find that the nations of the south and the tribes of the north, *Phenicians Trojans* and *Greeks*, *Gauls Goths* and *Vandals*; and in more modern times, that *Spaniards French* and *Austrians*, have invaded, subdued, or ravaged its several provinces in their turns with various success, and with very different consequences. The *Phenicians* established themselves in *Etruria*: the *Greeks* principally occupied the southern provinces: the *Trojans* fixed themselves in *Latium*, the heart and centre of the country; and the *Celtic* tribes seized the fertile territories extending along the banks of the *Po*, and stretching from the *Alps* to the *Apennines*. The *Phenicians* and *Greeks* brought with them their arts and sciences, established flourishing cities, and laid the foundations of the future glory and prosperity of the country. The barbarians of the north never passed their frozen barriers without bringing devastation and ruin in their train. If they made a transient incursion, like a tempest they swept away every thing within their range of havoc; if they settled, they lay like an army of locusts, a dead weight on the soil, and ages passed over their iron generations before they were softened into civilization and humanity. To the *Trojans* was reserved the nobler lot of establishing the Roman power, of taming and breaking the fierce spirit of the northern savages, of carrying the arts and sciences of the southern colonists to the highest degree of perfection, of uniting the strength, the genius, the powers of Italy in one centre, and of melting down the whole into one vast mass of interest and of empire.

Previous to the establishment of the Roman sovereignty, Italy, though independent and free, was weak because divided into petty states, and incapable not only of conquest, but even of long and successful defence. During the era of Roman

glory, Italy united under one head and directed by one principle, displayed talents and energies which astonished and subdued the Universe, and furnished the brightest examples of virtue and courage, of wisdom and of success that emblazon the pages of history. After the fall of the empire, Italy was again divided and again weakened, frequently invaded with success, and repeatedly insulted with impunity. The *Venetians*, it is true, rose to a high degree of pre-eminence and consideration; but they retained even in their greatness the spirit of a petty republic, and alive to their own, but indifferent to the general interest, they too often conspired against their common country, and to further their own projects, abetted the cause of its oppressors. The sovereign Pontiffs alone seem to have inherited the spirit of the Romans, and like them to have kept their eyes ever fixed on one grand object, as long as its attainment seemed possible; that object was the expulsion of the *barbarians* and the annihilation of all foreign influence in Italy. They have failed, though more than once on the very point of success, and their failure, as was foreseen, has at length left Italy at the disposal of one of the most insulting and wantonly mischievous nations that ever invaded its fair domains. What may be the duration, or what the consequences of the present dependent and degraded state of that country, it is difficult to conjecture; but should it terminate in the union of all its provinces under one active government seated in Rome, (and there is at least a possibility that such may be the result,) such an event would compensate all its past sufferings, and place it once more within the reach of independence, of empire, and of renown. The power which the present sovereign of Italy and of France enjoys, is peculiarly his own; and like that of Charlemagne, will probably be wrested from the grasp of his feeble successors.

Whoever then becomes master of Italy, if he should possess abilities, will find all the materials of greatness ready for his use; an Italian army, a rich territory, an immense population, and a national character bold, penetrating, calm, and persevering; with such means at his command he may defy all foreign power or influence, perhaps stand up the rival of France, and share with the British monarch, the glory of being the umpire and the defender of Europe. No country in reality is better calculated to oppose the gigantic pride of France than Italy; strong in its natural situation, big with resources, *magna parens frugum, magna virum*, teeming with riches and crowded with inhabitants, the natural mistress of the *Mediterranean*, she might blockade the ports, or pour her legions on the open coast of her adversary at pleasure, and baffle her favourite projects of southern conquest, with ease and certainty.

But the fate of Italy, and indeed of Europe, hangs still uncertain and undecided; nor is it given to human sagacity to divine the permanent consequences that will follow the grand revolutions which have, during the last fifteen years, convulsed the political system. To turn, therefore, from dubious conjectures about futurity to observations on the past; Liberty, which has seldom visited any country more than once, and many not at all, has twice smiled on Italy, and during many a happy age covered her fertile surface with republics, bold, free, and independent. Such were the *Sabines*, *Latins*, *Volsci*, *Samnites*, most of the *Etrurian* tribes, and all the Greek colonies, previous to the era of Roman preponderance; and such the States of *Siena*, *Pisa*, *Florence*, *Lucca*, *Genoa*, and *Venice*, that rose out of the ruins of the empire, flourished in the midst of barbarism, and transmitted the principles and the spirit of ancient

liberty down to modern times. Of these commonwealths, some were equal, and two were superior, in power policy and duration, to the proudest republics of Greece, not excepting *Lacedemon* and *Athens;* and like them enjoyed the envied privilege of producing poets and historians to record and to illustrate their institutions and achievements. The reader, who peruses these records, will applaud the spirit of liberty and patriotism that animated almost all the Italian republics during the periods to which I allude, and he will admire the opulence and prosperity that accompanied and rewarded that spirit, as well as the genius and the talents that seemed to wait upon it, or to start up instantaneous at its command.

While contemplating the splendid exhibition of the virtues and powers of the human mind, called into action and perfected in these latter as in those more ancient commonwealths of Greece and Rome, the candid reader will perhaps feel himself disposed to question that grand axiom of politicians, that monarchy, when lodged in the hands of a perfectly wise and good prince, is the best mode of government. If peace, security, and tranquillity, were the sole or even the principal objects of the human mind in the present state of existence, such a position might be true; and in admitting its truth, man must resign his dignity, and sacrifice the powers and the accomplishments of his nature to ease and to indolence. But the intention of Providence seems to be very different. He has bestowed upon man great intellectual powers, and endowed him with wonderful energies of soul, and his Will must be, that these powers and energies *should* be put forth, and developed and matured by exertion. Now, the more perfect the monarchy, the less occasion there is for the talents and exertions of subjects. The

wisdom of the prince pervades every branch of administration and extends to every corner of the empire; it remedies every disorder, and provides for every contingency: the subject has nothing to do but to enjoy, and to applaud the vigilance and foresight of his sovereign. That a state so governed is very delightful in description, and very prosperous in reality, I admit; but what are its fruits, and what the result of its prosperity? Ease, or rather indolence, pride, and luxury. No manly talents ripen, no rough hardy virtues prosper under its influence. Look at the Roman empire under Trajan and the Antonines, the most accomplished princes that have ever adorned a throne, whose era is represented by Gibbon as constituting the happiest period of human history. Peace, justice, and order, reigned, it is true, in every province, and the Capital received every day additional embellishments.

Mollia securæ peragebant otia gentes. *Ovid.*

But what great men arose to distinguish and immortalize this age of happiness? The two Plinys, Tacitus, and Suetonius. Look next at the great republic in the days of Cicero, when jarring factions and clashing interests roused every passion, and awakened every energy: when every virtue and every vice stood in array and struggled for the mastery. See, what talents were displayed! what genius blazed! what noble characters arose on all sides! Lucretius, Sallust, Cato, Pompey, Cicero, and Cæsar, all sprang up in the midst of public fermentation, and owe their virtues, their acquirements, and their fame to the stormy vicissitudes of a popular government. Behold again the glories of the Augustan age, all a splendid reflection of the setting sun of liberty. Virgil, Horace, and Titus Livius, were nursed, educated, and formed under the Republic; they speak its lofty

language, and breathe in every page its generous and ennobling sentiments. Let us again turn to the Italian states. Naples has for many ages, indeed almost ever since the time of Cæsar, been under the sway of a monarch; Florence, for many a century, and in reality till the sixteenth, was a republic. How unproductive in genius is Naples; how exuberant Florence!

In pursuing these observations I am tempted to go a step farther, and to infer from the great prosperity of the Italian, as well as of the ancient Grecian republics, that small territories are better calculated for happiness and for liberty than extensive empires. Almost all the great towns in Italy, particularly on the coasts and in the northern provinces, have in their turns been independent; and during the era of their independence, whatsoever might be the form of their internal government, have enjoyed an unusual share of opulence, consideration, and public felicity. *Mantua*, *Verona*, and *Vicenza*, owe all their magnificence to their governors or to their senate, during that period; since their subjection or annexation to greater states, they have lost their population and riches, and seem to subsist on the scanty remains of their former prosperity.

Sienna and *Pisa* could once count each a hundred thousand inhabitants, and though their territories scarce extended ten miles around their walls, yet their opulence enabled them to erect edifices that would do honour to the richest monarchies. These cities yielded in time to the prevailing influence of their rival *Florence*, and under its Dukes withered away into secondary towns; while their wide circumference, stately streets, and marble edifices daily remind the few scattered inhabitants, of the greatness and of the glory of their ancestors.

Lucca still retains its independence and its liberty, and with them its full population, its opulence, and its fertility. *Parma* and *Modena* possess the latter advantages because independent, but in an inferior degree comparatively, because not free. *Bologna* is, (I am afraid I may now say, *was*,) a most flourishing city, though annexed to the papal territory: because though nominally subject to the pontiff, it is governed by its own magistrates, and enjoys almost all the benefits of actual independence.

These petty states, it is true, were agitated by factions at home, and engaged in perpetual warfare abroad; but their civic tempests and foreign hostilities, like the feuds and the contests of the ancient Greeks, seem to have produced more good than evil. They seldom terminated in carnage or in destruction; while they never failed to give a strong impulse to the public mind, and to call forth in the collision every latent spark of virtue and of genius. It may, perhaps, be objected, that such petty states are too much exposed to external hostility, and are incapable of opposing a long and an effectual resistance to a powerful invader; and the fate of Italy itself may be produced as an instance of the misery and desolation to which a country is exposed when divided, and subdivided into so many little independent communities. It may indeed be difficult for such states to preserve their independence at a time like the present, when two or three overgrown Powers dictate to the rest of Europe, and when great masses are necessary to resist the impetus of such preponderant agents. But I know not whether a sort of federal union, like that of *Switzerland* (for *Switzerland* lost her liberty, not because subdivided but because enervated);

or rather an occasional subjection, like that of the Greeks to Agammemnon, and that of the Italian municipal towns to the Roman republic, when the common cause required them to unite and act as one body, (while at other times each state enjoyed its own laws and was governed by its own magistrates, under the honourable appellation of *Socii:)* I know not whether such a conditional and qualified submission would not be adequate to all the purposes of defence, and even of conquest in general, without subverting the independence, or checking the prosperity of any state in particular.

——— Sic fortis Etruria crevit:
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

But to conclude, and to [illegible]he history of Italy in one short observation: no country [illegible]r been the subject or the theatre of so many wars, has [illegible] a greater portion or a longer duration of liberty, ex[illegible] more forms of government, or given birth to so many and such powerful empires and republics. Virgil seems, therefore, not only to have described its past, but explored its future destinies, when comprising in four emphatic words its eventful annals, he represents it as,

Gravidam imperiis, belloque frementem.
Æneid IV. 229.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF MODERN ITALY.

IV. That a country subject to so many vicissitudes, colonized by so many different tribes, and convulsed by so many

destructive revolutions, should have not only varied its dialects but sometimes totally changed its idiom, must appear natural and almost inevitable: we are only surprized when we find that in opposition to the influence of so many causes, Italy has retained, for so long a series of ages, so much of one language, and preserved amidst the influx of so many barbarous nations uttering such discordant jargons, the full harmonious sounds of its native Latin. I have elsewhere made some observations on the origin and progress of this language*, and need only add to them, that it remained long in a state of infancy and imperfection; that, in the short space of one hundred and fifty or two hundred years, it passed rapidly to the highest refinement; and that in the days of Cicero and Virgil, it was compared by the partial Romans, and not without some appearance of reason, for copiousness, grace, and majesty, to the most perfect of human dialects, the language of Plato and of Demosthenes. Its decline was as rapid as its progress. The same century may be said to have witnessed its perfection and its decay. The causes that produced this decay continued to operate during ten or even twelve centuries with increasing activity, during which Latin was first corrupted, and then repolished and softened into modern Italian. When this change took place, by what causes it was effected, or, in other words, when and from what the Italian language originated, has been a matter of much curious research and long discussion among the learned in Italy; and where the most eminent native critics differ, it would be presumption in a foreigner to decide. As to the precise period when pure

* Vol. II. Chap. X.

