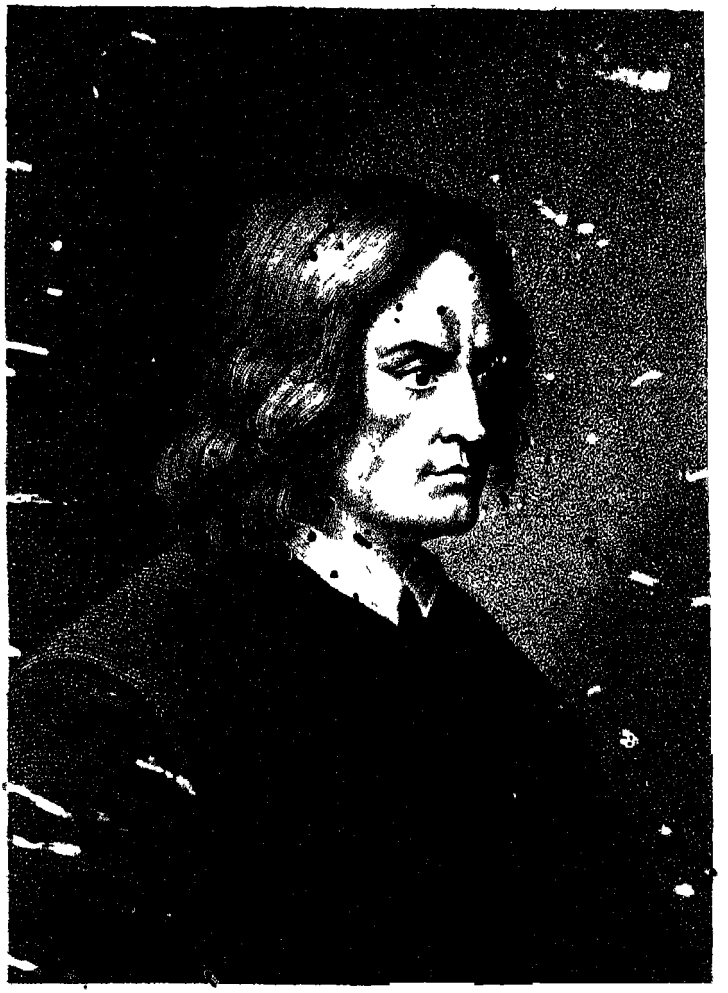

LAVRENTIVS MEDICES

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THE

LIFE

OF

LORENZO DE' MEDICI,

CALLED

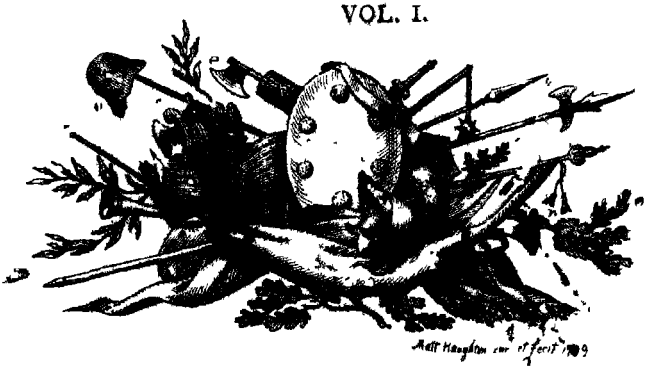
THE MAGNIFICENT.

BY WILLIAM ROSCOE.

THE FOURTH EDITION, CORRECTED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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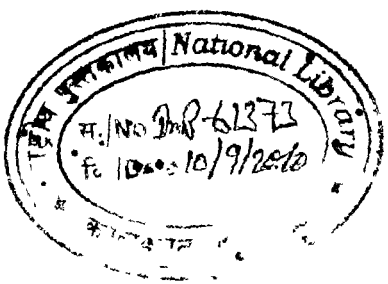
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PREFACE

THE close of the fifteenth, and the beginning of the sixteenth century, comprehend one of those periods of history which are entitled to our minutest study and inquiry. Almost all the great events from which Europe derives its present advantages, are to be traced up to those times. The invention of the art of printing, the discovery of the great western continent, the schism from the church of Rome, which ended in the reformation of many of its abuses, and established the precedent of reform, the degree of perfection attained in the fine arts, and the final introduction of true principles of criticism and taste,

compose such an illustrious assemblage of luminous points, as cannot fail of attracting for ages the curiosity and admiration of mankind.

A complete history of these times has long been a great desideratum in literature; and whoever considers the magnitude of the undertaking will not think it likely to be soon supplied. Indeed, from the nature of the transactions which then took place, they can only be exhibited in detail, and under separate and particular views. That the author of the following pages has frequently turned his eye towards this interesting period is true, but he has felt himself rather dazzled than informed by the survey. A mind of greater compass, and the possession of uninterrupted leisure, would be requisite to comprehend, to select, and to arrange the immense variety of circumstances which a full narrative of those times would involve; when almost every city of Italy was a new Athens, and that favoured country could boast its historians,

historians, its poets, its orators, and its artists, who may contend with the great names of antiquity for the palm of mental excellence; when Venice, Milan, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Ferrara, and several other places, vied with each other, not in arms, but in science and in genius; and when the splendor of a court was estimated by the number and talents of learned men who illustrated it by their presence; each of whose lives and productions would, in a work of this nature, merit a full and separate discussion.

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

particularly through the ardour and example of Lorenzo, the empire of science and true taste was again restored.

After the death of Boccaccio, the survivor of that celebrated triumvirate who had carried their native tongue to an high pitch of refinement, and endeavoured, not without success, to introduce the study of the ancient languages into Italy, a general degradation of letters again took place; and the Italian tongue in particular was so far deteriorated, and debased, as, by the acknowledgment of the best critics, to have become scarcely intelligible. The first symptoms of improvement appeared about the middle of the fifteenth century, when Cosmo de' Medici, after having established his authority in Florence, devoted the latter years of a long and honourable life to the encouragement, and even the study of philosophy, and polite letters. He died in 1464; and the infirm state of health of his son Piero, who was severely afflicted by the gout, did not permit

permit him to make that progress in the path which his father had pointed out, that his natural disposition would otherwise have effected. After surviving him only about five years, the greater part of which time he was confined to a sick-bed, he died, leaving two sons; to the elder of whom, Lorenzo, the praise of having restored to literature its ancient honours is principally due. In succeeding times, indeed, that praise has been almost exclusively bestowed on Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Leo the Tenth, the second son of Lorenzo, who undoubtedly promoted the views, but never in any degree rivalled the talents of his father.

Certain it is that no man was ever more admired and venerated by his contemporaries, or has been more defrauded of his just fame by posterity, than Lorenzo de' Medici. Possessed of a genius more original and versatile than perhaps any of his countrymen, he has led the way in some of the most valuable

species of poetic composition; and some of his productions stand unrivalled amongst those of his countrymen to the present day. Yet such has been the admiration paid by the Italians to a few favourite authors, that they have almost closed their eyes to the various excellencies with which his works abound. From the time of his death no general collection was made of his writings for upwards of sixty years; and after their first publication by Aldus in 1554, upwards of two centuries elapsed without a new edition. Neglected in Italy, they seem to have been unknown to the rest of Europe. A French historian[a], in whose narrative Lorenzo makes a conspicuous figure, assures his readers that the writings of this great man, as well in verse as prose, are irrecoverably lost; and that he would no longer be known as an author, were it not from the

[a] Varillas, Anecdotes de Florence, ou l'histoire secrete de la Maison de Medicis. *p.* 149. *Ed. La Haye*, 1687.

the commendations bestowed upon him by his friends, and the attention paid to him by Paulus Jovius, who has assigned a place to his memory in his eulogies on the modern writers of Italy!

But we are not to consider Lorenzo de' Medici merely in the character of an author, and a patron of learning. As a statesman he was undoubtedly the most extraordinary person of his own, or perhaps of any time. Though a private citizen and a merchant of Florence, he not only obtained the decided control of that state, at a period when it abounded with men of the greatest talents and acuteness, but raised himself to the rank of sole arbiter of Italy, and produced no inconsiderable effect upon the politics of Europe. Without attempting to subjugate his native place, he laid the foundation of the future greatness of his family. His son and his nephew were both, at a short interval from each other, raised to the pontifical dignity; and in the succeed-

ing centuries his descendants became connected by marriage with the first European sovereigns.* The protection afforded by him to all the polite arts gave them a permanent foundation in Italy. In the establishment of public libraries, schools, and seminaries of learning, he was equally munificent, indefatigable, and successful; and these objects were all accomplished by a man who died at the early age of forty-four years.

It is not, however, the intention of the author of the following work to confine himself merely to the relation of the life of an individual, however illustrious. Of a family of whom so much has been said, and so little with certainty known, a more particular account cannot be uninteresting. In aiming at this purpose, he has been unavoidably led to give some account of the rise of modern literature, and particularly to notice many contemporary authors, whose reputation, at least in this country, has not yet been adequate

to

to their merits. In an age when long and dangerous expeditions are undertaken to develope the manners of barbarians, or to discover the source of a river, it will surely not be thought an useless attempt, to endeavour to trace some of those minute and almost imperceptible causes, from which we are to deduce our present proficiency in letters, in science, and in arts.

Among the several narratives hitherto published of the life of Lorenzo de' Medici, the most ancient is that of Niccolo Valori a Florentine, eminent for his rank and learning, the contemporary and friend of Lorenzo. This account, written not inelegantly in Latin, and which composes a small octavo volume of sixty-seven pages, remained in manuscript, till Laurentius Mehus gave it to the public in 1749. An Italian translation had indeed been published at Florence, as early as the year 1560. The principal events in the Life of Lorenzo are here related

related with accuracy and fidelity; but upon the whole it gives us too distant and indistinct a view of him. Though sensible in some respects of the magnitude of his subject, Valori seems not to have been sufficiently aware of the distinguishing characteristics of Lorenzo—the strength, extent, and versatility of his mind. Hence he has exhibited him only in one principal point of view; either wholly omitting, or at most slightly noticing, his many other endowments. Closely adhering to his purpose, he confines himself to too small a circle, and enters not into those discussions respecting collateral events and circumstances, which a full display of the character of Lorenzo requires. The work of Valori may, however, be considered, not only as a well-written and authentic piece of biography, but as the foundation of all subsequent efforts on the same subject; although it wants that interest which it would have derived from a closer and more intimate examination of the temper, the

the character, and the writings of Lorenzo.

By what strange fatality it happened, that the reputation of the most eminent man of his own age should have fallen into almost absolute neglect in the course of that which immediately succeeded, it is difficult to discover; particularly when we consider that the Italians have been by no means inattentive to their national glory, and that the memoirs of the lives of many of the contemporaries of Lorenzo, who were inferior to him in every point of view, have been fully and even ostentatiously set forth. Whatever was the cause, it is certain, that from the publication of the work of Valori in its Italian dress, till the year 1763, no professed account of Lorenzo de' Medici made its appearance in public; although few authors have touched upon the history of those times, without paying him the passing tribute of their applause. This is the

more

more extraordinary, as the materials for enlarging, and improving the narrative of Valori, were obvious. In the year last mentioned, the poems of Lorenzo were reprinted at Bergamo; and a new account of the life of the author was prefixed to the work [b]. From this, however, little is to be expected, when it is understood that the biographer, in his introduction, acknowledges that it is entirely founded on that of Valori; upon whose authority he solely relies, and protests against being answerable for any fact alleged by him, further than that authority warrants. To an exertion of this kind, as he justly observes, neither the deep research of criticism, nor the assistance of rare books, was necessary. In the few attempts which he has made to afford additional information,

[b] Poesie del Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici, con alcune Memorie attenenti alla sua vita, Testimonianze, &c. Bergamo, 1763, appresso Pietro Lancellotti.

information, he has resorted principally to Negri[c], and Varillas[d], whose authority, nevertheless, he has himself deservedly impeached; and whose inaccuracy renders their testimony of little weight, when not expressly confirmed by other writers.

About twenty years since several learned Italians united in drawing up memoirs of such of their countrymen as had distinguished themselves in different branches of science and arts[e]; and the life of Lorenzo, amongst others, fell to the pen of P. Bruno Bruni, professor of divinity in Florence. Unfortunately, however, it was executed without any new researches, being entirely compiled from previous

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[c] Istoria degli scrittori Fiorentini, opera postuma del P. Giulio Negri. *Ferrara*, 1722.

Anecd. de Florence. ut sup.

[e] Elogj degli Uomini illustri Toscani. *In Lucca*, 1771, &c. 4 *vol.* 8*vo.*

previous publications; and it must be owned that the work derives no advantages from the professional prejudices or opinions of its author. The conspiracy of the Pazzi is one of the most striking events that ever engaged the attention of the historian; and the circumstances which accompanied it compose a body of evidence as accurate and authentic as history can produce. But the delicacy of the biographer shrunk from the relation of an incident, that involved in the guilt of premeditated assassination, the Vicar of Christ upon earth! This event is accordingly passed over with a general reference to previous relations; and an annotation is subjoined, tending to impeach the evidence of one who was an eye-witness of the transaction, and whose narrative was laid before the public immediately after the event took place[f]. No extraordinary number

[f] Angeli Politiani Conjurationis Pactianæ anno 1478 Commentarium, in eodem anno excusum, *in 4to sine loci et typographi nominibus*, iterum typis impressum Neapoli anno 1769, curâ et studio Joannis Adimari ex Marchionibus Bumbæ.

number of pages was devoted to the work; and it may be enough to remark, that the resemblance of Lorenzo de' Medici does not well associate with a set of petty portraits, hung up by way of ornament, in frames of equal sizes. In order to do justice to such a subject, a larger canvas is necessary.

In enumerating the labours of my predecessors, it may not be improper more particularly to notice the singular work of Varillas, to which I have before had occasion to refer. This book, written in a lively style, with great pretensions to secret information from manuscripts in the French king's library, has more the resemblance of a romance than of an authentic narrative; and if we may judge of the author's private anecdotes, from his misrepresentations and mistakes in matters of more general notoriety, we shall frequently be compelled to consider them rather as the offspring of his own imagination, than as substantiated facts. The absurdities

absurdities of this author have frequently been exposed by Bayle[s], who has in many instances pointed out his glaring perversions of the relations of Paulus Jovius, the veracity of whom as an historian is itself sufficiently equivocal. The accuracy of Varillas may in some degree be determined by the singular list of books and manuscripts from which he professes to have derived his information, the very existence of some of which yet rests on his own authority.

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

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[s] Dictionnaire Historique et Critique, *Art. Politien*, &c.

lot beyond the limits of that favoured country,

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

The truth is, that even in a remote part of this remote kingdom, and deprived of the many advantages peculiar to seats of learning, I saw no difficulty in giving a more full, distinct, and accurate idea of the subject than could be collected from any performance I had then met with. For some years past, the works of the Italian writers had amused a portion of my leisure hours; a partiality for any particular object generally awakens the desire of obtaining further information respecting it; and from the perusal of the Italian poets, I was insensibly led to attend to the literary history of that cultivated nation. In tracing the rise of modern literature, I soon perceived that every thing great and excellent in science and in art, revolved round Lorenzo de' Medici, during the short but splendid æra of his life, as a common centre, and derived

from him its invariable preservation and support.—Under these impressions I began to collect such scattered notices respecting him as fell in my way; and the Florentine histories of Machiavelli, and Ammirato, the critical labours of Crescimbeni, Muratori, Bandini, and Tiraboschi, with other works of less importance, of which I then found myself possessed, supplied me with materials towards the execution of my plan. I had not, however, proceeded far, before I perceived that the subject deserved a more minute inquiry; for which purpose it would be necessary to resort to contemporary authorities, and, if possible, to original documents. The impracticability of obtaining in this country the information of which I stood in need, would perhaps have damped the ardour of my undertaking, had not a circumstance presented itself in the highest degree favourable to my purpose. An intimate friend, with whom I had been many years united in studies and affection, had paid a visit to Italy, and had fixed his

his winter residence at Florence. I well knew that I had only to request his assistance, in order to obtain whatever information he had an opportunity of procuring, from the very spot which was to be the scene of my intended history. My inquiries were particularly directed towards the Laurentian and Riccardi libraries, which I was convinced would afford much original and interesting information. It would be unjust merely to say that my friend afforded me the assistance I required; he went far beyond even the hopes I had formed, and his return to his native country was, if possible, rendered still more grateful to me, by the materials he had collected for my use. Amongst these I had the pleasure to find several beautiful poems of Lorenzo de' Medici, the originals of which are deposited in the Laurentian library, although the former editors of his works appear not to have had the slightest information respecting them. These poems, which have been copied

with great accuracy, and, where it was possible, collated with different manuscripts, will for the first time be given to the public in the third volume. The munificence of the late Great Duke Leopold, and the liberality of the Marquis Riccardi, had laid open the inestimable treasures of their collections to every inquirer; and under the regulations of the venerable Canonico Bandini, to whose labours the literary history of Italy is highly indebted, such arrangements have been adopted in the Laurentian library, that every difficulty which might retard research is effectually removed. Unlike the immense but ill-digested and almost prohibited collections of the Vatican, the libraries of Florence are the common property of the learned of all nations; and an institution founded by Cosmo, and promoted by Lorenzo de' Medici, yet subsists, the noblest monument of their glory, the most authentic depository of their fame.

Amongst

Amongst a number of printed volumes immediately or remotely connected with my principal subject, which were supplied by the attention of my friend, were two works of which he had given me previous information. These were the life of Lorenzo de' Medici, written in Latin by Monsignor Fabroni, a learned Italian prelate, and published in the year 1784, in two volumes in quarto; and the life of his grandfather Cosmo, by the same author, published in one volume in quarto in the year 1789. On receiving these extensive productions, it became a subject of consideration, whether it might not be advisable to lay aside my own narrative, although it was then far advanced, and satisfy myself with a translation of the former of these works, adding such remarks as my previous researches had enabled me to make. The perusal of these volumes, whilst it afforded me considerable gratification, soon, however, convinced me that the purpose I had in view could not be obtained by a translation. The leading

object of Fabroni is to illustrate the political, rather than the literary life of Lorenzo. It appeared to me, that the mere historical events of the fifteenth century, so far as they regarded Italy, could not deeply interest my countrymen in the eighteenth; but I conceived that the progress of letters and of arts would be attended to with pleasure in every country where they were cultivated and protected: many other motives, some of which will appear in the course of the work, determined me to prosecute my original plan: and the history now presented to the public bears no more resemblance to that of Fabroni, than his does to that of his predecessor Valori. The general incidents in the life of Lorenzo are indeed nearly the same in all; but for most of the sentiments and observations that may occur in the ensuing volume, and for a considerable part of the narrative, particularly such as relates to the state and progress of letters and of arts, the responsibility must fall on myself.

But

But although I have not thought it eligible to rest satisfied with a mere translation of the works of Fabroni, I have derived from them very important assistance and information. The numerous and authentic documents which he obtained by diligent researches through the archives of Florence, and which occupy two thirds of his work, are a treasure with which, in the infancy of my undertaking, I little expected to be gratified. The assistance derived from these sources did not, however, supersede my exertions in procuring such additional information as other parts of the continent and this country could supply. The Crevenna library, lately exposed to sale at Amsterdam, and the Pinelli in London, furnished me with several publications of early date, for which I might otherwise long have inquired throughout Europe to no purpose. The rich and extensive catalogues published by Edwards, Payne, and other London booksellers, who have of late years diligently sought for and imported into Eng-

and whatever is curious or valuable in foreign literature, have also contributed to the success of my inquiries; and I may justly say, that I have spared neither trouble nor expence in the acquisition of whatever appeared to be necessary to the prosecution of my work.

I am not, however, arrogant enough to conceive that, even with these advantages, I have been able to do justice to so extensive and so diversified a subject. Precluded by more serious and indispensable avocations from devoting a continued attention to it, I am apprehensive that facts of importance may either have escaped my diligence, or may be yet imperfectly related. The difficulties attending a critical examination of works of taste, written in a foreign language, contribute to render me diffident of the success of my labours. In the few attempts to translate or imitate the poetical pieces of Lorenzo and his contemporaries, I must regret my inability to do them more

more complete justice; an inability of which I am fully sensible, but for which I do not mean to trouble my reader with any further apology. Such as it is, I submit this performance to the judgment of the public: ready to acknowledge, though not pleased to reflect, that the disadvantages under which an author labours are no excuse for the imperfections of his work.

POSTSCRIPT.

WHEN the first of these volumes was nearly printed, and the materials arranged for the second, I had the satisfaction of obtaining a copy of a very singular and interesting work, in three volumes octavo, intitled *Mémoires Généalogiques de la Maison de Médici.* For this performance I am indebted to the MARQUIS OF LANSDOWN; a nobleman who has conferred the most important benefits on his country, and whose attention has been invariably directed to the encouragement of those studies which can only produce their proper fruits in that state of public tranquillity, which his distinguished talents have been uniformly exerted to secure.

The work above mentioned is the production of Mr. Tenhove of the Hague, a near relation of the late Greffier of the states of Holland, Mr. Fagel, to whose memory it is inscribed in the following affectionate terms:

A l'heu-

A l' heureuse mémoire de François Fagel,
Greffier de leurs hautes puissances les Etats Generaux
des Provinces-unies:
Heritier des vertus et des talens de ses ancetres,
Collegue et ami du venerable vieillard son pere,
Favori des peuples et des grands,
Fragile espoir de la patrie,
Ami zelé des lettres et des arts,
Arbitre sur de l' elegance et du gout,
Et meilleure moitié de moi-meme.

But, alas! the monument which affection had devoted to the memory of a friend, was itself destined to remain unfinished; and the accomplished author, by a fatality which will perhaps remind my readers of the events related in the last chapter of this history, whilst he lamented the loss of his patron, was called to join him, in the society of the wise, the learned, and the good of former ages—in that of Scipio and of Lælius, of Politiano and of Lorenzo de' Medici.

Inter odoratum Lauri nemus, unde superne
Plurimus Eridani per silvam volvitur amnis.

Of such part of his work as was printed before his death, a copy had been presented by him to the learned and venerable Dr. Macleane of the Hague, the well-known translator of Mosheim's

Mosheim's ecclesiastical history, with whom he had lived for many years in the most friendly intimacy. At the kind request of the Marquis of Lansdown, Dr. Macleane transmitted these volumes to England; and a probability having since occurred, of his obtaining another copy, he has obligingly relinquished them to his Lordship, by whose liberality I have now the pleasure of calling them my own.

Although these volumes appear to be rather the amusement of the leisure hours of a polite scholar, than the researches of a professed historian, yet they display an acquaintance with the transactions of Italy, seldom acquired except by a native. To a great proficiency in the literature of that country, Mr. Tenhove united an indisputable taste in the productions of all the fine arts, and a general knowledge of the state of manners, and the progress of science, in every period of society. The fertility of his genius, and the extent of his information, have enabled him to intersperse his narrative with a variety of interesting digressions, and brilliant observations; and the most engaging work that has perhaps ever appeared, on a subject of literary history, is written by a native of one country, in the language of another, on the affairs of a third.

Excellent,

Excellent, however, as the work of Mr. Tenhove certainly is, I have not derived from it any very important assistance; which will be more readily credited, when it is understood that it commences with the history of the family of the Medici in remote antiquity, and adverting to every member of it, of whom any historical notices remain, was intended to be continued down to the present century. The interval of time which I have undertaken to illustrate, extending only to the life of an individual who died at an early age, must consequently form a small portion in a work intended to embrace such an extent of time, yet not upon the whole more voluminous than my own. The character of Lorenzo is indeed finely conceived, and faithfully drawn by Mr. Tenhove; and his accomplishments are celebrated with a warmth of expression, which proves that the author was fully sensible of his genius and his merits. But it was not consistent with the plan that he had adopted, to enter into those particular inquiries, and more minute discussions, which the duty of a professed biographer requires. From this circumstance, and the advanced state of my work, I was not induced to make any alteration either in its arrangement or in the manner of its execution. After having proceeded so far in the character of a simple relater of facts, it would

would indeed ill become me to aim at the higher ornaments of composition.

Servetur ad imum
Qualis ab incepto processerit.

Unwilling, however, to possess such a treasure as the volumes in question, without enabling my readers to share it with me in some degree, I have frequently taken occasion, in the notes to the second volume, to cite the sentiments of Mr. Tenhove, on the subject of our mutual inquiry. I am aware, that by this conduct I am inducing a comparison by no means favourable to my own performance; but having executed it to the best of my ability, I have not been led by that consideration to suppress any thing which I thought might tend to authenticate or illustrate my work. The motives which have encouraged me to persevere in this undertaking, amidst numerous avocations and duties, which connect me with society by almost every tie, have been a high admiration of the character of Lorenzo de' Medici, the singular pleasure which I have enjoyed in tracing his history, and the earnest desire which I feel, to place him in that rank in the estimation of my countrymen, to which he is so eminently entitled.

CHAP. I.

ORIGIN of Florence—Government—Family of the Medici—Salvestro de' Medici—Giovanni de' Medici—Cosmo de' Medici—Influence of that family in Florence—Cosmo seized and imprisoned—Is banished to Padua—Allowed to reside at Venice—Ambrogio Traversari—Cosmo is recalled from banishment—Encourages men of learning—Leonardo and Carlo Aretino—Researches after the writings of the ancients—Poggio Bracciolini—Guarino Veronese—Giovanni Aurispa—Francesco Filelfo—Council of Florence—Revival of the Platonic Philosophy—Marsilio Ficino—Cosmo establishes the Laurentian Library—Niccolo Niccoli founds the Library of S. Marco—The Vatican Library founded by Pope Nicholas V.—Invention and progress of the art of printing—Capture of Constantinople by the Turks—Cosmo applies himself to study—Marriage of Piero de' Medici—Birth of Lorenzo and Giuliano—Celebrity of Cosmo—Antonio Beccatelli—Literary Quarrels—Bessarion and George of Trebisond—Poggio and Filelfo—Death and character of Cosmo de' Medici.

CHAP. I.

FLORENCE has been remarkable in modern history for the frequency and violence of its internal dissentions, and for the predilection of its inhabitants for every species of science, and every production of art. However discordant these characteristics may appear, they are not difficult to reconcile: The same active spirit that calls forth the talents of individuals for the preservation of their liberties, and resists with unconquerable resolution whatever is supposed to infringe them, in the moments of domestic peace and security seeks with avidity other objects of employment. The defence of freedom has always been found to expand and strengthen the mind; and though the faculties of the hu-

CHAP. I.

man race may remain torpid for generations, when once roused into action they cannot speedily be lulled again into inactivity and repose.

Origin of Florence.

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

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[a] *Mac. Istoria Fiorentina, lib.* ii.

[b] "Sed Florentinæ canerem primordia gentis;
"Nobile Syllanum tempus in omne genus:
"Syllanum genus Romana stirpe colonos
"A patribus nunquam degenerasse suis."
Landinus de Laudibus Cosmi,
ap Bandini Specimen Literaturæ Florentinæ, vol. i. *p.* 102.

and Verini[c], refers this event to the times of the dictatorship of Sylla, whilst Politiano places it under the triumvirate of Octavius, Antonius, and Lepidus[d].

In the frequent irruptions of the northern nations that subverted the Roman state, Florence followed the fate of the rest of Italy; but about the year 1010 it had acquired some degree of strength and independence, which was first exerted in attacking and demolishing the place

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" Syllanus primus fugiens asperrima montis
" Purgavit nostros ute colonus agros;
" Atque Arnum recta, contractis undique lymphis,
" Obice disrupto compulit ire via."

Land de primordiis urbis.
Ibid. v. 1. *p.* 167.

[c] " Felici Comites Syllæ de marmore templum,
" Mavorti posuere suo."

Ugolinus Verinus de illustratione Urbis Florentiæ.
Flor. 1636, *lib.* i. *p.* 9.

[d] " Deduxere igitur Florentiam coloniam triumviri " Cajus Cæsar qui deinde Augustus, Marcus Antonius, " et Marcus Lepidus etiam pontifex maximus." For many curious observations and learned conjectures on the origin of Fiesole and Florence, v. *Politiani Ep. lib.* i. *Ep.* 2.

CHAP. I.

place from which it sprung [c]. Fiesole retains few traces of its former importance; but its delightful situation and pure air still render it an agreeable and healthy residence.

Government.

