VALPERGA:

OR, THE

LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

CASTRUCCIO,

PRINCE OF LUCCA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FRANKENSTEIN."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER,

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PREFACE

The accounts of the Life of Castruccio known in England, are generally taken from Macchiavelli's romance concerning this chief. The reader may find a detail of his real adventures in Sismondi's delightful publication, *Histoire des Republiques Italiennes de l'Age Moyen*. In addition to this work, I have consulted Tegrino's Life of Castruccio, and Giovanni Villani's Florentine Annals.

The following is a translation from the article respecting him in Moreri.

"Castruccio Castracani, one of the most celebrated captains of his time, lived in the fourteenth century. He was of the family of the Antelminelli of Lucca; and, having at a very early age borne arms in favour of the Ghibelines, he was exiled by the Guelphs. He served not long after in the armies of Philip king of France, who made war on the Flemings. In the sequel he repassed the Alps; and, having joined Uguccione Faggiuola, chief of the Ghibelines of Tuscany, he reduced Lucca, Pistoia, and several other towns. He became the ally of the emperor Louis of Bavaria, against pope John XXII, Robert king of Naples, and the Florentines. Louis of Bavaria gave him the investiture of Lucca under the denomination of Duke, together with the title of Senator of Rome. Nothing seemed able to oppose his courage and good fortune, when he was taken off by a premature death in 1330, in the forty-seventh year of his age."

The dates here given are somewhat different from those adopted in the following narrative.

VALPERGA

CHAPTER I

Birth of Castruccio.—His family exiled from Lucca when he is eleven years of age.

The other nations of Europe were yet immersed in barbarism, when Italy, where the light of civilization had never been wholly eclipsed, began to emerge from the darkness of the ruin of the Western Empire, and to catch from the East the returning rays of literature and science. At the beginning of the fourteenth century Dante had already given a permanent form to the language which was the offspring of this revolution; he was personally engaged in those political struggles, in which the elements of the good and evil that have since assumed a more permanent form were contending; his disappointment and exile gave him leisure to meditate, and produced his *Divina Comedia*.

Lombardy and Tuscany, the most civilized districts of Italy, exhibited astonishing specimens of human genius; but at the same time they were torn to pieces by domestic faction, and almost destroyed by the fury of civil wars. The antient quarrels of the Guelphs and the Ghibelines were started with renovated zeal, under the new distinctions of *Bianchi* and *Neri*[1]. The Ghibelines and the *Bianchi* were the friends of the emperor, asserting the supremacy and universality of his sway over all other dominion, ecclesiastical or civil: the Guelphs and the *Neri* were the partizans of liberty. Florence was at the head of the Guelphs, and employed, as they were employed by it in their turn, the Papal power as a pretext and an instrument.

The distinctions of *Bianchi* and *Neri* took their rise in Pistoia, a town of some moment between Florence and Lucca. The *Neri* being expelled from Pistoia, the exiles fixed their residence in Lucca; where they so fortified and augmented their party, as to be able in the year 1301 to expel the *Bianchi*, among whom was Castruccio Castracani dei Antelminelli.

The family of the Antelminelli was one of the most distinguished in Lucca. They had followed the emperors in their Italian wars, and had received in recompense titles and reward. The father of Castruccio was the chief of his house; he had been a follower of the unfortunate Manfred, king of Naples, and his party feelings as a Ghibeline derived new fervour from the adoration with which he regarded his noble master. Manfred was the natural son of the last emperor of the house of Swabia; before the age of twenty he had performed the most brilliant exploits, and undergone the most romantic vicissitudes, in all of which the father of Castruccio had been his faithful page and companion. The unrelenting animosity with which the successive Popes pursued his royal master, gave rise in his bosom to a hatred, that was heightened by the contempt with which he regarded their cowardly and artful policy.

When therefore the quarrels of the Guelphs and Ghibelines were revived in Lucca under the names of *Bianchi* and *Neri*, Ruggieri dei Antelminelli was the chief opponent

and principal victim of the machinations of the Papal party. Castruccio was then only eleven years of age; but his young imagination was deeply impressed by the scenes that passed around him. When the citizens of Lucca had assembled on the appointed day to choose their *Podestà*, or principal magistrate, the two parties dividing on the Piazza glared defiance at each other: the Guelphs had the majority in numbers; but the Ghibelines wishing, like Brennus, to throw the sword into the ascending scale, assailed the stronger party with arms in their hands. They were repulsed; and, flying before their enemies, the Guelphs remained in possession of the field, where, under the guidance of their chiefs, they voted the perpetual banishment of the Ghibelines; and the summons was read by a herald, which commanded all the districts of Lucca to range themselves the next morning under their respective banners, that they might attack and expel by force those of the contrary party who should refuse to obey the decree.

Ruggieri returned from the Piazza of the Podestà, accompanied by several of his principal friends. His wife, Madonna Dianora, was anxiously waiting his return; while the young Castruccio stood at the casement, and, divining by his mother's countenance the cause of her inquietude, looked eagerly down the street that he might watch the approach of his father: he clapped his hands with joy, as he exclaimed, "They come!" Ruggieri entered; his wife observed him inquiringly and tenderly, but forbore to speak; yet her cheek became pale, when she heard her husband issue orders, that the palace should be barricadoed, and none permitted to enter, except those who brought the word which shewed that they belonged to the same party.

"Are we in danger?"—asked Madonna Dianora in a low voice of one of their most intimate friends. Her husband overheard her, and replied: "Keep up your courage, my best girl; trust me, as you have ever trusted. I would that I dared send you to a place of safety, but it were not well that you traversed the streets of Lucca; so you must share my fortunes, Dianora."

"Have I not ever shared them?" replied his wife. His friends had retired to an adjoining hall, and she continued;—"There can be no dearer fate to me than to live or perish with you, Ruggieri; but cannot we save our son?"

Castruccio was sitting at the feet of his parents, and gazing on them with his soft, yet bright eyes. He had looked at his mother as she spoke; now he turned eagerly towards his father while he listened to his reply:—"We have been driven from the Piazza of the Podestà, and we can no longer entertain any hope of overcoming our enemies. The mildest fate that we may expect is confiscation and banishment; if they decree our

death, the stones of this palace alone divide us from our fate. And Castruccio,—could any of our friends convey him hence, I should feel redoubled courage—but it is too much to risk."

"Father," said the boy, "I am only a child, and can do no good; but I pray you do not send me away from you: indeed, dear, dearest mother, I will not leave you."

The trampling of horses was heard in the streets: Ruggieri started up; one of his friends entered:—"It is the guard going to the gates," said he; "the assembly of the people is broken up."

"And what is decreed?"

"No one ventures near to inquire out that; but courage, my noble lord."

"That word to me, Ricciardo?—but it is well; my wife and child make a very woman of me."

"*Ave Maria* is now ringing," replied his companion; "soon night will set in, and, if you will trust me, I will endeavour to convey Madonna Dianora to some place of concealment."

"Many thanks, my good Ricciardo," answered the lady; "my safest post is at the side of Ruggieri. But our boy——save him, and a mother's blessing, her warm, heartfelt thanks, all the treasure that I can give, shall be yours! You know Valperga?"

"Yes, the castle of Valperga. Is the Countess there now?"

"She is,—and she is our friend; if my Castruccio were once within the walls of that castle, I were happy."

While Madonna Dianora conversed thus with Ricciardo, Ruggieri held a consultation with his friends. The comfortable daylight had faded away, and night brought danger and double fear along with it. The companions of Ruggieri sat in the banqueting hall of his palace, debating their future conduct: they spoke in whispers, for they feared that a louder tone might overpower any sound in the streets; and they listened to every footfall, as if it were the tread of their coming destiny. Ricciardo joined them; and Madonna Dianora was left alone with her son: they were silent. Dianora wept, and held the hand of her child; while he tried to comfort her, and to show that fortitude he had often heard his father praise; but his little bosom swelled in despite of his mastery, until, the big tears rolling down his cheeks, he threw himself into his mother's arms, and sobbed aloud. At this moment some one knocked violently at the palace-gate. The assembled Ghibelines started up, and drew their swords as they

rushed towards the staircase; and they stood in fearful silence, while they listened to the answers which the stranger gave to him who guarded the door.

Ruggieri had embraced his wife he feared for the last time. She did not then weep; her high wrought feelings were fixed on one object alone, the safety of her child.—"If you escape," she cried, "Valperga is your refuge; you well know the road that leads to it."

The boy did not answer for a while; and then he whispered, while he clung round her neck,—"You, dear mother, shall shew it to me."

The voice of the man who had disturbed them by his knocking, had reassured the imprisoned Ghibelines, and he was admitted. It was Marco, the servant of Messer Antonio dei Adimari. A Florentine by birth, and a Guelph, Antonio had retired from his native city while it continued under the jurisdiction of the opposite party, and had lived at the castle of Valperga, of which his wife was Countess and Castellana. He was bound to Ruggieri by the strongest ties of private friendship; and he now exerted himself to save his friend. Marco brought intelligence of the decree of the assembly of the people. "Our lives are then in safety,"—cried Dianora, with a wild look of joy,—"and all the rest is as the seared leaves of autumn; they fall off lightly, and make no noise."

"The night wears apace," said Marco, "and before sunrise you must depart; will you accompany me to Valperga?"

"Not so," replied Ruggieri; "we may be beggars, but we will not burthen our friends. Thank your lord for his many kindnesses towards me. I leave it to him to save what he can for me from the ruins of my fortune. If his interest stand high enough with our rulers, intreat him to exert it to preserve the unoffending walls of this palace: it was the dwelling of my forefathers, my inheritance; I lived here during my boyish days; and once its hall was graced by the presence of Manfred. My boy may one day return; and I would not that he should find the palace of his father a ruin. We cannot remain near Lucca, but shall retire to some town which adheres to our party, and there wait for better days."

Dianora made speedy preparations for their departure; the horses were brought to the door; and the stars were fading in the light of dawn, as the cavalcade proceeded through the high and narrow streets of Lucca. Their progress was unimpeded at the gates; Ruggieri felt a load taken from his heart, when he found himself, with his wife and child, safe in the open country. Yet the feeling of joy was repressed by the remembrance, that life was all that remained to them, and that poverty and obscurity were to be the hard-visaged nurses of their declining years, the harsh tutors of the young and aspiring Castruccio.

The exiles pursued their way slowly to Florence.

Florence was then in a frightful state of civil discord. The Ghibelines had the preponderance; but not a day passed without brawls and bloodshed. Our exiles found many of their townsmen on the same road, on the same sad errand of seeking protection from a foreign state. Little Castruccio saw many of his dearest friends among them; and his young heart, moved by their tears and complaints, became inflamed with rage and desire of vengeance. It was by scenes such as these, that party spirit was generated, and became so strong in Italy. Children, while they were yet too young to feel their own disgrace, saw the misery of their parents, and took early vows of implacable hatred against their persecutors: these were remembered in after times; the wounds were never seared, but the fresh blood ever streaming kept alive the feelings of passion and anger which had given rise to the first blow.

When they arrived at Florence, they were welcomed with kindness by the chiefs of the *Bianchi* of that city. Charles of Valois had just sent ambassadors to the government, to offer his mediation in composing their differences; and on that very day the party of Ghibelines who composed the council assembled to deliberate on this insidious proposition. It may be easily supposed therefore, that, entirely taken up with their own affairs, they could not bestow the attention they would otherwise have done on the Lucchese exiles. On the following day Ruggieri left Florence.

The exiles proceeded to Ancona. This was the native town of the Lady Dianora; and they were received with hospitality by her relations. But it was a heavy change for Ruggieri, to pass from the active life of the chief of a party, to the unmarked situation of an individual, who had no interest in the government under which he lived, and who had exchanged the distinctions of rank and wealth for that barren respect which an unblamed old age might claim. Ruggieri had been a man of undaunted courage; and this virtue, being no longer called into action, assumed the appearance of patience and fortitude. His dearest pleasure was the unceasing attention he paid to the education of his son. Castruccio was an apt and sprightly boy, bold in action, careless of consequences, and governed only by his affection for his parents. Ruggieri encouraged his adventurous disposition; and although he often sympathized in the fears of his anxious wife, when Castruccio would venture out to sea on a windy day in a little fair-weather skiff, or when he saw him, without bridle or saddle, mount a horse, and, heading a band of his companions, ride off to the woods, yet he never permitted himself to express these fears, or check the daring of his son.

So Castruccio grew up active; light and graceful of limb, trusting that by his own powers he should always escape. Yet the boy was not without prudence; he seemed

to perceive instinctively the limits of possibility, and would often repress the fool-hardiness of his companions, and shew his superior judgement and patience in surmounting the same difficulties by slower and safer means. Ruggieri disciplined him betimes in all the duties of a knight and a soldier; he wielded a lance adapted to his size, shot with bow and arrows, and the necessary studies to which he applied, became, on account of their active nature, the source of inexhaustible amusement to him. Accompanied by a troop of lads, they would feign some court surrounded by an old wall, or some ruined tower, to be Troy Town, or any other famous city of antient days, and then with mimic *balestri*, and slings and arrows, and lances, they attacked, and defended, and practised those lessons in tactics which their preceptors inculcated at an early age.

During the first year of their banishment his mother died; her weak frame was destroyed by hardship and disappointment. She recommended her son to his father in terms of tender love; and then closed her eyes in peace. This circumstance for a considerable time unhinged the young mind of Castruccio, and interrupted his studies. His father, who loved her tenderly, and who had found in her a friend to whom he could confide those regrets which pride forbade him to impart to any other hearer, now lamented her with excessive grief.

He did not dare check the silent tear that started into the eye of Castruccio, when, returning from his exercises with his companions, he was no longer embraced by his mother; he felt that his own sentiments would refute the lesson he wished to impress.

Ruggieri was consoled for all his past misfortunes by the promising talents and disposition of his son, and parental tenderness, the strongest of all passions, but often the most unfortunate, was to him the sunbeam, solitary, but bright, which enlightened his years of exile and infirmity.

Yet at the moment that he most enjoyed this blessing, his security was suddenly disturbed. One morning Castruccio disappeared; and the following perplexing note addressed to his father, was the only trace that he left of his intentions:—

"Pardon me, dearest father; I will return in a very few days; I am quite safe, therefore do not disquiet yourself on my account. Do not be very angry with me; for, although I am indignant at my own weakness, I cannot resist! Be well assured that in less than a fortnight your unworthy son will be at your feet.

"CASTRUCCIO."

This was the year 1304, when Castruccio was fourteen years of age. Ruggieri hoped and trusted that he was safe, and that he would fulfil his promise and soon return; but he waited with inexpressible anxiety. The cause of Castruccio's flight was curious, shewing at once the manners of the age and country in which they lived, and the imagination and disposition of the boy.

[1]Black and White.

CHAPTER II

Castruccio visits Florence.—Characters of Euthanasia dei Adimari and her father.—The father of Castruccio dies.

A traveller had arrived at Ancona from Florence, and had diffused the intelligence that a strange and tremendous spectacle would be exhibited there on the first of May of that year. It had been proclaimed in the streets of the city, by a herald sent by the inhabitants of the quarter of San Frediano, that all who wished to have news from the other world, should repair on the first of May to the bridge of Carraia or to the quay of the Arno. And he added, that he believed that preparations were made to exhibit Hell, such as it had been described in a poem now writing by Dante Alighieri, a part of which had been read, and had given rise to the undertaking.

This account raised the curiosity, and fired the imagination of Castruccio. The idea darted into his head that he would see this wonderful exhibition; and no sooner had he conceived the possibility of doing so, than his determination was fixed. He dared not ask his father's permission, for he knew that he should be refused; and, like many others, he imagined that it was better to go, not having mentioned his design, than to break a positive command. He felt remorse at leaving his father; but curiosity was the stronger passion, and he was overcome: he left a billet for Ruggieri; and, during the silence of a moonlight night, he mounted his steed, and left Ancona. While proceeding through the streets of the town, he several times repented, and thought that he would return; but no sooner had he passed the walls, than he seemed to feel the joy of liberty descending on him; and he rode on with wild delight, while the mountains and their forests slept under the yellow moon, and the murmur of the placid ocean was the only sound that he heard, except the trampling of his own horse's hoofs.

Riding hard, and changing his horse on the road, he arrived in five days at Florence. He experienced a peculiar sensation of pleasure, as he descended from the mountains into Tuscany. Alone on the bare Apennines, over which the fierce wind swept, he felt free; there was no one near him to control his motions, to order him to stay or go; but his own will guided his progress, swift or slow, as the various thoughts that arose in his mind impelled him. He felt as if the air that quickly glided over him, was a part of his own nature, and bore his soul along with it; impulses of affection mingled with these inexplicable sensations; his thoughts wandered to his native town; he suffered his imagination to dwell upon the period when he might be recalled from exile, and to luxuriate in dreams of power and distinction.

At length he arrived at the fair city of Florence. It was the first of May, and he hastened from his inn to the scene of action. As he approached, he observed the streets almost blocked up by the multitudes that poured to the same spot; and, not being acquainted with the town, he found that he had better follow the multitude, than seek a way of his own. Driven along by the crowd, he at length came in sight of the Arno. It was covered by boats, on which scaffoldings were erected, hung with black cloth, whose accumulated drapery lent life to the flames, which the glare of day would otherwise have eclipsed. In the midst of these flames moved legions of ghastly and distorted shapes, some with horns of fire, and hoofs, and horrible wings; others the naked representatives of the souls in torment; mimic shrieks burst on the air, screams and demoniac laughter. The infernal drama was acted to the life; and the terrible effect of such a scene was enhanced, by the circumstance of its being no more than an actual representation of what then existed in the imagination of the spectators, endued with the vivid colours of a faith inconceivable in these lethargic days.

Castruccio felt a chill of horror run through his frame; the scene before him appeared for a moment as a reality, rather than a representation; the Arno seemed a yawning gulph, where the earth had opened to display the mysteries of the infernal world; when suddenly a tremendous crash stamped with tenfold horror the terrific mockery. The bridge of Carraia, on which a countless multitude stood, one above the other, looking on the river, fell. Castruccio saw its props loosening, and the curved arch shake, and with a sudden shriek he stretched out his arms, as if he could save those who stood on it. It fell in with a report that was reverberated from the houses that lined the Arno; and even, to the hills which close the valley, it rebellowed along the sky, accompanied by fearful screams, and voices that called on the names of those whom they were never more to behold. The confusion was beyond description terrible; some flying, others pressing towards the banks of the river to help the sufferers; all, as himself, seized with a superstitious dread, which rebuked them for having mimicked

the dreadful mysteries of their religion, and which burst forth in clamorous exclamations and wild horror. The heroism of Castruccio failed; he seized with eagerness the opportunity of an opening in the crowd; and, getting into a by street, ran with what speed he could, while his knees still shook beneath him, from the spot he in the morning as eagerly sought. The sound of the shrieks began to die away on his ear before he slackened his speed.

The first idea that struck him, as he recovered his breath, was—"I am escaped from Hell!"—And seeing a church open, he with an instinctive impulse entered its doors. He felt as if he fled from the powers of evil; and, if he needed protection, where should he seek it with more confidence, than in the temple where the good God of the universe was worshipped? It was indeed as a change from Hell to Heaven, to have escaped from the jostling of the crowd, the dreadful spectacle of mimicked torments, the unearthly crash that bellowed like thunder along the sky, and the shrieks of the dying—to the silence of the empty church, the faint smell of incense, and the few quiet lights that burned on the high altar. Castruccio was seized with a feeling of awe as he walked up the aisle; and conscience, alive at that moment, reproached him bitterly for having quitted his father. When the idea struck him—"If I had been on that bridge,"—he could no longer resist his emotions; tears ran fast down his cheeks, and he sobbed aloud.

A man, whom he had not perceived before kneeling in a niche beside the altar, arose on hearing the voice of grief, and drew near the boy. "Why do you weep?"—he said. Castruccio, who had not heard his approach, looked up with surprise; for it was the voice of Marco, the servant of his father's friend, Messer Antonio dei Adimari. Marco instantly recognised him; for who that had once seen, could ever forget his dark eyes, shaded by long, pointed lashes, his sun-bright hair, and his countenance that beamed with sweet frankness and persuasion? The boy threw himself into the arms of his humble, but affectionate friend, and wept there for some time. When he had become more calm, his story was told in a few words. Marco was not inclined to find fault with an adventurous spirit, and soon consoled him.—"You are safe,"—he said; "so there is no harm done. Come, this is rather a fortunate event than otherwise; my lord and lady are in Florence; you shall stay a night with them; and to-morrow morning we will send you home to your anxious father."

The eyes of Castruccio sparkled with hope.—"Euthanasia is here?"

"She is."

"Quick then, dear Marco, let us go.—How fortunate it was that I came to Florence!"

The life of Messer Antonio dei Adimari had been spent in the military and civil service of his country; he had often been *Priore*; and now, that age and blindness had caused him to withdraw from the offices of the state, his counsels were sought and acted upon by his successors. He had married the only daughter of the Count of Valperga, a feudal chief who possessed large estates in the territory of Lucca. His castle was situated among the Apennines north of Lucca, and his estates consisted of a few scattered villages, raised on the peaks of mountains, and rendered almost inaccessible by nature as well as art.

By the death of her father the wife of Adimari became Countess and Castellana of the district; and the duties which this government imposed upon her, often caused the removal of her whole family from Florence to the castle of Valperga. It was during these visits that Adimari renewed a friendship that had before subsisted between him and Ruggieri dei Antelminelli. Messer Antonio was a Guelph, and had fought against Manfred under the banners of the Pope: it happened during one campaign that Ruggieri fell wounded and a prisoner into his hands; he attended him with humanity; and, when he perceived that no care could restore him if separated from his prince, and that he languished to attend at the side of Manfred, he set him free; and this was the commencement of a friendship, which improved by mutual good offices, and more than all by the esteem that they bore one to the other, had long allied the two houses, though of different parties, in the strictest amity.

Adimari continued in the service of his country, until his infirmities permitted him to withdraw from these active and harassing duties, and, giving up the idea of parties and wars, to apply himself exclusively to literature. The spirit of learning, after a long sleep, that seemed to be annihilation, awoke, and shook her wings over her favoured Italy. Inestimable treasures of learning then existed in various monasteries, of the value of which their inhabitants were at length aware; and even laymen began to partake of that curiosity, which made Petrarch but a few years after travel round Europe to collect manuscripts, and to preserve those wonderful writings, now mutilated, but which would otherwise have been entirely lost.

Antonio dei Adimari enjoyed repose in the bosom of his family, his solitude cheered by the converse which he held with the sages of Rome in ages long past. His family consisted of his wife, two boys, and a girl only two years younger than Castruccio. He and Euthanasia had been educated together almost from their cradle. They had wandered hand in hand among the wild mountains and chesnut woods that surrounded her mother's castle. Their studies, their amusements, were in common; and it was a terrible blow to each when they were separated by the exile of the Antelminelli. Euthanasia, whose soul was a deep well of love, felt most, and her

glistening eyes and infantine complaints told for many months, even years after, that she still remembered, and would never forget, the playmate of her childhood.

At the period of this separation Adimari was threatened by a misfortune, the worst that could befall a man of study and learning—blindness. The disease gained ground, and in a year he saw nothing of this fair world but an universal and impenetrable blank. In this dreadful state Euthanasia was his only consolation. Unable to attend to the education of his boys, he sent them to the court of Naples, to which he had before adhered, and in which he possessed many valued friends; and his girl alone remained to cheer him with her prattle; for the countess, his wife, a woman of high birth and party, did not sympathize in his sedentary occupations.—"I will not leave you," said Euthanasia to him one day, when he bade her go and amuse herself,—"I am most pleased while talking with you. You cannot read now, or occupy yourself with those old parchments in which you used to delight. But tell me, dear father, could you not teach me to read them to you? You know I can read very well, and I am never so well pleased as when I can get some of the troubadour songs, or some old chronicle, to puzzle over. These to be sure are written in another language; but I am not totally unacquainted with it; and, if you would have a little patience with me, I think I should be able to understand these difficult authors."

The disabled student did not disdain so affectionate an offer. Every one in those days was acquainted with a rude and barbarous Latin, the knowledge of which Euthanasia now exchanged for the polished language of Cicero and Virgil. A priest of a neighbouring chapel was her tutor; and the desire of pleasing her father made her indefatigable in her exertions. The first difficulties being conquered, she passed whole days over these dusky manuscripts, reading to the old man, who found double pleasure in the antient poets, as he heard their verses pronounced by his beloved Euthanasia. The effect of this education on her mind was advantageous and memorable; she did not acquire that narrow idea of the present times, as if they and the world were the same, which characterizes the unlearned; she saw and marked the revolutions that had been, and the present seemed to her only a point of rest, from which time was to renew his flight, scattering change as he went; and, if her voice or act could mingle aught of good in these changes, this it was to which her imagination most ardently aspired. She was deeply penetrated by the acts and thoughts of those men, who despised the spirit of party, and grasped the universe in their hopes of virtue and independence.

Liberty had never been more devotedly worshipped than in the republic of Florence: the Guelphs boasted that their attachment to the cause of freedom might rival what history records of the glorious days of antiquity. Adimari had allied himself to this

party, because he thought he saw in the designs and principles of its leaders the germ of future independence for Italy. He had ever been a fervent advocate for the freedom of his fellow citizens: but he caught the spirit with double fervour from the Roman writers; and often, not seeing the little fairy form that sat at his feet, he forgot the age of his companion, and talked in high strains of that ennobling spirit which he felt in his inmost heart. Euthanasia heard and understood; her soul, adapted for the reception of all good, drained the cup of eloquent feeling that her father poured out before her, and her eyes shone with the deep emotion. Her young thoughts darted into futurity, to the hope of freedom for Italy, of revived learning and the reign of peace for all the world: wild dreams, that still awake the minds of men to high song and glorious action.

Such was the education of the friend of Castruccio, while he learned all chivalrous accomplishments under the tuition of his noble father at Ancona; and now, after three years absence, they met at Florence, neither having by forgetfulness wronged the friendship they had vowed in infancy.

When Marco led his young friend to the palace of Adimari, he found his master and the countess receiving the visits of some of the Guelph party; and he knew that this was no time or place to introduce the young Ghibeline. But, as they passed along the great hall, a sylph-like form came from a room opposite, appearing as a star from behind a cloud.—"I bring your exiled friend," said Marco; "Castruccio dei Antelminelli is come to visit you."

"Castruccio in Florence!" cried Euthanasia; and she embraced him with sisterly affection, "But how, dear friend, do you venture within these walls?—is your father here?—but this is no place to ask all the questions that I must hear resolved before you go. Come into this room; none but my father will enter here; and now you shall tell me all that has passed since you quitted Lucca."

Castruccio gazed on Euthanasia: he could, he thought, feed for life on her sweet looks, in which deep sensibility and lively thought were pictured, and a judgement and reason beyond her years. Her eyes seemed to read his soul, while they glistened with pleasure; he wished to hear her speak, but she insisted that his tale should be first told, of how he had lived at Ancona, and how he had ventured to Florence. She gently reproached him for having left his father; and then said,—"But I must not play the hypocrite; I am glad you are come; for it gives me more pleasure than I can express, to see you again. But I hear my father's step; I must go and lead him, and tell him of the stranger-visitor he has got."

Castruccio enjoyed the most heartfelt pleasure, as he sat between Euthanasia and her father. Their manners towards him were affectionate, and their conversation best calculated to fill an exile's bosom with hope and joy. He was told by them, that if they now parted, he must look forward to the moment when he and his father should be recalled with honour to their country. Adimari could not see the bright eyes and ardent mien of the boy; but he heard with pleasure the detail of his occupations at Ancona, and easily perceived that his young mind slept not on the present, dreamless of the future. He encouraged his aspirations to honour, and exhorted him to be faithful to the lessons of his father.

The charmed hours flew past, and the following morning they were to separate. This consideration, as evening came on, threw more solemnity into their looks and talk. Castruccio became pensive, and gazed on his friend, as a treasure that he was about to lose, perhaps for ever. Euthanasia was silent; her eyes were bent to earth; and the varying colour of her cheeks shewed that she was revolving some thought in her mind, to which she knew not how to give utterance. At length she raised her eyes, and said:—"We part to-morrow, Castruccio, as we have before parted,—for many years I fear. But there are two kinds of separation. One, during which we suffer time to obliterate the past, as we should if death, that parting to which no meeting succeeds, or a meeting in which all private ties are superseded, had been the cause of the separation. But there is another; when we cherish the memory of the absent, and act for them as if they were with us; when to remember is a paramount duty. This is alone practicable between friends, when each in his meditations is sure that the other thinks also of him: then, methinks to reflect on the words and looks of a friend, is as if one absolutely saw him. Let this be our separation. We are both familiar with the ideas of virtue and self-sacrifice; let friendship be joined to these, to make all sacrifice light, and virtue more delightful. We are very young; we know not what misfortunes are in store for us; what losses, perhaps what calumnies, or even dishonour, may in after times taint our names. In calumny it is to the friends of our youth that we must turn; for they alone can know how pure the heart is, with which they were acquainted at the time when disguise could have no existence. They, if they are true, dare not leave us without consolation. Castruccio, I know that you will never dishonour yourself: and, remember, if in any hard struggle you want a friend who will console you by sympathy and confidence, and help you as far as her power will permit, I will always be that friend to you."

Euthanasia was yet a child, when she made this promise. But she saw Castruccio, the friend of her infancy, a youth of high birth and nobly bred, an outcast and an exile; she had heard and read how few friends the unfortunate find, and generosity prompted

those sentiments, to which the frankness of her nature caused her to give utterance. She felt that Castruccio had a deep affection for her, and she hoped, that a promise thus voluntary and solemn; would be a consolation to him during adversity. He felt the kindness of her motive, and replied earnestly:—"I am an exile, and can do no good to you who are prosperous; mine must be barren thanks. Yet not the less will I fulfil my promise, if our fortunes change, of being your friend, your knight, your rock, on whom you may build your hope and trust in every misfortune."

The next morning, accompanied by Marco, Castruccio quitted Florence. In his mind there was a mixture of grief at having left, and joy at having once more seen, Euthanasia. Every word that she had said, and every look of her lovely eyes, were treasured in his soul—to be a consolation and support in trouble, and an incentive to noble endeavour. Adimari had taken an affectionate leave of him, telling him, that, as far as a poor blind man could, he would promote his interests, and seize the first opportunity, if such should offer, of procuring a repeal for his exile. There was a kindness and distinction in the manner of his aged friend, that touched the heart of the boy; and in after times he thought he perceived a hidden meaning in his last words, which he interpreted in a manner that gave a sober steadiness to what he would otherwise have considered as another airy bubble of the enchantress Hope. "Remember," said the venerable Florentine, "that I approve of, and love you; and if you become that which your talents and dawning virtues promise, you may in future be my elect favourite. Now, farewell; and do not forget me or mine!"

