as Lorenzo was likely to prove, of great importance to him. His domestic education being therefore completed, his father judged it expedient for him to visit some of the principal courts of Italy; not so much for the purpose of gratifying an idle curiosity, as to conciliate, by a personal intercourse, the friendship of those with whom he was in future to maintain a correspondence on matters of great moment, and to inform himself of such local circumstances as might enable him to transact the affairs of the republic with every possible advantage. In the year 1465, he had an interview at Pisa with the son of Ferdinand king of Naples, Federigo, who after the death of his eldest brother Alfonso, and his nephew Federigo, succeeded to the crown. This prince was then on his journey to Milan, to escort Ippolita, the daughter of Francesco Sforza, from thence to Naples, where she was to marry his elder brother Alfonso, duke of Calabria. At this interview some instances of mutual respect and attachment took place between Federigo and Lorenzo, which we shall hereafter have occasion to relate.

In the following year Lorenzo made a visit to Rome, where he was kindly received by Paul II, one of the most arrogant pontiffs that ever sat in the chair of St. Peter. A few months afterwards he proceeded through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice, and thence to Milan. During his absence he had frequent letters from his father, several of which yet remain, and sufficiently evince the confidence that Piero placed in his son, with whom he enters into a detail of all political occurrences, and to whom he transmits such letters of importance as were received on public affairs during his absence. That the respect paid by Piero to the judgment of Lorenzo did not arise from a blind partiality, may appear from the intercourse that already subsisted between Lorenzo and some of the most celebrated scholars of the age; several of whom, on his occasional absence from Florence, addressed themselves to him by letter, as their acknowledged patron and warmest friend.

The death of Pius II, who had preceded Paul II in the pontifical chair, happened a few days after that of CosImo de' Medici, and not long afterwards died Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, who had governed that state with great ability for the space of sixteen years. This event gave no small alarm to Piero de' Medici, whose family had long supported a close intimacy with that of Sforza, from which they had mutually derived important advantages. Lorenzo was then at Rome, where his father addressed to him several letters, in some of which his anxiety for the peaceable establishment of the widow and children of Francesco in the government of Milan is strongly expressed. By the death of so many of the Italian princes within so short a space of time, the minds of men began to be turned towards new commotions, particularly in Florence, where the bodily imbecility of Piero gave grounds to hope that a vigorous attempt to deprive the house of Medici of

its influence might be crowned with success. Nor was the conduct of Piero, on his succession to the immense inheritance of his father, calculated to strengthen the friendship of those whom Cosmo had attached to his interest. Apprehensive that his commercial concerns were too widely extended, and prompted by the treacherous advice of Dietisalvo Neroni, a man of ability and intrigue, who owed his fortunes to the protection and generosity of Cosmo, he began indiscriminately to collect the sums of money which his father had advanced to the citizens of Florence. The result was such as Neroni expected. Those who were friends of the father became enemies of the son; and had not Piero discovered the snare, and desisted from such rigorous proceedings, he might too late have found, that in supporting the character of the merchant, he had forgotten that of the statesman.

Amongst the number of opulent and aspiring citizens who had reluctantly submitted to the superior talents of Cosimo de' Medici, was Luca Pitti, whose name has been transmitted to posterity as the founder of the magnificent palace which has for some centuries been the residence of the sovereigns of Tuscany. The death of Cosmo, and the infirmities of Piero, afforded an opportunity that Luca conceived to be highly favourable to his ambitious purposes. Having formed a combination with the powerful family of the Acciajuoli, he attempted, in conjunction with them, to supplant the authority and destroy the influence of the Medici with the magistrates and council of Florence. Being defeated in their exertions, they resorted to more violent methods, and resolved upon the assassination of Piero de Medici, believing, that if they could succeed in such a project, his sons were too young to occasion any formidable opposition to their views. Debilitated by the gout, Piero was generally carried in a chair by his domestics from his house at Careggi to his residence at Florence. Having received intimation of an intended commotion, and being alarmed at the sudden approach of Ercole d'Este, brother of Borso, marquis of Ferrara, whom the conspirators had engaged to enter the territories of the republic, at the head of 1300 cavalry, he conceived his presence to be necessary in Florence, and accordingly set out from Careggi, accompanied only by a few attendants. Lorenzo, who had left Careggi a short time before his father, was surprised to find the road to the city beset by armed men, and immediately suspecting their purpose, despatched one of his followers to him with directions to proceed by a more retired and circuitous path, whilst taking himself the direct road, he informed those who inquired with apparent anxiety for his father, that he was following at a short distance. By these means Lorenzo rescued his father from the impending danger, and gave a striking proof of that promptitude of mind which so eminently distinguished him on many subsequent occasions.

The suspicions that fell upon Luca Pitti and his party induced the conspirators to abandon their design of open violence; and the intrigues of the politician were again substituted for the dagger of the assassin. Encouraged by the support of the marquis of Ferrara, they daily increased in numbers and audacity, but when an open contest between the opposite parties was hourly expected, and the citizens apprehended a renewal of those sanguinary commotions, from which, under the guidance of the Medici, they had been a long time exempted, Luca suddenly withdrew himself from his party, and effected a reconciliation with the Medici. Several of the malcontents followed his example, and their desertion gave a decided superiority to the cause of Piero, which was also most opportunely strengthened by the appearance of a body of two thousand Milanese troops, that kept in awe the army of the insurgents, and frustrated the hopes founded on its assistance. The friends of the Medici failed not to take advantage of this favourable concurrence; Piero Acciajuoli and his two sons, Dietisalvo Neroni, and two of his brothers, and Niccolò Soderini, with his son Geri, were declared enemies of the state, and condemned to banishment. The archbishop of Florence, who had taken a decided part against the Medici, retired to Rome. A few other citizens, unable to support their disgrace, adopted a voluntary exile; but the kindness of Lorenzo allayed the apprehensions of the greater part of the conspirators, and rendered them in future more favourable to his interests. He only knows how to conquer, said Lorenzo, who knows how to forgive.

Though exempted from the fate of the other leaders of the faction, Luca experienced a punishment of a more galling and disgraceful kind. From the high estimation in which he had before been held, he fell into the lowest state of degradation. The progress of his magnificent palace was stopped; the populace, who had formerly vied with each other in giving assistance, refused any longer to labour for him; many opulent citizens, who had contributed costly articles and materials, demanded them back, alleging that they were only lent. The remainder of his days was passed in obscurity and neglect, but the extensive mansion which his pride had planned, still remains to give celebrity to his name.

The defection of Luca Pitti, and the consequent establishment of the authority of the Medici in Florence, have been uniformly attributed by the Florentine historians to the abilities and prudence of Lorenzo; who, instead of resorting to forcible opposition, employed his own eloquence and the influence of his friends, in subduing the resentment of his adversaries, and particularly of Luca Pitti, whose versatile disposition fluctuated a long time between the remonstrances of his associates and the pacific representations of Lorenzo. A short time previous to this contest, Lorenzo had paid a visit to Naples, probably with a view of influencing the king to countenance his cause, in case the dissensions at Florence, which were then a subject of alarm, should terminate in an open rupture. The magnanimity of his conduct, as well in defeating this formidable conspiracy, as in his lenity towards his enemies, extended his reputation throughout Italy. No sooner was the result known at Naples, than Ferdinand addressed to him a letter strongly expressive of admiration and esteem; which being the testimony of a monarch whose character for sagacity and political knowledge was superior to that of any other potentate in Europe, must have been highly gratifying to the youthful ambition of Lorenzo. The success of Lorenzo in this critical business increased also the confidence which his father had before placed in him, and from this time he was entrusted with a considerable share in the conduct of the republic, as well as in the management of the extensive private concerns of the family. But if the prudence of Lorenzo was conspicuous in defeating his adversaries, it was more so in the use he made of his victory. He well knew that humanity and sound policy are inseparable, and either did not feel, or wisely suppressed that vindictive spirit which civil contests seldom fail to excite. “I have heard from my brother Filippo”, says Valori, “that upon his introducing to Lorenzo, for the purpose of reconciliation, Antonio Tebalducci, who had by different means attempted his ruin, Lorenzo, observing that my brother hesitated in requesting his indulgence towards an avowed enemy, said to him with great kindness, I should owe you no obligation, Filippo, for introducing to me a friend; but by converting an enemy into a friend, you have done me a favour, which I hope you will as often as possible repeat”

The exiled party, which consisted principally of men of abilities and intrigue, soon began to stir up new commotions. But Agnolo Acciajuoli, who had retreated only to Sienna, was desirous, before he engaged in further opposition, of trying whether a reconciliation with the Medici yet remained practicable. His letter to Piero on this subject, and the answer it occasioned, are yet extant. Many of the other conspirators retired to Venice, where they exerted their utmost endeavours to exasperate that formidable state against their countrymen. This attempt might have failed of success, had they not, in seeking to gratify their private resentment, flattered the ambitious aims of the Venetians on the rest of Italy. With this view they insinuated to the senate, that the support given by the Florentines, under the influence of Cosmo de' Medici, to Francesco Sforza, had enabled him to defend his states against their pretensions, and prevented their possessing themselves of all Lombardy. These representations had their full effect. Under the command of Bartolomeo Coglione, one of the most celebrated commanders of the time, a considerable army was collected for the purpose of attacking the states of Florence. Several of the Italian princes joined in person the standard of Bartolomeo, and amongst others Ercole d'Este, Alessandro Sforza, prince of Pesaro, the Lords of Forli, of Faenza, and Mirandola; insomuch that this army was not more formidable for its numbers, than respectable for the rank and the talents of its leaders.

Nor were the Florentines in the meantime ignorant of the intended hostilities, or inattentive to their own defence. Besides the support derived from the duke of Milan, the king of Naples sent his son Federigo with a powerful reinforcement to their assistance. Galeazzo, the young duke of Milan, joined the army in person, as did also Giovanni Bentivoglio, prince of Bologna; and the command of the whole was entrusted to Federigo count of Urbino, whose character as a soldier was not inferior to that of Coglione. The adverse forces approached each other near Bologna, but no great alacrity was shown on either side to begin the engagement. Wearied with apprehensions, and sinking under the expense of supporting so numerous an army, the Florentines began to complain of the indecisive conduct of their general, which they at length understood was chiefly to be attributed to the duke of Milan, who, reserving to himself great authority, and having little experience in military affairs, threw continual obstacles in the way of the chief commander. A message was therefore despatched to the duke, requesting his presence in Florence, where he soon after arrived, and took up his residence in the palace of the Medici. The count of Urbino, being freed from this restraint, or having no apology for longer delay, attacked the advanced guard of the enemy under the command of Alessandro Sforza. The engagement soon became general, and continued from noon till evening. Machiavelli assures us, that at the close of the battle both parties kept the field, that not a soldier lost his life, and that only a few horses were wounded, and some prisoners taken; but historians of more veracity have given a different relation. It is, however, certain, that no important consequences resulted from a contest that had excited so much expectation. The troops shortly afterwards withdrew into their winter-quarters, which afforded the Florentines an opportunity, by the mediation of the marquis of Ferrara, of negotiating for a peace. This was accordingly effected without any stipulation being introduced on the part of the exiles; and thus the storm which seemed for a while to threaten the destruction of the Florentine state, after having been repressed in its first fury, gradually abated, and at length settled in a perfect calm.

Although Piero de' Medici was inferior in talents, both to his father Cosimo and his son Lorenzo, yet he gave repeated proofs of a strong attachment to the cause of letters, and continued an hereditary protection to those men of learning, who, under the patronage of his father, had arisen in, or been attracted to Florence. In the year 1441 he had been engaged in promoting a literary contest in that city, by proposing a premium for the best poem on a given subject. The reward of the victor was to be a coronet of silver imitating a laurel wreath. The secretaries of the pope were appointed to decide upon the merits of the candidates. Splendid preparations were made. Several competitors appeared, and publicly recited their poems; but the laudable intentions of Piero were defeated by the folly or the knavery of the ecclesiastics, who gave the prize to the church of S. Maria, pretending that the merits of the pieces were so nearly equal that a decision was impossible. This absurd determination occasioned great dissatisfaction to the Florentines, and was probably considered not only as obliquely satirizing the candidates, but the city itself.

The coadjutor of Piero de' Medici on this occasion was the celebrated Leo Battista Alberti, who, independent of his extraordinary talents as an artist, deserves particular notice as one of the earliest scholars that appeared in the revival of letters. He first distinguished himself by his Latin comedy entitled *Philodoxios*, copies of which he distributed amongst his friends, as the work of Lepidus, an ancient Roman poet. The *literati* were effectually deceived, and bestowed the highest applauses upon a piece which they conceived to be a precious remnant of antiquity. It first appeared about the year 1425, when the rage for ancient manuscripts was at its height, and Lepidus for a while took his rank with Plautus and with Terence. As Alberti advanced in years he turned his attention to practical knowledge, and the present times are indebted to him for many useful and amusing inventions. In his Latin treatises, which have been translated into Italian by Cosimo Bartoli, and published under the name of *Opuscoli morali*, he appears as an author on a great variety of subjects; but he is better known by his treaties on architecture, which has been translated into many languages. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that Alberti made an attempt to reconcile the measure of the Latin distich with the genius of his native tongue, in which he has been followed by Claudio Tolomei, and other writers.

The reputation of Alberti as an architect, though it deservedly stands high in the estimation of posterity, must, however, be considered as inferior to that of Filippo Brunelleschi, who is the true father of the art in modern times. Vasari expresses his disapprobation of some part of the labours of Alberti. His paintings were not numerous, nor on a large scale; nor did he in this branch of art arrive at great practical perfection, which, as Vasari observes, is not much to be wondered at, as his time was mostly devoted to other studies. His principal merit is certainly to be sought for in his useful discoveries, and his preceptive writings. He was the first author who attempted practical treatises on the arts of design, all of which, but more particularly his treaties on architecture, are allowed to exhibit a profound knowledge of his subject, and will long continue to do honour to his memory.

Had all the other professors of letters been silent as to the merits of Piero de' Medici, the applauses bestowed on him by Cristoforo Landino would alone be sufficient to rescue his memory from neglect. Landino had indeed every motive of gratitude to the family of his patron. He was born a Florentine, and being early disgusted with the study of the civil law, devoted himself to that of poetry and polite letters. In pursuing his inclinations, he had the good fortune to find the road that led him to honour and to affluence. The bounty of a private friend supported him through the early part of his education, to which the finances of his family were inadequate, and the munificence of Cosimo de' Medici completed what the kindness of Angelo da Todi had begun. His proficiency in the Greek language was remarkable, even at a period when the study of it was in its highest vigour, and immediately supplied from its native fountain. The philosophy of Aristotle, and the dogmas of the stoics, had early engaged his attention; but from his intercourse with the Medici, and his intimacy with Ficino, he afterwards became a decided partisan of the new philosophy, and was among the few learned men whom Ficino thought proper to consult on his translation of the works of Plato. The Latin elegies of Landino bear ample testimony to the virtues, the liberality, and the accomplishments of Piero de' Medici, whom he constantly honours with the appellation of his Maecenas, and seems to have selected from the other individuals of that illustrious family, as the object of his particular affection and veneration.

If we consider the numerous testimonies that remain of the liberality of Piero de' Medici to men of learning, and advert at the same time to the infirm state of his health, and the short period during which he enjoyed the direction of the republic, we shall not hesitate in allotting to him a distinguished rank amongst the early promoters of letters. To Piero, Benedetto Accolti addressed, in terms of high commendation, his history of the wars between the christians and the infidels, a work of considerable historical credit, and which, in the succeeding century, served as a guide to Torquato Tasso, in his immortal poem the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. An uninterrupted friendship subsisted between Piero and the celebrated Donato Acciajuoli, who inscribed to him several of his learned works. The Laurentian library contains many similar instances of the gratitude and observance of the scholars of the time. Amongst those deserving of more particular notice is Francesco Ottavio, who dedicated to Piero his poem *De coetu poetarum,* in which he hesitates not to represent his patron as surpassing the example of his father in his attention to the cause of literature, and in his kindness to its professors.

No sooner was the city of Florence restored to peace, and the dread of a foreign enemy removed, than the natural disposition of the inhabitants for splendid exhibitions began to revive. Amongst other amusements, a tournament was held, in which Lorenzo de' Medici bore away the prize, being a helmet of silver, with a figure of Mars as the crest. In another encounter Giuliano had equal success with his brother. These incidents are the more entitled to our notice, as they have given rise to two of the most celebrated Italian poems of the fifteenth century, the Giostra of Lorenzo de' Medici, by Luca Pulei, and the Giostra of Giuliano de Medici, by Angelo Politiano.

At what particular time these events took place, and whether the two brothers signalized themselves on the same, or on different occasions, has been rendered doubtful by the inattention

and discordant relations of different writers, who have directly or incidentally adverted to this subject. Amongst these, Machiavelli has misinformed, and Paulus Jovius confused his readers. Of the authors who have followed them, some have employed themselves in comparing or contesting these various authorities, whilst others have gone a step further, and ingrafted their own absurdities on the errors of their predecessors. Even amongst those who are entitled to a greater share of attention, Fabroni has decided wrong, and Menckenius, after a full inquiry into all previous testimony, confesses his inability to decide at all. In solving this difficulty, it might have been expected that recourse would have been had, in the first instance, to the internal evidence of the poems themselves, by which all doubts on the subject would have been effectually removed; but Menckenius had never seen even the poem of Politiano, though it is of much more common occurrence than that of Pulci; and Fabroni, with the poem of Pulci before him, has suffered himself to be betrayed into an anachronism by the authority of Machiavelli. In the poem last mentioned, not only the year, but the precise day on which the tournament of Lorenzo took place, is particularly specified. This appears to have been the 7th of February, 1468, at which time he was in his twentieth year, to which the poet also expressly adverts, as well as to the attack lately made upon the Florentines by Bartolomeo Ceglione, called of Bergamo. The circumstance that gave rise to this solemnity was the marriage of Braccio Martello, an intimate friend of Lorenzo. The second prize of honour was adjudged to Carlo Borromei. At this time Giuliano was only in his fifteenth year; but he made his appearance on horseback among the combatants, and obtained a prize during the same festival; it being evident from the poem of Pulci, that he was to try his courage on a future day. The poem of Politiano contains also sufficient proof that the tournament of Giuliano is to be placed at no very distant period from that of Lorenzo, as it appears Lorenzo was not then married, although that event took place within a few months after he had signalized himself in this contest. If further confirmation were necessary, it may be found in the *Ricordi* of Lorenzo, who defrayed the expense of this exhibition, which cost ten thousand florins, and was held in the place of S. Croce. In this authentic document Lorenzo speaks with becoming modesty of these his youthful achievements.

It must be confessed that the poem of Pulci derives its merit rather from the minute information it gives us respecting this exhibition, than from its poetical excellence. A considerable part of it is employed in describing the preparations for the tournament, and the habits and appearance of the combatants. The umpires were, Roberto da Sanseverino, Carlo Pandolfini, Tomaso Soderini, Ugolino Martelli, Niccolo Giugni, and Buongianni Gianfigliazzi. The candidates for the prize were eighteen in number. The steed upon which Lorenzo made his first appearance was presented to him by Ferdinand king of Naples; that on which he relied in the combat, by Borso marquis of Ferrara. The duke of Milan had furnished him with his suit *fleurs de lys*, the privilege of using the arms of France having shortly before been conceded to the Medici by Louis XI by a solemn act. His first conflict was with Carlo Borromei; his next with Braccio de' Medici, who attacked him with such strength and courage, that if the stroke had taken place, Orlando himself, as the poet assures us, could not have withstood the shock. Lorenzo took speedy vengeance, but his spear breaking into a hundred pieces, his adversary was preserved from a total overthrow. He then assailed Carlo da Forme, whose helmet he split, and whom he nearly unhorsed. Lorenzo then changing his steed, made a violent attack upon Benedetto Salutati, who had just couched his lance ready for the combat.

Hast not thou seen the falcon in his flight.

When high in air on balanced wing he hung.

On some lone straggler of the covey light?

— On Benedetto thus Lorenzo sprung.

Whistled the air, as ardent for the fight.

Fleet as the arrow flies he rushed along;

Achilles' rage their meeting strokes inspires,

Their sparkling armour rivals Etna's fires.

The poem of Politiano is of a very different character, and though produced about the same period of time, is a century posterior in point of refinement. The age of Politiano when he wrote it, scarcely exceeded fourteen years, and it must not be denied that the poem bears upon the face of it the marks of juvenility—but what a manhood does it promise? From such an early exuberance of blossom what fruits might we not expect? The general approbation with which it was received, must have been highly flattering both to the poet and the hero; nor has posterity appealed from the decision. On the contrary, it has been uniformly allowed that this was one of the earliest productions in the revival of letters, that breathed the true spirit of poetry; and that it not only far excelled the *Giostra* of Pulci, but essentially contributed towards the establishment of a better taste in Italy.

It may seem strange, that although this poem is of considerable length, containing about fourteen hundred lines, it is left unfinished, and breaks off even before the tournament begins. Instead of giving us, like Pulci, a minute description of the habiliments of the combatants, the poet takes a wider circuit, and indulges himself in digressions and episodes of great extent. The express purpose for which it was written would not indeed be very apparent, were it not for the information afforded us in the commencement; and even here the author does not propose to confine himself to one subject in particular, but professes to celebrate the feats of arms and pomps of Florence, and the loves and studies of Giuliano de' Medici. Although Giuliano be the subject, the poem is addressed to Lorenzo, whose favour Politiano earnestly supplicates.

High born Lorenzo! Laurel — in whose shade

Thy Florence rests, nor fears the lowering storm,

Nor threatening signs in heaven's high front display'd,

Nor Jove's dread anger in its fiercest form;

O to the trembling muse afford thine aid,

— The muse that courts thee, timorous and forlorn,

Lives in the shadow of thy prosperous tree.

And bounds her every fond desire to thee.

Ere long the spirit that this frame inspires.

This frame, that from its earliest hour was thine,

If fortune frown not on my vast desires,

Shall spread to distant shores thy name divine;

To lands that feel the sun's intenser fires,

That mark his earliest rise, his last decline;

Nursed in the shade thy spreading branch supplies.

Tuneless before, a tuneful swan I rise.

The poet then proceeds to describe the youthful employments and pursuits of Giuliano de' Medici, and particularly adverts to his repugnance to surrender his heart to the attacks continually made upon it by the fair sex.

For Julian many a maiden heaved the sigh,

And many a glance the tender flame confess'd;

But not the radiance of the brightest eye

Could melt the icy rigour of his breast.

Wild through the trackless woods the youth would hie.

Severe of aspect, and disdaining rest:

Whilst the dark pine, or spreading beech, supplied

A wreath, from summer suns his head to hide.

When evening's star its milder lustre lends,

The wanderer to his cheerful home retires,

There every muse his loved return attends,

And generous aims, and heavenly verse inspires:

Deep through his frame the sacred song descends,

With thirst of ancient praise his soul that fires;

And Love, fond trifler, mourns his blunted dart.

That harmless flies where Dian shields the heart.

After some beautiful verses, in which Giuliano reproaches the weakness of those who devote themselves to the tender passion, he goes to the chase, which gives the poet an opportunity of displaying his talent for description, in which he particularly excels. Love, who feels his divinity insulted, employs a stratagem to subdue the obdurate heart of Giuliano. A beautiful white hind

crosses his way, which he pursues, but which perpetually eludes his endeavours to wound it, and leads him far distant from his companions. When his courser is almost exhausted with fatigue, a nymph makes her appearance, and Giuliano, astonished at her beauty, forgets the pursuit, and accosts her with trepidation and amazement. Her answer completes her triumph. Evening comes on, and Giuliano returns home, alone and pensive. The poet then enters upon a description of the court of Venus in the island of Cyprus, which extends to a considerable length, and is ornamented with all the graces of poetry. Cupid, having completed his conquest, returns thither to recount his success to his mother; who, in order to enhance its value, is desirous that Giuliano should signalize himself in a tournament. The whole band of loves accordingly repairs to Florence, and Giuliano prepares for the combat. In a dream sent by Venus, he seems to come off with victory. On his return, crowned with olive and laurel, his mistress appears to him, but is soon enveloped in a thick cloud, and carried from his sight; which incident the poet applies to the sudden death of the beautiful Simonetta, the mistress of Giuliano. Some consolatory verses are applied to the lover, who, awaking, invokes Minerva to crown his attempt with glory. But here the narrative is interrupted; nor does it appear that the author resumed his task at any subsequent period, having probably thrown the work aside as a production of his younger years, scarcely deserving of his riper attention.

The proficiency made by Lorenzo and Giuliano in active accomplishments, did not, however, retard their progress in the pursuits of science, or the acquisition of knowledge. About the year 1468, Landino wrote his *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, which, at the same time that they open to us the means of instruction adopted by him in the education of his pupils, give us the fairest evidence of their proficiency. In the infancy of science, particular departments of knowledge are frequently cultivated with great success; but it is only in periods of high improvement that men are accustomed to comprehend the general plan of human life, and to allot to every occupation and pursuit its proper degree of importance. The *Disputationes Camaldulenses* afford us sufficient proof that the Florentines had, at this early period, arrived at that mental elevation which enabled them to take a distinct view of the various objects by which they were surrounded, and to apply all that was then known of science to its best uses. In the introduction to this work Landino informs us, that having, in company with his brother Piero, made an excursion from his villa in Casentina to a monastery in the wood of Camaldoli, they found that Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici had arrived there before them, accompanied by Alamanni Rinuccini, and Piero and Donato Acciajuoli; all men of learning and eloquence, who had applied themselves with great diligence to philosophical studies. The pleasure of their first meeting was enhanced by the arrival of Leo Battista Alberti, who, returning from Rome, had met with Marsilio Ficino, and had prevailed upon him to pass a few days, during the heat of autumn in the healthful retreat of Camaldoli. Mariotto, abbot of the monastery, introduced to each other his learned friends; and the remainder of the day, for it was then drawing towards evening, was passed in attending to the conversation of Alberti, of whose disposition and accomplishments Landino gives us a most favourable idea. On the following day, after the performance of religious duties, the whole company agreed to ascend through the wood towards the summit of the hill, and in a short time arrived at a solitary spot, where the extended branches of a large beech overhung a clear spring of water. At the invitation of Alberti, a conversation here takes place, which he begins, by observing, that those persons maybe esteemed peculiarly happy, who, having improved their minds by study, can withdraw themselves at intervals from public engagements and private anxiety, and in some agreeable retreat indulge themselves in an ample range though all the objects of the natural and moral world. “But if this be an occupation suitable for all men of learning, it is more particularly so for you”, continued Alberti, addressing himself to Lorenzo and Giuliano, “on whom the direction of the affairs of the republic is likely, from the increasing infirmities of your father, soon to devolve. For although, Lorenzo, you have given proof of such virtues as would induce us to think them rather of divine than human origin; although there seems to be no undertaking so momentous as not to be accomplished by that prudence and courage which you have displayed, even in your early years; and although the impulse of youthful ambition, and the full enjoyment of those gifts of fortune which have often intoxicated men of high expectation and

great virtue, have never yet been able to impel you beyond the just bounds of moderation; yet, both you and that republic which you are shortly to direct, or rather which now in a great measure reposes on your care, will derive important advantages from those hours of leisure, which you may pass either in solitary meditation, or social discussion, on the origin and nature of the human mind. For it is impossible that any person should rightly direct the affairs of the public, unless he has previously established in himself virtuous habits, and enlightened his understanding with that knowledge, which will enable him clearly to discern why he is called into existence, what is due to others, and what to himself". A conversation then commences between Lorenzo and Alberti, in which the latter endeavours to show, that as reason is the distinguishing characteristic of man, the perfection of his nature is only to be attained by the cultivation of his mind, and by a total abstraction from worldly pursuits. Lorenzo, who is not a mere silent auditor, opposes a doctrine which, if carried to its extreme, would separate man from his duties; and contends that no essential distinction can be made between active and contemplative life, but that each should mutually assist and improve the other; and this he illustrates in such a variety of instances, that although it is evidently the object of Landino, through the medium of Alberti, to establish the pure Platonic dogma, that abstract contemplation can alone constitute the essence of human happiness, yet Lorenzo appears to have raised objections which the ingenuity of the philosopher in the sequel of the dispute seems scarcely to have invalidated. On the following day the same subject is pursued, and Alberti fully explains the doctrine of Plato respecting the true end and aim of human life; illustrating it by the opinions of many of the most celebrated followers of that philosopher. The third and fourth days are spent in a commentary by Alberti on the Aeneid, in which he endeavours to show, that under the fiction of the poem are represented the leading doctrines of that philosophy which had been the subject of their previous discussion. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of such a construction, certain it is, that there are many passages in this poem which seem strongly to countenance such an opinion; and, at all events, the idea is supported by Alberti with such a display of learning, and such a variety of proofs, as must have rendered his commentary highly amusing and instructive to his youthful auditors.

It must not however be supposed, that amidst his studious avocations, Lorenzo was insensible to that passion which has at all times been the soul of poetry, and has been so philosophically and so variously described in his own writings. To this subject he has indeed devoted a considerable portion of his works; but it is somewhat extraordinary that he has not thought proper, upon any occasion, to inform us of the name of his mistress; nor has he gratified our curiosity so far as to give her even a poetical appellation. Petrarca had his Laura, and Dante his Beatrice; but Lorenzo has studiously concealed the name of the sovereign of his affections, leaving it to be ascertained by a thousand brilliant descriptions of her superlative beauty and accomplishments. In the usual order of things it is love that creates the poet; but with Lorenzo, poetry appears to have been the occasion of his love. The circumstances, as related by himself, are these:—"A young lady of great personal attractions happened to die in Florence; and as she had been very generally admired and beloved, so her death was as generally lamented. Nor was this to be wondered at; for independent of her beauty, her manners were so engaging, that almost every person who had any acquaintance with her, flattered himself that he had obtained the chief place in her affections. This fatal event excited the extreme regret of her admirers; and as she was carried to the place of burial, with her face uncovered, those who had known her when living pressed for a last look at the object of their adoration, and accompanied her funeral with their tears,

'Whilst death smiled lovely in her lovely face'.

"On this occasion all the eloquence and the wit of Florence were exerted in paying due honours to her memory, both in prose and in verse. Amongst the rest, I also composed a few sonnets; and in order to give them greater effect, I endeavoured to convince myself that I too had been deprived of the object of my love, and to excite in my own mind all those passions that might

enable me to move the affections of others. Under the influence of this delusion, I began to think how severe was the fate of those by whom she had been beloved; and from thence was led to consider, whether there was any other lady in this city deserving of such honour and praise, and to imagine the happiness that must be experienced by anyone whose good fortune could procure him such a subject for his pen. I accordingly sought for some time without having the satisfaction of finding any one, who, in my judgment, was deserving of a sincere and constant attachment. But when I had nearly resigned all expectations of success, chance threw in my way that which had been denied to my most diligent inquiry; as if the god of love had selected this hopeless period to give me a more decisive proof of his power. A public festival was held in Florence, to which all that was noble and beautiful in the city resorted. To this I was brought by some of my companions (I suppose as my destiny led), against my will, for I had for some time past avoided such exhibitions; or if at times I attended them, it proceeded rather from a compliance with custom, than from any pleasure I experienced in them. Among the ladies there assembled, I saw one of such sweet and attractive manners, that whilst I regarded her, I could not help saying. If this person were possessed of the delicacy, the understanding, the accomplishments of her who is lately dead — most certainly she excels her in the charms of her person".

"Resigning myself to my passion, I endeavoured to discover, if possible, how far her manners and her conversation agreed with her appearance; and here I found such an assemblage of extraordinary endowments, that it was difficult to say whether she excelled more in her person, or in her mind. Her beauty was, as I have before mentioned, astonishing. She was of a just and proper height. Her complexion extremely fair, but not pale; blooming, but not ruddy. Her countenance was serious without being severe; mild and pleasant without levity or vulgarity. Her eyes were lively, without any indication of pride or conceit. Her whole shape was so finely proportioned, that amongst other women she appeared with superior dignity, yet free from the least degree of formality or affectation. In walking, in dancing, or in other exercises which display the person, every motion was elegant and appropriate. Her sentiments were always just and striking, and have furnished materials for some of my sonnets; she always spoke at the proper time, and always to the purpose, so that nothing could be added, nothing taken away. Though her remarks were often keen and pointed, yet they were so tempered as not to give offence. Her understanding was superior to her sex, but without the appearance of arrogance or presumption; and she avoided an error too common among women, who when they think themselves sensible, become for the most part insupportable. To recount all her excellences would far exceed my present limits; and I shall therefore conclude with affirming, that there was nothing; which could be desired in a beautiful and accomplished woman, which was not in her most abundantly found. By these qualities I was so captivated, that not a power or faculty of ray body or mind remained any longer at liberty, and I could not help considering the lady who had died, as the star of Venus, which at the approach of the sun is totally overpowered and extinguished".

Such is the description that Lorenzo has left us of the object of his passion, in his comment upon the first sonnet which he wrote in her praise; and if we do not allow great latitude to the partiality of a lover, we must confess that few poets have been fortunate enough to meet with a mistress so well calculated to excite their zeal, or to justify the effects of their admiration.

The first poetical offspring of this passion was the following :-

SONETTO.

Alas for me! -whene'er my footsteps trace

Those precincts where eternal beauty reigns,

The sanguine current from a thousand veins

Plows round my heart, and pallid grows my face:

But when I mark that smile of heavenly grace,

Its wonted powers my drooping soul regains;

Whilst Love, that in her eyes his state maintains,

Points to my wandering heart its resting place:

And stooping from his beamy mansion swears,

"By all that forms ray power, and points my dart,

The living lustre of those radiant eyes,

I still will guide thy way; dismiss thy fears;

True are those looks of love". My trusting heart

Believes th' insidious vow — and from me flies.

The effects of this passion on Lorenzo were such as might be expected to be produced on a young and sensible mind. Instead of the glaring exhibitions to which he had been accustomed, the hurry of the city, and the public avocations of life, he found in himself a disposition for silence and for solitude, and was pleased in associating the ideas produced by every rural object with that of the mistress of his affections. Of these sentiments he has afforded us a specimen in the following sonnet: —

SONETTO.

Seek he who will in grandeur to be blest,

Place in proud halls, and splendid courts, his joy,

For pleasure or for gold, his arts employ.

Whilst all his hours unnumbered cares molest.

A little field in native flowerets drest,

A rivulet in soft murmurs gliding by,

A bird whose love-sick note salutes the sky,

With sweeter magic lull my cares to rest.

And shadowy woods, and rocks, and towering hills.

And caves obscure, and nature's free-born train.

And some lone nymph that timorous speeds along.

Each in my mind some gentle thought instils

Of those bright eyes that absence shrouds in vain;

— Ah gentle thoughts! soon lost the city cares among.

Having thus happily found a mistress that deserved his attention, Lorenzo was not negligent in celebrating her praises. On this, his constant theme, he has given us a considerable number of beautiful sonnets, canzoni, and other poetical compositions; which, like those of Petrarca, are sometimes devoted to the more general celebration of the person, or the mind of his mistress, and sometimes dwell only on one particular feature or accomplishment; whilst at other times these productions advert to the effects of his own passion, which is analyzed and described with every possible illustration of poetic ingenuity and philosophic refinement.

But having thus far traced the passion of Lorenzo, we may now be allowed to ask who was the object of so refined a love; adored without being defined, and celebrated without a name? Fortunately, the friends of Lorenzo were not in this respect equally delicate with himself. Politiano, in his Giostra of Giuliano, has celebrated the mistress of Lorenzo by the name of Lucretia. And Ugolino Verini, in his Fiametta, has addressed to her a Latin poem in elegiac verse, in which he shows himself a powerful advocate for Lorenzo, and contends, that whatever might be her accomplishments, he was a lover deserving of her favour, Valori affords us more particular information; from him we learn that Lucretia was a lady of the noble family of the Donati, equally distinguished by her beauty and her virtue, and a descendant of Curtio Donate, who had rendered himself eminent throughout Italy by his military achievements.

Whether the assiduities of Lorenzo and the persuasions of his friends were sufficiently powerful to soften that obduracy which there is reason to presume Lucretia manifested on his first addresses, yet remains a matter of doubt. The sonnets of Lorenzo rise, and fall through every degree of the thermometer of love; he exults and he despairs—he freezes and he burns—he sings of raptures too great for mortal sense, and he applauds a severity of virtue that no solicitations can move. From such contradictory testimony what are we to conclude? Lorenzo has himself presented us with the key that unlocks this mystery. From the relation which he has before given, we find that Lucretia was the mistress of the poet, and not of the man. Lorenzo sought for an object to concentrate his ideas, to give them strength and effect, and he found in Lucretia a subject that suited his purpose, and deserved his praise. But having so far realized his mistress, he has dressed and ornamented her according to his own imagination. Every action of her person, every motion of her mind, is subject to his control. She smiles, or she frowns; she refuses, or relents; she is absent, or present; she intrudes upon his solitude by day, or visits him in his nightly dreams, just as his presiding fancy directs. In the midst of these delightful visions Lorenzo was called upon to attend to the dull realities of life. He had now attained his twenty-first year, and his father conceived that it was time for him to enter into the conjugal state. To this end he had negotiated a marriage between Lorenzo and Clarice, the daughter of Giacopo Orsini, of the noble and powerful Roman family of that name, which had so long contended for superiority with that of the Colonna. Whether Lorenzo despaired of success in his youthful passion, or whether he subdued his feelings at the voice of paternal authority, is left to conjecture only. Certain, however, it is, that in the month of December, 1468, he was betrothed to a person whom it is probable he had never seen, and the marriage ceremony was performed on the 4th day of June following. That the heart of Lorenzo had little share in this engagement is marked by a striking circumstance. In adverting to his marriage in his Ricordi, he bluntly remarks that he took this lady to wife, “or rather”, says he, “she was given to me”, on the day before mentioned.

Notwithstanding this indifference, it appears from indisputable documents, that a real affection soon afterwards subsisted between them; and there is reason to believe that Lorenzo always treated her with particular respect and kindness. Their nuptials were celebrated with great splendour. Two military spectacles were exhibited, one of which represented a field battle of horsemen, and the other the attack and storming of a fortified citadel.

In the month of July following, Lorenzo took another journey to Milan, for the purpose of standing sponsor in the name of his father, to Galeazzo, the eldest son of Galeazzo Sforza, the reigning duke. In this expedition he was accompanied by Gentile d'Urbino, who gave a regular narrative of their proceedings to Clarice. A letter from Lorenzo himself to his wife is also yet preserved, written upon his arrival at Milan, which, though very short and not distinguished by any flights of fancy, exhibits more sincerity and affection than the greater part of his amorous sonnets.

*Lorenzo de' Medici to his wife Clarice.*

"I arrived here in safety, and am in good health. This I believe will please thee better than anything else except my return; at least so I judge from my own desire to be once more with thee. Associate as much as possible with my father and my sisters. I shall make all possible speed to return to thee; for it appears a thousand years till I see thee again. Pray to God for me. If thou want anything from this place, write in time.

Thy Lorenzo de' Medici.

From Milan, 22d of July, 1469."

From the *Ricordi* of Lorenzo and the letters of Gentile, it appears that Lorenzo was treated at Milan with great distinction and honour. "More indeed", says he, "than were shown to any other person present, although there were many much better entitled to it". On his departure he presented the duchess with a gold necklace, and a diamond which cost about three thousand ducats; "whence", says he in his Ricordi, "it followed, that the duke requested I would stand sponsor to all his other children".

Piero de' Medici did not long survive the marriage of his son. Exhausted by bodily sufferings, and wearied with the arrogant and tyrannical conduct of many of those who had espoused his cause, and which his infirmities prevented him from repressing, he died on the 3d day of December, 1469, leaving his widow Lucretia, who survived him many years. His funeral was without ostentation; "perhaps", says Ammirato, "because he had in his lifetime given directions to that effect; or because the parade of a magnificent interment might have excited the envy of the populace towards his successors, to whom it was of more importance to be great, than to appear to be so".

Before Piero was attacked by the disorder which for a long time rendered him almost incapable of attending to public business, he had been employed in several embassies of the greatest importance, which he had executed much to his own honour and the advantage of the republic. Even after he was disabled from attending in the council, he continued to regulate the affairs of Florence, and to discuss with the principal citizens the most important subjects, in such a manner as to evince the solidity of his judgment and the integrity of his heart. He possessed a competent share of eloquence, some specimens of which are given by Machiavelli, who asserts that the extortions and abuses practised by his friends and adherents were so flagitious, and so hateful to his temper, that if he had lived it was his intention to have recalled the exiled citizens; for which purpose he had an interview, at his seat at Caffagiolo, with Agnolo Acciajuoli; but the numerous errors of this celebrated historian give us just reason to doubt on those points which

have not the concurrent testimony of other writers. “It is probable”, says Tiraboschi, “that had Piero enjoyed better health and longer life, he might have done more for the interests of literature; but if he had only been known as the father of Lorenzo de' Medici, it would have been a sufficient title to the gratitude of posterity”.

CHAPTER III.

1469— 1476.

At the time of the death of Piero de' Medici, the republic of Florence was not engaged in any open war. The absentees were however a cause of continual alarm, and the situation of the Italian states was such, as to give just grounds of apprehension that the tranquillity of that country would not long remain undisturbed.

Of these the most powerful was that of Venice, which aspired to nothing less than the dominion of all Lombardy, and the supreme control of Italy itself. The superiority which it had acquired was in a great degree derived from the extensive commerce then carried on by the Venetians to different parts of the East, the valuable productions of which were conveyed by way of Egypt into the Mediterranean, and from thence distributed by the Venetians throughout the rest of Europe. In this branch of commerce the Genoese and the Florentines had successively attempted to rival them; but although each of these people, and particularly the latter, had obtained a considerable portion of this lucrative trade, the Venetians maintained a decided superiority until the discovery of a new and more expeditious communication with India, by the Cape of Good Hope, turned the course of eastern traffic into a new channel. The numerous vessels employed in transporting their commodities to different countries, rendered the state of Venice the most formidable maritime power in Europe. Ever intent on its own aggrandizement, it has only been restrained within its limits by formidable leagues between the Italian sovereigns, and by the seasonable intervention of foreign powers. Its internal tranquillity is remarkably contrasted with the turbulence of Florence; but the Venetian nobility had erected their authority on the necks of the people, and Venice was a republic of nobles with a populace of slaves. In no country was

despotism ever reduced to a more accurate system. The proficiency made by the Venetians in literature has accordingly borne no proportion to the rank which they have in other respects held among the Italian states. The talents of the higher orders were devoted to the support of their authority, or the extension of their territory; and among the lower class, with their political rights, their emulation was effectually extinguished. Whilst the other principal cities of Italy were daily producing works of genius, Venice was content with the humble, but more lucrative employment of communicating those works to the public by means of the press. Other governments have exhibited a different aspect at different times, according to the temper of the sovereign, or the passions of the multitude; but Venice uniformly preserved for ages the same settled features, a phenomenon in political history.

NAPLES

The kingdom of Naples was at this time governed by Ferdinand of Arragon, who had in the year 1458, succeeded his father Alfonso. Under his administration that country experienced a degree of prosperity to which it had long been a stranger. At the same time that Ferdinand kept a watchful eye on the other governments of Italy, and particularly on that of Venice, he was consulting the happiness of his own subjects by the institution of just and equal laws, and by the promotion of commerce and of letters; but the virtues of the monarch were sullied by the crimes of the man, and the memory of Ferdinand is disgraced by repeated instances of treachery and inhumanity. Galeazzo Maria, son of the eminent Francesco Sforza, held the states of Milan, which were then of considerable extent. Of the virtues and talents of the father, little however is to be traced in the character of the son. Immoderate in his pleasures, lavish in his expenses, rapacious in supplying his wants, he incurred the contempt and hatred of his subjects. Like another Nero, he mingled with his vices a taste for science and for arts. To the follies and the crimes of this man, posterity must trace the origin of all those evils, which, after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, depopulated and laid waste the most flourishing governments of Italy.

The pontifical chair was filled by Paul II, the successor of Pius II. A Venetian by birth, he had been educated in the profession of a merchant. On his uncle Eugenius IV being promoted to the papacy, he changed his views, and betook himself to study, but too late in life to make any great proficiency. To compensate for this defect, Paul assumed a degree of magnificence and splendour before unknown. His garments were highly ornamented, and his tiara was richly adorned with jewels. Of a tall and imposing figure, he appeared in his processions like a new Aaron, and commanded the respect and veneration of the multitude. His dislike to literature was shown by an unrelenting persecution of almost all the men of learning who had the misfortune to reside within his dominions. In the pontifical government, it may with justice be observed, that the interests of the prince and the people are always at variance with each other. Raised to the supremacy at an advanced period of life, when the claims of kindred begin to draw closer round the heart, the object of the pope is generally the aggrandizement of his family; and as he succeeds

to the direction of a state whose finances have been exhausted by his predecessor, under the influence of similar passions, he employs the short space of time allowed him, in a manner the most advantageous to himself, and the most oppressive to his subjects. Such is nearly the uniform tenor of this government; but in the fifteenth century, when the pope by his secular power held a distinguished rank among the sovereigns of Italy, he often looked beyond the resources of his own subjects, and attempted to possess himself by force of some of the smaller independent states which bordered upon his dominions, and over which the holy see always pretended a paramount claim, as having at some previous time formed a part of its territory, and having been either wrested from it by force, or wrongfully granted away by some former pontiff. These subordinate governments, though obtained by the power of the Roman state, were generally disposed of to the nominal nephews of the pope, who frequently bore in fact a nearer relationship to him; and were held by them until another successor in the see had power enough to dispossess the family of his predecessor, and vest the sovereignty in his own.

With any of these governments, either in extent of territory, or in point of military establishment, the city of Florence could not contend; but she possessed some advantages that rendered her of no small importance in the concerns of Italy. Independent of the superior activity and acuteness of her inhabitants, their situation, almost in the centre of the contending powers, gave them an opportunity of improving circumstances to their own interest, of which they seldom failed to avail themselves; and if Florence was inferior to the rest in the particulars before mentioned, she excelled them all in the promptitude with which she could apply her resources when necessity required. The battles of the Florentines were generally fought by *Condottieri*, who sold, or rather lent their troops to those who offered the best price; for the skill of the commander was shown in these contests, not so much in destroying the enemy, as in preserving from destruction those followers on whom he depended for his importance or his support. The Florentines were collectively and individually rich; and as the principal inhabitants did not hesitate, on pressing emergencies, to contribute to the credit and supply of the republic, the city of Florence was generally enabled to perform an important part in the transactions of Italy, and if not powerful enough to act alone, was perhaps more desirable as an ally than any other state of that country.

Such was the situation of the different governments of Italy at the time of the death of Piero de' Medici; but besides these, a number of inferior states interfered in the politics of the times, and on some occasions, with no inconsiderable effect. Borso d'Este, marquis of Ferrara, although of illegitimate birth, had succeeded to the government on the death of Leonello, to the exclusion of his own legitimate brothers, and administered its affairs with great reputation. Torn by domestic factions, the Genoese were held in subjection by the duke of Milan, whilst Sienna and Lucca, each boasting a free government, were indebted for their independence rather to the mutual jealousy of their neighbours, than to any resource s of their own.

We have already seen, that during the indisposition of Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo had frequently interfered in the administration of the republic, and had given convincing proofs of his talents and his assiduity. Upon the death of his father, he therefore succeeded to his authority as if it had been a part of his patrimony. On the second day after that event, he was attended at his own house by many of the principal inhabitants of Florence, who requested that he would take upon himself the administration and care of the republic, in the same manner as his grandfather and his father had before done. Had Lorenzo even been divested of ambition, he well knew the impossibility of retiring with safety to a private station, and without long hesitation complied with the wishes of his fellow-citizens. Sensible, however, of the difficulties which he had to encounter, he took every precaution to obviate the ill effects of envy and suspicion, by selecting as his principal advisers such of the citizens as were most esteemed for their integrity and their prudence, whom he consulted on all occasions of importance. This practice, which he found so useful to him in his youth, he continued in his maturer years; but after having duly weighed the

opinions of others, he was accustomed to decide on the measures to be adopted by the strength of his own judgment, and not seldom in opposition to the sentiments of those with whom he had advised. Letters of condolence were addressed to him on the death of his father, not only by many eminent individuals, but by several of the states and princes of Italy, and from some he received particular embassies, with assurances of friendship and support.

Between Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano, there subsisted a warm and uninterrupted affection. Educated under the same roof, they had always participated in the same studies and amusements. Giuliano was therefore no stranger to the learned languages, and, in his attention to men of talents, emulated the example and partook of the celebrity of his brother. He delighted in music and in poetry, particularly in that of his native tongue, which he cultivated with success; and by his generosity and urbanity gained, in a great degree, the affections of the populace, to which it is probable his fondness for public exhibitions not a little contributed. At the death of his father, Giuliano was only about sixteen years of age, so that the administration of public affairs rested wholly on Lorenzo, whose constant attention to the improvement of his brother may be considered as the most unequivocal proof of his affection.

A hasty and ill-conducted attempt by Bernardo Nardi, one of the Florentine exiles, to surprise and possess himself of the town of Prato, a part of the Florentine dominions, was one of the first events that called for the interposition of the republic. A body of soldiers was despatched to the relief of the place, but the intrepidity of Cesare Petrucci, the chief magistrate, assisted by Giorgio Ginori, a Florentine citizen and knight of Rhodes, had rendered further assistance unnecessary; and Bernardo being made prisoner, was sent to Florence, where he paid with his life the forfeit of his folly. Being interrogated previous to his execution, as to his motives for making such an attempt with so small a number of followers, and such little probability of success, he replied, that having determined rather to die in Florence than to live longer in exile, he wished to ennoble his death by some splendid action. No sooner had this alarm subsided, than apprehensions arose of a much more formidable nature. Pursuing his destructive conquests, the Turkish emperor, Mahomet II, had attacked the island of Negropont, which composed a part of the Venetian territory, and, after a dreadful slaughter of both Turks and Christians, had taken the capital city by storm, and put the inhabitants to the sword. Encouraged by success, he vowed not to lay down his arms until he had abolished the religion of Christ, and extirpated all his followers. A strong sense of common danger is perhaps, of all others, the most powerful incentive to concord, and the selfish views of the Italian states were, for a short time, lost in the contemplation of this destructive enemy, whose success was equally dreaded by the prince, the scholar, and the priest. In the month of December, 1470, a league was solemnly concluded, for the common defence, between the pope, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and the Florentines, to which almost all the other states of Italy acceded. In the same month Lorenzo de' Medici received a further proof of the confidence of his fellow-citizens, in being appointed syndic of the republic, by virtue of which authority he bestowed upon Buongianni Gianfiliazzi, then Gonfaloniere. the order of knighthood in the church of S. Reparata.

The multiplicity of his public concerns did not prevent Lorenzo from attending to his domestic affairs, and taking the necessary precautions for continuing with advantage those branches of commerce which had proved so lucrative to his ancestors. Such were the profits which they had derived from these sources, that besides the immense riches which the family actually possessed, the ancestors of Lorenzo had, in a course of thirty-seven years, computing from the return of Cosimo from banishment in 1434, expended in works of public charity or utility upwards of 660,000 florins; a sum which Lorenzo himself justly denominates incredible, and which may serve to give us a striking idea of the extensive traffic by which such munificence could be supported. In relating this circumstance, Lorenzo gives his hearty sanction to the manner in which this money had been employed. “Some persons would perhaps think”, says he, in his private Ricordi, “that it would be more desirable to have a part of it in their purse; but I conceive it has

been a great advantage to the public, and well laid out, and am therefore perfectly satisfied". Of this sum the principal part had been acquired and expended by Cosimo de' Medici, who had carried on, in conjunction with his brother Lorenzo, a very extensive trade, as well in Florence as in foreign parts. On the death of Lorenzo, in the year 1440, his proportion of the riches thus obtained, which amounted in the whole to upwards of 235,000 florins, was inherited by his son. Pier Francesco de' Medici, for whose use Cosimo retained it until the year 1451, when a distribution took place between the two families. From that time it was agreed, that the traffic of the family should be carried on for the joint benefit of Pier Francesco and of Piero and Giovanni, the sons of Cosimo, who were to divide the profits in equal shares of one-third to each, and immense riches were thus acquired; but whilst Cosimo and his descendants expended a great part of their wealth in the service of the country, and supported the hereditary dignity of chiefs of the republic. Pier Francesco preferred a private life, and equally remote from the praise of munificence or the reproach of ostentation, transmitted to his descendants so ample a patrimony, as enabled them, in concurrence with other favourable circumstances, to establish a permanent authority in Florence, and finally to overturn the liberties of their native place.

Of the particular branch of traffic by which the Medici acquired their wealth, little information remains; but there is no doubt that a considerable portion of it arose from the trade which the Florentines, in the early part of the fifteenth century, began to carry on to Alexandria for the productions of the east, in which they attempted to rival the states of Genoa and of Venice. To this they were induced by the representations of Taddeo di Cenni, who, having resided at Venice, and being apprised of the advantages which that city derived from the traffic in spices, and other eastern merchandize, prevailed upon his countrymen, in the year 1421, to aim at a participation in the trade. Six new officers were accordingly created, under the title of maritime consuls, who were to prepare, at the port of Leghorn (the dominion of which city the Florentines had then lately obtained by purchase), two large galleys and six guard ships. In the following year the Florentines entered on their new commerce with great solemnity. A public procession took place, and the divine favour, which had always accompanied their domestic undertakings, was solicited upon their maritime concerns. At the same time, the first armed vessel of the republic was fitted out on a voyage for Alexandria, in which twelve young men of the first families of Florence engaged to proceed, for the purpose of obtaining experience in naval affairs. Carlo Federighi and Felice Brancacci were appointed ambassadors to the sultan, and were provided with rich presents to conciliate his favour. The embassy was eminently successful. Early in the following year the ambassadors returned, having obtained permission to form a commercial establishment at Alexandria for the convenience of their trade, and with the extraordinary privilege of erecting a church for the exercise of their religion. In this branch of traffic, which was of a very lucrative nature, and carried on to a great extent, the Medici were deeply engaged, and reciprocal presents of rare or curious articles were exchanged between them and the sultans, which sufficiently indicate their friendly intercourse.

Besides the profits derived from their mercantile concerns, the wealth of the Medici was obtained through many other channels. A very large income arose to Cosimo and his descendants from their extensive farms at Poggio-Cajano, Caffagiolo, and other places, which were cultivated with great assiduity, and made a certain and ample return. The mines of alum in different parts of Italy were either the property of the Medici, or were hired by them from their respective owners, so that they were enabled almost to monopolize this article, and to render it highly lucrative. For a mine in the Roman territory it appears that they paid to the papal see the annual rent of 100,000 florins. But perhaps the principal sources of the riches of this family arose from the commercial banks which they had established in almost all the trading cities of Europe, and which were conducted by agents in whom they placed great confidence. At a time when the rate of interest frequently depended on the necessities of the borrower, and was in most cases very exorbitant, an inconceivable profit must have been derived from these establishments, which, as we before noticed, were at times resorted to for pecuniary assistance by the most powerful sovereigns in Europe.

In the month of March, 1471, Galeazzo Sforza, duke of Milan, accompanied by his duchess Bona, sister of Amadeo, duke of Savoy, paid a visit to Florence, where they took up their residence with Lorenzo de' Medici; but their attendants, who were very numerous, were accommodated at the public charge. Not sufficiently gratified by the admiration of his own subjects, Galeazzo was desirous of displaying his magnificence in the eyes of the Florentines, and of partaking with them in the spectacles and amusements with which their city abounded. His equipage was accordingly in the highest style of splendour and expense; but, notwithstanding this profusion, his wonder, and perhaps his envy, was excited by the superior magnificence of Lorenzo, which was of a kind not always in the power of riches to procure. Galeazzo observed with admiration the extensive collection of the finest remains of ancient art, which had been selected throughout all Italy for a long course of years, with equal assiduity and expense. He examined, with apparent pleasure, the great variety of statues, vases, gems, and intaglios, with which the palace of Lorenzo was ornamented, and in which the value of the materials was often excelled by the exquisite skill of the workmanship; but he was more particularly gratified by the paintings, the productions of the best masters of the times, and owned that he had seen a greater number of excellent pictures in that place, than he had found throughout the rest of Italy. With the same attention he examined the celebrated collection of manuscripts, drawings, and other curious articles of which Lorenzo was possessed; and, notwithstanding his predilection for courtly grandeur, had the taste, or the address, to acknowledge, that in comparison with what he had seen, gold and silver lost their value. The arrival of the duke at Florence seems to have been the signal for general riot and dissipation. Machiavelli affects to speak with horror of the irregular conduct of him and of his courtiers; and remarks, with a gravity that might well have become a more dutiful son of the church, that this was the first time that an open disregard was avowed in Florence of the prohibition of eating flesh in Lent. For the amusement of the duke and his attendants, three public spectacles were exhibited; one of which was the Annunciation of the Virgin, another the Ascension of Christ, and the third the descent of the Holy Spirit. The last was exhibited in the church of S. Spirito; and, as it required the frequent use of fire, the building caught the flames, and was entirely consumed—a circumstance which the piety of the populace attributed to the evident displeasure of heaven.

There is however abundant reason to believe that Lorenzo was induced to engage in the avocations and amusements before mentioned, rather by necessity than by choice, and that his happiest hours were those which he was permitted to devote to the exercise of his talents, and the improvement of his understanding, or which were enlivened by the conversation of those eminent men who sometimes assembled under his roof in Florence, and occasionally accompanied him to his seats at Fiesole, Carreggi, or Caffagiolo. Those who shared his more immediate favour were Marsilio Ficino, the three brothers of the family of Pulci, and Matteo Franco; but of all his literary friends, Politiano was the most particularly distinguished. It has been said that this eminent scholar was educated under the protection of Cosmo de' Medici; but at the death of Cosimo he was only ten years of age, having been born on the 14th day of July, 1454. Politiano was indebted for his education to Piero, or rather to Lorenzo de' Medici, whom he always considered as his peculiar patron, and to whom he felt himself bound by every tie of gratitude. The place of his birth was Monte-Pulciano, or Mons Politianus, a small town in the territory of Florence, whence he derived his name, having discontinued that of his family, which has given rise to great diversity of conjecture respecting it. The father of Politiano, though not wealthy, was a doctor of the civil law, which may be an answer to the many invidious tales as to the meanness of his birth. On his arrival at Florence he applied himself with great diligence to the study of the Latin language under Cristoforo Landino, and of the Greek, under Andronicus of Thessalonica. Ficino and Argyropylus were his instructors in the different systems of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy; but poetry had irresistible allurements for his young mind, and his stanze on the Giostra of Giuliano, if they did not first recommend him to the notice of Lorenzo, certainly obtained his approbation and secured his favour. The friendship of Lorenzo provided for all his wants, and enabled him to prosecute his studies free from the embarrassments and interruptions of pecuniary affairs. He was early enrolled among the citizens of Florence, and appointed secular prior of the college of S.

