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THE
L I F E

OF

P E T R A R C H.

COLLECTED FROM

MEMOIRES POUR LA VIE DE PETRARCH.

By Mrs. DOBSON.

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Rarò magni errores nisi ex magnis ingeniis prodire.

PETRARCH

Who is free from love ?

All space he actuates like almighty Jove !

He haunts us waking, haunts us in our dreams,

With vigorous flight bursts thro' the cottage window :

If we seek shelter from his persecution

In the remotest corner of a forest,

We there elude not his pursuit ; for there

With eagle wing he overtakes his prey.

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TO

SOAME JENYNS, Esq.

S I R,

YOU have done me great honour in permitting me to address to you this LIFE OF PETRARCH. It is a very sincere, though inadequate, acknowledgment for the pleasure and improvement I have received from your conversation, and the many elegant and philosophical pro-

ductions with which you have enriched the public.

I am, SIR,

With the greatest respect,

Your most obliged,

and obedient fervant,

Liverpool,
Feb. 8th, 1775.

SUSANNA DOBSON.

P R E F A C E.

TH E fourteenth century, in which flourished the celebrated poet whose life and fortunes are the subject of the following pages, may be considered in a very important light as introductory to the clearer and brighter periods that followed.

In this age many discoveries were made, and useful arts established. The manners and customs of all Europe from this time began to wear a different aspect; and from contests and disorders arose the inestimable blessing of liberty, to the kind influence of which many states owe their present flourishing situation, whose subjects were formerly slaves. Italy, the country which gave birth to Petrarch, was at this time rich and powerful, and superior to

all others in the beauties of nature and the improvements of art : and it was just rising out of the darkness of superstition ; for the homage paid to the church in the thirteenth century was carried to so high a pitch, that when cardinals and prelates appeared, persons of the first rank went before them to keep off the crowd.

This blind devotion began to decrease in this age ; though by degrees scarcely perceptible, as the Roman pontiff still retained his power, and presided at the helm of all public affairs.

But Italy, though superior to the rest of Europe in her attainments, and many other advantages, was at this period a scene of misery and devastation. This delightful country was torn to pieces by the fury of civil discord ; it became a prey to the factions of the Guelphs and the Gibbelines, which arose partly from the quarrels between the popes and the emperors, and partly from struggles occasioned by the love of liberty. As the emperor had not passed the Alps for sixty years, most of the cities revolted from the empire, while they continued to be oppressed by petty tyrants, or

to oppress others whom they had conquered ; and, careless both of the interests of the pope, and the emperor which they had pretended to support, thought only of aggrandising themselves, and expelling their enemies. At the same time, the exiled of all parties waited a favourable occasion of revenge, and of overwhelming, even with the ruin of their country, those who had opposed them. The increase of these desolating evils may in a great measure be ascribed to pope Clement V, who from the love of his native country had translated the holy see to France. Rome in particular suffered greatly by the absence of its governor ; the usurpers who invaded it in this abandoned state caring little for the unavailing thunders launched at them from Avignon.

Such a situation of public affairs seemed little favourable to the restoration of letters. We expect the seeds of knowledge and learning to flourish only in prosperous seasons, and under the shade of tranquillity. Nevertheless it was in the bosom of discord, and amidst the found

of arms, that they were seen to revive and spring up together.

I will not pretend to trace all the circumstances that contributed to this happy event: I will only add, that more was due to the abilities of those great men, who at that time enlightened Italy, and among whom Petrarch held the first rank, than has by some been attributed to them. Had it not been for their fine genius, the world would probably have continued much longer buried in darkness, as the valuable art of printing was not discovered till two centuries after this, and manuscripts of any worth were shut up in the cloisters.

To Petrarch we are indebted for many of these manuscripts; with infinite pains and difficulty he collected and caused them to be copied, and by his labours, and those of his contemporaries, the way was opened for the reception of those works which the Greeks about a century after this brought with them into Italy.

It would be unjust not to name some of

those learned men who engaged with Petrarch in this arduous undertaking, and who, while nobles and peasants were destroying one another, helped to lay the foundation on which the superstructure of science was built. Among these was Brunetto Latini, a very great man, though little known in the present age; he taught rhetoric, eloquence, and philosophy.

Dante, his disciple, profited by his lessons, and composed that whimsical poem called the *Comedia*, full of sublime ideas, cutting strokes of satire, and natural beauties, which make it read to this day with admiration, notwithstanding many defects chargeable on the age in which it was written.

Cimabue and Giotto revived the animated art of painting, and drew pictures of extraordinary merit: a celebrated piece of these masters, now in the Vatican, is a St. Peter walking on the water.

John Villani, the famous historian, gave to posterity the facts that passed under his knowledge, with a fidelity and candour which ought



PREFACE.

to have served as a model to all succeeding historians.

Richard de Bury of England, in the beginning, and Malphigi of Florence, in the latter end of this century, ought also to be mentioned; but as they are, with Boccace and several others, introduced in the following memoirs, which comprehend many of the great characters that flourished, and the particular events that passed in this period, I will only add further in this view of the revival of letters, that the two famous English poets, Gower and Chaucer, were also contemporaries with Petrarch. The merit of the former is little known. The various beauties interspersed in the works of Chaucer, and particularly the masterly strokes of character we find in them, though obscured by an obsolete language, and mixed with many blemishes, shew the powers of a fine imagination, great depth of knowledge, and that perfect conception of men and manners, which is the surest mark of an elevated genius. The picture he has given us of

those times is indeed so animated, that we seem actually to converse with his characters, and are pleased to consider men like ourselves, even in the nicest resemblances, under the different circumstances of an age so very remote.

The above remarks may serve to illustrate the character of Petrarch, so extraordinary for that time, and so very interesting even in the present. To render it the more so, I have omitted some tedious and minute discussions, which appeared to me as barren of instruction as destitute of amusement; and all those private observations of my author (except that on the Decameron) which seem to be suggested to every thinking reader by the facts themselves. And with still more reason I have avoided every reflection that arose in my own mind, on the reading and translating these memoirs, except a few remarks with respect to the characters of Petrarch and Laura, particularly at the close of their lives, which I thought myself obliged to make.

And I have the rather guarded against all such prolix and intrusive digressions, that I

might have room to dwell minutely upon every part of Petrarch's private character, and his admirable letters, thus to exhibit him encircled with his friends, and in the familiar circumstances of life. It is in these situations the heart discloses itself without disguise or reserve; all its intricacies are laid open, and we are enabled to form a true judgment of its character: an object which, next to the great Author of nature, is certainly the most important to contemplate, as a warning, or as a pattern to the human mind.

And perhaps few characters have set in a stronger light the advantage of well-regulated dispositions than that of Petrarch's, from the contrast we behold in one particular of his life; and the extreme misery he suffered from the indulgence of an affection, which, though noble and delightful when justly placed, becomes a reproach and a torment to its possessor, whenever directed to an improper object. For, let us not deceive ourselves or others; though (from the character of Laura) they are acquitted of all guilt in their personal intercourse,

yet, as she was a married woman, it is not possible, on the principles of religion and morality, to clear them from that just censure which is due to every defection of the mind from those laws which are the foundation of order and peace in civil society, and which are stamped with the sacred mark of divine authority.

In this particular of his character, therefore, it is sincerely hoped that Petrarch will serve as a warning to those unhappy minds who, partaking of the same feelings under the like circumstances, but not yet suffering his misery, may be led, by the contemplation of it, by a generous regard to the honour of human nature, and by a view to the approbation of that all-seeing Judge who penetrates the most secret recesses of the heart, to check every unhappy inclination in its birth, and destroy, while yet in their power, the seeds of those passions which may otherwise destroy them.

As to the cavils or censures of those who, incapable of tenderness themselves, can neither enjoy the view of it when presented in its most perfect form, nor pity its sufferings when,

as in this work, they appear unhappily indulged beyond the bounds of judgment and tranquillity; to such minds I make no address; well convinced, that as no callous heart can enjoy, neither will it ever be in danger of being misled by the example of Petrarch, in this tender but unfortunate circumstance of his character.

To susceptible and feeling minds alone Petrarch will be ever dear. Such, while they regret his failings and consider them as warnings to themselves, will love his virtues; and, touched by the glowing piety and heartfelt contrition which often impressed his soul, will ardently desire to partake with him in those pathetic and sublime reflections which are produced in grateful and affectionate hearts, on reviewing their own lives, and contemplating the works of God.

It is too worthy of our notice here to be omitted, that a man who was the first genius of the age in which he lived, and whose society was sought and delighted in by persons of the

highest rank and learning, thought it no derogation to his talents or politeness to introduce sacred and moral observations both in his letters and conversation.

There is still another view in which these memoirs will, I trust, be useful and interesting to the world; I mean in the picture they so affectingly exhibit to mortals of the variation of the human mind, and the vicissitudes of health and fortune, to which, in the present state, beings like ourselves are liable in every rank and profession of life; an object so justly humbling to the pride, and touching to the heart of man, when he beholds, *not in tame precept, but lively image*, the nothingness of all things here, and is led thereby not to rest his view on this little point of time, but to extend it far beyond, and (if I may be allowed so to express myself) *to join the line of life to the line of immortality*.

As the memoirs from which I collected this work were voluminous and expensive, and no life of Petrarch, nor any translation from his

writings, has ever appeared in English, I was induced to venture this abridged translation.

It is taken from a French compilation of the life and writings of Petrarch, collected from his Latin and Italian works, from those of contemporary writers, and some private manuscripts granted to the author by the Abbe Blandini; from the registers of the sovereign pontiffs, who were seated at Avignon, communicated to him by cardinal Torrigiani; and from the archives of the house of Sade preserved there, in which is Laura's contract of her marriage, and her will.

From these sources, some of which were not obtained by the former biographers of Petrarch, who, many of them, were also too pedantic and fond of allegory to write simple facts, the author of these memoirs was enabled to give a more authentic life of Petrarch than had ever appeared before. From Petrarch's letters also in manuscript, a copy of which was granted to the author from the royal library at Paris, he obtained many rich materials for this work. 'To these,' says he, 'was I chiefly

attached. The friendships of Petrarch were tender as well as sociable ; he had a heart that delighted to expand, and to those he loved he opened its most secret folds with pleasure.' These memoirs have been spoken of with the esteem they deserve, and only charged with being rather tedious ; but in truth this was not so easy for a writer to avoid, who had many facts to settle, as for those who should undertake to collect from these facts.

In my endeavour to be less minute, I wish I may not have failed in the spirit of the work, which I undertook chiefly with a view to the amusement of the English reader ; and, considered in this light, it will, I doubt not, meet with all the candour it will require. I received so much pleasure from the perusal of it, independent of the beautiful sonnets, that I was desirous of communicating the same satisfaction to those who might choose to partake of it under this disadvantage.

As I did not think myself by any means capable of transfusing the spirit and elegance of the sonnets into any English translation, I have

only inserted a few lines from some of them, as they were necessarily connected with the subject, such as appeared from their sentiments best able to bear a prose metamorphosis, might serve to enliven the circumstances to which they refer, or illustrate the character of Petrarch, where they particularly mark the delicacy and justness of his sentiments. If any readers of the Latin and Italian works of Petrarch should condescend to look into this translation, they will not, I hope, be displeased with this presumption, or with the great imperfections they will discover through the whole of the work.

THE
L I F E
OF
P E T R A R C H.

B O O K I.

THE family of Petrarch was originally of Florence, where his ancestors had distinguished themselves by their probity, and held employments of trust and honour. Garzo his grandfather was a notary, a profession in higher repute at that time than the present. He was a man universally respected for his candour and the integrity of his manners. He had an excellent natural understanding, and was consulted as an oracle not only on affairs that related to his business, but on the sublimest subjects. Philosophers and learned men disdained not to apply to him; and, though he

had never studied, they admired in his answers the sagacity of his understanding and the rectitude of his heart. After having passed one hundred and four years in innocence and good works, Garzo died, like Plato, on the day of his birth, and in the same bed in which he was born. He had long before predicted the time of his death, which resembled a sweet and peaceful sleep. Thus he went to rest in the bosom of his family, without pain or inquietude, discoursing of God and virtue.

1300. He left three sons, one of whom was the father of our Petrarch, and engaged in the same employment with his ancestors. He had a superior genius and understanding, which would have carried him through every difficulty to a much higher post, had fortune seconded his talents, and permitted him to give them full scope. As he was active and prudent, he was intrusted by the republic with several important commissions, and would have been appointed to higher offices, had he not been the victim of a faction which caused him, together with Dante (who bitterly resents this treatment in his works) to be banished, and to pay a considerable fine.

Petrarco, thus expelled his native city, went to Arezzo in Tuscany, where he hired a

house, and waited for some favourable period to return to Florence.

1304. At the time of Petrarch's birth, his father was exposing his life, without success, to regain his patrimony; and his mother risking hers to bring a son into the world. The physicians and midwives thought her dead for some time; at last, however, the child appeared, and was baptised by the name of Francis, and, according to the custom there, called Francis Petrarco, or Petrarch. The pretext for his father's exile being personal, the party which governed Florence permitted the return of his wife, and she chose to retire to a little estate of her husband's, at Ancise, in the valley of Arno, fourteen miles from Florence. She took the child with her, who was then only seven months old; and in passing the river Arno he was near losing his life. His mother had intrusted him to the care of a lusty man, who fearing his little body might be injured, held him lapped up in a cloth hung at the end of a great stick; as we see Metabus in the *Æneid* carry his daughter Camilla. In passing the river his horse fell down, and the man's eagerness to save the child had like to have destroyed them both.

1311. Petrarch was brought up by his

mother at Ancise till he was seven years old. Petrarco, his father, went from place to place to gain a maintenance, and when fortune gave him the opportunity came secretly to visit his wife. She had two sons beside Petrarch: the one died young; the other, called Gerard, was bred up with his brother.

1313. Petrarco after this, losing all hopes of being re-established at Florence, resolved to abandon a country ruined by war, and governed by his enemies. He went to Avignon, a city of France between Lyons and Marseilles, situated on the banks of the Rhone, where a Gascon pope had fixed the Roman see. All those Italians who were discontented with their present fortunes, or desirous of gaining better, repaired in crowds to this city. Petrarco embarked with his wife and children at Leghorn, in the roughest season of the year: he arrived safely at Genoa, but in the passage to Marseilles so furious a tempest arose, that they were shipwrecked in sight of the port: however, by singular good fortune, not a soul perished.

The prince, who was lord of Avignon at this time, was Charles II. king of Naples, whose son Robert proved so great a friend to learning and to Petrarch.

The translation of the holy see from Rome

to Avignon was a source of infinite distress to the Italians. Italy was full of discord: the Romans disputed with the pope the sovereignty of Rome: he projected a new crusade; and founded his refusal of returning to Rome on this ground, that at Avignon he could more effectually prosecute this holy design. The French on their side complained, that the court of Rome had changed their manners, and, in the room of simplicity, had introduced luxury, murder, and every vice. Avignon was no doubt well situated for the establishment of a court; it was in the bosom of France, and, with respect to Europe, the centre of public affairs, and has always been the asylum of the sovereign pontiffs during their misfortunes. Its vicinity to Marseilles, a port of the Mediterranean, afforded an easy intercourse with Rome, which they might revisit at pleasure. The climate is fine, the air wholesome, the country beautiful, and abounding with every thing which can contribute to the plenty and delight of life. But the Italians, and particularly Petrarch, looked upon it with different eyes; and their prejudices in favour of their native country, so magnificently distinguished both by nature and art, led them to despise every thing they saw beyond the Alps.

Among others who came to settle at Avignon, was a Genoese called Settimo, who brought thither his wife, and a son of the same age with Petrarch. The parents became acquainted, and the children formed an union which was indissoluble. This friend of Petrarch was called Gui Settimo.

The amazing resort of strangers to this small city, made accommodations very dear, and not easy to be obtained : this determined several persons to fix themselves in the neighbouring towns, among whom were Petrarco and Settimo ; and they gave the preference to Carpentras, a pleasant town four leagues from Avignon. Petrarch some time after, in a letter written to a friend, thanks God for this tranquil situation, where he had time to suck in that nourishment which prepares the mind for more solid food.

1314. At this time a Tuscan, whose name was Convenole, quitted Pisa, where he had kept a grammar school, and came to settle at Carpentras. Petrarch had been under his care when he was eight years of age. He was now very old ; a simple honest man, who, though he had taught rhetoric and grammar for sixty years, possessed only the theory of his profession. He sometimes however thought of composing,

but scarcely had he conceived the plan and written the preface, when he changed his design and began another work. Petrarch compares him to the stone which sharpens knives, but is dull itself. It was from this master however he received the first lessons in poetry. Cardinal Colonna, afterwards the great patron of Petrarch, loved to discourse with his schoolmaster, whose simplicity amused him. He said to him one day, ‘ You have had doctors, abbots, bishops, a cardinal, for your scholars ! You loved them all ! Among so many great persons, was there any place in your heart for our Petrarch ? ’ The good old man could not refrain from tears at this question ; declaring always in a most solemn manner, that, of all the scholars he ever had, Petrarch was the youth he most tenderly loved.

A little time after Petrarch had resumed his studies under this master, Clement V. came to Carpentras with a great number of cardinals : the air of Avignon did not agree with him ; or the inquietude of his mind occasioned by ill health would not suffer him to rest in any place. The change, however, was not successful ; on which he resolved to go to Bourdeaux, to try his native air ; but was obliged to stop at a village near Avignon, where he died.

There was a great opposition of interests in the conclave, and disputes and quarrels arose between the Italians and Gascons about a new pope. These tumults, and the obsequies of Clement, were amusing objects to Petrarch, now ten years old; at a riper age they would have penetrated him with the most lively grief. Dante, whom we may consider as the forerunner of Petrarch, wrote on this occasion a fine letter to the dispersed cardinals; in which he exhorts them to reunite immediately, to stop this anarchy so fatal to the church, and to bring back the holy see to Rome.

1317. After the departure of the cardinals, Carpentras enjoyed tranquillity: Petrarch profited by it, gave himself entirely to study, and made astonishing progress. In the course of five years he learned as much grammar, rhetoric, and logic, as can be taught in schools to those of his age.

The father of Petrarch and the uncle of Gui Settimo, having engaged to go together to the celebrated fountain of Vaucluse, their children were desirous of accompanying them; a curiosity very natural to persons of their age. The mother of Petrarch consented to it with difficulty: she joined to the timidity of her sex that anxiety which is produced by extreme ten-

derness; the least thing alarmed her, and at that time the shortest journeys were not taken without danger. But how could she resist the requests and caresses of a beloved child! At last she complied, and they set out for this retreat. No sooner were they arrived at the fountain, than Petrarch, enraptured with the charms of this wonderful solitude, felt an emotion which made him cry out, 'Here is a situation which suits me marvellously! Was I master of this place, I should prefer it to the finest cities!' These lively impressions were afterwards transfused through many of Petrarch's works; and have immortalised the beauties of Vacluse.

A mind like Petrarch's could not be confined in the narrow path of study which was followed in that age; he soon left his school-fellows far behind in the career of learning. Prosper and the fables of Esop were the only books the masters gave their scholars to teach them the Latin: and while they were torturing their brains to understand these, Petrarch, to whom they were only a pastime, already devoured the works of Cicero, which he had found among his father's books, who loved and revered that celebrated writer. And though he could not penetrate his deep

thoughts, he tasted the harmony of his language, compared with which the style of every other author was to him discordant. In short, he conceived such a passion for these writings, that he would have stripped himself of all he had to purchase them.

1318. The time however came when his father thought it necessary to seek an establishment for his son. Science and letters were held in contempt even at Avignon, though the residence of the most polite and witty court in Europe. Law was the only study which led to fortune, and Petrarco, observing the talents of his son, hoped he would make a figure in this profession, and sent him, not yet fourteen years of age, to study at Montpellier; a town finely situated for health and pleasure, with a university famous for the skill of its professors, both in physic and law. The Roman law had been taught there from the twelfth century. Petrarch studied here four years; but it was so much lost time, for he could not be brought to fix his attention on such dry subjects: 'I could not,' says he, 'deprave my mind by such a system of chicanery as the present forms of law exhibit.'

Petrarco, perceiving his slow progress, sent him to Bologna, a place of still higher renown

for persons of this profession ; but he succeeded no better there than at Montpellier. What a grief to Petrarco to find that, instead of applying to the law, his son passed whole days in reading ancient authors, and above all the poets, with whom he was infatuated ! He took a journey to Bologna, to remedy if possible this evil, which he apprehended would be so fatal to his son. Petrarch, who did not expect his father, ran to hide the manuscripts of Cicero, Virgil, and some other poets, of whose works he had formed a little library ; depriving himself of every other enjoyment to become master of these treasures. Petrarco, having discovered the place in which they were concealed, took them out before his face, and cast them all into the fire. Petrarch in an agony of despair cried out, as if he himself had been precipitated into the flames, which he saw devouring what was most dear to his imagination. Petrarco, who was a good man, moved by the lamentations of a beloved child, snatched Cicero and Virgil out of the fire half burnt ; and holding the poet in one hand, and the orator in the other, he presented them to Petrarch, saying, ‘ Take them, my son ! here is Virgil, who shall console you for what you have lost ; here is Cicero, who shall pre-

pare you for the study of the laws.' Petrarch was touched with so much goodness, and would if possible have gratified so kind a father; but nature was always stronger than his endeavours.

By accident he met with two of the best poets of that time among the professors at Bologna; Cino de Pistoie, who read the code, and Cecco de Asoli, who taught philosophy and astrology. Cino had three disciples who have done him honour, Petrarch, Boccace, and Bartholi. These poets soon discovered the talents and the taste for poetry which Petrarch possessed; and, instead of opposing, they cultivated the latter, and assisted their young disciple in the pursuit of it. His desire of knowing every thing was insatiable, the surest mark of superior genius in youth.

1324. At this time he received a letter from Avignon, informing him of the death of his mother. Petrarch says, 'She was a woman of rare merit; and though very handsome, and living where much corruption of manners took place, not only her virtue had never swerved, but even calumny had never reached her. She possessed a solid and rational piety, which she shewed in attending to the duties of her station, and the care of her house.' Petrarco,

who had always lived with her in the most perfect union, felt his loss to be irreparable: he was affected with it in so lively a manner, that he languished from that time, and, not being able to survive so dear a companion, died the year after, 1325. As soon as Petrarch received this melancholy news, he quitted Bologna with his brother Gerard: and they went to Avignon to collect what their parents had left them, and to put their affairs in order.

These two orphans, without protection and experience, were much embarrassed in a city which they scarcely knew, having only passed through it occasionally; and where now neither parents nor friends remained. Their domestic affairs were in the greatest disorder, arising from the villany of those to whom Petrarco had given them in trust, and who had appropriated most of the effects to themselves. ‘To their ignorance, however,’ says Petrarch, ‘I owed a manuscript of Cicero; it was the most precious effect my father had left me.’ Their property being thus alienated, they had recourse to the priest’s habit, as the likeliest road to success.

This indifferent situation of affairs did not prevent Petrarch from a good work. Conventole, his old schoolmaster, had given up his

school, and dragged out a languishing life at Avignon, overwhelmed with age and poverty. Petrarco had assisted him during his life, and Petrarch was now the sole resource of this poor old man. He never failed to succour him in his need; and when he had no money (which was often the case) he carried his benevolence so far, as to lend him his books to pawn. This exquisite charity proved an irreparable loss to the republic of letters; for among these books were two rare manuscripts of Cicero, in which was his treatise upon glory. Petrarch asked him some time after where he had placed them, designing to redeem them himself. The old man, ashamed of what he had done, answered only with tears. Petrarch offered him money to recover them. 'Ah!' replied he, 'what an affront are you putting upon me!' Petrarch, to humour his delicacy, went no further. Some time after, Convenole went from Avignon to Prato, his native village, where he died: and the manuscripts could never be recovered. Petrarch drew up his epitaph, at the request of his countrymen.

1326. The licentiousness of such a city as Avignon was very dangerous for a youth of Petrarch's free dispositions and lively passions; he was now twenty-two years of age: he lived

however with his brother in the strictest union; their tastes, desires, and projects, were nearly the same. Inclination led them to frequent public places, and the assemblies of the ladies; and the state of their finances put them under the disagreeable necessity of making their court to persons in favour. A considerable part of the day was often employed in dressing, and in all those minute particulars which are requisite to a polished exterior. In a letter, which Petrarch wrote to his brother, he says, ‘ Recollect the time when we wore white habits, on which the least spot or a plait ill placed would have been a subject of grief; when our shoes were so tight we suffered martyrdom in them: when we walked in the streets, what care to avoid the puffs of wind that would have disordered our hair, and the splashes of water that would have tarnished the gloss of our clothes.’ A young man so employed could have but little leisure: that little however was devoted to study, and counterbalanced his devotion to the gaieties of the world.

The scarceness of books rendered it difficult for Petrarch to satisfy his desire of knowledge; the manuscripts of Latin authors of the Augustan age were scarce, and of the Greek authors there were only bad translations, which

were exceedingly dear ; for those who possessed them kept them shut up as a treasure. By courage, patience, and address, he often surmounted these obstacles : and it is to him we are indebted for many ancient authors which had been lost, had he not collected them with infinite labour. Copies were taken in his presence, and sometimes he transcribed them himself, being out of patience with the tediousness and blunders of the writers he employed.

Nothing was more easy than to err in this road of genius into which Petrarch was entered. He stood in need of an enlightened guide ; and he had the happiness to find such a director in John of Florence, canon of Pisa, a man respected for his age and the gravity of his manners. He had been fifty years in the office of apostolic writer, which, though a laborious employment, did not hinder him from improving his understanding, by the study of the ancient authors. He had behaved, in a stormy and corrupt court, with such steady virtue as to acquire great reputation. His conversation was agreeable, and he was sought by all for his eloquence and wit. Petrarch felt of what consequence it was to please a man of such merit. Their country was the bond that

united them, if we believe Petrarch, whose modesty gave this reason for the affection he was received with by this holy father. 'I have felt,' says he, 'in the course of my life, that the strongest of all bonds with good men is the love of their country, and hatred of it with the wicked.' It was no wonder John of Florence took a delight in such a young man as Petrarch. He looked upon him as his own son. Not content with directing him in his studies, he entered into all the particulars of his life, assisted him with his advice, and consoled him in his troubles. He exhorted him to virtue and the love of God; and praised him in all places with that warmth which friendship alone can inspire.

Petrarch, in return for all this goodness, placed an entire and unreserved confidence in his guide. He delighted to unbosom himself to his father; to confess to him his chagrins; and to acknowledge his faults. After quitting him, he looked into his own heart; he felt it more tranquil, more inspired with the love of study, more disposed to virtue. 'One day,' says he, 'I went to my father, in one of those desponding moods which sometimes take hold of me. He received me with his usual kindness.

“What is the matter with you?” said he. “You seem thoughtful, and I am deceived if something has not befallen you.” “You are not mistaken, my father,” replied I; “but it is nothing new; my old cares oppress me; you know them; my heart has never been hid from you. I hoped to have risen above the crowd, and, animated by your love, to have arrived at something great. You have often told me I should be obliged to answer before God for the talents which I neglected to cultivate. With such incitements, I applied myself with ardour to study, and suffered not a moment to be lost. Yet, after all I have done to know something, I find I know nothing. Shall I quit study? Shall I enter into another course? Have pity on me, my father. Draw me out of the dreadful state I am fallen into.” In saying this, I burst into tears. “Cease to afflict yourself, my child,” said he; “your condition is not so bad as it appears to you. You knew nothing at the time you thought yourself wise: and you have made a great step towards knowledge in discovering your ignorance. The veil is removed; and you now see those errors of the soul, which an excess of presumption had formerly hid from your eyes. In proportion as we ascend an ele-

vated place, we discover many things we did not suspect before. Launch out into the sea, and the further you advance, the more will you be convinced of its immensity, and of the necessity of a vessel to preserve you on that element. Follow the road you have entered by my advice, and be persuaded that God will never abandon you. Those disorders are the most fatal, where the evil is not perceived : to know the disease, is the first step towards a cure." These words, like an oracle, re-established my peace.'

Petrarch tells us that his mind, like his body, excelled in activity rather than strength, and in uprightness rather than solidity. Moral philosophy and poetry were his chief delight ; he loved also the study of antiquity, to which he was the more inclined from an aversion to the age in which he lived. He loved history, but he could not bear the discord which reigned among historians. In doubtful parts, he determined by the probability of the facts, and the reputation of the authors. He applied himself to philosophy, without espousing any sect ; because he found no system which was satisfactory. ' I love truth,' says he, ' and not sects. I am sometimes a peripatetic, a stoic, or an academician, and often none of them ; but—

ALWAYS A CHRISTIAN. To philosophize is to love wisdom ; and the true wisdom is Jesus Christ. Let us read the historians, the poets, and the philosophers ; but let us have in our hearts the gospel of Jesus Christ, in which alone is perfect wisdom and perfect happiness.' It were to be wished that those who have devoted themselves to letters had always followed this rule.

The time that Petrarch gave up to study retarded the progress of his fortune ; he had as yet no patrons who could make him independent. It was necessary therefore to seek some more profitable situation ; and one presented itself beyond his utmost hopes. He had seen at Bologna James Colonna ; but, though they pursued the same studies, and were often together in the same schools, they formed at that time no union. It is wonderful that two young men of such similar dispositions, and whom nature seemed to have united, should at that time shew so little affection for each other. James Colonna, who remained at Bologna to finish the study of the law after Petrarch quitted that place, returned to Avignon soon after. He discovered Petrarch in the confusion of that tumultuous court ; and, having informed himself more particularly about him,

he confessed, that his countenance had always pleased him, and he soon admitted him into his familiar friendship. To judge of Petrarch's happiness, we must give the picture he has himself drawn of James Colonna.

'He was,' says he, 'of all men one of the most amiable; he had a noble and agreeable countenance; and a majestic air, which announced a person of dignity. He was easy in society; gay in conversation; and grave, when such a deportment was proper. He was tender and dutiful to his parents, generous and faithful to his friends, and affable and liberal to all the world. Notwithstanding his great name, and greater talents, he appeared always humble and modest, and, with a very distinguished figure, his manners were irreproachable. No one could resist his eloquence. It might be said, he held the hearts of men in his hand. Full of candour and frankness, his letters, his conversation, discovered to his friends all the movements of his soul. He was born in France, during the residence of his father in that country. Nature gave him a taste for the sciences, which he had highly cultivated; but principally those relative to the ecclesiastical state. He had read the fathers, as far as they could be read in an age when manuscripts were rare;

and he gave the preference to St. Jerome.' This often engaged him in disputes with Petrarch, who was partial to St. Augustin. A man who had so much understanding and discernment, soon discovered the merits of Petrarch; who on his part considered it as a singular happiness to have acquired the protection and favour of such a Mæcænas.

James Colonna was desirous of presenting to his parents so amiable a friend. One branch of his family was established at Avignon, and were the greatest ornaments of the court of Rome.

In the quarrels of Italy they had been great sufferers; and there is a fine passage related of Stephen, an ancestor of this Colonna. When in the heat of battle, and oppressed with numbers, one of his friends, terrified with the peril in which he saw him, ran to his aid, crying out, 'Stephen! where is your fortress?' 'Here it is,' he replied with a smile, laying his hand upon his heart. And in fact, he had not at that time a single house left: Boniface had taken all.

Petrarch speaks with the greatest freedom of this pope. 'We ought not,' says he, 'to offend the vicar of God, but Boniface had too free a tongue, and too bitter a spirit, for a suc-

cessor of Christ.' This, among other free things, he wrote in a letter addressed to one of the subsequent popes. Benedict XI. revoked the sentence against the Colonnas; and Celment V. restored the hat to the two cardinals, James and Peter Colonna, at the solicitation of the kings of England and France. From the line of Stephen Colonna arose the illustrious family, which will so often appear in a very interesting light in the course of these memoirs,

B O O K II.

1327. WE are now to enter upon a very interesting part of the life of Petrarch. About this time he felt the first emotions of that ardent, tender, and constant passion, which was ever after engraved upon his heart. The names of Petrarch and Laura can *never* be separated.

Petrarch had received from nature a very dangerous present; his figure was so distinguished, as to attract universal admiration. He appears in his portraits with large and manly features, eyes full of fire, a blooming complexion, and a countenance that bespoke all the genius and fancy which shone forth in his works. In the flower of his youth the beauties of his person were so very striking, that wherever he appeared he was the object of attention. He possessed an understanding active and penetrating, a brilliant wit, and a fine imagination. His heart was candid and benevolent, susceptible of the most lively affections, and inspired with the noblest sentiments of liberality.

