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FRANCESCO PETRARCA AND THE  
REVOLUTION OF COLA DI RIENZO

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# FRANCESCO PETRARCA

## AND THE REVOLUTION OF COLA DI RIENZO

BY

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To my Sister  
GIANNINA



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## PREFACE

The present volume is the outcome of those notes that were taken during the preparation of my previous work, *Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors* (see *op. cit.*, p. xiv). In the pages which are now offered to the reader, I have endeavored to draw a picture of Petrarca as a statesman; for I firmly believe that, even if Petrarca had never sung a single sonnet in honor of Laura, he would still have been dear to endless generations of Italians for having been the first real Italian patriot—a man whose horizon was not bounded by narrow party lines, and whose heart, throughout his three score years and ten of busy life, was wholly devoted to the cause of *Italia una*.

It is evident that the material thus offered for research study was too abundant to be included within the covers of a single volume. In fact, it soon became necessary to concentrate upon only one period of Petrarca's political activities, and out of three or more possible choices, I have chosen to treat of Petrarca's relations with Cola di Rienzo. The reasons for this choice are such as would have appealed most strongly to

Petrarca himself. In the first place, Cola and the revolution which he successfully accomplished were more nearly connected with the City of the Seven Hills than were the Popes or Charles IV, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; secondly, Petrarca's relations with Cola form a unit, a story that is easily understood; and thirdly, this story practically constitutes a chapter in the history of Rome during the Middle Ages.

The material of the present volume is drawn chiefly from Petrarca's letters, from the extremely important correspondence of Cola di Rienzo, and from the equally important archives of the Roman church. Nearly all the material of both the text and the commentary is new to the English language. Such passages and portions as have already been translated into English are called to the attention of the reader in the notes, where also criticism and comment thereon will be found. The notes have been made as detailed as seemed necessary, in order that the many allusions of Petrarca might become perfectly clear.

As formerly, the Latin edition and the complete Italian translation of Petrarca's letters, *De rebus familiaribus* (both by Fracassetti),

have been indispensable. It is from these editions that I make all quotations from the letters. The volumes of the former work are referred to by Roman numerals; those of the latter, by Arabic numerals. Passages from other works of Petrarca are cited from the Basle edition of the *Opera omnia*, except those from the *De remediis utriusque fortunæ*, for which the 1649 edition has been used. Biblical quotations have been taken from the Vulgate and from the Catholic (Douay) Version of the Bible, for the convincing reason that it was from a Catholic Bible that Petrarca quoted, and that only by adopting such readings do certain passages of Petrarca's correspondence become clear. All other titles have been abbreviated in such manner as to be readily identified by consulting the Bibliography.

One departure from my former course will be noticed in the following pages, namely, the retention in this volume of the Italian spelling of Petrarca's name. The contents of this volume breathe forth such an atmosphere of Rome and of Italy, and the poet battles and preaches and sings with such inspiration for the political liberty of the capital of the Caesars and for the re-establishment of the ancient

*imperium*, that it would have been a contradiction to refer to him by any other name than Petrarca. I acknowledge that nothing would have pleased me more than to cite the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* in the original Italian, which gives much of the fire and the pathos that are lost in translation. But, considering the nature of this volume, such course was impossible.

The difficulties of preparing this volume have been greater than they may appear at first sight. I have been encouraged throughout by a constant interest in the subject-matter and by an increasing love for the patriot Petrarca. I now offer to the public these results of my labors, hoping that it too may be stirred by the prematurely national efforts of Francesco Petrarca and of Cola di Rienzo.

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## CHAPTER I

On May 19, 1342, Clement VI was crowned Pope at Avignon. His predecessors, Popes John XXII and Benedict XII had held out to the Romans hopes that had never been realized. When, therefore, Clement ascended the Sacred Chair, the hopeful Romans dispatched an embassy to their new overlord. This embassy, consisting of eighteen men and representing the three classes of the Roman people, was headed by Stefano Colonna the Younger, Francesco di Vico, and Lello di Pietro di Stefano dei Cosecchi (or Tosetti). With all due humility, the ambassadors made the following three requests: that the newly crowned Pope should deign to assume the supreme power over Rome; that he should withdraw from Avignon and restore the Church of Rome to its rightful seat in the city by the Tiber; and, thirdly, that he should decree the celebration of the Jubilee every fifty, instead of one hundred, years. The Pontiff accepted the rule thus offered to him, granted for Rome's financial advantage the request concerning the Jubilee, but alleged that the Roman church could not be restored to Rome

just at that time because of the unpleasant relations between England and France. Petrarca himself addressed a poetic epistle to the Pope, likewise urging upon him a return to Rome. But it was all in vain, and the only tangible result of this audience was the appointment by Clement VI of two nobles to represent him in the Roman Senate.

The mediaeval Romans lived eternally in an atmosphere of war. With the nominal ruler living a life of ease and of splendor on the banks of the Rhone, the real control of the city lay in the hands of the Colonna and of the Orsini, those powerful baronial houses that made the city itself the spoils of their factional strife, and that, by their daily encounters, helped to hasten the depopulation of the Urbs. Either in December, 1342, or in January, 1343, a revolt resulted in the overthrow of the Senators, and in placing the governing power in the hands of the Thirteen Good Men, who ruled in the name of the Pope. A second embassy was forthwith dispatched to Avignon, in order to acquaint the Pope with these changes and to justify the revolt. The Romans chose as leader of this embassy the lowly born Cola di Rienzo, who was endowed, however, with wonderful powers of

oratory. A kind reception awaited the envoys; and when the requests of the Quirites were made known to the Pontiff, the same answers were given as on the occasion of the former embassy.

It was during the course of this, his first political mission, that Cola di Rienzo met Francesco Petrarca. These two characters stand forth prominently in the history of the mediaeval mind. Standing upon the very thin line separating the old from the new, and born centuries ahead of their time, they only half-consciously divined the irresistible forces that were springing into being. The conflict between that which their instinct only imperfectly revealed to them and that which they knew to have inherited from the narrow and scholastic ages behind them must have been bitter indeed. It was this conflict that caused those inconsistencies both in Cola and in Petrarca upon which critics so fondly pounce. But no one could have escaped the accumulated heredity of centuries; and to but few has an inscrutable Power granted even an unconscious understanding of the future. The workings of these world-movements in the hearts of Cola and of Petrarca inevitably produced those well-known extremes of passion, and made them at

one moment sing the psalms of David and at the next voice the thunder of Isaias.

Cola, the son of an inn-keeper, delighted especially in the writings of the ancient historians of the City. To this he added a passionate fondness for deciphering the time-worn and neglected inscriptions which he beheld on every side. There gradually grew up before him the image of an ideal Rome, a Rome powerful and revered as in the days of Augustus, peaceful and not rent by the foreign barons of his day. It is possible that Cola was present on the occasion of Petrarca's coronation on the Capitol in 1341. If so, we can well imagine the impression which that Easter spectacle must have made upon his poetic nature. Well may he have thought it a vision of the ancient days, a wondrous staging of a page from his beloved Livy. As for Petrarca, the coronation for which he had so ardently sighed formed but an interlude in the composition of his epic the *Africa*. It was the reputation of this unseen and unpublished poem that had so influenced King Robert of Sicily during his examination of Petrarca at Naples; and to this poem it was that Petrarca returned with redoubled vigor after his triumph upon the Capitol.

We must here emphasize a well-known fact. The *Africa*, whose hero was P. Cornelius Scipio, was meant by Petrarca to be the national epic of Italy. His object was to offer to the Italian world a mediaeval *Aeneid*. He felt with all the deep feeling of a patriotic Italian the full force of the Vergilian behest to the Augustan Romans: to dictate the conditions of peace, to spare the conquered, and to subdue the proud. Petrarca wept at the disunited condition of his Italy; at the internecine strife of the princes and potentates; but, above all, at the presence of the foreign barbarians, who ruthlessly trod under foot the ashes of their former conquerors. Can we wonder that Scipio Africanus had become the special object of Petrarca's veneration? Had not Scipio, at a most critical time, stood forth as the champion of his country's liberty? Had he not roused the drooping spirits of the Romans? Had he not driven from Italic soil the most dreaded of all Rome's countless enemies, Hannibal?

It was these two men then, thus enamored of Rome's ancient grandeur and to an equal degree despondent at her present widowed state; thus inflamed with thoughts of her future and with vague—very vague—dreams of a restora-

tion; it was these two men whom chance or destiny brought face to face in the papal palace at Avignon.

It matters not whether Petrarca met Cola on the first, or on the second, or on any other particular day of the latter's stay at Avignon. But we can readily conceive of their desire for a mutual acquaintance. Cola must surely have known of Petrarca's presence in the capital of the papacy. The Roman envoy's eloquence, his portrayal of the ruined state of the Queen of Cities, of the fallen shrines and sanctuaries, of the more than Romulus and Remus hatred of the Orsini for the Colonna, of the arrogant barbarians swaggering about on the soil that had been drenched with the blood of martyrs—in a word, Cola's dreams and hopes, of a "single, harmonious, peaceful, holy, and indissoluble Union"—dreams and hopes that were premature by fully five centuries—must have struck a more than responsive chord in the breast of Petrarca. We may well fancy that to the Poet Laureate, Cola must have appeared as the reincarnation of his hero Scipio Africanus, who first freed Italic soil from the foot of the barbarian; or as the embodiment of the Dantesque Greyhound, who was to be the



savior of that low Italy "on whose account the maid Camilla died."

Clement VI was at once fascinated by the eloquence of Cola, but not so the powerful and influential cardinal Giovanni Colonna. It would have been superhuman for the cardinal to maintain a passive attitude when he heard Cola's fiery denunciations of the barons at Rome, of whom the Colonna formed so great a part. His influence with the Pope was so great that Cola fell into disfavor, finally re-entering the good graces of his Holiness through Petrarca's intervention. Petrarca, we must recollect, was an intimate member of the cardinal's household. The first beginnings, therefore, of that coldness between him and the house of the Colonna—a coldness which was to reach its climax with the battle of November 20, 1347—must be ascribed to this period of Cola's disfavor.

Petrarca's meetings with Cola must have been many and long. It is quite possible that the more learned poet recited to the youthful envoy passages from his epic of liberation—passages that he had scrupulously guarded from the world; that he stored the mind of Cola with countless examples of Roman greatness and patriotism drawn from the pages of his

adored classics; and that Cola's own ideas, vague and misty at first, may have taken more definite shape from these inspired conversations. Indeed, the world of today knows Petrarca's ideas and dreams so well, and knows Cola's future actions so thoroughly, that it would be an easy and pleasant task to reconstruct some of these conversations. But as usual, Petrarca has anticipated the ideas of future generations. His meetings with Cola became, it seems, somewhat more guarded than at first; they were wont to meet somewhere beyond the confines of the papal residence, and would saunter through the noisy, crowded streets of Avignon, earnestly discussing the ways and means for the realization of their hopes.

On one such occasion, having perhaps prayed together in the Church of St. Agricola to obtain that comfort of which both their distracted hearts were so sadly in need, they issued forth; and, standing outside the portals of that church, they engaged in an inspired conversation that may have owed its origin to the strengthening of their belief through the devout prayer just offered. This conversation, and the feelings which it subsequently aroused in Petrarca, the poet himself relates in the following letter.

## TO COLA DI RIENZO

(*App. Litt.*, II; *Sine Titulo*, VII)

As I recall that most inspired and earnest conversation in which we engaged two days ago, while standing before the portals of that famous and ancient sanctuary, I glow with zeal to such degree as to deem thy words the words of an oracle issuing forth from the innermost recesses of that temple.<sup>1</sup> I seem to have been hearkening to a god, not to a man. Thou didst bemoan the present conditions—nay, the very fall and ruin of the Republic—in words of such divine inspiration, and thou didst probe our wounds with the shafts of thy eloquence to such depths that whenever the sound and the meaning of thy words recur to the memory, tears leap to my eyes, and grief again grips my soul.<sup>2</sup> My heart was all inflamed as thou spakest. But now, as I recall the words and ponder upon them, as I anticipate the future, I melt into tears—not womanish, but manly and bold—tears which, if the occasion offered, would dare accomplish some patriotic deed and would gush forth in the defense of justice, as befits a man. And therefore, though I had often communed with thee, since that day I have done

so more than ever. Despair seizes me one moment, hope the next; and, with my soul wavering between the two, often I murmur to myself: "Oh! if ever . . . . oh! if it only occur in my day . . . . oh! if it were only granted me to share in so noble, so glorious an enterprise!"

Thereupon I am wont to turn to that Cross which is my solace, and exclaim with sad tones and moistened eyes:

O Christ, too good art thou and overmerciful. What means this? Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest thou thy face away? and forgettest our want and our trouble?<sup>3</sup> O Lord, our Defender, look thou upon us.<sup>4</sup> Behold our sufferings and the causes thereof. Behold what deeds are done by thine enemies under the shield of thy name. Behold, and take vengeance. If not, succour thou us before the power of the deadly poison wastes away the life of our body, before we are crushed by the insufferable weight of evils.

What dost thou, O Salvation of them that trust in thee?<sup>5</sup> What plannest thou, Saviour? why tarriest? How long wilt thou avert thy gaze? How long wilt thou remain untouched by our trials, how long wilt thou refrain from putting an end to such great distress? Dost thou not see our woes, thou whom neither the vast expanse of Heaven can escape, nor the unfathomable depths, nor the drops of the ocean, nor the leaves

of the forest, nor the sands of the sea, nor the number of the stars, nor the multitude of living creatures, nor the countless plants and shrubs? Are we, then, become hateful to thee, we whom thou wert wont to love so? we, for love of whom thou, our Lord ruling in Heaven, didst descend to earth, and, even as unto mortal man, didst suffer the Cross? Dost thou, perchance, both see us and cherish us, but art held back by thy lack of power? But art thou not Omnipotent? And if not, what hope remains? Does the power of thine enemies make thee to fear? But not yet has the insolent pride of our age made men equal to their Creator.<sup>6</sup> Or, finally, is it mercy that checks the thunderbolt of thy judgment? But see to it, O infallible Judge, see to it that in sparing the few thou destroy not the many. See to it that thy mercy, extended to the wicked, prove not cruelty to the upright and destruction to the innocent.

But what do I say, insignificant mortal that I am! Who am I thus to remonstrate with thee? We intrust to thee ourselves and all our belongings, O Lord. Thy will be done, thou who didst create us. But do thou remember that our frailty cannot longer endure beneath the weight of such great calamities. Bring us thy timely aid, while life still remains in us, that, if thou permittest us to die, thou mayest not be obliged to resurrect those whom thou mightest have spared. Come, O our Hope. Make haste, make haste to deliver us.<sup>7</sup> This is our daily prayer. And we beseech thee, O Lord, either destroy the countless evils of this world, or destroy thou the world itself.<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES

1. The Church of St. Agricola, at Avignon. While the two enthusiasts were thus conversing on the ancient grandeur and the present widowed state of the Queen of Cities, we can readily picture the passing to and fro of the populace "on sordid gain intent" (*la turba al vil guadagno intesa*: sonnet, *La gola e'l sonno*), among whom, perhaps, as Bartoli says (*Storia*, VII, 116), there may have mingled some bishop or some cardinal, *cupidinis veteranus*, *Baccho sacer et Veneri, non armatus sed togatus et pileatus*. According to Carducci, *Rime di F. P. sopra argomenti storici, morali e diversi*, p. 157, the Latin quotation is from the letter *Sine Titolo*, XVIII, which, in the Basle edition of 1581, is numbered XVI (see *Opera*, p. 731).

2. If Petrarca deemed the words of Cola to be divinely inspired, it is certain that his own words must have made the same impression upon the fiery imagination of the scholarly Cola di Rienzo, the more so that Petrarca was full of the subject of his *Africa*, which he had just completed. Probably Cola was the first person to whom Petrarca, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, recited in abundance pertinent verses from his epic, verses which were so eagerly sought after by the learned, but which Petrarca so constantly and so jealously refused to make known. The poet's relation to his younger contemporary, therefore, and his never-failing words of advice give good ground for likening him to the nymph Egeria (Brizzolara, *Studi storici*, XIV, 96, in the note carried over from p. 95).

3. Ps. 43:23-24 (A.V. 44:23-24).

4. Fracassetti continues to print these words in italics, as if they were still a quotation from the Bible.

5. Petrarca's words (Frac., III, p. 505): "*Quid agis in te sperantium salus,*" are a reminiscence of Ps. 16:7 (A.V. 17:7): "*qui salvos facis sperantes in te.*"

6. With this compare the statement made in the following letter: "beggarly thieves judge themselves unpardonably offended if they be not addressed as gods."

7. Again a loose quotation of Ps. 69:2 (A.V. 70:1).

8. It is reasonable to assume that this impassioned language reproduces the tone of the conversations between Petrarca and Cola di Rienzo. Indeed, the many remonstrances of the poet may be readily understood as reflecting those of the young patriot and ambassador from Rome.

## CHAPTER II

Cola di Rienzo returned to Rome after Easter of the year 1344. Clement VI, realizing how valuable an aid Cola might prove to be, had gladly complied with his request, and, on April 13, 1344, had appointed him notary of the civic camera.

We shall not give here the history of Cola. We shall merely mention the growing power of the Pope's protégé; his antagonism to the barons who scoffed at his rhetoric, which they were pleased to despise as the ravings of a madman; the allegorical paintings and the fanciful interpretations with which he endeavored to reawaken in the Roman people a sense of their ancient and inalienable rights. By these means Cola sought to attach everyone to his cause; and when, in the month of May, 1347, the Roman soldiers under Stefano Colonna were absent from the city, Cola resolved to take advantage of the opportunity. After hearing mass in the Church of S. Angelo in Pescheria on the morning of Sunday, May 20, 1347, he proceeded to the Campidoglio, addressed the populace with that eloquence which had ever



proved irresistible, and was proclaimed master of the City of the Apostles.

The news of Cola's peaceful elevation was at once carried into Provence. It startled not only the Curia, but, to an even greater degree, him who might be designated the arch-conspirator with Cola. During the years from 1344 to 1347—tedious years of waiting and of hoping—Petrarca and Cola must have exchanged numberless letters on the subject which lay nearest their hearts. Whatever may have been Petrarca's previous solution for Rome's difficulties, the enthusiasm engendered by the receipt of this news in June, 1347, swept it aside like a flood. He had prayed much, and earnestly; and now he gave himself up utterly to the great, alluring figure that had suddenly appeared above the Roman horizon.

It is doubtful whether in June, 1347, Petrarca had an exact and precise knowledge of Cola's aims and purposes; indeed it is doubtful whether these were clear to Cola himself. Nevertheless, with the characteristic abandon of impulsive natures, Petrarca gave free rein to his overflowing joy, and immediately wrote to Cola a letter which should rather be called a panegyric. Indeed, Baldelli (p. 81) does not

hesitate to pronounce the following letter the most virile and most eloquent philippic of modern times. It is a psalm that declares the supremacy of Rome. It is a hymn to liberty.

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TO COLA DI RIENZO AND TO THE  
ROMAN PEOPLE

(*Var.*, XLVIII, *Hortatoria*)

I am somewhat undecided, O noble soul, whether I should first congratulate thee on the achievement of such great glory, or the citizens of thy rescued city for thy services in their behalf and for the most happy recovery of their liberty. Both do I congratulate in equal measure. Both together shall I address, nor shall I distinguish in my words those whom I see so inseparably linked by fate itself. But what terms shall I employ in the midst of such sudden and unhoped-for joy? With what vows can I fitly set forth the emotions of my exultant soul? Hackneyed words are become utterly unfit; new ones I dare not attempt. I shall steal myself away from my occupations for a short time; and, though it were most proper to robe my thoughts in the Homeric dress, lack of

leisure obliges me to present them in a more irregular and more disordered fashion.

Liberty stands in your midst. There is nothing dearer, nothing more earnestly to be desired; and never are these facts more clearly understood than when liberty is lost.<sup>1</sup> Enjoy this great boon, this realization of your dreams of many years. Rejoice in it, but do so with moderation, with discretion, and with calm. Give thanks to God, the Dispenser of such gifts, who has not yet forgotten his most Holy City, and could no longer behold enchained in slavery her in whom he had placed the empire of the world. Therefore, ye brave men and descendents of brave men, if sane thinking has reasserted itself together with liberty, let each one of you choose death itself to the loss of liberty. Without liberty life is mockery. Keep your past servitude constantly before your eyes. In this way, unless I err, your present liberty will be somewhat dearer to you than life itself. In this way, if at any time it should become necessary to part with the one or the other, there will be no one (provided a drop of Roman blood still flows in his veins) who will not prefer to die a freeman rather than to live a slave. The fish which has once slipped from the barb

lives in constant fear of whatever stirs among the waters. The lamb which has been snatched from the jaws of the wolves trembles at the greyish dogs, even from a distance. The winged creature which has extricated itself from the bird-lime dreads even the harmless boughs.<sup>2</sup> You, too, believe me, had been baited with the blandishments of vain hopes; you, too, had been rendered helpless by the tenacious power of pernicious habit; you, too, had been encircled by bands of famishing wolves.

Consider all things with minds alert. Make sure that whatever you plan, whatever you do, savor of liberty. Let all your cares and vigils be directed to this one end; let all your deeds tend thereto. Whatsoever is achieved with other purpose, esteem it an irreparable loss of time—a delusion and a snare. Drive from your hearts the ill-deserved love which, through a long subjection, you may have conceived for your tyrants. Expel all memory of this unworthy affection. Even the slave bends the neck to his haughty master for the time being, and the caged bird makes sweet music for its jailer. But the former will throw off his shackles when the occasion offers; and if an

outlet be given, the latter will take wing with eager flight.

O most illustrious citizens, you have been living as slaves—you whom all the nations were wont to serve. Though kings were wont to kneel at your feet, you have lain passive beneath the tyranny of a few. But that which makes the cup of grief and of shame full to overflowing is the thought that you have had as tyrants strangers and lords of foreign birth. Enumerate the ravishers of your honor, the plunderers of your fortunes, the destroyers of your liberty. Bethink ye of their separate origins. The valley of Spoleto claims this one; the Rhine, or the Rhone, or some obscure corner of the world has sent us the next.<sup>3</sup> That one, who but recently was led in the triumph with hands fastened behind his back, has, from a captive, suddenly become a citizen; nay, not merely a citizen but a tyrant. Little marvel is it, therefore, if to such as these, when they meditate upon their former country, on the disgrace of their own former slavery and on the fields drenched with their life-blood, the city of Rome, its glory and its liberty, yea, the very blood which flows in your veins, should be a source of hatred.

Much more do I marvel at this: whence it was that you, armed Romans though you were, drew your long patience, or whereupon they based their insufferable pride. What superior qualities do they possess that they should be so highly self-complacent? What air do they breathe? What virtues own? No group of men ever existed who were more sadly lacking in these. Is their pride based on their overabundant wealth, which can never appease their hunger except it be attended with thoughts of theft and of plunder? Is it based on their great power, which will cease to be the moment ye assert yourselves men? Is it possible that they can glory in the splendor of their name and origin, or in their purloined and perchance transient abode in this city? What grounds have they for boasting of their Roman stock? And yet they do make this boast most impudently. They have falsely declared themselves Romans for so long a time that, as if falsehood legalized their claims, they now esteem themselves real Romans. Forsooth, the name of Roman citizens has become low and base in their eyes. They no longer style themselves Roman citizens, but, Princes of the Romans! I scarcely know whether such pretensions are to

be received with laughter or with tears. But I am the less indignant at this, when I behold that they have lost sight of even their human origin. They have lately reached that stage of insanity as to wish themselves to be considered gods and not men.

Oh unutterable shame! In that very city in which Caesar Augustus, the ruler of the world and the lawgiver of the nations, by special edict forbade that he be called a god,<sup>4</sup> in that same city, today, beggarly thieves judge themselves unpardonably offended if they be not addressed as gods. Oh wretched whirligig of fortune! Oh unheard-of change of times! Let us dispel the darkness, let us remove all errors, let us attain the truth. Whether or not these lords, who are entirely devoid of reason, are worthy the name of men, let those decide who desire to establish hair-splitting definitions of terms. Whether they are to be your masters, since it is your interests that are at stake, I leave to you yourselves to decide, O Romans, provided that you keep clearly in mind that, at the same time and in the same city, they cannot be lords and you free men. The one fact, however, which it is within my province to decide is that they surely are not Romans. Of all these who, as

you remember, were so fastidious of their empty titles of nobility, no matter whence they came, no matter what ill wind blew them hither or what barbarian country turned them loose, even though they roamed about in your Forum, though they ascended the Capitol attended by hordes of armed retainers, and though they trod (with proud step) upon the ashes of illustrious Romans—of all these, I say, there was not one who was not an alien. As says the satirist,<sup>5</sup> there was not one but that

with whiten'd feet,

Was hawk'd for sale so lately through the street.

And still true are the words of another poet:<sup>6</sup>

Our war no interfering kings demands,  
Nor shall be trusted to barbarian hands:  
Among ourselves our bonds we will deplore,  
And Rome shall serve the rebel son she bore.

Would that you too had had this consolation in your misery, that you were slaves to but one man, whether fellow-citizen or king, and not subject to many foreign robbers at once!

All too true is that which is reported to have been said by Hannibal,<sup>7</sup> formerly the most renowned enemy of the Roman race: "It is easier to censure past events than to correct them."



I do not desire to goad you further, nor to reproach you with by-gones. I wish, rather, to offer you wherewith to screen your blushes. Even your ancestors were ruled by kings—and by kings who were not always of Roman origin, but also, at one time, of Sabine, at another of Corinthian, and indeed (if we are to believe tradition) of servile origin.<sup>8</sup> But evil fortune must come to an end as well as good fortune. The restorer of the liberty of the early Romans and the restorer of your liberty were alike unexpected. Each age produced its Brutus. There are now three of the name of Brutus celebrated in history. The first is he who exiled the proud Tarquin; the second, he who slew Julius Caesar; the third, he who has visited with exile and with death the tyrants of our own age. Our third Brutus, then, is the equal of both the others, in that in his own person he has united the causes of the double glory which the other two divided between them. He is, however, more like the earlier Brutus in disguising his nature and in concealing his purpose. Like him he is young in age,<sup>9</sup> but of a far different temper; and if he assumed the false exterior of that other Brutus, it was in order that, biding his time beneath this false

veil, he might at last reveal himself in his true character—the liberator of the Roman People.<sup>10</sup>

To the valor of that ancient Brutus, Livy, prince of historians, bears testimony; to that of the present Brutus, your own experience. The former Brutus was scorned by kings; the present, by tyrants to whom he afterward became a source of fear. You have read of the former; with your own eyes you have seen the latter disdained by his fellow-men, men who deemed it slavery most base to live under the same laws with their fellow-citizens, men who esteemed nothing noble except it were unjust and arrogant. They spurned, they trampled upon the lowliness of this man, beneath which, however, a great soul lay concealed. I hereby testify in his behalf that he has ever had close at heart the end which he has at last attained.<sup>11</sup> But he was awaiting a favorable opportunity. The instant this presented itself he was quick to take advantage of it. In restoring your liberty, he has presented you with as great a boon as the elder Brutus did present his fellow-citizens, when he held on high the dagger which he had drawn from the heart of Lucretia. There is this difference, however: the patience of the early Romans was taxed by one shameful crime,

whereas yours has yielded only after countless deeds of shame and countless intolerable wrongs.

These barons in whose defense you have so often shed your blood, whom you have nourished with your own substance, whom you have raised to affluence to the detriment of the state revenues, these barons have judged you unworthy of liberty. They have gathered the mangled remnants of the state in the caverns and abominable retreats of bandits. They have felt no shame that their crimes were known abroad. They have been restrained neither by pity for their unhappy country, nor by love for it. They have irreverently pillaged the temples of the Lord; they have seized the strongholds, the public revenues, and the regions of the city. They have forcibly divided the different magistracies among themselves—the one cause in which they have united in an amazing and ferocious league of crime, though at all other times restless men and full of civil discord, and disagreeing entirely in their plans and conduct of life. And lately, neither commiseration nor pity for their unhappy city has prevented them from venting their rage upon the bridges<sup>12</sup> and the walls of the city and upon the undeserving

stones. In fine, after the palaces of ancient Rome had sunk into ruin, either through age or the hand of man, palaces which were once the homes of noble Romans; after the triumphal arches had been dismantled, arches which, perhaps, commemorated the conquest of the barbarians' ancestors; these haughty barons have not been ashamed to seek filthy lucre in the base sale of the fragments that had survived the lapse of ages and the barons' own ungodliness.<sup>13</sup> And oh my present grief! oh sin unpardonable! It is with your marble columns, O Romans, with the porticoes of your churches, to which but recently the most devout believers hastened from all quarters of the globe, it is with the statues pilfered from your sepulchers, in which the sacred ashes of your fathers rested, it is with these that (to leave other things unmentioned) indolent Naples is being adorned!<sup>14</sup> Gradually the ruins themselves will be no more—eloquent memorials of the greatness of the ancients. And you, so many thousands of brave men, you have not uttered a syllable of protest in the face of a few freebooters rioting about as if in a captured city. You have been not even slaves, but as so many sheep. You kept your peace while your

common mother was being torn asunder. Small wonder, then, that they drew lots for the distribution of plunder!

We marvel and are indignant that disasters such as these should have befallen peaceful Athens; that she should have been stripped of her marks of honor, bereft of her illustrious children, and subjected to the rule of the Thirty Tyrants. But that this could have come to pass in the city of Rome, the conqueror of cities and the mistress of the world, even now exalted and ennobled as the seat of the Empire and the home of the Holy See; that Rome could remain subject to the lusts and the caprices of tyrants only slightly more numerous than those who held sway at Athens (and perchance even fewer in number)—that such things could be, no one, up to this day, had considered sufficient cause for righteous indignation and displeasure. Who of your tyrant lords, pray, has ever been content with mere servile obedience on your part? Who of them has not insisted, rather, on submission, despicable and vile? Slaves of superior ability, even the beasts of the field are spared by their owners, not out of consideration for them, but because of the loss which might be incurred through harsh treatment. Have you

ever been spared? What baron has not torn each and every one of you from the arms of your beloved wives, and has not sent you abroad in the cold and darkness of a winter's night, when the rain fell in torrents and the lightning threatened, exposing you to the perils of death? What one of them has not led you in his train over snow-covered peaks and through slimy marshes, as if you had been so many purchased slaves?

You seem to have awakened at last from your heavy sleep. If you feel any shame, any grief for your past savage condition of life, sharpen your intellects and be ready for every emergency. Do not suffer any of the rapacious wolves whom you have driven from the fold to rush again into your midst. Even now they are prowling restlessly around, endeavoring through fraud and deceit, through false howlings and alluring promises, to regain an entrance to that city whence they were violently expelled. May the winds sweep away the omen, which is so dire that my soul trembles at the mere thought—how much more, then, at a possible realization! But unless ye take care, . . . do not suppose that they will return to the city as famishing as they left it. Their hunger will be

far more ravenous, and will have become more and more furious through lapse of time. They now thirst in equal degree for the blood of both the flock and the shepherd. Your liberty and the glory of your deliverer they reckon as their dishonor and disgrace. Have faith in yourselves. Rise against your enemies. They will be but a contemptible handful if you stand united.

I love much, hence I fear much; for the same reason I dare much, for love makes bold the weak. I know full well, alas, that at the time of the early Republic (of which I made mention above) there were some who favored the tyranny of the few as against the freedom of all. This treason was committed, moreover, not by men of obscure birth, but by most illustrious youths, indeed, by the sons of the liberator himself, youths who had been rendered forgetful of their better selves by the bonds of intermarriage, by long usage, and by familiar intercourse. All were punished with death by the father who, though perhaps wretched in his bereavement, was most fortunate in the possession of a courageous heart; and who deemed it a more sacredly appointed duty to bereave himself of his children than his country of

liberty.<sup>55</sup> I fear the recurrence of this treason today, the more so that the hearts of men are now more easily tampered with and more changeable. I fear there will be many, yea, very many, who, through intermarriage with the tyrants or through their long and wretched period of servitude, are persuaded that the cup of the slave is sweeter than the abstinence of the freeman; who believe that they have attained a great and noble end if they are greeted on the streets, or are summoned hastily by their lords and plagued with lewd commands; who, finally, famishing and filthy parasites that they are, seat themselves at the unrighteous board of their tyrants and greedily gulp down whatever escapes the capacious gullets of their lords. This, and nothing else, is the compensation of these unfortunates; this the only reward for their hazards and their toils.

But thou, O man most brave, thou who hast buttressed with thy patriotic shoulders the immense weight of the tottering state, gird thyself, and watch with equal vigilance against such citizens as against the most bitter enemy. O thou younger Brutus, keep ever before thine eyes the example of the first Brutus. He was Consul; thou art Tribune. If we should com-



pare the two offices, it would be found that the Consuls performed many acts hostile to the welfare of the Roman plebs; indeed (and I shall speak out bravely), they many times treated it harshly and cruelly. But the Tribunes were always and constantly the defenders of the People. If, then, that Consul slew his own sons because of his love of liberty, realize what is expected in all circumstances of thee, a Tribune. If thou dost not spurn the advice of a loyal friend, give no heed to considerations of either birth or affection. Remember that he whom thou hast felt to be an enemy of freedom cannot possibly be a stancher friend to thee than to himself. Such a man endeavors to deprive both thee and liberty of that which is most dear.

It was of the city of Rome that Sallust was speaking when he said: "In so large a state many and various are the inclinations of men."<sup>16</sup> How numerous, indeed, are those who today, in that same city, for a small sum would sell themselves and the entire state, and would prove traitor to all law, both human and divine! Divine Providence has already shown distinct marks of favor in our behalf, in that the greater portion of the people is of one mind and

has shaken off the lethargy which was crushing it. Even in its affliction the name of the Roman people inspires respect and awe. Great are its resources, great its riches, if both be managed wisely. The Roman people has exceeding power of itself, provided only it desire to be united. A beginning has, indeed, been made; the desire now exists. All who now harbor contrary sentiments are not to be reckoned in the number of citizens, but in that of enemies. The state must be relieved of these as a body would be freed of its poisonous secretions. Thus the state, though diminished in numbers, will be stronger and healthier. Be prudent, be brave, and strength will not fail thee either in protecting the liberties of the city or in re-establishing its ancient sway.

What inspiration, in truth, is not to be derived from the memory of the past and from the grandeur of a name once revered throughout the world? Who does not wish Rome the best of fortune in her endeavors to attain her rightful empire? Both God and men champion so just a cause. Italy, which but recently lay listless and enfeebled, with head bowed to earth, has now risen to her elbow. If you Romans show perseverance in your undertak-

ing, if the glad reports of your doings continue to prevail, shortly joyful hopes will spring in the hearts of men. All who can will rush to your assistance; those who are prevented by circumstances, will at least second your aims with their vows and prayers. On the other hand, the betrayers of their country will be punished by the sword of the avenger in this world, and in the lower world will they undergo the tortures which they have deserved, tortures with which they are threatened not merely by the learned men of today, but also by those of antiquity. These traitors are those whom Maro has placed in the circle of most dire punishments:<sup>17</sup>

This to a tyrant master sold  
His native land for cursed gold,  
    Made laws for lucre and unmade.

With such men as these, or rather (to speak as I truly feel), with such wild beasts, all sternness is benevolence, all pity is inhuman.

Thou, O extraordinary man, hast opened for thyself the path to immortality. Thou must persevere, if thou desirest to reach the goal. Otherwise, remember that the more illustrious the beginning, the more ignoble the end. Many dangers beset him who travels this road, many

intricate and troublesome questions will present themselves. But courage delights in obstacles; patience, in adversity. We are born for the accomplishment of a glorious task. Why should we sigh, then, for indolent inactivity? Consider, too, that many tasks which seem difficult when first essayed become most easy after further application. And yet, why should I discourse on the nature of things, when we owe much to our friends, still more to our parents, but everything to our country? Thou wilt be obliged to clash with the hostile lances of civil enemies. Do thou rush fearlessly to the combat, inspired by the example of Brutus himself, who met in battle the son of the Proud King and slew him, though he himself fell covered with wounds. He thus pursued even into the regions of Tartarus him whom he had driven out from the city.<sup>18</sup> Thou, however, wilt be victorious and wilt survive their death uninjured. But if thou must fall, if thou must sacrifice thy life for thy country, while the shades of thine enemies hasten to the regions of darkness, thou wilt gain heaven, whither thy courage and thy goodness have prepared the way for thee, leaving behind on earth the monuments of an enduring fame.<sup>19</sup>

What better can we hope for? Romulus founded the city; this Brutus whom I so frequently mention gave it liberty; Camillus restored both. What difference, then, O most illustrious man, exists between these and thee? Romulus surrounded a small city with weak ramparts; art thou not encircling with mighty walls the very greatest of the cities which are or have been? Brutus rescued liberty from the clutches of a single man; art thou not reclaiming a freedom usurped by many tyrants? Camillus restored the city from a devastation of recent occurrence, from ashes that were still smoking; art thou not restoring old ruins that had long been despaired of?<sup>20</sup> Hail, then, our Camillus, our Brutus, our Romulus! Or, if thou dost prefer to be addressed by some other name, hail, thou author of Roman liberty, of Roman peace, of Roman tranquillity. The present age owes it to thee that it will die in liberty; to thee posterity will owe that it is conceived in liberty.

I had resolved, illustrious man, to beg of thee two favors, briefly and easily asked, but far-reaching and most beneficial in their effect. Thou hast, of thine own accord, anticipated me in one of these; it will suffice, then, to have

asked thee for the other. I hear the following reports of thee: that, every day since thy accession to the rule of the Republic, at dawn and before attending to any transactions of either public or private nature, it is customary for thee to receive the Sacrament of our Lord's Body, with sincerest devotion and after a most searching examination of conscience. This is doubtless as it should be for the wise man who regards the frailty of the flesh and the brevity of life, and who beholds the manifold dangers that threaten on all sides. That most illustrious of Rome's generals would have followed the same course, I believe, had he lived in these days. For he was as duly observant of his sacred duties as his age permitted, an age shrouded in darkness and deprived of the knowledge of heaven.<sup>21</sup>

It remains for me to ask, therefore, that thou shouldst not deprive thy mind of its nourishment, neither when reclining, nor lying sleepless upon thy couch, nor when administering to the needs of the flesh, nor when enjoying a moment of relaxation from thy labors. Read whenever thou hast any spare moments; if thou canst not do so with convenience, have others read to thee. In so doing thou wilt be imitating that

most worthy Augustus, of whom it is written that "after retiring to bed, he never slept more than seven hours, nor were they seven hours of unbroken sleep; for, within that period, he would awaken three or four times, and if unable to regain his interrupted slumbers, would summon to his assistance his readers or story-tellers." Of the same Augustus is it said that he was so economical a steward of his time that he either read or wrote even while eating and drinking.<sup>22</sup> For one in thy present circumstances, what could be read or heard to greater advantage than the deeds of thy ancestors, of whom no city has had a greater number? Thou hast native instances of all the virtues. And, surely, in the work of that famous and venerable Cato the Censor, we read that the Romans were wont to sing the praises of their heroes to the sound of the trumpet.<sup>23</sup> On this I do not insist; and yet even this, as occasion warrants, will cause the eye to flash and stir the heart to emulation. I shall be content if the annals and the history of Rome are frequently read in thy presence. And with this I have said enough in thy regard.

But you, O citizens, now for the first time truly deserving the name of citizens, be fully

convinced that this man has been sent to you from heaven.<sup>24</sup> Cherish him as one of the rare gifts of God. In his defense hazard ye your lives. For he too could have lived his life in slavery together with the rest.<sup>25</sup> He too could have submitted to the yoke which so great a people was enduring without a murmur. If such an existence had seemed too burdensome to him, he could have fled far from the sight of the unhappy city and could have escaped the shower of abuse and insults by voluntary exile, as we know to have been the case with certain prominent citizens. It was only love of country that kept him back. He deemed it sacrilege to abandon it in such condition. In this city he resolved to live; for this city to die. He took pity on your misfortunes.<sup>26</sup> You see to what dangerous heights he has risen. Give him now your support, lest he fall. Recollect, I pray ye, how frequently you have exposed yourselves to the perils of death in behalf of most haughty and ungrateful tyrants. Recollect how often you drew the sword in defense, not of your property, but of theirs. In fine, recollect how often you fought to decide who of them should be the most powerful, and who should display the greater licentiousness in plundering, pillaging,



butchering, killing, and slaying. Ye who have dared so much for unworthy lords and in the pursuit of shameful servitude, it is but fitting that ye should now nobly dare in your own behalf and in the defense of liberty, liberty for which men have rid Rome of its kings and have deprived the Caesars of their lives. Tell me, Romans: if you did not endure the unbounded license of the Roman kings and emperors, will you so patiently tolerate the sanguinary rage and the insatiable greed of foreign-born robbers? I do not think that God is so deaf to the prayers of the devout. To live with these tyrants is sadder far than to die without them. Dare do something for your children, for your wives, for the hoary heads of your fathers and mothers, for the graves of your ancestors.

There is nothing which should not be hazarded in behalf of the Republic. It was patriotism that compelled the Decii to offer their devoted lives to their country; that urged Marcus Curtius to leap, full-armed and mounted, into that yawning chasm in the earth; that urged Horatius Cocles to oppose his own body, firm as a wall, to the Etruscan legions, to await until the bridge had been destroyed, and then, though heavily laden with

arms, to plunge headlong into the Tiber's tide. It was love of country that made Gaius Mutius Scaevola inflict upon his erring right hand a penalty which struck admiration and fear in his very enemies. Love of country drove Attilius Regulus back to the tortures of his angered executioners, though he could have remained safe at home. The same noble cause made the two Scipios die in Spain, and block with their dead bodies (when no other means remained) the path of the Carthaginians. The son of one of these Scipios preferred to die in poverty and obscurity rather than to impair in the slightest degree the liberty of the people. The son of the other, though a private citizen, crushed the turbulent measures of Tiberius Gracchus with death. Patriotism induced many other Romans to employ the same redress against disturbing citizens. And as a last instance, I shall recall Marcus Cato the Younger, who received a surname from the city of his death, and who laid violent hands upon himself rather than behold the face of his tyrant (remarkable and unique man though he was), or witness the enslaving of his country.<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to rehearse the names of these men, and particularly so in the presence of

those citizens from whose blood have sprung not merely individuals, but entire families of the same firm and united resolve. Of this let the Cremera bear witness, the scene of the memorable and at the same time pitiful end of three hundred and six Fabii.<sup>28</sup> And not only families, but legions and entire armies have deemed it dear to rush upon death in defense of country. I desire, moreover, that these deeds be read on that very Capitol (as I conjecture) from whose summit that bold Manlius was hurled headlong, Manlius who but recently had been guardian of that hill and who suffered death for this one reason: that he was suspected of plotting against that liberty which he had previously defended, and of desiring an issue not in accord with his excellent beginning. One and the same Rock bore witness both to his great glory and to his death, and served as an everlasting warning to all who should attempt similar treason.<sup>29</sup>

Let no one falsely suppose that those who keep vigilant watch over their liberties, and who have hitherto championed the cause of the abandoned Republic, are performing a duty rightfully belonging to others. It is their own cause they are defending. Let each man be

convinced that only in this way will his interests be safe. It is only thus that the merchant gains peace, the soldier glory, the husbandman plenty, the devout their religious services, the scholar leisure, the old rest, the boys rudiments of learning, the maidens nuptials, and the matrons honor. Only in this way, finally, will all find happiness.

O citizens of Rome, strain every nerve, bring to bear every public and private resource to the advancement of the public and the private welfare. Let all other cares give way to this. If you neglect this care, all your other deeds will be of no avail. If, on the contrary, you devote all your energies to it, even though you may seem to accomplish nothing, nevertheless will you perform to the full your duties as citizens and as men. Let every vestige of civil fury be effaced from your midst, I beseech you. Let the flames which had been fanned among us by the breath of tyrants be extinguished by the warnings and the guarded kindness of your deliverer.<sup>30</sup> Take upon yourselves this friendly rivalry: not who is to be the more powerful, but who is to be the better citizen, and the more patient; who is to evince the deeper love of country, the greater humility

toward his neighbors and the more implacable hatred for the tyrants. Enter upon this contest with your Tribune: as to whether he will show greater foresight in the honest administration of government than your readiness in obeying. And if, perchance, love (than which there is nothing stronger) prove insufficient to bring your hearts into harmonious accord, then may considerations of common interest avail you. Be united by this bond at least. Cling to each other tenaciously, peaceably. Wield not the arms handed down to you by your fathers except against the enemies of the commonwealth. Offer as most pleasing sacrifice to the ashes of your dead the exile, the destitution, and the punishment of the barons. The dead will rejoice in such deeds; and had they foreseen the future, they would surely have breathed their last with greater resignation and peace of mind.