Giovanni. He afterwards entered into clerical orders, and having obtained the degree of doctor of the civil law, was nominated canon of the cathedral of Florence. Entrusted by Lorenzo with the education of his children, and the care of his extensive collection of manuscripts and antiquities, he constantly resided under his roof, and was his inseparable companion at those hours which were not devoted to the more important concerns of the state.

Respecting the temper and character of Politiano, his epistles afford us ample information. In one of these, addressed to Matteo Corvino, king of Hungary, a monarch eminently distinguished by his encouragement of learned men, he hesitates not, whilst he pays a just tribute of gratitude to the kindness of Lorenzo, to claim the merit due to his own industry and talents. “From a humble situation”, says he, “I have, by the favour and friendship of Lorenzo de' Medici, been raised to some degree of rank and celebrity, without any other recommendation than my proficiency in literature. During many years I have not only taught in Florence the Latin tongue with great approbation, but even in the Greek language I have contended with the Greeks themselves—a species of merit that I may boldly say has not been attained by any of my countrymen for a thousand years past”. In the intercourse which Politiano maintained with the learned men of his time, he appears to have been sufficiently conscious of his own superiority. The letters addressed to him by his friends were in general well calculated to gratify his vanity; but although he was in a high degree jealous of his literary reputation, he was careful to distinguish how far the applauses bestowed upon him were truly merited, and how far they were intended to conciliate his favour. If he did not always estimate himself by the good opinion entertained of him by others, he did not suffer himself to be depressed by their envy or their censure. “I am no more raised or dejected”, says he, “by the flattery of my friends, or the accusations of my adversaries, than I am by the shadow of my own body; for although that shadow may be somewhat longer in the morning and the evening than it is in the middle of the day, this will scarcely induce me to think myself a taller man at those times than I am at noon”.

The impulse which Lorenzo de' Medici had given to the cause of letters soon began to be felt, not only by those who immediately surrounded him, but throughout the Tuscan territories, and from thence it extended itself to the rest of Italy. By the liberal encouragement which he held out to men of learning, and still more by his condescension and affability, he attracted them from all parts of that country to Florence; so that it is scarcely possible to name an Italian of that age, distinguished by his proficiency in any branch of literature, that has not shared the attention or partaken of the bounty of Lorenzo.

Paul XI, between whom and the family of the Medici there subsisted an irreconcilable enmity, died on the 26th of July, 1471, leaving behind him the character of an ostentatious, profligate, and illiterate priest. This antipathy, which took place in the lifetime of Piero de' Medici, though Fabroni supposes it arose after his death, was occasioned by the ambition of Paul, who, under the influence of motives to which we have before adverted, was desirous of possessing himself of the city of Rimini, then held by Roberto, the natural son of Gismondo Malatesti, whose virtues had obliterated in the eyes of the citizens the crimes of his father. Finding his pretensions opposed, Paul attempted to enforce them by the sword, and prevailed upon his countrymen the Venetians to afford him their assistance. Roberto had resorted for succour to the Medici, and by their interference the Roman and Venetian troops were speedily opposed in the field by a formidable army, led by the duke of Urbino, and supported by the duke of Calabria and Roberto Sanseverino. An engagement took place, which terminated in the total rout of the army of the pope, who, dreading the resentment of so powerful an alliance, acceded to such terms as the conquerors thought proper to dictate; not however without bitterly inveighing against the Medici for the part they had taken in opposing his ambitious project.

During the pontificate of Paul II letters and science experienced at Rome a cruel and unrelenting persecution, and their professors exhibited in their sufferings a degree of constancy

and resolution, which in another cause might have advanced them to the rank of martyrs. The imprisonment of the historian Platina, who, on being arbitrarily deprived of a respectable office to which he was appointed by Pius II had dared to thunder in the ears of the pope the dreaded name of a general council, might perhaps admit of some justification; but this was only a prelude to the devastation which Paul made amongst the men of learning, who, during his pontificate, had chosen the city of Rome as their residence. A number of these uniting together, had formed a society for the research of antiquities, chiefly with a view to elucidate the works of the ancient authors, from medals, inscriptions, and other remains of art. As an incitement to, or as characteristic of their studies, they had assumed classic names, and thereby gave the first instance of a practice which has since become general among the academicians of Italy. Whilst these men were employing themselves in a manner that did honour to their age and country, Paul was indulging his folly and his vanity in ridiculous and contemptible exhibitions; and happy had it been if he had confined his attention to these amusements; but on the pretext of a conspiracy against his person, he seized upon many members of the academy, which he pretended to consider as a dangerous and seditious assembly, accusing them of having, by their adoption of heathen names, marked their aversion to the Christian religion. Such of them as were so unfortunate as to fall into his hands he committed to prison, where they underwent the torture, in order to draw from them a confession of crime which had no existence, and of heretical opinions which they had never avowed. Not being able to obtain any evidence of their guilt, and finding that they had resolution to suffer the last extremity rather than accuse themselves, Paul thought proper at length to acquit them of the charge, but at the same time, by a wanton abuse of power, he ordered that they should be detained in prison during a complete year from the time of their commitment, alleging that he did it to fulfil a vow which he had made when he first imprisoned them.

To Paul II succeeded Francesco della Rovere, a Franciscan monk, who assumed the name of Sixtus IV. His knowledge of theology and the canon law had not conciliated the favour of the populace; for during the splendid ceremony of his coronation a tumult arose in the city, in which his life was endangered. To congratulate him on his elevation, an embassy of six of the most eminent citizens was deputed from Florence, at the head of which was Lorenzo de' Medici. Between Lorenzo and the pope mutual instances of good-will took place; and Lorenzo, who under the direction of his agents had a bank established at Rome, was formally invested with the office of treasurer of the holy see, an appointment which greatly contributed to enrich his maternal uncle, Giovanni Tornabuoni, who, whilst he executed that office on behalf of Lorenzo, had an opportunity of purchasing from Sixtus many of the rich jewels that had been collected by Paul II, which he sold to different princes of Europe, to great emolument. During this visit Lorenzo made further additions to the many valuable specimens of ancient sculpture, of which, by the diligence of his ancestors, he was already possessed. On his return to Florence he brought with him two busts, in marble, of Augustus and Agrippa, which were presented to him by the pope, with many cameos and medals, of the excellency of which he was an exquisite judge. In the warmth of his admiration for antiquity, he could not refrain from condemning the barbarism of Paul, who had demolished a part of the Flavian amphitheatre in order to build a church to S. Marco. At this interview it is probable that Lorenzo solicited from Sixtus the promise of a cardinal's hat for his brother, and it is certain that he afterwards used his endeavours to obtain for Giuliano a seat in the sacred college, through the medium of the Florentine envoy at Rome; but the circumstances of the times, and the different temper of the pope and of Lorenzo, soon put an end to all friendly intercourse between them, and an enmity took place which was productive of the most sanguinary consequences.

Soon after the return of Lorenzo to Florence, a disagreement arose between that republic and the city of Volterra, which composed a part of its dominions. A mine of alum had been discovered within the district of Volterra, which being at first considered as of small importance, was suffered to remain in the hands of individual proprietors; but it afterwards appearing to be very lucrative, the community of Volterra claimed a share of the profits as part of their municipal revenue. The proprietors appealed to the magistrates of Florence, who discountenanced the

pretensions of the city of Volterra, alleging, that if the profits of the mine were to be applied to the use of the public, they ought to become a part of the general revenue of the government, and not of any particular district. This determination gave great offence to the citizens of Volterra, who resolved not only to persevere in their claims, but also to free themselves, if possible, from their subjection to the Florentines. A general commotion took place at Volterra. Such was the violence of the insurgents, that they put to death several of their own citizens who disapproved of their intemperate proceedings. Even the Florentine commissary, Piero Malegonelle, narrowly escaped with his life. This revolt excited great alarm at Florence, not from the idea that the citizens of Volterra were powerful enough to succeed in an attempt which they had previously made at four different times without success, but from an apprehension, that if a contest took place, it might afford a pretext for the pope or the king of Naples to interfere on the occasion. Hence a great diversity of opinion prevailed amongst the magistrates and council of Florence, some of whom, particularly Tomaso Soderini, strongly recommended conciliatory measures. This advice was opposed by Lorenzo de' Medici, who, from the enormities already committed at Volterra, was of opinion that the most speedy and vigorous means ought to be adopted to repress the commotion. In justification of this apparent severity, he remarked, that in violent disorders, where death could only be prevented by bold and decisive measures, those physicians were the most cruel who appeared to be the most compassionate. His advice was adopted by the council, and preparations were made to suppress the revolt by force. The inhabitants of Volterra exerted themselves to put the city in a state of defence, and made earnest applications for assistance to the neighbouring governments. About a thousand soldiers were hired and received within the walls, to assist in supporting the expected attack; but the Florentines having surrounded the place with a numerous army, under the command of the count of Urbino, the citizens soon surrendered at discretion. The Florentine commissaries took possession of the palace, and enjoined the magistrates to repair peaceably to their houses. One of them on his return was insulted and plundered by a soldier; and notwithstanding the utmost exertions of the duke of Urbino, who put to death the offender, this incident led the way to a general sackage of the city, the soldiers who had engaged in its defence uniting with the conquerors in despoiling and plundering the unfortunate inhabitants. Lorenzo was no sooner apprized of this event, than he hastened to Volterra, where he endeavoured to repair the injuries done to the inhabitants, and to alleviate their distresses, by every method in his power. Although the unhappy termination of this affair arose from an incident, which, as the sagacity of Lorenzo could not foresee, so his precaution could not prevent, yet it is highly probable, from the earnestness which he showed to repair the calamity, that it gave him no small share of regret. Nor has he on this occasion escaped the censure of a contemporary historian, who being himself an inhabitant of Volterra, probably shared in those distresses of which he considered Lorenzo as the author, and has, therefore, on this and on other occasions, shown a disposition unfriendly to his character.

About the close of the following year great apprehensions of a famine arose in Florence, and five citizens were appointed to take the necessary precautions for supplying the place. The dreadful effects of this calamity were however obviated, principally by the attention of Lorenzo, who shortly afterwards took a journey to Pisa, where he made a long residence. The object of this visit was the re-establishment and regulation of the academy of that place, which, after having existed nearly two centuries, and having been celebrated for the abilities of its professors, and the number of its students, had fallen into disrepute and neglect. An institution of a similar nature had been founded in Florence in 1348 a year rendered remarkable by the dreadful pestilence of which Boccaccio has left so affecting a narrative; but Florence was on many accounts an improper situation for this purpose. The scarcity of habitations, the high price of provisions, and the consequent expense of education, had greatly diminished the number of students, whilst the amusements with which that place abounded were unfavourable to a proficiency in serious acquirements. Sensible of these disadvantages, the Florentines, who had held the dominion of Pisa from the year 1406, resolved to establish the academy of that place in its former splendour. Lorenzo de' Medici and four other citizens were appointed to superintend the execution of their purpose; but Lorenzo, who was the projector of the plan, undertook the chief direction of it, and

in addition to the six thousand florins annually granted by the state, expended in effecting his purpose a large sum of money from his private fortune. Amongst the professors at Pisa, were speedily found some of the most eminent scholars of the age, particularly in the more serious and important branches of science. At no period have the professors of literature been so highly rewarded. The dissensions and misconduct of these teachers, whose arrogance was at least equal to their learning, gave Lorenzo no small share of anxiety, and often called for his personal interference. His absence from his native place was a frequent cause of regret to Politiano, who consoled himself by composing verses expressive of his affection for Lorenzo, and soliciting his speedy return. To this circumstance we are however indebted for several of the familiar letters of Lorenzo that have reached posterity, many of which have been published with those of Ficino; and perhaps derive some advantage from a comparison with the epistles of the philosopher, whose devotion to his favourite studies is frequently carried to an absurd extreme, and whose flattery is sometimes so apparent as to call for the reprehension even of Lorenzo himself.

The increasing authority of Lorenzo, and his importance in the affairs of Europe, now began to be more apparent. In the year 1473, he took part in a negotiation, which had it been successful, might have preserved Italy from many years of devastation, and at all events must have given a different complexion to the affairs not only of that country, but of Europe. Louis XI of France, who laid the foundation of that despotism, which, after having existed for three centuries, was at length expiated in the blood of the most guiltless of his descendants, and whose views were uniformly directed towards the aggrandizement of his dominions and the depression of his subjects, was desirous of connecting his family with that of Ferdinand king of Naples, by the marriage of his eldest son with a daughter of that prince. To this end he conceived it necessary to address himself to some person, whose general character, and influence with Ferdinand, might promote his views, and for that purpose he selected Lorenzo de' Medici. The confidential letter from Louis to Lorenzo on this occasion is yet extant, and affords some striking traits of this ambitious, crafty, and suspicious monarch. After expressing his high opinion of Lorenzo, and his unshaken attachment to him, he gives him to understand, that he is informed a negotiation is on foot for a marriage between the eldest daughter of the king of Naples, and the duke of Savoy, upon which the king was to give her a portion of 300,000 ducats. Without apologizing for his interference, he then mentions his desire that a connexion of this nature should take place between the princess and his eldest son the Dauphin, and requests that Lorenzo would communicate his wishes to the king of Naples. To this proposal Louis adds the promise of his favour and protection to Ferdinand against the house of Anjou; requiring however his assistance, in return, against John king of Arragon, and his other enemies; alluding to the duke of Burgundy, whom he was then attempting to despoil of his dominions. After making further arrangements respecting the proposed nuptials, he requests that Lorenzo would send some confidential person to reside with him for a time, and to return to Florence as often as might be requisite; but with particular injunctions that he should have no intercourse with any of the French nobility or princes of the blood. The conclusion of the letter conveys a singular request : conscious of his guilt, Louis distrusted all his species, and he desires that Lorenzo would furnish him with a large dog, of a particular breed, which he was known to possess, for the purpose of attending on his person and guarding his bed-chamber. Notwithstanding the apparent seriousness with which Louis proposes to connect his family by marriage with that of the king of Naples, it is probable that such proposal was only intended to delay or prevent the marriage of the princess with the duke of Savoy. Whether Ferdinand considered it in this light, or whether he had other reasons to suspect the king of France of sinister or ambitious views, he returned a speedy answer, in which, after the warmest professions of personal esteem for Lorenzo, and after expressing his thorough sense of the honour he should derive from an alliance with a monarch who might justly be esteemed the greatest prince on earth, he rejects the proposition on account of the conditions that accompanied it; declaring that no private considerations should induce him to interrupt the friendship subsisting between him and his ally the duke of Burgundy, or his relation the king of Spain, and that he would rather lose his kingdom, and even his life, than suffer such an imputation upon his honour and his character. If in his reply he has alleged the true reasons for declining a

connexion apparently so advantageous to him, it must be confessed that his sentiments do honour to his memory. The magnanimity of Ferdinand affords a striking contrast to the meanness and duplicity of Louis XI. It is scarcely necessary to add that the proposed union never took place. The Dauphin, afterwards Charles VIII, married the accomplished daughter of the duke of Bretagne, and some years afterwards expelled the family of his once intended father-in-law from their dominions, under the pretence of a will, made in favour of Louis XI, by a count of Provence, one of that very family of Anjou, against whose claims Louis had himself proposed to defend the king of Naples.

Sixtus IV at the time he ascended the pontifical chair, had several sons, upon whom, in the character of nephews, he afterwards bestowed the most important offices and the highest dignities of the church. The indecency of Sixtus, in thus lavishing upon his spurious offspring the riches of the Roman see, could only be equalled by their profuseness in dissipating them. Piero Riario, in whose person were united the dignities of cardinal of S. Sisto, patriarch of Constantinople, and archbishop of Florence, expended at a single entertainment in Rome, given by him in honour of the duchess of Ferrara, 20,000 ducats, and afterwards made a tour through Italy with such a degree of splendour, and so numerous a retinue, that the pope himself could not have displayed greater magnificence. His brother Girolamo was dignified with the appellation of count; and that it might not be regarded as an empty title, 40,000 ducats were expended in purchasing from the family of Manfredi the territory of Imola, of which he obtained possession, and to which he afterwards added the dominion of Forli. The city of Castello became no less an object of the ambition of Sixtus; but instead of endeavouring to possess himself of it by compact, he made an attempt to wrest it by force from Niccolò Vitelli, who then held the sovereignty; for which purpose he despatched against it another of his equivocal relations, Giuliano della Rovere, who afterwards became pope under the name of Julius II, and who, in the character of a military cardinal, had just before sacked the city of Spoleto, and put the inhabitants to the sword. Niccold having obtained the assistance of the duke of Milan and of the Florentines, made a vigorous defence, and, though obliged at length to capitulate, obtained respectable terms. His long resistance was attributed by the pope, and not without reason, to Lorenzo de' Medici, who, independent of his private regard for Niccolò, could not be an indifferent spectator of an unprovoked attack upon a place which immediately bordered on the territories of Florence, and greatly contributed towards their security. These depredations, which were supposed to be countenanced by the king of Naples, roused the attention of the other states of Italy; and, towards the close of the year 1474, a league was concluded at Milan, between the duke, the Venetians, and the Florentines, for their mutual defence, to which neither the pope nor the king were parties : liberty was however reserved for those potentates to join in the league if they thought proper; but this they afterwards refused, probably considering this article of the treaty as inserted rather for the purpose of deprecating their resentment, than with the expectation of their acceding to the compact.

In this year, under the magistracy of Donato Acciajuoli, a singular visitor arrived at Florence. This was Christian, or Christiern, king of Denmark and Sweden, who was journeying to Rome, for the purpose, as was alleged, of discharging a vow. He is described by the Florentine historians as of a grave aspect, with a long and white beard; and although he was considered as a barbarian, they admit that the qualities of his mind did not derogate from the respectability of his external appearance. Having surveyed the city, and paid a ceremonial visit to the magistrates, who received the royal visitor with great splendour, he requested to be favoured with a sight of the celebrated copy of the Greek Evangelists, which had been obtained some years before from Constantinople, and of the *Pandects* of Justinian, brought from Amalfi to Pisa, and thence to Florence. His laudable curiosity was accordingly gratified; and he expressed his satisfaction by declaring, through the medium of his interpreter, that these were the real treasures of princes; alluding, as was supposed, to the conduct of the duke of Milan, who had attempted to dazzle him with the display of that treasure of which he had plundered his subjects, to gratify his vanity and his licentiousness; on which occasion Christian had coldly observed, that the accumulation of riches was an object below the attention of a great and magnanimous sovereign. Ammirato

attempts to show that this remark is rather specious than just; but the authority of the Roman poet is in favour of the Goth. It was a spectacle worthy of admiration, says the same historian, to see a king, peaceable and unarmed, pass through Italy, whose predecessors had not only overthrown the armies of that country, and harassed the kingdoms of France and of Spain, but had even broken and overturned the immense fabric of the Roman empire itself.

If we do not implicitly join in the applauses bestowed by Landino on the professors and the tenets of the Platonic or new philosophy, we must not, on the contrary, conceive that the study of these doctrines was a mere matter of speculation and curiosity. From many circumstances, there is great reason to conclude that they were applied to practical use, and had a considerable influence on the manners and the morals of the age. The object towards which mankind have always directed their aim, and in the acquisition of which every system, both of religion and philosophy, proposes to assist their endeavours, is the *summum bonum*, the greatest possible degree of attainable happiness; but in what this chief good consists has not been universally agreed upon, and this variety of opinion constitutes the essential difference between the ancient sects of philosophy. Of all these sects there was none whose tenets were so elevated and sublime, so calculated to withdraw the mind from the gratifications of sense, and the inferior objects of human pursuit, as that of the Platonists; which, by demonstrating the imperfection of every sensual enjoyment, and every temporal blessing, rose at length to the contemplation of the Supreme Cause, and placed the ultimate good in a perfect abstraction from the world and an implicit love of God. How far these doctrines may be consistent with our nature and destination, and whether such sentiments may not rather lead to a dereliction than a completion of our duty, may perhaps be doubted; but they are well calculated to attract a great and aspiring mind. Mankind, however, often arrive at the same conclusion by different means; and we have in our days seen a sect rise up whose professors, employing a mode of deduction precisely opposite to the Platonists of the fifteenth century, strongly resemble them in their sentiments and manners. Those important conclusions which the one derived from the highest cultivation of intellect, the other has found in an extreme of humiliation, and a constant degradation and contempt of all human endowments. Like navigators who steer a course directly opposite, they meet at last at the same point of the globe; and the sublime reveries of the Platonists, as they appear in the works of some of their followers, and the doctrines of the modern Methodists, are at times scarcely distinguishable in their respective writings.

In this system Lorenzo had been educated from his earliest years. Of his proficiency in it he has left a very favourable specimen in a poem of no inconsiderable extent. The occasion that gave rise to this poem appears from a letter of Ficino, who undertook to give an abstract of the doctrines of Plato in prose, whilst Lorenzo agreed to attempt the same subject in verse. Lorenzo completed his task with that facility for which he was remarkable in all his compositions, and sent it to the philosopher, who performed the part he had undertaken by giving a dry and insipid epitome of the poem of Lorenzo. What seems yet more extraordinary is, that Ficino, in a letter to Bernardo Rucellai (who had married one of the sisters of Lorenzo), transmits to him a prosaic paraphrase of the beautiful address to the Deity at the conclusion of the poem, affirming that he daily made use of it in his devotions, and recommending it to Bernardo, for the like purpose. At the same time, instead of attributing the composition to its real author, he adverts to it in a manner that Bernardo might well be excused from understanding. It is needless to add, that this subject appears to much greater advantage in the native dress of the poet, than in the prosaic garb of the philosopher. The introduction is very pleasing. The author represents himself as leaving the city, to enjoy for a few days the pleasures of a country life.

Led on by pensive thought I left erewhile

Those civil storms the restless city knows,

Pleased for a time to soothe my brow of toil.

And taste the little bliss that life bestows.

Thus with free steps my willing course I sped

Far from the circle of my native walls;

And sought the vale with thickest foliage spread.

On whose calm breast the mountain shadow falls.

Charmed with the lovely spot, I sat me down

Where first the hill its easy slope inclined.

And every care that haunts the busy town.

Fled, as by magic, from my tranquil mind.

Whilst the poet is admiring the surrounding scenery, he is interrupted by a shepherd, who brings his flock to drink at an adjacent spring; and who, after expressing his surprise at meeting such a stranger, inquires from Lorenzo the reason of his visit.

Thy splendid halls, thy palaces forgot,

Can paths o'erspread with thorns a charm supply;

Or dost thou seek, from our severer lot.

To give to wealth and power a keener joy?

— Thus I replied — I know no happier life,

No better riches than you shepherds boast.

Freed from the hated jars of civil strife,

Alike to treachery and to envy lost.

The weed, ambition, 'midst your furrowed field

Springs not, and avarice little root can find;

Content with what the changing seasons yield,

You rest in cheerful poverty resigned.

What the heart thinks the tongue may here disclose;

Nor inward grief with outward smiles is drest.

Not like the world — where wisest he who knows

To hide the secret closest in his breast.

Comparing the amusements of the city with the more natural and striking incidents of the country, he has the following passage : —

If chance two bulls in conflict fierce engage,

And, stung by love, maintain the doubtful fight;

Say, can the revels of the crowded stage

In all its pomp afford a nobler sight?

Judge of the strife, thou weav'st a chaplet gay,

And on the conqueror's front the wreath is hung:

Abash'd the vanquish'd takes his lonely way,

And sullen and dejected moves along

The shepherd however allows not the superior happiness of a country lite, but in reply represents, in a very forcible manner, the many hardships to which it is inevitably liable. In the midst of the debate the philosopher Marsilio approaches, to whom they agree to submit the decision of their controversy. This affords him an opportunity of explaining the philosophical tenets of Plato; in the course of which, after an inquiry into the real value of all subordinate objects and temporal acquisitions, he demonstrates, that permanent happiness is not to be sought for either in the exalted station of the one, or in the humble condition of the other, but that it is finally to be found only in the knowledge and the love of the first great Cause.

In order to give additional stability to these studies, Lorenzo and his friends formed the intention of renewing, with extraordinary pomp, the solemn annual feasts to the memory of the great philosopher, which had been celebrated from the time of his death to that of his disciples Plotinus and Porphyrius, but had then been discontinued for the space of twelve hundred years. The day fixed on for this purpose was the 7th of November, which was supposed to be the anniversary, not only of the birth of Plato, but of his death, which happened among his friends at a convivial banquet, precisely at the close of his eighty-first year. The person appointed by Lorenzo to preside over the ceremony at Florence was Francesco Bandini, whose rank and learning rendered him extremely proper for the office. On the same day another party met at Lorenzo's villa at Carreggi, where he presided in person. At these meetings, to which the most learned men in Italy resorted, it was the custom for one of the party, after dinner, to select certain passages from the works of Plato, which were submitted to the elucidation of the company, each of the guests undertaking the illustration or discussion of some important or doubtful point. By this institution, which, was continued for several years, the philosophy of Plato was supported not only in credit but in splendour, and its professors were considered as the most respectable and enlightened men of the age. Whatever Lorenzo thought proper to patronize became the admiration of Florence, and consequently of all Italy. He was the glass of fashion; and those who joined in his pursuits, or imitated his example, could not fail of sharing in that applause which seemed to attend on every action of his life.

Of the particular nature, or the beneficial effects of this establishment, little further is now to be collected, nor must we expect, either on this or any other occasion, to meet with the transactions of the Florentine academy in the fifteenth century. The principal advantages of this institution seem to have been the collecting together men of talents and erudition, who had courage to dissent from established modes of belief, and supplying them with new, rational, and important topics of conversation. From these discourses it was not difficult to extract the purest lessons of moral conduct, or the sublimest sentiments of veneration for the Deity; but good sense was the only alembic through which the true essence could be obtained, and this was not at hand on all occasions. The extravagances of some of the disciples contributed to sink into discredit the doctrines of their master. Even Ficino himself, the great champion of the sect, exhibits a proof, that when the imagination is once heated by the pursuit of a favourite object, it is difficult to restrain it within proper bounds. Habituated from his earliest youth to the study of this philosophy, and conversant only with Plato and his followers, their doctrines occupied his whole soul, and appeared in all his conduct and conversation. Even his epistles breathe nothing but Plato, and fatigue us with the endless repetition of opinions which Lorenzo has more clearly exhibited in a few luminous pages. Ficino was not, however, satisfied with following the track of Plato, but has given us some treatises of his own, in which he has occasionally taken excursions far beyond the limits which his master prescribed to himself. We might be inclined to smile at his folly, or to pity his weakness, did not the consideration of the follies and the weaknesses of the present times, varied indeed from those of past ages, but perhaps not diminished, repress the arrogant emotion.

Of those who more particularly distinguished themselves by the protection which they afforded to the new philosophy, or by the progress they made in the study of it, Ficino has left a numerous catalogue in a letter to Martinus Uranius, in which he allots the chief place to his friends of the family of the Medici. Protected and esteemed by Cosmo, the same unalterable attachment subsisted between the philosopher and his patrons for four successive generations. If ever the love of science was hereditary, it must have been in this family. Of the other eminent men whom Ficino has enumerated, Bandini has given us some interesting particulars, to which considerable additions might be made; but the number is too great, and the materials are too extensive, to be comprised within moderate limits. In perusing the catalogue of the disciples of this institution, we perceive that the greatest part of them were natives of Florence, a circumstance that may give us some idea of the surprising attention which was then paid in that city to literary pursuits. Earnest in the acquisition of wealth, indefatigable in improving their manufactures and extending their commerce, the Florentines seem not, however, to have lost sight of the true dignity of man, or of the proper objects of his regard. A thorough acquaintance as well with the ancient authors as with the literature of his own age, was an indispensable qualification in the character of a Florentine; but few of them were satisfied with this inferior praise. The writers of that country, of whose lives and productions some account is given by Negri, amount in number to upwards of two thousand, and among these may be found many names of the first celebrity. In this respect the city of Florence stands unrivalled. A species of praise as honourable as it is indisputable.

## CHAPTER IV.

Whilst Lorenzo was dividing his time between the cares of government and the promotion of literature, an event took place that attracted the attention of all Italy towards Milan. This was the death of the duke Galeazzo Maria, who was assassinated in a solemn procession, and in his ducal robes, as he was entering the church of St. Stefano. This daring act, which seems to have originated partly in personal resentment, and partly in an aversion to the tyranny of the duke, was not attended with the consequences expected by the perpetrators; two of whom were killed on the spot; and the third, Girolamo Olgiato, a youth of twenty-three years of age, after having been refused shelter in his father's house, died upon the scaffold. On his execution he showed the spirit of an ancient Roman. The conspirators undoubtedly expected to meet with the countenance and protection of the populace, to whom they knew that the duke had rendered himself odious by every species of cruelty and oppression. The delight which he seemed to take in shedding the blood of his subjects had rendered him an object of horror—his insatiable debauchery, of disgust: he was even suspected of having destroyed his mother, who, as he thought, interfered too much in the government of Milan; and who suddenly died as she was making her retreat from thence to Cremona. But no commotion whatever took place in the city, and Giovan Galeazzo, a child of eight years of age, peaceably succeeded his father in the dukedom. The imbecility of his youth tempted the daring spirit of his uncle, Lodovico, to form a systematic plan for obtaining the government of Milan, in the execution of which he drew ruin upon himself, and entailed a long succession of misery upon his unfortunate country.

The connexion that had long subsisted between the houses of Sforza and Medici, rendered it impossible for Lorenzo to be an indifferent spectator of this event. At his instance Tomaso Soderini was despatched to Milan, to assist by his advice the young prince and his mother who had taken upon herself the regency during the minority of her son. The ambitious designs of Lodovico soon became apparent. Having persuaded his three brothers, Sforza, duke of Bari, Ottaviano, and Ascanio, to second his views, he began to oppose the authority of the duchess, and attempted to divest her of the assistance of her faithful and experienced counsellor Cecco Simoneta, a native of Calabria, whose integrity and activity had recommended him to the patronage of the celebrated Francesco Sforza. Simoneta, aware of his design, endeavoured to frustrate it, by imprisoning and punishing some of his accomplices of inferior rank. The four brothers immediately resorted to arms, and of this circumstance Simoneta availed himself to obtain a decree, that either banished them from Milan or prohibited their return. Ottaviano, one of the brothers, soon afterwards perished in attempting to cross the river Adda. These rigorous measures, instead of depressing the genius of Lodovico, gave a keener edge to his talents, and superadded to his other motives the desire of revenge. Nor was it long before his resentment was gratified by the destruction of Simoneta, who expiated by his death the offence he had committed against the growing power of the brothers. No sooner was the duchess deprived of his support, than Lodovico wrested from her feeble hands the sceptre of Milan, and took the young duke under his immediate protection, where, like a weak plant in the shade of a vigorous tree, he languished for few miserable years, and then fell a victim to that increasing strength in which he ought to have found his preservation.

The public agitation excited by the assassination of the duke of Milan had scarcely subsided, before an event took place at Florence of a much more atrocious nature, inasmuch as the objects destined to destruction had not afforded a pretext in any degree plausible for such an attempt.

Accordingly we have now to enter on a transaction that has seldom been mentioned without emotions of the strongest horror and detestation, and which, as has justly been observed, is an incontrovertible proof of the practical atheism of the times in which it took place—a transaction in which a pope, a cardinal, an archbishop, and several other ecclesiastics associated themselves with a band of ruffians, to destroy two men who were an honour to their age and country; and purposed to perpetrate their crime at a season of hospitality, in the sanctuary of a Christian church, and at the very moment of the elevation of the host, when the audience bowed down before it, and the assassins were presumed to be in the immediate presence of their God.

At the head of this conspiracy were Sixtus IV, and his nephew Girolamo Riario. Raffaello Riario, the nephew of this Girolamo, who, although a young man then pursuing his studies, had lately been raised to the dignity of cardinal, was rather an instrument than an accomplice in the scheme. The enmity of Sixtus to Lorenzo had for some time been apparent, and if not occasioned by the assistance which Lorenzo had afforded to Niccolò Vitelli, and other independent nobles, whose dominions Sixtus had either threatened or attacked, was certainly increased by it. The destruction of the Medici appeared therefore to Sixtus as the removal of an obstacle that thwarted all his views, and by the accomplishment of which the small surrounding states would soon become an easy prey. There is, however, great reason to believe that the pope did not confine his ambition to these subordinate governments, but that, if the conspiracy had succeeded to his wish, he meant to have grasped at the dominion of Florence itself. The alliance lately formed between the Florentines, the Venetians, and the duke of Milan, which was principally effected by Lorenzo de' Medici, and by which the pope found himself prevented from disturbing the peace of Italy, was an additional and powerful motive of resentment. One of the first proofs of the displeasure of the pope was his depriving Lorenzo of the office of treasurer of the papal see, which he gave to the Pazzi, a Florentine family, who, as well as the Medici, had a public bank at Rome, and who afterwards became the coadjutors of Sixtus in the execution of his treacherous purpose.

This family was one of the noblest and most respectable in Florence; numerous in its members, and possessed of great wealth and influence. Of three brothers, two of whom had filled the office of *gonfaloniere*, only one was then living. If we may credit the account of Politiano, Giacopo de' Pazzi, the surviving brother, who was regarded as the chief of the family, and far advanced in years, was an unprincipled libertine, who having by gaming and intemperance dissipated his paternal property, sought an opportunity of averting, or of concealing his own ruin in that of the republic. Giacopo had no children; but his elder brother Piero had left seven sons, and his younger brother Antonio three; one of whom, Guglielmo de' Pazzi, had, in the lifetime of Cosmo de' Medici, married Bianca, the sister of Lorenzo. Francesco, the brother of Guglielmo, had for several years resided principally at Rome. Of a bold and aspiring temper, he could not brook the superiority of the Medici, which was supposed to have induced him to choose that place as his residence in preference to Florence.

Several of the Florentine authors have endeavoured to trace the reason of the enmity of this family to that of the Medici; but nothing seems discoverable which could plausibly operate as a motive, much less as a justification of their resentment. On the contrary, the affinity between the two families, and the favours conferred by the Medici on the Pazzi, memorials of which yet remain in the hand writing of Giacopo, might be presumed to have prevented animosity, if not to have conciliated esteem: and that they lived on terms of apparent friendship and intimacy is evident from many circumstances of the conspiracy. Machiavelli relates a particular injury received by one of the Pazzi, which, as he informs us, that family attributed to the Medici. Giovanni de' Pazzi had married the daughter of Giovanni Borromeo, whose immense property upon his death should have descended to his daughter. But pretensions to it being made by Carlo, his nephew, a litigation ensued, in the event of which the daughter was deprived of her inheritance. There is, however, reason to believe that this decree, whether justifiable or not, and of which we have no documents to enable us to form a judgment, was made many years before the death of Piero de' Medici, when

his sons were too young to have taken a very active part in it; and it is certain that it produced no ostensible enmity between the families. It is also deserving of notice, that this transaction happened at a time when Lorenzo was absent from Florence, on one of his youthful excursions through Italy.

This conspiracy, of which Sixtus and his nephew were the real instigators, was first agitated at Rome, where the intercourse between the count Girolamo Riario and Francesco de' Pazzi, in consequence of the office held by the latter, afforded them an opportunity of communicating to each other their common jealousy of the power of the Medici, and their desire of depriving them of their influence in Florence; in which event it is highly probable, that the Pazzi were to have exercised the chief authority in the city, under the patronage, if not under the avowed dominion of the papal see. The principal agent engaged in the undertaking was Francesco Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, to which rank he had lately been promoted by Sixtus, in opposition to the wishes of the Medici, who had for sometime endeavoured to prevent him from exercising his episcopal functions. If it be allowed that the unfavourable character given of him by Politiano is exaggerated, it is generally agreed that his qualities were the reverse of those which ought to have been the recommendations to such high preferment. The other conspirators were Giacopo Salviati, brother of the archbishop, Giacopo Poggio, one of the sons of the celebrated Poggio Bracciolini, and who, like all the other sons of that eminent scholar, had obtained no small share of literary reputation; Bernardo Bandini, a daring libertine, rendered desperate by the consequences of his excesses; Giovan Battista Montesicco, who had distinguished himself by his military talents as one of the Condottieri of the armies of the pope; Antonio Maffei, a priest of Volterra; and Stefano da Bagnone, one of the apostolic scribes, with several others of inferior note.

In the arrangement of their plan, which appears to have been concerted with great precaution and secrecy, the conspirators soon discovered, that the dangers which they had to encounter were not so likely to arise from the difficulty of the attempt, as from the subsequent resentment of the Florentines, a great majority of whom were strongly attached to the Medici. Hence it became necessary to provide a military force, the assistance of which might be equally requisite whether the enterprise proved abortive or successful. By the influence of the pope, the king of Naples, who was then in alliance with him, and on one of whose sons he had recently bestowed a cardinal's hat, was also induced to countenance the attempt.

These preliminaries being adjusted, Girolamo wrote to his nephew, the cardinal Riario, then at Pisa, ordering him to obey whatever directions he might receive from the archbishop. A body of two thousand men were destined to approach by different routes towards Florence, so as to be in readiness at the time appointed for striking the blow.

Shortly afterwards the archbishop requested the presence of the cardinal at Florence, whither he immediately repaired, and took up his residence at the seat of the Pazzi, about a mile from the city. It seems to have been the intention of the conspirators to have effected their purpose at Fiesole, where Lorenzo then had his country residence, to which they supposed that he would invite the cardinal and his attendants. Nor were they deceived in this conjecture, for Lorenzo prepared a magnificent entertainment on this occasion; but the absence of Giuliano, on account of indisposition, obliged the conspirators to postpone the attempt. Being thus disappointed in their hopes, another plan was now to be adopted; and on further deliberation it was resolved, that the assassination should take place on the succeeding Sunday, in the church of the Reparata, since called Santa Maria del Fiore, and that the signal for execution should be the elevation of the host. At the same moment, the archbishop and others of the conspirators were to seize upon the palace, or residence of the magistrates, whilst the office of Giacopo de Pazzi was to endeavour, by the cry of liberty, to incite the citizens to revolt.

The immediate assassination of Giuliano was committed to Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo Bandini, and that of Lorenzo had been entrusted to the sole hand of Montesicco. This office he had willingly undertaken whilst he understood that it was to be executed in a private dwelling; but he shrunk from the idea of polluting the house of God with so heinous a crime. Two ecclesiastics were therefore selected for the commission of a deed from which the soldier was deterred by conscientious motives. These were Stefano da Bagnone, the apostolic scribe, and Antonio Maffei.

The young cardinal having expressed a desire to attend divine service in the church of the Reparata, on the ensuing Sunday, being the twenty-sixth day of April, 1478, Lorenzo invited him and his suite to his house in Florence. He accordingly came with a large retinue, supporting the united characters of cardinal and apostolic legate, and was received by Lorenzo with that splendour and hospitality with which he was always accustomed to entertain men of high rank and consequence. Giuliano did not appear, a circumstance that alarmed the conspirators, whose arrangements would not admit of longer delay. They soon however learned that he intended to be present at the church. The service was already begun, and the cardinal had taken his seat, when Francesco de' Pazzi and Bandini, observing that Giuliano was not yet arrived, left the church and went to his house, in order to insure and hasten his attendance. Giuliano accompanied them; and as he walked between them, they threw their arms round him with the familiarity of intimate friends, but in fact to discover whether he had any armour under his dress; possibly conjecturing, from his long delay, that he had suspected their purpose. At the same time, by their freedom and jocularity, they endeavoured to obviate any apprehensions which he might entertain from such a proceeding. The conspirators having taken their stations near their intended victims, waited with impatience for the appointed signal. The bell rang—the priest raised the consecrated wafer—the people bowed before it—and at the same instant Bandini plunged a short dagger into the breast of Giuliano. On receiving the wound he took a few hasty steps and fell, when Francesco de' Pazzi rushed upon him with incredible fury, and stabbed him in different parts of his body, continuing to repeat his strokes even after he was apparently dead. Such was the violence of his rage that he wounded himself deeply in the thigh. The priests who had undertaken the murder of Lorenzo were not equally successful. An ill-directed blow from Maffei, which was aimed at the throat, but took place behind the neck, rather roused him to his defence than disabled him. He immediately threw off his cloak, and holding it up as a shield in his left hand, with his right he drew his sword, and repelled his assailants. Perceiving that their purpose was defeated, the two ecclesiastics, after having wounded one of Lorenzo's attendants, who had interposed to defend him, endeavoured to save themselves by flight. At the same moment, Bandini, his dagger streaming with the blood of Giuliano, rushed towards Lorenzo; but meeting in his way with Francesco Nori, a person in the service of the Medici, and in whom they placed great confidence, he stabbed him with a wound instantaneously mortal. At the approach of Bandini the friends of Lorenzo encircled him, and hurried him into the sacristy, where Politiano and others closed the doors, which were of brass. Apprehensions being entertained that the weapon which had wounded him was poisoned, a young man attached to Lorenzo sucked the wound. A general alarm and consternation commenced in the church; and such was the tumult which ensued, that it was at first believed that the building was falling in, but no sooner was it understood that Lorenzo was in danger, than several of the youth of Florence formed themselves into a body, and receiving him into the midst of them, conducted him to his house, making a circuitous turn from the church lest he should meet with the dead body of his brother.

Whilst these transactions passed in the church, another commotion arose in the palace; where the archbishop, who had left the church, as agreed upon before the attack of the Medici, and about thirty of his associates, attempted to overpower the magistrates, and to possess themselves of the seat of government. Leaving some of his followers stationed in different apartments, the archbishop proceeded to an interior chamber, where Cesare Petrucci, then gonfaloniere, and the other magistrates, were assembled. No sooner was the gonfaloniere informed of his approach, than out of respect to his rank he rose to meet him. Whether the

archbishop was disconcerted by the presence of Petrucci, who was known to be of a resolute character, of which he had given a striking instance in frustrating the attack of Bernardo Nardi upon the town of Prato, or whether his courage was not equal to the undertaking, is uncertain; but instead of intimidating the magistrates by a sudden attack, he began to inform Petrucci that the pope had bestowed an employment on his son, of which he had to deliver to him the credentials. This he did with such hesitation, and in so desultory a manner, that it was scarcely possible to collect his meaning. Petrucci also observed that he frequently changed colour, and at times turned towards the door, as if giving a signal to some one to approach. Alarmed at his manner, and probably aware of his character, Petrucci suddenly rushed out of the chamber, and called together the guards and attendants. By attempting to retreat, the archbishop confessed his guilt. In pursuing him, Petrucci met with Giacopo Foggio, whom he caught by the hair, and, throwing him on the ground, delivered him into the custody of his followers. The rest of the magistrates and their attendants seized upon such arms as the place supplied, and the implements of the kitchen became formidable weapons in their hands. Having secured the doors of the palace, they furiously attacked their scattered and intimidated enemies, who no longer attempted resistance. During this commotion they were alarmed by a tumult from without, and perceived from the windows Giacopo de' Fazzi, followed by about one hundred soldiers, crying out liberty, and exhorting the people to revolt. At the same time they found that the insurgents had forced the gates of the palace, and that some of them were entering to defend their companions. The magistrates however persevered in their defence, and repulsing their enemies, secured the gates till a reinforcement of their friends came to their assistance. Petrucci was now first informed of the assassination of Giuliano, and the attack made upon Lorenzo. The relation of this treachery excited his highest indignation. With the concurrence of the state councillors, he ordered Giacopo Poggio to be hung in sight of the populace, out of the palace windows, and secured the archbishop, with his brother and the other chiefs of the conspiracy. Their followers were either slaughtered in the palace, or thrown half alive through the windows. One only of the whole number escaped. He was found some days afterwards concealed in the wainscots, perishing with hunger, and in consideration of his sufferings received his pardon.

The young cardinal Riario, who had taken refuge at the altar, was preserved from the rage of the populace by the interference of Lorenzo, who appeared to give credit to his asseverations, that he was ignorant of the intentions of the conspirators. It is said that his fears had so violent an effect upon him that he never afterwards recovered his natural complexion. His attendants fell a sacrifice to the resentment of the citizens. The streets were polluted with the dead bodies and mangled limbs of the slaughtered. With the head of one of these unfortunate wretches on a lance, the populace paraded the city, which resounded with the cry of *Palle! Palle! Perish the traitors!* Francesco de' Pazzi being found at the house of his uncle Giacopo, where, on account of his wound, he was confined to his bed, was dragged out naked and exhausted by loss of blood, and being brought to the palace, suffered the same death as his associate. His punishment was immediately followed by that of the archbishop, who was hung through the windows of the palace, and was not allowed even to divest himself of his prelatical robes. The last moments of Salviati, if we may credit Politiano, were marked by a singular instance of ferocity. Being suspended close to Francesco de' Pazzi, he seized the naked body with his teeth, and relaxed not from his hold even in the agonies of death. Jacopo de' Pazzi had escaped from the city during the tumult; but the day following he was made a prisoner by the neighbouring peasants, who, regardless of his entreaties to put him to death, brought him to Florence, and delivered him up to the magistrates. As his guilt was manifest, his execution was instantaneous, and afforded from the windows of the palace another spectacle that gratified the resentment of the enraged multitude. His nephew Renato, who suffered at the same time, excited in some degree the commiseration of the spectators. Devoted to his studies, and averse to popular commotions, he had refused to be an actor in the conspiracy, and his silence was his only crime. The body of Giacopo had been interred in the church of Santa Croce, and to this circumstance the superstition of the people attributed an unusual and incessant fall of rain that succeeded these disturbances. Partaking in their prejudices or desirous of gratifying their revenge, the magistrates ordered his body to be removed without the walls of the

city. The following morning it was again torn from the grave by a great multitude of children, who, in spite of the restrictions of decency, and the interference of some of the inhabitants, after dragging it a long time through the streets, and treating it with every degree of wanton opprobrium, threw it into the river Arno. Such was the fate of a man who had enjoyed the highest honour of the republic, and for his services to the state had been rewarded with the privileges of equestrian rank. The rest of this devoted family were condemned either to imprisonment or to exile, excepting only Guglielmo de' Pazzi, who, though not unsuspected, was first sheltered from the popular fury in the house of Lorenzo, and was afterwards ordered to remain at his own villa, about twenty-five miles distant from Florence.

Although most diligent search was made for the priests who had undertaken the murder of Lorenzo, it was not till the third day after the attempt that they were discovered, having obtained a shelter in the monastery of the Benedictine monks. No sooner were they brought from the place of their concealment, than the populace, after cruelly mutilating them, put them to death; and with difficulty were prevented from slaughtering the monks themselves. Montesicco, who had adhered to the cause of the conspirators, although he had refused to be the active instrument of their project, was taken a few days afterwards, as he was endeavouring to save himself by flight, and beheaded, having first made a full confession of all the circumstances attending the conspiracy, by which it appeared that the pope was privy to the whole transaction. The punishment of Bernardo Bandini was longer delayed. He had safely passed the bounds of Italy, and had taken refuge at length in Constantinople; but the sultan Mahomet, being apprized of his crime, ordered him to be seized, and sent in chains to Florence; at the same time alleging, as the motive of his conduct, the respect which he had for the character of Lorenzo de' Medici. He arrived in the month of December in the ensuing year, and met with the due reward of his treachery. An embassy was sent from Florence to return thanks to the sultan in the name of the republic.

Throughout the whole of this just but dreadful retribution, Lorenzo had exerted all his influence to restrain the indignation of the populace, and to prevent the further effusion of blood. Soon after the attempt upon his life, an immense multitude surrounded his house, and, not being convinced of his safety, demanded to see him. He seized the opportunity which their affection afforded, and, notwithstanding his wound, endeavoured, by a pathetic and forcible address, to moderate the violence of their resentment. He entreated that they would resign to the magistrates the task of ascertaining and of punishing the guilty, lest the innocent should be incautiously involved in destruction. His appearance and his admonitions had a powerful and instantaneous effect. With one voice the people devoted themselves to the support of his cause, and besought him to take all possible precautions for his safety, as upon that depended the hopes and welfare of the republic. However Lorenzo might be gratified with these proofs of the affection of his fellow-citizens, he could not but lament that inconsiderate zeal which was so likely to impel them to a culpable excess. Turning to some of the Florentine nobility by whom he was attended, he declared that he felt more anxiety from the intemperate acclamations of his friend, than he had experienced even from his own disasters.

The general sorrow for the loss of Giuliano was strongly marked. On the fourth day after his death his obsequies were performed with great magnificence, in the church of S. Lorenzo. It appeared that he had received from the daggers of Bandini and Francesco de' Pazzi no less than nineteen wounds. Many of the Florentine youth changed their dress in testimony of respect to his memory. In the predilection of the Florentines for Giuliano historians are agreed. Even Machiavelli allows that he possessed all the humanity and liberality that could be wished for in one born to such an elevated station, and that his funeral was honoured by the tears of his fellow-citizens. Tall of stature—strong in his person—his breast prominent—his limbs full and muscular —dark eyes—a lively look—an olive complexion—loose black hair turned back from his forehead: —such is the portrait given of Giuliano by his intimate associate Politiano, who to these particulars has further added, that he excelled in active exercises, in horsemanship, in wrestling, in throwing

the spear: that he was habituated to thirst and to hunger, and frequently passed a day in voluntary abstinence: possessed of great courage, of unshaken fortitude, a friend to religion and order, an admirer of painting, music, and other elegant arts. From the same author we also learn, that Giuliano had given proofs of his poetical talents in several pieces remarkable for their strength of diction and plenitude of thought; but of these no specimens now remain.

Shortly after this transaction, Lorenzo received a visit from Antonio da San Gallo, who informed him that the untimely death of Giuliano had prevented his disclosing to Lorenzo a circumstance with which it was now become necessary that he should be acquainted. This was the birth of a son, whom a lady of the family of Gorini had borne to Giuliano about twelve months before his death, and whom Antonio had held over the baptismal font, where he received the name of Giulio. Lorenzo immediately repaired to the place of the infant's residence, and taking him under his protection, delivered him to Antonio, with whom he remained until he arrived at the seventh year of his age. This concealed offspring of illicit love, to whom the kindness of Lorenzo supplied the untimely loss of a father, was destined to act an important part in the affairs of Europe. The final extinction of the liberties of Florence; the alliance of the family of Medici with the royal house of France; the expulsion of Henry VIII of England from the bosom of the Roman church, and the consequent establishment of the doctrines of the reformers in this island, are principally to be referred to this illegitimate son of Giuliano de' Medici, who, through various vicissitudes of fortune, at length obtained the supreme direction of the Roman see, and under the name of Clement VII guided the bark of St. Peter through a succession of the severest storms which it has ever experienced.

The public grief occasioned by the death of Giuliano was however mingled with, and alleviated by exultation for the safety of Lorenzo. Every possible method was devised to brand with infamy the perpetrators of the deed. By a public decree, the name and arms of the Pazzi were ordered to be for ever suppressed. The appellations of such places in the city as were derived from that family, were directed to be changed. All persons contracting marriage with the descendants of Andrea de' Pazzi were declared to be prohibited from all offices and dignities in the republic. The ancient ceremony of conducting annually the sacred fire from the church of S. Giovanni to the house of the Pazzi was abolished, and a new method was adopted of continuing this popular superstition. Andrea dal Castagno was employed at the public expense, to represent the persons of the traitors on the walls of the palace, in the execution of which he obtained great applause, although the figures, as a mark of infamy, were suspended by the feet. On the other hand the skill of the Florentine artists was exerted in soothing the feelings, and gratifying the curiosity of the public, by perpetuating the remembrance of the dangers which Lorenzo had escaped. By the assistance of Andrea Verocchio, Orsini, a celebrated modeller in wax, formed three figures as large as the life, which bore the most perfect resemblance of the person and features of Lorenzo, and which were placed in different churches of the territory of Florence. One of these represented him in the dress which he wore when he received the wound, and as he appeared to the populace at the window of his palace. A more lasting memorial was devised by Antonio Pollajuoli, who struck a medal on this occasion, exhibiting in the ancient choir of the Reparata, the assassination of Giuliano, and the attack made upon Lorenzo. In this medal, the conspirators are all represented naked, not merely for the purpose of displaying the knowledge of the artist in the human figure, in which he excelled all his contemporaries, but, as some have conjectured, as being characteristic of the flagitious act in which they were engaged.

Although the body of troops destined to support the conspirators had kept aloof from the scene of action, and with difficulty effected their retreat from the Florentine dominions, yet Lorenzo was well aware of the storm that was gathering around him, and with equal prudence and resolution prepared to meet it. By the confession of Montesicco, he was fully informed of the implacable hatred of the pope, which was inflamed almost to madness by the miscarriage of his designs, and the publicity of his treachery. Lorenzo also knew that the king of Naples, who was

not less formidable to Italy from the ferocity and military reputation of his son Alfonso, duke of Calabria, than from the extent and resources of his own dominions, would most probably concur with the pope. His comprehensive eye saw at one glance the extent of the danger to which he was exposed, and he accordingly adopted every measure that might be likely to oppose or to avert it. He addressed himself to all the Italian states, with strong representations of the conduct of the pope, and entreated them, by every motive which was likely to influence them, to show their open disapprobation of a species of treachery, from which neither rank, nor talents, nor virtue, could afford protection. He adverted to the fatal consequences which must arise to Italy from the subjugation of the Florentine republic, and connected his cause with that of the country at large. In the same terms he wrote to the kings of France and of Spain, endeavouring to obtain their interference in his behalf, and to convince them of the injustice of his enemies, and of his own innocence and moderation. Nor was he negligent, in the meantime, in providing for his own defence. By every possible means he incited the citizens of Florence to make preparation for repelling their enemies. He procured from all quarters large supplies of provisions, with every other requisite for supporting an obstinate siege. The activity of Lorenzo infused a similar spirit into those around him, and the hopes of the people were supported by the early appearance, in Mugello, of Giovanni Bentivoglio, the firm ally of the Medici, with a chosen band of soldiers, which he led to the relief of Lorenzo as soon as he was apprized of his danger. Moved by his representations, or jealous of the power of the pope and of the king of Naples, several other states of Italy warmly espoused the cause of the Florentines. Ercole de' Este, duke of Ferrara, attended in person with a powerful reinforcement. The Venetians, although cautious in their determination, displayed a manifest partiality to the Florentines; and even the kings of Spain, and of France, transmitted to Lorenzo the fullest assurances of their conviction of the rectitude of his conduct, and of their willingness to interpose with all their authority in his behalf. So favourable a concurrence of circumstances gave fresh spirits to the Florentines, and removed in a great degree the apprehensions of the friends of the Medici. At this juncture Politiano addressed to Gentile d'Urbino, bishop of Arezzo, a Latin ode, which is not less entitled to notice for its intrinsic merit, than as an authentic indication of the public opinion at the time it was written.

AD GENTILEM EPISCOPUM.

O Friend, whose woes this bosom share.

Why ceaseless mourn our mutual cares?

Ah, why thy days to grief resign,

With thy regrets recalling mine!

Eternal o'er the atrocious deed,

‘Tis true our kindred hearts may bleed;

When He, twin glory of our land,

Fell by a sacrilegious hand!

But sure, my friend, there yet remains

Some solace for these piercing pains.

Whilst He, once nurtured at thy side,

Lorenzo lives, Etruria's pride.

Lorenzo, o'er whose favour'd head,

Jove his terrific gorgon spread;

Whose steps the lion pair await,

Of Florence, and Venetia's state.

For him his crest the dragon rears;

For him the Herculean band appears;

Her martial succour Gallia brings

Gallia that glories in her kings!

See round the youth the purpled band

Of venerable fathers stand;

Exulting crowds around him throng.

And hail him as he moves along.

Strong in our cause and in our friends,

Our righteous battle Jove defends;

Thy useless sorrows then represt,

Let joy once more dilate thy breast.

To animate the clay-cold frame,

No sighs shall fan the vital flame;

Nor all the tears that love can shed,

Recall to life the silent dead.

Notwithstanding the vigour and activity of Lorenzo in preparing for the war, he was anxiously desirous of preventing, if possible, such a calamity. By his moderation, and even kindness to the surviving relatives of the conspirators, he sought to obliterate the remembrance of past disturbances, and to unite all the citizens in one common cause. Upwards of one hundred persons had already perished, some by the hands of justice, and others by the fury of the populace. Many had absconded or concealed themselves, under apprehensions of being charged with a participation of the crime. Among the latter was Averardo Salviati, a near relation of the archbishop of Pisa. Lorenzo being informed that he had secreted himself in his house, requested,

by the mediation of a common friend, an interview with him, and on his arrival received him with such tokens of kindness and benevolence as drew tears from all who were present. Salviati was not ungrateful: a closer intimacy took place between them, and a few years afterwards Lorenzo gave one of his daughters in marriage to Giacopo Salviati, the nephew of Averardo, whose character and accomplishments merited such an honour. The cardinal Raffaello Riario was liberated as soon as the tumult had subsided, and was suffered to return to Rome. To Raffaello Maffei of Volterra, the brother of Antonio, one of the priests who had undertaken the assassination of Lorenzo, a man distinguished by his uncommon learning and indefatigable spirit of research, Lorenzo wrote a Latin letter, full of kindness and urbanity, which, on account of the elegance of its diction, Maffei erroneously attributed to the pen of Politiano. Even the survivors of the Pazzi family, although they had at first been treated with great severity, were, by the interference of Lorenzo, in a short time restored to their former honours. The only public monument that remained of this transaction was the painting on the walls of the palace by Andrea dal Castagno, which was suffered to remain long after the family of the Pazzi had been reinstated in their ancient rights and dignity.