For some centuries previous to the commencement of the present history, the government of Florence had fluctuated between an aristocratic and a popular form. The discord and animosity that arose from this instability may well be conceived. When either of the contending factions had obtained the ascendency, the leaders of it soon disagreed in the exercise of their power; and the weaker party, attaching themselves to the body of the people, speedily effected a revolution. The frequency of electing their magistrates, at the same time that it was favourable to the preservation of their liberties, fomented a continual spirit of opposition and resent-

[c] "Ast ubi Syllanos felix concordia cives
"Altius evexit, Fesulæ venere redactæ
"Sub juga, tunc populi crevit numerosa propago.
"Urbs inimica, potens, vicinaque mœnibus olim
"Martigenæ, ulterius fines efferre negabat.
"Ac veluti quondam veteres auxere Sabini
"Sub Tatio Romam: sic urbs Fesulana relicto
"Vertice victricem tandem migravit in urbem."
Verinus de illustr. Urbis Flor. lib. i.

resentment. A secret enmity, even in the most tranquil days of the republic, subsisted among the leaders of the different factions, and the slightest circumstance, whether of a foreign or domestic nature, was sufficient to kindle the latent spark into an open flame. The contests between the *Ghibellini* and the *Guelfi* [f], and between the *Bianchi* and the *Neri* [g], were entered

[f] This distinction began about the twelfth century. In the dissentions between the pope and the emperor, the partizans of the former were denominated Guelphs, and those of the imperial faction Ghibelines; but in succeeding times these appellations conveyed other ideas, and the name of Guelphs was applied to those who, in any popular commotion, espoused the cause of the people, whilst that of Ghibelines became synonymous to the *optimates* of the Romans, or Aristocrates. Ammirato, without being able to trace the origin, pathetically laments the unhappy consequences of these distinctions to his country. *Istoria Fiorentina*, v. 1. *p.* 55. 132. But the particular circumstances which introduced them into Florence are related at considerable length by Nerli. *Commentarii de' fatte civili di Firenze. Augs.* 1728. *p.* 2. *&c.*

[g] For these factions Italy was indebted to the city of Pistoia, where a disagreement took place between two young men of the family of Cancellieri, one of whom is called by Machiavelli, Geri, and the other, Lore. In this contest Geri received a slight blow from his relation, who immediately afterwards, at the command of his

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tered into by the Florentines with an eagerness beyond that of any other people in Europe. For a great length of time Florence was at continual war with itself; and a number of citizens under the name of *Fuorusciti*, or refugees, were constantly employed in attempting to regain their native residence, for which purpose they scrupled not, by all possible means, to excite the resentment of other powers against it. If their attempts proved successful, the weaker party left

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father Gulielmo, went to the house of Bertuccio, the father of Geri, to apologize for the offence. Bertuccio, exasperated at the indignity, seized the young man, and with the assistance of two of his servants, cruelly cut off his hand on a manger. This atrocious deed roused the resentment of Gulielmo, who took up arms to revenge the injury. Cancellieri the common ancestor of the family had two wives, from one of whom descended the line of Gulielmo, from the other that of Bertuccio. One of these wives was named Bianca, whence that branch of their family and their adherents were named *Bianchi*, and their opponents, by way of distinction, obtained the name of *Neri*. The whole city espoused the part of one or other of these factions, and the contagion soon spread to Florence, where it received fresh vigour from the ancient dissentions of the *Cerchi* and the *Donati*. The quarrel shortly became tinctured with political enmity, and the Bianchi were considered as Ghibelines, the Neri as Guelphs. *Mac. Ist. Fior. lib.* ii. *Amm. Ist. Fior. v.* i. *p.* 204.

left the city, till they in their turn could expel their conquerors. CHAP. I.

These disadvantages were however amply compensated by the great degree of freedom enjoyed by the citizens of Florence, which had the most favourable effects on their character, and gave them a decided superiority over the inhabitants of the rest of Italy. The popular nature of the government, not subjected to the will of an individual, as in many of the surrounding states, nor restricted, like that of Venice, to a particular class, was a constant incitement to exertion. Nor was it only on the great body of the people that the good effects of this system were apparent; even those who claimed the privileges of ancestry felt the advantages of a rivalship, which prevented their sinking into indolence, and called upon them to support by their own talents the rank and influence which they had derived from those of their ancestors. Where the business of government is confined to a few, the faculties of the many become torpid for want of exercise; but in Florence, every citizen was conversant with, and might hope, at least, to partake in the government; and hence was derived that spirit of industry, which in the pursuit of wealth, and the extension of commerce, was, amidst all their intestine

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intestine broils, so conspicuous, and so successful[h]. The fatigues of public life, and the cares of mercantile avocations, were alleviated at times by the study of literature or the speculations of philosophy. A rational and dignified employment engaged those moments of leisure not necessarily devoted to more important concerns, and the mind was relaxed without being debilitated, and amused without being depraved. The superiority which the Florentines thus acquired was universally acknowledged, and they became the historians, the poets, the orators, and the preceptors of Europe.

The

[h] The beneficial effects of their government were not unobserved by the Florentines, and are well adverted to by Verini.

——Semperque aliquid novitatis in urbe est
Stat tamen incolumis majestas publica; causa est
Præclaris quoniam ingenis Florentia favit,
Festinosque libens virtuti impendit honores.
Ex quo si linguæ vitæque industria major
Concessa est cuiquam, nostram demigrat in urbem;
Ut magis emteat virtus ubi præmia prompta:
Æquarique sibi fert ægre prisca colonos
Nobilitas, oriturque trucis discordia belli;
Fitque minor census, patrimoniaque hausta tributis,
Reddunt attonitum qui stemmate fulget avito.
Contra autem solers et cedere nescius, instat
Fortunæ, summosque animo molitur honores.

Ver. de illust. Urb. lib. iii.

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Family of Medici.

The family of the *Medici* had for many ages been esteemed one of the most considerable in the republic; nor have there been wanting authors who have derived its eminence from the age of Charlemagne: but it must be remembered, that these genealogies have been the production of subsequent times, when the elevation of this family to the supreme command in Florence, made it necessary to impress on the minds of the people an idea of its antiquity and respectability[1]. It appears however from authentic

[1] In a *M.S.* of the Riccardi library at Florence, of which I have obtained an ample extract, intitled "*Origine e descendenza della casa de' Medici*," the origin of the family greatness is romantically referred to Averardo de' Medici, a commander under Charlemagne, who, for his valour in destroying the gigantic plunderer *Mugello*, by whom the surrounding country was laid waste, was honoured with the privilege of bearing for his arms six *palle*, or balls, as characteristic of the iron balls that hung from the mace of his fierce antagonist, the impression of which remained on his shield. Verini had before this accounted for the family name and arms by another hereditary tale.

Est qui Bebryaca Medices testetur ab urbe
Venisse; et Toscam sobolem delesse superbam
Asserat: hinc Medicis meruit cognomen haberi
Quod Medicus Tosci fuerit, sic ore venenum
Dixerunt patrio: factique insignia portet
Senis in globulis flaventem sanguine peltam.
Ver. de illust. Urbis, lib. iii.

It

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thentic monuments, that many individuals of this family had signalized themselves on important occasions. Giovanni de' Medici[k] in the year 1251, with a body of only one hundred Florentines, forced his way through the Milanese army, then besieging the fortress of Scarperia, and entered the place with the loss of twenty lives.

Salvestro de' Medici.

Salvestro de' Medici acquired great reputation by his temperate, but firm resistance of the tyranny of the nobles[l], who, in order to secure their power, accused those who opposed them of being attached to the party of the Ghibelines, then in great odium at Florence. The persons so accused were said to be admonished, *ammoniti*, and by that act were excluded from all offices of government. This custom was at length carried to such an extreme, as to become insufferable. In the year 1379, Salvestro, being chosen

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It required some ingenuity to invalidate so strong a presumption of the ancient family profession, as arises from the name of *Medici*, and the six pills borne as their device.

[k] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* i. 531.

[l] *Razzi vita di Salvestro de' Medici. Flor.* 1580. *Amm. Ist. Fior.* ii. 716, 717.

chosen chief magistrate, exerted his power in reforming this abuse; which was not however effected without a violent commotion, in which several of the nobility lost their lives. After the death of Salvestro, his son, Veri de' Medici, continued to hold a high rank in the republic, and, like the rest of this family, was always in great favour with the populace. CHAP. I.

The person, however, who may be said to have laid the foundation of that greatness which his posterity enjoyed for several ages, was Giovanni de' Medici, the great grandfather of Lorenzo, the subject of our present history [m] By a strict attention to commerce, he acquired immense wealth; by his affability, moderation, and liberality, he ensured the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens. Without seeking after the offices of the republic, he was honoured with them all. The maxims, which, uniformly pursued, raised the house of Medici to Giovanni de' Medici.

[m] Giovanni nacque nel 1360, ebbe per moglie Piccarda di Nannino di Odoardo Bueri nel 1386. Fu principe nella republica Fiorentina, Ambasciatore al Papa, a Ladislao, e a Venegia Morì il dì 20 di Febrajo del 1428. *Origine e descendenza, MS.*

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to the splendor which it afterwards enjoyed, are to be found in the charge given by this venerable old man on his death-bed to his two sons, Cosmo and Lorenzo[n]; "*I feel*," said he, "*that I have lived the time prescribed me. I die content; leaving you, my sons, in affluence and in health, and in such a station, that whilst you follow my example, you may live in your native place, honoured and respected. Nothing affords me more pleasure, than the reflection that my conduct has not given offence to any one; but that, on the contrary, I have endeavoured to serve all persons to the best of my abilities. I advise you to do the same. With respect to the honours of the state, if you would live with security, accept only such as are bestowed on you by the laws, and the favour of your fellow-citizens; for it is the exercise of that power which is obtained by violence, and not of that which is voluntarily given, that occasions hatred and contention.*" He died in the year 1428, leaving two sons, Cosmo, born in the year 1389, and Lorenzo in 1394[o], from the latter of whom is derived the collateral branch of the family, that in the beginning of the

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[n] *Mac. Ist. Fior. lib.* v.

[o] *Origine e descendenza, M.S.*

the sixteenth century obtained the absolute sovereignty of Tuscany [P].

Cosmo de' Medici.

Even in the life-time of his father, Cosmo had engaged himself deeply, not only in the extensive commerce by which the family had acquired its wealth, but in the weightier concerns of government. Such was his authority and reputation, that in the year 1414, when Balthasar

1414

P At the instance of the two brothers, Donatello the sculptor erected a monument to the memory of their father Giovanni de' Medici, and their mother Picarda, which yet remains in the church of S. Lorenzo at Florence; on one side of which is the following inscription:

" Si merita in patriam, si gloria, sanguis, et omni
" Larga manus, nigra libera morte forent,
" Viveret heu! patriæ casta cum conjuge felix,
" Auxilium miseris, portus et aura suis,
" Omnia sed quando superantur morte, *Johannes*
" Hoc mausoleo, tuque *Picarda*, jaces:
" Ergo senex mœret, juvenis, puer, omnis et ætas,
" Orba parente suo patria mœsta gemit."

On the other side:

" Cosmus et Laurentius de' Medicis, viro clarissimo
" Johanni Averardi filio et Piccardæ Adovardi filiæ ca-
" rissimis parentibus hoc sepulcrum faciendum curarunt.
" Obiit autem Johannes x. Kal. Martii. MCCCCXXVIII.
" Piccarda vero XIII. Kal. Maii quinquennio post e vita
" migravit."

1419[q], and it was supposed, that the Medici at his death possessed themselves of immense riches, which he had acquired during his pontificate[r]. This notion was afterwards encouraged, for malevolent purposes, by those who well knew its falsehood[s]. The true source of the wealth of the Medici, was their superior talents and application to commerce. The property

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[q] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* 2. 985.

[r] "Si crede che Cosmo de' Medici, del danaro di "Baldassare accrescesse in modo le sue facoltà che fù "poi tenuto il più ricco cittadino di Fiorenza, anzi che "in Italia, e fuori d'Italia fosse." *Platina in vita di Martino* V. But this tale is confuted by Ammirato, who has cited the testament of Balthasar, by which it appears that he was doubtful whether his property would extend to pay the legacies he had bequeathed. To the altar of St. John the Baptist he gave a *finger of that saint*, which he had long carried secretly about his person.

Amm. Ist. Fior. 2. 1047.

The malice and virulence of Filelfo led him to accuse the Medici of having poisoned Balthasar, in order to obtain possession of his property; but this is sufficiently refuted by the slightest acquaintance with the characters of the accuser and the accused, to say nothing of the irrefragable testimony of Balthasar's will above referred to, of which Giovanni de' Medici was one of the trustees.

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perty of the cardinal was scarcely sufficient to discharge his legacies and his debts.

After the death of Giovanni de' Medici, Cosmo supported and increased the family dignity. His conduct was uniformly marked by urbanity and kindness to the superior ranks of his fellow-citizens, and by a constant attention to the interests and the wants of the lower class, whom he relieved with unbounded generosity. By these means he acquired numerous and zealous partizans, of every denomination; but he rather considered them as pledges for the continuance of the power he possessed, than as instruments to be employed in extending it to the ruin and subjugation of the state. "*No* "*family*," says Voltaire, "*ever obtained its* "*power by so just a title*[t]."

Influence of the Medici in Florence.

The authority which Cosmo and his descendants exercised in Florence during the fifteenth century, was of a very peculiar nature; and consisted rather in a tacit influence on their part, and a voluntary acquiescence on that of the people, than in any prescribed or definite compact between them. The form of government

[t] *Essai sur les Mœurs*, &c. *vol.* ii. *p.* 282. 4*to. ed. Gen.*

ment was ostensibly a republic, and was directed by a council of ten citizens, and a chief executive officer called the *Gonfaloniere*, or standard bearer, who was chosen every two months. Under this establishment the citizens imagined they enjoyed the full exercise of their liberties; but such was the power of the Medici, that they generally either assumed to themselves the first offices of the state, or nominated such persons as they thought proper to those employments. In this, however, they paid great respect to popular opinion. That opposition of interests so generally apparent between the people and their rulers, was at this time scarcely perceived at Florence, where superior qualifications and industry were the surest recommendations to public authority and favour. Convinced of the benefits constantly received from this family, and satisfied that they could at any time withdraw themselves from a connexion that exacted no engagements, and required only a temporary acquiescence, the Florentines considered the Medici as the fathers, and not as the rulers of the republic. On the other hand, the chiefs of this house, by appearing rather to decline than to court the honours bestowed on them, and by a singular moderation in the use of them when obtained, were careful to maintain the character of simple citizens of Florence, and

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servants of the state. An interchange of reciprocal good offices was the only tie by which the Florentines and the Medici were bound, and perhaps the long continuance of this connexion may be attributed to the very circumstance of its being in the power of either of the parties, at any time, to have dissolved it.

Cosmo seized and imprisoned.

But the prudence and moderation of Cosmo, though they soothed the jealous apprehensions of the Florentines, could not at all times repress the ambitious designs of those who wished to possess or to share his authority. In the year 1433 1433[u] Rinaldo de' Albizi, at the head of a powerful party, carried the appointment of the magistracy. At that time Cosmo had withdrawn to his seat at Mugello, where he had remained some months, in order to avoid the disturbances that he saw were likely to ensue[v]; but

[u] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* 2. 1088.

[v] For some time before the close of the 14th century, it became a custom amongst the chiefs of this family, to keep private memorials of the circumstances attending it. These memorials, or Ricordi, were begun by Filigno de' Medici, who in the year 1373 entered, in a book yet extant, and intitled "*Notizie della famiglia de' Medici,*" some information respecting its wealth, population, and respectability. (*Appendix*, No. I.) Cosmo continued the

but at the request of his friends he returned to Florence, where he was led to expect that an union of the different parties would be effected, so as to preserve the peace of the city. In this expectation he was however disappointed. No sooner did he make his appearance in the palace, where his presence had been requested, on pretence of his being intended to share in the administration of the republic, than he was seized upon by his adversaries, and committed to the custody of Federigo Malavolti. He remained in this situation for several days, in constant apprehension of some violence being offered to his person; but he still more dreaded that the malice of his enemies might attempt his life by poison. During four days, a small portion of bread was the only food which he thought proper to take. CHAP. I.

The generosity of his keeper at length relieved him from this state of anxiety. In order to Is banished to Padua.

the practice, and in particular has left a very minute account of the circumstances attending his banishment and return, which greatly differs in many respects from the narrative of Machiavelli. (*Appendix*, No. II.) The Ricordi of Lorenzo also remain, and afford much indisputable information on the principal events of his life.

CHAP. I. to induce him to take his food with confidence, Malavolti partook of it with him[w]. In the mean time, his brother Lorenzo, and his cousin Averardo, having raised a considerable body of men from Romagna and other neighbouring parts, and being joined by Niccolo Tolentino, the commander of the troops of the republic, approached towards Florence to his relief; but the apprehensions that in case they resorted to open violence, the life of Cosmo might be endangered, induced them to abandon their enterprise. At length Rinaldo and his adherents obtained a decree of the magistracy against the Medici and their friends, by which Cosmo was banished to Padua for ten years, Lorenzo to Venice for five years, and several of their relations and adherents were involved in a similar punish-

[w] The address of Malavolti to Cosmo on this occasion, as related by Machiavelli, is full of kindness and humanity. "Tu dubiti Cosimo di non essere avvelenato, et "fai te morire di fame, e poco honore à me, credendo "ch'io volessi tener le mani a una simile scelleratezza. "Io non credi che tu habbi à perdere la vita, tanti amici "hai in palagio, et fuori, ma quando pure avessi a per- "derla, vivi sicuro che pigliaranno altri modi che usar "me, per ministro à tal tela: perche io non voglio brut- "tarmi le mani nel sangue d'alcuno, e massime del tuo "che non mi offendesti mai," &c.

Mac. Ist. Flor. lib. iv.

punishment. Cosmo would gladly have left the city pursuant to his sentence, but his enemies thought it more advisable to retain him till they had established their authority; and they frequently gave him to understand that if his friends raised any opposition to their measures, his life should answer it. He also suspected that another reason for his detention was to ruin him in his credit and circumstances; his mercantile concerns being then greatly extended. As soon as these disturbances were known, several of the states of Italy interfered in his behalf. Three ambassadors arrived from Venice, who proposed to take him under their protection, and to engage that he should strictly submit to the sentence imposed on him. The Marquis of Ferrara also gave a similar proof of his attachment. Though their interposition was not immediately successful, it was of great importance to Cosmo, and secured him from the attempts of those who aimed at his life. After a confinement of near a month, some of his friends, finding in his adversaries a disposition to gentler measures, took occasion to forward his cause by the timely application of a sum of money to Bernardo Guadagni the Gonfaloniere, and to Mariotto Baldovinetti, two of the creatures of Rinaldo. This measure was successful. He was privately taken from his confinement

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by night, and led out of Florence. For this piece of service Guadagni received one thousand florins, and Baldovinetti eight hundred. "*They were poor souls,*" says Cosmo in his Ricordi, "*for if money had been their object, they might have had ten thousand, or more, to have freed me from the perils of such a situation*[x]."

Is allowed to reside at Venice

From Florence, Cosmo proceeded immediately towards Venice, and at every place through which he passed, experienced the most flattering attention, and the warmest expressions of regard. On his approach to that city he was

[x] Machiavelli ascribes the liberation of Cosmo to the interference and assistance of Fargonaccio, a buffoon, who was admitted by Malavolti to visit Cosmo during his confinement, and was employed by him in negotiating with the chiefs of the opposite faction for his deliverance. Varillas has ornamented the same story, according to his manner, with an infinite number of particulars. To judge from his narrative, this author might not only have been a contemporary, but intrusted with the most secret transactions of the negotiation, and the confidant of the most private thoughts of the parties concerned. *Var. Mem de Flor. p. 9, &c.* In the narrative that I have given I have thought proper to discard these dubious accounts, and to adhere to the authentic relation of Cosmo himself; who adverts to no such circumstance, but on the contrary expressly states by whose assistance the money was paid. *v. Ricordi di Cosmo in App.*

was met by his brother Lorenzo, and many of his friends, and was received by the senate with such honours as are bestowed by that stately republic, only on persons of the highest quality and distinction. After a short stay there, he went to Padua, the place prescribed for his banishment; but on an application to the Florentine state, by Andrea Donato the Venetian ambassador, he was permitted to reside on any part of the Venetian territories, but not to approach within the distance of one hundred and seventy miles from Florence. The affectionate reception which he had met with at Venice induced him to fix his abode there, until a change of circumstances should restore him to his native country. CHAP. I.

Amongst the several learned and ingenious men that accompanied Cosmo in his banishment, or resorted to him during his stay at Venice, was Michellozzo Michellozzi, a Florentine sculptor and architect, whom Cosmo employed in making models and drawings of the most remarkable buildings in Venice, and also in forming a library in the monastery of St. George[y], which he enriched with many valuable

[y] *Vasari Vite de' Pittori, vol. i. p. 339. Ed. Flor. 1568.*

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able manuscripts, and left as an honourable monument of his gratitude, to a place that had afforded him so kind an asylum in his adversity [z].

Ambrogio Traversari.

During his residence at Venice, Cosmo also received frequent visits from Ambrogio Traversari, a learned monk of Camaldoli near Florence [a], and afterwards superior of the monastery

[z] This library existed till the year 1614, when in consequence of the monastery being rebuilt, it was destroyed, and the books it contained are supposed to have perished. *Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, vol.* vi. *parte* i. *p.* 102.

[a] Ambrogio was born in 1386, and was a native of Forli, but is usually ranked amongst the eminent men of Florence, where he was educated, and where he principally resided. "In Firenze bensì fu educato Ambrogio: "In Firenze vestì l'abito monacale: In Firenze riposano "le sue ossa; e però in tal qual modo può Fiorentino "appellarsi." *Zeno, Dissertazioni Vossiane, vol.* i. *p.* 75. So complete was his knowledge of the Greek language, that in the council of Florence he acted as interpreter between the Italians and the Greeks. His translation of Diogenes Laertius, inscribed by him to Cosmo de' Medici, and first printed at Venice, by Nicolas Jenson, in 1475, has been several times reprinted. Traversari has had the good fortune to meet with a biographer and annotator in the learned Mehus, who has done justice to the subject, and made his life and writings the vehicle of

tery at that place. Though chiefly confined within the limits of a cloister, Traversari had, perhaps, the best pretensions to the character of a polite scholar of any man of that age. From the letters of Traversari, now extant, we learn that Cosmo and his brother not only bore their misfortunes with firmness, but continued to express on every occasion an inviolable attachment to their native place [b].

Cosmo is recalled from banishment.

The readiness with which Cosmo had given way to the temporary clamour raised against him, and the reluctance he had shewn to renew those bloody rencounters that had so often disgraced the streets of Florence, gained him new friends. The utmost exertions of his antagonists could not long prevent the choice of such magistrates as were known to be attached to the cause of the Medici; and no sooner did they enter

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of much curious and useful information. It is only to be regretted that this extensive and valuable work is not better arranged. *Amb. Traversarii Lat. Ep.* &c. 2 *vol. fo. Flor.* 1759.

[b] "Cosmus et Laurentius, fratres, viri amicissimi, "valent optimè; magnaque constantia animi ferunt ca- "lamitatem suam, et, quod his majus est, eo adfectu in "patriam sunt ut illam majore constantia quam antea "diligant," &c. *Trav. Ep. lib.* viii. *Ep.* 53.

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enter on the execution of their office, than Cosmo and his brother were recalled, and Rinaldo, with his adherents, were compelled to quit the city. This event took place about the expiration of twelve months from the time of Cosmo's banishment [c].

Encourages men of learning.

From this time the life of Cosmo de' Medici was an almost uninterrupted series of prosperity. The tranquillity enjoyed by the republic, and the satisfaction and peace of mind which he experienced in the esteem and confidence of his fellow-citizens, enabled him to indulge his natural propensity to the promotion of science, and the encouragement of learned men. The study of the Greek language had been introduced into Italy, principally by the exertions of the celebrated

[c] The attachment of the populace to the Medici is strikingly described by Poggio. "Itaque indicta populi "concione, quanta alacritate, Di boni, quanta exulta- "tione, quanto gaudio, quanto studio, etiam infirmorum "concursus est ad Palatium factus, omnium ætatum, "ordinum, nationum! Nemo non solum civem se, sed "se hominem quidem arbitrabatur, qui non huic causæ "interesset, qui non manu, voce, vultus denique ac "gestus significatione faveret. Existimabant omnes non "de tua, sed de publica salute agi, non de privata unius "domo, sed de communi omnium causa certari."

Poggii Ep. 340. *Ed. Basil.* 1538.

brated Boccaccio [d], towards the latter part of the preceding century, but on the death of that great promoter of letters it again fell into neglect. After a short interval, another attempt was made to revive it by the intervention of Emanuel Chrysoloras, a noble Greek, who, during the interval of his important embassies, taught that language at Florence and other cities of Italy, about the beginning of the fifteenth century. His disciples were numerous and respectable. Amongst others of no inconsiderable note, were Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Bruni [e], Carlo Marsuppini,

Leonardo and Carlo Aretino.

[d] Boccaccio is not only entitled to the honour of having introduced into Italy the study of the Greek language, but of having preserved and restored what constitutes its greatest glory—The writings of Homer—Thus he boasts of his meritorious labours: "Fui equidem "ipse insuper, qui primus meis sumptibus Homeri "libros, et alios quosdam græcos in Hetruriam revo- "cavi, ex qua multis ante sæculis abierant, non rediturí. "Nec in Hetruriam tantum sed in patriam deduxi."

Bocc. Genealogia Deorum, lib. xv. *cap.* 7. *Ed.* 1481.

[e] The life of this eminent scholar and promoter of science is prefixed to his *Epistolæ*, published by Mehus in 2 *vols.* 8*vo. Flor.* 1741.—Many particulars may also be found in the *Dissert. Voss. of Zeno.* He was born at Arezzo in 1370, "de honestis quidem sed non admodum "generosis parentibus." For several years he was one of the secretaries of the Roman court, but afterwards fixed

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pini[f], the two latter of whom were natives of Arezzo, whence they took the name of Aretino,

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fixed his reſidence at Florence, where he held an office which had been long enjoyed only by men of the firſt character for learning and abilities, that of ſecretary to the republic. His hiſtory of Florence, written in Latin, was tranſlated into Italian by Donato Acciajuoli, and publiſhed in Venice 1476. Flor. 1492. A conſiderable number of his works yet remain in MS. amongſt which are many tranſlations from the Greek. His Latin tranſlation of the Epiſtles of Plato is inſcribed to Cosmo de' Medici, and as the dedication is illuſtrative of his character, and has not hitherto been printed, I ſhall give it in the Appendix, from a MS. copy of the fifteenth century. (*Appendix*, No III.)

[f] Carlo Marſuppini the elder ſucceeded his countryman Leonardo Bruni in the office of ſecretary to the republic of Florence. Whilſt he held this employment, a circumſtance occurred in ſome degree unfavourable to his reputation as a ſcholar. On the emperor's arrival at Florence, it was the office of Carlo to addreſs him in a Latin oration, which he required two days to prepare, and by which he obtained no ſmall ſhare of applauſe: but Æneas Sylvius, the ſecretary to the emperor, and who afterwards became Pope Pius the II. having replied in the name of the emperor, and made ſome requiſitions to the Florentines that demanded an extempore anſwer, Carlo requeſted time to prepare himſelf, and could not be induced to proceed. The interview was therefore concluded by Gianozzo Manetti, who, by the ſpecimen he gave of his talents on this occaſion, roſe to great reputation amongſt his countrymen.

We

Aretino, Poggio Bracciolini, Guarino Veronese, and Francesco Filelfo, who, after the death of Chrysoloras, in 1415, strenuously vied with each other in the support of Grecian literature, and were successful enough to keep the flame alive till it received new aid from other learned Greeks, who were driven from Conſtantinople by the dread of the Turks, or by the total overthrow of the eastern empire. To these illustrious foreigners, as well as to those eminent Italians, who shortly became their successful rivals, even in the knowledge of their national history and language, Cosmo afforded the most liberal

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We need not hesitate in attributing this event rather to an untimely diffidence, than to any want of talents in Carlo, as may be judged, not only from the numerous suffrages of his countrymen, but from his own works, some of which yet survive, although few have undergone the preſs. He is however improperly placed by *Vossius* amongst the writers of history, as *Apostolo Zeno* has fully shewn. The numerous errors of the *Oltramontani* in treating on the Literati of Italy ought to operate as a perpetual caution to those who follow them in so hazardous a track. Of his poetry, the only piece that has been printed is a translation of the Batrachomyomachia of Homer, first published at Parma in 1492, and afterwards at Florence by Bernardo Zucchetti 1512, with this diſtich in the place of a title:

" Accipe Mæonio cantatas carmine ranas,
" Et frontem nugis solvere disce meis."

