At the foot of the little eminence of *Baccano*, (the second stage,) which still retains its ancient name, we crossed the *Cremera*, fatal stream! and walking on while they were changing horses, ascended the hill, took a last view of Rome then glittering with the rays of the sun that played upon its palaces, towers and domes, and displayed its whole extent in all its magnificence*.

> Quisque
> Hæsit et extremæ tunc forsitan Urbis amatæ
> Plenus abit visu. . . . .
>
> *Luc.* 1. 509.

From *Monte Rosi* the country began to improve, and appearances of cultivation increased as we advanced. A few miles north-west of *Monte Rosi*, on a hill, stands *Sutri (Sutrium,)* an ancient town and Roman colony.

At *Civita Castellana* we had time to examine the site and ancient walls which, though curious, we had been obliged on our first visit to pass unnoticed, on account of our late arrival and early departure. This town is supposed by many to be the ancient *Fescennium:* it stands on an insulated rock, surrounded on all sides with a precipice nearly perpendicular, forming a deep dell, at the bottom of which through a stony channel, rolls a clear and constant stream. The walls both of the town and citadel rise on the edge of the precipice, are formed in general of large blocks of stone, and probably

* This view of Rome at a very early hour is one of the finest that can be taken, as it shows off to the best advantage those long lines of buildings, and vast majestic masses, which constitute one of the principal features of this capital.

are the remains of the ancient rampart. The strength and position of *Civita Castellana* have induced, as I have before observed, many antiquaries to conjecture that it occupies the site of the ancient *Veii*, and the inhabitants have very readily adopted an opinion so honorable to their city. But the more general persuasion that *Veii* was much nearer Rome is founded upon arguments so very solid and satisfactory, that to doubt on the subject seems difficult.

About two miles and a half to the west of *Civita Castellana*, on a hill stands a little town, now called *Sta. Maria dei Fallari*, supposed by some to be the ancient *Falerii*, capital of the *Falisci*; a name that always revives the recollection of an anecdote highly honorable to the feelings of Camillus, and to the generous character of the Romans *.

We were now in the midst of regions once inhabited by warlike tribes, well known in the early periods of Roman history, and not unfrequently recorded by the poets.

> Hi Fescenninas acies æquosque Faliscos,
> Hi Soractis habent arces, Flaviniaque arva
> Et Cimini cum monte lacum, lucosque Capenos.
>
> *Virg. En.* VII. 695.

We were in the very capital itself, *Fescennium*, about six or seven miles from *Soracte*, as many from the mountains and lake of *Ciminus*, and close to *Falerium* †. Some days

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* Liv. v. 27.

† Perhaps *in it*, as Cluverius supposes, that *Civita Castellana* occupies the site of that city, and that *Fescennium* lay nearer the *Tiber*.

might have been passed here with pleasure, and perhaps with improvement; we might have ascended *Soracte*, and endeavored to discover the remains of the temple of Apollo—"*Sancti custos Soractis**;" we might have explored the *Ciminian* forest, which the Romans once beheld with awe and even terror, as impenetrable to human steps†; ranged along the borders of its lake, which is said to have swallowed up a city; and in fine, visited the shattered walls of old *Falerium*, and wandered over its now deserted hill. But these excursions we must leave to future travellers who may have more leisure, and as the season advances we must hasten on. Just out of the gate of *Civita Castellana* is an aqueduct, still kept up in good repair.

After having crossed a high hill covered with wood we entered *Borghetto*, an insignificant village; the only object that attracts the eye is an old castle, standing in picturesque ruin on the summit of the neighbouring eminence. We crossed the *Tiber* over a fine bridge, the *Ponte Felice*, erected by Sixtus Quintus, and shortly after began to ascend the ridge of cultivated hills that border the vale intersected by that river. As we advanced, the hills increased in height, till passing over the deep but dry channel of a wintry torrent, we turned and proceeded under the shade of the mountain and its forests, then peculiarly grateful. The scenery round *Narni* the reader is acquainted with; its beauties were not altered by the scorching heats of the season. Descending the hill, we once more visited the *Ponte D'Augusto*, and traversing the delicious vale of the *Nar*, entered *Terni* about six in the evening.

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* Æneid xi. † Liv. lib. ix. cap. 36.

Next morning early we made another and final visit to the cascade; we took the lower path, and proceeded along the *Nar* under the shade of groves rising on its banks, and woods hanging from the shelving sides of the mountains. The mass of water was considerably diminished, and of course the grandeur of the fall somewhat impaired; however as the *Velino* is fed by two lakes it retains a sufficient quantity of water to form at all times a most noble and interesting object, particularly when combined with the surrounding scenery. I must here observe, that if the traveller should not have leisure to visit the *Caduta delle Marmore* twice he would do well to prefer the view from above to that from below, as in the latter the first grand fall is not a little concealed by the cloud of spray, and the *Iris* playing over it, so much indeed that little more than one-third of its elevation is perceptible.

Leaving this singular and magnificent scene with regret, we continued our route, and entering the defiles of the mountains, began at the second post to ascend *Monte Somma*. We changed horses at *Spoleto;* we then rolled over the plain below, the delicious *Valle Spoletana*, feasted our eyes with the windings of the *Clitumnus* as we drove along, looked down upon his sources, visited once more his temple, again admired the picturesque position of *Trevi*, anciently *Trebia*, and the *Monte Petino* on our right, and entered *Foligno*. From this town the country became new to our eyes, and to its continued beauty superadded the charms of novelty.

On the left of the road from *Foligno*, at the distance of about six miles, the towers of *Mevania* (now with a slight alteration

*Bevagnia) latis projecta in campis** arise visible above the woods. The river on which it stands still nearly retains its ancient name *Timia*†, and with the *Clitumnus* contributes to water and fertilize the vale over which *Mevania* seems to preside. Propertius was born in this town and indulges the vanity of a poet in describing the lustre which it derives from that circumstance.

> Scandentes si quis cernit de vallibus arces
> Ingenio muros æstimet ille meo. *Lib.* IV. *Eleg.* I.

On the right on the side of a hill stands the little town of *Ispello (Hispellum)*, a Roman colony, whose sons, if a poet may be believed, once ranked among "*celeberrima nomina bello*‡." A little further, at the foot of the same hill are the ruins of an amphitheatre, shapeless, and uninteresting.

Asisium, now *Assisi*, on the side of a hill on the right, makes a fine appearance, and preserves it on a nearer approach. It gave birth to St. Francis, the founder of the Franciscan order, is the metropolis of this order, and owes to it its size, its splendor, and its fame. The *Sagro Convento*, where the body of the saint is said to repose, presents an immense front, and is considered as a very extensive and superb edifice. At the foot of the hill

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* Silius Italicus, lib. VI.

† Cluverius mistakes when he calls this river the *Topino*, a stream which, flowing from *Foligno*, joins the *Timia* at a town called *Cannara*, about six miles north of *Mevania*.

‡ Silius Italicus, lib. III.

on the road there is a village or rather little town, called *Madonna degli Angeoli*, from a rustic chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and angels, in which St. Francis was accustomed to offer up his devotions, and is supposed to have received the first call to perfection. This oratory became afterwards an object of great veneration, and still continues to be resorted to by pilgrims, especially on the second of August, when multitudes flock to it from all the neighbouring provinces. In order to satisfy the devotion of so great a concourse of people, a very spacious and noble church has been erected, in such a manner as to cover the original oratory, which stands in its centre and under its dome.

We passed on the second day after this festival, and were informed by one of the fathers, that more than ten thousand persons had attended service on that day, and that owing to the heat of the weather and the blind enthusiasm of the crowd pressing forward to touch the altar, no less than ten persons were suffocated, pressed or trampled to death. A practice which not only draws so many laboring persons from their homes and occupations, but occasions such tragical accidents, becomes a mischievous superstition, and ought to be suppressed by public authority. This church, or rather the chapel, enclosed within its precincts, is also called the *Portiuncula*, because it was the first *portion* or property annexed to the order. I regretted much that our arrangements did not permit us to visit *Asisium*, not only on account of the convents which are said to contain several valuable paintings, but particularly on account of the portico of *Santa Maria di Minerva*, composed of six Corinthian pillars of the finest proportion, which supported the front of the ancient temple of Minerva.

consider him as a great and wonderful personage. St. Francis was born about the year eleven hundred and eighty, and died about twelve hundred and twenty-five, having witnessed the rapid propagation of his order, which contained previous to his death more than fifty thousand persons.

I know full well that to ascribe virtue and talents to a saint or a friar, may be considered by some of my readers as an attempt to impose upon their credulity, and that an Italian *Religious*, and a Mahometan dervise are, as to personal merit and qualifications, placed by many nearly upon a level. Yet we may venture to assure such readers that both virtue and talents in a very transcendent degree have been found lodged under a cowl and a hood; how they came there they *may with Yorick wonder*, but as they are certainly found there we may be allowed to treat them with the love and reverence which they deserve. Gray imagined that St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian order, must have been a man of genius; we may extend the compliment to his master St. Benedict, to St. Bernard, St. Francis, and many of their disciples, men who in ages of ignorance endeavored to light up the beacons of science, and in ages of vice struggled by word and example to repress the debauchery, the cruelty, and the boundless licentiousness of the times.

> Hæc igitur qui cuncta subegerit, ex animoque
> Expulerit dictis, non armis; nonne decebit,
> Hunc hominem numero divum dignarier esse?
>
> *Luc.* v. 50.

The same plain still continues with all its fertility and beauty beyond *Asisium*. A little to the north of *Bastia* it is intersected by a stream called the *Chiascio*, anciently *Clasius*, and further on

by the *Tiber* itself, still a very noble river. We passed it, a little after sun-set, and began to ascend the mountains of *Perugia*, where we arrived about ten o'clock. I need not inform the reader that on crossing the *Tiber* we re-entered *Etruria*.

Perugia, anciently *Perusia*, is one of the most ancient and most distinguished cities of *Etruria*; the era of its foundation long preceded that of Rome, and like the origin of *Clusium Cortona*, &c. is almost lost in distance of time. In conjunction with all the other *Etrurian* states it long resisted the Romans, and when subjected, or rather reconciled to them, it became a faithful and a courageous ally; it defied the power of Hannibal, and flourished in peace and opulence till the reign of Augustus, when unfortunately it engaged in the rebellion of Lucius Antonius, uncle of the Triumvir, and under his command shut its gates against Augustus who took it, and as it is reported, wished to spare it; but one of its principal citizens setting fire to his own house, which he intended as a funeral pile for himself and his family, the flames communicated to the neighbouring buildings, and spreading rapidly around, reduced the city to ashes. *Perugia* however rose immediately from its ruins; and on its restoration, by a strange inconsistency, chose for its patron Vulcan, a divinity to whom it seems to have had very few obligations, as the god had spared his own temple only in the general conflagration. In the Gothic war it displayed much spirit, and stood a siege of seven years against these barbarians. It afterwards with the whole Roman state submitted to the Pope, and with some intervals of turbulent independence has remained ever since attached to the Roman See.