Latin ceased to be spoken it would indeed be useless to inquire, because impossible to discover. Languages are improved and corrupted, formed and lost almost imperceptibly: the change in them, as in the works of nature, though daily carried on, becomes observable only at distant periods, while the intermediate gradations are too nice to excite observation. Gibbon, who might have been expected to enlarge upon a point so interesting in itself and so intimately connected with his subject as the fate of the Latin language, has only mentioned in general terms and without any allusion to the time, its entire cessation as a living tongue. For want of better information on this point, the following observations may, perhaps, be acceptable.

The Latin language, stripped indeed of its elegance, but still grammatical and genuine, survived the invasion and expulsion of the Goths, and continued to be spoken in Rome in the beginning of the seventh century. That it was spoken under Theodoric and his successors appears evident from their laws, regulations, and letters in Cassiodorus. In one of these letters, *Theodahatus*, then king of Italy, speaking of the language of Rome, says—"*Roma tradit eloquium quo suavius nihil auditur**." After the long and most destructive war which terminated in the expulsion of the Goths, we find Gregory the Great, in the beginning of the seventh century, delivering his instructions to his flock in Latin, and in a style far more fluent and correct than Cassiodorus, who preceded him by more than fiftyyears. It is to be remembered, that these instructions were not learned

* Cass. lib. x. ep. 7.

harangues, *ad clerum*, but familiar discourses addressed to the people on Sundays and holidays, and consequently in the language best understood by those to whom they were directed. I am aware, that *Fornerius* asserts in a note on the epistle of *Theodahatus*, which I have quoted above, that he himself had seen a deed drawn up at Ravenna in the reign of Justinian, in the language of modern Italians; *eo sermone quo vulgus Italiæ nunc utitur*; but whatever may be the genuineness of such an instrument or deed, it is evident, from the expression of the king which I have cited, that such could not have been the language of Rome at that era.

From the time of Gregory the Great to the restoration of the western empire, Rome, though perpetually threatened, was never taken by the Lombards, nor by any other barbarians, nor is there any appearance that any very extraordinary influx of strangers flowed into it during that interval. We may therefore conclude, that, excepting the natural progress of barbarism in a dark and distracted age, the language remained unaltered, especially as all the public and private documents that have been transmitted to us from the intervening period are all drawn up in regular grammatical Latin. We may, I believe, on the same or similar reasons, ground an inference, that the same language though more corrupted still continued in use during the ninth, tenth, and even eleventh centuries. In fact, all the sermons, letters, documents, and inscriptions of this era are all Latin, more or less corrupt, according to the profession and the information of the writer.

But, while I represent Latin as the language of the higher

and better informed part of the community, so late as the eleventh century; I do not mean to assert that the lower classes, particularly in the country, spoke a dialect so regular and correct; and I am aware that at a much earlier period the pure and grammatical language of the classics was not even understood by the common people, at least in the transalpine provinces. In the third council of Tours, Anno 813, the clergy are required to explain or to translate their sermons into *Rusticam Romanam linguam;* and in *Fontanini* we find the form of a solemn engagement between *Charles the Bald* king of France, and *Lewis* of Germany, in the year 842, in that language, or rather jargon very different indeed from Latin; but we can only infer from hence, that beyond the Alps the progress of barbarism was far more rapid than in Italy. In fact, so late as the twelfth century, we find a Calabrian hermit traversing the country, and crying out as he went along—*Benedittu, sanctificatu, laudatu, lu patre, lu Fillu, lu spiritu sanctu,* terminations still retained in the Sicilian and Wallachian dialects, probably taken from the vulgar tongue, and though corrupted still very intelligible to a Roman; at all events, this language and indeed modern Italian was long honoured with the appellation of *Lingua Romana* and *Latina.*

From these observations, I think we may at least conclude, that no new language was introduced into Italy by any of the invading tribes*. Odoacer and the Heruli were masters of

* Odoacer made himself master of Rome and of Italy in the year 476, and was

Italy during the space of seventeen years only, a time too short to influence the language of a whole country. Theodoric and his Goths probably spoke Latin. They had long been in the service of the empire, and many, perhaps most of them, had been nursed and educated in its schools and legions. Besides, they were collected in an army, and not numerous enough to produce such a revolution as a change of language over a country so extensive; to which may be added, that their veneration for the Roman name was such, that, in order to conceal their barbarism, they endeavoured to adopt the language, manners, and dress of a people so far superior to them. Moreover, their reign did not exceed the narrow limits of sixty years, after which, during the course of a long and bloody war, they were almost exterminated by Belisarius and by Narses. The Lombards entered Italy soon after the expulsion of the Goths, and remained there for the space of two hundred years; but their influence was confined principally to the northern provinces, and consequently neither extended to Rome, nor to the greater part of the south: and they also, like the

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defeated and slain by Theodoric king of the Goths, in 493. The Goths were, in their turn, expelled in 553. The Lombards under Alboin invaded Italy, and made themselves masters of the northern provinces in the year 569, and their kingdom was destroyed in the year 774. The Saracens visited it, for the first time, in the year 820, and the Normans in 1016. A considerable number of Vandals were introduced by Belisarius into Italy, after the conquest of Africa, as was a whole colony of Bulgarians at a later period, to cultivate its provinces depopulated by the war. Of these latter colonies it was observed by contemporary writers, that they soon equalled the native Italians in the purity and correctness of their language.

Goths, seem, as appears from their laws, to have adopted the language of Italy, and whatever share they might have had in corrupting it, most undoubtedly they did not attempt to substitute any other in its place. The transient visit of the French and German Cæsars, the predatory incursions of the Saracens, and the settlement of some bands of Norman adventurers, were inadequate to produce the effect in question, nor can we possibly attribute a change, so slow and so extensive as the suppression or formation of a language, to causes so confined in their continuance and operation. To these observations, we may add one more of great importance on the subject, which is, that there is not the least resemblance between the languages of Italy and the dialects of the various tribes which I have mentioned, as far as these dialects are known to us; that the former is peculiarly soft and harmonious, all the latter rough and discordant; and consequently we may conclude, that Italian does not owe its origin to barbarians, and farther, that its introduction was gradual, and the operation, not of one, but of many succeeding ages.

But it may be still asked, whence does Italian derive its origin? May not Italian derive its origin from the corruption of the Latin language, the causes of which began to operate so early as the era of Julius Cæsar, and continued till the twelfth century, when the modern dialect first assumed a regular and grammatical form. These causes were, first, the great influx of provincials into Rome. Cæsar, to strengthen his party, brought several noble Gauls who had attached themselves to his fortunes into Italy, raised them to various dignities, and perhaps introduced some of them into the senate itself then thinned by the

civil war and its consequences*. This evil increased after the extinction of the Julian line, when the governors, and oftentimes the natives of distant provinces educated in the midst of soldiers, and unacquainted with the refinements of the capital, were promoted to the first stations, and not unfrequently raised to the imperial dignity itself. It reached a most alarming pitch in the time of Diocletian, and continued from that period to the downfal of the western empire, filling all the offices of state, crowding the legions, and degrading the throne itself, by the introduction and the usurpation of barbarians. The influence of these intruders upon the Roman idiom, may be traced through Lucan, Seneca, and Martial, to Ammianus Marcellinus and to Salvian.

Secondly, the introduction of colloquial and oftentimes rustic pronunciation into the style of the higher classes, as well as into regular composition or writing. The suppression of final letters, such as *s*† and *m*, was, we know, common in ordinary

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* The concourse of strangers was so great about this period, that Cæsar, to enable them to share the public amusements with which he entertained the Roman people, had plays acted in *all* languages.—*Suet. Div. Jul. Cæs.* 39.

Confluxerunt enim, *says Cicero about the same time*, multi inquinate loquentes ex diversis locis.—*De Clar. Orat.*

† Quin etiam quod jam subrusticum videtur, olim autem politius, eorum verborum, quorum eædem erant postremæ duæ, quæ sunt in *optumus*, postremam litteram detrahebant, nisi vocalis insequebatur. Ita non erat offensio in versibus, quam nunc fugiunt poetæ novi. Ita enim loquebamur:

Qui est omnibu princeps. Non, *omnibus princeps.* Et
Vitâ illâ dignu locoque. Non *dignus.*

conversation and in light compositions, and was probably, on account of the length and solemnity of the full sound, almost universal in the provinces and in the country. In the latter class, the custom of uniting a word terminating in a vowel, with the following word beginning with one, as well as an indistinct pronunciation of vowels and consonants of similar sounds, was noticed by Cicero. These elisions were very ancient, and probably remained among the peasantry when given up by the more polished inhabitants of the Capital. In fact, from the inscription on the rostral pillar, and the epitaph of the Scipios, we find that the *m* and *s* were anciently suppressed, even in writing; that the *b* and the *v*, the *e* and the *i*, were used indiscriminately, and that the *o* was generally employed instead of *u*. In an illiterate age, when few know how to read or write, and such were the ages that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, the pronunciation of the lower class generally becomes that of the community at

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Cicero had observed a little before, that the use of the aspirate was much less common anciently than it was in his time, and that the early Romans were accustomed to pronounce Cetegos, triumpos, Cartaginem, &c. that is as the modern Italians (*Orator* 48). The more frequent use of the aspirate was probably derived from the Greek pronunciation, which began to influence Roman elocution about that period.—*Cic. de Claris Orat.* 74.

The observations of Quintilian upon the *S* and the *M* are curious:

Cæterum consonantes quoque eæque præcipue quæ sunt asperiores in commissura verborum rixantur . . . . . quæ fuit causa et Servio subtrahendæ, S, literæ quoties ultima esset aliaque consonante susciperetur. Quod reprehendit Lauranius, Messala defendit. Nam neque Lucilium putant uti eadem ultima cum dicit *Serenu fuit* et *dignu' loco;* quinetiam Cicero in *Oratore* plures antiquorum tradit sic locutos inde *Belligerare*, po' *meridiem*. Et illa Censorii Catonis Die' hanc; æque', m, litera in e mollita. Quæ in veteribus libris reperta mutare imperiti solent et dum librariorum inscientiam insectari volunt, suam confitentur.—*Quintil.* lib. IX.

large, and at length acquires authority by time and prescription.

Another cause, similar and concomitant, was the ignorance of orthography. The dreadful and destructive wars that preceded and followed that disastrous event, suspended all literary pursuits, dissolved all schools and seminaries, and deprived for ages the inhabitants of Italy of almost all means of instruction. Books were rare, and readers still rarer; pronunciation was abandoned to the regulation of the ear only, and the ear was unguided by knowledge, and depraved by barbarous dissonance. We may easily guess how a language must be disfigured when thus given up to the management of ignorance, when we observe how our own servants and peasants spell the commonest words of their native tongue, even though in their infancy they may have learned at least the elements of reading and spelling *.

Among these causes we may perhaps number the false refinements of the Italians themselves; and it is highly probable, as the learned Maffei conjectures, that the unparalleled effeminacy of the Romans during the second, third, and fourth cen-

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* To the ignorance of orthography we may attribute half the corruption of the Latin language: hence the degradation of the Capitolium into *Campidoglio*, the Portico of Caius and Lucius (Caii et Lucii) into *Galluccio;* hence the Busta Gallorum became *Porto Gallo*, the Cloaca, *Chiavicha*, Video, *Veggo*, Hodie, *Oggi*, &c. &c. &c.