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liberal protection and support. Of this the numerous productions inscribed to his name, or devoted to his praise, are an ample testimony[g]. In some of these he is commended for his attachment to his country, his liberality to his friends, his benevolence to all. He is denominated the protector of the needy, the refuge of the oppressed, the constant patron and support of learned men. "*You have shewn*," says Poggio[h], "*such humanity and moderation in dispensing the gifts of fortune, that they seem to have been rather the reward of your virtues and merits, than conceded by her bounty. Devoted to the study of letters from your early years, you have by your example given additional splendor to science itself. Although involved in the weightier concerns of state, and unable to devote a great part of your time to books, yet you have found a constant satisfaction in the society of those learned men who have always frequented your house.*" In enumerating the

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[g] To Cosmo de' Medici Argyropylus addressed his translation of several tracts of Aristotle; Lapo Castelliouchio, his life of Themistocles from Plutarch; and Benedetto Accolti, his dialogue "de viris illustribus." A great number of other learned works, inscribed to Cosmo, remain in the Laurentian library, and are particularly cited in the catalogue of Bandini.

Flor. 1774, &c.

[h] *Poggii opera, p.* 312. *Ed. Basil.* 1538.

the men of eminence that distinguished the city of Florence, Flavio Blondo adverts in the first instance to Cosmo de' Medici[1]. "*A citizen, who, whilst he excels in wealth every other citizen of Europe, is rendered much more illustrious by his prudence, his humanity, his liberality, and what is more to our present purpose, by his knowledge of useful literature, and particularly of history.*" CHAP. I.

That extreme avidity for the works of the ancient writers which distinguished the early part of the fifteenth century, announced the near approach of more enlightened times. Whatever were the causes that determined men of wealth and learning to exert themselves so strenuously in this pursuit, certain it is that their interference was of the highest importance to the interests of posterity; and that if it had been much longer delayed, the loss would have been in a great degree irreparable; such of the manuscripts as then existed, of the ancient Greek and Roman authors, being daily perishing in obscure corners, a prey to oblivion and neglect. It was therefore a circumstance productive Researches after the writings of the ancients.

[1] *ap. Tiraboschi, Storia della Lett. Ital. v.* vi. *p.* 1. *p.* 27.

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ductive of the happiest consequences, that the pursuits of the opulent were at this time directed rather towards the recovery of the works of the ancients, than to the encouragement of contemporary merit; a fact that may serve in some degree to account for the dearth of original literary productions during this interval. Induced by the rewards that invariably attended a successful inquiry, those men who possessed any considerable share of learning, devoted themselves to this occupation, and to such a degree of enthusiasm was it carried, that the discovery of an ancient manuscript was regarded as almost equivalent to the conquest of a kingdom.

The history of the vicissitudes which the writings of the ancients have experienced, is little less than the history of literature itself, which has flourished or declined in proportion as they have been esteemed or neglected. A full and accurate detail of these circumstances, whilst it would be highly interesting to the scholar, would discharge in some degree the debt of gratitude due to those who have devoted their labours and their fortunes to this important service. In relinquishing an inquiry too extensive for the nature of the present work, it may here be allowed to advert to such remains

remains of the ancient authors as were brought to light during the period in question, by the munificence of Cosmo de' Medici, and the industry of those who so earnestly seconded his endeavours.

Of all the learned men of his time, Poggio[k] seems to have devoted himself the most particularly

Poggio Bracciolini.

[k] This extraordinary man, whose writings throw considerable light on the history of the age, and whose Latin stile pleases by its unaffected simplicity, was born in the year 1381, of the noble family of *Bracciolini*, originally of Florence, and having spent his youth in travelling through different countries of Europe, settled at length at Rome. He remained in this city as secretary in the service of *eight* successive popes, till he was invited to Florence in the year 1452, being then upwards of seventy years of age, to succeed Carlo Marsuppini as secretary to the republic. After his return to Florence he began to write the history of that state, but dying before he had brought it to a conclusion, it was afterwards completed by his unfortunate son Giacopo. His numerous works have been several times reprinted; the most general collection of them is that of *Basil*, 1538. Of all his productions his *Liber Facetiarum* is the most singular. The gross indecency of some of his tales can only be equalled by the freedom in which he indulges himself respecting the priesthood. It is difficult to conceive how he escaped in those times the resentment of that order; but we must remember that this work was produced in the bosom of

CHAP. I. larly to this employment, and his exertions were crowned with ample success. The number of manuscripts discovered by him in different parts of Europe, during the space of near fifty years, will remain a lasting proof of his perseverance, and of his sagacity in these pursuits. Whilst he attended the council of Constance in the year 1415, he took an opportunity of visiting the convent of S. Gallo, distant from that city about twenty miles, where he had been informed

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the church, and was probably an amusement for the learned leisure of prelates and of cardinals. In a short preface Poggio explains the motives that led him to this composition, and attempts to excuse its licentiousness.

Although Poggio was an ecclesiastic, he had several children whom he openly acknowledged. His friend the cardinal of S. Angelo having remonstrated with him on the irregularity of his conduct, Poggio, in his reply, acknowledges his fault, but at the same time attempts to extinguish the glare of it in the general blaze of licentiousness that involved the age. His letter on this occasion affords a striking proof of the depravity of the times. (*Poggii, Hist. de varietate Fortunæ*, &c. *p.* 207, *Ed. Par.* 1723.) He afterwards divested himself of his clerical character, and married a young and handsome wife; in justification of which measure he thought it necessary to write a treatise, which he intitled "*An seni sit uxor ducenda*," and which he addressed to Cosmo de' Medici. This *important* dissertation yet remains, though it has not hitherto been printed. *Zeno, Diss. Voss.* i. 36, &c.

informed that it was probable he might find some manuscripts of the ancient Roman writers. In this place he had the happiness to discover a complete copy of Quintilian, whose works had before appeared only in a mutilated and imperfect state. At the same time he found the three first books, and part of the fourth, of the Argonautics of Valerius Flaccus. Some idea may be formed of the critical state of these works from the account that Poggio has left. Buried in the obscurity of a dark and lonely tower, covered with filth and rubbish, their destruction seemed inevitable [l]. Of this fortunate discovery he gave immediate notice to his friend Leonardo Aretino, who, by representing to him the importance and utility of his labours, stimulated him to fresh exertions. The letter addressed by Leonardo to Poggio on this occasion is full of the highest commendations, and the most extravagant expressions of joy [m]. By his subsequent researches through France and Germany,

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[l] "Non in bibliothecâ ut eorum dignitas postulabat, "sed in teterrimo quodam et obscuro carcere, fundo "scilicet unius turris, quo ne vitâ quidem damnati detru- "derentur." *Pog. ap. Zeno, Diss. Voss.* i. 44.

[m] *Leonardi Brumi Ep. lib.* iv. *Ep.* 5.

CHAP. I. Germany, Poggio also recovered several of the orations of Cicero[n]. At that time only eight of the comedies of Plautus were known. The first complete copy of that author was brought to Rome at the instance of Poggio, by Nicholas of Treves, a German monk, from whom it was purchased by the cardinal Giordano Orsini, who was afterwards with great difficulty prevailed upon to suffer Poggio and his friends to copy it; and even this favour would not have been granted without the warm interference of Lorenzo, the brother of Cosmo de' Medici. The monk had flattered the Italian scholars that he also possessed a copy of the work of Aulus Gellius, and of the first book of Quintus Curtius; but in this they were disappointed[o]. From a Latin elegy by Christoforo Landino, on the death of Poggio, we are fully authorized to conclude that he also first discovered the beautiful and philosophic poem of Lucretius, that of Silius Italicus, and the valuable work of Columella[p]: and from a memorial yet existing in the

[n] *Trav. Ep. v.* i. *præf. p.* 36.

[o] *Trav. Ep. v.* i. *præf. p.* 40, 41. 43.

[p] "Quin etiam, ut veterum erueret monimenta virorum,
"Nec sineret turpem tot bona ferre situm,
"Ausus

the hand-writing of Angelo Politiano, it appears that the poems of Statius were brought into Italy by the same indefatigable investigator. In the opinion of Politiano these poems were indeed inaccurate and defective, yet all the copies which he had seen were derived from this manuscript [q].

Poggio

" Ausus barbaricos populos penitusque reposta
" Poscere Lingonicis oppida celsa jugis.
" Illius ergo manu nobis, doctissime Rhetor,
" Integer in Latium, *Quintiliane*, redis;
" Illius atque manu, divina poemata *Stli*
" *Italici* redeunt, usque legenda suis:
" Et ne nos lateat variorum cultus agrorum,
" Ipse *Columellæ* grande reportat opus:
" Et te, *Lucreti*, longo post tempore, tandem
" Civibus et Patriæ reddit habere tuæ.
" Tartareis potuit fratrem revocare tenebris
" Alterna Pollux dum statione movet;
" Conjugis ac rursus nigras subitura lacunas
" Eurydice sequitur fila canora sui.
" *Poggius* at sospes nigrâ e caligine tantos
" Ducit ubi æternum lux sit aperta viros."
Land. Eleg. ap. Band. Spec. Lit. Flor. vol. i. *p.* 93.

[q] " Incidi in exemplar Statii Silvarum, quod ex " Gallia *Poggius*, gallicâ scriptum manu, in Italiam " adtulerat; a quo videlicet uno, licet mendoso depra- " vatoque, et (ut arbitror) etiam dimidiato, reliqui " omnes codices qui sunt in manibus emanarunt."
Pol. ap. Band. Cat. Bib. Laur. Plut. xxxii. *Cod.* 10.

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Poggio had once formed the fullest expectations of obtaining a copy of the Decades of Livy, which a monk had assured him he had seen in the Cistercian monastery of Sora, comprized in two volumes in large Lombard characters [r]. He immediately wrote to a friend at Florence, requesting him to prevail on Cosmo de' Medici to direct his agent in that neighbourhood to repair to the monastery, and to purchase the work. Some time afterwards Poggio addressed himself to Leonello de' Este, marquis of Ferrara, on the same subject, but apparently without any great hopes of success [s]. His attempts to recover the writings of Tacitus, were equally fruitless [t]. After long inquiry, he was convinced that no copy of that author existed in

[r] "Duo sunt volumina magna, oblonga, literis Lon-
"gobardis in monasterio de Sora ordinis Cisterciensium
"prope Roschild, ad duo milliaria Theutonica, quo
"adiri potest a Lubich biduo amplius. Cura ergo ut
"Cosmus scribat quamprimum diligenter ad Gherardum
"de Bueris, ut si opus sit, ipse eo se conferat, imo omnino
"& conferat ad monasterium, nam si hoc verum est,
"triumphandum erit de Dacis."

Poggii Ep. ap. Trav. Ep. v. 1. *præf. p.* 46.

[s] *Poggius de Var. For. p.* 215.

[t] *Trav. Ep. v.* 1. *præf. p.* 47.

in Germany; yet at the distance of nearly a century, the five books of his history were brought from thence to Rome, and presented to Leo X. In prosecution of his favourite object, Poggio extended his researches into England, where he resided some time with the cardinal bishop of Winchester[u]; and from whence he transmitted to Italy the Bucolics of Calphurnius, and a part of the works of Petronius[v].

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The researches of Guarino Veronese[w], of Giovanni Aurispa, and of Francesco Filelfo were

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[u] Poggio has given a picture of the English nobility somewhat different from that of the present times— "Ilos (Gallos) Britanni sequuntur, Angli hodie vocitati, qui nobiles in civitatibus morari ignominiæ loco putant, rura, sylvis ac pascuis seclusa inhabitant; nobiliorem ex censu judicant; rem rusticam curant, vendentes lanam et armentorum fœtus; neque turpe existimant admisceri quæstui rusticano."

Poggius de Nobilitate, in Op. Bas 1538. *p.* 69.

[v] At least there is reason to conjecture so, from a passage in a letter from Poggio to Niccolo Niccoli; "Mittas ad me oro Bucolicam Calphurnii et partiunculam Petronii quas misi tibi ex Britannia," &c.

Trav Ep. v. i. *præf. p.* 29.

[w] Many particulars respecting Guarino may be collected from the poems of his pupil Janus Pannonius, printed

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were directed towards another quarter. For the purpose of procuring ancient manuscripts, and of acquiring a competent knowledge of the Greek language, they visited Constantinople and other parts of the east, where their perseverance was repaid by the acquisition of many valuable works. Guarino on his return to Italy was shipwrecked, and unfortunately for himself and the world, lost his treasures. So pungent was his grief upon this occasion, that if we may believe the relation of one of his countrymen, his hair became suddenly white [x]. Aurispa was more successful; he arrived at Venice in the year 1423, with two hundred and thirty-eight manuscripts, amongst which were all the works of

Guarino Veronese.

Giovanni Aurispa.

printed at *Basil* by Frobenius, in 1518, and which are possessed of considerable merit. Of these poems a new and improved edition was published at Utrecht in 1784, in 2 vols. 8vo. Guarino was born in 1370, and was the first native Italian who publicly taught the Greek tongue in Italy. He is, however, more celebrated as a preceptor than as an author. Almost all the learned men of the 15th century have profited by his instructions, but his diction is considered by Cortesi as harsh and inelegant. *Cort. de hom. doctis. Flor.* 1734.

[x] Pontico Virunio, Scrittore dei primi anni del secolo XVI.

ap. Tirab. Storia della Lett Ital. v vi. *p.* 1. *p.* 89.

of Plato, of Proclus, of Plotinus, of Lucian, of Xenophon, the histories of Arrian, of Dio, and of Diodorus Siculus, the geography of Strabo, the poems of Callimachus, of Pindar, of Oppian, and those attributed to Orpheus. In one of his epistles to Traversari, many other works are particularly enumerated, some of which are not at present known, and have most probably perished [y]. The large sums of money which Aurispa had expended in purchasing so considerable a number of books, and the charges of conveying them to Venice, had exhausted his finances, and he was obliged to apply to Traversari to procure him the sum of fifty florins to relieve him from his embarrassments. This was readily supplied by Cosmo de' Medici and his brother Lorenzo, to whom Aurispa expresses his obligations with great warmth, and apparent sincerity [z].

Filelfo

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[y] *Aurispæ Ep. in Epistolis Amb. Trav. lib.* xxiv. *Ep.* 53.

[z] "Volui ego Cosmo et Laurentio pro tot eorum erga "me beneficiis gratias agere in Epistolis quas ad eos "scribo, sed non poteram calamo prosequi quantum "eis obligari videor. Quamobrem id officium linguæ "tuæ reliqui."

Aurispæ Ep. in Trav. Epistolis. lib. xxiv. *Ep.* 57.

CHAP. I.

Francesco Filelfo.

Filelfo was about twenty years of age when he undertook his expedition to Constantinople, where he remained about seven years, and married the daughter of the noble and learned John Chrysoloras. In the year 1427 he returned to Italy with a great number of manuscripts which he had collected; and made a conspicuous figure amongst the literati there during the chief part of the fifteenth century, having been successively engaged as professor of different branches of science, at most of the universities and seminaries of education throughout that country. With all his learning, Filelfo had not acquired the art of controlling his own temper, which was in a high degree petulant, suspicious, and arrogant. His whole life was passed in quarrels and dissentions. At some times he narrowly escaped the public punishment due to his excesses; at others, the effects of the private resentment of those whom he had offended. He was even accused of having conspired against the life of Cosmo de' Medici, and of having engaged a Greek assassin to murder him. Their disagreement seems to have taken place during the exile of Cosmo at Venice. Amongst the letters of Filelfo there are some to Cosmo, in which he falls greatly short of the respect which he owed him for his patronage; and wherein

wherein he inveighs with much rancour against Niccolo Niccoli and Carlo Aretino, the particular friends of Cosmo [a]. From several of these letters he appears to have had frequent apprehensions of assassination; and even affects to accuse Cosmo of favouring the attempt [b]. How much

[a] Nicolaum Nicolum nosti; hic loquacior est, et levior; at Carolus Aretinus, ut est versuto occultoque ingenio, et eo plane improbo, ita mihi maxime inimicus. Is apud Medices plurimum potest. And the character he gives of Cosmo in a letter to the Cardinal of Bologna, dated 1432, is sufficiently invidious: "Cosmus quam-"quam videtur amantissimus mei, ejusmodi tamen virum "esse animadverto qui et simulet et dissimulet omnia. "Estque usque adeo taciturnus ut ne ab intimis quidem "familiaribus ac domesticis queat intelligi."

Phil. Ep p. 18, 19. *Ed.* 1501.

[b] By a letter of Filelfo to Lapo Castellionchio, which came to the sight of Ambrogio Traversari, it appeared that he expressed himself in terms of resentment against both Traversari and Cosmo de' Medici. Traversari upbraided him with his duplicity, and Filelfo attempted to justify it by accusing Cosmo, in his reply, of a design on his life. "De Cosmi Medices in me animo nihil est quod "minus credam. Nam quam me sit exosus jam pridem "expertus sum. Istius in me benevolentiam Philippus "sicarius declaret—itaque de reconcilianda gratia mihi "posthac verbum nullum facito. Sicis ipse venenisque "utatur. Ego autem ingenio et calamo."

Phil. Ep. p. 26.

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much Cosmo was superior to such imputations, appeared in the moderation of his conduct, which at length overcame even the arrogance and resentment of Filelfo himself; who lived to receive innumerable favours from him and his descendants; and died at Florence in the year 1481, in the eighty-third year of his age.

The productions of Filelfo are very numerous, and in almost every branch of literature [c]. His industry in collecting manuscripts was however of more indisputable service to the cause of learning. Of the particular works brought by him into Italy he has not left a very explicit account, but it appears that he had sent a considerable number to his friend Leonardo Giustiniani at Venice, from whom he found some difficulty in obtaining them, after his return. The letters of Filelfo contain indeed innumerable [c] complaints

[c] A very extensive catalogue of them may be found in the *Dissert. Voss.* of Apostolo Zeno. The character of Filelfo is well given by Paolo Cortesi (*De hom. doctis. p.* 32): "Habebat a natura ingenium vagum, multiplex, "volubile. Exstant ab eo scripta, et poemata, et ora-"tiones; sed ut vita, sic erat in toto genere varius. "Erat vendibilis sane scriptor, et is, qui opes, quam "scribendi laudem consequi malebat."

complaints of the injustice of his friends, in withholding the books which he had lent for their use, or intrusted to their care. Perhaps, says Tiraboschi, they acted upon the same principle as the enthusiasts of the darker ages, who considered the stealing the relics of a saint, not as a theft, but as a pious and meritorious act. Such was the high estimation in which these works were held, that a manuscript of the history of Livy, sent by Cosmo de' Medici to Alfonso king of Naples, with whom he was at variance, conciliated the breach between them, and although the king's physicians insinuated that the book was probably poisoned, Alfonso disregarded their suspicions, and began with great pleasure the perusal of the work.

Council of Florence.

In the year 1438 a general council was held by Eugenius IV. at Ferrara, for the purpose of settling some contested points, both of doctrine and discipline, between the Greek and Roman churches, preparatory to their proposed union; but the plague having made its appearance at that place, the council was in the following year transferred to Florence. On this occasion, not only the pope and several of his cardinals, the Greek patriarch and his metropolitans, but the emperor of the east, John Paleologus, attended in

1438.

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in perſon. Shortly before their arrival, Cosmo had been invested a second time with the office of Gonfaloniere, and the reception that he gave to these illustrious visitors, whilst it was highly honourable to his guests, was extremely gratifying to the citizens of Florence, who were as remarkable for the magnificence of their public exhibitions, as for their moderation and frugality in private life. As the questions agitated at this council would not admit of illustration from reasoning, and could only be argued from authority, the longer the dispute continued, the more were the parties at variance; but the critical situation of the eastern empire, then closely attacked by the Turks, and the expectations which the emperor had formed of procuring succours from the pope, and from other European princes, reconciled what the efforts of the schoolmen had only served to perplex. The proposed union accordingly took place; and the pope was acknowledged by the whole assembly as the legitimate successor of St. Peter. Little advantage was however derived by either of the parties from this remarkable transaction. The emperor was disappointed in his expectations of support, and with respect to the supremacy of the Roman church over the Greek, the ecclesiastics of the latter refused to obey the decree;

decree; and even many, who had been present and signed it at the council, publicly retracted at Constantinople [d].

Revival of the Platonic Philosophy.

For the purpose of conducting these important debates, each of the parties had selected six disputants, eminent for their rank and learning. Amongst those chosen on the part of the Greeks, was Gemisthus Pletho, who was then at a very advanced period of a life which had been devoted to the study of the Platonic philosophy [e]. As often as his public avocations afforded him an opportunity, he employed himself in the propagation of his opinions, which were not only new to the scholars of Italy, but were greatly at variance with those doctrines which had long obtained an uninterrupted ascendancy in all the public

[d] A full and interesting account of the visit of the Greek emperor to Italy, and of the proceedings and consequences of the council of Florence, may be found in Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, c. 66.

[e] Pletho, though living in 1439, had been the preceptor of Emanuel Chrysoloras, the great promoter of Grecian literature in Italy, whom he however long survived, having lived to the extended age of one hundred years. *Hodius de Græcis illustribus, p.* 22. *Ed. Lond.* 1742.

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public schools and seminaries of learning. So powerful was the effect which the discourses of Gemisthus had upon Cosmo de' Medici, who was his constant auditor, that he determined to establish an academy at Florence, for the sole purpose of cultivating this new and more elevated species of philosophy. With this view he selected Marsilio Ficino, the son of his favourite physician, and destined him, though very young, to be the support of his future establishment. The education of Ficino was, as he has himself informed us, entirely directed to the new philosophy[f]. The doctrines and precepts of the Grecian sage were assiduously instilled into his infant mind, and as he increased in years, he applied

[f] Thus he speaks of his education in his proeme to his translation of the works of Plotinus, addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici: "Magnus Cosmus, senatus consulto patriæ "pater, quo tempore concilium inter Græcos atque La- "tinos, sub Eugenio pontifice, Florentiæ tradabatur; "philosophum Græcum nomine Gemisthum, cognomine "Plethonem, quasi Platonem alterum, de mysteriis pla- "tonicis disputantem frequenter audivit. E cujus ore "fervente, sic afflatus est protinus, sic animatus, ut inde "*Academiam* quandam alta mente conceperit, hunc oppor- "tuno primo tempore pariturus. Deinde cum concep- "tum tantum magnus ille Medices quodammodo partu- "riret, me, electissimi Medici sui filium, adhuc puerum "tanto operi destinavit," &c. *Plotini op. Flor.* 1492. *per Ant. Miscominum magnifico sumptu Laurentii Medicis patriæ servatoris.*

applied himself to the study, not of the works of Plato only, but also of those of Plotinus, a distinguished promoter of the doctrines of that philosopher in the third century. Nor were the expectations which Cosmo had formed of Ficino disappointed. The Florentine academy was some years afterwards established with great credit, and was the first institution in Europe for the pursuit of science, detached from the scholastic method then universally adopted. It is true, the sublime and fanciful doctrines of Plato were almost as remote from the purposes of common life, and general utility, as the dogmatic opinions of Aristotle: but the introduction of the former was nevertheless of essential service to the cause of free inquiry, and substantial knowledge. By dividing the attention of the learned, they deprived the doctrines of Aristotle of that servile respect and veneration which had so long been paid to them: and by introducing the discussion of new subjects, they prepared the way for the pursuit of truths more properly within the sphere of the human intellect.

Cosmo establishes the Laurentian Library.

As the natural disposition of Cosmo led him to take an active part in collecting the remains of the ancient Greek and Roman writers, so he

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was enabled by his wealth, and his extensive mercantile intercourse with different parts of Europe, and of Asia, to gratify a passion of this kind beyond any other individual. To this end he laid injunctions on all his friends and correspondents, as well as on the missionaries and preachers who travelled into the remotest countries, to search for and procure ancient manuscripts, in every language, and on every subject[g]. Besides the services of Poggio and Traversari, Cosmo availed himself of those of Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Antonio da Massa, Andrea de Rimino, and many others. The situation of the eastern empire, then daily falling into ruins by the repeated attacks of the Turks, afforded him an opportunity of obtaining many inestimable works in the Hebrew, Greek, Chaldaic, Arabic, and

[g] "The example of the Roman pontiff was preceded "or imitated by a Florentine merchant, who governed "the republic without arms, and without a title. Cosmo "of Medici was the father of a line of princes, whose "name and age are almost synonymous with the restor-"ation of learning: his credit was ennobled into fame; "his riches were dedicated to the service of mankind; "he corresponded at once with Cairo and London, and "a cargo of Indian spices and Greek books were often "imported in the same vessel." *Gibbon's Hist. of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, c. 66.

and Indian languages [h]. From these beginnings arose the celebrated library of the Medici, which, after having been the constant object of the solicitude of its founder, was after his death further enriched by the attention of his descendants, and particularly of his grandson Lorenzo; and after various vicissitudes of fortune, and frequent and considerable additions, has been preserved to the present times under the name of the *Bibliotheca Mediceo-Laurentiana.*

Niccolo Niccoli founds the Library of S. Marco.

Amongst those who imitated the example of Cosmo de' Medici was Niccolo Niccoli, another citizen of Florence, who devoted his whole time and fortune to the acquisition of ancient manuscripts; in this pursuit he had been eminently successful, having collected together eight hundred volumes of Greek, Roman, and Oriental authors; a number in those times justly thought very considerable. Several of these works he had copied with great accuracy, and had diligently employed himself in correcting their defects and arranging the text in its proper order. In this respect he is justly regarded by

[h] *Bandini, Lettera sopra i principj e progressi della Biblioteca Laurenziana. Firenze,* 1773.

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by Mehus as the father of this species of criticism [i]. He died in 1436, having by his will directed that his library should be devoted to the use of the public, and appointed sixteen Curators, amongst whom was Cosmo de' Medici. After his death it appeared that he was greatly in debt, and that his liberal intentions were likely to be frustrated by the insolvency of his circumstances. Cosmo therefore proposed to his associates, that if they would resign to him the right of disposition of the books, he would himself discharge all the debts of Niccolo; to which they readily acceded. Having thus obtained the sole direction of the manuscripts, he deposited them, for public use, in the Dominican monastery of S. Marco at Florence, which he had himself erected at an enormous expense [k]. This

[i] *In præf. ad Ep. Trav. p* 50.

[k] From the funeral oration of Niccolo Niccoli, by Poggio, we learn, that the most celebrated collections that had been formed in Italy, before that of Niccolo, were those of Petrarca, of Lodovico Marsilio an Augustine monk, of Boccaccio, and of Colucio Salutati. The first of these was sold and dispersed after the death of its possessor. Marsilio and Boccaccio bequeathed their collections to the library of the Augustine monastery at Florence; and that of Colucio, which almost equalled in number the library of Niccolo, was sold by his children

This collection was the foundation of another celebrated library in Florence, known by the name of the *Bibliotheca Marciana;* which is yet open to the inspection of the learned, at the distance of three centuries [1].

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In

after his decease. To Niccolo Niccoli we must therefore attribute the honour of having set the first example of forming in Italy an institution so favourable to the interests of learning, as a *public library*.—"Id egit vir egregius, doctorum virorum amantissimus, quod nullum multis antea seculis fecisse, neque memoria hominum constat, neque ullæ literæ prodiderunt. Rem sane statuit temporum omnium ac seculorum laudibus celebrandam. Ex libris, quos homo nequaquam opulentus, et rerum persæpe inops, supra octingentos codices, summo labore ac diligentia comparuerat, decrevit testamento fieri per amicos publicam bibliothecam, ad utilitatem hominum sempiternam. O præclarissimum omnium quem unquam condita sunt et utillissimum testamentum! quo non unum aliquem, aut alterum, sed tum Græcas, tum Latinas musas, hujus preciosissimi thesauri reliquit hæredes."

Poggius in funere Nic. in op. Basil, 277.

[1] Tiraboschi suspects that the books collected by Cosmo and by Niccolo Niccoli were united together in the library of S. Marco, and that Lorenzo was the first of his family who began a collection under his own roof. (*Storia della Lett. Ital. vol.* vi. *parte* i. *p.* 98.) But ample evidence remains of the establishment of a domestic library by Cosmo. To say nothing of the authority of

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The Vatican Library founded by Pope Nicholas V.

In the arrangement of the library of S. Marco, Cosmo had procured the assistance of Tomaso Calandrino, who drew up a scheme for that purpose, and prepared a scientific catalogue

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the modern Florentine bibliographers, and particularly of Bandini, (*Lettera sopra i principj*, &c.) I may cite the explicit testimony of Alberto Avogradi, a contemporary of Cosmo, who addressed to him a poem in two books, intitled, *De religione & magnificentia illustris Cosmi Medices Florentini*, which has been published by Lami, (*Deliciæ Erudit. v* 12) in which these two collections are distinctly adverted to. Speaking in his first book of the public buildings erected by Cosmo, and particularly of the monastery of S. Marco, he adds,

" Post cellas gravis iste labor numerare libellos
" Quos duplici linguâ bibliotheca tenet;
" Ista tenet *nostros*, servat pars altera *Græcos*,
" Quis poterit quot sunt enumerare libros ?"