Perugia is now a large, clean, well-built, and well-inhabited

city. Seated on the summit of a mountain, it commands from its ramparts, and particularly from its citadel, an extensive view over a vast range of country, fertile, varied with hill and dale, and enlivened with villages and towns. In this rich landscape the plain which we had traversed made a very conspicuous figure, watered by the *Clitumnus*, and bounded by the Apennines. There are many churches, convents, and palaces in this city, most of which were adorned with the paintings of *Pietro Perugino*, the master of *Raffaello;* of these the French carried off a considerable number, and defaced others, particularly such as were painted on walls and could not be removed. The cathedral is in itself a very indifferent edifice, and its deformity is increased by the bad taste that seems to have prevailed in its repair and decorations. Several other churches merit attention, particularly that of *S. Pietro*, belonging to a Benedictine abbey; it is supported by eighteen pillars of fine marble, and adorned with an altar of the same materials very rich and well disposed. *Perugia* has an university supplied with able professors, and several academies, all of which can boast of illustrious names, and it is upon the whole an interesting city, capable of entertaining the curious and inquisitive traveller for several days.

The road from hence is over a hilly country, planted principally with olive trees, and of course not very shady. Descending the high hill of *Magiona* we first discovered, gleaming through a wood of oaks, the lake *Trasimenus*, and at the village of *Torricelli* at the foot of the hill we found ourselves on its banks. This lake is a very noble expanse of water, about ten miles in length and about seven in breadth. Three little islands rise in it, the largest and the least about a mile from the northern

shore; the other near the southern extremity. The name of this island is *Polvese*. The two others are denominated from their size *Minore* and *Maggiore*; the latter is adorned with a church. The banks of the lake ascend gradually, but in some places rapidly, from its margin; and as they are clad with wood and speckled with villages form an outline both bold and lively *. But if in extent and beauty the lake *Trasimenus* yield to many, in celebrity it is inferior to none; the fall of fifteen thousand Romans and the death of a consul ennoble its name, and cast an awful solemnity over its scenery.

From *Torricelli* the road winds along the margin of the lake to a village called *Passignano*, which occupies a very narrow defile, closed on one side by the lake, on the other by a rocky precipice. Beyond this defile the road crosses a plain, bounded by the lake on the left, and on the right by a semicircular ridge of hills and mountains. This ridge, which falls back in the centre, advances again on the sides, and closes on the lake at *Passignano* in a precipice; and at *Borghetto* in a lofty acclivity. The plain thus enclosed is about six miles in length, that is, from the former to the latter of these places, and about four in breadth from the lake to the mountains. Hannibal could not have discovered or even have desired a situation more favorable to stratagem and ambush. In the centre of

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* Such also was its ancient appearance.

Namque ego sum (the god of the lake speaks) celsis quem cinctum montibus ambit
Tmolo missa manus, stagnis Tbrasymenus opacis.

Sil. Ital. lib. IV.

this plain he encamped at the head of his African and Spanish troops; the *Baleares* and light armed forces he placed in the recesses of the mountains all around, while his cavalry were commissioned to occupy the defile on the rear of the Romans, as soon as they had passed through it. The consul entered by *Borghetto* with his characteristic rashness and impetuosity, and hastened to attack the army which he beheld in front; when a sudden shout bursting around informed him that he was beset on all sides; a thick mist rising from the lake darkened the air; noise, confusion, dismay, defeat, and slaughter followed. The return of sunshine shewed the ground strewed with the bodies of the Romans, and the lake crimsoned with their blood*. A streamlet, which nearly intersects the plain in the middle, still retains the name of *Sanguineto* or *Fossa del Sangue*, is supposed to water the spot where the consul fell, and is said by the peasants to have rolled a torrent of blood to the *Trasimenus*, and impurpled its waters to a considerable distance. This rill is the most popular and perhaps the most permanent memorial of this disastrous battle; it is known and pointed out by every peasant and driver, and contemplated by all with some degree of horror. To throw a certain gloom and melancholy over the scenes of human destruction is natural to the mind, and usual in all countries. It is reported, that after sunset a sound like the clashing of shields and the onset of distant armies is heard on the plain of *Marathon*: at *Neerwinden*† a countryman assured me that strange

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* Livius xxii. 4, 5, 6—for a poetical description see Sil. lib. v.

† Near *Louvain*, where the French under Dumourier were defeated by the

noises were often heard on the plains at night; and near *Tewkesbury*, a close where the greatest number of the *Lancastrians* were massacred, is still called the *bloody field*, and supposed by the people to be haunted by spectres.

> Ingemuisse putes campos, terramque nocentem
> Inspirasse animas, infectumque aera totum
> Manibus, et superam Stygia formidine noctem.
>
> *Lucan* VII. 769.

The *Sanguineto*, when we passed it, was the dry bed of a torrent, lined with vines above the road; and below it, toward the lake, shaded with poplars.

About two miles farther we turned from the lake, and began to ascend the bold wooded hill of *Gualandro*. From its summit we enjoyed a beautiful and extensive view, behind, of the lake, its islands, and its wooded borders; and before, of the plain of *Arezzo*, the *Valle de Chiana*, and the hills of *Viterbo*, with the truncated cone of *Monte Pulciano*. This wide and varied view was lighted by the richest and softest tints of an Italian summer's evening. Descending the declivity we passed through the village of *Ossaia*, said, like the *Fossa del Sanguine*, to take its name from the slaughter of the battle, and the bones dug up by the peasantry in the neighbouring fields. An inscription over the door of a house announces the origin

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Austrians, commanded by the Prince of Saxe Cobourg, in the month of March, 1793.

of the name in the following lines, not very classical but intelligible enough.

Nomen habet locus hic Ossaia, ab ossibus illis
Quæ dolus Annibalis fudit et hasta simul.

On entering the Tuscan territory we were stopped for a minute by an officer of the customs, the most polite and most disinterested of the profession, and then proceeded rapidly to *Camoscia*. It was now dusk, and we could barely distinguish at a little distance on our right the city of *Cortona*, "*superbi Tarchontis domus*" rising in a majestic situation on the side of a mountain. This city, supposed to be the most ancient in Italy, and once the capital of *Etruria*, still retains its original name unaltered, and preserves some remnant of its walls, the only vestige of its early magnificence. It possesses many valuable paintings, a museum, and a public library, and glories in an academy of great and deserved reputation, the grand object of which is to discover and elucidate Etrurian antiquities, and its success has in this respect kept pace with the talents and zeal of its members. To visit this museum and discourse with some of the learned members of the Tuscan academy was a desirable object: we were now in the centre of *Etruria*, under the walls of its capital, and within a few miles of *Clusium*, (now *Chiuso*) the seat of one of its most powerful monarchs. We had thus an opportunity of making some researches into the history of the wonderful people who gave their name to this territory and the neighbouring sea; who equalled the Egyptians in the solidity, and surpassed them in the beauty, of their edifices; who excelled in the arts, and rioted in the luxuries of life, while the Greeks were still barbarians, and Rome had yet no name; and whose antiquity is such that their origin is lost in the obscurity

of ages, and was even in the time of Herodotus, as it now still remains, a subject of dispute and conjecture. Some suppose them to have been *Aborigines*, an appellation given to the inhabitants found in a country by its first recorded invaders*; others from a distant conformity in certain customs, fancy that they were of Egyptian origin; many represent them as a colony of Lydians†, or perhaps Mæonians, compelled by the pressure of famine to leave their native soil and seek for maintenance in a more fertile region; a still greater number imagine that they were Pelasgi‡, a well known tribe of Greeks, who, when driven by the Hellenes from *Thessalia*, first took shelter in *Lydia*, and afterwards in Italy. In fine, a few later writers have thought that they had discovered in the manners, language, and monuments of the Etrurians and Cananeans such an affinity, as authorized them to conclude that the former were a colony of the latter, and of course either Phœnicians or Philistines. This opinion, supported by *Maffei* and *Mazzochi*, and followed by many other Italian authors, is combated by some French critics of considerable learning and merit.

We have neither time nor inclination to enter into a discussion in which learning has already exhausted its stores, and criticism foiled its own ingenuity; it will abundantly satisfy rational curiosity to know, that the Etrurians participated the qualities of all the different nations to which they have been supposed to owe their origin. Brave as the *Pelasgi*, they extended their conquests over almost all Italy, and filled its finest provinces, from the borders of *Campania* to the *Rhætian* Alps

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* Dionysius Halic. † Herodotus. ‡ See Cluv. Ital. Ant. lib. II.

with their cities and population. Like the Greeks, enthusiastically attached to the arts, they cultivated sculpture, painting, and architecture with passion, and have left behind them numberless monuments to attest their success. Enterprising as the Phœnicians, they delighted and excelled in navigation, colonized the Mediterranean islands, and attempted to explore the secrets of the ocean. So far their resemblance to their supposed ancestors is honorable, and to this they owed their achievements, their renown, and their prosperity. But unfortunately the similarity extends still further, and gives us the most deformed and disgusting features of the Canaanean character; rendered if possible still more hideous by time and by refinement*. The operation of these vices gradually produced effeminacy and weakness both of mind and body, and at length deprived the Etrurians of the glory of their achievements and the advantages of their many enterprises. Their more manly and more intrepid neighbours attacked them with success, and stripped them in process of time of their most valuable provinces†.

They were obliged to yield all the fertile plains that border the *Po*, and extend from the Alps to the Apennines, to the valor of the Gauls, who settled in that delightful country and gave it the name of *Gallia*, to which was afterwards added the distinctive appellation of *Cisalpina*. The Samnites expelled them from the still more delicious and more desirable region of *Campania*; the Umbri retook several of their ancient possessions; so that at the appearance of the Romans on the theatre of Italy, the Etrurians were confined to the territory that still bears their name,

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* Athenæus. † Strabo.

and extends from the *Tiber* northward to the Apennines, and westward to the sea. But although humbled in power and reduced in territory, this singular people still retained their superiority in the arts, and in the embellishments of civilized life; and while obliged to bend to the towering genius of Rome, they can boast of having communicated to her the skill that erected her temples*, the ceremonies that graced her religion, the robes that invested her magistrates, the pomp that accompanied her triumphs, and even the music that animated her legions†. They retained this superiority long after, perhaps they may be said never to have lost it entirely; and notwithstanding the succession of so many ages and revolutions, their descendants are supposed still to possess a peculiar aptitude for the arts, and a singular discernment in the sciences.

Of this extraordinary people we have indeed few architectural monuments; but in vases, tombs, and altars, we possess abundant proofs of their ingenuity, and without doubt might discover many more by making excavations in, or near the site of some of their ancient cities. But however well inclined to indulge in such amusing researches, time and circumstances dragged us irresistibly along, and obliged us to forego the satisfaction of visiting the venerable walls of *Cortona*. We there-

* Liv. l. i. 55.