The generosity and moderation of Lorenzo, although they endeared him still more to his fellow-citizens, had no effect upon the temper of Sixtus, who no sooner heard of the miscarriage of his design, the death of the archbishop, and the restraint imposed upon the cardinal, than he gave a loose to his impetuosity, and poured out against Lorenzo the bitterest invectives. In the first paroxysms of his anger, he directed that the property of the Medici and of all Florentine citizens then in Rome should be confiscated, and the Florentines themselves imprisoned; and had he not entertained apprehensions respecting the fate of the cardinal, it is probable that he would have treated them with still greater severity. To appease his wrath the republic despatched to Rome Donato Acciajuoli, a person no less celebrated for his talents and his learning, than for the credit with which he had performed the most important embassies and filled the highest offices of the state. This measure, far from pacifying the pope, seemed to add fresh fuel to his anger. Instead of attending to the representations of the ambassador, he threatened to send him as a prisoner to the castle of S. Angelo, and would certainly have executed his purpose, had not the legates from Venice and from Milan interfered in his favour, and declared that they should consider such a breach of the faith of nations as an insult to themselves. The resentment of Sixtus then burst forth through another channel. He attacked the Florentines with his spiritual weapons, and anathematized not only Lorenzo de' Medici, but the gonfaloniere and other magistrates of the republic. In the document which Sixtus issued on this occasion, Lorenzo is emphatically styled the “child of iniquity and the nursling of perdition”. After bestowing similar epithets on the magistrates, Sixtus proceeds to relate the manifold offences of Lorenzo against the holy see. Adverting to the gentleness and moderation of his own character, he then declares, that according to the example of our Saviour, he had long suffered in peace the insults and the injuries of his enemies, and that he should still have continued to exercise his forbearance, had not Lorenzo de' Medici, with the magistrates of Florence, and their abettors, discarding the fear of God, inflamed with fury, and instigated by diabolical suggestions, laid violent hands on ecclesiastical persons, *prob dolor et inauditum scelus!* hung up the archbishop, imprisoned the cardinal, and by various means destroyed and slaughtered their followers. He then solemnly excommunicates Lorenzo, the gonfaloniere, and other officers of the state, and their immediate successors; declaring them to be incapable of receiving or transmitting property by inheritance or will; and prohibiting their descendants from enjoying any ecclesiastical employment. By the same instrument he suspended the bishops and clergy of the Florentine territories from the exercise of their spiritual functions.

Whatever might have been the effect of this denunciation, if directed solely against the persons immediately concerned in the transactions to which the pope referred, it appears, that in extending his censures to the dignitaries of the church, who were not personally implicated in the imputed guilt, Sixtus had exceeded his authority; and the exasperated ecclesiastics, availing themselves of his imprudence, retorted upon the pope the anathemas which he had poured out against them. The most eminent civilians of the time were consulted on this occasion, many of

whom asserted the nullity of the prohibition. By the exertions of Gentile d'Urbino, bishop of Arezzo, a convocation was summoned in the church of the Reparata, and Fabroni has produced, from the archives of Florence, a document yet remaining in the hand-writing of Gentile, which purports to be the result of the deliberations which there took place. The professed tendency of this piece is to criminate the pope, as being the chief instigator of the enormities committed at Florence, and to exculpate Lorenzo de' Medici and the Florentines from the charges which Sixtus had brought against them; but this vindication would have lost nothing of its effect, if, in exposing the guilt of the pontiff, it had consulted the dignity of those he had injured, and exhibited a more temperate and dispassionate refutation. How so unmodified and daring an attack can be reconciled to the catholic idea of the infallibility of the holy see, it is not easy to discover. If it be acknowledged that the bull of Sixtus had exceeded all the limits of decorum, it must also be allowed that the reply of the synod is in this respect equally censurable; nor is it in the power of language to convey a more copious torrent of abuse, than was poured out upon this occasion by the Florentine clergy, on the supreme director of the Roman church.

Sixtus did not however relax from his purpose. Whilst he brandished in one hand the spiritual weapon, which has impressed with terror the proudest sovereigns of Europe, in the other he grasped a temporal sword, which he now openly, as he had before secretly, aimed at the life of Lorenzo. At his instigation the king of Naples despatched an envoy to Florence, to prevail upon the citizens to deliver up Lorenzo into the hands of his enemies, or at least to banish him from the Tuscan territories. The alternative denounced to them was the immediate vengeance of both the king and the pope. These threats had not however the intended effect, but on the contrary produced another instance of the attachment of the Florentines to Lorenzo. They not only refused to comply with the proposition of the king, but avowed their firm resolution to suffer every extremity, rather than betray a man with whose safety and dignity those of the republic were so nearly connected. They also directed their chancellor Bartolomeo Scala to draw up an historical memorial of all the proceedings of the conspiracy; by which it clearly appeared, that throughout the whole transaction, the conspirators had acted with the privity and assent of the pope.

Lorenzo was now fully apprized of the danger of his situation. It was sufficiently evident that this powerful league was not formed against the Florentines, but against himself; and that the evils of war might be avoided by a compliance with the requisition of the king. Under these circumstances, instead of sheltering himself in the affections of his fellow-citizens, he boldly opposed himself to the danger that threatened him, and resolved either to fall with dignity, or to render his own cause that of the republic at large. He therefore called together about three hundred of the principal citizens, whom he addressed in a striking and energetic harangue, at the close of which he earnestly besought them, that as the public tranquillity could not be preserved by other means, nor a treaty effected with their enemies, unless it was sealed with his blood, they would no longer hesitate to comply with the terms proposed, nor suffer their attention to the safety of an individual to bring destruction upon the State. When Lorenzo had concluded, Giacopo de' Alessandri, with the concurrence of every person present, declared it to be the unanimous resolution of the whole assembly to defend his life at the hazard of their own.

All was now prepared for war, the approaching horrors of which were increased by the appearance of the plague at Florence. In this emergency Lorenzo thought it advisable to send his wife and children to Pistoia. “Now remove from you”, said he to the citizens, “these objects of my affection, whom I would, if necessary, willingly devote for your welfare; that whatever may be the result of this contest, the resentment of my enemies may be appeased with my blood only”.

Though the duke of Calabria and the count of Urbino were the and esteemed the most formidable commanders of Italy, Florentines could boast of men of great eminence experience in the military art; but the supreme command was entrusted to Ercole d'Este, duke of Ferrara. The enemy were now approaching towards Florence, and marked their way with devastation. After

possessing themselves of several smaller places, they at length besieged Arezzo, but on the approach of the Florentine troops they prepared for an engagement. Notwithstanding the inferiority of the latter in the reputation of their generals, and in the number soldiers, they possessed such advantages as it was supposed would, in case of a general engagement, have ensured their success. The citizens of Arezzo by a vigorous defence had damped the spirit of the papal and Neapolitan troops, who experienced also a scarcity of provisions, and were disadvantageously posted; but after the two armies regarded each other for some time with mutual apprehensions, a truce was proposed by the duke of Urbino, which was acceded to by the duke of Ferrara, to the great dissatisfaction of the Florentines, who betrayed their cause. The two armies retired into their winter quarters; and the Florentines found themselves incumbered with great and increasing expense, without being relieved from the fears.

This season, however, afforded Lorenzo another opportunity of trying the result of further negotiation; but whilst he endeavoured on the one hand to reconcile himself to the pope, on the other hand, he made preparation to meet his enemies, in case his negotiation should prove unsuccessful. From the connexion between his family and that of Sforza, he had promised himself powerful support from Milan; but the disagreement between the duchess and Lodovico Sforza, which terminated in the latter assuming the regency during the minority of the young duke, in a great degree disappointed his hopes. The Venetians had sent Bernardo Bembo, the father of the celebrated Pietro Bembo, as their ambassador to Florence, and professed themselves inimical to the proceedings of the pope and the king. They did not, however, yet think proper to engage in the war; but with that species of policy by which they were always distinguished, looked on, for the purpose of taking advantage of any opportunity of aggrandizing themselves at the expense of their neighbours. In the course of the winter, different envoys arrived at Florence from the emperor and the kings of France and Hungary, who repeated to Lorenzo their assurances of attachment and support, at the same time advising him once more to attempt a reconciliation with the pope, under the sanction of their names and influence. A deputation, consisting of several of the most respectable citizens of Florence, was accordingly sent to Rome; but Sixtus still remained inflexible, and paid no more regard to the recommendations of the European sovereigns, than he had before done to the entreaties and remonstrances of Lorenzo himself.

In order to testify to the king of France the sense which they entertained of his interposition, the Florentines despatched Donato Acciajuoli as their ambassador to Paris. Shortly after his departure intelligence was received at Florence of his death, which happened at Milan, as he was pursuing his journey. This circumstance was a subject of the sincerest grief to the Florentines, who well knew how to appreciate the virtues of their fellow-citizens, and omitted no opportunity of inciting the patriotism of the living, by the honours they bestowed on the memory of the dead. A sumptuous funeral was decreed to his remains; Lorenzo de' Medici and three other eminent citizens were appointed curators of his children, who were declared to be exempt from the payment of taxes; and the daughters had considerable portions assigned them from the public treasury.

Besides the duke of Ferrara, the Florentines had, during the winter, prevailed upon several other experienced commanders, amongst whom were Roberto Malatesta, Constantino Sforza, and Rodolfo Gonzaga, to espouse their cause. The states of Venice also at length sent a reinforcement under the command of Carlo Montone and Diefebo d'Anguillari: by these powerful succours the Florentines found themselves enabled to take the field in the ensuing spring with great expectations of success. Emboldened by this support they determined to carry on a war not merely defensive. Their troops were divided into two bodies, one of which was destined to make an irruption into the territories of the pope, and the other to oppose the duke of Calabria. At the approach of Montone, who intended to attack Perugia, the troops of the pope made a precipitate retreat; but the unexpected death of that commander relieved them in some degree from their fears, and they at length ventured to oppose the further progress of the Florentines. The two

armies met near the lake of Perugia, the ancient Thrasymenus, rendered remarkable by the defeat which the Romans experienced there from the arms of Hannibal. Struck with the similarity of their situation, a sentiment of terror pervaded the papal troops, who were soon repulsed, and obliged to quit the field with considerable loss, whilst the successful army proceeded to invest Perugia. The other division of the Florentine troops was not equally successful. The mercenary views of the different commanders, who preferred plunder to victory, defeated the hopes which the Florentines had justly formed of their success. A disagreement took place among the leaders; in consequence of which the duke of Ferrara, with his own immediate followers, retired from the service of the republic. Availing himself of this opportunity, the duke of Calabria made an instantaneous attack upon the Florentines, who, having lost all confidence in their commanders, pusillanimously deserted their standards, and consulted their safety by a shameful flight. The consternation occasioned at Florence by this disaster is scarcely to be described, as it was supposed that the duke of Calabria would immediately proceed to the attack of the city; and this distress was heightened by the ravages of the plague, and by impending famine. Happily, however, the apprehensions of the Florentines on this occasion were not wholly realized. Instead of proceeding towards Florence, the duke rather chose to employ himself in plundering the surrounding country. The capture of the town of Colle, which made an obstinate resistance, and of some adjacent places of less importance, engaged his attention till the detachment that had been sent to the attack of Perugia having suddenly raised the siege, returned towards Florence, and alleviated the fears of the citizens. An unexpected proposition made by the duke of Calabria for a truce of three months, was cheerfully assented to by the Florentines, who thus once more obtained a temporary relief from a state of anxiety and a profusion of expense, which were become equally insupportable.

But although by this cessation of hostilities the tranquillity of the city was for a time restored, the situation of Lorenzo de' Medici was in the highest decree critical and alarming. He had witnessed the terrors of the populace on the approach of the Neapolitan army; and although he had great confidence in the affections of the citizens, yet as the war was avowedly waged against him as an individual, and might at any time be concluded by delivering him up to his enemies, he knew enough of human nature to be convinced that he had just grounds to dread the event. The rising discontents and murmurs of the people increased his suspicion; even the truce was unfavourable to him, as it gave the Florentines an opportunity of estimating the injuries they had sustained by the war, which, like wounds received by an individual in the ardour of action, were not fully felt till the heat of the contest had subsided. Complaints began to be heard that the public treasure was exhausted, and the commerce of the city ruined, whilst the citizens were burdened by oppressive taxes. Insinuations of a more personal nature were not always suppressed; and Lorenzo had the mortification of being told, that sufficient blood had been already shed, and that it would be expedient for him rather to devise some means of effecting a peace, than of making further preparations for the war. Under these circumstances, he resolved to adopt some measure which should effectually close the contest, although with the hazard of his life. In deliberating on the mode of accomplishing his purpose, his genius suggested to him one of those bold expedients, which only great minds can conceive and execute. This was, secretly to quit the city of Florence, to proceed immediately to Naples, and to place himself in the hands of Ferdinand, his avowed enemy; with the determination either to convince him of the injustice and impolicy of his conduct, and thereby induce him to agree to a separate peace, or to devote himself to the preservation of his country.

In the commencement of the month of December, 1479, Lorenzo accordingly left the city, without having communicated his intentions to his fellow citizens, and proceeded to San Miniato, a town in the Florentine state, whence he addressed a letter to the magistrates of Florence, which places the motives of his conduct in a very clear point of view.

*Lorenzo de Medici to the States of Florence.*

"If I did not explain to you, before I left Florence, the cause of my departure, it was not from want of respect, but because I thought, that in the dangerous circumstances in which our city is placed, it was more necessary to act than to deliberate. It seems to me that peace is become indispensable to us; and as all other means of obtaining it have proved ineffectual, I have rather chosen to incur some degree of danger myself, than to suffer the city to continue longer under its present difficulties: I therefore mean, with your permission, to proceed directly to Naples; conceiving, that as I am the person chiefly aimed at by our enemies, I may, by delivering myself into their hands, perhaps be the means of restoring peace to my fellow citizens. Of these two things, one must be taken for granted; either the king of Naples, as he has often asserted, and as some have believed, is friendly to the Florentine state, and aims, even by these hostile proceedings, rather to render us a service, than to deprive us of our liberties; or he wishes to effect the ruin of the republic. If he be favourably disposed towards us, there is no better method of putting his intention to the test, than by placing myself freely in his hands, and this I will venture to say is the only mode of obtaining an honourable peace. If, on the other hand, the views of the king extend to the subversion of our liberties, we shall at least be speedily apprized of his intentions; and this knowledge will be more cheaply obtained by the ruin of one, than of all. I am contented to take upon myself this risk, because, as I am the person principally sought after, I shall be a better test of the king's intentions; it being possible that my destruction is all that is aimed at: and again, as I have had more honour and consideration amongst you than my merits could claim, and perhaps more than have in our days been bestowed on any private citizen, I conceive myself more particularly bound than any other person to promote the interest of my country, even with the sacrifice of my life. With this full intention I now go; and perhaps it may be the will of God, that as this war was begun in the blood of my brother and of myself, it may now by my means be concluded. All that I desire is, that my life and my death, my prosperity and my misfortunes, may contribute towards the welfare of my native place. Should the result be answerable to my wishes, I shall rejoice in having obtained peace to my country, and security to myself. Should it prove otherwise, my misfortunes will be alleviated by the idea that they were requisite for my country's welfare; for if our adversaries aim only at my destruction, I shall be in their power; and if their views extend further, they will then be fully understood. In the latter case, I doubt not that all my fellow citizens will unite in defending their liberties to the last extremity, and I trust with the same success as, by the favour of God, our ancestors have heretofore done. These are the sentiments with which I shall proceed; entreating Heaven that I may be enabled on this occasion to perform what every citizen ought at all times to be ready to perform for his country.

From San Miniato, the 7th December, 1479".

The departure of Lorenzo upon so novel and so dangerous an expedition, occasioned various opinions and conjectures at Florence. Those who were friendly to the Medici, or who were interested in the personal welfare of Lorenzo, could not regard this measure without great anxiety. Even those who entertained the highest opinion of his prudence were inclined to consider his conduct in this instance as rash and inconsiderate, and as having revolted rather from the impulse of the moment, than from that mature deliberation which generally preceded his determinations. They remembered the fate of Giacopo Piccinini, who, with more claims on the favour of Ferdinand than Lorenzo could pretend to, had, on a visit to him at Naples, in violation of all the laws of honour and hospitality, been thrown into a dungeon, and soon afterwards secretly murdered. Those who entertained better hopes, founded them on a conjecture that Lorenzo had previously obtained an assurance from Ferdinand of a welcome reception, and a safe return; which assurance was supposed to be sanctioned by the other states of Italy. In proportion as his friends were alarmed at the dangers that threatened him, those who feared, or who envied the authority which he had obtained in Florence, rejoiced in the probability of his destruction; and by affecting on all

occasions to express their apprehensions of his ruin, and of a consequent change of government in Florence, endeavoured as far as in their power to prepare the way for those events.

From San Miniato, Lorenzo went to Pisa, where he received from the magistrates of Florence their unlimited authority to enter into such conditions with the king as he might think advisable. Thence he embarked for Naples, and on his arrival there was surprised, but certainly not displeased, to find that the king had information of his approach, and had directed the commanders of his galleys to receive him with due honour. This token of respect was confirmed by the presence of the king's son Federigo, and his grandson Ferdinand, who met Lorenzo on his landing, and conducted him to the presence of the king. The Neapolitans testified their eagerness to see a man who had been the object of such contention, and whose character and accomplishments were the subject of general admiration. On his interview with Ferdinand, Lorenzo omitted nothing that was likely to conciliate his esteem, and attach him to his cause. Fully acquainted with the political state of Italy, and with the temper and intentions of its different potentates, he demonstrated to Ferdinand the impolicy of separating the interests of the Neapolitans from those of the Florentines. He reminded him of the dangers which the kingdom of Naples had repeatedly experienced from the pretensions of the holy see, and thence adverted to the imprudence of contributing to the aggrandizement of the papal power. Nor was he silent on that flagrant breach of divine and human laws, which had deprived him of a brother, and endangered his own life; from which he justly inferred, that the perpetrators of such a crime could be bound by no engagements but such as suited their own interest or ambition. To representations thus forcibly urged, it was impossible that the king could be inattentive; and although he did not immediately comply with the wishes of Lorenzo, yet he gave him hopes of eventual success, and treated him with every distinction due to his character, expressing his approbation of him in the words of Claudian, *vicit praesentia famam*.

During the abode of Lorenzo at Naples, which was protracted by the cautious hesitation of the king, he rendered his liberality, his taste, and his urbanity, subservient to the promotion of his political views, and was careful that the expectations formed of him by the populace should not be disappointed. His wealth and his munificence seemed to be equally boundless, and were displayed, amongst other instances, in apportioning out in marriage young women of the lower rank, who resorted to Naples from the remotest parts of Calabria and Appulia to share his bounty. The pleasures which he experienced from thus gratifying his natural disposition, were however counterbalanced by the anxiety of his solitary moments, when the difficulties which he had to encounter pressed upon his mind with a weight almost irresistible! The disposition of Ferdinand was severe and unrelenting: from an appeal to his feelings little was to be expected; his determination could only be influenced by motives of policy or of interest. The conquests of his son Alfonso had rendered him less favourable to the views of Lorenzo; and it was particularly unfortunate, that whilst the negotiation was depending, Alfonso broke the stipulated truce, and gained advantages over the Florentine troops. The pope had also received intelligence of the arrival of Lorenzo at Naples, and exerted all his interest with Ferdinand to prevail upon him either to detain Lorenzo there, or to send him to Rome, on pretence of accommodating his difference with the holy see, and effecting a general peace. Notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances, Lorenzo did not relax in the pursuit of his object, nor betray in public the least appearance of dejection. He had already obtained the confidence of Caraffa, count of Metalonica, the minister of Ferdinand, and made daily progress in the affections of the king himself, who was at length induced seriously to weigh his propositions, and to consider the advantages that might result to himself and his family, by attaching to his interests a man of such talents and influence, now in the prime of life, and daily rising in the public estimation. Led by these considerations, and by the unwearied assiduities of Lorenzo, he at length gave way to his solicitations; and having once adopted a decided opinion, became as warmly devoted to Lorenzo, as he before had been inimical to him. The conditions of the treaty were accordingly agreed on; and Lorenzo, who had arrived at Naples not merely an unprotected stranger, but an open enemy, left that place at the end of three months, in the character of an ally and a friend.

Having thus accomplished his purpose, he instantly embarked for Pisa, notwithstanding the entreaties of Ferdinand, who wished to prolong his stay. His apology to the king for this apparent want of respect, was the desire that he had to communicate to his fellow-citizens, as speedily as possible, the happy result of his expedition; but the excuses of Lorenzo were urged with a levity and jocularity which he judged most likely to conceal his real motives, and to prevent the suspicions of Ferdinand. Shortly before his departure the king presented to him a beautiful horse, and Lorenzo returned his thanks by observing That the messenger of joyful news ought to be well mounted. He had, however, more urgent reasons for his haste: every moment that delayed his return gave encouragement to his enemies, and endangered his authority at Florence; but above all, he was apprehensive that the repeated remonstrances of the pope might induce the king to waver in his resolution, or to change his opinion. The event proved that his distrust was not unfounded; Lorenzo had no sooner sailed from Naples, than a messenger arrived there from Rome, with such propositions to the king, on the part of the pope, as would in all probability not only have defeated the treaty, but have led the way to the ruin of Lorenzo de' Medici. Such was the effect which this communication had on the mind of the king, that he despatched a letter to Lorenzo, entreating him, in the most pressing language, that at whatever place he might receive it, he would immediately return to Naples, where the ambassador of Sixtus was ready to accede to the articles of pacification. Having once escaped from the jaws of the lion, Lorenzo did not think proper a second time to confide in his clemency; and his determination was probably confirmed by the tenor of the letter from Ferdinand, which discovers such an extreme degree of anxiety for the accomplishment of his purpose, as seems scarcely consistent with an open and generous intention.

After touching at Leghorn, Lorenzo returned to Pisa, where the event of his embassy being known, he was received with the utmost demonstrations of joy. Thence he hastened to Florence, where the exultation of the populace was unbounded. Secured from the storm that had so long threatened to burst upon their heads, and restored to tranquillity by the magnanimity of a single citizen, they set no limits to their applause. All ranks of people surrounded and congratulated Lorenzo on his return. His faithful associate Politiano, having struggled in vain to approach his patron, expressed his affection in a few extempore stanzas, in which is given a lively picture of this interesting scene; where Lorenzo is represented as towering above his fellow-citizens, by his superior stature, and expressing his sense of their kindness by all the means in his power, by his smiles, his nods, his voice, and his hands.

The reconciliation which had thus been effected between the king of Naples and the Republic of Florence was a cause of vexation not only to the pope, but to the Venetians, who expressed great dissatisfaction that a measure of such importance, should have been adopted without their previous concurrence. In order to excuse to the pope the step which he had taken, Ferdinand alleged his apprehensions from the Turks, who had long threatened a descent upon Italy. Sixtus did not, however, relinquish the prosecution of his favourite object, the destruction of Lorenzo de' Medici, in which he was constantly incited to persevere, by his nephew Girolamo Riario, whose hatred to Lorenzo was unalterable. To no purpose did the Florentines despatch a new embassy to Rome to deprecate the wrath and entreat the clemency of the pope. Riario began to make preparations for renewing the war; and at his instance the duke of Calabria, instead of withdrawing his troops from Tuscany, remained at Sienna, where he continued to exercise great authority, and to fill with apprehensions the surrounding country. But while the affairs of Florence remained in this state of suspense, a more general alarm took place, and speedily accomplished what the intercessions and humiliation of the Florentines might have failed of effecting. Mahomet II, the conqueror of Constantinople, was yet living, and meditated further victories. In turning his arms westward, he first attacked the island of Rhodes; but being delayed and irritated by a vigorous defence, he determined to retrieve his military credit by making a descent upon Italy, where he captured the important city of Otranto, and threatened the whole extent of that country with devastation and slavery.

This alarming incident roused the adjacent states of Italy to their defence. So opportunely did it occur for the safety of Lorenzo, that it has given rise to an opinion that he incited and encouraged it. But if Mahomet had in fact any invitation upon this occasion, it was most probably from the Venetians, who were strongly suspected of having favoured his purpose; and this suspicion was afterwards strengthened by the reluctance which they showed to unite with the other states of Italy in expelling the Turks from Otranto. Compelled to attend to the defence of his own country, the duke of Calabria suddenly withdrew his troops from Sienna; and the pope of his own motion gave the Florentines to understand, that, on a proper submission, he should now listen to terms of reconciliation. Twelve of the most respectable citizens were sent to Rome, as a deputation in the name of the republic; but although the pope expressed his desire that Lorenzo should be of the number, he wisely judged that such a measure would neither be consistent with his honour nor his safety. Francesco Soderini, bishop of Volterra, made the oration to the pope; who, in his reply, once more gave way to his anger, and, in very severe language, reproached the Florentines with their disobedience to the holy see. Having vented his rage, he received their submission; and in milder terms reconciled them to the church; at the same time touching their backs with a wand, according to the usual ceremony, and releasing the city from his interdict.

CHAPTER V.

**Giovanni Pico della Mirandola**

The establishment of peace was a blessing which Lorenzo felt in common with the rest of his fellow-citizens; but to him it was peculiarly grateful, as it left him at liberty to attend to the prosecution of those studies in which he had always found his most unembittered pleasures, and the surest alleviation of his cares. “When my mind is disturbed with the tumults of public business”, says he, writing to Ficino, “and my ears are stunned with the clamours of turbulent citizens, how would it be possible for me to support such contention unless I found a relaxation in science?”. Nor was it to any particular study, in exclusion to others, that he addicted himself during his hours of leisure, although poetry had in his younger years a decided preference. “So vigorous and yet so various was his genius”, says Pico of Mirandola, “that he seemed equally formed for every pursuit; but that which principally excites my wonder is, that even when he is deeply engaged in the affairs of the republic, his conversation and his thoughts should be turned to subjects of literature, as if he were perfect master of his time”. Lorenzo was not, however, insensible, that amidst his serious and important avocations, the indulgence of a poetical taste might be considered as indicating a levity of disposition inconsistent with his character. “There are some”, says he, “who may perhaps accuse me of having dissipated my time in writing and commenting upon amorous subjects, particularly in the midst of my numerous and unavoidable occupations: to this accusation I have to reply, that I might indeed be justly condemned if nature had endowed mankind with the power of performing, at all times, those things which are most truly commendable; but inasmuch as this power has been conceded only to few, and to those few the opportunity of exercising it cannot often occur in the course of life, it seems to me, that considering our imperfect nature, those occupations may be esteemed the best in which there is the least to reprove.—If the reasons I have before given”, he afterwards adds, “be thought insufficient for my exculpation, I have only to confide in the kindness of my readers. Persecuted as I have been from my youth, some indulgence may perhaps be allowed me for having sought consolation in these pursuits”. In the sequel of his commentary he has thought it necessary to touch more fully on the peculiarity of his situation. “It was my intention”, says he, “in my exposition of this sonnet, to have related the persecutions which I have undergone; but an apprehension that I may be thought arrogant and ostentatious, induces me to pass slightly over them. In relating our own transactions it is not indeed easy to avoid these imputations. When the navigator informs us of the perils which his ship has escaped, he means rather to give us an idea of his own exertions and prudence, than of the obligations which he owes to his good fortune, and perhaps enhances the danger beyond the fact, in order to increase our admiration. In the same manner, physicians frequently represent the state of their patient as more dangerous than it is in reality, so that if he happen to die, the cause may be supposed to be in the disorder, and not their want of skill; and if he recover, the greater is the merit of the cure. I shall therefore only say, that my sufferings have been very severe, the authors of them having been men of great authority and talents, and fully determined to accomplish, by every means in their power, my total ruin. Whilst I, on the other hand, having nothing to oppose to these formidable enemies, but youth and inexperience, saving indeed the assistance which I derived from divine goodness, was reduced to such an extreme of misfortune, that I had at the same time to labour under the excommunication of my soul, and the dispersion of my property, to contend with endeavours to divest me of my authority in the state, and to introduce discord into my family, and with frequent attempts to deprive me of my life, insomuch that I should have thought death itself a much less evil than those with which I had to combat. In this unfortunate situation it is surely not to be wondered at, if I endeavoured to alleviate my anxiety by turning to more agreeable subjects of meditation, and in celebrating the charms of my mistress sought a temporary refuge from my cares”.

In taking a retrospect of the state of letters in Italy, it is impossible not to be struck with the great superiority which that country possessed over the rest of Europe. “To the *Commedia* of Dante, the sonnets of Petrarca, and the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio, three little books written for the purposes of satire, of gallantry, and of feminine amusement, we are to trace the origin of learning, and true taste in modern times”. Whether Dante was stimulated to his singular work by the success of his immediate predecessors, the Provencal poets, or by the example of the ancient Roman authors, has been doubted. The latter opinion seems, however, to be the more probable.

In his *Inferno*, he had apparently the descent of Aeneas in view. Virgil is the guide of Dante through these regions of horror. In the rest of his poem there is little resemblance to any antecedent production. Compared with the Aeneid, it is a piece of grand Gothic architecture at the side of a beautiful Roman temple. Dante was immediately succeeded by Boccaccio and by Petrarca, not as imitators, but as originals in the different branches to which their talents led them. Though they followed Dante, they did not employ themselves in cultivating the ground which he had broken up, but chose each for himself a new and an untried field, and reaped a harvest not less abundant.

The merits of these writers have been frequently recognised and appreciated, but perhaps by no one with more accuracy than by Lorenzo himself. In attempting to show the importance and dignity of the Italian tongue, he justly remarks, that the proofs of its excellence are to be sought for in the writings of the three authors before mentioned; “who”, says he, “have fully shown with what facility this language may be adapted to the expression of every sentiment”. He then proceeds as follows: “If we look into the Commedia of Dante, we shall find theological and natural subjects treated with the greatest ease and address. We shall there discover those three species of composition so highly commended in oratory, the simple, the middle style, and the sublime; and shall find in perfection, in this single author, those excellences which are dispersed amongst the ancient Greek and Roman writers. Who can deny that the subject of love has been treated by Petrarca with more consistency and elegance than by Ovid, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, or any other of the Latin poets? The prose compositions of the learned and eloquent Boccaccio may be considered as unrivalled, not only on account of the invention which they display, but for the copiousness and elegance of the style. If on perusing the *Decamerone* we attend to the diversity of the subjects, sometimes serious or tragical, at others conversant with common life, and at others humorous or ridiculous; exhibiting all the perturbations incident to mankind, of affection and of aversion, of hope and of fear; if we consider the great variety of the narrative, and the invention of circumstances which display all the peculiarities of our nature, and all the effects of our passions, we may undoubtedly be allowed to determine, that no language is better adapted to the purposes of expression than our own”.

But although the career of these first reformers of Italian literature was wonderfully rapid, the disciples they formed were few, and of those none maintained the reputation of their masters. Petrarca died in 1374, and Boccaccio in the year following. The clouds that had been awhile dispersed by the lustre of their abilities, again collected, and involved the world in their gloom. A full century elapsed without producing any literary work that can be ranked with the composition of those great men. The attempt of Piero de' Medici, in the year 1441, to create a spirit of poetical emulation in Florence, while it serves as a proof of his munificence, sufficiently indicates the low degree of estimation in which this study was then held, and the insignificance of its professors. If Philosophy in the fourteenth century went poor and naked, in the next she had changed her destiny with her sister Poetry. The state of prose composition was equally wretched. No longer the vehicle of elegant or learned sentiment, the Italian language was consigned over to the use of the vulgar, corrupted by neglect, and debased by the mixture of provincial dialects. It was only on the most common occasions, or in the freedom of epistolary intercourse, that men of learning condescended to employ their native tongue; and even then it appears to have been considered as inadequate to the purpose, and the assistance of the Latin language was often resorted to, and intermixed with it, in order to render it intelligible.

The only symptoms of improvement which had appeared in Italy, at the time that Lorenzo de' Medici first began to distinguish himself by his writings, are to be found in the productions of Burchiello, or in those of the three brothers of the family of Pulci, to some of which we have before adverted. Burchiello, who flourished about the middle of the fifteenth century, and who exercised in Florence a profession, in which, as he informs us,

has left a great number of sonnets, which exhibit no inconsiderable share of wit and vivacity, and occasionally display a felicity of expression, that might have done honour to better subjects than those which generally employed his pen; but it is to be regretted that the excellences of these pieces are too often lost in their obscurity, and that although we may at times perceive the vivid sallies of imagination, it is only as we see coruscations from a cloud by night, which leave us again in total darkness. This obscurity has been the cause of great regret to his admirers, several of whom have undertaken to comment upon and illustrate his works. Crescimbeni is of opinion, that these extravagant productions were intended to satirize the absurdities of his poetical contemporaries, and the folly of their admirers; but satire too obscure to be generally understood, is not likely to effect a reformation.

The Pulci were of a noble family of Florence, but seem to have declined any participation in the offices of the republic, for the purpose of devoting themselves to their favourite studies. That a close intimacy subsisted between them and the Medici is apparent from many of the works of these brothers, some of which are inscribed to their great patrons, and others entirely devoted to their praise. The earliest production of any of this family is probably the elegy by Bernardo, to the memory of Cosmo de' Medici, which he has addressed to Lorenzo. To his elegy on the death of the beautiful Simonetta, we have before assigned its proper date. He afterwards translated the Eclogues of Virgil, which he also inscribed to Lorenzo de' Medici. Bernardo is likewise the author of a poem on the passion of Christ, which is by no means devoid of poetical merit. It is preceded by a dedication to a pious nun; from which it appears that the good sister had not only prescribed this subject to the poet, but that by her pressing instances he had been induced to complete the work, which he affirms had cost him many a tear. In the Laurentian library some other poems of this author are yet preserved, that have not hitherto been published.

Of Luca Pulci, whose verses on the tournament of Lorenzo have before been noticed, we have two other poems. The first of these, entitled *Il Ciriffo Calvaneo*, is an epic romance, and was probably the first that appeared in Italy; it being certainly produced some years prior to the "Morgante" of Luigi Pulci, and to the "Orlando Innamorato" of Bojardo, two pieces which have generally been considered as the first examples of this species of poetry. In relating the wars between the Christians and the Infidels, the author seems to have prepared the way for the more celebrated works on the same subject which soon afterwards followed. This poem was left unfinished by the author, but at the instance of Lorenzo de' Medici, was, after the death of Luca, completed by Bernardo Giambullari. The *Driadeo d'Amore* is a pastoral romance in *ottava rima,* and is dedicated by the author to Lorenzo de' Medici, for whose particular amusement he professes to have written it. The heroic epistles of Luca Pulci do credit to their author. These epistles are eighteen in number, and are composed in *terza rima*. The first is from Lucretia to Lauro; that is, from the accomplished Lucretia Donati to Lorenzo de' Medici. The others are founded on different incidents in the ancient Greek and Roman history.

Luigi Pulci, the youngest of these brothers, was born on the 3d day of December, 1431, and appears, from many circumstances, to have lived on terms of the utmost friendship with Lorenzo de' Medici, who in one of his poems mentions him with great freedom and jocularity. The principal work of this author is the *Morgante maggiore*, a poem which has given rise to various opinions and conjectures, as to its tendency and its merits. Whether this poem, or the Orlando Innamorato of the count Bojardo, was first written, has been a matter of doubt; certain it is, that in publication the Morgante had the priority, having been printed at Venice in 1488, after a Florentine edition of uncertain date, whilst the Orlando Innamorato, did not appear till the year 1496. Accordingly the *Morgante* is generally regarded as the prototype of the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. It has been said that Ficino and Politiano had each a share in the composition of this work but the poetry of Politiano is of a very different character, and there is no instance on record that Ficino ever

attempted poetical composition. The same degree of credit is due to the opinion, that Luigi Pulci was accustomed to recite his poem at the table of Lorenzo de' Medici, about the year 1450; for it must be remembered that Lorenzo de' Medici was only born in 1448. It may further be observed, that although the Morgante was written at the particular request of Lucretia, the mother of Lorenzo, it was not finished till after her death, which did not happen till the year 1482. This singular offspring of the wayward genius of Pulci has been as immoderately commended by its admirers, as it has been unreasonably degraded and condemned by its opponents; and whilst some have not scrupled to give it the precedence, in point of poetical merit, to the productions of Ariosto and of Tasso, others have decried it as vulgar, absurd, and profane; and the censures of the church have been promulged in confirmation of the latter part of the sentence. From the solemnity and devotion with which every canto is introduced, some have judged that the author meant to give a serious narrative; but the improbability of the relation, and the burlesque nature of the incidents, destroy all ideas of this kind. By others, this author has been accused of a total want of elegance in his expressions, and of harmony in his verse; but this work yet ranks as classical in Italian literature, and, if it be not poetry of the highest relish, has a flavour that is yet perceptible.

The sonnets of Luigi Pulci, printed with those of Matteo Franco, have the same capricious character as his other writings, and bear a resemblance to those of his predecessor Burchiello. Franco, the poetic correspondent of Pulci, was a canon of Florence, and was by no means inferior to him in pungency and humour. It is to be regretted that these authors so far exceeded at times the bounds of civility and decorum, that it is scarcely possible to suggest an expression of reproach and resentment which is not to be found in their writings. The family name of Pulci (Pulex) affords an ample subject for the satirical powers of Franco. His person is a theme equally fertile. Famine, says his antagonist, was as naturally depicted in his countenance as if it had been the work of Giotto. He had made an eight days' truce with death, which was on the point of expiring, when he would be swept away to Giudecca, (the lowest pit of Dante), where his brother Luca was gone before to prepare him a place. Luigi supports this opprobrious contest by telling his adversary that he was marked at his birth with the sign of the halter, instead of that of the cross, and by a thousand other imputations, of which decency forbids a repetition. We are, however, informed, by the editor of the ancient edition of these poems, that although, for the amusement of their readers, these authors so lavishly abused and satirized each other, they continued in reality intimate friends; and this information is rendered highly probable, by their having equally shared the favour of Lorenzo de' Medici, whose authority would have suppressed the first indications of real dissension. The freedoms in which they indulged themselves called, however, for the interference of the Inquisition; and a prohibition was issued against the further circulation of this work. But although the productions of the before-mentioned authors display some share of vivacity and imagination, and exhibit at times a natural and easy vein of poetry; yet upon the whole they are strongly tinctured with the rusticity of the age in which they were produced.

That Lorenzo de' Medici had begun to exercise his talents for poetry at a very early age, there remains decisive proof. We have before adverted to his interview with Federigo of Naples, at Pisa, in the year 1465. On this occasion he was requested by that prince to point out to him such pieces of Italian poetry as were most deserving of his attention. Lorenzo willingly complied with his request; and shortly afterwards selected a small volume, at the close of which he added some of his own sonnets and canzoni, addressing them to Federigo in a few prefatory lines, as a testimony of his affection and regard. Hence it appears, that at the age of seventeen Lorenzo had attempted different kinds of composition, which may be considered not only as anterior to the celebrated poem of Politiano, on the *Giostra* of Giuliano, which we have before noticed, but probably to any of the writings of the Pulci. But however the Pulci may contend with Lorenzo in priority, they fall greatly short of him in all the essential requisites of a poet; and whilst their productions bear the uniform character of a rude and uncultivated age, those of Lorenzo do' Medici are distinguished by a vigour of imagination, an accuracy of judgment and an elegance of style, which afforded the first great example of improvement, and entitle him, almost

exclusively, to the honourable appellation of the restorer of Italian literature. Within the course of a few years Politiano, Benivieni, and others, imbibed the true spirit of poetry, and Florence had once more the credit of rekindling that spark which was soon to diffuse a lustre through the remotest parts of Europe.

If, in order to justify the pretensions of Lorenzo to the rank here assigned him it were sufficient merely to adduce the authority of succeeding critics, this would be productive of little difficulty. But to found our opinion of an author whose works are yet open to examination, on that of others, however it may soothe our indolence, or gratify our curiosity, cannot inform our judgment. It is from the writings which yet remain of Lorenzo de' Medici that we are to acquire a just idea of his general character as a poet, and to determine how far they have been instrumental in effecting a reformation in the taste of his countrymen, or in opening the way to subsequent improvements.

The great end and object of poetry, and consequently the proper aim of the poet, is to communicate to us a clear and perfect idea of his proposed subject. What the painter exhibits to us by variety of colour, by light and shade, the poet expresses in appropriate language. The former seizes merely the external form, and that only in a given attitude; the other surrounds his object, pierces it, and discloses its most hidden qualities. With the former it is inert and motionless; with the latter it lives and moves, it is expanded or compressed, it glares upon the imagination, or vanishes in air, and is as various as nature herself.

The simple description of natural objects is perhaps to a young mind the most delightful species of poetry, and was probably the first employment of the poet. It may be compared to melody in music, which is relished even by the most uncultivated ear. In this department Virgil is an exquisite master. Still more lively are the conceptions of Dante, still more precise the language in which they are expressed. As we follow him, his wildest excursions take the appearance of reality. Compared with his vivid hues, how faint, how delicate is the colouring of Petrarca! yet the harmony of the tints almost compensates for their want of force. With accurate descriptions of the face of nature the works of Lorenzo abound; and these are often heightened by those minute but striking characteristics, which though open to all observers, the eye of the poet can alone select. Thus the description of an Italian winter, with which he opens his poem of "Ambra", is marked by several appropriate and striking images.

The foliage of the olive appears of a dark green, but is nearly white beneath;

On some sweet sunny slope the olive grows.

Its hues still changing as the zephyr blows.

The flight of the cranes, though frequently noticed in poetry, was perhaps never described in language more picturesque than the following from the same poem:

Marking the tracts of air, the clamorous cranes

Wheel their due flight, in varied lines descried;

And each with outstretched neck his rank maintains,

In marshall'd order through th' ethereal void.

The following picture from his *Selve d' Amore* is also drawn with great truth and simplicity:

Sweet spring returns; the shepherd from the fold

Brings forth his flock, nor dreads the wintry cold;

Delighted once again their steps to lead

To the green hill, clear spring, and flowery mead.

True to their mother's track, the sportive young

Trip light, the careful hind slow moves along,

Pleased in his arms the new-dropt lamb to bear;

His dog, a faithful guard, brings up the rear.

In the same poem is a description of the golden age, in which the author seems to have exerted all his powers in selecting such images as are supposed to have been peculiar to that happy state of life.

But the description of natural objects awakes in the poet's mind corresponding emotions; as his heart warms, his fancy expands, and he labours to convey a more distinct or a more elevated idea of the impressions of his own imagination. Hence the origin of figures, or figurative language; in the use of which he aims at describing his principal subject, by the qualities of some other object more generally known, or more striking in its nature. These figures of poetry have furnished the philologists of ancient and modern times with a great variety of minute distinctions, but many of them consist rather in form than in substance; comparison, expressed or implied, will be found to be the essence of them all.

In the employment of comparative illustration, Lorenzo de' Medici is often particularly happy. An attentive observer of the works of nature, as well in her general appearances, as in her more minute operations, intimately acquainted with all the finer productions of art, and accustomed to the most abstruse speculations of philosophy, whatever occurred to his mind excited a profusion of relative ideas, either bearing a general resemblance to his immediate subject, or associated with it by some peculiar circumstance. The first of these he often employed for the purpose of explanation or of ornament, in his more serious compositions, the latter with great wit and vivacity in his lighter productions. At some times one external object, or one corporeal action, is elucidated by another; at other times natural phenomena are personified, and illustrated by sensible images; and instances occur where abstract ideas and metaphysical sentiments are brought before the mind, by a comparison with the objects of the material world. Of the simplest mode of comparison the following is no inelegant instance:

O'er her white dress her shining tresses flow'd;

Thus on the mountain heights with snow o'erspread,

The beams of noon their golden lustre shed.

In his pastoral of Corydon, the shepherd thus addresses his scornful mistress, elucidating one action by another:

Ah nymph! what pangs are mine, when causeless fright

O’er hill, o'er valley, wings thy giddy flight.

Lest some sharp thorn thy heedless way may meet,

Some poisonous reptile wound thy naked feet.

Thy pains I feel, but deprecate in vain.

And turn, and raise my feet, in sympathetic pain;

So when the archer, with attentive glance,

Marks his fleet arrow wing its way askance.

He strives with tortuous act and head aside.

Right to the mark its devious course to guide.

The following sonnet affords an instance, not only of the illustration of one sensible object by another, but of the comparison of an abstract sentiment with a beautiful natural image:

SONETTO.

Ah pearly drops, that, pouring from those eyes,

Spoke the dissolving cloud of soft desire!

What time cold sorrow chill'd the genial fire,

"Struck the fair urns and bade the waters rise".

Soft down those cheeks, where native crimson vies

With ivory whiteness, see the crystals throng;

As sonic clear river winds its stream along.

Bathing the flowers of pale and purple dyes.

Whilst Love, rejoicing in the amorous shower,

Stands like some bird, that after sultry heats

Enjoys the drops, and shakes his glittering wings

Then grasps his bolt, and, conscious of his power,

'Midst those bright orbs assumes his wonted seat.

And through the lucid shower his living lightning flings.

To examples of this kind I shall only add another, in which the poet has attempted to explain the mysterious intercourse of Platonic affection, by a familiar but fanciful comparison:

As from their wintry cells.

The summer's genial warmth impels

The busy ants — a countless train

That with sagacious sense explore,

Where, provident for winter's store.

The careful rustic hides his treasured grain,

Then issues forth the sable band.

And seizing on the secret prize.

From mouth to mouth, from hand to hand.

His busy task each faithful insect plies.

And often as they meet,

With scanty interval of toil.

Their burthens they repose awhile.

For rest alternate renders labour sweet.

The travell'd path their lengthened tracks betray.

And if no varied cates they bear,

Yet ever is the portion dear,

Without whose aid the powers of life decay.

Thus from my faithful breast,

The busy messengers of love,

Incessant towards my fair one's bosom move;

But in their way some gentle thought

They meet, with kind compassion fraught,

Soft breathing from that sacred shrine.

Where dwells a heart in unison with mine,

And in sweet interchange delight a while to rest.

But the poet does not confine himself to the lively description of nature, or of the corresponding emotions of his own mind. His next attempt is of a bolder kind, and the inanimate objects by which he is surrounded seem to possess life and motion, consciousness and reason, to act and to suffer. The mountains frown, the rivers murmur, the woods sigh, and the fable of Orpheus is revived. In the use of this figure, Petrarca is inexhaustible; and there are few rural objects that have not been called upon to share his emotions; the tenderness of the lover inspires the fancy of the poet, he addresses them as if they were conscious of his passion, and applauds or reproaches them as they are favourable or adverse to the promotion of it. The works of Lorenzo afford also frequent instances of the use of this figure, which more than any other gives action and spirit to poetry. In the following sonnet he not only animates the violets, but represents them as accounting, by a beautiful fiction, for their purple colour:

SONETTO.

Not from the verdant garden's cultured bound,

That breathes of Poestum's aromatic gale,

We sprung; but nurslings of the lonely vale,

'Midst woods obscure, and native glooms were found;

'Midst woods and glooms, whose tangled brakes around

Once Venus sorrowing traced, as all forlorn

She sought Adonis, when a lurking thorn

Deep on her foot impress'd an impious wound.

Then prone to earth we bow'd our pallid flowers,

And caught the drops divine; the purple dyes

Tinging the lustre of our native hue:

Nor summer gales nor art-conducted showers

Have nursed our slender forms, but lovers' sighs

Have been our gales, and lovers' tears our dew.

The province of the poet is not, however, confined to the representation, or to the combination of material and external objects. The fields of intellect are equally subject to his control. The affections and passions of the human mind, the abstract ideas of unsubstantial existence, serve in their turn to exercise his powers. In arranging themselves under his dominion, it becomes necessary that they should take a visible and substantial form, distinguished by their attributes, their insignia, and their effects. With this form the imagination of the poet invests them, and they then become as subservient to his purpose as if they were objects of external sense. In process of time some of these children of imagination acquire a kind of prescriptive identity; and the symbolic forms of pleasure, or of wisdom, present themselves to our minds in nearly as

definite a manner as the natural ones of Ajax, or of Achilles. Thus embodied, they become important actors in the drama, and are scarcely distinguishable from human character. But the offspring of fancy is infinite; and however the regions of poetry may seem to be peopled by these fantastic beings, genius will still proceed to invent, to vary, and to combine.

If the moderns excel the ancients in any department of poetry, it is in that now under consideration. It must not indeed be supposed that the ancients were insensible of the effects produced by this powerful charm, which more peculiarly than any other may be said.

To give to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name;

but it may safely be asserted, that they have availed themselves of this creative faculty much more sparingly, and with much less success than their modern competitors. The attribution of sense to inert objects is indeed common to both; but that still bolder exertion which embodies abstract existence, and renders it susceptible of ocular representation, is almost exclusively the boast of the moderns. If, however, we advert to the few authors who preceded Lorenzo de' Medici, we shall not trace in their writings many striking instances of those embodied pictures of ideal existence which are so conspicuous in the works of Ariosto, Spenser, Milton, and subsequent writers of the higher class, who are either natives of Italy, or have formed their taste upon the poets of that nation.

The writings of Lorenzo afford many instances of genuine poetical personification; some of which will not suffer by a comparison with those of any of his most celebrated successors. Of this his representation of Jealousy may afford no inadequate proof.

Sad, in a nook obscure, and sighing deep,

A pale and haggard beldam shrinks from view;

Her gloomy vigils there she loves to keep,

Wrapt in a robe of ever-changing hue;

A hundred eyes she has that ceaseless weep,

A hundred ears, that pay attention due.

Imagined evils aggravate her grief,

Heedless of sleep, and stubborn to relief.

If his personification of Hope be less discriminate, it is to be attributed to the nature of that passion, of which uncertainty is in some degree the characteristic.

Immense of bulk, her towering head she shows,

Her floating tresses seem to touch the skies.

Dark mists her unsubstantial shape compose,

And on the mountain's top her dwelling lies.

As when the clouds fantastic shapes disclose.

For ever varying to the gazer's eyes,

Till on the breeze the changeful hues escape.

Thus vague her form, and mutable her shape.

Her attendants are also highly characteristic.

Illusive beings round their sovereign wait,

Deceitful dreams, and auguries, and lies,

Innumerous arts the gaping crowd that cheat,

Predictions wild, and groundless prophecies;

With wondrous words, or written rolls of fate.

Foretelling — when 'tis past — what yet shall rise;

And alchemy, and astrologic skill.

And fond conjecture — always form'd at will.

Though not perhaps strictly to be ranked in this department, I shall not deprive my readers of the following fanciful description of the formation of the lover's chain:

Dear are those bonds my willing heart that bind,

Form'd of three cords, in mystic union twined;

The first by beauty's rosy fingers wove.

The next by pity, and the third by love.

— The hour that gave this wondrous texture birth.

Saw in sweet union, heaven, and air, and earth;

Serene and soft all ether breath'd delight.

The sun diffused a mild and temper'd light;

New leaves the trees, sweet flowers adorn'd the moad,

And sparkling rivers gush'd along the glade,

Reposed on Jove's own breast, his favourite child,

The Cyprian queen beheld the scene and smiled;

Then with both hands, from her ambrosial head,

And amorous breast, a shower of roses shed;

The heavenly shower descending soft and slow,

Pour'd all its fragrance on my fair below;

Whilst all benign the ruler of the spheres

To sounds celestial open'd mortal ears.

From the foregoing specimens we may be enabled to form a general idea of the merits of Lorenzo de' Medici, and may perceive, that of the essential requisites of poetic composition, instances are to be found in his writings. The talents of a poet he certainly possessed. But before we can form a complete estimate of his poetical character, it will be necessary to inquire to what purpose those talents were applied, and this can only be done by taking a view of the different departments of poetry in which he employed his pen. In the execution of this task we may also be enabled to ascertain how far he has imitated his predecessors, and how far he has himself been a model to those who have succeeded him.

The Italian sonnet is a species of composition almost coeval with the language itself; and may be traced back to that period when the Latin tongue, corrupted by the vulgar pronunciation, and intermixed with the idioms of the different nations that from time to time overran Italy, degenerated into what was called the *lingua volgare*; which language, though at first rude and unpolished, was, by successive exertions, reduced to a regular and determinate standard, and obtained at length a superiority over the Latin, not only in common use, but in the written compositions of the learned. The form of the sonnet, confined to a certain versification, and to a certain number of lines, was unknown to the Roman poets, who adopting a legitimate measure, employed it as long as the subject required it, but was probably derived from the Provençals; although instances of the regular stanza, now used in these compositions, may be traced amongst the Italians, as early as the thirteenth century. From that time to the present, the sonnet has retained its precise form, and has been the most favourite mode of composition in the Italian tongue. It may, however, be justly doubted whether the Italian poesy has, upon the whole, derived any great advantage from the frequent use of the sonnet. Confined to so narrow a compass, it admits not of that extent and range of ideas which suggest themselves to a mind already warm with its subject. On the contrary, it illustrates only someone distinct idea, and this must be extended or condensed, not as its nature requires, but as the rigid laws of the composition prescribe. One of the highest excellences of a master in this art consists, therefore, in the selection of a subject neither too long nor too short for the space which it is intended to occupy. Hence the invention is cramped, and the free excursions of the mind are fettered and restrained. Hence, too, the greater part of these compositions display rather the glitter of wit than the fire of genius; and hence they have been almost solely appropriated to the illustration of the passion of love : a subject which, from its various nature, and the endless analogies of which it admits, is more susceptible than any other of being apportioned into those detached sentiments of which the sonnet is composed.

To these restraints, however, the stern genius of Dante frequently submitted. In his *Vita Nuova* we have a considerable number of his sonnets, which bear the distinct marks of his character, and derogate not from the author of the Divina Commedia. These sonnets are uniformly devoted to the praises of his Beatrice; but his passion is so spiritualized, and so remote from gross and earthly objects, that great doubts have arisen among his commentators, whether the object of his adoration had a substantial existence, or was anything more than the abstract

idea of wisdom or philosophy. Certain it is, that the abstruse and recondite sense of these productions seems but little suited to the comprehension of that sex to which they are addressed, and ill calculated to promote the success of an amorous passion. The reputation of Dante as a poet is not, however, founded on this part of his labours; but Petrarca, whose other works have long been neglected, is indebted to his sonnets and lyric productions for the high rank which he yet holds in the public estimation. Without degrading his subject by gross and sensual images, he has rendered it susceptible of general apprehension; and, whether his passion was real or pretended, for even this has been doubted, he has traced the effects of love through every turn and winding of the human bosom; so that it is scarcely possible for a lover to find himself so situated, as not to meet with his own peculiar feelings reflected in some passage or other of that engaging author.

Without possessing the terseness of those of Dante, or the polish and harmony of those of Petrarca, the sonnets of Lorenzo de' Medici have indisputable pretensions to high poetical excellence. It is indeed to be regretted, that, like those of his two celebrated predecessors, they are almost all devoted to one subject—the illustration of an amorous passion; but he has so diversified and embellished them with images drawn from other sources, as to rescue them from that general censure of insipidity, which may properly be applied to the greater part of the productions of the Italians, in this their favourite mode of composition. These images he has sought for in almost all the appearances of nature, in the annals of history, the wilds of mythology, and the mysteries of the Platonic philosophy; and has exhibited them with a splendour and vivacity peculiar to himself. If the productions of Dante resemble the austere grandeur of Michael Agnolo, or if those of Petrarca remind us of the ease and gracefulness of Raffaello, the works of Lorenzo may be compared to the less correct, but more animated and splendid labours of the Venetian school. The poets, as well as the painters, each formed a distinct class, and have each had their exclusive admirers and imitators. In the beginning of the succeeding century, the celebrated Pietro Bembo attempted again to introduce the style of Petrarca; but his sonnets, though correct and chaste, are too often formal and insipid. Those of Casa, formed upon the same model, possess much more ease, and a greater flow of sentiment. Succeeding authors united the correctness of Petrarca with the bolder colouring of Lorenzo; and in the works of Ariosto, the two Tassos, Costanzo, Tansillo, and Guarini, the poetry of Italy attained its highest degree of perfection.

The sonnets of Lorenzo de' Medici are intermixed with Canzoni, Sestine, and other lyric productions, which in general display an equal elegance of sentiment, and brilliancy of expression. One of his biographers is, however, of opinion, that the merit of his odes is inferior to that of his sonnets; but it is not easy to discover any striking evidence of the propriety of this remark. It must not, however, be denied, that his writings occasionally display too evident proofs of that haste with which it is probable they were all composed; or that they are sometimes interspersed with modes of expression, which would scarcely have been tolerated among the more accurate and polished writers of the succeeding century. The language of Lorenzo de' Medici appears even more obsolete, and is more tinctured with the rusticity of the vulgar dialect, than that of Petrarca, who preceded him by so long an interval. But with all these defects, the intrinsic merit of his writings has been acknowledged by all those who have been able to divest themselves of an undue partiality for the fashion of the day, and who can discern true excellence, through the disadvantages of a dress in some respects antiquated, or negligent. Muratori, in his treatise on the poetry of Italy, has accordingly adduced several of the sonnets of Lorenzo, as examples of elegant composition: “It is gold from the mine”, says that judicious critic, adverting to one of these pieces, “mixed indeed with ruder materials, yet it is always gold”.

The “Selve d' Amore” of Lorenzo de' Medici is a composition in *ottava rima*, and, though it extends to a considerable length, deserves to be held at least in equal esteem with his sonnets and lyric productions. The stanza in which it is written is the most favourite mode of versification amongst the Italians, and has been introduced with great success into the English language. It was first reduced to its regular form by Boccaccio, who employed it in his heroic romance, the

*Theseide* and the *Filostrato*; but the poems of Ariosto and of Torquato Tasso have established it as the vehicle of epic composition. These *stanze* were produced by Lorenzo at an early age, and are undoubtedly the same of which Landino and Valori expressed such warm approbation. The estimation in which they were held may be determined by the many imitations which have appeared from Benivieni, Serafino d'Aquila, Politiano, Lodovico Martelli, and others; who seem to have contended with each other for superiority in a species of poetry which gives full scope to the imagination, and in which the author takes the liberty of expatiating on any subject, which he conceives to be likely to engage the attention and obtain the favour of his mistress.

Among the poems of Lorenzo de' Medici, which have been preserved for three centuries in manuscript, in the Laurentian library, and which are given at the close of the present work, is a beautiful Ovidian allegory, entitled “Ambra”, being the name of a small island, formed by the river Ombrone, near Lorenzo's villa at Poggio Cajano, the destruction of which is the subject of the poem. This favourite spot he had improved and ornamented with great assiduity, and was extremely delighted with the retired situation and romantic aspect of the place. He was not, however, without apprehensions that the rapidity of the river might destroy his improvements, which misfortune he endeavoured to prevent by every possible precaution; but his cares were ineffectual; an inundation took place, and sweeping away his labours, left him no consolation but that of immortalizing his Ambra in the poem now alluded to. The same stanza is employed by Lorenzo in his poem on hawking, now also first published under the title of "La Caccia col Falcone". The piece is apparently founded on a real incident. The author here gives us a very circumstantial, and at the same time a very lively account of this once popular diversion, from the departure of the company in the morning, to their return in the heat of the day. The scene is most probably at Poggio Cajano, where he frequently partook of the diversions of hunting and of hawking, the latter of which he is said to have preferred. In this poem, wherein the author has introduced many of his companions by name, the reader will find much native humour, and a striking picture of the manners of the times.