But his failings must not be concealed. His temper was on some occasions violent, and his passions headstrong and unruly. A warmth of constitution hurried him into irregularities, which were followed with repentance and remorse. 'I can aver,' says he, 'that from the bottom of my soul I detest such scenes.' And in another place, 'I sometimes acted with freedom, because love had not yet become an inhabitant of my breast.' No essential reproach however could be cast on his manners till after the twenty-third year of his age. The fear of God, the thoughts of death, the love of virtue, and those principles of religion which were inculcated by his mother, preserved him from the surrounding temptations of his earlier life.

After his return from Bologna, he passed a whole year among the numerous beauties of Avignon, in a state of calm indifference. Some of these beauties were ambitious to make a conquest of so accomplished a youth. Their attentions however were only matter of amusement; they never reached his heart: and he was at this time, to use his own words, 'as free and wild as an untamed stag.' But alas! the moment was fast approaching, when this boasted liberty was to be at an end. 'Love,'

says he, 'observing that his former arrows had glanced over my heart, called to his aid a lady against whose power neither wit, strength, nor beauty, were of the least avail.' . . .

On Sunday in the holy week, at six in the morning, the time of matins, Petrarch going to the church of the monastery of St. Claire, saw a young lady, whose charms instantly fixed his attention. She was dressed in green, and her gown was embroidered with violets. Her face, her air, her gait, were something more than mortal. Her person was delicate, her eyes tender and sparkling, and her eyebrow black as ebony. Golden locks waved over her shoulders whiter than snow; and the ringlets were interwoven by the fingers of love. Her neck was well formed, and her complexion animated by the tints of nature, which art vainly attempts to imitate. When she opened her mouth, you perceived the beauty of pearls and the sweetness of roses. She was full of graces. Nothing was so soft as her looks, so modest as her carriage, so touching as the sound of her voice. An air of gaiety and tenderness breathed around her, but so pure and happily tempered, as to inspire every beholder with the sentiments of virtue: for she was chaste as the spangled dew-drop of the morn,

‘Such,’ says Petrarch, ‘was the amiable Laura;’ and he adds:

‘Till this moment I was a stranger to love; but its brightest flame was now lighted up in my soul. Honour, virtue, and the graces; a thousand attractions, a thousand amiable conversations—these, O love! are thy tender ties! These are the nets in which thou hast caught me. How was it possible for me to avoid this labyrinth? a labyrinth from which I shall never escape.’

In another sonnet; ‘Hitherto I feared not love. My affections, cold as ice, formed around my heart a crystal rampart. Tears were strangers to my eyes; my sleep was undisturbed; and I saw with astonishment in others, what I had never experienced in myself. Such have I been! Alas! what am I now?’

‘Nature formed you,’ says Petrarch, ‘the most striking model of her own power. When I first beheld you, what emotions! Nothing can efface the impression you then made. When I begin to sing of Laura, my spirits are chilled: when I open my lips, my voice falters and stops. What powers of harmony can equal such a subject?’

Various have been the opinions concerning Laura. From a comparative view of them

with the few particulars to be found of her private life, collected from the archives of the house of Sade, and from the writings of Petrarch, it appears she was the daughter of Andibert de Novès, a chevalier, and that her mother's name was Ermeffenda. The house of Novès held the first rank at Novès, a town of Provence, two leagues from Avignon, and Laura had a house in that city, where she passed a part of the year. Her father left her a handsome dowry on her marriage, which was made by her mother when she was very young with Hugues de Sade, whose family was originally of Avignon, and who held the first offices there.

From the whole behaviour of Laura, joined to these and other facts on record, as we shall hereafter see, concerning her family, it is clearly proved she was a married woman when Petrarch first met with her at the church of the monastery of St. Claire. Had it not been so, there seems little reason for her austerity or his remorse, which arose from the indulgence of a passion too violent (as he owns in his dialogue with St. Augustin) to be caused by a pure affection of mind; as some authors have represented it: one in particular, who says that the pope, from his high esteem and love of Pe-

trarch, offered his holding certain offices in the church, in conjunction with his marriage with Laura; which Petrarch refused, saying that his affection would be fullied by the conjugal tie. One remark alone is sufficient to invalidate this author's authority. He says, that it was Urban V. who would have granted this license to Petrarch, and Urban was not elected pope till after the death of Laura.

An old picture of Laura was brought in 1642 to cardinal Barberini, which had a long time been preserved in the house of Sade at Avignon; and Richard de Sade, then bishop of Cavaillon, whose authority in this matter was undeniable, proved that this Laura of the house of Sade was the Laura of Petrarch: and that all the accounts of her as an allegorical person, or of her being at Vacluse as the mistress of Petrarch, were the invention of romancers, who drew from nothing less than facts, and mixed allegory with every thing; and who upon examination are found to be as ill informed in many other material circumstances concerning Petrarch as in this respecting Laura.

As so much has been said on this subject by different authors of the life of Petrarch, it seemed necessary to notice it, and mention the

authority on which the facts rest relative to the marriage and family of Laura. And this has caused us to digress too long from our history, to which we will now return.

James Colonna, the friend of Petrarch, had nobly distinguished himself in a dispute between the emperor and the pope, and had even exposed his life to the fury of the emperor's troops which surrounded him, while he was the only man who ventured to read the pope's bull to a thousand persons assembled; and after this he boldly said, 'I oppose Lewis of Bavaria; and maintain that pope John XXII. is the catholic and legitimate pope; and that he who calls himself emperor, is not so.' No one replied; and this adventurous step proved successful.

1330. The bishopric of Lombes becoming vacant, John XXII. gave it, with a dispensation on account of age, to James Colonna: a small recompense for so great a service. If the dignity was above his years, its situation in a rude village was little suitable to his rank; however, he determined to go and take possession. This prelate was extremely fond of Petrarch's society, and asked him to accompany him. 'He desired me to do that as a favour,' says Petrarch, 'which he might have command-

ed from his superiority and the ascendancy he had over me.' Influenced by the strongest attachment to this friend, Petrarch could not refuse him anything: besides, he had a curiosity which made travelling very agreeable, especially in such society, and he accepted with joy the proposal of the bishop of Lombes.

They set out in 1330, to go from Avignon to Lombes. They traversed Languedoc; passed Montpellier, where Petrarch had studied; Narbonne, which Cicero called the bulwark of the Roman empire, and the model of Rome itself, to Thoulouse, where they spent some days; for the love of science and letters rendered it worthy the curiosity of the bishop and of Petrarch. Martial calls it the Roman Palladium from its taste for the polite arts; Ausonius, the famous poet of the fourth century, was brought up there. Provincial poetry was more cultivated in Languedoc than in the other provinces; and Thoulouse was considered as the principal seat of the Muses. It was in this residence at Thoulouse, and in Gascony, that Petrarch became acquainted with the works of some of their famous poets, from whom he is thought to have gathered many beauties.

In their rout from Thoulouse to Lombes,

our travellers suffered much from bad weather and dreadful roads. The situation of the town, and the pleasures it afforded, did not recompense the fatigue of their journey. Lombes is at the foot of the Pyrenean mountains, near the source of the Garonne; the town is small, dirty, and very ill built; the country about dry, unfruitful, and void of all prospect. The characters, customs, and conversation of the inhabitants, like their climate, uncouth, rough, and hardened: nothing could be so opposite to the Italian manners. Petrarch could not reconcile himself to them; and, besides this, he dreaded the continual thunders this country is subject to, and which are occasioned by the neighbouring mountains, collecting almost uninterrupted storms. A fine field of pleasantry this for the bishop, who loved raillery, and who often bantered Petrarch for his delicacy; though in fact he was astonished to find so much courage, strength, and patience, in a young man softened by the polite arts. He was pleasant also upon some grey hairs which appeared already, though he was scarce twenty-five years old. To this raillery Petrarch answered, ‘ It consoles me that I have this in common with the greatest men of antiquity, Cæsar, Virgil, Domitian, &c.’ Petrarch found

however in the mansion of the bishop of Lombes, a sufficient recompense for what the rudeness of the climate and the inhabitants caused him to suffer. Among the persons whom his name, his rank, and above all, the character of James Colonna, attached to him, there were two whom our young poet distinguished from the rest, and with whom he formed a tender friendship.

The first was Lello, the son of Peter Stephani, a Roman gentleman, whose family had been always attached to that of Colonna. Petrarch says of him, ‘ His family is Roman and noble, but of modern origin ; his character, however, and manner of thinking, is that of ancient Rome. He is more ennobled by his virtues than his birth ; nature has endued him with many talents which he has cultivated and perfected by study : he is prudent, industrious, discreet, and faithful.’ So many good qualities rendered him extremely dear to all the Colonnas. Old Stephen Colonna looked upon him as his son ; his children, as their brother : and he was attached in a particular manner to the bishop of Lombes. He was much given to study from his youth ; but, afterwards, the unsettled state of his country inclined him to take

up arms; which he quitted again in peace, to resume his books and pen. His wisdom and his fidelity determined Petrarch to give him the name of Lelius, the friend of Scipio.

The second was called Lewis; he was born near Bar le Duc, in a little country situated on the banks of the Rhine, between Brabant and a part of Holland called Compigne. Petrarch, in respect to the place of his birth, calls him the Barbarian. 'I was astonished,' says he, 'to find in this Barbarian, a cultivated mind, politeness, sweetness, and the most agreeable talents. He makes good verses, and is perfect in music; his imagination is lively, his conversation cheerful and easy. To this he joins a rectitude and strength of soul, which renders him capable of bestowing the best advice.' The serenity of his manners, his modesty, and an equality of temper which nothing could disturb, determined Petrarch to give him the name of Socrates.

With these three friends, Lelius, Socrates, and the bishop, Petrarch passed a delicious summer; 'almost,' says he, 'a celestial one. I cannot,' he continues afterwards, 'recall a season passed so agreeably, without regretting it: those were the most delightful days of my life:

such a chosen society was a full compensation for residing in this Gascon village, and could alone console me for the absence of Laura.'

One of his great pleasures was to see the young prelate in his episcopal office. In the flower of his age, and with an air of youth which promised nothing serious, he acquitted himself with a gravity and exactness that would have been admired in an old pontiff. When he spoke to his people, or to his clergy, he inspired and impressed their souls; from the delicacies of a Roman court, he had passed into the Pyrenean deserts, without shewing by his air and manner that he had changed his climate. His countenance was always gay and serene, his humour always equal; and in a little time he so entirely changed the face of the country, that this part of Gascony appeared a little Italy.

A correspondence also between the bishop and John Andre, the famous professor of the canon law at Bologna, contributed very much to the amusement of Petrarch, during his residence at Lombes. This man, so celebrated in his own age, and so little known at present, was deeply versed in the civil law, but very superficial in all other knowledge; nevertheless, by a perverseness of nature not uncommon, he

wished to appear perfect in all the sciences. In his school, instead of keeping within his subject, he affected to dazzle his scholars with a vain parade of erudition, and quoted with emphasis books whose titles alone he was acquainted with. His scholars, who knew still less than he did, admired his memory, and considered him as a prodigy of learning. The letters which Andre wrote to the bishop of Lombes, the most loved of his disciples, were in the taste of pedantry and false erudition. In them he places Plato and Cicero in the rank of poets, and makes Ennius and Statius contemporaries. The bishop amused himself with them, and desired Petrarch to write the answers. The reputation of John Andre did not impose upon Petrarch; the judgment with which he had studied enabled him to heighten and set off the errors and anachronisms with which the professor's letters were filled, and he acquitted himself in a very artful and ingenious manner.

After having passed all the summer and a part of the autumn at Lombes, the bishop came back to Avignon to see his father, who was soon expected there from Italy. He brought Petrarch with him, and presented him on his arrival to the cardinal his brother, a

man whom he loved and esteemed, and without whom he could not live. Cardinal Colonna had neither the air nor the manners of his brethren; he was the most gentle, unartful, and amiable of men; the most easy to live with; to look at him, you would suppose him ignorant of his birth and rank: his life was innocent and pure, and he was indulgent to those errors in others, from which the superiority of his own mind had kept him free. He spoke to princes, and even to the pope himself, with a liberty and frankness which gave him during his whole life the greatest credit and authority. A friend of letters and of the sciences, it was his pleasure to bring together men of all countries, who had wit and knowledge; and their conversation was his greatest delight. He knew little of Petrarch; but, from the advantageous things the bishop of Lombes said of him, he gave him a very kind reception, and insisted on his coming to reside at his house.

The city of Avignon had given to the cardinal, for his use and that of his household, a large seat, where the city hotel and a part of the monastery of St. Laurence now stands.

‘What a happiness for me,’ says Petrarch, ‘that a man so superior in every respect, never

suffered me to feel that superiority! He behaved to me like a father; a father did I say, like a tender and indulgent brother: and I lived in his house with the same ease as I could have done in my own.' Undoubtedly this was the very situation for Petrarch: none could so perfectly suit a man of his taste. It was the rendezvous of all these strangers distinguished for their talents and learning, whom the court of Rome drew to Avignon. There was much improvement in these societies, where they reasoned on all subjects with an agreeable and becoming freedom. This was one of the sources from whence Petrarch drew that prodigious variety of knowledge, so astonishing in the age he lived in, and so very difficult to acquire. In these assemblies he became acquainted with the men of learning of all countries, and corresponded with many of them ever after.

1331. One of these was Richard of Bury or Augervile, the wisest man at this time in England, who came to Avignon in this year. He was sent thither by Edward III. his pupil and his king. Edward wrote a letter to the pope, recommending to him in particular Richard of Bury, and Anthony of Beſagnes, whom he had sent with an embassy to his court. The pope,

not knowing where he should find room to lodge these ambassadors as became their dignity, desired the grand master of the knights of St. John to lend him some houses dependent on their commandery. It is probable the motive of this embassy was to justify this prince with the pope for the violent part he had taken in shutting up in a castle his mother Isabella of France, and imprisoning Mortimer, the favourite of that queen. Richard of Bury had a piercing wit, a cultivated understanding, and an eager desire after every kind of knowledge; nothing could satisfy this ardour, no obstacle could stop its progress. He had given himself up to study from his youth. His genius threw light on the darkest, and his penetration fathomed the deepest subjects. He was passionately fond of books; and laboured all his life to collect the largest library at that time in Europe. A man of such merit, and the minister and favourite of the king of England, was received with every mark of distinction in the society of cardinal Colonna.

Petrarch was happy to unite himself to so great a scholar; from whom he might receive much information, especially on the subjects of ancient history and geography, which he was then particularly studying. These two men,

equally eager to make new discoveries in science, had several conferences. Petrarch mentions one of them, which relates to the island of Thule: he wished to be informed concerning its real situation, so doubtfully spoken of by the ancients; and which the best geographers placed several days voyage to the north of England.

Richard either could not, or did not choose to communicate any material discovery; but told Petrarch he must recur to his books when he returned home for an éclaircissement on this subject. His stay at Avignon was short: Edward, who could not do without him, recalled him to England soon after. On his return, he possessed all the confidence and favour of his master, who first made him bishop of Durham, chancellor the year following, then high treasurer, and plenipotentiary for a treaty of peace with France.

Richard of Bury did in England what Petrarch did all his life in France, Italy, and Germany. He gave much of his attention, and spent a great part of his fortune, to discover the manuscripts of ancient authors, and have them copied under his immediate inspection. Richard, in a treatise he wrote on the love and choice of books, relates the incredible ex-

pence he was at to form his famous library, notwithstanding he made use of the authority which his dignity and favour with the king procured him. He mentions the arts he was obliged to use to compass his design, and informs us, that the first Greek and Hebrew grammars that ever appeared were derived from his labours: he had them composed for the English students, persuaded that, without the knowledge of these two languages, and especially the Greek, it was impossible to understand the principles of either the ancient heathen or christian writers. And, speaking of France in this book, he says, ‘The superior sciences are neglected in France, and its militia is in a languishing state.’ Petrarch had not the happiness of seeing this great man again, being absent when he was sent on a second embassy to the court of Avignon, at the time the war between France and England began to break out; and Richard’s numerous affairs prevented his answering the letters of Petrarch. He died in 1345; and his character has been enlarged upon from the great importance it bore in the political, and the great use it was of to the learned, world.

Cardinal Colonna had not only a taste for Petrarch’s conversation, but soon became sen-

sible of the truth and candour of his soul; and shewed him a confidence and distinction extremely flattering to the self-love of our young poet. There was a great quarrel in the cardinal's household, which was carried so far that they came to arms. The cardinal wished to know the bottom of this affair; and, that he might be able to act with justice, he assembled all his people, and obliged them to take oath on the gospels that they would declare the whole truth. Every one without exception was obliged to submit to this determination; even Agopit, bishop of Luna, the brother of the cardinal, was not excused. Petrarch presenting himself, in his turn, to take the oath, the cardinal shut the book, and said, 'Oh! as to you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient.' The Athenians behaved in the same manner to Xenocrates the philosopher.

There lived with the cardinal several of his brothers, who had devoted themselves to the church; and they all seemed to dispute with each other who should shew the tenderest affection to Petrarch. An uncle also of the cardinal delighted infinitely in that love of knowledge and taste for conversation he perceived in him. He was called Jean de St. Vit; he was lord of Genzano, and maintained the siege of

Nepi against the army of crusaders sent there by Boniface VIII; and being constrained to surrender the place, he rambled up and down the world to avoid the fury of Boniface, the most revengeful of men. He travelled into Persia, Arabia, and Egypt; at last, tired of living this wandering life, he came back to enjoy the sweets of repose in the house of the two cardinals, James and Peter Colonna, one of whom was his uncle, the other his brother. To a mind lively and judicious, Jean de St. Vit joined a great variety of knowledge, acquired in his travels, which rendered his conversation as useful as it was agreeable.

To dissipate the chagrins of this good old man, Petrarch wrote a comedy in Latin verse, called *Philologia*, which some years after he suppressed, probably with some reason, as the subject of universal learning seems an improper one for the nature of comedy: but the motive for his writing it ought not to undergo the same fate. Petrarch did not long enjoy the society of Jean de St. Vit: this old man, almost blind, and harassed with the gout, had a restlessness of mind which did not permit him to remain in the same place; and a keenness of temper which drew upon him very powerful enemies in the court of Rome. They inveighed

against him with fury; and, notwithstanding his name, and the great credit of his family, they got him exiled to Italy, his native country. Though he might probably wish to revisit Italy and Rome, he was chagrined to do it in this manner, and submit to the triumph of his enemies. It was with sincere regret he quitted his friends at Avignon, and above all his dear Petrarch. He wrote frequently to him to express his concern for the separation, and shewed great impatience for having been detained by unfavourable winds from his place of destination. Petrarch answered these letters, full of spleen and weakness, in the tone of a philosopher and master who reproves his disciple. We are astonished that a young man of a free and gallant disposition should address an old lord of the house of Colonna in such terms. Petrarch felt the impropriety, and therefore adds: ‘Be not offended at the contrast of my life and my lessons: forget who it is that advises you. Have not you sometimes seen a physician, pale and wasted by a disease which had resisted all his art, cure another, though he could not heal himself?’

The concern of the Colonnas for the loss of this friend was succeeded by the greatest joy on the arrival of Stephen Colonna at Avignon,

that great man, so famous for his courage and resources in the cruel extremities to which the rage of Boniface had reduced him. The troubles of Rome, which still continued, drew him this year to the court of the pope, with whom he came to concert the means of re-establishing peace in his country; and with joy seized this occasion of again seeing a part of his family. Petrarch longed impatiently to know a hero of whom he had conceived the highest idea from the voice of fame. It has been said, that heroes lose their consequence when viewed in a familiar light: but the presence of Stephen Colonna only served to increase the admiration and respect of Petrarch, who soon insinuated himself into his heart. This gay and affable old man enjoyed the fire of Petrarch's imagination, and was much amused with his curiosity and inquiries. But the violent love Petrarch had for Rome, which the reading of Livy had confirmed into a sort of idolatry, contributed most of all to fasten the bonds that united him with Stephen Colonna. He delighted to converse with Petrarch on this subject, to speak of the grandeur of ancient Rome, where he held the first rank, and to explain to him the august and precious monuments which still subsisted.

Stephen Colonna did not make a long stay in this court ; his love of his country, and his affairs, recalled him soon after to Rome. He had brought with him to Avignon Agapit his grandson, designed for the ecclesiastical state, to have him brought up under the inspection of the cardinal and bishop his uncle. These prelates joined with the father in intreating Petrarch to undertake his education. As he was fond of liberty above all things, he was much disinclined to this office ; but his obligation to friends, who had overwhelmed him with favours, left him not the liberty of a refusal. This young man did not second his endeavours, or answer his great name. It must be allowed, that Petrarch's violent attachment to Laura, which was now extremely increased, rendered him not very equal to such a charge. To this interesting part of his life it is now high time to return.

He says, ' I run every where after Laura, but she flies from me as Daphne fled from Apollo.' In the sonnets of Petrarch concerning Laura there is a perpetual allusion to the laurel and Daphne. She was the daughter of the river Peneus ; the gods changed her into a laurel, to shelter her from the pursuit of Apollo, who ran after her along the banks of this



river. ‘ Since you cannot be my wife then,’ said he, ‘ you shall at least be my laurel !’ and from that time the laurel-tree was consecrated to that god.

From the laurel being consecrated to Apollo, who was the god of poetry, they afterwards crowned the poets with it. Love had so strangely united in the soul of Petrarch the idea of Laura and the laurel, from a romantic impression allowable to the poets, that, on the system of Pythagoras, he supposed the soul of Daphne, who was changed into the laurel, had passed into the body of Laura after a long succession of transmigrations. Indeed love associated the idea of Laura with every thing he saw : he could not behold the laurel without transports, and he planted it in every place. Petrarch went often and seated himself at the foot of one of those trees on the side of a river, a place where Laura frequently passed. The situation was delightful ; it was her favourite walk. When she was not there herself, every thing around presented her image to Petrarch, and his poetical raptures re-kindled.

‘ On this bank, and under the shelter of this charming tree, I sing with transports the praises of Laura. The gentle murmurs of the stream

accompany my tender sighs; the refreshing shade tempers the ardour of my passion: these alone are the objects which have power to relieve my soul.'

Petrarch, notwithstanding the sufferings he underwent from the natural agitations of a tender love when the object is rarely present, yet owns that Laura behaved to him with kindness so long as he concealed the passion that was labouring in his bosom; but when she discovered it, and that he was captivated with her charms, she treated him with more severity. Not that he had dared as yet to confess his passion; love like his is not capable of declaration, but it is as impossible to hide its power as to express its force. Laura, perceiving that Petrarch followed her every where, solicitously avoided him; and when by accident they met in public, if he came up to her, she left the place immediately. The tender looks he cast upon her determined her never to appear in his presence without a veil; and if by rare accident it was not over her face, as soon as she saw Petrarch she made haste and covered herself. Many and lamentable were his complaints against this cruel veil, which hid from his view such admirable beauties. These rigours in the conduct of Laura

rendered Petrarch still more timid than before ; though he was always extremely so—a strong character of true love. Dazzled by the lustre of her beauty, and the magnificence of her dress, for she wore on her head a silver coronet, and tied up her hair with knots of jewels (a prodigious magnificence for that time); terrified also with the severity of her looks, he had not courage to speak to her. ‘ Ah ! ’ said he to himself one day, ‘ was I to see the lustre of those bright eyes extinguished by age ; those golden locks changed to silver ; the flowers painted on that complexion faded away ; was I to see Laura without her garland, without her ornamented robe, I feel I should be more courageous. I should speak of my sufferings with confidence, and perhaps I should not then be refused her sighs.’

Petrarch, though treated with so much severity, was not disheartened. Occupied constantly with the pleasing hope of seeing his beloved object, to whose house it does not appear he was at this time admitted, he went to all the festivals ; and was in every place where ladies assembled. Laura appeared among those beauties who ornamented the city of Avignon, like a fine flower in the middle of a parterre, eclipsing all the rest with its lustre and the bright-

ness of its colours. What a delight to Petrarch to enjoy so lovely a sight ! His affection increased ; he applauded himself for so excellent a choice ; nothing appeared to him so honourable as his attachment to Laura. The respect he had for her, the admiration that her virtue inspired, led him to self-reflection, and to disengage himself from some connexions little to his honour or advantage.

‘ I bless the happy moment,’ says Petrarch, ‘ that directed my heart to Laura. She led me to see the path of virtue, to detach my heart from base and groveling objects : from her I am inspired with that celestial flame which raises my soul to heaven, and directs it to the Supreme Cause, as the only source of happiness.’

At this time, a lady who had heard of Petrarch’s reputation, consulted him on a subject in which he was much interested. She was an Italian ; her father was a man of wit and merit, and had given his daughter an education superior to what was usually bestowed on young women at that time. From her earliest years she was inspired by the Muses. The people of the world made a joke of her, and said, ‘ The business of a woman is to sew and spin ; cease to aspire after the poetic

laurel; lay down your pen, and take up the needle and distaff.' These words discouraged her; she was tempted to renounce poetry, yet could not determine without reluctance. In this situation, she addressed herself to Petrarch in a poem, the sense of which is as follows:

' O thou! who by a noble flight hast arrived so early at the summit of Parnassus, tell me what part ought I to act? I would fain live after I am dead: and the Muses can alone give me the life I desire. Do you advise me to devote myself to them, or to resume my domestic employments, and shield myself from the censure of vulgar minds, who permit not our sex to aspire after the crowns of laurel or of myrtle?'

Petrarch replied thus:

' Idleness and the pleasures of the table have banished all the virtues; the whole world is changed; we have now no light to direct our way; the man inspired by the Muses is pointed at; the vile populace, who think of nothing but advancing their interest, say, "Of what use are crowns of laurel or myrtle?"' Philosophy is abandoned, and goes quite naked. O thou! whom Heaven has endued with an amiable soul, be not disheartened by such advice! Fol-

low the path you have entered, though it is but little frequented.'

1332. In this year John of Luxembourg, king of Bohemia, came to Avignon to unite with the pope in subjecting all Italy, of which in part he had already made himself master. The fear of these powers in union, did what the popes had for two centuries vainly attempted; it united the Guelphs and the Gibelines to defend their country. Robert, king of Naples, of whom we shall have much to say hereafter, was the chief of the Guelph party, and joined with many other Italian princes against the king of Bohemia; and the emperor of Germany also raised up enemies who disconcerted this prince's projects, and obliged him to return and defend his own kingdom. He left the command of his army to his son Charles, a prince sixteen years old, who had been brought up at Paris, and promised the greatest things: we shall find him, when emperor, honouring Petrarch with singular marks of favour. After the king of Bohemia had established peace in his kingdom, he came to Avignon, where he passed fifteen days in secret conferences with the pope, from whence he went to Paris to ask assistance of Philip de

Valois, with whom he contracted a new alliance by the marriage of his daughter with Philip's eldest son. Soon after which he re-entered Italy with the constable of France and the flower of the French nobility. This redoubled the alarm of the Italians, and the grief of Petrarch, who idolized his native country, and trembled lest it should come under the dominion of slaves, for thus he called the French and the Germans. Things turned out however very differently from what was expected, and the Italians gained a complete victory, notwithstanding the great valour of the French nobility.

Petrarch at this time formed a design of travelling; he wished to follow the example of Ulysses, Lycurgus, Solon, Plato, and Pythagoras. He thought with Homer, that it was the best plan for forming youth; and, to use his own words, that 'we must expel ignorance by the exercise of the mind and of the body.' It was not easy for him to obtain the permission of his patrons. The bishop of Lombes proposed also to go to Rome: some family affairs required his presence, and Petrarch was to follow him. This journey was the object of his most ardent wish, but he was desirous first to survey France and Germany, where he flattered

himself with finding many good manuscripts of ancient authors. The prelate, who would not go to Rome without him, had the kindness to assure him he would wait for his return, and they shed many tears on this separation.

Petrarch could never have resolved to leave Avignon, had he experienced kinder treatment from Laura : but she had forbade him ever to see or to speak to her. Scarcely however was he got out of the city, when he repented the step he had taken : for he felt he could not live without Laura, and he was almost determined to return immediately ; at last he took courage, and continued his route.

Cardinal Colonna desired Petrarch to send him a very exact account of all he saw and heard, and to give him without ornament or care all that came into his mind. Only two of these letters remain : Petrarch confesses that, pushed on by the ardour of youth, he made this journey with too much precipitation, and therefore saw few things in the manner he ought. They shew, however, the pen of a master, compared with the writings of this period ; and are as follows :

‘ I ran over France, without any business there, from the mere impulse of curiosity. I have seen the famous capital of the Gauls,

which boasts it had Julius Cæsar for its founder. When I first entered this city, my feelings were very like those of Apuleius, when he entered for the first time into Hypate, a city of Thessaly full of magicians, of whom he had heard many wonders. I passed some time there, eager to see and know every thing; occupied in distinguishing right and wrong, and often struck with astonishment and admiration. When the days were not long enough, I employed a part of the night in researches concerning the fabulous or true origin of this much famed place. Paris is without doubt a great city, but much below the reputation the French have given it: for my own part, I have not any where met with so nasty a place, except Avignon. When I left Paris, I took the route of Flanders and Brabant, where the people are employed in tapestry and woollen works. I shall only speak of the principal towns, and those in which I have observed any thing remarkable. Ghent is one of the largest cities in Flanders; it boasts also of having Julius Cæsar for its founder,

‘ Liege is considerable from its wealth and the number of its clergy: as I had heard there were some good manuscripts to be met with, I stopped there. Is it not singular that in so

celebrated a city I could hardly find ink enough to copy two orations of Cicero? and what I did meet with was yellow as saffron.

‘ Aix la Chapelle is a famous city; it was here Charlemagne established the seat of his empire: he caused a temple to be built, wherein is his mausoleum, which these barbarous people revere. Near this city was a marsh, which he delighted in, where he built, on piles of wood, a palace and a church which cost immense sums. Here he ended his life, and in this place is the temple where he was buried. He ordered that his successors should be crowned here, a practice still observed. I have profited from this situation by using the bath: the waters have the same degree of heat as those at Bois, and have very nearly the same effects.

‘ From Aix la Chapelle I went to Cologne, a city celebrated for the beauty of its situation on the banks of the Rhine, and for the number of its inhabitants; I was surprised to find so much urbanity in a city of barbarians, such honest countenances in the men, and so exact a neatness in the women. I got there in the evening. How astonished was I to find friends I had never seen; and whom I owed to a false reputation, rather than real merit. You will

be surpris'd that under this part of heaven one should find souls inspir'd by the Muses ; I do not say that there are Virgils, but I have met with several Ovids. This poet was right when he said, at the end of his *Metamorphoses*, that he should be read with pleasure wherever the Roman name was known.

‘ The sun was declining : and scarcely was I alighted, when these unknown friends brought me to the banks of the Rhine, to amuse me with a spectacle which is exhibited every year on the same day, and on the same place. They conducted me to a little hill, from whence I could discover all that pass'd along the river. An innumerable company of women cover'd its banks : their air, their faces, their dress, struck me. No one who had a heart at liberty could have defend'd himself from the impression of love : alas ! mine was far from a state of freedom. In the midst of the vast crowd this sight had drawn together, I was surpris'd to find neither tumult nor confusion ; a great joy appear'd without licentiousness. How pleasant was it to behold these women ; their heads crown'd with flowers, their sleeves tucked up above their elbows, with a sprightly air advancing to wash their hands and arms in the river. They pronounc'd something in their language

which appeared pleasing, but I did not understand it. Happily I found an interpreter at hand : I desired one who came with me to explain to me this ceremony. He told me it was an ancient opinion spread among the people, and particularly the women, that this lustration was necessary to remove all the calamities with which human beings are threatened in the course of the year ; and when this was done, they had nothing to fear till the following year, at which time the ceremony must be renewed. “Happy,” replied I, “the people who inhabit the borders of the Rhine, since this river runs away with all their miseries. How happy should we be in Italy, if the Tiber and the Po possessed the same virtue ! You embark your misfortunes on the Rhine, which carries them to the English ; we should willingly make the same present to the Africans and to slaves, if our rivers would be burdened with the load.” After a great deal of laughing, the ceremony concluded, and we retired.

‘ I was five or six days in this city, remarking its antiquities and wonders. I came next to Lyons, which is a Roman colony more ancient than Cologne ; there we saw two noted rivers, the Rhone and the Saone, unite their waters to carry them with the greater expedition into our

sea. They run together to wash the banks of that city, where the Roman pontiff holds in his hand the whole human race.