† Bissenos hæc prima dedit præcedere fasces,
Et junxit totidem tacito terrore secures:
Hæc altas eboris decoravit honore curules,
Et princeps Tyrio vestem pretexuit ostro.
Hæc eadem pugnas accendere protulit ære.
Sil. lib. VIII. 483.

fore proceeded on our journey, and as it was dark when we set out from *Camoscia* entered *Arezzo* rather late.

ARRETIUM.

Arretium is one of the ancient Etrurian cities, though, with the exception of the supposed substructions of an amphitheatre, it can boast of no vestige of its former celebrity. It was nearly unpeopled by Sylla, and almost destroyed by the Lombards; it was afterwards agitated by faction, and convulsed by perpetual wars and revolutions during the middle ages. It has, however, survived these tempests, and still remains a considerable city. It is in general well built, and has some though few remarkable edifices, among which are the public palace on the great square, and the cathedral. The latter is a Gothic edifice, ancient and not contemptible; it contains some beautifully colored windows. The former displays a vast and very noble front.

Petrarcha was born in this city, although, as that circumstance was accidental, and as his family was Florentine and his stay short, he could not consider it as his country. The house in which that event took place does not correspond, I will not say with the fame, but with the parentage of the poet. It seems to have been originally little better than a cottage, and is now by time and neglect almost reduced to an hovel. But though *Arezzo* can scarcely rank *Petrarcha* among her sons, she can boast of many an illustrious name, and display a long list of worthies distinguished in arts and in arms. Among these I shall only mention one, because though his merit was great, yet his profession was humble and his name obscure. *Guido l'Aretino*, a monk of the eleventh century, invented the scale of notes now

in use, and thus gave to music, as writing does to language, a form and body, which may preserve and convey its accents down to the latest posterity.

While at *Arezzo*, the traveller may indulge himself in a pleasant and truly classical excursion to explore the site of the younger Pliny's Tuscan villa, so minutely and so beautifully described in one of his epistles*. It stood near *Tifernum*, now *Citta di Castello*, and is supposed by Cluverius to have grown into a large town called *Borgo di San Sepolcro*. This may have been its situation; yet I should be inclined from Pliny's expressions, "*Oppidum est prædiis nostris vicinum nomine Tifernum*†," to place it nearer this latter town. But to form any opinion as to the real spot is impossible, without visiting the country itself, and comparing its localities with the description of Pliny.

Descending the hill of *Arezzo* next morning to the Etrurian plains‡ so famed at all times for their fertility, and shortly after passing the *Chiana* or *Clanis* which interseots them, we entered the *Val d'Arno*, the Italian Arcadia, and hailed the Tuscan muse and the genius of Milton. This vale, almost as celebrated in modern as the vale of *Tempe* was in ancient

* Liv. v. Ep. 6.

† Lib. iv. Epist. 1.

‡ Regio erat in primis Italiæ fertilis, Etrusci campi, qui Fæsulas inter Arretiumque jacent, frumenti et pecoris, et omnium copiâ rerum opulenti.—*Tit. Liv. lib.* xxii. 3.

days, is formed by two ranges of hills stretching along opposite to each other, at the distance of four or eight miles. In the plain between glides the *Arno*, diffusing fertility and verdure over his banks; industry extends the benefits of the stream even to the hills, covers their sides with harvests, and crowns their summits with orchards. Handsome villages grace the road, and neat clean looking cottages rise without number in the fields, oftentimes imbosomed in gardens and overshadowed with pendant vines. The hills on both sides are adorned with several little towns, sometimes boldly rising on their sides, and at other times half concealed in their woods and recesses. Beyond the hills on the right rise the Apennines, lofty, rugged, and naked, excepting one summit, which is tufted with the forest that overhangs *Vallombrosa*.

This scenery, which commences at the passage of the *Chiana*, or rather a few miles to the north of that river, continues with some variations to Florence, and forms the *Val d'Arno Superiore*. It is in its greatest beauty where narrowest, that is, from *Levane* to *Incisa*. At this latter place the vale expands into a plain, and the road diverges from the river. The weather was intensely hot, the roads very dusty, and consequently the delight which a scene so beautiful in itself, and so celebrated by fame is well calculated to inspire, was considerably abated. We entered Florence about sunset.

CHAP. VII.

HISTORY OF FLORENCE—ITS EDIFICES—CATHEDRAL—TOMBS—MAUSOLEUM OF THE MEDICEAN FAMILY—PALACES—GALLERY.

THOUGH Florence owes its origin to a Roman colony, composed, it is said, of Cæsar's chosen veterans, and though it glories in having retained and occasionally displayed much of the energies and magnanimity of its founders, yet it made a very inconsiderable figure in ancient times; and as it was neither distinguished by great events, nor ennobled by great personages, it seems to have slumbered away several ages in the tranquil enjoyment of a fertile soil and a fine climate. Its powers were first called forth and its courage tried by the Gothic invasion, and while it underwent in common with the other cities of Italy, all the vicissitudes of that most destructive war which followed the demise of Theodoric, it seems to have invariably manifested a spirit of resistance and intrepidity worthy its military origin. These qualities suspended indeed but could not avert the fate of the city, which sunk under the disasters of the

Longobardic incursions, and remained for many years a deserted mass of ruins. It was restored by Charlemagne, and again resumed some celebrity, but never shone forth in all its lustre till governed by its own magistrates, and under laws enacted by its own authority, it acquired the name and energies of a republic. It was not, it is true, the first to profit of the weakness either of the German Cæsars or of its own rulers, but when it had once shaken off the yoke, it rose rapidly into fame and prosperity. Governed sometimes by its bishop, sometimes by its nobles, and not unfrequently by its people, it experienced all the varieties and all the agitations of republican administration. Sometimes convulsed by the rival pretensions of the former, or by the licentious claims of the latter, it was converted into a field of battle, a theatre of guilt and assassination; at other times under the sway of a wise and virtuous magistracy it exhibited a delightful scene of peace, industry, and prosperity, and displayed at once all the blessings and all the glories of liberty. It was frequently engaged in wars with the neighbouring states of *Sienna*, *Pisa*, and *Lucca*, then populous and enterprising, and in these civil contests obtained such a portion of military fame as placed it upon a level with most of the Italian commonwealths."

But whether agitated or tranquil at home, whether at peace or war abroad, its institutions were always free and manly, and its citizens were bold and active. This indeed is one of the peculiar and exclusive advantages of a republican government; every man acts for himself and for his own interests while he is acting for his country; the market of honor, dignity, and employment is open to all; it is consequently crowded with competitors, and each candidate is obliged in his own defence

to exert all the faculties of his soul, and call forth every latent energy. Hence that activity of mind, that fermentation of intellect and imagination, which produces genius and creates the poet and the orator, the statesman and the historian, the sage and the hero. The same ardent principle, it is true, that sets all the powers of the soul in motion may at the same time rouse many a dark and destructive passion, and impel a bold bad man to many a wicked deed; and I am aware that men of timid minds or of slavish downward propensities are too apt to take occasion from this acknowledgment to inveigh against popular governments, and exalt the advantages of monarchy. But do the intrigues of a court, and the lust and ambition of princes and ministers, excite no animosities, and produce no scenes of blood? or are the annals of monarchy stained with fewer crimes than the history of republicanism? The reverse is the case; and if all the crimes of all the Grecian republics were united, they would not equal the mass of guilt that might be collected from the reign of one Persian monarch; as all the murders and all the assassinations perpetrated in all the Italian commonwealths put into the scale together, would kick the beam when counterbalanced by the bloody deeds of Philip II. of Spain, or of Henry VIII. of England.

Wherever human passions are deeply engaged crimes will occur, but the difference between monarchy and republicanism is, that the former while it naturally excites and cherishes a spirit of intrigue, dissimulation, and treachery, proscribes the open, the generous feelings of conscious worth, independence, and honest pride, and thus gives vice a decided advantage over virtue; the latter on the contrary, friendly in its very essence to publicity and frankness, encourages the

undisguised display of bold intrepid sentiment, the sense of self-importance, and the pride of genius, such as generally accompany great talents, and usher the more useful and splendid virtues into the world. In a monarchy therefore where all is subservient to the will of the sovereign, Virtue must often veil her beauty, not to eclipse the splendor of the throne or divert the homage of the people; in a republic, where the natural feelings of mankind have full scope, Vice must hide her deformity, least she should excite hatred, and defeat her own purposes. Look at the Grecian republics, even when most convulsed by faction or maddened by war; contemplate, for instance, *Athens* and *Lacedæmon* in that bloody struggle of power and talents, which terminated in the temporary subjection of the former. Crimes of a very black die shock the feelings, and sufferings and misfortunes melt the heart; but how many virtues rise in opposition, what vigor, what perseverance, what activity, and what patience exalt the combatants, and inflame the mind of the reader! A pestilence ravaged *Athens* within and a cruel and unsuccessful war wasted her without, yet what a constellation of great and wise men blazed around her, and brightened the gloom of her destiny. Socrates and Thucydides, Pericles and Alcibiades, Sophocles and Euripides, all grace the annals of this disastrous *Peloponnesian* contest, and shed round *Athens* a lustre more vivid and more permanent than the glory of all the victories of *Lacedæmon*. Who would not prefer the agitations and even reverses of such a republic to the tranquillity and the triumphs of the most splendid monarchy?

It has been frequently and justly observed, that the Italian republics of the middle ages bore a striking resemblance to the commonwealths of Greece, and to this observation it may be

added that *Florence* had a strong similarity to *Athens*, a similarity not in government only and temper, but in genius and talents. Thus as in *Athens* so in *Florence*, that genius seemed struck out by the collision of parties and the shock of war; and as Euripides and Sophocles rose in the heat of the *Peloponnesian*, so *Dante* and *Bocaccio* sprung up amid the sanguinary broils of the *Ghibelline* contest. And again, as Demosthenes and Eschines, animated the decline of *Athens*, and cheered her once more with the language of liberty before she received the *Macedonian* yoke; so *Florence* ere she sunk into slavery, gave as a last bequest to liberty and literature, the works of *Guicciardini* and *Machiavelli*.