Thus cheered, thus buoyed up by hopes of future good fortune and advancement, which had before been too deeply mingled with fear, Castruccio returned with a light heart to his father, his soul more than ever bent upon improvement and the accomplishment of noble deeds. And now, forgiven by his anxious parent for the grief he had occasioned him, his days wore away, as they were wont, in delightful tasks.

Time passed on, while our young esquire was preparing himself for his future career; strengthening his mind by study, and his body by toil. His step assumed the firmness of one who does not fear, and who, with his eye fixed on one point, will not be daunted by the shadows that flit between him and his desired sun. His eyes, before beaming with frankness and engaging sweetness, now sparkled with a profounder meaning. He entered his seventeenth year, and he was pondering upon the fit beginning to his life, and hoping that his father would not oppose his fervent desire to quit what he thought a lifeless solitude; when, as a young bather, peeping from a rock, is pushed into the sea, and forced to exert the powers of which he was before only dreaming, so chance threw Castruccio from his quiet nook into the wide sea of care, to sink or swim, as fate or his own good strength might aid him.

His father died. A malignant fever, brought by some trading vessels from the Levant, raged in the town of Ancona, and Ruggieri was one of its earliest victims. As soon as he was attacked, he knew he must die, and he gazed upon his boy with deep tenderness and care. To be cast so young on life, with a mind burning with ardour, and adorned with every grace—the fair graces of youth, so easily and so irretrievably tarnished! He had commanded him not to come near him during his illness, which was exceedingly contagious: but finding that Castruccio waited on him by stealth, he felt that it was in vain to oppose; and, only intreating him to use every imaginable precaution, they spent the last hours of Ruggieri's life together. The fever was too violent to permit any regular conversation; but the dying father exhorted him to remember his former lessons, and lay them to his heart. "I have written a letter," said he, "which you will deliver to Francesco de Guinigi. He was one of my dearest friends, and of high birth and fortune, in Lucca; but now, like me, he is an exile, and has taken refuge at the town of Este in Lombardy. If he still preserves in adversity that generosity which before so highly distinguished him, you will less feel the loss of your father. Go to him, my Castruccio, and be guided by his advice: he will direct you how you can most usefully employ your time while an outcast from your country. Listen to him with the same deference that you have always shown to me, for he is one of the few wise men who exist in this world, whose vanity and nothingness open upon me the more, now that I am about to quit it."

From time to time Ruggieri renewed his affectionate exhortations. His parental tenderness did not desert him in his last moments; and he died making a sign that in Heaven they should again meet. Castruccio was overwhelmed by grief at his loss. But grief was soon silenced by pain: he had inhaled the pestilential air from the dying breath of his father, and was speedily like him stretched on the bed of sickness. Yet not like him had he any tender nurse, to watch his fever, and administer to his wants: every one fled from the chance of death; and it was only the excellent constitution of the boy that enabled him to recover.

In a month after his father's death, himself in appearance more dead than alive, he crawled out from his apartment to breathe the enlivening air of the sea. A wind swept over it, and chilled his frame, while the dusky sky filled him with despondency. But this was a transient feeling: day by day he gained strength, and with strength and health returned the buoyant spirits of youth. The first lively feeling that he experienced, was an ardent desire to remove from Ancona. During his illness he had bitterly felt the absence of many whom he considered dear and firm friends. When he was able to enquire for those whom he had inwardly reproached as false, he found that they were dead. The pestilence had visited them, and felled them to the ground, while he,

bruised and half broken, raised his head when the deadly visitation was over. These disappointments and losses pressed on his soul; and he experienced that feeling which deceives us at every age, that by change of place, he could exchange his unhappy sensations for those of a more genial nature. The rainy season had begun; but he would not delay his departure; so, taking an agonizing farewell of the graves of his friends, and of those of his beloved parents whom he could never see more, he left Ancona.

The beauty of the mountains and the picturesque views for a while beguiled his thoughts. He passed through the country where Asdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, was defeated and slain on the mountain which still bears his name. A river runs at the base; and it was clothed by trees now yellow and red, tinged thus by the winds of autumn, except where a cluster of ilexes gave life to the scenery. As he advanced, the rains poured down, and the hills, now more distant, were hid in mist; while towards the east the gloomy Adriatic filled the air with its restless murmurs. Castruccio had passed swiftly through this country before, when he went to the *Festa d'Inferno* at Florence. It was then adorned by the fresh spring; the sunbeams illuminated the various folds of the mountains, and the light waves coursed one another, dancing under the dazzling light. Castruccio remembered this; and he gazed sullenly on the sky obscured by a thick woof of black clouds, and reproached that with changing, as his fortune changed. Yet, reflecting on the chances that had occurred during his last journey, his imagination wandered to Euthanasia, and paused there, resting with delight on her beloved image.

He passed through many towns, among which he had no friends, and sought for none. Yet, if he had desired protection, several of these were ruled by Ghibeline lords, who would have welcomed him with hospitality. Rimini was then governed by the husband of Francesca, whose hapless fate is immortalized by Dante. She was dead; but the country people, with a mixture of pity and religious horror, still spoke of her as the loveliest creature that had ever dwelt on earth, yet for whose lost soul, condemned to eternal pains, they dared not even pray.

Castruccio journeyed slowly on. He was weak and unable to endure continued exercise. Yet his mind recovered by degrees its wonted strength; and imagination, ever at work, pictured his future life, brilliant with glowing love, transcendant with glory and success. Thus, in solitude, while no censuring eye could check the exuberant vanity, he would throw his arms to the north, the south, the east, and the west, crying,—"There—there—there, and there, shall my fame reach!"—and then, in gay defiance, casting his eager glance towards heaven:—"and even there, if man may climb the slippery sides of the arched palace of eternal fame, there also will I be recorded."

He was yet a boy in his seventeenth year when he said this. His desires were afterwards to a considerable extent fulfilled: would he not have been happier, if they had failed, and he, in blameless obscurity, had sunk with the millions that compose the nations of the earth, into the vast ocean of oblivion? The sequel of his history must solve the riddle.

CHAPTER III

Francis Guinigi, the military Peasant.—Castruccio resides with him one Year.

Castruccio passed through Bologna, Ferrara and Rovigo, to arrive at Este. It was not the most favourable period for a visit to Lombardy. The beauty of that country consists in its exquisite vegetation: its fields of waving corn, planted with rows of trees to which vines are festooned, form prospects, ever varying in their combinations, that delight and refresh the eye; but autumn had nearly stript the landscape, and the low lands were overflowed by the inundation of various rivers. Castruccio's mind, fixed on the imagination of future events, found no amusement in the wintry scene; but he saw with delight the mountains that were the bourn of his journey, become more and more distinct. Este is situated nearly at the foot of the Euganean hills, on a declivity overlooked by an extensive and picturesque castle, beyond which is a convent; the hills rise from behind, from whose heights you discover the vast plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines of Bologna, and to the east by the sea and the towers of Venice.

Castruccio ascended the hill immediately above the town, to seek for the habitation of Guinigi. The autumnal wind swept over it, scattering the fallen leaves of the chesnut wood; and the swift clouds, driven over the boundless plain, gave it the appearance, as their shadows came and went, of a heaving sea of dusky waters. Castruccio found Guinigi sitting at the door of his house; it was a low-roofed cottage, that seemed more fit for the habitation of a peasant, than of a man bred in camps and palaces. Guinigi himself was about forty years of age: the hardships of war had thinned the locks on his temples before their time, and drawn a few lines in his face, beaming as it was with benevolence. The sparkling intelligence of his eye was tempered by gentleness and wisdom; and the stately mien of the soldier had yielded somewhat to his late rustic occupations; for, since his exile he had turned his sword to a ploughshare, and he dwelt with much complacency on the change.

As Castruccio first saw him, he was gazing with the most heartfelt and benevolent pleasure on his boy, a child of seven years of age, who was busy with the peasants, drawing off wine from the vats; for it was just the time when the vintage was finished, and the last labours were bestowed on the crushed grapes. The youth paused: but for the air of dignity that was visible beneath his rustic dress, he could not have believed that this was his father's friend; his father, who in exile never forgot that he was a soldier and a knight. He gave the letter; and, when Guinigi had read it, he embraced the orphan son of his old comrade, and welcomed him with a cordiality that warmed the heart of Castruccio. The name of a stranger soon struck the ear of Arrigo, his little son, who came with joy to greet him, bearing a large basket of grapes and figs. Guinigi was much amused by the evident astonishment with which his guest regarded the appearance of the house and its master, and said:—"You come to the dwelling of a peasant who eats the bread his own hands have sown; this is a new scene for you, but you will not find it uninstructive. To my eyes, which do not now glance with the same fire as yours, the sight of the bounties of nature, and of the harmless peasants who cultivate the earth, is far more delightful than an army of knights hasting in brilliant array to deluge the fields with blood, and to destroy the beneficial hopes of the husbandman. But these are new doctrines to you; and you perhaps will never, like me, in the deep sincerity of your heart, prefer this lowly cottage to yonder majestic castle."

To say the truth, Castruccio was greatly disappointed. As he had ascended from the town, and saw a gay banner waving from the keep of the castle, as he heard the clash of armour, and beheld the sun-beams glitter on the arms of the centinel, he hoped that he should find his future protector a favourite with the happy chief. He would, he felt, have accosted him with more respect, if he had found him a monk in the neighbouring monastery, than a contented farmer, a peasant whose narrow views soared not beyond the wine-vat and the ox's stall.

These were the first feelings that occurred to Castruccio; but he soon found that he was introduced to a new world in the society of Guinigi; a world with whose spring of action he could not sympathize, yet which he could not contemn. It was characterized by a simple yet sublime morality, which resting on natural bases, admitted no factitious colouring. Guinigi thought only of the duty of man to man, laying aside the distinctions of society, and with lovely humility recognized the affinity of the meanest peasant to his own noble mind. Exercising the most exalted virtues, he also cultivated a taste and imagination that dignified what the vulgar would term ignoble, as the common clouds of day become fields of purple and gold, painted by the sun at eve. His fancy only paused, when he would force it to adorn with beauty vice, death, and misery, when disguised by a kingly robe, by the trappings of a victorious army, or the

false halo of glory spread over the smoking ruins of a ravaged town. Then his heart sickened, and the banners of triumph or the song of victory could not drive from his recollection the varieties of death, and the groans of torture that occasion such exultation to the privileged murderers of the earth.

When Guinigi and Castruccio became intimate, the youth would reason with him, and endeavour to prove, that in the present distracted state of mankind, it was better that one man should get the upper hand, to rule the rest. "Yes," said Guinigi, "let one man, if it be forbidden to more than one, get the upper hand in wisdom, and let him teach the rest: teach them the valuable arts of peace and love."

Guinigi was a strange enthusiast. Men, like Alexander and other conquerors, have indulged the hope of subduing the world, and spreading by their triumphs refinement into its barbarous recesses. Guinigi hoped, how futilely! to lay a foundation-stone for the temple of peace among the Euganean hills. He had an overflowing affection of soul that could not confine itself to the person of his son, or the aggrandizement of his country, or be spiritualized into a metaphysical adoration of ideal beauty. It bestowed itself on his fellow-creatures; and to see them happy, warmed his heart with a pleasure experienced by few. This man, his imaginative flights, his glowing benevolence and his humble occupations, were an enigma that Castruccio could never solve. But, while he neither sympathized with nor understood him, he quickly loved him with the warmest affection.

Castruccio wished to speak to him of his future destination; Guinigi said, "Your father has recommended you to my counsels, and you must allow me to become acquainted with you, before I can give you advice. You are very young; and we need not hurry. Grant me six months; we will not be idle. We will ramble about the country: winter is the peasant's leisure time, so I am quite at your service. We shall be much together, and will discuss many subjects; and by degrees I shall understand the foundations on which you are to build your future life."

They travelled to Padua, to lovely Venice, raising its head from the waves of ocean; they rambled about the coast for days together, having no other end than to enjoy the beauties of nature. Then, coming nearer home, they climbed the Euganean hills, and penetrated their recesses. Guinigi had an ultimate object in view; he wished to impress on the mind of his pupil a love of peace, and a taste for rural pleasures. One day they were on the summit of Monte Selice, a conical hill between Este and Padua, and Guinigi pointed to the country around.—"What a Paradise is this!" he said. "Now it is bare; but in the summer, when the corn waves among the trees, and the ripening grapes shade the roads; when on every side you see happy peasants leading the

beautiful oxen to their light work, and the sun, and the air, and the earth are each labouring to produce for man all that is necessary for his support, and the ground is covered with vegetation, and the air quickened into life, it is a spot, on which the Creator of the world might pause, and be pleased with his work. How different was this some years ago! You have heard of Ezzelino the tyrant of Padua, under whose auspices the rivers ran blood, and the unfortunate peasant found his harvests reaped by the sword of the invading soldier! Look at those peasants on yonder road, conducting their cattle crowned with flowers: habited in their holiday best, and moving in solemn procession; their oxen are going to be blest by St. Antonio, to ward from them the evils of the ensuing seasons. A few years ago, instead of peasants, soldiers marched along that road: their close ranks shewed their excellent discipline; their instruments filled the air with triumphant sounds; the knights pricked their steeds forward, who arching their proud necks, seemed to exult in their destination. What were they about to do? to burn a town, to murder the old, and the helpless, the women, and the children; to destroy the dwellings of peace; so that, when they left their cruel work, the miserable wretches who survived had nothing to shelter them but the bare, black walls, where before their neat cottages had stood."

Castruccio listened impatiently, and cried:—"Yet who would not rather be a knight, than one of those peasants, whose minds are as grovelling as their occupations?"

"That would not I," replied Guinigi fervently; "how must the human mind be distorted, which can delight in that which is ill, in preference to the cultivation of the earth, and the contemplation of its loveliness! What a strange mistake is it, that a peasant's life is incompatible with intellectual improvement! Alas! poor wretches; they are too hard-worked now to learn much, and their toil, uncheered by the applause of their fellow-creatures, appears a degradation; yet, when I would picture happiness upon earth, my imagination conjures up the family of a dweller among the fields, whose property is secure, and whose time is passed between labour and intellectual pleasures. Such now is my fate. The evening of my life steals gently on; and I have no regrets for the past, no wish for the future, but to continue as I am."

"Yes," cried Castruccio, "You have passed through life, and know what it is; but I would rather, while alive, enter my tomb, than live unknown and unheard of. Is it not fame that makes men gods? Do not urge me to pass my days in indolence; I must act, to be happy,—to be any thing. My father did not wish me to become a farmer and a vinedresser; but to tread in his steps, and go beyond them, and that is my purpose, which I would die to attain."

A year passed while Castruccio still lived under the low roof of Guinigi. He found that it was no vain boast, that this noble ate the bread that he had sown: for he saw him hold the plough, trim his vines, and enter into all the labours of the husbandman. There is something picturesque in the toil of an Italian peasant. It is not, as in more northern climates, where cold, and wet, and care are endured, to be scantily repaid; and their unceasing anxiety is often terminated by the destruction of their crops through the severity of their climate. Guinigi and his fellow-labourers rose with the sun, which, ascending from the ocean, illumined the wide plain with its slant beams. The most beautiful vegetation luxuriated around them: the strips of land were planted with Indian corn, wheat and beans; they were divided, in some places by row of olives, in others by elms or Lombardy poplars, to which the vines clung. The hedges were of myrtle, whose aromatic perfume weighed upon the sluggish air of noon, as the labourers reposed, sleeping under the trees, lulled by the rippling of the brooks that watered their grounds. In the evening they ate their meal under the open sky; the birds were asleep, but the ground was alive with innumerable glowworms, and the air with the lightning-like fire-flies, small, humming crickets, and heavy beetles: the west had quickly lost its splendour, but in the fading beams of subset sailed the boat-like moon, while Venus, as another satellite to earth, beamed just above the crescent hardly brighter than itself, and the outline of the rugged Apennines was marked darkly below.

Their harvests were plenteous and frequent. The moving of the grass was quickly followed in June by the reaping, and the well-trodden threshing floor, such as Virgil describes it, received the grain; then came the harvest of the Indian corn; and last the glorious vintage, when the beautiful dove-coloured oxen of Lombardy could hardly drag the creaking wains laden with the fruit.

Castruccio attended Guinigi in his labours; and Guinigi, resting on his spade, would moralize on all around him, and win the ardent imagination of the youth to follow his flights. All in the country bore for him the immediate stamp of divine and eternal beauty; he knew every flower of the field, and could describe their various habits, and what insects best loved to suck their nectar. He knew the form and the life of every little being of that peopled region, where the sun seems to quicken every atom into life; and that which was insignificant to common eyes, appeared to him to be invested with strange attributes and uncommon loveliness.

Again Guinigi sat, Castruccio beside him, at the door of his cot, watching the evening work of the labourers, as the wine was drawn off from the last vat. Arrigo, now a year older, was helping them: Castruccio said—"Instead of six months I have given you twelve, and I have not mentioned my future destiny; indeed we have been employed so pleasantly during the summer, that I almost forgot it. But I cannot live another year

among these hills; you know not what bitterness I feel at heart, when I hear the clash of arms from that castle, I, who am wearing away an ignoble youth."

Guinigi smiled, and replied, "I have reflected for you, and I have dived into your secret thoughts, although you have not spoken. To-morrow we will make a journey; and you shall soon be introduced to a man who will bring you into that life whose promise of glory is so attractive to you. So bid farewell to these hills; you will not see them again for many years."

This hope stole sleep from the eyes of Castruccio that night. His imagination, which had lately rested on sickles, and wains, and vines, and the simple philosophy of Guinigi, now again fled to its wonted track, and entered upon what he conceived to be a more glorious world. Fleecy clouds hid the full moon, and the world was invested by a faint light that gradually opened into day. Castruccio saw the horses led saddled to the door, and he hastened to join Guinigi. Before he departed he kissed affectionately the sleeping Arrigo, and said: "I fear those fair eyes will be dimmed with tears, when he hears that I am not to return. Sweet boy! I love you as a brother, and hope some future day to shew that love in something more than words."

Guinigi smiled at the aspiring spirit of Castruccio; he smiled to perceive that, still wanting protection, still a boy, his thoughts always dwelt on the power which he would one day acquire, and the protection he would then afford to others.

They rode silently along the well known road that led to Padua: after resting their horses at this town, they continued their way to Venice. Who knows not Venice? its streets paved with the eternal ocean, its beautiful domes and majestic palaces? It is not now as it was when Castruccio visited it; now the degenerate inhabitants go "crouching and crab-like through their sapping streets:" then they were at the height of their glory, just before the aristocratical government was fixed, and the people were struggling for what they lost—liberty.

Guinigi and his young companion were silent during their long ride. Guinigi was on the eve of seeing the friends of his warlike youth; and perhaps his memory recalled those scenes. Castruccio dreamed of futurity; and the uncertainty of his destiny only gave more scope to his imagination, as he figured the glorious part which he flattered himself he was about to act on the great theatre. At length they arrived on the shore of the Laguna, and entered the gondola which was to convey them to the city. Guinigi then addressed the youth:—"You trust your fate to me; and I must explain to you the plan that I have formed concerning you, that you may judge whether I merit the entire confidence you shew yourself inclined to repose in me. You know, my dear Castruccio, that poor Italy is distracted by civil brawls, and how little honour one who

is exiled as you are from his native town, can acquire, to whatever party he may adhere. His most arduous exertions may be sacrificed to political intrigue, and assuredly he will be repaid with ingratitude alone, whatever power he serves. In addition, a disgraceful political craft now reigns in the palaces of the Italian princes, which renders them ill schools for a youth, who, while he may, ought to preserve the innocence and sincerity of which the world will but too quickly deprive him. You would inevitably be disgusted by the narrow views, the treachery, and beggarly fraud, that dwell in the hearts, and influence the actions of our proudest nobles.

"You must therefore begin your knightly career out of Italy. The honours that you will obtain from a foreign sovereign, will ennoble you in the eyes of your countrymen, and will enable you, when you return, to judge impartially of the state of your country, and to choose, without being influenced by narrow party-feeling, the course you will pursue. It is with this view that I am going to introduce you to an old friend of mine, an Englishman, who is about to return to his native soil. I knew him many years ago, when he accompanied Charles of Anjou to Italy. A long time has elapsed since sir Ethelbert Atawel returned to England; but, upon the event of a new king's succession to the throne, he was chosen, as a person well acquainted with the customs of the holy court, to be the chief of an embassy to the Pope. Having discharged his mission, he has crossed the Alps to take a last farewell of his Italian friends, before he proceeds to assume a distinguished part in his own country. I shall consign you, my young friend, to the guidance of this noble gentleman. We have now been separated for nearly twenty years; but our attachment did not arise from casual intercourse alone; we esteemed one another, we bound ourselves one to the other by vows; and, although at this distance of time, life has much changed its appearance to both of us, yet I swear I would keep to the letter all that I vowed to him, and I believe that he will do the same by me.

"Another motive influences me in sending you to England. You have a rich relation there named Alderigo, who requested Atawel to enquire for the various branches of the exiled Antelminelli, and in particular for your father. It may well appear from the earnestness of his enquiries, that, if you go to England, you will find yourself neither friendless nor poor. I am an exile like you, and like you I am destitute of all resources, and am saved from embarrassment only by those labours in which I fortunately take a pride. I know that it would not be agreeable to you to be dependent on the favour of Atawel; but you are differently circumstanced with regard to your relation; and I believe him to have both the power and the will to serve you."

The gondola entered Canale Grande, and rested at the steps of a noble palace. Castruccio had no time to comment upon the relation of Guinigi; but followed him

silently through the stately apartments, hung with silk and tapestry, and paved with marble, into the banquetting hall, where the owner of the palace sat surrounded by the aristocracy of Venice. The childish mind of Castruccio shrunk into itself, when he saw the satined and gold-laced state of these nobles, and then glanced his eye on the dignified form of his companion clothed in the mean habiliments of an Italian peasant: but his shame was turned to pride and astonishment, when he found this homely-looking man received with reverence, and embraced with affection, by this lordly assembly. The most cordial salutes echoed from the ends of the hall, as they all pressed round to welcome their old friend and counsellor, to whose wisdom and calm courage many of them owed the most important obligations. There was a sweetness in the smile of Guinigi, that elevated him in appearance above other men, a sensibility beaming in his eye which added grace to his quick and expressive motions, and a gentleness that tempered the frankness of his manners. He introduced Castruccio to the nobles. The youth was beautiful to a wonder, and experienced a flattering reception from the friends of his protector.

"I shall remain but a few days in Venice," said Guinigi to his host; "but I will visit you again before I retire to my farm; at present you must tell me where I can find your English visitor, sir Ethelbert Atawel, for my business is with him."

A man now arose, and advanced from a retired part of the room; his person formed a strange contrast to the sun-burnt faces and black eyes of the Italians who were around him. He had the round Saxon features, moulded with uncommon delicacy; his light hair slightly shaded his fair temples; and his slender person denoted elegance rather than power; his countenance bore the expression of much thought, of thoughts moulded by an enquiring, yet a gentle mind. He advanced towards Guinigi; his lips were almost convulsed; a tear stole into his eye, as he grasped his hand, and said: "You do not forget me?"

Guinigi replied with trembling emphasis, "Never!"—the hearts of the friends were full, they took leave of the company, and descended to the gondola, that without spectators they might express their remembered affection.

CHAPTER IV

Castruccio in England.

Castruccio spent several days with his friend at Venice. Guinigi and Atawel were constantly together, and Castruccio was thrown to a great degree into the society of

the Venetian nobles. Having been for a year the constant companion of Guinigi, the contrast between him and these men struck him forcibly. The mind of the philosophical exile was fraught with a natural wisdom, a freedom from prejudice, and a boldness of thought, that suited the enthusiasm, while it corrected the narrow views of Castruccio. But these nobles were full of party spirit, and a never resting desire, to aggrandize first themselves, and secondly their native town, in opposition to the rest of the world. They were to themselves the centre of the universe, and men and nations rose and set only for them. As Galileo was persecuted for saying that the earth moved attendant on the sun, thus demonstrating the relative insignificance of our globe; so they would have pursued with excessive hatred any one who should have pointed out to them their true station in relation to their fellow-creatures. They were in no danger of hearing such disagreeable truths from Guinigi: he was content not to be deceived himself by the false shadows thrown from society; but with that amenity which was his characteristic, he adapted his counsels to the ideas of others, and allowed those whom he could not hope to new mould, to sleep in their pleasant dreams.

Castruccio was presented to the doge, and partook of all the brilliant amusements of Venice. But at length the time arrived, when he was to depart with sir Ethelbert Atawel, and Guinigi to return to his farm among the hills. It was a sorrowful event for Atawel and Castruccio to separate from this kind and valued friend. Before he departed, Guinigi talked long with Castruccio, and vehemently urged him, when he should arrive in England, that he would put himself entirely under the guidance of Atawel. "You will be," he said, "in a strange country, with unknown manners and customs; so that without a guide you would find it difficult to steer a right course among them. My dear Castruccio, God only knows what your future fortunes will be; but your father intrusted you to my care, and I feel the most earnest anxiety that you should enter life under good auspices, and enjoy, at least with untarnished pleasure, the years of youthful hope. Be towards Atawel as you ever have been to me; the natural ingenuousness of your character will discover to you the medium, which combines the graceful submission of youth, with that independence that is the dearest birthright of man. Atawel is gentle and unassuming; you must seek his counsels; for his best wisdom will be bestowed upon you, when you shew a desire to consult it."

They separated: Atawel and Castruccio departed with a few attendants towards Milan on their road to England.

Castruccio now found himself with a companion, different from him to whom he had just bade an affectionate farewell. Atawel was more a man of the world than Guinigi; nor did he possess his genius and surpassing excellence. Entering into the common road of life, he was notwithstanding able to regulate his conduct by just principles,

and to recommend himself by a sound judgement and a steady courage; but he was unable to strike into new paths, and become an adventurer in life and morals as Guinigi had been. He had great sensibility and warm affections; and various misfortunes in life had turned a constitutional gravity into melancholy. Yet he unveiled his spirit for a while from the clouds that obscured it, and entered with interest into the views and expectations of Castruccio.

They conversed together concerning his cousin Alderigo, who was a rich merchant in London, and who by his respectability and talents had acquired influence even among the nobles of England. Alderigo had been known and loved by Edward I: for in those days kings did not disdain to seek friends among those classes of society from which ordinary etiquette would have excluded them. The merchant however had withdrawn from all communication with the court, since the accession of Edward of Caernarvon; for the childish amusements of this monarch ill accorded with the dispositions of one who had been the friend of his manly father. When the barons of England remonstrated with Edward, and insisted on the exile of Piers Gavaston, Alderigo had however come forward to persuade the king to this necessary concession.

Atawel also was an enemy of Gavaston; and, as he sketched the political state of England to his young companion, he painted with indignation the change from the spirited counsels of the late sovereign, to the puerile amusements and weak inaction of his son. He described Gavaston as a man expert in feats of bodily activity, but destitute of judgement and manly enterprise. He said that he was vain-glorious, rapacious, and profuse. Insolent to his superiors and equals, tyrannical to his inferiors, he deigned to use the arts of courtesy to the king alone: even the queen failed in obtaining from him the respect due to her sex and dignity. He had been raised to rank and wealth by the royal favour; but he conducted himself with an arrogance, that would not have been tolerated in the first noble of the land. He was not content to overcome his adversary in the field of honour; but he endeavoured to add to his shame by sarcasm and ridicule. The barons exerted their utmost power for his destruction; Edward yielded to force; but on the first favourable opportunity he recalled his friend, who, untaught by adversity, again irritated his rivals to that hostility in which he was sure to be worsted.

The animated picture which Atawel drew of the discontent and turbulence of the English barons, although it would have excited terror in these quiet times, delighted Castruccio, as affording a hope of having now found a fitting stage on which he might commence his active career. The loss of Scotland to England, and the inaction of the king and his favourite, easily induced him to sympathize in the indignation of Atawel; and he readily believed, that the insolence of the upstart and unworthy Gavaston

demanded and justified the most rigorous measures to ensure his expulsion from the kingdom.

Castruccio was now eighteen years of age. His converse with Guinigi had indued him with a manliness of thought and a firmness of judgement beyond his years; at the same time that the vivacity of his temper often made him appear rash, and the gaiety of his disposition led him to seek with ardour the common diversions of his age. He was bred as a young esquire in all those accomplishments which were deemed essential to a gentleman, and was expert in feats of horsemanship and arms, in the dance, and in other exercises peculiar to his country. His countenance, which was uncommonly beautiful, expressed frankness, benevolence and confidence; when animated, his eyes shone with fire; when silent, there was a deep seriousness in his expression, that commanded attention, combined at the same time with a modesty and grace which prepossessed every one in his favour. His slight, but active form never moved without displaying some new elegance of person; and his voice, whose modulated accents stole on the ear like sweetest music, forced the hearer to love him; his laugh, like that of a child, heartfelt and joyous, was entirely distinct from the sneer of contempt, or the arrogance of superiority. He had read little; but he had conversed with those who had studied deeply, so that his conversation and manners were imbued with that refinement and superior sweetness, which are peculiar to those who unite the cultivation of the mind to exterior accomplishments. Gay, ambitious and beloved, there was little pride, and no insolence in his nature: nor could he endure either to be the object of arrogance, or to perceive it exercised over others.

Such was Castruccio, when in the beginning of the year 1309 he landed on the English shores. Gavaston had just been expelled by a confederacy of the nobles, who for a while had assumed the royal power into their own hands. But, instead of having been poorly exiled according to the wish of the barons, his royal master had invested him with the Lieutenancy of Ireland, where he signalized himself by his victories over the rebels. Edward however could not be happy in the absence of his favourite, but, melancholy and irresolute, watched for a fitting opportunity, when the hatred of his nobles should in some degree be softened, to recall him.