But in his second book, when he describes the palace of Cosmo, he expatiates largely on his library.

" Iste colit musas, colit hic quoque verba soluta :
" O mira in *tectis bibliotheca fuis !*
" Nunc legit altisoni sparsim pia scripta *Maronis*,
" Nunc *Augustini* sacra notata pii.
" Aut ea quæ *Cicero ; Senecæ* moralibus atque
" Insudat, memori mente notanda notans.
" Interdum ne fors semper sua pectora curis
" Repleat, adveniant dulcia scripta jubet,
" Et quando accedit *Naso*, vel quando *Tibullus ;*
" Aut priscis lectis sæpe moderna legit,
" Atque novas laudat musas, nova carmina spectans
" Dicit, habet faciles hæc nova musa modo ."

logue of the books it contained. In selecting a coadjutor, the choice of Cosmo had fallen upon an extraordinary man. Though Tomaso was the son of a poor physician of Sarzana, and ranked only in the lower order of the clergy, he had the ambition to aim at possessing some specimens of these venerable relics of ancient genius. His learning and his industry enabled him to gratify his wishes, and his perseverance surmounted the disadvantages of his situation. In this pursuit he was frequently induced to anticipate his scanty revenue, well knowing, that the estimation in which he was held by his friends, would preserve him from pecuniary difficulties. With the Greek and Roman authors no one was more intimately acquainted, and as he wrote a very fine hand, the books he possessed acquired additional value from the marginal observations which he was accustomed to make in perusing them. By the rapid degrees of fortunate preferment, Tomaso was, in the short space of twelve months, raised from his humble situation to the chair of St. Peter [m], and in eight years, during which time he enjoyed the supreme dignity, by the name of Nicholas V. acquired a reputation that has increased with the increasing estimation

[m] *Bart. Facius de viris illustribus. Flor.* 1745.

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estimation of those studies which he so liberally fostered and protected. The scanty library of his predecessors had been nearly dissipated or destroyed by frequent removals between Avignon and Rome, according as the caprice of the reigning pontiff chose either of those places for his residence; and it appears from the letters of Traversari, that scarcely any thing of value remained. Nicholas V. is therefore to be considered as the founder of the library of the Vatican. In the completion of this great design, it is true, much was left to be performed by his successors; but Nicholas had before his death collected upwards of five thousand volumes of Greek and Roman authors, and had not only expressed his intention of establishing a library for the use of the Roman Court, but had also taken measures for carrying such intention into execution [n].

Invention of printing.

Whilst the munificence of the rich, and the industry of the learned, were thus employed throughout Italy in preserving the remains of the ancient authors, some obscure individuals in a corner of Germany had conceived, and were silently bringing to perfection, an invention, which,

[n] *Trav. Ep. in præf p.* 65.

which, by means equally effectual and unexpected, secured to the world the result of their labours. This was the art of printing with moveable types; a discovery of which the beneficial effects have been increasing to the present day, and are yet advancing with accelerated progress [o]. The coincidence of this discovery with

[o] Of the numerous authors who have minutely inquired into the rise of this useful art, no one has had greater opportunities of obtaining information, or has pursued his inquiries with more accuracy than Mr. Heineken, who has clearly shewn, that the fabrication of cards for games of chance, was first practised in Germany, and was in use before the close of the fourteenth century. Not long afterwards, the same art that had at first been subservient to the amusement, was employed to gratify the superstition of the people, and it became usual to cut upon blocks of wood the figures of saints, with inscriptions. Mr. Heineken has cited an indisputable specimen of the latter, so early as the year 1423. These inscriptions gave the first idea of printing with tablets of wood, which are well known to have led the way to the invention of moveable types. The first book printed with such types was a copy of the bible, which made its appearance between the years 1450 and 1452. This discovery is certainly to be attributed to the Germans, whether it consisted in printing with blocks of wood, or with types moveable at pleasure. John Guttenburg of Mayence has the best claim to the honour of an invention which has so essentially contributed to enlarge the sphere of action of the human faculties. *Idée générale d'une collection complete d'estampes. Leipsic & Vienne*, 1771.

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with the spirit of the times in which it had birth, was highly fortunate. Had it been made known at a much earlier period, it would have been disregarded, or forgotten, from the mere want of materials on which to exercise it; and had it been further postponed, it is probable, that notwithstanding the generosity of the rich, and the diligence of the learned, many works would have been totally lost, which are now justly regarded as the noblest monuments of the human intellect.

Capture of Constantinople.

Nearly the same period of time that gave the world this important discovery, saw the destruction of the Roman empire in the east. In the year 1453 the city of Constantinople was captured by the Turks, under the command of Mahomet II. after a vigorous defence of fifty-three days. The encouragement which had been shewn to the Greek professors at Florence, and the character of Cosmo de' Medici as a promoter of letters, induced many learned Greeks to seek a shelter in that city, where they met with a welcome and honourable reception. Amongst these were Demetrius Chalcondyles, Johannes Andronicus Calistus, Constantius and Johannes Lascaris, in whom the Platonic philosophy obtained fresh partizans, and by whose support it began openly to oppose itself to that of Aristotle.

1453.

stotle [p]. Between the Greek and Italian professors a spirit of emulation was kindled, that operated most favourably on the cause of letters. Public schools were instituted at Florence for the study of the Greek tongue. The facility of diffusing their labours by means of the newly-discovered art of printing, stimulated the learned to fresh exertions; and in a few years the cities of Italy vied with each other in the number and elegance of works produced from the press [q].

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[p] The celebrated Johannes Argyropylus, though ranked by Dr. Hody amongst the learned Greeks who did not arrive in Italy until after the capture of Constantinople, had undoubtedly taken up his residence there before that event, as is fully shewn by Mehus.

Præf. ad Trav. Ep. v. i. *præf.* 20.

[q] Although Italy has no pretensions to the invention of printing, it was the first country that followed the example of Germany, and that with such ardour, as not only to outvie the rest of Europe in the number of printed works, but even to give speedy perfection to the art. Much investigation has been employed in determining in what city of Italy it was first practised, and attempts have been made to shew that Venice produced the "*Decor Puellarum*," in 1461, and Milan, the "*Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores*," in 1465. The evidence of these is at least doubtful; but it is certain, that in the year last mentioned, the works of Lactantius were printed at the monastery

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Towards the latter period of his life, a great part of the time that Cosmo could withdraw from the

Cosmo applies himself to study.

nastery of Soubiaco, in the Campagna of Rome, and that the grammatical work of Donatus had before issued from the same press. The character used by the German inventors was the *Gothic*, and those of the early Roman printers partook of the same form, but in a few years it was superseded by the character now in general use, which has therefore obtained the name of *Roman*. In the year 1471 this art was practised in Naples, Bologna, Ferrara, and Florence, and in a short time there was scarcely a place of any note in Italy in which it was unattempted. The *Carattere Corsivo*, or running type, was the invention of the celebrated Aldo Manutio, and being first used in Italy, thence acquired the name of the *Italic*, or Aldine, character. Strictly speaking, however, the Roman character itself was derived from the *cursive character* of the ancient Romans, as it appeared in the MSS. of the times, with such corrections and improvements as were suitable to the taste of the letter-founder, and not from the original or primary character. That both the Greeks and Romans had a smaller, distinct, and more ready character for common use, is well known; and from that of the Romans all the modern European characters are supposed to have been derived. "Ex illo "autem minusculo charactere cursivo, quam veteribus "Romanis, ut et Græcis notum fuisse demonstravimus, "defluxerunt illi characteres quos Cl. Mabillon, *lib.* i. "*cap.* 11. *de arte diplomatica*, et hinc Cl. Abbas Gode- "fridus, in *Chron. Gottwicensi*, *tom.* i. *p.* 16. vocant *Gothicos*, "*Longobardicos*, *Franco-gallicos*, seu *Merovingicos*, *Carolinos*, "*Anglo-*

the administration of public affairs was passed at his seats at Careggi and Caffaggiolo, where he applied himself to the cultivation of his farms, from which he derived no inconsiderable revenue. But his happiest hours were devoted to the study of letters and philosophy, or passed in the company and conversation of learned men. When he retired at intervals to his seat at Careggi, he was generally accompanied by Ficino, where, after having been his protector, he became his pupil in the study of the Platonic philosophy. For his use Ficino began those laborious translations of the works of Plato and his followers, which were afterwards completed and published in the lifetime and by the liberality of Lorenzo. Amongst the letters of Ficino is one from his truly venerable patron, which bespeaks most forcibly the turn of his mind, and his earnest desire of acquiring knowledge, even at his advanced period of life[r]. "*Yester-*

" *Anglo-saxonicos, Toletanos, Sueco-gothicos*, &c. Omnes illi " characteres, primo adspectu dissimiles, ad unum eun- " demque *cursivum* veterum Romanorum, veluti ad suam " fontem revocandi sunt; et varias pro variis et regio- " nibus, et sæculis, et librariorum manibus induerunt " formas." *Villoison Anecd. Græc. p.* 149.——For the above extract, elucidating this curious subject, I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Parr.

[r] *Ficini Ep. lib.* i. *Ep.* 1.

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"*Yesterday*," says he, "*I arrived at Careggi—not so much for the purpose of improving my fields, as myself—let me see you, Marsilio, as soon as possible, and forget not to bring with you the book of our favourite Plato,* DE SUMMO BONO—*which I presume, according to your promise, you have ere this translated into Latin; for there is no employment to which I so ardently devote myself as to find out the true road to happiness. Come then, and fail not to bring with you the Orphean lyre.*" Whatever might be the proficiency of Cosmo in the mysteries of his favourite philosopher, there is reason to believe that he applied those doctrines and precepts which furnished the litigious disputants of the age with a plentiful source of contention, to the purposes of real life and practical improvement. Notwithstanding his active and useful life, he often regretted the hours he had lost. *Midas was not more sparing of his money,* says Ficino, *than Cosmo was of his time.*

Marriage of Piero de' Medici

The wealth and influence that Cosmo had acquired, had long entitled him to rank with the most powerful princes of Italy, with whom he might have formed connexions by the intermarriage of his children; but being apprehensive, that such measures might give rise to suspicions that he entertained designs inimical to the freedom of the state, he rather chose to increase his interest amongst the citizens of Florence,

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Florence, by the marriage of his children into the most distinguished families of that place. Piero his eldest son married Lucretia Tornabuoni, by whom he had two sons, Lorenzo, the subject of our present history, born on the first day of January 1448, and Giuliano, born in the year 1453. Piero had also two daughters, Nannina, who married Bernardo Rucellai, and Bianca, who became the wife of Gulielmo de' Pazzi. Giovanni, the younger son of Cosmo, espoused Cornelia de' Alessandri, by whom he had a son who died very young. Giovanni himself did not long survive. He died in the year 1461, at forty-two years of age. Living under the shade of paternal authority, his name scarcely occurs in the pages of history; but the records of literature bear testimony, that in his disposition and studies he did not derogate from the reputation of that characteristic attachment to men of learning, by which his family was invariably distinguished [s].

Birth of Lorenzo and Giuliano.

Besides

[s] In the Laurentian library are several manuscripts which appear to have been copied for his use. At the close of the works of Lactantius (Plut. xxi. Cod. 2.) is the following memorial—*Scriptus autem fuit manu mea Gerardi Johannis del Ciriagio civis et notarii Florentini pro Johanne*

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Besides his legitimate offspring, Cosmo left also a natural son, Carlo de' Medici, whom he liberally educated, and who compensated the disadvantages of his birth by the respectability of his life. The manners of the times might be alleged in extenuation of a circumstance apparently

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Johanne Cosmi de' Medicis optimo et primario cive Florentino de anno Domini MCCCCLVIII. *Florentiæ, Laus Deo.*—Similar memorials occur in other instances. (*Bandini, Cat. Bib. Laur.*) Nicolo Tignosio inscribed to Giovanni de' Medici his treatise *De laudibus Cosmi patris ejus.* On his death Naldo Naldio addressed a Latin poem to his father, which is printed in the *Carmina illust. Poet. Ital. v.* 6. *p.* 451. The same work contains other testimonies of the regret that attended his loss. I shall content myself with giving one of the several epitaphs that Peregrino Allio wrote upon this occasion:

Hic sita magnanimi *Medicis* sunt ossa *Joannis*
Quanto heu privata est urbsque, domusque viro!
Fratre Petro, patriæque bonis, Cosmoque parente,
Ac tanto rerum culmine dignus erat.

The death of Giovanni de' Medici may afford a useful lesson: and I shall not conceal from my readers, that in the manuscript I have before cited, intitled, *Origine e descendenza della casa de' Medici*, this event is said to have been attributed to *high living*. "Molti vogliono che tal "morte di Giovanni derivasse dal soverchio bere e man-"giare, perche era di natura caldissimo, e bevendo e "mangiando tutte robe calde furono poi la cagione della "sua morte."

rently inconsistent with the gravity of the character of Cosmo de' Medici; but Cosmo himself disclaimed such apology, and whilst he acknowledged his youthful indiscretion, made amends to society for the breach of a salutary regulation, by attending to the morals and the welfare of his illegitimate descendant. Under his countenance Carlo became canon of Prato, and one of the apostolic notaries; and as his general residence was at Rome, he was frequently resorted to by his father and brothers, for his advice and assistance in procuring ancient manuscripts and other valuable remains of antiquity [t].

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The death of Giovanni de' Medici, on whom Cosmo had placed his chief expectations, and the

[t] Plures extant in tabulario Mediceo Caroli Epistolæ, tum ad patrem tum ad fratres, in quibus de rebus suis, et emendis Græcis et Latinis codicibus scribit. Cetera inter mandatum habuit a Cosmo, ut Phalaridis Epistolas, e Græco, in Latinum convertendas curaret. Inter Protonotarios Apostolicos relatus fuit, ac demum collegio Canonicorum Pratensium præfuit. Extat in principe æde prope sacrarium, marmoreum ejus monumentum, a Dantio Aretino scalptum, cum hoc titulo, CAROLO MEDICES COSMI FILIO PRÆPOSITO QUI OBIT MCDXCIIII.

Fabronius, in vita Cos. 2, 213.

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

Celebrity of Cosmo de' Medici.

THE kindness and attention shewn by Cosmo to men of learning were not without their reward. His virtues and his liberality were their most frequent topic. In every event of his life they were ready to attend him, to participate with him in his prosperity, and to sympathize with him in his misfortunes. The affectionate epistles addressed to him by Poggio on his banishment to Padua, and on his recal to Florence,

rence, exhibit a proof, not only of the sincere esteem, but of the high admiration of their author[u]. Of the continued attachment of Leonardo Aretino to his great patron, innumerable evidences remain. Amongst the eminent men of the time, who endeavoured to console him for the untimely loss of his son, was Pius II. who addressed to him a Latin epistle, to which Cosmo replied with great propriety and dignity, and in a style not inferior to that of this learned pontiff[v]. To the poem of Alberto Avogradi, we have before had occasion to refer[w]. A considerable number of works, as well

[u] *Poggii Ep. in Op. p.* 312. 339. *Ed Basil.*

[v] These letters will be found in the Appendix, No. IV.

[w] "*De religione et magnificentia Illustris Cosmi Medices Florentini.*" By which however the author only means to celebrate the buildings erected by Cosmo for public and private use. Accordingly, in his first book he adverts to the churches of S. Marco and S. Lorenzo, the dormitory of the convent of S. Croce, the chapels of Boschetti and Monte Averno, and the monastery of Fiesole, of each of which he gives a description. He also alludes to the intention which Cosmo had then formed, and which he afterwards executed, of erecting at Jerusalem a house of

CHAP. I. well in verse as in prose, inscribed to him on different occasions, were, after his death, collected together by Bartolomeo Scala, and are yet preserved in the Laurentian Library, under the name of *Collectiones Cosmianæ* [x].

But

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reception for poor and infirm pilgrims, in which it seems he had to contend with the prejudices of the Saracens.

——" Domini tu sancta sepulchra,
" Quæ sunt *Jerusalem* condecorasse paras,
" Magna parat Cosmus, sed tu, Saladine, recusas,
" O rapiant sensus, ista negata, tuos."

In the second book Avogradi recounts, in similar language, the magnificence of the palaces and other buildings erected by Cosmo for secular purposes.

[x] PLUT. LIV. COD. 10. This manuscript consists of *seventy-two* distinct pieces, composing a large volume in quarto, with the portrait of Cosmo prefixed to the work, which is also preceded by the following short introductory epistle from Scala to Lorenzo de Medici:

" Bart. Scala, Laurentio Medici, urbis spei, S. D.
" Collegi, Laurenti charissime, scripta compluria et
" omnia fere in quæ manus inciderunt, ubi nomen Cosmi
" Avi tui, Patris hujus urbis legeretur. Ea redegi in
" volumen, quod mitto nunc ad te. Velim ut tantum
" otii subtrahas maximis tuis occupationibus, ut mira et
" legendi et intelligendi divini ingenii tui solertia omnia
" percurras; et si tibi videbuntur digna quæ legantur
" ab hominibus, alicui ex bibliothecis Cosmi ut inserantur
" curabis. Vale."

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But perhaps the most extraordinary production that solicited the patronage of Cosmo, was the *Hermaphroditus* of Antonio Beccatelli, or, as he is usually called from Palermo, the place of his birth, Antonio Panhormita[y]. When the respectability and situation of Beccatelli are considered, our surprize must be excited on finding him the avowed author of a production so grossly indecent as the Hermaphroditus; when we

Antonio Beccatelli.

[y] Beccatelli was born of a respectable family, in 1394, and was for some years a public professor of history and letters at Pavia, where he enjoyed the protection of Filippo Visconti, duke of Milan, and a salary of eight hundred gold crowns. After having received the laurel by the favour of the emperor Sigismund, he went to the court of Alfonso, king of Naples, in whose employ he passed the remainder of his days, honoured with the office of his secretary and counsellor, and the constant companion both of his studies and his military expeditions. His "*Dicta et facta Alphonsi Regis Arragoniæ*," in four books, were commented on by Æneas Sylvius (pope Pius II.), and have been frequently printed. His epistles and orations were published at Venice in 1553. His *Hermaphroditus* is divided into two books, containing short epigrammatic poems on a variety of subjects. Some of the least exceptionable may be found at the end of his "*Epistolæ et Orationes*," (*Ven.* 1553); and others in the "*Carmina illustrium Poetarum Italorum.*" (*Vol.* II. *p.* 109.) The remainder have been strictly confined within the limits of the Laurentian Library.

CHAP. I. we advert to the age and character of Cosmo de' Medici, it is no less extraordinary that he should be the patron to whom it is inscribed.

Beccatelli did not however escape without reprehension, for thus indulging, at an advanced age, a pruriency of imagination not excusable at any time of life. Amongst others, Filelfo and Lorenzo Valla exclaimed against his licentiousness. Invectives against the author were likewise poured out from the pulpit, and he was burnt in effigy at Ferrara and afterwards at Milan. Valla had the charity to hope, that the third time the author might be burnt in his proper person [z]. Even Poggio, who in his *Facetiæ* had not confined himself within the strict limits of decorum, thought it necessary to

[z] "Declamarono contra di esso, insino dal pulpito, "*Bernardino da Siena*, e *Roberto da Lecce*, che in Bologna, "in Ferrara, e in Milano lo fecero abbrucciare nelle pub- "bliche piazze. Se dobbiam credere al *Valla (In Facium "Invect.* II. *p.* 543. *Ed. Basil*, 1540). Non solo due volte "fu abbruciato il libro, ma il ritratto ancora del *Panor- "mita: Certe bis in celeberrimis Italiæ locis, primum Ferrariæ "cum Papa Synodo adesset, iterum Mediolani omnium populorum "frequentia inspectante, per imaginem chartaceam crematus est. "Tertio per se ipsum cremandus ut spero."

Zeno Dissert. Voss. v. i. *p.* 316.

to remonstrate with his friend Beccatelli on the indecency of his work, though he highly commends its elegance and latinity[a]. Beccatelli attempted to excuse his performance by the authority of the ancient Greek and Roman writers, but his reply may rather be considered as a repetition than as a justification of his offence[b]. On the contrary, there were men of known talents who expressed their thorough approbation of this performance. A commendatory epistle of Guarino Veronese, is prefixed to the manuscript copy of it in the Laurentian Library,

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[a] "Delectatus sum mehercle, varietate rerum, et "elegantia versuum, simulque admiratus sum res adeo "impudicas, adeo ineptas, tam venuste, tam composite "a te dici: atque ita multa exprimi turpiuscula, ut non "enarrari, sed agi videantur; nec ficta à te jocandi "causa, ut existimo, sed acta extimari possint. Laudo "ego doctrinam tuam, jocunditatem carminis, jocos ac "sales, tibique gratias ago pro portiuncula mea, qui "latinas musas, quæ jamdudum nimium dormierunt à "somno excitas. Pro charitate tamen, qua omnibus "debitores sumus, unum est quod te monere et debeo et "volo, ut scilicet deinceps graviora quædam mediteris."— "Scis enim non licere idem nobis, qui Christiani sumus, "quod olim poetis qui deum ignorabant."

Poggii Op. Ed. Bas. p. 49.

[b] *Beccatelli Epist. lib.* 4. *p.* 80.

CHAP. I. Library, in which he defends Beccatelli, by alleging the example of St. Jerome.

Literary Quarrels.

One of the most striking, though not the most pleasing features, in the history of the fifteenth century, is exhibited in the frequent and violent dissensions which occurred amongst the most distinguished scholars of the time. In some instances these disputes arose between the chiefs of the two leading sects of philosophy; whilst in others the contest was more personal, and originated in the high opinion entertained by the disputants of their own respective merits.

Bessarion and George of Trebisond.

The controversy between cardinal Bessarion and George Trapezuntius, or of Trebisond, was of the former kind. A Greek by birth, Bessarion had early imbibed the doctrines of Plato. Having attained the dignity of Bishop of Nice, he attended in his public capacity the council of Florence, and was one of the disputants on the part of the Greeks. Whether Bessarion was alarmed at the disorderly state of his own country, or whether he found himself influenced by the arguments of his opponent, is uncertain; but soon after his return to Constantinople, he paid another visit to Italy, where he passed the remainder of his days. His learning and his integrity recommended him to Eugenius IV. who

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who in the year 1439 honoured him with the purple; and it has been said, that a mistake made by his secretary prevented him from obtaining the pontifical dignity; but the futility of this tale of Jovius has been sufficiently exposed by Hody [c]. That he had nearly arrived at that honour is however certain; and his more fortunate competitor Pius II. endeavoured to console him for his disappointment, by bestowing upon him the empty title of Patriarch of Constantinople. In the year 1468, Bessarion gave a striking proof of his munificence and love of literature, by presenting his very valuable collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts to the state of Venice, to be deposited in the church of St. Mark. His letter to the senate on this occasion, gives us a most favourable idea of his temper and character [d]. George, though called of Trebisond, was a Cretan by birth, who, after having taught in different parts of Italy, was at length called to Rome by Nicholas V. and nominated one of the apostolic secretaries. His arrogant and haughty temper soon offended the Pope, and he was compelled to spend the remainder

[c] *Hodius de Græcis illustribus, Lond.* 1742, *p.* 146. It is however related by Mr. Gibbon, b. xii. c. 66.

[d] *Lettere di Principi*, v. i. *p.* 2.

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remainder of his days in seeking a precarious subsistence in different parts of Greece and Italy. The dispute between him and Bessarion was occasioned by Theodore Gaza, who published a treatise against the Platonic philosophy, and in commendation of the opinions of Aristotle, to which Bessarion opposed a temperate and well-written reply. Gaza, overpowered by the arguments, or the authority of his adversary, declined any further controversy; but George of Trebisond boldly came forward to the relief of the declining cause of Aristotle, and in several invectives against the Platonists, endeavoured to throw an odium on their doctrines and their morals; insomuch, that there is scarcely a crime with which he hesitates to charge them, or a public calamity which he does not ascribe to the prevalence of their system. This attack again called forth Bessarion, who, in his treatise "*In Calumniatorem Platonis*[e]," is considered as having obtained a complete victory over his opponent. Other learned Greeks then in Italy joined in the debate. The Italians were indeed silent spectators of the controversy; but the eloquence of Bessarion, and the example and patronage of the Medici,

[e] First printed by Sweynheim and Pannartz at Rome about 1470, and several times afterwards, particularly by Aldus in 1516.

Medici, overpowered the partizans of Aristotle, and the Platonic academy instituted by Cosmo, acquired additional strength, till by the countenance and support of his grandson Lorenzo, it arrived at its highest pitch of eminence. CHAP. I.

A debate of this nature, on an important subject, if kept within the bounds of decorum, affects not the disputants with any degree of opprobrium, except so far as it may attach to the erroneousness of their opinions, or the futility of their arguments; but this applies not to the other kind of controversy to which I have before alluded, and of which the age in question produced frequent instances. The turbulent and vindictive temper of Filelfo has already been animadverted on. Unwearied in soliciting the favours of the great, he often extorted promises which were never meant to be performed, but the breach of which infallibly brought down the weight of his resentment. Almost all the sovereigns of Italy were successively the subject of his indecent satire, or his exaggerated complaints. He did not however escape without full retribution for the abuse which he so liberally dealt around him. In Poggio he met with an antagonist, that, if possible, exceeded him in rancour and scurrility. Their dispute commenced in an attack made by Filelfo on the character of Niccolo Poggio and Filelfo.

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Niccolo Niccoli, which, if we give credit even to his friend Leonardo Aretino, was not perfectly immaculate[f]. This gave occasion to the *invectivæ* of Poggio against Filelfo. If we for a moment suppose there could have been the slightest foundation for the charges exhibited against Filelfo in these pieces, he must have been a monster of depravity. After reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, Poggio pursues his track from place to place, successively accusing him of fraud, ingratitude, theft, adultery, and yet more scandalous crimes. The voyage of Filelfo to Constantinople was undertaken to shelter himself from punishment. The kindness of Chrysoloras, who received him destitute and friendless into his house, he repaid by debauching his daughter, whom Chrysoloras was therefore obliged to bestow upon him in marriage Not satisfied with serious invective, Poggio has also introduced his adversary in his *Facetiæ*; and Filelfo will long be remembered as the original Hans Carvel of Prior, and La Fontaine[g]. The contentions

[f] For a curious instance of this, see *Leonardi Aretini, Ep. tom.* ii. *p.* 17.

[g] Mr. Warton (*Essay on Pope, v.* ii. *p* 68.) traces the genealogy of this curious tale from Poggio to Rabelais, "Who,"

tentions of Poggio with Lorenzo Valla were carried on with an equal degree of rancour and licentiousness; and even his debate with Guarino Veronese on the comparative excellence of Scipio and Julius Cæsar, was sufficiently acrimonious. By these quarrels the learned were divided into factions, and Leonardo Aretino, Poggio, Niccolo Niccoli, and Beccatelli, were opposed to Valla, Niccolo Perotti, and others; but the leaders of these parties often disagreed amongst themselves, and scrupled not at times to accuse each other of the most scandalous enormities. As these imputations were however attended by no very serious consequences, charity

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"Who," says he, "inserted it in his eighth book, and "thirty-third chapter; it was *afterwards* related in a "book called the *Hundred Novels*. Ariosto finishes his "fifth satire with it. Malespini also made use of it. "Fontaine, who imagined Rabelais to be the inventor of "it, was the sixth author who delivered it, as our Prior "was the last, though perhaps not the least spirited."— Mr. Warton had this information from the *Menagiana*; but he has mistaken his authority, in placing the writings of Rabelais *before* the well-known work of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, which is more ancient by nearly a century. Even Ariosto was prior to Rabelais, who was only the *fourth* amongst these *Hogs of Westphaly*. Of this Menage was well aware. *Menag* i. 369.

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charity would lead us to conclude that they were mutually understood to be rather contests of skill between these literary gladiators, than proofs of real criminality in their respective antagonists. The life of a scholar is seldom stained by atrocious crimes; but that almost all the learned men of the age should have disgraced themselves by so shameless a degree of moral turpitude, is surely a supposition beyond the bounds of credibility.

Death and character of Cosmo de' Medici.