But I fear that I have detained you by my words longer than is fitting, especially at a time when there is far greater need of action. Neither my calling, alas, nor my lot permit me to assist you in deed. Hence I send you words, the one means of assistance at my disposal. I confess that at first I was roused by the glorious

reports to envy you your great honor. I heaped countless reproaches upon my lot which had deprived me of taking active part in so joyous a consummation. But I was not entirely excluded. Over lands and seas there came to me my due share of happiness. Hastily I seized my pen, that, in the midst of such great and such remarkable harmony of a delivered people, my voice too might be heard though from a distance—that I too might perform my duty as a Roman citizen.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, this subject which I have now treated in loose prose, I shall, perhaps, attempt in the near future, but in different measures, provided you will not deceive my hopes and wishes, and will not deny me perseverance in your glorious undertaking. Crowned with the chaplet of Apollo, I shall ascend the lofty and inspiring Helicon. There, at the brim of the Castalian font, I shall recall the Muses from their exile, and shall sing resounding words in abiding memory of your glory, words that will ring throughout the ages.<sup>32</sup> Farewell, thou bravest of men! Farewell, ye best of citizens! Farewell, thou most glorious City of the Seven Hills.

## NOTES

1. Compare the similar sentiment of the following lines:

“Libertà, dolce e desiato bene,  
Mal conosciuto a chi talor no'l perde.”

These lines are from the Canzone *Quel c'ha nostra natura in sè più degno*, celebrating the capture of Parma by Azzo da Correggio. For a detailed study of this poem and of its authenticity, see *Parma liberata dal giogo di Mastino della Scala, addì 21 Maggio 1341*, by Francesco Berlan, in *Scelta di curiosità letterarie*, CIX; and also Carducci, *Rime di F. P. sopra argomenti storici*, etc., pp. 79-96.

2. Cf. Eccl. 9:12.

3. These are references to the two pre-eminent families of the Roman nobility, the Orsini and the Colonna. In mediaeval fables which were widely credited, the Colonna were represented as coming to Rome from the banks of the Rhine (Gregorovius, IV, 320, n. 2); but their ancestry has been traced, with greater probability, back to the 10th century, to Alberic, Count of Tusculum (Papencordt, p. 15). According to Gregorovius, indeed, even this would stamp the Colonna, by far the most renowned nobles of mediaeval Rome, as being of German descent (see *op. cit.*, VI, 263, n. 1, which gives a list of the names of 33 families of the Roman nobility, who are stated as being of undoubted German origin).

At any rate, the first member of this family to make his appearance in history is a certain Petrus de Columpna, a relation of the Count of Tusculum, who in

1101 A.D. appears as the strenuous opponent of Pope Paschalis II. The Colonna soon made themselves lords of Palestrina, which became and remained (with short interruptions) the stronghold round which the power of the Colonna always rallied. From the very beginning this family was the main support of the Roman emperors, and was, consequently, of strongly emphasized Ghibelline tendencies (Papencordt, pp. 15-16; Greg., IV, 319-20, and *loc. cit.*).

The origin of the Orsini is even more obscure. The family records (which are said to be devoid of critical value) trace their origin to the valley of the Tiber near Spoleto; but these statements are not reliable. Some authorities (though evidently in the minority) would trace also the Orsini ancestry back to the Rhine (cf. Greg., V, 39, and VI, 263, n. 1; the Commentary to Eclogue 5 of Petrarca in Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur., and that by Francesco Piendibeni da Montepulciano in Avena, *Il Bucolicum Carmen*, pp. 215 and 271, respectively).

As distinguished from the Colonna, the Orsini were, as a rule, partisans of the Guelph cause; and this may account in great part for their hereditary and unceasing warfare with the Colonna.

4. Suet., *Aug.*, 53: *Domini appellationem ut male-dictum et obprobrium semper exhorruit.*

5. Juvenal, i. 111 (trans. by Gifford, I, 25).

6. Lucan, viii. 354-56 (trans. by Rowe).

7. Livy, xxx. 30, 7. Petrarca had had this same passage in mind when he wrote the *Africa*, in which Hannibal says to Scipio, *Africa*, VII, 245-46: *Culpari transacta tamen licet usque loquendo; Mutari vetitum est.*



8. The three kings meant are, respectively, Ancus Martius, Tarquinius Priscus, and Servius Tullius.

The Sabine origin of Ancus Martius is not actually mentioned, but is clearly implied in two other passages. The first of these is *De remediis*, I, *Dial.* LXXVIII, *De nepotibus*, in which Petrarca says (p. 225): "Ancus Martius, the grandson of Numa on his mother's side, with great glory held the royal power at Rome which his grandfather had held before him." The second passage is a precisely similar one from the short life of Ancus Martius in Petrarca's *De viris illustribus*, I, p. 48: *Numae nepos ex filia*.

Tarquinius Priscus was the son of Demaratus of Corinth, who belonged to the family of the Bacchiadae. The story as told by Cicero, in the *De republica*, ii. 34 (a work not known to Petrarca) is as follows: "They say that there was a certain Demaratus of Corinth, who, because of his integrity, influence, and wealth, was easily the foremost citizen of his state. When Demaratus could no longer endure the rule of Cypselus, tyrant of the Corinthians, he is said to have fled with vast sums of money, and to have betaken himself to Tarquini, the most flourishing city of Etruria." Fracassetti does not seem to have understood the expression "Corinthian origin," for he erroneously prints a *sic* after the word *Corinthiae* (*op. cit.*, III, p. 426).

The obscure origin of Servius Tullius is mentioned (together with that of Tarquinius Priscus) in another dialogue of the *De remediis* (II, *Dial.* V, *De originis obscuritate*, p. 364): "Tarquinius Priscus was the son of a trader and a foreigner; indeed, he was not even of

Italian stock. Servius Tullius, who was born of a slave, or, as some would have it, of a woman of noble birth held in captivity, gained the throne of Rome by his merits." The example of the latter king is again cited in *De rem.*, II, *Dial.* IX, *De damno passo*, p. 384: "And the sixth king, though of lowly origin, or, as others have thought, of servile origin, rose to the very heights of power." The classical sources for all the statements here made by Petrarca are Livy i. 32, 34, 39, 40, 47; Eutropius, i. 5-7; Florus, i. 4, 5, 6; and Seneca, *Ep.*, 108, 30.

9. Cola was born toward the middle of the year 1313, which would make him thirty-three years of age at the time of his rise to power on May 20, 1347.

10. Petrarca expresses the same ideas with reference to L. Junius Brutus, in *De viris ill.*, I, 52. After telling of Lucretia's suicide, Petrarca continues that, while all the rest of Rome was undecided, Brutus revealed his true character and spirit (long concealed through fear of the tyrant who had slain his brother), and stood forth as the leader in the vengeance demanded by the state. Cf. Petrarca's *Africa*, III, 684-772.

The indirect sources are Val. Max., vii. 3, 2: *obtunsi se cordis esse simulavit eaque fallacia maximas virtutes suas texit*; and *Auctor de viris ill.*, x: *stultitiam finxit; unde Brutus dictus*. The primary source is, of course, Livy i. 56, 7-8, of which this passage of Petrarca is a paraphrase.

The words of a contemporary biographer quaintly describe how Cola was made the butt of the barons' mirth during this period of his career. The anonymous

*Vita di Cola di Rienzo* says (I, 4, column 735): "In these days he (Cola) used to dine with the nobles of Rome at the house of Giovanni Colonna, and the Roman barons would derive great amusement from his speech. They were wont to make him rise to his feet, and to urge him to speak thus standing. And he, in the course of his address, would say: 'I shall prosecute all the barons here present: this one shall I hang, that one decapitate.' On all of them would he pass judgment. Whereat the barons would die of laughter."

11. Petrarca here refers to the beginning of his acquaintance with Rienzo in 1343. See the first letter of this volume.

12. The Colonna and the Orsini had, in the very nature of things, come to divide the city into sections within which they were, respectively, the absolute masters. Whenever war broke out between them, it became all-important to have control of the bridges which spanned the Tiber; and it is for this reason that in the treaties and the papal briefs referring to these wars a place of importance is assigned to the articles dealing with the bridges of Rome.

The said princely houses had once again begun open warfare on May 6, 1333. After this struggle had continued for two years, Pope Benedict XII exhorted the Romans, by brief of July 21, 1335 (Theiner, II, No. 11), to lay down their arms and to cease their fratricidal strife. The barons heeded not, and on September 3, 1335, the Orsini destroyed Ponte Molle. On January 13, 1336, the nobles agreed upon a truce, which was confirmed by Benedict XII two months later, by brief

issued March 18, 1336 (Theiner, II, No. 20; cf. Gregorovius, VI, 187-95). After a lengthy preamble common in such documents, this brief settles first of all the question of the bridges. The paragraph runs as follows (Theiner, *op. cit.*, p. 10, col. 1):

“And in the first place, indeed, concerning the tutelage and repair of certain bridges of said City and of its surrounding district, of which bridges four are held by said Stefano Colonna, a fifth by said Jacopo Savelli, and several others by the said Orsini:

“After having taken due cognizance of the arguments submitted by both parties, and believing that said bridges are known to belong, not to the holders of the same, but to the above-mentioned Roman people, we hereby wish, order, and decree that the said four bridges held by Stefano, and the fifth held by Jacopo, and the other bridges held by the said Orsini, be freely surrendered and placed in the power of said Archbishop and Syndic, who shall see to it that, throughout the continuation of this truce, the said bridges, and especially the Ponte Molle, be diligently and faithfully guarded, in such wise that they cannot fall into the hands of either party; (said Archbishop, moreover, shall see to it that) said Ponte Molle, and the other bridges which have been destroyed, be repaired for the public welfare and at the expense of those who have destroyed the same, not that any fortresses may be erected thereon—the construction of which we strongly forbid—but that provision may be made for the necessary and convenient passage, over said bridges, of citizens, pilgrims, and other travelers.”

It is hardly necessary to add that, with the French Popes residing in the Babylon of the West, the above injunctions were not obeyed (cf. the brief of April 13, 1338, in Theiner, II, No. 56).

It was just one year after the above-mentioned truce had been agreed upon that Petrarca visited Rome for the first time. The countryside had not had time to recover from the dread and the anxiety caused by the reprisals of the barons; and Petrarca, who had reached the Colonna stronghold of Capranica toward the beginning of January, 1337, was astonished first at the beauty of the country, and then at the unsettled and distressed condition of the wretched inhabitants. For a description of conditions in the Roman Campagna at this time, read Petrarca's letter to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, *Fam.*, II, 12.

13. Laments on the squalid aspect of widowed Rome (as Petrarca ever thought of the city) are to be found scattered everywhere in his works, and chiefly in those letters which he addressed to the Popes and the Emperors in defense of the cause of Rome and of the majesty of the Roman people. In an epistle to Clement VI (*Ep. poet.*, II, 5, written in 1342), Petrarca represents Rome as saying (*Opera Omnia*, ed. 1581, III, 92, col. 2): "My wounds are as numerous as my churches and fortified places; the walls of the city, thickly strewn with ruins, reveal but the remnants of a stately and lamentable city, and move all spectators to tears."

The most specific lines, perhaps, on the disappearance of the monuments of ancient Rome, due to the intramural strife of ages, are those which Petrarca penned in that Dialogue of the *De Remediis* which discusses the futility of hoping for glory from the erection of monumental buildings (*Dial.* CXVIII). With this Dialogue compare *Fam.*, II, 14.

14. Alas! poor Naples! The corrupt government of Parthenope had driven from Petrarca's mind the fond memories of six years before. In 1341 he had visited Naples on his way to Rome to receive the laurel crown, had been enthusiastically welcomed by that King Robert whom alone Petrarca considered a worthy judge of his fitness for the laurel, and had been dismissed on April 4 with gifts of regal robes and with a noble escort. Petrarca's cup of gratitude was full to overflowing. He never, thereafter, omitted the slightest opportunity for lauding King Robert to the skies, the prince whom he always proclaimed as the wisest, kindest, and most scholarly of monarchs.

The death of King Robert, on January 19, 1343, was a blow from which Petrarca never recovered, and from which the Neapolitan kingdom recovered only after many decades. Robert's son Charles, Duke of Calabria, was already dead (died 1328), so that the throne fell to Robert's granddaughters, Giovanna and her young sister Maria. Both Giovanna and her consort, Prince Andrew, were minors, and a regency was established according to plans which had been perfected by King Robert himself. This arrangement thoroughly displeased the Pope, who, in virtue of the high authority wielded by the church in those states, and because of the terms of the investiture, claimed that the rule of Naples had reverted to him. Before pressing his claim, however, he resolved to send an envoy to gather more accurate information concerning the state of the kingdom.

Clement VI consequently looked about for one who

should worthily represent his cause at the court of Naples. Whom was he to select? The choice inevitably fell upon Petrarca, who on his former visit had made the acquaintance of prominent Neapolitans, such as Giovanni Barili, Paolo di Perugia, and Barbato di Solmona. The torch-bearer of the humanists, the poet laureate and the Roman citizen who but recently had received the priorate of San Nicola di Migliarino (near Pisa) at the hands of Clement VI, accepted the trust, and undertook to represent the head of the Christian world at the Guelph court of Naples, which was the most powerful state of Italy at that time. He reached Naples on October 12, 1343.

Petrarca's dear and intimate friend, Philippe de Cabassole, Bishop of Cavaillon, occupied the chief position on the Board of Regency, and hence the poet entertained bright hopes of executing successfully both the charge of Clement VI and the one intrusted to him by Cardinal Giovanni Colonna. Unfortunately, Philippe's control was only a nominal one, while the real power had been usurped by one of Queen Giovanna's female dependents (who was called the Catanese), by the queen-mother Sancia (King Robert's second wife), and by a certain Robert, a Hungarian monk of the Franciscan order. It is needless to add that Petrarca's mission was unsuccessful; and the disappointment at his failure, together with his horror at the degraded condition of the court, which so strongly contrasted with that of his earlier visit, inspired not only the present discourteous reference to Naples, but also the acrid description which is to be found in a letter

written on November 29, 1343, and addressed to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (*Fam.*, V, 3; see also *Fam.*, XXIV, 11, in Cosenza, *Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors*, p. 138).

15. The same story is told by our author in *De viris ill.*, I, 52, and is borrowed from Livy ii. 5, 5-8; *Auctor de viris ill.*, x. The closing sentence of Petrarca (*Frac.*, III, p. 430), *sanctius aestimans sibi filios eripi quam patriae libertatem*, seems, however, to have been more directly inspired by Val. Max., v. 8, 1: *Exiit patrem, ut consulem ageret, orbusque vivere quam publicae vindictae deesse maluit.*

16. Sallust, *Catilina*, li. 35.

17. Vergil, *Aen.*, vi. 621-22 (Conington).

18. Petrarca was very fond of this story. He tells it briefly in *De rem.*, I, *Dial.* CII, *De spe vincendi*, p. 283. One of the interlocutors is so hopeful of victory that he is admonished that both the leaders of the hostile forces may perish in the strife, as often happened abroad and also at Rome, "in the first battle which was fought after the expulsion of the kings, when the consul Brutus pursued the son of the Proud King even into the regions of the dead."

But Petrarca naturally enlarges upon these brief statements in his life of Brutus, *De viris ill.*, I, p. 54:

"When the exiled king realized by this action [Brutus' killing of his own children; see above n. 15] that a return to Rome by fraudulent means was impossible, he had recourse to open violence, and sought the aid of the Etruscans. Relying upon these, he entered the Roman territory at the head of a large army. When Aruns, the king's son, beheld Brutus



adorned with the consular ornaments and advancing against him, maddened with poignant grief and goaded by the thought of his lost kingdom, he spurred on his steed and rushed upon the consul. Seeing this, Brutus hurled himself against the enemy with equal fury. They clashed together with such violence, with such utter neglect of self, urged on by the single thought of wounding the opponent, that both were laid low at the same time, each pierced by the other's spear. Brutus, himself mortally wounded, breathed his last (to quote the word used by Florus) over the body of Aruns, whom he had killed with his own hand, as if to drive the adulterer (as Florus calls him), or, to speak more exactly, as if to drive the brother of the adulterer from this world, even as he had already driven him from the city, and thus pursue him even into the regions of Tartarus."

The reference is to Florus, I, 10, 8. The whole is based upon Livy, ii. 6, 7-9; Val. Max., v. 6, 1; *Auctor de viris ill.*, x.

Both the passages from Petrarca cited above are later than 1347, the date of this letter; for, the *De viris ill.* was begun in 1350, and the *De remediis* in 1358. An earlier instance of the use of this story by our author is *Fam.*, VI, 2, written in 1343, where Petrarca says (Frac., I, p. 312): *ad inferos sequens consul*, which differs but slightly from this passage in *Var.* 48 (Frac., III, p. 432): *in tartarum usque persecutus est*. Even earlier than this date is the passage in the *Africa*, written between 1339 and 1341-2 (Book III, 786-802, especially lines 795-96): *Ferus ultor ad umbras, Perfide, Tartareas ferro sequar, inquit, acuto*.

19. For this entire paragraph, compare Stanza 7 of the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, given in full below, in n. 32.

20. See preceding note, and compare especially vss. 12-14.

21. *Vita*, I, 20, col. 795: "And then he built upon the Capitol a very beautiful chapel, inclosing it within a railing of iron overlaid with silver. There he had high mass sung by many priests and with great illumination."

To Petrarca's mind the most illustrious of Rome's generals was, of course, Scipio Africanus, the hero of his epic, the *Africa*. A few references to Scipio taken at random from our author's works are: *Roma caput rerum, Scipio dux summus in illa est (Africa, III, 281); oh summe virorum Scipio (Fam., XXIII, 1); maximum ducem (De viris ill., I, 456)*. The story of Scipio's being as duly observant of his sacred duties as his age permitted is told in the *Africa*, Book IV, ll. 115-22. After speaking of Scipio's divine origin, Laelius continues:

"For at sunrise, after all others have been removed to a distance, he is wont to enter alone into that most venerable shrine which rests upon our Hill Tarpeian—the Temple of Jupiter, to whom the priests, with due religious rites, offer worship in trembling awe. But alone and fearlessly he draws the portals, bars the threshold, and approaches the altar. There he lingers as if in lengthy communion with the god, and then he suddenly issues forth; and thou mightest behold his features glow with high courage, and his eyes flash with a fire celestial."

Petrarca repeats the story in *Rer. mem.*, III, 1, cap. 6, p. 431; and in *De vita solitaria*, Lib. II, sec. IX, cap. 5. The whole is based upon Livy, xxvi. 19 and Val.

Max., i. 2, 2, with such minor sources as Gellius and the *Auctor de viris ill.*

22. Suetonius, *Aug.* 78, 79.

23. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 3.

24. Compare the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, stanza 2, vss. 4-6.

25. In a letter dated July 15, 1347, Cola di Rienzo says, in speaking of himself: "Cola di Rienzo was wont to live a far more tranquil life than the Tribune:" *multo vivebat quietius Cola Laurentii quam tribunus* (Gabrielli, *Epistolario*, No. 12, p. 31, l. 39).

26. Compare the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, last stanza, vs. 3: *pensoso più d'altrui che di sè stesso*, to which we may add the statement of the *Vita*, II, chap. 23, col. 975: "There never was such another man. He alone bore all the weighty thoughts of the Romans."

27. This rapid survey is typical of Petrarca whenever he endeavors to instruct his readers. It is just such passages as these that have brought upon our author the charges of pedant and of preacher. But, unfortunately, those who make the charge seem to forget that in the earlier half of the 14th century, Petrarca was perhaps the only scholar who could correctly cite the classics; that he was the only one who intelligently interpreted both the letter and the spirit of the classical authors. They forget that his correspondents and his friends looked forward to a letter from the Poet Laureate as though it were a letter from an ancient Roman, and that they preserved all such epistles for the purpose of referring to them later on, and of drawing their information thence as if from an ancient

text, or from a dictionary and encyclopaedia of classical antiquities. In acceding to this tacit, nay expressed understanding, and in thus disseminating knowledge, Petrarca was fulfilling his mission to the full, and was assisting to remove the incubus of error then weighing upon the European intellect.

Examples of a similar historical survey can easily be found in Petrarca's works. To refer to but one, consult his epic, the *Africa*, Book III, ll. 527-772. Of these, lines 534, 623-30 refer to Regulus; 536-39, to the Scipios; 547-95, to Curtius; 596-622, to the Decii.

28. For a complete analysis of the story of the Fabii, see Pais, *Ancient Legends of Roman History* (trans. by M. E. Cosenza), chap. ix: "The Fabii at the River Cremera, and the Spartans at Thermopylae."

29. Cf. Livy, vi. 20, 12. For an analysis of the legends connected with the "Rock," consult Pais, *op. cit.*, chaps. v and vi, respectively entitled "The Story of the Maid Tarpeia" and "The Saxum Tarpeium."

30. Compare the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, stanza 5, vss. 10-14 (11-14 in the English translation cited in n. 32).

31. It will be remembered that Petrarca had been officially admitted to Roman citizenship at the time of his coronation, on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1341.

32. The promise made in these words has caused endless discussion among scholars. Those who have written lives of Cola di Rienzo (among others Papenordt and Zeffirino Re) are unanimous in maintaining that the poem here promised must be identified with the famous Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, which (they further-

more argue) was addressed to the Roman tribune (Torraca, *Discussioni e ricerche letterarie*, Livorno, 1888, p. 41).

In his note to this letter, Fracassetti argues (5, p. 414) that the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* was in fact addressed to Rienzo (cf. 2, pp. 190, 198), and that it represents a preliminary keeping of his promise on the part of Petrarca. He holds that Petrarca wrote the Italian Canzone first, intending to follow it up with a more worthy effort which was to have been composed in what Petrarca deemed the more dignified and majestic Latin. Fracassetti further maintains that the concluding words of this *Hortatoria* refer to the Latin poem which never materialized. To strengthen his position, he cites a parallel from Petrarca's earlier compositions; namely, that Petrarca wrote the sonnet *Vinse Annibal* (cf. Greg., VI, p. 187, n. 1) to celebrate the victory won by Stefanuccio Colonna over the Orsini at Castel Cesario, on May 22, 1333 (cf. *Fam.*, III, 3), and that he followed it up with a Latin poem on the same subject (cf. *Fam.*, III, 4).

Torraca (*op. cit.*, chap. i: *Cola di Rienzo e la canzone Spirto Gentil di Francesco Petrarca*, pp. 1-87) does not think it necessary to suppose a second poem that was to have been written in Latin, pointing out that Petrarca wrote the Canzone to the princes of Italy, and the one celebrating the victory of the Da Correggio, both in Italian (*op. cit.*, p. 41). Torraca, however, does not identify the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* with the poem promised in the closing words of the *Hortatoria*, on the ground that the poem was promised only

“provided you [*sc.*, the Romans] will not deceive my hopes and wishes, and will not deny me perseverance in your glorious undertaking,” whereas the Canzone alludes only to a glorious beginning, and bears every trace of having been composed in haste (*op. cit.*, p. 42). His conclusion is that the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* is a pendant to the *Hortatoria*, the latter celebrating the fact that liberty had been won, the former pointing out for what ends that liberty should be employed.

There seems to be but a very slight difference between the positions held by Torraca and by Fracassetti. They agree that the Canzone and the *Hortatoria* treat the same subject-matter; that one is a pendant to the other (Torraca, *op. cit.*, p. 41); that the Canzone was hurriedly written, and hence was perhaps meant to accompany the *Hortatoria* (*ibid.*, p. 42); and, finally, that both the Canzone and the *Hortatoria* are addressed to Cola di Rienzo. The one difference of opinion lies in their attitude toward the question whether or not the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* represents in any way the conditional promise made in the *Hortatoria*. Fracassetti (*v.s.*) answers the question in the affirmative; Torraca, in the negative (*op. cit.*, p. 41).

Until more convincing arguments are advanced and proofs are offered, it seems almost impossible not to agree with Fracassetti. It is to be hoped that an exhaustive study will soon be made which will answer once and for all the vexed questions of the date when the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* was composed, and to whom it was addressed.

The contents of the Canzone *Spirto Gentil* are so

closely akin to the spirit of the *Hortatoria*, and the poem itself is so stirring and so full of Petrarca's strong patriotism, that we shall here give it in full (translated by Major Macgregor, in *The Sonnets, Triumphs, and Other Poems of Petrarch*, London, 1893, pp. 54-56):

Spirit heroic! who with fire divine  
Kindlest those limbs, awhile which pilgrim hold  
On earth a Chieftain gracious, wise, and bold;  
Since, rightly, now the rod of state is thine  
Rome and her wandering children to confine,  
And yet reclaim her to the old good way:  
To thee I speak, for elsewhere not a ray  
Of virtue can I find, extinct below,  
Nor one who feels of evil deeds the shame.  
Why Italy still waits, and what her aim  
I know not, callous to her proper woe,  
Indolent, aged, slow,  
Still will she sleep? Is none to rouse her found?  
Oh! that my wakening hands were through her  
tresses wound.

So grievous is the spell, the trance so deep,  
Loud though we call, my hope is faint that e'er  
She yet will waken from her heavy sleep:  
But not, methinks, without some better end  
Was this our Rome intrusted to thy care,  
Who surest may revive and best defend.  
Fearlessly then upon that reverend head,  
'Mid her dishevel'd locks, thy fingers spread,  
And lift at length the sluggard from the dust;  
I, day and night, who her prostration mourn,  
For this, in thee, have fix'd my certain trust,  
That, if her sons yet turn,  
And if their eyes ever to true honour raise,  
The glory is reserved for thy illustrious days!

Her ancient walls, which still with fear and love  
 The world admires, whene'er it calls to mind  
 The days of Eld, and turns to look behind;  
 Her hoar and cavern'd monuments above  
 The dust of men, whose fame, until the world  
 In dissolution sink, can never fail;  
 Her all, that in one ruin now lies hurl'd,  
 Hopes to have heal'd by thee its every ail.  
 O faithful Brutus! noble Scipios dead!  
 To you what triumph, where ye now are blest,  
 If of our worthy choice the fame have spread:  
 And how his laurell'd crest,  
 Will old Fabricius rear, with joy elate,  
 That his own Rome again shall beauteous be  
 and great!

And, if for things of earth its care Heaven show,  
 The souls who dwell above in joy and peace,  
 And their mere mortal frames have left below,  
 Implore thee this long civil strife may cease,  
 Which kills all confidence, nips every good,  
 Which bars the way to many a roof, where men  
 Once holy, hospitable lived, the den  
 Of fearless rapine now and frequent blood,  
 Whose doors to virtue only are denied.  
 While beneath plunder'd Saints, in outraged fanes  
 Plots Faction, and Revenge the altar stains;  
 And, contrast sad and wide,  
 The very bells which sweetly wont to fling  
 Summons to prayer and praise now Battle's tocsin  
 ring!

Pale weeping women, and a friendless crowd  
 Of tender years, infirm and desolate Age,  
 Which hates itself and its superfluous days,  
 With each blest order to religion vow'd,  
 Whom works of love through lives of want engage,



To thee for help their hands and voices raise;  
While our poor panic-stricken land displays  
The thousand wounds which now so mar her frame,  
That e'en from foes compassion they command;  
Or more if Christendom thy care may claim.  
Lo! God's own house on fire, while not a hand  
Moves to subdue the flame:  
—Heal thou these wounds, this feverish tumult  
    end,  
And on the holy work Heaven's blessing shall  
    descend!

Often against our marble Column high  
Wolf, Lion, Bear, proud Eagle, and base Snake  
Even to their own injury insult shower;  
Lifts against thee and theirs her mournful cry,  
The noble Dame who calls thee here to break  
Away the evil weeds which will not flower.  
A thousand years and more! and gallant men  
There fix'd her seat in beauty and in power;  
The breed of patriot hearts has fail'd since then!  
And, in their stead, upstart and haughty now,  
A race, which ne'er to her in reverence bends,  
Her husband, father thou!  
Like care from thee and counsel she attends,  
As o'er his other works the Sire of all extends.

'Tis seldom e'en that with our fairest scheme  
Some adverse fortune will not mix, and mar  
With instant ill ambition's noblest dreams;  
But thou, once ta'en thy path, so walk that I  
May pardon her past faults, great as they are,  
If now at least she give herself the lie.  
For never, in all memory, as to thee,  
To mortal man so sure and straight the way  
Of everlasting honour open lay,  
For thine the power and will, if right I see,

To lift our empire to its old proud state.  
Let this thy glory be!—  
They succour'd her when young, and strong, and  
    great,  
He, in her weak old age, warded the stroke of Fate.

Forth on thy way! my Song, and, where the bold  
Tarpeian lifts his brow, shouldst thou behold,  
Of others' weal more thoughtful than his own,  
The chief, by general Italy revered,  
Tell him from me, to whom he is but known  
As one to Virtue and by Fame endear'd,  
Till stamp'd upon his heart the sad truth be,  
That, day by day to thee,  
With suppliant attitude and streaming eyes,  
For justice and relief our seven-hill'd city cries.

### CHAPTER III

The preceding letter was written about June 24-27, 1347; accordingly, it must have reached Rome about July 12-15. At this time Cola and the Prefect Giovanni di Vico were at war. Peace negotiations were begun on July 16; and the Roman army returned to the city on July 22. In the midst of such pressing occupations, Cola could not find time in which to answer Petrarca's letter of exhortation. On July 27, however, he began to draw up a report for the Pope, the sending of which was delayed by the lack of messengers; and on July 28, finally, he wrote the following letter acknowledging the receipt of Petrarca's *Hortatoria*.

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#### COLA DI RIENZO TO FRANCESCO PETRARCA

(*Epistol.*, XV)

Nicholas, the severe and clement, by the grace of our most merciful Lord Jesus Christ tribune of liberty, of peace, and of justice, and illustrious deliverer of the holy Roman Republic, sends greetings and wishes for

abundant joys and honors to Messer Francesco Petrarca of illustrious fame, poet laureate most worthy, and his well-beloved fellow-citizen.<sup>1</sup>

Your<sup>2</sup> numerous and most charming letters, so eloquently written and so thickly crowded with truthful and inspiring arguments, have filled with pleasure the eyes of the reader and the ears of the hearer. When the contents thereof had been more deeply and maturely considered, the intellect feasted upon it with greater pleasure. In your very gratifying letter of exhortation, you have summoned the praiseworthy examples of the heroes of old to spur us on to emulate their virtuous deeds, whereby our spirits are and have been thoroughly revived.

We clearly discern from your letters the fullness of your love for the City and your anxiety for its welfare. The most positive proofs, indeed, of the sincerity and the depth of the affection which you cherish for us and for the City are your human-kindness and sagacity, with which I became personally acquainted.<sup>3</sup> We and all the Romans feel warmly attached to you, and the more sincerely do we pledge ourselves to serve your glory and advantage. Would that you were present at Rome in very

person! For, just as a most precious stone adorns the ring of gold, so your illustrious presence would adorn and embellish the Nourishing City.

Liberty is now the very life and breath of the Romans. Its sweetness is tasted anew after the lapse of ages. After suffering for so long the error of servitude, every Roman would now sooner permit life itself to be torn from his heart than to be reduced once again to most bitter slavery—for all things easily revert to their natural state, and the city stands forth once again as the very head and fountain of liberty, the city which for so long a period, to our mortification, has experienced the irreverent lot of a handmaid. Wherefore, the Romans, snatched from the noose which was about to strangle them, make a joyful noise unto the Lord, and shun no death, no dangers, in defense of their re-established liberty. We ourselves, moreover, are most eager to do all things which pertain to your advantage and to your glory.

Given on the Campidoglio, where we live a righteous life under the reign of justice, on the twenty-eighth day of the month of July, in the fifteenth indiction, and in the first year of the City's freedom.

## NOTES

1. See chap. ii, n. 31.

2. Lest the reader should be confused by our use of the plural in this letter, when the singular is used in all the other letters, we shall cite two passages from the correspondence of Petrarca, which throw great light upon the custom of his times as well as upon the rule which he himself followed.

The first passage is taken from a letter to Neri Morando, written at Milan, February 18, 1356 (*Var.*, XXXII, Frac., III, pp. 380-81):

“I now begin to answer thy letter. I shall touch but lightly upon the fact that, toward its beginning, thou excuseth thyself to me as though thou hadst been guilty of a dreadful crime, of sacrilege almost, because, in thy correspondence, thou hast addressed me in the singular number. In consequence of which thou changest style, as if I too were in need of that flattery which the fortunes of Julius Caesar first inflicted upon the world; as if, moreover, it were unseemly for thee to write in that more simple and robust style employed by all the ancient authors.

“I have treated this topic at greater length elsewhere, hence I shall merely touch upon it here. If I have ever, I shall not say deserved, but acquired any authority with thee, thou mayest consider me too as thy most recent authority for such usage. For I am accustomed to employ the singular number in addressing not only my friends (whom I address as equals) but even kings and pontiffs and Caesar himself, all of whom it is both right and just to address in more respectful terms. But as for me, I do not judge that true respect is to be found in hypocrisy. To lie to princes in the terms which are now the general rule is a

custom which (as Lucan asserts) had origin during the lifetime of Julius Caesar.

"I can discern, however, the reasons which prompted thee to revert to the use of the plural, nor dost thou conceal them from me. Thou wert disturbed by those less important letters of mine in which I seem to have abandoned the use of the singular. I shall have to relate to thee the reason for this, that thou mayest feel no concern hereafter. My friend, I adhere closely to the use of the singular whenever I treat subjects of some importance. I do not say of great importance, because such subjects are foreign to these pressing and fleeting times, and are beyond my powers and my pen, which thou courteously didst prefer to designate as heavenly, though thou mightest more correctly have styled it rude and uncultivated. On the contrary, as often as the force of circumstances obliges me to turn to plebeian and commonplace topics—topics which I deem unworthy of style at all—I do not hesitate to employ a plebeian and commonplace dress, in order that I may not, perchance, expend more effort upon the choice of words than is due to the nature of the subject-matter.

"This, and nothing else, I assure thee, is the reason which prompted me to employ the plural in the less important communications to which I have already alluded. This has been my rule in the past. As for the future, no matter what the subject under consideration, no matter what the style adopted, I shall certainly not tolerate the use of the plural in addressing a friend or any single individual. This rule I shall adopt, firstly for my own satisfaction, that I may not lie to my friends; secondly, and chiefly, that thy style may not be injured by my bad example, seeing that I seem to have no slight influence upon thee. If thou lovest me, therefore, return to the correct style, and let us endeavor to satisfy, not the ears of the vulgar herd, but our own dignity."

In later years, Petrarca had occasion to make a similar plea for the simple style of the classical period. In a letter to the Bishop of Olmütz (Johann Ocko von Olmütz), written in 1363, he says (*Fam.*, XXIII, 14, *Frac.*, III, p. 227):

“I was astonished in no slight degree by thy letter. In the first place, its style was new, and one to which I am not accustomed. Thou addressest me in the plural, though I am but one; and would, indeed, that I were at one with myself, and not torn and wasted by the constant battling of conflicting opinions. I shall not waver from the style which all the learned men of old employed, and which we ourselves have long employed in our correspondence with each other. I execrate the flatteries and absurdities of today. On this topic, with due modesty and in confidence, I shall make to thee the boast that I seem to be the only one, or at any rate the first one, in Italy to have abandoned the style of our fathers, which had become effeminate and weak, and to have forced it back to its virile and healthy state. And I shall continue to employ this style, unless I shall become aware that thy wishes are diametrically opposed to it.”

Petrarca, however, did not adhere with absolute fidelity to the rule which he had set himself. For occasional lapses, see Fracassetti, in his note to *Var.*, XXXII, Vol. 5, p. 337.

3. This is evidently a reference to the personal acquaintance established between the poet and the Tribune at Avignon, in 1343.



## CHAPTER IV

Before the days of international postal service, and when the highways were as insecure as was the general rule during the 14th century, the carrying-on of anything like an accurate correspondence between two cities so widely separated as Rome and Avignon must have been difficult in the extreme. A further difficulty for the modern student lies in the fact that many of Petrarca's letters are undated. To the following letter we have given the date July 24-26, 1347, for reasons that will be advanced in the notes. The letter itself does not contain references to current events at Rome, for the reason that Cola's report to the Pope in regard to Vico's submission was not dispatched from Rome earlier than August 5. During this interval, Petrarca wrote frequent letters, seizing upon the slightest pretext, communicating to the Tribune his every thought, and describing to him scenes and occurrences in the household of the Pope.

TO COLA DI RIENZO, TRIBUNE OF THE  
ROMAN PEOPLE*(Var., XXXVIII)*

I shall not cease to write to thee daily,<sup>r</sup> in order that thou mayest be the first to know all my anxious thoughts concerning thee, and that I may place before thee all my uneasiness of mind for thy welfare. I do not, however, expect any answers from thee. Considering thy important and overwhelming duties, I confess that I desire an answer rather than expect one. I realize this serious fact: that thou hast elevated thyself to a very high pinnacle, where thou art subject to the gaze, the criticism, and the judgment not merely of the Italians, but of all mankind, and not merely of those who now live, but of all the generations yet unborn. I am conscious that thou hast assumed a heavy burden, but at the same time a noble and an honorable one. Thou hast set thyself an extraordinary and glorious task. In my opinion, never will the present age, never will posterity cease to speak of thee. The opinions of other men are vain and discordant, changing in obedience to the caprices of each and every individual. But thy resolution stands as firm

as that very rock of the Capitol on which thou dwellest.<sup>2</sup> It, too, remains unshaken by the winds that blow.

I do not know whether thou art aware, or suspectest, or art entirely ignorant of a certain fact. Do not suppose for a moment that the letters which thou writest from Rome remain long in the possession of those to whom they are addressed. On the contrary, everyone hastens to make a copy of them with as much earnestness, and circulates them about the court of the Pontiff with as much zeal, as if they were sent not by a man of our own race, but by an inhabitant of another world or of the antipodes. All press round to interpret thy epistles; and never was an oracle of the Delphic Apollo turned and twisted into so many different meanings. I therefore praise the caution thou hast hitherto displayed. Up to this time thou hast exerted great care in moderating thy tone, and hast succeeded beyond reproach. I urge thee and beg of thee to display greater and greater care in the future. Thy words reveal the great soul of the writer and the majesty of the Roman people, but neither the reverence nor the respect due to the Roman Pontiff is obscured and forgotten. It is fitting that thy eloquence and thy

wisdom should be able to blend harmoniously two concepts which seem to be mutually exclusive, but which are not so in reality.<sup>3</sup> In thy letters each concept maintains its own proper dignity. I have witnessed several persons struck with amazement as they read, when they saw thy self-assurance struggling with thy modesty so as to leave but a doubtful victory; astonished when they saw that neither debasing fear nor swelling pride found admittance to that contest.<sup>4</sup> I have seen others perplexed as to whether they should more deeply admire thy deeds, or thy words, and unhesitatingly call thee Brutus<sup>5</sup> for thy boon of liberty, and for thine eloquence Cicero, whom Catullus of Verona<sup>6</sup> addressed as "most eloquent."

Persevere, therefore, as thou hast begun. Write always as if all men were to read, and not merely read, but, indeed, as if they were about to set out from every shore and bear thy message to every land.<sup>7</sup> Thou hast laid the strongest of foundations: truth, peace, justice, liberty. Build upon these. Whatever structure thou dost erect will remain firm; and whosoever will hurl himself against it will be dashed to pieces. He who wars against truth will declare himself a liar; against peace, a

restless spirit; against justice, a dishonest man; and if against liberty, an arrogant and shameless wretch.

I laud also the fact that, no matter to what corner of the earth thou writest, thou dost keep copies of thy letters,<sup>8</sup> so that what thou art about to say may be in harmony with what thou hast already said, and so that, if the occasion render it necessary, thou mayest compare thy letters with the replies thereto. I discovered this custom of thine from the dating of thy letters. Thy signing them so gloriously, "In the first year of the City's freedom," smacks of a purpose to reform the annals of the state. The expression pleases me, and gives me delightful comfort.<sup>9</sup> And since thou art occupied in the performing of noble deeds, until thou wilt have found a genius capable of recounting thy deeds in worthy language, I promise thee the service of my feeble intellect and of my pen—if God permit me to live. In this way I shall (to borrow the words of Livy) perform my part in enhancing the memory of the noblest race in the world.<sup>10</sup> Nor will my Africanus disdain to yield to thee for a short while.<sup>11</sup> Farewell, most illustrious man.

## · NOTES

1. There are, in all, eight letters which are addressed directly to Cola. Petrarca's last letter to him is *Fam.*, VII, 7, dated Genoa, November 29, 1347, when the poet's faith in the Tribune began to waver. In that letter Petrarca reproaches Cola for his wayward actions, and closes with the following stinging rebuke: "Consider all this, and you will realize that you are not the master of the Republic, but its servant." If Petrarca did indeed write to Cola daily, or as frequently as a reasonable interpretation of that word would warrant, it is a thousand pities that the letters have been lost. Let us hope that they are still buried in the libraries of Europe, and that they are patiently awaiting the search of the scholar.

2. Compare the dating of Cola's answer to Petrarca.

3. Filippini (*Studi storici*, XI, p. 8) considers this ability of Cola to blend seemingly irreconcilable ideas as one of the surest indications that Cola had designedly adopted a policy of duplicity in his intercourse with the Avignonese Curia. Filippini, indeed, whose thesis is that Cola wished to strip the papacy of its temporal power (in the 14th century!), maintains in the course of both his lengthy articles (see Bibliography) that Cola constantly wrote to the Pontiff in one tone, and to the cities and to the princes of Italy in a far different one.

4. It may reasonably be deduced from this statement that, at the time when this letter was written, Cola's actions had not yet irritated the Pope, and that the relations between Rome and Avignon had not yet reached the straining point.

5. Rienzo is here compared with Brutus, not for having freed Rome from the tyranny of a monarchy, but for having rescued the Romans from the yoke of the foreign barons. The distinction correctly represents the attitude of the Curia at this time. It countenanced and furthered Cola's prosecution of the barons, whose lawless conduct the Curia had not been, and was not, strong enough to curb; and at the same time it claimed that Cola's deeds were all performed in the name of the church, whose head was, of course, the legitimate monarch of Rome.

6. Catullus, *C.*, 49.

7. Brizzolara (*Studi storici*, VIII, p. 433) regards this as a veiled warning to Cola of the increasing suspicions and hostility of the Curia.

8. Petrarca himself was wont to keep copies of his letters, and for the same purpose as that which he now commends in Cola. Consult Cosenza, *Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors*, p. 10, and *Frac.*, I, p. 245.

9. Compare the dating of Cola's answer to Petrarca.

The first letter (among those now extant) in which Cola employed this phrase, *liberate reipublice anno primo*, is one addressed to Pope Clement VI, and dated July 8, 1347 (*Ep.*, No. VIII, p. 27, ll. 193-94). Gabrielli, however, points out (*op. cit.*, p. 20, n. 4) that there must have been earlier letters to the Pope, of which no traces can be discovered. Surely, by the beginning of June, Cola must have notified the Pope of his elevation, for we find the latter recognizing both Cola and Raymond as his Rectors at Rome in a letter of June 27, 1347 (Theiner, II, No. 174, p. 178).

Petrarca, who was as yet (end of July or beginning of August) *persona grata* at the papal court, may either have seen, or have heard of these earlier letters. From these he may have become acquainted with Cola's use of the expression; and it is therefore not necessary to assume, from Petrarca's comment on this phrase, that *Var.*, XXXVIII was written only after the receipt of Cola's letter dated July 28th.

The phrase *Datum in Capitolio* must likewise have pleased Petrarca; for it must have reminded him of the same phrase employed in dating the coronation diploma given to him on the Campidoglio six years before. (See *Opera*, III, p. 6: *Privilegii laureae receptae a Francisco Petrarca exemplar*; for the date see *ibid.*, p. 7.) Petrarca may well have lingered upon these pleasing expressions, and may well have given loose rein to his memories, dreaming of the day when "the ancient and the modern eras met together on the Capitol . . . and a new stadium for the human spirit, that which we are wont to style Renaissance, was opened" (J. A. Symonds, *Enc. Brit.*, 9th ed., s.v. "Petrarch," p. 707).

10. Livy, *Praefatio*, 3.

11. This is a reference to Petrarca's own epic, the *Africa*, whose hero is Scipio, surnamed Africanus. Though the poem was finished at about the time when Petrarca met Cola at Avignon (1343), it is clear from the closing statement of this letter that Petrarca was still at work upon it, giving it the polishing touches. In fact, the *Africa* was not published until after the poet's death (Gaspary, *Geschichte*, I, 426).



Petrarca's laying aside of a work upon which such great labor had been expended can be accounted for only on the supposition that, for the time being at least, he considered his new undertaking as of even greater importance. Perhaps we are justified in assuming that Petrarca now (July, 1347) meant to devote himself to the Latin poem in honor of Rienzo promised in the closing words of *Var.*, XLVIII (June, 1347): "I shall recall the Muses from their exile, and shall sing resounding words in abiding memory of thy glory—words that will ring throughout the ages" (compare also the last note to that letter).