‘ When I arrived here this morning, I found a man of your retinue who informed me of your brother’s departure for Rome. This news, which I did not expect, has made me feel for the first time the fatigue of my journey. I shall rest here some time, and wait till the great heats are a little abated. I write to you in a hurry, because I wish to take the opportunity of a courier who is going from hence to inform you where I am. I write to your brother, to complain of his having left me in the lurch. He was formerly my guide; I would now call him, if I dared, my deserter. Have the goodness to forward this letter to him as soon as possible.’

In this relation of Petrarch’s journey we see that the inhabitants of modern as well as of ancient Rome considered all the people beyond the Alps as barbarians. And he adds in a post-script to the cardinal :

‘ I have seen fine things, it must be allowed, in the course of my journey; I have examined the manners and the customs of the countries through which I have passed; I have compared them with ours, and found nothing

which gave me cause to repent that I was born in Italy: on the contrary, the more I travel, the more I love and admire my own country.'

Petrarch departed from Cologne the last day of June; he went to Lyons, where he designed to embark on the Rhone to return to Avignon. In this route he was so incommoded with heat and dust, that he several times wished for the snows of the Alps, and the ice of the Rhine, of which Virgil speaks in his tenth Eclogue. Nevertheless he passed through a great part of the forest of Ardenne, which contained at that time the greatest part of Flanders. No one dared to pass this forest without a guard; it was full of thieves and banditti, who set themselves in ambuscade behind the trees, from whence they shot their arrows at passengers without being perceived. And the war between the duke of Brabant and the count of Flanders, who disputed with one another the sovereignty of Malines, rendered the passage of the Ardenne still more perilous, by the inroads of soldiers from both their armies. Petrarch however took no guard. Alone and without arms he dared to traverse these gloomy forests, which no one, as he himself says, could enter without a secret horror. As he could not see a knot of trees without a poetic inspiration, it

is not to be wondered at that he should be inspired in the midst of the greatest forest in Europe; and, as he himself says, ‘that love should enlighten the shades of Ardenne, where Laura appeared in every object, and was heard in every breeze.’ What was his delight when, approaching Lyons, he discovered the Rhone, which, in carrying its tribute to the sea, washes the walls of that city which was ornamented by the object of his love!

Cardinal Colonna was charmed to see Petrarch again, and informed him of the reason of the bishop’s unexpected departure for Rome; which was occasioned by a quarrel in Italy, in which the family of the Colonnas had great concern. This relieved the anxiety of Petrarch, whose tender love for the bishop of Lombes could not easily brook the disappointment of this separation.

1334. Petrarch, who, during the whole course of his journey, was constantly possessed with the image of Laura, was no sooner returned to Avignon than he watched an opportunity of seeing her, flattering himself she would be more sensible of his attention. But she was still the same, and continued to treat him with that rigour of which he before so bitterly

complained. He compares Laura to the snow which has never seen the sun for years.

‘ If I am not deceived in my calculation, adds he, ‘ it is now seven years that I have sighed night and day for Laura, and have no hope of being ever able to touch her heart.’ The coolness of the fountain of Vaucluse, the shade of the wood which surrounded the little valley that leads to it, appeared to him the most proper situation to moderate the ardour of his mind : he went there sometimes. The most frightful deserts, the blackest forests, the most inaccessible mountains, were to him delightful abodes ; but they could not shelter him from love, which followed him every where, and penetrated through the hardest rocks.

‘ The more desert and savage the scene around me, the more lively is the form in which Laura presents herself to my view. The mountains, the woods, and the streams, all see and witness my anguish : no place is so wild or savage, where I am not pursued by love.’

Sometimes he called death to his succour ; his health altered visibly ; the idea of death, and the uncertainty of what might be his state hereafter, filled his soul with trouble ; he saw all the misery of his condition ; he made strong

resolutions to overcome his passion; but love was always victorious. In vain he represented to himself, that time flew swiftly over his head, that his hopes were vain and frail, and his body decaying apace; that the source of his joy and of his grief, of his disgust and of his fears, would with that be soon destroyed; and that the eye of truth would then clearly discern how little such foolish pursuits and such frivolous pleasures merited the attention and anxiety of human beings.

In a situation so mournful and critical, Petrarch had recourse to an Augustine monk called Dennis de Robertis, born in the village of St. Sepulchre near Florence. This monk entered early into that order, in which he distinguished himself by his understanding and his talents; he made a voyage to Avignon, where he attached himself to cardinal Colonna, to whom he dedicated one of his works, entitled Commentaries on Valerius Maximus. His reputation gained him an invitation to Paris, where he read lectures on philosophy and theology with great success, and shone in the principal pulpits there. He passed for an universal genius; in reality he was an orator, a poet, a philosopher, a theologist, and a teacher. It was at Paris that Petrarch became acquainted

with this monk, and discoursed with him on the state of his soul. Father Dennis said every thing that an able adviser could say to a young man to cure him of a passion which so cruelly oppressed him. Petrarch had conceived the greatest veneration for this father; he continued to write to him to implore his advice, and to solicit remedies for the cure of his passion: most of these letters are lost, which are greatly to be lamented; there are only a few of Petrarch's remaining, which will be dispersed through these memoirs. We shall soon see the little success of father Dennis's advice, notwithstanding his skill and his extensive knowledge; but who does not know, that one look from a beloved mistress is sufficient to destroy whole years of counsel from a ghostly father?

The city of Avignon underwent this year a very singular kind of plague. The heat and drought were so violent, that persons of every age and sex changed their skins like serpents; it fell in scales from the face, the neck, and the hands. The populace, seized as with madness, ran half naked about the streets, with whips in their hands, scourging their flesh, supplicating with the most dreadful outcries for rain, and that a stop might be put to this terrible ca-

lamity. Those who escaped this disorder, which were very few, were thought to have bodies of iron. Nothing like it had ever been remembered. The constitution of Laura was too delicate to sustain so great an intemperature in the air; she was attacked with a violent disorder, which alarmed Petrarch in a most lively manner: he asked the physician who attended her, how she was; he replied, Extremely ill; and there was every thing to fear for her. Laura recovered however, and Petrarch was relieved from his distress.

On his return from Germany, Petrarch found the pope seriously employed, at the age of fourscore and ten years, on two great projects which required all the vigour of youth. The one was the crusade, the other was the re-establishment of the holy see at Rome. The unhappy consequences of former wars undertaken against the infidels, to dispossess them of the holy places they were masters of, had cooled the pious fury which had depopulated Europe to ravage Asia. It is difficult to comprehend how a pontiff so enlightened and experienced could seriously enter on a project which, in the present situation of Europe, was so chimerical. Petrarch himself, though full of outrageous

zeal for these holy enterprises, knew all the difficulties that attended them.

Philip of Valois, king of France, sent ambassadors to the pope, to concert proper measures for this great undertaking; and they promised on oath, in the name of this prince, that he should embark in three years for the Levant, at the head of an army. The pope declared Philip the chief of this enterprise, and granted him for six years the tenths of his clergy; and after the return of the ambassadors Philip took the cross with the greatest demonstrations of piety. This example, which was followed by almost all the princes and barons of the kingdom, and a great number of prelates, set all Europe in motion. The kings of Bohemia, Arragon, and Navarre, likewise took the cross, and the king of France promised that twenty thousand horse and thirty thousand foot should pass into the east, on board Venetian, Genoese, and Pisan, vessels.

The family of the Colonnas were more zealous than any other for the success of the holy war. In 1218 cardinal John Colonna headed the crusade, distinguished himself by his great valour, and contributed to the taking of Damietta, though he was made prisoner by the

Saracens, who condemned him to be sawed afunder, but at the moment of execution, surpris'd with the fortitude he discovered, they gave him his life and liberty.

The second project of translating the holy see to Rome, was as important as the former, and more easy to be executed; but the death of the pope, which happened in 1334, put an end to this design; and the troubles that agitated Europe put an end likewise to the other.

John XXII. had governed the church eighteen years: he was a man of understanding and knowledge; had prodigious activity, and great constancy in pursuing what he once undertook; and was possessed of an immense treasure. But, notwithstanding all these resources, he could not bring to perfection any one of the projects he aimed at in the course of his long pontificate.

The first was the crusade; the second the deposition of the emperor Lewis of Bavaria; the third the destruction of the Gibbelins in Italy, and of the imperial authority, on the ruins of which he meant to establish his own; and the fourth, though of a very different nature, was as vigorously pursued by him as the rest.

John believed that the souls of the just would not enjoy the vision of God till after the universal judgment, and the resurrection of their bodies. ‘ They are,’ said he, ‘ while waiting for this judgment, under the altar and protection of the humanity of Jesus Christ.’ Astonished at the opposition made to this doctrine, he employed his authority to prove the truth of it, punishing with severity those who openly contradicted it. He put a Dominican into prison on this account, and cited Durain de St. Pourcoin, bishop of Micux, one of the greatest theologists of his time, to appear and answer for his faith. These acts of violence incensed all the world against him. The insurrection of the cardinals, and a great part of the court of Rome ; the decision of the doctors in theology at Paris ; and the exhortation of the kings of France and Naples, obliged the pope to make a solemn retraction of this doctrine before his death.

Petrarch, speaking on this subject, says :

‘ Beatitude is a state to which nothing can be added ; it is conformable to nature, that the spirit should be always in motion till there remains nothing for it to desire. How then can the dead enjoy the vision of God, in which consists the blessedness of man, while they

are desiring with ardour the reunion of their bodies ?’

In a letter to cardinal Colonna, some years after :

‘ Permit me,’ says he, ‘ to speak freely of a pope of whom you were fond, though not of his errors. His doctrine concerning the vision of God, however probable at the bottom, was condemned by the greatest number, and those of the best judgment, and lies buried with its author.’

After the death of John, James Fournier was elected pope, to the astonishment of all the world ; and this cardinal himself, when they came to adore him, said to those around him, ‘ Your choice is fallen upon an ass.’ If we may believe Petrarch, he did himself justice, and the acknowledgment of his incapacity was the greatest proof he ever gave of his judgment.

He was a baker’s son, and took the name of Bennet XII. His figure, his shape, his voice, his manners, were entirely opposite to those of his predecessor, whose doctrine concerning the vision of God he publicly condemned. They looked upon him at the court of Avignon as a man of no consequence, and incapable of governing the church.

1335. Petrarch was at this time chaplain and official to cardinal Colonna, but he had no living; the pope gave him the canonry of Lombes, with the promise of the first vacant prebend; and in his letter speaks highly of the knowledge of Petrarch, and of the goodness of his life. It must be remarked here that this pope left a great number of benefices unsupplied; not finding, he said, any person capable of filling them.

The troubles of Italy drew this year to Avignon Azon de Corege, a character that soon engaged the attention and friendship of Petrarch: at fifteen years of age he had entered into holy orders, but took up arms afterwards in defence of his country, and came to Avignon on a public negociation; he had the best constitution in the world, his strength was astonishing, and his body hard as iron. He was called iron-foot, because he was indefatigable. His mind was full of ardour, and eager after all kinds of knowledge; he read a great deal, and forgot nothing; he sought earnestly the society of those who could give him any instruction, and in the hurry of the greatest affairs he always reserved some hours to enrich his mind with study. It is easy to imagine that a man of this character would be desirous

of being admitted into the assembly of cardinal Colonna, and would be well received there.

Azon de Corege had heard of Petrarch's reputation, and earnestly desired his acquaintance. As they were of the same age, and the same turn of mind, they soon entered into a very intimate friendship; and Petrarch was so happy as to have an opportunity of giving Azon a singular proof of his affection soon after his arrival at Avignon. The Coreges were deeply engaged in the public quarrels of Italy. Azon at this time had it upon his hands to defend the cause of the nobles of Verona, by whom he was sent to Avignon; to assert the rights of his family, which had been invaded; and to guard the safety of his own person, which had been assaulted. Enchanted with the genius of Petrarch, and his irresistible eloquence, he thought he could not confide his cause to an orator more able to defend it; and besought Petrarch to be his advocate. Petrarch had never taken upon him the profession of the law:

‘My reputation,’ said he, ‘has never been so blemished as to constrain me to defend it. My profession does not oblige me to take up the vindication of others. I love solitude; I detest the bar; I despise money; and I could never

be prevailed upon to let out my tongue for hire. It is repugnant to my nature.'

What Petrarch could not do from inclination, or for interest, he did from friendship. He charged himself with the cause of Azon, and of the house of Corege. It was a very interesting one, and opened a vast field for eloquence.

Petrarch, inspired by friendship, displayed his oratory with success, and, which was still more surprising, with a temper fiery and passionate like his, he avoided with care those digressions against the adverse party, those cutting sallies of wit, which lawyers are so apt to run into, in order to shine themselves, rather than to strengthen their cause. Azon gained his suit. The lords of Verona were confirmed in the sovereignty of Parma, and Petrarch convinced the pope and the cardinals who assisted in this assembly, that he would have been the greatest orator of his age, if he had not rather chose to be the greatest poet.

Petrarch on this occasion gained also another distinguished friend, who was colleague with Azon in this affair; his name was William de Pastrengo, born at Pastrengo, a town a few leagues distant from Verona. He had

studied the law at Padua, under the celebrated professor Oldradi. Having found out the secret of reconciling this study with that of the belles lettres, he was an orator, a poet, and a civilian.

The nobles of Verona had great confidence in Pastrengo, and committed to him the most important negotiations. We have at this day a book written by him, rare and little known, full of matter on all subjects, and which shews a great fund of erudition. It was printed at Venice: the first part is on sacred and profane history; the second, an historical and geographical dictionary, which treats of the origin of things. He was, with all this learning, a man of gallantry, and well versed in the methods of making himself agreeable in conversation. His love of the belles lettres united him with Petrarch in a very sincere friendship.

The bishop of Lombes, whom family affairs retained at Rome, desired extremely to see his dear Petrarch in that great city, and never ceased pressing him in his letters to undertake the journey. It cannot be doubted that Petrarch wished much to go; many objects attracted him; but he was prevented by his passion for Laura on one hand, and his attach-

ment to the cardinal on the other, who would not suffer him to leave Avignon. He excused himself on these accounts to the bishop of Lombes, assuring him these were the only reasons he did not comply with his tender and pressing invitations. He adds in his letter to the bishop, who had wrote with pleasantry on Laura :

‘ Would to God that my Laura was an imaginary person ! and that my passion for her was only a jest ! Alas ! it is a frenzy ! We may counterfeit sickness by voice and gesture, but we cannot give ourselves the air and colour of a sick person. How many times have you witnessed the paleness of my countenance, and the agonies of my heart ? I feel you speak ironically ; irony is your favourite figure ; but I hope I shall be cured of my disorder, and that time will close up my wound.’

He adds :

‘ Your kind attentions flatter my self-love ! I do not know from whence the high ideas have been taken which certain persons have conceived of me. But this favourable prejudice has been my happy destiny from my cradle. I have been always more known than I desired ; many things bad and good have been said of me ; I was not elated by the one, or depressed

by the other ; for I have been long convinced, that the world is false and deceitful, and that my life is but a dream. I have been torn to pieces by the pleasantries of my friends on my passion for Laura ; to put balm into the wound, you exhort me to love you. Alas ! you well know that in love I require a rein rather than a spur. I should be more tranquil had I less sensibility.'

1336. This year, at the end of April, Petrarch, always curious and eager to see new objects, took a journey to Mount Ventoux. This is one of the highest mountains in Europe, and having few hills near it so lofty as to intercept the prospect, it presents from its summit a more extensive view than can be seen from the Alps or the Pyrennees. Petrarch gives this account of his journey in a letter to father Dennis :

' Having passed my youth in the province of Venaission, I have always had a desire to visit a mountain which is described from all parts, and which is so properly called the mountain of the winds. I sought a companion for this expedition ; and, what will appear singular, among the number of friends that I had, I met with none quite suited to my mind : so true is it, that it is rare to find, even among persons

who love one another the best, a perfect conformity in taste, inclination, and manner of thinking. One appeared to me too quick, another too slow; I found this man too lively, the other too dull; there is one, said I to myself, too tender and too delicate to sustain the fatigue; there is another too fat and too heavy, he can never get up so high; in fine, this is too petulant and noisy, the other too silent and melancholy. All these defects, which friendship can support in a town and in a house, would be intolerable on a journey. I weighed this matter, and, finding that those whose society would have pleased me either had affairs which prevented them, or had not the same curiosity as myself, I would not put their complaisance to the proof. I determined to take with me my brother Gerard, whom you know. He was very glad to accompany me, and felt a sensible joy in supplying the place of a friend as well as a brother.

‘ We went from Avignon to Malaucene, which is at the foot of the mountain on the north side, where we slept the night, and reposed ourselves the whole of the next day. The day after, my brother and myself, followed by two domestics, ascended the mountain with much trouble and fatigue, though

the weather was mild and the day very fine. We had agility, strength, and courage; nothing was wanting; but this mass of rocks is of a steepness almost inaccessible. Towards the middle of the mountain we found an old shepherd, who did all he could to divert us from our project. "It is about fifty years ago," said he, "that I had the same humour with yourselves; I climbed to the top of the mountain, and what did I get by it?—My body and my clothes torn to pieces by the briars, much fatigue and repentance, with a firm resolution never to go thither again. Since that time I have not heard it said that any one has been guilty of the same folly."

'Young people are not to be talked out of their schemes. The more the shepherd exaggerated the difficulties of the enterprise, the stronger desire we felt to conquer them. When he saw that what he said had no effect, he shewed us a steep path along the rocks; "That is the way you must go," said he.

'After leaving our clothes and all that could embarrass us, we began to climb with inconceivable ardour. Our first efforts, which is not uncommon, were followed with extreme weakness: we found a rock, on which we rested some time; after which we resumed

our march, but it was not with the same agility; mine slackened very much. While my brother followed a very steep path which appeared to lead to the top, I took another which was more upon the declivity. "Where are you going?" cried my brother with all his might; "that is not the way, follow me." "Let me alone," said I, "I prefer the path that is longest and easiest." This was an excuse for my weakness. I wandered for some time at the bottom; at last shame took hold of me, and I rejoined my brother, who was set down to wait for me. We marched one before another some time, but I became weary again, and sought an easier path; and at last, overwhelmed with shame and fatigue, I stopped again to take breath. Then, abandoning myself to reflection, I compared the state of my soul, which desires to gain heaven, but walks not in the way to it, to that of my body which had so much difficulty in attaining the top of Mount Ventoux, notwithstanding the curiosity which caused me to attempt it. These reflections inspired me with more strength and courage.

' Mount Ventoux is divided into several hills, which rise one above the other; on the

top of the highest is a little plain, where we feated ourselves on our arrival.

‘ Struck with the clearness of the air, and the immense space I had before my eyes, I remained for some time motionless and astonished. At last, waking from my reverie, my eyes were insensibly directed toward that fine country to which my inclination always drew me. I saw those mountains covered with snow, where the proud enemy of the Romans opened himself a passage with vinegar, if we may believe the voice of fame. Though they are at a great distance from Mount Ventoux, they seemed so near that one might touch them. I felt instantly a vehement desire to behold again this dear country, which I saw rather with the eyes of the soul than those of the body : some sighs escaped me which I could not prevent, and I reproached myself for a weakness I could have justified by many great examples.

‘ Returning to myself again, and examining more closely the state of my soul, I said, “ It is near ten years, Petrarch, since thou hast quitted Bologna : what a change in thy manners since that time ! Not yet safe in port, I dare not view those tempests of the mind with which I feel myself continually agitated. The

time will perhaps come, when I may be able to say with St. Augustine, 'If I retrace my past errors, those unhappy passions that overwhelmed me, it is not because they are still dear, it is because I will devote myself to none but thee, my God.' But I have yet much to do. I love, but it is a melancholy love. My state is desperate. It is that which Ovid paints so strongly in that well-known line,

"I cannot hate, and I am forced to love!"

"If," said I, "thou shouldst live ten years longer, and in that time make as much progress in virtue, wouldst thou not be able to die with a more assured hope?" Abandoned to these reflections, I deplored the imperfection of my conduct, and the instability of all things human.

'The sun was now going to rest, and I perceived that it would soon be time for me to descend the mountain. I then turned towards the west, when I sought in vain that long chain of mountains which separates France and Spain.

'Nothing that I knew of hid them from my sight, but nature has not given us organs capable of such extensive views. To the right I discovered the mountains of the Lyonnaise, and

to the left the surges of the Mediterranean, which bathe Marseilles on one side, on the other dash themselves in pieces against the rocky shore. I saw them very distinctly, though at the distance of several days journey.

‘ The Rhone glided under my eyes; the clouds were at my feet. Never was there a more extensive variegated and enchanting prospect! What I saw rendered me less incredulous of the accounts of Olympus and mount Athos, which they assert to be higher than the region of the clouds from whence descend the showers of rain.

‘ After having satisfied my eyes for some time with those delightful objects, which elevated my mind, and inspired it with pious reflections, I took the book of St. Augustin’s Confessions which I had from you, and which I always carry about me. It is dear to me for its own value; and the hands from whence I received it, render it dearer still: on opening it I accidentally fell on this passage in the tenth book; “ Men go far to observe the summits of mountains, the waters of the sea, the beginnings and the courses of rivers, the immensity of the ocean, *but they neglect themselves.*”

‘ I take God and my brother to witness that what I say is true. I was struck with the sin-

gularity of an accident, the application of which it was so easy for me to make.

‘ After having shut the book, I recollected what happened to St. Augustin and St. Anthony on the like occasion, and, believing I could not do better than imitate these great saints, I left off reading, and gave myself up to the crowd of ideas which presented themselves, on the folly of mortals, who, neglecting their most noble part, confuse themselves with vain objects, and go to seek that with difficulty abroad, which they might easily meet with at home. “ If,” said I, “ I have undergone so much labour and fatigue, that my body may be nearer heaven ; what ought I not to do and to suffer that my soul may come there also ?”

‘ In the midst of these contemplations I was got, without perceiving it, to the bottom of the hill, with the same safety, and less fatigue, than I went up. A fine clear moon favoured our return. While they were preparing our supper, I shut myself up in a corner of the house, to give you this account, and the reflections it produced in my mind. You see, my father, that I hide nothing from you. I wish I was always able to tell you not only what I do, but even what I think. Pray to God that my thoughts, now alas ! vain, and wandering,

may be immoveably fixed on the only true and solid good.'

Petrarch often retired into the most desert places ; and if by accident he met with Laura in the streets of Avignon, he avoided her, and passed swiftly to the other side. This affectation displeased her. Meeting him one day, she looked at him with more kindness than usual. Perhaps she wished to preserve a lover of such reputation ; or could not be insensible to the constancy of his affection. A favour so unhopcd for from Laura restored Petrarch to happiness, and put an end to all his boasted resolution. When he passed a few days without seeing her, he felt an irresistible desire to see her in those places she frequented. She behaved to him with more ease ; he wished to assure her of his love by the most tender expressions, or at least by his sighs and tears ; but the dignity of Laura's countenance and behaviour rendered him motionless : his senses were suspended, his tears dried up, and his words expired upon his lips. His eyes could alone express the feelings of his soul. In a sonnet he says :

' You could not without compassion behold the image of death stamped on my face ; a kind regard, a word dictated by friendship has

restored me to life. That I yet breathe is your precious gift. Dispose of me, for you are the reviver of my soul; you alone, beautiful Laura, possess both the keys to my heart.'

The poets imagined their heart to have two doors, the one leading to pleasure, the other to pain. It is to this poetic fiction that Petrarch alludes.

Laura wished to be beloved by Petrarch, but with such refinement that he should never speak of his love. Whenever he attempted the most distant expression of this kind, she treated him with excessive rigour; but when she saw him in despair, his countenance languishing, and his spirits drooping, she then re-animated him by some trifling kindness; a look, a gesture, or a word, was sufficient.

This mixture of severity and compassion, so strongly marked in the lines of Petrarch, is the key to a right judgment of Laura's character. It was thus she held for twenty years the affections of a man the most ardent and impetuous, without the smallest stain to her honour; and this was the method she thought best adapted to the temper and disposition of Petrarch.

Whenever Laura had reason to complain of him, it was easy to perceive her displeasure: her hair was disturbed, she cast down her eyes,

turned away her head, and made haste out of his sight.

One day, more courageous than usual, Petrarch ventured to speak of his love and constancy, notwithstanding the rigour with which she treated him, and reproved her for the manner in which she behaved to the most faithful and discreet of lovers.

‘As soon as I appear, you turn away your eyes; you recline your head; and your countenance is troubled. *Alas! I perceive you suffer.* O Laura! why these cruel manners? Could you tear yourself from a heart where you have taken such deep root, I should commend your severity. In a barren and uncultivated soil the plant that languishes requires a kinder sun; but you must for ever live in my heart. Since then it is your destiny, render your situation less disagreeable.’

There are two stages of Petrarch’s love: the one when Laura was in that age of innocence in which there is no suspicion; when she treated him with politeness, and with kindness, because she saw nothing in his manner that opposed such treatment. On his part he behaved with tenderness and esteem, and she enjoyed at ease the pleasures of his conversation. The confidence with which this inspired him, and

the delight he felt in her presence, encouraged him, though with a trembling voice, to express his love. Laura replied with an agitated countenance, 'I am not, Petrarch, I am not the person you suppose me.' Petrarch was thunder-struck, and could not open his mouth. Laura forbids him to appear before her; he writes to her to beseech her pardon: she is still more offended, and avoids all occasions of seeing him. Petrarch weeps and sighs incessantly; and Laura deprives him of her society for a long time; but, on his falling sick, permits him at last to see, and to speak to her. He again hazards something about his affection, and she treats him with more severity than ever. He becomes outrageous, and in despair calls death to his succour, and goes wandering about in the most frightful and solitary deserts: love follows him every where.

A philosophical curiosity leads Petrarch to travel to France and Germany; but scarcely is he set out when he repents, and desires to return. He feels that he cannot live without Laura. In traversing the forest of Ardenne he believes her to be in every object he sees, and in every echo he hears: when he is near Lyons, his transports are inexpressible at the sight of the Rhone, because that river washes the walls

of the city where Laura resides. When he arrives at Avignon, he finds her in the same disposition he left her, as austere and intractable on the subject of love; and he complains that he could discover nothing in her eyes but anger and disdain.

This was his first state. He had yet never felt remorse; on the contrary, the modesty of Laura, her virtue, the innocence of her life, the graces of her conversation, had given him so high an idea of her, that he thought he could do nothing so honourable as to cultivate this love.

‘What a felicity is it for thee,’ he would say to himself, ‘to have dared thus high to raise thy vows of love. She has kindled in thy heart a flame, that in disengaging thee from licentious pleasures, fought by unthinking mortals, directs thee to that sovereign good which is the reward of virtue.’

But when Petrarch returned from his journey, he began to feel some remorse for ascribing so much to any created being, though perfect as Laura herself. He reflected that his heart was formed for his Creator, and could never be happy till fixed on God. The exhortations of father Dennis were probably the cause of this remorse.

In his letters he says :

‘How much time have you wasted on that Laura! How many useless steps have you taken in those woods!’

But the smallest incident was sufficient to unhinge his philosophy, and stagger every resolution he had formed to calm his mind. One day he observed a country girl washing the veil of Laura. A sudden trembling seized him; and, though the dog-star raged, he shivered as in the depth of winter. Every other object was concentrated in this passion. It was not possible for him to apply to study, or the conduct of his affairs. His soul was like a field of battle, where his heart and reason held continual engagements.

‘It was this,’ says he, ‘that overspread with the clouds of grief those delightful years of life which by nature seem consecrated to joy and pleasure.’

After contemplating his past and present state :

‘Ten years,’ says he, ‘has grief preyed upon me; a slow poison consumes my body; hardly have I strength to drag along my weakened limbs. I must get out of this dreadful situation; I must recover my liberty.’

He determined therefore again to travel, and try the effects of absence. We have already

mentioned the desire he had to visit Rome, and perform his promise to the bishop of Lombes. He had likewise a strong temptation to go to Paris; having promised some friends he left there he would soon return. At the head of these friends were father Dennis, and Robert de Bordi, whom the pope had just made chancellor of the church of Paris, with the canonry of Notre Dame.

Robert de Bordi was descended from one of the richest and most considerable families in Florence. He came when very young to pursue his studies at Paris, according to the custom of the Florentines, who have great emulation. He made so rapid a progress, that the doctors of this celebrated university had a sort of veneration for his genius. In truth he was a man of extraordinary merit, a great philosopher, and a sound divine. He appeared with distinction in the council of Vincennes, where the opinion of John XXII. concerning the vision of God was condemned. We are obliged to him for having preserved to us the discourses of St. Augustin, which would probably have been lost if he had not taken the pains to collect them.

Before we speak of Petrarch's journey, which he at last determined should be to Italy, we must insert a circumstance of reproach to his

character. In the early part of his life he had a mistress who behaved to him with less rigour than Laura, and by whom he had a son called John, and a daughter a few years after: they will both appear in the course of these memoirs.

After having obtained with difficulty the permission of cardinal Colonna, and taken leave of his friends, Petrarch set out from Avignon in the beginning of December, 1336, to go to Marseilles, where he embarked in a ship which was just setting sail to Civita-Vecchia. He concealed his name, and gave himself out for a pilgrim going to worship at Rome. Who can express the joy he felt when from the deck he could discover the coast of Italy! that dear country after which he had so long sighed! When he was landed, he perceived a laurel tree: in his first emotion he ran towards it; and too much beside himself to observe his steps, he fell into a brook which he must cross to arrive at the wished-for object. This fall caused him to swoon. Always occupied with Laura, he says:

‘On those shores, washed by the Tyrrhene sea, I beheld that stately laurel which always warms my imagination. Love impelled me towards it. I flew, and through my impatience

fell breathless in the intervening stream. I was alone and in the woods, yet I blushed at my heedlessness; for to the reflecting mind no witness is requisite to excite the emotions of shame.'

It was not easy for Petrarch to pass from the coast of Tuscany to Rome; for the war between the Ursins and the Colonnas, which was renewed with more fury than ever, filled all the surrounding places with armed men. As he had no escort, he went to the castle of Capranica, at ten leagues distance from Rome. He was well received by Orso count of Anguillora, who had espoused Agnes Colonna, sister of the cardinal and of the bishop. He was a man of understanding, and fond of letters. The description of this castle and its environs is contained in the following letter of Petrarch's to cardinal Colonna.

' Capranica is the very situation I could wish for, consumed as I am by anxiety. It was formerly an uncultivated place, full of thickets and wild trees, where the goats came to browse, and from whence it took its name. The beauty of the situation and the natural fertility of the soil drew men by degrees to settle there. They built a fortress on the most elevated part, and as many houses as the compass of a nar-

row hill could admit. From the top of this hill they discover mount Soracte, celebrated in this line of Horace :

“ See how Soracte stands, white with deep snows.”

The lake Cimirus, of which Virgil speaks, and Sutri, a town of Ceres, are but two thousand paces distant. The air of Capranica is very clear. Around it are a great number of little hills, which are not difficult of access ; several spacious caverns ; and to the south a thick wood, which is a shelter from the burning heats of noon. The hill reclines on the north side, and discovers fields in full bloom, where the bees delight to dwell. Several fountains of sweet water glide along the valleys ; and in the wood and on the hills deer, stags, kids, and all sorts of tame cattle, are seen to wander and graze. Birds of all kinds are heard to sing, and in general all things are found here which belong to the finest and most cultivated countries, without reckoning the lakes, the rivers, and a neighbouring sea, which are among the richest presents of nature.

‘ Peace was the only thing which I could not meet with in this delightful situation. I know not whether fate or some crime of the

nation has drawn on them the scourge of war. The shepherd, instead of guarding against the wolves, goes armed into the woods to defend himself from the enemy. The labourer, in a coat of mail, uses a lance instead of a goad to drive along his cattle. The fowler draws his nets, covered with a shield. The fisherman carries a sword, instead of a line to hook his fish. And, what is still more extraordinary, the native draws water from the wells in an old rusty helmet, instead of a pail. In a word, arms here are used as tools and implements for all the labours of the field, and all the wants of men. In the night are heard dreadful howlings round the walls; in the day, terrible voices which cry out, without ceasing, "To arms! to arms!" What music, compared with those soft and harmonious sounds that I drew from my lute at Avignon! This country is the image of hell; it breathes nothing but hatred, war, and carnage.