Cosmo now approached the period of his mortal existence, but the faculties of his mind yet remained unimpaired. About twenty days before his death, when his strength was visibly on the decline, he entered into conversation with Ficino, and, whilst the faint beams of a setting sun seemed to accord with his situation and his feelings, began to lament the miseries of life, and the imperfections inseparable from human nature.—As he continued his discourse, his sentiments and his views became more elevated; and from bewailing the lot of humanity, he began to exult in the prospect of that happier state towards which he felt himself approaching. Ficino replied by citing corresponding sentiments from the Athenian sages, and particularly from Xenocrates; and the last task imposed by Cosmo

Cosmo on his philosophic attendant, was to translate from the Greek the treatise of that author on death [h]. Having prepared his mind to wait with composure the awful event, his next concern was the welfare of his surviving family, to whom he was desirous of imparting, in a solemn manner, the result of the experience of a long and active life. Calling into his chamber his wife Contessina and his son Piero, he entered into a narrative of all his public transactions; he gave a full account of his extensive mercantile connexions, and adverted to the state of his domestic concerns. To Piero he recommended a strict attention to the education of his sons, of whose promising talents he expressed his hopes and his approbation. He requested that his funeral might be conducted with as much privacy as possible, and concluded his paternal exhortations with declaring his willingness to submit to the disposal of Providence whenever he should be called upon. These admonitions were not lost on Piero, who communicated by letter to Lorenzo and Giuliano the

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[h] This information we derive from the introduction of Ficino to his translation of that work, inserted in the *Collectiones Cosmianæ*.

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the impression which they had made upon his own mind[i]. At the same time, sensible of his own infirmities, he exhorted them to consider themselves not as children, but as men, seeing that circumstances rendered it necessary to put their abilities to an early proof. *A physician*, says Piero, *is hourly expected to arrive from Milan, but, for my own part, I place my confidence in God.* Either the physician did not arrive, or Piero's distrust of him was well founded, for, about six days afterwards, being the first day of August 1464, Cosmo died, at the age of seventy-five years, deeply lamented by a great majority of the citizens of Florence, whom he had firmly attached to his interest, and who feared for the safety of the city from the dissensions that were likely to ensue[k].

The

[i] This letter yet remains, and gives us a very interesting account of the conduct of Cosmo shortly before his death. I have therefore inserted it in the Appendix, from the collection of Fabroni. *App. No.* V.

[k] In the Ricordi of Piero de' Medici is a particular account of the death of his father, a character of whom is there given, drawn with great truth and simplicity by the hand of filial affection. It is with pleasure I illustrate my work with these authentic documents. The family of the Medici thus become their own historians. *App. No.* VI.

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

In affording protection to the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture, which then began to revive in Italy, Cosmo set the great example to those who, by their rank, and their riches, could alone afford them effectual aid. The countenance shewn by him to those arts, was not of that kind which their professors generally experience from the great; it was not conceded as a bounty, nor received as a favour;

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but appeared in the friendship and equality that subsisted between the artist and his patron[l]. In the erection of the numerous public buildings in which Cosmo expended incredible sums of money, he principally availed himself of the assistance of Michellozzo Michellozzi and Filippo Brunelleschi; the first of whom was a man of talents, the latter of genius[m]. Soon after his return from banishment, Cosmo engaged these two artists to form the plan of a mansion for his own residence. Brunelleschi gave

[l] Of this nature was the intercourse between Cosmo and Donatello. The treasures of the citizen were applied, under the direction of the sculptor, in the acquisition of the most beautiful specimens of ancient art. Donatello survived his patron; but Cosmo on his death recommended him to the attention of Piero his son, who amply provided for the wants of his age. Donatello died in 1466, and was buried in the church of S Lorenzo, adjoining to the sepulchre of Cosmo, according to his own directions, for which he alleged as a reason, that as his soul had always been with Cosmo whilst living, so he desired their bodies might be near each other when dead.

[m] Before the time of Brunelleschi, the Italians had imitated in their public buildings the Gothic structures of their German neighbours. He was the first who attempted to restore the Grecian orders of architecture, and under his control this important branch of art attained a degree of perfection which it had not known from the times of the ancients.

gave scope to his invention, and produced the design of a palace which might have suited the proudest sovereign in Europe; but Cosmo was led by that prudence which, in his personal accommodation, regulated all his conduct, to prefer the plan of Michellozzi, which united extent with simplicity, and elegance with convenience[n]. With the consciousness, Brunelleschi possessed also the irritability of genius, and in a fit of vexation he destroyed a design which he unjustly considered as disgraced by its not being carried into execution[o]. Having completed

[n] This venerable edifice is now the residence of the noble family of Riccardi, who, in the year 1659, purchased it from the grand duke Ferdinand II. Under the auspices of its present owner, the marquis Riccardi, whose extensive collection of manuscripts and antiquities is open to public inspection, this mansion yet emulates its ancient glory. In the year 1715 an inscription was placed in one of the façades of the inner court, which will be found in the Appendix, No. VII.

[o] Cosmo had employed Brunelleschi in completing the church of S. Lorenzo, and in erecting the church and monastery of S. Bartolomeo, and acknowledged him, on all occasions, as the first architect of his time. After his death Cosmo also raised a monument to his memory.

Fab. in vitâ Cos. v. i. p. 155.

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pleted his dwelling, Cosmo indulged his taste in ornamenting it with the most precious remains of ancient art, and in the purchase of vases, statues, busts, gems, and medals, expended no inconsiderable sum. Nor was he less, attentive to the merits of those artists which his native place had recently produced. With Masaccio a better style of painting had arisen, and the cold and formal manner of Giotto and his disciples had given way to more natural and expressive composition. In Cosmo de' Medici this rising artist found his most liberal patron and protector. Some of the works of Masaccio were executed in the chapel of the Brancacci, where they were held in such estimation, that the place was regarded as a school of study by the most eminent artists who immediately succeeded him. Even the celebrated Michelagnolo, when observing these paintings many years afterwards, in company with his honest and loquacious friend Vasari, did not hesitate to express his decided approbation of their merits. The reputation of Masaccio was emulated by his disciple Filippo Lippi, who executed for Cosmo and his friends many celebrated pictures, of which Vasari has given a minute account. Cosmo however found no small difficulty in controlling the temper and regulating the eccentricities of this extraordinary character.

character [p]. If the efforts of these early masters did not reach the true end of the art, they afforded considerable assistance towards it; and whilst Masaccio and Filippo decorated with their admired productions the altars of churches and the apartments of princes, Donatello gave to marble a proportion of form, a vivacity of expression, to which his contemporaries imagined that nothing more was wanting; Brunelleschi raised the great dome of the cathedral of Florence; and Ghiberti cast in brass the stupendous doors of the church of St. John, which Michelagnolo deemed worthy to be the gates of paradise.

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In

[p] His attachment to women was extreme; and if the favourite object resisted his assiduities, he found some consolation in painting her likeness. By this unconquerable propensity his labours were often interrupted, and an expedient adopted by Cosmo to remedy it nearly cost Filippo his life. Having engaged the painter to complete a piece of work for him, Cosmo made him a prisoner in his chamber; but a confinement of two days exhausted the patience of the artist. At the risk of his life he made his escape through the window, and devoted himself for several days to his pleasures, nor did he return till sought out and solicited by Cosmo, who heartily repented of a proceeding which, however friendly in its motive, was certainly somewhat too arbitrary.

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In his person Cosmo was tall; in his youth he possessed the advantage of a prepossessing countenance; what age had taken from his comeliness, it had added to his dignity, and in his latter years, his appearance was so truly venerable, as to have been the frequent subject of panegyric [q]. His manner was grave and complacent, but upon many occasions he gave sufficient proofs that this did not arise from a want of talents for sarcasm; and the fidelity of the Florentine historians has preserved many of his shrewd observations and remarks [r]. When Rinaldo de' Albizi, who was then in exile, and meditated an attack upon his native place, sent a message to Cosmo, importing that the hen would shortly hatch, he replied, *She will hatch with an ill grace out of her own nest.* On another occasion, when his adversaries gave him to understand that they were not sleeping, *I believe*

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[q] Thus Bartolomeo Scala, on a portrait of Cosmo, painted when he was young:

"Quæ vera est Cosmi facies, haud vera videtur;
"Dissimiles adeo longa senecta facit;
"Talis erat quondam, quem nunc perfectior ætas,
"Ex homine, incœpit fingere velle deum."

Carm. illust. Poet. Ital. v. 8. *p.* 489.

[r] *Mac. Ist. Fior. lib.* VII.

believe it, said Cosmo, *I have spoiled their sleep.* —*Of what colour is my hair?* said Cosmo, uncovering his head, to the ambassadors of Venice who came with a complaint against the Florentines: *White*, they replied: *It will not be long*, said Cosmo, *before that of your senators will be so too.* Shortly before his death, his wife inquiring why he closed his eyes, *That I may perceive more clearly*, was his reply.

If, from considering the private character of Cosmo, we attend to his conduct as the moderator and director of the Florentine republic, our admiration of his abilities will increase with the extent of the theatre upon which he had to act. So important were his mercantile concerns, that they often influenced in a very remarkable degree the politics of Italy. When Alfonso king of Naples leagued with the Venetians against Florence, Cosmo called in such immense debts from those places, as deprived them of resources for carrying on the war[5]. During the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster, one of his agents in England was resorted to by Edward IV. for a sum of money, which was accordingly furnished, to such an extraordinary

[5] *Mac. Ist. Fior. lib.* vii.

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extraordinary amount, that it might almost be considered as the means of supporting that monarch on the throne, and was repaid when his successes enabled him to fulfil his engagement [t]. The alliance of Cosmo was sedulously courted by the princes of Italy; and it was remarked, that by a happy kind of fatality, whoever united their interests with his, were always enabled either to repress, or to overcome their adversaries. By his assistance the republic of Venice resisted the united attacks of Filippo duke of Milan, and of the French nation; but when deprived of his support, the Venetians were no longer able to withstand their enemies. With

[t] La Maison de Medicis estoit la plus grande, que je croy que jamais ait esté au monde: car leurs serviteurs & facteurs ont eu tant de credit soups couleur de ce nom de Medicis, que ce seroit merveilles à croire à ce que j'en ay veu en Flandres & en Angleterre. J'en ai veu un appelé Guerard Quanvese presque etre occasion de soutenir le Roy Edouard le quart en son etat, estant guerre en son royaume d'Angleterre, & fournir par fois au dit roy plus de six vingt mille escus: où il fit peu de profit pour son maitre. toutes fois il recouvra ses pieces à la longue. Un autre ay vu nommé e appelé Thomas Portunary, estre pleige entre le dit roy Edouard & le duc Charles de Bourgogne, pour cinquante mille escus, & une autre fois en un lieu, pour quatre vingt mille.

Mem de P. de Commines, ap. Fabr. in vitâ Laurentii, v. ii. p 224.

With whatever difficulties Cosmo had to encounter, at home or abroad, they generally terminated in the acquisition of additional honour to his country and to himself. The esteem and gratitude of his fellow-citizens were fully shewn a short time before his death, when by a public decree he was honoured with the title of *Pater Patriæ*, an appellation which was inscribed on his tomb, and which, as it was founded on real merit, has ever since been attached to the name of Cosmo de' Medici.

CHAP. II.

Early accomplishments of Lorenzo—Education—Lorenzo visits different parts of Italy—Conduct of Piero—Conspiracy of Luca Pitti—Frustrated by Lorenzo—The exiles instigate the Venetians to attack the Florentines—Battle near Bologna—Piero promotes the interests of learning—Leo Battista Alberti—Cristoforo Landino—Piero patronizes other eminent scholars—Giostra of Lorenzo and Giuliano—Poem of Luca Pulci—Poem of Angelo Politiano—DISPUTATIONES CAMALDULENSES—*Lorenzo's description of his mistress—Sonnets in her praise—Lucretia Donati the object of his passion—Lorenzo marries Clarice Orsini—Visits the duke of Milan—Death of Piero de' Medici.*

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LORENZO de' Medici was about sixteen years of age when Cosmo died, and had at that time given striking indications of extraordinary talents. From his earliest years he had exhibited proofs of a retentive and vigorous mind, which was cultivated, not only by all the attention which his father's infirmities would permit him to bestow, but by a frequent intercourse with his venerable grandfather. He owed also great obligations in this respect to his mother Lucretia, who was one of the most accomplished

Early accomplishments of Lorenzo.

1464

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plished women of the age, and distinguished herself not only as a patroness of learning, but by her own writings. Of these some specimens yet remain, which are the more entitled to approbation, as they were produced at a time when poetry was at its lowest ebb in Italy[a]. The disposition of Lorenzo, which afterwards gave him a peculiar claim to the title of *magnificent*,

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[a] Several of her *Laudi*, or hymns, are printed in the collection of sacred poems by the Medici family, published by *Cionacci* at Florence, 1680, and since reprinted at Bergamo in 1763; but a much more favourable specimen of her talents is given by *Crescimbeni*, (*Della volgar poesia*, v. iii. *p.* 277,) who is of opinion that she excelled the greater part of, not to say all, the poets of her time. Her versifications of scripture history, though never printed, are noticed by *Luigi Pulci*, in his *Morgante*, which poem he was induced to complete by her encouragement, and in which he thus adverts to the writings of his patroness.

" Quivi si legge della sua *Maria*
" La vita, ove il suo libro è sempre aperto;
" E di *Esdram* di *Judith* e di *Tobia*
" Quivi si rende giusto premio e merto;
" Quivi s' intende hor l' alta fantasia
" A descriver *Giovanni nel deserto;*
" Quivi cantano hor gli angeli i suoi versi,
" Dove il ver d' ogni cosa può vedersi."

Morgante. Ed. Ven. per Comin. de Trino, 1546.

cent, was apparent in his childhood. Having received as a present a horse from Sicily, he sent the donor in return a gift of much greater value; and on being reproved for his profuseness, he remarked that there was nothing more glorious than to overcome others in acts of generosity. Of his proficiency in classical learning, and the different branches of that philosophy which was then in repute, he has left indisputable proofs. Born to restore the lustre of his native tongue, he had rendered himself conspicuous by his poetical talents before he arrived at manhood. To these accomplishments he united a considerable share of strong natural penetration and good sense, which enabled him, amidst the many difficulties that he was involved in, to act with a promptitude and decision which surprized those who were witnesses of his conduct; whilst the endowments which entitled him to admiration and respect were accompanied by others that conciliated, in an eminent degree, the esteem and affection of his fellow-citizens.

Tall in his stature, robust in his form, Lorenzo had in his person more the appearance of strength than of elegance. From his birth he laboured under some peculiar disadvantages;

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

Education of Lorenzo

Under the institution of Gentile d'Urbino, who afterwards, by the patronage of his pupil, became bishop of Arezzo, Lorenzo received the first rudiments of his education, and from the instructions of his tutor, aided perhaps by the

[b] *Valorius, in vitâ Laur. Med. p.* 9.

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the exhortations of his pious mother, acquired that devotional temper which is so conspicuous in some of his writings[c]. This disposition was however only occasional, nor was the mind of Lorenzo overshaded with the habitual gloom of the professed devotee. In his hours of seriousness, or of sickness, the impressions made upon him by his early instructors became sufficiently apparent; but the vivacity of his temper often hurried him to a contrary extreme; and the levity, not to say the licentiousness, of some of his writings, is strikingly contrasted with the piety and seriousness of his other productions. The vigour of his intellect seems to have thrown an indiscriminate lustre on every object that presented itself. So various, yet so extensive were his

[c] Valori dwells with apparent satisfaction on his early piety. "Audivi," says he, "sæpius a Gentile ejus preceptore, cum quo et in Gallia, quum ibi legatum ageret, et in patria familiarissime vixi, Laurentium a latere suo discessisse nunquam. Die in Templo, donec res divina peragceretur, permansisse semper: nocte etiam secum ire solitum ad divi Pauli societatem, quo conveniebant plurimi, Immortali Deo in sobrietate et vigiliis ac precibus gratias agentes: obvios Christi pauperculos eleemosynis prosequi ad unum omnes: nihil in eo puerile, nihil delicatum apparuisse."

Val. in vitâ Laur. p. 5.

CHAP. II. his powers, that they are scarcely reconcileable to that consistency of character with which the laws of human nature seldom dispense [d].

In superintending the subsequent progress of Lorenzo, several other persons eminent for their learning concurred. In the year 1457, Cristoforo Landino was appointed by the magistracy of Florence to the office of public professor of poetry and rhetoric in that city, and was soon afterwards intrusted by Piero de' Medici with the instruction of his two sons. Between Landino and his pupil Lorenzo a reciprocal attachment took place; and such was the opinion that the master entertained of the judgment of his scholar, that he is said frequently to have submitted his various and learned works to his perusal and correction.

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[d] This peculiarity in the character of Lorenzo was not unobserved by his contemporaries. "Jam vero quo "unquam in homine tam diversæ inter se fuerunt partes "virtutum maximarum? Quid enim longius abest "quam a gravitate facilitas? Quis tamen te constan-"tior? Contra vero quis clementior aut lenior? Quid "tam mirabile quam magnitudinem istam animi huma-"nitatis condimentis temperari?" &c. *Pauli Cortesii Ep. ad Laur. Med. ad Dial. de Hominibus doctis præf. Ed. Flor.* 1734. vide et *Val. in vitâ Laur. p.* 14.

tion [e]. In the Greek language, in ethics, and in the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy, Lorenzo had the advantage of the precepts of the learned Argyropylus [f], and in those of the Platonic sect he was sedulously instructed by Marsilio Ficino, for whom he retained through life an unalterable friendship. But for many of his accomplishments he was not indebted to any preceptor. That exquisite taste in poetry, in music, and in every department of the fine arts, which enabled him to contribute so powerfully towards their restoration, was an endowment of nature, the want of which no education could have supplied.

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With such qualifications, Lorenzo, soon after the death of his grandfather, entered on the stage of public life; for it was the laudable custom of the Florentines early to habituate their youth to serious and important occupations.

1465.

[e] *Band. Spec. Lit. Flor. v.* i. *p* 183.

[f] Argyropylus Byzantius insigni fuit et auctoritate et gratia apud Cosmum Medicem, hujus filium Petrum, nepotemque Laurentium, quem non modo Græcis literis sed at dialecticis imbuit, eaque philosophiæ parte qua de moribus præcipitur. *Politian. in Proem. ad Miscell.*

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

In

[g] *Muratori, Annali d'Italia,* v. IX. *p* 493.

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

The

[h] *App. No.* VIII.

[i] Some specimens of these, which have been preserved in the *Palazzo Vecchio* at Florence, and not before published, are given in the Appendix, No. IX. The first is an extract of an Italian letter from the celebrated Luigi Pulci, the author of the Morgante, and is as strongly

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Conduct of Piero de' Medici.

The death of Pius II. who had preceded Paul II. in the pontifical chair, happened a few days after that of Cosmo de' Medici, and not long afterwards died Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, who had governed that state with great ability for the space of sixteen years[k]. This event

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marked by affection for Lorenzo, as by the whimsical peculiarities of its author's character. The second is from Peregrino Allio, whose Latin poems in the *Carmina Illust. Poet. v.* i. *p.* 12. are a better testimony of his abilities than the exaggerated account of *Negri* (*Scrittori Fiorentini, p* 450). "Fu mostrato non dato al mondo "questo mostro d' ingegno e di memoria, affinche si "vedesse che nel secolo de' Ficini, de' Mirandolani, de' "Beneviemi, de' Barbari, de' Poliziani, ingegni tutti "portentosi e grandissimi, poteva ancora far qualche "cosa di piu marvaglioso la natura." This author is mistaken in placing the death of Allio in 1458, although the accurate Bandini has in this instance adopted his authority. (*Negri*, 450. *Band Spec Lit. Flor. p.* 204.) I have before cited the epitaph by Allio on John de' Medici, the son of Cosmo, who died in 1463; and amongst the letters which I have procured from the *Palazzo Vecchio*, is one from him to Lorenzo, dated the 25th of May 1466. That he died young may however be inferred from Verini. (*De illustr. Urbis, p* 34.)

"Te pariter juvenem tetricæ rapuere sorores:
"Aequasses priscos, Alli Peregrine, poetas."

[k] The Sforza were a family of adventurers. Sforza degli Attendogli, the father of Francesco, from the condition

event gave no small alarm to Piero de' Medici, whose family had long supported a close intimacy with that of Sforza, from which they had mutually derived important advantages. Lorenzo was then at Rome, where his father addressed to him several letters, in some of which his anxiety for the peaceable establishment of the widow and children of Francesco in the government of Milan is strongly expressed. By the death of so many of the Italian princes within so short a space of time, the minds of men began to be turned towards new commotions, particularly in Florence, where the bodily imbecility

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tion of a peasant, acquired such a high degree of military reputation, as enabled his son, who was also a soldier of fortune, to obtain in marriage the daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan, and the Milanese territory, at that period one of the most extensive in Italy, as her portion. According to tradition, Sforza was employed in turning the soil, when he was invited by some of his companions to enter into the army. His determination was a matter of difficulty, for the solution of which he resorted to his spade.—Throwing it into an oak, he declared that if it fell to the ground he would continue his labours, if it hung in the tree he would pursue his fortunes. (*Murat. Ann. vol.* IX. *p.* 2.) He became the father of a line of princes who were regarded as the most splendid sovereigns of Italy, and formed alliances with the chief families in Europe.

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

Conspiracy of Luca Pitti.

Amongst the number of opulent and aspiring citizens who had reluctantly submitted to the superior talents of Cosmo de' Medici, was Luca Pitti, whose name has been transmitted to posterity as the founder of the magnificent

1466. palace which has for some centuries been the residence

residence of the sovereigns of Tuscany. The death of Cosmo, and the infirmities of Piero, afforded an opportunity that Luca conceived to be highly favourable to his ambitious purposes [1]. Having formed a combination with the powerful family of the Acciajuoli, he attempted, in conjunction with them, to supplant the authority and destroy the influence of the Medici, with the magistrates and council of Florence. Being defeated in their exertions, they resorted to more violent methods, and resolved upon the assassination of Piero de' Medici; believing, that if they could succeed in such a project, his sons were too young to occasion any formidable opposition to their views. Debilitated by the gout, Piero was generally carried in a chair by his domestics from his house at Careggi to his residence at Florence. Having received intimation of an intended commotion, and being alarmed at the sudden approach of Ercole d'Este, brother of Borso, marquis of Ferrara, whom the conspirators had engaged to enter the territories of the republic, at the head of 1300 cavalry, he conceived his presence to be necessary in Florence, and accordingly set out from Careggi, accompanied only by a few attendants.

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[1] *Anm. Ist. Fior. v.* iii. *p.* 93.

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ants[m]. Lorenzo, who had left Careggi a short time before his father, was surprized to find the road to the city beset by armed men, and immediately suspecting their purpose, dispatched one of his followers to him with directions to proceed by a more retired and circuitous path, whilst taking himself the direct road, he informed those who inquired with apparent anxiety for his father, that he was following at a short distance; by which means Lorenzo rescued his father from the impending danger, and gave a striking proof of that promptitude of mind which so eminently distinguished him on many subsequent occasions.

The suspicions that fell upon Luca Pitti and his party, induced the conspirators to abandon their design of open violence; and the intrigues of the politician were again substituted for the dagger of the assassin. Encouraged by the support of the marquis of Ferrara, they daily increased in numbers and audacity, but when an open contest between the opposite parties was hourly expected, and the citizens apprehended a renewal of those sanguinary commotions, from which, under the guidance of the Medici, they had

[m] *Val. in vitâ Laur. p.* 10.

had been a long time exempted, Luca suddenly withdrew himself from his party, and effected a reconciliation with the Medici. Several of the malcontents followed his example, and their desertion gave a decided superiority to the cause of Piero, which was also most opportunely strengthened by the appearance of a body of two thousand Milanese troops, that kept in awe the army of the insurgents, and frustrated the hopes founded on its assistance. The friends of the Medici failed not to take advantage of this favourable concurrence; Piero Acciajuoli and his two sons, Dietisalvo Neroni, and two of his brothers, and Niccolo Soderini, with his son Geri, were declared enemies of the state, and condemned to banishment [n]. The archbishop of Florence, who had taken a decided part against the Medici, retired to Rome. A few other citizens, unable to support their disgrace, adopted a voluntary exile; but the kindness of Lorenzo allayed the apprehensions of the greater part of the conspirators, and rendered them in future more favourable to his interests.—*He only knows how to conquer*, said Lorenzo, *who knows how to forgive* [o].

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[n] *Amm. Ist. Fior. v.* 1 i. *p.* 99.

[o] *Val. in vitâ, p.* 11. *Fabr. in vitâ Laur. v.* i. *p.* 22.

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

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[p] It is deserving of remark that Machiavelli is mistaken not only in the period he assigns for the commencement of this building, but in the motives that led to it. After relating the successful interposition of Luca Pitti in the affairs of the republic, in the year 1453, by which he rose to great eminence, and obtained a reward from his fellow-citizens, which was supposed to amount to 20,000 ducats, he adds, (*Hist. lib* VII.) "Donde egli "salì in tanta riputatione che non Cosimo ma Messer "Luca la Città governava. Da che egli venne in tanta "confidanza, ch' egli incominciò due edificii, l'uno a "Firenze, l'altro a Ruciano, luogo propinquo un miglio "alla

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Frustrated by Lorenzo.

The defection of Luca Pitti, and the consequent establishment of the authority of the Medici in Florence, have been uniformly attributed by the Florentine historians to the abilities and prudence of Lorenzo; who, instead of resorting to forcible opposition, employed his own eloquence, and the influence of his friends, in subduing the resentment of his adversaries, and particularly of Luca Pitti, whose versatile disposition fluctuated a long time between the remonstrances of his associates, and the pacific representations of Lorenzo. A short time previous to this contest, Lorenzo had paid a visit to Naples,

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" alla città, tutti superbi et regii; ma quello della Città " al tutto maggiore che alcun' altro che da privato citta- " dino fino a quel giorno fusse stato edificato." It is however certain, that both these palaces were designed, and in part executed, by Filippo Brunelleschi, who died in 1446, seven years before the event related by Machiavelli took place. (*Vasari in vita di Filippo.*) " Ordinò " ancor Filippo à M. Luca Pitti, fuor della porta à " S. Niccolo di Fiorenza, in un luogo detto Ruciano un " ricco e magnifico palazzo; ma non già à gran pezza " simile à quello che per lo medesimo cominciò in Fi- " renze, e condusse al secondo finestrato, con tanta gran- " dezza et magnificenza, che d' opera Toscana, non si " è ancor veduta il più raro, ne il più magnifico." This palace was afterwards purchased by Leonora of Toledo, wife of Cosmo I. duke of Florence, and was completed under the directions of Bartolomeo Ammanati.

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Naples, probably with a view of influencing the king to countenance his cause, in case the dissensions at Florence, which were then a subject of alarm, should terminate in an open rupture. The magnanimity of his conduct, as well in defeating this formidable conspiracy, as in his lenity towards his enemies, extended his reputation throughout Italy. No sooner was the result known at Naples, than Ferdinando addressed to him a letter strongly expressive of admiration and esteem; which being the testimony of a monarch whose character for sagacity and political knowledge was superior to that of any other potentate in Europe, must have been highly gratifying to the youthful ambition of Lorenzo[q]. The success of Lorenzo in this critical business increased also the confidence which his father had before placed in him, and from this time he was intrusted with a considerable share in the conduct of the republic, as well as in the management of the extensive private concerns of the family. But if the prudence of Lorenzo was conspicuous in defeating his adversaries, it was more so in the use he made of his victory. He well knew that humanity and sound policy are inseparable, and either did

[q] This letter will be found in App. No. X.

did not feel, or wisely suppressed, that vindictive spirit which civil contests seldom fail to excite. "I have heard from my brother Filippo," says Valori, "that upon his introducing to Lorenzo, "for the purpose of reconciliation, Antonio "Tebalducci, who had by different means "attempted his ruin, Lorenzo, observing that "my brother hesitated in requesting his indulg- "ence towards an avowed enemy, said to him "with great kindness, *I should owe you no obliga- "tion, Filippo, for introducing to me a friend; but "by converting an enemy into a friend, you have "done me a favour, which I hope you will as "often as possible repeat.*"

The exiles instigate the Venetians to attack the Florentines.