## CHAPTER V

We can readily picture Petrarca's uneasy life during the months of July and August, 1347. Upon the first report of Cola's elevation to the tribunate, the Curia had rejoiced—for in Cola the church saw merely a dutiful son who had broken the lifted horns of the unruly barons. The Pope, indeed, had granted to him the title of Rector only, never recognizing Cola's self-assumed title of Tribune. The intention was quite plain: Cola should continue to rule over Rome in the name of the Pope, and should submit all his proposed actions to the maturer judgment of the Pontiff.

The tribune soon began to act in such wise as to arouse the suspicions of the church. In the midst of the gathering storm, Petrarca constantly championed the cause of his idol; and his unrestrained speech estranged many of his former friends. He was gradually losing that place in the general affection of which he was so proud. The members of the Curia may have begun to shun his presence; or, if this were impossible, they may have regarded him as an enemy, may have refused the warm grasp of the

hand, the welcoming glance of the eye, and may have passed on in silence. Such conduct toward Petrarca must have cut deeply into his sensitive soul; but he continued to take up arms in defense of the justice of Cola's tribunate and of the sincerity of his aims. It is to this period (more exactly, to August 21-25), to this beginning of open hostilities that we would assign the letter here given, which relates some thoughts which occurred to Petrarca one evening, or perhaps it was a vision, for he himself scarcely knew whether he was fully awake or half-asleep.

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TO COLA DI RIENZO, TRIBUNE OF THE  
ROMAN PEOPLE

(*Var.*, XL)

Thou canst easily conceive, O best of men, my great solicitude and suspense concerning the issue of thy fortunes. I call God to witness that I seem, somehow, to be a partaker of thy dangers, thy toils, and thy glory. And in truth, I neither wish to nor can dissemble. As often as Fortune brings me into the midst of those who are discussing thy affairs with stubborn insolence, I take up arms in thy defense.

This is a well-known fact, and the populace can testify to the great partiality and the eagerness with which I have argued against those who were decrying the justice of thy tribunate and the sincerity of thy aims. I have paid absolutely no regard either to the past or to the future; nor have I heeded whom I might sting with my words nor whom offend. Thanks to my unrestrained speech, I have estranged many whose favor I had gained through long intimacy.<sup>1</sup> But I am not surprised at this. For I have long recognized this verse of Terence<sup>2</sup> to be most true: "Homage begets friends; truth, enemies." Provided my conscience absolves me, however, I care not who accuses me.

I have wished to tell thee this by way of preface, that thou mayest not wonder, perchance, at the frequent letters I write to thee, nor deem my zeal inopportune. For I do not regard thy affairs from afar and as if I were absent. On the contrary I feel as if I were in the very center of the battle-line, as if I were destined to conquer in the great struggle, or by it be conquered. In consequence, my days are disturbed by harassing cares, and my nights by dreams. Both asleep and awake do I toil; and

never do I find a moment of rest. Under such conditions my pen is my one consolation. When I write I seem to be with thee, and I hurriedly jot down, not what is more pleasing to hear, but whatever first occurs to my mind. I do not so much strive to write in a brilliant style as, without regard to style, to pour into thine ears the cares of my soul and thus to lighten my heavily laden heart. Therefore receive my letters with the expectation of finding therein the conversation of a friend rather than the elegant exposition of thy deeds. Tormented by my cares, I think of thy fortunes day and night; and since the memory is fleeting and forgetful, lest my thoughts should pass away, I confine them in the unyielding meshes of letters. On returning home I record the thoughts which accompanied me during the day; upon arising in the morning, I record those of the night. Indeed, if I should yield to my inner promptings, no day would pass without a letter from me.<sup>3</sup>

I shall relate to thee now some thoughts which came to me last night—or perhaps it was a vision, for I scarcely know whether I was fully awake or half-asleep. I seemed to see thee in the center of the world and upon a very high

place, such as the topmost ridge of a precipitous mountain. So lofty wert thou that thou didst seem to touch the very skies. In comparison with that height, all the mountains which I have seen in our own land, and all which I have heard or read of in foreign lands, would be but low plains. Olympus itself, sung by the bards of both Greece and Rome, would be a most insignificant hill. Clouds floated far below at its feet, and the sun gleamed not far above its summit. Countless multitudes of brave men crowded round thee. Thou thyself wert seated in their midst upon a shining throne, and wert elevated above the rest. Thou wert more majestic and resplendent than the race of man, so much so that thou didst seem to have stirred to envy Phoebus himself. I moved about in the surrounding multitudes, and behold! my eyes fell upon endless masses such as I could never even have conceived of. I well-nigh fainted with wonder. In my utter amazement I asked of one who stood nearest to me what was the meaning of the marvel I beheld, or, perhaps, of the delusion under which I labored. For never, I believe, had even the twentieth part of that multitude peopled the earth.

“And thou wert not mistaken,” answered he

whom I had addressed. "Know that there are here assembled not only all who are now living, but also all future generations, summoned hither at the command of Him in whose palm rest the universe, and the race of man, and centuries untold."

"And what do they here? Never have I seen men so attentive."

"They wait to see what fortune attends that man," he answered, raising his eyes to thee, "because of whom, as thou seest, not merely earth, but the very sky and stars have lost their peace." And to this he added: "Dost thou not hear the rumbling of the heavens?" I hearkened, and behold! the deep thunder of a distant cloud—like the warning of an approaching storm.<sup>4</sup> "Mars," he said, "threatens with his thunderbolt, but Jove remains calm."

"And what is thy opinion?" I asked. "What dost thou suppose will be the end of such great expectations?"

"God alone knows," he answered; "but whatever the end, it will neither remain unnoticed nor be passed over in silence. All this great concourse will ever remember it and speak of it. So far as it is permitted to mortal wisdom to see into the future, the glory of this man

will be vigorous and eternal, provided only he bow not down before the gales. And he will not. Verily, what has that man to fear whose firm resolve it is to die for the right, if need be? One thing only I fear—the wavering loyalty of some of these who stand close round him on the very summit of the mount, and who look askance upon the successes of others. I fear the faltering loyalty of those who aspire to rise to pre-eminence by unworthy means, and who hope that, upon the destruction of that man, they will gain his throne. But they deceive themselves. If he beware of these, he will continue in safe possession of his power.”

“Alas!” I exclaimed, “is there anyone so savage, so inhuman as to plot the fall of that very man under whose guidance he has scaled such glorious heights? What madness, O gracious God, what folly not to desire, even as for oneself, the welfare of one’s preserver! But what will they accomplish,” I asked, “if (and may the Omnipotent avert the omen) this man fall? Under what leader will they find security?”

“I shall answer in a word,” said he. “They will rush headlong after him, down into the same abyss in which we have been living a life



of misery. For," he added, "envy brought death into the world, and envy is blind. When spurred by chagrin, it pays no heed to the suffering it brings upon itself provided it inflict injury upon another. I trust, however, that he will be more successful in evading all the pitfalls of Fortune, for God is with him." And here he left me.

I, however, who was thirsty for further information, seized him by the hand and said, "Whither art thou hastening?" "Night speeds on," said he, "and I must off." And I: "Tell me this at least: what toil has raised this man to such high station, what devotion, what chance?" And he, quoting those most charming lines of Vergil,<sup>5</sup> very appropriately replied: "He is one of the few

whom Heaven has marked for love,  
Or glowing worth has throned above."

Having said this he disappeared, just as the sky became tinged with the rosy dawn. And I, I either re-collected my scattered thoughts, or else awoke. Farewell, thou remarkable defender of Liberty!

*Postscript.*—I can testify in behalf of thy envoy Messer Giovanni,<sup>6</sup> and with me the Curia

and truth itself can testify, that he has comported himself with such integrity in thy interests and in those of the Republic as to merit the praise, esteem, and (in my opinion) even the gratitude of his chief. I am sure that thou wouldst have known this even had I made no reference to it; but I did not think it should be passed over in silence.

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#### NOTES

1. At first, Cola's prosecution of the barons of course pleased the Pope, as we have already pointed out (*Var.*, XXXVIII, n. 5). But, as the news of Rienzo's further doings reached the western Babylon, greater and greater must have become the resentment and the anger of the Colonna, who were the most prominent of the barons in Rome, and the leaders of the opposition to the Tribune. Not to mention the "many" other high dignitaries and prelates of the Avignonese court, the difficulties of Petrarca's position with reference to the Colonna (to whom, as he himself acknowledges, *Fam.*, VII, 13, he owed everything) were surely at this period of no enviable a nature.

2. Terence, *Andria*, I, 1, 41 (*ab in.*, vs. 68).

3. This statement clearly proves that when Petrarca said, "I shall not cease to write to thee daily," he was not to be taken too literally. See the opening sentence of *Var.*, XXXVIII, and the note thereto.

4. It is scarcely necessary to suppose that Petrarca here meant to warn Cola of the growing enmity of the

papal court (Brizzolara, *Studi storici*, VIII, p. 435, n. 1). It is quite evident that this entire letter is in the nature of a warning and advice, the result, indeed, of Petrarca's "solicitude and suspense concerning the issue" of Cola's fortunes.

5. Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 129-30, trans. by Conington (Longmans, 1900), p. 178.

6. This is a postscript which, like so many of its kind, either carries more information or causes greater difficulty than the letter itself. The question naturally arises, Who was this Messer Giovanni?

De Sade (II, p. 354, n. a) and Fracassetti (note to *Var.*, XL) identify Messer Giovanni with the messenger mentioned in the *Vita di Cola*, I, 10. The *Vita* runs as follows (col. 757):

"Then the Tribune held a general council, and wrote most excellent letters to the various cities. . . ." (col. 759): "In these letters he set forth his name in the magniloquent title exhibited by the following formula: 'Nicholas, the severe and clement, Tribune of liberty, of peace, and of justice, and illustrious deliverer of the Holy Roman Republic. . . .' The couriers who bore his letters carried in their hands wooden wands plated with silver. No arms did they bear. His couriers increased to such an extent that they became many in number, for they were welcomed courteously, and great honor was paid to them by every man. They were handsomely rewarded. One of his couriers, a Florentine, was sent to Avignon, to the Pope and to Messer Janni (Giovanni) de la Colonna, cardinal. He brought back a casket of wood inlaid with very fine silver which represented the arms of the Roman people, of the Pope, and of the Tribune. Its value was thirty florins. Upon his return the courier

said: 'This wand have I publicly carried through forests and over highways. Thousands of persons have knelt before it, and have kissed it with tears, because of their joy that the highways had been rendered safe and free from robbers.'"

The mention of the couriers in this chapter of the *Vita* occurs in connection with the statement that the Tribune had held a general council and had written most excellent letters to the various cities. It is natural to assume that the courier mentioned in said chapter was the bearer of one of these most excellent letters, and that therefore he was the first messenger dispatched to the Pope by Cola after his elevation to the tribuneship (cf. Filippini, *Studi storici*, X, p. 268, n. 2).

The date of Cola's letter to the city of Viterbo (May 24; cf. Gabrielli, *Epistolario*, No. II) seems somewhat too early for the description given in chap. 10 of the *Vita*. But such description seems to point to the circular letter addressed by the Tribune to the cities of Perugia, Florence, and Lucca, all of which bear the date June 7 (Gabrielli, *ibid.*, Nos. III, IV, V; cf. Torraca, *Discussioni*, p. 52). The contents of these letters must have become known at Avignon in the latter part of June, when the Pope must have received from Cola also a direct notification; for we find Clement VI recognizing both Cola and Raymond as his Rectors at Rome in a letter of June 27, 1347 (Theiner, II, No. 174, p. 178).

But with this dating of the events and of the messenger mentioned in *Vita* I, 10 (which we judge to be the correct one), insufficient time would be given either for

the natural development of the enmity described by Petrarca in the opening sentences of Var., XL, or for Petrarca's repeated defense of Cola's tribuneship and of the sincerity of Cola's aim. For, up to such date (the latter part of June), the Curia could not have become incensed at Cola. The latter's backslidings were as yet a thing of the future. Our first conclusion, therefore, is that both De Sade and Fracassetti are in error. The messenger of *Vita* I, 10, must be identified with the bearer of Cola's first message to the Pope in June; hence, he cannot be identified with the Messer Giovanni of Petrarca's letter, which must be dated in the second half of August.

Let us now examine the view of Filippini. He points out (*Studi storici*, X, p. 268, and n. 2) that Cola sent an envoy to Pope Clement VI by letter of August 5, 1347. This letter is No. XVI of the *Epistolario*, and it consists of two parts. The first part is dated July 27, and contains the statement (*ibid.*, p. 44, l. 157): *ambassador ad pedes vestre Clementie trasmitteretur*. In other words, by this first half of the letter, it is clearly promised that an ambassador will be sent. The second part of the letter is dated August 5, and contains the statement (*ibid.*, p. 45, l. 189) that said ambassador *dirigitur*, is being sent. Filippini gives the former reference instead of the latter. With this correction we shall proceed.

Filippini continues (*ibid.*, and *Studi storici*, XI, p. 13, n. 2) that the envoy thus sent on his way on August 5, or thereabouts, is mentioned as being on the way in Cola's letter to Rinaldo Orsini, dated September 17,

1347 (Gabrielli, *op. cit.*, No. XXIII). Filippini refers the reader to *Epistolario*, p. 66, l. 130; but he should have given ll. 131-32. Even so, we there find Cola's statement that he is not writing to the Pope nor to the other cardinals, because he believes that a worthy envoy representing both himself and the Roman people is about to be dispatched to the Curia: *quia ad Curiam credimus quod ambassata Romani populi et nostra honorabilis dirigitur*. The form here employed (*dirigitur*) is in the future tense, and therefore the sentence must mean that Cola intended to dispatch still another envoy, one quite distinct from the envoy sent on or about August 5. As a matter of fact, we have not been able to discover in the correspondence of Cola any further reference to the envoy of August 5, unless such reference is to be inferred from Cola's remark in the same letter to Rinaldo Orsini to the effect that he was being undeservedly accused in Avignon (*ibid.*, p. 66, l. 135).

Filippini concludes that the envoy sent on August 5 is the Giovanni of Petrarca's postscript. There is a lacuna in his argument. His conclusion is correct in our opinion, though the premises leading up to it are incorrect. In other words, he has jumped to a conclusion, and has not given the proofs thereof. The fault lies in the following misstatements:

a) *Epistolario*, p. 66, ll. 131-32, does not say that any envoy is on the way; the form there found is the future *dirigitur*, and not the present *dirigitur*.

b) Even granting that the reading of l. 132 is, or should be, the present *dirigitur*, it is scarcely conceivable

that a special envoy from Rome to Avignon, bearing a message direct to Clement VI, should have been traveling from August 5 to September 17, a period of 44 days, and still not have reached his destination.

We think, however, that we can prove the identity of Messer Giovanni with the messenger dispatched by Cola on or about August 5.

Any envoy sent on such date would accompany, or would follow, reports of Cola's doings in the latter part of July and in the beginning of August. We have proof positive that the Pope at Avignon was kept accurately informed by Raymond, Bishop of Orvieto and his vicar at Rome. On August 1, Raymond dispatched a letter to his lord and master Clement VI (Papencordt, Document No. 8). On August 2, Cochetus de Chotitis sent a similar letter to his patron in Avignon, Rinaldo Orsini, Archdeacon of Lüttich and a papal notary. This letter was written in greater detail than that of Raymond; in fact, it was quite a catalogue of events, beginning with the attack of Cola's army on Vetralla, then going over the same ground as the letter of the Bishop, and finally including the events of August 2 as well (Papencordt, Document No. 9).

Both these letters, being dispatched respectively 4 and 3 days before Cola's letter of the 5th, must have reached their destination a like number of days before the letter of Cola. Raymond's letter was direct to Clement VI; and we are safe in assuming that Rinaldo Orsini duly notified the Pope of the contents of the letter from Cochetus de Chotitis. Hence, at the arrival of Cola's messenger, the Pope must already have

known the following astonishing proceedings: the edict of the Tribune decreeing the existence of the Italian Nation and annulling all genuine and spurious privileges assumed by the Popes; the famous festival, in the course of which Cola assumed the dignity of knighthood, and bathed in the sacred baptismal basin of Emperor Constantine; the proclamation of Rome as the capital of the world; the summons sent to Emperor Lewis of Bavaria and to King Charles of Bohemia; and, finally, the distribution of the standards to the Italian cities during the memorable festival of the Unity of Italy. (Read the letter of Clement VI to Bertrand, Cardinal-legate for the kingdom of Sicily, dated August 21, 1347; Theiner, II, No. 175, pp. 179-80, beginning with *Post hoc autem*; cf. Raynaldus, XXV, 443-44.)

Such news as this (and in the middle of the 14th century) might truly have been deemed by the papal court as news from another world, or from the antipodes. No envoy, either bearing such news or reaching Avignon together with such news, could have escaped the resentment of the self-exiled Vicars of the Lord. Of this resentment, indeed, and of the chilly atmosphere then reigning in the palace of the Pope, we see a clear indication in the words of Petrarca, when he feels obliged to commend Messer Giovanni for the integrity and the ability with which he comported himself under such difficult circumstances.

We have found what may be considered a check proof of this identification of Messer Giovanni in chap. xxi of the anonymous *Vita di Cola*. To begin somewhat



farther back, chap. xvi gives an account of the submission of the Prefect Giovanni di Vico; chaps. xvii, xviii, and xix constitute an excursus by the author on the subject of dreams; chap. xx gives an account of what we shall name Cola's nepotism. Then follows chap. xxi, which in reality resumes the thread of the political history where it had been broken off at chap. xvi. In chap. xxi, the *Vita* tells how Cola finally dismissed his colleague Raymond and how he sent an embassy to the Pope. We cite from the *Vita*, cols. 797 and 799.

“At a time of such great prosperity Cola, wishing to be the sole ruler, dismissed the Vicar of the Pope, his colleague, who was a foreigner born beyond the Alps [*uno tramontano*], a man deeply learned in the Decretals, and Bishop of Viterbo [*sic*]. This man he dismissed in spite of the fact that he received many letters and many embassies from prominent ecclesiastics in Avignon. Then Cola sent an ambassador to the Pope, acquainting him with these conditions. This ambassador, upon his return, said that the Pope and all the Cardinals entertained the gravest doubts.”

From other sources we know that the Roman army marched out against Giovanni di Vico in the second half of June; that negotiations for peace were on foot on July 16; that the Roman army re-entered the city on July 22 (Torraca, *Discussioni*, p. 46, and the references there given). On July 27 Cola began to write to the Pope a report giving the account of Vico's submission (*Epistolario*, No. XVI). The sending of this letter was postponed because of the lack of messengers (*ibid.*, p. 44, ll. 161-62). On July 28 Cola finds a few

spare moments to write his long-delayed answer to Petrarca's *Hortatoria* (*ibid.*, No. XV). On August 5 Cola takes up again his letter to the Pope begun on July 27, grasping the opportunity of adding the news of the further developments of August 1 and 2. (It will be remembered that the Pope was to become acquainted with these facts even before the receipt of Cola's letter. See above.) We cannot help identifying the messenger thus dispatched with the one in chap. xxi of the *Vita*. In short, we claim that the messenger bearing Cola's letter of August 5, the messenger of *Vita* I, 21, and the Messer Giovanni of *Var.*, XL are one and the same person.

Cola's doings were becoming of an alarming and unprecedented nature. The relations between Rome and Avignon were becoming more and more strained, though they had not reached the breaking point. The household of the Pope, the Cardinals, and other high dignitaries of the church had by this time, therefore, had sufficient cause for their stubborn insolence, and for their doubts as to the justice of the tribunate, and as to the sincerity of the aims of their whimsical Rector in Rome. The doubts of the Curia described by Petrarca seem to us to correspond precisely to the gravest doubts entertained by the Pope and by all his Cardinals, as described by the anonymous author of the *Vita* in chap. xxi. Finally, this identification of Messer Giovanni would date *Var.*, XL toward August 21, a date which, with one exception (Filippini, *Studi storici*, XI, 14-15), is satisfactory to all those who have given due consideration to this subject.

## CHAPTER VI

The Pope at Avignon was in constant communication with his Vicar in Rome, Raymond, Bishop of Orvieto. On August 1, Bishop Raymond sent a letter to Clement VI, in which he reported Cola's assumption of the knightly dignity, the citation of the Emperor and the princes of the Empire, and his own protest against Cola's fantastic proceedings. On the following day (August 2) Cochetus de Chotitis dispatched similar news to his patron in Avignon, Rinaldo Orsini, papal notary. This letter contained information also of the festival of United Italy celebrated on August 2, 1347. It was followed by the official report sent by Cola on August 5, 1347.

From the ecclesiastical standpoint, the Rector's deeds were now becoming of an alarming nature. The Pope, the Cardinals, and others in high office had now good ground for their stubborn insolence. Petrarca's position among the Avignonese prelates was therefore becoming daily more intolerable. The increasing suspicions of the Colonna, of the Orsini, and of the other families of the Roman nobility

represented in the household of the Pope; the exaggerated fears of the clergy in general for the maintenance of their patrimony and their privileges in Italy; the strain of having to defend the Tribune from the accusations showered upon him from every side; and the feeling that his pleasant relations with all those by whom he was surrounded were being slowly and steadily undermined—all this must have filled with sadness the heart of Petrarca.

To give up Cola was impossible. He loved his friends deeply and sincerely, but even more deeply did he love Rome, and Italy, and the cherished dream of years. The relations between Cola and the Curia were strained; still, open hostilities had not yet been declared. The enmity thus far developed existed between individuals only; the church as an institution had not yet broken with Cola. Under the circumstances Petrarca, wearied by his unceasing strife in the "Hell of the Living," betook himself, nay fled with eagerness, to the quiet, peaceful solitude of the Enclosed Valley. The surroundings gave him relief from the distracting whirl of the city, but could not banish thoughts of Rome. Consequently, he composed an eclogue on the subject uppermost in

his mind, and sent it to Cola di Rienzo, accompanying it with a letter of explanation. Fortunately both eclogue and letter are extant.

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TO COLA DI RIENZO, TRIBUNE OF THE  
ROMAN PEOPLE

(*Var.*, XLII)

I have long, and with difficulty, been sailing the stormy seas of this Curia which calls itself Roman. I have grown rather old in the service, but am still an awkward and inexperienced sailor. Consequently I recently fled from the troubled waters of Avignon, and sought the haven which, as ever, offers me the quiet of solitude—that Enclosed Valley which receives its name from its very nature. This retreat is fifteen miles distant from that most boisterous of cities and from the left bank of the Rhone. Though the intervening distance is so short, still the two places are so utterly different that, whenever I leave here for that city, I seem to have encircled the globe from the farthest west to the extreme east. The two places have nothing in common except the sky: the men have a different nature, the waters are of a

different quality, the land brings forth a different vegetation.<sup>1</sup>

Here I have the Fountain of the Sorgue, a stream which must be numbered among the fairest and coolest, remarkable for its crystal waters and its emerald channel. No other stream is like it; none other is so noted for its varying moods, now raging like a torrent, now quiet as a pool. I am astonished, therefore, that Plinius Secundus should have placed this fount among the wonders of the province of Narbonne; for as a matter of fact it is situated in the province of Arles.<sup>2</sup> This is the country-seat where, beyond the confines of Italy, I am detained by the inexorable claims of necessity. And yet the spot is most suitable for my studies. The hills cast a grateful shadow in the morning and in the evening hours; and at noon many a nook and corner of the vale gleams in the sunlight. Round about, the woods lie still and tranquil, woods in which the tracks of wild animals are far more numerous than those of men. Everywhere a deep and unbroken stillness, except for the babbling of running waters, or the lowing of the oxen browsing lazily along the banks, or the singing of birds. I should speak of this more at length, were it not that the

rare beauties of this secluded dale have already become familiar far and wide through my verses.<sup>3</sup>

Hither then, as I was saying, I fled with great longing, both to give my mind and my ears rest from the distracting whirl of the city, and also to put the finishing touches to some work I had in hand, the thought of which, in its unfinished condition, weighed heavily upon me. The very aspect of the forest urged me to compose a poem dealing with the wild woodlands. To that pastoral poem, therefore, which I had sung during the preceding summer in that same valley, I now added a chapter.<sup>4</sup> Or rather, inasmuch as in matters of poetry we should ever employ poetical terms, I should say that I now added an eclogue. The laws of this species of poetry forbade me to choose for a background any other than a sylvan scene. Hence I wrote a pastoral in which the interlocutors are two shepherds, two brothers, and forwarded this poem to thee, who art so devoted a scholar, intending that it should serve as a relief from thy numerous cares.

The nature of these compositions is such that, unless the author himself provide the key, their meaning cannot, perhaps, be divined.<sup>5</sup> In fact, they are likely to remain quite unintelli-

gible. I shall not oblige thee, who art straining every nerve in solving most serious questions of state, to misspend any energy over the words of even one of these alleged shepherds. And that thy divine intellect may not be engaged even for one instant in unraveling these trifles of mine, I shall briefly disclose to thee the substance of what I have written.

The two shepherds represent two classes of citizens living in the same city, but entertaining widely divergent sentiments concerning that same Republic. One of them is named Martius, that is to say, warlike and restless, or perhaps he is named after Mars, whom tradition makes the father of him who founded our race. This Martius is affectionate toward his mother and has compassion for her. His mother, indeed, is Rome. The second shepherd is his brother Apicius, a name once borne by him who was master-connoisseur of the art of cooking. Apicius (as thou seest) must therefore typify that class of men totally given over to idleness and to the pursuit of pleasure. The scene represents the two shepherds in heated conversation on the love due to their aged mother, and especially on the question of restoring her ancient homestead (which, of course, is the



Capitolium), and the bridge by which she was wont to visit her farms (which, again, is the Mulvian). The bridge spans a stream descending from the lofty summits of the Apennines, the Tiber. This river, whose course is there outlined,<sup>6</sup> leads to the ancient orchards, and to the abodes of Saturn, in other words, to the ancient city of Orte, and to Sutri. It leads also to the shaded valleys of Tempe, by which is meant Umbria, in which are Narni and Todi and many other cities; and, farther south, it enters Etruria, whose people (as thou well knowest) are descended from the Lydian race.<sup>7</sup>

The shepherd who is mentioned in the following passage—he who caught the thieves on the bridge and slew them—is Marcus Tullius Cicero, who (as thou knowest) seized the Catilinarian conspirators on the Mulvian Bridge.<sup>8</sup> Rightly is he styled shepherd, because he was Consul; rightly is he styled acute and keen, because of his supremacy in the field of eloquence. The woods for which the ruined bridge is a menace, and the diminished flock dwelling therein alike symbolize the Roman people. The women and the children, for whom Apicius has abandoned his mother and whom alone he cherishes, are the lands and their

feudal dwellers. The caverns are the fortified palaces of these lords, relying upon which they scoff at the sufferings of the citizens. Apicius does not wish the Capitolium to be strengthened; on the contrary, he proposes that it be rent in two, so that this faction and that may alternately reign supreme. His brother strives to bring about a union, and in referring to the riches of their mother, à propos of restoring the Capitolium, he means to emphasize the fact that Rome is still a power, if only her children be of one mind. For (he says) Rome nourishes both sheep and bullocks, representing, naturally, the needy populace and the wealthier portion of the people. Among the remnants of their former fortune Martius mentions also a quantity of hidden salt, by which we may simply understand the revenues from the tax on salt, which I hear are quite considerable. However, understand by it rather the practical wisdom of the Romans which has too long lain dormant from dread of the tyrants.

While the brothers are thus engaged in debate, a winged messenger arrives. This is Rumor, than whom (to quote Vergil),<sup>9</sup>

never plague that runs  
Its way more swiftly wins.

This courier declares their cares vain and their altercations useless, announcing that they have both been disowned by their mother, and that, with the mother's consent, their younger brother rebuilds the old homestead and rules the forests; announcing, furthermore, that their brother thereby imposes silence upon them while he himself sings sweetly to the flocks and the herds, that is to say, while he himself promulgates just laws and abolishes the unjust. In these verses I have veiled (under the figures of wild animals) either the names, or the natural dispositions, or the armorial bearings of certain of the tyrants. Thus far thou hast proved thyself to be the youngest of the three brothers. Everything else is clear. Farewell, O illustrious man, and keep me in thy thoughts.

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#### NOTES

1. In *Fam.*, XIII, 8, addressed to Francesco Nelli, Prior of the Church of the Santi Apostoli at Florence, and dated 1352, Petrarca describes his simple life at Vacluse, closing with some pertinent remarks upon the contrast between his retreat by the Fountain of the Sorgue and the not distant Avignon. He speaks as follows (*Frac.*, II, p. 252, and 3, p. 262, n. 1).

“What wouldst thou have? I could, perhaps, pass my life here were Italy not so far away, or Avignon so

near. Why, forsooth, should I endeavor to conceal the two weaknesses of my soul? My love for the former soothes and torments me; hatred of the latter enrages and exasperates me. Its most horrid stench brings pestilence upon the entire world; what wonder, then, if it has vitiated the clear, pure atmosphere of a modest country-seat that is all too near? This stench will drive me hence—I have a sure presentiment of it.

“Thou art now informed of my present mode of living. There is nothing that I desire, except thee and the few friends who still survive; there is nothing that I dread, except a return to the cities. Farewell.”

2. Pliny, *N.H.*, XVIII, 22 (51), 190: *Est in Narbonensi provincia nobilis fons Orge nomine.*

3. Vacluse and its beauties are spoken of among others, in *Epistolae poeticae*, I, 4, which invites Dino Roberti di Borgo San Sepolcro to visit Vacluse; and in I, 6, which extends a similar invitation to his very dear friend Philippe de Cabassole, Bishop of Cavaillon. The dates which have been assigned to these two compositions are 1339 and 1346 respectively, hence they are both earlier than the present letter to Cola.

4. The *Eclogues* were begun in the summer of 1346 (Gaspary, *Geschichte*, I, 431). Since the eclogue which Petrarca now added, *Pietas pastoralis*, is the fifth “chapter” in the series, it is clear from this passage that at least Eclogues 1 to 4 inclusive were composed during the preceding summer.

5. In *Fam.*, X, 4, addressed to his brother Gerardo, and dated Padua, December 2, 1348, Petrarca gives a lengthy exposition of the meaning of Eclogue 1, entitled *Parthenias*.

6. This passage has confused earlier translators. The phrase which has caused the misunderstanding consists of the two words, *Iter illud* (Frac., III, p. 411). *Iter* has regularly been taken in the sense of road, or highway (Frac., 5, p. 370; Develay, *Lettres à Rienzi*, I, 79; II, 121, and note. Develay has repeated his version in the translation of the Eclogues, I, p. 90, note; cf. Adorni, in Rossetti, *Poesie Minori*, I, 80-82).

With this meaning for *Iter illud*, translators have been compelled to give a forced and untrue rendering of the passage in *Var.*, XLII (Frac., III, p. 411, *Iter illud . . . non ignoras*), and also of the corresponding passage in Eclogue 5 (Avena, *Il Bucolicum Carmen*, p. 117, vss. 88-92). In fact, in Eclogue 5 there is no mention whatsoever of *la strada* of Fracassetti or of *la route* of Develay. Eclogue 5 and *Var.*, XLII were sent off to Cola at the same time, and must have been composed at no great interval one from the other. Petrarca, in writing the latter, could not so far have forgotten the substance of the former as to refer to a road in Eclogue 5 which he had not there mentioned. The only meaning that can correctly be given to *Iter illud*, then, is "that course," meaning the river whose course is there outlined. This rendering is borne out by the fact that only by this interpretation do the cities and the districts mentioned by Petrarca remain in their proper geographical position, being named in order according to the southward flow of the Tiber from its source to its mouth, and not according to the northward direction of any road leading out from Rome. Such rendering, furthermore, gives the solution

of the *ulterius* of *Var.*, XLII, which had been an insurmountable obstacle to said commentators.

It should be noticed, in passing, that Petrarca here indulges in a play of words, if he does not actually dabble in philology. He connects *Hortanum* with *hortus*, *Sutrium* with *Saturnus*, *Umbria* with *umbrosus*. In commenting upon the corresponding passage of Eclogue 5, Piendibeni says (*Avena, op. cit.*, p. 269): "to the ancient orchards: the city of Orte, which is an ancient city; the shaded valleys of Tempe: the delightful valley of Spoleto; the abodes of Saturn: that is, Sutrium, so called from Saturn. Defeated by his son Jupiter, he [i.e., Saturn] hid in these parts, whence Latium, so called from his hiding [*a latendo*]."

7. Pliny, *N.H.*, III, 5(8), 50: *Umbros inde exegere antiquitus Pelasgi, hos Lydi, a quorum rege Tyrrheni, mox a sacrificio ritu lingua Graecorum Thusci sunt cognominati.*

8. Cicero, *Cat.*, iii. 2, 5-6; and iii. 3, 6.

9. *Aeneid*, iv. 174, trans. by Conington, p. 108.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SHEPHERDS' AFFECTION<sup>1</sup> (ECLOGUE 5)

*Martius.* Why is our revered mother thus afflicted, brother? What can have befallen her to cause such groans? Why is she so full of sadness, and why does she ever shed fresh tears, when our own eyes are not even moistened?

*Apicius.* The fleeting years devour everything. Time conquers all things, itself unconquerable. Our mother's fortune has vanished, and her comeliness; and vigorous youth turns the shoulder to withered old age.

*Martius.* But look about, and behold how many are the aged women still hale and hearty, in spite of the pressing years.<sup>2</sup> Different the source of her sorrow. For other reasons do these sighs spring from her bleeding heart. Our love urges us to discover these causes, and when discovered, to combat her destiny. Our filial duty commands us, and the excellence of our mother demands it in return for the labors of childbirth, and for her constant and tender care of us.

*Apicius.* Nature will not brook interference. Though all the powers unite against her,

though mankind summon every art and struggle in the vain contest, Nature will proudly rear her unconquered head and will scorn all fetters.

*Martius.* But this very Nature of which thou speakest, Apicius, wills it that our parents be well-nigh equal to the gods.

*Apicius.* Aye, and this same Nature forbids us to turn aside the course of life; forbids us to derange the established order of things. Our mother cannot regain the vigor of her youth. But there is another duty which claims our attention. Let each of us think of his spouse, and consider how best to aid his infant children.<sup>3</sup>

*Martius.* And are we to do nothing for our mother? As for myself, my concern for our widowed mother is the greater. I can conceive no dearer duty.<sup>4</sup>

*Apicius (aside).* What forbids my making a pretense at affection? Gentle words are but a light burden.<sup>5</sup> (*To Martius.*) She alone has given us these shoulders, these hands, these arms. Let her alone then reap the benefits of her gifts. I surely shall not decline to attend her at whatever hour she call, or to be a staff to her feeble old age.

*Martius.* The gods in the sky serene have given thee wisdom. Now filial affection takes



up its arms and asserts its sway. Now art thou a son. Brother, wishest thou that we relieve our mother's need?

*Apicius.* Why dost thou check thy words? Speak out. Every delay is torture to one who loves.

*Martius.* Mother dwells in a home surrounded by shady groves and built upon a hill.<sup>6</sup> For many years her sons (who until recently evinced a noble spirit) adorned their home with loyal care. The fame of their mother was great in the land; throughout the woodland pastures did she stir abundant envy. Blessed was she in her children, and renowned for her rustic treasures. She ruled queen of the forests, when envious death snatched her children from the disconsolate mother. The clay perished, but their fame lives on. We, on the contrary, are put off with promises in our youthful years, and live a life of mockery. The seeds of fame are still among us, but they are buried deep in darkness. It is in our times that our home has suffered change. Our fortunes, which had remained unimpaired through the lapse of years, sank because unable to resist our own mad fury. This ruined home we must now rebuild for our mother. Nothing could give

her greater pleasure, except she were to behold her children, whom the fates weigh down, spring again from the shattered graves, and to see the olden times return.

*Apicius.* Men are numbered by thousands; their cares by millions. Each man considers himself a sage. But whence these dreams of thine, brother? To ward off poverty is in itself a heavy task in this world, and one which holds forth no hope of respite. As for us, our fortune is so spiteful that, toil as we may, we can barely extract a livelihood from the forest. I shall mention facts well known to thee, brother. In the present condition of the country-side, we do not draw a comfortable existence from theft and plunder combined; as matters stand, we cannot drive home our booty from such sheepfolds as are well provided. And in spite of all this, wouldst thou prepare to rear a new home for our mother, who is so soon to descend into the grave?

*Martius.* Not a new home, no! I but wish to repair the shameful ruins of our former home. Come, dear brother! Give me thy hand, and manly assume thy share of the burden. Let thy filial duty remain unconquered and let it overcome all obstacles. Let us both dry our

mother's tears, and let us at the same time alleviate her sorrowing heart, lest she grieve that she has begotten such sons.

*Apicius.* Vain cares distract thy mind. Vain are thy hopes for a progeny such as once peopled the plains far and wide—a hardy band not content with its own walls nor with its small holdings. We are now reduced to a mere handful. The wilderness will henceforth nourish us with wild berries. Henceforth our spacious grotto with its double roof will shelter us from the threatening skies and ward off the winds and the rains. Our mother will live with us alternately, attending festive gatherings of both the one and the other house, and will thus enjoy a twofold homage.<sup>7</sup>

*Martius.* True, Apicius, but she will be despised and abused by our haughty consorts, and will have to bow the head to her domineering daughters-in-law.<sup>8</sup> Nay, abandon thy scheme and hearken to a better. Let us both protect the home of our mother, and worship with due reverence the threshold which her sacred feet have touched.<sup>9</sup> I make no harsh demand. It is sweet for youth to succor an aged mother. I shall not feel shame at being seen early in the morning standing at the

entrance, anxious for her every command.<sup>10</sup> Why should we not toil over our own flocks, and reconstruct the wonted abode of our household gods? Hence shall our children's children inherit their power. Let there be but one house; let there be no divided authority and no division of honors among brothers. Our neighbors will live in fear of us if we stand united, and true worth will win greater respect than the sword. Let us gird ourselves for the task before us. Some things become easier to those who try. Mother herself will lend her assistance if she but perceive our friendly disposition; for she doth rear a flock of sheep and a herd of bullocks,<sup>11</sup> the foundation of our entire wealth and substance.

To deceive a mother's expectations is the part of children only. Long years ago, mother buried in the earth remnants of our former fortunes, and in addition a large quantity of salt,<sup>12</sup> which she had secretly and lovingly prepared for her sheep who were so fond of it, and by the sprinkling of which she made the herbage more savory for them. Moreover, an impetuous stream, descending from the high mountain-range, flows down to our ancient orchards, to the shaded valleys of Tempe, to the

abodes of Saturn and to all the lands which we once possessed beyond its northern bank, but which our cruel Lydian guest now holds.<sup>13</sup>

With its raging waters this stream checks the further progress of our feeble mother when she desires to re-visit her pastures. A bridge once spanned it, a bridge which had been built by the hands of our revered ancestors and had stood firm until this day. Upon this bridge a keen shepherd once seized at night those stealthy robbers who had plotted death for the flock and destruction for the forest. That shepherd punished the robbers with death, as they deserved. But thy right hand it was, Apicius (it is a fact thou well knowest), that hurled this bridge into the swollen waters. In thy haste to do me harm, thou dost inflict an injury upon our mother, upon thyself, upon our flocks, and upon our entire forest home.<sup>14</sup> But I avoid recriminations. The bridge now demands our earnest attention, and, though myself innocent of all blame, I shall not refuse to shoulder my share of the burden.

*Apicius.* It was thy long-continued haughtiness, O brother, that drove me to commit the deed. But we possess a small skiff in which he who desires to cross may do so with ease. Only

a small parcel of land remains on the farther side of the stream.<sup>15</sup> Fortune has circumscribed our extensive possessions, and has marked out for us the same boundaries which it originally set for the two brothers, whose relations were as friendly as ours. Scanty were the lands of our earliest ancestors; scanty are those of their last descendants. Between the two periods, our fathers extended their territory, but daring wins merely gladsome results, not permanent ones. Behold, all things have returned to their primitive state. Base Fortune amuses herself with her incessant whirl. What if we do remain without a bridge? Is it not for that very reason safer on the bank? And as for the rest, it is somewhat too late to erect a new home when our mother's feet are already on the brink of the grave.

*Festinus.* Why do you both waste the fleeting hours in useless wrangling? Your younger brother—he whom you are wont to keep under foot—is now lord of the forests. Already has he laid the foundations of new palaces on the ancestral estate. To him has your mother intrusted her lands and her flocks. She now rests securely on the breast of her son. All classes swear allegiance to him; and he, though

a youth, is burdened with the cares of an aged statesman, and stands alert with drawn sword. Snares have been spread beneath the trees of the forest, in which to catch the feet of birds and the necks of thieves.<sup>16</sup> Strong bolts guard the well-fed and tender sheep against the thirsting wolves. The ill-humored Bear growls no longer; the blood-thirsty Boar has ceased to vent his rage, the Serpent to hiss. The swift Lions do not, as formerly, drive their prey away, nor do the Eagles fasten their hooked talons upon the lamb.<sup>17</sup>

High upon a lofty eminence the guardian shepherd sits, singing sweetly to his flock. The pasture lands rest quietly in the lap of security. And now both shores hearken to his song.<sup>18</sup> The far-off Calabrian hears it, and the remote waters of the Ligurians, and he who dwells on the curving shores of cleft and wave-breaking Pelorus. If he but raise his voice, he will arouse the Moors and the shepherds of Ind,<sup>19</sup> the snows of the North and the parching sands of the South. He bids you to hold your tongues. Go home, and shear the helpless sheep. Your dear mother protests that you are not the fruit of her womb, and vows that you were fraudulently substituted in place of

her true children. Thou, O Apicius, wert loosed against us by the neighboring valley, where the wild herds and the flocks of Spoleto go forth to reap the verdant meadows of the Apennine forest. The pasture lands and the distant region of the Rhine it was that gave thee birth, O Martius.<sup>20</sup>

*Martius.* Now I remember; I had heard some old herdsmen say so.

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#### NOTES

1. Codex 33, Plut. 52 of the Medicean-Laurentian Library contains a commentary on the Eclogues which Rossetti and Hortis have ascribed to Petrarca's friend, Donato degli Albanzani. Avena, however, cannot agree with them, and argues that the commentary must, for the present, be given as that of an anonymous author (*Il Bucolicum Carmen*, pp. 84 ff.). We quote from this debated commentary (*op. cit.*, p. 207):

"The argument of this eclogue is as follows. When the Roman power had been reduced to its lowest state and had been divided between two factions (that of the Orsini and that of the Colonna, to which families all the other noble and prominent houses and the entire people gave their adherence), among other causes of strife between said Colonna and Orsini, the following became the chief cause.

"The Colonna wished that the Roman Senate and power should have their seat on the Campidoglio, as had been the custom of old; the Orsini, on the other



hand, stated their desire that that same Senate have its seat at their home, the Castello S. Angelo; or else, that it should there be stationed when the rule of the city lay in their hands, and, in turn, at the home of the Colonna, that is to say at San Marcello, when the rule of the city fell to these. For each house ruled supreme in alternate months. In this way the state was divided: the Orsini desired to drag the Senate off to a strange and private abode; the Colonna, on the contrary, to its neutral and wonted abode. Therefore the title of the eclogue is 'The Shepherds' Affection' (*Pietas pastoralis*), because the shepherds speak of a queen as if of their mother, widowed, desolate, and abandoned.

The speakers are Martius—that is, the house of the Colonna, which has risen to the height of power by force of arms (for this has ever been a warlike house), and Apitius, that is, the house of the Orsini. For *apitiosus* means bald, without hair; and the bear itself is an animal without a tail, and so Apitius represents the house of the Orsini. Festinus is Rumor, in other words a messenger, so called because he travels swiftly. These two, Martius and Apitius, speak of Rome herself as if of their mother; for Rome had begotten them, hence is she their mother; and for this reason the eclogue is entitled 'The Shepherds' Affection,' because the conversation is as if concerning their actual mother. Therefore Martius thus begins."

In endeavoring to explain the symbolism of the three characters of this eclogue, the ancient commentators reached some strange conclusions.

Martius is, as a rule, correctly interpreted, being identified by Cod. Vat. lat. 1679, and by N with Stefano Colonna himself (*Avena, op. cit.*, pp. 76, 266, 267). Codex N gives as a reason for Petrarca's calling

Martius warlike the fact that a member of the Colonna brought about the death of Pope Boniface VIII (*op. cit.*, p. 266).

Apicius has caused greater confusion. The author of Arguments D explains in words reminiscent of Petrarca himself, saying (*op. cit.*, p. 85): *Appitius domus Ursina ab appitio summo in arte epulandi magistro*. Also Cod. Vat. lat. 1679 (*v.s.*) is correct. Cr. gives Apicius as the proper name of one of the Orsini (*op. cit.*, p. 266). N gives a new variant, explaining in a wild and rambling manner that Apitius is derived "from a (privative), that is 'without,' and *picios*, that is *pietas*: hence, without affection (*sine pietate*) or without a cap (*sine apice*), that is to say, without the cap (*sine birrieto*) which he himself was wont to wear, and hence Apitius stands for Messer Rinaldo degli Orsini" (*ibid.*).