‘ From this picture, who could believe that Capranica was the residence of the mildest and most amiable of men? Orso, count of Anquilora, tranquil in the midst of this confusion, lives with his wife in the happiest union, gives the most obliging reception to his guests, governs his vassals with a strictness tempered

tempered with love, cultivates the Muses, and seeks the society of men of learning. Agnes Colonna, his wife, is one of those women who can only be praised by a silent admiration, so much does she rise above all that can be said to her honour.

‘These charming hosts make that place delightful which would else be terrible from the horrors of war. Though I greatly desire the sight of Rome, and the friends I know there, I feel not that inquietude men experience as they approach nearer the object of their desires. I am as tranquil in this house as I could be even in the temple of peace herself. And, as we accustom ourselves insensibly to all things, I walk without arms and without dread on those hills which are the scenes of war. I hear them sound the charge; I see armed troops engaged with one another; the clashing of swords, and the cries of the combatants, do not prevent my meditating as in my closet, and labouring to amuse posterity.’

When Petrarch was arrived at Capranica, he dispatched a courier to the bishop of Lombes to inform him where he was, and that he knew no method of getting to him in the midst of so many dangers; all the roads which led to Rome being occupied by the enemy,

The bishop expressed great joy on hearing of his arrival, and ordered him to wait his coming.

This prelate came to Capranica with Stephen Colonna his brother, senator of Rome. They had with them only a troop of a hundred horse, and, as the enemy kept possession of the country with more than five hundred, it was wonderful they met with no difficulty on their route; but the name and reputation of the Colonnas had spread the alarm in the enemy's camp, and by this means made their way free and safe.

What a joy was it for the bishop of Lombes to see that friend again whom he so tenderly loved; whose works he read with pleasure; and whose conversation had a thousand charms! The senator was likewise delighted to see Petrarch, whose reputation had already spread far and wide. It is impossible to express Petrarch's joy on beholding the prelate who was so dear to him, and the hero for the sight of whom he had so impatiently longed. They departed all together from Capranica with their little escort, and arrived at Rome without any skirmish, notwithstanding the measures taken by their enemies to intercept them.

1337. Stephen Colonna in quality of se-

nator resided in the capitol, where he lodged Petrarch, who could not contain his transports to find himself in a place which had been the theatre of those great events always present in his mind.

It is much to be regretted that the letters which Petrarch wrote from Rome to cardinal Colonna are lost. There remains only a fragment of one dated from the capitol as follows :

‘ After having read the long account I gave you of Capranica, what will you not expect of me concerning Rome ? The subject is inexhaustible. I am struck with the wonders I every where behold. Their variety confounds me, and I know not where to begin. I recall to mind what you said to me one day at Avignon : “ Petrarch, do not go to Rome : that city will not answer the idea you have conceived of it ; you will find nothing but ruins.” These words impressed my mind, and cooled my ardour. I had experienced that great objects are often diminished by their presence ; but here I found it otherwise. My ideas of Rome are enlarged, not diminished ; its ruins have something grand and majestic, which impress me with veneration. And, far from being surprised that Rome should have subdued the

world, I rather wonder that the conquest was not earlier accomplished.'

Petrarch was received and treated in the house of the Colonnas as one of the family; and they contended which should shew him the most friendship. Old Colonna, who knew him at Avignon, loaded him with favours, and with eagerness pointed out to him all the curiosities in Rome. But of all the family, Jean de St. Vit, the brother of Stephen Colonna, was the most happy in Petrarch. This old man, who had been exiled from Avignon by his enemies, found more charms than ever in his wit and conversation, and was useful to him in his researches after Roman antiquities, about which our poet was very inquisitive. Jean de St. Vit had made them his study from his childhood, and was perhaps the only Roman of that time well acquainted with them, if we except Nicholas Rienzi, of whom I shall soon speak.

Nothing appeared more astonishing to Petrarch than the indifference of the Romans to these precious remains of antiquity. They had them continually before their eyes, but vouchsafed them not the least observation. 'The magnificence of Rome,' says he, 'and all that

can heighten its glory, are no where less known than at Rome.'

Jean de St. Vit took him every day to walk within and around this great city. It had a waste and desolate appearance, though it contained a vast number of inhabitants. They took scarcely a step without finding something to excite their admiration, and furnish them with a subject of discourse. At the end of their walk, they generally sat down to rest themselves on the baths of Dioclesian, some vestiges of which are still remaining. Sometimes they went upon the roof of this fine monument, where there was a clear air, a very extensive view, and no one to interrupt them.

Rome was at this time in a deplorable situation. The Colonnas at war with the Ursins, could not re-establish the peace of the city, or restore its ancient lustre. It was continually a prey to the evils of war. Nothing was to be seen in the streets but ruins: the churches falling to pieces; the altars spoiled of their ornaments. The priests were interrupted in the performance of their offices. Strangers could not resort thither; for the highways were infested with robbers, to whom the city, and even the churches, served for a retreat. No-

thing was heard of but rapes, murders, adulteries, and assassinations. Audaciousness reigned; justice was dumb; indulgence rendered the guilty more presumptuous; and the nobles, divided among themselves, only agreed in oppressing the people. If Petrarch was touched to observe the wretched state of Rome, and the decay of its ancient monuments, he was repaid by viewing the amiable and distinguished behaviour of the Roman ladies.

‘It is with reason,’ says he, ‘that they are renowned above their sex; for they have the tenderness and modesty of women, with the courage and constancy of men.’ In the two sisters of cardinal Colonna, he assures us, were united the virtues and good qualities of the Greek and Roman heroines. As to the men, ‘They are,’ says he, ‘a good sort of people, and affable when treated with civility; but they can bear no raillery in one particular, I mean that which respects the honour of their wives. Far from being as tractable as the Avignons, who suffer their wives to be taken from them without the least murmur, the Romans have always this sentence in their mouths: “Smite us where you will, so we may but preserve the honour of our wives.”’

‘The Romans,’ adds Petrarch, ‘are not

greedy of gain. I was astonished, in so great a city, to find so few merchants and usurers.' A very different representation of them from one given in the twelfth century. 'Beware of the Romans,' says St. Bernard; 'they are seditious, jealous of their neighbours, and cruel towards strangers. They love nobody, and nobody loves them.' Their manners must have undergone a great change in the space of two centuries, or Petrarch must have been strangely partial to them. Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, speaking of them in the same century, says, 'Rome would be happy if it had no lords, or if its nobles were honest men.'

Notwithstanding all the endeavours of the bishop of Lombes, he could not terminate the quarrel between the Ursins and his family. This was the principal object of his long residence at Rome. He was displeased that his father had engaged in a war which might have such fatal consequences; and he took the liberty one day to speak with freedom, and some severity, on this subject. Old Stephen, who, notwithstanding his great age, had yet much fire remaining, was hurt by these representations. He could not forgive the bishop, and would not admit him into his presence. Petrarch used the strongest solicitations to en-

gage him to renew his usual kindness to his son, and at last was so happy as to succeed.

In a conversation with the venerable old man, soon after this union, there happened a singular prediction, which Petrarch refers to afterwards, in a letter to Stephen Colonna.

‘Call to mind,’ says he, ‘that, walking together one evening in the street which leads from your palace to the capitol, we stopped; and, leaning on an old marble monument fronting the street that goes from the hills to the Tiber, we conversed on the state of your family. I had just obtained a favour from you, which you had refused to all your relations. It was to pardon the freedom of a son against whom you had conceived a violent displeasure.

“My son is your friend,” said you, “but he has not respected my age. You would have me pardon and restore him to my love; I can refuse you nothing; I will pass it entirely over, but I take this occasion to justify myself. They pretend that, contrary to what befits my age, I have engaged in a war which will descend to my family after my death; an inheritance of hatreds, quarrels, and dangers, with which it will be always agitated. I take God to witness, that it was only with a view to peace I entered into war. The weakness of

age, a certain degree of insensibility which is spread over my soul and all my senses, and, above all, long experience, have given me a love of repose, and make me sigh for tranquillity. But I refuse no difficulties when they are necessary, and would rather confront death in battle, than drag out a shameful old age in slavery. As to what regards my inheritance, alas !" said you, looking earnestly at me, your eyes bathed in tears, " I would and I ought to leave one to my children, but the fates have ordered it otherwise, by the overthrow of order, and the reign of confusion. It is myself—it is the decrepid old man before you, who will be the heir of all his children." At these words grief bound up your heart, and you could proceed no further.'

' I am not ignorant,' says Petrarch, ' that God permits princes sometimes to foresee what will happen to their children : witness the emperor Vespasian, and many others. Nevertheless, I gave little attention at that time to this prediction ; but when it was verified, I recollected and mentioned it to my friends.'

It is not certain how long Petrarch continued at Rome, probably his stay was but short. It appears, from a Latin epistle of his to the bishop of Lombe, that his route was to-

wards the west, and that he passed the Pyrennean mountains. I doubt not he went to take possession of his canonry at Lombes, which the pope had given him, with the expectation of the first vacant prebend. He says, in the same epistle, that he travelled along the coast of Spain by Cadiz, and from thence to the shores of the British sea. The true motive of these journeys was probably the disgust and weariness of life which he felt in the city of Avignon, and that love of liberty which would have carried him to the extremities of the earth.

‘One of the most disagreeable things,’ says he, ‘in the course of my journey was, that when I went from my own habitation, I met with none who spoke Latin; and when I came home again, I had not my books, my constant companions, so that I was obliged to have recourse to my memory for amusement.’

All the journeys of Petrarch only served to increase the idea he had always formed of the superiority of Italy over France, England, Germany, and all the rest of the world. In another letter to a friend, he explains himself more particularly.

‘Formerly,’ says Petrarch, ‘France possessed neither the gifts of Bacchus nor those of Mi-

nerva. It is to Rome they owe the wine and the oil they gather; but the olive tree is still scarce in this kingdom, and they do not cultivate those golden fruits which scatter so delightful a perfume. Their sheep yield not so fine a wool. The stubborn soil opens not its bosom to give out the treasures it contains. It sends not forth its salutary waters, which, running from the minerals, nature has placed as the remedy for the greatest part of our diseases.

‘ In England they drink nothing but beer and cider. The beverage of Flanders is metheglin. As wine cannot be transported but at a great price, few people can afford to drink it.

‘ I shall not speak of those frozen climates which are watered by the Danube, the Bog, and the Tanais. They know neither Bacchus nor Minerva, and are little favoured by Ceres. Nature seems to have acted the part of a step-mother to all these countries. She has refused something to every one of them. To some she has given no forests: they can only warm themselves with turf. Others are full of marshes, which exhaling corrupted vapours, the inhabitants have no water fit to drink. Some there are where the land, covered with

a barren sand, with heath and bushes, produces nothing useful : and others which tigers, leopards, lions, and serpents, render almost uninhabitable. Italy is the only country that nature has treated like a mother. She has given to it universal empire, talents, arts, all the advantages of genius ; and, above all, that lyre which caused the Latins to triumph over the Greeks. In a word, it wants nothing but peace.'

Petrarch assures us, that exercise and absence had produced a happy effect upon his mind, that his soul became tranquil, and he was no longer agitated with those inward conflicts which destroyed his health and his peace. ' The idea of Laura,' says he, ' less frequently presents itself, and when it does, it has less power.' Instead of passing whole nights in tears, he slept quietly, he was gay, every thing amused him. He thought he was cured, and smiled at the follies of love.

Petrarch returned to Avignon in August 1337. No sooner did he arrive than he saw Laura ; no sooner had he seen her, than his wound, so newly closed, burst open again, and his passion seized him with more violence than ever.

‘I desired death,’ says he. ‘I was even tempted to seek it in the violence of my anguish. As a pilot at sea dreads the rock on which he has been cast, so did I dread the meeting with Laura. She was sick; but the near approach of death had not diminished the lustre of her eyes. I trembled at her shadow. The sound of her voice deprived me of motion.’

In this dreadful state, Petrarch saw he had no other resource but flight. He determined to leave the city of Avignon, which in other respects also was insupportable to him. He assures us, the manner of its inhabitants, and the corruption of the court of Rome, were the true motives of his departure: perhaps also a secret chagrin that he was not advanced to a superior post, while many worthless persons were raised to the highest dignities.

‘To obtain such advantages,’ says Petrarch, ‘it is necessary to frequent the palaces of the great, to flatter, promise, lie, dissemble, and deceive: qualities to which I was a stranger. I have no aversion to honours, but to the methods of gaining them.’

He speaks in the same manner of riches. It is probable also that the desire of fame in the

purſuit of letters, as well as his ſufferings from love, induced him to leave Avignon.

Having determined this matter, he could think of no ſituation ſo favourable to theſe views as Vacluſe: that delightful ſolitude which he went to ſee when a ſchoolboy at Carpentras, and which made at that age ſo lively an impreſſion upon his mind. Petrarch tells us, he ſometimes went there to moderate the ardour of his mind, by a view of the cool waters of that marvellous fountain, and the delightful ſhades of the woods with which it was ſurrounded. Reſolving to fix his reſidence there, he bought a little cottage with a ſmall field adjoining, and went with no other companions than his books.

Vacluſe is one of thoſe places in which nature delights to appear under a form the moſt ſingular and romantic. Towards the coaſt of the Mediterranean, and on a plain beautiful as the vale of Tempe, you diſcover a little valley, encloded by a barrier of rocks in the form of a horſe-ſhoe. The rocks are high, bold, and groteſque; and the valley is divided by a river, along the banks of which are extended meadows and paſtures of a perpetual verdure. A path, which is on the left ſide of the river, leads in gentle windings to the head of this vaſt am-

phitheatre. There, at the foot of an enormous rock, and directly in front, you behold a prodigious cavern hollowed by the hand of nature ; and in this cavern arises a spring as celebrated almost as that of Helicon.

When the waters of the fountain are low you may enter the cavern, the gloom of which is tremendous. It is a double cavern. The opening into the exterior is an arch sixty feet high ; that of the interior thirty. Near the middle of the cavern you see an oval basin, the longest diameter of which is one hundred and eight feet ; and into this basin, without jet or bubble, rises that copious stream which forms the river Sorgia. There is a common report that this fountain has never been fathomed. May not this proceed from the water's issuing with great impetuosity at the bottom, and thus forcing back the lead and line ? However this may be, you see nothing but an expanse of water, smooth and tranquil.

The surface of the fountain is black. This appearance is produced by the depth of the spring, the colour of the rocks, and the obscurity of the cavern ; for, in reality, nothing can be more perfectly clear and limpid than the water of this spring. It stains not the rocks

over which it passes, nor does it produce either weeds or mud. But, what is very extraordinary, though so beautiful to the eye, it is harsh to the taste, crude, heavy, and difficult to digest. It is excellent however for tanning and dying; and is said to promote the growth of a plant which fattens oxen and hatches chickens. Strabo, and Pliny the naturalist, speak of this peculiarity.

In the ordinary state of the fountain, the water falls away through some cavities under the rocks, and afterwards returns to the day, and commences its course as a river. But during the swell about the spring equinox, and sometimes also after heavy rains, there is an astonishing accumulation. The waters roll on with a lofty head to the opening of the cavern, and are precipitated and dashed along the rocks with the noise of thunder. The tumult however soon ceases; the waters are peaceably received into a deep and commodious channel, and form a most delightful river, navigable to its very source. This river is in its progress divided into various branches, waters many parts of Provence, receives several other streams, reunites its branches, and falls into the Rhone near Avignon.

Petrarch thus beautifully moralises on this uncommon subject :

‘ Seneca observes, that *the sources of great rivers inspire us with a kind of veneration. And that, where a river bursts out at once, altars should be erected.* And I call heaven to witness,’ adds he, ‘ it is my firm resolution to dedicate one to the fountain of Vaucluse, as soon as my scattered faculties are a little collected. This altar shall be raised in the garden which hangs over the fountain. It shall not however be dedicated, like those of Seneca, to the gods of the rivers, or the nymphs of the fountains, but to the Virgin Mother of that God who has destroyed the altars and demolished the temples of all other gods.’

Such was the language of Petrarch ten years after his first retirement to Vaucluse. But it was not the language of a heart as yet freed from the charms of love. The history of his mind during this solitude is best collected from his own works.

In one of his letters, written about this time, he says :

‘ Here I make war upon my senses, and treat them as my enemies. My eyes, which have drawn me into a thousand difficulties, see no

longer either gold or precious stones, or ivory or purple; they behold nothing, save the firmament, the water, and the rocks. The only female who comes within their sight, is a swarthy old woman, dry and parched as the Lybian deserts. My ears are no longer courted by those harmonies of instruments or voices which have often transported my soul: they hear nothing but the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the warbling of birds, and the murmurs of the stream.

‘ I keep silence from morn to night. There is no one to converse with; for people constantly employed, either in spreading their nets, or taking care of their vines and orchards, have no knowledge of the intercourses of the world, or the conversations of society. I often content myself with the brown bread of my old fisherman, and even eat it with pleasure; and when I am served with white, I almost always return it.

‘ This old fisherman, who is hard as iron, earnestly remonstrates against my manner of life; says it is too hardy, and assures me I cannot long hold out. I am, on the contrary, convinced that it is more easy to accustom one’s self to a plain diet, than to the luxuries of a feast. Figs, raisins, nuts, and almonds, these

are my delicacies. I am fond of the fish with which this river abounds; it is an entertainment to see them caught, and I sometimes employ myself in spreading the nets. As to my dress, here is an entire change; you would take me for a labourer or a shepherd.

‘ My mansion resembles that of Cato, or Fabricius: my whole household consists of a dog and my old fisherman. His cottage is contiguous to mine: when I want him, I call; when I no longer stand in need of him, he returns to his cottage. I have made myself two gardens, which please me marvellously; I do not think they are to be equalled in all the world. And must I confess to you a more than female weakness, with which I am haunted? I am positively angry that there is any thing so beautiful out of Italy. They are my Transalpine Parnassus.

‘ One of these gardens is shady, formed for contemplation, and sacred to Apollo. It hangs over the source of the river, and is terminated by rocks, or places accessible only to birds. The other is nearer my cottage, of an aspect less severe, and devoted to Bacchus; and, what is extremely singular, it is in the middle of a rapid river. The approach to it is over a ridge of rocks which communicates with the garden;

and there is a natural grotto under the rock, which gives it the appearance of a rustic bridge. Into this grotto the rays of the sun never penetrate. I am confident it much resembles the place where Cicero sometimes went to declaim. It invites to study.

‘Hither I retreat during the noon-tide hours: my mornings are engaged upon the hills, and my evenings either in the meadows or in the garden sacred to Apollo. It is small, but most happily suited to rouse the most sluggish spirit, and elevate it to the skies. Here would I most willingly pass my days, was I not too near Avignon, and too far from Italy. For why should I conceal this weakness of my soul! I love Italy, and I hate Avignon. The pestilential influence of this horrid place empoisons the pure air of Vaucluse, and will compel me to quit my retirement.’

To another friend he writes this eloquent invitation:

‘Here is no tyrant to intimidate, no proud citizen to insult, no wicked tongue to calumniate. Neither quarrels, clamours, law-suits, nor the din of war. We are strangers to avarice, ambition, and envy; and have no great lords to whom court must be paid. Every thing breathes joy, freedom, and simplicity.

Our lot is neither that of poverty nor riches; but a sweet, modest, and sober rusticity. The inhabitants are innocent, tractable, and unacquainted with arms. Our chief, good, affable, and a lover of honest folks. The air healthy, the winds soft, the country open, the springs pure, and the river full of fish. We have shady woods, cool grottos, green lawns, enamelled pastures, and hills sacred to Bacchus and Minerva.

‘As to what respects the mere body, no one takes less trouble about it than myself. But I can tell you in one word, that every thing that liveth upon the earth, or that moveth in the waters, is here, as in the terrestrial Paradise, to speak in the language of the divines; or as in the fields of Elysium, to speak in that of the poets. A voluptuary, who was in search of the greatest dainties, would be easily accommodated in this neighbourhood.’

In another letter to a friend we have a picture in a very different style :

‘Oft in the midst of summer, when I had ended my midnight prayers, and the moon shone bright, have I been irresistibly impelled to wander over the fields, or ascend the hills. Oft, at this silent hour, have I walked alone into the cavern, where no one even in the day

and in company can enter without emotion. I feel a kind of pleasure in doing this: but it is a pleasure mixed with horror.'

Petrarch retired to this delightful spot to cure himself of his passion, and indulge his taste for letters; but in vain.

'I may hide myself,' says he, 'among the rocks, and in the woods, but there are no places so wild or solitary whither the torments of love do not pursue me.

'Thrice, in that dark and lonely hour when nought but ghastly shades is seen or heard, Laura with stedfast look approached my bed, and claimed her slave. My limbs were froze with fear; my blood fled from my veins, and rushed upon my heart. Trembling I rose ere morn, and left a house where all I saw alarmed me. I climbed the rocks; I ran into the woods, watching with fearful eyes this dreadful vision: I may not be believed, but still it followed;—here I perceived it starting from a tree—there rising from a fountain—now it descended from the rocks, or floated on the clouds. Surrounded thus, I stood transfixed with horror!'

1338. Petrarch passed near a year in this retreat: the domestics who served him at

Avignon desired their dismissal, for they could not bear to lead such reclusive lives.

He gives this character of his fisherman, who was his domestic at Vacluse.

‘He is,’ says he, ‘an aquatic animal, brought up among fountains and rivers, and seeking his livelihood in the rocks; but a very good man, merry, docile, and obedient. To say simply, that he was faithful, would be too little; for he was fidelity itself. He understood agriculture, and every thing relative to a country life. It was a maxim with him, that whatever was sown the eighth of the ides of February, in the soil of Vacluse, could not fail of being fruitful.’

He had a wife, of whom Petrarch has given this description in a letter to one of his friends.

‘Her face is so withered, so scorched by the sun, that was you to see her, you would think you beheld the deserts of Lybia or Ethiopia. If Helen, Lucretia, or Virginia, had possessed faces like hers, Troy would have existed still; Tarquin would not have been driven from his kingdom, nor Appius have died in prison. But though the face of my farmer’s wife is black, nothing can be whiter than her soul. She does not feel the want of beauty;

and to look on her one would even say, it became her to be ugly. No creature was ever so faithful, humble, and laborious.

‘ At the season when the grasshoppers can scarcely support the heat of the sun, she passes her life in the fields ; her hardy skin defies even the fury of the dog-days. At night, when she returns, she works in her house like a young person just risen from sleep. Never any complaints, never the least murmur, nothing that shews the smallest variation of temper, escapes her. She lies on a bed of leaves ; all her food is a black gritty bread ; her drink a sharp wine, which tastes like vinegar, and with which she mixes a great deal of water. If any one presents her with more delicate food she rejects it, because it is not what she has been accustomed to,’

Petrarch had hired this house from a peasant ; it was an uncomfortable dwelling, but he rebuilt it in the most simple manner. His best friends came seldom to see him, and, when they did, made but a short stay. Others went only from the mere principle of charity, and as we should go to see sick people or prisoners. Gui Settimo himself, that companion, that faithful friend, who had never left him from his childhood, had not the courage to

follow him into this solitude. He was in the bustle of the world, and, soliciting a place at court, was called to the bar. But when he could steal a few moments from the hurry of business, he went to pass them in this retreat with his friend, and said with him, 'This is a port, where I came to shelter myself from the tempests of the world.'

The other friends of Petrarch wrote to him sometimes, to excuse themselves for not seeing him more frequently.

'It is not possible to live as you do,' said they to him. 'The life you lead is contrary to nature. In the winter you sit like an owl in the corner of your chimney. In the summer you roam about the fields without ceasing; or, if by chance you are found, it is reposing yourself under the shade of a tree.'

'These friends of mine,' says Petrarch, 'regard the pleasures of the world as the supreme good; they do not comprehend that it is possible to renounce these pleasures. They are ignorant of my resources. I have friends whose society is delightful to me; they are persons of all countries, and of all ages; distinguished in war, in council, and in letters. Easy to live with, always at my command. They come at my call, and return when I de-

fire them : they are never out of humour, and they answer all my questions with readiness. Some present in review before me the events of past ages ; others reveal to me the secrets of nature ; these teach me how to live, and those how to die : these dispel my melancholy by their mirth, and amuse me by their sallies of wit ; and some there are who prepare my soul to suffer every thing, to desire nothing, and to become thoroughly acquainted with itself. In a word, they open a door to all the arts and sciences. As a reward of such great services, they require only a corner of my little house, where they may be safely sheltered from the depredations of their enemies. In fine, I carry them with me into the fields, the silence of which suits them better than the business and tumults of cities.'

The village of Vacluse is in the diocese of Cavaillon, and is subject to it in spirituals and temporals ; the bishop is sovereign. Cavaillon is a little neat town delightfully situated at the foot of a mountain near Durance, four leagues from Avignon, and two from the fountain of Vacluse. Petrarch gives this account of it :

' This town is neither large, well peopled, nor well built. It has only name and an-

tiquity; it is spoken of as an ancient city, in some authentic memoirs about fifty years before Christ, at the time that Julius Cæsar conquered Britain. It was formerly built on the mountain, and was a Roman colony, as appears from the medals of Lepidus. My friend Socrates said pleasantly enough, that it was like the little town which, according to some writers, king Agbarus offered to Jesus Christ. This bishopric resembles its possessor; it is equal to the greatest in dignity, and enjoys the freedom of the least.

‘ Philip of Cabassole has possessed it three years; he was of an ancient and noble family, divided into two branches; one of them resided at Avignon, the other at Cavaillon; he was of the second branch, and not arrived at the age prescribed by the canons when he was made bishop. One of his brothers, called John Elzeor, was at that time sent from the king of Naples to the court of the pope. This family have always been attached to the house of Anjou, which has loaded them with benefits. Philip received his education at Cavaillon, the place of his birth; he was made canon before he was twelve years old, thirteen years after archdeacon, and provost the year following. Three years after he had the bishopric,

vacant by the death of Goufridi, who had been apothecary, physician, and favourite, of John XXII.'

All contemporary authors speak of Philip of Cabassole as a man of distinguished merit: in the government of his diocese he was just and impartial; the popes employed him in several nice and important offices, in which he conducted himself with wisdom and dexterity. His mind was well cultivated, and enriched with a variety of knowledge; he gave all those moments to study which were not employed in public affairs. In the library of St. Victor at Paris there are some works of his in manuscript which have never been printed. Petrarch gives his eulogium in two words, 'He was,' says he, 'a great man with a little bishopric.' His merit afterwards raised him to the highest dignities in the church.

Petrarch knew this prelate only by sight when he took the resolution to fix at Vacluse: as soon as he got there he went to pay his duty to him as his bishop and his lord. Philip of Cabassole loved men of wit and letters; he was acquainted with Petrarch's high reputation, gave him the most obliging reception, and expressed great joy to see him fixed in his diocese.

‘ He received me,’ said Petrarch, ‘ as of old St. Ambrose received St. Augustin, as a father and a bishop ; he afterwards vouchsafed to admit me to the strictest intimacy, and came sometimes to Vacluse with no other view than to see me.’

The bishop of Cavaillon had a castle at Vacluse, placed on the top of a rock, of which there remain now only the ruins. Its approach appears inaccessible, and it is difficult to comprehend how it could ever be inhabited ; we shall see, however, that Philip de Cabassole went there frequently. The people of that country shew these ruins as the remains of the house of Petrarch, but they are mistaken, for it was much lower, and nearer the river and the village. It was not long after this prelate became acquainted with Petrarch, that he had the misfortune to lose one of his brothers, called Isnord : he was a knight of St. John of Jerusalem, and died in the flower of his age during a voyage on the Red sea. As soon as our poet heard this melancholy news, he went to Cavaillon to condole with the bishop on his loss. He found him extremely affected, but calm as became a man of his dignity.

When Petrarch returned to Vacluse, he wrote the bishop a letter, in which he places

before him every motive which could soften his grief: and at the same time mentions with admiration the becoming manner in which he received the compliments made him on this occasion.

In the answer this prelate returned to Petrarch he appeared most touched with the manner of his brother's death, and bitterly laments that, as he lost his life on the sea, his body had not received the honours of burial.

Petrarch took up the pen again, and taxed Philip with a weakness more natural to a woman than a bishop. He proves that the place of interment can never have any influence on our happiness in the other world, and he takes this occasion to speak of ancient customs with respect to the burial of the dead. He asserts, that the custom of reducing the body to ashes was not an ancient one among the Romans: that Lucius Sylla, the dictator, was the first of the Cornelian family who ordered his body to be burnt after his death, from the fear they should treat him as he had treated Marius. His example was followed, though without the same reason, in those who came after him. Petrarch shews in this letter that there are errors which proceed from habit; that certain things, which give us horror, are nothing to

people accustomed to them ; and that a man of understanding should shake off vulgar prejudices, and seek the truth in the nature of things themselves.

Petrarch had the happiness to find another friend in the provost of Cavaillon. Pons Samson obtained that dignity by the promotion of Philip de Cabassole to the episcopacy. Petrarch knew him from his childhood, and they had studied together.

‘He is justly called Samson,’ says Petrarch, ‘for he has as much strength of mind as that scourge of the Philistines had of body.’ The provost of Cavaillon joined to this a great knowledge of letters, and a sweetness of manners, which rendered his society delightful. The bishop loved him extremely.

Petrarch, who had not seen him for some time, was charmed to find him so near, and to renew his former friendship.

We learn that Petrarch often received visits in this solitude, which he had no reason to expect or hope for, from persons of rank and genius, who came from Italy and the remotest parts of France with no other view than to see and converse with him. ‘Some there were,’ says he, ‘who sent before them magnificent presents, persuaded that liberality clears the way

and opens the doors.' They assured him they came only to see him ; and, if they did not find him at Avignon, they set out immediately for Vacluse. He names only Peter de Poitiers, a man respectable for his piety and his knowledge ; he entered very young into the order of the Cordeliers ; he was afterwards promoted by the popes John and Clement to the priory of Clifton, and the abbey of St. Javin de Poitiers. His genius, or rather the taste of the age he lived in, led him to view every subject in a moral light, which made his works deficient in variety.

All Europe was at this time in motion, expecting France to be invaded by the English. Edward III. at this time king of England, was a young prince full of fire, valour, and ambition ; and possessed all the qualities that form a hero and a conqueror. He disputed the crown with Philip of Valois, under pretext that, being nephew of the deceased king by Isabella his mother, he was a degree nearer than Philip, who was only his cousin-german. Philip opposed the Salic law, which excluded females from the succession ; the English lawyers of this time, who acknowledged this law in France, maintained they had excluded females, because of their weak capacities, from

wearing, though they might transmit, the crown. But in the assembly of the nobles it was universally decided, that women could not give a right of which they were not in possession.

This decision appeared unjust to Edward, and confirmed his enmity to France. It began by little animosities. Edward received Robert of Artois with open arms, who had been banished from France for a falsehood he was guilty of in a process at law; and Philip returned the compliment by receiving David de Bruce, king of Scotland, dethroned by Edward Baliol, whom the king of England supported.

The emperor Lewis of Bavaria took the side of the English, and declared war against France. He summoned Humbert, the dauphin of Vienna, who held his titles from the emperor, to aid him in this war. Philip, on his part, invited Humbert, as a vassal of the crown to which his father had rendered homage, to come and join him at Amiens. Humbert, who was by no means of a warlike disposition, found himself very critically situated; and he thought he might come off by standing neuter. Petrarch knew the dauphin well; he had seen him often at cardinal Colonna's, when this

prince was at Avignon. He had expressed a friendship for Petrarch, who was concerned to see him act a part contrary to his honour; and he undertook to write to him, to draw him out of this lethargy, and to shew him the fatal consequences which must ensue from it. It is probable that cardinal Colonna, who loved Humbert, and was interested in his glory, engaged Petrarch to write this letter, as follows:

‘ My attachment to you forces me to break silence, and to write you a letter which, if it is read with the same disposition in which it was written, may contribute to your glory, and ought to increase your kindness towards me. If the name of friend, with which you have honoured me, is not an empty title, I think it is my duty to rouse you from sleep, and to set before you the great perils with which you are threatened.

‘ You perceive what a war is kindling between the kings of France and England; your ancestors have beheld nothing like it. All the princes and the nations of Europe are set in motion. Never has a wider field of glory been opened for the bravery of warriors. Already have those people taken up arms who inhabit the country between the Alps and the

ocean. You alone live in peace in the midst of that whirlwind which encircles all.