Alderigo received his young cousin with the warmest affection, and shewed every disposition to aid by his wealth and influence, in placing him in such a situation as might gratify his ambition. Atawel introduced him at court; and, if the haughty barons of England viewed with a supercilious smile the youthful beauty and accomplishments of the stranger, Edward was pleased to behold one, who by his foreign air, and the refinement of his manners, recalled the memory of his exiled

favourite. He distinguished Castruccio among the crowd; and the youth, dazzled perhaps by royal favour, easily altered his prepossessions in favour of the barons, into love and pity for their oppressed sovereign. At balls and tournaments Castruccio shone among the throng. He was yet too youthful to enter into manual contests with the English lords; but the management of his horse, his graceful person, his skill in the dance, and other light games endeared him to Edward, who was incapable of sympathizing in the ruder exercises in which his barons were so jealous of their pre-eminence.

Atawel and Alderigo viewed the favour which Castruccio enjoyed with the king, with fearful eyes: they dreaded the jealousy of the nobles; but happily this passion was not excited on the present occasion. On the contrary they were rather pleased, that the king should be amused by the company of one, whose youth and precarious situation withheld him from entering into the lists of rivalry with them. The Italian Castruccio, dependent on the bounty of a merchant of his own country, no conqueror at the tournament, neither thwarting, nor understanding their several plans of aggrandisement, was past over with a scornful smile, which the youth, regarding himself as a sufferer in common with their injured king, did not receive as a degradation. But deeper feelings of sympathy now gave him other sentiments.

Edward's favourite recreation was the game of tennis; in which, it being ommon in Italy under the name of *la Palla*, Castruccio excelled. One day after having amused themselves at this exercise in one of the royal gardens, Edward feeling fatigued gave up the game, and leaning on Castruccio's arm, strolled with him down one of the shady allies. And here for the first time he opened his heart to his new friend: he described Gavaston as the most amiable and the most accomplished knight of the times: he dwelt with touching earnestness on his own attachment to him, and his forced separation; tears started into his eyes as he spoke of the desolate state of his heart, deprived of the company of his first, his only and his dearest friend; and his cheeks glowed with indignation, as he mentioned the arrogance of his nobles, and the state of slavery to which he was reduced.

Castruccio was deeply moved; and the natural feeling of pity, with which he was inspired at the spectacle of the slavery of one, who it was presumed had a divine right to command, was augmented by the idea that he had been found a worthy deposit for the overflowings of the royal sorrows. He offered his services with earnestness, and Edward gladly accepted his proffers. "Yes, my dear friend," he cried, "the accomplishment of my fondest wishes shall devolve upon you. You shall be my saviour; the saviour of my honour, and the cause of the only happiness I can enjoy on earth, the return of my beloved Piers."

Edward then disclosed to Castruccio the various expedients he had used, to pacify his nobles, and to obtain the re-establishment of his friend. He acknowledged that he had just received from the Pope a dispensation of Gavaston's oath never again to set foot in England; and a faithful messenger was only necessary, to carry this intelligence to his friend, and bid him instantly return; so that the barons, taken unawares, should not have time to plot new disturbances, before the king should be able to defy their worst, secure of the life and the society of his favourite. "That task shall devolve on you, my dear Castruccio," said he; "and I shall be indebted to you for the happiness of again embracing him to whom I have bound myself by the ties of an eternal friendship. Frame a plausible excuse for quitting England, and hasten to Dublin, where Piers impatiently waits a messenger from me; that you may not be exposed to the slightest risk from the suspicion of the nobles, I will give you no letter: but this ring, as was agreed upon between myself and my friend, will obtain for its bearer his full confidence and friendship."

Castruccio took leave of the monarch, and hastened to the house of Alderigo, full of pride, hope, and joy. He had now indeed entered upon life, and as he hoped, with the best auspices: he had become the chosen confident of a king, and his secret messenger; he readily believed that prudence, and prudence should not fail him, would cause his rise to the highest dignities. His feelings were not entirely selfish; for he deeply pitied Edward, and was sincerely happy in serving him: but to pity and serve a king, was a state of being full of pleasure. In accordance with the prudent plan he had marked out for himself, he remained at the house of his kinsman during several days, secluded from his courtly friends, and absenting himself entirely from the palace. On occasion of the arrival of a few letters from France, he informed Atawel and Alderigo, that it was absolutely necessary for him to undertake a journey to that country. As he alleged the most frivolous causes as the motive of this determination, his friends easily perceived that he was endeavouring to mislead them by a false pretext. The Italian, after having in vain endeavoured to win his confidence, contented himself with recommending prudence and caution: Atawel spoke more seriously, and bade the youth beware, before he mixed with the intrigues of a foreign court, in which if he were once detected, he had neither friends nor connections to extricate him from the rage of his powerful adversaries. And then again he intreated Castruccio to consider the justice of the cause in the service of which he enlisted himself, and what would be the probable consequences, if through his means Edward were to establish a correspondence with his favourite. The young man listened with seeming deference, but allowed no word to escape him, that might countenance the idea that his journey was influenced by any except private considerations.

He departed from London, as if on his way to France; then suddenly changing his route, he traversed the kingdom, and crossing from Bristol to Cork, hastened to Dublin, and carried to Gavaston the welcome command of the king to return immediately to England; the ring that he bore from Edward, was an immediate passport to the friendship of the illustrious exile.

Piers Gavaston was still in the flower of his age. If he were not handsome, yet the expression of his features was manly and interesting; he was graceful in person, and strong of muscle, though agile of limb: he was courteous in general society, though a certain haughtiness was diffused over his whole manner, which forbade any more familiar feeling than that of admiration. Among his friends this air of superiority yielded to the most winning kindness and affability of demeanour, which, being ever a mark of distinguished affection, did not fail to bind them to him by an additional tie of gratitude. He spoke several languages with great fluency; he rivalled the most graceful knights of France, and far surpassed the English in all chivalrous accomplishments. The consciousness of power with which his dexterity inspired him, generated an independence and frankness of action, which would have rendered him amiable to all, had it not been tainted by vanity and presumption. He was magnificent in his attire, fond of parade, and proud of his dazzling fortunes, all heavy sins among his English enemies. He paid great attention, and made much shew of love to Castruccio, whom if princely affability had before moved, the gracious treatment of Gavaston made a complete conquest of him.

They returned together to England. Edward had arrived at Chester, that he might behold his friend a few days the sooner; and he flew to his arms with the affectionate transports with which a child might welcome the return of its absent mother.

A strict friendship was established between Gavaston and Castruccio. Piers had not learned moderation from adversity; his wealth and luxury were increased, and with these his vanity and insufferable presumption. Atawel in vain endeavoured to win Castruccio from his society; but, if the deportment of Gavaston was arrogant towards the English lords, it was so much the more affable and insinuating towards Castruccio. The king also loved the Italian; and, not examining the merits of the case, he allowed himself to be entirely led away by the personal attachment that he bore to Edward and Piers.

Gavaston had wealth and rank; and, although he was considered an upstart, yet the possession of these gave him a consequence in the eyes of the nobles, of which Castruccio was wholly divested. They looked on the latter as one may regard a stinging insect, whose insignificance is not to compound for his annoyance. They

endured the insolence of Gavaston with the sullenness of men who look into the future for revenge; but they bore the far slighter pain which Castruccio inflicted upon them, with the impatience one feels at an injury, however slight, for which we are by no means prepared. And, if Castruccio himself manifested few symptoms of insolence, yet he was supported by that of Gavaston; and they felt that, though for the present they could not injure the favourite personally, yet they might wound him through his Italian friend. This latter also was not unfrequently provoked beyond his usual courtesy by the pride and taunts of his enemies; and, if ever he dared reply, or when Gavaston replied for him, the nobles felt a rage they could ill smother at what they deemed so despicable an offender. The indications of mischief which had before slightly manifested themselves, broke out one day with a violence that suddenly terminated Castruccio's visit to England.

He accompanied the king, who went with a train of the first nobility on a hawking party, to Chelsea. The exercise excited Castruccio's blood, and inspired him with an exaltation of spirits which might have exhausted itself in gaiety alone, had not a quarrel, that arose between him and one of the nobles, urged him to a fury he could ill control. The contention began concerning the comparative flight of their birds; and, healed as they were by personal animosity, it became loud and bitter. Edward in vain endeavoured to appease them; but when, seconded by his friends, the English nobleman established his triumph in the contest, Castruccio replied by a sarcasm which so irritated his antagonist, that no longer restraining his indignation, he darted forward, and struck Castruccio. The fiery youth, crying in Italian, "By blood, and not by words, are blows to be avenged!"—drew his stiletto, and plunged it into the bosom of his adversary. A hundred swords immediately flashed in the air; Edward threw himself before his friend to protect him: Gavaston, Atawel and others who loved him, hastily withdrew him from the crowd, made him mount his horse, and without a moment's delay they rode to the river's side below the Tower, where they fortunately found a vessel on the point of sailing for Holland. Without waiting to see his other friends, without going to the house of Alderigo for money or equipment, they hurried him on board the vessel, which immediately got under weigh, and dropt down with a favourable wind towards the Nore.

The barons, burning with revenge, had sent archers to the house of Alderigo, who, not finding Castruccio, seized upon his kinsman, and threw him into prison. A law then existed in England, that if a foreigner killed a native and escaped, those with whom he resided became amenable for the murder. Alderigo was therefore in the most imminent peril; but Edward, as the last act of friendship that he could bestow upon Castruccio, saved the life and fortune of his kinsman. And thus, after a year's

residence in this island, did the youth bring to a disastrous conclusion all the hopes and expectations which had led him thither.

CHAPTER V

Castruccio in Flanders and France—Alberto Scoto—Benedetto Pepi.

After a favourable navigation of a few hours Castruccio arrived at Ostend. He landed destitute of friends, and even of the equipage of a gentleman. What Castruccio felt during the voyage can hardly be described. Anger, grief and shame kept his spirits in a perpetual fluctuation, which, painful as it was, was far preferable to the extinction of hope, and the sense of utter desertion upon his landing in Flanders. The world was indeed before him: he had been torn with frightful suddenness from the affections he had cultivated for a year, from ease, luxury and the friendship of a powerful monarch, and consigned to utter destitution. He did not even possess the lance and horse, with which knights-errant of old won kingdoms for themselves. Nor did he think without remorse of the blood with which his hands were for the first time stained; he had received a blow, and blood alone could expiate this injury: in France or England a duel in regular and courtly form would have terminated the quarrel; but in Italy the secret stiletto was the weapon of revenge, and the murder of one was avenged by the assassination of another, until the list of expiatory murders ran high, and were carefully counted by each party, each justifying his own, and blaming those of his adversary. Yet, although the mind of Castruccio was tinctured by the morality of his country, he was too young and too new not to feel a natural horror at having been the cause of the death of a fellow creature. Seated on a rock amidst the wide sands left by the retiring sea, listening to the melancholy roar of the tide, he shed bitter tears of repentance and conscious guilt. One idea alone calmed him, that his adversary might not have died—and then what was he? His rashness and folly had thrown him from a high station of prosperity and happiness, to being the solitary, helpless creature that he then was.

The sun sunk in a turbid sky. "Ah! how unlike dear Italy," sighed Castruccio; "how different from the clear heavens and orange-tinted sunsets of my native soil!"

He spoke in Italian, and a man who stood near unperceived by him, repeated the word so dear to exiles, the name of the country of his birth:—"*Italia*." Castruccio looked up,

and the man continued: "Italy is also my native country. And who are you, my friend, who, alone and a stranger, mourn for the delights of that paradise of the earth?"

"I am a Lucchese," replied Castruccio; "I am the cousin of Alderigo, the rich merchant in England."

"The name of an Italian," said the other, "is a sufficient passport to my poor hospitality; but, as the relation of my excellent friend, Messer Alderigo, it greatly delights me to offer you all the little service that I am capable of giving. Come with me to my house; you will recall perhaps some not unpleasing associations in the society of an Italian family, who, during a long absence, have never forgotten the olive groves of Italy, and never ceased to desire to return to them."

Castruccio accepted this friendly invitation with joy. He found his host a rich merchant of Ostend, living in the Italian style, and surrounded by a family, whose language and persons transported him to the plains of Lombardy, or the vallies of his native Tuscany.

During the conversation of the evening his host mentioned the wars that were then carrying on between the French king and the Flemings, and that Alberto Scoto commanded under the banners of the former with a troop of Italians. This account struck Castruccio with a hope, that he should now find some remedy for his misfortunes. Being obliged to enter on a new career, and his inclination leading him to war, he thought that this opportunity of serving under a fellow-countryman was too favourable a circumstance to be neglected. He made many enquiries concerning this troop and its illustrious chief. Alberto Scoto had once possessed a wide dominion in Lombardy; he had expelled the Visconti from Milan, and had been constituted tyrant or lord of the most flourishing Lombard states. When by the joint force of revolt and treason he was driven from his power, he had not lost his reputation as a successful general, and Philip le Bel, king of France, eagerly accepted his offered services. In former times he had been considered as belonging to the Guelph faction; but he had changed before he quitted Italy; and, now an exile, the distinction of party was entirely lost to him.

Castruccio had never yet made a campaign; and his eager spirit led him to regard with disdain the sloth in which he had hitherto passed his life. From the moment that he had landed in France he had resolved to commence a military career; and he believed that he should find no better school than that of Alberto Scoto, where he would be disciplined in the modes of his own country, and learn under so experienced a general, the tactics of those armies which he hoped one day to command.

On the following morning he discoursed concerning these ideas with his host, who easily entered into his designs, and promised to provide him with such an introduction to Scoto as would at least command his attention. His plans were quickly arranged.

The merchant took a kind leave of his young compatriot, and gave him a well filled purse at parting: "You shall repay me," said he smiling, "out of your first spoils: or, if these fall short of my expectations, Messer Alderigo will not suffer a friend of his to lose through his kindness to a kinsman."

Castruccio traversed in safety the plains of Flanders, and arrived at the French camp, which was pitched near Douai. He penetrated with some difficulty into the tent of Scoto: but that experienced general soon perceived in the mien of the youthful stranger a soldier's deportment and air of independence, that prepossessed him at once in his favour. After having read the letter of Castruccio's host, he addressed the youth with kindness. "Our countryman," said he, "informs me that you are the chief of the noble family of the Antelminelli, a name so well known in Italy, as to be itself a sufficient introduction to a native of that country. You desire to serve under me, and I feel myself honoured by your selection; my troop must be a gainer by the acquisition of so noble a volunteer."

The manners of Scoto were courtly; and in his conversation with the youth his keen judgement quickly discovered the qualifications of Castruccio. They dined together; and afterwards, having equipped him in a becoming dress, he presented him to the French king, from whom he experienced a favourable reception. Castruccio did not fail speedily to inform Alderigo of his situation, who immediately remitted him a sum of money amply sufficient for his present supply.

Castruccio had now exchanged the idle gaieties of the English court for the active labours of a camp; and on the following day he entered on his military duties. Scoto presented him with a suit of armour, selecting one of the most costly that he possessed. There was a small iron scull cap which fitted the head, and was worn under the helmet. The casque itself was of highly polished iron inlaid with gold in beautiful devices, and the mailed collar for his neck was plated with the same precious metal. The breast-plate was finely carved, and fastened over the shoulders to the back plate, which was laboured with less delicacy. The greaves which sheathed his legs, were beautifully inlaid, and shone with gold; his sword was of the finest temper, and the scabbard, richly adorned, hung at his side from an embroidered scarf; a shield and a good lance completed his equipment. Arms of less costly manufacture were chosen for his horse, which, selected from the stud of Scoto, was strong, heavy and spirited.

The next day the camp was in motion. It were needless to detail the events of this campaign: several battles were fought, and some towns taken. The French who had hitherto been losers, regained their ground; and in every action the troop of Scoto distinguished itself, and among his troop Castruccio was pre-eminent in bravery, enterprise and success. Scoto perceived, and warmly applauded his courage and conduct: the fame of his actions was spread through the army, and his first campaign crowned him with that reputation to which he had long aspired. King Philip himself had witnessed his achievements; he beheld him as he led a troop to the onset, and turned in favour of France the dubious fortune of a hard-fought day. The King proved his gratitude by bestowing on him such praises and rewards as filled Castruccio with triumph and delight.

Scoto was quartered during the winter at one of the Flemish towns, and Castruccio was invited to partake of the gaieties of the Parisian court. He obeyed the summons, and spent some weeks in the enjoyment of all those amusements which the palace of Philip afforded. His beauty and grace attracted the notice of the ladies; and his fame in arms caused him to be distinguished by the French nobility.

Towards the close of the winter he returned to the camp of Scoto, in whose esteem he held a very high place. This general delighted in imparting his experience to so attentive a listener, and in endeavouring to form the genius of one who he foresaw would rise to the highest rank among the lords of Italy. Castruccio was admitted at all hours to his tent; they rode together; and, under the precepts of one well experienced in the politics of Italy, Castruccio began to understand and meditate the part he should act, when he returned to that country. Yet Scoto's was an evil school; and, if his pupil gained from him a true insight into Italian politics, he at the same time learned the use of those arts which then so much disgraced that people. The *Punica fides* had been transferred across the Mediterranean; and every kind of wile and artifice was practised in the Italian palaces, which ever received from the court of the Popes, as from a well of poison, courtiers and crafty politicians, who never permitted the art to fail for want of instructors. Scoto had been more successful than any other in the exercise of this policy, and he now initiated Castruccio in the secrets of the craft. Hitherto his mind had been innocence, and all his thoughts were honour. Frankness played on his lips; ingenuousness nestled in his heart; shame was ever ready to check him on the brink of folly; and the tenderness of his nature seemed to render it impossible for him to perpetrate a deed of harshness or inhumanity. The court of England had infused some laxity into his moral creed; but at least he had not learned there hypocrisy, and the wily arts of a hoary politician. Still the strait path of honour and a single mind had ever engaged his choice. But nineteen is a dangerous

age; and ill betides the youth who confides himself to a crafty instructor. If Castruccio listened at first with an inattentive ear to the counsels of Scoto, yet their frequent repetition, and the wax-like docility of his mind, quickly gave them power over him.

"You, my dear Castruccio," said Scoto, "will soon return to your native country, where your talents and valour will open for you a brilliant career. A soldier, if he join wisdom of counsel to soldiership, must for a while succeed in Italy; and if he be prudent, he need not fall as I did. A chief in Italy ought to pay strict attention to the discipline and equipment of his followers, and to the spreading the terror of his name among his enemies. This must be his first step; and without that the foundations of his power are as sand; for to have many cities subject to his command is as nothing in the hour of danger, since if he control them not with iron, gold will ever find its way into the councils of the citizens; and woe and defeat are to that chief, who reigns only by the choice of the people; a choice more fickle and deceitful than the famed faithlessness of woman.

"But, having once formed an army, disciplined it, and shewn its temper by success, then is the time to change the arts of war for those of counsel, and to work your way as the mole, shewing no sign of your path, until your triumphant power comes forth where it is least expected. Nor be lavish of gold; for that is power while you possess it, weakness when surrendered into the hands of another. But alliances, marriages, nominal honours and promises are the fit allurements to be used among our countrymen. By one or other of these means, of such motley materials are Italian confederacies composed, one single chieftain may ever introduce dissention and treason into the enemy's camp. It was thus that I fell; for I did not trust to my own strength, but to that of my allies.

"There are two classes of men in Italy, which indeed often cut like a two-edged sword, and turn upon their master, yet which with proper management are of infinite use in the accomplishment of secret treaties, and the carrying on of correspondence in the very heart of the enemy's councils: these are the priests, and the *Uomini di Corte*[2]. The priests are the least trust-worthy and the most expensive: yet sometimes I have seen them stand by their employer, if he yielded them much respect and apparent submission, and betray him who has paid them well, yet who had neglected the arts of flattery. In their youth men are often led to trust to their actions and their sword; but every day is another page of experience, to shew us that men are governed by words alone, words light as air, yet which have often been found capable of overturning empires: witness the triumphs of the Popes, who dissipated the armies of their enemies, and despoiled them of rank, possessions and life, by excommunications, and anathemas—words. But, in discovering this infinite power in words, let it make

you prudent in their use; be not chary in their quantity, but look well to their quality. But to return to our instruments,—priests, and *Uomini di Corte*.

"These latter are poor dogs, often faithful, easily satisfied, and who can penetrate every where, see every thing, hear every thing, and if you acquire but the art of getting their knowledge from them, they become of infinite utility; this is done by many words, much good humour, and a little gold. When Della Torre and I chased Matteo Visconti from Milan, that chief retired to live on bread and onions in his miserable castle of St. Columban among the Euganean hills. All at once Della Torre began to suspect, that Matteo had received money from Germany, and was secretly collecting arms and men at his castle. So he sent for a *Uomo di Corte*, a famous fellow in those days, one Marco Lombardi, who had in former times prophesied to count Ugolino his future misfortunes, and said to him; 'Now, my brave Marco, if you would gain a palfrey and a gold-embroidered robe, I have an easy task, which accomplished they shall both be yours. Go, as if on your own pleasure, to the castle where Matteo Visconti now lives; spy well if there be gleam of arms or appearance of soldiers; and, when you take leave of the chief, ask him in a buffoonish manner to answer you two questions: let those questions be, first, how he likes his present state, and if he be not poorly off; and secondly, when he hopes to return to Milan.'

"Marco readily undertook the task, and visited the castle of St. Columban, where he found Visconti ill dressed, ill fed, and worse attended; for there were about him only a few wrinkled and crippled followers, who not being able to gain more in the wars, and too lazy for work, came to starve themselves under his roof. His good lady was worse off, not having a handmaid to wait upon her, and, as I have heard, there was but one capuchin between her and her husband, which they wore by turns. Marco made but a short stay in the castle, for he got nothing to eat; but, as he took his leave of Visconti, he intreated the chief to help him to gain a palfrey and a silken robe. 'Willingly,' replied Visconti, 'if I am able; but think not to get them from me, for I have them not.'

"'Noble count,' said Marco, 'answer me two questions, and I shall receive these gifts in pay for your answers.'

"And then he put the two demands, as Della Torre had instructed him. Visconti, who was discerning and cunning, replied: 'Truly I find my present situation suited to me, since I suit myself to it; tell this to your master, Messer Guido Della Torre, who sent you; and tell him also, that when his crimes out number mine, then it is God's will that I return to Milan.'

"Della Torre, relieved from his fears, since he undoubtedly feared German gold more than the due punishment for his sins, rewarded Marco as he had promised."

Such were the lessons of Scoto; and the reader will easily forgive me, if I repeat them not so often, or dilate on them so much as the chief himself did. Castruccio listened with curiosity, half angry, half convinced; and in those days the seeds of craft were sown, that, flourishing afterwards, contributed to his advancement to power and glory. As winter drew to a close, Scoto said to him: "I could have wished, my young friend, that you fought under my banners another campaign, and that I might still enjoy the advantage of your society and valour; but fortune orders it otherwise, and you must away to Italy. Henry of Luxemburgh, now emperor of Germany, has begun to advance towards that country, where he will collect the wrecks of the Ghibeline party, and endeavour to re-establish them. You are a Ghibeline of a high and faithful family, and must not omit this opportunity for your advancement. Return to Italy; join the emperor; and I doubt not that through his means you will be restored to your wealth and rights in Lucca. Go, Castruccio; you are formed for action and command: do not forget my lessons. Here or in England they might be useless, but in Italy they are necessary to your success. I doubt not of the high fortune that awaits you; and it will warm my old blood, if I think, that I, an exile, and a soldier of fortune, fighting under colours not my own, shall have contributed to the advancement of so lofty a spirit as yours."

Castruccio followed the advice of Scoto; he took an affectionate leave of him, and again received the courteous thanks of the French monarch. He was loaded with many costly presents; and his sword, of the finest temper, the hilt and sheath richly embossed and inlaid with jewels, was presented to him by the hands of the queen. He consigned these gifts, and the spoil by which he was enriched, into the hands of an Italian merchant, to be conveyed by his means into Italy; he travelled himself on horseback, accompanied by a servant, and a mule which bore his armour.

Journeying at this leisurely rate, he arrived after an interval of some weeks, at the south-eastern extremity of France. He approached the beautiful Alps, the boundaries of his native country: their white domes and peaks pierced the serene atmosphere; and silence, the deep silence of an Alpine winter, reigned among their ravines. As he advanced into their solitudes, he lost all traces of the footsteps of man, and almost of animals:—an eagle would sometimes cross a ravine, or a chamois was seen hanging on the nearly perpendicular rock. The giant pines were weighed down by a huge canopy of snow; and the silent torrents and frozen waterfalls were covered, and almost hid, by the uniform mass. The paths of the vallies, and the ascent of the mountains, ever difficult, were almost impassable; perpetual showers of snow hid every track, and a few straggling poles alone guided the traveller in his dangerous journey. The vulture leaving his nest in the rock, screamed above, seeming to tell the

rash adventurer who dared disturb his haunts, that his torn limbs were the tribute due to him, the monarch of that region. Sometimes even, the road was strewed with the members of the venturous chamois, whose sure foot had failed among the snows; and the approach of Castruccio scared the birds of prey from their repast on his half-frozen limbs. One pass was particularly dangerous: the road was cut in the side of a precipitous mountain: below, the stream which had cleared its way in the very depth of the valley, was hidden by the overhanging of the precipice: above, the mountain side, almost vulture-baffling, black, except where the snow had found a resting-place in its clefts, towered so high that the head became dizzy, when the traveller would have gazed on the walled-in heavens. The path was narrow; and being entirely exposed to the south, the snows that covered it had been slightly melted, and again frozen, so that they had become slippery and dangerous. Castruccio dismounted from his horse; and turning his eyes from the depth below, he led him slowly on, until the widening of the road, and the appearance of a few pines diminished the terror of the surrounding objects.

Then, finding the road less dangerous, he remounted, and was proceeding cautiously along the edge of the precipice, when he heard a voice behind him as calling for help. Hastily dismounting, and tying the animal to a jutting point of the rock, he returned to that chasm, which he had just passed with such tremendous difficulty. There he saw a mule standing quietly by the road side; but, on the steep face of the precipice a few feet below, he perceived a man clinging to the pointed inequalities of the mountain, with such energy that his whole force and being seemed to live in the grasp, and his voice failed as he again endeavoured to cry for help. Castruccio's servant had lingered far behind, so that he was obliged alone to attempt the fearful task of drawing the sufferer from his appalling situation. He unbound his sash, and, tying one end to the girth of the mule's saddle, and taking the other in his hand, he threw it down to the man below. By these means, with infinite difficulty, he succeeded in hoisting up the poor wretch, who, white and wrinkled with fear, stood almost as entranced, when he found himself safe from the frightful death he had feared. Castruccio soothed him with a gentle voice, and told him that now the worst part of the journey was over, and that they were about to descend by an easier path to the plain of Italy; "where," he said, "you will find a paradise that will cure all your evils."

The man looked at him with a mixture of wonder, and what might have been construed into contempt, had his muscles, made rigid with cold and fear, yielded to the feeling of his mind. He replied drily, "I am an Italian." And Castruccio smiled to perceive, that these words were considered as a sufficient refutation to his assertion of the boasted charms of Italy.

After resting until the unfortunate traveller had recovered health and life, they proceeded along the mountain, saying little, for the path was too dangerous to admit of conversation. Yet, when Castruccio dared take his eyes from the track of his horse's feet, he could not help examining curiously the companion fortune had given him. He was a man by whose dry and wrinkled face you might guess him to be nearly sixty years of age; and yet, by the agility and more youthful appearance of his person, he could not be more than forty. His eyes were small, black and sparkling; his nose pointed and turned up; his lips were as a line in his face, uncurved and unmarked except by three deep wrinkles at each corner: his eyebrows were elevated as in vanity; and yet a flat high forehead denoted a good understanding. His figure was tall and lank, yet muscular, and was clothed with a mixture of poverty and rank, which it amused Castruccio to observe. He wore gilt spurs as a knight, and, carefully folded on his saddle before him, was a rich mantle edged with deep gold lace; he was clad in a close, strait dress of threadbare cloth, with a kind of narrow trowsers made of common undressed sheep skin, which fastened with many knots and intersections round his legs; he had a large capuchin cloak wrapped about him, made of coarse flannel, such as was called *sclavina*, because it was manufactured in Sclavonia, and was worn at that time by the poorest class of Italians. On his feet he wore great coarse boots of undressed sheep skin, that furnished a singular contrast to the golden spurs attached to them; his head was covered only by a scull-cap of iron mail sewed to cloth, which was called in those times a *majata*.

The sun descended as they pursued their journey, when, perceiving a house not far distant, Castruccio's companion drew in his mule, and pointing to it, asked if they should not remain there for the night? "Nay," replied Castruccio, "the moon will be up in half an hour, and being but just past its full, we may, I think, proceed safely."

"Do not trust to the moon," said his companion; "its shadows are deep and fearful, and its light not less dangerous; sometimes a beam cast from among trees across the road, will look like a running stream, and its black shades may conceal the most frightful dangers. I dare not proceed by moonlight, and am unwilling to part company with you on this dreadful road. I beg you to consent to pass the night at that house."

"I readily agree, if that be indeed a house, and not an unroofed sheep-cot; for I hardly expect to find in these regions a bed softer than the rock, or a roof which will shelter me better than the moonlight sky."

The cottage was shut up, and its inhabitants asleep; but, called up by the shrill voice of the elder traveller, a man rolled himself out from his bed of dried leaves and sheep skins, and opened the door. Welcoming the travellers, he quickly blew up the decaying

ashes of a fire in the middle of the only room of the cottage, and it threw a light on the bare walls of this disconsolate apartment; the smoke rose and filled the upper part of the room, while a small portion only escaped through a round hole in the roof. A large bed, or rather dormitory of dried leaves and the stalks of Indian corn, was strewed along one side of the room, on which many both men and women lay, peeping out on the travellers from under their sheep skin coverings: there was no furniture, except a rude bench, and a ruder table; the bare walls were black and falling down, while the sky peeped through many cracks in the roof. The room was so filled with the stench of garlick and smoke, that Castruccio, hastily retreating to the door, asked his companion whether he would not prefer proceeding on his journey. The latter appeared better accustomed to the sight and smell of such miserable cabins, and he used his utmost eloquence to persuade Castruccio that the shelter of the cottage was preferable to the pure and keen air of heaven; but finding the latter resolute in his determination not to enter, he told him, that having warmed for a few minutes his half frozen fingers, and tasted the wine of the cottage, he would proceed with him down the mountain.

The companion of Castruccio had not exaggerated the extreme danger of the road by moonlight. The frightened horses often refused to proceed, or to penetrate the murky depths which the mountain shadows cast around them, even blackening the snow. They rode on slowly and cautiously; and the following morning found themselves little advanced in the descent. It was near noon before they reached Susa, when, having passed the dangers of the journey, the elder traveller, recovering his voice and recollection, rode up to Castruccio, and asked him where he intended to rest after the toil he had undergone. Castruccio replied, that he hoped to find an inn in the town, and, if not, he should apply to some monastery, where he doubted not he should be provided with food and shelter for the following day and night.