In the interval, the perpetual struggle between rival parties, and the vicissitudes that followed each other so rapidly kept the powers of the mind in continual action, and adapted them to excellence in every pursuit. Hence poets and statesmen, architects and painters, all of high merit and corresponding fame, rose in succession, and gave Florence, while free, the reputation which she scarcely forfeited when enslaved, of being the seat of the sciences, and the mother and nurse of the Tuscan muse. The struggles which raged in the meantime in her bosom, and the wars which she carried on abroad, seem again like the wars and quarrels of ancient Greece, to have been no obstacle to her prosperity; and as *Athens* and *Lacedamon* were never so rich or so populous as when engaged in mutual debates, so *Florence*, *Pisa*, and *Sienna* never contained more inhabitants or displayed greater resources than when warring upon each other, and marching hostile legions to each other's gates. This remark, applicable to the other Italian republics of the same pe-

riod, and indeed to those of both ancient Greece and Italy, proves that the agitations of a commonwealth are neither so dangerous to public happiness nor so destructive of private felicity, as the advocates of monarchy wish to persuade the world. The truth is, that tide of prosperity which has left so many traces behind, not only in the cities which I have just mentioned, but in almost every town in the northern parts of Italy, such as *Mantua*, *Cremona*, *Vicentia*, and *Verona*, was the effect of republican industry; and most of the stately edifices which still adorn these cities, whether public or private, sacred or profane, were raised by republican taste and munificence.

I speak not here of Rome; that city destined, it seems, to eternal greatness, owes her splendor to another cause more active perhaps than even the spirit of liberty, and doubtless more sublime; but the capitals to which I allude still exhibit the monuments of the opulence and public spirit of their ancestors as their noblest decorations, which, while they stand like so many trophies of liberty, show to the world how much popular surpasses monarchical government.

Among fallen republics, the fate of *Florence* seems peculiar; the loss of her liberty not only added not to her splendor, nor augmented her fame or territory; it did not even increase the prosperity of the family that usurped the government, or cast any additional lustre round the Medicean name. While *Florence* was free and the Medici only its first citizens, she paida most honorable tribute to their superior merit by a voluntary deference to their counsels, a tribute which ambition, if it knew its own interests, would prefer to forced homage and extorted allegiance.

The first merchant princes of this family, wisely content with the ascendency which the affection and gratitude of their country gave them, blended the policy of the statesman, the disinterestedness of the patriot, and the munificence of the sovereign, with the economy of traders, and the affability, ease, and simplicity of citizens. Such was the effect of these virtues, set of at the same time by learning and discernment, that history presents few great men to our observation more worthy of our esteem, and admiration than *Cosmo* and *Lorenzo di Medici*. The title of *Pater Patriæ*, first justly bestowed by Roman gratitude upon Cicero, and since that period so often prostituted by the prodigality of courtly flattery, and the vanity of weak, and even vicious despots, was here once more conferred by the judicious affection of a whole city on a generous and deserving magistrate.

But though the liberty of *Florence* and the glory of the Medicean family survived Lorenzo, yet they began from the fatal period of his death to decline, till one of his descendants, decorated with the empty title of Duke*, resigned the nobler appellation of the first citizen and father of his country, and usurped by force that government which the gratitude and veneration of his countrymen had deposited with generous confidence in the hands of his ancestors. Long might he have retained, unenvied and even applauded, the same honorable sway. But

Concessa pudet ire viâ civemque videri. *Lucan* II.

A title conferred by the Emperor, and supported by a regiment

* 1535.

of guards, was in Alexander di Medici's estimation preferable to one founded on his own virtues and the love of his country. From this inauspicious period the Medici, no longer the patrons of the arts and sciences, were lost in the common herd of petty despots, and like them whiled away their days in intrigue, debauchery, and obscurity. Under their leaden sway the commerce of *Florence* died away; the genius of the Tuscans languished, and want and misery spread over the fertile plains of *Etruria*.

The fate of *Florence* is a lesson held out to all free governments, to guard them not only against the ambition and power, but even against the virtues and popularity of their rulers. The latter without doubt are the more dangerous. Avowed ambition or pride ill-dissembled excite hatred, and justify opposition; while benevolence and affability engage the affections, and disarm resistance. Hence it would perhaps have been fortunate for Rome if her first tyrant, instead of Augustus had been Nero. and it is perhaps for the same reason advantageous to the cause of liberty that the chief magistrate in a free state should not be of a character too popular and engaging.

Florence is now under the government of the Prince of *Parma*, most unjustly expelled by the French from his own territory, and reluctantly decorated with the mock title of King of *Etruria*. How long he may be permitted to enjoy even this shadowy and precarious honor it is difficult to determine; but if the French were inclined to respect a title of their own creation and leave him in quiet possession, yet a weak constitution and a heart broken by disaster, will ere long bring his reign to a premature termination. He is naturally a prince of a mild and benevolent

character, and well fitted to govern a small territory in times of tranquillity.

Florence is seated in a vale, intersected by the *Arno*, graced by numberless hills, and bordered at no great distance by mountains of various forms rising gradually towards the Apennines. The whole vale is one continued grove and garden, where the beauty of the country is enlivened by the animation of the town, and the fertility of the soil redoubled by the industry of its cultivators. White villas gleam through the orchards on every side, and large populous hamlets border the roads, and almost line the banks of the river. Such is the scene of comfort and prosperity that surrounds the Tuscan capital, raised originally by the genius of liberty, and restored by the Grand Duke Leopold*. Happy will it be for the inhabitants if its charms can resist the *blasts from hell*, which have passed the Alps and the Apennines, and now brood in tempests over the *Val d'Arno*.

The city itself spreads along the side of the river which forms one of its greatest ornaments, and contributes not a little to its fame. Its streets are well paved or rather flagged, wider than usual in southern climates, and its houses in general solid and rather stately. It has several squares, and many churches and palaces, so that its appearance is airy, clean, and sometimes rising towards grandeur. I do not however think, that the number of great edifices corresponds with the reputation of the city, or with the figure which it has so long made in the annals

* Afterwards Emperor.

of modern history. It is indeed to be considered, that we came directly from Rome, and that the glories of that capital, when fresh upon the mind, must naturally eclipse the inferior splendor of every other city.

CHURCHES.

The *Cathedral* with its adjoining baptistery, *St. Lorenzo*, and the *Mausoleum* of the Medicean family; *Santa Maria Novella*, and *Santa Croce*, are the most conspicuous edifices in *Florence*, and have each some peculiarity that claims attention.

The Cathedral, called as usual in Italy *Il Duomo*, is an edifice of great extent and magnificence, and ranks among the first of the kind in Europe. It is in fact, if we consider magnitude and materials, boldness and skill, the second and in these respects inferior only to the unrivalled Vatican. Its walls are incrusted or rather cased with black and white marble; it is paved with variegated marble disposed, at least in part, by *Michael Angelo;* it is adorned both within and without by marble statues, most of which are works of the most eminent sculptors; and its paintings are in general masterpieces of the art. But its principal distinction and greatest glory is its dome, prior to that of St. Peter's in time, and little inferior to it in magnitude*. As it has the advantage of the latter in date, so it is represented by the Florentines as its model. *Michael Angelo*, they say, used to behold it with rapture, and pronounce it match-

* The difference is only thirteen feet in height and fifteen in breadth.

less in its kind, and they conclude from hence that his genius kindled by the contemplation conceived the grander idea of the Roman dome. But this dome, though erected by *Michael Angelo*, was planned by *Bramante*, and to him we are to ascribe the merit of the glorious conception. At all events, it is highly honorable to *Florence* to have furnished, if not the plan, at least the example even to Rome herself, and to have commenced in the thirteenth century an edifice of such boldness and magnitude.

This church was begun in the year 1296. The dome was raised in the following century by *Brunellesco*, who finished the edifice. The form of the dome to an eye accustomed to St. Peter's is not pleasing; it is octagonal, a form of less simplicity, and of course less grandeur than the circular; it is moreover closed at the top, and consequently appears dark and dismal to a spectator, who recollects the soft lights that play round the vault and illuminate the mosaics of the Vatican. The arcades that border the nave look naked for want of pilasters, and the cornice, (if it may be so called, for it rather resembles a gallery,) that intersects the space between the arches and the springing of the vault above, for want of pillars or pilasters to support it seems out of place, and rather an excrescence than an ornament. The windows are smaller than usual in similar edifices, and the deep and rich colors of the glass, which would elsewhere be considered as a beauty, here, by diminishing the quantity of light, render the defect more visible. The choir is immediately under the dome, and like it octagonal. It is enclosed by an Ionic colonnade of variegated marble, and adorned with basso relievos.

On the whole, the cathedral of *Florence* was the first effort of the reviving arts, and announced to a rude age the glories of the approaching era; it stood for some time unequalled, and even now claims the second honors. Nor is this noble fabric deficient in that more interesting glory which great monuments derive from great events. In it was assembled the celebrated council, where a Greek Emperor, surrounded by the patriarchs of the Greek church, sat enthroned next to the Roman Pontiff and his prelates, and the two most numerous, most ancient, and most venerable communions of the christian body were united for the last time in the bonds of faith and charity. This union is considered as a grand and singular event, but desirable as it was then, and must at all times be, it will appear to the reader acquainted with the subjects in debate, much less singular than their division. In this church also the Emperor Frederic III. environed by his vassal kings and dukes, sat in imperial state, and distributed the honors of knighthood among his attendants. We may wish to forget that its pavement was defiled by the blood of *Giuliano di Medici*, but while the crime presents itself to our memory we may also recollect its punishment, and the providential escape of *Lorenzo*.

To these historical embellishments we may add the additional awfulness which this cathedral derives from the illustrious persons who repose under its pavement. Among these are the well-known names of *Brunellesco*, *Giotto*, and *Marsilius Ficinus*. A picture only records the memory of *Dante*, whose remains, notwithstanding the lustre which his genius reflects upon his country, slumber in exile at *Ravenna*, in a tomb erected and inscribed by *Bernardo*, father of the Cardinal *Bembo*. Another epitaph, supposed to

have been penned by the poet himself, ends with a gentle complaint.

> Hic claudor Dantes patriis extorris ab oris
> Quem genuit parvi Florentia mater amoris.

The Florentines have indeed at various times endeavoured to recover the relics of their illustrious citizen, and particularly during the reign of Leo X. when Michael Angelo himself is said to have exerted his influence to obtain them; but in vain: the people of *Ravenna*, who had the honor of affording the exiled poet an asylum when living, conceive that they have the best title to the honor of preserving his ashes when dead—"*Exulem a Florentia excepit Ravenna,*" says the epitaph, "*vivo fruens, mortuum colens, ... tumulum pretiosum musis. S. P. E. Rav. jure ac ære suo tamquam thesaurum suum munivit, instauravit, ornavit.*" In fine, the Florentine republic voted a magnificent cenotaph to be erected in this cathedral, but even this vote has hitherto proved ineffectual, and the picture alluded to above continues still to occupy the place allotted to the monument.

Close to the front of the church but totally detached from it rises the *Campanile* or belfry, a light airy and graceful tower, coated with variegated marble, and adorned with many highly finished statues. Opposite the principal entrance stands the Baptistery, an octangular edifice, in many respects of great beauty. A number of granite pillars support its dome, and fine mosaics shed a rich coloring over it, the walls are lined, and the pavement inlaid with marble. It is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and all its ornaments have a reference to the sacrament of Baptism. It is in fact the Baptistery, not of one parish only, but of the whole city of *Florence*, and corresponds in magnitude

with its destination. Its three great bronze portals are celebrated for the exquisite beauty of the basso relievos with which they are adorned; the figures represent the principal events of the life of St. John, with the *cardinal* and *theological* virtues. *Michael Angelo*, in an extasy of admiration, termed them *the Gates of Paradise*. This well-known tribute of praise, when paid by such an artist, has justly been considered as an encomium that places them above the reach of criticism.