‘ Listen to Virgil, who asks, Can you sleep in the situation you are in? Do you not see the dangers that threaten you? Shame alone should have drawn you out of your lethargy. While all the warriors in Europe are armed and exposed to the heat of the dog-days, can you remain buried in the bosom of luxury and ease? You are young, noble, robust, and powerful. You appeared, formerly, eager after glory; what restrains this desire at present? You love sloth; you fly from labour: but learn from Sallust, that luxury and idleness suit none but women, and that labour is the lot of men. You fear death: but what is death? A sort of sleep. What difference is there between the day in which we begin, and that in which we end our lives? The first introduces us to pain and trouble: the last delivers us from both. Hence the custom, drawn from the maxims of sound philosophy, to weep at the birth, and rejoice at the death of their friends.

‘ But even supposing death to be an evil, do you believe you can shelter yourself from it by a soft and effeminate life? Are you ignorant of the proverb which says, “ The palate kills more than the sword.” Death seeks us and

finds us every where. Would you then be so much attached to life, as to wish to prolong it at the expence of your honour? Many, had they died sooner, would have preserved the names they afterwards lost; witness Tarquin, Claudius, and Pompey. Shall the fear of death then prevent your going where your duty calls? Or can you think yourself in safety at home?

‘ Open your eyes, and you will see an enormous mass, moved by the efforts of a thousand nations, ready to fall wherever fortune shall decree. Your enemies surround the king; you know he is not prejudiced in your favour. If he should prove conqueror, do you think he will take your indolence in good part? If he is vanquished, do you hope to rest secure from those dangers victory draws after it? Do not you fear being overwhelmed in the common ruin? They will say you remained neuter from fear, and not from good-will. They will oblige you to be a spectator of the combat, however it may be decided. Call to mind what happened to Metius the Alban chief, who, retiring to an eminence with the design of declaring himself the victor, was dragged to pieces between four horses by the order of Tullus Hostilius. Take my advice, awake from your drowsiness, and, before it is too late, perform your duty. To

remain inactive, when all the world is in motion, resembles death rather than sleep.'

This letter had no effect upon the dauphin. He passed the winter at Avignon, and went not to Paris till July following, where some business called him.

Petrarch speaks of a little journey that he took about this time with a man whose rank was superior to his judgment; and in a letter, wrote thirty years after to Philip of Cabassole, he gives this account of it:

'This great person, whose society was displeasing to me, invited me to go with him to St. Beaume. I constantly opposed his entreaties; but cardinal Colonna, to whom I could refuse nothing, joined in them. I was obliged to comply, and suffered myself to be dragged thither. We passed three days and three nights in that sacred and horrible cavern. Weary of the society I came with against my will, I wandered frequently into the neighbouring forests. I had sometimes recourse to my usual method of dispelling the vexation one feels in disagreeable society. My imagination brought to my view my absent friends, and I conversed with them in my thoughts as if present. I had not long had the happiness of knowing you; but you came to my aid on this occasion. I thought

I saw you seated near, and conversing with me in my grotto.'

Gerard, the brother of Petrarch, who was with him in this journey, took this opportunity to visit the monastery of the Carthusians, which is only two leagues from St. Beaume, and confirmed himself in the project he had already conceived of becoming a Carthusian.

Italy was still in commotion, and all the rest of Europe. The bishop of Verona was murdered in a fray, and Azon de Corregge and William de Pastrengo were sent to Avignon to represent this affair to the pope. Petrarch, who was then at Vacluse, no sooner heard of their arrival, than he flew to Avignon, eager to see his dear friend. But hardly had he set foot in that city, when he felt his wound open again. Convinced that he had no resource but in flight, and that he had not a moment to lose, he returned that very night to his retreat, without seeing those dear friends whom he sought with so much ardour. After Petrarch was settled at Vacluse, whenever he made a journey to Avignon, he lodged in a little house belonging to Lelius, who was at Rome with the bishop of Lombes. As soon as William de Pastrengo heard that Petrarch was come to see him, he went immediately to this house; but

finding no one there, he left the following billet :

‘ Where are you, my dear Petrarch ? I knocked at the door of my friend Lelius. I called ; no one made answer. Come out of your den, I beseech you, and shew yourself to a friend who longs to behold you.’

Petrarch returned this answer :

‘ You were astonished not to find me at Avignon, where I formerly was so happy to see you. But you ought to be still more surprised that, having quitted the country at the season when it is most agreeable to me, I should return again in so much haste without having embraced you. Listen to my reasons for a conduct so very singular. The sun is going to set, and your courier hastens me. I have not time to inform you of my sufferings in the city you are in ; perceiving that the only means of recovering my health was to leave it, I took this step, notwithstanding the efforts of all my friends to detain me. Alas ! their friendship serves only to my destruction. I came into this solitude, to seek a shelter from the tempest ; and to live a little for myself, before I was called to die. I was near the mark I aimed at ; I felt, with extreme joy, my mind was more at ease ; the life which I led seemed

to me to approach to that of the blessed in heaven. But behold the force of habit and of passion ; I return often, though led by no business, into that odious city. I cast myself into the nets in which I was before ensnared. I know not what wind drives me from the port into that stormy sea where I have been so often shipwrecked. I am no sooner there, than I feel I am in a vessel tossed on every side. I see the firmament on fire, the sea rage, and rocks ready to dash me in pieces. Death presents itself to my eyes ; and, what is worse than death, I am weary of my present life, and dread that which is to come,

‘ This is all the apology I can make at present for not having had the pleasure of seeing you. The cares which consume my heart seized upon me as soon as I set foot in Avignon. They threatened me as a rebellious slave who had broken his fetters. To avoid the new ones they were preparing, I fled with precipitation. I departed at night, not daring to attempt it by day. Touched with my condition, you will pardon me for not seeing you. You will plead my cause in the world, where they consider as a madness my quitting the town to live in solitude.’

William de Pastrengo made this answer :

“Your precipitate flight, my dear Petrarch, displeased me extremely; with grief I found myself deprived of your conversation. Is it easy to bear the absence of a friend whose presence is so delightful? Your letter came very seasonably to dissipate my chagrins, and refresh my mind after the fatigues of business. I learn with pleasure that you have forced open the door of your prison, and burst the chains that bound you: that, after having weathered a violent storm, you are at last arrived at the port you aimed at, and lead in it a life of reflection and tranquillity.

‘I see from hence all you do at Vacluse in the course of the day. At sun-rise, awakened by the concert of the woods and the murmurs of your fountains, you climb up the dewy hills, from whence you see under you beautiful and well-cultivated fields, and perhaps the sea covered over with sails. You have always your table-book with you, to which you commit every moment some new production of your mind. When the sun shines on the horizon you go into your little house, to a repast simple as those of Curius and Fabricius. This is soon followed by a short sleep, after which, to avoid the heat, you enter into the valley, where, when the sun begins to decline, the shadows of the moun-

tains lengthen towards the east. I think I see that marvellous fountain which seems to spring out of the rock, from whence, gushing forth in shining waves, it flows in a beautiful river which waters the valley.

‘ I discover that tremendous cavern which you enter when the water is low, and breathe a cool air in the burning heats of summer; that grotto suspended on waters more transparent than glass; and I behold you seated in the shade, feasting your eyes on those delightful prospects. From hence viewing the things of the world as a shadow that is passing away, you renounce them to employ your time in such productions as the Nymphs and the Muses applaud. When you leave these contemplations your hands are empty, but your tables are full. But think not to possess alone the treasures of your mind. Mine is never absent, but partakes with you an enjoyment as useful as it is agreeable.

‘ Adieu, my dear Petrarch. Forget not your other self.’

1339. William de Pastrengo remained a year at Avignon, occupied with the negotiation he was charged with, and in which he succeeded. He went to Vaucluse whenever he

could steal a few hours from his business, and assisted Petrarch in the cultivation of his garden.

Petrarch, after this, made several journeys to Avignon. He sometimes fancied himself cured: but, like Virgil's hind, he always carried about with him the fatal arrow.

'I am weary,' says he, 'of my tears which I shed day and night, and of feeling that I am the wretched object of my own aversion. At my sepulchre I would not have your name engraved upon my tomb; a testimony to future ages, that by the darts of Laura I was bereft of life. Accept rather this tender and faithful heart; treat it with more kindness; dry up my tears, and speak peace to my soul!'

Petrarch was in the unhappy state peculiar to a love tender like his, when directed to an improper object, and whose society he could therefore obtain very rarely, and for short intervals only: he knew not how to think, or how to act; he was irresolute and miserable: when he found himself more at liberty, he wished for his chains; when oppressed by their weight, he sighed for liberty. This, it must be owned, is a melancholy situation of the human mind, and the dreadful consequence of a mis-

placed affection; and, whatever palliations may be drawn in excuse for Petrarch, who lived in a dark age, under the clouds of superstition which at that time covered the world, no apology can be made with justice at present for those whose characters resemble his in this unhappy point of view, since the light both of sacred and moral truth, now clearly conveyed to all, rejects all sophistry in respect to the internal disposition, as well as the outward conduct, and condemns as certainly the inward encouragement of the passion as the outward commission of the crime.

Even Petrarch himself seems to have felt this truth, and censured his own conduct on these principles, as well as bitterly lamented the sufferings it caused him, in the dialogue he draws between himself and St. Augustin. The following sentiments, drawn from some sonnets he wrote about this time, addressed to the eyes of Laura, do also fully prove these sufferings, and are too descriptive of Laura to be omitted.

‘Bright eyes! where Love has established his empire! it is to you I address myself. My Muse is cold and languid, but the subject I am upon will cherish and inspire it. To those who

sing your praise you give the wings of love, which elevates them far above all that is gross and terrestrial. Borne upon these wings, I dare express the feelings which have long been concealed in my heart.

‘ Ye faithful witnesses of the life I lead ; ye fields and flowers, ye mountains, woods, and vallies, which surround me ; how often have ye heard me call death to my succour ? for she who wounds is not touched with my distress.

‘ Bright eyes ! serene beyond expression ! I complain not of you, though transfixed by your darts from which I cannot fly : behold the paleness of my visage, and then judge the condition to which you have reduced me !

‘ But grief makes me wander ; rather would I die in their presence than live deprived of their influence.

‘ Yes, charming Laura ! I discover in your eyes a light which points out the path and guides me in the road to heaven. By a long and delightful study I read in them all that passes in your soul. It is this view excites me to virtue, raises me above the joys of sense, and leads me to true glory : it spreads over my heart that inexpressible repose which fills it with delight, and renders it insensible to every

other object. In this state of enjoyment, my thoughts, my words, and my actions, bear the stamp of immortality !

‘ The happiest lovers, the brightest minions of fortune, have never felt my joy, when indulged with those tender regards bestowed by love and Laura. I see it with grief ; nature has not formed me worthy of these heavenly regards ; but it is my ambition to become so. If I can purify my heart, if I can detach it from every inferior impulse, perhaps a good name will compensate for my want of endowments. This is certain, that I shall never find consolation but in those transporting emotions which are the most exquisite gratifications to a chaste and tender heart.

‘ In past ages men, filled with a noble emulation, traversed the seas and the mountains to seek from a distant soil things that were rare and excellent. As for me, I need not travel far, for I find every good thing in the eyes I adore.

‘ As a pilot who, in the obscurity of the night tossed by the tempest, raises his eyes towards the heavens to direct him in his course, so I, in the storms of my passions, turn towards my bright and polar stars. These are my directors ; they are my guides in every step that

I take. O Laura ! I am nothing without you. If, cultivated by your kind hand, I should produce any fruit, the glory, the felicity, will be yours.'

We will now return to the affairs of Italy.

Benedict XII. drew to Avignon the best artists, to assist in raising that enormous edifice which he had planned for himself and his successors.

Painting began at this time to revive. Giotto, the pupil of Cimabue, who raised this art from its ashes, died in 1336. He left a pupil who followed his style of painting, and who had worked with him in Rome, at that famous Mosaic picture representing the bark of St. Peter tossed by the tempest. This pupil of Giotto was called Simon Martini, and sometimes Simon de Sienna, because he was born in that city. He attached himself to his master, and followed him to Rome, where he executed some pictures that established his reputation. He worked afterwards with success in Tuscany, always in the manner of Giotto. After his death, Benedict invited him in a very pressing manner, says Vasari, to Avignon. He intended to have the history of the martyrs painted by him, for the ornament of his palace.

Simon was not famous for design, as is evident from some pictures of his at Pisa, the subjects of which are taken from the life of St. Renier; but he had invention, and succeeded admirably in portraits. When he came to Avignon his behaviour gained him the love and esteem of all the prelates, and he soon became acquainted with Petrarch. He loved his countrymen, and above all men of genius; and he attached himself very sincerely to the Siennese poet: a certain affinity which subsists between poetry and painting contributed to strengthen the band of their union. Simon held the same rank among the painters as Petrarch among the poets.

Petrarch desired his friend to draw a small picture of Laura, so small as to be portable. Simon, who was delighted to exercise his talents on so celebrated a beauty, gave Petrarch this mark of his friendship with the greatest readiness. There is yet at Avignon, in the house of Sade, an old picture of Laura, which was probably a copy of this given to Petrarch. Laura appears in it dressed in red, holding a flower in her hand, with a sweet and modest countenance, rather inclining to tenderness.

Petrarch complimented Simon on this oc-

casion in one of his poems. 'What a happiness,' says Vasari, (who was himself an eminent painter in the sixteenth century) 'for a painter to be united with a great poet ! He shall draw a little picture, which can only last a certain number of years, because painting is subject to all sorts of accidents, and for his reward he shall be immortalised by verses, which are beyond the reach of time.'

Whether the imagination of Simon was so filled with Laura, that it was ever present when he proposed to paint a beautiful woman, or whether he meant by this to oblige and express his acknowledgments to Petrarch, it is certain he drew her figure on many occasions in which she had no concern.

On a painting in Fresco she is dressed in green at the feet of St. George on horseback, who delivers her from the dragon. This piece is under the portico of Notre-Dame de Dons, and is much damaged by the injuries of the weather ; Laura is placed in another of his pictures in the church of St. Marie Novella at Florence. Among the females who represent the pleasures of the world, we see Laura dressed in green, with a little flame rising out of her breast, her gown strewed over with flowers. In another picture in the same church, Pe-

trarch is drawn standing by a knight of Rhodes. At Sienna also they shew a picture of the Virgin drawn by Simon, which is a portrait of Laura; she is there dressed in green, with her eyes fixed on the ground, which was her common attitude. All these pictures of Laura were not thought sufficient by Simon to express his love for Petrarch. There was a manuscript of Virgil upon vellum, with the commentaries of Servius, which he greatly prized. Simon painted on the first leaf of this manuscript very elegant figures, which represented all the subject of the *Æneid*. This is to be seen at Milan, in the Ambrosian library.

1340. The first years of Petrarch's residence at Vacluse were employed in a deep study of the Roman history, and he undertook to write it from Romulus to Titus: an immense work in an age when manuscripts were rare, and the subject still buried in obscurity. His imagination was warmed with the fine passages in the life of Scipio Africanus. By a sort of instinct, he had from childhood given Scipio the preference to the heroes of ancient, as Stephen Colonna to all those of modern, Rome. He wished to write an epic poem on this subject. At that time this was the utmost effort of the human mind, and the most probable means of

gaining him the laurel crown, for which honour he had long sighed. He was not discouraged by difficulties. He set about and prosecuted this work with so much ardour, that in the space of a year the poem was far advanced. He gave it the name of *Africa*, because it recited the victories of Scipio over the Carthaginians in the second Punic war. If Petrarch had known the poem of Silius Italicus on this subject, he would hardly have undertaken it; but that being concealed in a monastery, was not found till 1415: that of Ennius he was acquainted with. ‘Ennius,’ says he, ‘has sung fully of Scipio; but, in the opinion of Valerius Maximus, his style is harsh and vulgar. There is no elegant poem which has for its subject the glorious actions of that conqueror of Hannibal. I am resolved to celebrate his victories in the best manner I am able.’

The bishop of Cavaillon, fearing that his close application to this work would destroy his health, which appeared to him already injured, came one day and asked him for the key of his library. Petrarch, not aware of his intention, gave it him immediately. The bishop, after having locked up his books and his papers, said to him, ‘I command you to remain ten days

without reading or writing.' Petrarch obeyed, but it was with extreme reluctance. The first day that he passed after this interdiction appeared to him longer than a year; the second he had a violent head-ach from morning to night; and on the third he felt some symptoms of a fever. The bishop, touched with his condition, restored to him in the same moment his keys and his health.

Notwithstanding his enthusiasm for Scipio, Petrarch was not so absorbed but that he found time for other studies. He had long desired to learn the Greek language, that he might read Homer and Plato, of whose works there were at that time no tolerable translations.

'The name of Homer,' says he, 'is hardly known to those barbarians from whom we are only separated by the Alps. Would to God we were divided from them by the ocean itself! The book which passes under the name of Homer is only an abridgment of the Iliad, done by a schoolboy whose name is unknown.'

The Greek language was never totally lost in Italy, but at the time I am speaking of there were hardly six persons who were acquainted with the rudiments of it; and though Dante in his famous poem cites several Greek au-

thors, Manneti and Philelphe assure us that he was ignorant of that language.

Petrarch was so happy this year as to have an opportunity of learning it at Avignon ; and this engaged him to make a longer stay in this city than he had ever done since his establishment at Vacluse. Barnard Borlaam, a Greek by descent, but born in Calabria, a monk of St. Basil, and abbe of St. Sauviur at Constantino-ple, came to Avignon on an embassy from Andronicus, the young Greek emperor, to the pope, to procure a council for the reunion of the Greek and Roman churches, which had separated in the ninth century. The pretext for this schism was, that the Greeks believed the Holy Ghost proceeded immediately from the Father ; the Latins, from the Father and the Son : and some dispute about the consecration of the holy bread. Borlaam brought letters of recommendation from Philip king of France, and Robert king of Naples, to facilitate the success of the negociation.

Boccace thus describes this Greek envoy, whom he knew at Naples :

‘ Borlaam was a little man, with great knowledge and understanding. Greece has not, for many years, produced so wise a man. He was profoundly versed in all that relates to history,

in philosophy, and the Greek language ; and from the princes and learned men in Constantinople he received certificates which attested the superiority of his abilities. He had a subtle and penetrating mind, and perfectly understood Euclid, Aristotle, and Plato. But he expressed with difficulty what he conceived with amazing ease and quickness.

Petrarch was solicitous to be acquainted with such a man as Borlaam, and sought with eagerness to be instructed in the Greek language. Borlaam, on his side, wished as much to be acquainted with the Latin tongue, which he knew only a little of, having been educated by masters who spoke that language. These views soon united them. They began by reading Plato. From this philosopher Petrarch drew many refined sentiments on the nature of love, the origin of souls, their transmigration, and their passage into the planets when disencumbered from the body. Petrarch would soon have become perfect in the Greek language, under this able master, had he continued at Avignon ; but the bad success of his negotiation hastened his departure. Petrarch was in despair at losing his tutor ; and Borlaam generously owned, that in this commerce he had learnt much more than he was able to teach.

The loss of one friend, however, was made up to Petrarch by the arrival of another, who was as necessary to regulate the motions of his heart as this Greek master was to increase the riches of his mind. This was father Dennis, whom Petrarch had so often consulted about his passion. He could not have arrived at a more fortunate moment; his patient wanted more than ever the exertion of his skill, for relapses are the rocks most to be feared, as well by the physician of the soul as the physician of the body. This wise Augustin, being advanced in years, thought it time to quit the pulpit, and the university of Paris, where he had appeared with great honour, to enjoy the sweets of repose in the bosom of his country, and came to Avignon with the intention of going by sea to Florence.

Petrarch did all he could to engage him to visit Vacluse, and finding him reluctant, he seconded his sollicitations with a billet, as follows:

‘ Can nothing induce you, my dear master, to come to my solitude? Neither the beauties of the place, nor the friendship you have always expressed for me? Will nothing tempt you to come to a friend solitary and abandoned? Will not my ardent request, and the

pity you must have for my condition, determine you to pass some days with your disciple, and honour his retreat with your presence? If these motives are not sufficient, permit me to employ others which appear to me irresistible. There is in this place a poplar tree of so immense a size, that it covers with its shade not only the river and its banks, but also a considerable extent beyond them. They tell us, that king Robert of Naples, invited by the beauty of this spot, came here to unburden his mind from the weight of public affairs, and enjoy in this delightful shade the sweets of repose. He brought with him his queen, as famous for her beauty as her birth; Clemence his niece, the widow of a great king, and a prodigious train of lords and ladies.

‘ While this brilliant court amused themselves in wandering over the meadows, hunting in the woods, drawing the ponds, and contriving a thousand rural games on the banks of the river, the king, seated on the enamelled lawn under the shade of this fine tree, was buried in deep thought. His penetrating mind, accustomed to pry into the bowels of the earth, sought perhaps some secret of nature; or perhaps he was conversing with fortune, and saying, “ You may continue to overwhelm me

with favours, but I am not to be blinded by your deceitful caresses; for I know that death pursues, and will soon raise me beyond the circle of them all." He might perhaps be meditating some great project, to punish the perfidious prince who so unjustly withheld a part of his kingdom. Whatever were the reflections which occupied the mind of this great man, they were certainly sublime and worthy of him.

'And will not you, my dear master, come with transport to a place so honoured? Will not you revere the tree that covered him, and kiss with transports the sacred footsteps of a prince who will be held in veneration by posterity?'

The king, of whom Petrarch gives so high an eulogium, in which flattery had no part, was Robert, son of Charles II. and grandson of Charles I. He was the third king of Naples, of the house of Anjou; and was crowned at Avignon, the same year that pope Clement V. established the holy see in that city, of which Robert was the lord in his own right as count of Provence.

'He was,' says Petrarch, 'the only true king of his time, for I call none kings but those who rule themselves. In him every virtue was

united ; he was a good master, a good father, a good husband : religious from principle, courageous from nature, pacific for the good of his people. He was the only prince who loved letters, and encouraged men of learning. He received them with kindness, and attended with pleasure to their works. He loved to communicate what he knew, and he blushed not to learn even in his advanced age. One of his favourite sayings was, “ We acquire knowledge by giving and receiving instruction.”

‘ Neither the capriciousness of fortune, whose favours and whose cruelties he had alternately experienced, the ignorance of his time, nor the contempt in which science was held, could detach him from study. In the midst of the most important affairs, in the tumult of war, day and night he would always have his books about him. He became by this means a philosopher, theologian, mathematician, astronomer, and even a physician ; and was besides well versed in history, belles lettres, and all the sciences.’

Boccace, who was soon after this united with Petrarch, being at Naples before he produced those works which have since rendered him so celebrated, obtained from this prince the most gracious reception, and knew him

well. 'He is,' says he, 'the wisest king that has reigned since Solomon. All the world was of the same opinion. He was, however, a believer in judicial astrology, which was the folly of the age he lived in.'

This prince made a voyage into Provence in 1319, and resided at Avignon four years, in the court of John XXII. who owed his elevation to Robert, and had a sincere regard for him. And it was at this time he went to visit Vacluse, the account of which Petrarch gave in the above letter.

Father Dennis yielded at last to the solicitations of Petrarch, who had addressed this monk with great skill, as he had a singular attachment and veneration for king Robert. Their union began at Avignon, and was founded upon a great similarity of taste and knowledge, and had been kept up ever since by an interchange of letters, in which the most important questions were discussed. Unhappily for Petrarch, father Dennis, who was in haste to return to his country, made but a short stay at Avignon. On his arrival at Florence, he found that city more agitated than ever by the intestine commotions already mentioned.

In July of the same year there was an eclipse of the sun in the sign of Cancer, 'which hap-

pens,' says Villani, ' only once in a hundred years; and announces, according to the ancient astrologers, very heavy calamities.' On this occasion their judgment proved true; a great deal of mischief was done by violent storms, and by the plague and famine at Florence. These calamities determined father Dennis to yield to the invitations of king Robert, who had pressed him a long time to come and end his days in his court. The king received him with open arms, and gave him an apartment in his own palace, that he might enjoy more of his society. By a public act he bestowed on him houses for the foundation of a convent and a church at Carbonora, which is a suburb of Naples.

In the first conversations which father Dennis had with this prince, he spoke to him of Petrarch as of a man whom he highly loved and esteemed. Robert already knew Petrarch by reputation, and the eulogy of father Dennis augmented the good opinion he had conceived of his character, and determined him to send him a letter. It is much to be lamented that this letter is lost. He enclosed in it an epitaph for the judgment of Petrarch on the niece we have mentioned; and ' who was,' says Villani, ' a queen of great virtue and knowledge.' He

takes the occasion to lament, as a Christian and a philosopher, the miseries of life, and the necessity of death ; opposed to which, there is no consolation but in the hopes of immortality. It is easy to imagine the joy of Petrarch when he received this mark of goodness from a prince of whom he had a long time conceived the highest idea, and whose favour and approbation he passionately desired. This was the answer he returned :

‘ I know not which I ought most to admire in the letter I have received, the justness and dignity of the thoughts, or the graces of the style. I did not imagine the human mind capable of expressing its ideas on so sublime a subject with so much variety, strength, and precision. The beginning of your letter, in which you paint in so lively a manner the misfortunes of human life, made so strong an impression on me, that I almost repented I ever came into the world : but the hand which made the wound contributed to heal it. What you say of the immortality of the soul relieved my drooping spirits, and I then felt a kind of joy that I was born mortal. After having broken the chains which imprison the soul, and cast off the outward covering, how delightful to be clothed with that immortal

robe which will render our bodies pure and incorruptible ! This expectation, which our faith presents to us, was unknown to the heathen philosophers : but they felt that the soul was not to die. Pherecydes was the first among them who openly maintained this truth ; Epicurus the only one who denied it. From Pherecydes it passed to Pythagoras, from Pythagoras to Socrates, and then to Plato, who composed a treatise on that subject, which Cato of Utica studied, to prepare himself for death. And Cicero established this doctrine in his discourses on friendship, old age, and many other parts of his works.

‘ But to whom do I say these things ? fool that I am ! Not only to the greatest of kings, but to the greatest of philosophers. Deign to pardon me, illustrious prince, if, carried away by my zeal for the subject, I sought to confirm by foreign testimonies a truth which verifies itself, and makes me sigh for that day so generally dreaded by mortals. I envy the fate of that niece whose epitaph you vouchsafed to send me ; whose humble and courteous manners, though a sovereign princess, rendered her truly worthy of the name she bore. Though taken from hence in the bloom of youth and beauty, universally regretted, as well in the

kingdom where she was born, as in that to which she succeeded, she yet appears to me the most happy, because you have immortalised her here, and she is enjoying a felicity that is everlasting. How then can any one call that princess dead who lives in fame on earth, and is exalted to bliss in heaven? Your epitaph will transmit the memory of your niece with your own to posterity: and it will be said of her, as Alexander said of Achilles, "How happy is she to be celebrated by so great a poet!" But I fear I shall weary you by the length of my letter. The elegant conciseness of yours warns me to conclude. I pray heaven to preserve a life crowned equally with the laurels of Mars and of Apollo.'

Some time after this Petrarch received a letter from father Dennis, inviting him to come and enjoy ⁴³⁹with him the tranquillity and bounty he possessed. To which Petrarch made this reply:

'Since the time I have ceased to hear your friendly voice, nothing has given me so much pleasure as the report spread at Avignon, that you was gone to Naples to the court of king Robert. Nothing, in my opinion, contributes so much to the delight and tranquillity of life as the intercourse and conversation of wise

men. You understand me, but I will speak with more clearness. Cicero said, "Who was greater than Themistocles in Greece?" And I say, with still more truth, "Who is greater than king Robert, not only in Italy, but even throughout Europe?"

' In this view, it is not the lustre of his crown that dazzles, or his power that weighs with me; it is his mind, his manners that I admire. True kings are more rarely met with than we imagine: we should see fewer sceptres and crowns, if these alone were honoured with them. It is a folly to give that name to the slaves of passion, who live like brutes rather than men. I think Robert the only one who deserves that title; for he has shewn, by a thousand instances of patience and moderation, that he knows how to govern himself.

' This prince has sent for you, and you have obeyed his summons. A perfect conformity in your studies and dispositions unites you: this is quite natural. If I was speaking to any other but yourself, I should say that the king could not procure himself a greater relief under the fatigues of government. As to you, you will obtain at Naples that inward peace which you could not have possessed amidst the disorders in Tuscany. When I heard you were there, "How

happy," cried I, "is father Dennis! He will now lead a peaceful life." I will soon follow you! You know that I aspire to the poetic laurel; and I would owe it only to king Robert. If I am so happy to be summoned by him, I will fly immediately, and consecrate to him my talents and my studies.'

From time immemorial the laurel had been the reward of valour, merit, and genius. Virgil speaks of it in the *Æneid*, where they crowned the victors in the Pythian games. The Romans early adopted this practice. The laurel being consecrated to Apollo, the god of poetry, it was natural to crown poets with it as well as conquerors. Petrarch says in his *Africa*, speaking in the character of Ennius to Scipio, 'Permit us to partake with you in the honour of this crown. If glory belongs to the talents of the mind as well as to military prowess, it is but just to adorn with laurel the brows of poets as well as the brows of heroes. This tree, by its perpetual and beautiful verdure, announces immortality both to the one and the other.' It may be added, the passion which Petrarch had for Laura rendered him still more desirous of this honour. This custom had however been abolished at Rome more than a thousand years.

At last the moment came when he arrived at the height of his wishes ; and the manner of obtaining this honour was still more flattering than the honour itself.

In August of the year 1340, being at Vaucluse, occupied with the thoughts of Laura and his poem, at the third hour, that is to say about nine in the morning, Petrarch received a letter from the Roman senate, who urged him with many pressing entreaties to come to Rome to receive the crown of laurel. On the same day arrived a courier from Robert Bordi, chancellor of the university of Paris, in which this friend and countryman joined every motive which was capable of inducing him to give the preference to Paris for the performance of this ceremony. Nothing could be more flattering to Petrarch than this honourable concurrence of the two greatest cities in the world, disputing which should have the glory of crowning him. This was the brightest period of his life.

In the first moments of his intoxication, being uncertain how to determine, he wrote thus to Avignon to cardinal Colonna :

‘ Who would have guessed that such honours would have pursued me amidst my rocks ? I know there is nothing solid in this world, and

that we run after shadows. But I cannot help comparing my situation to that of Syphax, the most powerful king in Africa, who received at the same time the ambassadors of Rome and Carthage contending for his alliance. I own to you I know not which to prefer: I am agitated by powerful motives on both sides.

‘ At Paris there never was a poet crowned. I shall be the first; this novelty pleases me, and disposes me to that side. But the veneration I have for Rome, where the greatest poets have received the laurel, inclines the balance to the other. Friendship draws me to Paris, but Rome has king Robert for its neighbour, and I know no person more capable of judging of my abilities. You see my perplexity. I fear lest in my joy I should decide improperly. Deign to advise me. To whom but you can I address myself? You who are my pilot, my support, and my glory!’

We see in this letter, that Petrarch inclined towards Rome; and the answer of the cardinal was conformable to this inclination: to which Petrarch thus replies:

‘ I receive with gratitude, and I embrace with pleasure, the advice you have given me. You love your country, but you prefer truth above all. I shall go where you command;

and if any censure the choice I have made, I will shield myself under your name.'

1341. Petrarch went to Rome in the beginning of the spring; but as he had not such an opinion of his works as to believe they merited this great honour, he determined to submit to a public examination, which is never exacted of one so established in reputation. He had a mind also to pay this literary homage to the king of Naples; and he requested the permission to present himself at his tribunal, to undergo this examination. Robert was pleased with the preference given him on this occasion.

The joy of Petrarch would have been complete, if he could have flattered himself with finding at Rome the bishop of Lombes, and to have had this dear friend witness of his glory. But as soon as he had extinguished the fire of discord, and established peace in his family, he returned to his church, which had been seven years deprived of its pastor. His soul, which was without ceasing occupied in weighing the importance of his duties, always determined in favour of those which were the most serviceable to mankind. The grief of the Romans was extreme to lose this tutelary angel, who had re-established harmony and peace among

them, and several times preserved their city from fire and pillage. This worthy prelate was so eager to return to those sheep that Providence had committed to his care in a barbarous country, that he only passed through Avignon, and stopped but a moment to embrace his brother the cardinal; nor did he see Petrarch, who was at that time at Vauchuse: from whence hearing of his departure from Rome he wrote these lines:

‘I am going to Rome, where I shall need you above all others; you who are my delight and glory, must at least be with me in mind.