"Sir," said his companion, "I am not a stranger in Susa, and have in particular one good old friend, Messer Tadeo della Ventura, well known to the Florentines and other Italians who pass over this mountain for the purposes of merchandize: this worthy man will receive me as an old friend and guest; and, as you both generously and bravely saved my life, I can do no less than offer to introduce you to the soft couches and good wines of Messer Tadeo."

"Nor will I refuse your offer; for soft couches will be welcome to my aching bones, and good wine a pleasant cordial to my wearied spirits: therefore, sir knight, I thank you heartily for your courtesy."

[2]*Uomini di Corte*, or "men of court:" story-tellers, minstrels, actors, or buffoons, who frequented the feasts and courts held by the Italian noblemen, and contributed no small part to the amusement of those times. They are frequently spoken of by Boccaccio.

CHAPTER VI

Castruccio in Italy—Susa—Creed of Benedetto.

Messer Tadeo received his old friend with respect and friendship; and, courteously welcoming Castruccio, he led them into a large hall, where the sight of a repast already set out seemed to diffuse joy over the countenances of both travellers. The hall was richly hung with scarlet cloth, and the tables and seats covered with tapestry; at the upper end of the room was a chimney and a fire, near which taking his seat, Messer Tadeo invited the new comers to join several other friends of his, who arranged themselves round the table.

When the long ceremony of dinner was finished, and the servants were busy in removing the tables, Messer Tadeo proposed to the newly arrived guests to conduct them to a bed-chamber, where they might repose after the fatigues of the journey. They both gladly accepted this offer; and in a deep and refreshing sleep Castruccio forgot his curiosity concerning who or what his companion might be, and the latter recovered from the trembling fear of danger, which had haunted him since his escape of the preceding day.

When Castruccio arose at about six o'clock in the evening, he joined Messer Tadeo, who was sitting with the other traveller in the great hall. The rest of the company had departed; and these two were in earnest conversation, which they changed when Castruccio entered.

After some time, holding up his finger, and drawing down still longer the long wrinkles of his cheeks, the fellow-traveller of Castruccio, in a mysterious manner, pronounced the word which had been given to the soldiers of Alberto Scoto, that they might distinguish one another during the darkness of night, or the confusion of battle; Castruccio, hearing this, easily divined that he had a fellow soldier, and a friend of his chief, in his strange travelling companion; so smiling, he uttered the countersign, and the other, turning on him, as if the ghost of one whom he had known many years before had risen before him, hastily enquired, "You served then in his troop?"

"Yes," replied Castruccio, "I had the honour of serving under the noble knight, Messer Alberto Scoto; and, in having rendered you a service, I am still more happy to find that I saved one who has fought under the same banners with myself."

"Is your name a secret?"

"I am of a noble Lucchese family, now exiled and wandering; my name is Castruccio Castracani dei Antelminelli."

The elder traveller suddenly arose, and, embracing Castruccio warmly, bestowed on him a brotherly kiss, and then turning to Tadeo, said: "This morning I introduced to you a stranger whose merit with me was that of having saved my life at the imminent risk of his own; now I introduce to you a gallant soldier, whose name has been spread through France, as that of the bravest warrior and the ablest commander that fought in the Low Countries: the Sieur Castruccio is a name which even the children in France lisp with gratitude, and the Flemings tremble to hear."

Many compliments passed; and then the traveller said: "This pleasant discovery has made friends of three who were before strangers; nor will I conceal from you, Messer Castruccio, that my name is Benedetto Pepi, a Cremonese, now returning to my own country, after having gained laurels and knight-hood under the banners of Messer Scoto. You, my dear companion, say that you are an exile; but great changes are now taking place in Italy, and, knowing who you are, we may well admit you to the confidential conversation that I and Messer Tadeo were holding when you entered, concerning all that has passed since the arrival of the emperor Henry in Italy."

Saying this, Benedetto made a slight sign to his friend, which Castruccio easily guessed to be an admonition to be discreet in his disclosures. Tadeo replied to this sign by a nod, and said:

"Two Florentine usurers who had come through Milan, dined yesterday at my house; they had witnessed the entrance of the emperor into that city. The lord of Milan, Guido della Torre, was obliged to discharge his soldiers, and unarmed, at the head of an unarmed multitude, went out to meet the emperor, who had the Visconti in his train, and all the Ghibelines, the old enemies of the Torre family. These are now reinstated in their possessions; yet Henry still pretends to impartiality, and in his march has restored all the exiles to their various towns, whether they be Guelphs or Ghibelines."

"I wonder," said Pepi, "how long he will keep on the mask; few men are impartial, an emperor never: to one curious in state affairs it were a fine occasion, to conjecture what will be the issue and crown of these pretensions."

"Why," asked Castruccio, "should not they be as they appear? Cannot the emperor be animated by a generous policy, and wish to reconcile all parties by a just and fair proceeding?"

"Impossible!" cried Pepi with energy; "an emperor just! a prince impartial! Do not thrones rest upon dissentions and quarrels? And must there not be weakness in the people to create power in the prince? I prophesy; and as a discreet man I prophesy seldom, yet I now securely foretell, that Henry will set all Italy by the ears, to reap the fruits of their dissentions. He procures the recall of all the exiles—I admire his policy, worthy of being studied and understood by all who would reign. Can Ghibelines and Guelphs live within the walls of the same town? No more than one vessel can contain fire and water. No; the cities of Italy will be filled with brawls, and her rivers run blood, by means of this conjunction. If he had meant to establish peace in Italy, he would have assassinated all of one party, to secure the lives of the other; but to unite them, is to destroy both, and under the mask of friendship to get into his own hands all that each has possessed."

Pepi uttered this harangue with an energy and a vivacity that startled Castruccio; his black eyes sparkled, his brows became elevated, and drawing down the perpendicular wrinkles of his cheeks, and contracting the horizontal ones of his forehead, he looked round with an air of triumph on his companions.

"You say true, Messer Benedetto," said Tadeo, groaning at the dismal prognostications of his friend; "and I greatly fear lest this pretended justice prove the watchword for war and bloodshed. Yet now all wears the appearance of peace and brotherhood. The lords of Langusco, Pavìa, Vercelli, Novara and Lodi have resigned their tyrannies and given up the keys of their respective towns to Henry, and Imperial Vicars are every where established. Guido della Torre, the proudest and most powerful tyrant of Lombardy, has submitted; and the court of the emperor at Milan is crowded by the lords of the towns in the east of Italy, and the ambassadors of the free states of the south."

"Has Florence submitted?" asked Castruccio.

"No;—that town and its league holds out; Sienna, Lucca and Bologna. Yet, when the emperor marches south, we shall see these proud republicans bow their stiff knees."

"Never!" cried Pepi; "Bologna, Lucca and Sienna may submit; but Florence never will; they are stiff-kneed, stiff-necked, and hate the name of emperor and master more than Pope Urban hated the house of Suabia. These republicans, whom from my soul I detest, have turned out the Ghibelines, and are now fighting with the nobles, and

asserting the superiority of the vulgar, till every petty artizan of its meanest lane fancies himself as great a prince as the emperor Henry himself. Besides, when all else fails, they will buy him off: these Florentines squander their golden florins, and pay thousands to purchase what would be a dear bargain even as a gift. Their watch-word is that echo of fools, and laughing stock of the wise,—Liberty. Surely the father of lies invented that bait, that trap, at which the multitude catch, as a mouse at a bit of cheese: well would it be for the world, if they found the same end; and, as the nibbling mouse pulls down the iron on his head, they, as if they had one neck, were lopped off, as they seized their prize:—but Florence flourishes!"

Pepi ended his speech with a deep groan, and continued lost in thought; while Tadeo and Castruccio discussed the chances that might arise from the new order of things established in Italy; and Castruccio owned his intention of joining the train of the emperor, and his hopes of being by his means re-instated in his paternal estates. The evening wore away during these discussions, and they retired early to rest. The next morning Castruccio and Pepi took leave of Tadeo, and departed together on the road to Milan.

For some time they rode along silently. Castruccio was overcome by a variety of feelings on again visiting Italian earth. Although, being winter, the landscape was stript bare, and its vineyards and corn-fields alike appeared waste, yet Castruccio thought that no country could vie with this in beauty, unless it were the plain of Lucca, such as he remembered it, the last time he beheld it, then a child, standing on the summit of his father's palace,—girded by hills, and the many-towered city set as its heart in the midst. He longed for a companion to whom he could pour out his full heart; for his overflowing feelings had for a time swept away the many lessons of Alberto Scoto. He forgot ambition, and the dreams of princely magnificence which he had cherished for many months. He forgot Milan, the emperor, the Guelphs and Ghibelines, and seemed to bury himself, as a bee in the fragrant circle of a rose, in the softest and most humane emotions; till, half recovering, he blushed to find his eyes dim, and his cheek stained by the pure tears of his deep and unadulterated feeling. Turning hastily round, he was glad to observe his companion somewhat behind him, and he reined in his horse that he might approach. Pepi rode up with his measured pace; and it would have been a curious study to remark the contrasted countenances of the travellers: Castruccio, glorious in beauty; his deep eyes suffused with tears, and his lips breathing passion and delight, was more opposite than light to dark, to the hard lines of Pepi's face, which were unmoved as he glanced his small bright eyes from side to side, while no other sign shewed that he felt or thought; his mouth shut close, his person stiff and strait, his knees pressing his mule's flanks, and his ungainly

horsemanship easily betraying the secret, that his feats in arms must have been performed on foot.

At length tired of silence, and willing to speak although to so unsympathizing a being, Castruccio asked: "Messer Benedetto, you seemed last night to groan under the weight of your hatred of the Florentines. Now I have good reason to hate them, since by their means my party was exiled, and Lucca ranks among the Guelphic cities of Tuscany. But you are of Cremona, a town separated from Florence by many mountains and rivers; whence therefore arises your abhorrence of this republic?"

Pepi fixed his little piercing eyes upon Castruccio, as if to read into his heart, and discover the secret motive of this question; but the frank and noble beauty of his fellow-traveller was such, that it even had an effect on this man's rigid soul; and, as he gazed on him, the hard lines of his face seemed to melt away, and he replied at first with gentleness; until, carried away by his subject, he poured forth the torrent of his hatred with a warmth, strange to observe in one, who in calmer moments appeared more as a man made of wood or leather, than of flesh and blood:

"My good friend, you say true, I hate the Florentines; yet I may well find it difficult to tell the cause; for neither have they wounded me, nor stolen my purse, nor done me any other great injury of the like nature; but I am a Ghibeline, and therefore I hate them. And who would not hate a people, that despise the emperor, and all lawful authority; that have as it were dug up the buried form of Liberty, which died when Milan fell under the Visconti; who force their very nobles to become vulgar, and counts of the palace, and counts of the empire, to inscribe their names as weavers and furriers; who go about the world enriching themselves by a wicked usury, and return and squander the money in purchasing licence for themselves? Is not their town filled with brawls, and are not their streets strewed with the ruins of the palaces of the noble Ghibelines? Do they not one day undo the acts of the day before, and ever introduce more and more licence? Now create every two months a set of magistrates, who take all power out of the hands of the rich, and now a captain of the people, who protects and raises the vile multitude, till every lord must cap to his shoe-maker? The example is what I abhor; are not Lucca, Bologna and Sienna free? and the contagion spreads over Lombardy. Oh! to every saint in heaven would I put up my prayer; to the devil himself would I give my thanks (but that so good a work could never have been done by his means), if, as was once proposed, the town of Florence had been razed, its streets sown with salt, and its inhabitants scattered like Jews and Sclavonians about the world. Curse thee, curse thee, Farinata, that through thy means this was not done!"

"A disinterested love of the Imperial power causes these emotions? In truth you are the warmest Ghibeline I ever knew."

"My friend, the world, trust me, will never go well, until the rich rule, and the vulgar sink to their right station as slaves of the soil. You will readily allow that war is the scourge of the world; now in free towns war has a better harvest, than where proper and legitimate authority is established. During war neither our persons, nor our lands, nor our houses are in safety; we may be wounded in brawls, our lands laid waste, our houses and all our possessions despoiled. Now my plan is easy, simple, and practicable: if you are at all read in history, you must know, that the fortunes of the nobles of antient Rome consisted in many hundreds of slaves, whom they brought up to various trades and arts, and then let them out to work, or permitted them to keep shops and make money, which the masters received, paying them a small sum for their necessary support. Such is the order, which, if I were a prince, I would establish, and every town, such as Florence, where all is noise and talk, should be reduced to silence and peace; about two thousand rich men should possess all the rest of the inhabitants, who, like sheep, would flock to their folds, and receive their pittances with thankfulness and humility."

"But if, instead of sheep, they were to be wolves, and turn rebels to their masters? Methinks their numbers would panic-strike their two thousand drivers."

"Nay, then we would display our whips, and drive the flock to market. Slaves rebel! we would starve them into decent submission."

Castruccio could not help being amused by the strange policy and earnest manners of the Italian lawgiver, and replied: "But, Messer Benedetto, I dispute your first proposition, and assert that there is as much war and bloodshed under kings, as in republics. You who have fought in Flanders, and I who have also visited England, know this to be true; yet in France and England the people do not mingle with the quarrels of the nobles; so I think you must mend your constitution, and reduce your two thousand slave-drivers of Florence to a single one; yet I am afraid that, if there were only one in each town of Italy; or even if there were only two in the whole world, they would contrive to create war and bloodshed."

"That," replied Pepi, with a groan, "is the great fault that I find in the constitution of the world. If the rich would only know their own interests, we might chain the monster and again bury Liberty. But they are all fools; if the rich would agree, if the few princes that there need exist in the world, would league in amity, instead of quarrelling, such a state as that of Florence would not subsist a year. But, if reason had a trump as loud as that which will awaken us at the last day, the clash of arms of these senseless

people would drown it. Now, if instead of quarrelling, the Pope and Frederic Barbarossa had made a league, all Italy would now be on its knees before this Henry of Luxembourgh. And one day this may be; mark my words; tyranny is a healthy tree, it strikes a deep root, and each year its branches grow larger and larger, and its shade spreads wider and wider. While liberty is a word, a breath, an air; it will dissipate, and Florence become as slavish as it is now rebellious; did not Rome fall?"

"I am little acquainted with the history of antient times," said Castruccio gaily; "but, since the world began, I can easily imagine that states have risen and fallen; we are blind with regard to futurity, and methinks it is foolish to build for a longer term than a man's life. Kingdoms are as fragile as a porcelain vessel tossed by the ocean; nay, so very weak are they, that even the stars, those small, silly points of light, are said to rule them; and often, when they are at their highest glory, God sends his scourges, pest or earthquake, to sink them for ever; let us work for ourselves alone; we may be obscure or famous, grovelling as the worm, or lofty as the kingly eagle, according as our desires sink or mount."

Discoursing thus they arrived at Turin, and were again entertained by a merchant, the friend of Pepi. Here they found a numerous company, who all discoursed with warmth concerning the political state of Italy, and poured forth the most extravagant praises of the emperor Henry. He had passed two months in Piedmont, reconciling factions, hearing complaints, and destroying the vexatious tyrannies of its petty lords. Pepi, not considering this a fit occasion to poison these sanguine hopes by his prophecies, sat in silence with elevated brows and pressed lips, turning his sharp eyes from one speaker to another, as if by their means to drink in all the intelligence the politicians were able to afford.

The next morning Pepi and Castruccio parted; whether this was caused by the necessities or the prudence of the former cannot be determined. He alleged that his business called him to Alessandria in his way to Cremona, and the road of Castruccio lay directly for Milan. On parting Pepi made a speech, expressive of his gratitude, and the return he was willing to render for the benefit he had received; which was a welcome to his house and board, whenever his preserver should pass through Cremona. "Yet," he added, "if you have any other friends in that town, you may be will prefer them to me. I have, as I related yesterday, suffered many losses, and am endeavouring to repair them by an œconomical mode of life; I have no rich wines or soft couches, and can neither afford to burn wax lights, nor to eat delicate food. I have a good tower to my house; and, now that I am a knight, I shall have a good horse in my stable; and that is all I have to boast. You seem to have no taste for coarse fare or hard beds; and therefore my dwelling would in no manner be agreeable to you."

Castruccio thanked him, and carelessly replied, that, as a soldier, he had been accustomed to hardship and privation, nor would the poverty of Pepi's dwelling render it less worthy in his eyes; and they coldly took leave of one another, Pepi trotting gravely on the road towards Alessandria, his head full of plans which he kept carefully locked up in his own brain, and his hard lined face, faithful to his commands, giving no indications of what was passing in his soul.

Castruccio rode on gaily towards Milan; the cheerless wintry sky and the cold air could not tame his buoyant spirits or his hopes. He panted for action, for distinction, and for power; yet he no longer desired these things as a boy, unknowing of the road which led to them. During the interval which he had spent in England and France, he had studied human nature with the observant eye of genius; and, all careless as he appeared to be, he had learned how to please the multitude, how to flatter the foibles of the noble, and thus to gain the hearts of men and to rule them. Under Alberto Scoto he had revolved with care the political state of Italy, such as that commander had pictured it to him; his plans of lordship and conquest were already formed; he had only the first step to make, to proceed afterwards with a swift pace to the goal for which he panted.

CHAPTER VII

Milan.—Court of the Emperor Henry.—Arrigo Guinigi.—Sack of Cremona.—Benedetto Pepi.

After several days travelling, he arrived at Milan; and his first care was to hasten to the palace of Matteo Visconti. This chief was gone to the meeting of the senate, deliberating with the nobles of Milan on the sum of money which should be voted for the use of the emperor. Castruccio was therefore introduced to his son, Galeazzo, who was then in the hall of the palace, surrounded by all the young Ghibeline nobility of Milan. It was a scene of gaiety and splendour. The young nobles were preparing to attend on the emperor in a royal hunt. They were attired with the utmost magnificence, with full dresses of embroidered silk, cloth, or velvet, and cloaks of precious furs; some were accoutred in short gowns with trowsers tied in the same manner as that of Pepi, but made of fine linen and embossed silks; their collars were ornamented with strings of pearl. Their hair, parted equally on the forehead, was curled and fell down as far as the shoulders; they wore different kinds of caps, some flat and adorned with plumes of feathers, others high and pointed, and the lower part

twisted round with pearls fastened with a rich broach; most of them held a falcon on his fist, or caressed a favourite hound, or vaunted the prowess of a noble steed. There were many ladies in company who seemed to vie with their male companions in luxury of dress. Their gowns were made of the same costly stuffs, and ornamented with greater profusion of precious stones; their wide sleeves which fell almost to the ground were edged with pearls, while underneath, a small sleeve of the finest silk fitted tight to the arm; the borders of their dresses were richly embroidered with pearls or golden beads; they wore their veils adorned with the same richness, and small capuchins of oriental fur bordered with fringes of gold and pearls; and their girdles were studded with the most splendid stones.

Castruccio paused, half dazzled by the scene. In the ruder courts of London or Paris he had never seen so much splendour and luxury: he cast an involuntary glance on his own habiliments, which although rich were soiled by travelling, and in their best days could not have vied with the meanest dress worn by these nobles. He quickly however recovered his self-possession; and his name, whose sound had passed the Alps, and been repeated with enthusiasm by many of the followers of the emperor who had served with him in the Low Countries, caused this brilliant assembly to receive him with flattering distinction. They crowded round him, and courteously invited him to partake of their amusements; while his handsome person won the smiles of the ladies who were present. Galeazzo Visconti received him with that kindness and cordiality which was then in fashion among the Italians; and he, as the most courteous cavalier of the country, was well versed in all the politeness of the age. Castruccio was provided with a beautiful horse, and a mantle of rich fur befitting the cold season, and made one of the gay and splendid band as they rode towards the palace of the emperor; here they were joined by the sovereign himself, the empress, and the noble Germans of his retinue. Riding through the streets of Milan, they quitted the city at the eastern gate, and dividing into various parties; spread themselves abroad in search of game. The Germans followed the dogs through the open country, chasing down foxes and hares; while the Italians, who were dressed for gala, and would not risk their fine silks among the brambles and impediments of the fields, were content with unmuffling their falcons when they saw game aloft, and making bets on the superior speed of their several birds.

During the first part of the ride Galeazzo observed Castruccio, who appeared to be too much wrapped up in his own thoughts to attend to the discourse of the gay throng around him. He loitered behind, that he might indulge in his reveries; and Galeazzo, who had separated himself from the rest, now rode up to him; and they entered into a conversation together, which at length turned into a discussion of the plans and

wishes of Castruccio. They were both men of caution and prudence; yet, being young, they were susceptible of impressions to which men lose their sensibility as they advance in years. They were mutually pleased with each other; and a single glance, a single word, sufficed to make each understand the other, and to unite them in the bonds of friendship.

Castruccio asked what it was believed that the designs of the emperor were; and Galeazzo replied: "You would hardly guess what anxious hearts, throbbing with distrust and fear, are concealed under the apparent gaiety of these hunters. We Milanese are full of dissentions and ambition; and I, as a chief among them, have my head well loaded with care and doubt, while I follow this joyous train with my falcon on my fist. In a few days the game will be up; and we shall see what power the Visconti or the Della Torre will have over Lombardy. At present wait. The emperor is expecting supplies of money, and we are voting them for him with apparent zeal: you, as a politician, must well know that money is the great mover of all change in a state. I prophesy change; but you as a stranger, must stand aloof, and be guided by circumstances. In the mean time make friends; attach yourself to the emperor and to the lords of Lombardy, many of whom are extremely powerful; and rest assured, that whether he be successful or not, he will not quit Italy without endeavouring to change the politics of the Tuscan republics. Now let us join our friends; to-morrow I will talk further with you; and, if we have recourse to arms, I need not say how proud I should be in having my party distinguished by the acquisition of Castruccio dei Antelminelli."

They then mingled with the rest of the company; and Galeazzo introduced his new friend to the Ghibeline lords of Lombardy. He here saw for the first time the magnificent Cane della Scala, lord of Verona, and the generous Guido della Polenta, lord of Ravenna, and father of the unhappy Francesca of Rimini. These nobles had assembled at Milan, to be present at the coronation of the emperor, which had taken place a few weeks before; all wore the appearance of gaiety and good humour; the empress headed the band, accompanied by a beautiful youth who bore a bow in his hand; and Cane della Scala was beside her, descanting on the merits of his falcon. Castruccio was struck by the countenance of the youth who rode near the empress. He was dressed with a profusion of magnificence; at his back he wore a gilt quiver studded with gems, and a scarf embroidered with pearls was thrown over one shoulder, and tied under the other arm; in every way he was accoutred as might become the favourite page of an empress. Yet Castruccio thought that he remembered those light blue eyes; and his sweet yet serious smile filled his own with tears of tender recollection. He eagerly asked Galeazzo who and what he was: his friend replied; "He is the squire of Can' Grande, and he is called; Arrigo I do not know

what other name he bears; the empress wishes to attach him to her suite; but the youth would prefer bearing arms under his munificent patron, to the situation of the effeminate page of a queen's anti-chamber."

"That cannot surprize me," said Castruccio; "for his infancy was spent in the labour of the fields, and in listening to the lessons of his godlike father; he must therefore be ill prepared to enter into the intrigues and follies of a court. If he have not forgotten his childish affection for me, I shall win him from them both; and, if indeed his father be dead, it shall be my pride and boast to be the protector of his Arrigo."

As they re-entered the gates of the town, the trains of the emperor and empress joined; and, Arrigo falling back among the nobles, Castruccio rode up to him. For some time he gazed on him, and heard the gentle tones of his youthful voice; he dared not speak; his heart was full; and to his eyes dimmed by emotion, he fancied that the revered form of Guinigi stood beside his son, smiled on Castruccio, and pointed to the boy. At length, recovering himself, he came abreast with the horse of Arrigo, and whispered, "Does the son of Guinigi forget me? does he forget the farm among the Euganean hills?"

Arrigo started; his countenance became radiant with joy; and he exclaimed, "My own Castruccio!"

They rode away from the company, and entered the town by more lonely streets. Castruccio saw by the looks of his young friend, that his worst fears were true, and that Guinigi was dead; and Arrigo easily read in Castruccio's face that he was thinking of his father. At length he said: "My brother, if so you will permit me to call you, a year has now passed since I was left an orphan; ten months ago I quitted my happy life among the hills, to dwell with a patron, who is indeed munificent and kind to me; but who is not as my father. It appears to me a vision that such a being ever existed; he was so great, so angelically wise and good; and I now float down the stream with the rest, an esquire, an attendant; I pass my life without enjoyment, and look forward to the future without pleasure; but if, my brother, you would grant me one request, a brighter sun would shine upon me."

"Dearest Arrigo, my dear, dear brother, I read in your earnest looks all that you would say; be assured we shall never part again! We will sally forth soldiers of fortune; and the same star shall ascend and descend for both."

"Enough, leave the rest to me; be it my task to contrive my departure from Can' della Scala; inform me of your motions, and fear not but that I shall be at your side."

That same evening a magnificent feast was given at the palace of the emperor; and Castruccio was introduced to this prince by Galeazzo. The lords of Lombardy regarded him with a favourable eye; for they knew that he could not hurt their interests north of the Apennines, and they hoped that by his means the Ghibeline faction might revive and triumph in Tuscany.

Castruccio spent almost the whole evening in conversation with Arrigo. For the youth would not absent himself from him, but recalled with earnest affection all the circumstances of their former intercourse; and related with tears the death of Guinigi; a death, calm as his most innocent life. One afternoon, during the heats of summer, he sat under a cypress with his son, and entered into an anxious detail of what would be the prospects and probable fate of the young Arrigo, when he, his father and protector, should be no more. The boy, struck with a melancholy foreboding, intreated him not to dwell on a period, which was far distant, and which, when it approached, would bring to him nothing but despair. Guinigi however told him that he would not be overruled in this, and with earnest affection talked for hours on the subject with a wisdom and goodness that appeared more than human. "Alas," said Arrigo, "even as he spoke, I thought I saw his eyes beam with a heavenly light, and the torrent of impressive words that he poured forth, were uttered with a voice deep and tender, filling the air as it were with a harmony sweeter than any earthly music. I listened, till I became almost as a statue with attention; and as he either exhorted to virtue, or described the evils of my country, or marked forth the glorious or peaceful path that I might pursue, I felt my countenance change, as I have seen a cloud vary as it passes before the moon, now, as it advances, beaming in a silver light, and then again fading into darkness. At length he dismissed me, saying that he wished to sleep, and I saw him stretch himself under the cypress, gazing on the sky, whose dazzling light was softened by the dark foliage through which it passed; and he slept never to wake again.

"Oh! what I then suffered, when our friends crowded round, and the mourning women came, and the mummery of the funeral went on! But all that is passed; and now I should again feel the elasticity of youth, but that I was, until you returned, friendless in the world."

They talked thus, while the company around them were amusing themselves, with dances and song; the feast broke up late; and it broke up only to be renewed with greater zeal the following and the following day. Yet, while all appeared so calm, the storm which the politicians prognosticated, broke out, and the quiet of these festive meetings was disturbed by the revolt of Milan against the Germans. And now Castruccio was witness for the first time to the popular commotions of his country:

armed knights galloped through the streets crying, "*Libertà!* Death to the Germans!" And a multitude of the people, who were enraged at the new taxes imposed upon them, joined in the cry. But the revolt thus quickly excited, was as quickly appeased. The Visconti after some hesitation ranged themselves under the emperor; and Della Torre and his partizans were obliged to fly; their houses were razed, their goods confiscated, and themselves declared traitors.

But the effects of the Milanese revolt were not so easily removed. The various Guelph towns of Lombardy, Crema, Cremona, Brescia, Lodi, and Como, set up the standard of revolt against the emperor; and, spring having now advanced, Henry began his campaign with the attempt to reduce these towns. Castruccio had received from him permission to raise a troop of volunteers, to serve under his command in the Imperial army, and his fame collected a brave band, whose discipline and valour were the admiration of the other generals.

Crema and Lodi submitted to the emperor on his advance, and reaped from their unseasonable resistance an increase of those vexations which had caused their revolt. Henry marched against Cremona, which at first made shew of resistance; but, when the Guelphs, hopeless of success, escaped from the town, the Ghibelines surrendered to the emperor; who, unmollified by their submission, punished his own innocent partizans, sending them to cruel prisons, razing the walls and fortifications of the town, and delivering over the property and persons of the unprotected citizens into the hands of the brutal Germans who composed the greater part of his army.

Castruccio entered Cremona at the head of his little troop, and beheld with dismay the cruel effects of the conquest of the emperor over this city. Most of the German soldiers were busy in destroying the fortifications; or in compelling the peasants and citizens to raze the walls of their town. Other parties were ranging about the streets, entering the palaces, whose rich furniture they destroyed, by feasting, and tearing down from the walls all that had the appearance of gold or silver. The cellars were broken open; and, after inebriating themselves with the choice wines of Italy, the unruly, but armed bands were in a better mood for oppressing the defenceless people. Some of these poor wretches fled to the open country; others locked themselves up in their houses, and, throwing what they possessed from the windows, strove to save their persons from the brutality of their conquerors. Many of the noble females took refuge in the meanest cottages, and disguised themselves in poor clothing, till, frightened by the eager glances, or brutal address of the soldiers, they escaped to the country, and remained exposed to hunger and cold among the woods that surrounded the town. Others, with their hair dishevelled, their dresses in disorder, careless of the eyes which gazed on them, followed their husbands and fathers to their frightful

prisons, some in mute despair, many wringing their hands, and crying aloud for mercy. As night came on, the soldiery, tired of rapine, went to rest in the beds from which the proprietors were remorselessly banished: silence prevailed; a dreadful silence, broken sometimes by the shriek of an injured female, or the brutal shouts of some of the men, who passed the night in going from palace to palace, calling up the inhabitants, demanding food and wine, and on the slightest shew of resistance hurrying their victims to prison, or binding them in their own houses with every aggravation of insult.