Lorenzo has, however, occasionally assumed in his writings a more serious character. His *Altercazione*, or poem explanatory of the Platonic philosophy, has before attracted our notice; but notwithstanding this attempt has great merit, and elucidates with some degree of poetical ornament a dry and difficult subject, it is much inferior to his moral poems, one of which in particular, exhibits a force of expression, a grandeur and elevation of sentiment, of which his predecessors had set him no example, and which perhaps none of his countrymen have since excelled. This piece, in which the author calls upon the faculties of his own mind to exert themselves to great and useful purposes, thus commences: —

Rise from thy trance, my slumbering genius, rise.

That shrouds from truth's pure beam thy torpid eyes!

Awake, and see, since reason gave the rein

To low desire, thy every work how vain.

Ah think how false that bliss the mind explores,

In futile honours, or unbounded stores;

How poor the bait that would thy steps decoy

To sensual pleasure, and unmeaning joy.

House all thy powers, for better use designed,

And know thy native dignity of mind;

Not for low aims and mortal triumphs given,

Its means exertion, and its object heaven.

Hast thou not yet the difference understood,

'Twixt empty pleasure and substantial good!

Not more opposed, by all the wise contest.

The rising orient from the farthest west.

Doom'd from thy youth the galling chain to prove

Of potent beauty, and imperious love,

Their tyrant rule has blighted all thy time,

And marred the promise of thy early prime.

Though beauty's garb thy wondering gaze may win,

Yet know that wolves, that harpies dwell within.

Ah think, how fair thy better hopes had sped.

Thy widely erring steps had reason led;

Think, if thy time a nobler use had known.

Ere this the glorious prize had been thine own.

Kind to thyself, thy clear discerning will

Had wisely learnt to sever good from ill.

Thy spring-tide hours consumed in vain delight,

Shall the same follies close thy wintry night?

With vain pretexts of beauty's potent charms,

And nature's frailty, blunting reason's arms?

— At length thy long-lost liberty regain.

Tear the strong tie, and break the inglorious chain.

Freed from false hopes, assume thy native powers,

And give to Reason's rule thy future hours;

To her dominion yield thy trusting soul.

And bend thy wishes to her strong control;

Till love, the serpent that destroyed thy rest.

Crushed by her hand shall mourn his humbled crest.

The sacred poems of Lorenzo de' Medici, distinguished by the names of Orazioni, and Laude have been several times printed in various ancient collections, from which they were selected and published (with others by different persons of the same family) by Cionacci at Florence, in the year 1680. The authors of the other poems in this collection are, Lucretia the mother of Lorenzo, Pier Francesco his cousin, and Bernardo d' Alamanni de' Medici; but the reputation of Lorenzo as a poet will not be much increased by our assigning to him a decided superiority over his kindred. The poems of Lorenzo need not, however, the equivocal approbation of comparative praise, as they possess a great degree of positive excellence. In the following beautiful and affecting address to the Deity, the sublimity of the Hebrew original is tempered with the softer notes of the Italian muse:—

ORAZIONE.

All nature, hear the sacred song!

Attend, earth, the solemn strain!

Ye whirlwinds wild that sweep along:

Ye darkening stones of beating rain;

Umbrageous glooms, and forests drear;

And solitary deserts, heart!

Be still, ye winds, whilst to the Maker's praise

The creature of His power aspires his voice to raise.

O may the solemn breathing sound

Like incense rise before the throne.

Where He, whose glory knows no bound,

Great cause of all things, dwells alone.

'Tis He I sing, whose powerful hand.

Balanced the skies, outspread the land;

Who spoke— from ocean's store sweet waters came,

And burst resplendent forth the heaven-aspiring flame.

One general song of praise arise

To him whose goodness ceaseless flows;

Who dwells enthroned beyond the skies.

And life, and breath, on all bestows.

Great source of intellect, His ear

Benign receives our vows sincere:

Rise then, my active powers, your task fulfil,

And give to Him your praise, responsive to my will.

Partaker of that living stream

Of light, that pours an endless blaze,

let thy strong reflected beam.

My understanding, speak His praise

My soul, in stedfast love secure,

Praise Him whose word is ever sure;

To Him, sole just, my sense of right incline,

Join every prostrate limb, my ardent spirit join.

Let all of good this bosom fires,

To Him, sole good, give praises due:

Let all the truth Himself inspires,

Unite to sing Him only true.

To Him my every thought ascend,

To Him my hopes, my wishes, bend.

From earth's wide bounds let louder hymns arise.

And His own words convey the pious sacrifice.

In ardent adoration join'd.

Obedient to Thy holy will.

Let all my faculties combined.

Thy just desires, God, fulfil.

From Thee derived, eternal King,

To Thee our noblest powers we bring:

O may Thy hand direct our wandering way,

bid Thy light arise, and chase the clouds away.

Eternal Spirit! whose command

Light, life, and being, gave to all;

hear the creature of Thy hand,

Man, constant on thy goodness call!

By fire, by water, air, and earth.

That soul to Thee that owes its birth,

By these, he supplicates Thy blest repose.

Absent from Thee no rest his wandering spirit knows.

The Italian language had not yet been applied to the purpose of satire, unless we may be allowed to apply that name to some parts of the Commedia of Dante, or the unpublished poem of Burchiello before noticed. The *Beoni* of Lorenzo de' Medici is perhaps the earliest production that properly ranks under this title; the *Canti Carnascialeschi*, or carnival songs, which we shall hereafter notice, and which are supposed by Bianchini to have set the first example of the jocose Italian satire, being a very different kind of composition. This piece is also composed in terza rima, and is a lively and severe reprehension of drunkenness. The author represents himself as returning, after a short absence, to Florence; when, as he approached towards the Porta di Faenza, he met many of his fellow-citizens hastening along the road with the greatest precipitation. At length he had the good fortune to perceive an old acquaintance, to whom he gives the appellation of Bartolino, and whom he requests to explain to him the cause of this strange commotion.

— As when some bird a kindred note that hears.

His well-known mate with note responsive cheers,

He recognised my voice; and at the sound

Relaxed his speed; but difficult he found

The task to stop, and great fatigue it seemed.

For whilst he spoke, each moment lost he deemed;

Then thus: Bartolino informs him that they are all hastening to the bridge of Rifredi, to partake of a treat of excellent wine,

That gives new vigour to the crippled feet.

He then characterises his numerous companions, who, although sufficiently discriminated in other respects, all agree in their insatiable thirst. Three priests at length make their appearance; Lorenzo inquires —

With rosy cheeks who follows next, my friend.

And who the gownmen that his steps attends

— Three pious priests — the chief in size and place,

Antella's rector — shows his vacant face;

He who, with easy smile and pointed nose,

In social converse with the rector goes.

Of Fesule, a dignified divine,

Has wisely placed his paradise in wine.

The favourite cup that all his wants supplies.

Within whose circle his devotion lies,

His faithful curate, Ser Antonio, brings

See, at bis side the goodly vessel swings.

On all occasions, and where'er he bends

His way, this implement its lord attends;

Or more officious, marches on before.

Prepares his road, and tinkles at the door;

This on his death-bed shall his thoughts employ.

And with him in his monument shall lie.

Hast thou not seen — if e'er thou chanced to meet

The slow procession moving through the street.

As the superior issues his command.

His sable brethren close around him stand:

Then whilst in pious act with hands outspread,

Each with his cassock shrouds his leader's head.

His face the toper covers with his cup,

And, ere the prayer be ended, drinks it up.

The fiery temperament of an habitual drunkard is described by the following whimsical hyperbole:

He sneezed : and as the burning humour fell,

The dust with vital warmth began to swell.

Hot, moist, and dry, their genial powers unite,

Up sprang a frog, and leaped before our sight.

So expeditious was Lorenzo in his compositions, that he is said to have written this piece nearly extempore, immediately after the incident on which it was founded took place. Posterity ought to regard this poem with particular favour, as it has led the way to some of the most agreeable and poignant productions of the Italian poets, and is one of the earliest models of the satires and *capitoli* of Berni, Nelli, Ariosto, Bentivoglio, and others, who form a numerous class of writers, in a mode of composition almost peculiar to the natives of Italy.

Italy has always been celebrated for the talents of its *Improvvisatori*, or extempore poets. Throughout Tuscany, in particular, this custom of reciting verses has for ages been the constant and most favourite amusement of the villagers and country inhabitants. At some times the subject is a trial of wit between two peasants; on other occasions a lover addresses his mistress in a poetical oration, expressing his passion by such images as his uncultivated fancy suggests, and endeavouring to amuse and engage her by the liveliest sallies of humour. These recitations, in which the eclogues of Theocritus are realized, are delivered in a tone of voice between speaking and singing, and are accompanied with the constant motion of one hand, as if to measure the time and regulate the harmony; but they have an additional charm from the simplicity of the country dialect, which abounds with phrases highly natural and appropriate, though incompatible with the precision of a regular language, and forms what is called the *Lingua Contadinesca,* of which specimens may be found in the writings of Boccaccio. The idea of adapting this language to poetry first occurred to Lorenzo de' Medici, who, in his verses entitled "La Nencia da Barberino", has left a very pleasing specimen of it, full of lively imagery and rustic pleasantry. This piece no sooner appeared, than Luigi Pulci attempted to emulate it, in another poem, written in the same stanza, and called “La Beca da Dicomano”; but instead of the more chastised and delicate humour of Lorenzo, the poem of Pulci partakes of the character of his "Morgante", and wanders into the burlesque and extravagant. In the following century, Michelangelo Buonaroti, the nephew of the celebrated artist of the same name, employed this style with great success in his admirable rustic comedy, *La Tancia*: but perhaps the most beautiful instance that Italy has produced, is the work of Francesco Baldovini, who, towards the close of the seventeenth century, published his *Lamento di Cecco da Varlungo;* a piece of inimitable wit and simplicity, and which seems to have carried this species of poetry to its highest pitch of perfection.

If, during the darkness of the middle ages, the drama, that great school of human life and manners, as established among the ancients, was totally lost, it was not without a substitute in most of the nations of Europe, though of a very imperfect and degraded kind. To this factitious species of dramatic representation, which led the minds of the people from the imitation of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and closed their eyes to their excellences, we are probably to attribute the slow progress which, in the revival of letters, took place in this important department. Innumerable attempts have indeed been made to trace the origin of the modern drama, and the Italians, the Germans, the Spaniards, the French, and the English, have successively claimed priority of each other. But questions of this kind scarcely admit of decision. Imitation is natural to man in every state of society; and where shall we draw the line of distinction between the polished productions of Racine and the pantomimes of Bartholomew fair? This propensity to imitation, operating upon the religious or superstitious views of the clergy, produced at length that species of exhibition which was formerly known throughout Europe by the name of Mysteries; but it is probable, that for a long time they were merely calculated to strike the eyes of the spectators. In the city of Florence they were often prepared at the public expense, and at times by rich individuals, for the purpose of displaying their wealth, and conciliating the public favour. Four days in the year were solemnly celebrated by the four districts of the city, in honour of their patron saints; but the feast of St. John, the tutelary saint of Florence, was provided, not at the expense of the particular district which bore his name, but of the city at large. The fabrication of these spectacles employed the abilities of the best artists and engineers of the time.

It was not, however, till the age of Lorenzo de' Medici, that these ill-judged representations began to assume a more respectable form, and to be united with dialogue. One of the earliest examples of the sacred drama is the *Rappresentazione of S. Giovanni e S. Paolo*, by Lorenzo de' Medici. Cionacci conjectures that this piece was written at the time of the marriage of Maddelena, one of the daughters of Lorenzo, to Francesco Cibò, nephew of Innocent VIII, and that it was performed by his own children; there being many passages which seem to be intended as precepts for such as are entrusted with the direction of a state, and which particularly point out the line of conduct which he and his ancestors had pursued, in obtaining and preserving their influence in Europe. The coadjutors of Lorenzo, in this attempt to meliorate the imperfect state of the drama, were Feo Belcari, Bernardo Pulci and his wife Madonna Antonia de' Tanini. That Lorenzo had it in contemplation to employ dramatic composition in other subjects is also apparent. Among his poems published at the end of the present work will be found an attempt to substitute the deities of Greece and Rome, for the saints and martyrs of the Christian church; but the jealous temper of the national religion seems for a time to have restrained the progress which might otherwise have been expected in this important department of letters. Some years after the death of Lorenzo, a more decided effort was made by Bernardo Accolti, in his drama of *Virginia*, founded on one of the novels of Boccaccio; and this again was followed, at a short interval, by the *Sofonisba* of Trissino, and the *Rosmunda* of Giovanni Rucellai; two pieces which are justly considered as the first regular productions of the drama in modern times.

The origin of the musical drama, or Italian opera, is by general consent attributed to Politiano, who gave the first example of it in his *Orfeo*. The idea of this species of composition seems to have been first suggested by the Eclogues of the ancient Greek and Roman authors; nor does there appear to have been any extraordinary exertion of genius in adapting to music the sentiments and language of pastoral life; but it should be remembered, that the intrinsic merit of any discovery is to be judged of rather by the success with which it is attended, than by the difficulties that were to be surmounted. Of the plan and conduct of this dramatic attempt, a particular account has been given by a very judicious and amusing author. Little, however, is to be expected in point of arrangement, when we understand that it was the hasty production of two days, and was intended merely for the gratification of Gonzaga, cardinal of Mantua, before whom it was first represented. Accordingly, its principal merit consists in the simplicity and elegance of some of the Lyric pieces with which it is interspersed. From the early editions of this poem, it

appears that the character of Orpheus was first exhibited by the celebrated Improvvisatore Baccio Ugolini, whose personal obligations to the cardinal occasioned the introduction of the beautiful Latin ode, in which, by a singular exertion of the *quidlibet audendi*, the Theban bard is introduced singing the praises of the cardinal, but which was afterwards superseded by the verses in praise of Hercules, generally found in the subsequent editions.

In a dedicatory epistle prefixed to this piece, and addressed to Carlo Carnale, the author, whilst he professes himself willing to comply with the wishes of some of his friends by its publication, openly protests against the propriety of such a measure. A species of conduct which, in modern times, might perhaps savour of affectation; but of this we may safely acquit Politiano, who, in the midst of his learned labours, certainly regarded a slight composition in the vulgar tongue as much below his talents and his character.

During the time of carnival, it was customary to celebrate that festival at Florence with extraordinary magnificence. Among other amusements, it had long been usual to collect together, at great expense, large processions of people, sometimes representing the return of triumphant warriors with trophies, cars, and similar devices; and at other times some story of ancient chivalry. These exhibitions afforded ample scope for the inventive talents of the Florentine artists, who contended with each other in rendering them amusing, extravagant, or terrific. The pageantry was generally displayed by night, as being the season best calculated to conceal the defects of the performance, and to assist the fancy of the spectators. “It was certainly”, says Vasari, “an extraordinary sight, to observe twenty or thirty couple of horsemen, most richly dressed in appropriate characters, with six or eight attendants upon each, habited in an uniform manner, and carrying torches to the amount of several hundreds, after whom usually followed a triumphal car with the trophies and spoils of victory—of imaginary victories indeed, hut not on that account less calculated to display the ingenuity of the inventor, or less pleasing in the estimation of the philosopher. The promised gaiety of the evening was sometimes unexpectedly interrupted by a moral lesson, and the artist seized the opportunity of exciting those more serious emotions, which the astonished beholders had supposed it was his intention to dissipate. Thus Piero di Cosimo, a painter of Florence, appalled the inhabitants by a representation of the triumph of Death, in which nothing was omitted that might impress upon their minds the sense of their own mortality. Prior, however, to the time of Lorenzo de' Medici, these exhibitions were calculated merely to amuse the eye, or were at most accompanied by the insipid madrigals of the populace. It was he who first taught his countrymen to dignify them with sentiment, and add to their poignancy by the charms of poetry. It is true, the examples which he has himself given of these compositions, in the *Canti Carnascialeschi*, or carnival songs, being calculated for the gratification of the multitude, and devoted only to the amusement of an evening, exhibit not any great energy of thought, nor are they distinguished by an equal degree of poetical ornament with his other works. Their merits are therefore principally to be estimated by the purity of the Florentine diction, which is allowed to be there preserved in its most unadulterated state. The intervention and patronage of Lorenzo gave new spirit to these amusements. Induced by his example, many of his contemporaries employed their talents in these popular compositions, which were continued by a numerous succession of writers, till the middle of the ensuing century, when they were diligently collected by Anton Francesco Grazzini, commonly called Il Lasca, and published at Florence in the year 1559.

The *Canzoni a Ballo* are compositions of a much more singular and inexplicable kind. From their denomination it is probable, that they were sung by companies of young people, in concert with the music to which they danced; and the measure of the verse appears to be so constructed as to fall in with the different movements and pauses. It may perhaps be thought that the extreme licentiousness of some of these pieces militates against such an idea, but in the state of manners in Italy at that period, this objection can have but little weight. Indeed, if we trace to its source this favourite amusement, we shall probably discover, that a dance is in fact only a figurative

representation of the passion of love, exhibited with more or less delicacy according to the character and state of civilization of those who practise it. To improve its relish, and heighten its enjoyment, seems to have been the intention of the *Canzoni a Ballo*. From the known affability of Lorenzo de' Medici, and the festivity of his disposition, as well as from other circumstances, there is reason to conclude, that he was accustomed to mingle with the populace on these mirthful occasions, and to promote and direct their amusements. Nor are we to wonder that the arbiter of the politics of Italy should be employed in the streets of Florence, participating in the mirth, and directing the evolutions, of a troop of dancing girls. On the contrary, this versatility of talent and of disposition may be considered as the most distinguishing feature of this extraordinary man; who, from the most important concerns of state, and the highest speculations of philosophy, could stoop to partake of the humblest diversions of the populace, and who in every department obtained, by general consent, the supreme direction and control.

Thus far we have taken a review of the chief part of the poems which yet remain of Lorenzo de' Medici, and have seen him, by his own example, stimulating his countrymen to the pursuit of literature. The restorer of the lyric poetry of Italy, the promoter of the dramatic, the founder of the satiric, rustic, and other modes of composition, he is not merely entitled to the rank of a poet, but may justly be placed among the distinguished few, who, by native strength, have made their way through paths before untrodden. Talent may follow and improve; emulation and industry may polish and refine; but genius alone can break those barriers that restrain the throng of mankind in the common track of life.

The poetical merits of Lorenzo de' Medici were perceived and acknowledged by his contemporaries. Were we to collect the various testimonies of respect and admiration that were produced in honour of him in different parts of Italy, they would form a very unreasonable addition to the present volume. We must not, however, omit to notice the opinion of Pico of Mirandola, who, in a letter addressed to Lorenzo, has entered into a full discussion of the character of his writings, comparing them with those of his predecessors Dante and Petrarca, and contending that they unite the vigour of thought apparent in the former, with the harmony and polish of the latter. Succeeding critics have, however, appealed against a decision, which seems to attribute to Lorenzo de' Medici a superiority over the great masters of the Tuscan poetry; and have considered the opinion of Pico either as an instance of courtly adulation, or as a proof of the yet imperfect taste of the age. Without contending for the opinion of Pico in its full extent, we may be allowed to remark, that the temper and character both of him and of Lorenzo are equally adverse to the idea, that the one could offer, or the other be gratified with unmerited approbation and spurious praise; and that Pico was not deficient in the qualifications of a critic may appear even from the very letter which has been cited as an impeachment of his taste. For although he there treats the writings of Dante and Petrarca with great severity, and asserts not only the equality, but, in a certain point of view, the superiority of those of Lorenzo, yet he clearly proves that he had attentively studied these productions, and by many acute and just observations demonstrates, that he was well qualified to appreciate their various merits and defects. Nor does Pico, in avowing this opinion, stand alone amongst his countrymen. Even in the most enlightened period of the ensuing century, the pretensions of Lorenzo de' Medici to rank with the great fathers of the Italian tongue, are supported by an author whose testimony cannot be suspected of partiality, and whose authority will be acknowledged as generally as his writings are known. The most celebrated literary historians of Italy, in adverting to the age of Lorenzo, have acknowledged the vigour of his genius, and the success of his labours; Crescimbeni, in tracing the vicissitudes of the Tuscan poetry, informs us, that it had risen to such perfection under the talents of Petrarca, that not being susceptible of farther improvement, it began, in the common course of earthly things, to decline; and in a short time was so debased and adulterated, as nearly to revert to its pristine barbarity. “But at this critical juncture”, says the same well-informed author, “a person arose who preserved it from ruin, and who snatched it from the dangerous precipice that seemed to await it. This was Lorenzo de' Medici, from whose abilities it received that support of which it then stood so greatly in need; who, amidst the thickest gloom of that barbarism which had spread itself throughout

Italy, exhibited, whilst yet a youth, a simplicity of style, a purity of language, a happiness of versification, a propriety of poetical ornament, and a fulness of sentiment that recalled once more the graces and the sweetness of Petrarca". If, after paying due attention to these authorities, we consider, that the two great authors with whose excellences Lorenzo is supposed to contend, employed their talents chiefly in one species of composition, whilst his were exercised in various departments; that during a long life, devoted to letters, they had leisure to correct, to polish, and to improve their works, so as to bear the inspection of critical minuteness, whilst those of Lorenzo must in general have been written with almost extemporaneous haste, and in some instances, scarcely perhaps obtained the advantages of a second revival; we must be compelled to acknowledge, that the inferiority of his reputation as a poet has not arisen from a deficiency of genius, but must be attributed to the avocations of his public life, the multiplicity of his domestic concerns, the interference of other studies and amusements, and his untimely death. When therefore we estimate the number, the variety, and the excellence of his poetical works, it must be admitted, that if those talents, which, under so many obstacles and disadvantages, are still so conspicuous, had been directed to one object, and allowed to exert themselves to their full extent, it is in the highest degree probable, that, in point of poetic excellence, Italy had not boasted a more illustrious name than that of Lorenzo de' Medici.

In dismissing this subject, it may yet be allowed to point out one tribute of respect to the poetical character of Lorenzo, which may serve at the same time to illustrate a passage in an author, who, though a modern, deserves the appellation of classical. This will be found at the close of the *Sylva* of Politiano, entitled *Nutricia*, which will scarcely be intelligible to the reader, without some previous acquaintance with the writings of Lorenzo, as the author has there, in a small compass, particularly celebrated most of the productions of his patron's pen.

Nor Alighieri, shall thy praise be lost,

Who from the confines of the Stygian coast,

As Beatrice led thy willing steps along.

To realms of light, and starry mansions sprung;

Nor Petrarch thou, whose soul dissolving strains,

Rehearse, love! thy triumphs and thy pains;

Nor he, whose hundred tales the means impart.

To wind the secret snare around the heart.

Be these thy boast, Florence! these thy pride.

Thy sons! whose genius spreads thy glory wide.

And thou, Lorenzo, rushing forth to fame.

Support of Cosimo's and of Piero's name!

Safe in whose shadow Arno hears from far,

And smiles to hear the thunder of the war;

Endow'd with arts the listening throng to move.

The senate's wonder, and the people's love.

Chief of the tuneful train! thy praises hear,

— If praise of mine can charm thy cultured ear:

For once, the lonely woods and vales among,

A mountain goddess caught thy soothing song.

As swelled the notes, she pierced the winding dell.

And sat beside thee in thy secret cell;

I saw her hands the laurel chaplet twine.

Whilst with attentive ear she drank the sounds divine.

Whether the nymph to Dian's train allied,

— But sure no quiver rattled at her side;

Or from th' Aonian mount, a stranger guest.

She chose awhile in these green woods to rest.

Through all thy frame while softer passions breathe.

Around thy brows she bound the laureat wreathe;

— And still — as other themes engaged thy song.

She with unrivall'd sweetness touch'd thy tongue;

To tell the contest on Thessalia's plains,

When Pan with Phoebus tried alternate strains,

Or Galatea, who no more shall slight

Corynthus' song, that soothes the ear of night.

— But who shall all thy varying strains disclose.

As sportive fancy prompts, or passion glows?

When to thine aid thou call'st the solar beams.

And all their dazzling lustre round thee flames,

Or sing'st of Clytie, sunward still inclined;

Or the dear nymph whose image fills thy mind;

Of dreams of love, and love's extremest joy;

Of vows of truth and endless constancy;

Or of those eyes a thousand flames that dart;

That hand that binds in willing chains thy heart;

The tresses o'er those ivory shoulders thrown;

The secret promise made to thee alone.

The stream's soft murmur, and the violet's glow,

And love's embitter'd joys and rapturous woe:

How pity adds to beauty's brightest charms;

And how thy bosom beats with soft alarms;

Nor wants there sprightly satire's vivid beam.

Whose lustre lights th' inebriate fools to fame;

Nor coral songs, whose animating sound

Provokes the smile, and bids the dance go round, —

Then free from babbling crowds, and city noise.

Thou sing'st the pleasures rural life enjoys;

Or with no faltering step, pursuest thy way.

To touch the confines of celestial day.

— These the delights thy happiest moments share,

Thy dearest lenitives of public care:

Blest in thy genius; thy capacious mind

Nor to one science, nor one theme confined.

By grateful interchange fatigue beguiles.

In private studies and in public toils.

## CHAPTER VI.

### 1481—1488.

Soon after the termination of hostilities between Sixtus I and the republic of Florence, Lorenzo began to unfold those comprehensive plans for securing the peace of Italy on a permanent foundation which confer the highest honour on his political life. Of the extensive authority which he had obtained by his late conduct, every day afforded additional proof; and it appears to have been his intention to employ it for the wisest and most salutary purposes. By whatever motives he was led to this great attempt, he pursued it with deep policy and unceasing assiduity, and finally experienced a degree of success equal to his warmest expectations.

The situation of Italy at this period afforded an ample field for the exercise of political talents. The number of independent states of which it was composed, the inequality of their strength, the ambitious views of some, and the ever active fears of others, kept the whole country in continual in agitation and alarm. The vicinity of these states to each other, and the narrow bounds of their respective dominions, required a promptitude of decision in cases of disagreement unexampled in any subsequent period of modern history.

Where the event of open war seemed doubtful, private treachery was without scruple resorted to; and where that failed of success, an appeal was again made to arms. The pontifical see had itself set the example of a code of conduct that burst asunder all the bonds of society, and served as a convincing proof that nothing was thought unlawful which appeared to be expedient. To counterpoise all the jarring interests of these different governments, to restrain the powerful, to succour the weak, and to unite the whole in one firm body, so as to enable them, on the one hand, successfully to oppose the formidable power of the Turks, and, on the other, to repel the incursions of the French and the Germans, both of whom were objects of terror to the less warlike inhabitants of Italy, were the important ends which Lorenzo proposed to accomplish. The effectual defence of the Florentine dominions against the encroachments of their more powerful neighbours, though perhaps his chief inducement for engaging in so extensive a project, appeared in the execution of it rather as a necessary part of his system, than as the principal object which he had in view. In these transactions we may trace the first decisive instance of that political arrange-ment which was more fully developed and more widely ex-tended in the succeeding century, and which has since been denominated the balance of power: Casual alliances, arising from consanguinity, from personal attachment, from vicinity, or from interest, had indeed frequently subsisted among the Italian states; but these were only partial and temporary engagements, and rather tended to divide the country into two or more powerful parties, than to counterpoise the interests of individual governments, so as to produce in the result the general tranquillity.

But before Lorenzo engaged in these momentous undertakings, he had further personal dangers to encounter. The moderation of his conduct could neither extinguish nor allay the insatiable spirit of revenge that burnt in the breast of Girolamo Riario. Defeated in his ambitious projects by the superior talents of Lorenzo, he once more had recourse to his treacherous practices; and, by an intercourse with some the Florentine exiles, again found, even in Florence, the instruments of his purpose. By their investigation Battista Frescobaldi, with only two assistants, undertook to assassinate Lorenzo in the church of the Carmeli, on the day of Ascension,

being the last day of May, 1481. This attempt was not conducted with the same secrecy as that which we have before related. The friends of Lorenzo were watchful for his safety. Frescobaldi was seized; and having upon his examination disclosed his accomplices, was executed with them on the 6th day of the following month. The treachery of Frescobaldi occasioned at Florence general surprise, and was almost regarded as an instance of insanity. He had been the consul of the Florentine republic at Pera, and it was at his instance that Bandini, the murderer of Giuliano, had been delivered up by Mahomet II. Yet neither the atrociousness of the crime nor the dread of the example, deterred him from a similar enterprise. From this circumstance Lorenzo perceived the necessity of being more diligently on his guard against the attempts of his profligate antagonists; and whilst he lamented the depravity of the times, that rendered such a precaution necessary, he was generally surrounded, when he appeared in public, by a number of tried friends and adherents. In this respect he has not, however, escaped censure, although from a quarter where it should have been silenced by the sense of decency if not by the feelings of gratitude. The kindness shown by him to Raffaello Maffei, the brother of Antonio, who in the conspiracy of the Pazzi had undertaken to be the immediate instrument of his destruction, has before been noticed. In return for such unmerited attention, this historian has availed himself of a measure which was rendered necessary by repeated instances of treachery, to represent Lorenzo as a gloomy tyrant, who supported his authority, and secured his safety in Florence, by the aid of a band of ruffians, and who found in music alone a solace from his anxiety. The reputation of Lorenzo is not, however, likely to suffer more from the pen of one brother, than his person did from the dagger of the other.

On the conclusion of the contest with the papal see, the first object, not only of Lorenzo, but of all the Italian potentates, was the expulsion of the Turks from Otranto. For this purpose a league was concluded, to which the Venetians only refused to accede. Suspicions had already been entertained that Mahomet II had been incited to his enterprise by the representations of that state; and these suspicions were strengthened by the indifference which the Venetians manifested on so alarming an occasion. It is, however, probable, that they kept aloof from the contest, merely for the purpose of availing themselves of any opportunity of aggrandizement which the exhausted situation of the neighbouring states might afford. With the powers of Italy, the kings of Arragon, of Portugal, and of Hungary, united their arms. The city of Otranto was attacked by a formidable army under the command of the duke of Calabria; whilst the united fleets of the king of Naples, the pope, and the Genoese, were stationed to prevent the arrival of further aid to the besieged. The place was, however, defended with great courage, and the event yet remained doubtful, when intelligence was received of the death of the emperor Mahomet II, who had established the seat of the Turkish empire at Constantinople, and been the scourge of Christendom for nearly half a century. Upon his death a disagreement arose between his two sons, Bajazet and Zizim; in consequence of which the Turkish troops destined to the relief of Otranto were recalled, and the place was left to its fate. A capitulation was concluded on the tenth day of September, 1481, by which the Turks stipulated for a free return to their native country; but the duke of Calabria, on the surrender of the city, found a pretext for eluding the treaty, and retained as prisoners about fifteen hundred Turks, whom he afterwards employed in the different wars in which he was engaged.

Whilst the other states of Italy were thus engaged in the common cause, the Venetians had been devising means for possessing themselves of the dominions of Ercole d'Este, duke of Ferrara, and, by the assistance of Girolamo Riario, had prevailed upon the pope to countenance their pretensions. The duke had married the daughter of Ferdinand, king of Naples; an alliance which, as it contributed to his credit and independence, had given great dissatisfaction to the Venetians. The first aggression was the erection of a fortress by those haughty republicans, on a part of the

territory of Ferrara, which they pretended was within the limits of their own dominions. An embassy was immediately despatched by the duke to Venice, to avert, if possible, the hostile intentions of the senate, and to conciliate their good-will by the fairest representations, and the fullest professions of amity. Finding his efforts ineffectual, he resorted for succour to the pope; but Sixtus was already apprised of the part he had to act, and whilst he beard his solicitations with apparent indifference, was secretly preparing to join in his ruin. The motives by which Sixtus was actuated are not difficult to be discovered. If the family of Este could be deprived of their dominions, many circumstances concurred to justify the pretensions of the papal see to the sovereignty of Ferrara. That city was itself ranked among those over which the pontiffs asserted a signorial claim, which lay dormant, or was revived, as circumstances required; and although Sixtus could not singly contend with the Venetians in the division of the spoil, yet he well knew that the rest of Italy would interpose, to prevent their possessing themselves of a territory which would add so considerably to their power. In the contest, therefore, which he supposed must necessarily, take place, Sixtus was not without hopes of vesting the government of Ferrara in his own family, in the person of Girolamo Riario, who was indefatigable in preparing for the approaching war.

In this exigency, the duke of Ferrara had two powerful resources. One of these was in the support which he derived from his father-in-law, the king of Naples; and the other in the claims which he had upon the known, justice of Lorenzo de' Medici. Neither of these disappointed his hopes. By the interference of Lorenzo, the duke of Milan joined in the league; and the marquis of Mantua, and Giovanni Bentivoglio, also became auxiliaries in the cause. The command of the allied army was entrusted to Federigo, duke of Urbino; but the preparation and direction of the war chiefly rested on Lorenzo de' Medici, on whose activity and prudence the allied powers had the most perfect reliance.

The first object of the allies was to discover the intentions of the pope. No sooner had the Venetians commenced their attack on the territory of Ferrara, than a formal request was. made to Sixtus, to permit the duke of Calabria, with a body of Neapolitan troops, to pass through his dominions. His refusal sufficiently discovered the motives by winch he was actuated. The duke immediately entered in a hostile manner the territories of the church, and having possessed himself of Terracina, Trevi, and other places, proceeded without interruption till he arrived within forty miles of Rome. At the same time the Florentine troops attacked and captured Castello, which was restored to Nicolo Vitelli, its former lord. By these unexpected and vigorous measures, Sixtus, instead of joining the Venetians, was compelled to solicit their assistance for his own protection. The duke had approached so near to Rome, that his advanced parties daily committed hostilities at the very gates of the city. In this emergency, the pope bad the good fortune to prevail upon Roberto Malatesta, lord of Rimini, to take upon him the command of his army. This celebrated leader, who was then in the pay of the Venetians, on obtaining their permission. to assist their ally, proceeded to Rome. Having there made the necessary arrangements, Roberto led out the papal troops, which were sufficiently numerous, and were only in need of an able general effectually to oppose their enemies. The duke of Calabria, being in daily expectation of a reinforcement under the command of his brother Federigo, would gladly have avoided an engagement, but his adversary pressed him so vigorously, that he was compelled either to risk the event of a battle, or to incur the still greater danger of a disorderly retreat. This engagement, we are assured by Machiavelli, was the most obstinate and bloody that had occurred in Italy during the space of fifty years. After a struggle of six hours, the contest terminated in the total defeat of the duke, who owed his liberty, or his life, to the fidelity and courage of his Turkish followers. Having thus delivered the pope from the imminent danger that threatened him, Roberto returned to Rome to enjoy the honours of his victory; but his triumph was of short duration, for a few days

after his arrival he suddenly died, not without giving rise to a suspicion that poison had been administered to him by the intervention of Girolamo Riario. This suspicion received confirmation in the public opinion, by the subsequent conduct of Sixtus and his kinsman. No sooner was Roberto dead, than the pope erected an equestrian statue to his memory; and Riario proceeded with the army which Roberto had lately led to victory, to dispossess his illegitimate son Pandolfo, to whom he had bequeathed his possessions, of the city of Rimini. In this attempt the ecclesiastical plunderers would probably have been successful, had not the vigorous interference of Lorenzo de' Medici, to whom Pandolfo resorted for succour, and who sent a body of Florentine troops to his speedy relief, frustrated their profligate purpose. Riario then turned his arms towards Castello, which was courageously defended by Vitelli, till the Florentines once more gave him effectual aid. A similar attack, and with similar success, was about the same time made by Sixtus on the city of Pesaro, the dominion of Constantino Sforza; who, having first engaged in the league against the Venetians, afterwards deserted his allies, and entered into their service, and was supposed to have died of grief because they had defrauded him of his stipulated pay.

Whilst Sixtus was thus employed in defending his own dominions, or in attempting to seize upon those of his neighbours, the duke of Urbino had opposed himself to the Venetian army, but not with sufficient effect to prevent its making an alarming progress, and capturing several towns in the territory of Ferrara. The death of that general, and the sickness of the duke of Ferrara, which rendered him incapable of attending with vigour to the defence of his dominions, opened to the Venetians the fullest prospect of success. This sudden progress of the republican arms was not, however, agreeable to the pope; who, having given no aid in the contest, began to be apprehensive that he could claim no share in the spoil, whilst so considerable an accession of power to the Venetians might scarcely be consistent with his own safety. At the same time he perceived a storm gathering against him from another quarter. The emperor had threatened to call together a general council of the church; a measure either originating with, or promoted by Lorenzo de' Medici; and for the effecting of which he had despatched Baccio Ugolino to Basil. Induced by these various considerations, Sixtus was at length prevailed upon to detach himself from the Venetians, and to listen to propositions for a separate peace. Under the sanction of the imperial ambassador, a league was concluded at Rome for five years, between the pope, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and the Florentines, for the defence of the duke of Ferrara. Sixtus, having engaged in the common cause, was not inactive. Having first warned the Venetians to desist from the further progress of the war, and finding his remonstrances disregarded, he solemnly excommunicated his late allies. The Venetians, however, persisted in their purpose, regardless of his denunciations, and having captured the town of Ficarola, laid siege to the city of Ferrara itself.

At this important juncture a congress was held at Cremona, for the purpose of considering on the most effectual means of repressing the growing power of the Venetians, and. of securing the rest of Italy from the effects of their ambition. The persons who assembled on this occasion were Alfonso duke of Calabria. Lodovico Sforza, Lorenzo de' Medici, Lodovico Gonzaga marquis of Mantua, the duke of Ferrara; and on the part of the pope, Girolamo Riario, and the cardinal of Mantua, with others of inferior note. The king of France, aware of the character of Riario, advised Lorenzo by letter not to trust himself to this interview; but the important consequences expected from it induced him to disregard the precaution. Among other arrangements it was determined that the Milanese should endeavour to form a diversion by an attack on the Venetian territory, and that the duke of Calabria should repair with a powerful body of troops to the relief of the duke of Ferrara. By these decisive measures, a speedy and effectual stop was put to the further progress of the Venetian arms, whilst the allied troops overran the territories of Bergamo, of Brescia, and Verona. Finding their attempt to subjugate the city of Ferrara frustrated, and solicitous for the safety of their own dominions, the Venetians had recourse to negotiation, and had sufficient

influence with Lodovico Sforza to prevail upon him to desert the common cause. His dereliction induced the allies to accede to propositions for peace, which, though sufficiently favourable to the Venetians, secured the duke of Ferrara from the ambition of his powerful neighbours, and repressed that spirit of encroachment which the Venetians had manifested, as well on this as on former occasions.

As soon as the affairs of Italy were so adjusted as to give the first indications of permanent tranquillity, Sixtus died. The coincidence of these events gave rise to an opinion, which was rendered in some degree credible by the knowledge of his restless disposition, that his death was occasioned by vexation at the prospect of a general peace. Of the character of this successor of St. Peter, we have already had sufficient proof. It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that no age has exhibited such flagrant instances of the depravity of the Roman see, as the close of the fifteenth century, when the profligacy of Sixtus IV led the way, at a short interval, to the still more outrageous and unnatural crimes of Alexander VI. The avarice of Sixtus was equal to his ambition. He was the first Roman pontiff who openly exposed to sale the principal offices of the church; but not satisfied with the disposal of such as became vacant, he instituted new ones, for the avowed purpose of selling them, and thereby contrived to obtain a certain emolument from the uncertain tenure by which he held his see. To Sixtus IV posterity are also indebted for the institution of inquisitors of the press, without whose licence no work was suffered to be printed. In this, indeed, he gave an instance of his prudence; it being extremely consistent, that those who are conscious of their own misconduct, should endeavour to stifle the voice that publishes and perpetuates it. Even the orthodox Muratori acknowledges, that this pontiff had a heavy account to make up at the tribunal of God.

The death of Sixtus IV who for the space of thirteen years had embroiled the states of Italy in constant dissensions, was a favourable omen of the continuance of tranquillity; and the choice made by the conclave of his successor seemed still further to secure so desirable an object. Giambattista Cibò, who obtained on this occasion the suffrages of the sacred college, was a Genoese by birth, though of Greek extraction. The urbanity and mildness of his manners formed a striking contrast to the inflexible character of his predecessor. From his envoys at Rome, Lorenzo became early, acquainted with the disposition of the new pope, who assumed the name of Innocent VIII. At the time of his elevation to the supremacy, he was about fifty-five years of age, and had several natural children. Vespucci, the correspondent of Lorenzo, represents him as a weak but well-disposed man, rather formed to be directed himself than capable of directing others.

Lorenzo had perceived the disadvantages under which he laboured in his political transactions, on account of his dissensions with the papal see; and he, therefore, learnt with great satisfaction, that the pope, soon after his elevation, had expressed a very favourable opinion of him, and had even avowed an intention of consulting him on all important occurrences. The power of the other Italian potentates was bounded by the limits of their respective dominions; but Lorenzo was well aware that the Roman pontiff superadded to his temporal possessions an influence that extended throughout all Christendom, and which might be found of the utmost importance to the promotion of his views. He, therefore, sedulously improved the occasion which the favourable opinion of Innocent afforded him; and in a short time obtained his confidence to such a degree, as to be entrusted with his most secret transactions and most important concerns. This fortunate event also first opened to the Medici the dignities and emoluments of the church, and thereby led the way to that eminent degree of splendour and prosperity which the family afterwards experienced.

To the carrying into effect the pacific intentions of Lorenzo, several obstacles yet remained. During the commotions in Italy, consequent on the conspiracy of the Pazzi, the town of Sarzana, situated near the boundaries of the Genoese and Florentine dominions, and which the Florentines had purchased from Lodovico Fregoso, had been forcibly wrested from them by Agostino, one of his sons. The important contests in which the Florentines were engaged had for some time prevented them from attempting the recovery of a place, to which, according to the established custom of the times, they had undoubted pretensions; but no sooner were they relieved from the anxiety and expense of external war, than they bent their whole attention to this object. In order to secure himself against the expected attack, Agostino had made a formal surrender of the town to the republic of Genoa, under which he professed to exercise the government. Lorenzo therefore entertained hopes, that, by the mediation of the new pope, his countrymen the Genoese might be induced to resign their pretensions; but his interference having proved ineffectual, the Florentines prepared to establish their right, by arms. The approach to Sarzana necessarily lay by the town of Pietra-Santa, the inhabitants of which were expected to remain neuter during the contest; but a detachment of Florentine troops, escorting a quantity of provisions and ammunition, passing near that place, were attacked and plundered by the garrison. So unequivocal a demonstration of hostility rendered it necessary for the Florentines, before they proceeded to the attack of Sarzana, to possess themselves of Pietra-Santa. It was accordingly invested, and such artillery as was then in use was employed to reduce the inhabitants to submission. The Genoese, however, found means to reinforce the garrison, whilst the sickness of some of the Florentine leaders, and the inactivity of others, contributed to protract the siege. Dispirited by resistance, the count of Pitigliano, one of the Florentine generals, ventured even to recommend to the magistrates of Florence the relinquishment of the enterprise as impracticable, at least for that season. These representations, instead of altering the purpose of Lorenzo, only excited him to more vigorous exertion; by his recommendation, the command of the Florentine troops was given to Bernardo del Nero, and soon afterwards Lorenzo joined the army in person. His presence and exhortations had the most powerful effect on his countrymen. Within the space of a few days after his arrival, the besiegers reduced the place to such extremity, that proposals were made for a capitulation, which were acceded to by Lorenzo; and the town was received into the protection of the Florentine republic, without further molestation to the inhabitants.

From Pietra-Santa, it was the intention of Lorenzo, notwithstanding the advanced season of the year, to have proceeded immediately to the attack of Sarzana; but the long and unhealthy service in which the army had been engaged, rendered a temporary cessation of hostilities indispensable. Several of the principal commanders, together with Antonio Pucci, one of the Florentine commissioners to the army, had fallen victims to the fatigues of the war; and Lorenzo, who laboured under a chronic, and perhaps an hereditary complaint, was soon afterwards obliged to resort to the baths of S. Filippo for relief. Before he recovered his health, his attention was called towards a different quarter, in which all his exertions became necessary to preserve his pacific system from total destruction.

This commotion originated in the turbulent designs of Sixtus IV who had sown the seeds of it in his lifetime, although they did not spring up till after his death. The Neapolitan nobility, exasperated with the princes of the house of Arragon, who had endeavoured to abridge their power and independence, were prepared, whenever occasion offered, to attempt the recovery of their rights. In restraining the exorbitant power of the nobles, which was equally formidable to the king and oppressive to the people, Ferdinand might have been justified by the expediency of the measure, and protected by the affections of his subjects; but, in relieving them from the exactions of others, he began to oppress them himself, and thus incautiously incurred that odium which had before been exclusively bestowed upon his nobility. The spirit of disaffection that soon

became apparent was not unobserved by Sixtus, who, in addition to the ambitious motives by which he was generally actuated, felt no small degree of resentment against Ferdinand, for having, without his concurrence, concluded a peace with the Florentines. A secret intercourse was carried on between the pope and the Neapolitan barons, whose resentment was ready to burst out in an open flame when Sixtus died. This event retarded but did not defeat the execution of their purpose. No sooner was Innocent seated in the chair than they began to renew with him the intercourse which they had carried on with his predecessor. They reminded him that the kingdom of Naples was itself a fief of the Roman see; they represented the exhausted state of the king's finances, and the aversion which he had incurred from his subjects, as well by his own severity, as by the cruelties exercised in his name by the duke of Calabria; and exhorted him to engage in an attempt, the success of which was evident, and would crown his pontificate with glory. The pacific temper of Innocent was dazzled with the splendour of such an acquisition. He encouraged the nobility to proceed in their designs; he raised a considerable army, the command of which he gave to Roberto Sanseverino; several of the principal cities of Naples openly revolted, and the standard of the pope was erected at Salerno. On the first indication of hostilities, the king had sent his son John, who had obtained the dignity of a cardinal, to Rome, for the purpose of inducing the pope to relinquish his attempt; but the death of the cardinal blasted the hopes, and added to the distresses of his father. Attacked at the same time by foreign and domestic enemies, Ferdinand saw no shelter from the storm, but in the authority and assistance of Lorenzo. The attachment that subsisted between him and the pope was indeed known to Ferdinand; but he had himself some claims upon his kindness, and had reason to believe that he could not regard with indifference an attempt which, if successful, would effect a total change in the political state of Italy. Lorenzo did not hesitate on the part it became him to act. No sooner was he apprised of the dangerous situation of Ferdinand, than he left the baths of S. Filippo, and hastened to Florence, where, on his first interview with the envoy of the king, he gave him the most unequivocal assurances of active interference and support. Lorenzo, however, saw the necessity of applying an effectual remedy to the increasing evil, and with a degree of freedom which the urgency of the occasion required, entreated the king to relax in his severity towards his subjects. "It grieves me to the soul," thus he writes to Albino, the Neapolitan envoy, "that the duke of Calabria should have, acquired, even undeservedly, the imputation of cruelty. At all events, he ought to endeavour to remove every pretext for the accusation, by the most cautious regard to his conduct. If the people be displeased with the late impositions, it would be advisable to abolish them, and to require only the usual payments; for one *carlino* obtained with good will and affection, is better than ten accompanied with dissatisfaction and resentment." He afterwards remonstrates with the king, through the same channel, on his harsh and imprudent conduct to some merchants, who it appears bad been dismissed from Naples, for having demanded from him the monies which they had advanced for his use. "If the king satisfy them not," says he, "by paying their demands, he ought at least to appease them by good words; to the end that he may not afford them an opportunity of treating his name with disrespect, and of gaining credit at the same time to what is, and to what is not true." The reply of Ferdinand to Albino is sufficiently expressive of the respect which he paid to these admonitions; but unfortunately, the precepts which he approved in theory, he forgot to adopt in practice; and to the neglect of these counsels, rather than to the courage or the conduct of Charles VIII the subsequent expulsion of his family from the kingdom of Naples is unquestionably to be referred.

The authority of Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence was not the authority of despotism, but that of reason; and it therefore became necessary, that the measures which he might adopt should meet with the approbation of the citizens at large. He accordingly, without delay, called together the principal inhabitants, but had the mortification to find, that the proposition which he laid before them, to afford assistance to the king, was received by his hearers with general

disapprobation; some exclaiming against him, as being too precipitate in involving the republic in dangerous and expensive wars; whilst others condemned the freedom with which be opposed the Roman pontiff and subjected himself and his fellow-citizens to those ecclesiastical censures, the ill effects of which they had so recently experienced. On this occasion, Lorenzo was reminded, that the Venetians would probably unite with the pope in subjugating the kingdom of Naples; in which case, the intervention of the Florentines would only involve them in the same ruin that threatened the Neapolitan state. The solicitations and remonstrances of his fellow-citizens shook not the purpose of Lorenzo. Through the thick mist of popular fears and prejudices, he distinctly saw the beacon of the public welfare; and the arguments of his adversaries had already been anticipated and refuted in his own mind. That eloquence which he possessed in so eminent a degree was never more successfully exerted; and the reasons that had determined his own judgment were laid before his audience in a manner so impressive, as to over-power all opposition, and induce them unanimously to concur in his opinion. “This oration”, says Valori, “as committed to writing by some of his hearers, I have myself perused; and it is not possible to conceive any composition more copious, more elegant, or more convincing.”

The situation of Ferdinand became every day more critical. A general defection of his nobility took place. The two brothers of the family of the Coppula, one of whom was his prime counsellor, and the other the treasurer of the kingdom, held a treacherous correspondence with his enemies; and the duke of Calabria, who had advanced towards Rome, to prevent a junction of the pontifical troops with those of the insurgents, was totally defeated by Sanseverino, and obliged to fly for protection into the territories of Florence. It was matter of gratification to some, and of surprise to all, that the very man who, by his sanguinary and tyrannical disposition, had a short time before spread terror through the whole extent of Tuscany, should now appear as a fugitive at Montepulciano, imploring the assistance of the Florentines, and waiting the arrival of Lorenzo de’ Medici; who, being prevented by sickness from complying with his expectations, despatched two of the principal citizens to assure the duke of the attachment of the Florentines to the house of Arragon, and of their determination to exert themselves to the utmost in its defence.

The military force of the republic, which seldom exceeded five thousand men, would have rendered small service in the contest, and it therefore became necessary to resort to other expedients. By the pecuniary assistance of the Florentines, the duke of Calabria was again enabled to take the field, and at their instance several eminent leaders of Italy engaged in the service of the king. The influence that Lorenzo possessed with Lodovico Sforza was successfully exerted to engage the states of Milan in the same cause. The powerful Roman family of the Orsini was induced not only to discountenance the enterprise of the pope, but to appear openly in arms against him; and Innocent began to dread that the conflagration which he had excited, or encouraged, in the kingdom of Naples, might extend to his own dominions. At the same time Lorenzo de’ Medici, having still maintained an uninterrupted intercourse with the pope, assailed him with those arguments which he knew were best calculated to produce their effect. He represented the evils and disgrace that must arise to all Christendom from the frequent example set by the head of the church, of appealing on all occasions to the sword. He pointed out the improbability that the northern powers of Italy would permit the Roman see to annex to its dominions, either directly or indirectly, so extensive a territory as the kingdom of Naples; and earnestly exhorted the pope not to waste his resources, disturb his tranquillity, and endanger his safety, in a conflict which, at best, could only terminate in substituting to the house of Arragon some of those fortunate adventurers who had led the armies employed in its expulsion. Whether the appearances of hostility operated on the fears, or the reasoning of Lorenzo on the judgment of the pope, may remain in doubt; but the ardour with which he engaged in the conflict gradually abated, and Sanseverino was left to avail himself of his own courage, and that of the troops under

his command, without receiving either orders to retire, or supplies to enable him to proceed. The languor that became apparent between the contending sovereigns seemed to have communicated itself to their armies; which having met on the 8th day of May, 1486, an encounter took place, in which Ammirato not only acknowledges that not a soldier was slain, but that he had found no memorial that even one of the combatants was wounded, though the contest continued for many hours, and only terminated with the day. In this harmless trial of muscular strength, Sanseverino and his followers were, however, forced off the field, and the consequences were as decisive as if the contest had been of the most sanguinary kind; for the king, availing himself of this circumstance, and apprised by Lorenzo of the favourable alteration in the temper of the pope, lost no time in laying before him such propositions for the accommodation of their dispute, as afforded him an opportunity of declining it with credit to himself, and apparent safety to his Neapolitan confederates. By the conditions of this treaty, the king acknowledged the jurisdiction of the apostolic see, and agreed to pay to the pope a stipulated subsidy. Besides which, he engaged to pardon, freely and unconditionally, the nobles who had revolted against him.

The oppressive conduct of the Italian sovereigns, or the restless disposition of their subjects, seldom admitted of a long continuance of tranquillity; and as Lorenzo had acquired a reputation for impartiality and moderation, the dissensions that occasionally arose were generally submitted to his decision. The political contentions in which the pope was engaged, displayed indeed an ample field for the exercise of his talents. Important as the favour of the Roman see might be to the success of his labours, it was not preserved without an unremitting attention to its interests. In the year 1486, Boccolino Guzzoni, a citizen of Osimo, a part of the papal territories, incited the inhabitants to revolt. The cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Julius II, was despatched by the pope to reduce the place to obedience; but threats and entreaties were alike ineffectual, and the inhabitants avowed their resolution to surrender their city to the Turks, rather than again submit to the authority of the pope. From the success of the insurgents, the example began to spread through the adjoining districts; when Lorenzo despatched Gentile, bishop of Arezzo, with instructions to treat with Boccolino for a reconciliation. What the obstinacy of Boccolino had refused to the representations of the pope, was conceded to those of Lorenzo, under whose sanction the terms of the treaty were speedily concluded, and Boccolino accompanied the ambassador of Lorenzo to Florence. Muratori informs us, that the artifice by which Lorenzo extricated the pope from his turbulent adversary, was the timely application of some thousands of golden ducats; and this he accompanies with an insinuation, which, if justly founded, would degrade the magnanimous character of Lorenzo to a level with that of his sanguinary and treacherous contemporaries. “Having invited Boccolino to Florence,” says that author, “Lorenzo, with great address, prevailed upon him, for his further security, to repair to Milan; but the only security that he there found was a halter from the hands of Lodovico Sforza.” If, however, the death of Boccolino, when the contention was over, was of such importance as to induce Lorenzo to the commission of so atrocious a crime, it is scarcely probable that he would have afforded his victim so favourable an opportunity of escaping the blow but without having recourse to conjecture, a refutation of this calumny may be found in an author who, not being considered as partial to the Medici, may on this occasion be admitted as an authentic witness. “After the surrender of Osimo”, says Machiavelli, “Boccolino resided a considerable time at Florence, under the safeguard of Lorenzo, honoured and respected. He afterwards went to Milan, where he did not experience the same fidelity, having been treacherously put to death there by Lodovico Sforza.”

The remonstrances of the Florentines to the Genoese, to relinquish the dominion of Sarzana, being yet disregarded, and the peaceable intervention of the pope, and the duke of Milan appearing to be ineffectual, Lorenzo prepared fora powerful attack ; and not only engaged the

lords of Piombino, Faenza, Pitigliano, and Bologna in his cause, but applied to the king of Naples for such assistance as he could afford. In his answer to this requisition, Ferdinand confesses his high obligations to Lorenzo, and after lamenting his inability to repay them in a manner adequate to their importance, promises to furnish a supply of ships against the Genoese, and to give such other aid as the embarrassed state of his affairs would permit. The command of the army destined to the attack of Sarzana was given to Jacopo Guicciardini, and Pietro Vittorio, who, having defeated a body of the Genoese, that opposed their progress, began the siege of the place. The resistance which they met with was, however, more obstinate than might have been expected. Impatient of the delay, Lorenzo resolved to join the army, and endeavour by his presence to promote the exertions of the commanders, and excite the ardour of the soldiery. His exhortations, addressed personally to every rank and denomination, produced qn in-stantaneous effect: a vigorous attack was made; and the citizens perceiving no prospect of further succour from the Genoese, surrendered at the discretion of the conquerors. It is not improbable, that the remembrance of the disaster which took place on the surrender of Volterra had operated as an additional motive with Lorenzo to be present at the capture of Sarzana; however this may be, his conduct was marked With the greatest clemency to the inhabitants, and the city was received into the protection of the Florentine state, to which it was only desirable as opposing a barrier to the incursions of the Genoese. Elated with conquest, the Florentine commanders wished to carry the war into the states of Genoa; but Lorenzo opposed himself to this design; justly conceiving it to be inconsistent with the interests of his country, and his own character, to destroy that general equilibrium of the Italian states, which his utmost endeavours were constantly exerted to maintain. The apprehensions entertained by the Genoese were productive, however, of consequences as unfavourable to their liberties, as any which they could have experienced from a hostile invasion. To secure themselves from the expected attack, they surrendered their states to the duke of Milan, probably with the intention of again asserting their independence as soon as they had an opportunity; an artifice to which they had frequently resorted on former occasions.