‘You will say, perhaps, “Why this ardour, this labour, this fatigue? What is the end of it all? Will it render you more wise or virtuous? No. This crown will only serve to expose you to public view, and in consequence to the darts of envy. Science and virtue, are they birds which require branches of trees on which to fix their nests? What use will you make of these laurels with which your brow is to be encircled?” To all these I shall content myself with replying in the words of the wise Hebrew, “Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity.” Such are the follies of men. Take care of yourself, and be favourable to me.’

After having written this letter, Petrarch set

out for Marseilles, and embarked from thence for Naples, notwithstanding his dread of the sea.

Robert learned with pleasure that he was arrived in his kingdom; he gave him the most honourable reception in the presence of all his court; and in the conversations he had with him, Robert found that the friends of this poet had not imposed upon him. Petrarch, on his side, admired the depth of this prince's mind, and the variety of his knowledge. He was extremely pleased with the situation of Naples, on account of the softness of the climate, and the delightful verdure of the country around it. The tomb of Virgil is near Naples; and it is said a laurel sprung up round it, and flourished for several ages.

Robert was curious to see the poem called *Africa*; it had made much noise, though the draught of it was barely sketched out. Petrarch with difficulty confided so unformed a work to this prince. Robert was so pleased with it, that he hinted a wish to have it dedicated to him when it should be made public. Petrarch engaged, and kept his word after the death of that prince; a singular mark of respect. This poem was the most indifferent of Petrarch's works; and he blushed for it some years after.

But Robert was no poet. 'I did not think,' says he, 'after he had conversed with Petrarch, that under the frivolous appearance of poetic fiction, such sublime ideas could be contained.' This prince, to give more weight to his own approbation, appointed a day to examine Petrarch in form; when questions were proposed to him by Robert on all subjects of learning; and this examination was continued the two following days. Then Robert, after a great eulogy on Petrarch, declared that he merited the laurel crown, and had letters patent drawn up, by which he certified that, after a severe examination, he was judged worthy to receive that honour in the capitol. Robert wished Petrarch to receive this crown at Naples, but he represented to this prince that he was desirous of obtaining it on the same theatre where Virgil, Horace, and so many other poets of the first order, had before been crowned. This prince had the complaisance to enter into his reasons; and, to complete his kindness, he testified his regret that his advanced age would not permit him to go to Rome and crown Petrarch himself, repeating several times that his dignity as a king should have been no obstacle.

As Robert could not himself accompany Petrarch, he named John Borrili, one of his first

courtiers, to be his proxy upon this occasion. Boccace speaks of Borrili as a man of great abilities, and a good poet. Petrarch compares him to Ovid. He was well descended, his family had been highly honoured by Charles I. of Naples, and he was the favourite of king Robert.

Petrarch, a little time before his departure from Naples, had a conversation with Robert, which proves the great taste this prince had for letters, and the honour in which he held them. He asked Petrarch why he thought so late of paying him a visit ?

‘ Great king,’ replied our poet, ‘ I have long wished for this happiness, but fortune has always opposed me. I own, to my shame, that the perils I had to encounter by sea and by land deterred me.’

The conversation after this falling upon Philip of Valois, king of France, Robert said to Petrarch, ‘ Have you never been at his court ?’ ‘ I have not even had the least desire to go,’ replied Petrarch. ‘ And why so ?’ said the prince smiling. ‘ Because,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ it seems to me that I could only be a useless and a troublesome person to an ignorant king. I would much rather live in an honest mediocrity, than

drag a useless life in a court where no one spoke my language.'

'It occurs to me,' said the king, 'that the eldest son of Philip loves study.' 'I have also heard it,' replied Petrarch, 'but it does not please the father; they even say he looks upon the preceptors of his son as his enemies.'

At these words Robert, seized with horror and indignation, after a short silence cried out, raising his eyes to heaven, 'How different are the tastes of men! For my own part, I swear that letters are dearer to me than my crown; and if I must renounce one or the other, I would immediately sacrifice my diadem.'

When Petrarch went to take leave of king Robert, this prince, after engaging his promise that he would visit him again very soon, took off the robe he wore that day, and begged he would accept it, and wear it at his coronation; and, that he might express his affection by every possible means, he had a breviae drawn up and given to Petrarch, by which he conferred on him the place of general almoner: great interest was always made for this post on account of the privileges attached to it; the principal of which were exemption from pay-

ing the tithes of benefices to the king, and a dispensation from residence.

There was at this time at Naples, 1341, a man of extraordinary learning, to whom Boccace gives singular commendation; this was Paul de Perouse, who had many years been librarian to king Robert. As he was very curious, and possessed of all sorts of knowledge, he had collected, by order of his master, a great number of foreign books in history and poetry. His search after these books had united him very strongly with Borlaam, the wise Grecian, who has already been mentioned. It was by his means he obtained from Greece those books he could not meet with among the Latins. He composed an immense work, entitled, 'Collections,' which was full of erudition, and comprehended all that had been said by the Greeks and the Latins on the pagan divinities,

B O O K III.

ORSO, count of Anguillara, was senator of Rome when Petrarch arrived there, and was to continue in office but a few weeks longer. We have seen that Petrarch passed some time in his castle at Capranica. Orso, who was very desirous of crowning Petrarch himself, wrote to inform him he must begin his journey immediately, if he would give him this satisfaction.

Petrarch set out from Naples in April with John Borrili, who having some affairs to transact in the way, took another road, promising to meet him at Rome. The day after Petrarch got there, not finding Borrili, he dispatched a courier to hasten him, the day of the ceremony being fixed. But he came back without him, and the count of Anguillara would not permit any delay.

The assembly was convoked early in the morning on Easter-day, which happened to be very serene and favourable to the solemnity. The trumpets sounded, and the people, eager

to view a ceremony which had been discontinued for so many years, ran in crowds to behold it. The streets were strewed with flowers, and the windows filled with ladies dressed in the most sumptuous manner, who sprinkled as much perfumed waters on the poet as would serve for a year in the kingdom of Spain.

Petrarch appeared at last at the capitol, preceded by twelve young men in scarlet habits. These were chosen out of the first families of Rome, and recited his verses; while he, adorned with the robe of state which the king of Naples had given him, followed, in the midst of six of the principal citizens clothed in green, with crowns of flowers on their heads: after whom came the senator, accompanied by the first men of the council. When he was seated in his place, Petrarch made a short harangue upon a verse drawn from Virgil: after which, having cried three times, 'Long live the people of Rome! Long live the senator! God preserve them in liberty!' he kneeled down before the senator, who, after a short discourse, took from his head a crown of laurel, and put it upon Petrarch's, saying, 'This crown is the reward of merit.' Then Petrarch recited a fine sonnet on the heroes of Rome; this sonnet is not in his works.

The people shewed their joy and approbation by loud and repeated shouts; by clapping their hands, and crying out several times, 'Long flourish the capitol! Long live the poet!' Stephen Colonna then spoke; and, as he truly loved Petrarch, he gave him that praise which comes from the heart.

Petrarch's friends at Rome shed tears of joy; and, though he was himself in a sort of intoxication, he felt at the bottom of his soul that such honours were incapable of conferring true happiness, and far exceeded his desert. 'I blushed,' says he, 'at the applauses of the people, and the unmerited commendations with which I was overwhelmed.'

When the ceremony in the capitol was ended, Petrarch was conducted in pomp with the same retinue to the church of St. Peter, where, after a solemn mass and returning thanks to God for the honour he had received, he took off his crown to place it among the offerings, and hung it up on the arch of the temple.

The same day the count of Anguillara had letters patent drawn up, by which the senators, after a very flattering preface, declare Petrarch to have merited the title of a great poet and historian; and that at Rome, and in every other place, by the authority of king Robert, the

Roman senate, and the people of Rome, he should have full liberty to read and comment on poetry and history, or on any of the works of the ancients, and to publish any of his own productions, and to wear on all solemn occasions the crown of laurel, beech or myrrh, and the poetic dress. In fine, they declare him a citizen of Rome, with all the privileges thereof, as a reward for the affection he has always expressed for the city and republic.

Petrarch was then brought to the palace of the Colonnas, where a magnificent feast was prepared for him, at which were assembled all the nobility and men of letters in Rome.

It cannot, after this view, be uninteresting to join with it what Petrarch thought of this event in his maturer life.

‘ These laurels,’ says he, ‘ which encircled my head, were too green ; had I been of riper age and understanding, I should not have sought them. Old men love only what is useful ; young men run after appearances, without regarding their end. This crown rendered me neither more wise nor eloquent ; it only served to raise envy, and deprive me of the repose I enjoyed. From that time tongues and pens were sharpened against me : my friends be-

came my enemies, and I suffered the just effects of my confidence and presumption.'

It was not the fault of Borrioli that he came not to Rome to assist at the coronation of Petrarch. He fell into an ambuscade of the Hernici, from whom he at last with difficulty escaped.

Petrarch, desirous of avoiding the visits and compliments which follow such a ceremony, departed a few days after. Fortune thought proper to remind him, that pleasure and pain are closely allied in this life. Hardly was he got out of Rome with his train, when he fell into the hands of some banditti, with which the high roads were then infested. He escaped alive by a kind of miracle, and returned to Rome, where the peril he had been in caused a great disturbance; they gave him an escort, and he set out again the day following.

He arrived at Pisa the 20th of April, from whence he wrote an account of what had passed to king Robert and his friends at Avignon. He did not stay long there. Eager to display his crown at Avignon, and above all to the eyes of Laura, and then to lay it at the feet of the bishop of Lombes, he set out in the beginning of May, and went by land, choosing

rather to pass the Alps than trust his life to the mercy of the sea. In crossing Lombardy he turned out of the road to make a visit to Azon de Corregge at Parma.

Azon, with his brothers, had just gained a victory over the party that opposed them in Parma, and besought Petrarch to stay and enjoy with them the peace and felicity they had obtained. He excused himself, from the ties he had to cardinal Colonna; but they were so pressing, that he wrote the following letter to the cardinal:

‘ Returning from Rome with my crown, I come to visit your friends at Parma, who have defeated their enemies, and are now in peaceable possession of this city. I was solicitous to give you this information, from which I know you will derive much pleasure. This city has changed its face; peace, liberty, and justice, which were banished, are returned, and the joy of the people is inconceivable. I could not resist the entreaties of your friends, who insisted I should pass the summer with them. Their politeness and goodness urge the impossibility of parting from me sooner; but in what can I be useful to them? Born as I am for solitude, and fond of leisure, I fly the noise of cities, and seek the silence of the fields. Your friends,

who know my sentiments, assure me of perfect tranquillity when time shall have calmed the present emotions of joy. You will see me again in the beginning of winter; sooner, if you command, later, if fortune will have it so.'

Nothing could be happier than the first year of the government of the Correges at Parma; they acted as fathers, not masters, and administered justice with great wisdom; they suppressed all exorbitant taxes, and enriched those families whom the avarice of their enemies had reduced to beggary. Petrarch was in a manner associated with Azon and his brothers; and they did nothing without consulting him, which not a little flattered his self-love. And soon after his arrival at Parma, there happened a singular circumstance which did not contribute to lessen it.

A schoolmaster of Pontremoli, old and blind, who knew Petrarch only by fame, was desirous to see him, as he expressed it; and being informed he was at Naples, he set out on foot for that place, supporting himself on his son's shoulder. But he got there too late, for Petrarch was already set out for Rome. The king being acquainted with the motive of his journey, had a mind to see him. He appeared a sort of monster; his face resembled one which was in

bronze at Naples. The king said to him, 'If you have so much ambition to behold Petrarch, you must make haste and seek him in Italy, for he will not make a long stay; and if you miss him there, you will be obliged to go to France to satisfy your curiosity.' 'I must absolutely see him before I die,' replied the old man; 'I would go and seek him in the furthest East, if it was necessary, and death would give me time for so long a journey.' The king, admiring his enthusiasm, gave him money to defray his expences.

He went immediately to Rome, and, not finding Petrarch there, he came back to Pontremoli; but, when he heard he had stopped at Parma, he resolved to set out again and seek him there: to do this he must cross the Apennines. The snows with which these mountains were entirely covered did not deter him. He thought it necessary to announce himself by some verses, which he sent to Petrarch, and they were not bad ones.

When he arrived at Parma he was led to Petrarch's house, and as soon as he was near him, he gave himself up to the most excessive transports. He was lifted up by his son and one of his scholars, that he might embrace a head which, he said, had conceived such noble

ideas. He then took the hand of Petrarch, and said, 'Let me kiss that hand which has written such delightful things.' He passed three days at Parma, full of this enthusiasm: this singularity excited the curiosity of the inhabitants of that city. As the blind man had always a crowd about him, he said one day to Petrarch, 'I fear I am a burden to you, but I cannot satisfy myself with beholding you, and it is but just you should suffer me to enjoy a pleasure for which I have travelled so far. The word behold, in the mouth of a blind man, having raised peals of laughter in the people around him, he turned towards Petrarch, and said, 'I take you for my witness; is it not true that, blind as I am, I see you better than all those laughers who look at you with both their eyes?'

Azon, the most generous of men, enchanted with the discourse of this good old man, and with his passion for Petrarch, overwhelmed him with presents, and he returned to Pontremoli highly gratified.

Petrarch, though extremely flattered by the friendship shewn him, was glad to steal from public life as often as he could, and to wander in the fields and woods, which were his greatest delight. One day, led on by his love of exer-

cise, he passed the river of Lenza, which is three leagues from Parma, and found himself in the territory of Rhegio, in a great forest, which is called the *Silva Piana*, or low wood; though it is situated upon a hill, from whence are discovered the Alps and all Cisalpine Gaul. He gives this description of the place in a letter to a friend :

‘ Aged oaks, whose heads seem to touch the clouds, shelter the avenues to this forest from the rays of the sun. The fresh breezes which descend from the neighbouring mountains, and many little rivulets which wind along, temper the violent heats. In the greatest droughts the earth is always covered with a soft verdure, and enamelled with flowers. Here all kinds of birds warble out their songs, and deer of every sort run sporting about. Nature has raised in the middle of this forest a theatre; which she seems to have formed expressly for poets. The rustling of the leaves, the singing of the birds, and the murmurs of the stream, invite to repose. The earth exhales a delicious odour. It is the theatre of Elysium. Even the shepherds and labourers revere this sacred place. Its beauty struck me : I felt myself all at once inspired by the Muses ; and I made

some verses with a facility I had never before experienced.'

This fine situation revived so strongly in the mind of Petrarch his taste for solitude, that he was obliged at his return to Parma to seek a little house in a remote place, where he might be at ease, and sheltered from the ceremonies of public life. He found one at the end of the city, near the abbey of St. Anthony, which perfectly suited him. It had a garden watered by a little river.

'I have,' says he, 'a country in the middle of the town; and a town in the midst of the fields. When I am tired with being alone, I have only to step out, and I find society immediately; when I am weary of the world I re-enter my house, and again possess the delight of solitude. I enjoy here a repose, which the philosophers at Athens, the poets on Parnassus, and the anchorites in the deserts of Egypt, never knew. O Fortune! leave in peace a man who wishes to lie concealed. Go out of his little house, and attack the palaces of kings.'

He was so pleased with this cottage that he determined to purchase and rebuild it, as we see in a letter of his to William de Pastrengo:

Are you curious to know what I think, what I wish, what I do? The life which I lead at present is a search after repose; and not flattering myself I shall find it on earth, I feel without fear that I am taking hasty steps towards the mansions of death. I would leave the prison in which my soul is confined.

I dwell at Parma, and pass my life in the church, or in my garden; tired of the city, I wander oft into the woods. Though fortune treats me more favourably, I have not changed my manner of living. I work with ardour at my Africa, without expecting any other reward but a vain and transitory glory. True glory, I know it well, is the reward of virtue alone. I have built a small house, such as suits the mediocrity of my station. There is little marble to be seen in it: I wish I was nearer your fine quarries, or that at least the Adige came to bathe our walls. The verses of Horace have cooled my ardour for building; they present to me my bust and my last dwelling; and I reserve my stones for my monument.

If I perceive a little chink in my new walls, I find fault with the masons, and they reply, that all the art of man cannot render them firmer; that it is not astonishing new founda-

tions should give way a little; that mortal hands can build nothing that will be everlasting; and, in fine, that my house will be of longer duration than myself and my successors. Penetrated with the truth of their observations, I blushed, and said to myself, " Foolish man! make sure the foundations of thy earthly tabernacle, which is falling to decay! Render that firm while it is yet in thy power. Thy body will fall before thy building, and soon shalt thou be forced to quit both dwellings."

These reflections would make me renounce my design, if shame did not retain me; would not the passengers laugh at me when they observed my walls hanging in the air? I proceed therefore, and hasten my work: but I am undetermined. Sometimes I content myself with a little house like that in the garden of Curius, or that in the field of the old man of whom Virgil speaks in his Georgics. Sometimes I give way to the idle fancy of raising my house to the clouds, and surpassing even the buildings of Babylon and Rome. The moment after I become modest again, and hate every idea that favours of luxury and pride. Thus does my soul float in perpetual uncertainties, and knows not where to fix. To see others

agitated in the same manner is all my consolation; and I laugh at them, at myself, and at the world.'

After having viewed Petrarch for a long time surrounded with agreeable objects and flattering events, we must now turn to a less pleasing picture, and see him bewailing the death of several of his best friends.

The first of these was Thomas de Caloria, with whom he had studied at Bologna, and always kept up a correspondence. He died at Messina, his native place, on his return from a journey he made to Lombes, to pass some time with James Colonna. It was this journey which prevented his being at Rome at the coronation of Petrarch, who learned this melancholy news by letters from the brothers of Thomas. They wrote to him to beg him to write his epitaph. This was Petrarch's answer:

'We were of the same age, and the same opinions; we pursued the same studies, had the same dispositions, and aimed at the same end. Never was there a stricter union, or greater familiarity. When I learned that I had lost the better part of myself, life became a burden to me; I wished to die, but could not. I had a violent fever, which brought my end in view;

but it was only a glimmering of futurity. I was at the gate of death, and found written thereon, "Return! Thy hour is not yet come." I came back to life with this consolation, that I could not be detained long. I know that Seneca says, it is absurd to desire what it is in our power to obtain; but though I admire the genius of this philosopher, I think often very differently from him; and, above all, on this subject, where his sentiments are ill-founded and carry no weight.'

The bishop of Lombes wrote at this time to Petrarch, to compliment him upon his coronation in the following singular style:

'If all the parts of my body were so many tongues; if all the voices which have ever existed were to cry out together; they would not express the joy I felt when I learned that the young Florentine poet had been crowned with laurel in the capitol.'

This prelate pressed Petrarch in the most earnest manner to come and see him at Lombes, and officiate as canon in his church. Petrarch had promised to go the beginning of the year following; and he looked forward with joy to that time, when he should have finished his Africa, and should lay that and his crown together at the feet of the man whom he



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Petrarch's Dream &c.

adored. He had even formed a project of settling entirely near this amiable friend, when he received the melancholy news that the bishop was dangerously ill at Lombes.

This information alarmed him exceedingly: he fluctuated between fear and hope. ‘One night in my sleep,’ says Petrarch, ‘I thought I saw the bishop walking alone, and crossing the stream that watered my garden. I ran to him, and asked him a thousand questions at once. “From whence came you? Where are you going so fast? Why are you alone?” The bishop replied with a smile, “Do you recollect the summer you passed with me on the other side the Garonne? The climate and the manners of Gascony displeased you, and you found the storms of the Pyrennees insupportable. I now think as you did. I am weary of it myself. I have bid adieu to this barbarous country, and am returning to Rome.” He had continued to walk on while he spake these words, and was got to the end of the garden. I attempted to join him, and begged that I might at least be permitted the honour of accompanying him. The bishop gently put me back with his hand, and changing his countenance and the tone of his voice; “No,” said he, “you must not come with me at present.” After having said this,

he looked stedfastly at me ; and then it was that I saw on his face all the signs of death. The sudden shock of this sight caused me to cry aloud, and awaked me from my sleep. I marked the day, and related the circumstances to the friends I had at Parma, and wrote an account of it to my other friends in many different places. Five and twenty days after this I received the mournful news that the bishop of Lombes was dead, and found that he died on the very day that I had seen him in vision in my garden.' 'This singular accident,' says he to John Andre, 'gives me no more faith in dreams than Cicero, who as well as myself had a dream confirmed by the event.'

How heavy was this loss to Petrarch ! How many others likewise were sufferers on this occasion ! The house of Colonna, of whom the bishop was the support, the joy, the consolation : the city of Rome, which looked upon him as its guardian, and tutelar angel : the court of Avignon, where he had many relations, admirers, and friends : in fine, his episcopal town, where he was universally loved and respected. He had behaved in this desert place with so much dignity and condescension, that every person of consequence, except himself, was ashamed to see him fixed there. He was

contented with his lot, and inaccessible to ambition : he considered the honours of this world as the precipices of virtue, and shunned them with as much care as others pursue them. The patriarchate of Aquilea becoming vacant at the time he was at Rome, he was named for it by the nobility and the people. But he wrote to his brother the cardinal, that they must not think of him for that place, for he would not accept of it. The jealousy and avarice of the Gascons, who filled the court of Rome, and disturbed the Italians, had at first suspended his elevation ; but his virtue and merit rose so high, that he would certainly have been raised to the purple, if death had not stopped him in the midst of his career.

A little time before he died he wrote to the cardinal his brother, concerning reports which had been spread of his approaching elevation. The cardinal sent this letter to Petrarch, who could not read it without shedding a torrent of tears.

‘ Every line of it,’ says he, ‘ breathes modesty ; the love of moderation ; freedom from ambition ; and contentment with his lot. In it are the principles of the soundest philosophy, expressed in the most noble and exact manner.

What a man ! And must such men, who ought to live for ever, die sooner than others !'

' We have lived too long,' says he to Lelius, who had received the last breath of this amiable prelate. ' We have lost the best of all masters, the tenderest of all fathers. What shall I do ? What will become of me ? I am at Parma only a bird of passage. Shall I go to Lombes, where I am a canon ? It is an odious climate, a barbarous country, and I have lost the only person that could render that situation agreeable. How can I look upon that tomb where all my hopes lie buried ? How shall I ever bring myself to kiss the hands of a proud prelate, a barbarian, instead of those of the amiable master I have lost ? Shall I go to Avignon, and resume my place in the court of our cardinal ? How mournful will that situation be, now it is deprived of its greatest ornament !'

Lelius had inherited from his ancestors an attachment to the house of the Colonnas, but he went beyond them in this attachment, and had devoted himself particularly to the bishop, whom he attended every where, and could find no consolation for the loss of such a friend.

A rumour was spread, that cardinal Colonna

intended to remove the body of his brother from Lombes to Rome. On this matter Petrarch says to him, 'Divided between a city of which I am a citizen, and a church in which I am a canon, I know not what counsel to give you.' Three years after this the remains of this great prelate were carried to Rome, and received with a great deal of veneration.

In a letter to the cardinal, Petrarch declaims very much against a superstitious custom which reigned at that time, and above all in the court of the pope; and which he wished to banish from the house of the cardinal. In speaking of a man lately dead, they pronounced only the first syllables of his name, and made use of some epithet before them, as unhappy, unfortunate.

'Shew no such weakness!' says he to the cardinal; 'support this loss with courage: you are exposed to public view, you ought to be more observant of your conduct than another; and as your name, your rank, and your actions, have set you up for an example, become also, in this instance, a model worthy the imitation of all the world.'

No one will suppose that, after the death of the bishop, Petrarch had any difficulty in renouncing his canonry at Lombes. He parted

with it entirely, and was well recompensed by the archdeaconry of Parma, which just then became vacant.

As it was the first dignity of the church at Parma, next to the mitre, it connected him much with the bishop. Hugolin de Rossi had governed this church eighteen years; and, as he was of that illustrious family which had so long disputed the lordship of Parma with the house of Corregge, Petrarch feared this prelate would be displeased to see at the head of his chapter a man whom he believed devoted to his enemies, and who had pleaded their cause against his family in 1335, as has been before observed. But Hugolin, who was full of sweetness and equity, not only did not express the least resentment towards Petrarch, but gave him a very favourable reception the first time he saw him, and afterwards the most flattering distinction. It was remarked, in speaking of that cause, that Petrarch had avoided with great circumspection saying any thing against this prelate, who was present, and whose birth and virtues he respected.

Petrarch's tears were scarcely dried up for the bishop of Lombes, when they were again called forth for another dear friend.

1342. At the beginning of this year death

deprived him of that wise man, who had been his director and his friend, the good father Dennis, whom king Robert had drawn to Naples. This prince conferred upon him, by leave of the pope, the bishopric of Monopoli, which became vacant soon after his arrival at Naples. He did not long enjoy this dignity; he died at Naples the 14th of January, in the palace of king Robert.

‘I would weep,’ says Petrarch, ‘in a letter to king Robert, but shame and grief prevent me. I knew before that there is no security against death. Of this truth we have now a melancholy proof! He has taken from Italy a man over whom he ought to have had no power, and whose name will live for ever. This learned man, who so well understood both nature and the world, must think this life of little moment. He has lost nothing by death; and, though happy on earth because he possessed your love, he will be much happier in heaven, whither he is translated.

‘It is I who suffer; it is Italy, it is his country, that is deprived of so great an ornament. It is the world whom death has robbed of an abundant source of truth and knowledge.

‘But it is you, oh best of princes! who are

the most deeply affected with this loss. The society of father Dennis was the charm and comfort of your life. Whose conversations were more entertaining, mild, and useful? Whom could you find so worthy to listen to you, or so capable of comprehending the mysteries of heaven, when you vouchsafed to display your eloquence and extensive knowledge? If great princes may be allowed to indulge their tears, you cannot refuse them to father Dennis. Muses! join your tears to mine! and weep with me the loss of a favourite so dear, a favourite who did you so much honour! Let all Parnassus mourn, and resound with your lamentations! Inspire me with some verses to engrave upon his tomb!

EPITAPH ON FATHER DENNIS.

‘ Here lies father Dennis; the flower of poets; the searcher into futurity; the glory of Italy. A faithful friend; mild and amiable in society; his soul and his countenance were always serene; and, notwithstanding the elevation of his mind and the lustre of his eloquence, he was always modest and condescending. Among the ancients he would have been

a rare, among the moderns he was an unequalled, character.'

These accumulated losses made so strong an impression upon Petrarch, that he could not open a letter without apprehension and fear. Had it not been for these distresses, he would have led at Parma a tranquil and agreeable life. This city is finely situated on the Po, in a valley which lies between the Alps and the Apennines, below the cascades of the one and the thunders and torrents of the other. It is surrounded with a rich and fruitful plain, where, cherished by the influence of the sun and the waters, the vine, the elm, and all sorts of fruit and grain, flourish together.

Petrarch divided his time between his church, where he filled up with honour his office of archdeacon, and his closet, where he principally worked at his Africa. He seldom went to make his court to his lords, who nevertheless treated him with great respect. He had not been a year in this city when the orders of his superiors obliged him to quit this situation, and return to Avignon. It is not clear from whence these orders came, or what could be the foundation of them. It is probable that cardinal Colonna, with whom Petrarch had promised

to pass the winter, summoned him to keep his word.

It appears, however, that he complied much against his will, by the bitter complaints he makes to Barbatius of Sulmone :

‘I am forced,’ says he, ‘to cross the Alps before the sun has melted the snows which cover them. I must return to the banks of the Rhone, and to those infamous places which are the receptacle of every evil. What a destiny! If fortune envies me a grave in my own country, let me be permitted to seek one under the pole! I consent to live and to die in Africa, among its serpents; upon Caucasus, or Atlas; if, while I live, I may be allowed to breathe a pure air, and, after my death, a little corner of the earth, where I may bestow my body: this is all I ask; but this I cannot obtain. Doomed always to wander, and to be a stranger every where, oh Fortune! Fortune! fix me at last to some spot. I do not covet thy favours; let me enjoy a tranquil poverty; let me pass in this retreat the few days that remain to me. How miserable are we! Nothing is certain in this world. The wheel of fortune is for ever in motion; we tremble on its summit; in the middle we are suspended; and at the bottom

we are trampled upon. I have pleased myself below; yet am agitated as if in the clouds. To no end have I avoided elevations; this is what I have a long time complained of; but my complaints have been in vain.

‘When we sail upon the ocean, tempests and shipwrecks are to be expected: but to be exposed to hurricanes on the land, to be swallowed up by the waves of a brook, this is monstrous indeed. I am again obliged to quit my country, and those friends who are dear to me. I am ordered to take a safe route; but the enemy occupies every road. I must go through the Tridentum of the Alps, cross the lakes of Germany, and pass the Danube and the Rhine near their sources. Alas! I must obey, and submit to the yoke. Fortune had forgot me; and I passed a year in tranquillity. It is her pleasure now to force me from a sweet repose, and plunge me again into a frightful chaos! How happy are you, my dear Barbatus! Take my advice, and never quit your nest.’

Petrarch set out for Avignon in 1342; and it was a great joy to him when he arrived there, to find his two friends Lelius and Socrates, who came to live with the cardinal after the death of the bishop of Lombes. The union of these three friends became stronger than ever.

Socrates in particular gave himself entirely to Petrarch, and never quitted him even when he went to Vacluse, where few of his other friends had the courage to follow him.

Soon after his return to Avignon, Petrarch was witness to a great event. Benedict XII. had for some years had a fistula in his leg, which obliged him to keep his chamber. At the petition of the cardinals, he held some consistories seated on his bed, according to the custom of that age. The discharge being more than common, the physicians attempted to stop it, and threw it back into the blood, where it made such havoc as to threaten a very speedy death. Petrarch perceiving that Benedict's last moments were coming on, wrote the following letter to the bishop of Cavaillon :

‘ What are you doing, my father ? And what think you will be the end of the present tempest ? Shall we gain the port, or be swallowed up by the waves ? The vessel cannot withstand the billows. The wind is violent ; the rowers are without experience ; and the pilot, despising the rules of his art, makes too fast towards the land, which is the rock of navigators. He confides too much in a deceitful calm, and steers his course by wandering planets, instead of adhering to the faithful pole.

Full of wine, weighed down by age, overpowered with drowfulness; he staggers, he sleeps, and is falling into the sea. And would to heaven he fell alone: would to God that our heavenly Father, seeing us erring without a pilot, in an agitated sea, would himself conduct the bark which he has purchased with so great a price!

‘Such is the condition we are thrown into by the ignorance of our pilot. What do I say? His indolence, his blindness, his shameful stupidity, and his passion for a vile and stormy country. Ah! why did they take him from his father’s plow, to commit to him a government of which he was so incapable? But he is going to receive the recompense he merits. This man, the jest of all parties, the object of incessant ridicule, will soon become the prey of sea-wolves.

‘What will become of us? We may seek a plank that may save us in our shipwreck. Our consolation is, we can scarcely find such another pilot; if we could, we should be lost for ever. If you ask what is my opinion, I think we ought to come and settle in your country, and thus shelter ourselves from the approaching tempest. Reflect upon these things.’

This pontiff despised Italy, and was therefore detested by Petrarch. Benedict carried this contempt to such a height, that one day some eels being sent him from the lake of Bolsena, of a prodigious size and exquisite flavour, he distributed most of them among the cardinals, reserving for himself but a very small portion. Some days after this, the cardinals going according to custom to attend upon him at dinner, he said to them in a jeering manner, ‘Gentlemen, if I had tasted the eels before I sent them, you would not have had so large a share; but I confess I did not believe that Italy produced any thing that was good.’ Cardinal Colonna, who was present, reddened with anger, and could not help replying, that he was astonished one who had read so many books as his holiness, should be ignorant that Italy was the mother of every thing that was excellent.

Benedict died the 25th of April, 1342, and was interred at Notre-Dame, where his monument is now to be seen. A contemporary author assures us, that a monk, who had been a brother in the same convent with Benedict, said to him some time before his death, ‘You will die soon if you do not amend your life.’

The holy see was vacant only thirteen days.

All the suffrages were united in Pierre Roger, cardinal of Aquileia, who took the name of Clement VI. He was of an ancient family, and had passed through many honours, as the provisor of the Sorbonne, the archbishoprics of Sens and Rouen, and the chancellorship of Paris, having the seals conferred on him by Philip of Valois; after which Benedict XII. made him cardinal in the promotion that took place in 1338. The coronation of this pope was conducted with great pomp, and was performed the 19th of May, in the church of the Dominicans. John duke of Normandy, eldest son of the king of France, James duke of Bourbon, Philip duke of Burgundy, Humbert dauphin of Viennois, and several other great lords, assisted at the ceremony.