Festinus, finally, is explained by the author of Arguments D as the Roman people, so called for its changeableness and fickleness (*op. cit.*, p. 73), which reason is repeated by Cr. and by C. B., the former adding the saving clause, "or it may be understood as Rumor" (*op. cit.*, p. 266). C. B., lastly, holds out the suggestion that Festinus may be Petrarca himself.

Enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said to prove how far away from the truth the ancient commentators strayed; to prove, also, that (in the words of Petrarca) "the nature of these compositions is such that, unless the author himself provide the key, their meaning cannot, perhaps, be divined. In fact, they are likely to remain quite unintelligible."

2. Francesco Piendibeni da Montepulciano gives Padua as an instance of a city that is even older than Rome and is still hale and hearty (Avena, p. 267).

3. Cod. 33, Plut. 52, Laur. (Avena, p. 208): "We must think of our cities, and castles, and farms, and of all the property which we possess in our own right; and let him (that is, each one) consider how best and legally to aid his infant children, that is, the peoples and all those subject to us, and the farmers who attend upon us, or serve us and obey our orders." The indiscriminate shifting between the singular and the plural is a faithful reproduction of the Renaissance original.

4. Piendibeni (Avena, p. 268): "And by this the author means to show that the Orsini always disregarded the welfare of the state, striving instead for their own private advantage."

5. We are indebted for the suggestion of making this verse (24) an aside to a remark in Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur., (Avena, p. 209): *et ideo, postquam intra se hoc dixerat, ad martium dirigit sermonem*. Compare the rendering of Develay (*Lettres à Rienzi*, II, 113): *Qui l'empêche de l'aimer? De douces paroles coûtent peu*. Compare, also, his translation of the Eclogues, I, 82-83, where the above rendering has been repeated unchanged.

6. Cod. 33, Plut. 52, Laur. (Avena, p. 209): "that is upon the mountain itself [the Campidoglio] with its many palaces constituting a veritable forest [*more silvarum conditis*], and with its towers and very lofty halls."

7. Compare above, n. 1; also, Avena, pp. 211, 269, and note.

8. These represent the barons and the princes "who are the consorts of the cities adjoining and bordering upon Rome, the Colonna, the Orsini, the Conti, the Savelli, and the others who rule all those cities. Hence, when he [i.e., Petrarca] says daughters-in-law, he means the cities betrothed by the ancestors of these very princes" (Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur.; Avena, p. 211).

9. Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur. (Avena, *loc. cit.*) would render: "which sacred feet have touched," meaning those of the ancient Roman heroes.

10. Piendibeni (Avena, p. 269): "This [i.e., the willingness of Martius to stand at the entrance] may be understood to signify that, when the Senate was convened in the home of the Orsini, the Colonna did not go thither; and conversely."

11. Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur. (Avena, p. 212) explains the sheep as *ipsos populares homines qui labore et sudore vivunt*; the bullocks, as *cives bonos romanos*. Piendibeni explains the latter as *potentes et magnates alios* (*op. cit.*, p. 269).

12. Read Gregorovius, VI, 256.

13. The reference is to the Prefect of the city, Giovanni di Vico, who had been tyrant of Roman Tuscany, that is to say, of the Patrimony of St. Peter in Tuscany (cf. Papencordt, pp. 23-24).

This verse is spoken before the arrival of Festinus; it occurs, therefore, in that portion of the eclogue which describes conditions in Rome before the elevation of Cola on May 20. Hence it cannot be argued from this

verse that the eclogue was composed before the news of Vico's submission reached Avignon, that is, before August 21. The date of this eclogue, however, can be inferred from other data. In the last note to *Var.*, XL, we endeavored to prove that said letter was written upon the arrival of a messenger from Rome bringing news of Vico's downfall. The consequent doubts arising in the papal court and the equivocal position in which Petrarca was placed were the causes, we think, of his leaving the troubled waters of Avignon and seeking the quiet haven of the Enclosed Valley. We are of the opinion, therefore, that both *Var.*, XLII, and Eclogue 5 are to be dated only a few days later than *Var.*, XL, that is to say, they are to be dated somewhere between August 22 and 31, 1347.

For the point involved in the word Lydian, see *Var.*, XLII, n. 7. With the statement of Pliny there given compare the similar account given by the author of Cod. 33, Plut. 52 Laur. (*Avena*, p. 212), and the myth reported by Piendibeni (*op. cit.*, p. 269).

14. See letter *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 12. Cod. 33, Plut. 52, Laur. (*Avena*, p. 213): "Recently, however, during the time of these Colonna and Orsini, and because the said Colonna had a part of their possessions across this bridge [i.e., the Ponte Molle], said Orsini destroyed said bridge, *which still remains thus in ruins.*" This codex dates from the end of the fourteenth, or the beginning of the fifteenth century (*Avena*, p. 26). The clew here given by the commentator, if properly traced, would assist in establishing either the date when the Ponte Molle was finally restored, or the date

of the composition of the commentary contained in this codex, or, finally, the identity of the commentator himself. Compare the account given by Piendibeni (*op. cit.*, pp. 269-70).

15. Compare above, n. 13.

16. Piendibeni strangely explains (Avena, p. 271): "of birds: the less important men; of thieves: the powerful and mighty; feet: some were hung by the feet, others by the neck."

17. Would that Petrarca had distinctly stated the identity of these wild animals. The families for which they stand are likely to remain veiled. The Bear represents the Orsini, of course, and all the MSS have so identified it. From Gregorovius we derive the further information that the Bear was to be found only on the coat-of-arms of the Monte Rotondo branch of that powerful family (V, 40, n. 1; cf. Papencordt, p. 21).

The remaining animals have different claimants. The Boar has been variously identified with the Colonna (Piendibeni, Avena, p. 271 and n. 2), the Tebaldi (Cod. N, *ibid.*), and with the Conti of Tusculum (Re, *Vita di Cola di Rienzo*, p. 372). The Serpent has practically one claimant, the Gaetani (Re, *ibid.*), though it has also been identified with the Anibaldi (Cod. V, Avena, *ibid.*). The Lions are almost certainly meant for the Savelli (Greg., V, 643, n. 1; Re, *op. cit.*, p. 372; cf. Piendibeni, in Avena, p. 271). The Eagles seem to represent the Prefect of the city, Giovanni di Vico (Papencordt, p. 23; Piendibeni, *ibid.*), though Re identifies them with another branch of the Conti of

Tusculum (*ibid.*), and Codex M of Piendibeni's Commentary with the Conti of Rome (Avena, p. 271, n. 2).

18. Cod. 33, Plut. 52, Laur. (Avena, p. 215): *adriaticum et oceanum*; Piendibeni (*op. cit.*, p. 271): *Italie et Affrice*; Codex N (*op. cit.*, p. 271, n. 2): *calabrie et lombardie*. Judging from the verses of Petrarca immediately following, it is certain that, without reference to East or West, to North or South, he meant simply that all of the Italian peninsula had been awakened by the reports of Cola's deeds. Those beyond the confines of Italy, "the Moors and the shepherds of Ind," will be aroused if Cola "raise his voice."

19. *Vita*, I, 12, cols. 765, 767: "The fame of so virtuous a man spread throughout the entire world. All Christendom was aroused, as if awakening from sleep. A certain citizen of Bologna, who had been a slave of the Soldan of Babylon, was the first who recovered his freedom. He made his way to Rome as directly as he could. He said that it had been reported to the great Rajah that a man of the people—a man of great justice—had risen to power in the city of Rome. Whereat the Rajah, fearing for himself, answered and said: 'May Mahomet and Saint Elimason help Jerusalem,' that is to say, the country of the Saracens." The credulity of the ancient chronicler, and the unconscious, bitter satire of the anecdote are alike delightful.

20. Compare *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 3.

## CHAPTER VIII

After the first of August events at Rome developed very rapidly. In a letter to the Pope written between August 15 and 31, Cola di Rienzo reported the astonishing details of his coronation on August 15, 1347. Even before receiving this letter, Clement VI, on August 21, 1347, had written to Cardinal Bertrand de Deux, informing him (among other things) of the coronation of the Tribune which was to have taken place on August 15. Such knowledge he could draw from the letter of Cola dated August 5, which he may have received on the very morning of the 21st, and from which, in fact, he quotes. We give the portion of the Pope's letter which is necessary for our understanding (Theiner, II, No. 175, pp. 179-80, beginning with the words *Post hoc autem*):

Afterward, however, and before said letters of ours had reached them, said Bishop and Cola dispatched ambassadors and envoys to us [*sc.*, Messer Giovanni, with letter of August 5], and humbly besought that we should deign to confirm them in the office of Tribune, or at any rate to renew for them the grant of such office. While we deliberated with our brethren [in Consistory?]



as to what was to be done in the matter, we learned from the indirect and the direct reports of many, that said Cola, not content with the title of Rector conferred upon him by us, but still styling himself Tribune, had, together with several of his fellow-citizens, girded himself with the belt of knighthood on the 1st of August just passed. We learned, furthermore, that he had appointed the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (which likewise is just passed but which was then still to come) for receiving the laurel wreath, with which, as he claims [cf. Cola's letter of August 5, in *Epistolario*, p. 43, l. 1], Tribunes were wont to be crowned in ancient times. We learned, also, that he had invited to said coronation the Syndics of all the cities and of all the famous places of Italy; that he had begun to strike a new currency and to make many other innovations. Among other innovations, he is said to have issued various orders to several individuals and to Communes within the territory of the church, and to have imposed upon them unaccustomed burdens of taxation. From these facts it is palpably evident that he is aiming at the occupation and the usurpation of the territory of that same church, to withdraw it from the dominion of said church, and to subject it to the sway of the Romans.

It is likely, we suppose, that these and other innovations instituted in that city have come to thy notice; and unless an opportune remedy be quickly applied, perilous scandals and serious dangers may arise therefrom—as thy discretion can readily understand. Therefore, desiring to obviate such scandals and such

dangers, and hoping that, by the exercise of thy foresight and by the grace of God, a timely and effectual remedy may be employed, we, by this apostolic letter, bid thy discretion that without any delay thou get ready to betake thyself at a moment's notice as far as said city or its neighborhood, provided this can be done without serious prejudice to the conduct of those affairs in the kingdom of Sicily which have already been intrusted to thee. We bid thee to betake thyself thither that thou mayest provide against such innovations and for the safety of the city, in accordance with the power conferred upon thee by thy liege lord; and that thou mayest diligently strive to provide a remedy in due season, for every possible avenue must be closed to the dangers and the evils which can arise.

We shall unhesitatingly dispatch to thee whatever letters will seem to thee necessary for this purpose, whatever letters, indeed, thou thyself wilt ask for and dictate. For it seems to us and to said brethren of ours, that said affairs of the city, on account both of their great difficulty and of the dangers which must be avoided (dangers which threaten a very probable loss unless proper measures for their remedy be taken in advance), absolutely require either thy presence or that of some other of said brethren. If, however, the management of affairs in said kingdom render thy presence indispensable, so much so that thou canst not, perchance, absent thyself thence without serious prejudice thereto, then do not fail to inform us immediately, through our beloved son . . . . the bearer of these presents, both of the impossibility of thy leaving

and of whatever thou judgest that we can advantageously do with reference to these matters in the city.

In order, however, that thou mayest be more fully informed regarding that which has already been done in said matters, we inclose copies of letters which we have recently forwarded to said Bishop, to Cola, and to the Roman people [see the beginning of this quotation], and we furthermore inclose copies of other letters as well. Finally, we have sent a full statement of our knowledge of the above-mentioned matters to our venerable brother Matteo, Bishop of Verona, and we have provided that he be detailed to said city and ultimately to thee.

Given at Avignon, on the 21st of August, and in the 6th year [of our pontificate].

We may safely assume that Cola was no more expeditious in sending to the Pope a report of what had occurred on August 15 than he had been in making a report of what had occurred on August 1 and 2. We saw that on that occasion his letter was dated August 5, representing a delay of three days, even assuming that Messer Giovanni started on his journey the very same day. A similar delay, or even a shorter delay, on the present occasion of the coronation would have afforded ample time to some papal agent, Bishop Raymond let us say, to draw up a scathing arraignment of Cola's sixfold coronation. On August 21, therefore, the Pope was

sufficiently alarmed (as we have just seen) to bid Cardinal Bertrand keep a watchful eye on Rome, and, if possible, to adjourn to that city from his post at the Neapolitan court.

The reports of the deeds of August 15 must have been raining in upon the Pope from all sides during the last days of August. His displeasure against the man who, instead of continuing to crush the barons, was now turning his attention to questions affecting the temporal domain of the papacy in Italy; who, in imitation of the ancient days, extended the rights of Roman citizenship to all Italians; his displeasure against this man, we repeat, must have been mounting higher and higher. Whatever sentiments of mercy and of forbearance he may have nourished must have been quite thoroughly stifled by the ultramontane cardinals by whom he was surrounded. Therefore it is quite possible that by the time the unsuspecting messenger bearing Cola's coronation letter (*Epistolario*, No. XXII) reached the south of France, the Pope and his household had already determined upon an actual break with Rome and upon open opposition to the Tribune. The thorough beating administered to this innocent messenger was the first blow

struck after this decision had been reached, and the turbulent Durance had become a fourteenth-century Rubicon.

Whether the instructions for such beating were issued by the Pope himself, or by one of the cardinals of his household, is a matter which we cannot decide at this distance of time. The only statement that we have is that of Cola himself; and in this connection it must, of course, be taken with all due caution. It occurs in the letter of September 17, written, it will be remembered, to the papal notary, Rinaldo Orsini. We quote (*Epistolario*, No. XXIII, ll. 130-51):

We are not writing to our liege lord the Pope, nor to other cardinals, because we believe that a worthy embassy representing both ourselves and the Roman people will be dispatched to the Curia. Nor do we intend to trouble ourselves about keeping many representatives at the papal court. God and the truth, to whom all hearts lie open, will judge between us and our detractors. We are fully aware, indeed, that, as a reward for our good works, we are assailed in Avignon undeservedly, yea even to the displeasure of God. We are fully aware that we are there charged with the sin of having taken care of our person on the Sabbath, and this, forsooth, by men who regard our works madness, and our life disgraceful. Our hope is in God, from whom we hope for everlasting rewards hereafter.

Yesterday [*sc.*, September 16] I received news that, as our messenger was approaching the Curia with dispatches, and just as he had advanced beyond the Durance, his letters were taken away from him and were rent in pieces; that the wand which he bore was broken over his head; that the letter-case which hung at his side was likewise snatched from him and shattered; and, finally, that he was told that instructions had been issued for a similar reception to each and every one of our couriers. And so he has returned to us empty-handed, and with his head covered with gore. The reverence due to our lord and master the Pope subdues and checks the righteous indignation of my soul, great though it be. Otherwise, in defense of our courier, we should take legal action against the ruler, the governing body, and the people of the city of Avignon.

With a struggle we yield to the reverence due to our lord and master the Pope, hoping that, by an edict of His Holiness, such evils may be corrected, so that they may not recur in the future. However, we reserve for the deliberation of our own parliament the question of taking said legal action.

Given on the Campidoglio, where we live a righteous life under the reign of justice, on the 17th day of the month of September, in the first indiction, and in the first year of the City's freedom.

The news of the beating of Cola's courier was received by Petrarca at the Fountain of the Sorgue during the first week of September.

His indignation and his anger immediately urged him to write to Cola the following letter, the most bitter and the most violent which he had yet penned against Avignon and the enemies of the Romans.

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## TO THE PRINCE OF THE ROMANS

(*App. Litt.*, VIII; *Sine Titulo*, II)

Thine Excellency's courier, who has recently experienced cruel treatment, will bear witness to thee of the kindness and the mercy, aye, of the justice, which thou mayest expect in these quarters. A new species of barbarity, indeed, that a youth, unescorted, unsuspecting, and entirely innocent of all blame, should have been set upon as if an enemy! His ambassador's wand, which they should have respected and feared (if anything be considered sacred in their eyes), and likewise his letter-case, which was filled with most important and grateful dispatches, were both plied about his innocent head until they broke to pieces. The letters themselves were torn and scattered to the winds, although they might have softened hearts of stone. And this is hospitality! this is charity! Thy messenger was seized at the River

Druentia. There he was tortured and scourged, and forbidden an entrance to the city. And now, his features covered with gore, he casts himself at thy feet and delivers his message of threats and blows and lashes.<sup>1</sup> O river, truly art thou named the Durance in the language of the people, for truly dost thou exhibit the hardened insensibility of the inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Some authors, indeed, call thee the Ruentia, naming thee from thy rushing current. Thou art a headlong and destructive stream, but the men dwelling along thy banks are not more gentle than the waters rushing in thy channels. They, too, are ever ready to run with equal fury to the commission of most revolting crimes.

O rivers, thus elated at your shameless deed! O irreverent and impious streams! O Fountain of the Sorgue that dost swallow waters not thine, and surgest so proudly against thy master! O all-corroding Rhone! Is it thus ye welcome the Tiber? Is it thus ye honor your queen, Rome? O Avignon, named (if we are to believe scholars) from thy vineyards which yield most bitter grapes and a vintage of blood, is this thy respect for Rome, thy mistress? Art thou thus mindful of thyself and of her station, of thy slavish condition and of her supreme



authority? Woe unto thee, unhappy city, the day she begins to awaken from her sleep, yea, the day she lifts her head and beholds the injuries and the wounds inflicted upon her as she slumbered.<sup>3</sup> Even now she is roused. Believe me, she sleeps no longer, but is silent, and in her silence ponders upon dreams of the past and resolves what must be done when she arises.

Attend yet awhile, O Avignon, and thou wilt witness mighty deeds performed on earth. Thou wilt marvel at the accomplishment of tasks previously judged impossible. Dost thou not realize who thou art, nor where, nor to whom subordinate? Dost thou not know whence comes the name Provence? What frenzy is this, what madness? Has forgetfulness of past storms crept insensibly upon thee merely because the skies have been fair for a time? Is it thus thou worshipest her who ruled all the provinces? She was but stunned, and thou thoughtest her dead. Thou thoughtest thyself restored to liberty by the death of thy mistress, but esteemed thyself still a slave unless thou shouldst confirm thy liberty by the commission of licentious deeds. Thou didst desire to be of some account in the world;

thou didst desire, at any rate, to give to others this impression. For some time and with due deliberation have we gratified thy wishes.

But it is now time that thou heed our advice and recover thy senses. As thou knowest, the power of many does not lie so much in their own strength as in the weakness of others. Such power, therefore, must needs vanish when the opponent regains his strength. Then only wilt thou, Avignon, know thy proper place, when thou dost realize how powerful Rome still is—Rome, whose envoys thou now tramplest into the dust, supposing that there is none to avenge the wrong. Thou art deceived; thou playest the part of a fool; thou actest like a madman. God in heaven will be the Avenger; and on earth, one of our fellow-beings who truly worships that God whom thou dost not know will likewise avenge the deed. There are forces at play whose power thou canst not even conceive. Ah wretched city! I hope that thou wilt discover them by sad experience, and shortly. The wrongs which thou hast heaped upon us have restored to us our strength. The moment we began to grieve over them, that very moment, by great leaps and bounds, we regained our full health and vigor.<sup>4</sup>

But thou, O remarkable man, take pity upon our condition. Give thy hand to the state which endeavors to rise to its feet, and prove to these men of little faith the power which Rome still possesses.<sup>5</sup> As for the rest of Italy, who can doubt that it can again regain the power it once wielded? To the accomplishment of this end I maintain that there is lacking neither strength, nor resources, nor courage. Harmony alone is lacking. Give me this, and by the words of this very letter do I predict the immediate ruin and destruction of those who deride the name of Italians.<sup>6</sup> And thou, I say, thou whom the fates have appointed the instrument of this great deliverance, persevere as thou hast begun. Fear not; the rays of the sun will dispel the gloomy clouds in thy sky. The meshes spread by these puny foxes cannot resist the lion's paw. Thou hast made a glorious beginning. Advance bravely and consistently unto the very end. Make clear to these men that their pride is far inferior to the lowliness of the poor; that avarice is far meaner than generosity; that intrigue coupled with wisdom is folly; and that their passions are scandalous when weighed in the balance with self-restraint and decorum. Finally, let the disguise of

hypocrisy acknowledge itself of none effect when submitted to the refulgent rays of true virtue.

Come now! no further delay! Crush, trample, grind under foot this frog which, with its ridiculous puffing, counterfeits the ox's massive bulk. I do not speak to urge thee on. Thou requirest not one to incite thee, nor one to check. Thou art thine own spur, thine own curb. I have spoken because I could no longer bear in silence the anguish of my soul. My grief has been rendered more acute by my dwelling upon it, and it has multiplied my laments. Words have given fuel to my indignation, and, in turn, my indignation to my pen. Who, indeed, could behold such spectacles and remain calm? The rights of nations have been outraged in the person of thy envoy; the common bond of humanity has been cut asunder. Oh the wrath that made men unmindful of their honor! Even among the barbarian nations would thy messenger have received kindlier reception than among those whom thou didst consider Romans and to whose good will thou wert entitled.

Let them turn over the pages of history—if, forsooth, they have eyes for aught but riches,

which they regard so longingly. Let them seek and give answer. What barbarian nation has ever violated the sacred rights of ambassadors, except very rarely, and then only for the gravest of reasons? The deceitful and faithless rabble of the Carthaginians did once attempt to maltreat our ambassadors, but their armed hands were checked by the intervention of their magistrates.<sup>7</sup> In the present instance, who, pray, checked the violence of the people? Who suffered punishment for his deed of shame? But perhaps I demand too much. Who, then, raised his voice in censure or in denunciation? How much safer would it have been for thy envoy to travel in the country of the Parthians, where the Roman legions of Crassus were cut off and vanquished! How much more securely would he have gone into Germany, in spite of the slaughtered Teutons and of the triumphant Marius! How much more safely guarded in either case than in coming hither to represent thee, a devout and dutiful son of the Roman church! Surely, neither the insolence of a conqueror, nor the rage of the oppressed, would have presumed so far as has the hatred of thy false friends. With greater ease would thy youthful envoy have scaled the wooded heights

of Pelion and the frozen mountains of Taurus, even in the depth of winter, than he has traversed the valley of Orgon<sup>8</sup> in the autumnal season.<sup>9</sup> With greater freedom would he have swum across the Ganges and the Don than across the Durance.

I have wished to tell thee all this merely to give an outlet to my feelings. As to thyself, O noble man, be not swerved from thy course by these doers of evil, nor by any appearances of false power. To be able to inflict injury upon others is not true greatness, nor is it a sign of power. The smallest and meanest of insects can do as much. True greatness lies in being able to do good; even nobler is the desire to do good. Very wicked men have had it in their power to harm an innocent boy, and to make him this shabby return for the joyful message of which he was the bearer.<sup>10</sup> What greatness is there in this? In truth, what is it but a power whose value must be reckoned at less than zero? If every sin is to be considered of zero value, then the greater the sin the greater must be its negative value. In any case, then, the greatness of sin (if the term greatness may be used in this connection) is always zero. It

is this species of greatness which these honorable men have gained by the exercise of their arts. It is such greatness as a scorpion might have achieved, or a spider!

They have visited their wrath upon one of thy following; but the more significant aspect of this act of cruelty is that they have wished to do thee harm. Nor do I mean thee in thine own person, but as the defender of liberty and of justice. This, and none other, is the cause of their hatred for thee; liberty and justice, indeed, they hate *per se*, knowing full well that such concepts are diametrically opposed to that régime which is their pride. Consider the loftiness of thine own soul, and thou wilt scorn and despise the arrogant and empty goal which they have set before themselves. Violent and severe are the measures which they have adopted; but after all they are matters of small moment. Far greater questions are at stake. These petty outbursts of their wrath will pass away even as other things of this earth, and the avenging of thy envoy is but part of the vengeance which the state will exact. Farewell, and mayest thou bring to completion the work which thou hast begun.

## NOTES

1. We now return once again to the complicated subject of the postal messengers. We have already endeavored to prove: firstly, the identity of the messenger in *Vita* I, 10, with the first messenger sent by Cola to the Pope in the early days of June; and secondly, the identity of the Giovanni of *Var.*, XL, with the messenger of the *Vita* I, 21, and also with the bearer of Cola's letter dated August 5 (see *Var.*, XL, last note).

Our task in the case of this beaten courier is not quite so complex. We identify him with the bearer of Cola's third extant letter to the Pope, No. XXII of the *Epistolario* published by Gabrielli. In this letter, Cola notified his liege lord of his own coronation on August 15, "the fantastic caricature in which ended the imperium of Charles the Great" (Greg., VI, 284). The letter, therefore, must be dated some time after the coronation date, hence, between August 15 and 31. The Pope did not know of the actual accomplishment of this piece of folly when he wrote the letter to Bertrand de Deux (Theiner, II, No. 175, of August 21, 1347. It is this letter which has enabled us to calculate an interval of 16 days as the minimum time required for a courier to travel from Rome to Avignon. Such period of time has afforded a good working hypothesis).

A more accurate analysis of the incident of the beaten messenger reveals some interesting coincidences. The messenger was attacked at the Durance according to Petrarca (Frac., III, p. 532: *Ad Druentiam captus*). But Cola, who had received the verbal report of his messenger on September 16, wrote with greater pre-



cision on the following day to Rinaldo Orsini, stating that the attack had been made beyond the Durance (Gabrielli, *op. cit.*, p. 66, l. 141). We shall further remark that, since the letters which said messenger was bearing were torn to shreds and scattered to the winds, it would seem almost imperative to assume that the Pope received from sources other than the Tribune the information therein contained. Finally, in connection with the same fact, it is interesting to dwell a moment upon the note by Gabrielli (*op. cit.*, p. 60, n. 1), to the effect that in the Codex from which he drew No. XXII of the *Epistolario*, said letter comes to a sudden break, which is clear evidence that the letter did not originally end as it now does. This fact may be pertinent to the question of the messenger's torn letters, or it may not. It has been impossible, however, to resist the temptation to point out these coincidences.

2. Petrarca goes from the classical form of this name, *Druentia*, to the form *Durentia* from which the modern French *Durance* is derived. He furthermore plays upon the word, saying that the name *Durance* fitly expresses the *durities* (hardened insensibility) of the inhabitants. In the beginning of the next paragraph Petrarca continues in the same strain, employing adjectives having the same ring as their nouns: *insurgens Sorga* and *Rhodanus rodens*. The same spirit may have suggested to him a similar play on words in the sentence immediately following, where he refers to the vineyards of Avignon—*O Avinio, cuius vinea*—thus giving a derivation for the name which we have not been able to discover anywhere.

3. Compare the second stanza of the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, given in *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 32.

4. Lest the reader suppose that he has sounded the depths of Petrarca's hatred for Avignon, before the present mild rumblings die away we shall place before him the deep thunder of the letter *Sine Titulo*, VIII (*Opera*, ed. 1581, No. 7, p. 718, *Si quicquid animus meus fert*; cf. Carducci, pp. 148-49).

In reading this letter, we must never lose sight of the fact that Petrarca's reason for his thorough hatred of Avignon was due to its being the home of the papacy. The glory, the power, and the prestige thus acquired by the French city rightfully belonged to Rome. With the Curia situated on the banks of the Tiber, Petrarca felt positive that the many evils distracting and rending Italy, the wars of commune against commune, and the everlasting, widespread contests of Guelphs and Ghibellines would be abated in great degree. In the restoration of the church back to the Rock on which it was founded, Petrarca saw the first steps toward the realization of his most cherished dreams, the creating of a free and united Italy. In a word, Petrarca was the first Italian to stand forth as a patriot along national lines, and to voice the sentiments of Italy for the Italians, and the Italians sufficient unto themselves. To such a man the continuance of the Papal See at Avignon, and the undoubtedly scandalous atmosphere reigning in the papal court and consequently throughout the city, were more than sufficient cause for his prophetic thunderings.

Unfortunately the letter which we shall quote is

among those grouped together as *Sine Titulo*, that is to say, among those letters in which Petrarca suppressed the names of those to whom they were addressed for fear of the possible consequences of the violent language in which they were couched. From internal evidences, however, it is clear that the letter was addressed to a bishop, perhaps to his intimate friend Philippe de Cabassole, Bishop of Cavaillon. Here is the letter:

“If I should wish to commit to writing all that my soul feels on the condition of affairs in this western Babylon, of which I so frequently become a resident either through fate or rather in atonement for my sins, I fear, O reverend Father, lest I should heighten my grief by my laments, or lest, by my inopportune and unavailing complaints, I should interrupt thy most holy cares and most honorable occupations. In fine, rest assured that neither my pen nor even that of Cicero could render the subject justice. Whatsoever thou hast read of the Assyrian Babylon, or of the Egyptian Babylon; whatsoever thou hast read of the four labyrinths, of the threshold of Avernus and of the forests of Tartarus and its lakes of sulphur, is but a mere fable when compared to these infernal regions.

“Here in Avignon there is Nimrod [Pope Clement VI, who was fond of hunting], builder of turrets and at the same time sower of dread; here there is Semiramis [Viscountess Cecilia of Turenne, the mistress of the Pontiff], armed with the quiver; here is Minos, inexorably severe; here is Rhadamanthus; here is Cerberus, the all-devouring; here is Pasiphae, yoked to the Bull; here, in the words of Vergil [*Aeneid* vi. 25-26] is the

Minotaur, of mingled race,  
Memorial of her foul disgrace.

“Here, finally, mayest thou behold whatever chaos,

whatever virulence, whatever horror exists anywhere, or can be conceived.

“O thou who hast ever been happy in thy good qualities, well mayest thou now be happy for thine absence from Avignon. Thinkest thou that this city is as thou once beheldest it? Far different is it, and far unlike it. The Avignon of former days was, to be sure, the worst of cities, and the most abominable of its day. But the Avignon of today, indeed, can no longer be considered a city. It is the home of spooks and of goblins, of ghosts and of specters. In a word, it is now the sink of all iniquities and disgrace; it is now that Hell of the Living sung by the lips of David so long before Avignon was founded and known [Ps. 54:16; A.V. Ps. 55:15].

“Alas! How frequently thy truly fatherly advice recurs to my mind, thy wholesome admonitions, when thou didst say to me as I was making preparations for my departure: ‘Whither goest thou? What art thou doing? What ambition drags thee and makes thee forgetful of thyself? Knowest thou not what thou seekest and what abandonest? Hence do I ask, what is it thou dost set about so keenly? Whither hastenest thou? If I have come to know thee well, I assure thee that thou wilt repent of thy course. Dost thou, who hast so frequently experienced the snares and fetters of the Curia, know not that, when thou hast once been entrapped thereby, thou wilt not be able to release thyself at will?’

“When thou hadst concluded with these and other persuasive arguments, I had no answer to make except that I was returning to well-known afflictions because I was held fast by my love for my friends. Thus did I answer thee, nor did I speak falsely. Up to this day I have not repented of that love, but I am uncertain whether I repent having lost my liberty out of love for my friends. I assure thee that I am grateful for thy

counsels, so ill received then and now approved of at a late hour. Hitherto, my not hearkening to thy words of advice has not been unattended by mortification. But I shall obey thee better hereafter, if ever I escape hence. Of this I do not despair, if Christ stretch forth his hand. To this end do I bend my energies.

“It was a sense of shame, Father, that forbade my writing this to thee sooner; for it is shameful and unbecoming in a man to wish that which he shortly afterward no longer wishes.”

5. *Fam.*, VI, 2 (Frac., I, p. 314): “For who can doubt that Rome will immediately rise to her feet, if she begins to know herself?”

6. All that has already been said regarding Petrarca's intense patriotism applies equally well to this note. The letter which we hereby give (*Sine Titulo*, IX, *Opera*, ed. 1581, p. 719, *Persecutionum duo sunt genera*) constitutes a more philosophical exposition of Petrarca's doctrines regarding a united Italy.

“There are two kinds of oppression; to one we submit willingly, to the other unwillingly. Someone else may, perhaps, discover more categories; and, indeed, there are innumerable oppressions, as any man advanced in years is well aware. All of them, however, reduce themselves to an oppression that is either forcibly inflicted or willingly endured. It is against our will that we endure exile, poverty, theft, disease, imprisonment, slavery, dishonor, chains, torture, the gallows, murder, and death. On the contrary, it is with our full consent that we are weighed down by the yoke of our vices. With our full consent do we submit to the rule of the vilest of men, either through degenerate fear, or disgraceful inactivity, or dishonoring patience, or the hope of vile gain. I have given examples from which thou mayest grasp my meaning

and thou mayest collect others like unto them. The former kind of oppression seems to many to be the more severe; but to me the latter is the more intolerable, for here the situation is open to discussion and the calamity receives no compassion.

“Italy in our days sighs as a slave under the sword of this second species of oppression. Then only will she see the end of her woes when she begins to wish to be united. The conditions, I grant, are hard, but they are by no means unattainable. I have said when she wishes to be united, and by this I mean that she will be united not by the victory of this or of that party, but by the abolition of party lines (*non studiis, sed studiorum termino*), and through an utter disgust for her unmerited slavery.

“Ye gods! We were wont to rule the greatest and the best of the earth; and now, alas how low have we fallen! We are the slaves of the meanest! Hard is the lot, unendurable the change! But, ye barbarian foreigners, ever stupid in the past and now even mad, aye raving mad! Ye scoff at Italy, your queen. Would that all the Italians were of the same mind as I, and that they were possessed of a firmer purpose but of a not lesser love than is mine! Soon indeed would trumpery and nonsense have been banished and serious matters would have been set on foot. May the all-powerful God attend to this, if he doth not yet hate us unto the last man; may fortune attend to it, if there be any fortune and if it have any control of the affairs of men. If, however, thou wishest me to penetrate beneath the surface, and to disclose to thee what I really think, I shall say that they scoff with their lips, but they groan in their hearts; that they display a smiling exterior, but they tremble within. For they know both us and themselves well indeed, pretending scorn in place of their hatred and their fear.

“Whither do my words tend, dost thou ask? I am

writing this, not because it may be to thy advantage to hear it, but because it is to my disadvantage to keep it within me. My burden is a heavy and grievous one, and to no one could I intrust it with greater assurance than to thee. I have written these words in great haste and indignation, an exile from Jerusalem and while dwelling in the midst and on the borders of the rivers of Babylon.”

7. The facts are these (Livy, xxx. 24, 25). Toward the close of the second Punic War, in 203 B.C., a truce was established between the Carthaginians and the Romans under Scipio. During this truce, a fleet of two hundred transports set sail from Sicily under the escort of thirty war galleys, the entire expedition being commanded by Cn. Octavius. The wind remained favorable until the fleet was almost within sight of Africa, when a calm ensued. This was followed by adverse winds which disarranged the order of the fleet and stranded the transports here and there along the African coast in view of Carthage. Great excitement at once prevailed among the Carthaginians, who, arguing that such an opportunity for inflicting loss upon the Romans ought not to be passed by, compelled their authorities to go forth and capture the vessels, notwithstanding the truce that had been agreed to. Thereupon Scipio sent L. Baebius, L. Sergius, and L. Fabius to the faithless city to register his well-founded protests. The rest of the story we shall quote from Petrarca's own epic, the *Africa* (Book VI, vss. 789-94): “The rabble received them with a savage attack, and a black cloud of missiles flew about them. The faithless mob rages. Hands are stretched forth, and had it not

been, perchance, for the respect due to their supreme magistrate, on that day the rights of mankind would have been crushed under foot by fell murder."

8. Orgon is a small town of 1,300 inhabitants (in 1886) in the Department Bouches-du-Rhône. It is situated on the left bank of the Durance, 35 kilometers east-northeast of Arles. It still boasts of a church dating from the fourteenth century, perhaps the very one attended by the men against whom Petrarca here thunders (cf. *Nouveau dict. de géographie universelle*, IV, [1890]). Develay (*Lettres à Rienzi*, II, 18) gives the following anecdote in corroboration of the hereditary grimness of these villagers: "Everyone knows that in 1814 the inhabitants of Orgon hung Napoleon I in effigy. That he might not be hung in reality, the Emperor, who had to pass through this town on his way to Elba, was obliged to disguise himself and to change his route."

9. The expression used by Petrarca—*quam Orgonis planitiem autumnali tempore* (Frac., III, p. 535)—excludes any possibility of dating the incident of the beaten courier in the month of August. We do not think that August could by any stretch of the imagination be called an autumn or fall month. The messenger must have been attacked on September 1, at the very earliest. For, allowing a delay of a few days on the part of Cola in sending off his letter No. XXII, the messenger would have left Rome on August 17, and would have arrived at the Durance in about 15 days, hence on September 1. The news of the attack on him must have reached Avignon by September 2; and



Petrarca (who was at Vauclose) perhaps did not hear of it until September 3. The chronological facts set forth above in n. 1, the present calculation, and the *autumnali tempore* of Petrarca, therefore, alike concur in dating this letter, *Sine Titulo*, II, in the first week of September, 1347.

That it is likely that the messenger was beaten on September 1 is borne out also by the following calculation. We may assume with safety that the courier's return trip to Rome was made as rapidly as he had traveled in the opposite direction. We have fixed upon September 1 as the day of the attack upon him. Adding to this date 15 days for the return, we have the messenger back in Rome on September 16, a date which is corroborated by the "yesterday" of Cola's letter No. XXIII, which is dated September 17 (see above, in the introductory pages to chap. viii).

10. It is doubtful whether Petrarca really knew the contents of the torn letter, No. XXII of the *Epistolario*. His confidence in Cola was still sublime, and in the light of this confidence he could very well feel positive that any message from Rome was a message of joy. He may, of course, have received a letter direct from Cola, or from some other friend, apprising him of the coronation on August 15. He may have heard of it even from Avignon. One thing is certain: this letter, *Sine Titulo*, II, the first one to be written after the unpleasant episode at the Durance, is likewise the first one in which Petrarca addresses Cola as Prince of the Romans. To Petrarca the coronation most assuredly represented a divinely appointed consummation of his

cherished dream. In Cola's elevation from Tribune to Prince of the Romans he fancied he could discern the final adjustment of the question of the Holy Roman Empire. In his fancy he was certain that he could now discern above the horizon the star of a United Italy, under the benevolent guidance of a man of the Italians, elected by Italians and toiling for the Italians.

## CHAPTER IX

After giving vent to his enraged feelings in the preceding letter, Petrarca returned to enjoy the undisturbed peace of Vauclose. This quiet retreat, however, was all too near Avignon. He was bound to receive news of what was going on in the papal city; and among the various unpleasant reports which shortly reached him, there was one which told of a gathering of certain prominent men, who calmly debated the question, "Whether or not it would make for the happiness of the world at large that the city of Rome and Italy should be united and should enjoy peace and harmony." The mere propounding of such a topic Petrarca judged childish and absurd; and naturally he could not rest easily until he had unburdened his soul by communicating with Cola.

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### TO THE PRINCE OF THE ROMANS

(*App. Litt.*, IV; *Sine Titulo*, III)

Light is the cause which now dampens my spirits; but it must out, for if neglected it is sure to destroy my physical well-being. It has

stirred up within me greater choler and ire than one would think possible. Though trifling in its nature, it has engendered boundless disgust; for it emits the stench of a secret, deep, and inveterate hatred. Thus it seemed to me, and thus, I am sure, will it seem to thee. I trust that the incident will become known far and wide, and that it will sow in the heart of every Roman and of every Italian the seeds of a righteous indignation. I trust that the news will shake off the heavy torpor, and will kindle once again the fire of that noble genius and pristine vigor to which formerly, through choice or necessity, the nations of the globe rendered obedience. But now, oh shame! the lowest of men scoff at the Romans! The general knowledge of what has occurred will, I hope, accrue greatly to the advantage of the state. A small spark can kindle an immense fire, and a single word has marked the inception of many great movements.

But now as to the facts themselves, whose significance will be measured not so much by what I say as by the displeasure of the reader. Recently there were gathered together certain men who pass as wise in their own estimation, but are not quite so in that of others. A doubt

prevailed in their minds, which after some time shaped itself into the following inquiry: "Whether or not it would make for the happiness of the world at large that the city of Rome and Italy should be united and should enjoy peace and harmony." The mere propounding of such a self-evident fact was sufficiently childish and absurd. And yet one might have excused the disputants on the plea that the question offered them an opportunity for displaying their skill as logicians and their powers of debate. After countless arguments had been exchanged, however, he who was considered the sagest among them, closed the discussion with this venomous statement: "That such a consummation would be by no means advantageous!" And this decision, forsooth, was received with great applause and with general approbation.<sup>2</sup>

The next time thou addressest the Roman people, O ruler, I beg of thee (who art endowed with such wonderful eloquence) to acquaint them with this occurrence, and to do so in my very words. Let them know what opinions these high and mighty nobles entertain concerning our safety. Such sentiments can do us no harm, of course; nevertheless their inflated

talkativeness betrays their innermost feelings. That fate which they wish for us, they long for so ardently that they cannot repress themselves. In their shameful blindness and poverty of intellect, they greedily throw their hostile vows and prayers into the form of scholarly disquisitions. But they will perish in their error. We are in the hands of God, and shall endure, not the fate which they desire for us, but that which God himself has ordained.

I was not present at this delirious session. I should, perchance, have saddened the joy of some of those gentlemen, for it would have been neither honorable nor possible for me to keep my peace in the midst of such irreverent prating. As soon as the news reached me, however, I waxed wroth with indignation. With what little authority I possess, I rendered the opposite decision to my friends, as I now do to thee, the defender of our liberty. I beg of thee before all others, O ruler, in the name of all the angelic hosts do I humbly beseech thee, and the Roman people, and all Italy, that ye confirm by deeds that which I have simply asserted. Mayest thou live long and prosperously, and mayest thou govern with success that Republic whose freedom thou hast so bravely restored.

## NOTES

1. Exactly three years later, this incident was referred to by Cola di Rienzo himself. It was during the summer of 1350, when, after having lived in disguise on Monte Maiella for many months, he had betaken himself to Prague, the capital city of the Bohemian emperor-king Charles IV. That month of August proved to be a very busy one for Cola. His letters, very lengthy and detailed, follow one another in rapid succession. The series begins with a long biographical letter addressed to the Emperor; the next letter (likewise to the Emperor) answers the objections raised by the King, and explains prophecies that call upon the King to be the savior of Italy. Then follow two letters to Johann von Neumark, Chancellor of the Empire; and, finally, the letter from which we shall quote.

It is addressed to Arnest von Parbubitz, Archbishop of Prague (*Epistolario*, No. XXXV, pp. 144-79). It is dated Prague, August, 1350; and Papencordt, relying upon an inferior manuscript, gives August 15, 1350 (*Epistolario*, p. 144, n. 2; Papencordt, Document on p. xlii). In the course of a lengthy account of his tribunate, Cola defends his actions and position as against those of the church. We cite this passage in its entirety (*Epistolario*, No. XXXV, ll. 254-302):

“Therefore, keeping the Crucifix of Charity before your eyes, which of the following two will your paternity consider the defender of the Church: him who, when the sheep are abandoned, yea afflicted, admits and fosters the wolves; or him who leads back and gathers

together into one fold the sheep scattered because of discord, and who, in defense of those same sheep, gladly exposes himself to the wolves and to death? Who will be the real schismatic: he who plants the seeds of disunion in the church of God, or he who removes them?

“Did I not, with God’s help, overthrow the errors of sinners? In spite of the rivalry among the Romans, whose deadly partisanship was found to have spread to the considerable number of eighteen hundred men, did I not cause them to cease their bloodshed, and to lay aside all thoughts of offenses and wrongs among them? Did I not, contrary to the expectation of mankind, lead them to a sincere peace? Did I not restore true peace among all the hostile cities? Did I not decree that all those citizens, who were living in exile from their native cities on account of party strife, should be led back together with their poor wives and children? Had I not begun to stamp out completely the disuniting names of Ghibelline and Guelph parties, in whose defense countless thousands of souls and bodies perished under the very eyes of their shepherds? Had I not begun to bring this to pass by welding the city of Rome and the whole of Italy into a single, harmonious, peaceful, holy, and indissoluble union? by collecting and consigning to the different cities the consecrated standards and banners? and, in token of our holy alliance and perfect union, by bestowing with due solemnity upon the ambassadors of all the Italian cities gold rings that had been consecrated on the day of the Assumption of our Most Blessed Lady?

“This union, like all other matters, was accomplished in the presence and with the approval of him who was then the vicar of the Pope. And yet our lord the Supreme Pontiff, owing to the insinuations of wicked men and to his own lack of charity, regarded this union with such great suspicion that the following



theme was discussed in the Consistory itself, 'Whether the Union of Rome and of Italy were advantageous to the Roman Church'! Hearken, O Father, to the theme of the separatists, yea of Satan himself, and a theme loathsome both to God and to angels. They brought into question, forsooth, whether the cutting-off of sinners and the creation of a union were of advantage to the believers in Christ, and whether the soundness of the flock were of benefit to the shepherd!