In the conduct of Lorenzo towards the smaller governments in the vicinity of Florence, he gave a striking instance of prudence and moderation. Instead of seeking for pretences to subjugate them, he, upon all occasions, afforded them the most effectual aid in resisting every effort to deprive them of their independence. In his estimation, these were the true barriers of the Tuscan territory. By the constant intercourse which he maintained with the subordinate sovereigns, and the chief nobility, of Italy, he was enabled to perceive the first indications of disagreement, and to extinguish the sparks before they had kindled into a flame. The city of Perugia was held by the Baglioni, Castello by the Vitelli, Bologna by the Bentivoli, and Faenza by the Manfredi; all of whom resorted to him as the umpire of their frequent dissensions, and their protector from the resentment or the rapacity of their more powerful neighbours. Innumerable occasions presented themselves, in which the Florentines might have extended the limits of their dominions ; but it was uniformly the policy of Lorenzo, rather to secure what the state already possessed, than by aiming at more exten-sive territory, to endanger, the whole; and so fully did he accomplish his purpose, that the acute but profligate Lodovico Sforza was accustomed to say, “That Lorenzo had converted into iron what he found fabricated of glass”. The views of Lorenzo were not, however, limited by the boundaries that divide Italy from the rest of Europe. The influence of other states upon the politics of that country was daily increasing. He had therefore, at almost every court, envoys and correspondents on whose talents and integrity he had the greatest reliance; and who gave him minute and early information of every circumstance that might affect the general tranquillity. By these men, he heard, he saw, he felt every motion and every change of the political machine, and was often enabled to give it an impulse where it was supposed to be far beyond the limits of his power. In conducting a negotiation, all circumstances seemed to concur in rendering him successful; but these were not the effects of chance, but of deep and premeditated

arrangement. Knowing the route he had to take, the obstacles that might have obstructed his progress were cautiously removed, before his opponents were apprised of his intentions. Hence, as one of the Florentine annalists expresses it, he became the balance point of the Italian potentates, whose affairs he kept in such just equilibrium as to prevent the preponderancy of any particular state. Surrounded as he was by ambitious despots, who knew no restraint except that of compulsion, or by restless communities constantly springing up with elastic vigour against the hand that pressed them; it was only by unwearied attention that he could curb the overbearing, relieve the oppressed, allay their mutual jealousy, and preserve them from perpetual contention. By inducing them to grasp at unsubstantial advantages, he placed in their hands real blessings; and by alarming them with imaginary terrors, averted their steps from impending destruction.

We have already seen, that by the terms of the treaty between the pope and the king of Naples, Ferdinand was to pay an annual subsidy to the Roman see, and was also to grant an unconditional pardon to his refractory nobles. The latter of these conditions he immediately broke, and the other he only adhered to as long as he conceived that the pope was able to compel its performance. The cruelty and perfidy shown by Ferdinand, in his treatment of the Neapolitan nobility, fixes an indelible stain upon his character; but the operations of the moral world are not less certain than those of the natural, and the treachery of Ferdinand brought forth in due time its fruits of bitterness. It is true indeed, as Muratori well observes, “God does not always repay in this world, nor are his judgments laid open to us; but if we may on any occasion be allowed to interpret them, it is when they seem to be the retribution of cruelty. In fact, the calamities of Ferdinand were not long postponed. The lapse of a few years deprived him of life, and his posterity of the kingdom of Naples. Surely, he can never be worthy to rule over a people, who knows not how to forgive.”

The refusal of Ferdinand to comply with his engagements again roused the resentment of the pope, the inadequacy of whose temporal arms to enforce his pretensions, was supplied by the spiritual terrors of excommunication. On this occasion, the intervention of Lorenzo de’ Medici again became necessary. A long negotiation ensued, in the progress of which he availed himself of every opportunity afforded him by the circumstances of the times, the temper of the parties, and his own credit and authority, to prevent the disagreement from proceeding to an open rupture. Of his letters written in the course of these transactions, some are yet preserved, which, whilst they display the refined policy and deep discernment of their author, demonstrate how assiduously he laboured to avert the calamities of war. “It appears to me,” says he, writing to Lanfredini, his confidential envoy at Rome, who was to lay these representations before the pope, “that his holiness must propose to himself one of these three things; either to compel the king by force to comply with his requisition; or to compromise .matters with him on the most advantageous terms that can be obtained; or, lastly, to temporize till something better may be effected.” He then enters into a full discussion of the difficulties and dangers that seem likely to attend the making a hostile attack on the kingdom of Naples. He lays before the pope the situation not only of the other states of Italy, but of Europe; and shews the indispensable necessity of entering into treaties for assistance, or neutrality, before he engages in so hazardous an attempt. Having thus endeavoured to deter the pope from adopting any violent and unadvised measures, he adverts to the probability of terminating their differences by negotiation; the opportunity for which, however, he thinks as yet crude and immature, and as likely to be still further delayed by any severe or incautious proceedings. “With respect to temporizing,” says he, “this is undoubtedly the only course to be pursued, because it is better beyond, comparison to let matters remain in their present state, with reputation co his holiness, than to risk a war; especially as the king has it in his power to do him essential injury.” He concludes with a recapitulation of his former opinions. “If the pope can accommodate matters with the king, consistently with his own honour, it seems

to me that a tolerable compromise is better than a successful war. But as difficulties present themselves to an immediate agreement, I would endeavour to protract the discussion as long as it might be done with safety and propriety; all that I have advanced is, however, upon the idea that the pope is not prepared to carry his point by force; for if that were the case, the king would soon submit; but I fear he is too well apprised how far he is liable to be injured, and on this account will be more obstinate." By representations of this nature, founded on incontestable facts, and enforced by unanswerable arguments, Lorenzo at length so far mitigated the anger or abated the confidence of the pope, as to dispose him to listen to propositions of accommodation; whilst through the medium of his ambassador at Naples, he prevailed on the king to assent to the payment of the same subsidy which his predecessors had paid to the holy see. It is not easy to say to which of the contending parties the conduct of Lorenzo was most acceptable; the pope omitted no subsequent opportunity of conferring on him and his family . the most important favours; whilst Ferdinand unequivocally acknowledged, that to his friendship and fidelity, he and his family were indebted for the rank they held, and even for their continuance in the kingdom of Naples.

The external concerns of the republic being thus happily adjusted, and the tranquillity of Italy secured, Lorenzo applied himself to the regulation of the internal discipline of the Florentine state. The government of this city was founded on the broadest basis of democratic equality. By its fundamental principles, every person who contributed by his industry to the support or aggrandizement of the state had a right to share in the dire on of it, either by delegating his power to others, or in exercising a portion of the supreme control, under the suffrages of his fellow-citizens. Inactivity was the only circumstance that incapacitated him from the enjoyment of political rights. The Florentines, as early as the year 1282, had classed themselves into distinct bodies or municipal companies according to their various professions; and in order to place their government on a truly popular foundation, had determined that no person should be eligible to a public office, unless he were either actually, or professedly, a member of one or other of these companies. By this regulation, the nobility were either excluded from the offices of the state, or, in order to obtain them, were obliged to degrade the honours of their rank by the humiliating appellation of artizan. From these associated bodies, a certain number of members were deputed to exercise the supreme government, in conjunction with an officer whom we have frequently mentioned by the name of Gonfaloniere, whose authority was, however, subordinate to that of the delegated mechanics, or Priori delle arti, who continued in office only two months, and from three in number, had increased, at various intervals, to six, to eight, and lastly to ten. This institution had, in the time of Lorenzo de' Medici, subsisted nearly two hundred years, during which the office of Gonfaloniere had been filled by a regular succession of twelve hundred citizens, who had preserved the dignity and independence of the republic, and secured to their countrymen the exercise of their rights. With this laudable jealousy of their own liberties, the Florentines did not, like the Romans, from whom they derived their origin, exert their power to destroy the liberties of others. They wisely repressed the dangerous desire of subjecting to their dominion surrounding states, nor aspired to the invidious honour of sparing the subservient, and overturning the proud; and, though a community of freemen, they were content to be the first in those accomplishments which the flatterer of Augustus affected to despise.

There is, however, reason to conjecture, that the Florentine government, although sufficiently vigorous for internal regulation, was inadequate to the exertions of external warfare. The band that may steer a vessel through the tranquil ocean, may be unable to direct the helm amidst the fury of the storm. It may indeed well be conceived, that the delegated magistrates, being so extremely limited, as well with respect to their number, as to the duration of their power, would reluctantly determine on, and cautiously engage in measures which involved the welfare,

and perhaps the existence of the community. Accordingly it appears, that on important occasions it was customary for the magistrates to assemble the most respectable citizens, from whose advice they might derive assistance, and by whose countenance they might secure themselves from censure. During the late dangerous contest, this measure had been frequently resorted to, and with such manifest advantage, that Lorenzo after the restoration of the public tranquillity, recommended and obtained the establishment of a body of seventy citizens, who, in the nature of a senate, were to deliberate and to decide on all the transactions of government, as well in the affairs of peace as of war. This institution, for which he might have pleaded the example of the Spartan legislator, was probably intended, not only to give a greater degree of stability and energy to the government, but to counteract the democratic spirit, which was supposed to have risen to a dangerous excess, and to operate as a safeguard against an abuse which was certainly the destruction of all the free states of antiquity—the exercise of the powers of government by the immediate interference of the citizens at large.

At this period the city of Florence was at its highest degree of prosperity. The vigilance of Lorenzo had secured it from all apprehensions of external attack; and his acknowledged disinterestedness and moderation had almost extinguished that spirit of dissension for which it had been so long remarkable. The Florentines gloried in their illustrious citizen, and were gratified by numbering in their body a man who wielded in his hands the fate of nations, and attracted the respect and admiration of all Europe. Though much inferior in population, extent of dominion, and military character, to several of the other states of Italy, Florence stood at this time in the first degree of respectability. The active spirit of its inhabitants, no longer engaged in hostile contentions, displayed itself in the pursuits of commerce, and the improvement of their manufactures. Equally enterprising and acute, wherever there appeared a possibility of profit or of fame, they were the first to avail themselves of it; and a Florentine adventurer, though with doubtful pretensions, has erected to himself a monument which the proudest conqueror might envy, and impressed his name upon a new world in characters that are now indelible." The silk and linen fabrics manufactured by the Florentines were in a great degree wrought from their native productions; but their wool was imported from England and from Spain, whose inhabitants indolently resigned their natural advantages, and purchased again, at an extravagant price, their own commodities. In almost every part to which the Florentines extended their trade, they were favoured with peculiar privileges, which enabled them to avail themselves of the riches they had already acquired; and the superstitious prohibitions of the clergy against usury were of little avail against a traffic in which the rich found employment for their wealth, and the powerful relief in their necessities. The consequence of these industrious exertions was, a sudden increase of population in Florence; insomuch that Lorenzo was under the necessity of applying to the pope for his permission to build in the gardens of the monasteries within the walls of the city. By his attention the police was also effectually reformed. A contemporary author assures us, that there was no part of Italy where the people were more regular in their conduct, or where atrocious crimes were less frequent. "We have here," says he, "no robberies, no nocturnal commotions, no assassinations. By night or by day every person may transact his concerns in perfect safety. Spies and informers are here unknown. The accusation of one is not suffered to affect the safety of the many; for it is a maxim with Lorenzo, 'that it is better to confide in all than in a few". From the same authority we learn, that the due administration of justice engaged his constant attention, and that he carefully avoided giving rise to an idea, that he was himself above the control of the law. Where compulsory regulations lost their effect, the assiduity and example of Lorenzo produced the most salutary consequences, and banished that dissipation which enervates, and that indolence which palsies society. By forming institutions for the cultivation of the ancient languages or the discussion of philosophical truths, by promoting the sciences and encouraging the useful and ornamental arts, he stimulated talents into action, and excited an emulation which

called forth all the powers of the mind. Even the public spectacles, intended for the gratification of the multitude, partook of the polished character of the inhabitants, and were conceived with ingenuity, and enlivened with wit. The prosperity and happiness which the citizens thus enjoyed were attributed to their true source, and Lorenzo received the best reward of his labours in the gratitude of his country.

Beyond the limits of Tuscany, the character of this illustrious Florentine was yet more eminently conspicuous. The glory of the republic appeared at a distance to be concentered in himself. To him, individually, ambassadors were frequently despatched by the first monarchs of Europe; who, as their concerns required, alternately courted his assistance or solicited his advice. In the year 1489, when the emperor Frederick III sent an embassy to Rome, he directed them to pass through Florence to obtain the patronage of Lorenzo; being, as he said, convinced of his importance in directing the affairs of Italy. An interchange of kind offices subsisted between this eminent citizen and John II king of Portugal, who was deservedly dignified with the appellation of Great, and was desirous that the transactions of his life should be recorded by the pen of Politiano. From Matteo Corvino, whose virtues had raised him to the throne of Hungary, many letters addressed to Lorenzo are yet extant, which demonstrate not only the warm attachment of that monarch to the cause of science and the arts, but his esteem and veneration for the man whom he considered as their most zealous protector. As the reputation of Lorenzo increased, the assiduities of Louis XI of France became more conspicuous; and in exchange for professions of esteem, which from such a quarter could confer no honour, we find him soliciting from Lorenzo substantial favours. The commercial intercourse between Florence and Egypt, by means of which the Florentines carried on their lucrative traffic in the productions of the east, was extended and improved by Lorenzo; and such was the estimation in which he was held by the sultan, that, in the year 1487, an ambassador arrived at Florence, bringing with him, as a mark of his master's esteem, many singular presents of rare animals and valuable commodities; amongst the former of which, a Camelopardalis principally attracted the curiosity of the populace.

This epoch forms one of those scanty portions in the history of mankind, on which we may dwell without weeping over the calamities or blushing for the crimes of our species. Accordingly, the fancy of the poet, expanding in the gleam of prosperity, has celebrated these times as realizing the beautiful fiction of the golden age. This season of tranquillity is the interval to which Guicciardini so strikingly adverts, in the commencement of his history, as being "prosperous beyond any other that Italy had experienced during the long course of a thousand years. When the whole extent of that fertile and beautiful country was cultivated, not only throughout its wide plains and fruitful valleys, but even amidst its most sterile and mountainous regions; and under no control but that of its native nobility and rulers, exulted, not only in the number and riches of its inhabitants, but in the magnificence of its princes, in the splendour of many superb and noble cities, and in the residence and majesty of religion itself. Abounding with men eminent in the administration of public affairs, skilled in every honourable science and every useful art, it stood high in the estimation of foreign nations. Which extraordinary felicity, acquired at many different opportunities, several circumstances contributed to preserve; but among the rest, no small share of it was, by general consent, ascribed to the industry and the virtue of Lorenzo de' Medici; a citizen, who rose so far beyond the mediocrity of a private station, that he regulated by his counsels the affairs of Florence, then more important by its situation, by the genius of its inhabitants, and the promptitude of its resources, than by the extent of its dominions ; and who having obtained the implicit confidence of the Roman pontiff, Innocent VIII, rendered his name great, and his authority important in the affairs of Italy. Convinced of the perils that might arise, both to the Florentine republic and to himself, if any of the more powerful states should be allowed to extend their dominions, he used every exertion that the affairs of Italy might be so balanced,

that there should be no inclination in favour of any particular state; a circumstance which could not take place without the permanent establishment of peace, and the minutest attention to every event, however trivial it might appear." Such are the representations of this celebrated historian. It is only to be regretted that these prosperous days were of such short duration. Like a momentary calm that precedes the ravages of the tempest, they were scarcely enjoyed before they were past. The fabric of the public happiness, erected by the vigilance and preserved by the constant care of Lorenzo, remained indeed firm and compact during the short remainder of his days; but at his death it dissolved like the work of enchantment, and overwhelmed for a time in its ruins even the descendants of its founder.

## CHAPTER VII.

### 1489.

Of the improvement that took place in the Italian language in the fourteenth century, of its rapid and unexpected decline in that which succeeded, and of its restoration under the auspices of Lorenzo de' Medici, some account has already been given; but in tracing the history of the revival and progress of the ancient languages, we shall find, that as they were influenced by other causes, they neither flourished nor declined with the study of the national tongue. On the contrary, a daily proficiency was made in classical literature, at the very time that the Italian language was again sinking into barbarism and neglect; and the former advanced, by a gradual but certain progress, towards that perfection which the latter suddenly and unexpectedly attained, from the causes to which we have before adverted.

In assigning the reason for this remarkable distinction, we must again recur to the times of Dante, of Petrarca, and of Boccaccio; and observe the effects produced by the exertions of those great men, whose talents throw a lustre over a period, which would otherwise be involved in total darkness. In estimating their labours, we shall find that their various attempts to reduce into form their native language, and to revive the study of the ancient tongues, were not only attended with different degrees of success, but were followed by consequences precisely the reverse of those which might have been expected. With whatever justice Petrarca and Boccaccio might, in their own days, have boasted of their voluminous productions in the Latin tongue, the increasing applause bestowed on their Italian writings soon obscured their fame as Latin authors; and they are indebted for their present celebrity to works which they almost blushed to own, and were ashamed to communicate to each other. The different merits of their Latin and their Italian compositions were, however, soon appreciated; and whilst the latter were daily rising in the estimation of the world, the former lost a great share of their reputation before the close of the suc-ceeding century. "It is not to be denied," says a very judicious critic of that period, "that both Dante and Petrarca were warm admirers of the ancients; but the Latin writings of Dante, like a picture that has lost its colour, exhibit little more than an outline. Happy indeed had it been, had this author been enabled to convey his sentiments in Latin as advantageously as he has done in his native tongue. The numerous works of Petrarca, the offspring of that solitude in which he delighted, are lasting monuments of his industry and his talents. Yet his style is harsh, and scarcely bears the character of Latinity. His writings are indeed full of thought, but defective in expression, and display the marks of labour without the polish of elegance; but as we sometimes take a potion, not for the sake of gratification, but of health, so from these writings we must expect to derive utility rather than amusement. Rude as they are, they possess, however, some secret charm which renders them engaging. The distinguished talents of Boccaccio sunk under the pressure of the general malady. Licentious and inaccurate in his diction, he has no idea of selection. All his Latin writings are hasty, crude, and uninformed. He labours with thought, and struggles to give it utterance; but his sentiments find no adequate vehicle, and the lustre of his native talents is obscured by the depraved taste of the times."

Whilst such was the fate of the Latin productions of these authors, their Italian writings were the objects rather of adoration than applause. No longer confined to the perusal of the closet and the gratification of an individual, the poems of Dante and of Petrarca were read in public

assemblies of the inhabitants of Florence, and their beauties pointed out, or their obscurities illustrated, by the most eminent scholars of the time. No sooner was the art of printing discovered, than copies of them were multiplied with an avidity which demonstrates the high esteem in which they were held. Even the prolix annotations with which these early editions were generally accompanied, if they do not for the most part display the talents of the critic, are a proof of the celebrity of the author. This observation is not, however, applicable to the commentary of Dante by Landino, who, with a laudable perseverance, has preserved the remembrance of many historical facts, and related many circumstances indispensably necessary to the explanation of the "Divina Commedia." His industry in the execution of a task so grateful to his countrymen was rewarded by the donation of a villa, or residence, on the hill of Casentino, in the vicinity of Florence, which he enjoyed under the sanction of a public decree. Whilst the annotator was thus compensated, the exiled poet was, upward of a century after his death, restored to his family honours, with the same formalities as if he had been still living; his descendants were permitted to enjoy the possessions of their illustrious ancestor, and his bust, crowned with laurels, was raised at the public expense.

It might then have been expected, that the successful efforts of these authors to improve their native tongue would have been more effectual than the weak though laudable attempts made by them to revive the study of the ancient languages; but it must be remembered, that they were all of them men of genius, and genius assimilates not with the character of the age. Homer and Shakespeare had no imitators, and are no models. The example of such talents is perhaps, upon the whole, unfavourable to the general progress of improvement; and the superlative abilities of a few have more than once damped the ardour of a nation. But if the great Italian authors were inimitable in the productions of their native language, in their Latin writings they appeared in a subordinate character. Of the labours of the ancients, enough had been discovered to mark the decided difference between their merits and those of their modem imitators; and the applauses bestowed upon the latter were only in proportion to the degree in which they approached the models of ancient eloquence. This competition was therefore eagerly entered into; nor had the success of the first revivers of these studies deprived their followers of the hope of surpassing them. Even the early part of the fifteenth century produced scholars as much superior to Petrarca and his coadjutors, as they were to the monkish compilers, and scholastic disputants, who immediately preceded them; and the labours of Leonardo Aretino, Gianozzo Manetti, Guarino Veronese, and Poggio Bracciolini, prepared the way for the still more correct and classical productions of Politiano, Sannazzaro, Pontano, and Augurelli. The declining state of Italian literature, so far then from being inconsistent with, was rather a consequence of the proficiency made in other pursuits, which, whilst they were distinguished by a greater degree of celebrity, demanded a more continued attention, and an almost absolute devotion both of talents and of time.

Whatever may have been the opinion in more modem times, the Italian scholars of the fifteenth century did not attribute to the exertions of their own countrymen the restoration of ancient learning. That they had shown a decided predilection for those studies, and had excited an ardent thirst of further knowledge, is universally allowed; but the source from which that thirst was allayed, was found in Emanuel Chrysoloras, who, after his return to his native country from bis important embassies, was prevailed upon by the Florentines to pay a second visit to Italy, and to fix his residence among them. The obligations due to Chrysoloras are acknowledged in various parts of their works, by those who availed themselves of his instructions; and the gratitude of his immediate hearers was transfused into a new race of scholars, who, by their eulogies on their literary patriarch, but much more by their own talents, conferred honour upon his memory. On his arrival in Italy in the character of an instructor, he was accompanied by Demetrius Cydonius,

another learned Greek. The ardour with which they were received by the Italian scholars may be conjectured from a letter of Coluccio Salutati to Demetrius on his landing at Venice. “I rejoice not so much,” says he, “in the honour I received from your notice, as for the interests of literature. At a time when the study of the Greek language is nearly lost, and the minds of men are wholly engrossed by ambition, voluptuousness, or avarice, you appear as the messengers of the Divinity, bearing the torch of knowledge into the midst of our darkness. Happy indeed shall I esteem myself, (if this life can afford any happiness to a man to whom tomorrow will bring the close of his sixty-fifth year,) if I should by your assistance imbibe those principles from which all the knowledge which this country possesses is wholly derived. Perhaps, even yet, the example of Cato may stimulate me to devote to this study the little that remains of life, and I may yet add to my other acquirements a knowledge of the Grecian tongue.”

If we advert to the night of thick darkness in which the world had been long enveloped, we may easily conceive the sensations that took place in the minds of men when the gloom began to disperse, and the spectres of false science, by turns fantastic and terrific, gave way to the distinct and accurate forms of nature and of truth. The Greeks who visited Italy in the early part of the fifteenth century, if they did not diffuse a thorough knowledge of their language, and of those sciences which they exclusively possessed, at least prepared a safe asylum for the muses and the arts, who had long trembled at the. approach, and at length fled before the fierce aspect of Mahomet II. From that period a new order of things took place in Italy; the construction of language was investigated on philosophical principles; the maxims of sound criticism began to supplant the scholastic subtleties which had perverted for ages the powers of the human mind; and men descended from their fancied eminence among the regions of speculation and hypothesis, to tread the earth with a firm foot, and to gain the temple of fame by a direct though laborious path.

The establishment of public libraries in different parts of Italy, whilst it was one of the first consequences of this striking predilection for the works of the ancients, became in its turn the active cause of further improvement. To no description of individuals is the world more indebted, than to those who have been instrumental in preserving the wisdom of past ages for the use of those to come, and thereby giving, as it were, a general sensorium to the human race. In this respect great obligations are due to the venerable Cosimo. From the intercourse that in his time subsisted between Florence and Constantinople, and the long visits made by the Greek prelates and scholars to Italy, he had the best opportunity of obtaining the choicest treasures of ancient learning; and the destruction of Constantinople may be said to have transferred to Italy all that remained of eastern science. After the death of Cosimo, his son Piero pursued with steady perseverance the same object, and made important additions to the various collections which Cosimo had begun, particularly to that of his own family. But although the ancestors of Lorenzo laid the foundation of the immense collection of manuscripts since denominated the Laurentian Library, he may himself claim the honour of having raised the superstructure. If there was any pursuit in which he engaged more ardently and persevered more diligently than the rest, it was that of enlarging his collection of books and antiquities. “We need not wonder,” says Niccolo Leoniceno, writing to Politiano, “at your eloquence and your acquirements, when we consider the advantages which you derive from the favour of Lorenzo de’ Medici, the great patron of learning in this age; whose messengers are dispersed throughout every part of the earth, for the purpose of collecting books on every science, and who has spared no expense in procuring for your use, and that of others who may devote themselves to similar studies, the materials necessary for your purpose; I well remember the glorious expression of Lorenzo, which you repeated to me, that he wished the diligence of Pico and yourself would afford him such opportunities of purchasing books, that, his fortune proving insufficient, he might pledge even his furniture to possess them.”

Acting under the influence of such impressions,. we cannot wonder at the progress made by Lorenzo, in which he derived great assistance from Hieronymo Donato, Ermolao Barbara, and Paolo Cortesi; but his principal coadjutor was Politiano, to whom he committed the care and arrangement of his collection, and who made excursions at intervals through Italy, to discover and purchase such remains of antiquity, as suited the purposes of his patron. Two journeys, undertaken at the instance of Lorenzo, into the east, by Giovanni Lascar, produced a great number of rare and valuable works. On his return from his second expedition, he brought with him about two hundred copies, many of which he had procured from a monastery at Mount Athos ; but this treasure did not arrive till after the death of Lorenzo, who, in his last moments, expressed to Politiano and Pico his regret that he could not live to complete the collection which he was forming for their accommodation. Stimulated by the example of Lorenzo, other eminent patrons of learning engaged in the same pursuit. Those who particularly distinguished themselves were Mattia Corvino king of Hungary, and Federigo duke of Urbino, to both of whom Lorenzo gave permission to copy such of his manuscripts as they wished to possess; nothing being more consonant to his intentions than to diffuse the spirit of literature as extensively as possible.

The newly discovered art of printing contributed also, in an eminent degree, to accelerate the progress of classical literature. This art was practised very early in Florence, and some of the Florentine authors have even been desirous of conferring on one of their countrymen the merit of its invention; but this acute people have too many well-founded claims on the gratitude of posterity, to render it necessary for them to rely on doubtful commendation. It is however certain, that whilst Venice solicited the assistance of Nicolas Jensen, a native of France, and Rome began to practise the art under the guidance of the two German printers, Sweynheym and Pannartz, Florence found amongst her own citizens an artist equal to the task. Taking for his example the inscriptions on the ancient Roman seals, or more probably stimulated by the success of his contemporaries, Bernardo Cennini, a Florentine goldsmith, formed the matrices of his letters in steel; by means of which, with the assistance of his two sons, Domenico and Piero, he began in the year 1471 to print the works of Virgil, with the commentary of Servius, which he published at Florence in the following year.

Lorenzo de' Medici saw the importance of a discovery, which had been wanting to the completion of the generous views of his ancestors, and availed himself of it with a degree of earnestness which sufficiently shews the motives by which he was actuated. At his instigation, several of the Italian scholars were induced to bestow their attention in collating and correcting the manuscripts of the ancient authors, in order that they might be submitted to the press with the greatest possible accuracy. In the dialogues of Landino, published by him under the name of "Disputationes Camaldulenses," to which we have had occasion to refer, that author has devoted his third and fourth books to a critical dissertation on the works of Virgil, particularly with a view of explaining such parts as are supposed to contain an allegorical sense; but he soon afterwards performed a much more grateful office to the admirers of the Roman poet, by correcting the errors with which his works abounded, and endeavouring to restore them to their original purity. In the proeme to this work, which he has inscribed to Piero de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo, he recapitulates the favours which the ancestors of his patron have bestowed on men of learning, and particularly recommends to his imitation in this respect, the example of his father. He adverts to the assassination of Giuliano de' Medici, and attributes the preservation of Lorenzo, at that critical juncture, to his own courage and magnanimity. Returning to his immediate subject, he thus proceeds: "In my dialogues of Camaldoli, I have given a philosophical comment on the works of Virgil. I now mean to perform the office of a grammarian and critic on this author. In my former attempt, as the subject is of more dignity, I have introduced your father as one of the disputants; but these observations, which are intended to inculcate a knowledge of the Latin language, I

consider as more properly addressed to a young man of your promising talents and cultivated understanding." In the year 1482, Landino published also an edition of the works of Horace, with numerous corrections and remarks, which he inscribed to Guido da Feltri, the son of Federigo duke of Urbino, to whom he had dedicated, in terms of the highest commendation and respect, his "Disputationes Camaldulenses." Landino was one of the first scholars who, after the revival of letters, devoted himself to the important *task of restoring and elucidating these favourite authors, and his labours were received with unbounded applause. Of his observations on Horace considerable use has been made by many subsequent editors. On their publication, Politiano accompanied them with the following ode, not unworthy of the poet whose praises it is intended to celebrate.

AD HORATIUM FLACCUM.

Poet, than whom the bard of Thrace

Ne'er knew to touch a sweeter string !

O whether from their deep recess

The tenants of the wilds thou bring,

With all their shades; whether thy strain

Bid listening rivers cease to flow;

Whether with magic verse thou stain

A lasting blot on vice's brow;

Poet! who first the Latian lyre

To sweet Aeolian numbers strung

When late repress'd thy native fire,

When late impervious glooms o'erhung

Thy front; o say, what hand divine

Thy rude barbaric chains unbound,

And bade thee in new lustre shine,

Thy locks with vernal roses crown'd ?

As when in spring's reviving gleam

The serpent quits his scaly slough,

Once more beneath the sunny beam,

In renovated youth to glow;

To thy loved lyre, and choral throng,

Landiko thus their poet brings;

Such as thy Tibub heard thy song.

Midst her cool shades and gushing springs.

Again with tales of whisper'd love,

With sprightly wit of happiest vein,

Through bands of vine-crown'd youths to rove,

Or sport amidst the virgin train.

It is greatly to the credit of Politiano that these verses were addressed to the person who was his most formidable rival in those studies to which he had particularly devoted his talents. In restoring to their original purity the ancient authors, he was himself indefatigable; and if to the munificence of Lorenzo de' Medici we are to attribute the preservation of many of these works, Politiano is perhaps entitled to our equal acknowledgments for his elucidations and corrections of the text, which, from a variety of causes, was frequently unintelligible, illegible, or corrupt In the exercise of his critical talents, he did not confine himself to any precise method, but adopted such as he conceived best suited his purpose; on some occasions only comparing different copies, diligently marking the variations, rejecting spurious readings, and substituting the true. In other cases he proceeded further, and added Scholia and notes illustrative of the text, either from his own conjectures, or the authority of other authors. Besides the advantages which he derived from various copies of the same work, which enabled him to collate them so as to ascertain the true reading, he obtained great assistance from the collection of antiques formed by Lorenzo and his ancestors; and amongst his coins, inscriptions on marble, and other authentic documents, frequently elucidated and determined what might otherwise have remained in darkness or in doubt. At the close of his remarks on Catullus, a memorial appears in his own hand-writing, in which he indulges himself in an exultation of youthful vanity, in the idea of having surpassed all his contemporaries in the diligence which he has shown in correcting the ancient authors. This memorial, which bears the date of 1473, at which time he was only eighteen years of age, is subscribed Angelus Bassus Politianus. Before, however, we accuse our youthful critic of an ostentatious display of learning, or an improper confidence in his own abilities, we ought to advert to another entry made two years afterwards at the close of the works of Propertius in the same volume, by which he confesses that many of his previous observations do not approve themselves to his riper judgment, and requests the reader not to form an opinion of his talents, his learning, or his industry, from such a specimen; there being many things, says he,

Which I, their author, well might wish to blot.

In this subsequent entry he denominates himself Angelus Politianus, which sufficiently marks the period when he chose to discontinue the appellation of Bassus; but, what is of more importance, it serves to convince us, that with the errors of his judgment Politiano corrected also those of his temper, and that his proficiency in learning was accompanied by an equal improvement in modesty and candour. Among the ancient authors which he has thus illustrated, are, Ovid, Suetonius, Statius, the younger Pliny, the Scriptores Historic Augustae, and Quintilian; some of which have been published with his emendations, while his valuable remarks on others are yet confined to the limits of the Italian libraries. The example of Politiano was followed by many other celebrated scholars, who regarded Lorenzo de' Medici as the patron of their studies, and inscribed their labours with his name. Thus Domitio Calderino undertook to regulate the text of Martial. Bartolommeo Fontio employed his talents on Persius, and Lancelotto on Columella.

Nor were the Greek authors neglected. In the year 1488, Demetrius Chalcondyles and Demetrius Cretensis published at Florence the first edition of the works of Homer, which is inscribed to Piero de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo.

The system of jurisprudence which in the fifteenth century prevailed throughout the greatest part of Europe, was that of the Roman or civil law, which was principally founded on the pandects or constitutions of Justinian. Hence the correction and explication of the subsisting copies of this work became of high importance to the community. This task was reserved for the indefatigable industry of Politiano, whose labours in this department entitle him to rank not only with the earliest, but with the most learned modern professors of this science, In his letters he has himself given some account of his progress in this laborious work. Much additional information may be found in the narrative of his life by Menckenius; and Bandini, who has lately had the good fortune to recover the commentary of Politiano, and restore it to its former station in the Laurentian Library, has published an historical narrative expressly on this subject. In the accomplishment of this task, which he was induced to undertake at the instance of Lorenzo de' Medici, Politiano had singular advantages. An ancient and authentic copy found at Pisa, and supposed to have been deposited there by the orders of Justinian himself, had on the capture of that place been transferred to Florence, and was afterwards entrusted by Lorenzo de' Medici to the sole custody of Politiano. By this he was enabled to correct the numerous errors, and to supply the defeats of the more recent manuscripts, as well as of two editions which had before issued from the press. The civilians of the ensuing century have freely confessed their obligations to a commentator who first, with the true spirit of research, applied himself to the elucidation of a science in itself sufficiently complex and obscure, but which was rendered still more so by the imperfect state of those authorities to which its professors were constantly obliged to refer.

Of the critical talents of Politiano, and of the variety and extent of his erudition, his "Miscellanea" alone afford a sufficient testimony. For the publication of this work, which consists principally of observations on the writings of the ancient authors, we are also indebted to Lorenzo de' Medici, to whom Politiano was accustomed, as they rode out on horse-back, to repeat the various remarks which had occurred to him in his morning studies. At the request of Lorenzo, he was at length induced to commit them to paper, and to arrange them in order for the press. On their publication he inscribed them to his great friend and benefactor; not, as he assures him, merely for the purpose of testifying his gratitude for the assistance and advice which he had, in the course of his work, received from him, but that it might obtain favour, and derive authority from the celebrity of his name.

The publication of this work soon afterwards led Politiano into a controversy, in which he conducted himself with firmness and moderation, and which terminated greatly to his honour. Lodovico Sforza, anxious to throw a veil over the guilt of his usurpation by an attention to the promotion of letters, had prevailed upon Giorgio Merula, among other learned men, to establish his residence ait Milan, where he enjoyed an ample pension from the duke. The character of Merula stood high for his acquirements in Latin literature; but neither his proficiency in learning, nor his intercourse with the great, nor even his advanced age, had softened or improved a disposition naturally jealous and austere. He had, however, singled out Politiano as the only person among the scholars of Italy, who, in his opinion, possessed any share of merit, and upon an interview which they had together at Milan, had acknowledged, that the restoration of the language of the ancient Romans depended upon his exertions. No sooner, however, did the "Miscellanea" of Politiano make their appearance, than Merula availed himself of an opportunity of demonstrating his own superiority by depreciating the labours of his rival; asserting that such of the remarks of Politiano as were entitled to commendation, might be found in the critical works which he had himself previously published, or were in the memory of his pupils who had attended

his public instructions. He even insinuated that he had collected no inconsiderable number of gross errors, which he might probably make public on some future occasion. Politiano was soon apprised of this injurious treatment; and as he was not slow at resenting an indignity, it is probable that Merula would have experienced the weight of his resentment, had not other considerations interposed. Merula stood high in the opinion of his patron, whilst Politiano was known to live on terms of the closest intimacy with Lorenzo de' Medici. An open attack might therefore have involved the name of Lorenzo, whose connexions with Lodovico were of too much importance to be endangered in a literary contest. Thus circumstanced, Politiano adopted a more discreet and serious method of bringing on a discussion. He addressed a letter to the duke, entreating that he would exert his authority with Merula, to induce him to publish his criticisms; at the same time transmitting for his perusal a letter to Merula of similar import. Merula however refused either to retract the opinions which he had avowed, or to communicate to Politiano his remarks. In answer to a sarcasm, which Politiano might well have spared, he replies, "You reproach me with my grey locks—I feel not their effects. I yet possess vigour of mind and strength of body; celerity of thought and tenacity of memory; of these let Politiano beware. Several letters on this subject appear in the epistles of Politiano, and the contest was rising to an extreme of violence, when Merula suddenly died. This event gave Politiano real concern, not only on account of the loss of a man of whose talents he entertained a high opinion, but as tending to deprive him still more effectually of the opportunity of defending his work. Anxious, however, that nothing might be omitted which was necessary to the vindication of his character, he again addressed himself to the duke, with earnest entreaties to transmit to him the criticisms of Merula; but to no purpose. This formidable composition, if indeed it ever existed, was reduced to a few loose and unimportant observations. The letters of Lodovico, which are remarkable for their kindness and attention to Politiano, seem however at length to have satisfied his restless apprehensions. "You can have no reason, Angelo," says the duke, "to fear any injury to your reputation from the suppression of the remarks of Merula, as this cannot be attributed to you, who, so far from wishing to conceal them, have used your utmost endeavours with us to lay them before the public; of which the present letter may serve as a testimony."

The institution of public seminaries for promoting the knowledge of the ancient languages, the respect paid to those who undertook the task of instruction, and the ample compensation they derived, not only from the liberality of individuals, but from the public at large, powerfully cooperated with the causes before mentioned in diffusing a just taste for classical literature. Of the establishment of the academy at Pisa, by the exertions of Lorenzo de' Medici, a brief account has before been given; but his attention to the cause of learning was by no means confined to this institution. The studies at Pisa were chiefly restricted to the Latin language, or to those sciences of which it was the principal vehicle; but it was at Florence only that the Greek tongue was inculcated under the sanction of a public institution, either by native Greeks, or learned Italians, who were their powerful competitors, whose services were procured by the diligence of Lorenzo de' Medici, and repaid by his bounty. Hence succeeding scholars have been profuse of their acknowledgments to their patron, who first formed that establishment, from which, (to use their own classical figure,) as from the Trojan horse, so many illustrious champions have sprung, and by means of which the knowledge of the Greek tongue was extended, not only through all Italy, but through France, Spain, Germany, and England; from all which countries numerous pupils attended at Florence, who diffused the learning they had there acquired throughout the rest of Europe.

Of this institution the first public professor was the eminent Johannes Argyropylus, who, after having enjoyed for several years the favour and protection of Cosimo and Piero de' Medici, and having had a principal share in the education of Lorenzo, was selected by him as the person

best qualified to give instructions on the Greek tongue. Of the disciples of Argyropylus, Politiano, if not the most diligent, was the most successful. With the precepts which he imbibed, he acquired a predilection for the source from whence they flowed; and his writings discover numerous instances of his affection and veneration for the man who first opened to him the treasures of Grecian literature. To the unlimited applause bestowed by the scholar on the master, one exception only occurs. Argyropylus had professed an open hostility to the reputation of Cicero, whom he represented as a sciolist in the Greek tongue, and as unacquainted with the tenets of the different sects of philosophy, to which so many of his writings relate. The acuteness of Argyropylus, and the influence of his authority, degraded in the estimation of his pupils, the character of the Roman orator; and Politiano, in his riper years, seems to shudder at the recollection of the time when the ignorance of Tully was a matter taken for granted by him and his fellow-students. During the long residence of Argyropylus in Italy he had acquired an extensive knowledge of the Latin language—a species of praise to which few of his countrymen are entitled. His translations into Latin of various tracts of Aristotle are, for the most part, inscribed to his successive patrons of the family of the Medici, in language expressive of his respect and gratitude. Among his auditors we find Donato Acciajuoli, Janus Pannonius, and the German prelate Johannes Reuchlinus, who having had the singular good fortune to obtain some previous knowledge of the Greek tongue, displayed, it is said, on his first interview with Argyropylus, such an acquaintance with it, as induced the Greek to exclaim with a sigh, “Alas! Greece is already banished beyond the Alps”

To the industry of Argyropylus, and the excellence of his precepts, his disciple Acciajuoli has borne ample testimony; affirming, that whilst he inculcated his doctrines, the times of the ancient philosophers seemed to be again renewed. If, however, we may give credit to the testimony of Paulus Jovius, the precepts and the practice of Argyropylus were not entirely consistent with each other; and the obesity of his figure, which was supported by an immoderate supply of food and wine, seemed to mark him out as belonging to a different sect of philosophers. But the bishop of Nocera had too many passions to gratify, to permit him to perform the part of a faithful historian, and there are few of his characters that are not discoloured or distorted by the medium through which they are seen. The same author attributes the death of Argyropylus to the intemperate use of melons, which brought on an autumnal fever, that put a period to his life in the seventieth year of his age. This event took place at Rome, where he had fixed his residence some time previous to the year 1471.”

After an interval of a few years, during which there is reason to believe that the office of public Greek professor at Florence was filled by Theodorus Gaza, and not by Politiano, as asserted by Jovius, the loss of Argyropylus was supplied by Demetrius Chalcondyles, who was invited by Lorenzo de’ Medici to take upon himself that employment about the year 1479. It is generally understood that an enmity subsisted between Politiano and Chalcondyles, in consequence of which the latter was eventually under the necessity of quitting Florence, whence he retired to Milan; but for this opinion the only authority is that of Jovius, and of those who have implicitly confided in his relation.

This author, always hostile to the character of Politiano, would induce us to believe, that the Italian scholar, actuated by his jealousy of the Greek, and availing himself of his superior wit and eloquence, endeavoured to injure Chalcondyles by drawing off his pupils, and engaging them in his own auditory; and that Lorenzo de’ Medici, as well in order to remove the causes of their contention, as to avail himself of their mutual emulation, divided between them the task of educating his children. It may however be observed, that no traces of this dissension are to be found in the narrative of any contemporary author; and although the known irascibility of Politiano, and his acknowledged animosity to the Greeks, may seem to strengthen the credit of

Jovius, yet it will appear, on further consideration, that these very circumstances tend greatly to invalidate his testimony. The antipathies of Politiano were never concealed; and his letters, which extend nearly to the time of his death, contain many instances of that vehemence with which he attacked all those who he conceived had given him just cause of offence; but of any dissensions with Chalcondyles, no memorial is to be found. On the contrary, Chalcondyles is frequently noticed, both by the Italian scholar and his correspondents, as living with him in habits of intimacy." The rest of the information derived from Jovius is equally futile. The uninterrupted affection that subsisted between Lorenzo and Politiano would have prevented the former from adopting a measure which the latter could only have considered as an impeachment of his talents; but independent of inferences drawn from this source, we have positive evidence, that however the children of Lorenzo might attend the incidental instructions of others, Politiano had the constant superintendence of their education, and was addressed, on all occasions, as the sole person honoured with that important trust.

From the Florentine institution, it is not difficult to discover the progress of Grecian literature to the rest of Europe; but the traces of the channels by which it was conveyed are in no instance more conspicuous than in those which communicated with this country. William Grocin, who was for some years professor of Greek literature in the university of Oxford, had made a journey to Italy, and had resided, for the space of two years, at Florence, where he attended the instructions of Chalcondyles and of Politiano. Thomas Linacer, whose name deservedly holds the first rank among the early English scholars, availed himself of a similar opportunity; and, during his abode at Florence, was so eminently distinguished by the elegance of his manners and his singular modesty, that he is said to have been selected by Lorenzo de' Medici as the associate of his children in their studies."

Such were the causes that in the fifteenth century concurred to promote the study of the ancient languages in Italy; but one circumstance yet remains to be noticed, which was perhaps more efficacious than any other in giving life and energy to these pursuits. An acquaintance with the learned languages was, at this period, the most direct path, not only to riches and literary fame, but to political eminence; and the most accomplished scholars were, in almost every government of Italy, the first ministers of the time. This arose, in a great degree, from the very general use of the Latin tongue in the negotiations of different states, which rendered it almost impossible for any person to undertake the management of public affairs, without an habitual acquaintance with that language; but this was more particularly exemplified in Florence, where the most permanent officers were uniformly selected on account of their learning. During a long course of years the place of secretary, or chancellor of the republic, (for these terms seem to have been indiscriminately used), was filled by scholars of the first distinction. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, it was held by Coluccio Salutati, who had been the intimate friend of Petrarca, and of Boccaccio, and is denominated by Poggio, "The common father and instructor of all the learned". He was succeeded by Leonardo Aretino, whose services to the republic were repaid by many privileges and favours conferred on himself and his descendants. After the death of Leonardo, this office was given to Carlo Marsuppini, and was afterwards successively held by Poggio Bracciolini, and Benedetto Accolti. During a great part of the time that the affairs of Florence were directed by Lorenzo de' Medici, the chancellor of the republic was Bartolomeo Scala, whose life affords the best example of the honours and emoluments which were derived from the cultivation of literature. Scala deduced his origin from parents of the lowest rank; nor did he possess from his birth even the privileges of a Florentine citizen. An early proficiency in letters recommended him to the notice of Cosmo de' Medici; and it was the pride of Scala to avow the meanness of his birth, and the obligations which he owed to his earliest patron. The loss of Cosmo was amply compensated to Scala by the favour of his descendants, through whose

assistance he gradually rose to honours and to affluence, and in the year 1472 was entrusted with the seal of the republic. In imitation of his predecessors in this office, Scala began a history of Florence, of which he lived to complete only four books. His apologues are highly commended by Landino and Ficino. Of his poetry, specimens remain both in the Latin and Italian languages, and the former have obtained a place in the celebrated collection of the Latin poems of his illustrious country-men. When the proverbial uncertainty of public favour is considered, the life of Scala may be esteemed a life of unusual prosperity. He transacted the concerns of the republic with acknowledged fidelity, industry, and ability; arrived at the highest dignities of the state; amassed wealth ; ranked with men of learning; and left at his death a numerous progeny to inherit his riches and his respectability. In his controversy with Politiano he appears, however, as a scholar, to manifest disadvantage; but the impetuosity of his adversary hurried him into a contest which it is evident he would willingly have avoided, and in which every effort to extricate himself only brought down a severer chastisement.

From the epistles of Politiano, it appears, that for some time these angry disputants had shared the favour of Lorenzo de' Medici without discovering any symptoms of jealousy, and had even been in the habit of submitting to each other their literary works for mutual correction. Scala, however, having discovered, or suspected, that Lorenzo had employed Politiano to revise the letters which he had written in the execution of his office, as chancellor of the republic, began to entertain a secret enmity against his rival, and omitted no opportunity of depreciating his writings. Politiano was no sooner aware that his literary reputation was attacked, than he gave loose to feelings which it is probable he had before with difficulty repressed; and notwithstanding the rank and respectability of Scala, addressed him in a style that shows the high opinion which he entertained of his own talents, and his contempt of those of his adversary. Alluding, in one of his letters, to the parentage of Scala, he gives him the appellation of *monstrum furfuraceum*. In another, he honours him with a comment on this title. To the boasting of Scala, respecting the approbation expressed of him by Lorenzo, he returns an answer which in these days (whether more polished or more barbarous the reader may determine) could only have been expiated in the blood of one of the disputants." In this transaction it must be allowed that Politiano suffered himself to be carried beyond all reasonable bounds, and forgot that respect which he owed, if not to the character of his opponent, at least to his own dignity and reputation. It may perhaps be thought that Lorenzo de' Medici ought to have interposed his authority to suppress a contest which contributed so little to the credit of the parties, but it was not till after the death of Lorenzo that the dispute became so outrageous. It must be observed that Menckenius, the historian of Politiano, has on this occasion attributed to the expressions of Scala, an import which it is certain they were not intended to convey."

If the circumstances before related were not sufficiently characteristic of the spirit of the times, we might advert to the other governments of Italy; where we should find, that offices of the highest trust and confidence were often filled by men who quitted the superintendence of an academy, or the chair of a professor, to transact the affairs of a nation. Alfonso, king of Naples, and Francesco Sforza, contended in liberality with each other, to secure the service of Beccatelli. Pontano was the confidential adviser, and frequently the representative to other powers of Ferdinand, the son of Alfonso." The brothers of the family of Simoneta directed for a considerable time the affairs of Milan. Bernardo Bembo, and Francesco Barbara, maintained the literary, no less than the political dignity of the Venetian republic. When eminent talents were not engaged in public services, they were rewarded by the most flattering attention, and often by the pecuniary bounty of illustrious individuals, who relaxed from the fastidiousness of rank, in the company of men of learning, or have left memorials of their regard by their epistolary correspondence.

Nor was it seldom that the characters of the scholar, and of the man of rank, were united in the same person. Of this Giovanni Pico of Mirandola, to whom we have before frequently adverted, is perhaps the most illustrious instance. This accomplished nobleman, of whom many extraordinary circumstances are related, and who certainly exhibited a wonderful example of the powers of the human mind, was born at Mirandula, in the year 1463, and was one of the younger children of Giovan-Francesco Pico, prince of Mirandula and Concordia. So quick was his apprehension, so retentive his memory, that we are told a single recital was sufficient to fix in his mind whatever became the object of his attention. After having spent seven years in the most celebrated universities of Italy and France, he arrived at Rome in the twenty-first year of his age, with the reputation of being acquainted with twenty-two different languages. Eager to signalize himself as a disputant, Pico proposed for public debate nine hundred questions, on mathematical, theological, and scholastic subjects, including also inquiries into the most abstruse points of the Hebraic, Chaldaic, and Arabic tongues. This measure, which in its worst light could only be considered as an ebullition of youthful vanity, might, without any great injustice, have been suffered to evaporate in neglect; but the Romish prelates, instead of consigning these propositions to their fate, or debating them with the impartiality of philosophers, began to examine them with the suspicious eyes of churchmen, and selected thirteen of them as heretical. To vindicate his labours from this dangerous imputation, Pico composed a Latin treatise of considerable extent, which he is said to have written in the space of twenty days, and which he inscribed to Lorenzo de' Medici, under whose protection he had sheltered himself from persecution at Florence. The character and acquirements of Pico afforded to his contemporaries a subject for the most unbounded panegyric. "He was a man," says Politiano, "or rather a hero, on whom nature had lavished all the endowments both of body and mind; erect and elegant in his person, there was something in his appearance almost divine. Of a perspicacious mind, a wonderful memory, indefatigable in study, distinct and eloquent in speech, it seemed doubtful whether he was more conspicuous for his talents or his virtues. Intimately conversant with every department of philosophy, improved and invigorated by the knowledge of various languages, and of every honourable science, it may be truly said, that no commendation is equal to his praise.

The instances before given of the critical talents of Pico, whatever may be thought of their accuracy, will at least justify him from the reproof of Voltaire, who is opinion that the works of Dante and Petrarca would have been a more suitable study for him, than the summary of St. Thomas, or the compilations of Albert the Great. But the literary pursuits of Pico were not confined to commentaries upon the works of others. From the specimens which remain of his poetical compositions in his native language, there is reason to form a favourable judgment of those which have perished. Crescimbeni confesses, that by his early death the Tuscan poetry sustained a heavy loss, and that his accomplished pen might have rescued it from its degraded state, without the intervention of so many other eminent men, whose labours had been employed to the same purpose. The few pieces which remain of his Latin poetry induce us to regret the severity of their author. These poems he had arranged in five books, which he. submitted to the correction of Politiano, who, having performed his task, returned them, with an elegant apology for the freedoms he had taken. Soon afterwards Keo committed his five books to the flames, to the great regret of Politiano, who has perpetuated this incident by a Greek epigram. If the works thus destroyed were equal in merit to his Latin elegy addressed to Girolamo Benivieni, posterity has indeed reason to lament her loss.

Among the circumstances favourable to the promotion of letters in the fifteenth century, another yet remains to be noticed, which it would be unpardonable to omit; and which, if it did not greatly contribute towards their progress, certainly tended, not only to render the study of languages more general, but to remove the idea that the acquisition of them was attended with

any extraordinary difficulty. This was the partiality shewn to these studies, and the proficiency made in them, by women, illustrious by their birth, or eminent for their personal accomplishments. Among these, Alessandra, the daughter of Bartolomeo Scala, was peculiarly distinguished. The extraordinary beauty of her person was surpassed by the endowments of her mind. At an early age she was a proficient, not only in the Latin, but the Greek tongue, which she had studied under Joannes Lascar and Demetrius Chalcondyles. Such an union of excellence attracted the attention, and is supposed to have engaged theaffections of Politiano; but Alessandra gave her hand to the Greek Marullus, who enjoyed at Florence the favour of Lorenzo de' Medici, and in the elegance of his Latin compositions, emulated the Italians themselves. Hence probably arose those dissensions between Marullus and Politiano, the monuments of which yet remain in their writings.

Of yet greater celebrity is the name of Cassandra Fidelis. Descended from ancestors who had changed their residence from Milan to Venice, and had uniformly added to the respectability of their rank by their uncommon learning, she began at an early age to prosecute her studies with great diligence, and acquired such a knowledge of the learned languages, that she may with justice be enumerated among the first scholars of the age. The letters which occasionally passed between Cassandra and Politiano demonstrate their mutual esteem, if indeed such expression be sufficient to characterise the feelings of Politiano, who expresses in language unusually florid, his high admiration of her extraordinary acquirements, and his expectation of the benefits which the cause of letters would derive from her labours and example. In the year 1491, the Florentine scholar made a visit to Venice, were the favourable opinion which he had formed of her writings was confirmed by a personal interview. "Yesterday," says he, writing to his great patron, "I paid a visit to the celebrated Cassandra, to whom I presented your respects. She is, indeed, Lorenzo, a surprising woman, as well from her acquirements in her own language, as in the Latin; and in my opinion she may be called handsome. I left her, astonished at her talents. She is much devoted to your interests, and speaks of you with great esteem. She even avows her intention of visiting you at Florence, so that you may prepare yourself to give her a proper reception." From a letter of this lady, many years afterwards, to Leo X we learn, that an epistolary correspondence had subsisted between her and Lorenzo de' Medici; and it is with concern we perceive, that the remembrance of this intercourse is revived, in order to induce the pontiff to bestow upon her some pecuniary assistance; she being then a widow, with a numerous train of dependents. She lived, however, to a far more advanced period, and died in the year 1558, having completed a full century. Her literary acquirements, and the reputation of her early associates, threw a lustre on her declining years; and as her memory remained unimpaired to the last, she was resorted to from all parts of Italy, as a living monument of those happier days, to which the Italians never adverted without regret.

That this attention to serious studies, by which these celebrated women distinguished themselves, was the characteristic of the sex in general, cannot perhaps be with truth asserted. Yet the pretensions of the sex to literary eminence were not Confined to these instances. The Italian historians have noticed many other women of high rank who obtained by their learning no inconsiderable share of applause. Politiano celebrates as a tenth muse a lady of Sienna, to whom he gives the name of Cecca; and from the numerous pieces in the learned languages, professedly addressed to women, We may reasonably infer, that these studies were at that time more generally diffused amongst them, than they have been at any subsequent period.

Having thus adverted to some of the principal causes which accelerated the progress of classical literature in the fifteenth century, and observed the active part which Lorenzo de' Medici took in every transaction that was favourable to its promotion, it may now be proper briefly to inquire what was the result of exertions so earnestly made, and so long continued; and whether

the tree, which had been transplanted with so much difficulty, and nourished by such constant attention, brought forth fruit sufficient to repay the labour bestowed upon it.

One of the first efforts of the Italian scholars was the translation of the most eminent Greek authors into Latin. Among the earliest and most assiduous of these translators is Leonardo Aretino, whose versions of various works of Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch, and other Greek authors, form a list too extensive to be recognised in the present work. The labours of Ficino, though not so numerous, are yet more voluminous. Some account of them is found in a Latin epistle from their author to Politiano: "Why, my friend," says Ficino, " have you so often desired to know what works I have published? Is it that you may celebrate them in your verses? But approbation is not due to number so much as to choice, and merit is distinguished by quality rather than quantity." If Ficino had adhered more closely to this maxim, it would certainly have diminished nothing of his reputation, which is buried under the immense mass of his own labours. The earliest production in this department of literature, which united elegance with fidelity, is the translation of the history of Herodian, by Politiano. This work he inscribed to Innocent VIII in a manly and judicious address, in which he briefly states the rules that he had prescribed to himself in the execution of his work, which are yet deserving the notice of all who engage in similar undertakings.

From his early years Politiano had closely attached himself to the study of the writings of Homer; and whilst he was very young, had begun to translate the Iliad into Latin hexameter verse. Whoever is acquainted with the great extent of his powers, and the peculiar energy of his Latin compositions, will regret that of this monument of his industry not a vestige remains. That he had made a considerable progress in this work, appears from many authorities; and there is even reason to believe that his perseverance finally overcame the difficulties of his undertaking. Ficino, writing to Lorenzo de' Medici, and congratulating him on the success of his attention to liberal studies, particularly adverts to the protection afforded by him to Politiano, of whose translation of the Grecian bard he speaks in those terms of florid adulation which too frequently characterise his letters. Another contemporary author has plainly indicated that Politiano completed his important task, to the progress of which, he has occasionally adverted in his own works .Whether his youthful labours fell a sacrifice to the severity of his riper judgment, or perished in the general dispersion of the Medicean library, of which he lived to be a witness, is a question which must yet remain Undecided.

The early part of the fifteenth century was distinguished by a warm admiration of the writings of the ancients, and an extreme avidity to possess them. This was succeeded, as might be expected, by an attention to the accuracy of the text, and an ardent desire of transfusing their beauties into a language more generally known. Towards the latter part of the century a further progress was made; and from commenting, and translating, the Italians began to emulate these remains of ancient genius. Those who distinguished themselves during the time of Cosmo and Piero de' Medici, have already attracted some share of our notice; but it must, in general, be acknowledged, that although their labours exhibit at times a tolerable knowledge of the mechanical parts of learning, and have the body and form of poetic composition, yet the animating spirit that should communicate life and motion is sought for in vain ; or if it be anywhere discoverable, is only to be found in the licentious productions of Beccatelli. Of that kind of composition which may be called classical, modern Italy had seen no examples. The writings of Landino, of which specimens have been already given, are however entitled to some share of approbation; and if they be not marked by any powerful efforts of imagination, nor remind us strongly of the wants of others, they possess a flow of language, and a facility of diction and versification, much superior to his predecessors. A further proficiency was made by Naldo Naldio, or Naldo de Naldis, the friend of Ficino and Politiano, and the frequent panegyrist of the Medici.

The poem of Ugolino Verini, “De Illustratione Urbis Florentiae,” is perhaps more valuable for the authenticity of the information it communicates, than for its poetical excellence, yet Verini has left other testimonies that entitle him to rank with the. first Latin poets of his age. These pieces are principally devoted. to the praises of the Medici, and frequently advert to the characters of Lorenzo and Giuliano, and to the circumstances of the times.