The court of Rome immediately changed its appearance, and there was a magnificence and luxury unknown in the preceding pontificates. Clement VI. was condescending, frank, noble, and generous. He had the taste and manners of a nobleman who had always lived in the courts of princes. No sovereign of his time appeared with more éclat, or diffused his favours with more grace or liberality. Nothing equalled the sumptuousness of his furniture, the delicacies of his table, or the splendour of

his court, which was filled with lords and gentlemen of ancient nobility. Accustomed to live among ladies, whose society amused him, he did not think the papacy obliged him to alter his manner of life. They continued to visit him as usual. In truth this did not add to the decorum of his court, but it rendered it very agreeable and brilliant.

This pope had great qualities, but an excessive luxury of character, which caused him to be spoken of by many authors with great bitterness. His reputation for generosity and benevolence, together with a bull of invitation that he published, drew to Avignon this year more than a hundred thousand scholars, who all returned with some favour shewn them. It would be hard to give credit to this, if we did not recollect that his predecessor left a great number of benefices vacant, because, as he said, he found no person worthy to fill them. Clement VI. thought and acted in a very different manner. His hands were ever open, and his favourite maxim was, 'That no one should depart unsatisfied from the palace of a prince.'

As soon as they were informed at Rome of the election of Clement, they sent a solemn embassy to make him three principal requests,

The first, that he would vouchsafe to accept the office of senator ; as disputes on this head had often made that city a prey to civil wars. The second, that he would hasten the re-establishment of the holy see at Rome. And the third, that he would be pleased to reduce to fifty years the indulgence which pope Boniface VIII. had granted to the church, and fixed at an hundred years ; and that the reason for this their prayer was, that all the faithful might partake of it, the time appointed by Boniface exceeding the ordinary term of life.

After two months consideration the pope returned this answer : That, as to the first, it belonged to him as sovereign of Rome ; that he would however accept the municipal government in his right as cardinal, without derogating from his sovereignty : that, as to the second request, no one could be more desirous than himself of the return of the holy see to Rome ; but he could not fix the time till the affairs of France and England were in a more tranquil state : and that with respect to the jubilee, he granted with pleasure the reduction they asked, and fixed his indulgence to return every fifty years.

Petrarch, who had obtained the dignity of Roman citizen by letters patent at his corona-

tion, was one of the ambassadors sent from Rome to pope Clement; he was joined with Nicholas Gabrini, called Rienzi, and appointed to make an oration before the pope. In this speech he uses his favourite figure when speaking of Rome; he describes an old woman, bowed down with grief and misfortune, who comes to throw herself at the feet of her husband. 'You desired to see me,' says she, 'when I was in bondage to another; and I fear not being as dear to you now I am again become yours. You judge not like the vulgar, who desire ardently what they have not, and are easily disgusted with what they have.'

The reward of this oration, which was a long one and very dry, was the priory of St. Nicholas, in the diocese of Pisa, which the pope gave to Petrarch the sixth of October, 1342.

The pope granted two small favours this year to two of Laura's children. Her daughter Ermessenda was received into the convent of St. Laurence, where she professed herself some time after; and Audibert her son was appointed to the canonry of Notre Dame de Dons. These children were about twelve or thirteen years of age.

We are now come to Rienzi, Petrarch's

colleague, who was soon after this very singularly distinguished in the revolutions of Rome. His origin and character were as follows. His father kept a public-house, and his mother was a washerwoman. But he made up for the lowness of his birth by the elevation of his wit and understanding; his imagination was lively and brilliant; he had a prodigious memory, and a natural eloquence which drew after him the whole world. His parents, though so meanly situated, spared nothing in the course of his education. When the first studies of grammar and rhetoric had polished his mind, and improved his natural eloquence, he applied himself to the study of the Roman history, and the search into its antiquities, to which he joined a great knowledge of the civil law, and the rights of the people. The commentaries of Cæsar were much read, and much esteemed by him.

Rienzi's enthusiasm for Rome united him firmly with Petrarch, and could be the only foundation of a connection between men of such different characters. He succeeded also with Clement, who admired his eloquence, and was never weary of his conversation. He had likewise at first the good graces of cardinal Co-

lonna, probably through the favour of Petrarch, but which he afterwards lost by inveighing bitterly against some great lords in Rome. The pope conferred upon Rienzi the place of notary at Rome, which was a very lucrative post. These honours paved the way for the extraordinary situation in which we shall soon behold him.

Clement VI. had a fine natural understanding, which he had enriched and improved by study. Petrarch says, he forgot nothing that he read, and if he wished to do it, he had it not in his power.

He had gained in his conversation with the female sex, and in the courts of princes, a softness and politeness of manner which endeared him to every one. When he reserved to himself the nomination of the greater prelacies, to satisfy the desire he had of bestowing favours, it was represented to him that such reserves would produce great inconveniences, and that his predecessors had not dared to make them. He replied, 'My predecessors knew not what it was to be popes.'

It was in the pontificate of this pope that the city of Avignon, where debauchery had long reigned, came at last to the greatest excess of luxury and dissoluteness. The accounts

which Petrarch gives of the licentiousness and neglect of all decency in this city, are fully confirmed by other writers.

On the return of Petrarch to Avignon, Laura behaved to him in a kinder manner. Perhaps a long absence made her feel more sensibly that she was not indifferent to him; perhaps, too, his reputation made some impression on her mind. However this was, the favour of the pope, and the kindness of Laura, rendered Avignon more agreeable than usual to Petrarch. He passed the greatest part of this year there, and went to Vaucluse but seldom, and for a short time; and when he was in that solitude, he owns that his soul was always at Avignon with Laura.

Petrarch was one day seated in a public place to which he knew Laura would come, and meditating on his usual subject, with his eyes fixed on the ground, when she appeared suddenly before him. As soon as he perceived her, he rose, and making her a low bow, was going to speak. She cast upon him a kind look, returned him the same salutation, and passed along, saying something he did not perfectly hear. These obliging manners filled Petrarch with extreme joy.

At this time Petrarch made a connection

with Sennucio Delbene, a Florentine of noble birth, and who favoured the party of the Ghibelins. There is an anecdote relating to him which the people of Florence speak of with indignation. Charles of Valois being sent to Florence by pope Boniface VIII. on public affairs, was much delighted with the diversion of hawking. Sennucio had a country house near the city, where Charles often went to refresh himself on these occasions. Sennucio accommodated him in the best manner he could, and as suited a gentleman of his rank. This hospitality did not prevent the prince from imprisoning him, because he was of the party opposite to that he favoured, and condemning him to pay a fine of four thousand livres: his estate also was confiscated. But by the favour of John XXII. Sennucio was re-established in all his rights in the year 1326. He was attached to the Colonnas, and above all to cardinal John Colonna, which gave rise to the friendship between him and Petrarch.

Sennucio was fond of the arts. He had a tender heart, and was attached to the fair sex. He was also a poet, but his lyre was strung to lighter measures, not sad and plaintive like that of Petrarch.

I do not know how it was that Sennucio was admitted to the house of Laura, but it appears that he saw her often, and that Petrarch often conversed with him on the subject of his love.

The praises Petrarch had bestowed on Laura rendered her celebrated every where. All who came to Avignon had a strong desire to see her. But, though she was not yet thirty years of age, she was somewhat altered. Whether this was owing to her having had many children, to illness, or domestic chagrins, she had no longer her former clear and brilliant complexion. Petrarch also, by a kind of sympathy, lost that beautiful complexion which had been so universally admired. In a letter written to a friend, whom he had not seen for some time, he says, ‘I am not what I was; the perpetual discord between my soul and my body has changed me so much that you would hardly know me again.’

This year, 1342, died at Avignon a lady who was greatly beloved by Gerard, the brother of Petrarch.

‘The object,’ says Petrarch to him, ‘of your tender love has left us to enjoy celestial glory. I hope it at least, and I believe it! The sweetness of her manners, and the virtues of her life,

will not fail to insure her this felicity. Take back therefore, for it is high time, the two keys of thy heart. Thus relieved from anxiety, and thy path clear before thee, follow this beloved object in the surest road. Nothing ought now to retard thy progress. Thou resemblest a pilgrim who wants only a staff to take a long journey. You see, my dear brother, we hasten fast toward death: when, in the awful passage, our souls are released from mortal ties, they will take their flight with more freedom and ease.'

Gerard, touched in the most sensible manner with this loss, followed the advice of his brother, and determined to employ himself wholly for the future in the great work of his salvation: he quitted the world, and placed himself in the monastery of the Carthusians, which he went to visit when at St. Baume with Petrarch in 1339. The heavenly life which these monks led in that awful solitude, had made an impression upon him which had never been effaced.

The origin of the order of the Carthusians is thus related by Petrarch. Two brothers from Genoa set out on a trading voyage; the one sailed toward the east, the other toward the west. After a number of years, one of

them arriving at Genoa, being informed his brother was at Marfeilles, wrote to him to desire his return to Genoa; but, receiving no answer, he went to Marfeilles, and, finding his brother there, he asked him, why he did not come to Genoa? His brother replied, ‘I am weary of navigation and trade: I will no longer trust my life to the mercy of the winds; do as you please; my resolution is fixed. I have found a port on the borders of paradise, where I will rest, and wait in tranquillity the moment of my death.’

The other, who did not comprehend this language, asked him to explain himself; he returned no answer, but took him to Montrieu, into a deep valley, in the middle of a wood, and pointed to a house he had there just built. Struck with the awfulness of the surrounding scene, the other Genoese felt a sudden compunction, and determined immediately to erect a building like that of his brother on a neighbouring hill. They bade adieu to the world, and founded with their estates and houses the new order of the Carthusians; an order famous for its piety and austerity of manners: and in this solitude they consecrated the remainder of their days to God. This monastery of Montrieu is situated between Aix and Toulon;

in the middle of the woods, and furrounded with mountains, from whence issue several rivers. Hence the name of Montrieu.

Though Petrarch loved his brother with tendernefs, he was not sorry for this change. Gerard was fond of pleasure, and of an unsteady temper; he knew not how to moderate any of his inclinations; and this gave Petrarch a great deal of trouble and uneasinefs, especially in a city like Avignon. ‘I acknowledge,’ says Petrarch, ‘the hand of God in this conversion. None but himself could work fo great a change.’ Petrarch had conceived a very high idea of the Carthusians. ‘This order does not,’ says he, ‘refemble others: none enter into it by force or seduction.’ Gerard was no fooner fixed in this monastery, than he wrote to his brother to induce him to take the fame resolution. Petrarch, filled with piety and remorse, was staggered; but he did not comply. Pope Clement VI. gave Gerard an abfolution when in the article of death.

The bishop of Rhodes, whose name was Bernard Albi, and who had been appointed cardinal after the exaltation of Clement, came at this time to Avignon, and was much delighted with the conversation of Petrarch. After his return to Italy, he sent him a letter full of

sublime questions on the most abstracted subjects of philosophy. Petrarch replies thus :

‘ Your questions are an ample proof of your great penetration. To question and to doubt with judgment is a great part of our knowledge. The manner in which you confess your ignorance consoles me for my own ; and, was not this the case, my occupations, the excessive heats, the tumult of this crowded city, leave me little time for writing.

‘ You would have me measure the heavens, the earth, and the seas ; I, who know not of what kind of clay my own body is formed, or the nature of the soul which is confined in it as in a prison, shall I dive into the systems of Ptolemy, or decypher the characters which the Sicilian geometrician drew on the unfortunate soil ? Alas ! death pursues me with eager steps ; and all my aim is to steal a few moments from his grasp. I shall therefore only say in answer to your questions, that there are seven planets, and that the sun holds the first rank : his rays reanimate the world ; he begins his course in the east, and when he sets a cold shade is spread over the earth. The fixed stars make their revolutions also by a motion not visible to us. It is disputed whether the sun is placed in the centre of the world ; but

would it not be better to seek this centre where virtue dwells? Men form calculations how much larger it is than the earth; and they neglect to examine how much more noble the soul is than the body.

‘The moon shines with the light it borrows from the sun; its motions are periodical. Mercury is an inconstant planet, and its influences are various: we know all this, but we neglect to inquire whether prosperity is a good or evil; by whom, and in what cases, death is to be desired or feared. Your courier is in haste, and I would rather send him back with nothing, than give him many lines of which I should be ashamed. I cannot explain to you my astonishment when I saw that deluge of verses which your letter poured in upon me. I undertook to count them, but in vain. What a pity that Virgil possessed not this happy faculty? he would not have passed his whole life in composing a poem which at last he left imperfect. Your questions resemble the enigma of the Sphinx; and you must seek another Oedipus to answer them.’

1343. Borlaam the Greek monk, of whom mention has been already made, came this year to Avignon: he had been much chagrined by a decision given against him by the patriarch

of Constantinople, in a dispute he had held with the monks of mount Athos. These monks maintained that the light which appeared on mount Tabor, at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, was uncreated; and that it was God himself. The Greeks made a serious affair of this fanciful opinion, and were contending for the truth of it with vehemence, while the Turks were at their gates, and had formed as it were a barrier round Constantinople of the cities they had taken in Asia.

Petrarch was glad to see his Greek master again; and as Borlaam desired an establishment in Italy, Petrarch by his solicitations and his credit procured him the bishopric of Geraci, which being a suffragan, or subsidiary bishopric depending on Rheggio, the revenue was small; but it suited Borlaam, because it settled him at the close of life in his native country, where he died ten years after, in 1353.

At the end of January 1343, there arrived an extraordinary courier at Avignon, who brought the melancholy news of the death of Robert king of Naples. This caused a general consternation in that city, and throughout all Provence. This prince was sixty years old, when, without terror, he saw his flesh waste away, his

body decaying, and death taking possession of his whole fabric. One thing alone troubled his last moments : this was the state in which he must leave his family and his kingdom. Robert had had two children by his queen : the eldest died young ; and the second, named Charles, duke of Calabria, left only two daughters, Joan and Mary.

Charobert, king of Hungary, who had some pretensions to the kingdom of Naples, as the heir of Charles Martel, Robert's eldest brother, had two sons. Pope John XXII. who had decided in favour of Robert, proposed a double marriage between these royal houses : the princess Joan, who was the eldest, with Andrew the second son ; and the eldest son Lewis with Mary the second daughter. These marriages were celebrated with astonishing magnificence in 1333. Andrew was six, and Joan nine years old ; and it was thought their being brought up together would cement this union : but, as it might rather have been expected, it happened otherwise. The antipathy that Joan shewed for Andrew was soon remarked ; the difference of their educations alone would have produced this effect.

The Neapolitans were polite, voluptuous, gallant, and magnificent. The Hungarians, on

the contrary, were vulgar, churlish, and enemies to magnificence and pleasure; and were looked upon at Naples as barbarians, who could scarcely be treated with sufficient contempt. Add to this, Andrew and his courtiers exaggerated in a haughty manner their rights to the kingdom of Naples; while at the court of Joan they ridiculed their pride, and maintained that Andrew could only reign as husband of his queen. Robert saw with grief these contests, and the presentiments they raised in his heart clouded his last moments, which would otherwise have been the calm evening of a bright day.

Perceiving that he drew near his end, he assembled his nobles, and dictated his will in their presence. By this will he made Joan his grand-daughter his heir, and her sister Mary was to succeed her. Saiche of Arragon, the second wife of Robert, by whom he had no children, was a woman of capacity and virtue, to whom he would have confided the regency, and the education of his grand-daughters, had she not formed a resolution on his death to finish her days in a monastery. She had always so strong an inclination for the cloister, that in 1317 she attempted to set aside her marriage, to throw herself into a convent. But

pope John XXII. to whom she applied, told her this intention was a snare of the devil. Robert named her, however, at the head of a council for the administration, till the princesses were twenty-five years old; and Philip de Cabasole was one of this council.

After this Robert desired they would bring to him the two young persons he had named for his successors. He addressed himself to them with the greatest dignity and tenderness; discovered to them the dangers which threatened them; and informed them in what manner they ought to conduct themselves towards their enemies, their friends, and their subjects. At a moment when other men can scarcely support themselves, this great king seemed wholly interested in the good of his family; and the wisdom, strength, and presence of mind, he shewed on this occasion, surprised and overwhelmed with grief those who were present. Observing those who stood round his bed melted into tears, he reproached them for it in a gentle manner. ‘What is the reason of your grief?’ said he. ‘My death has nothing in it mournful or unhappy; on the contrary, it is greatly for my advantage. I leave a frail throne for an everlasting kingdom. Have I not lived long enough? I have almost attained

the period that Nature herself seems to have fixed to the life of man. Instead of afflicting yourselves, my children, rejoice with me in my felicity.'

After having said this, he discoursed to them upon death with so much eloquence and philosophy; he painted it in such soft and agreeable colours, that those who were present confessed it no longer appeared so terrible an event, and that the end of a dying sage, like Robert, was preferable to the school of the greatest philosopher. After having settled all his affairs with the same calm deliberation as if he was just going to set out for the country, he addressed himself to God, and delivered up his soul into the hands of its Maker, without one sigh or tear, or shewing the least mark of weakness on account of its separation from his body. 'He died,' says Petrarch, 'as he lived, acting and speaking like himself.' He chose to die in the habit of the third order of St. Francis, an act of zeal at that time in fashion.

Petrarch was at Avignon when he received the news of king Robert's death. He set out immediately for Vaucluse, to lament in silence and solitude so irreparable a loss. Some time after he writes thus to Barbatus of Sulmone:

'Alas! nothing can equal my loss! Who

now shall be my adviser, my protector, my support? To whom shall I devote my genius and my studies? Who shall revive my hopes, and draw my soul out of its lethargy? I had two guides, two protectors; and death has deprived me of both in the course of one year. For my first and dearest friend, I shed the tears of affection on the bosom of Lelius. For the second, I weep with you, and shall for ever weep. I, who have been accustomed to console others, know not how to console myself. I send you these few lines from that retreat where my soul seeks refuge in all its troubles.'

Petrarch, some time after this, at the desire of a Neapolitan nobleman, made the following epitaph on king Robert :

' Here lies the body of king Robert; his soul is in heaven. He was the glory of kings; the honour of his age; the chief of warriors; and the best of men. Skilful in the art of war, he loved peace. If he had lived longer, Jerusalem and Sicily, under his standard, would have shaken off the yoke of the Barbarians, and driven out the tyrants. These two kingdoms have lost their hope in losing their king. His genius equalled his valour: he unravelled the holy mysteries; he read the events of hea-

ven; he understood the virtues of plants; all nature was open before him. The Muses and the Arts mourn their protector. Nothing was kinder than his manners: his heart was the temple of Patience. All the Virtues lie buried in his tomb. No one can praise him as he deserves: but fame shall make him immortal.'

Petrarch had reason to regret a prince who had conferred upon him so many favours, and who had so great a relish for his works, that, stealing sometimes from his serious occupations, he passed many hours of the night in reading them, without thinking either of food or sleep.

Petrarch, after lamenting this friend many days in the silence and gloom of his retreat, came back to Avignon, where he passed a great part of the winter, making only now and then short visits to Vaucluse.

1344. Petrarch being at Avignon some time after this, met with Laura at a public assembly: her dress was magnificent; but in particular she had silk gloves, brocaded with gold—a rare ornament at that time, when silk was so scarce in Languedoc and in Provence, that the senechal of Beaucaue, two years after this, sent twelve pounds to queen

Joan of Burgundy, which cost him seventy-six French livres a pound. Laura happened to drop one of these gloves. Petrarch, whose eyes were ever bent towards her, immediately picked it up. Laura perceiving it in his hands, took it from him instantly; and, though Petrarch had the strongest desire to retain this precious ornament, he had not the power. If the nobility of Laura had not been proved by the contract of her marriage, it would have been by these embroidered gloves; for in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries none but persons of quality in France were allowed to wear silk, gold, furs, pearls, and precious jewels. This was observed at Avignon; and none of the relations of the pope, the wives and daughters of the marshals, barons, viguiers, and the ladies of noble birth in this city, were exempted from this sumptuary law. Avignon however, by its commerce with strangers, had long lost the simplicity of its manners, which till then it had been famous for: their extravagance increased with their wealth, and the wives of citizens aimed as much as possible to vie with the ladies of noble rank in their luxury and expence.

Under the pontificate of Clement VI. profusion and debauchery were carried to the ut-

most height at Avignon. The generosity of this pontiff was unbounded; and he had the strongest attachment to the fair sex, who had free access at all hours to his palace. At the head of these ladies, who formed a court in the palace of Clement, was the viscountess of Turenne. As she acted a considerable part in the pontificate of Clement, and was the particular object of Petrarch's aversion, a short description of her may not be disagreeable.

The name of this lady was Cicily; she was daughter of the count de Commenges, who had espoused the daughter and heir of Raymond, viscount of Turenne. She married the son of Alphonso IV. king of Arragon, and became viscountess of Turenne by the death of her brother, in the year 1340. She was a woman of infinite cunning, and proud and imperious to excess. It was easy for such a character to influence the mind of Clement, who was a man of the most gentle temper, and the easiest to govern. The empire she obtained over him, and the authority with which she disposed of every thing in his court, have caused many to suspect that she was his mistress. It is certain she made herself very agreeable to him as a companion, accumulated a great deal of wealth, and dishonoured herself

by the avidity with which she received money from all hands without distinction.

It is not surprising that, under the government of a woman who thought of nothing but amassing wealth, and in a court filled with young persons of both sexes who held the first places there, and had no curb to their desires, debauchery should wholly prevail and become universal. Petrarch draws two pictures of this terrible licentiousness. In his letters called the *Mysteries*, one of these descriptions is as follows :

‘All that they say of Assyrian and Egyptian Babylon, of the four Labyrinths, of the Avernian and Tartarian lakes, are nothing in comparison of this hell. We have here a Nimrod powerful on the earth, and a mighty hunter before the Lord, who attempts to scale heaven with raising his superb towers; a Semiramis with her quiver; a Cambyfes more extravagant than the Cambyfes of old. You may here behold the inflexible Minos; Rhodomanthus; the greedy Cerberus; Pasiphae, and the Minotaur. All that is vile and execrable is assembled in this place. There is no clue to lead you out of this labyrinth, neither that of Dedalus nor Ariadne: the only means of escaping is by the influence of gold. Gold

pacifies the most savage monsters, softens the hardest hearts, pierces through the flinty rock, and opens every door, even that of heaven : for, to say all in one word, even Jesus Christ is here bought with gold.

‘ In this place reign the successors of poor fishermen, who have forgot their origin. They march covered with gold and purple, proud of the spoils of princes and of the people. Instead of those little boats in which they gained their living on the lake of Gennefaret, they inhabit superb palaces. They have likewise their parchments, to which are hung pieces of lead ; and these they use as nets to catch the innocent and unwary, whom they fleece and burn to satisfy their gluttony.

‘ To the most simple repasts have succeeded the most sumptuous feasts ; and where the apostles went on foot covered only with sandals, are now seen insolent satrapes mounted on horses ornamented with gold, and champing golden bits. They appear like the kings of Persia, or the Parthian princes, to whom all must pay adoration.

‘ Poor old fishermen ! For whom have you laboured ? For whom have you cultivated the field of the Lord ? For whom have you shed so much of your blood ? Neither piety, cha-

city, nor truth, is here. God is despised, the laws trampled upon, and wickedness is esteemed wisdom. Oh times! Oh manners!

Petrarch did not satirize the vices of others alone; he composed some reflections at this time which unfold his own character, and the failings to which it was subject. These reflections are put in the form of dialogues, in imitation of the Confessions of St. Augustin.

Augustin was Petrarch's favourite saint. 'When I read his Confessions,' says Petrarch, 'I think I read my own, for I find in them the history of my life. At night, when my soul is freed from care, I lay myself down in bed as in a tomb, and summon my heart before me. Its restlessness and distraction, its dread of death, its hatred of vice, and yet unequal progress in virtue and purity; from whence come all these things?

'They arise,' replies Augustin, 'from your light and careless disposition. You perceive your errors, but you do not seek a better path to walk in: you behold your peril, but take no pains to avoid it.

'How absurd is that vanity of mind produced by your wit, knowledge, eloquence, and beauty! What is there in these things on which to build your pride? How many times

has your wit failed you? In the arts, how much more skilful than you are the most vulgar of mankind, and the smallest animals in the creation? Compare your knowledge with your ignorance, and it will appear like a small brook by the side of the ocean. Your eloquence, what is it? A wind, a puff, an empty noise! Did you feel in the midst of the loudest praises that you wanted the greatest of all, the applause of your own mind? What folly to neglect the most important things in life, to occupy yourself in arranging syllables! Under this restraint, how many objects are there in nature to which you cannot do justice? How many sentiments in philosophy you are not able to express, because you are tied down to measures, and fail in the number of your words? The Greeks and the Latins, have they not mutually reproached each other for this poverty of language?

‘As to your body, your health, your complexion, your features, can any thing be more frail, or less to be depended on? The smallest accident, the sting of a gnat, a breath of corrupted air, will cause them to wither and decay. Beauty is a flower which often fades before noon: and was not this the case, only represent to yourself how that body will appear

a few years hence, when committed to the silent grave.

‘As to your avarice: while you lived in your solitude, content with a plain garb, the fruits of your trees, and the herbs of your garden, you wanted nothing, and passed a sweet and tranquil life. Now example has altered your taste, and you have the disturbed air of those who are always seeking after what they can never obtain. It is commendable to be active in procuring a comfortable livelihood, but bounds should be fixed to our desires. What are yours?’ ‘I ask nothing superfluous,’ replied Petrarch, astonished that avarice should be laid to his charge, ‘but I would want for nothing. I have no ambition to command, but I would not choose to obey.’ ‘This,’ says St. Augustin, ‘is the object of the greatest kings, but they have failed in accomplishing it; and those who command whole nations have themselves been forced to obey. Virtue alone can procure that independence which is the end of human wishes.

‘As to your ambition.’—‘How!’ interrupted Petrarch, ‘to flee courts and cities, to bury oneself among rocks and woods, to combat vulgar opinions, to hate and despise honours, to laugh at those who seek, and all their me-

thods of obtaining them, is this to be ambitious?'—'You are not, I will grant,' replied St. Augustin, 'born ambitious, and nature is not to be forced: but ~~examine~~ your own heart. It is not honours that you hate, but the steps necessary in this age to obtain them. Your route to them is more secret, but has the same end. You must own that this is the real aim of all your studies. The man who sets out on a journey to Rome, but turns back intimidated by the length of the way, it is not Rome that displeases him, but the road that leads to it.

'Envy, gluttony, and wrath,' continued St. Augustin, 'I cannot seriously reproach you with; but you cannot vindicate yourself from the charge of incontinence: and when you have prayed to be delivered from every licentious passion, you have prayed, as too many do, in this manner; "Lord, make me chaste, but not too soon. Wait a little, I beseech thee, till my youth is passed, and the season of pleasure is over. The time will come when I shall have no inclination to vice, and when satiety and disgust will prevent all danger of a relapse." To ask in such a manner, is indeed to ask in vain.'

St. Augustin next speaks of that unsettled

and discordant humour to which Petrarch was subject, and which delights to dwell on the dark side, and is always disturbing and tormenting itself. 'Men are lost to peace,' continues he, 'because they know not the difficulties which attend the situations of others, or feel the advantages of their own. Hence arise the complaints of the whole world.'—'I know well,' replied Petrarch, 'that in elevated stations we in vain seek for peace and tranquillity of soul. I am satisfied with my fortune, but I am obliged to live for others, and comply with their humours: this dependence is my misery.'

'And who then,' said St. Augustin, 'in this world, lives only for himself? Even Cæsar, after he had subdued the universe, did not he live for others? With all his art, he could not satisfy the desires, or overrule the power, of those who conspired against him. Nothing but wisdom can insure an independence like this.'

Petrarch next complains to St. Augustin of the life he leads at Avignon. 'I am fatigued,' says he, 'beyond all expression, with this noisy dirty city; it is the gulph of all nastiness and vice; a collection of narrow ill-built streets, where one cannot take a single step without

meeting with filthy pigs, barking dogs; chariots which stun one with the rattling of their wheels; sets of horses in caparison which block up the way; disfigured beggars, terrible to look at; strange faces from all the countries upon earth; insolent nobles drunk with pleasure and debauch; and an unruly populace always quarrelling and fighting.' To this the faint answers, 'If the tumult of your soul would subside, you would no longer complain of these outward noises, which affect only the senses. When the mind is calm, the confusion of objects around us is no more to our ear than the murmurs of a running stream. In this happy state of soul, neither the clouds which fly around her, nor even the thunder that rolls over her head, is able to disturb her serenity. Safe in the port, she beholds but feels not the shipwreck.

'But I have yet only attacked the disorders you are willing to confess; more delicate and deeper wounds lie behind. When I consider your extreme sensibility, I dare hardly attempt to probe them. Petrarch! you are bound with two golden chains, and your greatest unhappiness is, you are so dazzled by the lustre of them both, that you do not perceive your fetters: these chains are love and glory; these are your

treasures, your delights. Let us examine this matter, and first treat of love. Do you not allow that it is a great folly ?

‘ The object of our love,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ must decide this : love is the most noble, or the most despicable, of all the passions ; misery, if the object is unamiable ; but to be attached to a virtuous woman, who deserves both love and respect, this appears to me a great felicity. If you think otherwise, I am sorry for it. Every one has his own opinion ; if this is an error, it is dear to me, and I should be sorry to be deprived of it. You know not the object of this love !’

‘ Indeed I do,’ replied St. Augustin ; ‘ a mortal, a woman is the cause ; I know you have passed a great part of your life in admiring and adoring her. A folly so long persisted in astonishes me.’

‘ I beseech you,’ returned Petrarch, ‘ no invectives. Thais and Livia were women, but what a difference between them and the person of whom you speak : know that her manners are a perfect model of the purest virtue ; little attracted by the pleasures of the world, she sighs after heaven as her only reward.’ ‘ What a madness,’ returned the saint ! ‘ you have nourished this flame in your heart sixteen

years. The war of Hannibal in Italy was not so long, nor the flames he kindled more violent, than yours. He was driven out at last; but who shall drive away that Hannibal who lays waste your soul?

‘Blind as you are, you love your disease, and you feed it; but listen to me: when death shall extinguish those eyes which delight you now, when you shall behold that beautiful face disfigured and pale, and those perfect limbs motionless and livid, then will you blush for having attached an immortal soul to a decayed and perishable body.’

‘God preserve me,’ resumed Petrarch, ‘from beholding so terrible a disaster; it would be reversing the order of nature. I came first into the world, and it would be unjust I should go out of it the last.’—‘It is not, however,’ said St. Augustin, ‘an impossible event, in as much as this beautiful person, which is the object of your love, and which is worn out by frequent confinements, has already lost much of its strength and brilliancy.’

‘Learn,’ replied Petrarch, ‘that it is not the person of Laura I adore, but that soul so superior to all others: her conduct and her manners are an image of the life the blessed lead in heaven. If I should ever lose her, (the

very idea makes me tremble!) I would say, what Lelius the wisest of the Romans said on the death of Scipio, "I loved her virtue, and that shall ever live."

'It is not easy,' returned the faint, 'to force you out of your intrenchment: for a moment I will therefore allow, that this woman for whom you languish is a saint, a goddess, the goddess of virtue herself, if you will have it so. You are then the more culpable, if your inclinations toward her are not pure and honest.'—'I take Heaven to witness,' replied Petrarch, 'that there was never any thing dishonest in my affections for Laura, never any thing reprehensible in them but their excess. I wish all the world could see my love with as much clearness as they can her face. It resembles it; it is like that face, pure and without spot. I am going to say a thing that will perhaps astonish you.

'It is to Laura I owe what I am. Never should I have attained my present reputation and glory, if the sentiments with which she inspired me had not raised those seeds of virtue which nature had planted in my soul: she drew me out of those snares and precipices into which the ardour of youth had plunged me. In fine, she pointed out my road to heaven,

and served me as a guide to pursue it. The effect of love is to transform the lover, and to assimilate him to the object beloved. What then more virtuous, more perfect than Laura? In a city where no one is respected, where no character is held sacred, has calumny dared to assault her? have they found any thing reprehensible, I say not only in her actions, but even in her words, in her countenance, or in her gestures? Those bad mouths which poison all, have they dared to taint her life with their pestiferous breath? No; they could not even forbear respecting and admiring it. Inflamed with the desire of enjoying, like her, a great reputation, I have forced through all the obstacles that opposed it: in the flower of my age, I loved her alone, I wished to please her alone. You know all that I have done, and all that I have suffered to accomplish this end. To her I have sacrificed those pleasures for which I felt the greatest inclination, and you would have me forget and renounce her. No, nothing can ever determine me to such a sacrifice; it is to no purpose for you to attempt. 'How many errors!' said the saint, 'how many illusions! You say you owe to Laura what you are; that she has caused you to quit the world,

and has elevated you to the contemplation of celestial things. But the truth is this :/ full of confidence and a good opinion of yourself, entirely occupied with one person in whom your whole soul is absorbed, you despise the rest of the world, and the world in return despises you. It is true she has drawn you out of some vices; but she has also prevented the growth of many virtues. In tears and complaints you have spent that time which should have been devoted to God. The best effect of this affection is perhaps to have rendered you eager after glory : we shall presently examine how much you are indebted to her on this account. As to every thing else, I venture to declare that she has been your destruction in nourishing a passion she ought to have suppressed. She has filled you with the love of the creature rather than the Creator ; and this is the death of the soul.