Castruccio divided his little band, and sent his men to the protection of several of the palaces, while he and Arrigo rode all night about the town; and, having the watchword of the emperor, they succeeded in rescuing some poor wretches from the brutality of the insolent soldiers. Several days followed, bringing with them a repetition of the same scenes; and the hardest heart might have been struck with compassion, to see the misery painted on the faces of many, whose former lives had been a continual dream of pleasure; young mothers weeping over their unfortunate offspring, whose fathers lay rotting or starving in prison; children crying for bread, sitting on the steps of their paternal palaces, within which the military rioted in plenty; childless parents, mourning their murdered babes; orphans, helpless, dying, whose parents could no longer soothe or relieve them. Castruccio, though a soldier, wept; but Arrigo, who had never before witnessed the miseries of war, became almost frenzied with the excess of his compassion and indignation; he poured forth curses loud and bitter, while his eyes streamed tears, and his voice, broken and sharp, was insufficient to convey his passionate abhorrence. Castruccio was at length obliged to use violence to draw him from this scene of misery; and, after soothing him by every argument he could use, and by the most powerful of all, that Henry would be soon obliged to withdraw his soldiers from Cremona to serve him at the siege of Brescia, he dispatched the youth with a letter to Galeazzo Visconti.

Returning to the town, Castruccio saw a figure pass along at the end of the street, which reminded him of one whom he had almost forgotten—Benedetto Pepi. "Alas! poor fellow," said Castruccio to himself, "you will find the pillage of the Germans a tremendous evil. Well; as I restored your life once, I will now try, if I am not too late, to save the remnant of your property."

He enquired of a passenger for the house of Benedetto Pepi. "If you mean Benedetto the Rich, if any can now be called rich in this miserable city," replied the man, "I will conduct you to his house."

"My Pepi ought rather, I think, to be called the poor; lead me however to Benedetto the Rich; and if he be a tall, gaunt figure with a wrinkled, leathern face, he is the man for whom I enquire."

Castruccio was conducted to a palace in the highest and most commanding part of the town, built of large blocks of stone, and apparently firm and solid enough to bear a siege. The windows were few, small, grated and sunk deep in the wall; it had a high tower, whose port-holes shewed that it was of uncommon strength and thickness; a parapet built with turrets surrounded it at the top, and in every respect the mansion resembled more a castle, than a palace. The entrance was dark; and, by the number of grooves, it appeared as if there had been many doors; but they were all removed, and the entrance free. Castruccio advanced: there were two large halls on the ground-floor, on each side of the entrance-court; both were filled with German soldiers; they were high, dark, bare rooms, more like the apartments of a prison than a palace. In one of them a number of beds were laid on the paved floor; in the other there was a large fire in the middle, at which various persons were employed in the offices of cookery, and near this, a table was spread out with immense quantities of food, haunches of boiled beef, and black bread; two boys stood at either end of the table, each holding a large flaring torch; and the soldiers with riotous exclamations were choosing their seats on the benches that were placed around. Castruccio paused, unable to discern whether Pepi were among this strange company. At length he observed him standing in one corner filling large jugs from a barrel of wine: he accosted him with a voice of condolence; and Pepi looked up with his little bright eyes, and a face rather expressive of joy than sorrow. After he had recognized his guest, he left his wine barrel, and invited him into another room, for they could hardly distinguish each other's voices amidst the shouts and tumult of the rude feasters. They ascended the steep narrow stairs; and, Castruccio complaining of want of light, Pepi said: "Let us go to the top of my tower; the sun has been set about ten minutes, and, although dark every where else, it will be light there. If you will wait a short time I will get the key."

Pepi descended the stairs; and from a small port-hole Castruccio saw him cross the court, and then in a few minutes return with cautious and observant steps. When he came near Castruccio, he said: "Those German ruffians are now eating and drinking, and will not mark us; yet let us tread lightly, for I have admitted none of them to my tower, nor is it my intention to do so. It is a place of strength; and the little I have in the world is preserved here, which little in spite of the emperor and his devils I will preserve."

Although the tower had appeared large without, yet its walls were so thick that there was only room left within for a small circular staircase; at the top of this Pepi undrew the bolts, pushed up a trap-door, and they ascended to the platform on the outside. The sky was darkening; but the west was tinged with a deep orange colour, and the wide and dusky plain of Lombardy lay far extended all around: immediately below was the town of Cremona, which to them appeared as silent and peaceful as if the inhabitants were in the enjoyment of perfect security. They continued some minutes gazing silently, Castruccio on the wide extent of scenery before him, Pepi on the thick walls of his tower. At length the former said; "An evil star pursues you, Messer Benedetto, and I am afraid that you were born in the descent of some evil constellation."

"Doubtless," replied Pepi: yet there was an indescribable expression in his countenance and manner, that startled his companion; his eyes sparkled, and the lines of his face, as plainly as such things could speak, spoke joy and exultation. His voice however was drawn out into accents of grief, and he ended his reply by a groan.

"Your palace is wasted by these ruffians."

"Nay, there is nothing to waste; the walls are too thick to be hurt, and I removed every thing else before they came."

"They consume your food."

"I have none to consume. I am a poor, lone man, and had no food in the house for them. They bring their rapine here; I send my squire for wood, wherever he can collect it; I make a fire, and they dress their food; and that is all that they get by me."

"Have you lost no friend or relation in the war?"

"There is no one whom I love; I have met with undutifulness and ingratitude, but no kindness or friendship; so I should not have mourned, if my relations had fallen; but they are all safe."

"Then it would appear, that you have lost nothing by the havock of these Germans, and that you are still Benedetto the Rich."

Pepi had answered the previous questions of Castruccio with vivacity, and an expression of triumph and vanity, which he in vain strove to conceal; his brows were elevated, a smile lurked in the corners of his strait lips, and he even rubbed his hands. But, when Castruccio spoke these last words, his face fell, his mouth was drawn down, his arms sunk close to his sides, and, glancing at his mean clothing, he replied: "I am always poor, always unfortunate; and, Messer Castruccio, you do me great

injustice and injury by supposing that I have any wealth. I have a well built palace, and a strong tower; but I can neither eat the stones, nor clothe myself with the plaster; and, God knows, my possessions are now reduced to fifty small acres; how therefore can I be rich?"

"At least, if you are poor," replied Castruccio, "your unfortunate townsmen share your misfortunes. Their habitations are pillaged; those that escape the ravage of the emperor, are driven out, starving and miserable, from the only dwellings, be they palaces or cottages, which they possess."

The countenance of Pepi again lighted up, his eyes sparkled, and, he said; "Aye, aye, many are fallen; but not so low—not so low: they have still lands, they are not quite destitute, and the dead have heirs——"

"Yes, indeed, heirs to famine and indignity; unhappy orphans! far more miserable than if they had died with those who gave them birth."

"Nay, I pity them from my soul; but I also have suffered losses. The first party of Germans that broke into the town, seized upon my horse, and my squire's gelding: I must buy others when our enemies are gone, to keep up the honour of my knighthood. But, enough of this. You, Messer Castruccio, have a troop of Italians, horsemen, I believe, under your command: what do you intend to do with them? Do you stay in Lombardy, or follow the emperor south?"

"Events are now my masters; soon I hope to rule them, but at present I shall be guided by accident, and cannot therefore answer your question."

Pepi paused a few moments, and at length said, half to himself; "No; this is not the time; events are as yet unripe; this siege has done much, but I must still delay;—— well, Messer Castruccio, at present I will not reveal some circumstances, which, when we began this conversation, I had thought to confide to your discretion. Sometime, perhaps when you least expect it, we shall meet again; and if Benedetto of Cremona be not exactly what he seems, keep the secret until then, and I shall rest your obliged servant. Now, farewel. You came to offer your services to save my palace; I am a prudent man, and ordered my affairs so, that it ran no risk; yet I am indebted to you for this, and for your other generous act in my behalf; a time may come when we shall know one another better. Again farewel."

This speech was delivered with a grave and mysterious mien, and a face that signified careful thought and important expectations. When he had ended, Pepi opened the trap-door, and he and Castruccio descended slowly down the now benighted staircase into the court of the palace: here they again interchanged salutations, and

parted. Pepi joined his boisterous guests, and Castruccio rode towards the camp of the emperor. He mused as he went upon what the words of his strange acquaintance might portend; his curiosity was for a time excited by them; but change of place and the bustle of action made him soon forget the existence of Benedetto the Rich, of Cremona.

CHAPTER VIII

Death of the Emperor.—Uguccione, tyrant of Pisa, restores Castruccio at Lucca.—Euthanasia.

Quitting Cremona, Henry engaged himself in the siege of Brescia, which made a gallant resistance, and yielded only on honourable conditions, in the month of September. Castruccio served under the emperor during this siege; but his nature was shocked by the want of faith and cruelty of this monarch, who punished his enemies by the most frightful tortures, and treated his friends as if they had been his enemies. Castruccio therefore resolved to separate himself from the Imperial army; and, when Henry quitted Lombardy for Genoa, he remained with his friend, Galeazzo Visconti.

The petty wars of Lombardy could only interest those engaged in them; and all eyes were turned towards the emperor during his journey to Genoa, his unsuccessful negotiations with Florence, his voyage to Pisa, his journey to Rome; where, the Vatican being in the hands of the contrary party, he was crowned in the Lateran. And then, his army diminished by sickness, and himself chagrined by the slow progress of his arms, he returned to Tuscany, made an unsuccessful attack upon Florence, and retired to the neighbourhood of Sienna, where he died on the eighteenth of August 1313; leaving Italy nearly in the same situation with regard to the preponderance of the Guelph party, but more heated and violent in their factious sentiments, as when he entered it two years before.

During this long contest Florence was the head and heart of the resistance made against the emperor. Their detestation of the Imperial power, and their fears of the restoration of their banished Ghibelines, excited them to exert their utmost faculties, in gaining allies, and in the defence of their own town. The death of Henry was to them a bloodless victory; and they hoped that a speedy change in the politics of Italy would establish the universal ascendancy of the Guelphic party.

Pisa had always been constant to the Ghibelines, and friendly to the emperor; by his death they found themselves thrown almost without defence into the hands of the

Florentines, their enemies; and they therefore gladly acceded to the moderate terms offered to them by the king of Naples and his ally, Florence, for the establishment of peace in Tuscany. If this treaty had been fulfilled, the hopes of the Ghibelines would have been crushed for ever, nor would Castruccio ever have returned to his country; the scenes of blood and misery which followed would have been spared; and Florence, raising its benign influence over the other Tuscan states, would have been the peace-maker of Italy. Events took a different turn. To understand this it is necessary to look back.

Immediately on the death of Henry, the Pisans, fearful of a sudden incursion of the Florentines, for which they might be unprepared, had engaged in their service a *condottiere*, Uguccione della Faggiuola, who with his troop of a thousand Germans, took on him the guard of their city. War was the trade of Uguccione; he therefore looked with dismay on the projected peace, and resolved to disturb it. The populace of the Italian towns, ranged under party names, and ever obedient to the watchword and signals of their party, were easily moved to fall on the contrary faction. The Pisan people were Ghibelines; and, while the more moderate among them had advanced far in the negociating of a peace, Uguccione caused live eagles, the ensigns of the Ghibelines, to be carried through the streets; and the cry of, "Treason from the Guelphs!" was the rallying word of fury to the populace. The magistrates in vain endeavoured to assert their authority; their partizans were dispersed, their captains taken prisoners and put to death, and Uguccione declared general of the war against the Florentines. This active chieftain lost no time in his operations; he marched against the Lucchese, the allies of Florence, ravaged their country, brought them to terms, and made peace with them on condition of their recalling their Ghibeline exiles.

The three years which these events occupied were spent by Castruccio in Lombardy. He made each year a campaign under one or another of the Ghibeline lords of that territory, and passed the winter at Milan. He formed a sincere and lasting friendship with Galeazzo Visconti: but, although this amity contributed to his advancement, his character suffered by the congeniality of sentiment which he acquired with this chief. As they rode, hunted, or fought together, often employed in mutual good-offices one for the other, their affection became stronger; and it was as disinterested and generous as it was firm. Galeazzo sincerely loved Castruccio, and opened to him the dearest secrets of his heart; but these secrets were such as to initiate the latter in the artful policy and unprincipled motives of the Milanese lord, and to make him regard treachery and cruelty as venial faults. He had no saving passion, which by its purity and exalted nature, although it permitted him to forgive, would make him avoid the

faults of Galeazzo. Ambition was the ruling feeling of his soul; an ambition for power, conquest and renown, and not for virtue, and that fame, which as the phœnix, cannot live at the same period as its parent, but springs from his ashes with the strong pinions of immortal being.

It was this aspiring disposition which strongly recommended him to Galeazzo. For it was not with him the wild desire for what he had neither qualities nor capacity to obtain; it was combined with transcendant talents, an energy of action and a clearness of judgement, which greatly surpassed that of his companions. Castruccio was fond of power; yet he was neither arrogant nor tyrannical; words of kindness and winning smiles he bestowed at will on all around. He appeared to fit himself for each scene in which he was to take a part; in the camp he was energetic, valorous, and swift of action; in council he was as prudent and cautious as a grey-haired minister of state; at balls, or during a hunting party, he recommended himself by grace, agility, wit, and a courtesy whose sweetness was untarnished by vanity or presumption. His beauty took a more manly cast; and somewhat of pride, and more of self-confidence, and much of sensibility, were seen in his upturned lip; his eyes, dark as a raven's wing, were full of fire and imagination; his open forehead was shaded by the hyacinthine curls of his chesnut-coloured hair. His face expressed extreme frankness, a frankness that did not exist in his mind; for his practices among the wily chiefs of Lombardy had robbed him of all ingenuousness of soul, although the traces of that which he once possessed had not faded from his countenance. Amidst all the luxury of Lombardy he was abstemious, nor spent in personal magnificence the money which he rather applied to the equipment of his troop. At length the patient improvement which he had bestowed upon his powers, and his perseverance in preparing for advancement, obtained their due reward; and he among the other Lucchese exiles returned to his native city.

But Castruccio was ill content to return as is were by the endurance of the opposite party; on the contrary he wished to raise his faction to that supremacy which would invest him with dominion as its chief. He therefore carried on a treaty with Uguccione's army, requiring their assistance for the overthrow of the Guelphs of Lucca, and for placing him in authority over his native town; while the tyrant of Pisa should in return gain a faithful ally, and one more step should be taken towards the final establishment of the Ghibeline ascendancy.

After arranging this scheme, Castruccio and his companions passed the defile of the Serchio; and, advancing towards Lucca, assumed a warlike appearance, and endeavoured to force the gate of San Frediano; the Guelphs opposed him, and a battle ensued. In the mean time Uguccione arrived in another direction, and, not

finding free entrance at any of the gates, began to batter the wall. The Guelphs, defeated by the Ghibelines, were in no condition to resist; the Ghibelines, headed by Castruccio, considered Uguccione as their ally, and thought not of impeding his operations; indeed they were fully employed in resisting their adversaries, who, though worsted, would not yield. The breach was effected, Uguccione entered triumphantly, and, treating Lucca as a conquered town, delivered it over to be sacked by his troops; while he himself made a rich booty of the treasure of the Pope which had been preserved in the church of San Frediano; Lucca having been selected as the safest deposit for such a treasure.

Uguccione thought no more of his promises to Castruccio, and both parties in Lucca were oppressed alike, by one who believed that the best security for a governor was the cutting off the tallest flowers in the field. The prompt exertions of Castruccio alone saved his native city from utter ruin. He collected his partizans, formed them into a troop, and ranging them under the banners of Uguccione, accepted a command in this chief's army; thus quieting the invaders' fears of a resistance which would have been rash and vain, but having at the same time ready at Castruccio's smallest signal a well armed and disciplined troop, nominally in the service of the tyrant, but really devoted by affection and military oaths to the cause of their immediate commander. Nor did he again betray the confidence of his fellow citizens; but, entering into Uguccione's counsels, and assuming a tone of power which this chieftain could not resist, Castruccio at the same time opposed a boundary to his arrogance and cruelty.

But, although his first imprudence in inviting Uguccione to the possession of Lucca was pardoned by his countrymen, in consideration of the reparation that he earnestly desired to make, it was looked upon with far different eyes by states who, hating the Pisan Tyrant, and too distant to be acquainted with all the palliating circumstances, regarded Castruccio as a traitor. The news of the entrance of the Ghibeline exiles into Lucca, and the capture of that town by Uguccione, quickly reached his Florentine adversaries, and excited grief and rage in all the hearers. The name of Castruccio as the betrayer of his country was repeated with indignation and hatred.

There was one gentle heart in Florence which felt deep pain, when it heard the name of Antelminelli coupled with an opprobrious epithet. Euthanasia dei Adimari had not forgotten her vow made many years before; she had treasured in her memory the recollection of her young playfellow, and often, when travellers from Lombardy mentioned the name of Castruccio, her fair cheek was suffused by the eloquent blood.

Euthanasia had long been an orphan; her father had died, and by his death was cut the dearest tie she had to earth. While he lived, she had confined herself almost entirely to his room, and serving as eyes to his blinded sense, she was as faithful to his wants as his own orbs had been before their light was quenched. After his death she mingled more with the distinguished youth of Florence, and joined in that society, which, if we may judge from the indications that Dante gives in his prose works, and from the tender and exquisite poetry of Petrarch, was as refined, delicate and cultivated, as the best society amidst the boasted politeness of the present day. Yet among the youth of Florence Euthanasia was as a lily, that overlooks the less illustrious yet beautiful flowers Of a garden. Her beauty, her accomplishments, and the gift of flowing yet mild eloquence that she possessed, the glowing brilliancy of her ardent yet tempered imagination, made her the leader of the little band to which she belonged. It is said, that as Dante sighed for Beatrice, so several of the distinguished youths of Florence fed on the graceful motions and sweet words of this celestial girl, who, walking among them, passionless, yet full of enthusiasm, seemed as a link to bind their earthly thoughts to heaven. Often with her mother's permission Euthanasia retired for months to the castle of Valperga; and alone among the wild Apennines she studied and worshipped nature, while the bright sun warmed the valleys, and threw its beams over the mountains, or when the silver boat of the moon, which displayed in the clear air its heavy lading, sunk swiftly in the west, and numberless stars witnessed her departure. Then again, quitting the eternal, ever-succeeding pages of nature's volume, she pored over the works she had before read with her father, or the later written poetry of Dante, and incorporated the thoughts of the sublimest geniuses with her own, while the creative fire in her heart and brain formed new combinations to delight and occupy her.

Her young friends hailed with heartfelt joy her return from her seclusion; she joined in all their amusements; who could sing the *canzones* of those times, or relate a pathetic tale, like Euthanasia? Besides she was so prudent, so wise, and so kind, that her assistance was perpetually claimed and afforded in every little misfortune or difficulty of her friends.

But the age of thoughtlessness and fearless enjoyment passed away, and Euthanasia advanced to womanhood. At this period a succession of events deprived her of her mother and her two brothers, so that she remained sole heiress of the possessions of her family. Independent and powerful, she was as a queen in Valperga and the surrounding villages; at Florence she was considered one of its first citizens; and, if power, wealth and respect could have satisfied her, she must have been happy. She had wept bitterly the death of her relations; she grieved for the loss of her brothers,

and felt only pain at being advanced to their place. Yet her mind acquired new dignity, and the virtues of her heart new fervour, from the entire independence of her situation, and the opportunities she possessed of doing good. There was none to gainsay her actions, except the rigid censorship of her own reason, and the opinion of her fellow-citizens, to whose love and esteem she aspired. Most of her time was now spent among her dependents at Valperga; the villages under her jurisdiction became prosperous; and the peasantry were proud that their countess preferred her residence among them to the gaieties of Florence. In the winter she visited her friends of that town; and many a noble, who hoped to rival Dante Alighieri or Guido Cavalcanti, sang of the miraculous change of seasons that had been operated on his city;—that their summers were dreary, bare, and deserted, while the soul of loveliness dwelt among them during the formerly dull months of winter.

It is said that during this period she had never loved; she admired the illustrious and energetic spirits of Florence, and she bestowed her affections on several whose virtue and talents claimed by right that meed; but she had never loved. It appears wonderful, that one so sensitive of heart and imagination should have attained her twenty-second year without having experienced the tyranny of that passion; but, if it be true, how tremendous must be the force of that power, which could finally break down the barriers piled by reason and accustomed coldness, and deluge her soul with the sweet waters of earthly love?

She had just entered her twenty-second year, when Castruccio in 1314 returned to Lucca; when under his auspices, the greatest enemy of Florence became master of the neighbour city; when war was declared between the two states, and Castruccio was in arms against the Florentines. The summer was now far advanced; and she hastened to her solitude at Valperga. She was hurt at heart; one of her dearest dreams, the excellence of Castruccio, was overthrown; and she wished for a while to shut out from her thoughts all memory of the world, which appeared to bring tumult and discord to trouble her tranquillity. She was unable to do this: she was too well known, and too much loved, not to be sought by those with whom she was acquainted; and she was startled to hear from all sides eulogiums of the talents and soldiership of Castruccio, those of the Ghibelines mingled with hope, those of the Guelphs with fear.

Is there not a principle in the human mind that foresees the change about to occur to it? Is there not a feeling which would warn the soul of peril, were it not at the same time a sure prophecy that that peril is not to be avoided? So felt Euthanasia: and during her evening meditations she often enquired from her own heart, why the name of Castruccio made her cheeks glow; and why praise or dispraise of him seemed to

electrify her frame: why a nameless inquietude pervaded her thoughts, before so calm: why, tenderly as she dwelt on the recollection of her infant playmate, she dreaded so much now to see him? And then, strange to say, being thus agitated and fearful, she saw him; and a calm more still than the serene depths of a windless heaven, redescended on her soul, and wrapt it in security and joy.

It was not until October, while Euthanasia still lingered at Valperga, that Castruccio took up his abode in Lucca. He returned thither, covered with glory, but highly discontented with Uguccione who feared him, and, while he shewed him outward honour, took every occasion to thwart his desires, and to deprive him of all power and voice in his council. But Castruccio was at the head of a large party, who could ill brook the rude arrogance of Uguccione, and the unmasked presumption of his sons. This party augmented every day; it was watched, insulted, and harassed; but all the Ghibeline youth of Lucca made it their boast to attend the person, and partake the counsels of Castruccio.

The winter months were spent in apparent idleness, but in reality in deep plotting on the part of Castruccio. Uguccione was at Pisa, and his son, Francesco, could ill understand the wiles of the pupil of Alberto Scoto. He saw his frank countenance, and watched his gay demeanour; but the conclusion of his observations was, that although Castruccio was careless of danger, and ambitious of glory, he was too fond of pleasure, and of too ingenuous a disposition, to enter into any deep scheme, or to form even the wish of usurping the power of the state.

Castruccio stood on the tower of the Antelminelli palace; young Arrigo Guinigi was at his side; he was surrounded by half a dozen of his most intimate associates, and after having for a while discussed their plans of political conduct, they remained silent. Castruccio was separated from the rest of the group; the tower of Antelminelli overlooked the town of Lucca, and being raised far above its narrow, dark streets, appeared, together with the numerous towers of the city, as forming a separate and more agreeable town for the nobles over the heads of the meaner inhabitants. The valley was stretched around the city; its field bare of vegetation, and spotted with black patches of leafless woods; and the view was terminated by the hills, crowned with snow, and their sides clothed with the dark verdure of the ilex, while from among their folds peeped the white walls of villages and castles.

Castruccio fixed his eye on one of these castles. The forgotten scenes of his youth thronged into his memory, and oppressed him with their numbers and life; the low voice of his mother sounded in his ears; the venerable form of Adimari stood before him, and it seemed to him as if the slender fingers of the infant Euthanasia pressed his

hand. He turned suddenly round, and asked: "Doe she still live there?"—pointing to the castle.

"Who? The countess of Valperga?"

"Aye, and her daughter Euthanasia?" Many years had elapsed since he had pronounced that name; he felt his whole frame thrill to its musical sound.

"The present countess," replied Vanni Mordecastelli, "is young and unmarried"—

"And her name is Euthanasia," continued count Ludovico de' Fondi; "she is the daughter of Messer Antonio dei Adimari, who while he lived was one of the leaders of the Guelph party at Florence; and through her mother she possesses the castle and villages of Valperga."

"Aye," cried a youth, "and they say that Ranieri della Fagginola pretends to Her hand. It is not well, that the credulity of a woman, who will listen to the first fine speeches that are addressed to her, should cause so strong a hold as the castle of Valperga to pass into the hands of that insufferable nest of traitors."

"You are ignorant of whom you talk," said the aged Fondi, "when you speak thus lightly of the young countess of Valperga. She is a lady of great prudence, beauty, and learning; and, although for years she has been sought by the first nobles of Italy, she glories in her independence and solitude. She mingles little with the citizens of this town; her friends reside at Florence, where she often passes many months, associating with its first families."

"Is she as beautiful, as she is said to be?" asked young Arrigo Guinigi.

"Indeed she is lovely to a miracle; but her manners almost make you forget her beauty; they are so winning and graceful. Unfortunately she does not belong to our party, but is as strongly attached to the Pope's as the countess Matilda of old."

"Aye, these women are so easily cajoled by priests."

"Nay, Moncello, you will still be in the wrong, if you apply common rules to the conduct of the countess Euthanasia. She is attached to the cause of the freedom of Florence, and not to the power of her Popes. When I visited her on her return to her castle, I found her full of grief at the renewal of the war between these states. She earnestly asked me whether I saw any prospect of peace; 'For,' said she, 'I am more attached to concord and the alliance of parties, than to any of the factions which distract our poor Italy.'"——

The conversation then turned on other subjects. Castruccio had listened silently to the praise which the old count Fondi had bestowed on the friend of his childhood; and presently after, taking Arrigo aside, he said: "My young friend, you must go on an embassy for me."

"To the end of the world, if you desire it, my dear lord"—

"Nay, this is a shorter journey. You must ride to-morrow morning to the castle of Valperga, and ask permission of the countess that I may visit her. Our families, though of opposite interests, were much allied; and I ought to have sought this interview before."

On the following day Castruccio waited anxiously for the return of Arrigo. He arrived a little before noon. "I have seen her," he cried; "and, after having seen her, I wonder at the torpor of these Lucchese that they do not all emigrate from their town, to go and surround her castle, and gaze on her all day long. I seem only to live since I have seen her; she is so lovely, so enchantingly kind and gentle. I have heard you say, my good brother, that you never met with a woman whom you could enshrine in your inmost heart, and thus pay worship to the exalted spirit of loveliness, which you had vainly sought, and never found. Go to Valperga, and, gazing on Euthanasia, you will tremblingly unread your heresy."

"To horse then, my dear Arrigo. Does she consent to receive me?"

"Yes, she desires to see you; and with the most ingenuous sweetness, she bade me tell you the pleasure it would give her, to renew her acquaintance with one whom she has not forgotten during a long separation."

CHAPTER IX

Castle of Valperga described—Friendship and Love.

"This is a well known road to me," thought Castruccio, as he rode across the plain of Lucca towards the hills of the Baths; "there is still that mountain, that as a craggy and mighty wall surmounts and bounds the other Apennines; the lower peaks are still congregated round it, attracting and arresting the clouds that pause on their summits, and then slowly roll off. What a splendid garb of snow these old mountains have thrown over themselves, to shield them from the *tramontano*[3], that buffets them all the winter long, while their black sides appear almost as the shadows of a marble

statue. Looking at these hills, it seems to me as if I had suddenly a recollection of a previous existence, such a crowd of ideas rush upon me, the birth of my early years, long dead, now revived. There on that hill stands the old sheep-cot, in which I once took refuge during a storm; there is the castle of the Fondi, near which grow the largest ilexes of these hills; and in that recess of the mountain is the holy spring, near which on summer mornings Euthanasia and I have often gathered flowers, and placed leaves for boats, seeing them swallowed up and again cast forth in the whirl of that strange pool; I wonder if that tall cypress still throws its shade upon the water; methinks it would well please me, to sit as of yore, Euthanasia by my side, on its moss-covered roots."

Castruccio's heart was much softened, as he successively recognized objects, which he had forgotten for so many years, and with which he had been most intimately acquainted. The peculiar form of the branches of a tree, the winding of an often-trod mountain-path, the murmurs of small streams, their banks bedecked with dwarf shrubs; things which would have appeared uncharacterized to one who viewed them for the first time; bore for him some distinguishing mark, some peculiar shape, which awoke within him memories that had been long laid asleep.

The road that led from Lucca to Valperga struck directly across the plain to the foot of the rock on which the castle was built. This rock overhung the road, casting a deep shade; and projected, forming a precipice on three sides; the northern side, at the foot of which the Secchio flowed, was disjoined from the mountain by a ravine, and a torrent struggled in the depth, among loose stones, and the gnarled and naked roots of trees that shaded the side of the cleft. Castruccio began to ascend the path which led to the portal of the castle, that was cut in the precipitous side of this recess, and was bordered by hedges of stunted myrtles overtopped by chesnut trees; the foliage of these had fallen; and their spoils, yellow, and brown, and red, were strewed on the shining leaves of the myrtle underwood. The path was steep, serpentine and narrow; so that Castruccio, who now looked on nature with a soldier's eye, remarked what an excellent defence Valperga might make, if that were the only access to it: the torrent roared below, keeping the air for ever awake; for that commoner babbles more and louder among huge mountains, and solitudes which may never be still, than among the haunts of men; but all sounds are melodious there; none harsh and obtrusive.

At the summit of the path was a drawbridge that connected it with the almost isolated platform of rock on which the castle stood:—the building nearly covered this space, leaving room only for a small plot of ground, which overlooked the plain, and was guarded by a barbican; and on which a few trees, dark ilexes, and light acacias, mingled their contrasted foliage. Behind the castle the mountain rose, barren and

nearly perpendicular; and, when you looked up, the dark and weather-stained precipice towered above, while the blue sky seemed to rest upon it. The castle itself was a large and picturesque building, turreted, and gracefully shaded by trees. Castruccio entered the gate on the side of the drawbridge, and passed between the main building and the barbican which guarded the pass; so coming round to the front of the castle, which opened on the grassy plot; here he was met by several servants, and conducted to the apartment of Euthanasia. The counts of Valperga had been rich; and the castle was more magnificent than those rocky strong holds usually were. The great banqueting hall was painted with various figures, which, though rude, and defective in shade and perspective, were regarded with admiration in those days. A large fireplace, now illumined by a blazing fire, gave an air of cheerfulness to the hall; several serving-men, and two large and beautiful dogs, were cowering round the fire, as a cold January blast rushed through the opposite door, through which Castruccio passed into an inner, open court of the castle.