The reader, unacquainted with the date of these masterpieces, will be astonished when he learns that one of the three is inscribed anno 1330, an era when the arts were supposed to slumber under the ruins of antiquity, and when even Italy itself is generally represented as enveloped in all the gloom of ignorance and barbarism. In truth, our ideas of the middle ages are in many respects the mere prejudices of childhood. Europe, or at least Italy, was never involved in such utter darkness as some of our modern oracles endeavor to make their unthinking readers imagine. Some of the Italian republics were then in the full enjoyment of liberty, and liberty never yet visited a country without bringing knowledge and taste, the arts and the sciences in her train. In fact, the century and the country that produced *Cimabue* and *Giotto*, *Arnolfo* and *Ugolini*, *Dante* and *Petrarcha*, could not have been deficient in genius or criticism, in painting or sculpture, in design or in architecture.

But let us turn from a subject too fertile and alluring for a traveller, and pass to the church of *St. Lorenzo*, the next in rank as an object of curiosity, not so much for its own internal beauties as for the edifices united or connected with it. These

are the Sacristy, the Medicean chapel, and the Laurentian library.

The Sacristy, which is in fact a chapel and the mausoleum of several princes of the Medicean line, was planned by *Michael Angelo*, and is adorned with several statues of his workmanship. Some are finished in his best style; others remain unfinished, but display, it is thought, even in the imperfect parts, the grand daring touches and inimitable manner of the sculptor.

Close to the Sacristy and behind the chancel of the church, though the communication is not yet open, stands the intended mausoleum of the Medicean family. This edifice was begun two hundred years ago*, and if completed upon the plan on which it was commenced would surpass every sepulchral building in the world. Its form is octagonal, its diameter ninety-four, and its elevation to the vault two hundred feet. It is literally lined with lapis lazuli, agate, jasper, onyx, &c. furnished with sarcophagi of porphyry, and supported by granite pilasters with capitals of bronze. The niches between these pilasters are of touchstone; beneath is a subterraneous chapel, where the bodies, whose names are inscribed on the sarcophagi above, are to repose. The crucifixion of our Saviour, a groupe in white marble by *John of Bologna*, with a Blessed Virgin by *Michael Angelo*, and St. John by one of his disciples, grace this dormitory of the dead, and preside over it with appropriate majesty. But

Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futuræ,

* An. 1604.

before the magnificent monument intended for their reception was finished, the Medicean line has failed; the work is now suspended, and if we may judge from the impoverished state of the country and the agitation of the times, it is not likely to be resumed for many years, if ever. In the mean time, the materials of the inlaid pavement remain still in store; the dome which was to have been incrusted with mosaics (it was first intended, with *lapis lazuli*), presents nothing to the eye but its inanimate form; even the altar has not yet been raised, nor the grand entrance opened from the church of *St. Laurence*. In short, if the present system of French influence and exaction should continue, the Medicean chapel, stripped of its rich decorations, will be abandoned to oblivion, until undermined by time it shall one day bury under its ruins the remains which it was commissioned to preserve, as a sacred deposit enshrined in pomp and magnificence*.

The Laurentian library is in the convent annexed to the church. This library consisted originally of the many valuable manuscripts collected by the first princes of the Medicean family; these were dispersed in a very little time after the death

* This celebrated chapel appeared to us dark and heavy, and in architectural beauty, chaste decoration, and fair proportions, far inferior to the *Corsini* chapel in *St. John Lateran*. In riches it is equalled if not surpassed by the *Borghese* chapel in *Sta. Maria Maggiore*. But though it yields in magnificence to these two unrivalled temples, it far surpasses all similar edifices, whether oratory or mausoleum, beyond the Alps. The dome of the Invalids at Paris covers a chapel, which is shewn as the pride of French architecture; but when compared to the Medicean chapel, how graceless are its proportions! how mean its materials!

of *Lorenzo*, during the disgrace and banishment of his son. Many were recovered, others purchased, and the collection considerably increased by the munificence of the two Medicean Pontiffs, Leo X. and Clement VII. As these manuscripts were in almost every language, and their number was considerable at the same time, the reputation of this collection rose very high, and almost equalled, it is said, that of the Vatican. In fact, this library was the noblest monument which the *Medici* have left of the glory of their line, and reflected more honor upon them than the proudest edifices could bestow; but even this literary monument will soon exist only in remembrance; it has not escaped the rapacity of the French leaders, and after the gleaning which it has already furnished, will probably pass entire, either as an homage, or a purchase, or a *voluntary* present, to the consular palace.

It is not my intention to enlarge upon the churches of *Florence*; in external beauty, excepting the cathedral, they are inferior to many, but in internal decorations equal to most Italian churches; however to travellers who had just arrived from Rome, and sated their eyes with the splendor of its majestic temples, the most magnificent edifices of *Florence* could present little interesting, nothing astonishing. One charm indeed the churches of *Florence* possess in a manner peculiar to themselves, and that is, an intimate connection with the memory of the great men who flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and from *Florence* diffused the light of literature over the western world. There are, in fact, few churches in this city which are not ennobled by the tombs of some or other of these personages; scarce one that does not present to the eyes of the traveller, when he enters, inscribed on marble or bronze, some illustrious and well known name. Thus

in the church of *San Marco*, we find the tomb of *Picus of Mirandola*, distinguished alike by rank, fortune, genius, piety and learning. This combination of qualities so rare even when single, deserved to be recorded in lines more simple and affecting than the two bombastic verses now inscribed upon his tomb.

On the opposite side of the church lies *Politianus*, the friend of *Lorenzo*, the favorite of the Latin muse; a trivial epitaph records his name, but no elegiac verse deplores his untimely fate, nor does one indignant line avenge his sullied fame. The honour of vindicating the poet was reserved to an English pen, and Politian owes to the generosity of a *Roscoe* that which he had a right to claim from the justice of his countrymen.

> Candidus ille viget morum tenor, et pia vitæ
> Simplicitas nullis est labefacta malis.

In the church of *Sta. Croce* we find the tomb of *Michael Angelo Buonarotti*, the painter, the sculptor, the architect. It is graced with many figures; perhaps the name alone would have been its best decoration. In the same church lie the remains of *Leonardi Bruni Aretino*, and of *Galileo*, a more illustrious name. In another sanctuary reposes the Florentine Livy, *Guicciardini*, and in a third the Tuscan Tacitus *Machiavelli*. Of *Boccacio*, the modern Petronius, we say nothing; the abuse of genius is more odious and more contemptible than its absence, and it imports little where the impure remains of a licentious author are consigned to their kindred dust. For the same reason the traveller may pass unnoticed the tomb of the malignant *Aretino*. But who can view without compassion the urn of the young, the virtuous poet *Verini*.

Occidit obscænæ Veneris contagia vitans . . . . .
Moribus ambiguum major an ingenio . . . . .
Sic jacet, heu patri dolor et decus—unde juventus
Exemplum, et vates materiam capiant.

The tombs of the learned Greeks who fled before the last and worst of barbarians, the Turks, and fixing at *Florence* established the seat of the Grecian muses in *Etruria*, awaken many a pleasing and many a melancholy recollection. The honors heaped on these illustrious exiles, the enthusiasm of their numerous disciples, and the propagation of their language delight the imagination even at this distance of time, and do credit to the taste and feelings of the Italians of that *vivid* era.

But who can recollect without regret, that the schools which they opened are shut, that the divine language which they taught is neglected, and that a race of savage invaders are now endeavoring to suppress the dialects of Greece and of Italy, in order to substitute the flippant jargon of France in their stead, and replace the solid bullion of ancient wisdom by the base tinsel of Gallic *philosophism*. Thus has this restless and overbearing nation twice attacked the cause of literature in *Florence;* in their first visit, they plundered and dispersed the Medicean library and cabinet; in their second, they not only repeated the same sacrilege, but attempted to stop for ever the two great sources of science and of literature, the languages of Plato and of Cicero.

PALACES.

The remark which we have made above relative to the churches of *Florence* is still more applicable to the palaces, few of which

are calculated to inspire interest, either from their grandeur or magnitude, when compared to similar edifices in Rome. To which we may add, that the Tuscan style, mixed as it generally is in these buildings with much of the rustic, is dull and heavy, and gives them a sullen appearance better adapted to monasteries or even prisons than to palaces. The *Palazzo Strozzi*, and even the archiducal residence the *Palazzo Pitti*, though grand, regular, and extensive edifices, fall under this censure. The *Palazzo Corsini* on the quay is perhaps an exception. The *Palazzo Riccardi* is said to be erected on a plan of Michael Angelo; it has however a better recommendation to notice. It was built by the first *Cosmo de Medici*, and was the residence of that family in the happiest and most glorious period of its history, when its wealth was the produce of its industry, its honors the voluntary tribute of public esteem, and its power the affection of its country. The house of *Cosmo* and afterwards of *Lorenzo*, was then truly the palace of public wisdom * the *Curia* of the Commonwealth, and at the same time the abode of the Greek, the Latin, and the Etruscan muses. It was in process of time honored by the presence of emperors and of pontiffs, and of kings and of princes; it was decorated by the first artists in succession, and may with propriety be considered as the temple of virtue, public spirit, and science.

When we enter it the recollection of all the virtues and honors of the first Medici inspire veneration; as we advance we seem to see the heroes and the sages of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rising successively before us, and claiming

* *Palazzo della Ragione*, an appellation given in Italy to the townhall or place where the magistrates assemble.

the homage due to their exertions in the cause of science and literature. "*Hospes*," says the inscription which presents itself to the stranger on his entrance, "*Mediceas olim ædes in quibus non solum tot principes viri, sed et sapientia ipsa habitavit, ædes omnis eruditionis, quæ hic revixit, nutrices* . . . . . *Gratus venerare*. It must appear surprising, that a sovereign of this family should have sold a palace so intimately connected with the history of its fortunes, not only the *incunabula gentis*, but a monument of the most honorable period of its existence. But Ferdinand *II*. lived at a time when the Medicean princes, then a degenerate race, had lost in the effeminacy and pride of sovereignty, even the memory of the virtues that made their ancestors great, and were probably indifferent or perhaps averse to trophies and monuments that only reproached them with their vices and their indolence.

The *Riccardi* family, the present proprietors of the Medicean palace, are not unworthy of such a residence. It still remains the repository of the arts and of the wisdom of antiquity, and its gallery and library, open to public inspection, continue to announce the spirit, the judgment, and the liberality of its inhabitants.

