MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

VALPERGA

BIOGRAPHICALLY ANNOTATED

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Mary Shelley

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Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Her Life And Works

British authoress, second wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, was born in the Polygon, Somers Town, on 30 Aug. 1797, and was the only daughter of William Godwin the elder and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Orphaned of her mother a few days after her birth, she was left to the care of her father, who, bewildered by the charge, soon began to look for some one to share it with him. After sundry rebuffs he at last found the needed person (December 1801) in his next-door neighbour, Mrs. Clairmont, a widow with a son and daughter—‘a clever, bustling, second-rate woman, glib of tongue and pen, with a temper undisciplined and uncontrolled; not bad-hearted, but with a complete absence of all the finer sensibilities’ (Marshall). She inspired no remarkable affection, even in her own children, and Mary was thrown for sympathy upon the companionship of her father, whose real tenderness was disguised by his frigid manner. It was natural that, as she grew up, she should learn to idolise her own mother, whose memory became a religion to her. There seems to have been nothing peculiar in her education. ‘Neither Mrs. Godwin nor I,’ Godwin had written, ‘have leisure enough for reducing modern theories of education to practice;’ but she must have imbibed ideas and aspirations from the numerous highly intellectual visitors to her father's shabby but honoured household. At the age of fifteen she is described by Godwin as ‘singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire

of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible.’ From June to November 1812, and again from June 1813 to March 1814, she resided at Dundee with friends, the Baxters, whose son was employed with her foster-brother, Charles Clairmont, in Constable's publishing house at Edinburgh. The day of her return was 30 March, and on 5 May, so far as can be ascertained from Godwin's diary, she first made acquaintance with Shelley, whom she had only once seen before, in November 1812. Shelley was then in the throes of his breach with Harriet. Mary, remitted from beloved friends to an uncongenial stepmother, was doubtless on her part pining for sympathy. By 8 June, to judge by Hogg's record of the meeting between them which he witnessed, they had become affectionate friends; but it was not until 28 July that they left England together, accompanied by Jane Clairmont.

The poet learnt of the death of his first wife in the middle of December 1816, and he married Mary Godwin about a fortnight later. For the next six years her history is almost absorbed in that of her illustrious husband. They were seldom apart, and her devotion to him was complete. Some differences were unavoidable between persons in many respects so diversely organised. Endowed with a remarkably clear, penetrating, and positive intellect, she could not always follow Shelley's flights, and was too honest to affect feelings which she did not really entertain. Possessing in full measure the defects of her qualities, she had not the insight to discern the prophetic character of Shelley's genius; and, although she admired his poetry, her inner sympathy was not sufficiently warm to console him for the indifference of the world. Expressions of disappointment occur occasionally both in his verse and his prose. He was probably thinking of himself when he wrote: ‘Some of us have loved an Antigone in a previous stage of

existence, and can find no full content in any mortal tie.’ There were incidents, too, on his side to test both her patience and her affection. With every deduction on these accounts, the union was nevertheless in the main a happy one. Mary undoubtedly received more than she gave. Nothing but an absolute magnetising of her brain by Shelley's can account for her having risen so far above her usual self as in ‘Frankenstein.’ The phenomenon might have been repeated but for the crushing blow of the death of her boy William in 1819. From this time the keynote of her existence was melancholy. Her father's pecuniary troubles, and the tone he chose to take with reference to them, also preyed upon her spirits, insomuch that Shelley was obliged at last to intercept his letters. With all this she was happier than she knew, and after Shelley's death she exclaims, with tragic conviction, ‘Alas! having lived day by day with one of the wisest, best, and most affectionate of spirits, how void, bare, and drear is the scene of life!’ Trelawny was her favourite among her husband's circle; but Byron, much as he made her suffer in many ways, also endeared himself to her. She associated him with Switzerland, where she copied the third canto of ‘Childe Harold’ for him. She liked Hogg and loved Leigh Hunt, but Peacock was uncongenial to her.

Mary Shelley was a hard student during her husband's lifetime. She read incessantly without any neglect of domestic duties, acquiring some knowledge of Greek, and mastering Latin, French, and Italian. Of the two romances which she produced during this period, ‘Frankenstein’ is deservedly by far the more famous. Frankenstein's monster, though physically an abortion, is intellectually the ancestor of a numerous family. The story, which was commenced in 1816 in rivalry with Byron's fragmentary ‘Vampyre,’ was published in 1818. ‘Valperga,’ an historical romance of the fourteenth century, begun in 1820, was printed in the

spring of 1822, and published in 1823, after undergoing considerable revision from Godwin.

After her husband's death in 1822 her diaries for years to come are full of involuntary lamentations. Byron's migration to Genoa drew the Hunt circle after him, and there she spent the winter (1822–3), tried by the discomfort of Leigh Hunt's disorderly household, the waning kindness of Byron, who, by her own statement, had at first been most helpful and consolatory, and temporary misunderstandings with Hunt himself. These ordeals lessened the pain of leaving Italy. Byron and Peacock, Shelley's executors, concurred with Godwin in deeming her presence in England necessary. Byron, although he had handsomely renounced his prospective claim to a legacy under Shelley's will, showed no disposition to provide travelling expenses. Trelawny accordingly depleted his own purse for the purpose, and in June 1823 she left for London with her three-year-old child. On the way she had the satisfaction of seeing a drama founded on ‘Frankenstein’ performed with applause at Paris. She found her native land a dismal exchange for Italy, but was for a time much soothed by the society of Mrs. Williams. Sir Timothy Shelley had offered to provide for her son upon condition of her resigning the charge of him, which she of course rejected with indignation. After a time terms were made; but her small allowance was still dependent upon Sir Timothy's pleasure, and was withdrawn for a while when the newspapers named her as the authoress of ‘The Last Man,’ which had been published anonymously. ‘The name annoyed Sir Timothy.’ In the same year (1826), however, the death of Shelley's son by Harriet made little Percy a person of consequence as heir to the baronetcy, and her position improved.