The exiled party, which consisted principally of men of abilities and intrigue, soon began to stir up new commotions. But Agnolo Acciajuoli, who had retreated only to Sienna, was desirous, before he engaged in further opposition, of trying whether a reconciliation with the Medici yet remained practicable. His letter to Piero on this subject, and the answer it occasioned, are yet extant[r]. Many of the other conspirators

[r] Machiavelli informs us that Agnolo withdrew to Naples, and professes to cite the particulars of the letters between him and Piero. The accuracy of this historian

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conspirators retired to Venice, where they exerted their utmost endeavours to exasperate that formidable state against their countrymen. This attempt might have failed of success, had they not, in seeking to gratify their private resentment, flattered the ambitious aims of the Venetians on the rest of Italy. With this view they insinuated to the senate, that the support given by the Florentines, under the influence of Cosmo de' Medici, to Francesco Sforza, had enabled him to defend his states against their pretensions, and prevented their possessing themselves of all Lombardy. These representations had their full effect. Under the command of Bartolomeo Coglione, one of the most celebrated commanders of the time, a considerable army was collected for the purpose of attacking the states of Florence. Several of the Italian princes joined in person the standard of Bartolomeo, and amongst others Ercole d'Este, Alessandro Sforza prince of Pesaro, the lords of Forli, of Faenza, and Mirandula; insomuch that this army was not more formidable for its numbers,

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may appear by comparing the authentic letters published in the Appendix, from the collection of Fabroni, with the recital of them by Machiavelli in the 7th book of his history *App. No.* XI.

numbers, than respectable for the rank and the talents of its leaders.

Battle near Bologna.

Nor were the Florentines in the mean time ignorant of the intended hostilities, or inattentive to their own defence. Besides the support derived from the duke of Milan, the king of Naples sent his son Federigo with a powerful reinforcement to their assistance. Galeazzo, the young duke of Milan, joined the army in person, as did also Giovanni Bentivoglio, prince of Bologna; and the command of the whole was intrusted to Federigo count of Urbino [s], whose character as a soldier was not inferior to to that of Coglione. The adverse forces approached each other near Bologna, but no great alacrity was shewn on either side to begin the engagement. Wearied with apprehensions, and sinking under the expence of supporting so numerous an army, the Florentines began to complain of the indecisive conduct of their general, which they at length understood was chiefly

[s] "Principe di accorgimento e di valore non ordi-
"nario; per cui da tutti i più potenti sovrani d' Italia,
"era a gara richiesto per condurre le loro truppe, e
"accolto co' i più singolari onori."

Tirab. Storia della Lett. Ital. v. vi. *parte* i. *p.* 13.

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chiefly to be attributed to the duke of Milan, who reserving to himself great authority, and having little experience in military affairs, threw continual obstacles in the way of the chief commander. A message was therefore dispatched to the duke, requesting his presence in Florence, where he soon after arrived, and took up his residence in the palace of the Medici[t]. The count of Urbino being freed from this restraint, or having no apology for longer delay, attacked the advanced guard of the enemy, under the command of Alessandro Sforza. The engagement soon became general, and continued from noon till evening. Machiavelli assures us, that at the close of the battle both parties kept the field, that not a soldier lost his life, and that only a few horses were wounded, and some prisoners taken; but historians of more veracity have given a different relation[u]. It

1467

[t] L'anno 1467 di Luglio, ci venne il duca Galeazzo di Milano, ch' era in campo contro Bartolomeo da Bergamo, in Romagna, che vessava lo stato nostro, e alloggiò in casa nostra, che così volle, benchè dalla signoria gli fusse stato apparecchiato in Santa Maria novella.

Ricordi di Lorenzo, in App. No. XII.

[u] Platina, (I quote the Italian translation,) in reference to this battle, says, "Quelli, ch' in questa battaglia si retrovarono, dicono che nel età nostra la maggior

It is however certain, that no important consequences resulted from a contest that had excited so much expectation. The troops shortly afterwards withdrew into their winter-quarters, which afforded the Florentines an opportunity, by the mediation of the marquis of Ferrara, of negotiating for a peace. This was accordingly effected without any stipulation being introduced on the part of the exiles; and thus the storm which seemed for a while to threaten the destruction of the Florentine state, after having been repressed in its first fury, gradually abated, and at length settled in a perfect calm.

Piero promotes the interests of learning.

Although Piero de' Medici was inferior in talents both to his father Cosmo and his son Lorenzo, yet he gave repeated proofs of a strong attach-

"gion non si vedesse, e vi morirono molti." (*Plat v.* i. *p.* 448. *Ven* 1774.) And Ammirato expressly informs us, in direct contradiction to Machiavelli, who, says he, "schernendo, come egli suol far, quella milizia, dice che "non vi morì niuno," that both armies fought with great courage, that according to the most moderate accounts 300 men and 400 horses were killed; that another account stated the loss at 800, and another at 1000 men. He also cites the Venetian history of Sabellico, who denominates this a very bloody engagement. "Così," says he, "siamo trascurati à saper la verità "delle cose." *Amm. v.* III. *p.* 102.

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

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[v] These poems are however yet preserved in the Laurentian library, PLUT. xc. cod. xxxviii. The subject is *Friendship*. The derided candidates were Michele di Noferi, Francesco Altobianco, Antonio Allio, afterwards

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Leo Battista Alberti.

The coadjutor of Piero de' Medici on this occasion was the celebrated Leo Battista Alberti, who, independent of his extraordinary talents as an artist, deserves particular notice as one of the earliest scholars that appeared in the revival of letters[w]. He first distinguished himself by his Latin comedy intitled *Philodoxios*, copies of which he distributed amongst his friends, as the work of Lepidus, an ancient Roman poet. The literati were effectually deceived, and bestowed the highest applauses upon a piece which they conceived to be a precious remnant of antiquity.

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wards bishop of Fiesole, Mariotto Davanzati, Anselmo Calderoni, and Francesco Malecarni. Pozzetti, somewhat unfortunately, denominates this contest *The triumph of literature.* (*v I. B. Alberti, laud. a Pompilio Pozzetti,* 4to *Flor.* 1789.)

[w] Alberti was of a noble family of Florence, but was born at Venice in 1404. In his youth he was remarkable for his agility, strength, and skill in bodily exercises. An unquenchable thirst of knowledge possessed him from his earliest years. In the learned languages he made a speedy and uncommon proficiency, and had perhaps a more general acquaintance with the sciences than any man of that age. Of all the fine arts he had a thorough and practical knowledge; and as a painter, a sculptor, but particularly as an architect, obtained no small share of celebrity.

Vasari, vita di Alberti. L. B. Alb laud. à Pozzetti, ut sup.

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antiquity. It first appeared about the year 1425, when the rage for ancient manuscripts was at its height, and Lepidus for a while took his rank with Plautus and with Terence [x]. As Alberti advanced in years, he turned his attention to practical knowledge, and the present times are indebted to him for many useful and amusing inventions [y]. In his Latin treatises, which have been translated into Italian by Cosimo Bartoli, and published under the name of

[x] This piece was written by Alberti during the confinement of sickness, occasioned by too close an application to study. It was printed in the succeeding century by the younger Aldo Manutio, who had procured a manuscript copy, and not aware of the deception, gravely confesses in the proeme his ignorance of *Lepidus* the Roman poet.

[y] On the authority of Vasari we may attribute to Alberti the discovery of the *Camera oscura*, though that invention is generally given to Giambatista Porta in the succeeding century. "L'anno 1437 trovò per via d'uno "strumento il modo di lucidare le prospettive naturali et "diminuire le figure," &c. (*Vasari, in vita di Alberti, da Bottari, Fir.* 1771.) The invention of the optical machine for exhibiting drawings so as to imitate nature, is indisputably due to him. "Opera ex ipsa arte pingendi "effecit inaudita, et spectatoribus incredibilia, quæ qui- "dam parva in capsa conclusa pusillum per foramen "ostenderet. Vidisses illic montes maximos," &c.

Alb. vita, ab Anonymo ap. Vasari, ut sup.

of *Opuscoli Morali*, he appears as an author on a great variety of subjects, but he is better known by his treatise on architecture, which has been translated into many languages. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that Alberti made an attempt to reconcile the measure of the Latin distich with the genius of his native tongue, in which he has been followed by Claudio Tolomei, and other writers [z].

The reputation of Alberti as an architect, though it deservedly stands high in the estimation of posterity, must however be considered as inferior to that of Filippo Brunelleschi, who is the true father of the art in modern times. Vasari expresses his disapprobation of some part of the labours of Alberti. His paintings were not numerous, nor on a large scale; nor did

[z] Of this Vasari has preserved the following specimen:

"Questa per estrema miserabile pistola mando,
"A te, che spregi miseramente noi."

Some of the sonnets of Alberti are yet extant, and are printed with those of Burchiello, with whom he seems to have been on terms of intimacy; and Pozzetti, who has lately favoured the public with a very full account of this extraordinary man, has also pointed out several of his poetical pieces, which are yet preserved in different libraries of Italy.

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did he in this branch of art arrive at great practical perfection, which, as Vasari observes, is not much to be wondered at, as his time was mostly devoted to other studies. His principal merit is certainly to be sought for in his useful discoveries, and his preceptive writings. He was the first author who attempted practical treatises on the arts of design, all of which, but more particularly his treatise on architecture, are allowed to exhibit a profound knowledge of his subject, and will long continue to do honour to his memory.

Cristoforo Landino

Had all the other professors of letters been silent as to the merits of Piero de' Medici, the applauses bestowed on him by Cristoforo Landino would alone be sufficient to rescue his memory from neglect. Landino had indeed every motive of gratitude to the family of his patron. He was born a Florentine, and being early disgusted with the study of the civil law, devoted himself to that of poetry and polite letters. In pursuing his inclinations he had the good fortune to find the road that led him to honour and to affluence. The bounty of a private friend supported him through the early part of his education, to which the finances of his family were inadequate, and the munificence of Cosmo de' Medici completed what the kind-

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ness of Angelo da Todi had begun. His proficiency in the Greek language was remarkable, even at a period when the study of it was in its highest vigour, and immediately supplied from its native fountain. The philosophy of Aristotle, and the dogmas of the stoics, had early engaged his attention; but from his intercourse with the Medici, and his intimacy with Ficino, he afterwards became a decided partisan of the new philosophy, and was among the few learned men whom Ficino thought proper to consult on his translation of the works of Plato. The Latin elegies of Landino [a] bear ample testimony to the virtues, the liberality, and the accomplishments of Piero de' Medici, whom he constantly honours with the appellation of his Mæcenas, and seems to have selected from the other individuals of that illustrious family, as the object of his particular affection and veneration.

Piero patronises other eminent scholars.

If we consider the numerous testimonies that remain of the liberality of Piero de' Medici to

[a] To these poems Landino prefixed the name of *Xandra*, being the diminutive of *Alessandra*, the appellation of his poetical mistress. This work has not been published; but the Canonico Bandini has given us some extracts from it in his *Spec. Lit. Flor.* v i. *p.* 110, &c. The prefatory verses to his second book, addressed to Piero de' Medici, are given in the Appendix, No. XIII.

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to men of learning, and advert at the same time to the infirm state of his health, and the short period during which he enjoyed the direction of the republic, we shall not hesitate in alloting to him a distinguished rank amongst the early promoters of letters. To Piero, Benedetto Accolti addressed, in terms of high commendation, his history of the wars between the christians and the infidels [b], a work of considerable historical credit, and which, in the succeeding century, served as a guide to Torquato Tasso, in his immortal poem the *Gerusalemme liberata* [c]. An

[b] This work, written in Latin, was first printed at Venice in 1532, again, at Basil, 1544, and at Florence, 1623; the last-mentioned edition being accompanied by the annotations of Thomas Dempster, a Scotchman, and professor of humanity in the college of Bologna. It was translated into Greek by Irone Ducas, and printed at Paris in 1620; and into Italian by Francesco Baldelli, and published by Giolito at Venice in 1549.

Zeno. Diss. Voss. v. i. *p.* 163.

[c] Accolti is not less celebrated as a civilian than as a polite scholar. He was born at Arezzo in 1415, whence his usual appellation of Benedetto Aretino. Having been sent on an embassy from that place to Florence, he took up his residence there, and in the year 1459 succeeded Poggio Bracciolini as secretary to the republic, in which office he continued till his death, in 1466. Besides his history, he is the author of a dialogue, intitled,

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An uninterrupted friendship subsisted between Piero and the celebrated Donato Acciajuoli, who inscribed to him several of his learned works [d]. The Laurentian library contains many similar instances of the gratitude and observance of the scholars of the time. Amongst those deserving of more particular notice is Francesco Ottavio, who dedicated to Piero his poem *De cætu poetarum*, in which he hesitates not to represent his patron as surpassing the example of his father, in his attention to the cause of literature, and in his kindness to its professors [e].

Giostra of Lorenzo and Giuliano.

No sooner was the city of Florence restored to peace, and the dread of a foreign enemy removed, than the natural disposition of the inhabitants for splendid exhibitions began to revive. Amongst other amusements, a tourna- 1468. ment

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tled, *De præstantia virorum sui ævi*, inscribed to Cosmo de' Medici, which was first printed in 1689. Paulo Cortesi, a severe censor, allows that his history is a work of great industry, and that it throws considerable light on a very difficult subject.

Zeno. Diss. Voss. v. i. *p.* 164. *Cortes. de hom. doct. p.* 22.

[d] *Band. Cat. Bib Laur.* v. ii. *p.* 554. 748.

[e] This poem is published in the *Carmina Illustr. Poetar. Ital.* v. vii. *p.* 1.

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ment was held, in which Lorenzo de' Medici bore away the prize, being a helmet of silver, with a figure of Mars as the crest. In another encounter Giuliano had equal success with his brother. These incidents are the more entitled to our notice, as they have given rise to two of the most celebrated Italian poems of the fifteenth century, the *Giostra of Lorenzo de' Medici*, by Luca Pulci, and the *Giostra of Giuliano de' Medici*, by Angelo Politiano.

At what particular time these events took place, and whether the two brothers signalized themselves on the same, or on different occasions, has been rendered doubtful by the inattention and discordant relations of different writers, who have directly or incidentally adverted to this subject. Amongst these, Machiavelli has misinformed [f], and Paulus Jovius confused his readers.

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[f] If we believe Machiavelli, this exhibition took place in 1465, (at which time Lorenzo was only seventeen years of age,) and was intended merely to turn the attention of the people from the affairs of state. "Per toi "via adunque questo otio, e dare che pensare à gli huo-"mini qualche cosa che levassero i pensieri dello stato, "sendo gia passato l' anno che Cosimo era morto, pre-"sero occasione, da che fusse bene rallegrar la città, e "ordinarono due feste (secondo l' altre che in quella "città

readers[g]. Of the authors who have followed them, some have employed themselves in comparing

" città si fanno) solennissime. Una che rappresentava " quando i tre magi vennero d'oriente dietro alla stella " che dimostrava la natività di Christo; la quale era di " tanta pompa et si magnifica, che in ordinarla e farla, " teneva più mesi occupata tutta la città. L'altra fù " uno torniamento dove i primi giovani della città si esser- " citarono insieme coi più nominati cavallieri d' Italia; " e tra i giovani fiorentini il più riputato fu Lorenzo, " primo genito di Piero, il quale non per gratia, ma per " proprio suo valore ne riportò il primo honore."

Mac. Hist. lib. vii.

[g] In his elogies Jovius adverts to the Giostra of Lorenzo, as prior to that of Giuliano. " Politianus à " prima statim juventa admirabilis ingenii nomen adeptus " est. cum novo illustrique poemate, Juliani Medicis " equestres ludos celebrasset; Luca Pulcio nobili poeta " omnium confessione superato, qui Laurentii fratris " ludicrum equestris pugnæ spectaculum, iisdem modis " et numeris decantarat," &c. *In Elog vir. doct.* But in his life of Leo X. he directly contradicts his own evidence. Speaking of the tournament of Giuliano, he says: " Ejus gloriosi laboris præmium fuit triumphus " Politiani divini poetæ carminibus celebratus. Nec " multo post Laurentius, ut fraternis laudibus æquaretur, " novum spectaculum periculosissimæ pugnæ edidit. " Hujus quoque speciosissimi certaminis memoriam " Pulcius ipse, Politiani æmulus, perjucundo edito poe- " mate sempiternam fecit."

Jovius, in vitâ Leonis X. *lib.* i.

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paring or contesting these various authorities [h], whilst others have gone a step further, and ingrafted their own absurdities on the errors of their predecessors [i]. Even amongst those who are entitled to a greater share of attention, Fabroni has decided wrong [k], and Menckenius, after a full inquiry into all previous testimony, confesses his inability to decide at all [l]. In solving this difficulty, it might have been expected that recourse would have been had, in the first instance, to the internal evidence of the poems themselves, by which all doubts on the

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[h] Bayle cites these different passages of Jovius, but, as usual, leaves his reader to form his own judgment upon them *Dict Hist. Art Politien.* Vide *Bolsardum in Elog. vir. doct. & Jo. Mich. Brutum in Hist. Flor. lib.* II. *ap. Bayle.*

[i] Varillas and Baillet The former of whom gives an account of the poem of Politiano, sufficiently absurd to afford amusement to the reader, the substance of which has been adopted by the latter. *Anec. de Flor. p.* 194 *Jugemens de Savans, v.* V. *p.* 29.

[k] Fabroni places this event before the conspiracy of Luca Pitti, and the attempt on the life of Piero de' Medici. *Laur. Med. vita, v.* I. *p.* 20.

[l] " Scriptorem qui hunc exsolvat nodum, ego quidem " scio nullum. Certi adeo hac in re nihil definire audeo," &c. *Menck. in vita Politiani, p.* 44.

the subject would have been effectually removed; but Menckenius had never seen even the poem of Politiano, though it is of much more common occurrence than that of Pulci [m]; and Fabroni, with the poem of Pulci before him, has suffered himself to be betrayed into an anachronism by the authority of Machiavelli. In the poem last mentioned, not only the year, but the precise day on which the tournament of Lorenzo took place, is particularly specified. This appears to have been the seventh of February 1468 [n], at which time he was in his twentieth year, to which the poet also expressly adverts [o], as well as

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[m] "Compertum mihi est per Italos, mei studiosissimos, atque hujus carminis probe gnaros, duobus illud libris distingui, nec ad finem perductum esse alterum," &c. *Menck. in vitâ Pol. p.* 43.

[n] "L' anno correva mille quattro cento
"Et sessant'octo dall' incarnazione,
"Et ordinossi per mezzo Gennaio,
"Ma il septimo dì fessi di Febraio."

Giostra di Lor.

It must be observed that the year, according to the Florentine computation, did not terminate till the 25th day of March.

[o] "Ch' era al principio del ventesimo anno,
"Quando e' fu paziente à tanto affanno."

Ibid.

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as to the attack lately made upon the Florentines by Bartolomeo Coglione, called of Bergamo [p]. The circumstance that gave rise to this solemnity was the marriage of Braccio Martello, an intimate friend of Lorenzo [q]. The second prize of honour was adjudged to Carlo Borromei [r]. At this time Giuliano was only in his fifteenth year; but he made his appearance on horseback among the combatants [s], and obtained a prize during the same festival; it being evident from the poem of Pulci, that he was to try his courage on

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[p] "Ma poi che in tutto fu l'orgoglio spento
"Del furor bergamasco: al fier leone
"Venne la palma, et ciascun fu contento
"Di far la giostra nel suo antico agone."
Giostra di Lor

[q] "E' si faceva le nozze in Fiorenza
"Quando al ciel piacque, di Braccio Martello,
"Giovane ornata di tanta eccellenza
"Ch'io non saprei chi comparare à quello," &c.
Ibid.

[r] "Trassonsi gli elmi i giostranti di testa
"E posto fine à si lungo martoro;
"Fu data al giovinetto con gran festo
"Il primo honor di Marte, con l'alloro,
"Et l'altro a Carlo Borromei si resta."
Ibid.

"Poi seguitava il suo fratel Giuliano,
"Sopra un destrier tutto d'acciaio coperto."

on a future day [t]. The poem of Politiano contains also sufficient proof that the tournament of Giuliano is to be placed at no very distant period from that of Lorenzo, as it appears Lorenzo was not then married, although that event took place within a few months after he had signalized himself in this contest [u]. If further confirmation were necessary, it may be found in the Ricordi of Lorenzo, who defrayed the expence of this exhibition, which cost ten thousand florins, and was held in the place of S. Croce. In this authentic document Lorenzo speaks with becoming modesty of these his youthful atchievements [v].

It must be confessed that the poem of Pulci derives its merit rather from the minute information

Poem Luca Pulci.

[t] " Digli, che sono per Giuliano certi squilli
" Che deston come Carnasciale il corno,
" Il suo cor magno all' aspettata giostra;
" Ultima gloria di Fiorenza nostra."
Giostra di Lor. in fine.

[u] *Giostra di Giuliano de' Med. lib.* ii. *stan.* 4.

[v] *Ric. di Lor. in App. No.* XII.

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ation it gives us respecting this exhibition, than from its poetical excellence[w]. A considerable part of it is employed in describing the preparations for the tournament, and the habits and appearance of the combatants. The umpires were, Roberto da Sanseverino, Carlo Pandolfini, Tomaso Soderini, Ugolino Martelli, Niccolo Giugni, and Buongianni Gianfigliazzi. The candidates for the prize were eighteen in number. The steed upon which Lorenzo made his first appearance was presented to him by Ferdinand king of Naples. That on which he relied in the combat, by Borso marquis of Ferrara. The duke of Milan had furnished him with his suit of armour. His motto was *Le tems revient*. His device, the *fleurs de lys*, the privilege of using the arms of France having shortly before been conceded to the Medici by Louis XI. by a solemn

[w] Of this poem I have seen only two editions; the first printed without note of date or place, but apparently about the year 1500, under the title of LA GIOSTRA DI LORENZO DE' MEDICI MESSA IN RIMA DA LUIGI DE' PULCI ANNO M.CCCC LXVIII. in which it is to be observed, that this work is erroneously attributed to *Luigi*, the author of the *Morgante*, instead of *Luca*, his brother. The other edition is printed in Florence by the Giunti, in 1572, accompanied by the *Ciriffo Calvaneo*, and the *Epistole* of *Luca Pulci*, and is there attributed to its proper author.

solemn act [x]. His first conflict was with Carlo Borromei; his next with Braccio de' Medici, who attacked him with such strength and courage, that if the stroke had taken place, Orlando himself, as the poet assures us, could not have withstood the shock. Lorenzo took speedy vengeance, but his spear breaking into a hundred pieces, his adversary was preserved from a total overthrow. He then assailed Carlo da Forme, whose helmet he split, and whom he nearly unhorsed. Lorenzo then changing his steed, made a violent attack upon Benedetto Salutati, who had just couched his lance ready for the combat.

Vedestu mai falcon calare a piombo,
F poi spianarsi, e batter forte l' ale,
C' ha tratto fuori della schiera il colombo?
Così Lorenzo Benedetto assale;
Tanto che l' aria fa fischiar pel rombo,
Non va si presto folgor, non che strale;
Dettonsi colpi che parvon d'Achille,
Et balza un mongibel fuori di faville.

Hast thou not seen the falcon in his flight,
When high in air on balanced wing he hung,

On

[x] The grant of this privilege yet remains. *V. App.* No. XIV.

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On some lone straggler of the covey light?
—On Benedetto thus Lorenzo sprung.
Whistled the air, as ardent for the fight,
Fleet as the arrow flies he rushed along;
Achilles' rage their meeting strokes inspires,
Their sparkling armour rivals Etna's fires.

Poem of Politiano.

The poem of Politiano is of a very different character, and though produced about the same period of time, is a century posterior in point of refinement [y]. The age of Politiano, when he wrote it, scarcely exceeded fourteen years, and it must

[y] The *Stanze* of Politiano on the *Giostra* of Giuliano de' Medici have been frequently printed. In the earliest edition I have seen, they are accompanied by his Fable of Orfeo, *stampate in Firenze, per Gianstephano di Carlo da Pavia, a stanza di Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, questo dì* XV. *d' Ottobre* M.D.XIII. This, however, is not the first edition, they having been printed in the lifetime of Politiano, though without his concurrence, as appears by the dedication from Alessandro Sartio to Galeazzo Bentivoglio, reprinted in the edition of 1513, wherein Sartio alludes to their having been printed by Plato de Benedictis, one of the best printers of the fifteenth century; and adds, "Credo ancora che se alquanto al Politiano dispiacerà "che queste sue Stanze dallui già disprezzate, si stam- "pino; pur all incontro gli piacerà che havendosi una "volta a divulgare, sotto el titolo e nome di tua Signoria "si divulghino." Many subsequent editions have been published; at Venice, 1521, 1537, &c. and at Padua, by Comino, 1728, 1751, and 1765.

must not be denied that the poem bears upon the face of it the marks of juvenility—but what a manhood does it promise? — From such an early exuberance of blossom what fruits might we not expect? The general approbation with which it was received, must have been highly flattering both to the poet and the hero; nor has posterity appealed from the decision. On the contrary, it has been uniformly allowed that this was one of the earliest productions in the revival of letters, that breathed the true spirit of poetry; and that it not only far excelled the Giostra of Pulci, but essentially contributed towards the establishment of a better taste in Italy.

It may seem strange, that although this poem be of considerable length, containing about fourteen hundred lines, it is left unfinished, and breaks off even before the tournament begins. Instead of giving us, like Pulci, a minute description of the habiliments of the combatants, the poet takes a wider circuit, and indulges himself in digressions and episodes of great extent. The express purpose for which it was written would not indeed be very apparent, were it not for the information afforded us in the commencement; and even here the author does not propose to confine himself to one subject in par-

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ticular, but professes to celebrate the feats of arms and pomps of Florence, and the loves and studies of Giuliano de' Medici[z]. Although Giuliano be the subject, the poem is addressed to Lorenzo, whose favour Politiano earnestly supplicates.

E tu, ben nato LAUR', sotto 'l cui velo
Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa,
Nè teme i venti, o'l minacciar del cielo,
O Giove irato in vista più crucciosa;
Accogli al ombra del tuo santo ostelo
La voce umil, tremante, e paurosa;
Principio, e fin, di tutte le mie voglie,
Che sol vivon d' odor delle tue foglie.

Deh sarà mai che con più alte note,
Se non contrasti al mio voler fortuna,
Lo spirto delle membre, che divote
Ti fur da' fati, insin già dalla cuna,
Risuoni te dai Numidi a Boote,
Dagl' Indi, al mar che'l nostro ciel imbruna,
E, posto'l nido in tuo felice ligno,
Di roco augel diventi un bianco cigno?

High

[z] "Le gloriose pompe, e i fieri ludi
"Della città che 'l freno allenta e stringe
"A' magnanimi Toschi: e i regni crudi
"Di quella dea che'l terzo ciel dipinge:
"E i premj degni a gli onorati studi."

High born LORENZO! laurel—in whose shade
Thy Florence rests, nor fears the lowering storm,
Nor threatening signs in heaven's high front display'd,
Nor Jove's dread anger in its fiercest form;
O to the trembling muse afford thine aid,
—The muse that courts thee, timorous and forlorn,
Lives in the shadow of thy prosperous tree,
And bounds her every fond desire to thee.

Ere long the spirit that this frame inspires,
This frame, that from its earliest hour was thine,
If fortune frown not on my vast desires,
Shall spread to distant shores thy name divine;
To lands that feel the sun's intenser fires,
That mark his earliest rise, his last decline;
Nurs'd in the shade thy spreading branch supplies,
Tuneless before, a tuneful swain I rise.

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

Ah quante Ninfe per lui sospirorno!
Ma fu sì altero sempre il giovinetto,
Che mai le Ninfe amanti lo piegorno,
Mai potè riscaldarsi 'l freddo petto.
Facea sovente pe' boschi soggiorno;
Inculto sempre, e rigido in aspetto;
Il volto diffendea dal solar raggio
Con ghirlanda di pino, o verde faggio.

E poi,

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E poi, quando nel ciel parean le stelle,
Tutto gioioso a suo magion tornava;
E'n compagnia delle nove sorelle,
Celesti versi con disio cantava:
E d' antica virtù mille fiammelle,
Con gli alti carmi ne' petti destava:
Così chiamando amor lascivia umana,
Si godea con le Muse, e con Diana.

For Julian many a maiden heav'd the sigh,
And many a glance the tender flame confest;
But not the radiance of the brightest eye
Could melt the icy rigour of his breast.
Wild thro' the trackless woods the youth would hie,
Severe of aspect, and disdaining rest:
Whilst the dark pine, or spreading beech supplied
A wreathe, from summer suns his head to hide.

When evening's star its milder lustre lends,
The wanderer to his cheerful home retires,
There every muse his lov'd return attends,
And generous aims, and heavenly verse inspires:
Deep through his frame the sacred song descends,
With thirst of ancient praise his soul that fires;
And Love, fond trifler, mourns his blunted dart,
That harmless flies where Dian shields the heart.