This court was surrounded by gothic cloisters on all sides except one, where the huge mountain formed the barrier: high, near the summit of the rock, grew a few cypresses; and, as you gazed upwards at them, they seemed to pierce the sky with their dark and motionless spires. On one side of this court was a handsome staircase built of the marble of Carrara, and by this he ascended into the audience chamber. It was then, being winter, hung with scarlet cloth; the ceiling was painted; and the bright marble pavement reflected in dim colours the Venus and her Cupids depicted above. A small tripod of white marble curiously carved, stood in the middle of the room, supporting a bronze censer in which incense was burning; several antique vases and tripods adorned the room; the tables were of the finest stones, or of glass mosaic; and the seats or couches were covered with scarlet cloth inwoven with gold. Within this was Euthanasia's own apartment; it was hung with blue silk, and the pavement was of mosaic; the couches were richly embroidered, and a small table of *verde antique* stood in the middle of the room. In the recesses were several stands for books, writing materials, etc.; and in the embrasures of the windows were bronze stands, on which were placed finely embossed gold vases, filled with such flowers as the season afforded. But, amidst all this luxury, the richest ornament of the room was the lovely possessor herself.

Castruccio and Euthanasia met; after many years of absence, they gazed on each other with curiosity and interest. Euthanasia had awaited his arrival with unwonted anxiety: she could not explain to herself the agitation that she felt at the idea of meeting him; but, when she saw him, beautiful as a god, power and love dwelling on every feature of his countenance, and in every motion of his graceful form, the unquiet

beatings of her heart ceased, and she became calm and happy. And was she not also beautiful? Her form was light, and every limb was shaped according to those rules by which the exquisite statues of the antients have been modelled. A quantity of golden hair fell round her neck, and, unless it had been confined by a veil that was wreathed round her head, it would almost have touched the ground; her eyes were blue; a blue that seemed to have drunk-in the depths of an Italian sky, and to reflect from their orbs the pure and unfathomable brilliance, which strikes the sight as darkness, of a Roman heaven; but these beauteous eyes were fringed by long, pointed lashes, which softened their fire, and added to their sweetness: the very soul of open-hearted Charity dwelt on her brow, and her lips expressed the softest sensibility; there was in her countenance, beyond all of kind and good that you could there discover, an expression that seemed to require ages to read and understand; a wisdom exalted by enthusiasm, a wildness tempered by self-command, that filled every look and every motion with eternal change. She was dressed according to the custom of the times, yet her dress was rather plain, being neither ornamented with gold nor jewels; a silk vest of blue reached from her neck to her feet, girded at the waist by a small embroidered band; the wide and, hanging sleeves were embroidered at the edge, and fell far over her hands, except when, thrown back, they discovered her rosy-tipt fingers and taper wrist.

They met then and often again; and the difference of their political parties only drew them closer. Euthanasia perceived that Castruccio intended to work some change in the state of her country; and she earnestly wished,—not to draw him over to her party,—but to shew how futile that distinction and enmity were, if one love of peace and good animated all hearts. She wished also to read his mind, to know if the love of liberty lived there. Euthanasia had this foible, if indeed it might be called one in her, to love the very shadow of freedom with unbounded enthusiasm. She was bred a Guelph among the leaders of that party at Florence, a party whose watchword was liberty; her rank itself would have forced her to take part in the contentions of the times; but she was no narrow partizan; her father, and the studies she had followed under him, had taught her higher lessons; and the history of the Roman republic had increased her love of freedom, while it had annihilated in her mind all interest in petty intrigue. Castruccio was a staunch Ghibeline, and his soul was set on the advancement of that party; he did not sympathize with Euthanasia, but he appeared to do so, for he loved her, and listened, his eyes shining with pleasure, while she spoke in silver tones, and all appeared wise and good that came from her lips. Often her gentle eloquence would for a while carry him along with it, and he would talk of republics, and the energy and virtue that every citizen acquires, when each, acting under the censure of

each, yet possesses power; and men, not as children obedient to the mere word of command, discuss and regulate their own interests. Her admiration for the character of several of the Florentine chiefs gave interest to her details respecting the changes that had occurred there during the last years, and to the many anecdotes that she dwelt upon as demonstrating the power and grandeur of her beloved Florence.

Nor were their conversations only political. Euthanasia's mind was stored with sweet lore; she loved poetry, and sang or repeated the verses of Guido or Dante; and, as she made excursions among the woods, or joined in hunting-parties with Castruccio and her other friends, her conversation appeared one strain of poetry. Castruccio related his adventures, and Euthanasia was never weary of listening to the details of the English and French courts and manners; two systems of society, so widely opposite to each other, and both so different from the scenes to which she had been accustomed. Their love for one another, and their confidence increased: the winter months passed on, and the first days of spring, bringing with them green leaves and soft air, found them vowed friends, each believing to be knit to the other for life with the strongest ties of enduring love.

Euthanasia said that she loved for the first time, and a falsehood had never stained her purest soul; a well of intensest and overflowing passion was opened in her heart; every feeling was softened, every emotion modulated by this change: she was penetrated with love; and, admiration and esteem forming but a part of this, she made a god of him she loved, believing every virtue and every talent to live in his soul. Thus, unrestrained by any latent fear or ungenerous suspicion, she gave up her heart to him, and was for a while happy. They passed much time together; and every day each made a discovery of some new excellence, some till then unobserved accomplishment.

Her feelings were indeed entirely changed by the birth of this new and powerful sentiment. Hitherto she had been in a great degree alone in the world; finding none who entirely sympathized with her, she had poured out the treasure of her heart to the ear of silence alone. She was happy among the gaieties of Florence; the wit and imagination of the people formed an agreeable variety to her life; but there was a mutable and changeful spirit among them, that did not invite her confidence. Her eyes had often been lighted up, and her spirit awakened in conversation, where wit sharpens wit, and the ideas of one mind seem to cause the birth of the children of another. But, when tenderness softened her heart, and the sublime feeling of universal love penetrated her, she found no voice that replied so well to hers as the gentle singing of the pines under the air of noon, and the soft murmurs of the breeze

that scattered her hair and freshened her cheek, and the dashing of the waters that has no beginning or end.

It was not thus now; the words and looks of Castruccio replied to her, and she felt happier than she had ever been. There was no doubt, no sorrow; all was security and calm; and her heart softened, until tears sprang forth under the weight of unmitigated pleasure. She was frank, generous and fearless; therefore she instantly believed and trusted; while the master-passions which ever ruled her life were not forgotten, but, mingling with and heightened by love, glowed with greater energy. They passed several months in the enjoyment of this intercourse; they hoped, they felt, that their destinies were intertwined never to be separated; and their union was only deferred until Castruccio should free his country. The summer advancing would soon give the signal for separation. On one of these days, one of the last before their parting, Euthanasia related to Castruccio the few events of her peaceful life which had occurred since their separation ten years before. The tale was short, but it was one that deeply interested the listener.

[3]The *Tramontano* is the north wind; the *Scirocco* the south-west and the *Libeccio* the south-east.

CHAPTER X

Euthanasia's Narrative.

"It is strange for one to speak, who never before has uttered the sentiments of her heart. With my eyes I have spoken to the starry skies and the green earth; and with smiles that could not express my emotion I have conversed with the soft airs of summer, the murmur of streams, and the chequered shades of our divine woods: but never before have I awakened sympathy in a human countenance with words that unlock the treasure of my heart.

"I have lived a solitary hermitess, and have become an enthusiast for all beauty. Being alone, I have not feared to give the reins to my feelings; I have lived happily within the universe of my own mind, and have often given reality to that which others call a dream. I have had few hopes, and few fears; but every passing sentiment has been an event; and I have marked the birth of a new idea with the joy that others derive from what they call change and fortune. What is the world, except that which we feel? Love,

and hope, and delight, or sorrow and tears; these are our lives, our realities, to which we give the names of power, possession, misfortune, and death.

"You smile at my strange words. I now feel livelier emotions arise; and, as is my custom, I try to define and understand them. Love, when nurtured by sympathy, is a stronger feeling, than those breathless emotions which arise from the contemplation of what is commonly called inanimate nature, and of the wondrous and eternal changes of the universe; and, feeling as I do, that if I give it place in my heart, it must bear my whole being away with it, as the tempest bears the rack along the sky, wonder not, dear friend, that I have paused, and even shuddered, when I thought that an unknown power was about to dwell in my soul, which might make it blind to its former delights, and deaf to the deep voice of that nature, whose child and nursling I call myself. But now I doubt no more; I am yours, Castruccio; be my fortune tearful or smiling, it shall be one that will bring with it human sympathy, and I resign that savage liberty of which I was ere while jealous.

"You have asked me to relate the events of my life; I may say that it is a blank, if you would not hear the history of many a strange idea, many an exalted feeling, and reverie of wondrous change. You left me at Florence the favourite daughter of a father I adored: I was ever near him reading and conversing with him; and if I have put order in my day dreams, and culled the fruit of virtue and some slight wisdom from my meditations, it is to his lessons that I owe this good. It is he who taught me to fathom my sensations, and discipline my mind; to understand what my feelings were, and whether they arose from a good or evil source. He taught me to look on my own faults fearlessly; humbly as a weak being—yet not with mock humility, but with a modest, yet firm courage, that led me to know what indeed I might become. He explained to me the lessons of our divine master; which our priests corrupt to satisfy the most groveling desires; and he taught me to seek in self-approbation, and in a repentance, which was that of virtuous action, and not of weeping, for the absolution of which they make a revenue.

"Do I speak with vanity? I hope that you do not so far mistake me. I have been a solitary being; and, conversing with my own heart, I have been so accustomed to use the frank language of a knowledge drawn from fixed principles, and to weigh my actions and thoughts in those scales which my reason and my religion afforded me, that my words may sound vain; when they are only true. I do not think then that I could speak with vanity; for I was enumerating the benefits that I received from my father. I read with him the literature of ancient Rome; and my whole soul was filled with the beauty of action, and the poetic sentiment of these writers. At first I complained that no men lived now, who bore affinity to these far shining beacons of the earth: but my

father convinced me, that the world was shaking off her barbaric lethargy, and that Florence, in her struggle for freedom, had awakened the noblest energies of the human mind. Once, when we attended a court in Lombardy, a minstrel sang some of the Cantos of Dante's *Divina Comedia*, and I can never forget the enthusiastic joy I experienced, in finding that I was the contemporary of its illustrious author.

"I endeavour to mark in this little history of myself the use of the various feelings that rule all my actions; and I must date my enthusiasm for the liberties of my country, and the political welfare of Italy, from the repetition of these Cantos of Dante's poem. The Romans, whose writings I adored, were free; a Greek who once visited us, had related to us what treasures of poetry and wisdom existed in his language, and these were the productions of freemen: the mental history of the rest of the world who are slaves, was a blank, and thus I was irresistibly forced to connect wisdom and liberty together; and, as I worshipped wisdom as the pure emanation of the Deity, the divine light of the world, so did I adore liberty as its parent, its sister, the half of its being. Florence was free, and Dante was a Florentine; none but a freeman could have poured forth the poetry and eloquence to which I listened: what though he were banished from his native city, and had espoused a party that seemed to support tyranny; the essence of freedom is that clash and struggle which awaken the energies of our nature, and that operation of the elements of our mind, which as it were gives us the force and power that hinder us from degenerating, as they say all things earthly do when not regenerated by change.

"What is man without wisdom? And what would not this world become, if every man might learn from its institutions the true principles of life, and become as the few which have as yet shone as stars amidst the night of ages? If time had not shaken the light of poetry and of genius from his wings, all the past would be dark and trackless: now we have a track—the glorious foot-marks of the children of liberty; let us imitate them, and like them we may serve as marks in the desart, to attract future passengers to the fountains of life. Already we have begun to do so; and Dante is the pledge of a glorious race, which tells us that, in clinging to the freedom which gave birth to his genius, we may awake the fallen hopes of the world. These sentiments, nurtured and directed by my father, have caused the growth of an enthusiasm in my soul, which can only die when I die.

"I was at this time but sixteen; and at that age, unless I had been guided by the lessons of my father, my meditations would have been sufficiently fruitless. But he, whether he taught me to consider the world and the community of man, or to study the little universe of my own mind, was wisdom's self, pouring out accents that commanded attention and obedience. At first I believed, that my heart was good, and that by

following its dictates I should not do wrong; I was proud, and loved not to constrain my will, though I myself were the mistress; but he told me, that either my judgement or passions must rule me, and that my future happiness and usefulness depended on the choice I made between these two laws. I learned from him to look upon events as being of consequence only through the feelings which they excited, and to believe that content of mind, love, and benevolent feeling ought to be the elements of our existence; while those accidents of fortune or fame, which to the majority make up the sum of their existence, were as the dust of the balance.

"Well; these were the lessons of my father, a honey of wisdom on which I fed until I attained my eighteenth year; and then he died. What I felt, my grief and despair, I will not relate; few sorrows surpass that of a child, who loses a beloved parent before she has formed new ties which have weakened the first and the most religious.

"Do you remember my mother? She was a lady with a kind heart, and a humanity and equanimity of temper few could surpass. She was a Guelph, a violent partizan, and, heart and soul, was taken up with treaties of peace, acquisitions in war, the conduct of allies, and the fortune of her enemies: while she talked to you, you would have thought that the whole globe of the earth was merely an appendage to the county of Valperga. She was acquainted with all the magistrates of Florence, the probabilities of elections, the state of the troops, the receipt of imposts, and every circumstance of the republic. She was interested in the most lively manner in the fall of Corso Donati[4], the war with Pistoia, the taking of that town, and the deaths and elections of the various Popes. She was present at every court held by the Guelph lords of Lombardy; and her poor subjects were sometimes rather hardly taxed, that we might appear with suitable dignity on these occasions. The marriage of her children was her next care; but she could never come to a decisive resolve as to which alliance would be the most advantageous to her family, and at the same time most promote the cause of the Guelphs in Italy.

"When my father died, she sent for my eldest brother from Naples; and for several months her mind was occupied by his accession, and the dignity that the houses of Adimari and Valperga would acquire by having a young warrior at their head, instead of a woman and a blind philosopher. My brother was a soldier, a brave man, full of ambition and party spirit; and a new field was opened to my mother's politics by him, when he detailed the intrigues of the Neapolitan court; she was for ever occupied in sending messengers, receiving dispatches, calculating imposts, and all the pygmy acts of a petty state.

"When I was nineteen years of age, we heard that my younger brother had fallen ill at Rome, and desired to see some one of his family. My uncle, the abbot of St. Maurice, was on the point of going to Rome; and I obtained my mother's leave to accompany him. Oh, what long draughts of joy I drank in on that journey! I did not think that my brother's illness was dangerous, and indeed considered that circumstance more as the pretext, than the object of my journey; so I fearlessly gave myself up to the enthusiasm that deluged my soul. Expression lags, as then my own spirit flagged, beneath the influence of these thoughts: it was to Rome I journied, to see the vestiges of the mistress of the world, within whose walls all I could conceive of great, and good, and wise, had breathed and acted: I should draw in the sacred air which had vivified the heroes of Rome; their shades would surround me; and the very stones that I should tread were marked by their footsteps. Can you conceive what I felt? You have not studied the histories of ancient times, and perhaps know not the life that breathes in them; a soul of beauty and wisdom which had penetrated my heart of hearts. When I descended the hills of the Abruzzi, and first saw the Tiber rolling its tranquil waters glistening under the morning sun; I wept;—why did not Cato live?—why was I not going to see her consuls, her heroes, and her poets? Alas! I was about to approach the shadow of Rome, the inanimate corse, the broken image of what was once great beyond all power of speech to express. My enthusiasm again changed; and I felt a kind of sacred horror run through my veins. Thou, oh! Tiber, ever rollest, ever and for ever the same! yet are not thy waters those which flowed here when the Scipios and the Fabii lived on thy shores; the grass and the herbage which adorn thy banks have many thousand times been renewed since it was pressed on by their feet; all is changed, even thou art not the same!

"It was night when we entered Rome; I dared hardly breathe; the stars shone bright in the deep azure of heaven; and with their twinkling beams illuminated the dark towers which were black and silent, seeming like animated beings asleep. A procession of monks passed by chaunting in a sweet and solemn tone, in that language which once awoke the pauses of this Roman air with words of fire. Methought they sang their city's *requiem;* methought I was following to their last narrow home all that had existed of great and good in this god-inhabited city.

"I remained in Rome three months; when I arrived, my brother was considerably better, and we entertained every hope of his recovery. I spent my life among the ruins of Rome; and I felt, as I was told that I appeared to be, rather a wandering shade of the ancient times, than a modern Italian. In my wild enthusiasm I called on the shadows of the departed to converse with me, and to prophesy the fortunes of awakening Italy. I can never forget one evening that I visited the Pantheon by moonlight: the soft beams

of the planet streamed through its open roof, and its tall pillars glimmered around. It seemed as if the spirit of beauty descended on my soul, as I sat there in mute extacy; never had I before so felt the universal graspings of my own mind, or the sure tokens of other spiritual existences, as at that moment. Oh! could I even now pour forth in words the sentiments of love, and virtue, and divinest wisdom, that then burst in upon my soul, in a rich torrent——such as was the light of the moon to the dark temple in which I stood—the whole world would stand and listen: but fainter than the moon-beams and more evanescent are those deep thoughts; my eyes glisten, my cheeks glow, but words are denied me. I feel as it were my own soul at work within me, and surely, if I could disclose its secret operations, and lay bare the vitals of my being, in that moment, which would be one of overwhelming extacy—in that moment I should die.

"Well; to return to the events that sealed my residence in Rome, and by shedding the softness of affectionate sorrow over my feelings, added to their deep holiness. The last month of my residence there, I was a constant attendant on the sick bed of my dying brother: he did not suffer pain; his illness was lethargic; and I watched with breathless anxiety the change from life to death. Sometimes, when the *Ave Maria* had sounded, and the heats of the day had subsided, I stole out into the air to refresh my wearied spirits. There is no sky so blue as that of Rome; it is deep, penetrating, and dazzling: but at this hour it had faded, and its soft airs, that made wild and thrilling music among the solitudes of its hills and ruins, cooled my fevered cheeks, and soothed me in spite of sorrow. I then enjoyed grief; I may now say so, although I then felt anguish alone; truly I wept, and bitterly over the illness of my brother: but, when the soul is active, it brings a certain consolation along with it: I was never so much alive as then, when my wanderings, which seldom exceeded one or at most two hours, seemed to be lengthened into days and weeks. I loved to wander by the banks of the Tiber, which were solitary, and, if the scirocco blew, to mark the clouds as they sped over St. Peter's and the many towers of Rome: sometimes I walked on the Quirinal or Pincian mounts which overlook the city, and gazed, until my soul was elevated by poetic transport. Beautiful city, thy towers were illuminated by the orange tints of the fast-departing sunset, and the ghosts of lovely memories floated with the night breeze, among thy ruins; I became calm; amidst a dead race, and an extinguished empire, what individual sorrow would dare raise its voice? subdued, trembling, and overcome, I crept back to the sick bed of my brother.

"He died; and I left this city of my soul. I know not whether I shall ever again breathe its air; but its memory is a burning cloud of sunset in the deep azure of the sky: it is that

passage in my life since my father's death, on which my intellectual eye rests with emotion, pleasurable now, although I then endured poignant sorrow.

"The passenger that carried the intelligence of my younger brother's death to my mother, was crossed on the road by one who came to inform me that the eldest also was no more. He was killed in an assault on Pistoia. Thus death quickly mowed down the ranks of our family; and at last I have become a solitary scion of the stock.

"I returned home by very slow journies, and in my way was detained a fortnight at Perugia. When I arrived, I was met by my mother at our palace in Florence; she burst into tears as she folded me in her arms, and wept for some time, lamenting with bitter grief her sad losses. I mingled my tears with hers, and alas! I soon shed them alone; doubly an orphan through her death, I mourned over the last of my family. So many losses, following swift one upon the other, astounded me; and I passed many months, as one who had wandered from the true path, and had no guide to set her right. I retreated to my castle, and the solitude frightened me; I returned to Florence; but the gaieties of that city only told me more plainly that I was alone, since I sympathized with none there. But time has healed these wounds, leaving only a tinge of melancholy in my character which had not belonged to it till now."

[4]Dante: *Purgatorio*, Canto XXIV.

CHAPTER XI

Capture of Monte Catini.—Castruccio treacherously made prisoner by Ranieri, Governor of Lucca.—Delivered, and proclaimed Consul.

The winter passed away, and with the summer the toils of the soldier began. Castruccio left Lucca, and joined the army of Uguccione against the Florentines. He took leave of his lady; yet she neither tied the scarf around him, nor bade him go and prosper. Florence was her native town; and love of their country was a characteristic of all Florentines. There was in that city an energy of spirit, which panting to expand itself, sought for new emotions, or exalted those that were before felt, until each sentiment became a passion. The Florentines were patriots; there was not one among them, who would not have sacrificed wealth, life, and happiness, to the prosperity of

his native city. Euthanasia was brought up in the midst of public discussions and of expressions of public feeling; the army of the Florentines contained her best friends, the companions of her youth, all among men whom she had esteemed and loved; how then could she bid her lover, go, and prosper, when he went to destroy them? She would have been still more unhappy, could she have anticipated the event of the campaign.

Uguccione engaged himself in the siege of the castle of Monte Catini; and the Florentines, after having made every exertion to assemble and discipline their troops, advanced against him with a larger army than they had ever before brought into the field. Nor were the preparations of Uguccione inferior in vigour; he assembled all his allies, and awaited with confidence the arrival of the enemy. During this interval however, the chief fell ill, and was obliged to retire from the camp: the nominal command of the army devolved on his eldest son Francesco; but all looked up to Castruccio as their real leader. The Florentines advanced full of hope; and the Lucchese awaited them with steady courage. The battle was long and bloody; in the beginning of the combat Francesco was killed, and Castruccio perceived the soldiers make a sudden halt, when they saw their general fall: instantly feeling that the command devolved upon him, he galloped to the front of the lines, he threw off his casque that he might be distinguished, and, bidding the trumpets sound, he led his troops to a fresh assault. His army was drawn out on the plain, and every eye was turned upwards towards the castle, which, situated on the height of a steep hill, was the goal they must win. Castruccio had seen service in France; but with far different feelings did he now engage in battle. He was surrounded by his friends; he saw those he loved advance with a steady eye to the danger towards which he led them; he looked up, and saw above the high seated castle that he must storm; be saw the closely set ranks of the enemy; he beheld all this with one glance, one feeling quicker than a look, and the trumpets sounded while he waved his sword; his spirits were exhilarated, his heart swelled,—tears—tears of high and uncontrolable emotion, filled his eyes, as he dashed through the ranks of the enemy, and cried, "Victory, or death!" None dared disobey his voice. His dark brown hair, on which the sun shone, might be distinguished amidst a forest of hostile javelins. He was wounded; but he refused to retire; and fixing his eye on the castle walls—he cried, "There is our home!" All gave way before his fury; that part of the Florentine army which had been drawn out on the plain, was dispersed and fled—the rest retreated towards the castle; when he saw them retreat, when he first perceived that they gave ground before him, his triumph and extacy rose almost to frenzy; the mountain was steep, he threw himself from his horse, his troop followed his example; he called on them by the names of father and

brother to follow his steps. "Go on!" they cried, "go on!" And they broke through all the impediments placed to impede their ascent, and were seen in close array, winding up the steep path towards the castle.

The victory was due to him alone; he, ever foremost, scaled the height, and first displayed the Ghibeline banner from the walls of the castle of Monte Catini; while, his cheek pale with pain, and his limbs trembling from loss of blood, it seemed almost as if his own death would seal the bloody conquest. The Florentines sustained irreparable loss; their general, the son of the king of Naples, several of his relations, and many members of the noblest families in Florence, fell. The loss is compared by the Florentine historians to the defeat of Cannæ; and many years elapsed before Florence could fill up the gap among her citizens made by the havoc of that day.

Such was the news that blanched poor Euthanasia's cheek. She had spent the period that had elapsed since the departure of Castruccio, in utter solitude. Her anxiety, and the combat of feelings which she experienced, destroyed all her peace: she dared not give her prayers to either side; or if, following the accustomed bent of her inclinations, she wished success to her townsmen, the idea of Castruccio defeated, perhaps killed, turned all her thoughts to double bitterness. Yet, when the Florentines were indeed defeated, when messenger after messenger brought intelligence from her terror-stricken friends of the sad losses they had sustained, when the name of Castruccio as the slayer was repeated with fear and curses by those whom she tenderly loved; then indeed the current of her feelings returned with violence to its accustomed channel, and, bitterly reproaching herself for having dared to hesitate in a cause where her country was concerned, she knelt down, and solemnly and deliberately made a vow, sanctifying it by an appeal to all that she held sacred in heaven and upon earth,—she made a deep and tremendous vow, never to ally herself to the enemy of Florence: and then, somewhat calmed in soul, though ever sorrowing, she waited for the return of Castruccio to Lucca, so to learn if he could clear himself, or if indeed he were that enemy to Florence against whom her vow was made.

If the overthrow and massacre of the Florentines had moved her soul to its very depths, her horror was tempered with tenderness, when she heard that Castruccio had been brought back wounded to Lucca. The glory of this victory was attributed to him alone; and this glory, which appeared a shame to Euthanasia, excited in her feelings of confusion and sorrow. Now for the first time she felt the struggle in her soul, of inclination warring with duty; for the first time she feared that she ought not to love Castruccio; she thought of retreating to Florence, and of shutting him out from her sight, if possible from her thoughts; yet, as she meditated this, she thought she

heard the soft tones of his melodious voice sounding in her ears, and she sank into grief and tears.

This painful struggle ceased not, until she saw him again; and then, as before, all pain and doubt vanished. His cheek was pale from the consequences of his wound, and his person, having thus lost its usual decision of mien, was more interesting; but his eyes shone, and they beamed unutterable love upon her. Truly did he look a hero; for power sat on his brow, and victory seemed to have made itself a home among the smiles of his lips. "Triumph, my sweet girl," he said; "all my laurels are spoils for you. Nay, turn not away as if you disdained them; they are the assurances of the peace that you desire. Do not doubt me; do not for a moment suffer a cloud of suspicion to darken your animated countenance. This sword has made me master of peace and war; and need I say, that my wise and gentle Euthanasia shall direct my counsels, her love and honour being the aim and purpose of my life?"

Upon such words could aught but pardon and reconciliation attend?

Castruccio's wound was slight, and soon healed. But he was now more than ever immersed in his political plans: throwing off the mask, he appeared openly as the leader of a party against Uguccione; his palace was for ever open, and crowded with friends and followers; and, when he rode through the streets, he was attended by a band of the first nobles in Lucca. To his other talents Castruccio joined a vein of raillery and bitter irony, which, when he chose to exert it, seemed to enter into and wither the soul of its object. His scoffs and mockery of the Faggiuola family were repeated through Lucca; and the person against whom they were particularly directed, the governor whom Uguccione had appointed, was a man formed to feel in every nerve the agony of derision.

Francesco having been killed at the battle of Monte Catini, Uguccione had set his son Ranieri over the Lucchese. Ranieri was only two-and-twenty years of age; but his straight black hair fell over a forehead prematurely wrinkled; without the courage of his father, he possessed all his cunning and ambition, as much cruelty, and even more deceit. He had long been a pretender to the hand of the countess of Valperga,—with no hope except that with which his own vanity inspired him: yet, when he perceived that Castruccio was his favoured rival, he felt as if he had been robbed of his inheritance; and the beauty, talents, and glory of his adversary made him taste to the dregs the cup of envy. The consciousness of power alone for a while restrained the manifestation of his feelings. He soothed himself with the idea that Castruccio's life was in his hands; yet a lurking doubt prevented him from putting forth his strength; he glared on his enemy, as a tiger who crouches within reach of his prey; but he dared not

spring. He would gladly have got rid of his rival by private assassination; but Castruccio was too cautious, and ever went too well attended, to afford an opportunity for such a measure. Rivalry in love was however but a small part of the cause of the hate with which Ranieri was filled; for Castruccio no longer disguised his abhorrence of the cruelty of Uguccione, or his contempt for the cowardly and artful policy of his son; and a man far less cunning than Ranieri might easily perceive that he laboured day and night for the overthrow of the Faggiuola family.

An accidental scuffle brought these feelings into action; it were idle to attempt to discover the cause of a quarrel, at a period when civil broils were so common, not only among the Italians; but when the capitals of the French and English monarchs were often stained with blood on the most trivial occasions. This affray arose between the dependents of Ranieri and of count Fondi; Castruccio and his companions joined in it; and it ended in the rout and flight of Faggiuola's men, one of whom was killed. Ranieri seized this opportunity to send to his father with greater effect an account of the haughty conduct and machinations of Castruccio. The truth had been sufficient to awaken the suspicions of a man, whose rule it was never to permit an enemy to live; but the colouring that Ranieri gave to the affair, made it appear as if open war had been declared between the parties at Lucca. Uguccione had bathed his hands that very winter in the best blood of Pisa; and he considered one life more as a small sacrifice towards the completion of his security. His advice therefore was to act cautiously, but swiftly, and that the next messenger might bring intelligence of the death of his adversary.

This direction filled Ranieri with unwonted joy; it smoothed the wrinkles of his brow, and lighted up his eyes with ferocity: he would willingly have led forth his troops, and seized Castruccio in the midst of his partizans; but his deceitful disposition suggested to him a quieter, and as he imagined, a surer mode of proceeding. The enemies met at church; they disposed themselves on opposite sides of the aisle,—the followers of Castruccio viewed their opponents with a careless smile of contempt, which was returned by a sullen scowl; while Ranieri manifested an alternation of gaiety and uneasiness, which his art could not entirely conceal. High mass being over, Castruccio was about to retire, when Ranieri, quitting his attendants, walked across the aisle; seeing his movement, the followers of Antelminelli crowded about him; but he bade them fall back, and with a haughty step, and a smile of conscious superiority, he also advanced towards his enemy; they met midway, and the two parties, their hands on their swords, watched every motion of their respective chiefs during this unexpected parley. Had not Ranieri's character for artifice been impressed on every mind, his appearance might now have lulled suspicion;—he smiled, and spoke with a

loud, careless voice; and what was hidden under this friendly outside seemed rather timidity, than enmity: Castruccio fixed his eagle-eye upon him; but fear appeared to be the only feeling which lurked behind the frankness that Ranieri wished to assume: nor did he shrink from the examination; he spoke:

"Messer Castruccio, methinks you are much a stranger to my councils and board. Do you suppose that my father forgets your services in his cause, or that he does not pray for an opportunity of shewing his gratitude? Evil reports, I own, have gone abroad to your disadvantage, and your absence from my palace might give some colour to these; but I am not a suspicious man, and trust the actions of my friends which speak in their favour, more readily than the hearsay which traduces them. If any ill blood exists between us, and I am the cause of it, I freely ask your pardon for any offence I may have given you, and request, as the seal of our reconciliation, that you would honour with your presence a poor banquet I am to give to-night to the nobility of Lucca.