"Of a surety, so long as that union flourished, tyrants trembled, and the peoples, like unto lambs, gambled in the pasture-lands. Safety and peace reigned supreme in every direction. The moment that that union was dissolved because of my absence, all things fell again beneath the foot of the tyrant. Everywhere wars, attacks, invasions. With the destruction of souls and the butchering of bodies, disunion again raised its head. But in the Consistory there was no debating now on the question whether or not the renewal of such scandalous deeds brought detriment to the Roman church.

"Indeed, it appears to them that the church, that is to say that the wealth of the cardinals, is increased by the dissensions of cities. In truth, the cardinals consider their Consistory and the entire church as one and the same thing. For, if the cities be divided by discord and by wars, each visits the Supreme Pontiff and the cardinals with gold in its hands, whereby to curry favor. If on the contrary, the cities repose peaceful and united, there is no necessity of their paying visits of this kind. Hence let there be discord everywhere, that the shepherds of the church may receive visitations. Let disease come, that convenient recourse may be had to the healer—and would that it were to a healer and not to a leech! Let the wolves be called, that the sheep may have their necessary shepherd, and that they may fear him the more. Ah

charity, rejected, condemned, slain, aye and buried too! Arise for a moment, for our one Lord hath arisen, who was condemned and buried together with thee!"

Petrarca comments on the theme which was thus debated in the Consistory that "The mere propounding of such a self-evident fact was sufficiently childish and absurd." And Gregorovius muses (VI, 271, n. 1): "What would he say, did he know that even now [in 1866] the subject is discussed throughout the whole world?" But later on in the same volume (p. 293, n. 1), the historian of mediaeval Rome adds: "This [i.e., Cola's welding of a United Italy; *v.s.*] sounds quite modern, nevertheless they are Cola's words. . . . This is the cry 'Italia una!' which was raised by Cola for the first time. It re-echoed for centuries, until in our own days it filled Italy with feverish enthusiasm, and in 1870 Cola's inspired dream became a reality."

We may add that the Third Italy has answered once and for all the doubts of the French Pope and of the French cardinals in Consistory assembled. And, to bring the remarks of Gregorovius up to date, we shall conclude by saying that in this year—the nineteen hundred and eleventh of our Lord, and the two thousand six hundred and sixty-fourth of the City—the Italian nation is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of that single, harmonious, peaceful, holy, and indissoluble Union conceived both by Cola di Rienzo and by Petrarca.

## CHAPTER X

Events at Rome moved rapidly after Cola's coronation. The struggle against the barons (the Gaetani in particular) continued as bitterly as before. At last Cola, in a desperate attempt to stamp out all opposition, invited the barons to a sumptuous banquet on the Campidoglio, at the end of which he treacherously imprisoned them (September 14). On the following day, however, Cola, preaching on the text "Forgive us our trespasses," pardoned them all, invested them with high offices, and, two days later, received communion with them at the Church of S. Maria in Aracoeli. On the very same day (September 17), Cola wrote to the papal notary Rinaldo Orsini, giving him a full account of these occurrences, as well as defending himself against the charges of having taken the Bath of Knighthood in the basin consecrated by Constantine's conversion; of having helped to desecrate the marble pontifical table in the course of the banquet at the Lateran (August 1); and, finally, of having acted in a generally childlike manner (*Epistolario*, No. XXIII).

The actions of Cola were, we grant, open to

criticism. The difficulties with which he was beset made him every day more and more inconsistent and capricious. When he realized that he could not overcome each and every obstacle that presented itself with the same ease as in the early days of his power, he became increasingly irritable. In the months from May to September the close, compact body of the barons had had ample time to form a well-organized opposition to the Tribune; and the same flight of time had made serious inroads into the number of the Tribune's loyal friends. But what effect did Cola's actions have upon his optimistic champion at Vacluse?

We shall see in the course of this volume that Petrarca considered Cola's liberation of the barons a most serious error. Examples of wholesale murderers—such as Ezzelino da Romano—were not lacking; and had Cola been endowed with the qualities of a real tyrant, he would have committed the deed which everyone (in accordance with the standards of that age) expected him to commit under the circumstances. But by September 11 Petrarca had not yet heard of these matters. There were other causes to disturb his delicately strung nature. It will be remembered that the affairs

of Queen Giovanna's kingdom of Naples were in anything but a reassuring condition (see above, letter *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 14). Rumors of the threatened invasion of Italy by Louis I the Great, king of Hungary, began to spread far and wide. Petrarca recognized in this calamity an atoning for the assassination of King Andrew of Naples. Still, he could not calmly behold the punishing of an innocent population, and the treading of barbaric hosts upon the sacred Italic soil. In a letter addressed to Marco Barbato, whose native city of Solmona was in the war-distracted region, Petrarca affirms his sense of security for the rest of Italy. He says (*Frac.*, I, p. 355, l. 1):

But far be it from me to entertain fears for Italy. Her enemies, rather, will have cause to fear, provided the tribunician power recently restored to the City continue in a vigorous and flourishing condition, and provided Rome, our fountain-head, become not ill and sicken. Another portion of Italy, however, makes me uneasy—that which once was called Magna Graecia, including the modern Abruzzi, Calabria, Puglia, the Terra di Lavoro, Capua once so powerful, and Parthenope, the present queen of cities.

Petrarca's thoughts of the army from the North sweeping down like a sullen cloud into the smiling skies of Italy, and particularly upon

Solmona, cause a natural transition to an expression of anxiety for Barbato's personal safety (Frac., I, pp. 356 to end):

I am racked by my great fears for thee; but, as far as I am aware, I am helpless either to advise or to assist. Still, since some men can now and then accomplish more than they hope to accomplish, exercise thy rights of a friend if thou canst see any way in which I may be of service to thee. I confess that I have no slight influence with the Tribune, a man of lowly origin but of high mind and purpose; and likewise have I influence with the Roman people. But it is due to no merits of mine. God has compensated the hatred of the wicked for me with the love of the good, not because I have injured the former or have benefited the latter, or because I have ceased to err and am now an upright man, but simply because it has ever been my disposition to hate the wicked and to love the good. I have frequently desired to flee from the horde of the former to the handful of the latter, if the opportunity had only presented itself; and I still so desire, if the opportunity now present itself. If at the present crisis, therefore, my intervention with the above-mentioned Tribune and people can profit thee, behold! both my mind and my pen are at thy service.

In addition, I possess a home in Italy, in a region far distant [from the kingdom of Naples] and safe against the present disturbances [*sc.*, his home at Parma]. It is a small home, to be sure, but no home is too small for two beings with but a single heart. It is not inhabited

by pernicious wealth, nor by poverty, nor by greed, but indeed by countless books. This home is now waiting for us: for me, who am about to return from the West, and whom she complains of for my absence of two years; for thee, who art to come from the East, if the fates so compel thee, or if thy pleasure so will. I have nothing to offer thee but this. Thou knowest where the home to which I invite thee is situated—in a healthful spot, free from terrors, full of joys, and suitable to quiet study. May God bring to a happy issue whatever thou decidest upon. I trust that in the meantime I may have been entertaining false fears, and that absence, according to its wont, has increased the terrors of the lover. Indeed, my soul will not be at peace until I see thee, or until I receive news by letter that thou hast survived the tempest safe and sound. Farewell.

This letter must have reached Barbato in the early days of October—if it reached him at all, owing to the unsettled condition of the country. Solmona, in fact, was captured by the Hungarian soldiers on October 20. Said letter, however, is important for our purpose, in that it contains the first hint of Petrarca's leaving France—and the reason given is merely that of a desire to revisit his beloved Italy after an absence of two years. What Petrarca did, or thought, during the weeks that followed September 11 it is impossible to know. There is a

dearth of material for this interesting period. It is quite certain, however, that the contents of Cola's letter of October 11 must have become known to him by the beginning of November. An examination of this letter reveals some facts that will aid us in reconstructing their effect upon Petrarca's feelings.

The letter in question is addressed to Clement VI (*Epistolario*, No. XXV, October 11, 1347). It begins with remonstrances on the part of Cola because the Pope had instituted proceedings against him. Cola presents a defense based upon three chief arguments: the first, that the Pope should not rashly give heed to mere slanderous rumors that had been spread concerning him; the second, that all his deeds had been performed in behalf of the Roman people. The third part of his defense we shall cite in full (*op. cit.*, p. 73, ll. 53-60):

Thirdly: seeing that I consider whatever is pleasing and agreeable to your Holiness as sacred and just, whenever it please your Holiness that I be removed from said office, I am prepared to surrender my power, being resolved never to act contrary to your wishes. And to accomplish this end, it is not necessary to belabor the Curia and to make the whole world resound with the thunder of your accusations. Indeed, the least of your couriers would have sufficed, and will still



suffice, whenever it so please you. For God is greater than man, and you are greater than the kings and the princes of earth.

We can imagine the amazement of Petrarca on becoming acquainted with this. He may well have considered it in the nature of a rapprochement with the Curia. This calm surrender of Cola's power which it had cost so much toil to establish, and from which Petrarca had hoped the pacification and the regeneration of Italy, must have disturbed him in no slight degree. He must have begun to lose his confidence in Cola, and to see the not-distant melting away of his fairy castles. But there was still worse in that evil letter.

Cola informs the Pope that he had received an embassy from the king of Hungary, who made three requests: the first, that the murderers of his brother King Andrew be visited with due punishment; the second, that Cola and the Roman people should ally themselves with the Hungarians; the third, that Cola permit the Hungarian king and his army to enter the city of Rome (*op. cit.*, p. 76). Cola furthermore informs the Pope categorically of his answers to these requests: that justice would surely never be denied to anyone seeking

it; that he did not refuse the king's friendship, but that he neither wished, nor could, enter upon an alliance without the Pope's knowledge and consent thereto, and without consulting other friendly princes and states, to whom (he adds) he had sent a special embassy (*op. cit.*, p. 77).

Such news undoubtedly caused Petrarca greater uneasiness than the earlier portion of the letter. For here we have Cola treating with the foreigner. We have him threatening to harbor the barbaric hosts within the City of Petrarca's dreams. Indeed, Cola adds to his answers the statement that the hostile attitude of the Pope's Rectors in Campania and in the Patrimony will very likely force him into an alliance with the king, though such action would be quite contrary to his own wishes. Here was the repetition of the error of centuries: the everlasting summoning of the outsider to decide petty, internal dissensions. Here were new wounds about to be inflicted upon the beautiful form of Italy; new incursions; new appeals to the swords of the stranger; renewed drenching of Italic soil with the blood of the barbarian; the desecration of the nest wherein Petrarca had been born, of the pious and benign mother that held the graves of his parents.

By the beginning of November, therefore, Petrarca had fully decided upon going to Italy. Cola's wavering and the possible establishment of the supremacy of the foreigner throughout Italy, made it imperative for him to join Cola, in order that he might advise the Tribune, or prince of the Romans; that he might perform his duty as a Roman citizen and thus aid to steady the tempest-tossed bark.

This was undoubtedly the chief motive of Petrarca's departure. But of course there were many minor incentives. In his letter to Barbato, Petrarca, as we have seen, invites his friend to go and live with him at his small home at Parma. The choice of this abode was not as haphazard a one as the reader may be inclined to suppose. The deciding factors in this choice were two: the fact that he wished to enter upon the actual possession of the canonry at Parma bestowed upon him in the October of the preceding year; and the fact that he had received a hearty invitation from Azzo da Correggio, Lord of Parma, to become a resident and an adornment of this court. Petrarca has left to us a description of his leave-taking from Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (Eclogue 8). In answer to the cardinal's surprise that he should leave just

at this juncture, after so many years<sup>̄</sup> passed in intimate friendship, Petrarca answers that hitherto he had been held captive by pernicious habit, by his love for the cardinal himself (which, he declares, will never abate), and by the presence of a charming and enticing maiden (see *Avena*, *Eclogue* 8, vss. 73-75). But wandering one day among the hills, he chanced to meet a shepherd named Gillias (*Azzo da Correggio*, cf. *op. cit.*, vs. 50), who led him to the topmost ridge of the mountain, and pointed out to him the smiling plains of Italy on the other side. But it is best to hear what followed in Petrarca's own words (*op. cit.*, vss. 52-60):

I step forward, and I behold new valleys and fertile fields stretching far and wide; but, frequently turning my eyes back to my wonted fields, the lands on this side of the mountain begin to seem despicable to me, the Western sky misty and stormy, and the stars themselves melancholy. At once I recognize the strong love of country calling aloud within me. On the farther side of the mountain the violets, moistened with dew, are of a paler tint of yellow; the roses emit a sweeter scent from the thickets, and grow to a deeper red; there, a more limpid stream—the stream of my fathers—flows through the meadows; and the crops of Ausonia have for me now a sweeter taste.

The causes of Petrarca's leaving France, therefore, may here be summarized: the first and foremost, his desire to be with, or near, Cola in case of emergency; the second, his desire to accede to the invitation of Azzo da Correggio, who had become more and more insistent (cf. Eclogue 8, vss. 106-7); and the third, his love for his native country, which, after all, is the feeling predominantly pervading all other motives.

As is usual when one leaves for foreign parts, Petrarca's friends began to importune him with the executing of commissions. A letter to Giovanni, bishop of the Tricastrine diocese (cf. Mehus, p. ccxvi) and librarian of the Avignon Library under Clement VI, gives us a clear picture of the still friendly relations existing between Petrarca and the authorities of the church. The letter (*Fam.*, VII, 4, *Frac.*, I, pp. 366-67) bears no date, but is clearly of this period, as is proved by the opening sentence.

I have forgotten neither thy request nor my promise, and I am about to return to Italy—or, perhaps, I had better say into Italy, if I do not wish to become involved in a grammatical discussion such as Atticus carried on in his correspondence with Cicero. I well remember, I assure thee, what thou hast so often asked of me in

regard to collecting the various works of that same Cicero, arranging them in their proper order, and annotating them with my illuminating remarks, as thou art wont to say. The Roman Pontiff, aware of thy great love for books, has generously intrusted to thee an office worthy of thy talents—the care of his library, thus following the example set of yore by our emperors. For it is common knowledge that Julius Caesar gave a similar appointment to Marcus Varro, and Augustus Caesar to Pompeius Macer, and the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philadelphus, to Demetrius Phalereus. I well remember, I repeat, how thou, to make thy entreaty more than ever irresistible, didst maneuver in such wise that the Pope very discreetly made known to me, on my leave-taking, his similar wishes in the matter. What was I to do? Though the poet be unknown, familiar are these words of his: “The requests of princes are as the scowling face of a commander; and those in power beseech as if with drawn sword.” And so I shall obey, if I can. For it is necessary that I should; and then, too, I delight to think that I can give thee pleasure. Moreover, to spurn thy entreaties would be unfeeling in me; whereas to disobey his commands would be sacrilegious.

The success of my undertaking, however, hinges on this point, in how far fortune will smile upon me in discovering those carefully emended manuscripts which both of you are so eager to acquire. Thou art well acquainted with the crime of our age. Thou knowest, therefore, how great is the scarcity of such manuscripts, but with what care and toil, on the con-

trary, dangerous and destructive wealth is amassed, even though it avails not and though it already abounds. Whatever power and energy I may possess I shall exert tirelessly, and moreover I shall employ the greatest care. And that thou mayest not accuse me of having delayed, know that I have lingered in my retreat at the Fountain of the Sorgue awaiting the more temperate days of autumn, in order to regain the health which my illness has impaired. I have hesitated to submit my still weak health to the ordeal of a long journey. Now that, with the help of God, my strength has returned and the excessive heat has come to an end, I shall take the road. Would that thou couldst experience, in the meanwhile, the pleasure with which I roam alone and free from care through the hills and groves; how freely I breathe in the midst of springs and of rivulets, in the company of my books and of the thoughts of the greatest men; and how, endeavoring to forget the past, and to ignore the present, even as the apostle I direct my mind to that life which still awaits me. Farewell.

Several facts result from this letter. The most important (as we have already pointed out) is the friendship with which Petrarca was still regarded at the papal court, notwithstanding his clearly reiterated sympathy with the Tribune. We do not hesitate to attribute this friendship to his pre-eminent position in the world of letters. Unfortunately, Petrarca's

ideas in political matters were regarded as the wild, impractical dreams of a poet and scholar. They were good-naturedly tolerated whether at papal Avignon or at imperial Prague. For the same reason, his fiery outbursts at political conditions did not weaken his prestige as a scholar, nor lessen the desires of potentates to attract him to their courts and to employ him on various missions of diplomacy. Consequently, when Petrarca had made known his resolution to depart for Italy, he felt in duty bound to take formal leave of the Pope. This visit we would date in the first few days of November. From the letter just cited it is furthermore clear that the librarian Giovanni had already requested Petrarca to do him the favor mentioned, and had enlisted also the specific assistance of Clement VI. After this visit, it would seem that Petrarca returned to Vaucuse to make the final preparations for his journey. But he was obliged to postpone his departure because of ill health. Supposing, therefore, that the librarian must have been impatient to hear of his actual departure, Petrarca wrote to him the above letter of explanation.

We here assume that the librarian forthwith



informed the Pope of the fact that Petrarca had not yet left Vacluse. On his visit of leave-taking, and in answer to some questioning as to his plans in Italy, Petrarca may very well have communicated to the Pope that he intended, after arriving at Parma, to visit his ten-year-old son Giovanni, whom he had left at Verona in 1345, under the tuition and the care of the grammarian Rinaldo da Villafranca. Remembering this, and taking advantage of the week's delay on the part of Petrarca, Clement VI decided to enlist the services of the poet in the capacity of ambassador, and furnished him with the following letter to the ruler of Verona (see Cipolla, *Giornale storico*, XLVII, 256-57):

To our beloved Mastino della Scala, faithful and devoted son of the Church of Rome.

We render to thy nobility due thanks for those acts which thou hast performed in the service and to the advantage of our very dear son in Christ, the illustrious Charles, king of the Romans. The affairs of said king are particularly close to our heart, and the Bavarian—that inveterate enemy of the evil days gone by—has now been removed from our midst. Since, therefore, we can now hope that, with the aid of God, the affairs of said king may be rendered fortunate and prosperous, we earnestly beg thy nobility to be sure to continue industriously, loyally, and zealously that which thou

hast so worthily begun in behalf of the respect due to thyself, of the reverence due to the apostolic see, and of the maintenance of thine own power.

Indeed, thou must have heard that our very beloved son in Christ, the illustrious Louis, king of Hungary, desires to invade the kingdom of Sicily. So rumor has it. Since, however, said kingdom is within the jurisdiction and the possessions of the Church of Rome; and since any hardships inflicted upon it would, not without reason, be a source of disturbance to us also, we add to our former prayers the further request that thou mayest manage to put obstacles in the way of all who are advancing to the invasion and occupation of said kingdom; and, also, that thou mayest not grant to those thus inclined permission to cross through that territory which is under thy control. With reference to these matters, kindly give credence to, and put into grateful and pleasing execution, that which our beloved son Maestro Francesco Petrarca, Florentine clergyman, will communicate to thee in our behalf.

Given at Avignon, on the 13th of November, and in the sixth year [of our pontificate].

This letter, therefore, is practically Petrarca's ambassadorial portfolio to the court of the Scaligers. It recommended him, so to speak, as *persona grata* to Mastino della Scala, who enjoyed also the title of Papal Vicar. The letter, furthermore, is clear evidence of the opposition to the Hungarian invasion that was

being organized by the Pope, and, incidentally, of the answer which Clement VI would have given to the ambassadors of the king of Hungary had they gone to Avignon instead of Rome. In his opposition to the efforts of King Louis, the Pope was certain of enlisting all Petrarca's eloquence; and the mission thus intrusted to the poet may have been a shrewd move on the part of the Avignonese diplomacy to detach Petrarca from the cause of Cola. At the same time the Pope sent an envoy to many cities of northern Italy, but his efforts were in vain. Petrarca's mission, too, was doomed to failure; for on December 5, the gates of Verona were thrown open to welcome the invading king.

On November 20, precisely one week after the date of the papal letter, Petrarca finally started for Italy—the fifth return to the land of his birth. On that very same day, Cola was breaking the backbone of the barons' opposition, and was decimating the family of the Colonna outside the Porta S. Lorenzo. Petrarca's departure was inevitably attended with sad regrets. To be sure, he was leaving Avignon which he so thoroughly detested, but he was leaving also his beloved Vauclose. And then, in spite of all Petrarca's thundering, the

western Babylon must have contained within its ramparts the ten righteous men necessary to ward off the fires of heaven. In this number of the elect Petrarca surely placed Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, whom he never saw again; and his dear friend Ludwig von Kempen (Socrates), who was born in the cold North, but whom he always liked to think of as an Italian; and his equally beloved friend Lello di Pietro dei Stefaneschi (Laelius), to whom he addressed such numerous letters.

In fact, Petrarca received a farewell letter from Laelius on November 19—the eve of his departure. On November 22, he halted his journey long enough to write *Fam.*, VII, 5, in answer to it. He begins the letter by telling Laelius that he has already spent three sleepless nights, apparently caused by the contents of Laelius' letter. He then assures Laelius that he will do what is asked of him, and at as early a date as possible. After adding that he will finish for Laelius the composition of certain verses already begun, he concludes with the following sad remarks (*Frac.*, I, pp. 368–69):

I have received the letter of the Tribune, of which thou hast inclosed a copy. I have read it, and I have remained aghast. I know not what to answer thee. I

clearly perceive the ruin of my country; whithersoever I turn, I discover causes and fuel for grief. For when Rome is thus mangled and mutilated, what will be the condition of Italy? And when Italy has been disfigured, what will be my future life? In this public and private calamity, some will contribute their wealth, others their bodily strength, others their political power, and still others words of advice. As for me, I do not see what else I can offer but tears.

Written on the road, on the 22d of November.

What was the dreadful letter of Cola, a copy of which Laelius inclosed? What distressing news did it contain? We cannot answer these questions with certainty. The news may have told of Cola's attack on the Orsini intrenched at Marino; or of the drowning of two hounds by Cola which the Tribune had previously, and in mockery, baptized as Rinaldo and Giordano Orsini; or of the puerile visit of Cola to Cardinal Bertrand de Deux. But surely, stronger reasons were Cola's open alliance with King Louis of Hungary, and the contribution by the latter of 300 horsemen for the war against the barons; the similar alliance with the Prefect Giovanni di Vico, the cruel Lydian guest of Petrarca's eclogue; and a repetition of the treacherous imprisonment of such nobles as were still within his reach. Enough has been given to make it

perfectly clear that adverse circumstances had turned Cola into a haughty and arrogant ruler; that he was now surrounded by men of inferior character. In a word, that he was slowly but surely unfolding into a full-fledged tyrant.

This was an all-sufficient cause for Petrarca's tears; and those who accuse him of unmanliness, of lack of courage and determination, of being found wanting even in words of advice in the hour of extreme necessity, such critics, we say, forget that Petrarca could have nothing new to say; that for six months he had done nothing but advise and exhort; that he had defended Cola at every turn and had preached the gospel of Italian liberty as far as the power of his pen permitted. They forget, in short, that these tears were absolutely normal and human. Behold yet another tyrant added to the endless list over whom Italy already wept, and against whom Petrarca was always inveighing. Behold new wounds, sorrows, woes. His idol was shattered. Instead of a united Italy under the paternal guidance of a native Italian; instead of a peaceful Italy constructed on national lines, he beheld an addition to the hosts and the legions of petty rulers and princes. It was enough to have made the angels weep!

Bitter indeed were the thoughts that accompanied him on the remainder of his journey. The skies of Italy must have smiled not for him thus weighed down with oppressive forebodings. He reached Genoa on November 25 (Frac., 1, p. 175; but cf. 2, 197). During four continuous days he lay wrapped up in gloom, receiving new letters from his friends. Then, as a drowning man clutching at the last straw, he began to hope against hope. He began to convince himself that the letter which he had received must have been dictated by envy and jealousy, and therefore he came to the cheering conclusion that the unwelcome news was not, could not be true. In the moments of relief thus engendered, and before the clouds of despondency again closed in about him, Petrarca penned the following letter of mingled exhortation and rebuke, to the man whom he once again addressed as Tribune of the Roman people (*Fam.*, VII, 7, Genoa, November 29, 1347).

TO COLA DI RIENZO, TRIBUNE OF THE  
ROMAN PEOPLE*(Fam., VII, 7)*

Thine actions have been such that in these past months I have oft repeated, and with great delight, the words which Cicero puts in the mouth of Africanus:<sup>1</sup> "What is this soft, sweet music that fills my ears?" What could I have said that would more fitly have answered to the splendor of thy name, or to the joyful tidings which poured in upon us thick and fast? The lengthy letter of exhortation which I wrote to thee, replete with encouragement and praises, clearly indicates how fondly I repeated those words. I pray thee, however, not to oblige me to change the refrain, and to ask: "What is this loud and deafening crash that wounds my ears?"

Beware, I beseech thee: let not thine own deeds dishonor thy fair name. No man except thee thyself can dislodge the corner-stone which thou hast laid. Thou alone canst overturn the edifice which thy hands have raised. As ever, the builder can best demolish his own works. Thou knowest by what difficult paths thou hast climbed to glory. Thy footsteps are now



turned in the opposite direction; thou art descending from thy glorious height, and nature herself makes the descent easier. Broad is the way; and the words of the poet, "Easy the descent to Avernus,"<sup>2</sup> are not true of the lower regions only. Our life in this world, however, differs from the hopeless misery of those who have descended to the abodes of darkness, in that, so long as life remains, we fall, to be sure, but we may rise again; we are ever descending and ascending. But from the lower regions there is no return.

What greater folly than to fall when thou mightest stand undaunted, simply because of thy confidence to rise again? The higher the station, the more dangerous the fall. And what greater heights can be reached than those of virtue and of glory, the very summits of which thou hadst scaled, though inaccessible to the rest of our generation?<sup>3</sup> Thou foughtest thy way to the summit with such energy and by such untrodden paths that I doubt whether any man was ever exposed to more frightful a fall. Thou must advance with firm and deliberate step, and must take a resolute stand. Do not become the laughing-stock of thy foes, or the despair of thy friends. An illustrious name is

not to be had cheaply, nor is it kept cheaply. "The guarding of a great name is itself a great task." Pardon me for quoting to thee a slight verse of my own, which pleased me so much that I was not ashamed to transfer it bodily from my daily letters to my epic *Africa*.<sup>4</sup> Pray release me from this most bitter necessity: let not the lyric verses which I have begun to compose in thy praise and over which (as my pen can testify) I have spent much toil, end in satire.<sup>5</sup>

Do not suppose that I am writing in this vein through mere chance, or that I am complaining without just cause. Letters from my friends have followed me since I left the Curia.<sup>6</sup> In these letters reports of thy doings have reached me which are far different from the earlier reports. I hear that thou no longer, as formerly, lovest the whole people but only its worst element; that it is these only whom thou humorest, for whom thou showest any consideration, and whose support thou seekest. What can I say except that which Brutus once wrote to Cicero:<sup>7</sup> "I am ashamed of such condition and such fortune"? Shall the world behold thee, who hast been the leader of patriots, become the accomplice of reprobates?

Has our star sunk so rapidly? Has Providence been so quickly angered? Where now is thy protecting genius? Where now (to employ a more familiar term), is that Holy Ghost, the good counselor with whom it was generally thought that thou didst commune?<sup>8</sup> And it was natural to suppose this, for it seemed impossible that thy deeds could be accomplished by a mere mortal except through divine intercession.

But why grieve so? All things must obey the eternal law. I cannot change conditions, but I can flee from them. Thou seest, therefore, that thou hast relieved me of no little trouble. I was hastening to thee with eagerness, but I have now abandoned my plans. I am resolved not to behold thee other than thou hast been in the past. And a long farewell also to thee, O Rome, if these rumors be true. Rather shall I visit the regions of Garamant and of Ind.<sup>9</sup>

But are they true? Oh, end unexpected! And oh, my oversensitive ears! They had become trained to noble reports; these they cannot endure. It is possible, however, that what I am saying is false. Would that it were so! Never shall I more gladly have been con-

victed of error. The writer of that letter ranks high in my estimation; but I detect no slight traces of an ill-will with which I have become familiar through many incidents. I scarcely know whether such envy be due to his noble birth or to his eager courage.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, though my grief urges me to write further, I shall check the impulse, a thing (I assure thee) which were impossible did I not cheer my fallen spirits by refusing to believe the unwelcome news.

May the Lord look kindly upon thy actions, and may these have a more joyous issue than is reported. I should much rather be offended by the falsehood of the one friend, than by the disgraceful treason of the other. After all, universal practice has made lying a daily and commonplace sin. On the other hand, no age, however dissolute, no social fabric, and no licentiousness has ever excused the traitor. Far better, therefore, that my correspondent cause me a few days of sadness by his false statements than thou a whole life of gloom by deserting the cause of freedom. If he has transgressed by word, by word shall he make atonement. But if it be true that thou hast committed the heinous crime of treason (and I

pray it be not true), with what sacrifices canst thou ever hope to expiate thy sin?

Glory is immortal; immortal, too, is infamy.<sup>11</sup> Wherefore, if, perchance, thou hast no regard for thine own name (which I cannot believe), have some consideration for mine at least. Thou knowest how great a storm threatens me. Thou knowest how great a throng of slanderers will attack me the moment thou givest sign of weakening. Therefore, to quote the words of the youth in Terence:<sup>12</sup> "While there is yet time, reflect again and again." Consider most carefully, I beseech thee, thine every action. Rouse thyself thoroughly. Examine thine own conscience, and be not deceived as to who thou art and who thou hast been, whence thou camest and whither goest, and how far it is permissible for thee to go without detriment to the liberty of thy country. Recollect the rôle which thou art playing in thy city's history, the title thou hast assumed, the hopes thou hast aroused, and the promises thou hast made to the people. Consider all this, and thou wilt realize that thou art not the master of the Republic, but its servant.<sup>13</sup>

Written at Genoa, November 29.

## NOTES

1. *Somnium Scipionis* v. 1 (*De re publica*, vi. 18).
2. *Aeneid*, vi. 126.
3. Compare the Canzone *Spirto Gentil*, stanza 7, vss. 7-11, given in *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 32.
4. The original Latin of this verse is *Magnus enim labor est magnae custodia famae*. From what Petrarca says here, and from the occurrences of the verse elsewhere, we can readily reconstruct its history. It was first used in the lost letter to which the poet here refers. Between 1339 and 1341, he inserted it into his epic *Africa*, VII, 292. In 1342, he again quotes it, this time as coming from the *Africa*, in his *Secretum*, or *De Contemptu Mundi*, Dial. III, 363 (*Opera*, ed. 1581), which work was composed in that year. On November 29, 1347, he cites it to Cola, *Fam.*, VII, 7 (Frac., I, p. 372). Finally, he uses it once again in *Ep. poet.*, II, 15, addressed to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (*Opera*, ed. 1581, III, 100, 2d col.), which must have been written either at Parma in the December of 1347 or at Verona in the January of 1348; for the *Ep. poet.* was prompted by the news of the slaughter of the Colonna at the gate of S. Lorenzo, on November 20, 1347, which news Petrarca received only while he was staying at Parma (Papencordt, p. 185).
5. We here refer the reader to the last note on the letter *Var.*, XLVIII. Continuing with the explanation there offered, we are inclined to think that this poem over which Petrarca had spent so much toil represents the Latin poem promised in honor of Cola at the end of the *Hortatoria*, to which he has already referred in

the present letter, when he said *inscriptus tibi exhortationum mearum liber* (Frac., I, p. 371).

6. If this be strictly accurate language, we must infer therefrom that Petrarca received other letters in addition to that of Laelius. Throughout the rest of this letter, however, he emphasizes but one letter and but one writer, Laelius.

7. Cicero, *Ad M. Brutum*, i. 16, 1: *quid scribam? pudet condicionis ac fortunae sed tamen scribendum est.*

8. In his citation of August 1 to the emperors (*Epistolario*, No. XVII), Cola for the first time styles himself Servant and Knight of the Holy Ghost (*op. cit.*, p. 49, l. 3), and Candidate of the Holy Ghost (*ibid.*, l. 11). The latter seems to have appealed more strongly to the mystic temperament of the Tribunes Augustus; for, from this date on he regularly began his official letters with *Candidatus Spiritus Sancti* (cf. *Epistolario*, Nos. XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXIV).

9. Compare Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 794.

10. Laelius' full name was Lello di Pietro dei Stefaneschi dei Tosetti. The members of his house held a very prominent place among the Roman nobles, and were close adherents of the Colonna. Indeed, Laelius himself was one of the numerous courtiers constituting the household of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna at Avignon. These facts alone would suffice to make him harbor ill-will against Cola; but we call attention to a document which seems to have been overlooked by previous investigators in the history of this period, and which throws added light on this statement of Petrarca. We mean a letter of Clement VI

addressed *Dilecto filio Nobili viro Lello Petri Stephani de Tosettis, domicello Romano, Magistro hostiario et familiari nostro* (Theiner, II, No. 178, p. 181, dated October 5, 1347).

We are strengthened in our belief that this is Petrarca's friend by the various parts of the address. Laelius is here called a Roman nobleman, or perhaps a Roman Syndic (cf. Du Cange, *s.v. domicellus*, especially under No. 3), a friend of the Pope, and *Magister hostiarius* (or, *ostiarius*), which we translate Master of the Guards (compare Du Cange, *s.v. hostiarius* and *magister ostiariorum*). This last title is in accordance with the known military character of Laelius; and we suppose that the Guards here mentioned were the predecessors of the Swiss Guards, and were in charge of the entrances and the gates of the papal precincts.

In this letter, the Pope says, after some preliminary remarks:

“We clearly understand from the documents thou hast submitted that a short time ago the office of Syndic in the city of Rome was (as thou assertest) conferred upon thee by our beloved sons, the inhabitants of the city; and that our beloved son Cola di Rienzo, who administers in our name the office of Rector in the Roman state, has without any predetermined and conceivable reason, caused thee to be summoned throughout said city by the voice of a herald, in order that, under penalty of permanent debarment from office (to use his own words) and the confiscation of thy property, thou mightest appear in person within a specified time, to render an account of thy incumbency of said office of Syndic, and to answer



to certain points in regard to which an investigation of thy incumbency was being conducted."

From what follows in the papal brief it appears that Laelius had first asked the Pope, and then the Consistory, for permission to absent himself from his post at Avignon, and to appear before Cola and thus retain possession of his estates. But the Pope pointed out to Laelius that Cola, in issuing such summons, had not consulted his superior the Pope, in whose name he held office, and that consequently the summons itself was null and void. The letter continues with the Pope absolving Laelius from the necessity of obeying the Rector's summons, and with his reassuring Laelius in the undisputed possession of the estates he then held and of those he would acquire in the future. In closing, the Pope distinctly forbids Laelius to go to Rome under penalty of forfeiting the good graces of his Holiness and also of being discharged from the position which he then held at the papal court.

In conclusion, we think that it was this personal reason, in addition to reasons of birth, that made Laelius so ready and so keen to receive bad news of Cola, and to dispatch such news so eagerly to Petrarca who was setting out on his Roman pilgrimage.

11. Petrarca here makes a general statement, *Immortale decus est, immortalis infamia* (Frac., I, p. 373); in his translation, Fracassetti wrongly gives, *Immortale t'avrai o l'onore, o l'infamia*, applying the words directly to Cola (Frac., 2, p. 190).

12. Terence, *Eunuchus*, i. 1, 11 (or according to the consecutive numbering, vs. 56).

13. Tears indeed! And to think that but one week previous to the writing of this letter Petrarca, then in the slough of despondency, had thought himself unable to offer even words of advice. Tyrtaeus continued to sing martial strains in his endeavor to reanimate drooping spirits, but there were no Spartans to hearken unto his song.

## CHAPTER XI

Cola's fortune reached its zenith with the successful battle fought on November 20, 1347. Thenceforward, intoxicated at his success, his behavior became more and more uncertain, inconsistent, and questionable. The surviving barons allied themselves with Cardinal Bertrand. Cola, threatened with excommunication, resigned the office of podestà; and, in his efforts to reconcile himself with the church, again embraced with eagerness the title of Rector of the Pope. It would, however, take us beyond the purposes of the present volume to enter into the details of Cola's fall. Suffice it to say that the direct cause (remembering, of course, also the famous tax on salt) was his entangling alliance with King Louis of Hungary. This called into being irresistible situations and problems that were too knotty for Cola's present shattered intellect. Consequently, on December 15, 1347, Cola quietly descended from the Campidoglio, the stage from which he had brought to the Romans and to the world visions of the ancient days of glory.

We may follow the events of Roman history

in only the most cursory manner. Papal power was almost immediately restored, and Cola fled to Naples, hoping to find refuge with the king of Hungary, who had just captured that city (January 24, 1348). The dreadful pestilence of that year, however, forced the king to return across the Alps, and Cola fled to the inaccessible mountains of the Abruzzi, hunted down and pursued at every turn by the ban of the church. At Rome, Bertoldo Orsini and Luca Savelli, the two senators appointed by the papal delegate, proved unequal to the situation which faced them.

The Black Death which so depopulated Europe in general, everywhere turning the existing disorder into chaos and anarchy, fell upon Rome also, but not with so heavy a hand. To make the misery complete, however, earthquakes followed one another in rapid succession, at times destroying entire cities, and everywhere overthrowing towers, palaces, churches, and basilicas into a heap of indescribable ruins. Such happenings could be understood only as the visitations of the Creator's wrath upon the sinful population of Europe, a dire punishment for its unbounded licentiousness and for the wreckless destruction of all

barriers in political and social relations. The Jubilee of 1350, therefore—the declaration of which was in great part due to the efforts of Cola di Rienzo seven years before—came at a most opportune moment. It directed the minds of men to higher things. The teachings of the Son of Man, and the moral truths of the sacred writings are never more fully interpreted than in the hour of adversity. The Europeans of the fourteenth century, down-trodden by the beasts in human form that in so many instances ruled over them, rendered orphans by the ravages of the plague and homeless by the convulsions of Nature, were seized with a contagious enthusiasm. They turned to the Scriptures with the holy and irresistible faith of the early martyrs. From the pilgrimage to Rome mankind promised itself and confidently expected the recovery from all its ills and the regeneration of the world.

And so it proved to be in great measure. We cannot underestimate the influence for good of this spiritual uplift. The pious fervor of the Crusaders again seized the hearts of men, and countless pilgrims must have spread an atmosphere of holiness and of sanctity on their return from the Jubilee city. There was, however, a

loud note of discord: the addition of St. John the Lateran as a third pilgrimage church for the Jubilee could hardly compensate for the absence of the Supreme Pontiff in France; and the papal benediction which served as a seal to the pilgrimage was not administered from the loggia of the Mother of Churches, but from one of the far-off towers of the Palace by the Rhone.

The artificial truce established by the Jubilee came to an end even before the echoes of the pilgrims' choruses had grown faint. New senators were constantly appointed, one representing the interests of the Colonna, the other those of the Orsini. All were doomed to the same ignominious failure. Cardinal Bertrand de Deux had been succeeded by Cardinal Annibaldo di Ceccano, legate for the Jubilee year. This cardinal so irritated the Romans that an attack was made upon him. Shortly afterward he was visited by the cardinal of St. Chrysogonus, an eminent French prelate who then happened to be in Rome. And the latter to comfort Annibaldo for the attempt upon his life, said to him (*Vita*, II, 2, col. 883): "He who would wish to restore Rome to order, would be obliged to destroy it utterly, and then

to rebuild it anew." De Sade (III, 224) pronounces this story to be false. Whether false or true, the anecdote gives a true picture of the almost insurmountable difficulties facing Annibaldo. When he fled, Annibaldo delegated his powers to Ponzio Perroto, Bishop of Orvieto.

The question of giving the unruly and recalcitrant Romans some permanent form of government now became a problem of paramount importance to the Pope and to his cardinals. In 1351 finally, Clement VI appointed a commission of four cardinals, with power to settle this question to the best of their ability. These men must have sat long and deliberated profoundly; and at last, in their perplexity, it occurred to one of them that it might be profitable to obtain what we would today call expert opinion. There was but one man to whom a commission thus constituted could submit itself with becoming deference. Petrarca immediately availed himself of the opportunity thus extended to him, and wrote a lengthy *ex cathedra* exposition which he forwarded to the cardinals in two letters (*Fam.*, XI, 16, 17, respectively dated November 18 and 24, 1351). "Both letters [to quote Grego-

rovius, VI, 330, n. 1], which redound to Petrarch's honor as a patriot, are manifestos of the democratic principle which governed the cities at this time. . . . Petrarch, questioned as to the best constitution for Rome, resembles Rousseau, placed in a similar position with regard to the Corsicans and Poles." The following is the first of these letters.

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TO THE FOUR CARDINALS APPOINTED  
TO REFORM THE GOVERNMENT  
OF ROME<sup>1</sup>

(*Fam.*, XI, 16)

A weighty burden is placed upon my weak shoulders by one to whom I can deny nothing, and in behalf of that city for which refusal is impossible. The love which rules within me bade me heed the request. The safety of our common country and mother was at stake; and he who is not moved by the woes of his dear mother is not a true son. In addition to this debt which mankind in general owes, there is added a certain special claim which the city of Rome has upon my services for its former favors, in that, by extraordinary privilege, she elected me her citizen.<sup>2</sup> Perchance, not the



least mark of her favor is the fact that at this crisis, when her name and her glory are waning, she places some hopes of assistance in me. Rome, in short, has ever deserved well of me. If her welfare be at stake, silence on my part would be not only disgraceful, but inhuman and ungrateful.

I have wished to preface these remarks, in order that no one may consider me mad or forgetful of myself, charging that I have undertaken a task beyond my powers and that, contrary to the advice of the sage, I have aimed too high and too presumptuously. Let no one be roused to indignation if he hears the liberties of Rome championed in affectionate and respectful words, even though he may deem them lowly at one moment, prosaic the next, and, perchance, even irrelevant. The obligation resting upon me is, I confess, one of great responsibility; my conclusions are to be discussed in the presence of prominent men, and are to be submitted to the Supreme Pontiff. I am conscious of my own insignificance; but an inborn devotion to the cause of Rome gives me courage to speak. Therefore, ye most reverend Fathers to whom the reordering of the state has been intrusted, if (as I hope) you are

favorably disposed to accept this excuse for my boldness, give respectful attention, I beg of you, to words spoken in good faith, and charitably consider not who I am, but the motives which prompt me; consider not the form, but the substance of my speech; indeed, judge not so much that which I say, as that which I should wish to say, and which could be said on so pregnant a topic.

And in the first place, I presume the following to be an idea deeply rooted in your minds: that no group of words strikes a more responsive chord in the heart of man than these, The Roman Republic. No region of this earth, no barbarian nation, will gainsay it. The entire world would unanimously proclaim it, were it possessed of a tongue to speak. It would openly acknowledge Rome its head, even though she is now miserably unkept, forlorn, and unadorned.<sup>3</sup> Wherefore, though Rome were but a name, still would the name be that of a city once queen of the world and consequently, in my opinion, a name to be spoken with a certain degree of reverence. It would ever represent, I say, that city which Omnipotent God had adorned with the many, marked favors of both the temporal and the spiritual

dominion; the city wherein he had set the cradle of the true faith, the Rock of his church, and the supreme seat of empire.

But that Rome may be something more than a mere name, that she may become the object of our hopes or of our fears, ample provision has at last been made. The Roman Pontiff has chosen you in particular from among the entire number composing the Sacred College. Upon you has he shouldered this glorious and incomparable burden, a burden which must seem a very heavy one to those who are keenly alive to the exigencies of the case. As we meditate upon his action, we come to the conclusion that the selection of you four in particular was not without cause or design, but, indeed, that it was inspired from on high. Three of you are endowed with most profound wisdom and with vast learning; and in addition, experience has given to you an intimate knowledge of Roman affairs. The fourth member of your board is not merely of Roman origin, but (according to some) traces his ancestry to that most renowned and ancient family of the Cornelii. It is not, therefore, without divine inspiration that this man, a noble example of true patriotism and sweet love

of country, should now bravely champion and plead the rights of the defenseless plebeians against the proud nobles, and should protect the cause of oppressed liberty.<sup>4</sup> Appointed by the Lord to judge this cause, give ye no occasion to charges of indolence, and have no regard for the requests and power of any man.

But briefly to express my opinions on the question before us, I shall say that this is a repetition of the old Roman struggle. Would that the tyrants of today were no worse than those of old! This dastardly, self-satisfied nobility, spurning and despising all things, abuses the excessive meekness of the Roman plebeians, and drags them to a shameful triumph, not otherwise than if they were so many Carthaginians or Cimbri taken in war and sent under the yoke. And yet no law sanctions such proceeding; no tradition warrants it, nor has anyone ever been heard to say that Romans triumphed over subjugated fellow-Romans.