After some beautiful verses, in which Giuliano reproaches the weakness of those who devote themselves to the tender passion, he goes to

to the chace, which gives the poet an opportunity of displaying his talent for description, in which he particularly excels. Love, who feels his divinity insulted, employs a stratagem to subdue the obdurate heart of Giuliano. A beautiful white hind crosses his way, which he pursues, but which perpetually eludes his endeavours to wound it, and leads him far distant from his companions. When his courser is almost exhausted with fatigue, a nymph makes her appearance, and Giuliano, astonished at her beauty, forgets the pursuit, and accosts her with trepidation and amazement. Her answer completes her triumph. Evening comes on, and Giuliano returns home, alone and pensive. The poet then enters upon a description of the court of Venus in the island of Cyprus, which extends to a considerable length, and is ornamented with all the graces of poetry. Cupid, having completed his conquest, returns thither to recount his success to his mother; who, in order to enhance its value, is desirous that Giuliano should signalize himself in a tournament. The whole band of loves accordingly repairs to Florence, and Giuliano prepares for the combat. In a dream sent by Venus, he seems to come off with victory. On his return, crowned with olive and laurel, his mistress appears to him, but

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but is soon enveloped in a thick cloud, and carried from his sight; which incident the poet applies to the sudden death of the beautiful Simonetta, the mistress of Giuliano[a]. Some consolatory verses are applied to the lover, who, awaking, invokes Minerva to crown his attempt with glory. But here the narrative is interrupted, nor does it appear that the author resumed his task at any subsequent period, having probably thrown the work aside as a production of his younger years, scarcely deserving of his riper attention.

Disputationes Camaldulenses.

The proficiency made by Lorenzo and Giuliano in active accomplishments, did not however retard their progress in the pursuits of science, or the acquisition of knowledge. About the year 1468, Landino wrote his *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, which, at the same time that they open to us the means of instruction adopted by him in the education of his pupils, give

[a] On this lady we have an epitaph by Politiano, (the substance of which is said to have been suggested to him by Giuliano,) printed amongst his smaller poems, in *Op. Ald.* 1498. And Bernardo Pulci has also left an elegy on her death, published by Miscomini at Florence in 1494.

give us the fairest evidence of their proficiency [b]. In the infancy of science, particular departments of knowledge are frequently cultivated with great success; but it is only in periods of high improvement that men are accustomed to comprehend the general plan of human life, and to allot to every occupation and pursuit its proper degree of importance. The *Disputationes Camaldulenses* afford us sufficient proof that the Florentines had, at this early period, arrived at that mental elevation, which enabled them to take a distinct view of the various objects by which they were surrounded, and to apply all that was then known of science to its best uses. In the introduction

[b] This work was first published without note of place or date, but, as Bandini supposes, about the year 1472, (*Spec Lit Flor. v.* ii. *p.* 3) or 1475 (*Ib. v.* iv. *p.* 192) De Bure conjectures it was printed about the year 1480. (*Bibliographie Instructive, v.* iv. *p.* 272. *Ed* 1763.) This edition is extremely scarce. Bandini could not find a copy in the Vatican library, although it appears in the catalogue. It was reprinted at Strasburg in the year 1508. The title of this last edition is, CHRISTOPHORI LANDINI FLORENTINI LIBRI QUATTUOR. *Primus de vita activa et contemplativa. Secundus de summo bono. Tertius et quartus in Publii Virgilii Maronis Allegorias*; and at the close, "*Has Camaldulenses Disputationes pulchriortbus typis* "*Mathias Schürerius, artium doctor excussit in officina sua* "*litteratoria Argentorati die* XXVI *Augusti. Anno Christi* "M.D.VIII. *Regnante Cæsare Maximiliano Augusto.*"

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duction to this work Landino informs us, that having, in company with his brother Piero, made an excursion from his villa in Casentina to a monastery in the wood of Camaldoli, they found that Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici had arrived there before them, accompanied by Alamanni Rinuccini, and Piero and Donato Acciajuoli; all men of learning and eloquence, who had applied themselves with great diligence to philosophical studies. The pleasure of their first meeting was enhanced by the arrival of Leo Battista Alberti, who, returning from Rome, had met with Marsilio Ficino, and had prevailed upon him to pass a few days, during the heat of autumn, in the healthful retreat of Camaldoli. Mariotto, abbot of the monastery, introduced to each other his learned friends; and the remainder of the day, for it was then drawing towards evening, was passed in attending to the conversation of Alberti, of whose disposition and accomplishments Landino gives us a most favourable idea[c]. On the following day, after the perform-

[c] Erat enim vir ille, omnium quos plura jam secula produxerint, omni humanitatis, ac salium genere cumulatissimus; nam quid de litteris loquar? cum nihil omnino extet, quod quidem homini scire fas sit, in quo ille scienter, prudenterque, non versaretur.

Land. Disput. Camal. p. 7. *Ed.* 1508.

performance of religious duties, the whole company agreed to ascend through the wood towards the summit of the hill, and in a short time arrived at a solitary spot, where the extended branches of a large beech overhung a clear spring of water. At the invitation of Alberti, a conversation here takes place, which he begins by observing, that those persons may be esteemed peculiarly happy, who, having improved their minds by study, can withdraw themselves at intervals from public engagements and private anxiety, and in some agreeable retreat indulge themselves in an ample range through all the objects of the natural and moral world. "But "if this be an occupation suitable for all men "of learning, it is more particularly so for "you," continued Alberti, addressing himself to Lorenzo and Giuliano, "on whom the direc- "tion of the affairs of the republic is likely, "from the increasing infirmities of your father, "soon to devolve[d]. For although, Lorenzo, "you

[d] *Land. Disput. Camal. p.* 7. Bandini conjectures that Landino composed this work about the year 1460, (*Spec. Lit. Flor. v.* ii. *p.* 2.) at which time Lorenzo was only twelve years of age. But from the above passage it is evident that it was written towards the latter part of the life of Piero de' Medici, and probably about the year 1468, when Lorenzo had already distinguished himself by his successful interference in public affairs.

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" you have given proof of such virtues as would " induce us to think them rather of divine " than human origin; although there seems to " be no undertaking so momentous as not to be " accomplished by that prudence and courage " which you have displayed, even in your early " years; and although the impulse of youthful " ambition, and the full enjoyment of those " gifts of fortune which have often intoxicated " men of high expectation and great virtue, " have never yet been able to impel you beyond " the just bounds of moderation; yet, both you, " and that republic which you are shortly to " direct, or rather which now in a great mea- " sure reposes on your care, will derive import- " ant advantages from those hours of leisure, " which you may pass either in solitary medi- " tation, or social discussion, on the origin and " nature of the human mind. For it is impos- " sible that any person should rightly direct " the affairs of the public, unless he has pre- " viously established in himself virtuous habits, " and enlightened his understanding with that " knowledge, which will enable him clearly to " discern why he is called into existence, what " is due to others, and what to himself." A conversation then commences between Lorenzo and Alberti, in which the latter endeavours to shew, that as reason is the distinguishing charac-

teristic

teristic of man, the perfection of his nature is only to be attained by the cultivation of his mind, and by a total abstraction from worldly pursuits. Lorenzo, who is not a mere silent auditor, opposes a doctrine which, if carried to its extreme, would separate man from his duties; and contends, that no essential distinction can be made between active and contemplative life, but that each should mutually assist and improve the other; and this he illustrates in such a variety of instances, that although it is evidently the object of Landino, through the medium of Alberti, to establish the pure Platonic dogma, that abstract contemplation can alone constitute the essence of human happiness, yet Lorenzo appears to have raised objections which the ingenuity of the philosopher in the sequel of the dispute seems scarcely to have invalidated[c]. On the following day the same subject

[c] Alberti appears, from the following passage, to have almost given up the contest: "Nam quod aiebas "maximum idcirco inde provenire reipublicæ detri- "mentum, quod occupatis excellentioribus ingeniis circa "veri cognitionem, ipsa a deterioribus regatur, nun- "quam profecto cessabit sapiens, quin se de rebus arduis "consulentes recta semper moneat; unde si non opera, "consilio tamen juvabit." (*Quæst. Camal. p.* 28.) Thus the philosopher is obliged to stoop from his celestial

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subject is pursued, and Alberti fully explains the doctrine of Plato respecting the true end and aim of human life; illustrating it by the opinions of many of the most celebrated followers of that philosopher. The third and fourth days are spent in a commentary by Alberti on the Æneid, in which he endeavours to shew, that under the fiction of the poem are represented the leading doctrines of that philosophy which had been the subject of their previous discussion. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of such a construction, certain it is that there are many passages in this poem which seem strongly to countenance such an opinion; and at all events, the idea is supported by Alberti with such a display of learning, and such a variety of proofs, as must have rendered his commentary highly amusing and instructive to his youthful auditors.

Lorenzo's description of his mistress.

It must not however be supposed, that amidst his studious avocations, Lorenzo was insensible to that passion which has at all times been the soul of poetry, and has been so philosophically and

height, and to disturb the calm repose of his mind with the cares of this grosser world:—Beautiful, but impracticable system of philosophy! which must perhaps wait for its completion till another state of being.

and so variously described in his own writings. To this subject he has indeed devoted a considerable portion of his works; but it is somewhat extraordinary that he has not thought proper, upon any occasion, to inform us of the name of his mistress; nor has he gratified our curiosity so far as to give her even a poetical appellation. Petrarca had his Laura, and Dante his Beatrice; but Lorenzo has studiously concealed the name of the sovereign of his affections, leaving it to be ascertained by a thousand brilliant descriptions of her superlative beauty and accomplishments. In the usual order of things it is love that creates the poet; but with Lorenzo, poetry appears to have been the occasion of his love. The circumstances, as related by himself, are these[f]:—"A young lady of great "personal attractions happened to die in Flo- "rence; and as she had been very generally "admired and beloved, so her death was as "generally lamented. Nor was this to be won- "dered at; for, independent of her beauty, her "manners were so engaging, that almost every "person

[f] *Commento di Lor. de' Medici sopra alcuni de' suoi Sonetti nel fine delle sue Poesie volgari, p.* 123, 129, *&c. Ed. Ald.* 1554.

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" person who had any acquaintance with her, " flattered himself that he had obtained the " chief place in her affections. This fatal event " excited the extreme regret of her admirers; " and as she was carried to the place of burial, " with her face uncovered, those who had " known her when living pressed for a last look " at the object of their adoration, and accom- " panied her funeral with their tears [s],

" Whilst death smil'd lovely in her lovely face."

Morte bella parea nel suo bel volto. PETR.

" On

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[s] From this singular circumstance, compared with the evidence of one of the epigrams of Politiano, we are enabled to determine that this lady was the beautiful Simonetta, the mistress of Giuliano de' Medici, to whose untimely death we have before adverted.

" *In Simonettam.*

" Dum pulchra effertur nigro Simonetta feretro,
" Blandus et exanimi spirat in ore lepos,
" Nactus amor tempus quo non sibi turba caveret,
" Jecit ab occlusis mille faces oculis:
" Mille animos cepit viventis imagine risus;
" Ac morti insultans, est mea, dixit, adhuc;
" Est mea, dixit, adhuc, nondum totam eripis illam,
" Illa vel exanimis militat ecce mihi.
" Dixit—et ingemuit—neque enim satis apta triumphis
" Illa puer vidit tempora—sed lachrymis."

Pol. lib. Epigram. in Op. Ald. 1498.

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" On this occasion all the eloquence and the " wit of Florence were exerted in paying due " honours to her memory, both in prose and in " verse. Amongst the rest, I also composed a " few sonnets; and in order to give them " greater effect, I endeavoured to convince " myself that I too had been deprived of the " object of my love, and to excite in my own " mind all those passions that might enable me " to move the affections of others. Under the " influence of this delusion, I began to think " how severe was the fate of those by whom she " had been beloved; and from thence was led " to consider, whether there was any other lady " in this city deserving of such honour and " praise, and to imagine the happiness that " must be experienced by any one whose good " fortune could procure him such a subject for " his pen. I accordingly sought for some time " without having the satisfaction of finding any " one, who, in my judgment, was deserving of " a sincere and constant attachment. But when " I had nearly resigned all expectations of suc- " cess, chance threw in my way that which had " been denied to my most diligent inquiry; as if " the god of love had selected this hopeless " period, to give me a more decisive proof of " his power. A public festival was held in Flo- " rence, to which all that was noble and beau-

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"tiful in the city resorted. To this I was "brought by some of my companions (I suppose "as my destiny led) against my will, for I had "for some time past avoided such exhibitions; "or if at times I attended them, it proceeded "rather from a compliance with custom, than "from any pleasure I experienced in them. "Amongst the ladies there assembled, I saw "one of such sweet and attractive manners, that "whilst I regarded her, I could not help saying, "*If this person were possessed of the delicacy, the "understanding, the accomplishments of her who "is lately dead—most certainly she excels her in "the charms of her person.*"

* * * *

"Resigning myself to my passion, I endea- "voured to discover, if possible, how far her man- "ners and her conversation agreed with her ap- "pearance, and here I found such an assemblage "of extraordinary endowments, that it was diffi- "cult to say whether she excelled more in her "person, or in her mind. Her beauty was, as I "have before mentioned, astonishing. She was "of a just and proper height. Her complexion "extremely fair, but not pale; blooming, but "not ruddy. Her countenance was serious, "without being severe; mild and pleasant, with- "out levity or vulgarity. Her eyes were lively,

"without

" without any indication of pride or conceit. CHAP. II.
" Her whole shape was so finely proportioned,
" that amongst other women she appeared with
" superior dignity, yet free from the least degree
" of formality or affectation. In walking, in
" dancing, or in other exercises which display
" the person, every motion was elegant and
" appropriate. — Her sentiments were always
" just and striking, and have furnished materials
" for some of my sonnets; she always spoke at
" the proper time, and always to the purpose,
" so that nothing could be added, nothing taken
" away. Though her remarks were often keen
" and pointed, yet they were so tempered as not
" to give offence. Her understanding was
" superior to her sex, but without the appear-
" ance of arrogance or presumption; and
" she avoided an error too common among
" women, who, when they think themselves
" sensible, become for the most part insupport-
" able [h]. To recount all her excellencies would
" far

[h] Let it not be thought that I should hazard such a sentiment without the full authority of my author, who has indeed expressed it in more general terms — " Lo " ingegno," says he, " meraviglioso e ciò senza fasta o " presunzione, e fuggendo un certo vitio commune à " donne, le quali parendo d'intendere assai, divengono

CHAP. II.

" far exceed my present limits, and I shall there-
" fore conclude with affirming, that there was
" nothing which could be desired in a beautiful
" and accomplished woman, which was not in
" her most abundantly found. By these qua-
" lities I was so captivated, that not a power or
" faculty of my body or mind remained any
" longer at liberty, and I could not help consi-
" dering the lady who had died, as the star of
" Venus, which at the approach of the sun is
" totally overpowered and extinguished." Such is the description that Lorenzo has left us of the object of his passion, in his comment upon the first sonnet which he wrote in her praise; and if we do not allow great latitude to the partiality of a lover, we must confess that few poets have been fortunate enough to meet with a mistress so well calculated to excite their zeal, or to justify the effects of their admiration.

Sonnets in her praise.

The first poetical offspring of this passion was the following

SONETTO:

" insuppórtabili; volendo giudicare ogni cosa, che vol-
" garmente le chiamiamo Saccenti."—But we must recollect that Lorenzo de' Medici wrote in the fifteenth century!

SONETTO:

Lasso a me, quando io son la dove sia
Quell' angelico, altero, e dolce volto,
Il fieddo sangue intorno al core accolto
Lascia senza color la faccia mia:
Poi mirando la sua, mi par sì pia,
Ch'io prendo ardire, e torna il valor tolto;
Amor ne' raggi de' begli occhi involto
Mostra al mio tristo cor la cieca via:
E parlandogli alhor, dice, io ti giuro
Pel santo lume di questi occhi belli
Del mio stral forza, e del mio regno onore,
Ch'io sarò sempre teco; e ti assicuro
Esser vera pietà che mostran quelli:
Credogli lasso! e da me fugge il core.

Alas for me! whene'er my footsteps trace
Those precincts where eternal beauty reigns,
The sanguine current from a thousand veins
Flows round my heart, and pallid grows my face:
But when I mark that smile of heavenly grace,
Its wonted powers my drooping soul regains;
Whilst Love, that in her eyes his state maintains,
Points to my wandering heart its resting place;
And stooping from his beamy mansion swears,
"By all that forms my power and points my dart,
"The living lustre of those radiant eyes,
"I still will guide thy way; dismiss thy fears;
"True are those looks of love." My trusting heart
Believes th insidious vow—and from me flies.

The

CHAP. II.

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

SONETTO.

Cerchi chi vuol, le pompe, e gli alti honori,
Le piazze, e tempi, e gli edifici magni,
Le delicie, il tesor, qual accompagni
Mille duri pensier, mille dolori:
Un verde praticel pien di bei fiori,
Un rivolo, che l' erba intorno bagni,
Un augelletto, che d' amor si lagni,
Acqueta molto meglio i nostri ardori.
L' ombrose selve, i sassi, e gli alti monti,
Gli antri oscuri, e le fere fuggitive,
Qualche leggiadra Ninfa paurosa;
Quivi veggio io con pensier vaghi, e pronti
Le belle luci, come fossin vive:
Qui me le toglie hor una, hor altra cosa.

Seek he who will in grandeur to be blest,
Place in proud halls, and splendid courts, his joy,
For

For pleasure, or for gold, his arts employ,
Whilst all his hours unnumbered cares molest.
—A little field in native flow'rets drest,
A rivulet in soft murmurs gliding by,
A bird whose love-sick note salutes the sky,
With sweeter magic lull my cares to rest.
And shadowy woods, and rocks, and towering hills,
And caves obscure, and nature's free-born train,
And some lone nymph that timorous speeds along,
Each in my mind some gentle thought instills
Of those bright eyes that absence shrouds in vain;
—Ah gentle thoughts! soon lost the city cares among.

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

Lucretia Donati the object of his passion.

But having thus far traced the passion of Lorenzo, we may now be allowed to ask who was

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

Whether the assiduities of Lorenzo, and the persuasions of his friends, were sufficiently powerful to soften that obduracy which there is reason to presume Lucretia manifested on his first addresses, yet remains a matter of doubt. The sonnets of Lorenzo rise and fall through every degree of the thermometer of love; he exults

[i] *v. App. No.* XV.

[k] *Valor. in vitâ Laur. p.* 8.

exults and he despairs—he freezes and he burns—he sings of raptures too great for mortal sense, and he applauds a severity of virtue that no solicitations can move. From such contradictory testimony what are we to conclude? Lorenzo has himself presented us with the key that unlocks this mystery. From the relation which he has before given, we find that Lucretia was the mistress of the poet, and not of the man. Lorenzo sought for an object to concentrate his ideas, to give them strength and effect, and he found in Lucretia a subject that suited his purpose, and deserved his praise. But having so far realized his mistress, he has dressed and ornamented her according to his own imagination. Every action of her person, every motion of her mind, is subject to his control. She smiles, or she frowns: she refuses, or relents; she is absent, or present; she intrudes upon his solitude by day, or visits him in his nightly dreams, just as his presiding fancy directs. In the midst of these delightful visions Lorenzo was called upon to attend to the dull realities of life. He had now attained his twenty-first year, and his father conceived that it was time for him to enter into the conjugal state. To this end he had negotiated a marriage between Lorenzo and Clarice, the daughter of Giacopo Orsini, of the noble and powerful Roman-

Lorenzo marries Clarice Orsini.

CHAP. II

Roman family of that name, which had so long contended for superiority with that of the Colonna. Whether Lorenzo despaired of success in his youthful passion, or whether he subdued his feelings at the voice of paternal authority, is left to conjecture only. Certain however it is, that in the month of December 1468, he was betrothed to a person whom it is probable he had never seen, and the marriage ceremony was performed on the fourth day of June following [l]. That the heart of Lorenzo had little share in this engagement is marked by a striking circumstance. In adverting to his marriage in his Ricordi, he bluntly remarks that he took this lady to wife, *or rather*, says he, *she was given to me*, on the day before mentioned [m]. Notwithstanding this indifference, it appears from indisputable documents, that a real affection soon afterwards subsisted between them;

[l] Bayle is mistaken in supposing that the marriage of Lorenzo took place in 1471. Speaking of Machiavelli, he says; "Il ne marque pas l'annee de ce mariage ce "qui est un grand defaut dans un Ecrivain d'histoire, "mais on peut recueillir de sa narration que ce fut l'an "1471." *Dict. Hiſt. Art. Politien.* In correcting Bayle, Menckenius falls into a greater error, and places this event in 1472. *Menck in vitâ Pol. p.* 48.

[m] *Ricordi di Lor. App. No.* XII.

them; and there is reason to presume that Lorenzo always treated her with particular respect and kindness. Their nuptials were celebrated with great splendor. Two military spectacles were exhibited, one of which represented a field battle of horsemen, and the other the attack and storming of a fortified citadel. CHAP. II.

In the month of July following, Lorenzo took another journey to Milan, for the purpose of standing sponsor, in the name of his father, to Galeazzo, the eldest son of Galeazzo Sforza, the reigning duke. In this expedition he was accompanied by Gentile d'Urbino, who gave a regular narrative of their proceedings to Clarice. A letter from Lorenzo himself to his wife is also yet preserved, written upon his arrival at Milan, which, though very short, and not distinguished by any flights of fancy, exhibits more sincerity and affection than the greater part of his amorous sonnets [n]. Visits the duke of Milan. 1469.

Lorenzo de' Medici to his wife Clarice.

" *I arrived here in safety, and am in good* " *health. This I believe will please thee better* " *than*

[n] *Fabr. in vitâ Lor. Adnot. & Mon. v.* ii. *p.* 56.

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" *than any thing else except my return: at least* " *so I judge from my own desire to be once more* " *with thee. Associate as much as possible with* " *my father and my sisters. I shall make all* " *possible speed to return to thee, for it appears a* " *thousand years till I see thee again. Pray to* " *God for me. If thou want any thing from this* " *place write in time. From Milan, twenty-* " *second July* 1469.

" *Thy Lorenzo de' Medici.*"

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

Death of Piero de' Medici.

Piero de' Medici did not long survive the marriage of his son. Exhausted by bodily sufferings, and wearied with the arrogant and tyrannical conduct of many of those who had espoused his cause, and which his infirmities prevented him from repressing, he died on the

the third day of December 1469, leaving his widow Lucretia, who survived him many years. His funeral was without ostentation; "perhaps," says Ammirato, "because he had in his lifetime "given directions to that effect; or because "the parade of a magnificent interment might "have excited the envy of the populace towards "his successors, to whom it was of more im- "portance to *be* great, than to *appear* to be so [o]."

Before Piero was attacked by the disorder which for a long time rendered him almost incapable of attending to public business, he had been employed in several embassies of the greatest importance, which he had executed much to his own honour, and the advantage of the republic. Even after he was disabled from attending in the council, he continued to regulate the affairs of Florence, and to discuss with the principal citizens the most important subjects, in such a manner as to evince the solidity of his judgment and the integrity of his heart. He possessed a competent share of eloquence, some specimens of which are given by Machiavelli, who asserts that the extortions and abuses practised

[o] *Amm. Ist Fior. v.* iii. *p.* 106.

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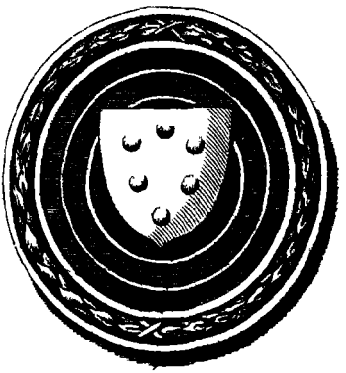
tised by his friends and adherents were so flagitious, and so hateful to his temper, that if he had lived it was his intention to have recalled the exiled citizens; for which purpose he had an interview, at his seat at Caffagiolo, with Agnolo Acciajuoli; but the numerous errors of this celebrated historian give us just reason to doubt on those points which have not the concurrent testimony of other writers. "It is "probable," says Tiraboschi, "that had Piero "enjoyed better health and longer life, he might "have done more for the interests of literature, "but if he had only been known as the father "of Lorenzo de' Medici, it would have been "a sufficient title to the gratitude of posterity."

CHAP. III.

Political state of Italy—Venice—Naples—Milan—Rome—Florence—Lorenzo succeeds to the direction of the republic—Giuliano de' Medici—Attack on Prato—League against the Turks—Riches of the Medici—Their commercial concerns—Other sources of their revenue—The duke of Milan visits Florence—Lorenzo devotes his leisure to literature—Angelo Politiano—His temper and character—Death of Paul II.—*A persecutor of learned men—Succeeded by Sixtus* IV.—*Lorenzo deputed to congratulate him—Revolt and saccage of Volterra—Lorenzo establishes the academy of Pisa—Negotiation for a marriage between the dauphin and a daughter of the king of Naples—The king declines the proposal—Ambition and rapacity of Sixtus* IV.—*League between the duke of Milan, the Venetians, and the Florentines—The king of Denmark at Florence—Progress of the Platonic academy—Poem of Lorenzo intitled* ALTERCAZIONE—*Platonic festival—Effects of this institution—Number and celebrity of its members.*



CHAP. III.

1469

At the time of the death of Piero de' Medici, the republic of Florence was not engaged in any open war. The absentees were however a cause of continual alarm, and the situation of the Italian states was such, as to give just grounds of apprehension that the tranquillity of that country would not long remain undisturbed. Of these the most powerful was that of Venice, which aspired to nothing less than the dominion of all Lombardy, and the supreme control of Italy itself. The superiority which it had acquired was in a great degree derived from the extensive commerce then carried on by the Venetians to different parts of the East, the valuable productions

Political state of Italy.

Venice.

CHAP. III

ductions of which were conveyed by way of Egypt into the Mediterranean, and from thence distributed by the Venetians throughout the rest of Europe. In this branch of commerce the Genoese and the Florentines had successively attempted to rival them; but although each of these people, and particularly the latter, had obtained a considerable portion of this lucrative trade, the Venetians maintained a decided superiority, until the discovery of a new and more expeditious communication with India, by the Cape of Good Hope, turned the course of eastern traffic into a new channel. The numerous vessels employed in transporting their commodities to different countries, rendered the state of Venice the most formidable maritime power in Europe. Ever intent on its own aggrandizement, it has only been restrained within its limits by formidable leagues between the Italian sovereigns, and by the seasonable intervention of foreign powers. Its internal tranquillity is remarkably contrasted with the turbulence of Florence; but the Venetian nobility had erected their authority on the necks of the people, and Venice was a republic of nobles, with a populace of slaves. In no country was despotism ever reduced to a more accurate system. The proficiency made by the Venetians in literature has accordingly borne no proportion to the rank which

which they have in other respects held among the Italian states. The talents of the higher orders were devoted to the support of their authority, or the extension of their territory; and among the lower class, with their political rights, their emulation was effectually extinguished. Whilst the other principal cities of Italy were daily producing works of genius, Venice was content with the humble, but more lucrative employment of communicating those works to the public by means of the press. Other governments have exhibited a different aspect at different times, according to the temper of the sovereign, or the passions of the multitude; but Venice has uniformly preserved the same settled features, and remains to the present day a phenomenon in political history.

Naples.

The kingdom of Naples was at this time governed by Ferdinand of Arragon, who had in the year 1458 succeeded his father Alfonso. Under his administration that country experienced a degree of prosperity to which it had long been a stranger. At the same time that Ferdinand kept a watchful eye on the other governments of Italy, and particularly on that of Venice, he was consulting the happiness of his own subjects by the institution of just and equal laws, and by the promotion of commerce

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and of letters; but the virtues of the monarch were sullied by the crimes of the man, and the memory of Ferdinand is disgraced by repeated instances of treachery and inhumanity. Galeazzo Maria, son of the eminent Francesco Sforza, held the states of Milan, which were then of considerable extent. Of the virtues and talents of the father little however is to be traced in the character of the son. Immoderate in his pleasures, lavish in his expences, rapacious in supplying his wants, he incurred the contempt and hatred of his subjects. Like another Nero, he mingled with his vices a taste for science and for arts. To the follies and the crimes of this man, posterity must trace the origin of all those evils which, after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, depopulated and laid waste the most flourishing governments of Italy.

Milan.

Rome.