One of the most remarkable edifices of *Florence*, and perhaps the most beautiful in its kind in Europe, is the *Ponte della Trinita*, built of marble and formed of three elliptic arches; it was erected by *Ammanati*, and is universally admired for grace and airy lightness.

THE GALLERY.

It now remains for me to speak of the celebrated gallery which

has occupied the attention of so many sovereigns, and forms the distinguishing and most honourable feature of *Florence*. The general appearance of this city is equalled by many and surpassed by some Italian cities, but its gallery stands confessedly in the second place, and yields only (if yet it yield) to the unrivalled collection of the Vatican. I am aware that in speaking of both these famous cabinets I am enlarging rather upon their past than their present glory, and need not inform the reader that the masterpieces of the latter have been transported to France, and that those of the former have been conveyed by a well-timed precaution to *Palermo*. The Medicean gallery therefore when we visited it was stripped of its principal ornaments, and presented so many vacant frames and unoccupied pedestals, that we found ourselves more disposed to regret its absent than admire its present beauties. Among the former were the *Venus of Medicis*, the *Faun*, the *Wrestlers*, with sixty other ancient statues, the most perfect in their kind now at *Palermo*. Many others, of nearly a similar description, have been transported to Paris. The paintings, at least the masterpieces, have shared the same fate, and for the same reasons have been either removed to Sicily or sent to France. The gallery, however, could not be said to be a dreary void ; many statues and many paintings still remained, excellent in their kinds, and capable singly of giving reputation to any transalpine collection.

We will now proceed to a more minute account, and begin by the edifice itself. It was erected by the orders of *Cosmo* I. in the year 1564. *Georgio Vasari* was the architect; it is built in the form of the Greek π, and is more than five hundred feet in length; the court enclosed between the wings is sixty-four

feet in breadth. This court is regular in all its parts; on each side is a gallery supported by Tuscan pillars, one end opens on the great square; the other borders the *Arno*, and is terminated by a large arch which unites the two buildings and forms the communication. The magnitude and regularity of this edifice are alone capable of giving it a majestic appearance, but in other respects it is liable to much criticism; for, not to object to the heaviness of the order itself, the gallery is too low, the pillars too far from each other, the entablature too cumbersome, and the whole colonnade quite buried under the vast superstructure which it supports.

On entering this edifice, and ascending the staircase, (for the gallery is in the upper story,) we are pleased to find the vestibule adorned with the busts of the Medicean princes its founders, who seem to preside over the entrance as the tutelary divinities of the place, and claim from the traveller as he passes before them the acknowledgment due to their munificence. These princes occupy the first part of the vestibulum; the second part contains various antique altars and two remarkable trophies. The gallery occupies the whole length of the building on both sides, and the end or space that forms the communication. Each wing of this gallery is four hundred and sixty feet in length, and the part that forms the communication is more than one hundred; it is about twenty-four in breadth, and nearly as many in heighth. The ceiling is painted in fresco, and represents in one wing various mythological subjects, in the middle and the other wing, conspicuous persons and events remarkable in the annals of *Florence*. These paintings are only interesting inasmuch as they are connected with the history of

the art. Immediately under the ceiling is a line of portraits of great men both ancient and modern; of the latter many are copied from originals. The walls are adorned with pictures, and lined with busts and statues all antique, some in marble and some in bronze. All the busts are of Roman Emperors, or of persons connected with imperial families. The statues generally represent gods or heroes; of these, few are perfect, most having been damaged, and repaired with more or less felicity by modern artists. Intermingled with the statues and busts are altars and sarcophagi; shields, and trophies. Above the statues the pictures are ranged in such a manner as to form the history of the art from the eleventh century down to the seventeenth. The mixture of objects, sacred and profane, historical and fictitious, produces an unpleasant sensation; but according to the principles of the arrangement, which is to shew the progress of the art, seems unavoidable. The number both of paintings and statues surprizes; the excellency of many astonishes; and the effect of the whole at first is rather confusion than satisfaction. The arrangement, it must be admitted, is simple and methodical, but the objects press too close upon each other, and leave no time for discrimination.

The gallery is bordered on one side by a suit of apartments or halls, spacious and well-proportioned, twenty, I think, in number, each of which is consecrated to some particular set of masterpieces in sculpture or in painting, or to some particular school or favourite collection.

One of these halls is devoted to Niobe and her children, a collection in itself, consisting of sixteen figures, all intended to

form, like the Laocoon, one group. Whether this celebrated group be the original itself, which Pliny the Elder ascribes to either Scopas or Praxiteles*, or only a copy, is a subject of debate among critics; its merits are acknowledged, though very differently appreciated, as *Winckelman* and the Italian artists in general represent the different figures, particularly that of Niobe itself, as models of the highest perfection, and in every excellence equal to the two supposed grand masterpieces of the art; while the French, though they admit the general beauty, find fault with the details, and place them on the whole much lower in the scale of excellency. We are naturally inclined to prefer the opinion of the former, whose authority in the arts a transalpine *connoisseur* cannot safely reject; especially as we are inclined to suspect that the real cause of the criticism of the latter is the pure and almost sublime simplicity of these figures, expressing the extreme of fear in the daughters, and of grief in the mother, without grimace, distortion, or agitation.

Oiba resedit
Exanimos inter natos, natasque virumque
Diriguitque malis, nullos movet aura capillos,
In vultu color est sine sanguine, lumina mæstis
Stant immota genis - nihil est in imagine vivi.

Ovid. Met. vi. 301.

These figures have been damaged and repaired.

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* xxxvi. cap. 5. Ausonius decides in favour of the latter, probably because his name is better adapted to versification. The same reason may have influenced a writer in the Anthelogia Aus. Epitaph.—*Anth. lib.* 4.

The most beautiful of these halls, which contained the Venus of Medicis, may be considered as a temple to that goddess, equal perhaps in interior beauty to that of Paphos or Cythera: at present this temple is abandoned by its celestial inhabitant, and nearly stript of all its furniture. It contained the masterpieces of ancient sculpture and modern painting; when they are to be replaced it is difficult to determine. This little temple, for so we may call it, is an octagon of about four-and-twenty feet in diameter, its dome is adorned with mother of pearl, and its pavement formed of the most beautiful marbles. Other apartments are consecrated to the great schools of painting, and could formerly boast of many of the masterpieces of each: now their vacant places only are conspicuous; "*sed præfulgebant eo ipso quod non visebantur**;" their absence announced their value and their celebrity.

* Tacitus, Annal. l. III.

CHAP. VIII.

ENVIRONS OF FLORENCE—THE ARNO—THE VILLAS OF THE GRAND DUKE—FÆSULÆ—VALLOMBROSA.

FROM the city we will pass to the neighbouring country, which presents as great a portion of rural beauty, hill and dale, orchard and vineyard, cottage and villa, as the environs of any capital in Europe, Naples perhaps excepted. Its first feature is the *Arno*, a river like the *Tiber*, inferior to many streams in magnitude, but superior to most in renown. Unknown in the first age of Italian verse, its name rose to eminence in the second, became the theme of many a strain, and was celebrated in both the divine dialects of Italy. Even foreign bards caught inspiration on its banks, and the genius of Milton himself loved to sport under the poplars that shade its borders.

O ego quantus eram, gelidi cum stratus ad Arni
Murmura, populeumque nemus, qua mollior herba,
Carpere nunc violas, nunc summas carpere myrtos.
Epit. Dan.

These banks furnish many a *wildly devious walk* to the solitary wanderer, and to the city itself one of the most beautiful and most frequented haunts of fashion. But the *Arno* with all its fame is liable to the disadvantages of many southern streams; in summer it loses most of its waters, and presents to the eye at that season, even in the immediate neighbourhood of *Florence*, little more than a few pools united by a narrow rillet. The traveller then courts in vain the breezes that *blow freshness* from its waves, and listens in vain to the *murmurs* that delighted the ear of the poet. All around is heat and silence. The sultriness of this summer* is indeed said to be unusual, and it is to be hoped that the *Arno* is not thus annually stript of its coolness and its charms.

The villas of the Grand Dukes, if we consider their size, their architecture, or their present decorations, inspire no great interest; even their gardens display little or no pleasing scenery, no masses of shade, no expansions of water, no groves or thickets, to delight the eye or amuse the fancy. All is art, stiff, minute, and insignificant; besides, they seem much neglected, and are in general out of repair. Yet it is impossible to visit some of them without emotion, such as *Pratolino*, *Caiano*, and *Carreggi*, the retreats of the *Medici* and once the haunts of the Italian muses. The last of these villas witnessed the closing stage of Lorenzo's career, and if the solemn scene that terminates the life of a benefactor of mankind can confer dignity or communicate interest, the chamber where Lorenzo died must excite both veneration and emotion.

* 1802.

FÆSULÆ.

But of all the objects that present themselves in the immediate vicinity of *Florence*, *Fiesole* is from its antiquity, its situation, and its celebrity, one of the most conspicuous and attractive. This town, under the appellation of *Fæsulæ*, was one of the twelve Etrurian cities, and seems to have been distinguished above the others by its skill in the interpretation of omens and prognostics. It submitted with the rest of *Etruria* to the Roman power, and was colonized by Sylla. The species of colonists sent by this tyrant seem to have been of no very favourable description, and are represented afterwards as composing the main body of Catiline's ruffian army. It made no figure in the civil wars or revolutions of the following era, survived the general desolation of Italy during the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, and prolonged its existence till the commencement of the eleventh, when, in a contest with *Florence*, it was destroyed and its inhabitants, or at least a considerable number, transported to that city. However, the cathedral remained, and *Fiesole*, now a lonely but beautiful village, still retains its episcopal honours, its ancient name, and its delightful situation. Placed on the summit of a lofty and broken eminence it looks down on the vale of the *Arno*, and commands *Florence* with all its domes, towers, and palaces, the villas that encircle it, and the roads that lead to it. The recesses, swells, and breaks of the hill on which it stands are covered with groves of pines, ilex, and cypress. Above these groves rises the dome of the cathedral; and in the midst of them reposes a rich and venerable abbey founded by the Medicean family. Behind the hill at a distance swell the Apennines. That a place graced with so

many beauties should delight the poet and the philosopher is not wonderful, and accordingly we find it alluded to with complacency by Milton, panegyrized by Politian, inhabited by Picus, and frequented by Lorenzo.

The abbey of *Fiesole* was the retreat of Picus, and governed at that time by an abbot worthy of such a guest, *Matteo Bosso*, one of the most eminent scholars of that age. The frugal table of this venerable sage united not unfrequently the three last mentioned persons, with *Ficinus* and *Hermolaus Barbarus*. Such a society has been compared to Plato's repasts, and to the philosophic interviews of Cicero and his friends. In genius and eloquence, they imitated but could not presume to rival these illustrious associations; but in virtue and in that superior wisdom which they derived from Christianity, they far surpassed their famed predecessors.

Politian has celebrated *Fæsulæ* and the scenes which he so often contemplated with all the rapture of a poet, at the conclusion of his *Rusticus*, a subject which the genius of the place seems to have inspired.