The most material change took place not in the sound but in the sense of the words, though it is difficult to conceive how it could have been effected. Thus, laxare to loosen, unbind, has become *lasciare* to let go, to let in general; cavare to hollow, indent, is now to take, to draw. Morbidus, sickly, morbid, *morbido*, soft, &c.

turies, might have extended itself even to their language, multiplied its smoother sounds, retrenched some of its rougher combinations, and turned many of its manly and majestic closes by consonants into the easier flow of vowel terminations. In fact, no circumstance relative to the Italian language is so singular and so unaccountable as its softness. The influence of the peasantry of the country, as well as that of the northern barbarians, must have tended, it would seem, to untune the language and fill it with jarring and discordant sounds; yet the very reverse has happened, and the alteration has been conducted as if under the management of an academy employed for the express purpose of rendering the utterance distinct and easy, as well as soft and musical. Thus the termination of *m*, so often recurring in Latin, was supposed to have a bellowing sound, and indeed Cicero calls it *mugientem litteram;* the *s* again was heard to hiss too often at the end of words; as *t* closing the third person was considered as too short and smart for a concluding letter; they were all three suppressed. *Cl*, *pl*, *tr*, have somewhat indistinct as well as harsh in the utterance; the first was changed before a vowel into *chi*, the second into *pi*, the *t* was separated from the *r*, and a vowel inserted to give the organ time to unfold itself, and to prepare for the forcible utterance of the latter letter. Thus *Clavis*, *placere*, *trahere*, were softened into *chiave*, *piacere*, *tirare*. For similar reasons, *m*, *c*, *p*, when followed by *t*, were obliged to give way, and *somnus*, *actus*, *assumptus*, metamorphosed into *sonno*, *atto*, *assonto;* in short, not to multiply examples, which the reader's observation may furnish in abundance, the ablative case was adopted as the most harmonious, and the first conjugation as the most sonorous. The only defect of this nature in Italian, and it may be apparent only, is the frequent return of

the syllables *ce* and *ci*, which convey a sort of chirping sound, not pleasing I think when too often repeated. As for the want of energy in that language, it is a reproach which he may make who has never read Dante, Ariosto, or Tasso; he who has perused them knows that in energy both of language and of sentiment, they yield only to their illustrious masters, Virgil and Homer, and will acknowledge with a satyrist of taste and spirit, that they *strengthen and harmonize both the ear and the intellect**.

In fine, though the invading tribes did not introduce a new language into Italy, yet they must be allowed to have had some share in corrupting and disfiguring the old, by perverting the sense of words, inverting the order of sentences, and thus infecting the whole language with the inaccuracy and barbarism of their own dialects†. Hence, though the great body of Italian remain Latin, yet it is not difficult to discover some foreign accretions, and even point out the languages from which they

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* Pursuits of Literature.

† This corruption Vida exaggerates and deplores as a change of language imposed by the victorious barbarians on the subjugated Italians.

Pierides donec Romam, et Tiberina fluenta
Deseruere Italis expulsæ protinus oris.
Tanti caussa mali, Latio gens aspera aperto
Sæpius irrumpens. Sunt jussi vertere morem
Ausonidæ victi, victoris vocibus usi.
Cessit amor Musarum, &c.

This *change of language* however is confined to about a thousand words, which are derived either from barbarous dialects or from unknown sources. Muratori has collected them in his *Thirty-third* Dissertation. The rest of the language is Latin.

have been taken, and though singular yet it is certain, that the Greek, the Sclavonian, and the Arabic tongues have furnished many, if not the greatest part, of these tralatitious terms.

The first remained the language of *Apulia*, *Calabria*, and other southern districts of Italy, which continued united to the Greek Empire many ages after the fall of the western. The second was brought into Italy about the middle of the seventh century by a colony of Bulgarians, established in the southern provinces by the Greek Emperors: and the latter by the Saracens, who established themselves in *Sicily*, and in some maritime towns in *Calabria*, during the ninth and tenth centuries. The Lombards probably left some, though, I believe, few traces of their uncouth jargon behind them; and the same may be supposed of the Vandals, whom Belisarius transported from *Africa*, and established as colonists in some of the most fertile provinces, to repair the dreadful havoc made in their population by the Gothic war. These causes were doubtlessly more than sufficient to produce all the changes which have taken place in the ancient language of Italy, even though we should reject the conjecture of Maffei, who supposes, that Italian retains much of the ancient dialects of the different provinces, which dialects yielded to Latin in the great towns during the dominion of Rome, but always remained in vigour in the villages and among the peasantry. Yet this opinion, in itself probable, as may well be supposed, since it is supported by such authority as that of the learned Marquis, is strengthened, and I might say almost established, by the information and acuteness of *Lanzi*.

But whatever foreign words or barbarous terms might have

forced their way into the language of Italy, they have resigned their native roughness as they passed the *Alps* or the sea, dropped their supernumerary consonants, or changed them into vowels, and instead of a nasal or guttural close, assumed the fulness and the majesty of Roman termination. Such words therefore may, in general, be considered rather as embellishments than as deformities, and doubtless add much to the copiousness, without diminishing, the harmony of the language. In this latter respect, indeed, Italian stands unrivalled. Sweetness is its characteristic feature: all modern dialects admit its superior charms, and the genius of music has chosen it for the vehicle of his most melodious accents. That this advantage is derived from the mother tongue principally, is apparent, as all the sounds of the modern language are to be found in the ancient; but some attempts seem to have been made, by retrenching the number of consonants and multiplying that of vowels; by suppressing aspirations and separating mutes; in short, by multiplying the opener sounds, and generalizing the more sonorous cases, tenses, and conjugations, even to improve the smoothness of Latin, and to increase, if possible, its harmonious powers. How far these attempts have succeeded is very questionable; especially as they have been counteracted by the introduction, or rather, the extension, of articles and of auxiliary verbs, that dead weight imposed by barbarism on all modern languages, and invented, it would seem, for the express purpose of checking the rapidity of thought, and encumbering the flow of a sentence. In this respect particularly, and almost exclusively, the modern dialect of Italy betrays marks of slavery and of degradation.

Barbaricos testatus voce tumultus.
Milton Epist. ad Patrem.

Italian is, however, freer from these burthens than any other modern language, but this partial exemption, which it owes to a nearer resemblance to its original Latin, while it proves its superiority on one side, only shows its inferiority on the other. To which we may add, that the Roman pronunciation, the only one which gives Italian all the graces and all the sweetness of which it is susceptible, is evidently the echo of the ancient language transmitted from generation to generation, and never entirely lost in that immortal Capital. Let not the daughter therefore

Sdegnosa forse del secondo onore.

dispute the honours of the Parent, but content herself with being acknowledged as the first and the fairest of her offspring*.

I will now proceed to point out some of the most striking features of resemblance, which have been observed between the modern and the ancient dialects of Italy, and at the same time indicate several words borrowed by the former from the latter. These I shall extract principally from *Lanzi*. I will then follow Latin in its decline, as I formerly traced it in its advancement, and by presenting the reader with specimens of the latinity of each century, enable him to mark its approximation to the modern language.

N. B. The reader will recollect, that the limits of the present

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* "Figlia bensì della Latina, ma non men bella e nobile della Madre," says Muratori with pardonable partiality.—*Dissert.* XXXIII.

work oblige me to confine myself to a few general observations, and to give him rather an imperfect sketch, than a full view, of this very extensive and interesting subject.

The differences between the early and later Latins, and between them and the modern Italians, may be classed under four heads—I. *Detractio*—II. *Adjectio*—III. *Immutatio*—IV. *Transmutatio.*

The Etrurians like the Dorians often retrenched syllables, as δω for δωμα, καρα for καρινον, and so the modern Italian *pro* for *prodo*, &c. and in *Dante*, *ca* for *casa.*

Retrenching the last syllable, was common from *Numa* to *Ennius*, *pa* for *parte*, *po* for *populo*; and in the latter, *cael* for *cælum*, *debil homo* for *debilis*, in *Lucretius famul* for *famulus*: a practice very common in Italian, especially in poetry,

Che non *han* tempo di *pur tor* gli scudi. *Ariosto.*

han for *hanno*, *pur* for *pure*, *tor* for *torre (togliere).*

The letters N and R were often omitted, as *Cosol rusus* for *Consul rursus.* M at the beginning, as *Ecastor* for *Mecastor*, &c. and oftener at the end, as *Regem Antioco*, and *Sannio cepet.* S was generally omitted at the end of words, as *famî' causâ.*

Cato the censor entirely omitted the M, according to Quintilian.

Vowels, in long syllables, were doubled, as *Feelix.*

In some of the ancient Italian dialects and even in Latin, as in the modern language, vowels were sometimes inserted between two consonants, merely to prevent harsh sounds; thus ΔΕΡΟΣΕΟ for ΔΡΟΣΕΟ, &c.; *principes*, *ancipes*, for *princeps*, *anceps*. *Materi* for *matri tirare* in Italian for *trahere*.

E and O were often added at the end, as *illico*, *face*, *dice*, for *illic*, *fac*, *dic*; like the modern, *amano*, *face*, *dice*.

Syllables added in the beginning, middle, and end of words, not uncommon anciently; *danunt* for *dant* is a remarkable instance: in Italian *Chiavica* for *Cloaca*.

The custom of the modern Italians of ending syllables and words with vowels is derived from their ancestors, the Latins, Umbri, and Etrurians, as well as Oscans, as *arferture* for *adfertur*, *hoco* for *hoc*, &c.

Letters were frequently transposed to facilitate utterance by the Dorians and their Italian colonies anciently, as ΚΑΡΝΕΙΟΣ for ΚΡΑΝΕΙΟΣ, a name of Apollo, as by the Italians now.

C, among the ancient Latins, often used for g, as *acnu* for *agnus*, and for g as *cotidie*, as also for *x* as *facit* for *faxit*, sometimes with *s* as *vocs*, &c. for *vox*, &c.

Syllables displaced, as *precula*, *pergula*, *Tharsomeno*, *Thrasomeno*; and in derivatives, as from Μορφη *forma*, Τιρηκ *tener*, all in use in Italian.

F, V and B, and sometimes S and N, were used merely to

mark the aspiration, as *Ferdeum*, *Hordeum*, *Helia*, *Velia*, *Eneti*, *Veneti*, *Fruges*, *Brüges*.

Consonants, of sounds not very dissimilar were often used indiscriminately or confusedly as B P and F, M and N, D and T. *Bellum*, *Duellum*; *Purrhus*, *Burrhus*; *Capidolium*, *Capitolium*, from whence perhaps the modern *Campidoglio*, &c.

E was a prevalent letter, and often substituted for I, as in *Italian*. O also often substituted for E, and U, as *Vostri*, *colpa*, &c. as again in *Italian*.

Aspirations were marks of rusticity, common in the earlier ages of Rome.

Diphthongs were used in genitives, datives, ablatives, for simple vowels.

The Etrurians and ancient Latins, like the modern Italians, often wrote *o* for *au*, as *plostrum* for *plostro*, as also *dede* for *dedit*, *Orcule* for *Urguleius*.

Great confusion also prevailed in the ancient punctuation: sometimes neither sentences nor words were separated; at other times syllables and even letters. *Sapsa* for *seipsa*; *on* at the end of verbs instead of *unt*, as *conveneron*, whence the Italian *amaron sentiron*, &c. *cavneas* for *cave ne eas*.

The Italian sound of *z*, like *ts*, is very ancient, as appears from a medal of Trezæne, on which, for Ζευς, is ΣΔευς.

Ct was generally changed by the ancient as by the modern Italians into *tt*, as *Coctius* into *Cottius*, *pactum* into *pattum*, *factum* into *fattum*, &c.; in Italian, *Cottio*, *patto*, *fatto*, &c.—*(Cluv.)*

WORDS.

Susum (for *sursum*) ancient Latin; (hence the Italian *suso*), found in an inscription of the year of Rome 686.

Pusi for *sicut*, hence the Italian *cosi*.

Deheberis and *Teeberis* for *Tiberis*.

Among such words we may rank *Vitello*, *Toro*, *Capra*, *Porco*, which occur in the Eugubian tables, and were common in Italy before the formation and general adoption of Latin.

Casino is derived from the Sabine *Casinum*.

The Italian *come* seems to be derived from *cumc* or *cum*, sometimes spelt *quom*.