That no one may suspect my words to be prompted by even the slightest malice, it may not be inappropriate to mention here, by way of parenthesis, that, of the two families whence all this trouble arises, I do not hate the one,

whereas the other (needless to say) I do not merely love, but indeed have cherished throughout a long period of almost familiar intercourse. In fact, I wish to state here that none of the princely families of this world has been dearer to me than the latter. Nevertheless the public welfare is even dearer to me. Dearer is Rome, dearer is Italy, dearer the peace and the security of the upright.

It was to attain this security that (speaking with peace to the living and to the dead) both God and man and fortune toiled and strove harmoniously. Their aim was to make Rome a stupendous city, fit to be the seat of both church and empire, and not the petty principality of a few citizens. Indeed, if with your gracious leave I may be permitted to speak the entire truth, I shall correct my statement and shall say that Rome was not meant to be the prey of men who are not even Roman citizens, and who do not even love the name of Rome. I shall not delay to review the origin of both these families. It is common knowledge, and is sung by the shepherds in the valleys of the Rhine and of Spoleto. The queen of nations has sunk into abject misery. To none is she an object of compassion. She has been rent and mangled,

not by the hands of her own children (as of yore), but by those of strangers.<sup>5</sup> No longer can she derive consolation from those old lines:

Our war no interfering kings demands,  
Nor shall be trusted to barbarian hands:  
Among ourselves our bonds we will deplore,  
And Rome shall serve the rebel son she bore.<sup>6</sup>

Can it be doubted that we should amend these wrongs? But no thought is being given to that which should have demanded our first attention, namely, with what carefully chosen penalties we should punish these public robbers, or, at any rate, in what way these enemies of liberty can be most completely prevented from holding office in a free state. Wonderful to relate, this is the question which men are now debating: whether or not the Roman people, who once ruled the universe, should be restored to some degree of liberty; whether or not they may today participate to any extent with their domestic tyrants in the government of their own city; and whether they are to have any voice on that very Capitol from which they drove the flames and the power of the Senonian Gauls, where they once beheld captured kings chained to the triumphal chariots, where they listened haughtily to the suppliant envoys of

foreign nations, and whence they hurled to headlong destruction proud citizens as well as enemies.

O kind Jesus, to what have we come? Dost thou observe these things, O Savior? Art thou perchance offended by our sins? Whither hast thou turned thy eyes that are wont to look with mercy? Have mercy upon us, and wipe away the stains of our deep disgrace.

Are we then fallen so low? Was this, I ask, to be the end of all our woes, that in public and indeed (which is far worse) in the presence of the Vicar of Christ and of the successors of the apostles, the question should be raised whether or not it is proper for a Roman citizen to be elected Senator? And this notwithstanding the fact that for so many years we have witnessed on the Capitol the rule of foreign-born tyrants, and of so many proud Tarquins? Behold the question toward the solution of which four heavenly Hinges are laboring!<sup>7</sup>

For my part, I should not hesitate, if consulted, to answer that, according to Roman custom, the Roman Senate should perforce be constituted of Roman citizens; that foreigners should all be barred from the threshold, not merely those born in a far-off land, but also the Latins and those races inhabiting the country

near and even adjacent to that of the Romans, men having, so to speak, the very same body with the Romans. I add that these foreigners should be excluded not merely by word or by pen, but, if necessary, even by the sword. Let the example of Aulus (*sic*) Manlius Torquatus suffice, who, when the Latins once asked that the high Council and half the Senate be chosen from their number, was so stirred with indignation as to swear that he would enter the Senate-house in arms, and would destroy with his own hand all the Latins he might find there.<sup>8</sup> With what feelings, then, would Torquatus have beheld the entire Senate composed of men hailing from the banks of the Rhine or from Umbria, he who so indignantly received the proposal of the Latins that only half the Senate should become non-Roman?

Our present foreigners do not wish to seem to exercise their mad power without just cause. They give this defense for their usurpation of the senatorial privilege: that they are the stronger, and consequently the more fitted to bear the burden of so high an office. What is this power they boast of, a power which is never evinced except to the detriment of the state? Whence is it derived, great or small though it



be, except from the blood of the people and from the very vitals of the republic? But even granting that their power is great, and that it is just; what bearing, I ask, has that upon the problem before us? Surely, when the above-mentioned embassy of the Latins came to Rome, Latium was described as being flourishing in arms, men, and resources. Nonetheless their proposal was rejected, because, relying on their power, they had aspired to undeserved honors, and because the Romans would not grant to the caprice of fortune honors that are the reward of manly conduct.

Forsooth, if the senatorial dignity at Rome were to be the reward of mere brute force,<sup>9</sup> and if no regard were to be had for either birth or conduct, then Macedonia and Carthage in ancient times, and today other powerful nations of the earth could present a far more just and better claim than the Roman barons. In excusing their usurpation, even the barons will retort: "We are Romans; we have become Roman citizens by our long and exclusive tenure of office, and by the suppression of liberty." I should esteem it no slight victory if I had caused these most haughty spirits to wish to be real citizens and not the plague of citizens.

I should not then bar them from an honorable career with the inflexibility of Manlius Torquatus.

In the name of God who takes pity on the affairs of this world, O Fathers most kind, and if you yourselves are moved by any compassion for the Roman name, I ask whether you honestly believe that these barons have seized the reins of government with the purpose of bringing their resources to the aid of the poverty-stricken city? Would that they were of this mind! I should then forgive them their generous ambition, and should admit them as candidates for office no matter what their origin. But, believe me, they cherish far different aims. They purpose not so much to appease their insatiable and gluttonous hunger, but to whet it with the remnants of the ruined city. They will, perchance, dare deny even this palpable fact. They will wish to veil with a general barefaced denial the long series of crimes committed throughout their lives and known to the whole world. They will desire to be called Roman citizens and lovers of Rome. But not so! To call these barons citizens, aye to call them men instead of princes and gods, constitutes a mortal offense.<sup>10</sup>

Although I have impartial judges, nevertheless I am arguing a case under very unfavorable circumstances. I shall concede, therefore—but merely for the sake of peace—a thing which it would be most easy to refute: that these barons are citizens, and moreover peaceable citizens. Though unworthy, let them attain to office, provided only they do not exclude the most deserving. If strangers compete against native Romans, and if all are to be designated by the common name of Romans, why should only they be elected to office who enjoy the name of Romans on sufferance, as it were; and why, indeed, should they be given the preference over their fellow-citizens in anything whatsoever? Is it because of their nobility? But the essence of true nobility is still a moot point. Then only will the barons realize how noble they are when they will likewise realize how virtuous and upright they are.

Do the barons, perhaps, claim superiority and preference because of their riches? I do not desire here to belittle the extent of their wealth. I warn them of this, however: that they should not, for that reason, despise those who are poorer than they; that mere wealth adds absolutely nothing to persons of good

moral character; and that, remembering that riches are only of this world, they should use with moderation the wealth which they have sucked from the breasts of mother church. If, however, they are so inclined, and if their dull intellects do not rise to the level of these higher concepts, let them enjoy their wealth as though it were an everlasting boon, provided they observe this one restriction, not to employ for the destruction of the people the riches which they have amassed through the people's generosity.

But if they deem private wealth to be a necessary qualification for public honors, I should wish them to give answer to the following questions. How much wealth did Valerius Publicola possess, when he aided Brutus in expelling the proud kings, or when in his first consulship he triumphed over the Etruscans, and in his third consulship over the Sabines? Indeed, he died so poor that he was buried at the public expense. Again, how rich was Menenius Agrippa, when, with words of divine inspiration, he cemented the discordant and divided republic? or Quinctius Cincinnatus, who, abandoning his meager farm, saved Rome from defeat and freed from a siege a Roman

consul and a Roman army?<sup>11</sup> What wealth did Curius possess, or Fabricius, when they overthrew the standards of King Pyrrhus and of the Samnites? or Attilius Regulus, who vanquished the legions of Carthage? or Appius Claudius, who, though deprived of sight, continued to rule the republic wisely?

It would be an endless task to gather all the examples of a glorious poverty. Nevertheless, I dare affirm (though the rabble may cry out against me) that the greatest obstacle to true virtue is overabundant wealth. That I may not, however, undertake to pluck out notions that are most deeply rooted and fixed, I dare affirm what most clearly results from the writings of the ancient authors, that riches conquered Rome, the conqueror of nations. It is beyond the shadow of a doubt that foreign vices and foreign evils entered Rome by one and the same gate through which poverty had left.

But to return to our barons. They believe, or (as I think more likely) they pretend to believe that wealth will be of the very greatest advantage to them, though it has ever been the greatest bane of rulers. It remains for us to inquire into the real cause of their desire to rule.

It is not far to seek. I shall make no mention of avarice, which, though it might be suspected from many indications, my sense of decency forbids me to mention in this discussion. Disgrace most foul would it be for avarice to dwell in noble hearts, from which, on the contrary, it is always banished to a remote distance. But now I am speaking of nobility in the general acceptation of the word! I shall merely point out (with Sallust) that pride is the evil common to all nobles.<sup>12</sup> It is not, therefore, a new disease which now infests the state. It attacked the ancient Romans, the true Romans, and the deadly poison crept stealthily among the noblest virtues. It was always checked, however, by the dignified resistance of the lowly, as now, I hope, it is to be crushed by your decisions, most worthy Fathers. But my statements seem to require amplification.

From the very beginning, the Roman plebeians were wronged most cruelly. They demanded magistrates of their own to assert and to protect their uncertain liberty. The nobility opposed their demands in a bitter struggle, and hence the first secession to the Sacred Mount. The plebeians, with justice on their side, finally overcame the pride of the

nobles; and though the patricians protested in vain, there came into existence for the first time the Tribune of the people, the one spur and curb upon the violence of the nobles. After some time the plebeians demanded that this officer be elected in their own assembly, that is to say in the tribunician assembly. Again they were victorious, though opposed by Appius Claudius, the keenest of the patricians.

Thereafter a new struggle arose, for the upper class, with proud disdain, refused to recognize the intermarrying of plebeians with patricians. In this way the most sacred bond of society was torn asunder, and the state was for the second time split in twain. The indignant plebs offered vigorous opposition, and, with the reluctant consent of the nobles, a law was passed recognizing such intermarriages as legal. The priestly duties, the office of decemvir, the quaestorship, and the curule aedileship were still reserved to those of patrician birth. The plebeians realized that they were being made sport of. They rose in their might and secured the privilege of sharing in these offices too.

And here I must not pass over that brief anecdote related by Titus Livy, of small importance in itself, but most clearly mani-

festing the pride of the patricians and the plebeians' love of liberty. Gnaeus Flavius, the son of a scribe, a man of humble fortune, but keen and well-spoken, had been elected curule aedile. This election so stirred the resentment of the nobles (who shrank back at the novelty of the appointment), that very many of them, grieving over his election as over a personal loss, laid aside their golden rings and other ornaments. Flavius, on the contrary, was not at all disturbed thereat, but met their insolence with a serene firmness and perseverance. Later it happened that Flavius visited his colleague who lay sick in bed. As he entered the room, several young patricians who were present, in obedience to the contempt which they all harbored, did not rise to offer him a seat. Flavius immediately ordered his curule chair to be brought in.<sup>13</sup> Thus he more nobly set at naught the scorn of the youthful nobles; for he now looked down upon them as they consumed themselves with envy, not from the bench of a private citizen, but from the chair of office. In my opinion, this one act proved him most worthy to fill the office, not only of aedile, but even of consul.

I have purposely reserved the office of consul



unto the end, because the two senators, who alone survive from the great number of conscript fathers who once constituted the Roman Senate, can be deemed to be the successors of the two consuls. The tenure of office both of our modern senators and of the consuls of old is a limited one; the senatorial dignity in ancient Rome, however, was enjoyed for life. If I were even to begin to rehearse the countless, bitter struggles over the consulship, I should put off even longer the end of this letter, toward which I am hastening. Suffice it to know this: that when the Roman plebs sought to gain admission even to this, the highest magistracy, the patricians considered that such a consummation would be to their lasting disgrace, and so opposed it with all their power. Finally, however, they were conquered as on previous occasions. Many disagreements followed, and at first this compact was made: that there should be no more consuls, but that four military tribunes with consular power should be created. The ambitions of the plebeians were not yet satisfied, and at last they won, through the might of right, that which the swollen pride of the patricians had so long denied them: that a plebeian consul should sit

by the side of a patrician one, and should, with equal majesty, rule the common fatherland and the territory gained through common hardships.

If all this be true, and if it be truly recorded by all the most illustrious historians, why doubt any longer, O most prudent Fathers? Or why seek further encouragement? If you have pity for the misfortunes of the Romans, if you have resolved to prop the gigantic ruins with your patriotic shoulders, follow the examples of the time when Rome grew from nothing till her head touched the very stars. Heed not the example of today, when she has fallen from the heights of so great a fortune into almost the lowest depths.

I trust you do not doubt that the city of Rome shelters many who are nobler and better than those who only boast of a noble name, but who are a burden to heaven and to earth. I shall not refuse to call them noble, if they will act accordingly; but, surely, not only I, but Rome herself denies them the name of Romans. Let us grant that they are nobles, and Romans too. Are they still to be preferred to our ancestors, the defenders of justice, the protectors of the down-trodden, the conquerors of haughty nations and the builders of empire?

Though great their impudence, they will not dare to make this claim. If, then, our ancestral Romans yielded, let not the barons feel shame in likewise yielding to the plebeians, who justly demand that they shall not live in their own city as if in exile, and that they shall not be excluded from public office, as if they were a diseased member of the body politic.

In this regard, it may behoove us to remember what Aristotle says. As in the case of those who straighten the plant that grows one-sided, so must you compel these nobles not only to share with the rest the senatorial and other dignities, but also to surrender unconditionally and for a long period all the privileges which they have so long usurped through their own arrogance and the patient suffering of the plebeians. And you must persevere along these lines until the republic, like unto the one-sided plant, will have bent in the opposite direction and have thus returned to its proper, erect position.

These are my opinions, this I beg of you on bended knee, this venerable Rome tearfully implores of you. If you display lack of energy in restoring her liberty, she will call you to account before the tribunal of the dreadful

Judge. Christ orders you to re-establish her freedom, Christ, who will stand in your midst as you deliberate, that he may shield unto the very end those whom he chose in the beginning. The apostles Peter and Paul entreat it, who inspired the Roman Pontiff to confide this sacred duty to none other than to you. Give heed to the silent prayers of these saints, and you will find it very easy to spurn the hostile wishes and the pressure of all others. Finally, consider not what may please the pride of others, but only what best becomes your own integrity, and what will be of the greatest advantage to Rome, to Italy, and to the world.

November 18, 1351.

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#### NOTES

1. The four Cardinals to whom this letter was addressed are: Bertrand de Deux, Gui de Boulogne, Guglielmo Curti, and Niccola Capocci (De Sade, III, 157). They formed a very wisely appointed commission, each having had a practical acquaintance with Roman affairs.

Of these four Cardinals, Bertrand de Deux was the senior member, having been created cardinal of St. Mark by Benedict XII. His direct acquaintance with Roman conditions had begun as early as 1335, when he had been delegated to the city in an endeavor to

establish peace between the Colonna and the Orsini, who were then at war (cf. *Var.*, XLVIII, n. 12). In addition, it was to him that Clement VI (as we have seen) intrusted the negotiations with Cola di Rienzo. In fact, he was considered the most astute diplomatist in the Sacred College (Christophe, II, 183), which, after December 17, 1350, consisted of 26 members (De Sade, III, 146).

Gui de Boulogne was born of a very noble family; in fact, he was related to the royal house of France, for his niece, Jeanne d'Auvergne, was married to King John of France on September 26, 1349 (De Sade, III, 51, and n. a; but cf. the marginal note on p. 150, which gives the date as September 24, 1349). The cardinal, moreover, was a friend and relative also of the emperor Charles IV. For these reasons he was appointed ambassador plenipotentiary to the king of Hungary, to which country he repaired in 1349, in order to reconcile King Louis and Queen Giovanna of Naples. In the following year he was ordered to Italy for the Jubilee, and met Petrarca at Padua in February, 1350. It is Gui de Boulogne who is generally supposed to be the one by whom Petrarca's opinion was solicited and to whom Petrarca, whose friendship with him dated from Avignon, could deny nothing (De Sade, III, 51, 52, 150, 157; more biographical details are given in *La Grande Encycl.*, s.v. *Guy d'Auvergne*).

Guglielmo Curti, like Bertrand de Deux, had been created Cardinal during the pontificate of Benedict XII (De Sade, III, 146). For further information regarding him, see Segré, *Studi petrarcheschi*, pp. 216-19.

Niccola Capocci was one of the twelve cardinals created by Clement VI on December 17, 1350 (De Sade, *loc. cit.*). He and Rinaldo Orsini (the former papal notary) were the only two Italians promoted to the rank of cardinal on that occasion (*op. cit.*, p. 148). And Petrarca here tells us that Capocci traced his descent from the Cornelii of Republican Rome (cf. Greg., VI, 263, n. 1, and p. 682, n. 2, where reference to a *Vita* of Capocci is given).

Fracassetti (3, p. 292) agrees with De Sade in assuming that Cardinal Talleyrand was one of the three judges later appointed to try Cola di Rienzo, and adds that he was also one of this commission of four cardinals appointed to reform the government of Rome, in fact, that Talleyrand was the very one who solicited Petrarca's opinion. But previously (*ibid.*, p. 99) Fracassetti had accepted De Sade's list of four cardinals, among whom Talleyrand does not appear. He had also accepted De Sade's identification of Gui de Boulogne as he who solicited Petrarca's opinion. In the midst of these contradictions, we prefer to adhere to the Abbé de Sade, who in matters pontifical is generally quite accurately informed.

2. The word privilege employed by Petrarca (Frac., II, p. 145) is the very word which occurs in the document conferring Roman citizenship upon him: *Privilegii laureae receptae a Francisco Petrarca exemplar* (*Opera*, III, 6). The sentence actually declaring him a Roman citizen runs as follows (*ibid.*, p. 7, toward the end of the document):

“Furthermore: on account of his extraordinary

intellectual endowments, and on account of the well-known devotion which he cherishes for the City and for our state—a devotion to which common report and his own deeds and words bear witness—we hereby make, pronounce, decree, and declare said Francesco Petrarca a Roman citizen, honoring him with the name and also with the privileges, both old and new, of Roman citizenship.”

3. Petrarca knew whereof he spoke. In 1350 he had been one of the countless thousands who made the pilgrimage to the Jubilee city. There he witnessed with his own eyes the ravages of the Black Death of 1348, and the ruins caused by the earthquakes of 1349. Six months before addressing this letter to the four cardinals, he had written to his dear friend Socrates, sadly describing the results of those catastrophes. The letter gives so faithful a picture of the terror which seized the minds of men, and presents so peculiar a blending of Petrarca’s religious feelings with his patriotic concept of *Roma caput mundi*, that we cite it in full (*Fam.*, XI, 7):

“What shall I do first? Shall I voice my laments or my fears? Everywhere there is cause for grief; and all the present woes give promise of deeper woes to come. And yet, I can scarcely conceive what worse evils can possibly be expected. The world has been destroyed and brought to an end by the madness of men and by the avenging hand of God. We have sunk to such depths of misery that no new species of misfortune occurs to the mind. Whosoever, indeed, will narrate the present state of humanity to posterity—provided any descendants survive us—will seem to be recounting mere fables. Nor will it be right to wax indignant if we should be given less credence in matters

which we ourselves would not believe from others. As for myself, I frankly confess that the present times, in which mankind has experienced every conceivable evil, have made me more prone to believe many things of which I had been skeptical.

“I shall pass over those floods and hurricanes and conflagrations, whereby cities that were flourishing one moment perished root and branch the next. I shall pass over, too, those wars raging throughout the world and attended by endless slaughter of men. I shall touch but lightly, furthermore, upon this heaven-sent plague, unheard of during the ages. They are matters well known to all. The depopulated cities and the fields deprived of their tillers bear witness to them; the face of the earth, afflicted and well-nigh turned into a desert—aye Nature herself, so to speak—sheds tears of sorrow. These facts, I repeat, are abundantly known in the lands of the setting sun, as well as in those of the rising sun; in the regions of Boreas, and in those of Auster.

“But as thou knowest, the Alps were in many places shaken to their very foundations recently. Thence did the earthquake proceed; and—oh unusual and dire presage of the future!—a great portion of both Italy and Germany were simultaneously rocked. Evils followed which we cannot recollect without tears, and which it is beyond our power to enumerate. Very recently we, the insignificant few who seemed to have been snatched from the universal shipwreck, hoped that the deathly visitation had abated its ravages, and that the wrath of the Lord had been appeased. But behold!—and thou mayest perchance be still in ignorance of this—Rome herself was so violently shaken by the strange trembling that nothing similar to it had ever there been known in the two thousand years and more since the founding of the city.

“The massive structures of the ancients fell in ruins,



structures that, though neglected by the citizens, brought amazement to the stranger. That famous tower called the Torre dei Conti, unique in the world, was rent by enormous cracks, and fell apart; and now, with its summit lopped off, it looks down and beholds strewn upon the ground the glory of its proud head. Finally, that there may not be lacking positive proofs of the divine wrath, the appearance of many churches speaks loud in testimony. Above all, the ruined aspect of a large portion of the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, and the fallen roof of the Church of St. John the Lateran saddened the fervor of the Jubilee and caused the pilgrims to shudder. With the Church of St. Peter, however, Nature dealt more kindly.

“These occurrences are unprecedented—and justly do they deject the spirits of many. For, if the trembling of the limbs did presage the occurrence of such dread calamities, what is not now threatened by the trembling of the head? Aye, let those who judge themselves of some authority fume and fret; let them murmur their disapprobation. Nonetheless, Rome is the head of the world. Though grown old and unkept, Rome is undoubtedly the head of all nations. The world itself would not deny this, could it speak to me with one voice; and if the world should not acknowledge it on good authority, it would be conquered by written proofs.

“That I may not, however, be deemed a most malignant prophet of evil in the hour of adversity, or be thought to have created unfounded fears, I shall free myself from such charges by citing the examples of the recent ills that have befallen us, and also by appealing to the authority of Pliny, a writer ranking among the very highest. To avoid even the suspicion of warping his statements, I shall quote him verbatim. He says (*N.H.*, II, 84 [86], 200): ‘Indeed, the evil is not free from complications, nor does the danger lie only in the

earthquake itself, but it is a portent of an equal or of a greater danger. Never has the city of Rome trembled without its being the omen of some future disaster.' These are Pliny's very words. Why, therefore, should I now remain silent? Or why repeat them? I am speaking thus to thee because thou belongest to those of our generation who dearly love the Roman republic. What matters it, forsooth, where thou didst first draw breath? I consider thy disposition rather, which our friendship has rendered quite distinctly Italian.

"Wherefore, my dear Socrates, give me thy close attention. I feel deep concern for the highest welfare of the republic, and sad forebodings cause me to tremble not so much for Rome as for the whole of Italy. I fear not so much the convulsions of Nature, as indeed the upheavals of men's minds. I am terrified by many things, but above all by that ancient prophecy uttered so long before the City was founded, and inserted not in any minor writings but in the sacred Scriptures themselves. Though I was then entirely absorbed in secular literature, and not familiar with the Scriptures, I confess that when I first read it I shuddered, and the blood in my heart grew cold and chill. The utterance is in the final words of the last prophecy of Balaam. I shall quote it here, to relieve thee of the labor of running through the pages. Thus, then, is it written (Num. 24:24): 'They shall come in galleys from Italy, they shall overcome the Assyrians, and shall waste the Hebrews, and at the last they themselves also shall perish.'

"Some may hold that this prophecy has long since been fulfilled in the fall of the Roman Empire; but I trust that this recent trembling of the city does not portend a second overthrow of peace and of liberty. Do thou, however, steady thy faltering spirits upon the strong foundation of thy virtues and thy firmness. In spite of quaking earth, mayest thou remain unshaken

in thy secure abode; mayest thou be like unto him of whom Horace speaks (*C.*, III, 3, 7-8, tr. by Addison):

Should the whole frame of Nature round him break,  
In ruin and confusion hurled,  
He, unconquered, would hear the mighty crack,  
And stand secure amidst a falling world.

“I wrote this letter to thee while I was still at Padua, but it was delayed in sending as late as today for want of a messenger. It has pleased me to dispatch it to thee from this city, for no other reason than to humor this mutual friend of ours, who refused to go to thee without bearing a letter from me. For that matter, there was no need of either messenger or letter, since I myself am just about to follow him. When, therefore, thou wilt read this letter, know that I am already near. Thou wilt give me pleasure indeed, if thou shouldst come to meet me at the Fountain of the Sorgue. Remember me always, and farewell.

At Piacenza, June 11, 1351.”

4. The point which Petrarca wishes to emphasize is that it was but natural for Capocci to champion the rights of the defenseless plebeians against the nobles. He has already stated that Capocci was a native Roman boasting a descent from the Corneli. Hence, Capocci inherited the native, Italian antagonism to the foreign-born nobles, who, as Petrarca has already said time and again, hailed from the valley of Spoleto, or from the banks of the Rhine, or from some other obscure corner of the world.

5. Gregorovius keenly observes (VI, 330-31):

“Petrarch’s views deserve serious attention. If he considered the Roman nobles in the light of foreign immigrants, he simply expressed the historic origin of feudalism and its antagonism to the Latin character.

It was indeed a German institution, which had been transplanted by invasion to Latin soil. The struggle of Italian citizenship in the republics against the feudal nobility, who were almost all of German origin, consequently arose out of a native and national contradiction, and these democracies still traced their freedom from the ancient right of Roman citizenship. About the time of Petrarch the victory of the Latin principle over German feudalism was almost everywhere complete, and even now Italy is an absolutely democratic country, where the contrast between the nobles and the middle class is only faintly perceptible."

6. Lucan, viii. 354-56 (tr. by Rowe).

7. A play on words, connecting the word cardinals with the very literal meaning of the Latin *cardo*, the hinge of a door or gate.

8. Petrarca is mistaken about the *praenomen* of this Torquatus, which should be Titus. The story is given in Livy, viii. 5, 7.

9. The passage is reminiscent of Cicero, *Cat.*, ii. 9, 19.

10. It is hardly necessary to point out that in this letter passage after passage harps back to similar lines in Letter *Var.*, XLVIII.

11. The Petrarca original reads (Frac., II, p. 151): *deserto rure, inopi victu Romam et obsidione consulem romanum atque exercitum liberaret*. Fracassetti translates (3, p. 91): *mosse a liberare il console e Roma dall'assedio e dalla sconfitta*. We have altered the punctuation of the Latin by placing the comma after *inopi*, thus translating the first three words together, "abandoning his meager farm." In fact, Rome was not under siege at the time, and the ancient historian

clearly states that Cincinnatus "freed from a siege a Roman consul and a Roman army" (Livy, iii. 26, 27).

12. Sallust, *Iugurtha*, 64, 1: *superbia, commune nobilitatis malum*. Fracassetti (3, p. 92) places his *come narra Sallustio* after the statement that pride is not a new disease in the state. The impression received, therefore, is that this also is a quotation from Sallust, who merely says, however, that pride is the evil common to all nobles.

13. Livy, ix. 46, 8, 9, 12.

## CHAPTER XII

The following letter is the second which Petrarca addressed to the commission of four cardinals. It is, so to speak, a postscript to the preceding letter, being written but one week later, and naturally treating of the same subject-matter.

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### TO THE FOUR CARDINALS APPOINTED TO REFORM THE GOVERNMENT OF ROME

(*Fam.*, XI, 17)

I know full well, excellent and most worthy Fathers, that, in judging between circumspect humility and unbridled arrogance, you stand in no need of advice from an insignificant mortal like myself in order to render a just decision. But it pleases me to speak my mind on a question affecting the welfare of our common country, and to shoulder my manly share of the burden.<sup>1</sup> Though I cannot contribute deeds, I shall contribute at least my pen to the defense of liberty. I shall speak, therefore, from purest conviction and in obedience to the dictates of

my conscience, seeking neither glory nor praise from my words. I shall be quite unconcerned as to whom my language may goad, provided it does not offend the sense of justice. It is, no doubt, a cruel necessity to rise against the mighty ones of this earth, especially when these are dear to one. Still, only he can deem himself a lover of truth who values it more highly than friends and all other possessions.

And so, thrusting aside my affection for those nobles, who are very dear to me and whom I have long cherished,<sup>2</sup> I ask of these foreign-born tyrants whence they have assumed such arrogant haughtiness in a foreign city? Three of you, may, perhaps, wonder at this question, but the fourth will understand my meaning, I am sure.<sup>3</sup> If the barons laugh my charge to scorn, hoping that time has buried the origin of both houses in oblivion, Rome and Italy will both testify to the truth of my statement.

Astonishing and insufferable pride! Welcomed into the city as exiled strangers, they have long excluded the ancient citizens from all participation in the public offices, and they will continue forever to exclude them, if not checked by the right hand of the Supreme Pontiff and by the measures that you will

adopt. Our sins may, perhaps, have rendered us unworthy of your assistance; but, assuredly, the home of the apostles deserves to be freed from the violence of tyrants; the shrines of the saints deserve to be snatched from the clutches of the plunderer, and the soil consecrated by the lives of the martyrs deserves not to be defiled by the blood of its citizens. But none of these things can come to pass, unless you repress the frenzy of the tyrants, and unless you bring timely aid to the wretched population.

There are some in this world who voluntarily put an end to their wrong-doing, and return to the straight path, even though their repentance may be somewhat tardy; but there are some who never correct the error of their ways unless compelled to do so. It is conducive to the well-being of the latter class, therefore, to employ violence. Most praiseworthy indeed is it for a man to cultivate virtue and to flee from vice of his own accord; the next most commendable thing is to do so from compulsion.

Bring force to bear, then, upon these unwilling barons. Heed not their cries of protest, but wrench this baleful tyranny from their grasp. Not only admit the common people of Rome to a share in the public honors, but wrest from the



present unworthy incumbents the office of senator which they have always administered most abominably. Even if the barons were citizens, and good citizens, they could lay claim to but half the offices. As matters stand, they have conducted themselves in such wise as to be unworthy both of the city which they destroy, and of the fellowship of the citizens whom they crush. How much more unworthy, then, are they of filling the highest office!

Pitiful, indeed, is their boast of noble birth and of wealth, relying upon which they strut about in their pride, though devoid of even a leaven of virtue. It would take many pages to prove that the ancient Romans, who were endowed with a matchless and extraordinary virtue, were not successful in excluding the plebeians from office. It would be beyond my purpose to trace the particulars in this place. To state the question in its briefest compass, I shall say that, in almost every instance of a struggle for political office, the proud nobles were conquered by the lowly plebeians.

I expounded this truth at greater length in the detailed letter which I recently wrote to you. If you will deign to give to that letter your undivided attention for one hour, I have hopes

that you will follow in the footsteps of our ancestors, and that you will decree the salvation of the republic and of that fold especially dear to Jesus Christ; for, though He had appointed trusty shepherds to keep watch over it, seeing them terror-stricken at the fierceness of the wolves, He himself (as you know) returned in person without hesitation to suffer for the second time the passion of the cross.

November 24, 1351.

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#### NOTES

1. Compare Livy, *Praefatio*, 3; and letter *Var.*, XXXVIII, n. 10.

2. This is an unmistakable reference to the members of the Colonna family. Petrarca seems to have had some misgivings as to the effect of the preceding letter upon the commissioners, all of whom, being cardinals and residents of Avignon, had known personally Cardinal Giovanni Colonna and other members of that family. Everyone, of course, knew of Petrarca's intimacy with the Colonna, and hence our patriot here reiterates his love for the Colonna as individuals, and his unavoidable hatred for them as members of a foreign and invading feudal order.

3. The fourth member referred to is Niccola Capocci, of course. See *Fam.*, XI, 16, n. 1.

## CHAPTER XIII

The commission of cardinals appointed to reform the government of Rome did not accomplish anything in spite of Petrarca's suggestions. Their deliberations continued to be held with due gravity and solemnity, while the Romans patiently waited for the solution of their pressing problems. At last, wearied by the inaction of the responsible authorities, the Romans faced the situation squarely, and provided their own solution. On December 26, 1351, they gathered at the Church of S. Maria Maggiore and declared as the absolute head and master of the city the plebeian Giovanni Cerroni. This decisive act relieved at once the deep embarrassment both of the cardinals and of the Pope; and though the Romans had not seen the two letters of Petrarca, it is evident to the reader that their solution was quite in accord with Petrarca's suggestions.

The children of Mars, however, continued to be as unruly and as warlike as ever. Cerroni was shortly obliged to flee from the city, and his flight ushered in anew the party strifes of Colonna and Orsini. In sheer desperation, and

because they recalled the relatively peaceful and glorious days of 1347, the Romans at last gave the control of the city to Francesco Baroncelli, second Tribune of Rome (September 14, 1353). But what of Cola di Rienzo? What had now become of the former idol of the populace?

During many of those months of turmoil, Cola had been living the quiet life of a monk on Monte Maiella, in the company of the mystic and fanatic band known as the Fraticelli. Finally, spurred on by dreams of power and by the prophecies of the hermit Fra Angelo, he journeyed to Prague, the capital of the Bohemian king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. His intention was to place before the emperor schemes for establishing the claims of the empire independent of the pretensions of the papacy. In short, Cola had become a Ghibelline. The Bavarian claimant to the empire—the “inveterate enemy of the evil days gone by”—would have welcomed Cola—“the son of Belial”—with open arms. But unfortunately for Cola, Lewis the Bavarian was dead, and Charles IV was now without a rival. Charles IV, it will be remembered, had submitted in all things to the demands of the

church. To assure himself of the support of the church in his candidacy for the empire, he had promised at Avignon to be the humble servant of the Pope. After the consummation of this bargain, he had promised to enter Rome for the coronation, to leave the City of the Apostles on the very same day, and never again to enter the territory of the church. The eagle of the Ghibellines had by this time become the tame and docile dove of the Guelphs.

When, therefore, Cola reached the barbarian city of Prague (in July, 1350), the scholarly disposed emperor decided to give him an audience, spurred chiefly by a sense of curiosity to behold the ex-Tribune by whom he had been so boldly summoned three years before. Cola now began to write to the emperor, to the chancellor of the empire, and to the archbishop of Prague those lengthy letters of self-defense to which allusion has already been made. The strongly Catholic emperor, who grew increasingly alarmed at Cola's bold language, finally cast him into prison, and sent the news thereof to his sponsor at Avignon. Clement VI at once began to urge the emperor to surrender Cola. In a letter of August 17, 1350 (Theiner, II, No. 200), the Pope begs Arnest von Parbubitz, the

archbishop of Prague, either to send Cola to Avignon immediately, or else to be sure to keep close guard over him. On February 1, 1351, Pope Clement again writes to the emperor (*ibid.*, No. 204), rehearsing the well-known fact that Cola had been declared a heretic by Cardinal Bertrand de Deux and by Annibaldo di Ceccano, bishop of Tusculum. The tone of this letter is one of reproach and complaint, because, in spite of repeated demands, Cola had not yet been dispatched to Avignon. Cola's continued residence in the North caused the Pope serious apprehensions regarding the baneful influence of Cola's religious and political preachings. As Gregorovius says (VI, 346): "The Tribune in chains at Prague was more dangerous to the Papacy than he had been when at the height of his power on the Capitol." On February 24, 1352, consequently, the Pope wrote a general letter to the archbishops and the bishops of Germany and of Bohemia (Theiner, II, No. 217), instructing them to inform their flocks of Cola's heresy and to warn them to shun him accordingly. Finally, by brief of March 24, 1352 (*ibid.*, No. 218), Clement VI gave very specific instructions for the surrender of Cola. His letter ran as follows:

Clement, Bishop, etc., to his very dear son in Christ, the illustrious Charles, king of the Romans, greetings.

In a separate communication, we are sending instructions to our venerable brother Arnest, archbishop of Prague, to the effect that, without causing any disturbance, he be good enough to deliver Cola di Rienzo, the Roman citizen condemned of heresy, to our intimate acquaintances and bearers of the present, namely, to our venerable brother Giovanni, bishop of Spoleto, and to our beloved son Roger de Moulinneuf, Master of the Guards, and to Hugue de Charlus, in order that said Cola di Rienzo be conducted before us. Therefore, we earnestly beg thy Serenity that, in so far as in thee lies, thou mayest lend thy efficient aid to said archbishop in order that he may successfully fulfil our instructions in this regard.

Given at Villeneuve (-lès-Avignon), in the diocese of Avignon, on the 24th of March, and in the tenth year of our Pontificate.

Cola di Rienzo himself was glad of the coming change. His transfer to Avignon would release him from the cold and damp dungeon in which he had been confined for months, and would offer him the long-wished-for opportunity for defending himself in person against the charge of heresy. His journey from the representative of the temporal to that of the spiritual power was one continued ovation. The anonymous biographer of Cola condenses into one short

chapter Cola's journey to Avignon, his trial and his acquittal. The chapter is as follows (*Vita*, II, 13):

After some time Cola asked it as a favor of the emperor that he might go to Avignon, in order to appear before the Pope and to submit proofs that he was neither a heretic nor a Patarine. The emperor was very loath that he should go. But in the end he condescended to humor his desire. Cola di Rienzo was wont to say: "Most Serene Emperor, I go willingly before the Holy Father. Therefore, provided it is not under compulsion that you send me, you will not be breaking your promise to me." [In the chapter of the *Vita* preceding this, it is said that the emperor had reassured Cola not to entertain any fears whatsoever regarding his powerful enemies.] On his journey, the inhabitants of all the countries through which he passed rose up in great commotion, and, gathering in multitudes, went forth to meet him with much din and uproar. They took hold of him, and they said that they wished to rescue him from the hands of the Pope. They did not wish him to go to Avignon. To all he answered and said: "I go willingly, and not under compulsion." He would thank them, and thus he passed from city to city. Throughout his journey solemn honors were paid unto him. When the different peoples beheld him, they marveled; they accompanied him. And after this fashion did he reach Avignon.

When Cola di Rienzo reached Avignon, he spoke in



the presence of the Pope. He presented his defense, that he was not a Patarine, and that therefore he was not affected by the sentence [of excommunication] passed upon him by the Cardinal [*sc.*, Annibaldo di Ceccano] and by Messer Bruno [*sc.*, Bertrand de Deux, at one time Bishop of Embrun]. He expressed his desire to be submitted to a trial. At these words the Pope remained silent. Cola di Rienzo was imprisoned in a strong and spacious tower; a chain of suitable dimensions weighted his foot. The chain was fastened to the vaulted ceiling of the tower room. There Cola remained, clothed in robes of tolerable decency. He had many books; he had his Livy, his Histories of Rome, the Bible, and many other books. He studied incessantly. Food in great abundance was given to him from the kitchens of the Pope, food which was administered to him out of charity and in the name of God. His deeds were examined, and he was found to be a faithful Christian. Then the trial was annulled, and the sentence of Messer Bruno and of the Cardinal di Ceccano was revoked, and he was absolved. And he fell into the good graces of the Pope, and was saved.

The condensed story of the mediaeval biographer has caused us to anticipate somewhat. To return to Cola, it appears that he was surrendered to the papal emissaries in July, 1352 (Greg., VI, 350). Since the distance between Prague and Avignon was much greater than that between Rome and Avignon, we

calculate that if Cola left in the early days of July he must have reached Avignon in the early days of August. A few days later, perhaps a whole week later, Petrarca wrote from Vacluse a long letter (*Fam.*, XIII, 6), in which he described to his friend Francesco Nelli both the arrival of Cola and the strange rumors that were being spread concerning him.

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TO FRANCESCO, PRIOR OF THE HOLY  
APOSTLES

(*Fam.*, XIII, 6)

What dost thou expect to find in this letter?<sup>1</sup> Thinkest thou that I shall complete the mournful, and, at the same time, ridiculous tale of my last letter to thee?<sup>2</sup> To be sure, there is just now nothing of greater importance to do; or rather, there are many such tasks, but lack of time forbids me to apply myself to those of greater importance.<sup>3</sup> What little time I have is not at my own disposal, but is clogged with truly remarkable interruptions. Even I am constantly on the go; I find myself in the midst of turmoil and of confusion; I am here and there at once, with the result that I never really get anywhere. This is the familiar evil attend-

ing all wanderers. But recently I departed from Babylon and came to a halt at the Fountain of the Sorgue, the well-known refuge from the storms which beset me.

Here I await some traveling companions and the end of autumn, or at least that season described by Vergil,<sup>4</sup> when "the days are shorter, and the heat milder." In the meantime, therefore, that my stay in the country may not be altogether fruitless, I am bringing together the scattered fragments of previous meditations. My daily endeavor is, if possible, to add a little to the larger works which I have in hand, or to put the finishing touches to some of the minor ones. Learn from this letter, then, the task which I have set myself for today.

Poetry, a divine gift bestowed upon only a few, begins to be the common property of the mob. This is putting it mildly, for I might well say that poetry is now desecrated and degraded. There is nothing which stirs greater wrath within me; and if I have come to know thy tastes, my friend, I am sure that thou too canst in no way tolerate such an affront. Never at Athens or at Rome, never in the times of Homer or of Vergil, was there so much prattle about poets as there is today along the banks of

the Rhone. And yet I am positive that in no place and at no time was there such profound ignorance of the subject of poetry. Appease thy wrath with laughter, please; and learn to be merry in the midst of sorrow.<sup>5</sup>

There recently came to the Curia, or rather, he did not come, but was led here a prisoner, Cola di Rienzo, formerly the widely feared Tribune of Rome, today the most wretched of men. He has now touched the very lowest depths of misfortune; for, though he is extremely miserable, I know not whether he is by any means to be pitied. He might have died a glorious death on the Capitol; but he has submitted to the chains first of a Bohemian, and then of a Limousin—to his everlasting disgrace and in mockery of the Roman name and republic.<sup>6</sup>

The constant praises and exhortations in which my pen was so busily engaged are perhaps better known than I should wish at present. I loved his virtues, praised his aims, and marveled at the courage of the man. I congratulated Italy; I foresaw the empire of the bountiful city, and anticipated the peace of the entire world. I could not repress the joyous feelings springing from such numerous causes,

and it seemed to me that I should partake of his glory, if I should goad him on in his course. And, indeed, his messengers and letters to me bear witness that he esteemed my words most potent incentives. The heat of my enthusiasm became more intense thereat. I racked my brain to devise means whereby I might the more inflame his already glowing spirit. I knew full well that nothing enkindles a generous heart more readily than praises and the prospects of glory; hence I constantly introduced words of high praise, which to many appeared extravagant, but which to me seemed justly deserved. I lauded the deeds already performed, and urged him to the performance of others.

There are extant several letters which I wrote to him, letters which even today it does not displease me to have written. I am not accustomed to predict the future; and would that he, too, had not been addicted to prophecy! Verily, the deeds which he was performing and which he gave promise of performing at the time when I wrote, were most deserving not only of my praise and admiration, but of that of the whole human race. I hardly think that all those letters should be destroyed for this one

false step: that he chose to live in shame rather than to die in glory. But it is a waste of time to deliberate on the impossible. Though great should be my desire to destroy them, I am now powerless. They have gone forth into the world, and are no longer subject to my control.

But to resume my story. Rienzo entered the Curia, humbled and despised, he who once had made the wicked of this world to tremble and to fear, and who had filled the upright with the most joyful hopes and expectations. Once upon a time, he was attended by the whole people of Rome, and in his train followed the princes of the Italic cities. Today the unhappy man proceeded on his way, hemmed in on this side and on that by two guards, while the rabble eagerly rushed forward to gaze upon the face of him whose illustrious name they had heard of only. He was being sent to the Roman Pontiff by the king of the Romans! Oh strange traffic indeed!<sup>7</sup> I do not dare commit to writing the thoughts which now rush to my brain. Not even this much did I intend should escape me; and so I shall continue with the story which I began.

Upon his arrival, then, the Supreme Pontiff immediately appointed three princes of the

church to try his case, with instructions to discover the most suitable punishment for him who desired the freedom of the republic.<sup>8</sup> *O tempora, o mores!*<sup>9</sup> Alas, how often is it necessary in our age, to utter these words of exclamation! In a certain sense, I admit that no penalty is too severe for Cola; firstly, because he did not persevere in his aims as steadfastly as he should have, and as the condition and the needs of the state demanded; and secondly, because, having once declared himself liberty's champion, he should not have permitted the enemies of liberty to depart in arms, when he could have crushed them all at a single blow, an opportunity which fortune had never offered to any ruler. Fatal and dreadful darkness, which often obscures the sight of men as they struggle over projects of supreme importance!<sup>10</sup>

He was wont to style himself "severe and clement." Forsooth, if he had determined to put into practice only the second part of this title, and not that other part which was quite necessary on account of the disease of the republic; if, I say, he had determined to display only mercy to the traitors of their country, he should at least, in sparing their lives, have deprived them of all means for working injury,

and especially should he have driven them from their frowning strongholds. In this way, those who had previously been enemies of Rome would have become her citizens; or, at any rate, those who had been a source of constant fear would have become an object of contempt. I remember having written to him a well-pondered letter on that occasion.<sup>12</sup> Had he heeded its substance, the republic would now be in a far different condition. Rome would not be, today, the slave of others, nor he a prisoner.