Hic resonat blando tibi pinus amata susurro
Hic vaga coniferis insibilat aura cupressis;
Hic scatebris salit et bullantibus incita venis
Pura coloratos interstrepit unda lapillos . . . .
Talia Fæsuleo lentus meditabar in antro
Rure sub urbano Medicum, qua mons sacer urbem
Mæoniam, longique volumina despicit Arni,
Qua bonus hospitium felix, placidamque quietem
Indulgens Laurens, Laurens non ultima Phœbi
Gloria, jactatis Laurens fida anchora musis.
. . . . . .

VALLOMBROSA.

The most delightful excursion in the neighbourhood of *Florence* is, without doubt, the Abbey of *Vallombrosa*, a name well known to every English reader, because ennobled by Milton*. The road to this famed retreat runs for thirteen miles through the *Val d'Arno*, along the banks of the river.

A little beyond *Pelago* we began to ascend the Apennines, and winding along their sides enjoyed, as we advanced, many delicious views of hills crowned with villas, and mountains sometimes covered and sometimes merely spotted with the olive, the vine, and the ilex. The beauty of the scenery increased upon us at every step, and as we passed through groves of lofty chestnuts intermingled with oak, we occasionally caught the view of a torrent tumbling from the craggs, a church seated on the bosom of a fertile hill, or a broken ridge of rocks and precipices.

At a little distance from the abbey we observed a large stone cross placed at the entrance of a wood of firs thick and lofty, whose deep shade was lighted up by the horizontal rays of the setting-sun that shot along the arcades formed by their meeting branches. As we entered, the abbey bell tolled to call the monks to the evening service, and continued tolling till we emerged from the gloom of this path to a little plain, bounded behind by a semi-circular curve of steep mountains covered to the summit with one continued forest. Here we beheld the antique towers, and pinnacles of the abbey rising full before us; and

* Parad. Lost, Book 1.

on a nearer approach heard the swell of the organ, and the voices of the choir, and instantly alighting under the archway of the gate hastened to the church. The monks were then singing the *Qui habitat* (ninety-first psalm), which is part of the evening service. The melody was sweet and solemn; a long pause between each verse gave it time to produce its full effect; and the gloom of the church, the lights on the altar, the chant of the choir, and the tones of the organ could not fail to awaken in the mind, already prepared by the scenery, and circumstances of place and time, a strong emotion of piety, awe, and melancholy. When service was ended the monks retired in deep silence, like so many ghosts gliding along the nave, and disappearing in the aisles; we withdrew with regret. We were then conducted by the father appointed to receive strangers to the usual apartments allotted to visitants, and treated with unaffected hospitality. These apartments are fitted up in a style of cleanliness and simplicity admirably adapted to the spirit of the place and of the order. The walls are merely white-washed, without either paper, wainscot, or tapestry. Their only decorations are a few prints of subjects taken from scripture, or connected with the history of the order, or the life of the founder. The furniture consists of a very good bed, a table, a desk for prayer, with a crucifix, and a few chairs, all very plain but very neat, and evidently designed not for luxury but convenience. The supper was frugal, but not parsimonious; the conversation of the Father *Foresteraio**, a man of a good countenance and easy manners, was sensible and entertaining. Between nine and ten he took his leave for the night.

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* A title given to the monk who is commissioned to receive and entertain guests.

The Abbey of *Vallombrosa* was founded towards the middle of the eleventh century by *John Gualbertus*, a nobleman of *Florence*, who having embraced the monastic life in the Benedictin monastery of St. Minias at *Florence*, and refused the dignity of abbot, withdrew from a love of solitude to the wilds of *Vallombrosa*. Here he found two hermits, and assisted by them and a companion who had followed him from *Florence*, established a monastery which, from the superior sanctity and industry of its inhabitants soon acquired reputation and riches. In time it rose to the dignity of a *parent* abbey, and became the head of the numerous congregation of Benedictins of *Vallombrosa*. The founder shewed his judgment in the selection of his retreat, as it is difficult to discover a wilder or more romantic solitude. The little plain in which the abbey stands is imbosomed in the Apennines, open to the rays of the western sun, but enclosed on the south, east, and north by a semi-circular ridge of mountains. The steep acclivity is clothed to the summit with forests of ancient firs, oaks, and beeches, waving one above the other, and sometimes apparently hanging from the very brows of the precipices and bending over the steep. In the upper regions an occasional glade breaks the uniformity of forest scenery, while the naked summits expand into wide grassy downs, and command a beautiful view over the *Arno* and its *storied* vale, *Florence* and all its neighbouring hills on one side, and extending on the other to the wilds of *Camaldoli* and *La Vernia*. The elevation is so considerable even at the abbey as to affect the temperature of the air, insomuch indeed that after having panted so long at Naples, Rome, and Florence, we found ourselves delightfully refreshed at *Vallombrosa* by the cool breezes of an English summer.

The day after our arrival the good father, who was appointed

to attend strangers, was so obliging as to defer dinner till a late hour, in order to enable us to make our intended excursion to the summit of the mountain; and after breakfast we set out, crossing first the little plain in which the abbey stands; and then passing a stream that descends from the cliff, we began the ascent by a narrow pathway which winds up the acclivity, but is yet sufficiently steep and laborious. However, as the heat was by no means oppressive, and we walked under a deep shade the whole way, the ascent was not very fatiguing.

The trees that form the forest through which we passed are generally old, shattered, and venerable, and the silence that reigned around us interrupted, perhaps I might have said heightened, by the murmurs of the wind unusually deep in such a vast mass of foliage, was extremely impressive, and gave the savage scene around us a grand, a melancholy solemnity. The channels of several torrents now dry, but encumbered with fragments of rock and trunks of trees hurled down by the fury of the mountain stream, furrowed the sides of the steep, and added to its rude magnificence. Down one of these channels a rill still continued to roll, and tumbling from rock to rock formed several cascades, whose *tinklings* were faintly heard amidst the hollow roar of the forests.

When we reached the summit we walked up and down to enjoy the cool breezes that always fan the higher regions of the Apennines, and to contemplate at the same time the picture expanded beneath us; on one side, the declivity shagged with wood, and enclosing in an oval sweep the lawn and Abbey of *Vallombrosa;* and on the other, a long ridge of bleak rugged mountains. We then reclined under a thicket on the brow of

the eminence, and compared the scenery immediately under us with Milton's description, of which it is supposed by many to be the original. Many features without doubt agree, and may be considered as transcripts beautiful as poetry can be supposed to give of nature.

> So on he fares, and to the border comes
> Of Eden, where delicious Paradise
> Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green
> As with a rural mound, the champion head
> Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
> With thicket overgrown grotesque and wild,
> Access deny'd; and overhead upgrew
> Insuperable high of loftiest shade.
> Cedar and pine, and fir and branching palm
> A sylvan scene, and as the ranks ascend
> Shade above shade, a woody theatre
> Of stateliest view. *Par. Lost*, IV.

Most of these lines are so far applicable as to form a regular description, and the *prospect large* is too obvious a consequence from the preceding features to be considered as an allusion. So far, therefore, the poet may have described what he had seen; but his genius that soared above the Apennines, and passed *extra flammantia mundi*, kindled at the contemplation of *Vallombrosa*, and created a Paradise. It may, perhaps, be observed with more probability, that the imagination of a love-sick maid, aided by the muse of Pope in one of her happiest humours, has given undesignedly the best poetical description of *Vallombrosa* that perhaps exists, a description which can have no reference to any scene which either the poet or Eloisa had ever beheld, as neither the one nor the other had ever visited the countries where alone such scenery occurs. The following beautiful verses, so applicable to the prospect before us, as well as the emphati-

cal expressions of which they are an amplification, were inspired by that melancholy which so often melts the heart of the lover, and lulls the imagination of the poet.

> The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclin'd,
> Wave high and murmur to the hollow wind,
> The wandering streams that shine between the hills,
> The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,
> The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
> The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze.
> . . . . . .
> But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
> Long sounding aisles and intermingled graves,
> Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
> A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
> Her gloomy presence saddens every scene,
> Shades every flower and darkens every green;
> Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
> And breathes a brown horror o'er the woods.

While thus employed on the summit, we heard the bell tolling below for afternoon service, and immediately began our descent. The tolling of a church bell is one of the few sounds that disturb the silence, without lessening the solemnity of solitary scenes. In our descent we stopped occasionally to listen to its deep *roar*, re-echoed from the opposite woods, and re-bellowing from steep to steep. It occurred to me as I worked my way down the dry bed of a torrent, and now and then stopped to breathe and admire the *rupes**, *et vacuum nemus*;

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* When editions differ we may be allowed to prefer the reading that suits our object best, and quote *rupes* in the old way for *ripas*.

that these forests and dells that now resound with the toll of the *church going bell*, once perhaps repeated the screams and shouts of the Bacchanalian throng. They delighted in the savage scenes that bordered the *Hebrus* and the *Rhodope*, in the depth of forests, in the hollows of lonely mountains or deserts, places all well adapted to their dark orgies and odious rites; fortunately the wisdom and gravity of the Romans did not permit them to adopt these foul inventions of Greek licentiousness. They had indeed been introduced into *Etruria* at an early period, and an attempt was made, at first with some success, to establish them in Rome itself, but they were soon observed and repressed by the vigilance of the Consuls *. This event took place about the year of Rome five hundred and sixty-six, that is, before power and luxury had impaired the virtue of the Romans.

Another but a shorter excursion from the abbey leads by a winding pathway, where

> the Etrurian shades
> High over-arch'd imbower

to an hermitage, or rather a little convent, erected on the flat surface of a rock projecting from the sides of the mountain. This retreat is a very commodious house with a little garden behind, and a fountain clear as crystal bubbling out from a cleft in the rock; it has a chapel annexed to it, and is divided into a variety of little galleries, oratories, and cells, very neatly furnished and adorned with pictures and prints, and the whole in a style totally different from every

* Liv. lib. xxxix.

other dwelling, fancifully pretty, and peculiarly conformable to its destination. This romantic hermitage is called, partly I suppose from its situation and prospect, and partly from its internal conveniences, *Paradisino*; and I must confess, that I never visited an abode better calculated to furnish the hermit with all the *aids* of meditation, and all the luxuries of holy retirement. From his window he may behold the *Val d'Arno*, and the splendours of *Florence*, at a distance too great to dazzle; around him he sees spread all the grandeur and all the gloom of rocks, forests, and mountains; by his fountain side he may hear the tinkling of rills and the roaring of torrents. Sometimes too, while absorpt in meditation, the swell of the distant organ and the voices of the choir far below may steal upon his ear, and *prompt the song of praise*. This retreat, so suited to the genius of a Gray or a Milton, is now occupied by a lay-brother, who resides in it merely to keep it clean, a task which he performs with great care and success. We found among other portraits that of Father Hugford, an English Benedictin, who in the beginning or middle of the last century passed several years in this retreat, and by his piety, learning, and skill in mosaics, acquired a great reputation not only among his brethren but at *Florence**.