Cima for summit, is found in Lucilius, and seems to have been confined in process of time to popular use.

Basium, *basia*, used by Catullus only in the purer age of Latin, and afterwards resumed by Juvenal, Martial and Petronius; it seems to have been borrowed, like the word *Ploxenum*,

used by the same author, from the Venetic dialect. *Circa Padum invenit*, says Quintilian.

Obstinata mente is used in the Italian sense by the same poet. —*Cat.* VIII. *v.* 11.

In Plautus we find several words supposed to be derived from the Sabines, which were gradually retrenched from pure latinity, but preserved probably in the popular idiom, and revived in the modern language. Such are,

Batuere (now *battere*) to strike.

Poplom for *populum*.

Danunt (dant) now *danno*.

Dice for *dic*.

Face for *fac*.

Grandire (now *ingrandire*) to grow.

Minacia for *minæ* threats.

Pappare (edere) to eat.

Merenda, a slight repast or collation.

Others of the same nature may be collected from Lucilius, as

Mataxa, now *Matassa*, a skein (of thread).

Spara, a lance (whence our word spear).

Potesse, &c.

Cicero uses the *habessit*, whence the Italian *avesse*, as an ancient and legal form. *Separatim nemo habessit deos.*—De Legibus II. 8.

He elsewhere notices the custom which he himself once indulged in, and afterwards corrected as faulty, of sometimes omitting the aspirate H, now universally suppressed in Italian.—*Orator* 48.

The following passage from Varro (quoted by *Muratori*) gives the origin of an Italian word *tagliare*, which without such authority, we should scarce have suspected of being derived from Latin.—Nunc *Intertaleare* rustica voce dicitur dividere vel excidere ramum ex utraque parte æqualibiter præcisum quas alii Calbulas alii Faleas appellant.

In Pliny the Elder we find the word *lætamen*, in Italian *letame*. —*Hist. Nat.* XVIII. c. 16.

DECLINE OF LATIN.

Suetonius (in Augusto, 88) alludes to various peculiarities of Augustus, both in writing and speaking; and Quintilian assures us,

that the Roman people assembled in the Circus and in the theatre sometimes exclaimed in barbarous expressions, and concludes, that to speak Latin is very different from speaking grammatically,*—*Vulgo imperitos barbare locutos, et tota sæpe theatra, et omnem Circi turbam exclamasse barbare.*—Lib. 1. cap. 6.

That the cases required by the rules of syntax in the government of verbs and prepositions were not always observed even in the very family of the abovementioned Emperor, is clear from the following expressions, *quod est in palatium*, and *Dat Fufiae Climene, et Fufiae Cuche sorores*, used even in writing by his own freedmen. *(Murat.)*

Festus observes, that the rustic mode of pronouncing *au* was like *o*, whence so many Italian words are formed in *o* from the *au* of the Latins. "Orata," says he, "genus piscis appellatur a colore auri quod rustici *orum* dicebant." Cato, cited by Varro, makes the same observation, or rather uses the rustic pronunciation; a pronunciation so prevalent at a later period, that the Emperor Vespasian seems to have been partial to it, and was reprehended by an uncourtly friend for changing *plaustra* into *plostra.*—*Suet. in Vespasiano.* 22.

Statius, in one single verse, seems to use a very common word in a sense peculiarly Italian.

Salve supremum, *senior* mitissime patrum!
Epicedion in Patrem.

* Aliud est Latine, aliud grammatice loqui.—*Cap.* 10.

"Quidquid," says Seneca, "est boni moris extinguimus levitate et politura corporum." The word *politura* is here taken in a sense purely Italian. *Impolitia*, taken in the opposite sense, was a word not uncommon among the early Romans, according to Aulus Gellius IV. 12.

The African writers seem to have used a dialect tending more to Italian than any others, whether derived from the early colonists or from some provincial cause of corruption, it is difficult to determine. In Apuleius we find, not only particular words, as *totus*, *russus*, *patronus*, &c. in the Italian sense, but united adverbs, accumulated epithets, and the florid phraseology of Italian poetic prose.

In the Augustan history several phrases bordering upon Italian, and words taken in an Italian sense, may be observed, as *a latus* instead of *a latere*, *ante fronte* for *frontem*, *ballista* (now *balletta*) for *saltationes*, *totum* for *omnia*, *intimare*, &c. &c.

The word *spelta*, signifying a certain vegetable, is represented by St. Jerom as *purely* Italian, and is still in use.—*Cap.* IV. *in Ezech.*

The same author alludes to the word *parentes*, taken in the Italian and French sense, that is, for *relations*, *kindred*, as used in his time, *militari vulgarique sermone*.—Lib. II. *Apol. adv Ruffin.*

Mulieri suæ for his wife, is used by St. Augustine—*De Catech. rudibus*, cap. XXVI. as is *jusum*, (*giu*, below, beneath, in Italian) *Tract.* VIII *in Epist.* I. *S. Johan.*

A bishop of Brescia, (St. Gaudentius) of the same era, mentions the word *brodium* for *broth*, a word solely Italian.—*Serm. 2do, ad Neophyt.**

St. Cæsarius, bishop of *Arles*, employs the word *balationes*, *ballare*, for balls, dancing, &c.†

In St. Gregory we find the word *caballus* used for *equus* almost constantly, together with other words of rustic origin, replacing the more polite terms of the preceding ages.

Fabretti, (in *Muratori*,) has published a curious passage, extracted from the manuscript work of Urbicius, a Greek author of the fifth century, containing the forms employed in command by the centurions and tribunes. They are in Latin, though writen in Greek characters, and run as follows:—

"Silentio mandata complete—Non vos turbatis—Ordinem servate—Bandum sequite—Nemo dimittat bandum et inimicos seque."

Here we discover the construction, and even the phraseology, of modern Italian, *complete, seguite—Bandum, (Bandiera)—Non vi turbate, segue*, &c.

In litanies sung publicly in Rome in the seventh century, we

* Fifth century. † Sixth century.

find *Redemtor mundi tu lo adjuva;* thus *illum* first resumed its original form *illom*, and then became *lo*, as *illorum* by the same process, *loro;* thus also in the eighth century *ibi* was transformed into *ivi*, *ubi* into *ove*, *prope* into *presso*, &c. *Qui* and *iste* into *quiste*, *questa*, *questo*, &c. and frequently into *sto*, *sta*, &c.

From this period indeed the alteration of the language seems to have proceeded with more rapidity, and popular phrases bordering upon the modern dialect appear in every deed and instrument, as in a manuscript of Lucca*, "Una torre d'auro fabricata;" and in another of 730, "Uno capite tenente in terra Chisoni & in alium capite tenente in terra Ciulloni; de uno latere corre via publica & de alium latere est terrula Pisinuli plus minus modiorum dua, & staffilo."

Again, in a deed of the year 816, we find, "Avent in longo pertigas quatordice in transverso, de uno capo pedes dece, de alio nove in traverso . . . . . de uno capo duas pedis cinque de alio capo."

I alluded above to the oath which follows, it is well known, and shews what corruptions Latin had undergone beyond the Alps in the ninth century.

"Pro Deo amur, & pro Christian poblo, & nostro comun salvamento dist de in avant in quant Deus savir & podir me

* An. 753.

donat, si salvareio cist meon fradre karlo, & in adiudha, & in cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fradre salvardist in o, quid il mi altre si fazet. Et ab Ludher plaid nunquam prindrai, qui meon vol cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit." *

In Italian this form would run as follows:

" Per amore di dio, e per bene del popolo Christiano, e per comune salvezza, da questo di' in avanti, in quanto Dio mi dara sapere e potere, cosi salvero questo mio Fratello Carlo, e gli sarò in aiuto, e in qualunque cosa, come uomo per deritto dee salvare il suo Fratello in quello che un altro farebbe a me; ne con Lottario farò mai accordo alcuno che di mio volere torni in danno di questo mio Fratello Carlo."

Of nearly the same era are the following curious letters which are translations of the papal rescripts to the Emir of Palermo, on the purchase of certain captives, and may be considered both as specimens of the vulgar Latin of the age, and as instances of the benevolence and the active charity of the Popes.

" Lu Papa de Roma Marinu servus di omni servi di lu maniu Deu te saluta . . . . . .
La tua dominakzione me invii la responsio quantus vorrai denari

* This is the first specimen on record of the Provincial, Provenzal, or Romance language.

per omni kaput de illa gens . . . de lu plus prestu; ki si farai ak kosa tantu bona, lu maniu Deu ti dat vita longa, omnia plena di benediksioni, &c. li tres di lu mensi di April oktocento oktanta dui, di lu usu di li kristiani.

This epistle was written or rather translated from one written by Pope Marinus in the year 882. The subsequent letter is of the same Pope.

" Abeo kapitatu la tua littera signata kum la giurnata dilli quindisi dilu mense di Aprili oktocento octanta tre. Abeo lectu in ipsa ki lu Mulai ti a datu lu permissu di vindirmi omne illi sklavi ego volo la quali kosa mi a dato una konsolazione Mania.

In 1029 we meet with words and phrases perfectly Italian, as, " In loco et finibus ubi dicitur civitate vetera . . . . prope loco qui dicitur a le grotte."

The first regular inscription in the modern language is of the following century, viz. 1135; it was engraved on the front of the cathedral of *Ferrara*, and is as follows :

Il mille cento tremptacinque nato
Fo questo tempio a Zorzi consecrato
Fo Nicolao Scolptore,
E Glielmo fo l'auctore.

There is however a considerable difference between these half-formed rhymes and the highly polished strains of *Petrarca*. In

the space that intervened between the date of the inscription of *Ferrara*, and the birth of that poet, taste began to revive, information became more general, and men of learning and genius applied themselves to the cultivation of the vulgar tongue. Latin, which still continued then as now the language of the Church, of the schools, and of formal discussion and public correspondence, furnished both the rules, and the materials of amelioration; and to infuse as much of its genius and spirit into the new language as the nature of the latter would permit, seems to have been the grand object of these first masters of modern Italian. Among them *Brunetto Latini*, a Florentine, seems to have been the principal, and to him his countrymen are supposed to be indebted for the pre-eminence which they then acquired, and have ever since enjoyed in the new dialect, which from them assumed the name of *Tuscan*. *Dante*, *Petrarca*, and *Boccacio* completed the work which *Brunetto* and his associates had commenced, and under their direction the Italian language assumed the graces and the embellishments that raise it above all known languages, and distinguish it alike in prose or verse, in composition or conversation.

> Illam quidquid agit, quoque vestigia vertit
> Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.
> *Tibul.* IV. 2.

In this form of beauty and perfection the new language had recovered so much of the parent idiom, that not the same words only, but even the same phrases are equally appropriate in both, and hymns have been written which may be called indis-

criminately either Latin or Italian*. Of this description are the two following.

In mare irato in subita procella
Invoco te, nostra benigna stella! &c.

The second turns upon the same thought, and must be considered by the reader merely as a poetical lusus, as I do not mean to be accountable for its theological accuracy †.

Vivo in acerba pena, in mesto orrone
Quando te non imploro, in te non spero
Purissima Maria, et in sincero
Te non adoro, et in divino ardore.
Et, O vita beata, et anni, et ore!
Quando contra me armato, odio severo
Te Maria amo, et in gaudio vero
Vivere spero ardendo in vivo amore.
Non amo te, Regina augusta, quando
Non vivo in pace, et in silentio fido;
Non amo te, quando non vivo amando.
In te sola o Maria, in te confido
In tua materna cura respirando,
Quasi columba in suo beato nido.

When the reader has seriously perused these observations, he will, I believe, agree with me when I recapitulate and conclude, that Italian owes little to barbarians; that it has bor-

* The same attempt has been made in favour of Portuguese, but the languages as may easily be imagined do not assimilate so naturally.

† It was composed by *P. Tornielli*, a Jesuit of great literary reputation.

rowed much from native sources; and that it still bears a sufficient resemblance to the ancient language, to entitle it to the appellation of LINGUA LATINA.