‘The Last Man,’ published in 1826, though a remarkable book, is in no way apocalyptic, and wants the tremendous scenes which the subject might have suggested, the destruction of the human race being effected solely by pestilence. Passages, however, are exceedingly eloquent, and the portrait of Shelley as Adrian, drawn by one who knew him so well, has singular interest. Neither her historical novel, ‘Perkin Warbeck’ (1830), nor her latest fiction, ‘Falkner’ (1837), has much claim to remembrance; but ‘Lodore’ (1835) is remarkable for being, as Professor Dowden was the first to discern, a veiled autobiography. The whole story of the hero's and heroine's privations in London is a reminiscence of the winter of 1813. Harriet Shelley appears much idealised as Cornelia, and her sister's baneful influence over her is impersonated in the figure of a mother-in-law, Lady Santerre. By it Lodore is driven to America, as Shelley to the continent. Emilia Viviani is also portrayed, probably with accuracy.

Mrs. Shelley contributed for many years to the annuals, then in their full bloom, and her graceful tales were collected and published in 1891 as a volume of the ‘Treasure-house of Tales by Great Authors.’ One of these tales, ‘The Pole,’ was written by Claire Clairmont, but made presentable by Mary's revision. In 1831 she was engaged in polishing the style of Trelawny's ‘Adventures of a Younger Son,’ and negotiating with publishers on account of the erratic author, then far away, who gave her nearly as much trouble as Landor had given Julius Hare under similar circumstances. He must have offered her marriage, for she writes: ‘My name will never be Trelawny. I am not so young as I was when you first knew me, but I am as proud. I must have the entire affection, devotion, and above all the solicitous protection of any one who would win me. You belong to womenkind in general, and Mary Shelley will never be yours.’ This probably accounts for Trelawny's

depreciation of Mary Shelley in the second edition of his ‘Memoirs,’ so different from the cordial tone of the first edition.

In 1836 Mary lost her father and her old and attached friends, the Gisbornes. She was at the time writing the lives of Petrarch, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, and other Italian men of letters for Lardner's ‘Cabinet Cyclopædia,’ and severely pressed by her exertions to give her son an education at Harrow, whither she had removed for the purpose. Sir Timothy did not see his way to assist, but, through his attorney, ‘trusted and hoped you may find it practicable to give him a good education out of the 300l. a year.’ The thing was done; Percy Florence proceeded from Harrow to Cambridge, but the struggle ruined Mary Shelley's health, and left her, exhausted by effort and ‘torn to pieces by memory,’ very unfit to discharge the task which devolved upon her of editing Shelley's works when the obstacles to publication were removed in 1838. The poems nevertheless appeared in four volumes in 1839, with notes, slight in comparison with what they might have been, but still invaluable. The prose remains were published in the following year, and, notwithstanding the number of pirated editions, both publications proved profitable. A further piece of good fortune signalised 1840, when Sir Timothy relented to the extent of settling 400l. a year upon his grandson on occasion of his attaining his majority and taking his degree. Mrs. Shelley was now able to seek rest and change on the continent, and eagerly availed herself of the opportunity. In 1840 and 1841 she and her son travelled in Germany, and in 1842 and 1843 in Italy. Her impressions were recorded in ‘Rambles in Germany and Italy,’ published in two volumes in 1844 and dedicated to Samuel Rogers, who, like Moore, had always shown himself a sympathising friend. The German part of the book

contains little of especial interest, but the Italian part is full of admirable remarks on Italian art and manners.

In 1844 Sir Timothy Shelley's death placed Mary in a position of comparative affluence. The first act of her and her son was to carry out Shelley's intentions by settling an annuity of 120l. upon Leigh Hunt. She next endeavoured to write Shelley's life; but her health and spirits were unequal to so trying a task, and nothing was written but a fragment printed at the beginning of Hogg's biography. She died in Chester Square, London, on 1 Feb. 1851, and was interred in the churchyard at Bournemouth near the residence of her son, in the tomb where he also is buried, and to which the remains of her father and mother were subsequently brought.

Personally, Mary Shelley was remarkable for her high forehead, piercing eyes, and pale complexion. She gained in beauty as she grew in years; and her bust strikingly brings out the resemblance, which Thornton Hunt noticed, to the bust of Clytie. A fine portrait by Rothwell, painted in 1841, is engraved as the frontispiece to Mrs. Marshall's biography.

Valperga

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.

Chapter I

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 ancient quarrels of the Guelphs and the Ghibelines were started with renovated zeal, under the new distinctions of Bianchi and Neri. 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 ?"

"Yes, the castle of . 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 shew 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, " 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 , 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 ?"

"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 ancient 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.

Chapter II

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 gulf, 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 , 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 . 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 chestnut 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 ancient 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 a 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