I cannot forgive this, nor do I see how his subsequent actions can very well be excused. Although he had assumed the protection of all good citizens, and the extermination of all wicked ones, it was only after a short interval that he unexpectedly changed in purpose and in manners, began to favor the wicked, and to place in these his whole trust, greatly to the dismay and the detriment of the upright. Rienzo himself may perhaps know the motives of his actions, for I have not seen him since; but surely the excuse for a misdeed, though it may always be readily framed by a man of eloquence, never can have the ring of truth. Would at least that he had not chosen the very



lowest of the low! Once again did I write to him on the subject, and at a time when the republic had not yet fallen, but was already tottering.<sup>12</sup>

But enough. I am speaking with too great ardor, and I dwell in sadness (as thou seest) on the different steps of my story. And naturally so, for I had placed in that man my last hope for the liberties of Italy. I had long known him, and cherished him; but when he began to essay that most glorious enterprise, I allowed myself to love and to worship him beyond all other mortals. And, therefore, the more I hoped in the past, the more do I now grieve at the destruction of those hopes. I frankly confess that, whatever the end of it all may be, even now I cannot help admiring his glorious beginning.

But to return once more to my story. He came, but not in chains. This alone was lacking to his public disgrace; as for the rest, he was so carefully guarded that there was no hope of escape. As soon as he reached the city gate, the poor unfortunate inquired whether I was in attendance at the Curia, hoping, perhaps, that I might be of some assistance to him (which, to my knowledge, I cannot be), or else simply

because he was reminded of an old friendship formerly contracted in that very city.<sup>13</sup> Now, therefore, the life of that man in whose hands rested the safety and the welfare of so many nations, hangs upon the nod of strangers. His life and his name are alike at stake. Do not be surprised at the outcome; men are now wavering in their opinions, and thou wilt be sure to hear one of two sentences: either that he has been deprived of all legal rights, or else that he has been condemned to death.<sup>14</sup> The clay of any mortal creature, even of the most sacred and pure, can indeed be destroyed; but virtue fears neither death nor reproach. Virtue is invulnerable, and survives uninjured all calumny and attack.

And oh that he had not stained his honor by his own lethargy and change of purpose! He would have nothing to fear from the sentence pending over him except physical injury. And yet, even today his fame is not in danger among those who judge of right and of wrong, of glory and of shame, not according to the general opinion but according to certain and more reliable tests. His fame rests secure with those who measure the greatness of men by considering the noble qualities they have displayed,

and not the success which has attended their undertakings.

That this is so results most clearly from the nature of the charge brought against him. No account is taken of the many errors with which all upright citizens upbraid him. He is accused for that which he did at the opening of his career, and not at all for that which signalized its close. He is not accused of embracing the cause of the wicked, nor of deserting the standard of liberty, nor of fleeing from the Capitol, although in no other place could he have lived more honorably, or died more gloriously. What, then, is the charge, thou mayest ask? This is the one great crime for which he is brought to trial, and if he be condemned for this, I shall consider him to have been marked not with infamy but with eternal glory: he has dared to entertain the hope that the republic should be restored to safety and to freedom, and that questions of the Roman empire and the Roman dominion should be settled at Rome.<sup>15</sup> A crime, this, worthy of the gallows and the attendant vultures, indeed! This, surely, is the sum and substance of the accusation, and it is for this that punishment is demanded: that a Roman citizen should have

voiced his grief at seeing his country, the rightful queen of the universe, the slave of the vilest of men!

Now at last listen to that which first prompted me to write, and thou wilt have good cause for laughter after the sad recital which has preceded. While the trial is in this unsettled state, I learn from the letters of friends that one hope of safety still remains—the rumor which has spread abroad that Rienzo is a most famous poet! Consequently it seems an act of sacrilege to do violence to a man so worthy and dedicated to so sacred a study. The magnificent phrases which Cicero addressed to the judges in defense of his teacher Aulus Licinius Archias are now upon the lips of everyone.<sup>16</sup> Many years ago I brought back that speech from far-off Germany, whither I had roamed impelled by my youthful desire to visit those regions; and the following year I sent it on to you all at Florence, who were so eagerly expecting it. I do not stop to cite the passage; for I can readily see from your letters that you still prize that famous oration, and still read it with care.<sup>17</sup>

What shall I say of this strange rumor? I heartily rejoice. I deem it a cause for endless

congratulation that the Muses are held so much in honor even today. The following is even more astonishing: that the mere mention of the Muses should be potent enough to bring safety to one who is hated by his very judges, men who are quite unacquainted with their refining influence.

What greater victory could the Muses have scored under Augustus Caesar, an age when they were most highly honored, and when, from every land, poets assembled at Rome to behold the noble countenance of him who was at once an unparalleled prince, the friend of poets, and the master of the universe? What greater tribute, I ask, could have been paid to the Muses in those days than this which we witness today: that a man undoubtedly hated (though how just or unjust the hatred I do not stop to prove), and entirely free from all guilt (yet pronounced guilty and convicted), a man who, by the unanimous vote of his judges was deemed worthy of capital punishment, that this man, I say, should be snatched from the very jaws of death by an appeal to the Muses? I repeat, I rejoice, and congratulate both him and the Muses. I congratulate him, because the Muses have been his shield; and the Muses, because of this honor so freely bestowed. I do not

begrudge him that, in his hour of extreme need and when the trial has assumed such a doubtful aspect, the rumor of his being a poet should bring him salvation.

If, however, thou wert to ask me my private opinion, I should answer that Cola di Rienzo is a very fluent speaker, possessing great convincing powers and a decided vein for oratory; and that as a writer, he is pleasing and elegant, and his diction, though not extensive, is charming and brilliant. I suppose he has read all the poets, at least all those who are generally known; but he is no more a poet for that reason than he would be a weaver for robing himself with a mantle wrought by another's hands. The mere production of verses is not sufficient to merit for the composer the name of poet. Most true are the words of Horace:<sup>18</sup>

For one certainly should never say this, "I know it's  
Quite enough to give lines their six feet," or suppose  
Those true bards who, like me, write what's much  
more like prose.

As for Cola, never, to my knowledge, has he managed to write a single line; nor has he devoted to the subject of poetry the slightest study, and without application nothing can be well done, no matter how easy it be.

I have wished to acquaint thee with these facts, that thou mayest grieve over the lot which has befallen the former deliverer of a people, that thou mayest rejoice at his unhoped-for freedom, and, thirdly, that thou mayest, at one and the same time, weep and laugh over the cause of his safety, even as I do now. Stop to consider for a moment. If, under the shield of poetry, Cola escapes uninjured from such great perils (and may it so fall out!), what dangers would Vergil not escape?<sup>19</sup> If tried by the judges of this generation, Vergil, however, would perish for other reasons: for today he is considered not a poet, but a sorcerer. Indeed, I shall now tell thee something that will increase thy mirth. Even I, the most inveterate enemy that ever was of both divination and sorcery, even I have at times been pronounced a magician by these most worthy judges—and all because of my intimacy with Vergil. Behold how low our studies have fallen! Behold to what hateful and ridiculous trifles they are reduced!<sup>20</sup>

I shall relate to thee one other remarkable absurdity, in order that, from a comparison of several instances, thou mayest become better acquainted with the trend of affairs, and that,

from a consideration of the example set by those in high station, thou mayest form some adequate conception of what must be the conditions among the populace.

I have at Babylon a dear friend, a man whose acquaintance deserves to be cultivated with great care. I call him "friend" only because I employ the ancient and candid style of speech, writing in the same spirit in which Cicero addressed Pompey the Great as friend, or in which Pliny the Elder sent familiar greetings to his Vespasian. If I were to adopt the slavish and cringing speech of today, I should be compelled to see in my friend only an excellent and revered master. Whatever may be the proper title, this much I can assert in all honesty: that he is one of the few, a prince among princes, and foremost among the highest; a man who reflects honor upon his office of Roman cardinal; a man of rare foresight, whose wisdom, it would seem, is easily capable of ruling the world; a man, finally, of lofty intellect and of wide reading.<sup>21</sup>

But, after all, Sallustius Crispus is right in saying:<sup>22</sup> "Intellect displays its power only in those things to which attention has been given." This great man frequently honors me by



admitting me to his conversation with intimate friends. Often enough there is mention of someone or other who has learned to put together a few words in making a public address, or perhaps has learned to compose a letter with great difficulty. In each and every instance, my friend would turn to me with great eagerness (not to say stupefied amazement), and would ask of me: "Is this man a poet?" I, on the other hand, would remain silent. What else could I do?

One day, finally, he put that question once too often, this time in regard to certain rhetoricians who, through long practice rather than ability, could manage to write some stupid and nauseating stuff.<sup>23</sup> It was with difficulty that I repressed a smile; and he, being a very keen man, noticed at once my changed expression. In consequence, he pressed me urgently and more urgently to tell him the reason thereof. And then, in obedience to his reiterated wishes I took advantage of the familiarity with which I always speak to him. I rebuked him (with all due respect, however) for the crass ignorance of so noble a subject in a man of such lofty genius. I pointed out that he did not comprehend even the elementary and fundamental

principles of an art to which formerly (as is certain) the masters of the earth, burdened down as they were with affairs of state, had devoted their profound intellects with such longing and earnestness. I cited several instances (which thou, of course, dost not need), and concluded by proving to him that the number of poets was far smaller than he thought. I spoke hastily, briefly, and superficially, discoursing on the origin of poetry, on its nature and on its aims, but especially on the incredible scarcity of poets, the last subdivision of learned men mentioned by Cicero in his work *De Oratore*.<sup>24</sup> That great man listened to my words in wrapt attention; for, though learned in other matters, he was quite ignorant of the subject under discussion. He seemed to be thirsty for information; when I was done speaking, he asked many questions on the separate points of my discourse; and since that day he has carefully avoided making inquiries on the subject of poetry.

As for thyself, mayest thou live happily and well. And unless thou thinkest otherwise, when thou art through reading today's letter and yesterday's, send them on to our dear Zanobi at Naples, so that both he and my

Barbato may share our mirth and our indignation, provided, of course, that Barbato has by this time left his haven at Solmona and has returned to the stormy waters of Parthenope.

At the Fountain of the Sorgue, August 10.<sup>25</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Fracassetti wrongly adopted July of the year 1351 as the date of Cola's journey to Avignon. In this he followed Papencordt, and he was consequently forced into several misunderstandings. For instance, he argues that Cola's journey could not have taken place in July of 1352, because in such case it would be difficult to believe that he could have reached Avignon as soon as August, and that the trial could already have been ended by August 10, when all fear of Cola's conviction had vanished, and when there was already talk of acquitting him on the strange plea of his being a poet (3, p. 237). Fracassetti furthermore assumes that a considerable period of time elapsed after Cola's arrival at Avignon before the Pope appointed the three cardinals who were to judge him, and assumes also the usual delays of the law, all in the endeavor to bridge the gap between the supposed date of Cola's arrival in July or August, 1351, and August 10, 1352, the date of *Fam.*, XIII, 6. Finally, and for the same reason, he places Petrarca's letter to the Roman People (*Sine Titulo*, IV) chronologically ahead of this letter to Nelli (*Fam.*, XIII, 6).

The papal briefs already cited prove beyond per-

adventure that Cola's journey from Bohemia to Avignon took place during July, 1352. Consequently, the letter to Nelli was in fact written shortly thereafter, and the "recently" (*nuper*, *Frac.*, II, p. 234) of Petrarca must be taken in its literal sense, and not (as Fracassetti says, 3, p. 237) in a rather broad and liberal sense. It follows, therefore, that *Fam.*, XIII, 6, must be earlier than *Sine Titulo*, IV. The internal evidence of *Fam.*, XIII, 6, itself refutes the assumptions of Fracassetti.

We shall take up the various points in their proper order. There was no delay in appointing the three cardinals who were to judge Cola. Petrarca distinctly says that they were appointed immediately after Cola's arrival—*Ut ergo [sc., Nicolaus] pervenit, illico pontifex maximus tribus e numero principum ecclesiae causam eius discernendam dedit* (*Frac.*, II, p. 236). All fear of Cola's conviction had not vanished, for Petrarca says: first, that Cola's safety was still in the hands of strangers—*Nunc ergo viri salus . . . de manibus pendet alienis* (*ibid.*, p. 237); secondly, that he learns from the letters of friends that but one hope for Cola's acquittal remains—*unam sibi relictam spem salutis* (*ibid.*, p. 238); and thirdly, that Cola is in his hour of extreme need—*in extremis casibus* (*ibid.*, p. 239; cf. *in extremis*, III, p. 501, and *dum licet*, *ibid.*, p. 503). Finally, Petrarca continues to speak of Cola's acquittal as a matter that had been un hoped for, but which was still to be realized—*de insperata gaudeas salute*; and he adds: "if Cola escapes uninjured from such great perils"—*si . . . Nicolaus e tantis periculis evaserit* (II, p. 240). All the above citations prove, we think, not only that

the trial was not over by August 10, but, indeed, that it had only been fairly launched. For this reason, as well as for the internal evidence offered by *Sine Titulo*, IV, we reach the conclusion that said letter is to be dated later than *Fam.*, XIII, 6, and perhaps not earlier than the middle of September, 1352.

2. In *Fam.*, XIII, 5, which precedes the present letter in Petrarca's correspondence, Petrarca relates that his friends had warmly offered to him the office of apostolic secretary, and that, in the presence of the Pope himself, they had remarked that the only drawback was his style, which would prove to be too noble and too elevated for the position offered to him. Petrarca could hardly believe them serious in their offering to him a post of such honor; indeed, he judged that their criticism of his style was meant very much in the nature of satire. The assurances of the assembly, however, restored his confidence in the sincerity of their proposal. He was then given a theme, on which to compose something extemporaneously.

Petrarca, who dreaded the mere thought of tying himself down to such steady employment, and who considered any encroachment upon his time as nothing short of slavery, here saw his opportunity, and he made the most of it. He assures Nelli that, though the theme suggested to him was in no way worthy of the Muses and of Apollo, he so exerted his every power as to rise to heights to which his auditors could not follow. The verdict of the assembly was that Petrarca should be allowed time in which to learn the barbaric style characteristic of the chanceries of the day. And

Petrarca, breathing freely once again, concludes the letter with congratulating himself upon his narrow escape from the threatened servitude.

3. Robinson and Rolfe here translate (p. 342): "although there are plenty of trifling duties." The original reads (Frac., II, p. 233): *Nil certe nunc maius habeo quod agam: immo vero multa: sed maioribus incumbere breve tempus vetat*. Similarly, we do not think that *Babylone ultimo digressus* (*ibid.*, p. 234) means "Having left Babylon for the last time." It so happens that after his departure for Italy on May 1, 1353 (Frac., I, p. 181), Petrarca never again set foot upon French soil. But surely he could not have known this when writing the present letter to Nelli on August 10, 1352; for Vaucluse was only 15 miles distant from Avignon, and the slightest call from the Pope or from one of his many friends in the Sacred College would have brought him back post-haste. Were any further proof necessary, we should find it in a letter which Petrarca wrote many years later (in 1361-62), in which he describes to Cardinal Talleyrand the motives which at about this time (December, 1352, or January, 1353) urged him to leave Avignon. Petrarca there says (*Sen.*, I, 3, p. 739, quoted below in n. 20): "Therefore, at the time that he [Innocent VI] ascended the Sacred Chair [December 30, 1352], I left Avignon not knowing whether or not I should ever return"—*nescio an umquam reversurus inde abiens*.

4. *Georgics*, i. 312.

5. In a letter to Pietro, abbot of St. Benigno, written in the same year as the present letter, Petrarca

expresses himself on this subject with greater freedom and playfulness (*Fam.*, XIII, 7, Vauclose, 1352). He says (*Frac.*, II, pp. 245-46):

“Hitherto well-meaning young men, eager to further their own interests and those of their friends, were accustomed to draw up such papers as pertained to their own property, or to their business affairs, or to the noisy contentions of the echoing lawcourts. But now we are all plying the same trade. Now the words of Horace are verified to the letter [*Ep.*, ii. 1, 117,] ‘But verses all men scribble, wise or fools.’

“It is but a poor species of consolation to have found so many to share one’s burdens. I should prefer to grow ill alone. As matters stand, I am preoccupied by my own faults as well as by those of others; and even if I should wish to pause and to regain my breath, I am not permitted to do so. Daily, and from every corner of the world, epistles and odes are showered upon my head. Nor does this satisfy my foreign correspondents. I am overwhelmed by a perfect avalanche of letters, not only from France, but also from Greece and Germany and England. I am called upon to be the arbiter of all talents, though unaware of possessing any myself. Were I to answer each and every one of these letters, I should be the busiest of men. Were I to condemn the fruits of their labors, I should be pronounced an envious critic; were I to laud them, a false flatterer; and were I to express no opinion at all, I should be judged insolent and haughty. They are afraid, I suppose, that I am aging too slowly. Thanks to their incitements and to my ever feverish passion for writing, I may gratify their wishes.

“But this was as nothing. Who would believe it? The disease has been spreading, and very recently it fastened upon the Roman Curia itself. What dost thou suppose the lawyers and the physicians are now

discussing? They no longer study their Justinian and their Aesculapius; they no longer pay heed to the voices of their clients or to the groans of their patients. They are become deaf, smitten with prophetic fury by the names of Homer and of Vergil. They rove in the woody valleys of Cirrha, and linger by the murmuring fountain of Aonia. But why do I dwell on these minor portents? Wagon-makers, fullers, and farmers have abandoned the plough and the other tools of their trades, and chatter about the Muses and Apollo. It is inconceivable how far this pestilence has diffused itself, which but recently was confined to a few.

“If thou requirest a reason for all this, it is simply that poetry is a most delightful thing; but it is really understood only by men of rare talents, for poetry demands an utter disregard and contempt for all mortal things, an elevated mind that can withdraw itself from the things of the world, and suitable natural endowments. Therefore, both experience and the authority of the most learned men teach us that in none of the arts is progress less due to study than in that of poetry.

“To thee, perchance, it may be laughable, but to me it is a disgusting fact that one can stumble over poets at every street corner, but can behold scarcely one on Helicon. All men taste of the Pierian honeycomb with the tips of their tongues, but not one can digest it. Imagine, I beg of thee, how powerful and how delightful a gift poetry must be to its true possessors, when it gives such great pleasure to these idle dreamers; when, in spite of their occupations and their greed, in spite of the countless vanities of our age and the many hours spent in frivolities, it has caused these men to forget their affairs and to neglect the accumulation of riches!

“For one reason do I congratulate the fatherland—that, in the midst of the miserable tares and barren oats [Vergil, *Ecl.*, v. 37; *Georg.*, i. 154] scattered throughout the world, there are arising young men of greater



ability, young men who (unless my love deceive me) will drink, and not in vain, at the Castalian spring. I congratulate you all, O Mantua beloved by the Muses; O Padua, Verona, Umbria, my dear Solmona, and Parthenope, home of Vergil. For it is far away from you that I behold these new bands of poetasters roaming far and wide in uncertain by-paths, and tormented by a parching thirst which they can never quench."

6. The references are, respectively, to the Bohemian king, Emperor Charles IV; and to Clement VI, whose family name was Pierre Roger, and who was a native of Limoges.

7. Robinson and Rolfe omit from these words (Frac., II, p. 236, l. 1) to *In hoc statu* (*ibid.*, p. 238); and again from the words *O nugas* (*ibid.*, p. 240) to the end of the letter. These two omissions constitute almost exactly one-half of the entire letter.

8. Here again we are indebted to the Abbé de Sade, who seems to have been so well informed on matters dealing with the Sacred College. He admits that the three judges appointed to try Cola di Rienzo are not known, but proposes the following cardinals: Gui de Boulogne, Talleyrand, and Bertrand de Deux (III, p. 233).

9. Cicero, *Cat.*, i. 1, 2.

10. Petrarca refers to the arrest of the barons at the banquet given by Cola on September 14, and to their release on the 15th, when Cola, as if to make amends for his boldness, showered honors and offices upon them. The arrested barons included several members of the Colonna, and even more of the Orsini. Their names are given in detail in the anonymous *Vita*, which con-

sequently becomes the chief source for their identification. According to the *Vita*, then (I, 28, col. 821), they were: of the Colonna, Stefano the Elder, the venerable head of the house; Pietro d'Agapito Colonna, lord of Genazzano, formerly provost of Marseilles and senator of Rome during the first half of 1347; and Giovanni Stefano Colonna, grandson of Stefano the Elder, and at this time a mere youth of twenty years, who had, a few days before, been appointed by Cola captain of the Campagna; of the Orsini, Roberto, son of Count Bertoldo, and likewise senator of Rome during the first half of 1347; Giordano of the Orsini del Monte; Rinaldo of the Orsini of Marino; Cola, lord of the Castle S. Angelo; and Count Bertoldo, lord of Vicovaro.

This makes a total of three Colonna, and of five Orsini; and the biographer adds (*ibid.*, col. 823): "and many others of the foremost barons of Rome."

In Cola's letter to Rinaldo Orsini (*Epistolario*, No. XXIII, dated Rome, September 17, 1347) we have (p. 61) practically the same list. Among the Colonna, there is no mention of Pietro, son of Agapito; among the Orsini, we do not find Senator Roberto, but instead there is mention of Orso, brother of Giordano del Monte and son of Jacopo Orsini. Among those who were honored with offices, Cola di Rienzo gives (*ibid.*, p. 63) the same list as on p. 61, with the addition of Cola Orsini.

Petrarca here considers that Cola di Rienzo missed his opportunity. The biographer of Cola considers him guilty of neglecting a second opportunity after the battle of November 20, 1347, when Cola broke the

power of the barons. After an excursus on the famous conversation between Hannibal and Maharbal after the battle of Cannae, he says (*Vita*, I, 36, cols. 857, 859):

“And now to the point. If Cola di Rienzo, the Tribune, had followed up his victory, and had advanced upon Marino, he would have taken the Castle of Marino, and would have utterly destroyed the power of Messer Giordano, who could never again have raised his head. And the people of Rome would have lived unmolested in the enjoyment of their liberty.”

11. We have already pointed out (chap. x) the dearth of material for the period of time between the writing of *Fam.*, VII, 1, and *Fam.*, VII, 7; the former letter, addressed to Marco Barbato, is dated Avignon, September 11, 1347; the latter, addressed to Cola, is dated Genoa, November 29, 1347. Of course Develay is absolutely wrong in identifying the “well-pondered letter” here mentioned with *Var.*, XLVIII (*Lettres à Rienzi*, II, 90). *Var.*, XLVIII, was written on the occasion of Petrarca’s first hearing of Cola’s elevation, and all agree that the letter must be dated in the end of June or in the beginning of July. It is clear from our preceding note that the “well-pondered letter” which Petrarca here mentions must have been written when he became acquainted with the arrest of the barons (September 14) and with their release (on the 15th). Cola sent a full account of these events to the papal notary Rinaldo Orsini on September 17 (see note 10). According to our calculations, this letter must have reached Avignon about October 3. But the Pope must by this time have heard only of the arrest of

the barons, for we find him writing on October 4, 1347, and interceding with Cola for the pardon of the nobles in the name of the reverence due to the Pope and to the apostolic see (Theiner, II, No. 177). Someone, evidently, had hurriedly sent a dispatch to the Pope on the evening of September 14. The "well-pondered letter" which Petrarca wrote on that occasion, therefore, must likewise have been written in October, but unfortunately such letter is not to be found in the extant correspondence.

12. The letter now referred to is *Fam.*, VII, 7, the spirit of which is clearly summarized in the present paragraph.

13. It will be remembered that Cola and Petrarca had become thoroughly acquainted with each other at Avignon in 1343, on the occasion of the second embassy of the Romans to the newly elected Pope, Clement VI. Cf. chap. i.

14. The original Latin is here very uncertain: *Non advertes ante vibrante sententia (sic) vel intestabilem illum audies vel extinctum* (Frac., II, p. 237). Even as Fracassetti (3, p. 231), we have tried to divine the meaning of this passage, for it was impossible to translate it.

15. The two charges on which Cola was to be tried are distinctly these: his declarations that Rome was a free city, and that the rights of the Roman empire were in the sacred possession of the Roman people only. These two statements, therefore, constituted a declaration of war against the two principles which so fundamentally ruled the Middle Ages, the two principles represented by the Guelphs and by the Ghibellines, in

other words, the supremacy in Italy of the Roman church as embodied in a Pope, and the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire as embodied in an emperor of German origin. The former declaration assailed the temporal claims of the papacy over Rome; the latter, those of Charles IV. According to Petrarca's testimony, then, this lengthy trial of Cola reduces itself to a political one, purely and simply. And the religious trial—that is to say the question of Cola's heresy and the subsequent excommunication inflicted upon him—must have been hushed, or previously dealt with as quickly and as concisely as the description thereof by the anonymous biographer of Cola: "His deeds were examined, and he was found to be a faithful Christian."

16. Cicero, *pro Archia*, viii.

17. Petrarca says (Frac., II, p. 238): *illa quidem praeclara sententia iam in vulgus effusa, qua pro Aulo Licinio Archia praeceptore suo apud iudices usus est Cicero; quam non apposui*. The *quam* surely refers to *sententia*, and the sentence *quam non apposui* is to be rendered: "I do not stop to cite the passage" (*quam*, i.e., *sententiam*); cf. "But I need not add a description of the oration" (Robinson and Rolfe, p. 345). Similarly, Petrarca's *orationem . . . vobis optantibus transmissam* (Frac., II, p. 239, l. 1) surely indicates that the oration was eagerly desired by all Petrarca's Florentine friends, including Nelli, as is proved by the plural *vobis* instead of a *tibi*, and by the plurals *habetis* and *legitis* instead of a *habes* and a *legis*; hence the oration was not sent "in response to the desires of your friends"

(Robinson and Rolfe, *ibid.*), but "to you all at Florence, who were so eagerly expecting it."

Petrarca gives a brief account of his discovery of the oration *pro Archia* in a letter written to the papal secretary Luca della Penna (*Sen.*, XVI, 1, *Dabis veniam*, dated Arquá, April 27, 1374; *Sen.*, XV, 1 in the Basle ed. of 1581, p. 948):

"At about the twenty-fifth year of my life [1329], while hurriedly traveling among the Belgians and the Swiss, I reached the city of Liège. Upon hearing that the city contained a goodly number of books, I made a halt there, and detained my companions until I was in possession of two orations of Cicero, one copied by the hand of a friend, the second by my own. The latter oration I afterward spread throughout Italy; and that thou mayest smile, I shall tell thee that it was quite a considerable task to find some ink in so fine a barbarian city, and that when it was found, it was very much the color of saffron."

18. *Sat.*, i, 4, 40-42 (tr. by R. M. Millington).

19. Petrarca says (*Frac.*, II, p. 240): *cogitesque: si (quod utinam accidat) sub clypeo poetico Nicolaus e tantis periculis evaserit, unde non evasurus esset Maro?* Robinson and Rolfe (p. 347) render as follows: "and will wonder, if Cola—which God grant!—can, in such imminent peril, find shelter beneath the aegis of the poet, why Vergil should not escape in the same way."

20. There is a passing reference to this accusation against Petrarca in *Fam.*, IX, 5 (*Frac.*, II, pp. 18-19, dated Avignon, December 28, 1352):

"Perhaps, I say, to many I now appear to be a necromancer and enchanter, because, forsooth, I am

frequently alone and because (it is a thing which has justly dispelled my wrath with laughter) I read the works of Vergil, as those most learned men say. And I do not deny it; I have read them. Behold the cause of their suspicions! Behold the disrepute cast upon our studies!"

The above letter continues with some very interesting remarks upon the vanity of human wishes. But the details of the occurrence are given in a letter written years later (in 1361 or 1362) to Cardinal Talleyrand, and they are mentioned in connection with the post of Apostolic Secretary which had again been offered to him (*Sen.*, I, 4, *Litteras pridem*; I, 3 in the Basle ed. of 1581, p. 739).

"It was with reverent joy, but with amazement, most loving Father, that I read thy letter and the commands of his Holiness which it contained. The great hurry of thy messenger did not allow me the time necessary for an adequate answer thereto. Nevertheless, I answered as best I could, very briefly, but clearly. That which I had not time to put down in writing, I was content to confide to thy trusted messenger. But behold, I am now again overwhelmed by more messengers and by more letters on the same subject, whereat my astonishment increases, and likewise my joy.

"For who, I ask, would not be amazed, and who would not rejoice at becoming the friend of the Vicar of Jesus Christ; at becoming a friend of that man who is wont not merely to suspect, but actually to affirm that I am a magician? Who would not rejoice that he has now suddenly laid aside this suspicion of me, a suspicion which he had so falsely entertained and which hitherto he had always so stubbornly defended against thy

eloquent remonstrances and against those of many who desired to root it out? Why should I not rejoice? Not only has he now laid aside such suspicion, but he has replaced it with an opinion so utterly the opposite that he offers to me the post of Apostolic Secretary, and beseeches with gifts and with prayers the faithful services of the very man at whose conversation and presence he once seemed to shudder! Great is the power of truth; it may be crushed and prostrated by falsehood, but it cannot be destroyed. After lying prostrate for a time, of its own strength will truth rise to greater and brighter heights.

"May God, however, forgive him who was so falsely the author of that suspicion [Cardinal Pierre Desprez]. He was a great man indeed, for he was not the least among those of thy order [he had been vice-chancellor since 1325]; in addition, he was a most learned jurist (which makes his error all the more remarkable), a man of the most varied experience [cardinal since 1320] and of very advanced years [born c. 1280]. But perhaps his was not an error at all, but merely an evidence of his hatred. . . .

"Whatever may have been the cause, he pronounced me a magician, and he did not blush to allege as his reason the fact that I read the works of Vergil, or had read them. And he found men to believe him [among others, Cardinal Etienne Aubert, of Limoges]. Behold the intellects to which is intrusted the control of the highest matters!

"Thou knowest, in truth, how often we joked over these accusations, and several times even in the presence of him whom my accuser had persuaded [Cardinal Aubert]. But when at last he [Cardinal Aubert] had been raised to the papal see [as Innocent VI], then the accusation ceased to be a jesting matter, and it began to turn to wrath with thee, and to grief with me. It is not that I especially desired anything



of him, for all my desires are well known to thee. But since Benedict [XII] had judged my youth, and Clement [VI] my manhood, and since they had found me, I do not say innocent, but at any rate averse to base studies and to injurious arts, I could not but grieve that my old age had been suspected by Innocent. Therefore, at the time that he ascended the sacred chair [December 30, 1352], I left Avignon not knowing whether or not I should ever return. And though, in compliance with even his wishes, thou hadst desired to take me to him that I might bid him farewell, I refused, lest my magical arts should annoy him, or lest his credulity should annoy me.

“Thou knowest that I am speaking the truth, when I say that thou didst endeavor time and again, and in vain, not to have me set out without having paid my respects to him. Behold what the venomous tongue of a single man brought upon me, a man who had no earthly reason for hating me! But nothing happens without a reason; he [Desprez] hated me, not indeed for myself, but on account of that man with whom he remembered that I had lived on the most intimate terms [Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, who died July 3, 1348]. Aye, on account of that same man he hated thee also; but, being conscious of fostering an unjust hatred, he feigned a friendship for both of us, consummate hypocrite that he was! I mention facts that are well known to thee: though that man had been laid to rest, as if not appeased by his death, he [Desprez] had declared war upon his very ashes. . . .

“The Pontiff, indeed, can scarcely believe that man a magician whom he desires as his secretary; nor can he suppose that that man devotes his labors to abominable incantations and sorceries whom he deems worthy of the secrets of his inner councils and fit to perform the duties of his sacred correspondence. For these great honors do I render him thanks; nor do I

render him lesser thanks for having rid himself of his delusion. . . ."

21. These would seem to be sufficient indications whereby to identify Petrarca's "dear friend," and yet such identification is at present impossible. Develay's statement that the cardinal referred to is Giovanni Colonna (*Lettres à Rienzi*, II, 103) is, of course, the wildest kind of a guess; for Cardinal Giovanni died of the plague at Avignon on July 3, 1348. Fracassetti (3, p. 238) advances the hypothesis that the cardinal in question may have been one of the three cardinals appointed to try Cola.

22. Sallust, *Cat.*, 51, 3.

23. Petrarca's meaning and words, *pingue quiddam et rancidum* (Frac., II, p. 241), are reminiscent of the words spoken by Cicero with similar purpose, *pingue quiddam sonantibus atque peregrinum* (*pro Archia*, 10, 26).

24. The original Latin is misleading: *quem novissimum articulum in Oratore suo Tullius attigit* (Frac., II, p. 241). Petrarca undoubtedly refers to the *De Oratore*, i. 3. That chapter speaks first of the philosophers, and (says Cicero) it would be difficult to enumerate the large number of eminent ones; secondly, it speaks of the mathematicians, all of whom seem to attain what they earnestly desire; thirdly, of musicians and of grammarians, who are able to master the whole range of their sciences, though they are almost infinite. And finally Cicero says (*ibid.*, i. 3, 11):

"I think I may truly say this: that of all those who have occupied themselves with the studies and the principles of the most liberal arts, the number of those

who have risen to eminence is smallest among the poets. And in the number of the learned . . . there will be found far fewer good orators than good poets."

25. There is a strange inconsistency among authors in regard to the date of this letter, which is August 10, 1352 (Frac., I, p. 110; 3, pp. 227, 236; II, p. 242). Papencordt, who prints part of this letter to Nelli among his Documents (No. 28), dates it Vacluse, August 12, 1352 (p. lxxviii), but correctly prints *ad fontem Sorgie IIII Id. Aug.* on p. lxxxii, and gives August 10, 1352, on p. 254, n. 1. Filippini, citing and perhaps misunderstanding Papencordt, gives August 12, 1351 (*Studiosi storici*, X, 254, n. 2), changing it without any explanation to August 12, 1352, in the continuation of his article (*op. cit.*, XI, 11, n. 2). Gregorovius (likewise using Papencordt) says August 12 on one page (VI, 351, n. 2) and August 10 on the next (p. 352, n. 1; cf. also Faucon, pp. 53, 55). The reason for the slip on the part of Papencordt (whom they all follow) was a momentary thoughtlessness as to the day on which the Ides of August fell. Since these fell on the 13th (and not on the 15th), four days before the Ides would, according to the Roman method of calculating dates, be August 10. A further proof of the correctness of this date is to be found in Petrarca's closing statement referring to another letter to Nelli written on the preceding day. This letter is extant (*Fam.*, XIII, 5) and is dated *V Idus Augusti* (Frac., II, p. 233), that is, August 9. For this letter, see above, n. 2.

## CHAPTER XIV

The trial of Cola proceeded with all the wonted delays of the law. Indeed, there was not much attention paid to the former Tribune after the excitement of his arrival had abated. The first mention of Cola in the books of papal expenditures is found under date of August 14, 1352, where the interesting fact is recorded of the purchase of a bed for the imprisoned Tribune (Faucon, p. 56). The next entry is under date of October 21, 1352, and it records the payments made by Michel de Pistoie (Michele di Pistoia?), the sergeant-at-arms in charge of Cola, for other purchases intended to satisfy Cola's necessities (Faucon, p. 57). In the meantime Cola, in his vaulted prison-chamber, calmly read his Bible and his Roman historians, feeling, perhaps, quite certain of his ultimate freedom. If Gui de Boulogne was really one of the three cardinals appointed to try Cola, then his mission to Paris in the early part of September, 1352, caused a vacancy in the Board of Cardinals, and an unavoidable delay in the trial must have ensued. Again, the illness of the Pope, Clement VI, and his

death on December 6, 1352, must further have brightened Cola's prospects of ultimate acquittal. Under the new Pope Innocent VI, who had not been directly sinned against by the former Rector of the city, the custody of Cola must have become of a very light and easy nature.

We have already seen that the relations between Petrarca and the former cardinal Etienne Aubert were not of the friendliest. Far be it from us, however, to suggest the thought that Petrarca was moved to write the present letter to the Roman people (if it is to be dated in 1353) from a sense of injury, and merely to bring upon the newly elected Pope additional difficulties to those already due to his elevation to the sacred chair. But surely the times for an appeal to the Romans were propitious: interest in the prosecution of Cola's trial had abated; the outburst of the poetic mania in the country of the Provençals likewise favored Cola's chances; there was still a vacancy, perhaps, on the board of judges; and the new Pope not only had numerous pressing duties to claim his undivided attention, but, indeed, he had no personal motive to push the trial vigorously. Petrarca's

lack of interest in Cola's fate, a coldness so evident in the preceding letter, began to be conquered under these favorable circumstances. His patriotism, which he had thought dead in so far as Cola was concerned, was stirred anew, and it irresistibly urged him to take up his pen, in order that his voice, as in the golden days of the *Hortatoria*, might again be heard though from a distance, and that he might again perform his duty as a Roman citizen, and as an Italian patriot.

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### TO THE ROMAN PEOPLE

(*App. Litt.*, I; *Sine Titulo*, IV)

Invincible people, Conqueror of the Universe, my People! It is you whom I address anonymously;<sup>†</sup> it is with you that I must discuss, and briefly, matters of the highest importance. Give me your attention, I beg and beseech you, most illustrious men. It is your interests that are at stake. It is a question, I repeat, of great importance, nay of the greatest importance, one to which all other earthly questions must give way. Perchance you are eager to learn the facts; consequently I shall torment you no longer with suspense, nor shall I en-

deavor to magnify with mere words a question which by its very nature is a most momentous one. Without further preamble, then, I come to the facts themselves.

Your former Tribune is now—oh melancholy sight!—the prisoner of a stranger. Like unto him who steals under the cover of darkness, or like an ordinary traitor, he pleads his cause in chains. Though brought before the arbiters of the world and the dispensers of justice, he is denied the privilege of presenting a legal defense—a right which has never been denied to even the most sacrilegious wretch.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps his suffering such treatment is not altogether undeserved; for, at the moment when his enterprise gave promise of a most glorious success, at that very moment did he abandon the flourishing republic, which had been planted and had taken deep root (so to speak) in his genius and his hands. Most undeserved, however, is the penalty inflicted upon Rome. Formerly her citizens were inviolable and exempt from punishment under the protection of their laws. But today they are dishonored and outraged everywhere, in obedience to the fell caprices of everybody and anybody. The offenders, moreover, not

only do not incur any infamy for their crime, but on the contrary receive high praise as men of virtue!

Be no longer in ignorance, illustrious men, of the charges preferred against him who was once your head and ruler, but who is now— shall I say your fellow-citizen or your exile? You will hear facts which may or may not be known to you, but which will surely fill you with wonder and indignation. He is accused, not of neglecting, but of defending the cause of liberty; and he is pronounced guilty, not for having deserted, but for having mounted the Capitol. This, finally, is the chief charge against him, a crime to be atoned for on the scaffold: that he has had the presumption to affirm that even today the Roman empire is at Rome and at the disposal of the people of Rome.

Oh ungodly age! oh grim envy! oh unheard-of hatred! What dost Thou now, O Christ, infallible and incorruptible Judge of all things? Where are thine eyes, with which thou art wont to dispel the mists of human misery? Whither hast thou turned thy gaze? Why dost thou not end this infamous trial with thy forked lightning?<sup>3</sup> Though we be un-



worthy, look thou upon us and take pity. Behold our enemies—thine enemies as well—how they have multiplied! Behold with what unholy hatred they hate us, and thee! Judge, we beseech thee, between two causes so utterly unlike. Finally, let thy countenance pronounce judgment, and let thine eyes behold justice.

Surely, there is no cause for indignation or for wonder that any nation, or that all nations (as we have seen), should have desired freedom from the yoke of Rome, just and easy though that yoke was. For there dwells in the heart of man an innate love of liberty, which is often inconsiderate and rash. Often a false sense of shame forbids men to obey their superiors, and those who would better have played their rôle in subordinate positions often rise to unfit command. Consequently the world becomes confused and chaotic. Hence it is that, in place of dignified command, we often find shameful servitude; and in place of just subjection, unjust command. Were it not so, human affairs would be better ordered, and the world would be in healthier vigor, if Rome, its head, were still uninjured.

If my words be not convincing, then believe in past experience. When, I ask, was there

such peace, such tranquillity, such justice; when was such tribute paid to honesty, when were the good so readily rewarded and the evil punished; when were human affairs so well administered as when the world had but one head, and that head was Rome? At what time did God, the Lover of peace and of justice, condescend to be born of the Virgin and to visit the earth?<sup>4</sup> Every living creature possesses but one head; and the world, which the poet calls the Great Body,<sup>5</sup> should be content with but one temporal head. It would be monstrous and unnatural for any creature to possess two heads. How much more terrible and portentous, then, is an animal with a thousand different heads biting and rending one another in turn? Even granting that several heads are possible, surely none ought to doubt that one of these should curb and hold all the others in check, so that the peace of the body as a whole may remain undisturbed.

We have countless proofs, and the authority of the most learned scholars as well, to the effect that, both in heaven and on earth, oneness of rule has ever been of the greatest advantage. Omnipotent God has declared in

manifold ways his will that this supreme head should be none other than Rome.<sup>6</sup> He has ennobled her with the glories of peace and of war, and has made of her a matchless wonder, surpassing in all the virtues.

The human mind daily rejoices in its own perversity. If, then, notwithstanding the truth of the above, any nation (as I have already said) should have preferred a dangerous and doubtful liberty to the safe and wholesome authority of the common mother, some indulgence could be had for its arrogance—or for its ignorance. But who can hear with unruffled brow that learned men are discussing the question whether or not the Roman empire be at Rome? I suppose we are to assume that the empires of the Parthians and the Persians and the Medes are respectively in the power of the Parthians and the Persians and the Medes. And will the Roman empire alone, then, have no fixed abode? Who can stomach this insult? Who would not rather vomit it forth and cast it out completely?

If the Roman empire be not at Rome, pray where is it? Forsooth, if it is to be found elsewhere, it is no longer the empire of the Romans, but of those among whom fickle

Fortune has placed it.<sup>7</sup> Roman generals, to be sure, often fought to defend the needs of the empire in the lands of the extreme East, and in those of the extreme West; often they fought in the regions ruled by Boreas and in those ruled by Auster. But the Roman empire itself, in the meantime, remained firmly fixed at Rome. Rome it was that judged whether Roman generals were to be praised or censured. On the Capitol was it decided who should be honored and who punished, who should enter the city as a private citizen, and who should receive an ovation or a triumph. It is a positive fact that, even after the tyranny of Julius Caesar (or monarchy if we so prefer), the Roman emperors, although already assigned a place in the council of the gods, sought sanction for their deeds either from the Senate or from the Roman people, and, according as this sanction was given or withheld, they accomplished their undertakings, or abandoned them. Emperors, therefore, may roam about; but the seat of the empire remains ever firm and immovable.

We must suppose, therefore, that Vergil was speaking of the perpetuity of the Roman empire and not of the temporal existence of the Romans themselves, when he said:

While Capitol abides in place,  
The mansion of the Aeneian race,  
And throned upon that moveless base  
Rome's father sits sublime.<sup>8</sup>

For by these words Vergil was promising to the two youths<sup>9</sup> not one hundred nor one thousand years of glory, but immortality itself. And that no one may consider my words mere flattery, unworthy both for me to speak and for you Romans to hear, I shall now make a necessary digression.