Castruccio was somewhat astounded by this speech, which was concluded by the offer of his hand from the speaker. Castruccio drew back, and replied; "My poor services, my lord, were offered to my country; from her I hope for gratitude, from your father I neither deserve nor expect this meed. It were as well perhaps not to attempt to mix jarring elements; but, since you offer hospitality, I will freely accept it; for, whatever cause of alienation may exist between us, you are a knight and a soldier, and I do not fear deceit."

Castruccio withdrew; and the certainty of revenge alone could have quelled the deadly anger of Ranieri at the haughty and supercilious treatment that he had received.

Before the hour for the banquet had arrived, Castruccio rode to the castle of Valperga, and related the occurrence to Euthanasia. She listened attentively, and then said: "There is some deep plot in this; I know Neri della Faggiuola; he is at once cowardly, artful, and cruel. Be on your guard; I would intreat you not to go to this feast, but that, going with your followers, I do not see what danger you can incur; but doubt not, that this, or any other friendly overture that may follow; is only a snare in which it is expected that you will entangle yourself."

"Fear not, dear girl; I am open-hearted with my friends;—but I have been a soldier of fortune; and at such a school I may well have learned to detect wiles more deep, and politicians more cunning than Ranieri. Let him beware; this moon which has just bent her bow among the clouds of sunset, will not be two weeks old, when you may see

this deep schemer take his solitary way to Pisa, glad to escape from the vengeance that he so well merits."

Castruccio attended the feast of Ranieri, accompanied by count Fondi and Arrigo Guinigi. He had expected to find the rest of his friends and partizans assembled there, since they had all received invitations: but Ranieri had acted with the utmost caution; and, a very short time before the hour fixed for the banquet, he had sent messages to the friends of Castruccio, and under various pretexts, had, unknown one to the other, employed them on different affairs which he pretended to be of the greatest urgency. When therefore Castruccio entered the banquetting hall, he found only the officers of the German troop attached to the Faggiuola faction, some old men who had retired from public affairs, and a few Guelph families who Ranieri supposed would remain neuter on the present occasion. Castruccio observed this, and felt that all was not right; yet not for a moment did the expression of his physiognomy change, or his frank demeanour betray any sign of suspicion. It was not then the custom, as in the more barbarous society of France and England, to attend peaceful meetings as if armed for mortal combat; and Castruccio was unarmed, except with a small dagger, which as a matter of caution he concealed about his person.

The repast was sumptuous; course succeeded course; and the most delicate sweetmeats and richest wines invited the guests to a prolongation of their pleasures. Castruccio was both from habit and principle abstemious, and the quiet of the banquet was first interrupted by a sarcasm of Ranieri, as he pointed to the quantity of water which his guest mingled with his wine. The latter replied; and his irony was the more keen from the reputation of cowardice and luxury which his enemy bore. Ranieri grew pale; and, filling his own cup with pure wine, he presented it to Castruccio, saying; "Nay, Messere, before you depart, dishonour not my pledge, but drink this cup of generous Cyprus, to the overthrow of the enemies of Faggiuola."

These words were the signal agreed upon with his soldiers; they suddenly entered, surrounded the other guests, and throwing themselves upon Castruccio, endeavoured to secure him. Twice he threw them off: and once he had nearly drawn his stiletto from his bosom; but he was overpowered and manacled with heavy chains—yet, standing thus impotent, his eagle-glance seemed to wither the soul of Ranieri, who, unable to give voice to the irony with which he had intended to load his victim, gave orders that he should be carried to prison.

Ranieri then addressed his guests, telling them, that the riotous behaviour of Castruccio the preceding week, and the murder of one of his servants, were the just causes of his imprisonment. He bade them not fear any danger to their own persons,

unless they should rashly attempt to disturb the due course of justice. Arrigo, with all the warmth of youth, would have replied with bitter reproaches; but count Fondi, making him a signal of silence, and deigning only to cast on Ranieri a smile of contempt, retreated with the youth from the violated board. Ranieri invited his guests to continue their festivity, but in vain: they were silent and confounded; one by one the Italians withdrew, and Ranieri was left only with his officers who were chiefly Germans, and the remainder of the evening was spent in that intemperate enjoyment of the bottle, which the Italians held in wonder and contempt. Ranieri did not wish to drown the voice of his conscience, for that was his servant, and not his monitor; but his coward spirit failed, when he reflected on his critical situation, and the number and resoluteness of Castruccio's friends: wine inspired him with boldness; and a riotous night succeeded and crowned a misspent day.

No feelings could be in more perfect contrast one to the other, than those with which the jailer and his prisoner hailed the morning of the ensuing day. Castruccio had slept soundly on the pavement of his dungeon; and, though his limbs were weighed down by chains, his spirit was light and tranquil; he trusted to his friends, and he trusted to the intimate persuasion he felt, that his star was not to stoop before that of the cowardly and treacherous Ranieri. Looking at the clouds as they passed swiftly across the sun borne along by an irresistible wind, he chaunted a troubadour song of victory.

Ranieri awoke with those feelings of listless depression that succeed to drunkenness; the idea that Castruccio was his prisoner struck him with affright; and now, repenting that he had taken so decided a measure, he sent for his favourite attendant, and bade him go and reconnoitre the town, and endeavour to discover the opinions and temper of the citizens. During the absence of this man he was several times on the point of sending an order for the instantaneous death of his prisoner; but his heart failed him: he felt that he might be disobeyed, and that the mandate of death might be the signal for the deliverance of Castruccio. Thus he waited, irresolutely, but impatiently, till circumstances should decide the course he was to pursue.

The report of his messenger was ill calculated to allay his apprehensions. Knots of citizens stood in the streets and market-place, who, with serious mien and angry fervour, talked over the occurrence of the preceding evening. Some friend of Castruccio was at the head of each of these, who incited the people to action, and, ridiculing the cowardice, and reprobating the treachery and cruelty of Ranieri, awakened in every heart love and reverence for Castruccio, by the well deserved praises that he bestowed upon him. The word Liberty seemed to be creeping among them and warming every soul, while it struck a blight upon the sensations of Ranieri:

he dared not act, but sent a messenger to his father at Pisa, recounting what he had done, and desiring his assistance in the accomplishment of his revenge.

A few weeks before, Uguccione had caused Bonconti and his son, two Pisan nobles, much loved and esteemed in that town, to be put to death: he had before committed flagrant injustices and legal murders in that city, and to these the people had submitted: but Bonconti was a man of understanding and courage; the Pisans had looked up to him as the instrument of their deliverance from the tyrant; by his death this task seemed to devolve into their own hands, and their sullen looks and whispered discontents shewed plainly that they were about to right themselves. Uguccione sat unsteadily on his seat of power; and his uneasiness, as is often the case in minds untamed by humanity, begot in him a hasty courage, and fierce rashness, that resolved not to yield to any obstacle; he was a stag at bay, and the Pisans stood about him watching some weak side on which they might commence their attack.

At this moment the messenger of Ranieri arrived, relating the seizure of Castruccio, and the fears of the governor. "Fool!" cried Uguccione, "does he not know that the members walk not without the head?"

So, without giving one moment to reflection, he hastily called his faithful troop together, consisting of about four hundred men, and, leaving Pisa, hastened at full gallop towards Lucca. The Pisans dared not trust their good fortune, when they saw their enemy and his adherents voluntarily desert their post, and deliver a bloodless victory into their hands; before Uguccione had reached the summit of Monte San Giuliano, which is, as Dante says, the

Perchè i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno,

the cry of liberty, and death to the tyrant, arose in the town; the multitude assailed the house of Uguccione; some of his household fell; the rest fled; and the crowd, now somewhat appeased, assembled to constitute as their chief, a man of understanding and valor, who might bring under discipline the furious passions of the injured Pisans.

Uguccione found Lucca in open revolt: he entered the town, and at the head of his troop endeavoured to charge the mutinous multitude. It was vain; firm barriers thrown across the streets impeded the horses, and the tyrant was obliged to parley with the heads of the revolters. They demanded Castruccio; and he was brought forth chained,

and delivered to them; his fetters were knocked off, and, mounting a charger brought by one of his friends, his manacles carried as a trophy before him, he was led in triumph to his palace. The people almost worshipped him as he passed, and the air rang with acclamations in his favour; a crowd of his adherents, well armed, clustered about him, proud of their victory, and proud of the chief whom they had delivered. His chains were affixed to the tower of his palace, in commemoration of this sudden change of fortune. Uguccione fled:—he did not wait to be expelled by the furious populace; the news reached him of the revolt of Pisa, and it struck him with a panic; he was accompanied by Ranieri; and, quitting Lucca by the northern gate, they hastened across the mountains to Lombardy, and in one day fell from the rank of powerful chieftains, to be soldiers of fortune at the hire of the first prince who might require their services.

Castruccio and his adherents assembled in his palace to deliberate on the government they should choose; the multitude assembled round, and demanded to behold their beloved chief.—Castruccio shewed himself at the balcony, and was saluted with one cry, as Lord of Lucca, and captain of the war against the Florentines: his friends joined in the acclamation; but Castruccio, who never allowed a momentary enthusiasm to obliterate the plan of conduct that he had marked out for himself, made a sign for silence, which was obeyed. He then addressed the people, and, thanking them for their love and services, declared that he could not alone support the government of his town, and, after many modest observations, requested a companion in the weighty task. The people acceded to his wishes, and the Cavaliere Pagano Quartezzano was named as the sharer of his dignities and power under the appellation of consul.

CHAPTER XII

Peace between Lucca and Florence.—Bindo.

The ill news had travelled fast; and Euthanasia knew of the imprisonment of Castruccio the same evening that it had taken place. Well acquainted with the cruel policy of the Faggiuola family and in particular with the dastard ferocity of Ranieri, her fears were wound up to an agonizing height: more unhappy than the prisoner himself, she slept not, nor did she seek sleep; but her thoughts were bent on the consideration of whether she were able in any manner to assist her friend. She resolved at least to employ all the influence her possessions and connexions gave her, to arrest the hand of the murderer.

Early in the morning young Guinigi arrived at the castle. If Arrigo admired Castruccio, he adored Euthanasia; her sex and beauty might well have a powerful effect on his youthful heart, and her simplicity and purity were more calculated to influence his inexperienced but active understanding, than the more studied courtesies of Castruccio. Her pale cheek and heavy eyes indicated the anxious thoughts that beset her; and Arrigo hastened to tranquillize them. "Fear not," he said, "he shall not, he cannot die. His friends watch over him; and Ranieri has by this time learned, that he is more a prisoner among the guards in his palace, than Castruccio chained in his dungeon."

He then detailed the plans of the Ghibeline party for the deliverance of their chief; and, having somewhat calmed the uneasiness of the countess, he returned with haste to his post at Lucca.

Euthanasia passed an anxious day. She was alone; if one may be called alone, whose thoughts descended not to the calm of solitary meditation, but were actively engaged in the imagination of events passing but a few miles distant. It was a warm April day, but sunless: for the Libeccio had veiled the blue heavens with clouds which seemed to press down the atmosphere, that unmoved by any breeze appeared even by its weight to encumber the flowers, and to destroy all elasticity either in vegetable or animal life. Poor Euthanasia walked restlessly on the plot of ground before the gate of her castle; and her languid eyes, bent towards Lucca, were able to discern objects afar off, sharpened as their sight was by love and fear. In the afternoon she saw a band of soldiers ride along the road beneath the rock on which her castle was built, directing their course towards the northern mountains. She thought that she could distinguish the uncouth figure of Uguccione in the tallest among the horsemen who led the troop; while in the rear she felt sure that she beheld the form of Ranieri.

Her heart was now relieved from many of its fears; and she watched with greater calmness the fading hues of sunset, and the moon, now but a day older than when Castruccio had foretold the overthrow of the tyrant. She had a favourite retreat near a spring that issued from the rock behind her castle. The mountain was almost perpendicular from which it gushed; but a rude flight of steps had been cut, by which she ascended to it through a postern. The spring rose from a rift above, and fell first on a narrow rocky platform about seventy steps above the castle. Euthanasia had caused a basin to be scooped here for the reception of the water, and had covered it with a light portico, supported by fluted columns of the Etruscan order made of the finest marble; a few mossy seats surrounded the fountain. The rock shaded her as she sat, on whose stony face grew nothing but heath, and such shrubs as seem to find nutriment and growth in stone itself; but the top was crowned by ilex trees and

stunted myrtle underwood. Thither she now retired, and watched the coming night; when suddenly she thought she heard a rustling above her, and a small bunch of myrtle fell on her lap; she looked up; and, gazing earnestly, perceived Castruccio, with one hand grasping a myrtle shrub, leaning from the summit of the precipice.

"Euthanasia!—Victory!" he cried.

"Victory and security!" she repeated with a deep sigh of joy.

"And glory, and all the blessings of Heaven!" he replied. She answered, but he was far above, and could scarcely hear the words she spoke; he threw another sprig of myrtle, and said, "To-morrow!" and retreated. She continued to look upwards to the spot where he had leaned; the rustling of the leaves was still—the myrtles that had bent as he leaned upon them, slowly upraised themselves—yet still she thought that she heard his voice, until the murmuring of the near stream recalled her to herself, and told her how moveless every thing else was.

And now Euthanasia was happy—too happy; and fast-falling and many tears alone relieved her full heart. She was happy in the assurance of the safety and triumph of her friend; but it was his love that touched her heart, and made her thrill with delight. What sweeter meed is there in life, than the approbation and sincere friendship of those whom we approve and admire? But to be loved by such a one; to feel the deep sympathy of united affections, the delicious consciousness of being loved by one whom all the world approves, by one who fully justifies his claim to the world's esteem by an oblivion of self, and heroic sacrifice of personal felicity for the public cause, touches a chord—opens a spring of feeling which those have never known, whose hearts have not been warmed by public feeling, or who have not entered with interest into the hopes and fears of a band struggling for liberty. The human soul disdains all restraint, and ever seeks to mingle with nature itself, or with kindred minds; to hope and fear for oneself alone often narrows the heart and understanding; but if we are animated by these feelings in unison with a multitude, bound by the same desires and the same perils, such participation of triumph or sorrow exalts and beautifies every emotion.

Yet triumph is a feeling which oppresses the human heart; and that strangely fashioned instrument seems more adapted for suffering than enjoyment; it is rather a passive, than an active principle; abundant joy fills it with melancholy, but it can extract pleasure from the depths of despair. Euthanasia was overpowered; and she felt, in that moment of satisfaction to her hopes, an agitation and unquiet repining, which, though it were indeed only the rebellion of the heart against peace, seemed to

her in after times as the foreboding of the unlooked for catastrophe to so much happiness.

The following evening Castruccio again visited her, and restored her to calm. He sat at her feet, and fixing on her his dark eyes, related the circumstances of his imprisonment and liberation. "Did you not wonder," said he, "at your eagle's visit yesternight? I would indeed that I had been one, so that I could have cast myself at your feet, instead of the silly myrtle that I threw! Yester evening, after the business of the day, I went to the castle of Mordecastelli, which is on this same mountain, not far from the Fairy's Fountain and the cypress, under which as children we often sat—which we visited a few weeks ago, clambering to it from the valley. When I left his castle, I passed by that spot; and, pausing there, I thought that perhaps I could not only attain the summit of the rock that overlooks your fountain, but in some way get down to the alcove itself, and thus surprize your retreat. I was disappointed; the precipice is too high above;—but as I looked down, I caught a glance of your robe, and was repaid for my toil, in being able to communicate to you the news of my success. And now, dearest girl, be happy, and smile contentedly on me; for now that I have overcome my domestic enemies, and have supreme power in this hive of ours, you shall direct me, and there shall be the peace that you love, and the concord you so much desire between us and the proud republicans, your friends."

Euthanasia smiled, and said, "Well may it please one so nearly useless as I am, that I can save the lives of some of my fellow-citizens. Do you not know, dearest Castruccio, that when you draw your sword against the Florentines, it is always wetted with the blood of my best friends? Love you indeed I always must; but I know, for I have studied my own heart, that it would not unite itself to yours, if, instead of these thoughts of peace and concord, you were to scheme war and conquest."

"You measure your love in nice scales," replied Castruccio, reproachfully; "surely, if it were as deep as mine, it would be ruled alone by its own laws, and not by outward circumstances."

Euthanasia answered earnestly, "So can it not be with me; I have been bred in a city distracted by domestic faction, and which, when it obtains a moment of peace in its own bosom, loses the flower of its children in petty wars. A hatred and fear of war is therefore a strong and ruling passion in my heart; but other feelings mingle with these in my zeal for your concord with my fellow-townsmen. Florence is my native city; its citizens are bound to me by the ties of consanguinity and friendship: the families of the Pazzi, the Donati, the Spini, and other noble or plebeian Florentines, against whom you fight when you war with them, each contains individuals whom I love and

honour. I should be a traitor to the best feelings of human nature, and a rebel to my country, if I allied myself to its enemy: think you that I who have joined in the social meetings of the Florentines, who as a child was caressed by them, and as a woman loved, who have been present at their marriages, and have mourned among them at their funerals,—when my own beloved father was attended to his grave by these men whom you call your enemies, and my own bitter sorrows assuaged by the sympathy of their daughters,—think you, that thus linked by every social tie, having prayed, and rejoiced, and wept with them, that I could say to you, 'Go, prosper!' when you should go to destroy them? Dearest Castruccio, if, united to you, such an event were to ensue, in that moment I must die, or live a death in life."

Castruccio replied only by fresh assurances of his earnest desire for peace, and kissed from the brow of Euthanasia the cloud that for a moment had gathered there.

It had been a strange task to unveil the heart of Antelminelli, and to disentangle the contradictory feelings that influenced him at that moment. There can be no doubt that he never forgot his designs for the aggrandizement of his native city; and he had seen too much of courts, and felt too strongly his own superiority to the men about him, to allow us to suppose that he entertained the idea of establishing a free republic there, and submitting his actions and intentions to be controled by the people. It had long been his earnest desire to raise and reinstate the fallen Ghibeline party in Tuscany; and this was not to be accomplished except by the humiliation of the Florentines: yet at this time his whole policy was employed in concluding a peace with them,—a peace, which was ratified the following April, and preserved for three years. These three years it is true were not spent in inactivity, but in the reduction of the surrounding country, and, latterly, in preparation for the successful war he afterwards carried on against Florence. Are therefore his protestations to Euthanasia to be considered as wholly deceitful? His frank countenance and unembarrassed voice forbade that idea for a moment to cross her imagination: we may perhaps form this conclusion;—that he now found it for his interest to conclude a peace with Florence; and he made the sincerity of his present purpose lend its colour to his assurances for the future.

A whole year was spent in the arrangement of the treaty. Euthanasia passed all that time at her castle; and her content was again disturbed by the successes of Castruccio; who in treating for peace did not fail to make it more desirable to his enemies, by seizing every opportunity to defeat their forces, and lay waste their country; nor did the knowledge of the pain which these operations caused his friend, in any degree check his activity. Euthanasia loved Castruccio; but her judgement was penetrating, and she was so accustomed to meditate on the events and feelings of

each day, that, during this time, she in part penetrated the character of her lover. He was formed for victory and daring, rather than for magnanimity: he was swift of design and steady in execution; bold, valiant, yet gentle of manner; his wit was keen; his penetration into the dispositions of men instantaneous; and he possessed also, as by instinct, the faculty of adapting himself to every character, and of acquiring the love of all around him: men always love those who lead them successfully through danger. He was temperate in his habits; and in his mien, though the exterior were ardent and even rash, there might be perceived underneath a reserve of caution, a presence of mind, which never permitted him to be carried beyond the dictates of prudence, and an eagle-eye which caused him swiftly to distinguish danger from impracticability. He trod the most perilous activities, but his foot was sure like that of the chamois; and he could discern from afar where the path was broken, and would check himself in the most headlong course. All this was well; but, underneath a frankness of behaviour, and an apparent nobleness of nature, there was the craft of a grey-haired courtier, and even at times the cruelty of a falling tyrant. Euthanasia saw not all this; but at times a glance, a tone seemed to open a mine of undiscovered evil in his character, that made her shudder in the very depths of her nature: yet this sensation would pass away, and she, prompt to forget evil in others, thought no more of it.

This year might be called the happiest of her life; yet it was that which first schooled her to the pain and anguish which were afterwards her portion. The flower of love can never exist without its thorns. She loved, and was beloved:—her eyes beamed with a quicker fire; and her whole soul, perfectly alive, seemed to feel with a vividness and truth she had never before experienced. Nature was invested for her with new appearances; and there was a beauty, a soul, in the breeze of evening, the starry sky, and uprising sun, which filled her with emotions she had never before so vividly felt. Love seemed to have made her heart its chosen temple; and he linked all its beatings to that universal beauty which is his mother and his nurse.

There are feelings, which overpower the human soul, and often render it morbid and weak, if virtuous action does not give dignity to reverie. Euthanasia had many occupations, and among them the glorious and delightful one of rendering her numerous dependents happy. The cottages and villages over which she presided, were filled by a contented peasantry, who adored their countess, and knew her power only by the benefits she conferred on them. Castruccio often accompanied her in her visits to these; and he, accustomed as he was to count men as the numerals of a military arithmetic, even he was touched by her care for the sick, her many ways of displaying her judgement and abounding benevolence towards her people. Yet

sometimes he laughed at the difference between her practice and her theory, and asked the youthful sovereign, why she did not erect her states into a republic?

She smiled; but then, collecting herself, answered seriously; "When I first inherited my mother's power, I gave much consideration to this very question; not of forming a separate republic of my poor villages, but of incorporating them, as many nobles have done, and as doubtless the lords of Valperga will one day be obliged to do, with some neighbouring and more powerful republic. My inclinations led me to join myself to Florence; but the distance of that city, and the immediate vicinity of Lucca, shewed me the impracticability of that project. Valperga must one day fall into the hands of the Lucchese; but, if I had at any time made an alliance with them, I should have destroyed the present happiness of my people; there would have been war instead of peace, instead of concord and plenty, party agitations and heavy taxes. This, my friend, must be my excuse for my tyranny; but, when the alliance between you and the Florentines can be sure, when Lucca is as peaceful and happy as Valperga, believe me, I will no longer arrogate a power to which I ought not to have a pretension."

Castruccio smiled; he hardly believed the simple sincerity of Euthanasia; he understood well and judged with sagacity the balancing objections in a question of interest; but the principle of decision was always with him, that which would most conduce to the fulfilment of his projects, seldom that of the good or evil which affected others. Yet this was veiled even to his own mind, by a habit of gentleness and forbearance, which even in this age of the world, often fills the place, and assumes the form of virtue.

And now Euthanasia was busy in preparing for a court, which she had determined to hold, when peace should be ratified between the contending powers of Tuscany; and Castruccio found her employed in the, for her, unwonted toils, of the arrangement of silks, jewels, and tapestry. She said: "You know that the dependents of Valperga are lightly taxed; and the little money that enters my coffers is chiefly expended in the succour of their own necessities: yet of that little I have reserved a sum for periods of sickness, scarcity, or any more agreeable occasion that may call for it. A part of this will be expended on the present solemnity. Nor do I think that I hurt my good people by such an extravagance: their joy on this occasion will be far greater than mine; their pride and love of pleasure will be gratified; for in arranging the amusements of my court the country people will have a full share; and, if *we* engage the attention of Borsiere, Guarino and other distinguished *Uomini di Corte,* the buffoons, jugglers, and dancers, will spread glee among the villagers."

The castle was fuller than usual of dependents and workmen, and its cloister-like silence was exchanged for the noise of the hammer, and the voices of Italians, ever louder than need is. Euthanasia witnessed their eagerness with pleasure; and her undisguised sympathy in their feelings made her adored by her servants and dependents. She had now about her several of the daughters of her richer subjects, who assisted in the arrangement of her castle: and there were gathered in the hall men who had grown grey on her estate, who remembered the dreadful battle of Monte Aperto, the fall of Manfred, and the death of the last unfortunate descendant of Frederic Barbarossa. These recounted the feats and dangers of their youth to their descendants, until, so strange are the feelings of our nature, war, peril and ruin seemed joys to be coveted, not perils to be eschewed.

Among the attendants who most constantly waited on her person, was a man who, from his diminutive stature, and strange dress, might have been taken for the buffoon or dwarf so common at the courts of princes in those days, had not the melancholy of his looks forbidden that supposition. Yet he had some of the privileges of the licensed fool; for he mingled in the conversation of his superiors, and his remarks, generally pithy, were sometimes bitter and satirical: yet indeed they were more commonly characterized by a wild and imaginative originality, than by wit; and, if they sometimes made others laugh, he never smiled. The playful and witty disposition of Castruccio would often make him enter into conversation with, and reply to, and try to draw out this strange being, who was no less uncommon in his person than in his mind. He was of that race of which there are a few native specimens in Italy, generally called Albinois; his complexion was of a milky fairness, his hair white, and his long white eyelashes hardly shaded his light red eyes: he was brief of stature, and as slender as he was short; the softness of his features, and the roundness and flexibility of his limbs, manifested his want of strength; his mild, but almost meaningless physiognomy betrayed the want of judgment, courage, and all the more manly virtues. His mind seemed to approach the feebler spark of animal life, had it not been redeemed by an imagination of which he hardly appeared conscious himself, but which raised him above many of the brutal and rough peasants who despised him. Sometimes Castruccio laughed at Euthanasia for keeping this strange creature about her, but she defended herself, saying:

"Indeed, my lord, you must shew no disrespect towards this servant of mine, and truly you will be little inclined to do so, when I have summed up all his good qualities. First, he has by heart, ready to quote on any suitable occasion, every prophecy that has been made since the time of Adam, and knows all the vulgar expositions of the sacred texts. Then he is an adept in the knowledge of sacred trees, fountains, and stones, the

flight of birds, lucky and unlucky days; he has an extensive acquaintance with witches, astrologers, sorcerers, and *tempestarii*[5], he knows every peculiar ceremony for remarkable days, how to celebrate the calends of January, those of August, and the *Vindemie Nolane*; none of our cattle are blest by St. Anthony until he has bound on their crowns; the ceremonies attendant on the Nativity, Easter, and other feasts, are all conducted under his guidance. He interprets all the dreams of the castle, and foretells the point of time when to begin any enterprise; he has a wonderful assortment of holy legends and strange relics; such as a lock of Adam's hair, a little of the sawdust from Noah's saw-pit when he clove the planks for the ark, a brick of the tower of Babel, and a tooth of St. Theresa; he has presented many of these to the priest of San Martino, and the people go and adore these shreds and patches of religion with the veneration that its divine morality alone demands. Although of a feminine and un-muscular form, he is healthy; he is silent to a miracle; and among my noisy household he alone flits about unheard, so much so that I have been assured that grass yields not beneath his feet, and that he has no shadow; but you can yourself ascertain that fact. I believe him to be faithful, yet I think him to be attached to none, except the wild beings whom his imagination invests with supernatural powers. But he is an excellent guide for me in my various wanderings, since, as if he had a clue of thread, he can find his unerring way amid the most pathless desarts and forests. With all these wonderful acquirements he is generally disliked; he is said to be the son of a witch, and to have a natural propensity to evil; yet I have never heard of any ill act of his doing; although in truth some strange events have taken place with regard to him, that look as if he had communion with the spirits of air.

"I have said that he is attached to no one among us, yet I may be wrong. If he is always near my person, it is because he seizes every moment, when he is permitted to enter, to creep near me. Once, when I left him here during a visit to Florence, be pined for some time, till every one believed that he was about to die; and then taking a sudden resolution, like a dog following the scent of his master, he departed on foot, and in less than twenty-four hours, arrived half dead with fatigue at my palace at Florence.

"I have another motive for being attached to him: he was a favourite of my father. He found him when a child, in a village not far from Florence, half starved, and ill treated by the country people; for he could not work, and, being an orphan, was destitute of every resource; the idea of his unholy parentage and his strange appearance, rendering the country-people even malignantly inclined towards him. He loved my father, and almost sunk to the grave with sorrow when he died; nor at that time would he leave the room where I was, or if obliged to go, he crept near the door crouching like a dog for the moment of admittance."

This being was now very busy amidst the preparations for the court; preparations which engaged all the hands and all the heads of Valperga. While the countess made provision for the entertainment of her guests, her dependents practised the games and exercises with which they should amuse the nobles: all was bustle and animation, but all was joy and good humour. Castruccio and Euthanasia became dearer to each other, as he perceived the pleasure he was able to bestow upon her by a compliance with her wishes; and she felt gratitude for the delight she enjoyed, towards him whom she fondly looked upon as its cause.

[5]Persons supposed to have the power of commanding the elements.

CHAPTER XIII

***Euthanasia holds a Court*.**

As the day approached on which Euthanasia was to hold her court, her castle became thronged with the nobility, wealth, and beauty of Tuscany and Lombardy. She had wished indeed to make this a public union of the two parties which distracted Italy; but she was so noted a Guelph that few Ghibelines appeared, although some were attracted by the name of Castruccio, to come under his escort, and in his company. First arrived her uncle, the lord Radolfo di Casaregi; he was an old man, but he loved to encircle his bare temples with an iron helmet, and to try his well used sword against the unfleshed blades of the sons of his companions in arms in days gone by. Then came the marquess Marcello Malespino of Valdimagra, his wife, and three lovely daughters; they were accompanied by three brothers of the Bondelmonti family of Florence: these claimed affinity to the house of Adimari, and when by the laws of her country Euthanasia was obliged to choose a guardian for her maiden state, she had selected the eldest, count Bondelmonte de' Bondelmonti to be her *Mondualdo*; this relationship had given rise to a sincere friendship, which, although the difference of age was inconsiderable, and the same reverence and obedience could never be felt or exercised, yet in some sort was to Euthanasia in the stead of her dead parents. There arrived soon after the chief members of the Pazzi, Donati, Visdomini, Gianfigliazi, and other Guelph families of Florence; there was Alberti count of Capraia, and all the numerous troop that claimed relationship to him; and many others, both Bianchi and Neri, both Guelph and Ghibeline, whose names it would be needless to detail.