On the ascent from the abbey to *Paradisino*, close to the path and on the brink of the precipice, is a stone, the history of

* Father Hugford was a man of talents, and excelled in the various branches of natural philosophy. He is said to have carried the art of imitating marble by that composition called *Scagliuola*, to its present perfection. He died I believe Abbot of *Vallombrosa*.

which, as related by our guide and indeed as consigned to posterity in an inscription, is as follows—St. John Gualbert, the founder of the abbey, while engaged in his devotions in the depth of the forest, was attacked by the devil, and to avoid his fury was obliged to fly, but being closely pursued by his *harpy-footed* adversary who, it seems, meant to throw him down the precipice, and was then close to him, he took shelter under a rock, which instantly softened as he pressed it, and admitting his back like a waxen mold, kept him in close embrace till the fiend in his precipitate haste shot down the steep below. The representation of the saint in rude sculpture still remains on the stone.

The inscription and the tale might perhaps suit the approach to a Capuchin convent, but are totally unworthy of a Benedictin abbey. The glory of the founder is established upon a much more solid foundation than legendary stories; it rests upon the heroic exercise of the first of christian virtues, charity, in the forgiveness of an enemy on a most trying and difficult occasion*.

At supper we had much conversation with the good father about the beautiful scenery we had beheld, and the delightful situation of the abbey. He observed that we saw it to advantage, that in summer, that is, from May to October, it was what we conceived it to be, a most delicious and magnificent retirement, but that during winter, which commences here in October and lasts till May, they were buried in snow, or enve-

* See his Life in Butler, June 12, Vol. 6.

loped in clouds, and besieged by bears and wolves prowling round the walls, and growling in the forests--*Orsi, lupi, e tutti, li peste* was his emphatic expression. I know not how such objects may appear to persons doomed to reside here for life; but a visitant is disposed to regard them as so many supernumerary charms, considerably augmenting the characteristic feature, that is, the wild and gloomy magnificence of the place, and deepening that religious awe and veneration which naturally brood over monastic establishments.

The reader will learn with pleasure that the monks of *Vallombrosa* are not idle solitaries; but, like most of the ancient and many of the modern Benedictin establishments, unite the labours of public instruction with monastic discipline. In fact, *Vallombrosa* is both an abbey and a college, and in its latter capacity furnishes an excellent seminary for the education of the Florentine youth of rank, many of whom were there at the time of our visit. Their dress is a black gown, with a black collar, lined and edged with white; we were present at one of their amusements, which was the *Calcio* or balloon, a game in great repute both in Italy and France. Their looks and manners seemed to display the advantages both physical and moral of the situation.

Before we take leave of these enchanting wilds, we may observe, that, as they are supposed to have furnished Milton with the original of his Paradise, so, his description of Paradise is considered as the model of modern parks. Others, it is true, choose to go farther for the idea, and pretend that it is borrowed from *China*. It might seem extraordinary, that a taste so simple and so natural should

have laid dormant for so many ages, if experience did not teach us that simplicity, which is the perfection of art, is always the last quality which it attains. The ancients had no notion of the species of garden I am speaking of, as appears from Pliny's account of his villas, round which we find *xystus concisus in plurimas species, distinctusque buxo . . . pulvinus cui bestiarum effigies invicem adversas buxus inscripsit . . . . . ambulatio pressis varieque tonsis viridibus inclusa**. The moderns, if we may believe Addison, were not ignorant of it even before his time, as the gardens both in France and Italy were at that period laid out, if his description be accurate, in that *artificial rudeness* which is now the characteristic feature of English park scenery†. In fact, this author himself may justly be considered as the father of good taste in this respect, as the paper to which I have alluded, contains the fundamental principles of ornamental gardening as it is now practised at home, and even on the continent under the appellation of the *English style*. However, if we must give the credit of the invention to a poet, *Tasso* is best entitled to it, not only because he furnished Milton with some of the leading features of his description, but because he laid down the very first principle of the art, and comprised it in a very neat line with which he closes one of the most beautiful landscapes in *Armida's* garden.

L'Arte che tutto fa, nulla se scopre.

Canto XVI. 9.

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* Lib. v. Epist. 6.

† Spect. 414.

CHAP. IX.

EXCURSION TO CAMALDOLI, LAVERNIA, AND PIETRA MALA.

ON the following day a temporary separation took place. Three of the party proceeded forwards towards *Camaldoli*, another celebrated solitude, and two were under the necessity of returning to *Florence*. For the following description therefore, both of *Camaldoli*, *Lavernia*, and *Pietra Mala*, the reader is indebted to one of the author's fellow-travellers.

The road to *Camaldoli* winds round the mountain that shelters *Vallombrosa* on the north side, and then descends into a little valley. In the middle of this valley on the very edge of a deep dell stands a sequestered villa, built by one of the Medici, when that family delighted occasionally in the classical pleasures of literary retirement. Though long forsaken and neglected it continued the property of the sovereign till lately, when it was sold to the Abbey of *Vallombrosa* by the Grand Duke *Leopold*. From thence we passed into a very beautiful part of the *Val*

d'Arno Inferiore, rich in that species of cultivated and lively scenery which graces the banks of the *Arno*. Some of its most striking features are, the ruined castle of *Romene* seated on a knowl that rises encircled with trees in the middle of the plain; behind it, the villages of *Poppi* and *Bibiena;* and immediately below us, the little town of *Prato Vecchio*, watered by the *Arno* and imbosomed in gardens and vineyards. From *Prato* we began to ascend a steep hill, and continued to wind amidst barren rocks for at least six miles. At length we arrived at *Camaldoli* about three o'clock.

CAMALDOLI.

The abbey stands on the bank of a torrent that murmurs through a valley surrounded by mountains towering to a prodigious elevation, and covered to the very summit with forests. On the south side, the valley expands, and the gloom of forest scenery is softened by an agreeable intermixture of lawn and down, not altogether unlike the varieties of an English park. On the north, rises a very steep hill, shaded to the summit with lofty firs: up this eminence we laboured for a mile and a half, and then entered the *Sagro Eremo*, or *holy desert*. This hermitage consists of twenty-seven mansions, each the abode of one monk, all on the same plan, taken from the original residence of *St. Romuald* the founder of the order, which is still preserved by the monks, as the thatched cottage of Romulus was by the Romans, with the greatest veneration. Each of these mansions consists of a bed-room, a sitting-room, a working-room, a little oratory, and a garden, all on a very small scale, and furnished with the utmost plainness and simplicity. They are surrounded by a wall, forming a general enclosure. The inhabitants are taken from the abbey, and return thither

after having passed two years in the solitude of the hermitage. At present there are four-and-twenty only. The abbot always resides among them, and governs the monastery below by a delegate called the *Prior*. The life of these hermits is unusually austere and mortified. Their diet consists entirely of vegetables and eggs, as meat is utterly prohibited. On Fridays they confine their repasts to bread and water. In summer, out of regard, it seems, to the genial influence of the season that must naturally invite to social enjoyments, the hermits are allowed to converse together at certain stated hours three days in the week. In winter, when the gloom of the weather and the horrors of the surrounding wilds are supposed to be more favourable to meditation, this indulgence is confined to two days. These austerities are peculiar to the inhabitants of the *Sagro Eremo*, and do not extend to the monastery. The church of the *Eremo* is extremely neat, and the sacristy adorned with some excellent paintings. The library contains not only religious and ascetical works, which are seldom wanting in such establishments, but a very good collection of general literature. The situation is extremely grand and romantic; in the midst of craggy mountains, and almost impenetrable forests of firs, it is eternally enveloped in that holy gloom so congenial to the spirit of monastic institution, and so well calculated to infuse into the most dissipated minds sentiments of religious melancholy.

Not far from the *Eremo*, the *Apennines* attain their highest elevation, and exhibit at once a view of the *Adriatic* and *Tyrrhene* seas. We did not, however, ascend, as the heat of the weather at this season renders the horizon too hazy for extensive prospects: but when evening approached we returned to the abbey, where we found a very good supper prepared for us by the

attention of the *Padre Foresteraio*, to whom we had particular letters of recommendation. The prior himself also honoured us with his company, so that we were on the whole provided with good fare and excellent conversation.

We were informed by the Prior, that the abbey was founded by a Calabrian anchoret, called *St. Romuald*, who having sought in vain for perfect solitude in many parts of Italy, at length settled himself in the rugged desert of *Camaldoli*, in the beginning of the eleventh century. Here, with a few companions, he revived or rather augmented the primitive austerity of the Benedictin Order, intermixed with its rule some portion of the eremitical life, and in short laid the foundation of the congregation called, from its principal monastery, *Camaldulensis* or *Camaldolese*. As *St. Romuald* lived to the advanced age of a hundred and twenty, and enjoyed a high reputation for sanctity and wisdom, he may be supposed to have left his monastery in a very flourishing condition at his death. It has now continued for the space of nearly eight centuries, with little relaxation in its rules and few vicissitudes in its fortunes.

There is something extremely striking in the duration of these monastic establishments—kingdoms and empires rise and fall around them—governments change—dynasties flourish and fade—manners and dresses alter, and even languages corrupt and evaporate. Enter the gates of *Camaldoli* or *Monte Cassino*—the torrent of time stands still—you are transported back to the sixth or the tenth century—you see the manners and habits, and hear the language of those distant periods—you converse with another race of beings, unalterable in themselves though placed among mortals, as if appointed to observe and record the

vicissitudes from which they are exempt. Hitherto these monuments of ancient times and past generations have been placed above the reach of that mortality, to which all the other works and institutions of man are subject; but is not the term of their existence at hand? or are they destined to survive the tempest that now scowls over Europe, and where it falls, levels all that is great and venerable in the dust?

The number of monks at the Abbey of *Camaldoli* is about forty, of whom ten only are in priest's orders; though not obliged to the silence or *extra-fasts* of their brethren in the hermitage, they lead a more austere life than other Benedictins. They arise a little after midnight, or rather about one in the morning, a practice not uncommon in religious orders, nor difficult to persons who sleep in the afternoon and retire to rest early; I might, perhaps, add, pleasant in a country where the morning is so delightful and so glorious. In winter indeed, which in these elevated regions of the *Apennines* is long and intensely cold, this practice must be very irksome, and may justly be considered as one of their severest duties. But in all seasons, at such an hour and in such solitudes, the deep tones of the bells, the chant of the choir, and the fulness of the organ, must be most solemn and impressive.

The dress of the *Camaldolese* is white, but in form the same as that worn by the Benedictins in general, that is, a cassock, a scapulary, a hood, and in the church a cowl or long robe, with white sleeves.

The abbey enjoys a considerable income, derived principally from its forests, which supply the port of *Leghorn* with firs for