In Michael Verini, the son of Ugolino, we have a surprising instance of early attainments in learning. He was born in 1465; and, although he died at the age of seventeen years, yet in that short space of time, he had obtained the admiration and conciliated the esteem of his learned contemporaries. His principal work is a collection of Latin *disticha*, which exhibit great facility both of invention and expression, and acquaintance with human life and manners far beyond his years. His Latin letters, of which a large collection is preserved in the Laurentian Library, and which are chiefly addressed to his father, are as honourable to the paternal kindness of the one, as to the filial affection of the other. His death is said to have been occasioned by his repugnance to obey the prescription of his physicians, who recommended an experiment which it seems his modesty did not approve, and he fell a sacrifice to his pertinacious chastity. From his letters it appears that both he and his father lived on terms of intimacy and friendship with Landino, Bartolomeo Fontio, and Politiano, and that Lorenzo de’ Medici occasionally passed a leisure hour in convivial intercourse with this learned family.

The reputation acquired by the Florentines in the cultivation of Latin poetry stimulated the exertions of other Latin authors. On the memorable occasion of the conspiracy of the Pazzi, Platinus Platus, a Milanese, addressed to Lorenzo de’ Medici a copy of verses which obtained his warm approbation. The exertions of Lorenzo in establishing the academy at Pisa gave rise to a poem of greater merit and importance by Carolus de Maximis. To the authors before mentioned we may add the names of Cantalicio, Nicodemo Folengi, Alessandro Braccio, and Aurelio Augurelli, all of whom have cultivated Latin poetry with different degrees of success, and have addressed some portion of their works to Lorenzo de’ Medici, to which the reader may not be displeased to refer.

Of all these authors, though some possess a considerable share of merit, not one of them can contend in point of poetical excellence with Politiano, who in his composition approaches nearer to the standard of the ancients than any man of his time; yet, whilst he emulates the dignity of Virgil or reminds us of the elegance of Horace, he suggests not to our minds the idea of servile imitation. Of the character of his writings various opinions have indeed been entertained, which have been detailed at large by Baillet, and still more copiously by Menckenius. It may therefore be sufficient on this occasion to caution the reader against an implicit acquiescence in the opinions of two eminent modern authors, who have either obliquely censured, or too cautiously approved his poetical works. In the attempt made by Politiano to restore a just taste for the literature of the ancients, it is not to be denied that he had powerful coadjutors in Pontano and Sanazaro, whose labours have given to the delightful vicinity of Naples new pretensions to the appellation of classic ground. Nor will it diminish his reputation if we admit that the empire which he had founded was in the next century extended and secured by the exertions of Fracastoro, Vida, Naugerio, and Flaminio, in whom the great poets of the Augusta nage seem once more to be revived.

Whilst the study of polite literature was thus emerging from its state of reptile torpor, the other sciences felt the effects of the same invigorating beam ; and the city of Florence, like a sheltered garden, in the opening of spring, re-echoed with the earliest sounds of returning animation. The Platonic academy existed in full splendour, and served as a common bond to unite, at stated intervals, those who had signalized themselves by scientific or literary pursuits. The

absurd pretensions of judicial astrology were freely examined and openly exposed; and observation and experi-ment were at length substituted in the place of conjecture and of fraud. Paolo Toscanelli had already erected his celebrated Gnomon. Lorenzo da Volpaja constructed for Lorenzo de' Medici a clock, or piece of mechanism, which not only marked the hour of the day, but the motions of the sun and of the planets, the eclipses, the signs of the zodiac, and the whole revolutions of the heavens. A laudable attempt was made by Francesco Berlinghieri to facilitate the study of geography by uniting it with poetry. In metaphysics several treatises made their appearance, some of which are inscribed by their authors to Lorenzo de' Medici. His efforts to promote the important science of medicine, and to rescue it from the absurdities in which it was enveloped, are acknowledged by several of its most eminent professors, who cultivated it on more liberal principles, and have attributed their proficiency to his bounty. In the practice and theory of music, Antonio Squarcialupi excelled all his predecessors; and Lorenzo is said to have written a poem in his praise. His liberality was emulated by many other illustrious citizens who were allied to him by affinity, or attached by the ties of friendship and of kindred studies, and the innumerable literary works of this period, the production of Florentine authors, evince the success that attended their exertions. Of these works many yet hold a high rank, not only for practical knowledge, but for purity of diction; and upon the whole they bear the stamp of industry, talents, and good sense. And as they certainly excel, both in point of information and composition, the productions that immediately preceded them, so they are perhaps justly to be preferred to many of those of the ensuing century; when, by an overstrained attention to the beauty of language, the importance of the subject was frequently neglected or forgotten, and the talents of the first men of the age, being devoted rather to words than to things, were overwhelmed in a prolixity of language, that in the form of letters, orations, and critical dissertations, became the opprobrium of literature and the destruction of true taste.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### 1490.

Having hitherto traced the conduct of Lorenzo de' Medici in public life, we may now be allowed to follow him to his domestic retreat, and observe him in the intercourse of his family, the education of his children, or the society of his friends. The mind of man varies with his local situation, and before it can be justly estimated must be viewed in those moments when it expands in the warmth of confidence, and exhibits its true colours in the sunshine of affection. Whether it was from the suggestion of policy, or the versatility of his natural disposition, that Lorenzo de' Medici turned with such facility from concerns of high importance to the discussion of subjects of amusement and the levity of convivial intercourse, certain it is, that few persons have displayed this faculty in so eminent a degree. "Think not," says Politiano, writing to his friend, "that any of our learned associates, even they who have devoted their lives to study, are to be esteemed superior to Lorenzo de' Medici, either for acuteness in disputation or for good sense in forming a just decision; or that he yields to any of them in expressing his thoughts with facility, variety, and elegance. The examples of history are as familiar to him as the attendants that surround his table ; and when the nature of his subject admits of it, his conversation is abundantly seasoned with the salt collected from that ocean from which Venus herself first sprung." His talent for irony was peculiar, and folly and absurdity seldom escaped his animadversion. In the collections formed by the Florentines of the *motti e burle* of celebrated men, Lorenzo bears a distinguished part; but when expressions adapted to the occasion of a moment are transplanted to the page of a book, and submitted to the cool consideration of the closet, they too often remind us of a flower cropt from its stalk to be preserved in arid deformity. Possibly, too, those who have assumed the task of selection may not have been accurate in their choice, and perhaps the celebrity of his name may have been an inducement to others to attribute to him witticisms unworthy of his character. Yet the *bon-mots* of Lorenzo may rank with many of those which have been published with importance and read with avidity. Grazzini has also introduced this eminent man as amusing himself with a piece of meditated jocularity, in order to free himself from the importunate visits of a physician who too frequently appeared at his table; but for the veracity of this narrative we have only the authority of a professed novelist. Nor is it likely that Lorenzo, though he frequently indulged in the license allowed by the Roman satirist, would have forgotten the precaution with which it is accompanied, or would have misemployed his time and his talents in contriving and executing so insipid and childish an entertainment.

Although there is reason to believe that Clarice Orsini, the wife of Lorenzo, was not the object of his early passion, yet that he lived with her in uninterrupted affection, and treated her on all occasions with the respect due to her rank and her virtues, appears from many circumstances. He has not, however, escaped an imputation which has sometimes attached itself to names of great celebrity, and which indeed too often taints the general mass of excellence with the leaven of human nature. "Such a combination of talents and of virtues," says Machiavelli, "as appeared in Lorenzo de' Medicis was not counterbalanced by a single fault, although he was incredibly devoted to the indulgence of an amorous passion." In asserting a particular defect, it is remarkable that the historian admits it not as an exception to his general approbation. Yet it is not to be denied, that if such an accusation were established, it would be difficult to apologize for Lorenzo, although the manners of the age and the vivacity of his natural disposition might be urged in extenuation of his misconduct. In justice, however, to his character, it must be observed,

that the history of the times furnishes us with no information, either as to the circumstances attending his amours or the particular objects of his passion; nor indeed does there appear, from the testimony of his contemporaries, any reason to infer that he is justly charged with this deviation from the rules of virtue and of decorum. Probably this imputation is founded only on a presumption arising from the amorous tendency of some of his poetical writings; and certain it is, that if the offspring of imagination and the effusions of poetry be allowed to decide, the grounds of his conviction may be found in almost every line. It may perhaps be observed that these pieces were chiefly the productions of his youth, before the restrictions of the marriage vow had suppressed the breathings of passion; but how shall we elude the inference which arises from the following lines?

Oo that the marriage bond had join'd our fate,

Nor I been bom too soon, nor thou too late !

Or from these, which are still more explicit ?

But why these thoughts irrelevant and vain !

If I, long since in Hymen's fetters tied,

Am doom'd to hear another call thee bride ?

Nor must it be denied that this elegiac fragment, though incorrect and unfinished, is distinguished by that pathos and glow of expression which genuine passion can alone inspire. If in this piece Lorenzo be amorous, in others he is licentious; and if we admit the production of a moment of levity, as the evidence of his feelings, the only regret that he experienced was from the reflection that he had, in the course of his past time, imprudently neglected so many opportunities of collecting the sweets that were strewn in his way. But shall we venture to infer, that because Lorenzo wrote amorous verses and amused himself with *jeux d'esprit*, his life was dissolute and his conduct immoral "As poetry is the flower of science," says Menage, "so there is not a single person of education who has not composed, or at least wished to compose, verses; and as love is a natural passion, and poetry is the language of love, so there is no one who has written verses, who has not felt the effects of love." If we judge with such severity, what will become of the numerous throng of poets who have thought it sufficient to allege in their justification, that if

Their verse was wanton, yet their lives were chaste?

or what shall we say to the extensive catalogue of learned ecclesiastics who have endeavoured to fill the void of celibacy by composing verses on subjects of love ?

Whatever may be thought of the conduct or the sentiments of Lorenzo on this head, it does not appear that he left any offspring of illicit love; but by his wife Clarice he had a numerous

progeny, of which three sons and four daughters arrived at the age of maturity. Piero, his eldest son, was born on the 15th day of February, 1471; Giovanni, on the 11th day of December, 1475; and Giuliano, his youngest, in 1478. Of these, the first was distinguished by a series of misfortunes, too justly merited, the two latter by an unusual degree of prosperity: Giovanni having obtained the dignity of the Tiara, which he wore by the name of Leo X, and Giuliano having allied himself by marriage to the royal house of France, and obtained the title of duke of Nemours.

In no point of view does the character of this extraordinary man appear more engaging than in his affection towards his children, in his care of their education, and in his solicitude for their welfare. In their society he relaxed from his important occupations, and accustomed himself to share their pleasures and promote their amusements. By what more certain means can a parent obtain that confidence so necessary to enable him to promote the happiness of his children ? The office of an instructor of youth he considered as of the highest importance. “If,” says he, “we esteem those who contribute to the prosperity of the state, we ought to place in the first rank the tutors of our children, whose labours are to influence posterity, and on whose precepts and exertions the dignity of our family and of our country in a great measure depends.”

Soon after the conspiracy of the Pazzi, when Lorenzo thought it expedient to remove his family to Pistoia, they were accompanied by Politiano, as the instructor of his sons, who gave frequent information to his patron of their situation and the progress made in the education of his children. These confidential letters enable us to form a more accurate idea of the disposition of their author, than we can collect from any of his writings intended for publication. Restless, impatient of control, and conceiving all merit to be concentered in the acquisition of learning, he could brook no opposition to his authority. The intervention of Madonna Clarice in the direction of her children, was in his judgment impertinent, because she was unlettered, and a woman. In one of his letters, he earnestly requests that Lorenzo will delegate to him a more extensive power; whilst in another, written on the same day, he acknowledges that this request was made under the impulse of passion, and solicits indulgence for the infirmity of his temper. The subsequent eminence of his pupils renders these letters interesting. What friend of literature can be indifferent to the infancy of Leo the Tenth ? “Piero,” says Politiano, “attends to his studies with tolerable diligence. We daily make excursions through the neighbourhood, we visit the gardens with which this city abounds, and sometimes look into the library of Maestro Zambino, where I have found some good pieces both in Greek and Latin. Giovanni rides out on horseback, and the people follow him in crowds.” From Pistoia the family retired in the close of the year to Caffagiolo, where they passed the winter; from whence Politiano continued his correspondence with Lorenzo, and occasionally addressed himself to his mother, Madonna Lucretia, between whom and this eminent scholar, there subsisted a friendly and confidential intercourse. These letters afford an additional proof of the querulousness of genius, and may serve to reconcile mediocrity to its placid insignificance. “The only news I can send you,” thus he writes to this lady, “is, that we have here such continual rains, that it is impossible to quit the house, and the exercises of the country are changed for childish sports within doors. Here I stand by the fireside, in my great coat and slippers, that you might take me for the very figure of melancholy. Indeed, I am the same at all times; for I neither see, nor hear, nor do anything that gives me pleasure, so much am I affected by the thoughts of our calamities; sleeping and waking they still continue to haunt me. Two days since we were all rejoicing upon hearing that the plague had ceased;—now we are depressed on being informed that some symptoms of it yet remain. Were we at Florence we should have some consolation, were it only that of seeing Lorenzo when he returned to his house; but here we are in continual anxiety, and I, for my part, am half dead with solitude and weariness. The plague and the war are incessantly in my mind. I lament past misfortunes, and anticipate future evils; and I have no longer at my side my dear Madonna Lucretia, to whom I might unbosom my cares.” Such

is the melancholy strain in which Politiano addresses the mother of Lorenzo; but we seldom complain except to those we esteem; and this letter is a better evidence of the feelings of Politiano than a volume of well-turned compliments.

In conciliating the regard of Clarice, Politiano was not equally fortunate. Her interference with him in his office appeared to him an unpardonable intrusion. “As for Giovanni,” says he, “his mother employs him in reading the Psalter, which I by no means commend. Whilst she declined interfering with him, it is astonishing how rapidly he improved; insomuch that he read without assistance. There is nothing,” he proceeds, “which I ask more earnestly of Heaven, than that I may be able to convince you of my fidelity, my diligence, and my patience, which I would prove even by my death. Many things however I omit, that amidst your numerous avocations I may not add to your solicitude.” When Politiano wrote thus to his patron, it is not to be supposed that his conduct at Caffagiolo was distinguished by moderation or complacency. The dissensions between him and Madonna Clarice consequently increased, till at length the intemperance or the arrogance of Politiano afforded her a just pretext for compelling him to quit the house. By a letter from Clarice to her husband on this occasion, we are informed of the provocation which she received, and must confess that she had sufficient cause for the measures she adopted; for what woman can bear with patience the stings of ridicule ? “I shall be glad,” says she, “to escape being made the subject of a tale of Franco’s as Luigi Pulci was; nor do I like that Messer Agnolo should threaten that he would remain in the house in spite of me. You remember I told you, that if it was your will he should stay, I was perfectly contented; and although I have suffered infinite abuse from him, yet if it be with your assent, I am satisfied. But I do not believe it to be so.” On this trying occasion, as on many others, Politiano experienced the indulgence and friendship of Lorenzo, who, seeing that a reconciliation between the contending parties was impracticable, allowed the banished scholar a residence in his house at Fiesole. No longer fretted by female opposition, or wearied with the monotonous task of inculcating learning, his mind soon recovered its natural tone; and the fruits of the leisure which he enjoyed yet appear in a beautiful Latin poem, inferior in its kind only to the Georgies of Virgil, and to which he gave the title of “Rusticus.” In the close of this poem, he thus expresses his gratitude to his constant benefactor:

Thus flow the strains, whilst here at ease reclined

At length the sweets of calm repose I find;

Where Fesule, with high impending brow,

O’erlooks Maeonian Florence stretch’d below:

Whilst Arno, winding through the mild domain,

Leads in repeated folds his lengthen'd train ;

Nor thou thy poet's grateful strain refuse,

Lorenzo ! sure resource of every muse;

Whose praise, so thou his leisure hour prolong,

Shall claim the tribute of a nobler song.

Were we to give implicit credit to the testimony of his tutor, Piero de' Medici united in himself all the great qualities by which his progenitors bad been successively distinguished: "The talents of his father, the virtues of his grandfather, and the prudence of the venerable Cosimo." Lorenzo himself had certainly formed a favourable opinion of his capacity, and is said to have remarked that his eldest son would be distinguished for ability, his second for probity, his third by an amiable temper. The fondness of a parent was gratified in observing those instances of an extraordinary memory which Piero displayed in his childhood, and in listening to the poetical pieces which he was accustomed to recite to the familiar circle of friends who perhaps admired, and certainly applauded his efforts. Among these were some of the whimsical productions of Matteo Franco. As he advanced in years, his father was desirous that he should always participate in the conversation of those eminent scholars who frequented the palace of the Medici; and it was with pleasure that Lorenzo saw the mutual attachment that subsisted between his son and the professors of literature in general." The celebrated epistles of Politiano, which were collected by their author at the instance of Piero, and to whom they are inscribed in terms of grateful affection, bear ample testimony to his acquirements; and the frequent mention made of his name by the learned correspondents of Politiano is a convincing proof of his attention to their interests and his attachment to the cause of letters. Happy if the day that opened with such promising appearances had not been seen so suddenly overclouded;

Sed zephyri spes portavere paternas;

and Piero, by one inconsiderate step, which his subsequent efforts could never retrieve, rendered ineffectual all the solicitude of his father and all the lessons of his youth.

Giovanni, the second son of Lorenzo, was destined from his infancy to the church. Early brought-forward into public view, and strongly impressed with a sense of the necessity of a grave deportment ,he seems never to have been a child. At seven years of age he was admitted into holy orders, and received the *tonsura* from Gentile, bishop of Arezzo. From thenceforth he was called Messer Giovanni, and was soon afterwards declared capable of ecclesiastical preferment. Before he was eight years of age he was appointed by Louis XI of France, abbot of Fonte Dolce, which was immediately succeeded by a presentation from the same patron to the archbishopric of Aix in Provence; but in this instance the liberality of the king was opposed by an invincible objection, for before the investiture could be obtained from the pope, information was received at Florence that the archbishop was yet living. This disappointment was however compensated by the abbacy of the rich monastery of Pasignano. Of the glaring indecorum of bestowing spiritual functions on a child, Lorenzo was fully sensible, and he accordingly endeavoured to counteract the unfavourable impression which it might make on the public mind, by inculcating upon his son the strictest attention to his manners, his morals, and his improvement. He had too much sagacity not to be convinced, that the surest method of obtaining the rewards of merit is to deserve them; and Messer Giovanni was not more distinguished from his youthful associates by the high promotions which he enjoyed, than he was by his attention to his studies, his strict performance of the duties enjoined him, and his inviolable regard to truth.

In providing for the expenses of the wars in which the Florentines had been engaged, considerable debts had been incurred: and as they had not yet learned the destructive expedient of anticipating their future revenue, or transferring their own burthens to their posterity, it became necessary to provide for the payment of these demands. Besides the debts, contracted in the name of the republic, Lorenzo had been obliged to have recourse to his agents in different countries to borrow large sums of money, which had been ap-plied to the exigencies of the state; but if was no improbable conjecture, that the money which had been lavishly expended during the heat of the contest, would be repaid with reluctance when the struggle was over. These

considerations occasioned him great anxiety; for whilst, on the one band, he dreaded the disgrace of being wanting in the performance of his pecuniary engagements, he was not perhaps less apprehensive, on the other hand, of diminishing his influence in Florence by the imposition of additional taxes. From this difficulty he saw no possibility of extricating himself, but by the most rigid attention, as well to the improvement of the public revenue, as to the state of his own concerns. The increasing prosperity of the city of Florence seconded his efforts, and in a short time the creditors of the state were fully reimbursed, without any increase of the public burthens. His own engagements yet remained incomplete; but whilst he was endeavouring from his large property and extensive concerns to discharge the demands against him, a decree providing for the payment of his debts out of the public treasury relieved him from his difficulties, and proved that the affection of his fellow-citizens yet remained unimpaired. Lorenzo did not, however, receive this mark of esteem without bitterly exclaiming against the negligence and imprudence of his factors and correspondents, who, by their inattention to his affairs, had reduced him to the necessity of accepting such a favour. From this period he determined to dose his mercantile concerns with all possible expedition, well considering, that besides the inherent uncertainty of these transactions, the success of them depended too much on the industry and integrity of others. He therefore resolved to turn his attention to occupations more particularly under his own inspection, and to relinquish the fluctuating advantages of commerce for the more certain revenue derived from the cultivation of his rich farms and extensive possessions in different parts of Tuscany.

His villa of Poggio-Cajano was, in his intervals of leisure, his favourite residence. Here he erected a magnificent mansion, and formed the complete establishment of a princely farmer. Of this fertile domain, and of the labours of Lorenzo in its cultivation and improvement one of his contemporaries has left a very particular and authentic description. “The village of Cajano,” says he, “is built on the easy slope of a hill, and is at the distance of about ten miles from Florence. The road to it from the city is very spacious, and excellent even in winter, and is in every respect suitable for all kinds of carriages. The river Ombrone winds round it with a smooth deep stream, affording great plenty of fish. The villa of Lorenzo is denominated Ambra, either from the name of the river, or on account of its extraordinary beauty. His fields are occasionally refreshed with streams of fine and wholesome water, which Lorenzo, with that magnificence which characterizes all his undertakings, has conveyed by an aqueduct over mountains and precipices for many miles. The house is not yet built, but the foundations are laid. Its situation is midway between Florence and Pistoia. Towards the north a spacious plain extends to the river, and is protected from the floods, which sudden rains sometimes occasion, by an immense embankment. From the facility with which it is watered in summer, it is so fertile, that three crops of hay are cut in each year; but it is manured every other year, lest the soil should be exhausted. On an eminence about the middle of the farm are very extensive stables, the floors of which, for the sake of cleanliness, are laid with stone. These buildings are surrounded with high walls and a deep moat, and have four towers like a castle. Here are kept a great number of most fertile and productive cows, which afford a quantity of cheese, equal to the supply of the city and vicinity of Florence; so that it is now no longer necessary to procure it as formerly from Lombardy. A brood of hogs fed by the whey grow to a remarkable size. The villa abounds with quails and other birds, particularly water fowl, so that the diversion of fowling is enjoyed here without fa-tigue. Lorenzo has also furnished the woods with pheasants and with peacocks, which he procured from Sicily. His orchards and gardens are most luxuriant, extending along the banks of the river. His plantation of mulberry trees is of such extent, that we may hope ere long to have a diminution in the price of silk. But why should I proceed in my description? come and see the place yourself; and you will acknowledge, like the queen of Sheba when she, visited Solomon, that the report is not adequate to the truth.”

Like the gardens of Alcinous, the farm of Lorenzo has frequently been celebrated in the language of poetry. To his own poem, on the destruction of his labours by the violence of the river, we have before adverted. Politiano thus concludes his Sylva, devoted to the praises of Homer, to which, on account of its having been written at this place, he has given the name of *Ambra*.

Go on, Lorenzo, thou the muse's pride,
Pierce the hard rock and scoop the mountain's side;
The distant streams shall hear thy potent call,
And the proud arch receive them as they fall.
Thence o'er thy fields the genial waters lead,
That with luxuriant verdure crown the mead.
Thera rise thy mounds th' opposing flood that ward,
Thera thy domains thy faithful mastiffs guard :
Tarentum there her horned cattle sends,
Whose swelling teats the milky rill distends:
There India's breed of various colours range,
Pleased with the novel scene and pastures strange,
Whilst nightly closed within their shelter'd stall
For the due treat their lowing offspring call.
Meantime the milk in spacious coppers boils.
With arms upstript the elder rustic toils,
The young assist the curdled mass to squeeze,
And place in cooling shades the recent cheese.
Wide o'er thy downs extends thy fleecy charge:
There the Calabrian hog, obese and large,
Loud from his sty demands his constant food;
And Spain supplies thee with thy rabbit-brood.
Where mulberry groves their length of shadow spread,
Secure the silk-worm spins his lustrous thread;
And, cull'd from every flower the plunderer meets,
The bee regales thee with her rifled sweets:
There birds of various plume and various note

Flutter their captive wings, with cackling throat

The Paduan fowl betrays her future breed,

And there the geese, once Rome's preservers, feed,

And ducks amusive sport amidst thy floods,

And doves, the pride of Venus, throng thy woods.

When Lorenzo was prevented by his numerous avocations from enjoying his retreat at Poggio-Cajano, his other villas in the vicinity of Florence afforded him an opportunity of devoting to his own use or the society of his friends those shorter intervals of time which he could withdraw from the service of the public. His residence at Careggi was in every respect suitable to his rank. The house, which was erected by his grandfather and enlarged by his father, was sufficiently commodious. The adjacent grounds, which possessed every natural advantage that wood and water could afford, were improved and planted under his own directions, and his gardens were provided with every vegetable, either for ornament or use, which the most diligent research could supply. But Fiesole seems to have been the general resort of his literary friends, to many of whom he allotted habitations in the neighbourhood during the amenity of the summer months. Of these Politiano and Pico were the most constant, and perhaps the most welcome guests. Landino, Scala, and Ficino, were also frequent in their visits; and Crinitus, the pupil of Politiano, and Marullus, his rival in letters and in love, were occasionally admitted to this select society. "Superior perhaps," says Voltaire, (substituting however Lascar and Chalcondyles for Scala and Crinitus,) "to that of the boasted sages of Greece." Of the beauties of this place, and of the friendly intercourse that subsisted among these eminent men, Politiano, in a letter to Ficino, gives us some idea. "When you are incommoded," says he, "with the heat of the season in your retreat at Careggi, you will perhaps think the shelter of Fiesole not undeserving your notice. Seated between the sloping sides of the mountain, we have here water in abundance; and being constantly refreshed with moderate winds, find little inconvenience from the glare of the sun. As you approach the house, it seems embosomed in the wood; but when you reach it, you find it commands a full prospect of the city. Populous as the vicinity is, yet I can here enjoy that solitude so gratifying to my disposition. But I shall tempt you with other allurements. Wandering beyond the limits of his own plantation, Pico sometimes steals unexpectedly on my retirement, and draws me from my shades to partake of his supper. What kind of supper that is, you well know; sparing indeed, but neat, and rendered grateful by the charms of his conversation. Be you, however, my guest. Your supper here shall be as good, and your wine perhaps better; for in the quality of my wine I shall contend for superiority even with Pico himself."

Besides his places of residence before noticed, Lorenzo had large possessions in different parts of Tuscany. His house at Caffagiolo, near the village of that name among the romantic scenes of the Apennines, had been the favourite residence of his grandfather Cosimo; who, on being asked why he preferred this place to his more convenient habitation at Fiesole, is said to have assigned as a reason, that Caffagiolo seemed pleasanter, because all the country he could see from his windows was his own. At Agnana, in the territory of Pisa, Lorenzo had a fertile domain, which he improved by draining, and bringing into cultivation the extensive marshes that lay in its neighbourhood, the completion of which was only prevented by his death. Another estate, in the district of Volterra, was rendered extremely fruitful by his labours, and yielded him an ample revenue. Valori relates that Lorenzo was highly gratified with the amusement of horse-racing, and that he kept many horses for this purpose, amongst which was a roan, that on every occasion bore

away the prize. The same author professes to have heard from Politiano, that as often as this horse happened to be sick, or was wearied with the course, he refused any nourishment except from the hands of Lorenzo, at whose approach he testified his pleasure by neighing and by motions of his body, even whilst lying on the ground; so that it is not to be wondered at, says this author, by a kind of commendation rather more striking than just, that Lorenzo should be the delight of mankind, when even the brute creation expressed an affection for him. In the year 1484, at which time Piero de' Medici, the eldest son of Lorenzo, was about fourteen years of age, his father judged it expedient to send him to Rome on a visit to the pope, and appointed Scala and Politiano as his companions. He did not however implicitly confide in their discretion, but drew up himself very full and explicit directions for the conduct of his son during his absence. These instructions yet remain, and may serve, as much as any circumstance whatever, to give us an idea of the sagacity and penetration of Lorenzo, and of his attention, not only to the regulation of the manners of his son, but to the promotion of his own views. He advises him to speak naturally, without affectation, not to be anxious to display his learning, to use expressions of civility, and to address himself with seriousness and yet with ease to all. On his arrival at Rome he cautions him not to take precedence of his countrymen who are his superiors in age; "for though you are my son," says he, "you will remember that you are only a citizen of Florence like themselves." He suggests to him what topics it will be proper for him to dwell upon.in his interview with the pope; and directs him to express, in the most explicit manner, the devotion of his father to the holy see. He then proceeds to the essential object of his mission. "After having thus recommended me to his holiness, -you will inform him that your affection for your brother induces you to speak a word in his favour. You can here mention that I have educated him for the priesthood, and shall closely attend to his learning and his manners, so that he may not disgrace his profession; that in this respect I repose all my hopes on his holiness; who, having already given us proofs of his kindness and affection, will add to our obligations by any promotion which he may think proper to bestow upon him; endeavouring by these and similar expressions to recommend your brother to his favour as much as lies in your power."

In whatever manner Piero acquitted himself on his youthful embassy, it is probable that this interview accomplished the object on which the future fortunes of his house were so materially to depend; and Giovanni de' Medici, when only thirteen years of age, ranked with the prime supporters of the Roman church. It seems, however, that although the pope had complied with the pressing instances of Lorenzo, in bestowing on his son the dignity of a cardinal, he was not insensible of the indecorum of such a measure, for he expressly prohibited him from assuming the insignia of his rank for three years, requesting that he would apply that interval to the diligent prosecution of his studies. He accordingly went to Pisa, where the regularity of his conduct and his attention to his improvement, justified in some degree the extraordinary indulgence which he had experienced, in consequence of which, his father made the most pressing instances to the pope to shorten the time of his probation. "Trust the management of this business to me," said Innocent; "I have heard of his good conduct, and of the honours which he has obtained in his college disputes. I consider him as my own son, and shall, when it is least expected, order his promotion to be made public; besides which, it is my intention to do much more for his advancement than is at present supposed." The three years were, however, suffered to elapse, and the young cardinal was then admitted to all the honours of his rank, the investiture having been performed by Matteo Bosso, prior of the monastery at Fiesole, who has left in one of his letters a particular narrative of the ceremony. After passing a few days with his father at Florence, Giovanni hastened to Rome to pay his respects to the pope. On his approach to that city he was met and congratulated by several other cardinals, who made no hesitation in receiving into their number so young an associate. By the seriousness and propriety of his demeanour, he obviated as much as possible the unfavourable impression which a promotion so unprecedented had made on the

public mind. Soon after his arrival at Rome, his father addressed to him an admonitory letter, as conspicuous for sound sense as for paternal affection, but which discovers the deep policy of Lorenzo and the great extent of his views. This letter may, without any unreasonable assumption, be considered as the guide of the future life and fortunes of a son, who afterwards attained the highest rank in Christendom, and supported it with a dignity which gave it new lustre.

Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni de' Medici, Cardinal.

"You, and all of us who are interested in your welfare, ought to esteem ourselves highly favoured by Providence, not only for the many honours and benefits bestowed on our house, but more particularly for having conferred upon us, in your person, the greatest dignity we have ever enjoyed. This favour, in itself so important, is rendered still more so by the circumstances with which it is accompanied, and especially by the consideration of your youth and of our situation. in the world. The first thing that I would therefore suggest to you is, that you ought to be grateful to God, and continually to recollect that it is not through your merits, your prudence, or your solicitude, that this event has taken place, but through his favour, which you can only repay by a pious, chaste, and exemplary life; and that your obligations to the performance of these duties are so much the greater, as in your early years you have given some reasonable expectation that your riper age may produce such fruits. It would indeed be highly disgraceful, and as contrary to your duty as to my hopes, if, at a time when others display a greater share of reason and adopt a better mode of life, you should forget the precepts of your youth, and forsake the path in which you have hitherto trodden. Endeavour therefore to alleviate the burthen of your early dignity by the regularity of your life and by your perseverance in those studies which are suitable to your profession. It gave me great satisfaction to learn, that, in the course of the past year, you had frequently, of your own accord, gone to communion and confession; nor do I conceive that there is any better way of obtaining the favour of heaven than by habituating yourself to a performance of these and similar duties. This appears to me to be the most suitable and useful advice which, in the first instance, I can possibly give you"

"I well know, that as you are now to reside at Rome, that sink of all iniquity, the difficulty of conducting yourself by these admonitions will be increased. The influence of example is itself prevalent; but you will probably meet with those who will particularly endeavour to corrupt and incite you to vice; because, as you may yourself perceive, your early attainment to so great a dignity is not observed without envy, and those who could not prevent your receiving that honour will secretly endeavour to diminish it, by inducing you to forfeit the good estimation of the public thereby precipitating you into that gulf into which they had themselves fallen; in which attempt, the consideration of your youth will give them a confidence of success. To these difficulties you ought to oppose yourself with the greater firmness, as there is at present less virtue amongst your brethren of the college. I acknowledge indeed that several of them are good and learned men, whose lives are exemplary, and whom I would recommend to you as patterns of your conduct. By emulating them you will be so much the more known and esteemed, in proportion as your age and the peculiarity of your situation will distinguish you from your colleagues. Avoid, however, as you would Scylla or Charybdis, the imputation of hypocrisy; guard against all ostentation, either in your conduct or your discourse; affect not austerity, nor even appear too serious. This advice you will, I hope, in time understand and practise better than I can express it.

"Yet you are not unacquainted with the great importance of the character which you have to sustain, for you well know that all the Christian world would prosper if the cardinals were what they ought to be; because in such a case there would always be a good pope, upon which the

tranquillity of Christendom so materially depends. Endeavour then to render yourself such, that if all the rest resembled you, we might expect this universal blessing. To give you particular directions as to your behaviour and conversation would be a matter of no small difficulty. I shall therefore only recommend, that in your intercourse with the cardinals and other men of rank, your language be unassuming and respectful, guiding yourself, however, by your own reason, and not submitting to be impelled by the passions of others, who, actuated by improper motives, may pervert the use of their reason. Let it satisfy your conscience that your conversation is without intentional offence; and if, through impetuosity of temper, any one should be offended, as his enmity is without just cause, so it will not be very lasting. On this your first visit to Rome, it will however be more advisable for you to listen to others than to speak much yourself.

"You are now devoted to God and the church; on which account you ought to aim at being a good ecclesiastic, and to shew that you prefer the honour and state of the church and of the apostolic see to every other consideration. Nor, while you keep this in view, will it be difficult for you to favour your family and your native place. On the contrary, you should be the link to bind this city closer to the church, and our family with the city $ and although it be impossible to foresee what accidents may happen, yet I doubt not but this may be done with equal advantage to all; observing, however, that you are always to prefer the interests of the church.

"You are not only the youngest cardinal in the college, but the youngest person that ever was raised to that rank; and you ought therefore to be the most vigilant and unassuming, not giving others occasion to wait for you, either in the chapel, the consistory, or upon deputations. You will soon get a sufficient insight into the manners of your brethren. With those of less respectable character converse not with too much intimacy; not merely on account of the circumstance in itself, but for the sake of public opinion. Converse on general topics with all. On public occasions let your equipage and dress be rather below than above mediocrity. A handsome house and a well-ordered family will be preferable to a great retinue and a splendid residence. Endeavour to live with regularity, and gradually to bring your expenses within those bounds which in a new establishment cannot perhaps be expected. Silk and jewels are not suitable for persons in your station. Your taste will be better shown in the acquisition of a few elegant remains of antiquity, or in the collecting of handsome books, and by your attendants being learned and well-bred rather than numerous. Invite others to your house oftener than you receive invitations. Practise neither too frequently. Let your own food be plain, and take sufficient exercise, for those who wear your habit are soon liable, without great caution, to contract infirmities. The station of a cardinal is not less secure than elevated; on which account those who arrive at it too frequently become negligent, conceiving that their object is attained, and that they can preserve it with little trouble. This idea, is often injurious to the life and character of those who entertain it. Be attentive therefore to your conduct, and confide in others too little rather than too much. There is one rule which I would recommend to your attention in preference to all others: Rise early in the morning. This will not only contribute to your health, but will enable you to arrange and expedite the business of the day; and as there are various duties incident to your station, such as the performance of divine service, studying, giving audience, &c., you will find the observance of this admonition productive of the greatest utility. Another very necessary precaution, particularly on your entrance into public life, is to deliberate every evening on what you may have to perform the following day, that you may not be unprepared for whatever may happen. With respect to your speaking in the consistory, it will be most becoming for you at present to refer the matters in debate to the judgment of his holiness, alleging as a reason your own youth and inexperience. You will probably be desired to intercede for the favours of the pope on particular occasions. Be cautious, however, that you trouble him not too often ; for his temper leads him to be most liberal to those who weary him least with their solicitations. This you must observe, lest you should give

him offence, remembering also at times to converse with him on more agreeable topics; and if you should be obliged to request some kindness from him, let it be done with that modesty and humility which are so pleasing to his disposition. Farewell."

As the policy of Lorenzo led him to support a powerful influence at Rome, and as he had frequently experienced the good effects of the connexion which subsisted between him and the family of the Orsini, he thought it advisable to strengthen it; and accordingly proposed a marriage between his son Piero and Alfonsina, the daughter of Roberto Orsini, count of Tagliacozzo and Albi.

This proposal was eagerly listened to by Virginio Orsini, who was then considered as the head of that powerful family, the chiefs of which, though subordinate to the pope, scarcely considered themselves as subjects, and frequently acted with the independence of sovereign princes. In the month of March, 1487, these nuptials were celebrated at Naples, in the presence of the king and his court, with extraordinary pomp. Lorenzo on his marriage with Clarice Orsini had received no portion; but the reputation which he had now acquired was more than equivalent for the pride of ancestry, and Virginio agreed to pay 12,000 Neapolitan ducats as a portion with his niece. On this occasion Piero was accompanied by Bernardo Rucellai, who had married Nannina, one of the sisters of Lorenzo, and who has not only signalized himself as a protector of learned men, but was himself one of the most accomplished scholars of his time.

The marriage of Piero de' Medici was soon afterwards followed by that of his sister Maddalena with Francesco Cibò, the son of the pope, and who then bore the title of count of Anguillara. Of the three daughters of Lorenzo, Lucretia intermarried with Giacopo Salviati, Contessina with Piero Ridolfi, and Louisa, his youngest, after having been betrothed to Giovanni de' Medici, of a collateral branch of the same family, died before the time appointed for the nuptials.

In the year 1488, Piero de' Medici took a journey to Milan, to be present at the celebration of the nuptials of the young duke Galeazzo Sforza, with Isabella, grand-daughter of Ferdinand king of Naples. The whole expense of this journey was defrayed by Lodovico Sforza, who paid a marked respect to Piero, and directed that he should always appear in public at the side of the duke. By a letter yet existing, from the Florentine legate to Lorenzo de' Medici, it appears that these nuptials were celebrated with great magnificence but amidst the splendour of diamonds and the glitter of brocade, were entwined the serpents of treachery and guilt. Even in giving the hand of Isabella to a nephew, whom he regarded rather as an implement of his ambition than as his lawful sovereign, Lodovico himself burnt with a criminal passion for her; and the gravest of the Italian historians assures us, that it was the public opinion that he had, by means of magic and incantations, prevented the consummation of a marriage, which, while it promoted his political views, deprived him of the object of his love. The prejudices of the age and the wickedness of Lodovico sufficiently countenance the probability of such an attempt; but that the means employed were so far successful as to prevent that circumstance taking place for several months, is an assertion, of the veracity of which posterity may be allowed to doubt.

Of this princess an incident is recorded, which does equal honour to her conjugal affection and her filial piety. When Charles VIII of France, at the instigation of Lodovico Sforza, entered Italy, a few years after her marriage, for the avowed purpose of depriving her father of the throne of Naples, he passed through Pavia, where the young duke then lay on his death-bed, not without giving rise to suspicions that he had been poisoned. Touched with his misfortunes, and mindful of the relationship between Galeazzo and himself, who were sisters' children, Charles resolved to see him. The presence of Lodovico, who did not choose to risk the consequences of a private and

confidential interview, whilst it restricted the conversation of the king to formal inquiries about the health of the duke, and wishes for his recovery, excited both in him and in all present a deeper compassion for the unhappy prince. Isabella perceived the general sympathy, and throwing herself at the feet of the monarch, recommended to his protection her unfortunate husband and her infant son; at the same time, by tears and entreaties, earnestly endeavouring to turn his resentment from her father and the house of Arragon. Attracted by her beauty, and moved by her solicitations, Charles appeared for a moment to relent, and the fate of Italy was suspended in the balance; but the king, recollecting the importance of his preparations, and the expectations which his enterprise had excited, soon steeled his feelings against this feminine attack, and resolved, in spite of the suggestions of pity and the claims of humanity, to persevere in his design.

Having now secured the tranquillity of Italy, and the prosperity of his family by every means that prudence could dictate, Lorenzo began to enjoy the fruits of his labours. These he found in the affection and good-will of his fellow-citizens; in observing the rapid progress of the fine arts, towards the promotion of which he had so amply contributed; in the society and conversation of men of genius and learning; and in the inexhaustible stores of knowledge with which he had enriched his own discriminating and comprehensive mind.

As his natural disposition, or the effects of his education frequently led him to meditate with great seriousness on moral and religious subjects, so there were no persons for whom he entertained a greater esteem than those who adorned their character as teachers of religion by a corresponding rectitude of life and propriety of manners. Amongst these he particularly distinguished Mariano Genazano, an Augustine monk and superior of his order, for whose use, and that of his associates, he erected in the suburbs of Florence an extensive building which he endowed as a monastery, and to which he was himself accustomed occasionally to retire, with a few select friends, to enjoy the conversation of this learned ecclesiastic. Politiano, in the preface to his “Miscellanea,” inveighing against those who affected to consider the study of polite letters as inconsistent with the performance of sacred functions, adduces Mariano as an illustrious instance of their union. “On this account,” says he to Lorenzo, “I cannot sufficiently admire your highly esteemed friend Mariano, whose proficiency in theological studies, and whose eloquence and address in his public discourses, leave him without a rival. The lessons which he inculcates derive additional authority from his acknowledged disinterestedness, and from the severity of his private life; yet there is nothing morose in his temper, nothing unpleasingly austere; nor does he think the charms of poetry, or the amusements and pursuits of elegant literature, below his attention.” In one of his letters, the same author has left a very explicit account of the talents of Mariano as a preacher. “I was lately induced,” says he, “to attend one of his lectures, rather, to say the truth, through curiosity, than with the hope of being entertained. His appearance, however, interested me in his favour. His address was striking and his eye marked intelligence. My expectations were raised. He began—I was attentive, a clear voice—select expression—elevated sentiment. He divides his subject—I perceive his distinctions. Nothing perplexed; nothing insipid; nothing languid. He unfolds the web of his argument—I am enthralled. He refutes the sophism—I am freed. He introduces a pertinent narrative —I am interested. He modulates his voice—I am charmed. He is jocular—I smile. He presses me with serious truths—I yield to their force. He addresses the passions—the tears glide down my cheeks. He raises his voice in anger—I tremble and wish myself away.”

Of the particular subjects of discussion which engaged the attention of Lorenzo and his associates in their interview at the convent of San Gallo, Valori has left some account which he derived from the information of Mariano himself. The existence and attributes of the Deity, the insufficiency of temporal enjoyments to fill the mind, and the probability and moral necessity of

a future state, were to Lorenzo the favourite objects of his discourse. His own opinion was pointedly expressed. “He is dead even to this life,” said Lorenzo, “who has no hopes of another.”

Although the citizens of Florence admired the talents and respected the virtues of Mariano, their attention was much more forcibly excited by a preacher of a very different character, who possessed himself of their confidence, and entitled himself to their homage, by fortelling their destruction. This was the famous Girolamo Savonarola, who afterwards acted so conspicuous a part in the popular commotions at Florence, and contributed so essentially to the accomplishment of his own predictions. Savonarola was a native of Ferrara; but the reputation which he had acquired as a preacher induced Lorenzo de’ Medici to invite him to Florence, where he took up his residence in the year 1488, and was appointed prior of the monastery of S. Marco. By pretensions to superior sanctity, and by a fervid and over-powering elocution, he soon acquired an astonishing ascendency over the minds of the people ; and in proportion as his popularity increased, his disregard of his patron became more apparent, and was soon converted into the most vindictive animosity. It had been the custom of those who had preceded Savonarola in this office, to pay particular respect to Lorenzo de’ Medici, as the supporter of the institution.

Savonarola, however, not only rejected this ceremony, as founded in adulation, but as often as Lorenzo frequented the gardens of the monastery, retired from his presence, pretending that his intercourse was with God and not with man. At the same time, in his public discourses, he omitted no opportunity of attacking the reputation and diminishing the credit of Lorenzo, by prognosticating the speedy termination of his authority, and his banishment from his native place. The divine word from the lips of Savonarola, descended not amongst his audience like the dews of heaven; it was the piercing hail, the sweeping whirlwind, the destroying sword. The friends of Lorenzo frequently remonstrated with him on his suffering the monk to proceed to such an extreme of arrogance; but Lorenzo had either more indulgence or more discretion than to adopt hostile measures against a man, whom, though morose and insolent, he probably considered as sincere. On the contrary, he displayed his usual prudence and moderation, by declaring that whilst the preacher exerted himself to reform the citizens of Florence, he should readily excuse his incivility to himself. This extraordinary degree of lenity, if it had no influence on the mind of the fanatic, prevented in a great degree the ill effects of his harangues; and it was not till after the death of Lorenzo that Savonarola excited those disturbances in Florence which led to his own destruc-tion, and terminated in the ruin of the republic.

Another ecclesiastic, whose worth and talents had conciliated the favour of Lorenzo, was Matteo Bosso, superior of the convent of regular canons at Fiesole. Not less conversant with the writings of the ancient philosophers than with the theological studies of his own times, Bosso was a profound scholar, a close reasoner, and a convincing orator; but to these he united much higher qualifications—a candid mind, an inflexible integrity, and an interesting simplicity of life and manners. To his treatise “ De veris animi gaudiis,” is prefixed a recommendatory epistle from Politiano to Lorenzo de’ Medici, highly favourable to the temper and character of the author. On the publication of this piece, Bosso also transmitted a copy of it to Lorenzo, with a Latin letter, preserved in the *Recuperationes Fesulae*, another work of the same author, highly deserving the attention of the scholar. In this letter Bosso bears testimony to the virtues and to the piety of Lorenzo; but whether this testimony ought to be received with greater confidence because Bosso was the confessor of Lorenzo, the reader will decide for himself.

Of these his graver associates, as well as of the companions of his lighter hours, Lorenzo was accustomed to stimulate the talents by every means in his power. His own intimate acquaintance with the tenets of the ancient philosophers, and his acute and versatile genius, enabled him to propose to their discussion subjects of the most interesting nature, and either to

take a chief part in the conversation, or to avail himself of such observations as it might occasion. It appears also, that at some times he amused himself with offering to their consideration such topics as he well knew would dude their researches, although they might exercise their powers; as men try their strength by shooting arrows towards the sky. Of this we have an instance in the sonnet addressed by him to Salviati. " When the mind," says he, "escapes from the storms of life, to the calm haven of reflection, doubts arise which require solution. If no one can effectually exert himself to obtain eternal happiness without the special favour of God, and if that favour be only granted to those who are well disposed towards this reception, I wish to know whether the grace of God or the good disposition first commences?". The learned theologian to whom this captious question was addressed, took it into hie serious consideration, and after dividing it into seven parts, attempted its solution in a Latin treatise of considerable extent, which is yet preserved in the Laurentian Library.

Lorenzo was not however destined long to enjoy that tranquillity which he had so assiduously laboured to secure. His life had scarcely reached its meridian, when the prospect was overhung with dark, and lowering clouds. The death of his wife Clarice, which happened in the month of August, 1488, was a severe shock to his domestic happiness. He was then absent from Florence, and did not arrive in time to see her before she died, which it seems gave rise to insinuations that his conjugal affection was not very ardent; but the infirm state of his own health at this time had rendered it necessary for him to visit the warm baths, where he received an account of her death before he was apprised of the danger of her situation. From his youth he had been afflicted with a disorder which occasioned extreme pain in his stomach and limbs. This complaint was probably of a gouty tendency; but the defective state of medicine at that time rendered it impossible for him to obtain any just information respecting it. The most eminent physicians in Italy were consulted, and numerous remedies were prescribed, without producing any beneficial effect. By frequenting the tepid baths of Italy he obtained a temporary alleviation of his sufferings; but, notwithstanding all the assistance he could procure, his complaints rather increased than diminished, and for some time before his death he had reconciled his mind to an event which he knew could not be far distant. When his son Giovanni took his departure for Rome, to appear in the character of cardinal, Lorenzo with great affection recommended him to the care of Filippo Valori and Andrea Cambino, who were appointed to accompany him on his journey; at the same time expressing his apprehensions, which the event but too well justified, that he should see them no more.

In the year 1488, Girolamo Riario, whose machinations had deprived Lorenzo of a brother, and had nearly involved Lorenzo himself in the same destruction, fell a victim to his accumulated crimes. By the assistance of Sixtus IV he had possessed himself of a considerable territory in the vicinity of the papal state, and particularly of the cities of Imola and Forli, at the latter of which he had fixed his residence, and supported the rank of an independent prince. In order to strengthen his interest in Italy he had connected himself with the powerful family of the Sforza, by a marriage with Caterina, sister of Galeazzo Sforza, duke of Milan, whose unhappy fate has already been related. The general tenor of the life of Riario seems to have corresponded with the specimen before exhibited. By a long course of oppression he had drawn upon himself the hatred and resentment of his subjects, whom he had deduced to the utmost extreme of indigence and distress. Stimulated by repeated acts of barbarity, three of them resolved to assassinate him, and to trust for their safety, after the perpetration of the deed, to the opinion and support of their fellow-citizens. Although Riario was constantly attended by a band of soldiers, these men found means to enter his chamber in the palace at the hour when he had just concluded his supper. One of them having cut him across the face with a sabre, he took shelter under the table, whence he was dragged out by Lodovico Orso, another of the conspirators, who stabbed him through the

body. Some of his attendants having by this time entered the room, Riario made an effort to escape at the door, but there received from the third conspirator a mortal wound. It is highly probable that he was betrayed by the guard, for these three men were even permitted to strip the dead body and throw it through the window, when the populace immediately rose and sacked the palace. The insurgents having secured the widow and children of Riario, were only opposed by the troops in the fortress of the town, who refused to surrender it either to their entreaties or their threats. Being required, under pain of death, to exert her influence in obtaining for the populace possession of the fortress, the princess requested that they would permit her to enter it; but no sooner was she secure within the walls than she exhorted the soldiers to its defence, and, raising the standard of the duke of Milan, threatened the town with destruction. The inhabitants attempted to intimidate her by preparing to execute her children in her sight, for which purpose they erected a scaffold before the walls of the fortress; but this unmanly proceeding, instead of awakening her affections, only excited her contempt, which she is said to have expressed in a very emphatic and extraordinary manner. By her courage the inhabitants were however resisted, until Giovanni Bentivoglio, with a body of two thousand foot and eight hundred cavalry from Bologna gave her effectual assistance, and being joined by a strong reinforcement from Milan, compelled the inhabitants to acknowledge as their sovereign Otta-io Riario, the eldest son of Girolamo.

Lorenzo de' Medici has not escaped the imputation of having been privy to the assassination of his old and implacable adversary; but neither the relations of contemporary historians, nor the general tenor of his life, afford a presumption on which to ground such an accusation; although it is certain, that some years previous to this event, he had been in treaty with the pope to deprive Riario of his usurpations, and to restore the territories occupied by him to the family of the Ordolaffi, their former lords, which treaty was frustrated by the pope having insisted on annexing them to the states of the church. The conspirators however soon after the death of Riario apprized Lorenzo of the event, and requested his assistance; in consequence of which he despatched one of his envoys to Forli, with a view of obtaining authentic information as to the disposition of the inhabitants and the views of the insurgents when finding that it was their intention to place themselves under the dominion of the pope, he declined any interference on their behalf, but availed himself of the opportunity of their dissensions, to restore to the Florentines the fortress of Piancaldoli, which had been wrested from them by Riario. That the assassins of Riario were suffered to escape with impunity, is perhaps the best justification of their conduct, as it affords a striking proof that he had deserved his fate.

Another event soon afterwards took place at Faenza, which occasioned great anxiety to Lorenzo, and called for the exertion of all his conciliatory powers. If the list of crimes and assassinations which we have before had occasion to notice, maybe thought to have disgraced the age, that which we have now to relate exhibits an instance of female ferocity, which renewed in the fifteenth century the examples of Gothic barbarity. By the mediation of Lorenzo, who was equally the friend of the Manfredi and the Bentivogli, a marriage had taken place between Galeotto Manfredi, prince of Faenza, and Francesca, daughter of Giovanni Bentivoglio, which for some time seemed to be productive of that happiness to the parties, and those advantages to their respective families, which Lorenzo had in view. It was not long however before Francesca discovered, or suspected, that her husband was engaged in an illicit amour, the information of which she thought proper to communicate both to her father and to Lorenzo. Ever on the watch to obtain further proofs of his infidelity, she found an opportunity of listening to a private interview between Galeotto and some pretender to astrological knowledge, in whom it seems he was credulous enough to place his confidence. Instead however of gaining any intelligence as to the object of her curiosity, she heard predictions and denunciations which, as she thought, affected the safety of her father, and being unable to conceal her indignation, she broke in upon

their deliberations, and reproached her husband with his treachery. Irritated by the intrusion and the pertinacity of his wife, Galeotto retorted with great bitterness; but finding himself unequal to a contest of this nature, he had recourse to more violent methods, and by menaces and blows reduced her to obedience. Bentivoglio was no sooner apprised of the ignominious treatment which his daughter had received, and of the circumstances which had given rise to it, than he resolved to carry her off from her husband by force. Taking with him a chosen body of soldiers, he approached Faenza by night, and seizing on Francesca and her infant son, brought them in safety to Bologna. This step he followed up by preparing for an attack on the dominions of his son-in-law; but Galeotto having resorted to Lorenzo for his mediation, a reconciliation took place, and Francesca shortly afterwards returned to Faenza. Whether she still harboured in her bosom the lurking passions of jealousy and revenge, or whether some fresh insult on the part of her husband had roused her fury, is not known; but she formed and executed a deliberate plan for his assassination. To this end she feigned herself sick, and requested to see him in her chamber. Galeotto obeyed the summons, and, on entering his wife's apartments, was instantly attacked by four hired assassins, three of whom she had concealed under her bed. Though totally unarmed, he defended himself courageously; and as he had the advantages of great personal strength and activity, would probably have effected his escape; but when Francesca saw the contest doubtful, she sprung from the bed, and grasping a sword, plunged it into his body, and accomplished his destruction with her own hand. Conscious of her guilt, she immediately took refuge with her children in the castle, until her father once more came to her relief. On his approach to Faenza, Bentivoglio was joined by the Milanese troops, who had been engaged in reinstating the family of Riario at Forli. The citizens of Faenza, conceiving that it was his intention to deprive them of Astorgio, the infant son of Galeotto, or rather perhaps under that pretext to possess himself of the city, refused to surrender to him his daughter and her family. He immediately attacked the place, which was not only successfully defended by the citizens, but in an engagement which took place under the walls, Borgomini, the commander of the Milanese troops, lost his life, and Bentivoglio was made a prisoner. During this dispute Lorenzo de' Medici had warmly espoused the cause of the citizens, and had encouraged them with promises of support, in case they should find it necessary in preserving their independence. The success of their exertions, and the disaster of Bentivoglio, changed the object of his solicitude; and no sooner did he receive intelligence of this event than he despatched a messenger to Faenza, to interfere on the behalf of Bentivoglio, and if possible to obtain his release. This was with some difficulty accomplished, and Bentivoglio immediately resorted to Florence to return his thanks to his benefactor. Some time afterwards Lorenzo, at the request of Bentivoglio, solicited the liberation of his daughter, which was also complied with; and he was at length prevailed upon to intercede with the pope, to relieve her from the ecclesiastical censures which she had incurred by her crime. The reason given by Bentivoglio to Lorenzo for requesting his assistance in this last respect will perhaps be thought extraordinary—He had an intention of providing her with another husband!

## CHAPTER IX.

### Progress of the arts

Those periods of time which have been most favourable to the progress of letters and science have generally been distinguished by an equal proficiency in the arts. The productions of Roman sculpture in its best ages bear nearly the same proportion to those of the Greeks, as the imitative labours of the Roman authors bear to the original works of their great prototypes. During the long ages of ignorance that succeeded the fall of the Western empire, letters and the fine arts underwent an equal degradation; and it would be as difficult to point out a literary work of those times which is entitled to approbation, as it would be to produce a statue or a picture. When these studies began to revive, a Guido da Sienna, a Cimabue, rivalled a Guittone d' Arezzo, or a Piero delle Vigne. The crude buds that had escaped the severity of so long a winter soon began to swell, and Giotto, Bufialmacco, and Gaddi, were the contemporaries of Dante, of Boccaccio, and of Petrarca.

It is not however to be presumed, that even in the darkest intervals of the middle ages these arts were entirely extinguished. Some traces of them are found in the rudest state of society; and the efforts of the Europeans, the South Americans, and the Chinese, without rivalship, and without participation, are nearly on an equality with each other. Among the manuscripts of the Laurentian Library are preserved some specimens of miniature paintings which are unquestionably to be referred to the tenth century, but they bear decisive evidence of the barbarism of the times; and although they certainly aim at picturesque representation, yet they may with justice be considered rather as perverse distortions of nature, than as the commencement of an elegant art.

Antecedent however to Cimabue, to whom Vasari attributes the honour of having been the restorer of painting, Guido da Sienna had demonstrated to his countrymen the possibility of improvement. His picture of the virgin, which yet remains tolerably entire in the church of S. Domenico, in his native place, and which bears the date of 1221, is presumed, with reason, to be the earliest work now extant of any Italian painter. The Florentine made a bolder effort, and attracted more general admiration. Every new production of his pencil was regarded as a prodigy, and riches and honours were liberally bestowed on the fortunate artist. His picture of the Madonna, after having excited the wonder of a monarch, and given the name of *Borgo Allegro* to that district of the city, whither his countrymen resorted to gratify themselves with a sight of it, was removed to its destined situation in the church of *S. Maria Novella*, to the sound of music, in a solemn procession of the citizens. The modern artist who observes this picture may find it difficult to account for such a degree of enthusiasm; but excellence is merely relative, and it is a sufficient cause of approbation if the merit of the performance exceed the standard of the age. Those productions which, compared with the works of a Raffaello or a Titian may be of little esteem, when considered with reference to the times that gave them birth, may justly be entitled to no small share of applause.