ITALIAN LITERATURE.

V. But language is only the vehicle of instruction, and the sweetest dialect that ever graced the lips of mortals, if not ennobled by genius and consecrated by wisdom, may be heard with as much indifference as the warblings of the birds of the forest. Fortunately for Italy, if the Goddess of Liberty has twice smiled, the Sun of Science also has twice risen on her favoured regions, and the happy periods of Augustus and of Leo, have continued through all succeeding ages, to amuse and to instruct mankind. If the Greek language can boast the first, and Latin the second, Italian may glory in the third epic poem; and *Tasso*, in the opinion of all candid critics has an undoubted right to sit next in honour and in fame to his countryman Virgil. *Dante* and *Ariosto* have claims of a different, perhaps not an inferior, nature, and in originality and grandeur the former, in variety and imagery the latter, stands unrivalled. *Petrarca* has all the tenderness, all the delicacy of Catullus Tibullus and Propertius without their foulness and effeminacy; he seems to have felt the softness of love without any mixture of its sensuality; he has even raised it above itself, as I have observed elsewhere, and superadded to that grace and beauty, which have ever been deemed its appropriate ornaments, some of the charms of virtue and even a certain religious solemnity. Nor has the genius of Italian poesy, as if exhausted by the effort, expired with these, the first and the most illustrious of her offspring. The same spirit

has continued to inspire a succession of poets in every different branch of that divine art, from *Boccacio* and *Guarini* down to *Alfieri* and *Metastasio*, all *Phœbo digna locuti*, all inimitable in their different talents, equal perhaps to their celebrated predecessors in the same career and in the same country, and undoubtedly superior both in number and in originality to the bards of the northern regions.

The French, who glory, and not without reason, in their dramatical writers, have often reproached the Italians with the barrenness of their literature in this respect, and have even ventured to assert, that it proceeded from some inherent defect, from some want of energy or of pliability in the formation of their language. But the language of *Dante* and of *Ariosto* wants neither of these qualities; it has assumed all the ease and the grace of Terence, in the comedies of *Gherardo di Rossi;* in the tragedies of *Alfieri*, it appears in all the dignity and the strength of Sophocles;* and simplicity, tenderness, and delicacy, are the inseparable attendants of the virgin muse of *Metastasio*. It is indeed useless to enlarge on the excellency of Italian poetry: its superiority is admitted, and dull must be the ear, and unmusical the soul, which do not perceive in the

* The tragedy of *Aristodemo* by *Monti* is deemed a masterpiece; it is in the chastest style of the Greek school. It would have been well for the Poet's virtue and honour.

si sic

Omnia dixisset.

The unhappy man in his old age sunk into folly and wickedness, insulted his Sovereign, and blasphemed his Saviour. To flatter his new masters, the French, he indulges himself in a philippic against England, which he emphatically calls *La Seconda Roma*. We accept the omen, and trust that modern Rome, powerful

chant of the Hesperian Muse a glow and a harmony peculiar to the age and country which inspired the divine strains of Virgil and of Horace.

Namque haud tibi vultus
Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat; O Dea, certe
Et Phœbi soror! *Æn.* lib. 1.

But the reader, if not better versed in Italian literature than most of our travellers, will be surprised to hear that Italy is as rich in history as in poetry, and that in the former as well as in the latter, she may claim a superiority not easily disputed, over every other country. Every republic and almost every town has its historian, and most of these historians, though their subject may sometimes appear too confined, possess the information and the talents requisite to render their works both instructive and amusing. The greater States can boast of authors equal to their reputation; while numberless writers of the first rate abilities have devoted their time and their powers to the records of their country at large, and related its vicissitudes with all the spirit of ancient, and with all the precision of modern times. In these cursory observations, a few instances only can be expected, but the few which I am about to produce are sufficient to establish the precedency of Italian historians.

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and free as the ancient, will triumph over modern Gaul. Its greatness is well described by the poet, and is an earnest of its success

Sei temuta, sei forte: a te rischiara
L'un mondo e l'altro la solar quadriga,
E le tue leggi il doppio polo impara.
A te d'Africa e d'Asia il sol castiga
L'erbe, i fiori, le piante; e il mar riceve
Dalle tue prore una perpetua biga.

Capitolo d'Emenda.

Paolo Sarpi,* in depth, animation, and energy, is represented by the *Abbé Mably*, no incompetent judge, as unrivaled, and proposed as a model of excellence in the art of unravelling the intricacies of misrepresentation and party spirit. Cardinal *Pallavicini* treated the same subject as *Paolo Sarpi*, with candor, eloquence, and judgment, and his style and manner are supposed to combine together with great felicity, the ease and the dignity that became the subject and the historian†. *Giannone* possesses nearly the same qualities, and adds to them an impartiality of discussion, and a depth of research peculiar to himself. *Guicciardini*, with the penetration of Tacitus, unites the fulness (*lactea ubertas*) of Titus Livius, and like him possesses the magic power of transforming the relation into action, and the readers into spectators. This historian has been reproached with the length and intricacy of his sentences, a defect considerably increased by the number of parentheses with which they are, not unfrequently, embarrassed. The reproach is not without foundation. But it must be remembered that his Roman master is not entirely exempt from the same defect, and that in neither, does it impede the fluency, or weaken the interest of the narration. The greatest fault of the Florentine historian is the frequency of his studied speeches, a fault into which he was betrayed by his admiration of the ancients, and by that passionate desire of imitating them, which is its natural consequence. But his harangues have their

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* In his history of the Council of Trent.

† The latter history was written originally in Latin, but translated, I believe, by the author, into Italian.

advantages, and, like those of Livius and of Thucydides, not only furnish examples of eloquence, but abound in maxims of public policy and of sound philosophy. *Machiavelli* ranks high as an historian, and may be considered as the rival of Tacitus, whom he imitates, not indeed in the dignity and extent of his subject, nor in the veracity of his statements, but in the concise and pithy style of his narration.

These historians were preceded and followed by others of talents and celebrity little inferior; such were the judicious historian of *Naples*, *Angelo de Costanzo*; the Cardinal *Bembo*, *Morosini*, and *Paruta* of *Venice*; *Adriani* and *Ammirato* of *Tuscany* or rather of *Florence*; *Bernardino Corio* of *Milan*; and in general history, *Tarcagnota* and *Campagna*, not to mention *Davila* and the Cardinal *Bentivoglio*. In each of these historians, the Italian critics discover some peculiar features, some characteristic touches exclusively their own; while in all, they observe the principal excellencies of the historic art, discrimination in portraits, judicious arrangements in facts, and in style, pure and correct language. These writers, it is true, flourished for the greater part, at a time, when Italian literature was in its meridian glory, that is, during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries; but its lustre *did* not cease with them, nor was Italy in the eighteenth century unenlightened by history or unproductive of genius.

Were I to mention the learned and judicious *Muratori* only, and close the list of Italian historians with his name, I should not be called upon for any further proof of the superiority of the Italians in the research, and combination that constitute the excellence of this branch of literature. So extensive is

the erudition, so copious the information, so judicious the selection, and so solid the criticism that reign throughout the whole of this voluminous author's writings, that his works may be considered in themselves, as a vast and well disposed library, containing all the documents of Italian history and antiquities, and all the reflections which they must suggest to a mind of great and extensive observation.

But to the name of *Muratori*, I will add another equally illustrious in the annals of literature, and like it capable even single, of fixing the reputation of a language of less intrinsic merit than Italian; I mean *Tiraboschi*, the author of numerous works, but known principally, for his *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*. This work takes in the whole history of Italian literature both ancient and modern, and contains an account of the commencement and progress of each science, of the means by which knowledge was promoted, of libraries and literary establishments, of the lives, the works, and the characters of great authors; in short, of persons, revolutions, events, and discoveries, connected with the fate of literature. It begins with the first dawn of science and taste in Rome, and follows their increase, decline, and revival during the succeeding ages; of course it includes a considerable portion of the general history of the country at each epoch, and conducts the reader from the first Punic war over the immense space of twenty intervening centuries down to the eighteenth. Few works have been planned upon a scale more extensive, and none executed in a more masterly manner. A strict adherence to veracity; a thorough acquaintance with the subject in all its details; a spirit of candor, raised far above the influence of party; a discernment in criticism, deep and

correct; and, above all, a clear and unbiassed judgment, *principium et fons recte scribendi*, pervade every part of this astonishing work, and give it a perfection very unusual in literary productions so comprehensive and so complicated. The style, according to the opinion of Italian critics, is pure, easy, and rapid, free alike from the wit that dazzles and the pomp that encumbers, yet graced with such ornaments as rise spontaneously from the nature of the subject. On the whole, it may be considered as one of the noblest and most interesting works ever published, and far superior to any historical or critical performance in any other language. The author intended it as a vindication of the claims of his country to the first honours in literature, and has, by establishing those claims, erected to its glory a monument as durable as human language, and appropriated for ever to Italy the title of Mother of the Arts and Sciences, and Instructress of Mankind.

The work of Abate *D. G. Andres Dell'Oregine, di progressi e dello Stato di ogni Letteratura*, is a noble, an extensive, and a very masterly performance. I have already spoken of the *Revoluzioni D'Italia*, by the *Abate Denina;* I need only say that to perspicuity and manly simplicity this author adds a great share of political sagacity, and a sound philosophic spirit. The same qualities are predominant in his discourses, *Sopra le Vicende della Lctteratura*, a work which comprises, in a small compass, a great mass of information, and may be considered as a compendious history, and at the same time, as a very masterly review, of literature in general.

In antiquities the Italians are rich to superabundance, and can produce more authors of this description not only than any

one, but than all the other nations of Europe together. Among them we may rank the illustrious names of *Muratori*, *Maffei*, *Mazzochi*, *Carli*, and *Paciaudi*, to which many more might be added were it not universally acknowledged that the study of antiquities called forth by so many motives and by so many objects, is an indigenous plant in Italy, and flourishes there as in its native climate *.

For the last fifty years political economy has been a favourite subject on the continent, and in it some French writers have acquired considerable reputation. In this respect as in many others, the French may be more bold, more lively, and perhaps more entertaining, because more paradoxical; but the man who wishes to be guided by experience and not by theory, who prefers the safe, the generous principles of Cicero and of Plato, to the dangerous theories of *Rousseau* and of *Sieyes*, will also prefer the Italian to the French *economists*. Of the former the number is great, and from them has been extracted and printed in sets, as Classics, (in which light indeed they are considered,) a select number of the best, whose works form a collection of about fifty volumes octavo.

In Essays, Treatises, Journals, and Reviews, the Italians first

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* *En verite*, exclaims the Abbé Barthelemi, *on ne peut guere se dire antiquaire, quand on ne pas sorti de France!*—Letter IV.

The same ingenious writer observes elsewhere—*Il faut l'avouer encore une fois, ce n'est qu' ici que se trouvent des carrieres inépuisables d'antiquites; et relativement aux etrangers, on devroit ecrire sur la porte* del Popolo *cette belle inscription du Dante.*

Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate.

led the way, and still equal every other nation. In the Sciences, they have been considered as deficient, but this opinion can be entertained only by persons imperfectly acquainted with Italian literature. To be convinced, that it is without foundation, we need only enumerate the astronomers, mathematicians, geographers, and natural philosophers, who have flourished in Italy from the time of *Galileo* to the present period; and among them we shall find a sufficient number of justly celebrated names to vindicate the reputation of their country, and to justify its claim to scientific honours.*

Here indeed, as upon another occasion, I must observe that Italian literature has been traduced, because its treasures are unknown; and that the language itself has been deemed unfit for research and argument, because too often employed as the vehicle of amorous ditties and of effeminate melody. This prejudice, is owing amongst us in some degree to the influence of French fashions and opinions, which commenced at the Restoration, was increased by the Revolution, and was strengthened and extended in such a manner by the example of court sycophants, and by the writings of courtly authors, that French became a constituent part of genteel education, and some tincture of its literature was deemed a necessary accomplishment. Thence, French criticism

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* *Les sciences sont plus cultivees a Rome qu'on le croit en France*, says the Abbe Barthelemi, *je vous dirai sur cela, quelque jour, des details qui vous etonneront.*—Letter XXVIII.