I am well aware that, in this matter of empire, Vergil was rebuked by St. Augustine, in a certain passage, and not unjustly; but presently, and in the same passage, he is most justly excused by the same St. Augustine. When the poet represents Jove as speaking of you, O Romans, he says:

Then, with his nurse's wolf-skin girt,  
Shall Romulus the line assert,  
Invite them to his new-raised home,  
And call the martial city Rome.<sup>10</sup>

And, adding the element of perpetuity to the prophecy of the Roman origin, the poet continues:

No date, no goal I here ordain:  
Theirs is an endless, boundless reign.<sup>11</sup>

At this point St. Augustine rightly remarks: how, indeed, is he [Jove] able to grant an endless empire, who never has granted nor can grant anything whatsoever, having no power beyond that of any other wretched mortal, and being not honored, but burdened down and oppressed by the false belief in his divinity? But I pass over the question concerning the author of the Roman empire, for it is certain that it was granted by none other than Omnipotent God, who rules with undisputed sway both in heaven and on earth, and from whose power all other authority is derived. St. Augustine next inquires where this empire is situated? "Has it its abode in heaven or on earth? Undoubtedly on earth," he answers; "and even were it in heaven, heaven and earth shall pass away,<sup>12</sup> which God himself has created. How much sooner, then, will that pass away which Romulus has founded?"<sup>13</sup>

Thus speaks St. Augustine in denial of Vergil's statements. And, surely, it is most clear that all kingdoms, and whatever else appears grand and magnificent to our eyes, even though not sooner, will inevitably fall into ruin when heaven and earth will be shaken from their foundation by the arm of Him who

did create them, and who will call into being a new heaven and a new earth.<sup>14</sup> For, being Truth itself, He lies not,<sup>15</sup> as does Jupiter. His is the kingdom without beginning and without end, of which it is written: "And of his kingdom there shall be no end."<sup>16</sup>

Vergil may, perchance, have been ignorant of this prophecy; for, though God had endowed him with a surpassing genius and power of expression, he had denied him the knowledge of those truths which were hid from the wise and were to be revealed to little ones.<sup>17</sup> But surely Vergil clearly understood that all the kingdoms of this earth, having a beginning, are destined to perish. He was consequently extremely cautious. If in any passage of his works he promised immortality to the Roman empire, it will be observed that he was not speaking in his own person, but that he placed the words in the mouth of Jove, so that the lying prophecy and the false promise are both to be attributed to the lying god.<sup>18</sup> In other words, Vergil employed the falsehood of another to gratify the vanity of the Roman people. But elsewhere, when he wished to voice his personal opinion in this regard, that same Vergil did not remain silent as to the truth,

but spoke of the "great Roman state and kingdoms destined to perish."<sup>19</sup>

Who does not clearly realize the immense chasm between an endless reign and kingdoms destined to perish? In the latter passage Vergil was the spokesman; in the former, Jove; in the latter, the man of genius; in the former, the false and lying god. It is to this effect, though in different words, that St. Augustine first accuses, and then excuses Vergil; and the things which I have already said, and those which I am about to say, are in harmony with this judgment.

It was likewise a Roman who wrote: "All that is born must perish and, in the very process of gaining added strength, advances toward decay."<sup>20</sup> Hence all things will waste away, if they continue to exist. If the end of all things be old age, then surely all things will become weak and aged, unless they are already so. All that now stands in vigor will likewise fall, and if old age does not precede the fall, it will at least attend it. There is no possible exception to this rule, whether the things of this world be granted a long or a short existence. Sooner or later all created things will waste away and die. Fickle Fortune will turn her



wheel without cessation, and will whirl ephemeral kingdoms from race to race. In compliance with her every whim, she will make kings of slaves, and slaves of kings, and she will hurl her irresistible might against the city of Rome and against the world of the Romans.

For a long time and in lamentable ways, O excellent men, has Fortune directed her power chiefly against you, who have become an object of compassion to many, perhaps, though no one has hastened to render assistance. And Fortune will continue to vex you. I am positive of this, and I grieve over it. I am more angered thereat than one could believe possible; but I do not know what else I can do. I do not feel particularly distressed that Fortune has exercised her privileges over you as over the rest of mankind, and that, in order to prove herself absolute mistress of human affairs, she has not feared to assault the very head of the world. I, too, have experienced her violence; I, too, have known her fickle moods.

I can ill tolerate, however, the vain bragging of certain so-called invincible nations, whose heads are raised in such wanton insolence,

though their necks still bear the traces of the Roman yoke. And now—oh shame and tale incredible!—to pass over many other serious wrongs, now the question is raised whether or not the Roman empire be at Rome! In truth, where now the wild forests rule, there may some day arise the palaces of kings; and where now are halls resplendent with the glow of gold, the eager flocks may some day go forth to pasture, and the wandering shepherd may roam in the apartments of kings. I do not underestimate the power of Fortune. As she has destroyed other cities, so can she totally overthrow, with equal ease but with greater ruin, the very queen of cities, a thing, alas! which she has already accomplished in great measure. This, however, she can never bring to pass: that the Roman empire be anywhere else than at Rome. The moment it begins to reside elsewhere, that very moment does it cease to be Roman.

Your wretched fellow-citizen does not deny having made such assertions, and continues to adhere to his previous statements. This is the terrible crime for which his life now hangs in the balance. He adds (and I believe that he speaks the truth) that he reached these

conclusions only after consulting many wise men; and he demands that counsel and the opportunity to present his defense be given to him. This is denied him; and unless divine mercy and your good-will intercede in his behalf, it is all over. Innocent and without counsel, he will surely be condemned. A great many feel pity for him; in truth there is hardly one who does not, except those whom it would befit to pity and to pardon the sins of others, and not to envy them their virtues.

There are not lacking in this city prominent jurists who maintain that, according to civil law, this maxim of the illustrious prisoner could be proved in the clearest way. There are not lacking others who say that, were they permitted to speak freely, they could adduce many reliable instances from the pages of history which would corroborate that same maxim. But now no one dares murmur a syllable, except in a remote corner, or in the darkness, or in fear. I myself, who am writing to you, should not refuse, perchance, to die for the truth, if my death would seem to be of any advantage to the state. And yet I, too, remain silent, nor do I affix my name to this letter, supposing that the style will be sufficient

to reveal the writer. I add only this: that it is a Roman citizen who addresses you.

If the case were being tried in a safe place, and before a just judge, and not at the tribunal of our enemies, I feel confident that, with truth illuminating my soul and with God directing my tongue and my pen, I could speak convincing words, words from which it would result clearer than day that the Roman empire, though long exhausted and oppressed by the blows of Fortune, and though seized at various times by Spaniards, Africans, Greeks, Gauls, and Germans, is yet, how limited soever it may be, at Rome, and nowhere else than at Rome; words, I repeat, which would clearly prove that there the Roman empire will remain, though nothing were left of the stupendous city but the bare rock of the Capitol. Furthermore, I should prove that, at the time when Rome was not yet at the mercy of barbarian hands and when the Roman Caesars ruled the world, even then all the rights of empire rested not with the emperors, but on the citadel of the Capitol and with the Roman people. I should clearly prove, finally, whether or not it is truly a fundamental principle of government that rulers who do not possess the con-

fidence of their subjects shall not dictate the laws of the land.

Time glides along, and everything is still in an unsettled state, a delay, perchance, which has been granted from on high in order that a question of such great importance may be decided in the light of day.<sup>21</sup> This is a boon for which but recently you did not dare even to hope. Consequently it has been impossible for me to check one request which seems to concern most deeply your dignity and that of the Roman name. The faith which makes me entwine you and your city with an unparalleled love and veneration, urges me to write. I therefore beg and beseech you, illustrious men, not to abandon your fellow-citizen in his hour of extreme need. Send a formal embassy, point out that he belongs to you, and claim him as your own. Though they may strive to wrest from you all claim to the empire, they have not, as yet, reached that degree of insanity as to dare deny that you have the right of jurisdiction over your own citizens. Forsooth, if this man has sinned, it is at Rome that he has sinned. And there can be no doubt that you should pass judgment upon sins that are committed at Rome—unless the common rights

of law be torn from you who are the very founders and organizers of law, and who once framed laws for the nations of the world.

Where, indeed, can crimes be punished with greater justice than in that region where they were committed? There, the very scene calls back the crime to the mind of the transgressor— itself no small part of the punishment—and the sight of the penalty meted out either soothes or terrifies the spectators. Many, or rather all, right-minded men hold that your Tribune deserves to be rewarded and not punished. If this be so, where will he more appropriately receive his reward than in that city where he performed the deeds which have earned it for him? In no other place is reward more worthily given than upon the very scene of brave actions, in order that the beholders may be moved by the reward to follow the good example.

Have confidence, then, and demand the return of your citizen. You will make no new or unjust demand; on the other hand, you will be guilty of a positive wrong if you remain silent. If the plea of a common country be advanced in defense of his being punished in the city where he is now held captive, how

much more truly is Rome his common country, the city where he was born and reared, and where he performed all the deeds of which he is now accused? Here, on the contrary, he has done absolutely nothing deserving either praise or blame.

If, however, contrary to the traditions of your ancestors, your courage fails you in the hour of adversity; if the times have become so degenerate that those whose fathers deemed no difficulty insurmountable now consider it an act of rashness to demand justice, then at least ask for that which can always be asked of any barbarian nation where laws exist: insist that your citizen be given a public trial, and that he be not denied the right of counsel. Demand that he whose every action was performed in the light of day, and who shed as much splendor upon this world as is given to the lot of mortal—demand that this man be not condemned in the darkness. Make it perfectly clear, finally, that you will not forsake the cause and the fortunes of your fellow-citizen. Resist the injustice; forbid the consummation of so unspeakable a crime. Protect him, if you deem him innocent; pass sentence upon him, if you deem him a criminal or a

culprit; but at least obviate the possibility of his being sentenced according to the caprice of anyone who may so desire.

Bring that aid which you can and should bring to your Tribune, or, if that title has lost its spell, to your fellow-citizen who deserves well of the republic. Foremost among his claims is the fact that he has revived an important question, a question of great interest to the world, but which had been forgotten and buried in the sleep of many centuries, the question which alone can lead to the reformation of the state and can usher in the golden age. Succor this man. Do not esteem lightly the safety of that one who, in your behalf, has exposed himself to a thousand dangers and to everlasting odium. Bethink ye of his plans and purposes; remember in what condition your city was, and how suddenly, through the wisdom and the efforts of a single man, not only Rome but all Italy rose to great hopes. Remember how quickly the Italic name and the glory of Rome were restored to their ancient splendor. Recollect the deep fear and the grief of your enemies, the exultant joy of your friends, the lofty expectations of the nations; recollect how the course of events



was changed, how the face of the earth was altered, how different became the desires of men, and how everything beneath the vault of heaven assumed a different aspect. So marvelously and so rapidly was the world changed!

He held the reins of government not longer than seven months, so that I can scarcely conceive of a greater or a nobler attempt in the history of the world. Had he continued unto the end even as he had begun, his work would have seemed that of a god rather than of a mortal. For that matter, anything well done by man is divinely done. This man, therefore, who (as all know) toiled to enhance your glory and not to gratify his personal ambitions, deserves your unhesitating favor. Fortune must be blamed for the issue. If any listlessness succeeded to his enthusiastic beginning, attribute it to the inconstancy and the frailty of human nature. While yet ye may, protect your fellow-citizen against a grave wrong, ye who formerly, and with great peril to yourselves, defended the Greeks against the Macedonians, the Sicilians against the Carthaginians, the Campanians against the Samnites, and the Etruscans against the Gauls.

Your resources, I know, are sadly depleted; but never were your fathers imbued with greater courage than when Roman poverty, the mother of virtues, was held in honor. I am fully aware that your power has dwindled; but believe me, if a single drop of the old blood still courses through your veins, you are possessed of no slight majesty, of no indifferent authority. Dare something, I adjure you, in memory of your past history, for the ashes and the glory of your ancestors, in the name of the empire, out of mercy for Jesus Christ, who commands us to love our neighbors and to succor the afflicted. Dare something, I beseech you, the more so that any demand on your part is honorable, whereas silence is dishonorable and disgraceful. Dare something, if not for his safety, then at least to preserve your own self-respect—if you desire to be held in any esteem.

Nothing is less Roman than fear. I predict to you that if you are afraid, if you despise your own worth, many will likewise despise you, and no one will fear you. But if you begin to make it clear that you will not be spurned, you will be respected far and wide, a fact which was frequently made manifest

in the olden times, and again recently when he of whom I speak governed the republic. Be unanimous in your demands; let the world realize that the voice of the Roman people is a unit. No one will then deride or mock you; no one but will either respect it, or fear it. Be sure to exact the return of this prisoner, or to demand justice. The latter, surely, will not be denied. And you, who once, with an insignificant embassy, did free a king of Egypt from the siege of the Syrians,<sup>22</sup> do ye now liberate your fellow-citizen from undeserved imprisonment.

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## NOTES

1. The word employed by Petrarca, *clam* (Frac., III, p. 493) must refer simply to the fact that the present letter to the Roman people, because of its outspoken sentiments, was included by the author himself in the group *Sine Titulo*. In those letters Petrarca deemed it safer to suppress the names of the persons to whom they were addressed, expunging also his own name. Hence the word *clam* must mean "anonymously," and hardly "in confidence" (Robinson and Rolfe, p. 348); and this is proved by Petrarca's statement (III, p. 500), *neque his ipsis ad vos scriptis meum nomen adiicio*, on the ground that the style would be sufficient to reveal the writer.

2. De Sade remarks (III, 234): "Je ne comprends pas

pourquoi cette grâce qu'on accorde à tous les criminels lui fut refusée sous le Pontificat le plus doux." But Robinson and Rolfe (p. 349): "Rienzo was accused of heresy, and it was quite in accord with the jurisprudence of the inquisition to refuse him counsel."

3. From this sentence it is again clear (as we have already shown in n. 1 to *Fam.*, XIII, 6) that the trial was not over by August 10, 1352; for, according to the calculations there made, the present letter is later in date than *Fam.*, XIII, 6, and even at the writing of this letter Cola's trial was not at an end.

4. Dante, in *Convito* IV, 5, expounds at great length the mediaeval theme that the birth and the unparalleled growth of Rome were both predestined "in the most high and divine Consistory of the Trinity"; and, speaking of Rome, he concludes: "I, surely, am of the firm opinion that the stones in her walls are worthy of reverence, and that the soil upon which she rests is more worthy than that which is said and proved by men."

5. Vergil, *Aen.*, vi. 727.

6. To add still another instance to the many already cited, we shall give the following lines from a letter written to Emperor Charles IV (*Fam.*, XXIII, 2, *Frac.*, III, p. 193): "Aye, Rome is the mother-country of all; she is the head of the universe, the queen of the world and of cities, abounding in so many noble examples that, once seen, she readily inspirits the soul." Cf. also *Fam.*, XI, 7, given in full in n. 3 to letter *Fam.*, XI, 16.

7. In the *Africa* Scipio grieves at hearing that the honor of the empire was one day to fall into barbarian

hands; but his father consoles him by saying (Book II, 287-89): "Cease thy weeping, I beseech thee, and lay aside thy fear: the glory of the Latins will live, and the empire will ever be called by the same name, the Roman Empire."

But Petrarca might have cited pontifical authority for this statement of fact. In a letter which is supposed to have been addressed to Francesco Nelli, and to have been written (at Milan, it seems) in 1357, Petrarca tells the following interesting story of Pope John XXII (*Sine Titulo*, XVII, *Quo te cumque converteris*; numbered XV in the Basle ed. of 1581, pp. 727, 728):

"Our own listlessness is responsible for the daring of these cowards. They take unholy joy in our patience, and at the same time they hate us. Indeed, that thou mayest be most profoundly astonished, know thou that they have an inward fear of those for whom they outwardly show contempt. The latter is merely feigned, the former exists in reality. There are a thousand proofs of their hatred and of their terror. I shall now relate an anecdote that will serve as a proof of both at once. Though this story was at first kept secret, ultimately it got abroad, so that it became known not only at Babylon but even in more distant lands.

"The incident occurred at the time when that Supreme Pontiff [John XXII] had organized a decrepit expedition of the priestly soldiery with the purpose of reducing Italy to the condition of a province, and above all, of destroying the city of the Milanese. It was at the time, I repeat, when the Father of the Christians was rendered so extremely furious by his thorough and complete hatred of this Christian land and Christian city, that one would not have thought

this land Italy, but Syria or Egypt; and this city not Milan, but Damascus or Memphis.

“For the accomplishment of this holy and pious undertaking, the Pontiff chose one of the Fathers of the Sacred College [Beltram de Poggetto], his own son, as many said; and, indeed, in addition to his figure [cf. Greg., VI, 188, n. 1, and reading, with him, *secundum formam* instead of the Basle *famam*], a strong resemblance and the ferocity of his character strengthened the belief. He did not equip him in the manner of an apostle, but in that of a robber; not with the signs of the virtues and with the power of working wonders, but with the ensigns of the camps and with wonderful legions. Thus equipped did he send him into these lands, not as a second Peter, but as a second Hannibal. In the war which ensued, Omnipotent God, according to his wont, humbled the proud and raised the lowly, and fought openly on the side of justice.

“There was in that same troop of cardinals a certain man who likewise nourished an insatiable hatred for us. He was a man of boundless arrogance, whom I, at that time a mere boy, knew by sight and whose character I execrated with all the energy of my feeble youth. This man was dear to the Pontiff beyond all others. One day, entering the papal cabinet, he found the Pope dismayed and distressed by the reports of the war. In fact, the onslaught of the war had, contrary to expectations, been checked on the very threshold of this city, which was not then defended by walls, but, indeed, by that which constitutes the very best kind of wall, extraordinary soldiers and very brave commanders. And so, the besieged had frequently put the besiegers to flight; the prisons were full to overflowing with the hordes of captives; and the fields were being fattened by the blood of the slain.

“While, therefore, matters were in this state, and since he beheld the Pope more downcast than usual,

relying upon his great intimacy with the Pope, he addressed him and said: 'I wonder, most Holy Father, why it is that, though thou art very clear-sighted in other matters, thou seest to but little purpose in that one question which is of especial and of highest importance to us.'

"At these words the Pontiff raised his head, which had been weighed down by heavy cares, and said, 'Continue. What meanest thou?'

"Thereupon that surpassingly fine counselor replied: 'I know that thou desirest nothing so ardently as the destruction of Italy. To this end are we devoting all our strength, our resources, our counsels; to this end have we now squandered nearly all the riches of the church. We have ventured into an inextricable labyrinth, unless another way be tried. Behold now our magnificent preparations for war! The edge of our power is being blunted at the very gates of Milan, a city which thy cringing sycophants asserted to be like unto any one of our cities, but which by experience has been found to be superior to them all. If we are conquered by a single Italian city, when shall we conquer the whole of Italy? But if thou wishest, there is a far easier way whereby to accomplish this end.'

"'What way,' exclaimed the Pontiff, 'speak, and more quickly. For, over this do I labor, this do I desire, this is the one thing for which I should be willing to sell both body and soul.'

"And the other: 'Thou canst all things. Whatever thou orderest is accomplished. Why, therefore, dost thou not deprive the city of Rome and Italy of both the papacy and the empire? Why dost thou not transfer that empire to Cahors, our native place, that is to say, to Gascony? [John XXII had been Jacques d'Euse, of Cahors.] It is not a difficult task; speak, and it will be done. There is no need of arms, in which we are greatly their inferiors. By a single word wilt

thou triumph over thine enemies. Thus, by transferring the very summits of power into our country, thou wilt distinguish us with new honors, and thou wilt deprive that hateful race of its double glory.'

"At these words the Pontiff raised his head and, smiling in the midst of his wrath, replied: 'Thou hast deceived me hitherto; I had not yet known thee to rave like a madman. Knowest thou not, stupid one, that according to the way which thou didst deem to have so subtly devised, both I and my successors become merely bishops of Cahors, and that the emperor (whosoever he may be) becomes a prefect of Gascony? Knowest thou not that they who would rule at Rome in spiritual and in temporal matters would be, respectively, the real Pope and the real Emperor? And so, while thinking to overthrow the Italic name, thou art elevating it to its former dignity. Therefore, while it is so granted from on high, let us hold fast the reins of the Roman pontificate, and let us bend our every energy to this: that Italian hands may never, perchance, grasp what is theirs by right. But it is an uncertain matter how long this event can be delayed. Let us not haggle about mere names; for, whether we will it or no, the head and center of all things will still be Rome.'

"Upon hearing these words, that sagacious fool blushed scarlet. I, in truth, disapprove of the Pope's intentions, but am obliged to approve of his good sense; for, though he was consumed with undeserved hatred of us, he nevertheless remembered and knew full well whereon had been founded the lofty structure from the summit of which he exhibited his pride. He clearly realized that to impair the foundations would bring on ruin. He therefore decided that it was best to remain quiet and to enjoy the papacy in silence, as if over an object obtained by theft.

"I do not know whether this tale has been recounted by others. I have given it in detail in order that, if



thou hast already heard it, thou mayest know that I, too, am acquainted with it; that if thou hast not yet heard it, in order that thou mayest learn it from me, and that, being acquainted with the past, thou mayest not be in ignorance of the present."

8. *Aeneid*, ix. 448, 449, tr. by Conington, p. 304. After these verses Robinson and Rolfe omit from the words *Neque enim* (Frac., III, p. 496) to *Certe romanus* (*ibid.*, p. 498); they give two lines, and then, without indicating the fact, omit the following 15 lines, from *Senescent ergo* (*ibid.*, p. 498) to *Nec me angit* (*ibid.*, p. 499). Again, there is an omission from *Si verum* (*ibid.*, p. 500) to *Ferte quam potestis* (*ibid.*, p. 502). These omissions constitute one-third of the entire letter.

9. Nisus and Euryalus.

10. *Aeneid*, i. 276, 277.

11. *Aeneid*, i. 278, 279.

12. Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33.

13. St. Augustine, *Sermo CV* (*alias 29 de Verbis Domini*), in Migne, *Patrologiae cursus*, XXXVIII, col. 618. Of this *Sermo*, chap. 10, entitled *Terreno regno aeternitas adulatorie promissa*, is as follows (cols. 622, 623):

"Those who have promised eternity to the kingdoms of earth, have not been led to do so by truth, but have lied from a sense of adulation. A certain pagan poet represents Jove as speaking, and says of the Romans [Vergil, *Aen.*, i. 278, 279]:

No date, no goal I here ordain:

Theirs is an endless, boundless reign.

But this does not quite answer to the truth. O thou [*sc.*, Jove] who hast granted nothing, has this reign,

which thou hast granted endless and boundless, its abode in heaven or on earth? Undoubtedly on earth. And even were it in heaven, heaven and earth shall pass away [Luke 21:33]. Those things shall pass away which God himself has created; how much sooner, then, will that pass away which Romulus has founded?

"If we should wish to take Vergil to task for this, and to revile him for having made such a statement, he would perhaps take us to one side and say to us: 'I, too, know its falsity; but what was I to do to please the Romans except to employ this flattery and to promise to them something which I knew to be false? And yet I was cautious in so doing. When I said: 'Theirs is an endless, boundless reign,' I brought their own Jove upon the scene to speak those words. It was not in my own person that I spoke the falsehood, but I shouldered upon Jove the character of liar: for, just as he was a false god, so was he also a false prophet. Indeed, dost thou wish to feel certain that I was aware of this? In another passage, and when I did not represent a Jove of stone as speaking, but when I spoke in my own person, I said 'the great Roman state and kingdoms destined to perish' [*Georg.*, ii. 498]. Thou wilt observe that I said kingdoms destined to perish. I actually said kingdoms destined to perish, I did not remain silent.'

"And so Vergil, when speaking the truth, did not conceal the fact that kingdoms of earth were destined to perish; but, when flattering the Romans, he promised them an endless reign."

It will be seen from this citation that Petrarca follows St. Augustine pretty closely. But where he says "At this point St. Augustine rightly remarks," that which follows is not a direct quotation from St. Augustine, who, after the verses from the *Aeneid*,

simply says: *Non plane ita respondet veritas. Regnum hoc, quod sine fine dedisti, o qui nihil dedisti, in terra est, an in caelo?* Therefore, the first three lines printed in italics in Fracassetti's Latin edition belong to Petrarca himself, and should not have been printed in italics, which inevitably imply a direct quotation from St. Augustine (Frac., III, p. 497).

14. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; II Pet. 3:13; Apoc. 21:1.

15. Num. 23:19; John 3:33; 8:26; Rom. 3:4.

16. Luke 1:33.

17. Matt. 11:25.

18. Cf. Dante, *Inferno*, I, 70-72, where the shade of Vergil says (tr. by Longfellow):

Sub Julio was I born, though it was late,  
And lived at Rome under the good Augustus,  
During the time of false and lying gods.

19. *Georg.*, ii. 498.

20. Sallust, *Iugurtha*, 2, 3.

21. Unfortunately, the three extant letters written by Cola while he was confined at Avignon are without dates (Gabrielli, *Epistolario*, No. XLVII to the Archbishop of Prague, and Nos. XLVIII, XLIX to the Roman people). The trial may have dragged on (cf. *dies trahitur*, Frac., III, 500) for any one of many reasons. Among them we point out the departure of Gui de Boulogne, one of the presumed judges, in the early part of September, 1352 (Frac., 3, p. 254). This cardinal was then sent to Paris, in an endeavor to bring about a peace between the kings of France and of England, who had already fought the battle of Crécy, and who were renewing their

preparations after the enforced truce caused by the Black Death.

22. In the year 168 B.C., ambassadors from Ptolemy and Cleopatra, rulers of Egypt, reported to the Roman Senate that Alexandria was being besieged by Antiochus, king of Syria (Livy, xlv. 19, 9). The Senate immediately appointed an embassy composed of C. Popilius, C. Decimius, and C. Hostilius (*ibid.*, xlv. 19, 13), instructing these envoys to visit both kings and to re-establish peace. The envoys met Antiochus at Eleusin, four miles away from Alexandria; and the unbending severity of Popilius compelled Antiochus to make peace at once (*ibid.*, xlv. 12). In the same year envoys of Ptolemy repaired to the City, to thank the Romans, through whose intervention the Egyptians had been freed from a most wretched siege, *per quos obsidione miserrima liberati essent* (*ibid.*, xlv. 13, 5).

## CHAPTER XV

### CONCLUSION

The correspondence of Petrarca which deals directly with the Roman revolution of Rienzo comes to an end with the letter *Sine Titulo, IV*. This letter we have tentatively dated in the latter part of 1352, or in the beginning of 1353. Neither the political career of Rienzo, however, nor Petrarca's reflections on that career ceased this early. In fact, Petrarca never did quite forget Rienzo; and only two years before his own death, he could still draw a moral from the unhappy fate of the Tribune, and in the calm of his advanced years he could still feel the heat of the flame which had been fanned so vigorously in the year 1347. It is the purpose of this concluding chapter, therefore, briefly to follow in Petrarca's life the thin thread of his blasted hopes in Rienzo.

As we have already seen (see introduction to *Fam.*, XIII, 6), after the fiasco of the commission of four cardinals appointed to reform the government of Rome, the citizens of the Urbs had, on St. Stephen's day, December 26, 1351, declared the plebeian Giovanni Cerroni

absolute head and master of the city. His rule came to an end when he fled in September, 1352. This flight threw Rome into a state of utter chaos, a period during which it is difficult to discern the true course of events.

In this inextricable tangle, it would seem that the Romans returned to the time-worn system of senators, and elected to that office Count Palatine Bertoldo Orsini and Stefanello Colonna. The Pope in distant Avignon, however, does not seem to have ratified the choice of the Romans, and he nominated in their stead Giovanni Orsini and Pietro Sciarra Colonna as senators for the year 1353. In other words, in January, 1353, there must have been in Rome four senators, two of whom represented the interests of Avignon, the other two the wishes of the Romans themselves. It is therefore safe to assume that until February 15, 1353, the control of affairs really rested with the people's choice, Bertoldo Orsini and Stefanello Colonna.

Stefanello was the grandson of Stefano the Elder, and we have already pointed out (*Fam.*, VII, 7, n. 10) the attachment to the Colonna of Petrarca's friend, Laelius. During the period of his supremacy, Stefanello seems to

have asked Laelius for advice. In fact, Laelius' friendship for the Colonna and his present intimate relations with the young Stefano were so well known at Avignon that the Pope and the Curia considered all the rebellious acts of the unratified senators as due to the suggestions of Laelius. This information we gather from a letter of Petrarca to Laelius (*Fam.*, XV, 1, from Vaucluse), a letter which, considering its historical content, must be assigned to January or to the beginning of February, 1353.

We must recollect that Cola was still under guard at Avignon, and that the broken-hearted Petrarca placed no more hopes in his shattered idol. But now, on the contrary, the alliance of a Colonna and of Laelius—a Roman nobleman by birth—raised anew in the poet hopes of a rejuvenated Rome under the rule of a native Roman. He did not yield at once, nor with full enthusiasm, to this new ray of hope; but, with as much self-restraint as was possible for his optimistic nature, he expressed his personal belief that Laelius had sufficient strength to restore the Roman republic provided only that the Romans would hearken to his counsels, and that Laelius would devote himself wholeheartedly to the welfare of the city. Petrarca,

in referring to the enemies of Laelius, continues as follows (Frac., II, p. 309):

As regards those men, finally, there is no advice that I need give to thee. Thou knowest all. One thing, however, I should wish that thou never forget, the statement which we have so often heard from the lips of that venerable old man who, though of opinions hostile to ours, was nevertheless great souled and of wide experience. The saying is worthy of being remembered, not so much for the elegance of its diction as for the truth of its content. Thus was that experienced man wont to say, and excellently so, that the Roman church ever loves the powerful. Nothing could be more concise, nothing more true.

Therefore, O Romans, if you desire to be great among the nations and (what is more to be desired) dear unto God, practice virtue, love your religion, and observe justice. Employ your ancient arts: spare the conquered, and subdue the proud [*Aeneid*, vi. 853]. But, on the contrary, if you desire to be beloved by this church, all that you need is power, without which (I assure you) you will be held in no esteem, it matters not how great your virtues be. With respect to you, O Romans, I shall make but one remark. Two are the men who in our times have seized the reins of government. To one of them [*sc.*, Cola di Rienzo] I wrote numerous letters; to the second [*sc.*, Giovanni Cerroni] I wrote not a word. The reason for my course was that the former led me to entertain great, though premature, hopes; while the latter did not arouse in me any hopes whatever.



As for thee, Laelius, if thou retain thy power, if thou fear not the menacing hissing of serpents, there flash through my mind many and varied thoughts destined to be brought forth in due time. Let it suffice for the present to have given to thee this warning: to those who enter upon this career, excess of patience and excess of zeal are alike sources of danger. Thou hast before thine eyes native and at the same time recent examples of both. As Ovid says, thou wilt be safest in the middle course [*Met.*, 2, 137]. Farewell; and, since thou art a man, see to it that thou prove thyself a man.

Laelius, however, was not permitted to continue long in his rôle of mentor. The turbulence of the Romans proved to be the undoing of the senators whom they themselves had chosen. On account of the scarcity of grain and of the high prices resulting, the Roman populace gathered in the market-place on February 15, 1353, and the slogan of rebellion was again sounded. Of the senators, Bertoldo Orsini was stoned to death, while the younger and more vigorous Stefanello managed to effect his escape (Greg., VI, 338; Frac., 3, pp. 340-41). Naturally, the Avignonese candidates Giovanni Orsini and Pietro Sciarra Colonna now ruled unmolested.

Peace, of course, was bound to be of short

duration. On September 14, 1353, the Romans, temporarily wearied by their fratricidal strife, elected a Roman, Francesco Baroncelli, second Tribune of Rome.

The Pontiff was, as ever, kept accurately informed of these kaleidoscopic changes in the City of Peter. From the account of Raynaldus (*ad A.* 1353, chap. 5, p. 574, col. 1) it becomes clear that Cola's liberation was a direct consequence of Baroncelli's elevation to the tribunate.

On being informed of these events by Hugo Harpaion, apostolic internuncio, the Pontiff [*sc.*, Innocent VI] conceived the plan of freeing from prison Cola di Rienzo, who was repeatedly promising that he would be a most ardent champion for the maintenance of the pontifical supremacy. The Pope hoped that other tyrants would be crushed by the agency of Cola, whose name still had great influence and was still in good repute with many. This is what the Pope wrote to the above-mentioned Hugo:

"After carefully seeking a remedy for this evil, we have caused our beloved son, the noble Cola di Rienzo, a Roman knight, to be absolved from all the penalties and the judgments by which he had been overwhelmed; and, if God grant it, we shall quickly send him as a free man to the City, hoping: that he may have gained understanding from his troubles; that, having utterly renounced the unjust and perverse endeavors of the malicious, he will sanely oppose his former fantastic

innovations, drawing upon his own activity and shrewdness (which is indeed great) and also upon that of the inhabitants and of many nobles of said city who desire to live a quiet life and to enhance the general welfare; and hoping, finally, that, with the assistance and the favor of God, he will resist the absorbing greed and the lawless, injurious desires of certain leaders.

“Given at Villeneuve (-lès-Avignon), in the Diocese of Avignon, on the fifteenth day of September, and in the first year [of our Pontificate].”

Here, at last, we have the first official mention of Cola's liberation. The suppositions and hypotheses were many. We have heard Petrarca asserting that Cola was likely to be set free because of the strange rumor of his being a poet. Raynaldus (*ad A.* 1347, chap. 21 end, p. 448, col. 2) says that Cola was freed because of his eloquence, but he does not clearly state whether he was thus absolved from the charge of heresy or from that of being a political rebel. Later in his annals, however, Raynaldus says (*ad A.* 1350, chap. 5 end, p. 504, col. 2): “How Cola was brought to trial on the charge of heresy, and how, in spite of the fact that he had been condemned by two cardinal-legates, he cleared himself of that charge, was freed from his imprisonment, and finally was slain and burned—all this will be narrated in the proper place.”

The place thus pointed out by anticipation is the chapter which we have already quoted, and which cites the papal brief to the internuncio Hugo Harpaion. The underlying cause of Cola's freedom, therefore, was not his innocence of the taint of heresy, not the papal forgiveness of his political offenses, but merely the skilful maneuvering of pontifical diplomacy. By this simple move of an insignificant and despised pawn, Innocent VI checkmated the drastic but aimless efforts of the Romans. He counterbalanced the magic of Baroncelli's title by opposing to it the former irresistible sway of the first Tribune, who had sworn to uphold the papal cause; and to the Spanish cardinal Albornozy, who had been appointed on June 30, 1353 (Greg., VI, 336) vicar-general in Italy and in the state of the church, he thus added a source of strength greater than that of many legions.

It remained for the Pope to acquaint the Romans of his decision to set Cola at liberty. It is needless to state that he would represent things in quite a different light. But we shall let the reader judge for himself. On the very next day after writing to Hugo Harpaion, the Pope wrote the following letter to the Roman

people (Theiner, II, No. 257, p. 255, dated September 16, 1353).

Innocent, Bishop, to his beloved children the Roman people, greetings.

Although many evil things concerning our beloved son, the noble Cola di Rienzo, your fellow-citizen and knight, had been related to our predecessor of blessed memory, Pope Clement VI, and also to ourselves; and

although both our venerable brother Bertrand, cardinal of the Sabina (then presbyter-cardinal of St. Mark), and Annibaldo of good memory, bishop of Tusculum (then legate of the apostolic see) had instituted some legal proceedings against him;

nevertheless, having been raised to the summit of the highest apostleship through the assisting grace of God, and

considering that, although said knight (who was then detained in our prisons) had transgressed in many things, he had nevertheless performed more good works worthy of reward; and

reflecting that (according to the past and the present trustworthy reports of many) the unanimous will and the universal love of you all most ardently demanded the liberation and the restoration of Cola to the city, and that, after a long period, he had been weakened by the inconveniences of his prison chamber (which, however, was quite respectable and within the walls of the palace); and

hoping confidently that he who, out of love for the common weal and zeal for justice (which he is said to have administered during his régime without regard to

person) exposed himself to many dangers and to the hatred of many who eagerly desired a tyranny and your subjugation and who sought their own gain in your loss and in that of others—confidently hoping, we say, that such a man will curb with the bit of justice their criminal appetites, and that, having stifled all hatred and rancor, he will (with the favor of God and with our aid) cause you and your compatriots to enjoy the prayed-for quiet and peace,

we, therefore, have caused him to be absolved from all the judgments and the penalties by which he had been overwhelmed, and we have decided that he should be sent back to you a free man.

Therefore we request and urge you all, earnestly soliciting you to aid the above-mentioned knight, whom you have so eagerly sought, whom you desire to welcome joyfully, and who, with the grace of God, will strengthen your weakness and that of the state.

We solicit you to aid him unanimously, with timely and effectual good-will, in restoring your fallen conditions, in directing them toward a better state, and in enlarging your republic—objects which he himself is said to be especially desirous of attaining. We beg of you to rival with your aid the wisdom of his plans, so that you may check the ravenousness of your powerful fellow-citizens and neighbors who are gnawing your sides both within and without the city, and so that you may break the lifted horns of the proud.

Given at Villeneuve (-lès-Avignon), in the Diocese of Avignon, on the sixteenth day of September, and in the first year of our Pontificate.

From this letter it is evident that the Roman people had asked for Cola's freedom and also for his return—unless the passage in question is mere rhetoric on the part of the apostolic secretary. Petrarca's last letter to the Romans, consequently, was not altogether in vain. On September 24, 1353, the sum of 200 florins for traveling expenses was given to Cola (Faucon, *op. cit.*, p. 58, n. 1). He left Avignon on that day in order to overtake Alborno, who must have left in the first half of August. Indeed, as early as September 14, 1353, Alborno had entered Milan, and had been met by Petrarca and by Giovanni Visconti. On this occasion Galeazzo saved Petrarca's life, when the latter's horse was on the point of throwing him violently to the ground (Frac., 1, pp. 180-81; 2, p. 240).

In November, 1353, Baroncelli fled, and Cardinal Alborno took possession of the city (Greg., VI, 358). It was not until August 1, 1354—the seventh anniversary of Cola's knighthood, of the famous citation, and of the proclamation of Rome as the Capital of the world—it was not until that fateful date that Cola re-entered the Urbs, but in the character of senator and ruling in the name of Innocent VI. Only sixty-nine days later, on October 8, 1354,

the sword of Cecco del Vecchio put an end to the life of Cola di Rienzo.

The mangled and headless corpse was dragged from the Capitol to the Colonna quarter, and was hanged outside a house close to S. Marcello. Two days the appalling figure remained; once in life the idol of Rome, now the target for the stones of street boys. By command of Jugurtha and Sciarretta Colonna, the remains of the Tribunus Augustus were burnt by the Jews on the third day, on a heap of dry thistles in the Mausoleum of Augustus. The scene of the last act of this curious tragedy had been specially chosen in mockery of Cola's pompous ideas concerning antiquity. His ashes were scattered like those of Arnold of Brescia (Greg., VI, 373).

About one month and a half after this tragedy, Petrarca, in addressing Charles IV, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, reproached him for delaying his descent into Italy, and cites Cola's successes as an example of what would be possible for the rightful emperor. These are his words (*Fam.*, XVIII, 1, November 23, 1354, *Frac.*, II, pp. 463-64).

Would not thy mere name, together with the assistance of the few good men who still love virtue and the Empire, easily bring to a successful close any struggle against sluggish magnificence and unarmed pride? Dost thou wish me to prove and to demonstrate to thee that things are as I say? Well, then. Very recently



one of the lowly plebeians rose to power. He was not a Roman king, nor a consul, nor a patrician. He was a Roman citizen who was scarcely known—one who was not illustrious because of the glory and the images of distinguished ancestors, nor indeed because of any virtues of his own that had as yet been manifested. Nevertheless he proclaimed himself the champion of Roman liberty. Dazzling declaration of an obscure person!

Immediately and eagerly (as thou knowest) Tuscany joined hands with him, and hearkened unto his orders. Gradually all Italy followed her example; and soon Europe, aye the entire world was astir. But what need of many details? We have not read of these events, we have witnessed them with our own eyes. Justice and peace seemed to have returned in company with their handmaidens—genial confidence and tranquil ease. In fine, traces of the golden age reappeared. In the very bloom of prosperity, however, he submitted to the counsels of another. I do not desire to blame either him or that other. I neither condemn nor acquit; I am not the judge, and I shall keep my opinions to myself. He had assumed the title of Tribune, the lowliest among the Roman offices. And if the name of Tribune was able to accomplish so much, what is impossible for one boasting the title of Caesar?

The next mention of Cola which Petrarca makes is to be found in his work *De Remediis*, written between the years 1358 and 1366. In Book I, Dialogue 89, entitled "On coming

forth from prison," *De carceris exitu*, we find the following strange conversation, put into the mouths of the usual two characters, Joy and Reason (*op. cit.*, p. 243):

*Joy*: I rejoice at having come forth from prison.

*Reason*: Only recently thou didst rejoice at having entered the haven, now thou rejoicest at leaving it. The prison has been a haven to many; to many it has been a place of refuge, to many a source of safety. The prison hath spared in chains many who were destined to perish when restored to liberty. That which is bound fast and is placed under lock and key is more carefully preserved. Men, in their blindness, know not what is to their best advantage, and consequently they keenly desire their own evil; and when they have attained it, they rejoice at a thing over which they will soon grieve. That thou mayest not have far to seek, thou didst recently witness the spirited and noble (rather than persevering) endeavors of that man [*sc.*, Cola di Rienzo] who, in a time of adversity, dared to proclaim himself the defender of the Roman republic, taking unto himself the title of Tribune. But shortly fortune changed. Expelled from the city, he was imprisoned first by the Emperor of the Romans [*sc.*, Charles IV] and then by the Pope [*sc.*, Clement VI]. In each case he was treated both well and honorably. Unluckily he was set free; and he was not merely slain, but indeed he was mangled by the swords of his enemies. I believe that in his dying moments he must have sighed for the safety of his former prison.

The last mention of Cola in Petrarca's extant writings occurs in his *Invectiva in Gallum*, the fiery invective which the poet wrote against the monk Jean de Hesdin, who had defended the establishment of the Papal See outside of Italy. Though this answer was written in 1371 or 1372, and therefore but shortly before Petrarca's death in 1374, it reveals all the vigor of his youth, and it furthermore proves the undiminished sway wielded over him by memories of his idealized Cola. We cite from the *Invectiva* (Basle ed. of 1581, p. 1071):

And yet I do not speak blasphemy (as he has done), but something closely akin to blasphemy, when I say that he [*sc.*, Jean de Hesdin] rends the Holy City [*sc.*, Rome] with his profane abuse. How great is the audacity of slaves! How great is their impudence, when they have once escaped from the fetters of their masters! Incapable of avenging themselves otherwise, they war against their former masters with curses and maledictions, pouring the wrath of their ulcerous souls forth upon the winds. They bark in their fear, like unto feeble curs. This barbarian makes mention of the ancient slavery of his race; and, though his neck be still callous from the Roman yoke, like a runaway slave does he rail at his mistress from afar and quivering with fear. If Omnipotent God were to grant peace and brotherly concord to the sons of Rome—to her barons, I say—and if Rome were aided (as formerly)

by the united strength of the Italians, how quickly and how easily would she suppress the rebellious barbarians and impose upon them that same yoke of ancient days! Had this been unknown heretofore, it became clearly manifest recently, when a single man of the most obscure origin and not possessed of riches—a man who (as experience proved) was endowed with greater spirit than constancy, dared to buttress the Republic with his weak shoulders, and to assume the defense of the tottering empire. How soon was all Italy aroused; how great did the fear and the fame of the Roman name spread to the furthestmost countries of the earth! And with how much greater authority would it have spread, were it as easy to persevere as it is to make a beginning. I was then in Gaul, and I know right well what I heard, and what I saw, and what I read in the words and the eyes of those who were considered the greatest of men. They would deny it now, perhaps, for it is extremely easy to deny fear when its cause no longer exists. Then, however, consternation had filled every corner, so true is it that Rome is still something. But no more of this, lest I drive my barbarian to the fear of despair as he bitterly reflects upon what Italy really is, and upon the uncivilized state of his own country. . . .

To the last, then, Petrarca regarded Cola's uprising with feelings of unabating kindness. Petrarca has been accused, and not once merely, of having followed now this policy, now that. We frankly acknowledge that he wrote eulogistic epistles to King Robert, the great champion

of the Guelph cause in Italy; that he addressed metrical compositions to Benedict XII and to Clement VI, urging upon both the restoration of the Papal See to the City by the River; that he surrendered himself heart and soul to Cola; that he afterward addressed with equal vigor and persistency Emperor Charles IV; and that he finally turned once again to Pope Urban V. We acknowledge all this. But back of it all, actuating and giving strength to his every word, uplifting him in the hour of crushing disappointment, pouring balm upon his wounded heart, and stirring ever new hopes in his responsive soul, we discern the one great cause and sustaining faith of Petrarca's existence, a creed that was summed up in the single name Rome.

The deep and concentrated studies of the Father of Humanism had first awakened in Petrarca a belief in the rebirth of an Augustan Rome. The distracted and mangled condition of Italia's fair body had caused this belief to blossom forth into an overpowering and all-mastering passion. Whether addressing Cola the Tribune or Robert the King, whether addressing the Venetian or the Genoese Doge, whether addressing popes or emperors, the one thought supreme in Petrarca's mind was the

establishment of peace and of harmony among the Italic states, and a hegemony under the leadership of Rome. He longed for a renewal of the golden days, of the universal esteem and veneration for Rome, of the days when the City of the Seven Hills centered within its walls the grandeur and the glory of human achievements.

Petrarca was neither a Guelph nor a Ghibelline; neither a Florentine nor a Roman; neither a bigoted churchman nor a Protestant reformer. He was, in a word, an Italian patriot, an Italian born five centuries ahead of the times; a man who, with the prophetic instinct of the bard, conceived an ideal which his imaginative nature could not bring to a practical consummation. He was consequently doomed to everlasting disappointment in his intercourse with the mighty of the earth, a disappointment to which he fortunately gave vent in that noblest and most glorious of all his Canzoni, *Italia mia, benché'l parlar sia indarno*, uttering words that were destined to become the rallying-cry of generations of patriotic Italians.

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