Then arrived a multitude of *Uomini di Corte*; story-tellers, *improvisatori*, musicians, singers, actors, rope-dancers, jugglers and buffoons. The most distinguished among the first class was William Borsiere[6]; a man of courteous yet frank manners, nice wit and keen penetration: he was about forty years of age; but he had lost none of the jovial temper of youth, and his generous and even noble disposition made him more respected than men of his class usually were. There was Bergamino, a man more caustic than Borsiere, but whose insinuating address obtained pardon for his biting words; no one knew better than Bergamino to cure the wounds his tongue had made. There was Andreuccio, whose satirical mood and rough manners frequently drew upon him the anger of the nobles on whose favour he depended; and he was so often dismissed, disgraced and unrewarded, from the courts, where his companions were loaded with presents, that, from his mean and sometimes ragged appearance, and his snarling habits, he went by the name of the *Cane Mendicante*. He wished to rival Borsiere and Bergamino who were staunch friends, and endeavoured to make up for his lack of the more delicate kind of wit by caustic sayings and contemptuous remarks. There was Ildone, a foolish, smiling fellow, but who sang sorrowful airs with so sweet and touching a voice, that, if you shut your eyes, you might have imagined that St. Cecilia herself had descended to entrance the world with heavenly melody.

Guarino, the *Improvisatore*, closed the list of the distinguished *Uomini di Corte*. He was sought in every court in Lombardy for his entertaining qualities: his tales displayed the fire of genius, and the delicate observations of a lover of nature. But he was eaten up by vanity and envy; he hated all those who were admired, from the princely beauty who attracted all regards, down to the lowest buffoon at court. If he were sought by the great, so much the more was he avoided by his equals and inferiors; to the first he tricked himself out with a flattering tongue, a mean and servile address, and gross adulation; for the second he expressed hatred and contempt; and he tyrannized over the last with a hand of iron. But all three classes might equally dread his malignant calumnies, and hatred of all that was good. He spared no art, no wit, no falsehood, to detract from merit, however exalted or lowly; and so full was he of wiles, that he was seldom detected in his serpent craft. He had been a Ghibeline, and at one time was imprisoned by the Dominican inquisitors as a heretic; but now he surpassed all the Italians in superstition and credulity; his friends said that he was truly pious, his enemies that he was the most deceitful of hypocrites: but the trait that sealed his character, was his intolerance and violent persecution of his former heretical associates. Those who were most indulgent said, that he had been first actuated by fear, and was now a sincere convert; he himself pretended to attribute his conversion to a miracle, and of such consequence was he in his own eyes, that he

almost affirmed that a saint from heaven had informed him, that the redemption of mankind had been undertaken by the Almighty Saviour for his benefit alone.

Many others followed and joined these; but they were a nameless multitude, distinguished only for vulgar talents; some trying to raise a laugh by folly, others by pert wit; many by manual jests upon each other, in which innumerable were the blows given and received: they were a strange set, and whether they were handsome or ugly, old or young, agile or slow, expert or awkward, they turned even their defects to account, and with a never-ceasing grin, thronged around the nobles, forming a contrast to the dignified deportment and rich dresses of the latter, by their supple and serpentine motions, strange gait, and motley habiliments; some being ragged from lack of wit, others from detected roguery, all regarding with the eagerness of starved curs the riches of the castle, and the generosity of its mistress.

The court opened on the first of May; it was to last four days; and, on the evening before, surrounded by her guests, Euthanasia issued forth the laws for their amusements on the occasion: "The first day," said she, "we will give to hunting and hawking; the country is well stocked with game, and each guest has surely his falcon on his fist. I will instal Antelminelli, the *liberatore* of Lucca, king for that day; for he has been in foreign countries, and has studied these amusements under the best masters of the age; and I doubt not is well able to direct our exertions, and secure us plentiful sport.

"The second day we will give up to our friends, the *Uomini di Corte*: they shall do their best to please us, and to deserve the rewards in store for them; certainly none will censure my choice, when I name William Borsiere king of that day. Let him direct the exertions of the rest, so that their tales, their songs, and their feats may succeed one another in agreeable variety.

"On the third day the lists shall be set, and the knights will tilt for the honour of their ladies' beauty; the conqueror shall receive as the reward of his prowess the liberty of choosing the queen for the following day, who will direct the sports of the ladies, and close with their games the gaieties of my court."

A shout of applause followed the enunciation of these laws; and it was declared by all, that no better could be devised for the promotion of amusement among their joyful assembly.

On the first of May the sun arose in cloudless splendour. The steeds richly caparisoned were led from the stable; the ladies were mounted on gentle palfreys, and were followed by the esquires, holding the hawks, or with the dogs in leash;

others sounding the awakening horn, while the air resounded with voices which called the idlers from their rooms, and said that the hunter deserved no game, who was not with the first a-field to brush the morning dew from the grass. Euthanasia headed a chosen band supreme in beauty; her soft and enthusiastic eyes now sparkled with joy, which the fair expanse of her smooth brow shewed to be yet uninvaded by the fang of a bitter sorrow; a smile hovered on her beautiful lips, like Love playing among the leaves of a rose; her golden hair shone under the sunbeams, and clustered round her neck white as marble, and, like that enriched by many a wandering vein, eclipsing the jewels of her dress; her motions, free as the winds, and graceful as an antelope of the south, appeared more than human in their loveliness; and, when she awoke the air with her silver voice, silence seemed on the watch to drink in the sound.

And now away!——They rode down the steep on which the castle stood, to a chesnut wood, and thence along a plain covered with brushwood: all was alive and gay; the huntsmen called to their dogs;—the knights reined in their restless steeds;—and the ladies with animated gestures, laughing looks, and upturned eyes, watched the flight of their birds, and betted upon their speed.

When noon approached, they became heated and tired, and looked around for a shady spot where they might repose. Castruccio rode forward, and said:—"I should ill deserve the honour of being king of this day, if I suffered my fair subjects to wander as in a desart without refreshment or repose—follow me!"

They entered a chesnut wood; and, after riding about half a mile, they came to a small plot of ground, encircled by trees, and protected from the heat by canopies which ware fastened to the boughs: a magnificent repast was prepared in this retreat; a profusion of wines glittered in glass vessels; the tables were piled with every delicate sweetmeat, as well as with the more substantial fare of flesh and fowl.

The esquires having fastened their falcons to the branches of the trees, and covered their eyes with the hood, seized the large carving knives, and began their ministry; while the joyous band seated themselves on the cushions that had been provided for their accommodation.

After the repast was ended, they reposed under this delicious shade, watching the changeful shadows of the trees, and listening to the songs of the birds—"How delightful it would be," cried Calista di Malespino, "if Ildone or Guarino were here, whose songs rival the sweetest birds!"

"To-morrow these men will display their talents," said Castruccio; "to-day we must amuse ourselves." Then clapping his hands, several servants brought forward musical

instruments, such as were then in fashion, unlike in form those now used, but which in sound and construction might be compared to the lute, the harp, the guitar, and the flute. Many of the company had sweet voices; some who came from Genoa, sang the romances of the Provençal minstrels; the Florentines sang the canzones of Dante, or chosen passages from the Teroretto of his master, Ser Brunetto Latini, or indeed stanzas of their own composing, for the Florentines were an ingenious race, and few among the nobles had passed the boundary between youth and age, without having indited more than one sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow: the inhabitants of each separate town had a favourite poet, whose verses they now rehearsed.

Thus the time passed, till the sun descended, and the lengthening shadows told them that the heat was gone, and the light of day well nigh spent; when they mounted their horses, and rode towards the castle along the skirts of the chesnut wood. The high Apennines were still white with snow; and, as evening came on, a refreshing breeze blew across the plain, and sang among the branches of the trees,—at a distance was heard the murmuring of the Serchio, as it travelled along in its unwearied course; the air was perfumed by a thousand scents, for the grass was mowing, and bathed the element in sweetness. From out one copse a nightingale poured forth its melodious notes, singing as it were to one lone star that peered through the glowing sunset; Arrigo taking his flute drew a responsive strain which the sweet bird strove to imitate, while the cavalcade passed silently along. Darkness closed around, and the first fire-flies of summer issued from their deep green bowers among the bushes, and darted forth their gentle, ineffectual flame, skimming over the fields, which, as a phosphoric sea, or as a green heaven of evershifting planets, now was dark, and again thickly studded by these stars. The glow-worm on the ground slowly trailed his steady light; a few bats flew from the rocks; and the regular moan of the Agiolo wheeled about the trees, and spoke of fine days to come. As the home-ward hunters ascended the mountain, the breeze died away, and a breathless stillness pervaded the atmosphere; Euthanasia rode near Castruccio; her sweet countenance bespoke a deeper joy than mere gaiety, and her wild eyes shone with her emotion. She had thrown her capuchin over her head; and her face, fair as the moon encircled by the night, shone from beneath the sable cowl, while her golden locks twined themselves round her neck: Castruccio gazed on her, and would have given worlds to have embraced her, and to print on her glowing cheek a kiss of love; he dared not,—but his heart swelled with joy, when she turned to him with an affectionate smile, and he whispered his heart—"She is mine."

The second day William Borsiere was prepared to amuse the guests by his own and his companions' talents. His task was more difficult to perform than that of

Castruccio, for his materials were not so easy to be controled as hawks and hounds. Guarino was mortally offended by the choice of Euthanasia with regard to the king of the day, and declared that he had a cold, and could not sing. Nothing but his intolerable vanity vanquished his sullenness; for, when he found that, upon his refusal, Borsiere passed him by, and that his ill humour would only punish himself by consigning him to obscurity, he consented to be numbered among the recruits of the day. Andreuccio was less tractable, for he was less vain; and it was sheer avarice that caused his anger, when he imagined that Borsiere would be the best paid of the company; he absolutely refused to perform his part in story-telling, but reserved his wit for endeavours to turn to ridicule the amusements and exertions of his favoured rival.

In the morning at break of day, each fair lady was awakened by a song, bidding her arise and eclipse the sun; and, as he awoke, and gave life to the flowers and fruits of the earth, so must she spread her benign influence over the hearts of men. The guests assembled in the hall of the castle, which was hung with festoons of evergreens and flowers; and, as they sat, an invisible concert was played, and, between the pauses of the music, a strain of rich melody broke upon the air, that by its unrivalled sweetness betrayed that the singer was Ildone, who, thus concealed, could wrap the soul in Elysium, while his presence must have destroyed the enchantment.

After the music, they were conducted to a small amphitheatre, constructed on the little green platform before the castle, where they were amused by the tricks of the jugglers, sleight of hand, fire-eating, rope-dancing, and every prank that has been known from the shores of the Ganges to those of the Thames, from the most distant periods, even down to our own times. After these had displayed their arts, a number of the peasantry of Valperga presented themselves to run at the ring. Three pieces of cloth, and two of silk, the prizes for the various games, streamed from the props that supported the amphitheatre. Two poles were erected, and a string was attached to these, on which were strung three rings. A peasant on horseback, with his lance in rest, galloped past in a line parallel to the string, endeavouring to catch the three rings on the point of his lance; the first, second and third failed,—the fourth was more successful; he caught the three rings, and bore off the piece of scarlet-cloth as his prize. A wrestling match succeeded, a foot-race, and then a horse-race; the prizes were distributed by Borsiere; and then, it being noon, the company adjourned to their mid-day meal.

It were needless to enumerate the dainties that made their appearance; Borsiere resolved that the feast neither of the preceding, nor of the two following days, should exceed his; and, having been often regaled at the tables of the most luxurious princes

of Europe, he now displayed the skill that he had there acquired, in the directions he gave to the ruder cooks of Euthanasia. When every one had satisfied his appetite, the conversation flagged, and the eyes of the ladies wandered round in search of new amusement. Borsiere appeared at the head of his party; Bergamino, Guarino, Ildone and a score others of less fame came forward; while Andreuccio edged in sideways, neither choosing to join, nor be left out, of the company. Advancing in a courteous manner, Borsiere intreated the company to follow him: they all rose, each lady attended by her cavalier. Borsiere had been bred at courts, and knew how to marshal them with the science of a seneschal; as they quitted the hall, they, as by magic, fell each into his proper place, and every noble dame felt that neither could she have preceded the person before her, nor would she have gone behind the one who followed her. Thus, in courtly guise, they proceeded through several passages of the castle, till they quitted it by a small postern; the rocky face of the mountain rose, as I have already said, immediately behind the castle, and almost overhung the battlements; but this postern opened on the little winding staircase I have before mentioned, that, cut in the rock, enabled them to scale the precipice; they ascended therefore, and before they could feel fatigued, they came to a small platform of turf-covered rock, which Borsiere had prepared for their accommodation, The fountain, that gushed from a cleft, trickled down with a gentle murmur, and filled the basin prepared to receive it with its clear and sparkling liquid. This fountain had, like many other springs of those mountains, peculiar qualities: in summer it was icy cold, and in winter it became warmer and warmer as the temperature of the air decreased, until on the frosty mornings of December it smoked in its passage down the rock. To preserve the waters of this basin from the rains, Euthanasia had, as already mentioned, built an alcove over it, supported by small columns; this was a favourite retreat of our young mountain-nymph; and Borsiere had adorned it for the occasion with a master's hand. The boughs of the trees were bent down, and fastened to the rock, or to the roof of the alcove, and then, being interlaced with other boughs, formed a web on which he wove a sky of flowers, which shut out the sun's rays, and, agitated by the gentlest airs, cast forth the most delicate scents: the artificer of the bower had despoiled an hundred gardens to decorate only the floor of the platform, forming a thousand antic devices with the petals of various flowers. Anemones, narcissi, daffodils, hyacinths, lilies of the valley, and the earliest roses, had all lent their hues, making a brief mosaic of these lovely and fragile materials; and the white columns of the alcove shone in the midst of this splendid shew in elegant simplicity. Seats were placed round in a semicircle for the company; from hence they could behold the whole country; the platform was so high, that it surmounted the battlements of the castle, and they viewed the entire plain of Lucca, its defiles and woody hills, and the

clear Serchio that loitered on its way across it. An exclamation of delight burst from all lips, as they entered this flowery paradise, where every gay colour of nature was heaped about in rich and lovely profusion, while the deep green of the ilex trees, the soft and fan-like foliage of the acacia, mingled with the shining foliage of the laurel, bay and myrtle, relieved the eye from any glare of colours. The joyous company sat down; and Borsiere, coming forward, announced, that he and his companions were ready to present the assembly with their songs and tales; Euthanasia accepted the offer in the name of her guests; and Guarino first shewed himself: that he should be the first to attract the attention of the noble guests had been the bribe which won him to forget his hoarseness, and, having entered upon his task, there was no doubt that his vanity would induce him to exert his utmost powers to surpass his companions.

He sang extempore verses on the event of the late war with Florence, changing his notes, from the hurry of battle, to the wailing for the dead, and then to the song of triumph, whose thrilling melody transported the hearers with admiration. Then, leaving this high theme, he described himself as Dante descending to hell; but, as he had ventured thither without a guide, rude Charon had refused him a passage, and he only saw the wandering ghosts of those recently dead, and some few who bewailed their unburied bones, as they flitted about the dreary coast. Here he found Manfred, who, addressing him, told him that he was now paying, and hereafter would more painfully pay, the deadly penalty for his many crimes—"Well did they for me, and benignly," he cried, "who cast my bones from their unhallowed sepulchre; for now I wander here untormented; but, when the cycle of an hundred years is fulfilled, and I pass that dark river, fire and torture await me, dire punishment for my resistance to the Holy Father." And then continuing, he sent a message to his friends on earth, bidding them repent; and Guarino introduced into this the bitter gall of his sharp and cruel satire against his enemies. He ended; and small applause followed, for he had offended many who were present by his strictures, and few could sympathize in the deep malignity of his anathemas.

He was followed by the story-tellers, who repeated various anecdotes and tales which they had collected in their rambles; they seldom invented a new story; but an old one well told, or some real occurrence dressed up with romantic ornaments, formed the subjects of their narratives.

[6]See Boccaccio: *Giornata* I. *Novella* 8.

CHAPTER XIV

Euthanasia's Court continued.—Pepi arrives.

Castruccio had not joined the amusements of the day; for he had returned to Lucca, and assembled his council to deliberate on some knotty question in the Lucchese policy. Having dispatched this weighty affair, he mounted his horse, and turned his head the accustomed road to the castle of Valperga. As he quitted the gate of the town, he heard a voice behind calling him; and, reining in his horse, he saw approach at a tremendously high trot, Benedetto the Rich of Cremona. Although at some distance he instantly recognized his old fellow-traveller, by his uncouth dress which was still unchanged, his high shoulders, strait back and bent in knees. Pepi, approaching with a humble salutation, said that he had affairs of importance to communicate to the noble consul of Lucca, and intreated him to give him audience.

"Willingly," said Castruccio: "I am going to ride to yonder castle; do you accompany me; we will discourse on the way; and when there you will find hospitality as well as I."

"You must check your steed then," said Pepi, "for mine will hardly gallop after the hard day's journey he has had."

They rode on together, and Pepi seemed oppressed by a weighty secret, which he longed, yet did not know how, to disclose. He praised the fortifications of Lucca, the fertility of its plain, and its mountains, those inexpensive barriers against the incursions of enemies; and then he paused,—coughed,—scolded his horse,—and sunk into silence.

"And now," asked Castruccio, "what is this affair of importance concerning which you would speak to me?"

"Ah! *Messer lo Console*, it is a matter of such consequence that I hardly know how to disclose it; and methinks you are in too merry a mood to listen with requisite attention, so for the present I will waive the subject."

"As you please; but, when we arrive at yonder castle, we shall find little opportunity to talk of business; for amusement and gaiety are there the order of the day."

"Gaiety!—Well; it perhaps will do my heart good to see merry faces once again; I have seen few of them since you were on the donjon of my palace. Cremona has not yet recovered its cruel siege and storm; many of its palaces still lie in their ashes; and many good and fertile acres have been sold at a low rate, to trim the despoiled apartments in the guise they once were. Yet the Guelphs have again attained the upper hand there; my townsmen are proud and rebellious, and have not acquired

through their misfortunes the humility of poverty, which sits better on a subject than the insolence of prosperity. Were I a prince, all my subjects should be poor; it makes them obedient towards their master, and daring towards their foes, on whose spoils they depend for riches. Yet, alas! so obstinate is man in his wickedness, that, as we see in Cremona, famine, fire and slaughter cannot tame their factious spirits."

"Ah! Messer Benedetto, you are ever the same; you have neither changed your dress nor opinions since I saw you last; ever immersed in politics."

"Indeed, my good lord, I am fuller of those than ever, and that of necessity; as, when you hear what I have to say, you will perceive. Ah! the Cremonese are still proud, though they ought to be humble; yet a small power might now easily overcome them, for they are thinking more how to replant their burnt vineyards, than to resist their lawful prince. Sovereigns make war in a strangely expensive way, when they collect armies and man fleets against a country: a dozen bold fellows with fire-brands, when all the town is asleep in their beds, will do as well to the full, as an hundred thousand armed men by broad day-light: a well timed burning of harvests is a better chastiser of rebels, than an army headed by all the sovereigns of Europe. I was ever an admirer of the Hebrew warrior who sent foxes with torches to their tails among the enemy's corn; these are sleights of war that are much neglected, but which are of inestimable benefit."

"Messer Benedetto, I listen with admiration to your wisdom; but trust the word of a friend, and do not talk thus openly in yonder castle; or if you cannot rein your tongue now, turn your horse's head towards Lucca. They are Guelphs up here."

"Strange company for me to enter; for in Cremona I never cap to a Guelph, whoever he may be; but if you, my lord, are safe, surely so am I, and trust Benedetto Pepi for discretion. You are I believe my friend, and a Ghibeline; and, being now lord of this noble country, you can well judge of the truth of my remarks. As it is I am glad to enter the company of Guelphs, and glad to find that you are well with them; for it is always expedient to have a spy in the enemy's camp."

If Castruccio had not fully understood the eccentric mood of his companion, he might have been offended at this speech; and even now he felt his cheek flush at the name of spy being thus as it were applied to him; but he replied laughing; "Aye, Messer Benedetto, there will be fine sport for you; the lady of the castle is holding a court, and to-morrow we have a tournament; will you not enter the lists against these priest-ridden knights?"

"Not the less powerful for being priest-ridden; not the less powerful if they were priests themselves; as I well know to my misfortune, having been beaten almost to death by a young canon who was my enemy; and that took place many years ago, when I was younger, and more active than I am now. But I was revenged; aye, Benedetto Pepi was never yet injured in a hair of his head, but the heart's anguish of his enemy paid for it."

Pepi looked at his companion with the elevated brows of triumph and vanity, while his sharp eyes spoke, not ferocity, but successful cunning. Castruccio regarded him with a glance of distrust, which he did not observe, but continued:—"This young rascal had been forced into the priestly dress, but had not yet made vows, when he resolved to supplant me with a rich, young heiress whom I intended to marry. I was well off in the world, with a good estate, and a noble palace, so the father gave his consent, and all went on prosperously; till this roguish priest laid a plot for my destruction. He waylaid me on the wedding day, as I was conducting the bride to my own house; she loved him, and left me; aye, at the first whistle of this brave dame-hunter I felt her snatch her hand from mine, and saw her throw herself into his arms. I resisted, more as an angry, than a wise man, for they were armed, and I defenceless: so, as I told you, the villain beat me, till I was carried home nearly dead from the blows I received. During my recovery, as I lay there in my bed, my bones aching with the bruises I had received, I formed my plan of revenge, which I carried on, till he and she, and his kin and her kin, knelt to me for mercy; but I did not bend, and was most gloriously revenged. And now where is he? a grey-haired wretch; old before his time, rotting in the dungeons of the Inquisition. She has long been dead; of grief, they say,—at least she never enjoyed a moment with her paramour."

Castruccio started, as he heard the devilish confession of his companion. He did not reply; but he no longer felt that careless amusement which he had formerly done, in his conversation and uncouth manners; but watched him warily as if he had been an old and wrinkled serpent, whose fangs had fallen to decay, but whose venom still lurked in his toothless gums.

Pepi rode on, unconscious of the emotions he had excited; he imagined that he had just recited the finest passage of his life. For this old craftsman was folly impregnated with the Italian policy, which has stained the history of her lords and princes with the foul blots of fraud and cruelty: he did not admire the conqueror of a nation (although that were almost an object of adoration to him), so much as he worshipped the contriver of frauds, the base intriguer, who, not by the open combat of power and passion, but by dastardly and underhand means, brings his enemy on his knees before him.

When they arrived at the castle, they were conducted to the fountain of the rock, and Castruccio introduced Pepi to the company. The Cremonese bowed to the fair countess; and then darted his quick glances around, to discover if he knew any of the company; many he had seen before, and he could not help muttering as he seated himself—"Guelphs to the core! a pretty nest of hornets this!"

The company in the mean time were examining with curious eyes the garb and manners of their visitor. His dress was more shabby than that of the poorest of the jugglers; for he had not brought his gold-fringed cloak with him on this occasion; and, but for the introduction of Castruccio, and the gold spurs which he wore, he would have hazarded the disgrace of being dismissed to the company of the valets of the castle. Pepi observed their contempt, and addressed them as follows.

"For you, noble lords and ladies, who with upturned lips sneer at my homely garb, listen to my story, and do not despise my words, because they are those of a Ghibeline. You shine in silk, and jewels, and costly furs; I am clothed in sheep-skin and sclavina, and perhaps my capuchin may have a hole in its well worn texture; but look at my golden spurs; I am a knight, and have a palace, and a tower, and a good horse, as an Italian nobleman should have. Now listen, and then tell me whether I am right or wrong, in not throwing away the produce of my fields in trinkets and trumpery.

"I dare say that you all know, that there was once an emperor of the West, called Charlemagne. He was a great conqueror, and during his life lorded it nobly over all Europe, even from the tepid waters of the Mediterranean to the frozen Baltic sea; Italy did not murmur against his sway, and Germany was obliged to submit to the force of his arms. It was a glorious thing to see this great prince ride out among his followers, clothed, as I may be, in common skins, and greater than the meanest soldier in his camp only through his superior prowess and wisdom. But the nobles of his court were such as the nobles have continued to be to this day; and the money they should have kept for the maintenance of their followers, and the furniture and works of war, they expended upon dress and foppery.

"One day Charlemagne was at the town of Fugolano, clothed as I have said in a well worn vest of fox's fur, and his only jewel the well-tempered blade of his trusty sword. The courtiers gathered round this royal eagle, and he was indignant at heart to view their tawdry attire: they had just come from Pavia, which place, then as now, the Venetians made the mart for all the rich merchandize they brought from the East. They were dressed with every extravagance of luxury; they wore tippets of the feathers of Phœnician birds, lined with silk; robes of rich brocade, trimmed with the feathers of the back and neck of peacocks. Their flowing cloaks of fur were made of the skins of a

thousand minute animals, brought from the wilds of Tartary, and in their caps they had jewels and feathers of extraordinary price. Thus they jutted up and down before their master, fancying that he would admire them, he who loved a well hacked helmet, boots bespattered with riding after fugitive enemies, a blood-stained sword, and a spirited war horse, more than ten armies of such fair-weather birds. 'Come, my brave comrades,' cried the emperor, 'we have no battle and no siege to amuse us; and the gloomy day with its drizzling rain makes the quiet of my palace irksome to me; mount your steeds and let us away to the chase.'

"It had been a fine sight, to see the courtiers, as they gave a last pitying glance to their gay dresses, and bestrode their horses to follow their master. He led the way; no ditch or hedge or thick cover of copse-wood, could obstruct his path; his noble steed surmounted all, and every bramble had rich spoils from his companions: silk, fur, and feathers strewed the ground, and hung on the thorns by the roadside; what escaped the dangers of land, was shipwrecked by water, for the rain wetted them to the skin, and the materials of their clothes, in losing their gloss, had lost all their value.

"When they returned, they bitterly complained among themselves for the losses they had sustained: the emperor was advised of their murmurs, and sent to command their attendance. They obeyed, and approached his throne in a guise much unlike the gay figure they had exhibited in the morning; their feathers broken, their jewels lost, their silk torn, and their furs, which had been wet, and afterwards dried by the fire, were shrunk, disfigured and spoiled. 'Oh, most foolish mortals!' cried Charlemage, 'how are these furs precious or useful? Mine cost only a few pence; yours cost not only silver, but many pounds of gold!'"

Pepi ended his most apposite tale by a laugh of triumph; and it might easily be perceived that some of the young nobles were by no means pleased with the uncouth manners of their teacher. But the sun had now set, and the bell of the *Ave Maria* rung from the chapel of Valperga; so the company descended the rock, and joined in the devotions of the priest, who celebrated vespers, attended by all the more humble guests of the castle.

In the evening several mimes were represented under the direction of Borsiere. No nation can excel the Italians in the expression of passion by the language of gesture alone, or in the talent of extemporarily giving words to a series of action which they intend to represent; even in those ruder times they were able to draw tears from the audience, or shake them with convulsions of laughter. The actors now at the castle, first performed the touching story of Palamon and Arcite, and afterwards the favourite tale of the loves of Troilus and Cressida, and told with animated action the story of the

ill repaid constancy of the worthy knight of Troy, and the black treachery of the faithless Cressida; so that few eyes were undimmed with tears, when this unhappy knight, who had sought death in vain, but who survived his country and his friends, was supposed to stand beside the half choked cistern of a once often visited fountain among the ruins and burnt palaces of Troy, and to behold Cressida, in a mean garb, and deformed by disease, bearing a heavy pitcher on her head, come to draw water from the spring; and every bosom thrilled at the bitter grief of Troilus, and the humble repentance and heart-felt self-reproaches of his once wanton mistress, as, calling for pardon, she died. To relieve the company from their painful sympathy, the mimes came forward to act the antic pantomimes of the day: these were neither very decent nor very clever; a miller and a priest were over-reached in their love, and were left shivering in the snow during a winter-night, while two young students of Bologna, whom the other worthies had combined to trick, enjoyed that for which in their dreary condition they ardently pined. Night had now run half its course; and the company retired, after bestowing the praises well due to Borsiere's successful exertions.

The next morning before daylight Castruccio heard some one enter his apartment. It was Pepi, who approached his bed, and said: "My lord, I come to take my leave of you. After what passed last night, you may well believe that the young countess would rather not count me among her guests. I am about to return to Cremona, but would first ask you, whether you would not prefer that a staunch friend of yours should be lord of that town, than that it should remain in the hands of the people, who have become Guelphs and traitors, body and soul?"

Castruccio's thoughts instantly fixed on Galeazzo Visconti, or Cane della Scala, as the promised lord of Cremona; and he replied eagerly: "Messer Benedetto, you would do me an inestimable benefit, if by any means, either in your power, or with which you are acquainted, you could place the government of your town in the hands of one of my friends."

"And are you prepared to assist in such an undertaking?"

"Now I cannot; but I have promised to be in Lombardy at the end of the month of July. In August I will visit you at Cremona; and, if you will disclose to me the contrivers and instruments of this change,—"

"Now I can tell you nothing. Come to me on the fifteenth of August, alone, or with but one attendant; but come not with the shew of a prince; on that day, at five o'clock in the evening, you will meet a person on the bridge of the rivulet you cross about half a mile from Cremona; say to him the word, Lucca, and he will conduct you to my palace by an obscure way, and then I will disclose every thing to you. As you may not be able

to command your time to a day, I will wait for you one month, until the fifteenth of September; then if you do not appear, the enterprise must proceed by other means. During this interval promise me inviolable secrecy."

"What, may I not tell——?"

"No living soul must hear of this—If you impart that with which I have intrusted you, my plan must instantly fail. I trust to your discretion."

"It is well, Messer Benedetto," replied Castruccio, recalling to mind the impressions of the preceding evening, and gazing on his companion with distrust: "I do not clearly understand your plans, and cannot promise to assist in them; but I assure you of my secrecy, and that you shall see me before the fifteenth of September."

"I am satisfied; farewel. The stars are disappearing, and I would reach your town before sunrise."

Pepi departed with a brow of care; while every heart in the castle of Valperga was light, and every countenance expressed gaiety. This was the third day of the court, the day for which a tournament had been proclaimed. But it would be tedious to dilate on the remainder of these ceremonies, and from what has been related a judgement may be formed of those which were yet to come.

The summer months passed on, and the time approached when Castruccio had promised Galeazzo Visconti to meet him at Rovigo. Euthanasia desired during the autumn to revisit her native city, from which she had been long absent. They agreed to journey thither together; and on Castruccio's return from Lombardy their long delayed marriage was to take place.

END OF VOLUME I.