Soyez persuade, says he again, *que malgrè l'avilissement et le decouragement general, l'Italie fournit encore bien des gens de lettres dignes de ceux qui les ont precédés. Ces gens la iroient bien loin si ils avoient un Colbert a leur tête.*

acquired weight, and the opinions of *Boileau, Bouhours, Dubos,* &c. became axioms in the literary world. Either from jealousy or from ignorance, or from a mixture of both, these critics speak of Italian literature with contempt, and take every occasion of vilifying the best and noblest compositions of its authors. Hence the contemptuous appellation of *tinsel**, given by the French Satirist to the strains *(Aurea dicta)* of Tasso, an appellation as inapplicable as it is insolent, which must have been dictated by envy, and can be repeated by ignorance only.

The flippant petulancy of these criticisms might perhaps recommend them to the French public, especially as they flattered the national vanity, by depreciating the glory of a rival, or rather a superior country; but it is difficult to conceive how they came to be so generally circulated and adopted in England; and it is not without some degree of patriot indignation, that we see Dryden bend his own stronger judgment, and Pope submit his finer taste, to the dictates of French essayists, and to the assertions of Parisian poets. Addison, though in other respects an Anti-Gallican, and strongly influenced by those *laudable prejudices*, to use his own expression, *which naturally cleave to the heart of a true-born Briton*, here condescended to follow the crowd, and resigning his own better lights and superior information, adopted without examination, the opinions of the French school. This tame, servile spirit of imitation became in a short time general, and not only contributed to give the language of our enemies that currency of which they are now so proud, but restrained the flight of British genius,

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* Le clinquant de Tasse à tout l'or de Virgile. *Boileau, Sat.* IX.

and kept it confined in the trammels of French rules and of French example.

How detrimental, in fact, this imitative spirit has been to our national literature will appear evident, if we compare the authors, who were formed in the Italian school, with those who fashioned their productions on French models. To say nothing of Chaucer, who borrowed both his manner and his subject from Italy, or of Shakspeare, whose genius like that of Homer was fed, as the lummaries of heaven, by sources secret and inexhaustible; I need only mention the names of Spenser and of Milton, two towering spirits, who soar far above competition, and from their higher spheres look down upon the humbler range of Pope and of Dryden. Yet Spenser and Milton are disciples of the Tuscan sages, and look up with grateful acknowledgment to their Ausonian masters. Waller and Cowley pursued the same path though at a respectful distance, and certainly not, *passibus æquis;* especially as in the time of the latter, French fashion began to spread its baneful influence over English literature. Then came the *gossamer* breed of courtly poetasters, who forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that

> The sterling bullion of one British line
> Drawn to French wire, would through whole pages shine;

derived their pretty thoughts from French madrigals, and modelled their little minds, as they borrowed their dress from French puppets. I mean not to say that Italian was utterly neglected during this long period, because I am aware that at all times it was considered as an accomplishment ornamental to all, and

indispensably necessary to those, who visit Italy. But though the language of Italy was known, its literature was neglected; so that not its historians only were forgotten, but of all the treasures of its divine poesy little was ever cited or admired excepting a few airs from the opera, or some love-sick and effeminate sonnets selected from the minor poets. French literature was the sole object of the attention of our writers, and from it they derived that cold correctness which seems to be the prevailing feature of most of the authors of the first part of the eighteenth century.

Nor was this frigidity, the only or the greatest evil that resulted from the then prevailing partiality for French literature. The spirit of infidelity had already infected some of the leading writers of that volatile nation, and continued to spread its poison imperceptibly, but effectually, till the latter years of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, when most of the academicians had, through interest, or vanity ever the predominant passion in a French bosom, ranged themselves under the banners of *Voltaire*, and had become real or pretended sceptics. The works of the subalterns, it is true, were much praised but little read by their partisans; and *Helvetius*, *Freret*, *Du Maillet*, with fifty others of equal learning and equal fame now slumber in dust and silence on the upper shelves of public libraries, the common repository of deceased authors. But the wit and the ribaldry of their Chief continued to amuse and to captivate the gay, the voluptuous, and the ignorant; to dictate the *ton*, that is, to prescribe opinions and style to the higher circles; and by making impiety current in good company, to give it the greatest recommendation it could possess in the eyes of his countrymen, the *sanction of Fashion*.

Such was the state of opinion in France, when two persons of very different tastes and characters in other respects, but equally enslaved to vanity and to pride, visited that country—I mean Hume and Gibbon, who, though Britons in general are little inclined to bend their necks to the yoke of foreign teachers, meanly condescended to sacrifice the independence of their own understanding and the religion of their country, to the flatteries and the sophisms of Parisian atheists. These two renegadoes joined in the views of their foreign associates, undertook to propagate atheistic principles among their countrymen, and faithful to the engagement, endeavoured in all their works to instil doubt and indifference into the minds of their readers, and by secret and almost imperceptible arts, gradually to undermine their attachment to revealed religion. Hints, sneers, misrepresentation, and exaggeration, concealed under affected candour, pervade almost every page of their very popular but most pernicious histories; and if the mischief of these works however great, be not equal to the wishes of their authors, it is entirely owing to the good sense and the spirit of religion so natural to the minds of Englishmen. This wise and happy temper, the source and security of public and private felicity, the nation owes to Providence; the *desolating* doctrines of incredulity,* Hume and Gibbon, and their disciples, borrowed from France and its academies. Italian literature is exempt from this infection: its general tendency is religious; all its great authors have been

* Fuyez ceux qui sous pretexte d'expliquer la nature sement dans les cœurs des hommes de *desolantes doctrines* . . . . nous soumettent a leurs decisions tranchantes, et pretendent nous donner, pour les vrais principes des choses, les inintelligibles systemes qu'ils ont bâtis dans leur imagination.—*Rousseau. Emile.*

distinguished by a steady and enlightened piety, and their works naturally tend to elevate the mind of the reader and to fix his thoughts on the noble destinies of the human race; an unspeakable advantage in a *downward* and perverse age, when men, formed in vain with *looks erect and countenance sublime*, confine their views to the earth, and voluntarily place themselves on a level with the *beasts that perish*.

To return.—Gray, who seems to have conceived, while in Italy, a partiality for its poetry, soon discovered the treasures which it contains; and first, I believe, attempted to copy the manner and to revive the taste that had formed the *princes of English verse*, and, given them that boldness and that sublimity which foreigners now consider as their characteristic qualities. His school inherited his partiality, and the study of Italian began to revive gradually, though its progress was slow until the publication of the Life of *Lorenzo de Medici;* a work which evidently awakened the slumbering curiosity of the nation, and once more turned their eyes to *Italy*, the great parent and nurse of languages, of laws, of arts, and of sciences. Since the appearance of that publication, many champions have arisen to support the united cause of Taste and of Italian, and have displayed talents which might have obtained success with fewer advantages on their side, but with so many, could not fail to triumph. Among these the public is much indebted to Mr. Mathias, and to the author of the *Pursuits of Literature*, *(quocunque gaudet nomine)* who have struggled with unabating zeal to turn the attention of the public, from the frippery and the *tinsel* of France, to the sterling ore of Italy, and to place the literature of that country in the rank due to its merit, that is, next to the emanations of Greek and Roman genius.

VI. It is indeed much to be regretted that a language so harmonious in sound, so copious in words, so rich in literature, and at the same time so intimately connected with the ancient dialect of Europe and its modern derivatives, as to serve as a key both to one and to the others, should have been forced from its natural rank, and obliged to yield its place to a language far inferior to it in all these respects, and for many reasons not worth the time usually allotted to it in fashionable education. The great admirers of French, that is, the French critics themselves, do not pretend to found its supposed universality on its intrinsic superiority. In fact, not to speak of the rough combinations of letters, the indistinct articulation of many syllables, the peculiar sound of some vowels, the suppression, not of letters only but of whole syllables, and the almost insuperable difficulties which arise from these peculiarities to foreigners studying this language; the perpetual recurrence of nasal sounds, the most disagreeable that can proceed from human organs, predominating as it does throughout the whole language, is sufficient alone to deprive it of all claim to sweetness and to melody. Some authors, I know, and many French critics discover in it a natural and logical construction, which as they pretend, gives to it, when managed by a skilful writer, a clearness and a perspicuity which is scarcely to be equalled in Latin and Greek, and may be sought for in vain in all modern dialects. This claim has been boldly advanced on one side and feebly contested on the other, though many of my readers, who have perhaps amused themselves with French authors for many a year, may perhaps have never yet observed this peculiar excellence, nor discovered that the French language invariably follows the natural course of our ideas, and the process of grammatical construction.

I mean not to dispute this real or imaginary advantage; especially as the discussion unavoidably involves a long metaphysical question relative to the natural order of ideas and the best corresponding arrangement of words; but I must observe, that to be confined to one mode of construction only, however excellent it may be, is a defect; because it deprives poetry and eloquence of one of the most powerful instruments of harmony and of description, I mean, *Inversion*: and because it removes the distinction of styles, and brings all composition down to the same monotonous level. In fact, French poets have long complained of the tame uniform genius of their language, and French critics have been obliged, however reluctantly, to acknowledge that it has no poetic style; and if the reader wishes to see how well founded these complaints are, and how just this acknowledgment, he need only consult the ingenious translation of Virgil's Georgics by the *Abbé de Lille*. In the preface he will hear the *critic* lamenting the difficulties imposed upon him by the nature of his language; and in the versification he will admire the skill with which the *poet* endeavours, (vainly indeed,) to transfuse the spirit, the variety, the colouring of the original into the dull, lifeless imitation. If he has failed, he has failed only comparatively; for his translation is the best in the French language, and to all the excellencies of which such a translation is susceptible, adds the peculiar graces of ease and propriety. He had all the talents necessary on his side, taste, judgment, and enthusiasm; but his materials were frail, and his language, *Phœbi nondum patiens*, sunk under the weight of Roman genius. If other proofs of the feebleness of the French language, and of its inadequacy to the purposes of poetry were requisite, we need only open *Boileau's* translation of Longinus, and we shall there find innumerable instances of failure, which, as they cannot be

ascribed to the translator, must originate from the innate debility of the language itself.

In consequence of this irremediable defect the French have no poetical translation of Homer nor of Tasso; nor had they of Virgil or of Milton, till the *Abbé De Lille* attempted to introduce them to his countrymen in a French dress* But, both the Roman and the British poet seem alike to have disdained the trammels of Gallic rhime, and turned away indignant from the translator, who presumed to exhibit their majestic forms masked and distorted to the public. The exertions of the *Abbé* only proved to the literary world, that even *his* talents and ingenuity were incapable of communicating to the language of his country, energy sufficient to express the divine sentiments and the sublime imagery of Virgil and of Milton. In this respect Italian is more fortunate, and seems formed to command alike the regions of poetry and of prose. It adapts itself to all the purposes of argumentation or of ornament, and submits with grace and dignity to whatever construction the poet, the orator, or the metaphysician chooses to impose upon it.

Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet. *Tibullus, 4—2.*

In fact, this language has retained a considerable portion of the boldness and the liberty of the mother tongue, and moves

* The author was present in a party in Paris many years ago, when the *Abbé De Lille* being asked by an English gentleman why he did not translate the Æneid, answered in a style of delicate compliment, *Monsieur donnez moi votre langue et je commence demain.* He was indeed an enthusiastic admirer of English poetry.

along with a freedom which her tame rival would attempt in vain to imitate.