The glory of Cimabue was obscured by that of his disciple Giotto, who, from figuring the sheep which it was his business to tend, became the best painter that Italy had produced?" It

affords no inadequate proof of his high reputation, when we find him indulging his humour in an imitation of the celebrated artist of Cos, and sending to the pope, who had desired to see one of his drawings, a circle, struck with such freedom, as to shew the hand of a master, yet with such truth, as to have given rise to a proverb. Inferior artists hazard not such freedoms with the great. Giotto seems, however, to have delighted in the eccentricities of the art. One of his first essays, when he began to study under Cimabue, was to paint a fly on the nose of one of his master's portraits, which the deluded artist attempted to brush off with his hand; a tale that may rank with the horse of Apelles, the curtain of Parrhasius, or the grapes of Zeuxis. Boccaccio has introduced this celebrated painter with great approbation in one of his novels; a singular conversation is said to have occurred between him and Dante; and Petrarca held his works in such high esteem, that one of his pictures is the subject of a legacy to a particular friend in his will. Upwards of a century after his death, Lorenzo de' Medici, well aware that the most efficacious method of exciting the talents of the living is to confer due honour on departed merit, raised a bust to his memory in the church of *S. Maria del Fiore*, the inscription for which was furnished by Politiano.

The merits of Giotto and his school are appreciated with great judgment by Vasari, who attributes to him and his predecessor Cimabue the credit of having banished the insipid and spiritless manner introduced by the Greek artists, and given rise to a new and more natural style of composition. This the historian denominates the *maniera di Giotto*. "Instead of the harsh outline, circumscribing the whole figure, the glaring eyes, the pointed feet and hands, and all the defects arising from a total want of shadow, the figures of Giotto exhibit a better attitude, the heads have an air of life and freedom, the drapery is more natural, and there are even some attempts at fore-shortening the limbs." "Besides these improvements," continues this author, "Giotto was the first who represented in his pictures the effect of the passions on the human countenance. That he did not proceed further must be attributed to the difficulties which attend the progress of the art, and to the want of better examples. In many of the essential requisites of his profession he was indeed equalled, if not surpassed, by some of his contemporaries. The colouring of Gaddi had more force and harmony, and the attitudes of his figures more vivacity. Simone da Sienna is to be preferred to him in the composition of his subjects, and other painters excelled him in other branches of the art; but Giotto had laid the solid foundation of their improvements. It is true, all that was effected by these masters may be considered only as the first rude sketch of a sculptor towards completing an elegant statue, and if no further progress had been made, there would not, upon the whole, have been much to commend; but whoever considers the difficulties under which their works were executed, the ignorance of the times, the rarity of good models, and the impossibility of obtaining instruction, will esteem them not only as commendable, but wonderful productions, and will perceive with pleasure these first sparks of improvement, which were afterwards fanned into so bright a flame."

The patronage of the family of the Medici is almost contemporary with the commencement of the art Giovanni de' Medici, the father of Cosimo, had employed his fellow-citizen, Lorenzo de' Bicci, to ornament with portraits a chamber in one of his houses in Florence, which afterwards became the residence of Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo. The liberality of Cosimo led the way to further improvement. Under Masaccio, the study of nature and actual observation were substituted for cold and servile imitation. By this master, his competitors, and his scholars, every component branch of the art was carried to some degree of perfection. Paolo Uccello was the first who boldly surmounted the difficulty which Giotto, though sensible of its importance, had ineffectually attempted to overcome, and gave that ideal depth to his labours, which is the essence of picturesque representation. This he accomplished by his superior knowledge of perspective, which he studied in conjunction with the celebrated Gianozzo Manetti, and in the attainment of which the painter and the scholar were mutually serviceable to each other. The rules which he

thence acquired he applied to practice, not only in the backgrounds of his pictures, but in his representations of the human figure, of which he expressed the Scorci, or fore-shortenings, with accuracy and effect. The merit of having been the first to apply the mathematical rules to the improvement of works of art, and the proficiency which he made in so necessary and so laborious study, if it had not obtained from Vasari a greater share of praise, ought at least to have secured the artist from that ridicule with which he seems inclined to treat him. The elder Filippo Lippi gave to his figures a boldness and grandeur before unknown. He attended also to the effect of his backgrounds, which were however in general too minutely finished. About two years after his death, which happened in the year 1469, Lorenzo de' Medici, who was then absent from Florence on a journey, to congratulate Sixtus IV on his accession to the pontificate, took the opportunity of passing through Spoleto, where he requested permission from the magistrates to remove the ashes of the artist to the church of S. Maria del Fiore at Florence. The community of that place were unwilling to relinquish so honourable a deposit; and Lorenzo was therefore content to testify his respect for the memory of the painter, by engaging his son, the younger Filippo, to erect in the church of Spoleto a monument of marble, the inscription upon which, written by Politiano, has led his historian, Menckenius, into a mistake almost too apparent to admit of an excuse.

In the anatomy of the human figure, which now began to engage the more minute attention of the painter, Antonio Pollajuolo took the lead of all his competitors. By accurate observation, as well on the dead as on the living, he acquired a competent knowledge of the form and action of the muscles, which he exemplified in a striking manner in his picture of Hercules and Antaeus, painted for Lorenzo de' Medici, in which he is said not only to have expressed the strength of the conqueror, but the languor and inanimation of the conquered; but his most celebrated work is the death of S. Sebastian, yet preserved in the chapel of the Pucci family at Florence, and of which Vasari has given a particular account. In this picture, the figure of the dying saint was painted from nature after Gino Capponi. In the figures of the two assassins, who are bending their crossbows, he has shown great knowledge of muscular action. Baldovinetti excelled in portraits, which he frequently introduced in his historical subjects. In a picture of the queen of Sheba on a visit to Solomon, he painted the likeness of Lorenzo de' Medici, and of the celebrated mechanic Lorenzo da Volpaia; and in another picture intended as its companion, those of Giuliano de' Medici, Luca Pitti, and other Florentine citizens. The resemblance of Lorenzo was also introduced by Domenico Ghirlandajo in a picture of S. Francesco taking the habit, painted by him in the chapel of the Trinity at Florence. Until this time the pictures of the Tuscan artists had been executed in distemper, or with colours rendered cohesive by glutinous substances. The practice of painting in oil, so essentially necessary to the duration of a picture, was now first introduced amongst his countrymen by Andrea da Castagna. The younger Filippo Lippi attempted, and not without effect, to give a greater share of energy and animation to his productions. His attitudes are frequently bold and diversified; and his figures have expression, vivacity, and motion. It is deserving of remark, that he prepared the way to the study of the antique, by introducing into his pictures the vases, utensils, arms, and dresses of the ancients. But of all the masters of this period, perhaps Luca Signorelli united the most important excellences; his composition was good; in drawing the naked figure he particularly excelled; in his picture of the institution of the Eucharist, yet remaining in the choir of the cathedral at Cortona, the figure of Christ might be mistaken for the production of one of the Caracci. In the variety and expression of countenance, in the disposition of the drapery, even in the just distribution of light, this picture has great merit; and if some remnants of the manner of the times prevent us from giving it unlimited approbation, it may certainly be considered as the harbinger of a better taste.

The art of sculpture, dependent on the same principles, and susceptible of improvement from the same causes as that of painting, made a proportionable progress. The inventive genius

of the Italian artist had very early applied it to almost every variety of material; and figures in wood, in day, in metals, and in marble, were fashioned by Giovanni and Niccolo Pisano, by Agostino and Agnolo Sanese, which, though rude and incorrect, excited the admiration of the times in which they were produced. Their successor Andrea Pisano, the contemporary of Giotto, supported the credit of the art, which was then endangered by the sudden progress of its powerful rival; and in the early part of fifteenth century the talents of Ghiberti and Donatello carried it to a degree of eminence which challenged the utmost exertions, and perhaps even excited the jealousy of the first painters of the age. It must indeed be acknowledged that the advantages which sculpture possesses are neither few nor unimportant The severe and simple mode of its execution, the veracity of which it is susceptible, and the durability of its productions, place it in a favourable point of view, when opposed to an art whose success is founded on illusion, which not only admits, but courts meretricious ornament, and whose monuments are fugitive and perishable. These arts, so distinct in their operations, approach each other in works in *rilievo*, which unite the substantial form that characterizes sculpture, with the ideal depth of picturesque composition. In this province Donatello particularly excelled; and in Cosimo de' Medici he found a patron who had judgment to perceive and liberality to reward his merits. But the genius of Donatello was not confined to one department. His group of Judith and Holofernes, executed in bronze for the community of Florence, his statue of S. George, his Annunciation, and his Zuccone, in one of the niches of the Campanile at Florence, all of which yet remain, have met with the uniform approbation of succeeding times, and are perhaps as perfect as the narrow principles upon which the art was then conducted would allow.

Notwithstanding the exertions of the early painters, which were regarded with astonishment by their contemporaries, and are yet entitled to attention and respect, it does not appear that they had raised their views to the true end of the profession. Their characters rarely excelled the daily prototypes of common life; and their forms, although at times sufficiently accurate, were often vulgar and heavy. In the pictures which remain of this period, the limbs are not marked with that precision which characterizes a well informed artist. The hands and feet, in particular, appear soft, enervated, and delicate, without distinction of sex or character. Many practices yet remained that evince the imperfect state of the art. Ghirlandajo and Baldovinetti continued to introduce the portraits of their employers in historic composition, forgetful of that simplex *duntaxat et unum* with which a just taste can never dispense. Cosimo Roselli, a painter of no inconsiderable reputation, attempted, by the assistance of gold and ultramarine, to give a factitious splendour to his performances. To everything great and elevated, the art was yet a stranger; even the celebrated picture of Pollajuolo exhibits only a group of half-naked and vulgar wretches, discharging their arrows at a miserable fellow-creature, who, by changing places with one of his murderers, might with equal propriety become a murderer himself. Nor was it until the time of Michelangelo that painting and sculpture rose to their true object, and, instead of exciting the wonder, began to rouse the passions and interest the feelings of mankind.

By what fortunate concurrence of circumstances the exquisite taste evinced by the ancients in works of art was revived in modern times, deserves inquiry. It has generally been supposed that these arts, having left in Greece some traces of their former splendour, were transplanted into Italy by Greek artists, who, either led by hopes of emolument, or impelled by the disastrous state of their own country, sought, among the ruins of the western empire, a shelter from the impending destruction of the east. Of the labours of these masters, specimens indeed remain in different parts of Italy; but, in point of merit, they exceed not those of the native Italians, and some of them even bear the marks of deeper barbarism. In fact, these arts were equally debased in Greece and in Italy, and it was not therefore by an intercourse of this nature that they were likely to receive improvement. Happily, however, the same favourable circumstances which contributed to the

revival of letters took place also with respect to the arts; and if the writings of the ancient authors excited the admiration and called forth the exertions of the scholar, the remains of ancient skill in marble, gems, and other durable materials, at length caught the attention of the artist, and were converted from objects of wonder into models of imitation. To facilitate the progress of these studies, other fortunate circumstances concurred. The freedom of the Italian governments, and particularly that of Florence, gave to the human faculties their full energies.*The labours of the painter were early associated with the mysteries of the prevailing religion, whilst the wealth and ostentation of individuals and of states, held out rewards sufficient to excite the endeavours even of the phlegmatic and the indolent.

From the time of the consul Mummius, who, whilst he plundered the city of Corinth of its beautiful productions of art, regarded them rather as household furniture, than as pieces of exquisite skill, the avidity of the Romans for the works of the Grecian artists had been progressively increasing, till at length they became the first objects of proconsular rapacity, and the highest gratification of patrician luxury. The astonishing number which Verres had acquired during his government of Sicily, forms one of the most striking features of the invectives of Cicero; who asserts, that throughout that whole province, so distinguished by the riches and taste of its inhabitants, there was not a single statue or figure, either of bronze, marble, or ivory, not a picture or a piece of tapestry, not a gem or a precious stone, not even a gold or silver utensil, of the workmanship of Corinth or Delos, which Verres, during his praetorship, had not sought out and examined, and if he approved of it, brought it away with him; insomuch that Syracuse, under his government, lost more statues than it had lost soldiers in the victory of Marcellus. Such, however, was the desolation which took place in Italy during the middle ages, occasioned not only by natural calamities, but by the yet more destructive operation of moral causes, the rage of superstition, and the ferocity of barbarian conquerors, that of the innumerable specimens of art, which, till the times of the later emperors, had decorated the palaces and villas of the Roman nobility, scarcely a specimen or a vestige was, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, to be discovered. Even the city of Rome could only display six statues, five of marble and one of brass, the remains of its former splendour; and the complaint of Petrarca was not therefore without reason, that Rome was in no place less known than in Rome itself .

In tracing the vicissitudes which the arts have experienced, we observe with pleasure, that the same persons who signalized themselves by their attention to preserve the writings of the ancient authors, were those to whom posterity is indebted for the restoration of a better taste in the arts. Petrarca himself is one of the first who displayed a marked attention to the remains of antiquity. On his interview with the emperor Charles IV at Mantua, he presented to that monarch a considerable number of coins, which he had himself collected; at the same time assuring him, that he would not have bestowed them on any other person, and, with a degree of freedom which does him honour, recommending to the emperor, whilst he studied the history, to imitate the virtues of the persons there represented. Lorenzo de' Medici, brother of Cosimo, distinguished himself not only by his assiduity in collecting the remains of ancient authors, but also by a decided predilection for works of taste, in the acquisition of which he emulated the celebrity of his brother. From the funeral oration pronounced by Poggio on the death of Niccolò Niccoli, to whom the cause of literature is perhaps more indebted than to any individual who held merely a private station, we learn, that he was highly delighted with paintings and pieces of sculpture, of which he had collected a greater number, and of more exquisite workmanship, than any person of his time; and that visitors thronged to see them, not as to a private house, but as to a public exhibition.§ Nor was Poggio himself less attentive to the discovery and acquisition of these precious remains. "My chamber," says he, "is surrounded with busts in marble, one of which is whole and elegant. The others are indeed mutilated, and some of them are even noseless, yet they are such as may

please a good artist. With these, and some other pieces which I possess, I intend to ornament my country seat." In a letter from Poggio to Francesco da Pistoia, a monk who had travelled to Greece in search of antiquities, we have a much more explicit instance of the ardour with which he pursued this object. "By your letters from Chios," says Poggio, "I learn that you have procured for me three busts in marble, one of Minerva, another of Jupiter, a third of Bacchus. These letters afforded me great satisfaction, for I am delighted beyond expression with pieces of sculpture. I am charmed with the skill of the artist, when I see marble so wrought as to imitate Nature herself. You also inform me that you have obtained a head of Apollo, and you add from Virgil,

' Miros ducent de Marmore vultus.'

"Believe me, my friend, you cannot confer a greater favour on me than by returning laden with such works, by which you will abundantly gratify my wishes. Different persons labour under different disorders; and that which principally affects me is an admiration of these productions of eminent sculptors, to which I am perhaps more devoted than becomes a man who may pretend to some share of learning. Nature herself, it is true, must always excel these her copies; yet I must be allowed to admire that art, which can give such expression to inert materials, that nothing but breath seems to be wanting. Exert yourself therefore, I beseech you, to collect, either by entreaties or rewards, whatever you can find that possesses any merit. If you can procure a complete figure, *triumphatum est"*. Being informed by Francesco, that a Rhodian named Suffretus had in his possession a considerable number of antique sculptures, Poggio addressed a letter to him, earnestly requesting to be favoured with such specimens from his valuable collection as he might think proper to spare, and assuring him, that his kindness should be remunerated by the earliest opportunity. In the same earnest style, and for the same purpose, he addressed himself to Andreolo Giustiniano, a Venetian, then residing in Greece. Induced by his pressing entreaties, both Suffretus and Giustiniano entrusted to the monk some valuable works; but, to the great disappointment of Poggio, he betrayed the confidence reposed in him, and, under the pretext that he had been robbed of them in his voyage, defrauded Poggio of the chief part of his treasures, which, as it afterwards appeared, he presented to Cosimo de' Medici. The indignation of Poggio on this occasion is poured forth in a letter to Giustiniano, whose liberality he again solicits, and which he professes to have in some degree repaid, by obtaining for him from the Pope a dispensation to enable his daughter to marry; thus sacrilegiously, though almost excusably, bartering the favours of the church for the objects of his favourite study and the gratification of his taste.

The riches of Cosimo de' Medici, and the industry of Donatello, united to give rise to the celebrated collection of antiquities, which, with considerable additions, was transmitted by Piero to his son Lorenzo, and is now denominated the *Museum Florentinum*. By an estimate or account taken by Piero on the death of his father, it appears that these pieces amounted in value to more than 28,000 fiorins. But it was reserved for Lorenzo to enrich this collection with its most valuable articles, and to render it subservient to its true purpose, that of inspiring in his countrymen a correct and genuine taste for the arts.

Of the earnestness with which Lorenzo engaged in this pursuit, some instances have been already adduced. "Such an admirer was he," says Valori, "of all the remains of antiquity, that there was not anything with which he was more delighted. Those who wished to oblige him were accustomed to collect, from every part of the world, medals and coins, estimable for their age or their workmanship, statues, busts, and whatever else bore the stamp of antiquity. On my return from Naples," adds he, "I presented him with figures of Faustina and Africanus in marble, and several other specimens of ancient art; nor can I easily express with what pleasure he received them." Having long desired to possess the resemblance of Plato, he was rejoiced beyond measure

when Girolamo Roscio of Pistoia presented to him a figure in marble of his favourite philosopher, which was said to have been found among the ruins of the academy. By his constant attention to this pursuit, and by the expenditure of considerable sums, he collected under his roof all the remains of antiquity that fell in his way, whether they tended to illustrate the history of letters or of arts. His acknowledged acquaintance with these productions induced the celebrated Fra Giocondo, of Verona, the most industrious antiquary of his time, to inscribe to him his collection of ancient inscriptions, of which Politiano, who was a competent judge of the subject, speaks with high approbation.

But it is not the industry, the liberality, or the judgment shown by Lorenzo in forming his magnificent collection, so much as the important purpose to which he destined it, that entitles him to the esteem of the professors and admirers of the arts. Conversant from his youth with the finest forms of antiquity, he perceived and lamented the inferiority of his Contemporary artists, and the impossibility of their improvement upon the principles then adopted. He determined therefore to excite among them, if possible, a better taste, and, by proposing to their imitation the remains of the ancient masters, to elevate their views beyond the forms of common life, to the. contemplation of that ideal beauty which alone distinguishes works of art from mere mechanical productions. With this view he appropriated his gardens, adjacent to the monastery of S. Marco, to the establishment of a school or academy for the study of the antique, and furnished the different buildings and avenues with statues, busts, and other pieces of ancient workmanship. Of these he appointed the sculptor Bertoldo, the favourite pupil of Donatello, but who. Was then far advanced in years, superintendent The attention of the higher rank of his fellow-citizens was incited to these pursuits by the example of Lorenzo ; that of the lower class, by his liberality. To the latter he not only allowed competent stipends, whilst they attended to their studies, but appointed considerable premiums as the rewards of their proficiency.

To this institution, more than to any other circumstance, we may, without hesitation, ascribe the sudden and astonishing proficiency which, towards the close of the fifteenth century, was evidently made in the arts, and which commencing at Florence, extended itself in concentric circles to the rest of Europe. The gardens of Lorenzo de' Medici are frequently celebrated by the historian of the painters, as the nursery of men of genius; but if they had produced no other artist than Michelangelo Buonarroti, they would sufficiently have answered the purposes of their founder. It was here that this great man began to imbibe that spirit which was destined to effect a reformation in the arts, and which he could perhaps have derived from no other source. Of a noble but reduced family, he had been placed by his father, when young, under the tuition of the painter Ghirlandajo, from whom Lorenzo, desirous of promoting his new establishment, requested that he would permit two of his pupils to pursue their studies in his gardens; at the same time expressing his hopes that they would there obtain such instruction as would not only reflect honour on the institution, but also on themselves and on their country. The students who had the good fortune to be thus selected were Michelangelo and Francesco Granacci. On the first visit of Michelangelo, he found in the gardens his future adversary, Torrigiano, who, under the directions of Bertoldo, was modelling figures in clay. Michelangelo applied himself to the same occupation, and his work soon afterwards attracted the attention of Lorenzo, who, from these early specimens, formed great expectations of his talents. Encouraged by such approbation, he began to cut in marble the head of a faun, after an antique sculpture, which, though unaccustomed to the chisel, he executed with such skill as to astonish Lorenzo; who, observing that he had made some intentional deviations from the original, and that in particular he had represented, the lips smoother, and had shown the tongue and teeth, remarked to him, with his accustomed jocularity, that he should have remembered that old men seldom exhibit a complete range of teeth. The docile artist, who paid no less respect to the judgment than to the rank of Lorenzo, was no sooner

left to himself than he struck out one of the teeth, giving to the part the appearance of its having been lost by age. On his next visit Lorenzo was equally delighted with the disposition and genius of his young pupil, and sending for his father, not only took the son under his particular protection, but made such a provision for the old man, as his age, and the circumstances of his numerous family required. From tins time till the death of Lorenzo, which included an interval of four years, Michelangelo constantly resided in the palace of the Medici, and sat at the table of Lorenzo among his most honoured guests; where, by a commendable regulation, the troublesome distinctions of rank were abolished, and every person took his place in the order of his arrival. Hence the young artist found himself at once associated on terms of equality with all that was illustrious and learned in Florence, and formed those connexions and friendships which, if they do not create, are at least necessary to promote and reward superior talents. His leisure hours were passed in contemplating the intaglios, gems, and medals, of which Lorenzo had collected an astonishing number, whence he imbibed that taste for antiquarian researches which was of essential service to him in his more immediate studies, and which he retained to the close of his life.

Whilst Michelangelo was thus laying the sure foundation of his future fame, and giving daily proofs of his rapid improvement, he formed an intimacy with Politiano, who resided under the same roof, and who soon became warmly attached to his interests. At his recommendation, Michelangelo executed a *basso-rilievo* in marble, the subject of which is the battle of the Centaurs. This piece yet ornaments the dwelling of one of his descendants; and, although not wholly finished, displays rather the hand of an experienced master than that of a pupil. But its highest commendation is, that it stood approved even in the riper judgment of the artist himself; who, although not indulgent to his own productions, did not hesitate, on seeing it some years afterwards, to express his regret that he had not entirely devoted himself to this branch of art. The death of Lorenzo too soon deprived him of his protector. Piero, the son of Lorenzo, continued indeed to show to him the same marks of kindness which his father had uniformly done; but that prodigality, which so speedily dissipated his authority, his fortune, and his fame, was extended even to his amusements; and the talents of Michelangelo under the patronage of Piero, instead of impressing on brass or on marble the forms of immortality, were condemned to raise a statue of snow! nor was this intercourse of long continuance; for Piero, instead of affording support to others, was soon obliged to seek, in foreign countries, a shelter for himself.

The history of Michelangelo forms that of all the arts which he professed. In him sculpture, painting, and architecture, seemed to have been personified. Born with talents superior to his predecessors, he had also a better fate. Ghiberti, Donatello, Verocchio, were all men of genius, but they lived during the gentile state of the art. The light had now risen, and his young and ardent mind, conversant with the finest forms of antiquity, imbibed as its genuine source, a relish for their excellence. With the specimens of ancient art the depositories of ancient learning were unlocked to him, and of these also he made no inconsiderable use. As a poet he is entitled to rank high amongst his countrymen; and the triple wreaths of painting, sculpture, and architecture, with which his disciples decorated his tomb, might without exaggeration have been interwoven with a fourth.

Of the sculptures of Michelangelo, some yet remain in an unfinished state, which strikingly display the comprehension of his ideas and the rapidity of his execution. Such are the bust of Brutus, and the statue of a female figure, in the gallery at Florence. In the latter the chisel has been handled with such boldness, as to induce a connoisseur of our own country to conjecture that it would be necessary, in the finishing, to restore the cavities. Perhaps a more involuntary homage was never paid to genius, than that which was extorted from the sculptor Falconet, who having presumed upon all occasions to censure the style of Michelangelo, without having had an

opportunity of inspecting any of his works, at length obtained a sight of two of his statues which were brought into France, by cardinal Richelieu. “I have seen Michelangelo”, exclaimed the French artist; “he is terrific”

The labours of the painter are necessarily transitory ; for so are the materials that compose them. In a few years Michelangelo will be known like an ancient artist, only by his works in marble. Already it is difficult to determine, whether his reputation be enhanced or diminished by the sombre representations of his pencil in the Pauline and Sixtine chapels, or by the few specimens of his cabinet pictures, now rarely to be met with, and exhibiting only a shadow of their original excellence. But the chief merit of this great man is not to be sought for in the remains of his pencil, nor even in his sculptures, but in the general improvement of the public taste which followed his astonishing productions. If his labours had perished with himself, the change which they effected in the opinions and the works of his contemporaries would still have entitled him to the first honours of the art. Those who from ignorance, or from envy, have endeavoured to depreciate his productions, have represented them as exceeding in their forms and attitudes the limits and the possibilities of nature, as a race of beings, the mere creatures of his own imagination; but such critics would do well to consider, whether the great reform to which we have alluded could have been effected by the most accurate representations of common life, and whether anything short of that ideal excellence which he only knew to embody, could have accomplished so important a purpose. The genius of Michelangelo was a leaven which was to operate on an immense and heterogeneous mass, the salt intended to give a relish to insipidity itself; it was therefore active, penetrating, energetic, so as not only effectually to resist the contagious effects of a depraved taste, but to communicate a portion of its spirit to all around.

Of the contemporary artists of Michelangelo, such only are entitled to high commendation as accompanied his studies, or availed themselves of his example. Amongst these appears the divine Raffaello; second to his great model in that grandeur of design which elevates the mind, but superior to him in that grace which interests the heart; and endowed, if not with vigour sufficient alone to effect a reform, yet with talents the best calculated to promote its progress. It is well known that the works of this exquisite master form two distinct classes, those which he painted before, and those which he painted after he had caught from the new Prometheus a portion of the ethereal fire—those of the scholar of Perugino, and of the competitor of Michelangelo. “Happy age!” exclaims, with more than common animation, the historian of the painters, “and happy artists, for so I may well denominate you, who have had the opportunity of purifying your eyes at so clear a fountain; who have found your difficulties removed, your crooked paths made straight by so wonderful an artist; know then, and honour the man who has enabled you to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and let your gratitude be shown in returning your thanks to heaven, and in imitating Michelangelo in all things”

Genius is ever obnoxious to that criticism which mediocrity escapes; nor has this test been wanting to the merits of Michelangelo. The parasites of a vicious court and a corrupt age, have not hesitated to charge him with indecency, in introducing naked figures in his celebrated picture of the last judgment. This accusation was made even in his lifetime by one who called himself his friend, and who saw no impropriety in representing it as proceeding from the obscene lips of Pietro Aretino. It soon however became prevalent, that in the pontificate of Paul IV it was in contemplation to destroy this astonishing picture, which was at last only preserved by the expedient of covering those parts which were supposed to be likely to excite in the minds of the depraved spectators ideas unsuitable to the solemnity of the place. The painter who undertook this office was ever afterwards distinguished by the name of Il Braghettone. These opprobrious charges were renewed in the succeeding century, by a man of talents and celebrity, who united, like Michelangelo, the character of a painter and a poet, without having one idea in common with

him. But what shall we say of an artist who could mingle with the contemplation of a subject so interesting to all mankind, which unites everything terrible and sublime, and absorbs all other passions, an idea that can only have a relation to the decorums of modern life, and to that factitious decency which, by affecting concealment, acknowledges a pruriency of imagination to which true taste as well as true modesty is a stranger.

The favours of Lorenzo de' Medici were not, however, exclusively bestowed. Although he well knew how to appreciate and to reward extraordinary excellence, he was not inattentive to the just claims of those who made a proficiency in any branch of the arts. Where the indication of talents appeared, he was solicitous to call them into action, to accelerate their progress, and to repay their success. "It is highly deserving of notice," says Vasari, "that all those who studied in the gardens of the Medici, and were favoured by Lorenzo, became most excellent artists, which can only be attributed to the exquisite judgment of this great patron of their studies, who could not only distinguish men of genius, but had both the will and the power to reward them". By his kindness the eminent sculptor Rustici was placed under the care of Andrea Verocchio, where he formed an intimacy with the celebrated Lionardo da Vinci; but although he availed himself of the friendship and the instructions of this wonderful man, he acknowledged Lorenzo as the parent of his studies. Francesco Granacci, the fellow-student of Michelangelo, partook also of the favour of Lorenzo, and was occasionally employed by him in preparing the splendid pageants with which he frequently amused the citizens of Florence; in the decoration of which Granacci displayed uncommon taste. The reputation acquired by the pupils of S. Marco soon extended beyond the limits of Italy. At the request of the king of Portugal, Lorenzo sent into that country Andrea Contucci, where he left various monuments of his talents in sculpture and architecture. The encouragement afforded by him to the professors of every branch of the arts, may be estimated in some degree by the numerous pieces executed at his expense by the first masters of the time, accounts of which are occasionally dispersed through the voluminous work of Vasari. Like his ancestor Cosimo, Lorenzo often forgot the superiority of the patron in the familiarity of the friend, and not only excused but delighted in the capriciousness which frequently distinguishes men of talents. In this number was Niccolò Grosso, a Florentine citizen, who wrought ornaments in iron with extraordinary skill. Conscious of his merits, Niccolò resolved to labour only for those who paid him ready money, referring his employers to the sign suspended at his door, which represented books of account destroyed in the flames. Lorenzo, desirous of presenting to some of his powerful friends abroad a specimen of Florentine ingenuity, called upon Niccolò to engage him to execute for him a piece of his workmanship; but the surly artisan, who was busy at his anvil, instead of acknowledging the honour intended him, bluntly told Lorenzo, that he had other customers who, having first applied, must be first served. The invincible pertinacity of Niccolò, in refusing to work till he had received his usual deposit, occasioned Lorenzo to give him the name of *Il Coparra* by which he was ever afterwards generally known.

The study of architecture, as revived by Brunelleschi, received additional support from the encouragement afforded by Lorenzo de' Medici, who, to the munificence of his grand-father, superadded a knowledge of this science equal to that of a practical artist. At his instance, and often at his individual expense, the city of Florence was ornamented with a profusion of elegant buildings, as well for private residence as public purposes. Convinced that the art was founded on fixed and determined principles, which were only to be discovered in the labours of the ancients, he justly reprobated those professors who, neglecting the rules of Vitruvius, followed only the variable suggestions of their own fancy. Nor was he less severe on those who, without any previous knowledge of the art, conceived themselves equal to the task of conducting a building on an extensive scale, and in the erection of their dwellings, chose to become their own architects. "Such people," said Lorenzo, "buy repentance at too dear a rate." Of this description was his relation

Francesco de' Medici, who, having erected a large house at Maiano, and made several alterations in its progress, complained to Lorenzo of the great expense with which it had been attended: "That is not to be wondered at," replied Lorenzo, "when instead of erecting your building from a model, you draw your model from your building." His superior judgment in works of this kind was acknowledged on many occasions. Ferdinand, king of Naples, intending to build a palace, conceived no one more competent to direct him in the choice of a plan than Lorenzo. His assistance was also sought for on a similar occasion by the duke of Milan; and Filippo Strozzi, in the erection of a mansion, which in grandeur of design and richness of execution is not inferior to a royal residence, availed Himself greatly of his advice and directions. It does not however appear, that Lorenzo on any occasion thought proper to dispense with the aid of those who had made this art their more immediate study. Having formed the intention of erecting his palace at Poggio-Cajano, he obtained designs from several of the best architects of the time, and amongst the rest from Giuliano, the son of Paolo Giamberto, whose model was preferred by Lorenzo, and under whose directions the building was carried on; but in the construction of the picturesque and singular flight of steps, which communicated to every part With such convenience that a person might ascend or descend even on horseback, Lorenzo made use of a design of Stefano d'Ugolino, a painter of Siena, who died about the year 1350. Lorenzo was desirous that the ceiling of the great hall should be formed by a single arch, but was apprehensive that it would not be practicable on account of its extent. Giuliano was at that time erecting a residence for himself in Florence, where he took an opportunity of executing one in the manner suggested by Lorenzo, and succeeded so effectually as to remove his doubts on this head. The ceiling at Poggio-Cajano was accordingly completed, and is acknowledged to be the largest vaulted roof of modem workmanship that had then been seen. The talents of this artist induced Lorenzo to recommend him to Ferdinand king of Naples, to whom he presented, on the part of Lorenzo, the model of an intended palace. His reception was highly honourable. On his departure Ferdinand supplied him with horses, apparel, and other valuable articles, amongst which was a silver cup containing several hundred ducats. Giuliano, whilst he declined accepting it, expressed a desire that the king would gratify him with some specimens of ancient art, from his extensive collection, which might be a proof of his approbation. Ferdinand accordingly presented him with a bust of the emperor Adrian, a statue of a female figure larger than life, and a sleeping Cupid; all of which Giuliano immediately sent to Lorenzo, who was no less pleased with the liberality of the artist, than with the acquisition of so valuable a treasure.

At the request of the celebrated Mariano Genazano, Lorenzo had promised to erect, without the gate of San Gallo at Florence, a monastery capable of containing one hundred monks. On the return of Giuliano to Florence, he engaged him in this work, whence he obtained the name of San Gallo, by which he was always afterwards distinguished. Whilst this building was carrying forwards, Giuliano was also em-ployed by Lorenzo in designing and erecting the extensive fortifications of Poggio Imperiale, preparatory to the founding a city on that spot, as was his intention. To this artist, who arrived at great eminence in the ensuing century, and to his brother Antonio, architecture is indebted for the completion of the Tuscan order, as now established, and for considerable improvements in the Doric.

Besides the many magnificent works begun under the immediate directions of Lorenzo, he sedulously attended to the completion of such buildings as had been left imperfect by his ancestors. On the church of S. Lorenzo, the building of which was begun by his great-grandfather Giovanni, and continued by his grandfather Cosimo, he expended a large sum. At the request of Matteo Bosso, he also completed the monastery begun by Brunelleschi at Fiesole, at the same time expressing his regret that he should have rendered it necessary to solicit him to do that which he conceived to be an indispensable duty.

Amongst the various kinds of picturesque representation practised by the Greeks and Romans, and transmitted by them to aftertimes, is that of Mosaic; a mode of execution which, in its durability of form and permanency of colour, possesses distinguished advantages, being unaffected by drought or moisture, heat or cold, and perishing only with the building to which it has been originally attached. This art, during the middle ages, had experienced the same vicissitudes as attended all those with which it is so nearly connected. Some attempts had, however, been made to restore it by Andrea Tafi, the contemporary of Giotto; and even Giotto himself had cultivated it, not without success, although the celebrated picture over the great door of St. Peter's at Rome, called the Navicella di Giotto, is said to be a more modern work, copied from a former one of that artist* Lorenzo was desirous of introducing this mode of execution into more general practice. On expressing to Graffione, a Florentine painter, his intention of ornamenting with work of this kind the vault of a large cupola, the painter ventured to observe to him that he had not artists equal to the task: "We have money enough to make them," replied Lorenzo; and although. Graffione still continued incredulous, Lorenzo soon afterwards met with a person who suited his purpose in the painter Gherardo, who had generally applied himself to works in miniature. The specimen produced by Gherardo for the inspection of Lorenzo, was a head of S. Zenobio, with which he was so well pleased, that he resolved to enlarge the chapel of that saint at Florence, in order to give the artist an opportunity of exhibiting his talents in a wider field. With Gherardo he associated Domenico Ghirlandajo, as a more complete master of design, and the work was commenced with great spirit. Vasari assures us, that if death had not interposed, there was reason to believe, from the part that was executed, that these artists would have performed wonderful things.

But if the attempts made by Lorenzo to restore the practice of Mosaic were thus in a great degree frustrated, a discovery was made about the same period which proved an ample substitute for it, and which has given to the works of the painter that permanency which even the durability of Mosaic might not perhaps have supplied. This was the art of transferring to paper impressions from engravings on copper, or other metals; an invention which has tended more than any other circumstance to diffuse. throughout Europe a just and general taste for the arts.

This discovery is attributed by the Italians to Maso, or Tomaso Finiguerra, a goldsmith of Florence, who being accustomed to engrave on different metals, for the purpose of inlaying them, occasionally tried the effects of his work by taking off impressions, first on sulphur, and afterwards on paper, by means of a roller, in such a manner that the figures seemed to have been traced with a pen. It does not appear that Finiguerra ever applied this invention to any other purpose than that of ascertaining the progress of his work; nor have the researches of the most diligent inquirers discovered a single print that can with any degree of probability be attributed to him; but Baccio Baldini, another goldsmith, conceiving that this discovery might be applied to more important purposes, began to engrave on metals, solely with a view of transmitting impressions to paper. Possessing, however, no great skill in design, he prevailed on Sandro Botticelli to furnish him with drawings suitable for his purpose. The concurrence of Antonio Pollajuoli, and Andrea Mantegna, carried the art to greater perfection. Of the works of the last-mentioned master many specimens yet remain, which do credit to his talents. The beginning of the ensuing century produced a much superior artist in Marcantonio Raimondi, by whose industry the numerous productions of Raffaello, the transcripts of his rich and creative mind, were committed to paper with an accuracy which he himself approved, and may serve as a standard to mark in future times the progress or the decline of the arts.

Whilst the art of transferring to paper impressions from copper was thus first practised, that of engraving on gems and stones was again successfully revived. The predilection of Lorenzo de' Medici for the beautiful specimens of skill which the ancients have left in materials of this

nature has frequently been noticed. Of those which once formed a part of his immense collection, some occasionally occur that seem to have been the objects of his more particular admiration, and bear upon some conspicuous part the name of their former proprietor, thus expressed, LAVR MED. Nor is it improbable that Michelagnolo, who passed among these treasures a considerable portion of his time, was indebted to the liberality of Lorenzo for the beautiful intaglio which he is supposed to have worn as his seal.

The protection and encouragement afforded by Lorenzo to every other branch of art was not withheld from this his favourite department. From the early part of the fifteenth century, some specimens of the astonishing proficiency of the ancients in works of this nature had occasionally been discovered; and, as the public taste improved, they were sought for with avidity, and only to be purchased at considerable prices. In the pontificate of Martin V and again in that of Paul II some attempts had been made to rival, or at least to imitate, these productions; but the first artist whose name stands recorded in modern times, is Giovanni delle Corniuole, so called from his having generally exercised his skill upon the stone called a Cornelian. The museum of Lorenzo de' Medici was the school in which he studied. The proficiency which he made corresponded to the advantages he possessed, and answered the purposes which his liberal patron had in view. The numerous pieces of his work- manship in various sizes, and on various materials, were the admiration of all Italy. One of his most celebrated productions was the portrait of Savonarola, who was then in the meridian of his popularity at Florence. Giovanni immediately met with a formidable competitor in a Milanese, who also lost the name of his family in that of his art, and was called Domenico de' Camei. The likeness of Lodovico Sforza, engraved by Domenico in a large onyx, was considered as the most extraordinary specimen of modern skill. By these masters and their scholars, this elegant but unobtrusive branch of the fine arts kept pace with its more ostentatious competitors; and even in the most flourishing period of their elevation, under the pontificate of Leo X the eye that had contemplated the divine sculptures of Michelangelo, or had dwelt with delight on the paintings of Raffaello or of Titian, might have turned with pleasure to the labours of Valerio Vicentino, or of Giovanni Bolognese, which compressed into the narrowest bounds, the accurate representations of beauty, strength, or grace, and gave to the most inestima-ble productions of nature the highest perfection of art.

## CHAPTER X

### 1492.

That love of leisure which is inseparable from a mind conscious of its own resources, and the consideration of his declining state of health, were probably the motives that induced Lorenzo de' Medici to aim at introducing his two elder sons into public life at so early and almost premature an age. The infirmities under which be laboured not only disqualified him at times from attending with his accustomed vigilance to the affairs of the republic, but rendered it also necessary for him often to absent himself from Florence, and to pass some portion of his time at the warm baths in various parts of Italy, of which those of Siena and Porrettana afforded him the most effectual relief. At those seasons which were not embittered by sickness, he appears to have flattered himself with the expectation of enjoying the reward of his public labours, and partaking of the general happiness which he had so essentially contributed to promote, in a peaceful and dignified retirement, unlevelled by social amusements, by philosophic studies, and literary pursuits. These expectations were built upon the most substantial foundation, the consciousness that he had discharged his more immediate duties and engagements; but his feelings on this occasion are best expressed in his own words. "What," says he, "can be more desirable to a well-regulated mind than the enjoyment of leisure with dignity? This is what all good men wish to obtain, but which great men alone accomplish. In the midst of public affairs we may indeed be allowed to look forwards to a day of rest; but no rest should totally seclude us from an attention to the concerns of our country. I cannot deny that the path which it has been my lot to tread has been arduous and rugged, full of dangers, and beset with treachery; but I console myself in having contributed to the welfare of my country, the prosperity of which may now rival that of any other slate, however flourishing. Nor have I been inattentive to the interests and advancement of my own family, having always proposed to my imitation the example of my grandfather Cosmo, who watched over his public and private concerns with equal vigilance. Having now obtained the object of my cares, I trust I may be allowed to enjoy the sweets of leisure, to share the reputation of my fellow-citizens, and to exult in the glory of my native place." His intentions were more explicitly made known to his faithful companion Politiano, who relates, that sitting with him in his chamber, a short time before his death, and conversing on subjects of letters and philosophy, he then told him that he meant to withdraw himself as much as possible from the tumult of the city, and to devote the remainder of his days to the society of his learned friends; at the same time expressing his confidence in the abilities of his son Piero, on whom it was his intention that the conduct of the affairs of the republic should principally devolve.

This prospect of relaxation and happiness he was not, however, destined to realize. Early in the year 1492, the complaint under which he laboured attacked him with additional violence; and whilst the attention of his physicians was employed in administering relief, he contracted a slow fever, which escaped their observation, or eluded their skill, until it was too late effectually to oppose its progress. The last illness of Lorenzo de' Medici, like that of most other great men, is represented as being extraordinary in its nature. Politiano describes his disorder as a fever, of all others the most insidious, proceeding by insensible degrees, not like other fevers, by the veins or arteries, but attacking the limbs, the intestines, the nerves, and destroying the very principle of life. On the first approach of this dangerous complaint be had removed from Florence to his house at Careggi, where his moments were enlivened by the society of his friends and the respectful

attentions of his fellow-citizens. For medical advice his chief reliance was upon the celebrated Pier Leoni of Spoleto, whom he had frequently consulted on the state of his health; but, as the disorder increased, further assistance was sought for, and Lazaro da Ticino, another physician, arrived at Careggi. It seems to have been the opinion of Politiano, that the advice of Lazaro was too late resorted to; but if we may judge from the nature of the medicines employed by him, he rather accelerated than averted the fatal moment. The mixture of amalgamated pearls and jewels, with the most expensive potions, might indeed serve to astonish the attendants and to screen the ignorance of the physician, but were not likely to be attended with any beneficial effect on the patient Whether it was in consequence of this treatment, or from the nature of the disorder itself, a sudden and unexpected alteration soon took place; and whilst his friends relied with confidence on the exertions made in his behalf; he sunk at once into such a state of debility as totally precluded all hopes of his recovery, and left him only the care of preparing to meet his doom in a manner consistent with the eminence of his character and the general tenor of his life.

Notwithstanding the diversity of occupations which had successively engaged his attention, and the levity, hot to say licentiousness, of some of his writings; the mind of Lorenzo had always been deeply susceptible of religious impressions. This appears not only from his attention to the establishment and reform of monastic houses, but from his laudi, or hymns, many of which breathe a spirit of devotion nearly bordering on enthusiasm. During his last sickness, this feature of his character became more prominent; nor did he judge it expedient, or perhaps think it excusable, to separate the essential from the ceremonial part of religion. Having therefore performed the offices of the church with peculiar fervour, and adjusted with sincerity and decorum his spiritual concerns, he requested a private interview with his son Piero, with whom he held a long and interesting conversation on the state of the republic, the situation of his family, and the conduct which it would be expedient for Piero to pursue. Of the precepts which he thought it necessary to inculcate on his successor, we derive some information from Politiano, which was probably obtained from the relation of his pupil. “I doubt not,” said Lorenzo, “that you will hereafter possess the same weight and authority in the state which I have hitherto enjoyed; but as the republic, although it form but one body, has many heads, you must not expect that it will be possible for you, on all occasions, so to conduct yourself as to obtain the approbation of every individual. Remember, therefore, in every situation to pursue that course of conduct which strict integrity prescribes, and to consult the interests of the whole community, rather than the gratification of a part.” These admonitions, if attended to, might have preserved Piero from the ruin which the neglect of them soon brought down, and may yet serve as a lesson to those whose authority rests, as all authority must finally rest, on public opinion. The dutiful and patient attendance of Piero on his father during his sickness was, however, a pledge to Lorenzo that his last instructions would not be forgotten; and, by confirming the favourable sentiments which he appears to have entertained of the talents and the disposition of his son, served at least to alleviate the anxiety which he must have felt, on resigning, thus prematurely, the direction of such a vast and rapid machine into young and inexperienced hands.

At this interesting period, when the mind of Lorenzo, relieved from the weight of its important concerns, became more sensibly alive to the emotions of friendship, Politiano entered his chamber. Lorenzo no sooner heard his voice than he called on him to approach, and raising his languid arms, clasped the hands of Politiano in his own, at the same time steadfastly regarding him with a placid, and even a cheerful countenance. Deeply affected at this silent but unequivocal proof of esteem, Politiano could not suppress his feelings, but, turning his head aside, attempted as much as possible to conceal his sobs and his tears. Perceiving his agitation, Lorenzo still continued to grasp his hand, as if intending to speak to him when his passion had subsided ; but finding him unable to resist its impulse, he slowly, and as it were unintentionally, relaxed his hold,

and Politiano, hastening into an inner apartment, flung himself on a bed, and gave way to his grief. Having at length composed himself, he returned into the chamber, when Lorenzo again called to him, and inquired with great kindness why Pico of Mirandula had not once paid him a visit during his sickness. Politiano apologized for his friend, by assuring Lorenzo that he had only been deterred by the apprehension that his presence might be troublesome. “On the contrary,” replied Lorenzo, “if his journey from the city be not troublesome to him, I shall rejoice to see him before I take my final leave of you.” Pico accordingly came, and seated himself at the side of Lorenzo, whilst Politiano, reclining on the bed, near the knees of his revered benefactor, as if to prevent any extraordinary exertion of his declining voice, prepared for the last time to share in the pleasures of his conversation. After excusing himself to Pico for the task he had imposed upon him, Lorenzo expressed his esteem for him in the most affectionate terms, professing that he should meet his death with more cheerfulness after this last interview. He then changed the subject to more familiar and lively topics; and it was on this occasion that he expressed, not without some degree of jocularity, his wishes that he could have obtained a reprieve, until he could have completed the library destined to the use of his auditors.

This interview was scarcely terminated, when a visitor of a very different character arrived. This was the haughty and enthusiastic Savonarola, who probably thought, that in the last moments of agitation and of suffering, he might be enabled to collect materials for his factious purposed. With apparent charity and kindness, the priest exhorted Lorenzo to remain firm in the catholic faith; to which Lorenzo professed his strict adherence. He then required an avowal of his intention, in case of his recovery, to live a virtuous and well-regulated life; to this he also signified his sincere assent Lastly, he reminded him, that, if needful, he ought to bear his death with fortitude. “With cheerfulness,” replied Lorenzo, “if such be the will of God.” On his quitting the room, Lorenzo called him back, and, as an unequivocal mark that he harboured in his bosom no resentment against him for the injuries which he had received, requested the priest would bestow upon him his benediction; with which he instantly complied, Lorenzo making the usual responses with a firm and collected voice.

No species of reputation is so cheaply acquired as that derived from death-bed fortitude. When it is fruitless to contend, and impossible to fly, little applause is due to that resignation which patiently awaits its doom. It is not therefore to be considered as enhancing that dignity of character which Lorenzo had so frequently displayed, that he sustained the last conflict with equanimity. “To judge from his conduct and that of his servants,” says Politiano, “you would have thought that it was they who momentarily expected that fate, from which he alone appeared to be exempt.” Even to the last the scintillations of his former vivacity were perceptible. Being asked, on taking a morsel of food, how, he relished it, “as a dying man always does,” was his reply. Having affectionately embraced his surrounding friends, and submitted to the last ceremonies of the church, he became absorbed in meditation, occasionally repeating portions of scripture, and accompanying his ejaculations with elevated eyes and solemn gestures of his hands, till the energies of life gradually declining, and. pressing to his lips a magnificent crucifix, he calmly expired.

In the height of his reputation, and at a premature period of life, thus died Lorenzo de’ Medici; a man who may be selected from all the characters of ancient and modern history, as exhibiting the most remarkable instance of depth of penetration, versatility of talent, and comprehension of mind. Whether genius be a predominating impulse, directed towards some particular object, or whether it be an energy of intellect that arrives at excellence in any department in which it may be employed, it is certain that there are few instances in which a successful exertion in any human pursuit has not occasioned a dereliction of many other objects, the attainment of which might have conferred immortality. If the powers of the mind are to bear

down all obstacles that oppose their progress, it seems necessary that they should sweep along in some certain course, and in one collected mass. What then shall we think of that rich fountain, which, whilst it was poured out by so many different channels, flowed through each with a full and equal stream? To be absorbed in one pursuit, however important, is not the characteristic of the higher class of genius, which, piercing through the various combinations and relations of surrounding circumstances, sees all things in their just dimensions, and attributes to each its due. Of the various occupations in which Lorenzo engaged, there is not one in which he was not eminently successful; but he was most particularly distinguished in those which justly hold the first rank in human estimation. The facility with which he turned from subjects of the highest importance to those of amusement and levity, suggested to his countrymen the idea that he had two distinct souls combined in one body. Even his moral character seems to have partaken, in some degree, of the same diversity ; and his devotional poems are as ardent as his lighter poems are licentious. On all sides he touched the extremes of human character ; and the. powers of his mind were only bounded by that impenetrable circle which prescribes the limits of human nature.

As a statesman, Lorenzo de' Medici appears to peculiar advantage. Uniformly employed in securing the peace and promoting the happiness of his country by just regulations at home and wise precautions abroad, and teaching to the surrounding governments those important lessons of political science, on which the civilization and tranquillity of nations have since been found to depend. Though possessed of undoubted talents for military exploits, and of sagacity to avail himself of the imbecility of neighbouring powers, he was superior to that avarice of dominion, which, without improving what is already acquired, blindly aims at more extensive possessions. The wars in which he engaged were for security, not for territory; and the riches produced by the fertility of the soil, and the industry and ingenuity of the inhabitants of the Florentine republic, instead of being dissipated in imposing projects and ruinous expeditions, circulated in their natural channels, giving happiness to the individual, and respectability to the state. If he was not insensible to the charms of ambition, it was the ambition to deserve rather than to enjoy; and he was always cautious not to exact from the public favour more than it might be ready voluntarily to bestow. The approximating suppression of the liberties of Florence, under the influence of his descendants, may induce suspicions unfavourable to his patriotism; but it will be difficult, not to say impossible, to discover, either in his conduct or his precepts, anything that ought to stigmatize him as an enemy to the freedom of his country. The authority which he exercised was the same as that which his ancestors had enjoyed, without injury to the republic, for nearly a century, and had descended to him as inseparable from the wealth, the respectability, and the powerful foreign connexions of his family. The superiority of his talents enabled him to avail himself of these advantages with irresistible effect; but history suggests not an instance in which they were devoted to any other purpose than that of promoting the honour and independence of the Tuscan state. It was not by the continuance, but by the dereliction of the system which he had established, and to which he adhered to the close of his life, that the Florentine republic sunk under the degrading yoke of despotic power; and to his premature death we may unquestionably attribute, not only the destruction of the commonwealth, but all the calamities that Italy soon afterwards sustained.

The sympathies of mind, like the laws of chemical affinity; are uniform. Great talents attract admiration, the offering of the understanding; but the qualities of the heart can alone excite affection, the offering of the heart. If we may judge of Lorenzo de' Medici by the ardour with which his friends and contemporaries have expressed their attachment, we shall form conclusions highly favourable to his sensibility and his social virtues. The exaction of those attentions usually paid to rank and to power, he left to such as had no other claims to respect; he rather chose to be considered as the friend and the equal, than as the dictator of his fellow-citizens.

His urbanity extended to the lowest ranks of society; and while he enlivened the city of Florence by magnificent spectacles and amusing representations, he partook of them himself with a relish that set the example of festivity. It was the general opinion in Florence, that whoever was favoured by Lorenzo could not fail of success. Valori relates, that in the representation of an engagement on horseback, one of the combatants, who was supposed to contend under the patronage of Lorenzo, being overpowered and wounded, avowed his resolution to die rather than submit to his adversary, and it was not without difficulty that he was rescued from the danger, to receive from the bounty of Lorenzo the reward of his well-meant though mistaken fidelity.

The death of Lorenzo, which happened on the 8th day of April, 1492, was no sooner known at Florence, than a general alarm and consternation spread throughout the city, and the inhabitants gave way to the most unbounded expressions of grief. Even those who were not friendly to the Medici lamented in this misfortune the prospect of the evils to come. The agitation of the public mind was increased by a singular coincidence of calamitous events, which the superstition of the people considered as portentous of approaching commotions. The physician, Pier Leoni, whose prescriptions had failed of success, being apprized of the result, left Careggi in a state of distraction, and precipitated himself into a well in the suburbs of the city. Two days preceding the death of Lorenzo, the great dome of the Reparata was struck with lightning, and on the side which approached towards the chapel of the Medici, a part of the building fell. It was also observed that one of the golden *palle*, or balls, in the emblazonment of the Medicean arms, was at the same time struck out. For three nights, gleams of light were said to have been perceived proceeding from the hill of Fiesole, and hovering above the church of S. Lorenzo, where the remains of the family were deposited. Besides these incidents, founded perhaps an some casual occurrence, and only rendered extraordinary by the workings of a heated imagination, many others of a similar kind are related by contemporary authors, which, whilst they exemplify that credulity which characterizes the human race in every age, may at least serve to show that the event to which they were supposed to allude, was conceived to be of such magnitude as to occasion a deviation from the ordinary course of nature.

From Careggi the body of Lorenzo was conveyed to the church of his patron saint, amidst the tears and lamentations of all ranks of people, who bewailed the loss of their faithful protector, the glory of their city, the companion of their amusements, their common father and friend. His obsequies were without ostentation, he having, a short time before his death, given express directions to that effect. Not a tomb or an inscription marks the place that received his ashes; but the stranger, who, smitten with the love of letters and of arts, wanders amidst the splendid monuments erected to the chiefs of this illustrious family, the work of Michelangelo and of his powerful competitors, whilst he looks in vain for that inscribed with the name of Lorenzo, will be reminded of his glory by them all.

Throughout the rest of Italy the death of Lorenzo was regarded as a public calamity of the most alarming kind. Of the arch which supported the political fabric of that country he had long been considered as the centre, and his loss seemed to threaten the whole with immediate destruction. When Ferdinand, king of Naples, was informed of this event, he exclaimed, “this man has lived long enough for his own glory, but too short a time for Italy.” Such of the Italian potentates as were more nearly connected with the Medici sent ambassadors to Florence on this occasion. Letters of condolence were transmitted to Piero from almost all the sovereigns of Europe. Many distinguished individuals also paid this last tribute to the memory of their friend and benefactor. Among these communications, dictated by flattery, by friendship, and by political motives, there is one of a more interesting nature. This is a letter from the young cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici to his elder brother, written four days after the death of their father, which evinces that

the cardinal was not without apprehensions from the temper and disposition of Piero, and does equal honour to his prudence and to his filial piety.

1492. LETTER OF GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI.

The Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, at Rome, to

Piero de' Medici, at Florence.

"My dearest brother, now the only support of our family; what I have to communicate to thee, except my tears, I know not; for when I reflect on the loss we have sustained in the death of our father, I am more inclined to weep than to relate my sorrow. What a father have we lost! How indulgent to his children! Wonder not then that I grieve, that I lament, that I And no rest. Yet, my brother, I have some consolation in reflecting that I have thee, whom I shall always regard in the place of a father. Do thou command—I shall cheerfully obey. Thy injunctions will give me more pleasure than I can express—order me—put me to the test—there is nothing that shall prevent my compliance. Allow me, however, my Piero, to express my hopes, that in thy conduct to all, and particularly to those around thee, I may find thee as I could wish—beneficent, liberal, affable, and humane; by which qualities there is nothing but may be obtained, nothing but may be preserved. Think not that I mention this from any doubt that I entertain of thee, but because I esteem it to be my duty. Many things strengthen and console me; the concourse of people that surround our house with lamentations, the sad and sorrowful appearance of the whole city, the public mourning, and other similar circumstances, these in a great degree alleviate my grief; but that which relieves me more than the rest, is, that I have thee, my brother, in whom I place a confidence that no words can describe, *&c. Ex urbe, die 12 Ap. 1492*."

The common mediator of Italy being now no more, the same interested and unenlightened motives which had so often rendered that country the seat of treachery and of bloodshed, again began to operate, and the ambitious views of the different sovereigns became the more dangerous, as they were the more concealed. Such was the confidence which they had placed in Lorenzo, that not a measure of importance was determined on by any of them without its being previously communicated to him, when, if he thought it likely to prove hostile to the general tranquillity, he was enabled either to prevent its execution, or at least to obviate its ill effects; but upon his death a general suspicion of each other took place, and laid the foundation of the unhappy consequences that soon afterwards ensued. The impending evils of Italy were accelerated by the death of Innocent VIII, who survived Lorenzo only a few months, and still more by the elevation to the pontificate of Roderigo Borgia, the scourge of Christendom, and the opprobrium of the human race."