The pontifical chair was filled by Paul II. the successor of Pius II. A Venetian by birth, he had been educated in the profession of a merchant. On his uncle Eugenius IV. being promoted to the papacy, he changed his views, and betook himself to study, but too late in life to make any great proficiency. To compensate for this defect, Paul assumed a degree of magnificence and splendor before unknown. His garments were highly ornamented, and his tiara

was

was richly adorned with jewels. Of a tall and imposing figure, he appeared in his processions like a new Aaron, and commanded the respect and veneration of the multitude. His dislike to literature was shewn by an unrelenting persecution of almost all the men of learning who had the misfortune to reside within his dominions. In the pontifical government, it may with justice be observed, that the interests of the prince and the people are always at variance with each other. Raised to the supremacy at an advanced period of life, when the claims of kindred begin to draw closer round the heart, the object of the pope is generally the aggrandizement of his family; and as he succeeds to the direction of a state whose finances have been exhausted by his predecessor, under the influence of similar passions, he employs the short space of time allowed him, in a manner the most advantageous to himself, and the most oppressive to his subjects. Such is nearly the uniform tenor of this government; but in the fifteenth century, when the pope by his secular power held a distinguished rank among the sovereigns of Italy, he often looked beyond the resources of his own subjects, and attempted to possess himself by force of some of the smaller independent states which bordered upon his dominions, and over which the holy see always pretended

CHAP. III.

pretended a paramount claim, as having at some previous time formed a part of its territory, and having been either wrested from it by force, or wrongfully granted away by some former pontiff. These subordinate governments, though obtained by the power of the Roman state, were generally disposed of to the nominal nephews of the pope, who frequently bore in fact a nearer relationship to him; and were held by them until another successor in the see had power enough to dispossess the family of his predecessor, and vest the sovereignty in his own.

Florence.

With any of these governments, either in extent of territory, or in point of military establishment, the city of Florence could not contend; but she possessed some advantages that rendered her of no small importance in the concerns of Italy. Independent of the superior activity and acuteness of her inhabitants, their situation, almost in the centre of the contending powers, gave them an opportunity of improving circumstances to their own interest, of which they seldom failed to avail themselves; and if Florence was inferior to the rest in the particulars before mentioned, she excelled them all in the promptitude with which she could apply her resources when necessity required. The battles of

of the Florentines were generally fought by *Condottieri*, who sold, or rather lent their troops to those who offered the best price; for the skill of the commander was shewn in these contests, not so much in destroying the enemy, as in preserving from destruction those followers on whom he depended for his importance or his support. The Florentines were collectively and individually rich; and as the principal inhabitants did not hesitate, on pressing emergencies, to contribute to the credit and supply of the republic, the city of Florence was generally enabled to perform an important part in the transactions of Italy, and if not powerful enough to act alone, was perhaps more desirable as an ally than any other state of that country [a].

Such

[a] Of the population and finances of Florence, in the fifteenth century, I am enabled to give some interesting particulars, from a manuscript of that period, hitherto unpublished, intitled *Inventiva d' una imposition di nuova gravezza*, or "A proposition for a new mode of taxation," by Lodovico Ghetti. In this document the projector calculates the number of Florentine citizens capable of bearing arms at 80,000 men, which, by computing four persons with each, so as to include infirm people, women, and children, he estimates as a population of 400,000 inhabitants. He then calculates the amount of the consumption, by this number of inhabitants, of the necessary articles of life, of which he proposes to take a tenth part in

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Such was the situation of the different governments of Italy at the time of the death of Piero de' Medici; but, besides these, a number of inferior states interfered in the politics of the times, and on some occasions with no inconsiderable effect. Borso d' Este, marquis of Ferrara, although of illegitimate birth, had succeeded to the government on the death of Leonello, to the exclusion of his own legitimate brothers, and administered its affairs with great reputation [b]. Torn by domestic factions, the Genoese were

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in one general tax upon the produce of the soil and the labour of the country, amounting to 475,815 florins, which, after making all due allowances, would be sufficient to support the military establishment of the republic, and to discharge the other necessary expences of the government. Many other particulars, respecting the ancient state of Florence, may be found in this piece, which I have given in the Appendix, as accurately as the state of the manuscript will admit. *v. App. No.* XVI.

The florin is no longer a current coin in Tuscany; it may therefore be proper to observe, that the value of the ancient florin, or *Fiorino d' oro*, was about two shillings and sixpence, having been of the value of three lire and ten soldi. *Amm. Ist. Fior. v.* ii. *p.* 753.

[b] The family of Este may be considered as powerful rivals of the Medici in the encouragement of learning and arts. This taste seems to have arisen with Leonello, who had studied under Guarino Veronese (*Tirab. v.* vi. *p.* 2. *p.* 259.)

were held in subjection by the duke of Milan, whilst Sienna and Lucca, each boasting a free government, were indebted for their independence rather to the mutual jealousy of their neighbours, than to any resources of their own.

Lorenzo succeeds to the direction of the republic.

We have already seen, that during the indisposition of Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo had frequently interfered in the administration of the republic, and had given convincing proofs of his talents and his assiduity. Upon the death of

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p. 259.) and is not less entitled to a place in the annals of letters than in those of political events. Under his protection the university of Ferrara was splendidly re-established and endowed. His court was resorted to by men of learning from all parts of Italy. Of his own poetical productions some specimens yet remain which do honour to his memory. "Principe," says Muratori, "d' immortale memoria; perchè, secondo la Cronica di Ferrara, fu amatore della pace, della giustitia, e della pietà; di vita onestissima, studioso delle divine scriture, liberale massimamente verso i poveri; nelle avversità paziente, nelle prosperità moderato, e che con gran sapienza governò e mantenne sempre quieti i suoi popoli; di modo che si meritò il pregiatissimo nome di Padre della Patria." (*Mur. Ann. v.* ix. *p.* 439) His successor was not inferior to him as a patron of learning; and Ercole I. who succeeded Borso in 1471, continued his hereditary protection of literature to the ensuing century.

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of his father, he therefore succeeded to his authority as if it had been a part of his patrimony. On the second day after that event, he was attended at his own house by many of the principal inhabitants of Florence, who requested that he would take upon himself the administration and care of the republic, in the same manner as his grandfather and his father had before done [c]. Had Lorenzo even been divested of ambition, he well knew the impossibility of retiring with safety to a private station, and without long hesitation complied with the wishes of his fellow-citizens [d]. Sensible, however, of the

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[c] *Ricor di Lor. in App No.* XII.

[d] If we give implicit credit to Machiavelli, Lorenzo was in a great degree indebted for this high distinction to Tomaso Soderini, who (as that author informs us) had, after the death of Piero de' Medici, obtained such influence in the city, that he was consulted on all affairs of importance, and was even addressed by foreign powers as the principal person in the republic. On this trying occasion, Tomaso, we are told, gave a striking proof of his moderation and fidelity. He assembled by night the principal citizens in the convent of S. Antonio, when Lorenzo and Giuliano were present, to take into consideration the state of the republic; where, by many arguments, he convinced his auditors of the expediency of continuing the Medici in the elevated station which their ancestors had so long enjoyed. (*Mac. Ist. lib.* 7.) This account,

the difficulties which he had to encounter, he took every precaution to obviate the ill effects of envy and suspicion, by selecting as his principal advisers such of the citizens as were most esteemed for their integrity and their prudence, whom he consulted on all occasions of importance. This practice, which he found so useful to him in his youth, he continued in his maturer years; but after having duly weighed the opinions of others, he was accustomed to decide on the measures to be adopted, by the strength of his

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account, though so circumstantially related, and adopted even by Ammirato and Fabroni, I am led to reject, on the simple narrative of Lorenzo in his Ricordi. If Lorenzo was in fact called upon to take the direction of the republic two days after the death of his father, there seems to have been but little time allowed for the honours paid by the citizens, and by foreign powers, to Tomaso Soderini. And if Lorenzo accepted this honourable distinction in his own house, as he expressly informs us was the case, there was no occasion for his attendance in the convent of S. Antonio, whilst the citizens debated whether he should preserve the rank which his family had so long held in Florence. His continuance in this rank was not owing to the favour or the eloquence of an individual, but to the extensive wealth and influence of his family, its powerful foreign connexions, and above all, perhaps, to the remembrance of the many benefits which it had conferred upon the republic.

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

Giuliano de' Medici.

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

as

as the most unequivocal proof of his affection [e]. CHAP. III.

Attack on Prato.

A hasty and ill-conducted attempt by Bernardo Nardi, one of the Florentine exiles, to surprise and possess himself of the town of Prato,

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[e] "Gaudeo mirum in modum Julianum nostrum se "totum literis tradidisse; illi gratulor, tibique gratias "ago, quod eum ad hæc prosequenda studia excitaveris."
Laur. Med. ad Pol. in Ep. Pol. lib. 10.

"Julianus tuus verè frater, hoc est ut docti putant "ferè alter, ipse sibi in studiis est non modo jam miri- "ficus hortator, sed et preceptor; nihilque nobis ad "summam voluptatem deest nisi quod abes," &c.
Pol. ad Laur. Med. ib.

If we may admit the evidence of a poet, the two brothers exhibited a striking example of fraternal affection.

In Laurentium, Juliumque Petri F. Fratres pissimos.

"Nec tanta Ebalios tenuit concordia fratres,
"Nec tanto Atridas fœdere junxit amor,
"Implicuit quanto *Medicum* duo pectora nexu
"Mitis amor, concors gratia, pura fides;
"Unum velle animis, unum est quoque nolle duobus,
"Corque sibi alternâ dant capiuntque manu:
"Esse quid hoc dicam *Juli*, et tu maxime *Laurens*,
"Anne duos una mente calere putem?"
Pol. lib. Epigram. in Op. Ald. 1498.

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1470.

Prato, a part of the Florentine dominions, was one of the first events that called for the interposition of the republic. A body of soldiers was dispatched to the relief of the place, but the intrepidity of Cesare Petrucci, the chief magistrate, assisted by Giorgio Ginori, a Florentine citizen and knight of Rhodes, had rendered further assistance unnecessary; and Bernardo being made prisoner, was sent to Florence, where he paid with his life the forfeit of his folly [f]. Being interrogated previous to his execution, as to his motives for making such an attempt with so small a number of followers, and such little probability of success, he replied, that having determined rather to die in Florence than to live longer in exile, he wished to ennoble his death by some splendid action [g]. No sooner had this alarm subsided, than apprehensions arose of a much more formidable nature. Pursuing his destructive conquests, the Turkish emperor, Mahomet II., had attacked the island of Negropont, which composed a part of the Venetian territory, and after a dreadful slaughter of both Turks and Christians, had taken the capital city by storm, and put the inhabitants to the

[f] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* v. III. *p.* 107. [g] *Mac. Hist. lib.* 7.

the sword [h]. Encouraged by success, he vowed not to lay down his arms until he had abolished the religion of Christ, and extirpated all his followers. A strong sense of common danger is perhaps of all others the most powerful incentive to concord, and the selfish views of the Italian states were for a short time lost in the contemplation of this destructive enemy, whose success was equally dreaded by the prince, the scholar, and the priest. In the month of December 1470, a league was solemnly concluded, for the common defence, between the pope, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and the Florentines, to which almost all the other states of Italy acceded [i]. In the same month Lorenzo de' Medici received a further proof of the confidence of his fellow-citizens, in being appointed syndic of the republic, by virtue of which authority he bestowed upon Buongianni Gianfiliazzi, then Gonfaloniere, the order of knighthood in the church of S. Reparata [k].

League against the Turks.

The multiplicity of his public concerns did not prevent Lorenzo from attending to his domestic affairs, and taking the necessary precautions

Riches of the Medici.

[h] *Murat. Ann.* v. ix. *p.* 507.
[i] *Ib. p.* 508.
[k] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* v. iii. *p.* 107

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cautions for continuing with advantage those branches of commerce which had proved so lucrative to his ancestors. Such were the profits which they had derived from these sources, that besides the immense riches which the family actually possessed, the ancestors of Lorenzo had in a course of thirty-seven years, computing from the return of Cosmo from banishment in 1434, expended in works of public charity or utility upwards of 660,000 florins; a sum which Lorenzo himself justly denominates incredible, and which may serve to give us a striking idea of the extensive traffic by which such munificence could be supported[1]. In relating this circumstance, Lorenzo gives his hearty sanction to the manner in which this money had been employed. *Some persons would perhaps think*, says he, in his private Ricordi, *that it would be more desirable to have a part of it in their purse; but I conceive it has been a great advantage to the public, and well laid out, and am therefore perfectly satisfied.* Of this sum the principal part had been acquired and expended by Cosmo de' Medici, who had carried on, in conjunction with his brother Lorenzo, a very extensive trade, as well in Florence as in foreign parts. On the death

[1] *Ricordi di Lor. de' Med. in App No* XII

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

Of

[m] *Ricord. di Lor. de' Med. in App. No.* XII.

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Their commercial concerns.

Of the particular branch of traffic by which the Medici acquired their wealth, little information remains; but there is no doubt that a considerable portion of it arose from the trade which the Florentines, in the early part of the fifteenth century, began to carry on to Alexandria for the productions of the east, in which they attempted to rival the states of Genoa and of Venice. To this they were induced by the representations of Taddeo di Cenni, who having resided at Venice, and being apprized of the advantages which that city derived from the traffic in spices and other eastern merchandize, prevailed upon his countrymen, in the year 1421, to aim at a participation in the trade. Six new officers were accordingly created, under the title of maritime consuls, who were to prepare at the port of Leghorn (the dominion of which city the Florentines had then lately obtained by purchase) two large galleys and six guard-ships[n]. In the following year the Florentines entered on their new commerce with great solemnity. A public procession took place, and the divine favour, which had always accompanied their domestic undertakings, was solicited upon their maritime

[n] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* v. II. *p.* 994.

maritime concerns. At the same time the first armed vessel of the republic was fitted out on a voyage for Alexandria, in which twelve young men of the chief families in Florence engaged to proceed, for the purpose of obtaining experience in naval affairs. Carlo Federighi and Felice Brancacci were appointed ambassadors to the sultan, and were provided with rich presents to conciliate his favour. The embassy was eminently successful. Early in the following year the ambassadors returned, having obtained permission to form a commercial establishment at Alexandria, for the convenience of their trade, and with the extraordinary privilege of erecting a church for the exercise of their religion [o]. In this branch of traffic, which was of a very lucrative nature, and carried on to a great extent, the Medici were deeply engaged, and reciprocal presents of rare or curious articles were exchanged between them and the sultans, which sufficiently indicate their friendly intercourse.

Other sources of their revenue.

Besides the profits derived from their mercantile concerns, the wealth of the Medici was obtained

[o] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* v. ii. *p* 999.

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

In

[p] *Fabr. in vitâ Laur.* v. i. *p.* 39. 182.

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The duke of Milan visits Florence.

1471.

In the month of March 1471, Galeazzo Sforza, duke of Milan, accompanied by his duchess Bona, sister of Amadeo, duke of Savoy, paid a visit to Florence, where they took up their residence with Lorenzo de' Medici; but their attendants, who were very numerous, were accommodated at the public charge[q]. Not sufficiently gratified by the admiration of his own subjects, Galeazzo was desirous of displaying his magnificence in the eyes of the Florentines, and of partaking with them in the spectacles and amusements with which their city abounded. His equipage was accordingly in the highest style of splendor and expence[r]; but notwithstanding this

[q] They consisted of one hundred men at arms, and five hundred infantry as a guard, fifty running footmen richly dressed in silk and silver, and so many noblemen and courtiers, that, with their different retinues, they amounted to two thousand horsemen. Five hundred couple of dogs, with an infinite number of falcons and hawks, completed the pageantry.

Amm. Ist. Fior. v. iii. *p.* 108.

[r] Muratori, (*Annali d' Italia, v.* IX. *p* 511.) after Corio (*Ist. di Milano,*) informs us, that this journey was undertaken by Galeazzo under the pretext of the performance of a vow. Valori supposes that the motive of the duke was to confirm the authority of Lorenzo in Florence. Galeazzo was not remarkable either for his piety or his prudence;

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this profusion, his wonder, and perhaps his envy, was excited by the superior magnificence of Lorenzo, which was of a kind not always in the power of riches to procure. Galeazzo observed with admiration the extensive collection of the finest remains of ancient art, which had been selected throughout all Italy for a long course of years with equal assiduity and expence. He examined with apparent pleasure the great variety of statues, vases, gems, and intaglios, with which the palace of Lorenzo was ornamented, and in which the value of the materials was often excelled by the exquisite skill of the workmanship; but he was more particularly gratified by the paintings, the productions of the best masters of the times, and owned that he had seen a greater number of excellent pictures in that place, than he had found throughout the rest of Italy. With the same attention he examined the celebrated collection of manuscripts, drawings, and other curious articles of which Lorenzo was possessed; and notwithstanding his predilection for courtly grandeur, had the taste, or the address,

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prudence; and it seems more probable that this excursion was undertaken merely to gratify his vanity, which he did at the expence of 200,000 gold ducats. In tracing the motives of conduct, historians frequently forget how many are to be sought for in the follies of mankind.

address, to acknowledge, that in comparison with what he had seen, gold and silver lost their value. The arrival of the duke at Florence seems to have been the signal for general riot and dissipation. Machiavelli affects to speak with horror of the irregular conduct of him and of his courtiers; and remarks, with a gravity that might well have become a more dutiful son of the church, that this was the first time that an open disregard was avowed in Florence of the prohibition of eating flesh in lent[s]. For the amusement of the duke and his attendants three public spectacles were exhibited; one of which was the annunciation of the virgin, another the ascension of Christ, and the third the descent of the holy spirit. The last was exhibited in the church of the S. Spirito; and as it required the frequent use of fire, the building caught the flames, and was entirely consumed—a circumstance which the piety of the populace attributed to the evident displeasure of Heaven.

Lorenzo devotes his leisure to literature.

There is however abundant reason to believe that Lorenzo was induced to engage in the avocations and amusements before mentioned, rather by necessity than by choice, and that his happiest hours

[s] *Mac. Hist. lib.* 7.

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hours were those which he was permitted to devote to the exercise of his talents, and the improvement of his understanding, or which were enlivened by the conversation of those eminent men who sometimes assembled under his roof in Florence, and occasionally accompanied him to his seats at Fiesole, Careggi, or Caffagiolo. Those who shared his more immediate favour, were Marsilio Ficino, the three brothers of the family of Pulci, and Matteo Franco; but of all his literary friends, Politiano was the most particularly distinguished. It has been said that this eminent scholar was educated under the protection of Cosmo de' Medici, but at the death of Cosmo he was only ten years of age, having been born on the fourteenth day of July 1454. Politiano was indebted for his education to Piero, or rather to Lorenzo de' Medici, whom he always considered as his peculiar patron, and to whom he felt himself bound by every tie of gratitude [t]. The place of his birth

Angelo Politiano.

[t] Ficino, addressing himself to Lorenzo, denominates Politiano "Angelus Politianus noster, *alumnus tuus*, acerrimo vir judicio." And Politiano himself says, "Innutritus autem *penè à puero* sum castissimis illis penetralibus magni viri, et in hac sua florentissima republica principis Laurenti Medicis."

Pol. Ep. ad Johannem Regem Portugalliæ. in Ep, lib. X. *Ep.* I.

birth was Monte-Pulciano, or *Mons-Politianus*, a small town in the territory of Florence [u], whence he derived his name, having discontinued that of his family, which has given rise to great diversity of conjecture respecting it [v]. The father of Politiano, CHAP. III.

[u] *Monte-Pulciano* is remarkable also for producing the best wine not only in Italy, but in Europe. In the Ditirambo of Redi, Bacchus, after enumerating every known species of wine, declares, by a definitive sentence, that

MONTE-PULCIANO D'OGNI VINO È IL RÈ.

[v] Some authors have given him the name of *Angelus Bassus*, but more modern critics have contended that his real name was *Cini*, being a contraction of *Ambrogini*. (*Menage Antibaillet*, *lib.* 1. *c.* 14. *Bayle Dict. Hist. Art. Politien*) Menckenius, in his laborious history of the life of this author, employs his first chapter in ascertaining his real name, and constantly denominates him *Angelus Ambroginus Politianus*. The Abate Serassi, in his life of Politiano, prefixed to the edition of his Italian poems by Comino, (*Padua*, 1765,) is also of opinion, that the name of *Bassus* is supposititious, and endeavours, on the authority of Salvini, to account for the rise of the mistake. Notwithstanding these respectable authorities, indisputable evidence remains, that in the early part of his life Politiano denominated himself by the Latin appellation of *Bassus*. Not to rely on the epigram "*ad Bassum*," printed

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Politiano, though not wealthy, was a doctor of the civil law, which may be an answer to the many invidious tales as to the meanness of his birth. On his arrival at Florence he applied himself with great diligence to the study of the Latin language under Cristoforo Landino, and of the Greek, under Andronicus of Thessalonica. Ficino and Argyropylus were his instructors in the different systems of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy; but poetry had irresistible allurements for his young mind, and his *stanze* on the Giostra of Giuliano, if they did not first recommend him to the notice of Lorenzo, certainly obtained his approbation, and secured his favour.

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printed amongst his works, and certainly addressed to him, which Menckenius supposes led Vossius into his error, we have the most decisive evidence on this subject from different *memoranda* in the hand-writing of Politiano, yet remaining in the Laurentian library, which I shall hereafter have occasion more particularly to state, and in which he subscribes his name *Angelus Bassus Politianus*. Bandini, who has had every possible opportunity of information on this subject, accordingly gives him that denomination. (*Spec. Lit. Flor* v i. *p.* 172.) That *Bassus* was an academical name, assumed by Politiano in his youth, might be contended with some degree of probability. De Bure has given him the name of *Jean Petit* (*Bibliogr. Instr.* v iv. *p.* 271.) in which absurdity he was preceded by another of his countrymen, Guy Patin.

favour [w]. The friendship of Lorenzo provided for all his wants, and enabled him to prosecute his studies free from the embarrassments and interruptions of pecuniary affairs [x]. He was early inrolled among the citizens of Florence, and appointed secular prior of the college of S. Giovanni. He afterwards entered into clerical orders, and having obtained the degree of doctor

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[w] Etenim ego tenera adhuc ætate sub duobus excellentissimis hominibus, Marsilio Ficino Florentino et Argyropulo Bizantino Peripateticorum sui temporis, longe clarissimo, dabam quidem philosophiæ utrique operam, sed non admodum assiduam; videlicet ad Homeri poetæ blandimenta natura et ætate prochivior.

Pol. in fine Miscell.

[x] Omnia tibi ad ingenue philosophandum adjumenta suppeditat favor ac gratia Laurentii Medices, maximi hac tempestate studiorum patroni: qui missis per universum terrarum nuncius, in omni disciplinarum genere libros conquirit, nulli sumptui parcit, quo tibi ac reliquis præclaris ingeniis, bonarum artium studia æmulantibus, instrumenta abundantissima paret. (*Nic. Leoniceno ad Pol. in Pol. Ep lib.* II. *Ep.* 7.) Nor did Politiano hesitate, upon occasion, to trouble his patron with his personal wants. From one of his epigrams it appears that his inattention to dress had rendered it necessary for him to request immediate assistance from Lorenzo's wardrobe: and from another we find that such assistance was not denied him. These epigrams merit a place in the Appendix, *vide No.* XVII.

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doctor of the civil law, was nominated a canon of the cathedral of Florence. Intrusted by Lorenzo with the education of his children, and the care of his extensive collection of manuscripts and antiquities, he constantly resided under his roof, and was his inseparable companion at those hours which were not devoted to the more important concerns of the state.

His temper and character.

Respecting the temper and character of Politiano, his epistles afford us ample information. In one of these, addressed to Matteo Corvino king of Hungary, a monarch eminently distinguished by his encouragement of learned men, he hesitates not, whilst he pays a just tribute of gratitude to the kindness of Lorenzo, to claim the merit due to his own industry and talents[y]. *From a humble situation*, says he, *I have, by the favour and friendship of Lorenzo de' Medici, been raised to some degree of rank and celebrity, without any other recommendation than my proficiency in literature. During many years I have not only taught in Florence the Latin tongue with great approbation, but even in the Greek language I have contended with the Greeks themselves—a species of merit that I may boldly say has not been attained*

[y] *Pol. Ep. lib.* ix. *Ep.* 1.

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attained by any of my countrymen for a thousand years past. In the intercourse which Politiano maintained with the learned men of his time, he appears to have been sufficiently conscious of his own superiority. The letters addressed to him by his friends were in general well calculated to gratify his vanity; but although he was in a high degree jealous of his literary reputation, he was careful to distinguish how far the applauses bestowed upon him were truly merited, and how far they were intended to conciliate his favour. If he did not always estimate himself by the good opinion entertained of him by others, he did not suffer himself to be depressed by their envy or their censure[z]. *I am no more raised or dejected,* says he, *by the flattery of my friends, or the accusations of my adversaries, than I am by the shadow of my own body; for although that shadow may be somewhat longer in the morning and the evening than it is in the middle of the day, this will scarcely induce me to think myself a taller man at those times than I am at noon.*

The impulse which Lorenzo de' Medici had given to the cause of letters soon began to be felt

[z] *Pol. Ep. lib.* iii. *Ep.* 24.

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

Death of Paul II.

Paul II. between whom and the family of the Medici there subsisted an irreconcileable enmity, died on the 26th of July 1471, leaving behind him the character of an ostentatious, profligate, and illiterate priest. This antipathy, which took place in the lifetime of Piero de' Medici, though Fabroni supposes it arose after his death[a], was occasioned by the ambition of Paul, who under the influence of motives to which we have before adverted, was desirous of possessing himself of the city of Rimini, then held by Roberto, the natural son of Gismondo Malatesti, whose virtues had obliterated in the eyes

[a] *Fabr. in vitâ Laur. v.* 1. *p.* 29.

eyes of the citizens the crimes of his father [b]. Finding his pretensions opposed, Paul attempted to enforce them by the sword, and prevailed upon his countrymen the Venetians to afford him their assistance. Roberto had resorted for succour to the Medici, and by their interference the Roman and Venetian troops were speedily opposed in the field by a formidable army, led by the duke of Urbino, and supported by the duke of Calabria and Roberto Sanseverino. An engagement took place, which terminated in the total rout of the army of the pope, who, dreading the resentment of so powerful an alliance, acceded to such terms as the conquerors thought proper to dictate; not however without bitterly inveighing against the Medici for the part they had taken in opposing his ambitious project.

Paul a persecutor of learned men.

During the pontificate of Paul II. letters and science experienced at Rome a cruel and unrelenting persecution, and their professors exhibited in their sufferings a degree of constancy and resolution, which in another cause might have advanced them to the rank of martyrs. The

[b] *Amm. Ist. Fior.* v. iii. *p* 105. *Murat. Ann.* v ix. *p.* 505.

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The imprisonment of the historian Platina, who, on being arbitrarily deprived of a respectable office to which he was appointed by Pius II. had dared to thunder in the ears of the pope the dreaded name of a general council, might perhaps admit of some justification; but this was only a prelude to the devastation which Paul made amongst the men of learning, who, during his pontificate, had chosen the city of Rome as their residence[c]. A number of these uniting together, had formed a society for the research of antiquities, chiefly with a view to elucidate the works of the ancient authors, from medals, inscriptions, and other remains of art. As an incitement to, or as characteristic of their studies, they had assumed classic names, and thereby gave the first instance of a practice which has since become general among the academicians of Italy. Whilst these men were employing themselves in a manner that did honour to their age and country, Paul was indulging his folly and his vanity in ridiculous and contemptible exhibitions[d]; and happy had it been if he had confined

[c] *Platina nella vita di Paolo* II. *Muratori Ann.* v. ix. *p.* 504.

[d] Correvano i vecchi, correvano i giovani, correvano quelli che erano di mezza età, correvano i giudei, e li facevano

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confined his attention to these amusements; but on the pretext of a conspiracy against his person, he seized upon many members of the academy, which he pretended to consider as a dangerous and seditious assembly, accusing them of having, by their adoption of heathen names, marked their aversion to the Christian religion. Such of them as were so unfortunate as to fall into his hands he committed to prison, where they underwent the torture, in order to draw from them a confession of crimes which had no existence, and of heretical opinions which they had never avowed. Not being able to obtain any evidence of their guilt, and finding that they had resolution to suffer the last extremity rather than accuse themselves, Paul thought proper at length to acquit them of the charge, but at the same time, by a wanton abuse of power, he ordered that they should be detained in

facevano ben saturare prima, perchè meno veloci corressero. Correvano i cavalli, le cavalle, gli asini, e i buffali con piacere di tutti, che per le risa grandi potevano appena star le genti in pie. Il correre che si faceva, era dall' arco di Domiziano sino alla chiesa di S. Marco, dove stava il papa, che supremo gusto e piacere di queste feste prendeva; e dopo il corso usava anche a fanciulli, lordi tutti di fango, questa cortesia, che ad ogni uno di loro faceva dare un carlino. *Plat. ut sup.*