I have hinted at the difficulty of the French language, which is in reality so great as to become a serious defect, and a solid ground of objection. This difficulty arises, in the first place, from the general complication of its grammar, the multiplicity of its rules, and the frequency of exceptions; and in the next place, from the nature of several sounds peculiar, I believe, to it. Such are some vowels, particularly *a* and *u;* and such also many diphthongs, as *ieu, eu, oi*, not to mention the *l mouillé*, the *e muet*, and various syllables of nasal and indistinct utterance, together with the different sounds of the same vowels and diphthongs in different combinations. I speak not of these sounds as agreeable or disagreeable to the ear, but only as difficult, and so much so as to render it almost impossible for a foreigner ever to pronounce French with ease and strict propriety. Here again Italian has the advantage. Its sounds are all open and labial; it flows naturally from the organs, and requires nothing more than time and expansion. Its vowels have invariably the same sound, and that sound may be found in almost every language*. The nose and the throat, those *bagpipe* instruments of French ut-

* In the year 1669, a certain *Le Laboureur* undertook to prove that the French language was, in every respect, superior to Latin, not in construction only but even in harmony. He was in part answered and refuted by a canon of *Liege*, of the name of *Sluze*. The Frenchman writes with ease, flippancy, and confidence. His adversary, a German, manages his subject with less skill and much more diffidence. Neither of the combatants seem to have been sufficiently prepared for the contest, if we may judge of their information by the arguments employed,

terance, have no share in its articulation; no grouped consonants stop its progress; no indistinct murmurs choke its closes: it

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and the concessions made on both sides. Thus the Frenchman admits that Latin is an original or mother tongue, and that French is derived from it; and while he passes over the first part of this concession as self-evident, he softens the second by observing, that such a derivation was no proof of inferiority, as daughters are frequently more beautiful than their mothers, an observation so new and so dubious, that he fears his readers may call it in question, and therefore oppresses them at once with the authority of Horace, *O matre pulchra*, &c.

In order to prove that Latin is less copious than French, he asserts, that the Latins had only Greek to borrow from, while the French have Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish, German, nay, even Hebrew and Syriac. He forgets, it seems, that the Latins, besides Celtic and Greek, had also the ancient dialects of Italy, at least six in number, open before them, from which they might cull at pleasure, and that the wars of Rome, first with the Carthaginians, and then with the Dalmatians, Syrians, and Egyptians, enabled them to lay the language of all these nations under contribution. That the Romans did not profit of all these advantages to the full extent will be admitted, but on the other hand nobody will maintain that French has derived much advantage from German, Hebrew, Syriac, or even from Greek, except through the medium of Latin, or which is the same, of Italian or of Spanish. On the contrary, so far from wishing to enrich their language with new acquisitions, the French seem to have been endeavouring to retrench its luxuriancy. In fact, whoever has read *Montaigne*'s Essays will easily perceive, how many manly and majestic expressions have died away, and how much the energy and copiousness of this language has been impaired during the last three centuries.

But the whole of this argument is grounded on a supposition, that the richest languages are those which have borrowed most; which is proved to be false by the acknowledged copiousness of Greek, which however is of all languages the least indebted to others. His objections to Latin poetry are rather singular. He censures the additions of such epithets as paint the object in its own colouring, such as *brindled* when applied to a lion, and such as mark the principal

glides from the lips with facility, and it delights the ear with its fulness, its softness, and its harmony. As its grammar approaches

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temples or countries in which the divinity in question seemed most to delight, such as *Lydian* Apollo, *Cyprian* Venus. He is therefore unmercifully severe on the two following lines of Horace—

> O quæ beatam, Diva, tenes Cyprum, et
> Memphim carentem Sithonia nive,

as encumbered with circumstances introduced merely for the purpose of filling up the verse. This penetrating critic had never, it seems, discovered that the ancient poets excelled in painting, and that to retrench such exquisite pictures in Horace or Virgil (for we speak only of the Latins), is as absurd as it would be to expunge the temples, mountains, and streams that throw such glory and freshness over *Claude Lorraine's* landscapes. Rhyme, he finds, delightful and enchanting, and far preferable to metre. French verse, it is true, tires sooner than Latin, and now and then lulls the reader to sleep. But this is the natural effect of its fluency, clearness and harmony, while Virgil (so happy is this critic in his instances) is not *quite* so well understood, nor of course read with so much ease and avidity. The elisions in Latin verse are rough and intolerable: in French owing to the E *muet* all smoothness. The following eulogium on his own language cannot be perused without a smile at the simplicity of the writer. The exclamation with which it commences, is truly comic.—"*Notre langue est si belle, quand on scait s'en servir! Elle tient plus de l'esprit et depend moins des organes du corps que toute autre: il ne faut ni parler de la gorge, ni ouvrir beaucoup la bouche, frapper de la langue contre les dents, ni "faire des signes et des gestes," comme il m'a semble que font la plupart des etrangers quand ils parlent la langue de leurs pays!*—The French r is not a very smooth letter, nor is the *u* very easily pronounced by any but Frenchmen. With regard to the other letters, the palate teeth and lips are relieved from all exertion by the action of the *nose*. The French, as we at least are apt to suppose, are not deficient in gesture. Latin (so says *Mons. Le Laboureur)* is monotonous, because all its vowels are pronounced with equal force French is agreeably varied, because its vowels are frequently half

nearer Latin, it is more congenial to our infant studies, and may therefore be acquired with the greater facility.

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uttered. Here the author forgets, (what his countrymen are very apt to forget, as they have no prosody in their language) the difference of quantity in Latin, a difference which gives rise to so much variety and harmony; and in the next place he seems to consider indistinct sounds as pleasing; an opinion, I believe, peculiar to himself. French, he says, has a greater variety of terminations, and of course more grace, more amenity than any other language. Latin, Italian, Spanish, and almost every other, have always the same final letter. Had the author ever read ten lines of those languages he could not have made such a remark. He complains of the frequent recurrence of the letter *m* in Latin; in French, though retained in spelling, it is in pronunciation changed into *n*. The truth is, that in French both *m* and *n* final are confounded together in the same nasal sound, and lost in a *grunt*; so that the nicest ear can scarce distinguish between *fin* and *faim*.

Both the disputants find Virgil *obscure*, and both admit the superior harmony of French; in neither point, I believe, will the reader agree with them. *Mons. Labourcur* at length acknowledges, that in copiousness Latin surpasses, but to compensate for this humiliating acknowledgment, he peremptorily requires that his antagonist should confess, that French words are better and more naturally arranged than in Latin. This indeed is the great boast of French grammarians, who fill whole pages with encomiums on the admirable arrangement, the method, the perspicuity of their language. If we may believe them, every object is placed in the sentence in the very order in which it occurs to the mind. Of the force, the beauty, and oftentimes the necessity of inversion in prose as well as in poetry, there is, I believe, no doubt; of course a language which, like French, is not susceptible of it, must be defective. As for the natural order of ideas it has long been a matter of debate, and many grammarians have maintained that the Latin construction is more conformable to it than that of French, or of any modern language. Among these, the *Abbé Batteux*, in his *Belles Lettres*, has made some curious observations, and applied them to different passages from Livy and Cicero. The truth seems to be, that the construction common to French and most modern dialects is the grammatical, while that of the ancient languages seems to be the natural construction.

would be an occupation equally amusing and instructive, but at the same time it would require more leisure than the traveller can command, and a work far more comprehensive than the present, intended merely to throw out hints which the reader may verify and improve at discretion, as the subject may hereafter invite. I must therefore confine myself to a very few remarks, derived principally from French critics, and consequently of considerable weight, because extorted, it must seem, by the force of truth from national vanity. The authority of *Voltaire* may not perhaps be looked upon as decisive, because, however solid his judgment, and however fine his taste, he too often sacrificed the dictates of both to the passion or the whim of the moment, and too frequently gave to interest, to rancor, and to party, what he owed to truth, to letters, and to mankind. But, it must be remembered that these defects, while they lower his authority as a critic, also obscure his reputation as an historian, and deprive French literature of the false lustre which it has acquired from his renown. And indeed, if impartiality be essential to history, Voltaire must forfeit the appellation of historian, as his *Histoire Generale* is one continued satire upon religion, intended by its deceitful author not to inform the understanding, but to pervert the faith of the reader. Hence the *Abbé Mably*, in his ingenious reflections on history, though not very hostile to the unbelieving party, censures the above-mentioned work with some severity, without condescending to enter into the details of criticism.

The same author speaks of the other historians of his language with contempt, and from the general sentence excepts the *Abbé Vertot* and *Fleury* only; exceptions which prove at the same time the critic's judgment and impartiality; for few writers

equal the former in rapidity, selection, and interest, and none surpass the latter in erudition, good sense, and simplicity. The same *Abbé* prefers the *History of the Council of Trent*, by the well known Father *Paolo Sarpi*, to all the histories compiled in his own language, and represents it as a model of narration, argument, and observation. We may subscribe to the opinion of this judicious critic, so well versed in the literature of his own country, without the least hesitation, and extend to Italian history in general the superiority which he allows to one only, and one who is not the first of Italian historians, either in eloquence or in impartiality.

In one species of history indeed, the Italians justly claim the honour both of invention and of pre-eminence, and this honour, not France only but England must, I believe, concede without contest. I allude to critical biography, a branch of history in the highest degree instructive and entertaining, employed in Italy at a very early period, and carried to the highest perfection by the late learned *Tiraboschi*. In French, few productions of the kind exist: perhaps the panegyrical discourses pronounced in the French Academy border nearest upon it; but these compositions, though recommended by the names of *Fontenelle*, *Massillon*, *Flechier*, *Marmontel*, and so many other illustrious academicians, are too glittering, too artificial, and refined, as well as too trivial and transient in their very nature, to excite much interest, or to fix the attention of the critic. In our own language *Johnson's Lives of the Poets* present a fair object of comparison, as far as the plan extends, and perhaps in point of execution may be considered by many of my readers as masterpieces of style, of judgment, and even of eloquence, equal, if not superior, to the Italian. But as the narrow sphere of the

English biographer sinks into insignificance, when compared to the vast orbit of the Italian historian, so their works bear no proportion, and cannot of course be considered as objects of comparison. With regard to the execution, Johnson, without doubt, surprises and almost awes the reader, by the weight of his arguments, by the strength of his expression, and by the uniform majesty of his language; but I know not whether the ease, the grace, and the insinuating familiarity of *Tiraboschi* may not charm us more, and keep up our attention and our delight much longer.

In one branch of literature France may have the advantage over most modern languages, I mean in theological composition: and this advantage she owes to her peculiar circumstances; I might say with more propriety, to her misfortunes. The Calvinistic opinions prevalent in *Geneva* had been propagated at an early period of the reformation in the southern provinces of France, and in a short space of time made such a progress, that their partisans conceived themselves numerous enough to cope with the established Church, and perhaps powerful enough to overturn it. They first manifested their zeal by insults and threats, then proceeded to deeds of blood and violence, and at length involved their country in all the horrors of civil war, anarchy, and revolution. In the interim, the pen was employed as well as the sword, and while the latter called forth all the exertions of the body, the former brought into action all the energies of the mind.

During more than a century, war and controversy raged with equal fury, and whatever the opinion of the reader may be upon the subject in debate, he will probably agree with me,

that Calvinism, defeated alike in the field of battle and in the nobler contest of argument, was compelled to resign the double palm of victory to the genius of her adversary. In the course of the debate, and particularly towards its close, great talents appeared, and much ingenuity and learning were displayed on both sides; till the respective parties seem to unite all their powers in the persons of two champions, *Claude* and *Bossuet*. Though nature had been liberal in intellectual endowments to both the disputants, and though all the means of art had been employed to improve the gifts of nature, yet the contest was by no means equal between them; and after having been worsted in every onset, the *Elder* at length sunk under the superiority of the Prelate. But, if the victim can derive any credit from the hand that fells it, *Claude* and Calvinism may boast that the illustrious *Bossuet* was alone capable, and alone worthy, to give the fatal blow that put an end at once to the glory, and almost to the existence of the party in France.