Piero de' Medici, on whom the eyes and expectations of the public were turned, gave early indications that he was unable to sustain the weight that had devolved upon him. Elated with the authority derived from his father, but forgetting the admonitions by which it was accompanied, he relaxed the reins that controlled all Italy, to grasp at the supreme dominion of his native place. For this purpose he secretly formed a more intimate connexion with the king of Naples and the pope, which being discovered by the penetrating eye of Lodovico Sforza, raised in him a spirit of jealousy which the professions and assurances of Piero could never allay. An interval of dissatisfaction, negotiation, and distrust, took place, till at length the solicitations of Lodovico and

the ambition of Charles VIII brought into Italy a more formidable and warlike race, whose arrival spread a general terror and alarm, and convinced, too late, the states and sovereigns of that country, of the folly of their mutual dissensions. Even Lodovico himself, who, in the expectation of weakening his rivals, and of vesting in himself the government of Milan, had incessantly laboured to accomplish this object, no sooner saw its approach than he shrunk from it in terror; and whilst he was obliged, for the sake of consistency, to persevere in exhorting Charles to proceed in his enterprise against the kingdom of Naples, he endeavoured, by secret emissaries, to excite against him the most formidable opposition of the Italian powers. Lodovico having for this purpose despatched an envoy to Florence, Piero conceived that he had obtained a favourable opportunity of convincing the king of France of the insincerity of his pretended ally, and thereby of deterring him from the further prosecution of bis undertaking; but however laudable his purpose might be, the means which he adopted for its accomplishment reflect but little credit on his talents. In the palace of the Medici was an apartment which communicated with the gardens by a secret door, constructed by Lorenzo de' Medici for the purpose of convenience and retirement. In this room Piero, pretending to be sick, contrived an interview with the agent of Lodovico, whilst the envoy of Charles VIII, secreted behind the door, was privy to their conversation. Whether Piero had not the address to engage the Milanese sufficiently to develop the views of his master, or whether the French envoy found the Italian politicians equally undeserving of confidence, rests only on conjecture; but the communication of this incident to Charles tended not in the slightest degree to avert the impending calamity. On the contrary, the conduct of Piero being made known to Lodovico, rendered any further communication between them impossible, and by preventing that union of the Italian states, which alone could have opposed with effect the further progress of the French arms, facilitated an enterprise that could owe its success only to the misconduct of its opponents.

This unfortunate event led the way to another incident more immediately destructive to the credit and authority of Piero de' Medici. Charles, at the head of his troops, had without resistance reached the confines of the Florentine state, and had attacked the town of Sarzana, which Lorenzo, after having recovered it from the Genoese, had strongly fortified. The approach of such a formidable body of men, the reputation they had acquired, and the atrocities they had committed in their progress, could not fail of exciting great consternation in Florence, where the citizens began freely to express their dissatisfaction with Piero de' Medici, who they asserted had, by his rash and intemperate measures, provoked the resentment of a powerful sovereign, and endangered the very existence of the republic. This crisis suggested to Piero the situation in which his father stood, when, in order to terminate a war which threatened him with destruction, he had hastened to Naples, and, placing himself in the power of an avowed enemy, had returned to Florence with the credentials of peace. The present season appeared to him favourable for a similar attempt; but, as Guicciardini judiciously observes, it is dangerous to guide ourselves by precedent, unless the cases be exactly alike; unless the attempt be conducted with equal prudence; and, above all, unless it be attended with the same good fortune. The impetuosity of Piero prevented him from observing these distinctions—hastening to the French camp, he threw himself at the feet of Charles, who received his submission with coldness and disdain. Finding his entreaties ineffectual, he became lavish in his offers to promote the interests of the king, and, as a pledge of his fidelity, proposed to deliver up to him not only the important fortress of Sarzana, which had till then successfully resisted bis attacks, but also the town of Pietra Santa, and the cities of Pisa and Leghorn, Charles at the same time undertaking to restore them when he had accomplished his conquest of the kingdom of Naples. The temerity of Piero in provoking the resentment of Charles, added to his inability to ward off, and his pusillanimity in resisting the blow, completed what his ambition and his arrogance had begun, and for ever deprived him of the respect and confidence of his fellow-citizens. On his return to Florence, after this disgraceful

compromise, he was refused admittance into the palace of the magistrates, and finding that the people at large were so highly exasperated against him as to endanger his personal safety, he hastily withdrew himself from his native place, and retreated to Venice. The distress and devastation which the inhabitants of Italy experienced for a series of years after this event have afforded a subject upon which their historians have dwelt with melancholy accuracy. Amidst these disasters, there is perhaps no circumstance that so forcibly excites the regret of the friends of letters, as the plundering of the palace of the Medici, and the dispersion of that invaluable library, whose origin and progress have before been traced. The French troops that had entered the city of Florence without opposition, led the way to this sacrilegious deed, in the perpetration of which they were joined by the Florentines themselves, who openly carried off, or secretly purloined, whatever they could discover that was interesting, rare, or valuable. Besides the numerous manuscripts in almost every language, the depredators seized, with contentious avidity, the many inestimable specimens of the arts with which the house of the Medici abounded, and which had long rendered it the admiration of strangers, and the chief ornament of the city. Exquisite pieces of ancient sculpture, vases, cameos, and gems of various kinds, more estimable for their workmanship than for their native value, shared in the general ruin; and all that the assiduity and the riches of Lorenzo and his ancestors had been able to accumulate In half a century, was dissipated or demolished in a day.

The same reverse of fortune that overwhelmed the political labours of Lorenzo, that rendered his descendants fugitives, and dispersed his effects, seemed to extend to his friends and associates, almost all of whom unhappily perished within a short interval after his death, although in the common course of nature they might have expected a longer life. The first of these eminent men was Ermolao Barbara, of whose friendly intercourse with Lorenzo many testimonies remain, and who died of the plague in the year 1493, when only thirty-nine years of age. This event was succeeded by the death of Pico of Mirandula, who in his thirty-second year fell a victim to his avidity for science, and has left posterity to regret that he turned his astonishing acquisitions to so little account. Nor did Politiano long survive his great patron. He died at Florence on the 24th day of September, 1494, when he had just completed his fortieth year.

It is painful to reflect on the propensity which has appeared in all ages to sully the most illustrious characters by the imputation of the most degrading crimes. Jovius, with apparent gravity, informs us, that Politiano, having entertained a criminal passion for one of his pupils, died in the paroxysm of an amorous fever, whilst he was singing his praises on the lute; and this preposterous tale has been repeated, with singular variations, by many subsequent writers. To attempt a serious refutation of so absurd a charge would be an useless undertaking; but if may not be uninteresting to inquire by what circumstances it was first suggested ; as it may serve to shew on how slight a foundation detraction can erect her super-structure. On the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, Politiano attempted to pour forth his grief in the following monody to his memory, which, although left in an unfinished state, and not to be ranked, in point of composition, with many of his other writings, is strongly expressive of the anguish and agitation of his mind:

Who from perennial streams shall bring,

Of gushing floods a ceaseless spring ?

That through the day in hopeless woe,

That through the night my tears may flow

As the 'reft turtle mourns his mate,

As sings the Bwan his coming fate,
As the sad nightingale complains,
I pour my anguish and my strains.
Ah wretched, wretched past relief,
O grief, beyond all other grief !

—Through heaven the gleamy lightning flies.
And prone on earth my Laurel lies :
That laurel, boast of many a tongue,
Whose praises every muse has sung,
Which every dryad of the grove,
And all the tuneful sisters love;
That laurel that erewhile displayed
Its ample honours; in whose shade
To louder notes was strung the lyre,
And sweeter sang the Aonian choir,
Now silent, silent all around,
And deaf the ear that drank the sound.

—Who from perennial streams shall bring,
Of gushing floods a ceaseless spring ?
That through the day, in hopeless woe,
That through the night, my tears may flow.
As the reft turtle mourns his mate,
As sings the swan his coming fate,
As the sad nightingale complains,
I pour my anguish and my strains.
Ah wretched, wretched past relief,
Oh grief, beyond all other grief!

Such was the object of the affections of Politiano, and such the amorous effusion, in the midst of which he was intercepted by the hand of death; yet if we advert to the charges which have been brought against him, we shall find that they are chiefly, if not wholly, to be attributed to a misrepresentation, or perversion, of these lines. Of those who, after Jovius, have repeated the accusation, one author informs us, that the verses which Politiano addressed to the object of his love were so tender and impassioned, that he expired just as he had finished the second couplet. Another relates, that in the frenzy of a fever, he had eluded the vigilance of his guard, and escaping from his bed, seized his lute, and began to play upon it under the window of a young Greek, of whom he was enamoured, whence he was brought back by his friends, half dead, and expired in his bed soon afterwards. We are next informed, that in a fit of amorous impatience, he occasioned his own death, by striking his head against the wall: whilst a fourth author assures us, that he was killed by a fall from the stairs, as he was singing to his lute an elegy which he had composed on the death of Lorenzo de' Medici. The contrariety of these relations, not one of which is supported by the slightest pretence to serious or authentic testimony, is itself a sufficient proof of their futility. Some years after the death of Politiano, the celebrated cardinal Bembo touched with the untimely fate of a man whom he was induced, by a similarity of taste and character, to love and admire, paid a tribute of gratitude and respect to his memory in a few elegiac verses, in which, alluding to the unfinished monody of Politiano, he represents him as sinking under the stroke of fate, at the moment when, frantic with excess of grief, he was attempting, by the power of music, to revoke the fatal decree which had deprived him of his friend.

POLITIANO TUMULUS.

Whilst borne in sable state, Lorenzo's bier
The tyrant Death, his proudest triumph, brings,
He mark'd a bard in agony severe,
Smite with delirious hand the sounding strings.
He stopp'd—he gazed—the storm of passion raged,
And prayers with tears were mingled, tears with grief;
For lost Lorenzo, war with fate he waged,
And every god was call'd to bring relief.

The Tyrant smiled—and mindful of the hour
When from the shades his consort Orpheus led,
" Rebellious too wouldst thou usurp my power,
And burst the chain that binds the captive dead
He spoke—and speaking, launch'd the shaft of fate,
And closed the lips that glow'd with sacred fire.

His timeless doom 'twas thus Politian met—

Politlan, master of th' Ausonian lyre.

The fiction of the poet, that Politiano had incurred the resentment of Death by his affection for the object of his passion, suggests nothing more than that his death was occasioned by sorrow for the loss of his friend; but the verses of Bembo seem to have given a further pretext to the enemies of Politiano, who appear to have mistaken the friend whom he has celebrated for the object of an amorous passion, and to have interpreted these lines, so honourable to Politiano, in a manner not only the most unfavourable to his character, but the most opposite to their real purport, and to the occasion which gave them birth.

From authentic documents which yet remain respecting the death of this eminent scholar, it appears that he breathed his last in the midst of his relatives and friends, having first expressed his desire to be buried in the church of S. Marco, in the habit of the Dominican order. This request was complied with by the piety of his pupil Roberto Ubaldini, one of the monks of the convent of S. Marco, who has left a memorial in his own handwriting of the circumstances attending his death. His remains were accordingly deposited in the church of S. Marco, where his memory is preserved in an epitaph very unworthy of his character and genius. The various and discordant relations respecting the death of Politiano are happily adverted to by one of his country men, in the following lines :

*PAMPHILI SAXI,*

*De Morte Angeli Politiani.*

Ask'st thou what cause consign'd to early fate

Politian, glory of the Tuscan state —

Not loathsome jaundice tainting all the frame,

Not rapid fever's keen consuming flame,

Not viscous rheum that chokes the struggling breath,

Nor any vulgar minister of death;

—'Twas that his Bong to life and motion charm'd

The mountain oaks, the rock's cold bosom warm'd,

Stay'd the prone flood, the tiger's rage controll'd,

With sweeter strains than Orpheus knew of old.—

"Dimm'd is the lustre of my Grecian fame,"

Exclaimed Calliope—“ No more my name

“ Meets even in Helicon its due regard,”

Apollo cry’d, and pierced the tuneftil bard—

Yet lives the bard in lasting fame approved,

Who Phoebus and the muse to envy moved.

The expulsion of Piero de’ Medici from Florence neither contributed to establish the tranquillity, nor to preserve the liberty of the republic. The inhabitants exulted for a time in the notion that they were freed from the tyranny of a family which had held them so long in subjection; but they soon discovered that it was necessary to supply its absence, by increasing the executive power of the state. Twenty citizens were accordingly chosen by the appellation of Accopiatori, who were invested not only with the power of raising money, but also of electing the chief magistrates. This form of government met, however, with an early and formidable opposition; and to the violence of political dissensions was soon superadded the madness of religious enthusiasm. The fanatic Savonarola having, by pretensions to immediate inspiration from God, and by harangues well calculated to impress the minds of the credulous, formed a powerful party, began to aim at political importance. Adopting the popular side of the question, he directed the whole torrent of his eloquence against the new mode of government, affirming that he was divinely authorized to declare that the legislative power ought to be extended to the citizens at large; that he had himself been the ambassador of the Florentines to heaven, and that Christ had condescended to be their peculiar monarch. The exertions of Savonarola were successful. The newly-elected magistrates voluntarily abdicated their offices, and an effort was made to establish the government on a more popular basis, by vesting the legislative power of the state in the Consiglio Maggiore, or Council of the Citizens, and in a select body, called the Consiglio degli Scelli, or Select Council. The first of these was to be composed of at least one thousand citizens, who could derive their citizenship by descent, and were upwards of thirty years of age; the latter consisted of eighty members, who were elected half-yearly from the great council, and were upwards of forty years of age. These regulations, instead of uniting the citizens in one common interest, gave rise to new distinctions. The Frateschi, or adherents of Savonarola, who were in general favourable to the liberty of the lower classes of the inhabitants, regarded the friar as the messenger of heaven, as the guide of their temporal and eternal happiness; whilst the Compagnacci, or adherents to a more aristocratical government, represented him as a factious impostor; and Alexander VI seconded their cause by fulminating against him the anathemas of the church. Thus impelled by the most powerful motives that can actuate the human mind, the citizens of Florence were seized with a temporary insanity. In the midst of their devotions, they frequently rushed in crowds from the church, to assemble in the public squares, crying *Viva Cristo*, singing hymns, and dancing in circles, formed by a citizen and a friar, placed alternately. The hymns sung on these occasions were chiefly composed by Girolamo Benivieni, who appears to have held a distinguished rank amongst these disciples of fanaticism. The enemies of Savonarola were as immoderate in their opposition as his partisans were in their attachment. Even the children of the city were trained in opposite factions, and saluted each other with showers of pebbles; in which contests the gravest citizens were sometimes unable to resist the inclination of taking a part.

Such was the state of Florence in the year 1497, when Piero de’ Medici, who had long waited for an opportunity of regaining his authority, entered into a negotiation with several of his

adherents, who undertook, at an appointed hour, to admit him within the walls of the city, with the troops which he had obtained from the Venetian republic, and from his relations of the Orsini family. Piero did not, however, make his appearance till the opportunity of assisting him was past. His abettors were discovered; five of them, of the chief families of Florence, were decapitated; the rest were imprisoned or sent into banishment. The persons accused would have appealed from their judges to the Comiglio Grande, according to a law which had lately been obtained by the influence of the Frateschi; but that party, with Savonarola at their head, were clamorous for the execution of the delinquents, and, in spite of the law which they had themselves introduced, effected their purpose. Amongst the five sufferers was Lorenzo Tornabuoni, the maternal cousin of Lorenzo de' Medici, of whose accomplishments Politiano has left a very favourable account, and to whom he has inscribed his beautiful poem entitled *Ambra*.

The authority of Savonarola was now at its highest pitch. Instead of a republic, Florence assumed the appearance of a theocracy, of which Savonarola was the prophet, the legislator, and the judge. He perceived not, however, that he had arrived at the edge of the precipice, and that by one step further he might incur destruction. Amongst the methods resorted to by the opponents of Savonarola to weaken his authority and to counteract his pretensions, they had attacked him with his on weapons, and had excited two Franciscan monks to declaim against him from the pulpit. Savonarola found it necessary to call in the aid of an assistant, for which purpose he selected Fra Domenico da Pescia, a friar of his own convent of S. Marco. The contest was kept up by each of the contending parties with equal fury, till Domenico, transported with zeal for the interests of his master, proposed to confirm the truth of his doctrines by walking through the flames, provided any one of his adversaries would submit to a similar test. By a singular coincidence, which is alone sufficient to demonstrate to what a degree the passions of the people were excited, a Franciscan friar accepted the challenge, and professed himself ready to proceed to the proof. The mode of trial became the subject of serious deliberation among the chief officers of the republic. Two deputies were elected on-behalf of each of the parties, to arrange and superintend this extraordinary contest. The combustibles were prepared, and over them was erected a scaffold, which afforded a commodious passage into the midst of the flames. On the morning of the day appointed, being the 17th day of April, 1498, Savonarola and his champion made their appearance, with a numerous procession of ecclesiastics. Savonarola himself intonating, with a tremendous voice, the psalm "Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus." His opponent, Fra Giuliano Rondinelli, attended by a few Franciscan monks, came sedately and silently to the place of trial; the flames were kindled, and the agitated spectators waited with impatience for the moment that should renew the miracle of the Chaldean furnace. Savonarola finding that the Franciscan was not to be deterred from the enterprise either by his vociferations, or by the sight of the flames, was obliged to have recourse to another expedient, and insisted that his champion Domenico, when he entered the fire, should bear the host along with him. This sacrilegious proposal shocked the whole assembly. The prelates who, together with the state deputies, attended the trial, exclaimed against an experiment which might subject the catholic faith to too severe a test, and bring a scandal upon their holy religion. Domenico, however, clung fast to the twig which his patron had thrown out, and positively refused to encounter the flames without this sacred talisman. This expedient, whilst it saved the life of the friar, ruined the credit of Savonarola. On his return to the convent of S. Marco, he was insulted by the populace, who bitterly reproached him, that after having encouraged them to cry Viva Cristo, he should impiously propose to commit him to the flames. Savonarola attempted to regain his authority by addressing them from the pulpit, but his enemies were too vigilant; seizing the opportunity of his disgrace, they first attacked the house of Francesco Valori, one of his most powerful partisans, who, together with his wife, was sacrificed to their fury. They then secured Savonarola, with his associate Domenico, and another friar of the same convent, and dragged them to prison. An

assembly of ecclesiastics and seculars, directed by an emissary of Alexander VI sat in judgment upon them. The resolution and eloquence of Savonarola, on his first interview, intimidated his judges; and it was not till recourse was had to the implements of torture—the *ultima theologorum ratio*, that Savonarola betrayed his weakness, and acknowledged the fallacy of his pretensions to supernatural powers. His condemnation instantly followed; and the unhappy priest, with his two attendants, was led to execution in the same place, and with the same apparatus, as had been prepared for the contest; where, being first strangled, their bodies were committed to the flames; and, lest the city should be polluted by their remains, their ashes were carefully gathered and thrown into the Arno.

From the time that Piero de' Medici quitted the city of Florence, he experienced a continual succession of mortifications and disappointments. Flattered, deserted, encouraged, and betrayed, by the different potentates to whom he successively applied for assistance, his prospects became daily more unfavourable, and his return to Florence more improbable. In the meantime a new war had arisen in Italy. Louis XII the successor of Charles VIII after having, in conjunction with Ferdinand, king of Spain, accomplished the conquest of Naples, disagreed with him in the partition of the spoil, and Italy became the theatre of their struggle. On this occasion Piero entered into the service of the French, and was present at an engagement that took place between them and the Spaniards, on the banks of the Garigliano, in which they were defeated with great loss. In effecting his escape Piero attempted to pass the river, but the boat in which he, with several other men of rank, had embarked, being laden with heavy cannon, sunk in the midst of the current, and Piero miserably perished, after having supported an exile of ten years. By his wife Alfonsina, he left a son named Lorenzo, and a daughter Clarice.

Few men have derived from nature greater advantages, and perhaps never any one enjoyed a better opportunity of improving them, than Piero de' Medici. A robust form, a vigorous constitution, great personal strength and activity, and a share of talents beyond the common lot, were the endowments of his birth. To these was added a happy combination of external affairs, resulting from the opulence and respectability of his family, the powerful alliances by which it was strengthened, and the high reputation which his father had so deservedly acquired. But these circumstances, apparently so favourable to his success, were precisely the causes of his early ruin. Presuming on his security, he supposed that his authority could not be shaken nor his purposes defeated. Forgetting the advice so often repeated to him by his father, to u remember that he was only a citizen of Florence, he neglected or disdained to conciliate the affections of the people. His conduct was the exact reverse of that which his ancestors had so long and uniformly adopted, and was attended with the effects which might reasonably be expected from a dereliction of those maxims that had raised them to the honourable distinction which they had so long enjoyed.

A few poetical compositions of Piero de' Medici, preserved in the Laurentian Library, though not hitherto printed, place his character in a more favourable point of view, and exhibit his filial affection and his attachment to his native place in a very interesting light. Of this the following sonnet may be a sufficient proof:

Thy offspring, Florence, nurtured at thy breast,

Ah! let me yet thy kind indulgence prove;

Or if thou own no more a parent's love,

Thy pity sure may soothe my woes to rest.

Fate marks to each his lot: the same behest
That taught the bird through fields of air to rove,
And tunes his song, my vital tissue wove
Of grief and care, with darkest hues imprest.

But if, my fondness scorn'd, my prayer denied
Death only bring the period of my woes,
Yet one dear hope shall mitigate my doom.

—If then my father's name was once thy pride,
Let my cold ashes find at last repose,
Safe in the shelter of his honour'd tomb

Of the many ties by which Lorenzo had endeavoured to secure the prosperity of his family amidst the storms of fortune, and the ebbs and flows of popular opinion, one only now remained,—that by which he had connected it with the church; but this alone proved sufficient for the purpose, and shews that in this, as in every instance, his conduct was directed by motives of the soundest policy. After the expulsion of the family from Florence, the cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, finding that the endeavours of himself and his brothers to effect their restoration were more likely to exasperate the Florentines than to promote that desirable event, desisted from any further attempts, and determined to wait with patience for a more favourable opportunity. He therefore quitted Italy, and whilst that country was the theatre of treachery and war, visited many parts of France and Germany.

His dislike to Alexander VI, who had entered into an alliance with the Florentines, and was consequently adverse to the views of the exiles, was an additional motive for his absence. After the death of Alexander in the year 1503, he returned to Rome, and found in Julius II a pontiff more just to his talents, and more favourable to his hopes. From this time he began to take an important part in the public affairs of Italy, and was appointed legate in the war carried on by the pope, the Venetians, and the king of Spain, against Louis XII. Whilst invested with this dignity, he was taken prisoner by the French, in the famous battle of Ravenna, but soon afterwards found an opportunity of effecting his escape, not however without great danger and difficulty. In the meantime new dissensions had sprung up at Florence, where the inhabitants, wearied with the fluctuations of a government whose maxims and conduct were changed in the same rapid succession as its chief magistrates, were at length obliged to seek for a greater degree of stability, by electing a Gonfaloniere for life. This authority was entrusted to Piero Soderini, who, with more integrity than ability, exercised it for nearly ten years. His contracted views suited not with the circumstances of the times. The principal governments of Italy, with Julius at their head, had

leagued together to free that country from the depredations of the French. Fearful of exciting the restless dispositions of the Florentines, and perhaps of endangering the continuance of his power, the Gonfaloniere kept aloof from a cause, on the success of which depended the tranquillity and independence of Italy. His reluctance to take an active part in the war was construed into a secret partiality to the interests of the French; and, whilst it rendered him odious to a great part of the citizens of Florence, drew upon him the resentment of the allied powers. The victory obtained by the French at Ravenna, dearly purchased with the death of the gallant Gaston de Foix, and the loss of near ten thousand men, proved the destruction of their enterprise; and as the cause of the French declined, that of the Medici gained ground, as well in Florence, as in the rest of Italy. The prudence and moderation of the cardinal enabled him to avail himself of these favourable dispositions without prematurely anticipating the consequences. During his residence at Rome he had paid a marked attention to the citizens of Florence who occasionally resorted there, without making any apparent distinction between those who had espoused and those who had been adverse to the cause of his family; and by his affability and hospitality, as well as by his attention to the interests of those who stood in need of his services, secured the esteem and good opinion of his fellow-citizens. Having thus prepared the way for his success, he took the earliest opportunity of turning the arms of the allied powers against Florence, for the avowed purpose of removing Piero Soderini from his office, and restoring the Medici to their rights as citizens. On the part of Soderini little resistance was made. The allies having succeeded in an attack upon the town of Prato, and the friends of the Medici having openly opposed the authority of Soderini, the tide of popular favour once more turned ; and whilst the Gonfaloniere with difficulty effected his escape, the cardinal made his entrance into his native place, accompanied by his younger brother Giuliano, his nephew Lorenzo, and his cousin Giulio de' Medici, the latter of whom had been his constant attendant during all the events of his public life.

The restoration of the Medici, although effected by an armed force, was not disgraced by the bloodshed of any of the citizens, and a few only of their avowed enemies were ordered to absent themselves from Florence. Scarcely was the tranquillity of the place restored, when intelligence was received of the death of Julius II. The cardinal lost no time in repairing to Rome, where, on the 11th day of March, 1513, being then only thirty-seven years of age, he was elected supreme head of the church, and assumed the name of Leo X. The high reputation which he had acquired not only counter-balanced any objections arising from his youth, but rendered his election a subject of general satisfaction; and the inhabitants of Florence, without adverting to the consequences, exulted in an event which seemed likely to contribute not less to the security than to the honour of their country. The commencement of his pontificate was distinguished by an act of clemency which seemed to realize the high expectations that had been formed of it A general amnesty was published at Florence, and the banished citizens restored to their country. Piero Soderini, who had taken refuge in Turkey, was invited by the pope to Rome, where he resided many years under his protection, and enjoyed the society and respect of the prelates and other men of eminence who frequented the court, being distinguished, during the remainder of his life, by the honourable title of the Gonfaloniere.

The elevation of Leo X to the pontificate established the fortunes of the Medici on a permanent foundation. Naturally munificent to all, Leo was lavish in bestowing upon the different branches of his own family the highest honours and most lucrative preferments of the church. Giulio de' Medici was created archbishop of Florence, and was soon afterwards admitted into the sacred college, where he acquired such influence, as to secure the pontifical chair, in which he succeeded Adrian VI, who filled it only ten months after the death of Leo. The daughters of Lorenzo, Maddalena the wife of Francesco Cibò, Contessina the wife of Piero Ridolfi, and Lucrezia the wife of Giacopo Salviati, gave no less than four cardinals to the Romish church; there being

two of the family of Salviati, and one of each of the others. Profiting by the examples of his predecessors, Leo lost no opportunity of aggrandizing his relations, well knowing that, in order to secure to them any lasting benefit, it was necessary that they should be powerful enough to defend themselves, after his death, from the rapacious aims of succeeding pontiffs, who, he was well aware, would probably pay as little regard to his family as he had himself, in some instances, paid to the friends and families of his predecessors.

The pontificate of Leo X is celebrated as one of the most prosperous in the annals of the Romish church. At the time when he assumed the chair, the calamities of Italy were at their highest pitch; that country being the theatre of a war, in which not only all its governments were engaged, but which was rendered yet more sanguinary by the introduction of the French, Helvetian, and Spanish troops. A council, which had long established itself at Pisa, under the influence and protection of the king of France, thwarted the measures, and at times overawed the authority of the holy see; and, in addition to all her other distresses, Italy laboured under great apprehensions from the Turks, who constantly threatened a descent on that unhappy country. The address and perseverance of Leo surmounted the difficulties which he had to encounter; and during his pontificate the papal dominions enjoyed a greater degree of tranquillity than any other state in Italy. In his relations with foreign powers, his conduct is no less entitled to approbation. During the contests that took place between those powerful monarchs, Charles V and Francis I, he distinguished himself by his moderation, his vigilance, and his political address; on which account he is justly celebrated by an eminent historian of our own country, as “the only prince of the age who observed the motions of the two contending monarchs with a prudent attention, or who discovered a proper solicitude for the public safety.”

Leo was not however aware, that whilst he was composing the troubles which the ambition of his neighbours, or the misconduct of his predecessors, had occasioned, he was exciting a still more formidable adversary, that was destined, by a slow but certain progress, to sap the foundations of the papal power, and to alienate that spiritual allegiance which the Christian world had kept inviolate for so many centuries. Under the control of Leo, the riches that flowed from every part of Europe to Rome, as to the heart of the ecclesiastical system, were again poured out through a thousand channels, till the sources became inadequate to the expenditure. To supply this deficiency, he availed himself of various expedients, which, whilst they effected for a time the intended purpose, roused the attention of the people to the enormities and abuses of the church, and in some measure drew aside that sacred veil, which in shrouding her from the prying eyes of the vulgar, has always been her safest preservative. The open sale of dispensations and indulgences, for the most enormous and disgraceful crimes, was too flagrant not to attract general notice. Encouraged by the dissatisfaction which was thus excited, a daring reformer arose, and, equally regardless of the threats of secular power, and the denunciations of the Roman see, ventured to oppose the opinion of an individual to the infallible determinations of the church. At this critical juncture, Luther found that support which he might in vain have sought at any other period, and an inroad was made into the sanctuary, which has ever since been widening, and will probably continue to widen, till the mighty fabric, the work of so many ages, shall be laid in ruins. It is not however so much for the tenets of their religious creed, as for the principles upon which they founded their dissent, that the Reformers are entitled to the thanks of posterity. That right of private judgment which they claimed for themselves, they could not refuse to others; and by a mode of reasoning as simple as it was decisive, mankind arrived at the knowledge of one of those great truths which form the basis of human happiness. It appeared that the denunciations of the church were as ineffectual to condemn, as its absolution was to exculpate; and instead of an intercourse between the man and his priest, an intercourse took place between his conscience and his God.

But turning from the advantages which the world has derived from the errors of Leo X, we may be allowed for a moment to inquire what it owes to his talents and to his virtues. No sooner was he raised to the papal chair, than Rome assumed once more its ancient character, and became the seat of genius, magnificence, letters, and arts. One of the first acts of his pontificate was to invite to his court two of the most elegant Latin scholars that modern times have produced, Pietro Bembo and Giacopo Sadoleti; whom he appointed his pontifical secretaries. The most celebrated professors of literature, from every part of Europe, were induced by liberal pensions to fix their residence at Rome, where a permanent establishment was formed for the study of the Greek tongue, under the direction of Giovanni Lascar. The affability, the munificence, the judgment, and the taste of this splendid pontiff, are celebrated by a considerable number of learned men, who witnessed his accomplishments, or partook of his bounty. Succeeding times have been equally disposed to do justice to so eminent a patron of letters, and have considered the age of Leo X as rivalling that of Augustus. Leo has not however escaped the reproach of having been too lavish of his favours to authors of inferior talents, and of having expended in pompous spectacles and theatrical representations, that wealth which ought to have been devoted to better purposes. But shall we condemn his conduct, if those who had no claims on his justice, were the objects of his bounty? or may it not be doubted whether this disposition was not more favourable to the promotion of letters, than a course of conduct more discriminating and severe? Whatever kindness he might shew to those who. endeavoured to amuse his leisure by their levity, their singularity, or their buffoonery, no instances can be produced of his having rewarded them by such distinguished favours as he constantly bestowed on real merit; and whilst we discover amongst those who shared his friendship and partook of his highest bounty, the names of Bembo, Vida, Ariosto, Sadoleti, Casa, and Flaminio, we may readily excuse the effects of that superabundant kindness which rather marked the excess of his liberality than the imperfection of his judgment.

In the attention paid by Leo X to the collecting and preserving ancient manuscripts, and other memorials of literature, he emulated the example of his father, and by his perseverance and liberality, at length succeeded in restoring to its former splendour the celebrated library which, on the expulsion of Piero de' Medici, had become a prey to the fury or the rapacity of the populace. Such of these valuable articles as had escaped the sacrilegious hands of the plunderers, had been seized upon for the use of the Florentine state ; but in the year 1496, the public treasury being exhausted, and the city reduced to great extremity, the magistrates were under the necessity of selling them to the monks of the fraternity of S. Marco, for the sum of three thousand ducats. Whilst these valuable works were deposited at the convent, they experienced a less public but perhaps a more destructive calamity, many of them having been distributed as presents by Savonarola, the principal of the monastery, to the cardinals, and other eminent men, by whose favour he sought to shelter himself from the resentment of the pope. When the Florentines destroyed their golden calf, and the wretched priest expiated by his death his folly and his crimes, apprehensions were entertained that the library of the Medici would once more be exposed to the rapacity of the people; but some of the youth of the noblest families of Florence, with a laudable zeal for the preservation of this monument of their national glory, associated themselves together, and undertook to guard it till the frenzy of the populace had again subsided. After the death of Savonarola, the fraternity having fallen into discredit, and being in their turn obliged to sell the library, it was purchased from them by Leo X, then cardinal de' Medici, and in the year 1508 was removed by him to Rome, where it continued during his life, and received constant additions of the most rare and valuable manuscripts. From Leo it devolved to his cousin Clement VII, who, upon his elevation to the pontificate, again transferred it to Florence, and by a bull, which bears date the fifteenth day of December, 1532, provided for its future security. Not satisfied, however, with this precaution, he meditated a more substantial defence, and, with a munificence which

confers honour on his pontificate, engaged Michelangelo to form the design of the splendid edifice in which this library is now deposited, which was afterwards finished under the directions of the same artist, by his friend and scholar Vasari.

Giuliano de' Medici, the third son of Lorenzo, was more distinguished by his attention to the cause of literature, and by his mild and affable disposition, than by his talents for political affairs. On the return of the family to Florence he had been entrusted by his brother, then the cardinal de' Medici, with the direction of the Florentine state; but it soon appeared that he had not sufficient energy to control the jarring dispositions of the Florentines. He therefore resigned his authority to Lorenzo, the son of his brother, Piero de' Medici, and on the elevation of Leo X took up his residence at Rome; where, under the title of captain-general of the church, he held the chief command of the papal troops. By the favour of the pope he soon afterwards obtained extensive possessions in Lombardy, and having intermarried with Filiberta, sister of Charles duke of Savoy, and a descendant of the house of Bourbon, was honoured by Francis I with the title of duke of Nemours. Of his gratitude, an instance is recorded which it would be unjust to his memory to omit. During his exile from Florence, he had found a hospitable asylum with Guid'ubaldo di Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, who on his death left his dominions to his adopted son, Francesco Maria delle Rovere. Incited by the entreaties of his nephew Lorenzo, Leo X formed the design of depriving Rovere of his possessions, under the usual pretext of their having escheated to the church for want of legitimate heirs, and of vesting them in Lorenzo, with the title of duke of Urbino; but the representations of Giuliano prevented for a time the execution of his purpose; and it was not till after his death that Leo disgraced his pontificate by this signal instance of ecclesiastical rapacity. If we may give credit to Ammirato, Giuliano at one time entertained the ambitious hope of obtaining the crown of Naples; but if such a design was in contemplation, it is probable that he was incited by his more enterprising and ambitious brother, who perhaps sought to revive the claims of the papal see upon a kingdom, to the government of which Giuliano could, in his own right, ad-vance no pretensions. As a patron of learning, he supported the ancient dignity of his family. He is introduced to great advantage in the celebrated dialogue of Bembo on the Italian tongue, and in the yet more distinguished work of Castiglione, entitled "Il libro del Cortegiano." In the Laurentian library several of his sonnets are yet preserved; and some specimens of his composition are adduced by Crescimbeni, which, if they display not any extraordinary spirit of poetry, sufficiently prove, that, to a correct judgment, he united an elegant taste.

Naturally of an infirm constitution, Giuliano did not long enjoy his honours. Finding his health on the decline, he removed to the monastery at Fiesole, in the expectation of deriving advantage from his native air; but his hopes were frustrated, and he died there in the month of March, 1516, not having then fully completed his thirty-seventh year. His death was sincerely lamented by a great majority of the citizens of Florence, whose favour he had conciliated in a high degree by his affability, moderation, and an inviolable regard to his promises. His tomb, in the sacristy of the church of S. Lorenzo at Florence, one of the most successful efforts of the genius of Michelangelo, may compensate him for the want of that higher degree of reputation which he might have acquired in a longer life. His statue, seated, and in a Roman military habit, may be considered rather as characteristic of his office, as general of the church, than of his exploits. The figures which recline on each side of the sarcophagus, and are intended to represent day and night, have been the admiration of succeeding artists; but their allegorical purport may admit of a latitude of interpretation. Had the conquests of Giuliano rivalled those of Alexander the Great, we might have conjectured, with Vasari, that the artist meant to express the extent of his glory, limited only by the confines of the earth; but the hyperbole would be too extravagant; and the

judicious spectator will perhaps rather regard them as emblematical of the constant change of sublunary affairs, and the brevity of human life.

By his wife Filiberta of Savoy, Giuliano de' Medici left no children; but, before his marriage, he had a natural son, who became an acknowledged branch of the family of the Medici, and, like the rest of his kindred, acquired, within the limits of a short life, a considerable share of reputation. This was the celebrated Ippolito de' Medici, who, dignified with the rank of cardinal, and possessed by the partiality of Clement VII of an immense revenue, was at once the patron, the companion, and the rival of all the poets, the musicians, and the wits of his time. Without territories, and without subjects, Ippolito maintained at Bologna a court far more splendid than that of any Italian potentate. His associates and attendants, all of whom could boast of some peculiar merit or distinction which had entitled them to his notice, generally formed a body of about three hundred persons. Shocked at his profusion, which only the revenues of the church were competent to supply, Clement VII is said to have engaged the *maestro di casa* of Ippolito to remonstrate with him on his conduct, and to request that he would dismiss some of his attendants as unnecessary to him. "No," replied Ippolito, "I do not retain them in my court because I have occasion for their services, but because they have occasion for mine." His translation of the second book of the Aeneid into Italian blank verse is considered as one of the happiest efforts of the language, and has frequently been reprinted. Amongst the collections of Italian poetry may also be found some pieces of his own composition, which do credit to his talents.

On the voluntary resignation by Giuliano de' Medici of the direction of the Florentine state, that important trust had been confided by Leo X to his nephew Lorenzo, who, with the assistance of the cardinal Giulio de' Medici, directed the helm of government according to the will of the pope; but the honour of holding the chief rank in the republic, although it had gratified the just ambition of his illustrious grandfather, was inadequate to the pretensions of Lorenzo; and the family of Rovere, after a vigorous defence, in which Lorenzo received a wound which had nearly proved mortal, was obliged to relinquish to him the sovereignty of Urbino, of which he received from the pope the ducal investiture in the year 1516. After the death of his uncle Giuliano, he was appointed captain-general of the papal troops, but his reputation for military skill scarcely stands higher than that of his predecessor. In the year 1518, he married Magdeleine de Boulogne, of the royal house of France, and the sole fruit of this union was Catherine de' Medici, afterwards the queen of Henry II. The birth of the daughter cost the mother her life; and her husband survived her only a few days, having, if we may credit Ammirato, fallen a victim to that loathsome disorder, the peculiar scourge of licentiousness, which had then recently commenced its ravages in Europe. His tomb, of the sculpture of Michelangelo, is found amongst the splendid monuments of his family, in the church of S. Lorenzo at Florence. He appears seated in the attitude of deep meditation. At his feet recline two emblematical figures, the rivals of those which adorn the tomb of Giuliano, and which are intended to represent morning and evening. Ariosto has also celebrated his memory in some of his most beautiful verses. Like the Egyptians, who embalm a putrid carcase with the richest odours, the artist and the poet too often lavish their divine incense on the most undeserving of mankind.

Prior to his marriage with Magdeleine of Boulogne, the duke of Urbino had an illegitimate son, named Alessandro, in whose person was consummated the destruction of the liberties of Florence. It was commonly supposed that Alessandro was the offspring of the duke by an African slave, at the time when he, with the rest of the family, were restored to Florence; and this opinion received confirmation from his thick lips, crisped hair, and dark complexion. But it is yet more probable that he was the son of Clement VII. Such at least was the information given to the historian Ammirato by the grand duke Cosimo I at the time when he read to him the memoirs which he had prepared respecting his family, and the predilection of the pontiff for this equivocal

descendant of the house of Medici adds probability to the report. But whatever was his origin, the circumstances of the times and the ambition of those who protected his infancy, compensated for the disadvantages of his birth, and his want of inherent merit. On failure of the legitimate branch of Cosmo de' Medici, usually styled the father of his country, derived through Lorenzo the Magnificent, Alessandro and Ippolito became necessary implements in the hands of Clement VII to prevent the credit and authority of the family from passing to the collateral branch, derived from Lorenzo the brother of Cosimo, which had gradually risen to great distinction in the state, and of which it will now be necessary to give a brief account.

Pierfrancesco de' Medici, the son of the elder Lorenzo, to whom we have before had occasion to advert, died in the year 1459, having bequeathed his immense possessions, obtained from his share in the profits acquired by the extensive traffic of the family, to his two sons, Lorenzo and Giovanni. Following the example of their father, and emulous rather of wealth than of honours, the sons of Pierfrancesco had for several years confined themselves to the limits of a private condition, although they had occasionally filled the chief offices of the republic, in common with other respectable citizens. On the expulsion of Piero, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, from Florence, in the year 1494, they endeavoured to avail themselves of his misconduct, and of the importance which they had gradually acquired, to aspire to the chief direction of the republic, and divesting themselves of the invidious name of Medici, assumed that of Popolani, The restoration of the descendants of Lorenzo the Magnificent to Florence, the elevation of his second son to the pontificate, and the series of prosperity enjoyed by the family under his auspices, and under those of Clement VII, had repressed their ambition, or frustrated their hopes; and Lorenzo and Giovanni, the sons of Pierfrancesco, passed through life in a subordinate rank, the former of them leaving at his death a son, named Pierfrancesco, and the latter a son Giovanni, to inherit their immense wealth, and perpetuate the hereditary rivalship of the two families. But whilst the descendants of Cosimo, the father of his country, existed only in females, or in a spurious offspring, those of his brother Lorenzo continued in a legitimate succession of males, and were invigorated with talents the most formidable to their rivals, and the most flattering to their own hopes. Adopting from his youth a military life, Giovanni de' Medici became one of the most celebrated commanders that Italy had ever produced. By the appellation of captain of the *bandenere*, his name carried terror amongst his enemies. His courage was of the most ferocious kind. Equally insensible to pity and to danger, his opponents denominated him II gran Diavolo. As the fervour of youth subsided, the talents of the commander began to be developed; but in the midst of his honours his career was terminated by a cannon ball, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. By his wife, Maria Salviati, the offspring of Lucrezia, one of the daughters of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he left a son, Cosimo de' Medici, who, after the death of Alessandro, obtained the permanent sovereignty of Tuscany, and was the first who assumed the title of Grand Duke.

The younger Pierfrancesco left also a son, named Lorenzo, who, as well on account of his diminutive person, as to distinguish him from others of his kindred of the same name, was usually denominated Lorenzino, and who was destined with his own hand to terminate the contest between the two families. Though small of stature, Lorenzino was active and well proportioned. His complexion was dark, his countenance serious; when he smiled it seemed to be by constraint. His mother, who was of the powerful family of Soderini, had carefully attended to his education; and as his capacity was uncommonly quick, he made an early proficiency in polite letters. His elegant comedy entitled "Aridosio," still ranks with those works which are selected as models of the Italian language. Enterprising, restless, fond of commotions, and full of the examples of antiquity, he had addicted himself when young to the society of Filippo Strozzi, who to an ardent love of liberty united an avowed contempt for all the political and religious institutions of his time.

The talents and accomplishments of Lorenzino recommended him to Clement VII under whose countenance he resided for some time at the Roman court; but an extravagant adventure deprived him of the favour of the pope, and compelled him to quit the city. It appeared one morning, that, during the preceding night, the statues in the arch of Constantine, and in other parts of the city, bad been broken and defaced; a circumstance which so exasperated the pope, that he issued positive orders that whoever had committed the outrage, except it should appear to be the cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, should be immediately hanged. This exception indeed strongly implies that the cardinal was not free from suspicion; but whoever was the delinquent, Lorenzino bore the whole odium of the affair; and it required all the influence that Ippolito possessed with the pope to rescue his kinsman from the denunciations issued against the offender. Lorenzino gladly took the earliest opportunity of quitting the city, and retreated to his native place, where, transferring his resentment from the dead to the living, he soon afterwards acted a principal part in a much more important transaction.

To the energy and activity of Lorenzino, and the courage of Giovanni de' Medici, Clement VII could only oppose the dissipation and inexperience of Ippolito and Alessandro; but the turbulent disposition of the Florentines seconded his views, and the premature death of Giovanni, whilst it exposed his dominions to the ravages of the German troops, relieved him from his apprehensions of his most dangerous rival. Having prevailed on the emperor and the king of France to concur in his design, he seized the opportunity afforded him by the civil dissensions of the Florentines, and, in the year 1532, compelled them to place at the head of the government Alessandro de' Medici, with the title of Doge of the Florentine republic. The authority of Alessandro was soon afterwards strengthened by his marriage with Margaretta of Austria, a natural daughter of the emperor Charles V. The cardinal Ippolito, jealous of his success, had attempted to preoccupy the government; disappointed in his hopes, and disgusted with his ecclesiastical trappings, which ill-suited the rapidity of his motions and the vivacity of his character, he united his efforts with those of Filippo Strozzi, who had married Clarice, the sister of Lorenzo, duke of Urbino, to deprive Alessandro of his new dignity; but before the arrangement could be made for the meditated attack, Ippolito suddenly died of poison, administered to him by one of his domestics, leaving his competitor in the undisturbed possession of his newly acquired power.

The period, however, now approached, which was to transfer the dominion of Florence from the descendants of Lorenzo the Magnificent, to the kindred stock. In the secure possession of power, Alessandro knew no restraint. Devoted to the indulgence of an amorous passion, he sought its gratification among women of all descriptions, married and unmarried, religious and secular; insomuch that neither rank nor virtue could secure the favourite object from his licentious rapacity. The spirit of the Florentines, though sinking under the yoke of despotism, began to revolt at this more opprobrious species of tyranny, and the absentees and malecontents became daily more numerous and more respectable. But whilst the storm was gathering in a remote quarter, a blow from a kindred hand unexpectedly freed the Florentines from their oppressor, and afforded them once more an opportunity of asserting that liberty to which their ancestors had been so long devoted. Lorenzino de' Medici was the second Brutus who burst the bonds of consanguinity in the expectation of being the deliverer of his country. But the principle of political virtue was now extinct, and it was no longer a subject of doubt whether the Florentines should be enslaved; it only remained to be determined who should be the tyrant. On his return from Rome to Florence, Lorenzino had frequented the court of Alessandro, and, by his unwearied assiduity and singular accomplishments, had ingratiated himself with the duke to such a degree, as to become his chief confidant, and the associate of his licentious amours. But whilst Lorenzino accompanied him amidst these scenes of dissipation, he had formed the firm resolution of

accomplishing his destruction, and sought only for a favourable opportunity of effecting his purpose. This idea seems to have occupied his whole soul, and influenced all his conduct. Even in the warmth of familiarity which apparently subsisted between them, he could not refrain from adverting to the design of which his mind was full, and by jests and insinuations gave earnest of his intention. Cellini relates, that on his attending the duke Alessandro with his portrait executed as a medal, he found him indisposed and reclined on his bed, with Lorenzino as his companion. After boasting, as was his custom, of the wonders which he could perform in his profession, the artist concluded with expressing his hopes, that Lorenzino would favour him with a subject for an opposite reverse. "That is exactly what I am thinking of," replied Lorenzino, with great vivacity; "I hope ere long to furnish such a reverse as will be worthy of the duke, and will astonish the world."* The blind confidence of Alessandro prevented his suspicions, and he turned on his bed with a contemptuous smile at the folly or the arrogance of his relation. But whilst Lorenzino thus hazarded the destruction of his enterprise by the levity of his discourse, he prepared for its execution with the most scrupulous caution.

The duke having selected as the object of his passion, the wife of Lionardo Ginori, then on a public embassy at Naples, Lorenzino, to whom she was nearly related, undertook with his usual assiduity to promote the suit. Pretending that his representations had been successful, he prevailed upon the duke to pass the night with him at his own house, where he promised him the completion of his wishes. In the meantime he prepared a chamber for his reception; and having engaged as his assistant a man of desperate fortunes and character, called Scoroncocolo, waited with impatience for his arrival. At the appointed hour, the duke having left the palace in a mask, according to his custom when he was engaged in nocturnal adventures, came unobserved to the house of Lorenzino, and was received by him in the fatal chamber. After some familiar conversation, Lorenzino left him to repose on the bed, with promises of a speedy return. On his quitting the chamber, he stationed his coadjutor where he might be in readiness to assist him, in case he should fail in his first attempt, and gently opening the door, approached the bed, and inquired from the duke if he was asleep, at the same instant passing his sword through his body. On receiving the wound the duke sprang up and attempted to escape at the door; but, on a signal given by Lorenzino, he was attacked there by Scoroncocolo, who wounded him deeply in the face. Lorenzino then grappled with the duke, and throwing him on the bed, endeavoured to prevent his cries. In the struggle the duke seized the finger of Lorenzino in his mouth, and retained it with such violence, that Scoroncocolo, finding it impossible to separate them so as to dispatch the duke without danger of wounding Lorenzino, deliberately took a knife from his pocket, and cut him across the throat. The completion of their purpose was however only the commencement of their difficulties. Scoroncocolo, who probably knew not that the person he had assassinated was the duke, until the transaction was over, was so terrified as to be wholly unable to judge for himself of the measures to be adopted for his own safety. To the active mind of Lorenzino various expedients presented themselves; and he hesitated for some time whether he should openly avow the deed, and call upon his countrymen to assert their liberties, or should endeavour to make his escape to the absentees, to whom the information which he had to communicate would give new energy, and a fair opportunity of success. Of these measures the last seemed, on many accounts, to be the most advisable. Having therefore locked the door of the chamber in which he left the dead body of the duke, he proceeded secretly to Bologna, expecting there to meet with Filippo Strozzi; but finding that he had quitted that place, he followed him to Venice, where he related to him his achievements. Filippo, well acquainted with the eccentricity of his character, refused for some time to credit his story, till Lorenzino, producing the key of the chamber, and exhibiting his hand, which had been mutilated in the contest, at length convinced him of its truth. The applause bestowed by Filippo and his adherents on Lorenzino was in proportion to the incredulity which they had before expressed. He was saluted as another Brutus, as the deliverer of his country; and

Filippo immediately began to assemble his adherents, in order to avail himself of so favourable an opportunity of restoring to the citizens of Florence their ancient rights.

The Italian historians have endeavoured to discover the motives that led Lorenzino to the perpetration of this deed, and have sought for them in the natural malignity of his disposition; as a proof of which he is said to have acknowledged, that during his residence at Rome, notwithstanding the kindness shown to him by Clement VII, he often felt a strong inclination to murder him. They have also attributed them to a desire of immortalizing his name by being considered as the deliverer of his country; to a principle of revenge for the insult which he received from the pope, in being banished from Rome, which he meant to repay in the person of Alessandro, his reputed son; and, lastly, to his enmity to the collateral branch of the Medici family, by which he was excluded from the chief dignity of the state. How far any of these conjectures may be well founded, it is not easy to determine. Human conduct is often the result of impulses, which, whilst they arise in various directions, determine the mind towards the same object, and possibly all, or most of the causes before stated, might have concurred in producing so signal an effect. Aware of the misconstruction to which his principles were liable, Lorenzino wrote an apologetical discourse, which has been preserved to the present times, and throws considerable light on this singular transaction. In this piece he first attempts to demonstrate that Alessandro was an execrable tyrant, who, during the six years that he held the chief authority, had exceeded the enormities of Nero, of Caligula, and of Phalaris. He accuses him of having occasioned by poison the death, not only of the cardinal Ippolito, but of his own mother, who resided in an humble station at Collevecchio, and whose poverty he conceived was a reproach to the dignity of his rank; and denies that the blood of any branch of the Medici family flowed in his veins. He then justifies, with great plausibility, the conduct adopted by him after the death of the duke, in quitting the city to join the absentees; and after vindicating himself from the imputation of having been induced by any other motive than an earnest desire to liberate his country from a state of intolerable servitude, he concludes with lamenting, that the want of energy and virtue in his fellow-citizens prevented them from availing themselves of the opportunity which he had afforded them of re-establishing their ancient government. But whatever were the motives of this deed, the consequences of it were such as have generally been the result of similar attempts,—the riveting of those chains which it was intended to break. The natural abhorrence of treachery, and the sentiment of pity excited for the devoted object, counteract the intended purpose, and throw an odium even on the cause of liberty itself. No end can justify the sacrifice of a principle, nor was a crime ever necessary in the course of human affairs. The sudden burst of vindictive passion may sometimes occasion important changes in the fate of nations; but the event is seldom within the limits of human calculation. It is only the calm energy of reason, constantly bearing up against the encroachments of power, that can with certainty perpetuate the freedom, or promote the happiness of the human race.

After the perpetration of this deed, Lorenzino, not conceiving himself in safety within the limits of Italy, continued his route till he arrived at Constantinople, from whence, after a short residence, he returned again to Venice. Having passed eleven years of exile and anxiety, he was himself assassinated by two Florentine soldiers, who, under the pretext of avenging the death of Alessandro, probably sought to ingratiate themselves with his successor, by removing a person who derived from his birth undoubted pretensions to the credit and authority which had for ages been attached to the chief of the house of Medici.

The adherents of the ruling family, at the head of whom was the cardinal Cibò, who had been the chief minister of Alessandro, conducted themselves with great prudence on the death of the duke, and before they permitted the event to be made public, not only secured the soldiery within the city, but summoned to their assistance all their allies in the vicinity of the Florentine

state. They then assembled the inhabitants, avowedly to deliberate on the state of the re-public, but in fact rather to receive than to dictate a form of government. If Lorenzino was the Brutus of his age, an Octavius was found in his cousin, Cosmo de' Medici, the son of Giovanni, general of the *bandenere*, and then about eighteen years of age. Being informed of the unexpected disposition of the citizens in his favour, Cosmo hastened from his seat at Mugello to Florence, where, on the 9th day of January, 1536, he was invested with the sovereignty by the more modest title of chief of the republic. Despotism generally proceeds with cautious steps; and Augustus and Cosmo affected the name of citizen, whilst they governed with absolute authority.

To the election of Cosimo little opposition had been made within the city. The proposition of Pallas Rucellai to admit the party of the Strozzi to their deliberations, and that of Giovanni Canigiani to place the supreme command in an illegitimate and infant son of Alessandro, had met with few supporters. But the numerous exiles, who, by compulsion or in disgust, had quitted their native country during the government of Alessandro, had already begun to convene together from all parts of Italy, in hopes of effecting their restoration, and of establishing a form of government more consistent with their views. The cardinals Ridolfi and Salviati, both grandsons of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Bartolomeo Valori, and other citizens of high rank, uniting with Filippo Strozzi. raised a considerable body of troops, and approached towards the city; but more powerful parties had already interposed, and the fate of Florence no longer depended on the virtue or the courage of its inhabitants, but on the will of the emperor or on the precarious aid of the French. Sensible of the advantages which he had already obtained, by holding at his devotion the Florentine state, and that such influence was inconsistent with a republican government, Charles V openly approved of the election of Cosmo, and directed his troops, then in Italy, to support his cause. The exiles having possessed themselves of the fortress of Montemurlo, in the vicinity of Florence, were unexpectedly attacked there by the Florentine troops under the command of Alessandro Vitelli, in the night of the 1st of August, 1538, and their defeat fixed the destiny of their country. Bartolomeo Valori, with his two sons, and Filippo, his nephew, were made prisoners, and conducted to Florence, where he, with one of his sons, and his nephew, were decapitated. Many others of the insurgents experienced a similar fate. The rest were consigned to the dungeons in different parts of Tuscany. Filippo Strozzi, the magnanimous asserter of the liberties of his country, languished upwards of twelve months in the prisons of Castello, and his situation became more hopeless in proportion as the authority of Cosmo became more established. After an interval of time which ought to have obliterated the remembrance of his offence, he was cruelly subjected to torture, under the pretext of discovering the accomplices of his unfortunate enterprise. Finding that the remonstrances of his friends with the emperor and the duke were not only ineffectual, but that the latter had resolved to expose his fortitude to a second trial, he called to his mind the example of Cato of Utica, and fell by his own hand, a devoted victim to the cause of freedom.

Thus terminated the Florentine republic, which had subsisted, amidst the agitations of civil commotions, and the shock of external attacks, for upwards of three centuries, and had produced from its circumscribed territory a greater number of eminent men than any other country in Europe. This singular pre-eminence is chiefly to be attributed to the nature of its government, which called forth the talents of every rank of citizens, and admitted them without distinction to the chief offices of the state. But the splendour which the Florentines derived from examples of public virtue, and efforts of superlative genius, was frequently tarnished by the sanguinary contests of rival parties. The beneficent genius of Lorenzo de' Medici for a time removed this reproach, and combined a state of high intellectual improvement with the tranquillity of well-ordered government. The various pursuits in which he himself engaged appear indeed to have been subservient only to the great purpose of humanizing and improving his countrymen.

His premature death left the commonwealth without a pilot, and after a long series of agitation, the hapless wreck became a rich and unexpected prize to Cosimo de' Medici. With Cosimo, who afterwards assumed the title of grand duke, commences a dynasty of sovereigns, which continued in an uninterrupted succession until the early part of the eighteenth century, when the sceptre of Tuscany passed from the imbecile hands of Gaston de' Medici, into the stronger grasp of the family of Austria. During the government of Cosmo, the talents of the Florentines, habituated to great exertions, but suddenly debarred from further interference with the direction of the state, sought out new channels, and displayed themselves in works of genius and of art, which threw a lustre on the sovereign, and gave additional credit to the new establishment; but as those who were born under the republic retired in the course of nature, the energies of the Florentines gradually declined. Under the equalizing hand of despotism, whilst the diffusion of literature was promoted, the exertions of original genius were suppressed. The numerous and illustrious families, whose names had for ages been the glory of the republic, the Soderini, the Strozzi, the Ridolfi, the Ruccellai, the Valori, and the Capponi, who had negotiated with monarchs, and influenced by their personal characters the politics of Europe, sunk at once to the uniform level of subjects, and became the subordinate and domestic officers of the ruling family. From this time the history of Florence is the history of the alliances, the negotiations, the virtues, or the vices, of its reigning prince ; and even towards these the annals of the times furnish but scanty documents. The Florentine historians, as if unwilling to perpetuate the records of their subjugation, have almost invariably closed their labours with the fall of the republic; and the desire of information fortunately terminates at that period, when the materials for supplying it are not to be found.