Bossuet was indeed a great man, and one of those extraordinary minds which at distant intervals seem as if deputed from a superior region, to enlighten and to astonish mankind. With all the originality of genius, he was free from its eccentricity and intemperance. Sublime without obscurity, bold yet accurate, splendid and yet simple at the same time, he awes, elevates, and delights his readers, overpowers all resistance, and leads them willing captives to join and to share his triumph. The defects of his style arise from the imperfection of his dialect; and perhaps, he could not have given a stronger proof of the energies of his mind, than in compelling the French language itself to become the vehicle of sublimity. His works,

therefore, are superior to all other controversial writings in his own or in any other language.

In Italian there are, I believe, none of that description: there was no difference of opinion on the subject, and of course no controversy: a deficiency in their literature abundantly compensated by the absence of animosity, of hatred, of penal laws, and of insolence on one side, and on the other, of complaint, of degradation, and of misery.

To return to my first observation.—We have just reason to lament, that a language so inferior in every respect as French, should have been allowed to acquire such an ascendancy as to be deemed even in England a necessary accomplishment, and made in some degree an integral part of youthful education. If a common medium of communication between nations be necessary, as it undoubtedly is, it would have been prudent to have retained the language most generally known in civilized nations, which is Latin; especially as this language is the mother of all the polished dialects now used in Europe, has the advantage of being the clearest, the most regular, and the easiest, and moreover, was actually in possession at the very time when it pleased various courts to adopt, with the dress and other fopperies of France, its language also. Reason might reclaim against the absurdity of preferring a semi-barbarous jargon, to a most ancient, a most beautiful, and a most perfect language; but the voice of reason is seldom heard, and yet more seldom listened to at courts, where fashion, that is the whim of the monarch or of the favourite, is alone consulted and followed even in all its deformities and all its extravagancies.

But that which escaped the observation of the courtier ought to have attracted the attention of the minister, who might have discovered by reflection or by experience, the advantages which a negociator derives from the perfect knowledge of the language which he employs, and the extreme impolicy of conceding these advantages to our enemies. In order to form a just idea of the importance of this concession, we need only to observe the superiority which a Frenchman assumes, in Capitals where his language is supposed to be that of good company, such as *Vienna*, and particularly *Petersburg*, and contrast with that superiority, his humble appearance in London or in Rome, where he cannot pretend to such a distinction. In the former cities he feels himself at home, and considers himself as the first in rank, because the first in language; in the latter, the consciousness of being a foreigner checks his natural confidence and imposes upon him, however reluctant, the reserved demeanor inseparable from that character.

Now, in all diplomatic meetings, French is the language of discussion, and consequently, the French negociator displays his faculties with the same ease and with the same certainty of applause as in his own saloon, surrounded with a circle of friends at Paris. The English envoy on the contrary finds his natural reserve increased, and all his powers paralized by a sensation of inferiority in the use of the weapons which he is obliged to employ, and by a conviction that the eloquence of his adversary must triumph over his plain, unadorned, and probably ill-delivered statements. To this disadvantage we may, perhaps, attribute the observation so often repeated, that France recovers in the cabinet all she loses in the field: an obser-

vation, which, if it does not wound our pride, ought at least to awaken our caution.

But this diplomatic evil is not the only, nor the greatest, mischief that results from this absurd preference: it moreover enables our enemies to disseminate their political principles, to carry on intrigues, to multiply the means of seduction, and to insure, by the agency of numberless scribblers, pamphleteers, poetasters, &c. the success of their dark and deep laid projects. They are already endowed with too many means of mischief, and possess all the skill and activity requisite to give them effect*. Why should we voluntarily increase their powers of attack, and by propagating their language, open a wider field of action to their baneful influence? Such conduct surely borders upon infatuation.

In the next place, the propagation of the French language has produced no better effects in literature than in policy. If France has furnished the Republic of Letters with some finished models of theatrical excellence and exquisite specimens of ecclesiastical oratory, the only branches in which she excels; she has, on the other hand, inundated Europe with frivolous compositions, erotic songs, and love-sick novels, by which she has warped the public taste

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Monstrum; tot sese vertit in ora,
Tam sævæ facies, tot pullulat atra colubris.

Æn. lib. VII.

from the classical rectitude of the preceding centuries; and inverting the natural process of the mind, turned it from bold and manly contemplations to languid and enervating trifles. Nay, she has done more. For the last sixty years, the genius of France, like one of those Furies* sometimes let loose to scourge mankind, and to ripen corrupted generations for destruction, has employed all its talents and all its attractions to confound the distinction of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, to infect the heart with every vice, and to cloud the understanding with every error; to stop for ever the two great sources of human dignity and felicity, Truth and Virtue, and to blot out of the mind of man, the Sun, the soul of the intellectual world, even the Divinity himself. Such is the unvarying tendency of almost all the works which have issued from the French press, and been circulated in all the countries of Europe during the period above-mentioned, from the voluminous and cumbersome *Encyclopedie* down to the Declamations of *Volney* or the Tales of *Marmontel*, *en petit format*, for the accommodation of travellers. The truth is, that the appellation of French literature, at present, seems confined to the works of *Voltaire* and of his disciples, that is, to the infidel faction, excluding the nobler specimens of French genius, the productions of the age of Lewis XIV. and of the period immediately following that monarch's demise: and if we wish to know the effects which this literature produces upon the human mind, we need only cast our eyes upon those who are most given to it,

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Cui tristia bella
Iræque *insidiæque* et *noxia* crimina cordi.

Æn. VII.

and the countries where it flourishes most. We shall find that impiety and immorality keep pace with it in private and public life, and that domestic and national disorder and misery are its constant and inseparable companions. France, where the pestilence begun, first felt its consequences, and still bleeds under its scourge. The Prussian court, actually degraded and despised, smarts under the punishment brought upon the monarchy by the French principles of the atheistic Frederic. The Russian Capital, now the theatre of every dark intrigue, treacherous plot, and foul indulgence, may ere long have reason to curse the impolicy of Catherine, who, by encouraging the language and the opinions of France, sowed the seeds of death and of dissolution in the bosom of her empire.

Vipeream inspirans animam.

The late unhappy sovereign fell a victim to their increasing influence; and it is difficult to say, whether the same passions, working on the same principles, may not at some future period produce a similar catastrophe. Such are the consequences of partiality to French literature, and such the last great curse which that nation, at all periods of its history the bane and the torment of the human species, has, in these latter times, brought upon the civilized world. Now let me ask once more, in the name of truth and of virtue, of interest and of patriotism, by what fatality Europe is doomed to encourage a language, the instrument of so much mischief, and to propagate a literature, the vehicle of poison and of desolation? What can induce her to furnish weapons of assault to a giant Power, that massacres her tribes, and ravages her fairest provinces, by supplying the means of

communication, to facilitate the progress of armies already too rapid and too successful; and thus to prepare the way for her own final subjection? Surely such impolitic conduct must be the last degree of blindness, the utmost point of public infatuation.

But, it may be asked, where is the remedy? The remedy is at hand. We have our choice of two languages, either of which may be adopted as a general medium of communication, not only without inconvenience but even with advantage—Latin and Italian. Latin is the parent of all the refined languages in Europe; the interpreter of the great principles of law and of justice, or, in other words, of jurisprudence in all its forms and with all its applications: it is the depository of wisdom and of science, which every age, from the fall of Carthage down to the present period, has continued to enrich with its productions, its inventions, its experience: it still continues the necessary and indispensable accomplishment of the gentleman and of the scholar, and is the sole introduction to all the honourable and liberal professions. It still remains the most widely spread, of all languages, and its grammar is justly regarded for its clearness, its facility, and its consistency as the *General* grammar. Why then should we not adopt as an universal medium of intercourse this language universally understood; and why not restore to it the privilege which it had ever enjoyed, till the fatal conquests of Lewis XIV. spread the language and the vices of France over half the subjugated Continent?

I need not enlarge upon the advantages that would result from the adoption of Latin, or shew how much it would disencumber and facilitate the progress of education: this much,

however, I will observe, that the energy and the magnanimity of the Roman authors in this supposition made common, might kindle once more the flame of liberty in Europe, and again man the rising generation now dissolved in luxury and in effeminacy. But, if in spite of taste and of reason, this noble language must be confined to our closets and a modern dialect must be preferred to it, Italian, without doubt, is the most eligible, because it possesses the most advantages and is free from every objection. Of its advantages, I have already spoken; of its exemption from evils to which French is liable, I need to say but a few words. It can have no political inconvenience; it is not the language of a rival nation. Italy pretends not to universal dominion, either by sea or by land; it administers to the pleasures without alarming the fears of other nations. Its language is that of poetry and of music; it is spread over all the wide-extended coasts, and through all the innumerable islands, of the Mediterranean, and has, at least, a classic universality to recommend it to the traveller who wishes to visit the regions ennobled by the genius and by the virtues of antiquity. The general tenor of Italian is pure and holy. None of its great authors were infected with impiety, and not one of its celebrated works is tinctured, even in the slightest degree, with that poisonous ingredient. I have already mentioned the ease with which it may be acquired: all its sounds may be found in every language; and if it be difficult, perhaps impossible, for foreigners to acquire all the graces of its modulation, they may with very little labour make themselves masters of its essential parts, so as to express themselves with facility and with perspicuity.

But it may perhaps be objected, that a change of diplomatic

language might at present be difficult, if not impossible. The difficulty is not so great as may be imagined.* Let any one of the greater Courts declare its intention of communicating with foreign ministers only in its own language, or in Latin or Italian, and a revolution in this respect will be brought about without delay or opposition. That this change is desirable, and that it would bring with it many political, literary, and even moral advantages can scarcely be disputed; and that it may take place at some future period is by no means improbable †.

Italian was, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, what French has been in the eighteenth, with this difference, that the former language owed to its own intrinsic merits that extension which the latter acquired by the preponderance of French power. When that power declines, and it is too gigantic and too oppressive to last, the language will decline with it, and again return to its natural limits; but what language will succeed it, it is not easy to conjecture. Italian has its intrinsic excellence and its superior literature to recommend it; but English,

* This revolution might have been effected in Vienna in the year 1791, that is, shortly after the commencement of the revolutionary war, if the court had supported the Anti-Gallican spirit of the gentry and people, who pretty generally came to a resolution to dismiss all French teachers, and forbid their families to use that language upon any occasion: a similar disposition was manifested in the year 1806 in Petersburg, in a much higher quarter, as the Emperor is said to have publicly declared, that he never expected to be addressed in any language but English and Russian, but in neither case was this patriotic resolution supported; the burghers of Vienna resumed their French grammars, and the Emperor Alexander submitted to French influence.

† How much the rejection of their language annoys and mortifies the French Cabinet appears from the angry expressions of Bonaparte, complaining that, in

with similar though inferior claims, is supported by fashion, a very powerful ally, by influence commensurate with the known world, and by renown that spreads from pole to pole. It is already the language of commerce as French is that of diplomacy; and while the one is confined to courts and Capitals, the other spreads over continents and islands, and is the dialect of the busy and the active in every quarter of the globe. With such a weight on its side it is possible, even probable, that the scale will preponderate in favour of English; a preponderance which may flatter our vanity, but cannot promote our interest, as it will increase an influence already exorbitant, and expose us more and more to the jealousies and the suspicions of Europe.

After all, it is very difficult to determine, whether, any human efforts can influence the fate of languages, or abridge or prolong their destined duration. We move along in a vast funeral procession, which conveys individuals, kingdoms, and empires, with their passions, their monuments, their languages, to the tomb. The Greeks and Romans precede us in the paths of oblivion: a faint murmur of their languages reaches our ears, to subside ere long in utter silence. Shall our less perfect dialects be more fortunate, and can typographic art impart to them an immortality that fate refused to the beauty of Greece and to the majesty of Rome? I know not; but I can scarce expect such a distinction. One consolation however offers itself amid this general wreck of man, of his works, and of his inventions; it is, that new political associations

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the late negotiations (of 1806), the English Ministry wished to lengthen and perplex the discussions, by the introduction of *Latin forms*, &c.