‘ You say she has raised you to the love of God. It may be so. But in this you have inverted the order of nature. The Creator is to be first loved for his own sake, for his infinite goodness and perfection; and then the creature as his work, and in proportion to its resemblance to him. You have done the contrary. You

have loved God as a good artifice; who has made what you thought the finest object in the world.'

'I take Heaven to witness,' again replied Petrarch, 'of what I before advanced, that it is the soul of Laura, and not her person, that I love. Of this I can give you the most incontestible proof. The older she grows, the more does my affection for her increase. Even in her spring her charms began to fade; but the beauties of her mind, and my passion, increased together.'

'If that soul,' resumed St. Augustin, 'had inhabited a vile and ugly body, would you have loved it then?'

'The body,' said Petrarch, 'is the image and the mirror of the soul: if the beauty of the soul could be immediately perceived without the interposition of the body, I should love a beautiful soul though placed in a disfigured person.'

'If,' replied St. Augustin, 'you love what falls under your senses only, it is still the body which you love. I do not deny that it was the beauty of the soul which nourished and kept up your passion, but it did not give birth to it. You loved the body with the soul, and the heat of youth led you to inclinations even

for Laura, which her virtue alone subdued, Did she not herself tell you in one of those excesses, “ I am not, Petrarch, the person you take me for ? ” In your commendations of Laura you have often condemned yourself.’

‘ I will with joy acknowledge,’ returned Petrarch, ‘ her virtue and my own folly ; but if my desires have ever passed the bounds which honour prescribes, it is no longer so ; those limits are now sacred. With respect to Laura, let me ever do her this justice ; I never saw her virtue stagger in the most interesting moments of our connexion ; and in the gayest hours of her life her conduct was always uniform, always pure. How admirable is a constancy, a resolution so superior to the generality of her sex !’

‘ You cannot deny,’ said the saint, ‘ and have indeed confessed, that this love of yours has made you unhappy, and was near drawing on you a fatal crime. This admirable woman was the cause of all this : and ought she not rather to have suppressed than encouraged an inclination so fatal to your peace ? She ought to have known and impressed this truth upon you ; that of all the passions to which human nature is subject, love is the most to be feared. It makes us forget ourselves, and it

leads us to forget our God. Every thing serves to nourish and increase it ; and those wretched mortals whom it holds in bondage, carry a fire within them which will finally consume both soul and body. It is unnecessary to say more : those who have experienced this passion will feel I speak truth ; those who have never known it, will give me no credit. But you are not one of these.'

' Alas !' returned Petrarch, ' I am not able to answer you, and I must give myself up to despair !'

' No,' said the saint, ' before you do this, you must make every effort. Consult the best poets and philosophers. Cicero advises to change the object of love, or divide it ; like a king of Persia, who, to weaken the current of the Ganges, cut this river into several streams. But I would not have you take this method. It is better to die an honest death, than to live an infamous life ; to be devoted to one honourable, than many disgraceful objects. You have tried absence, but it was liberty and curiosity that were your chief motives. These sent you to the north and the south, and to the extremities of the ocean ; these were the foundation of your retreat at Vaucluse. But travelling does more harm than good to those who

carry their diseases along with them ; and one might apply to you, in this situation, the answer of Socrates to a young man who complained of the little use he had derived from his travels : “ That is,” said Socrates, “ because you travelled with yourself. For those who would travel with success, must have the mind rightly prepared ; and, without this preparation, in vain will be its course, though extended from pole to pole.” As Horace says, it will change its climate, but never alter its sentiments. To exchange your situation to advantage, you must lay down the burden that oppresses you, nor like Orpheus ever look behind you.

‘ You love Italy : it was there you received your life. No situation can suit you better ; no situation is so delightful. Recollect the beauty of the skies, the sea, and the mountains ; call to mind the agreeable manners of its inhabitants. You have been too long absent from this your native country : it is growing late ; the night of life is coming on. Above all things remember, that solitude is fatal to you, and that the rocks and woods of Vaucluse are so many snares to your soul.

‘ Enter into yourself. Be not disgusted with age, which is approaching : or afraid of death

that will succeed it. Time passes away, and the body decays; but the mind is incorruptible, and its maturity can never be determined. With reason has it been said, that one soul required many bodies. Consider then the nobleness of this your soul, the frailty of your body, the shortness of life, and the certainty of death. Recall the torments you have suffered, the useless tears you have shed, and the short pleasures you have obtained, which may be compared to those light zephyrs of the summer which refresh the air but for a moment. Reflect on the duties you have neglected, and the works you have begun, and yet never completed. Finally, let your prayers be fervent and sincere, that God would hear you, that he would strengthen your mind, and assist you with his grace.

‘ This is all I have to say upon the head of love. As to glory, which is founded upon fame, what is it? Words which pass through the mouths of mortals, and vanish into air! What is it but a wind blown up by their frail breath! How many obstacles are there to an immortal name! Fashion, which changes every day, and gives to the moderns the preference over the ancients; envy, which pursues the greatest men even after death; the humour of

the vulgar, who neither love men of genius, nor truth herself; the ignorance and inconstancy of men's judgments; in fine, the ruin of sepulchres and monuments, which you elegantly call the second death. And can this be glory which depends upon the duration of marble? Even books, more durable than monuments, are they not subject to a thousand accidents? They have, like us, their old age and death; and with this oblivion are the most celebrated men threatened. In reality, the true honour of man is virtue: and glory is only her shadow; it follows her every where, and the less it is sought, the more certainly is it obtained. If the earth is but a speck, and if God fills both space and time, why do vain mortals waste their short moments in such an empty pursuit? Was you assured but of one more year of life, would not you manage it with extreme economy? Alas! men are avaricious of a certain, and prodigal of an uncertain, time. They are not sure of a day, an hour, a minute, yet they set about employments of great extent, and little use. Thousands, intoxicated with this folly, die in the flower of their age, and in the midst of their projects. With one foot in heaven, and the other upon the earth, they fall into the grave. Thus do you con-

fume your time in making books, and neglect important duties to run after vain desires. Thus you pursue a shadow, and neglect your soul.

‘ Abandon these things. The exploits of the Romans have been sufficiently celebrated; they do not need your praise. Leave Africa, and your Scipio; you can add nothing to his glory.

‘ Be yourself once again, prepare for death, and for the life that is to come.’

Thus end these excellent dialogues.

In September 1343, the pope, who had formed a high idea of Petrarch's abilities, entrusted him with a negociation, the execution of which required both judgment and penetration. It has been observed, that Robert king of Naples had established a regency till his grand-daughter attained the age of twenty-five years. The pope, on his side, claimed the government of Naples during this minority; and on this account sent Petrarch to assert his right, and inform himself of what was passing in that court. The influence of cardinal Colonna no doubt contributed to the obtaining this commission for Petrarch. The cardinal had friends who were unjustly detained in prison at Naples, and whose freedom

he had solicited ; and he flattered himself that Petrarch's eloquence and intercession would obtain their enlargement.

Petrarch went by land to Nice, where he embarked, and in his passage was near being lost. He wrote to cardinal Colonna the following account of his voyage :

‘ I embarked at Nice, the first maritime town in Italy ; at night I got to Monaco ; and the bad weather obliged me to pass a whole day there : this did not put me into humour. The next morning we re-embarked, and, after being tossed all day by the tempest, we arrived very late at Port Maurice. The night was dreadful ; it was not possible to get to the castle ; and I was obliged to put up at a village ale-house, where my bed and supper appeared tolerable, from extreme weariness and hunger. I determined to proceed by land ; the perils of the road were less dreadful to me than those of the sea. I left my servants and baggage in the ship, which set sail, and I remained with only one domestic on shore.

‘ By accident, among the rocks towards the coast of Genoa, I found some German horses which were for sale : they were strong and serviceable. I bought them ; but I was soon after obliged to take ship again, for war was

renewed between the Pisans and the people of Milan. Nature has placed limits to these states, the Po on one side, and the Appenines on the other; but pride and avarice know no bounds. I must have passed between their two armies if I had gone by land; this obliged me to re-embark at Lerici. I passed by Corvo, that famous rock, the ruins of the city of Luna, and I landed at Mutrona. From thence I went the next day on horseback to Pisa, Sienna, and Rome. My eagerness to execute your orders has made me a night-traveller, contrary to my character and disposition. I would not sleep till I had paid my duty to your illustrious father, who is always my hero. I found him just the same I left him seven years ago; nay, even as hale and sprightly as when I first saw him at Avignon, which is now twelve years. What a surprising man! What majesty! What strength of mind and body! How firm his voice, how beautiful his face! Had he been a few years younger, I should have taken him for Julius Cæsar, or Scipio Africanus. Rome grows old, but not its hero. He was half undressed, and going into bed; I staid then only a moment, but I passed the whole of the next day with him. He asked me a thousand questions about you; and was much

pleased I was going to Naples. He would accompany me when I set out from Rome, beyond its walls. I went to Palestrina that night, and was kindly received there by John Colonna. This is a young man of great hopes, who follows the steps of his ancestors.

‘ I arrived at Naples the 11th of October. Heavens! what a change has the death of one man produced in this place! No one would know it now. Religion, justice, truth, are banished. I think I am at Memphis, Babylon, or Mecca. In the place of a king so good, so just, and so pious, a little monk, fat, rosy, barefooted, with a shorn head, and half covered with a dirty mantle; bent by hypocrisy more than age, lost in debauchery, proud of his poverty, and still prouder of the gold he has amassed; this man holds the reins of this staggering empire. His cruelty and his debauches go beyond even those of Dionysius, Agathocles, and Phalaris. The name of this monk is brother Robert; he was an Hungarian cordelier, and preceptor of prince Andrew, whom he entirely governed. This monster oppresses the weak, despises the great, tramples justice under foot, and treats the two queens with the greatest insolence. The court and the city

tremble before him. A mournful silence reigns in the public assemblies ; and in private houses they converse by whispers. The least gesture is punished, and to think is imputed a crime.

‘ How terrible for me to negotiate with such a man ! I have presented to him the orders of the sovereign pontiff, and your just demands : he behaved with an insolence I cannot describe ; Sufa, or Damascus, the capital of the Saracens, would have received with more respect an envoy from the holy see. The great lords imitate his pride and tyranny. The bishop of Cavaillon is the only one who opposes this torrent : but what can one lamb do in the midst of so many wolves ? It is the request of a dying king alone that makes him endure so wretched a situation. How small are the hopes of my negotiation ! But I shall wait with patience, though I know beforehand the answer they will give me.’

Petrarch represents queen Joan as a woman of weak understanding, and disposed to gallantry, but incapable from her weakness of greater crimes. She was at this time eighteen years old, and governed by an old woman whose origin was from the dregs of the people. She was wife to a poor fisherman of Catana,

a town of Sicily, and was nurse to a child of king Robert, of which his first wife was delivered when she followed him to the siege of Trapani in Sicily. This woman was handsome, insinuating, and had found out the art of pleasing both the wives of king Robert, and the duchess of Calabria the mother of Joan, who entrusted her with the education of her daughter. She was consummate in the art of address and the intrigues of a court, and soon gained the heart of a young princess who sought after nothing but love and pleasure. This woman had married for her second husband a Turkish slave, whom the seneschal of Naples had bought of a corsair. The seneschal took a liking to him, and gave him his freedom; from thence he became keeper of the king's wardrobe, in which post he amassed prodigious wealth. When he married the Catanese he was made a chevalier, and by her credit obtained the place of seneschal, which became vacant by the death of his master. She had a son called Robert, for whom she obtained his father's place, after his death. His person was handsome and agreeable, and it was thought that she very early procured him the good graces of the princess Joan. These people used every means to oppose the coronation of

prince Andrew, that his authority, and that of the Hungarians, might not be confirmed; and they, on their part, aimed at the destruction of the Catanese and her cabal. Such was the situation of this divided court, and it was easy to foresee it must end in some tragical event.

Petrarch, wearied out with the pretended considerations they pleaded, to retard and amuse him, formed the project of visiting the mount Gargon, the port of Brindisi, and the upper coast of that sea. But the queen dowager begged he would not go so far from Naples, always saying to him, 'We must wait a little, perhaps the face of things may change.' She permitted him, however, to visit some places near, which he gives an account of in the following letter to cardinal Colonna:

'I went to Baiæ with my friends Barbatus and John Barrili: every thing concurred to render this jaunt agreeable; good company, the beauty of the scenes, and my extreme weariness of the city I quitted. This climate, which, as far as I can judge, must be insupportable in summer, is delightful in winter. I was rejoiced to behold places described by Virgil, and, which is more surprising, by Homer before him. I have seen the Lucrine lake, famous for its fine oysters: the lake Avernus, the

waters of which are as black as pitch, with fish swimming in it of the same colour: marshes, formed by the standing water of Acheron, and that mountain whose roots go down to hell; the horrible aspect of this place, the thick shades with which it is covered by a surrounding wood, and the pestilential smell that this water exhales, characterise it very justly as the hell of the poets. There wants only the bark of Charon, which would indeed be unnecessary, as there is only a shallow ford to pass over. The Styx and the kingdom of Pluto are now hid from our sight. Awed by what I had heard and read of these mournful approaches to the dwellings of the dead, I was contented to view them at my feet from the top of a high mountain. The labourer, the shepherd, and the sailor, dare not approach them nearer. There are profound caverns, where some pretend much gold is concealed; covetous men, they say, have been to seek it, but they never returned; whether they lost their way in the dark valleys, or whether they had a fancy to visit the dead, being so near their habitation.

‘ I have seen the ruins of the grotto of the famous Cumean Sybil; it is a hideous rock, suspended in the Avernian lake. Its situation

strikes the mind with horror : there still remain the hundred mouths by which the gods conveyed their oracles ; they are dumb at present, and there is only one God who speaks in heaven and in the earth. These uninhabited ruins serve for the nests of birds of unlucky omen. Not far from hence is that horrible cavern which leads, say they, to hell.

‘ Who would believe, that close to the mansions of the dead nature should have placed powerful remedies for the preservation of life ? Near Avernus however, and Acheron, is that barren land from whence rises continually a salutary vapour, a cure for several diseases ; and those hot springs which sound like the boiling of an iron pot ; there are some which vomit cinders hot and sulphureous. I have seen the baths which nature has prepared, but the avarice of the physicians hath rendered them of doubtful use : this does not however prevent them from being visited by all the neighbouring towns. These hollowed mountains dazzle with the lustre of their marble arches, on which are engraved figures that point out by the position of their hands the part of the body each fountain is proper to cure.

‘ I saw the foundations of that admirable reservoir of Nero, which was to go from mount

Misene to the Avernian lake, and enclose all the hot waters of Baiæ.

‘ At Puzzoli I saw the mountain of Falernus, celebrated for its grapes, whence the famous Falernian wine. I saw likewise those enraged waves that Virgil speaks of in his *Georgics*, on which Cæsar put a bridle by the mole which he raised there, and which Augustus finished : it is now called the Dead Sea. I am surprised at the prodigious expence the Romans were at to build houses in the most exposed situations, to shelter them from the severities of winter ; for in the heats of summer the valleys of the Appenines, the mountains of Viterbe, the woods of Ombriu, Tivoli, Frescate, &c. furnished them with charming shades : even the ruins of those houses are superb. But this magnificence was little suited to the Roman manners, and on this account Marius, Cæsar, and Pompey, were praised for having built upon the mountains, where they were not disturbed by the foaming of the sea, and where they trod under foot those darling pleasures which destroy mankind, by rendering them effeminate. This it was that determined Scipio Africanus to seek a retreat at Linterno ; this unparalleled hero rather chose to flee from voluptuousness than trample it under foot. I

could see nothing that would delight me more than his abode, but I had no guide that was acquainted with its situation.

‘ Of all the wonders I saw in my little journey, nothing surprised me more than the prodigious strength and extraordinary courage of a young woman called Mary, whom we saw at Puzzoli. She passed her life among soldiers, and it was a common opinion that she was so much feared, no one dared attack her honour. No warrior but envied her prowess and skill. From the flower of her age she lived in camps, and adopted the military rules and dress. Her body is that of a hardy soldier, rather than a woman, and seamed all over with the scars of honour. She is always at war with her neighbours; sometimes she attacks them with a little troop, sometimes alone; and several have died by her hand. She is perfect in all the stratagems of the military art; and suffers, with incredible patience, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and fatigue. In fine, she lies on the bare ground, her shield serves for her pillow, and she sleeps armed in the open air.

‘ I had seen her in my first voyage to Naples about three years ago; but as she was very much altered, I did not know her again. She came

forward to salute me ; I returned it as to a person I was not acquainted with ; but by her laugh, and the gestures of those about me, I suspected something ; and, observing her with more attention, I found under the helmet the face of this formidable virgin. Was I to inform you of half the things they relate of her, you would take them for fables. I will therefore confine myself to a few facts, to which I was witness. By accident, several strangers, who came to Puzzoli to see this wonder, were all assembled at the citadel to make trial of her strength. We found her alone, walking before the portico of the church, and not surprised at the concourse of the people. We begged she would give us a proof of her strength. She excused herself at first as having a wound in her arm ; but afterwards she took up an enormous block of stone, and a piece of wood loaded with iron. " Upon these," said she, " you may try your strength if you will." After every one had attempted to move them with more or less success, she took and threw them with so much ease over our heads, that we remained confounded, and could hardly believe our eyes. At first some deceit was suspected, but there could be none. This has rendered credible what the ancients

relate of the Amazons, and Virgil of the heroines of Italy, who were headed by Camilla.'

Petrarch was but just returned from this little journey, when the city of Naples underwent a horrible tempest, which was felt along the coasts of the Mediterranean.

' A monk, who was the bishop of a neighbouring island, and held in great esteem for his sanctity and his skill in astrology, had foretold that Naples was to be destroyed by an earthquake on the 25th of November. This prophecy spread such terror through the city, that the inhabitants abandoned their affairs to prepare themselves for death. Some hardy spirits indeed ridiculed those who betrayed marks of fear on the approach of a thunder storm; and, as soon as the storm was over, jestingly cried out, *See, the prophecy has failed!*

' As to myself, I was in a state between fear and hope; but I must confess that fear sometimes got the ascendant. Accustomed to a colder climate, and in which a thunder storm in winter was a rare phenomenon, I considered what I now saw as a threatening from heaven.

' On the eve of the night in which the prophecy was to be fulfilled, a number of females, more attentive to the impending evil

than to the decorum of their sex, ran half naked through the streets, pressing their children to their bosoms. They hastened to prostrate themselves in the churches, which they deluged with their tears, crying out with all their might, *Have mercy, O Lord! Have mercy upon us!*

‘ Moved, distressed with the general consternation, I retired early to the convent of St. Laurence. The monks went to rest at the usual hour. It was the seventh day of the moon: and, as I was anxious to observe in what manner she would set, I stood looking at my window till she was hid from my sight by a neighbouring mountain. This was a little before midnight. The moon was gloomy and overcast; nevertheless I felt myself tolerably composed, and went to bed. But scarce had I closed my eyes, when I was awakened by the loud rattling of my chamber windows. I felt the walls of the convent violently shaken from their foundations. The lamp, which I always keep lighted through the night, was extinguished. The fear of death laid fast hold upon me.

‘ The whole city was in commotion, and you heard nothing but lamentations, and confused exhortations to make ready for the dread-

ful event. The monks, who had risen to sing their matins, terrified by the movements of the earth, ran into my chamber, armed with crosses and relics, imploring the mercy of Heaven. A prior, whose name was David, and who was considered as a saint, was at their head. The sight of these inspired us with a little courage. We proceeded to the church, which was already crowded; and here we remained during the rest of the night, expecting every moment the completion of the prophecy.

‘ It is impossible to describe the horrors of that night. The elements were let loose. The noise of the thunder, the winds, and the rain, the roarings of the enraged sea, the convulsions of the heaving earth, and the distracted cries of those who felt themselves staggering on the brink of death, were dreadful beyond imagination. Never was there such a night! As soon as we apprehended that day was at hand, the altars were prepared, and the priests dressed themselves for mass. Trembling we lifted up our eyes to heaven, and then fell prostrate upon the earth.

‘ The day at length appears. But what a day! Its horrors were more terrible than those of the night. No sooner were the higher

parts of the city a little more calm, than we were struck with the outcries which we heard towards the sea. Anxious to discover what passed there, and still expecting nothing but death, we became desperate, and instantly mounting our horses, rode down to the shore.

‘Heavens ! what a sight ! Vessels wrecked in the harbour. The strand covered with bodies which had been dashed against the rocks by the fury of the waves. ‘Here you saw the brains of some, and the entrails of others ; there the palpitating struggles of yet remaining life. You might distinguish the groans of the men, and the shrieks of the women, even through the noise of the thunder, the roaring of the billows, and the crash of the falling houses. The sea regarded not either the restraints of men, or the barriers of nature. She no longer knew the bounds which had been set by the Almighty.

‘That immense mole, which stretching itself out on each hand forms the port, was buried under the tumult of the waves ; and the lower parts of the city were so much deluged that you could not pass along the streets without danger of being drowned.

‘We found near the shore above a thousand Neapolitan knights, who had assembled, as it

were, to attend the funeral obsequies of their country. This splendid troop gave me a little courage. "If I die," said I to myself, "it will be at least in good company." Scarce had I made this reflection, when I heard a dreadful clamour every where around me. The sea had sapped the foundations of the place where we stood, and it was at this instant giving way. We fled therefore immediately to a more elevated ground. Hence we beheld a most tremendous sight! The sea between Naples and Capræa was covered with moving mountains; they were neither green as in the ordinary state of the ocean, nor black as in common storms, but white.

' The young queen rushed out of the palace bare-footed, her hair dishevelled, and her dress in the greatest disorder. She was followed by a train of females whose dress was as loose and disorderly as her own. They went to throw themselves at the feet of the blessed Virgin, crying aloud, *Mercy! Mercy!*

' Towards the close of the day the storm abated, the sea was calm, and the heavens serene. Those who were upon the land suffered only the pains of fear; but it was otherwise with those who were upon the water. Some Marseilles gallies, last from Cyprus, and

now ready to weigh anchor, were sunk before our eyes; nor could we give them the least assistance. Larger vessels from other nations met with the same fate in the midst of the harbour. Not a soul was saved!

‘ There was a very large vessel which had on board four hundred criminals under sentence of death. The mode of their punishment had been changed, and they were reserved as a forlorn hope to be exposed in the first expedition against Sicily. This ship, which was stout and well built, sustained the shocks of the waves till sunset: but now she began to loosen and to fill with water. The criminals, who were a hardy set of men, and less dismayed by death as they had lately seen him so near at hand, struggled with the storm, and by a bold and vigorous defence kept death at bay till the approach of night. But their efforts were in vain. The ship began to sink. Determined, however, to put off as far as possible the moment of dissolution, they ran aloft, and hung upon the masts and rigging. At this moment the tempest was appeased, and these poor convicts were the only persons whose lives were saved in the port of Naples. Lucan says, *Fortune preserves the guilty*. And do we not find, by daily experience, that lives of little mo-

ment easily escape the perils to which they are exposed.'

Petrarch wrote this letter the day after the earthquake, and concludes with the following reflections :

' I trust that this storm will be a sufficient security against all solicitations to make me risk my life upon the ocean. This is the only thing in which I shall dare to be a rebel : but in this I would not obey either the pope, or even my father himself, was he again to return upon the earth. I will leave the air to the birds, and the sea to the fish ; for I am a land animal, and to the land will I confine myself. Send me whither you please ; I will go to the furthest east, or even round the world, provided I never quit my footing upon the earth. I know very well the divines insist there is as much danger by land as by sea. It may be so. But I beseech you to permit me there to give up my life where I first received it. I like that saying of one of the ancients, *He who is shipwrecked a second time, cannot lay the fault upon Neptune.*

Petrarch, in another letter to cardinal Colonna, speaks of the continual murders in the city of Naples.

' The streets,' says he, ' at night are filled by

young men of rank, who are armed, and attack all who pass without distinction ; they must fight or die. This evil is without remedy ; neither the authority of parents, the severity of the magistrates, nor the power of kings themselves, has been able to suppress it : but it is not surprising that such actions are committed at night, when they kill one another for diversion in open day. To these barbarous spectacles the people run in crowds, and shout and rejoice at the sight of human blood ; even kings and princes are amused by it. Young men are seen expiring under the eyes of their parents ; and it is reckoned a shame not to die with a good grace, as if it was to serve God or their country. The place destined to this butchery is near the city. One day they dragged me thither. The king and queen, with all the nobility of Naples, were assembled. I was dazzled by the magnificence of this assembly, but ignorant of the sight I was to behold ; when on a sudden I heard a great noise and shouting of the people : I looked toward the place from whence it came, and saw a young man of a very interesting figure, covered with blood, who fell down and expired at my feet. Seized with horror, I set spurs to my horse, and fled with haste from this infernal spectacle ;

curling those who brought me there, and the spectators who could be pleased with such a horrid sight. You will not be surprised they retain your friends in irons, when they can amuse themselves with the death of an innocent and amiable young man. I am tempted instantly to quit this barbarous place, and in three days perhaps its fun will no longer shine upon me. I shall first go into Cisalpine, and then to Transalpine Gaul, eager to return to a master who can render every thing agreeable to me but the sea.'

Petrarch employed all his eloquence to make the Neapolitans feel the cruelty of these games, but in vain; it was not till fifty years after this that they were abolished by Charles de la Poise, king of Naples. The situation of Naples was insupportable to Petrarch: he was however much honoured by queen Joan, who loved letters, and wished to attach him to her; she made him her chaplain and clerk in writing, as king Robert had done. Petrarch passed a whole day before his departure with his friends John Barrili, and Barbatus of Sulmone, whom he calls his second Ovid, drunk with the nectar of Hippocrene. 'They live,' says he, 'a tranquil life, neither troubled with the noise of

children, the contentions of servants, nor the fatigues of business.'

The part of his negotiation which respected the release of prisoners Petrarch succeeded in. This was afterwards the occasion of prince Andrew's death: they were released by his interest; and he took them into the most intimate friendship, which rendered them insolent, and caused their ruin: and Petrarch was concerned he had meddled with this affair, which proved so fatal in the end to the persons concerned as well as the prince himself.

Before Petrarch set out from Naples, there was a report spread of his death in that part of Italy between the Alps and the Appenines, and they even mourned for him at Venice. Antoine de Beccari in rather too much haste wrote some verses on the occasion. A sketch of this poem will serve to shew the superiority of Petrarch's genius to that of the poets who were his contemporaries. The poem is allegorical, as were most of the writings in that age. It represents a funeral procession, composed of several ladies followed by a numerous train.

Among these Grammar appears the first, supported by Priscian and other masters famed in its rules. She celebrates the pains with which

Petrarch cultivated her regard from his tenderest youth, laments extremely his loss, and seems to fear there is not one grammarian left able to fill his place. After her comes Rhetoric followed by Cicero, Geoffroy de Vinesouve, and Alain de Lisle, two Gothic authors of the twelfth and thirteenth century, who must be very much surprised to see themselves at the side of Cicero. Next comes a train of historians: Livy, Suetonius, Florus, and Eutropius with his hands joined, and his face covered; followed by the nine Muses rending their garments, tearing their hair, and showing all the signs of a most lively grief. Philosophy appears the next in a black robe, as a widow who laments for a husband she most tenderly loved. Plato, Aristotle, Cato, and Seneca, make up her train.

Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Statius, Horace, Lucretius, Persius, Gallus, and Lucan, support the bier, and deposit the body in the mausoleum of Parnassus, which had not been opened for several centuries. Minerva closes this procession, bringing from heaven the crown of Petrarch, which she had in her possession, and which she places in a sacred wood of pines, where it may be sheltered from the wind, the thunder, and the rain.

The poet by a sort of envoy addresses his own poem, and says, ‘ This is from Antoine de Bec-cari, who knows little, but would willingly learn more.’ Petrarch sent this poet a few lines rather than a sonnet, in which he testifies his gratitude, and proves it by avoiding to answer him in such a manner as would have confessed his own superiority.

Petrarch set out from Naples at the end of December, and went directly to Parma, which he found in a very unhappy situation. The brothers of the family of Corregge were dis-united; the city was blocked up by their enemies, and suffered all the distresses that war, famine, and internal divisions, produce. This redoubled Petrarch’s desire to return to his friends at Avignon, to Laura, and to his Trans-alpine Parnassus, as he called his retreat at Vau-cluse. The difficulty was to get out of Parma with safety. He could not pass on the western side, which was his shortest road to France; that road was shut up entirely; and if he went towards the east, he must go by the army of the enemy. There are certain uneasy situations of the mind which cause persons of the least intrepidity to brave the greatest dangers; and such was Petrarch’s. He set out in February at sun-set with a small number of persons, who

agreed to run the same risk as himself. About midnight, near Rheggio, a troop of robbers rushed from their ambuscade, and came down upon them, crying, ' Kill ! kill ! ' All their resource was in flight, favoured by the darkness of the night. Petrarch in this precipitate retreat was thrown from his horse, which had stumbled against something in the road ; and the fall was so violent that he swooned. When he came to himself, he was so bruised he could scarcely move ; but fear giving him strength, he remounted his horse, and was joined by his companions. They had not gone far, when a violent storm of rain and hail, with thunder and lightning, rendered their situation almost as bad as that they had escaped from, and presented them with the image of death in another shape. They passed a dreadful night, without finding a tree or the hollow of a rock to shelter them. Necessity sharpens the invention, and they contrived an expedient which guarded them in some measure from the injuries of the weather. They set the backs of their horses together on the side from whence the storm drove, and thus they made a sort of tent to cover them.

When the dawn of day permitted, Petrarch and his companions set out on their journey,

and got safely to Scandiano, a castle occupied by the Gonzagas, friends to the lords of Parma. They learned there, that if the storm had not detained them, they would have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and that they owed their safety to an accident they had considered as very unfortunate. Petrarch now felt the consequence of his fall. He wanted rest and assistance, and with great pain and difficulty, after a few hours refreshment, got to Modena, where he slept, and the next day arrived at Bologna. He stopped there for advice; the physicians assured him that the warm weather would alone restore him to health. He was, however, so much disgusted with Italy in its present situation; or he was so eager to see Laura, without whom he felt life was insupportable; that the moment he could fit his horse, he took the road to Avignon. On approaching that city, 'I feel,' says he, 'a greater softness in the air, and I see with delight the flowers that adorn the neighbouring woods. Every thing announces the presence of Laura. I have fled from tempests and war to seek a happy asylum in the temple of love, and behold her who can calm the winds, and clear the air from all obscuring clouds.'

Soon after his return Petrarch went to pass

some days at Vacluse. He was charmed to see his house again, and his books. But the absence of Philip de Cabaffole rendered this spot less agreeable: he was still at Naples, detained there by his attachment to the memory of the deceased king, and the desire of serving his family. Petrarch wrote the bishop this letter :

‘ I fled from the fury of civil war, and have taken refuge in my old retreat. Here I find many things that please me, woods, rivers, and peace; but I find not my friend, and this place no longer charms me without his society. I am, however, well satisfied; I am here, and I determine to pass the rest of my life in this place, if affairs do not change in Italy. This is my Parnassus. The Muses, driven out of Italy, enjoy here the tranquillity they love. You may enjoy it too; and will find yourself much happier than at Naples, as I have experienced an agreeable contrast between this place and Parma. Let others run after riches and honours; let them be marquisses, princes, kings; I consent: for my own part, I am content with being a poet. But on yours, will you be always wandering? You know the courts of princes, the snares they contain, the cares that devour,

the perils that are run, the tempests to which they expose.

‘ Believe me. Come back, and repose yourself in your diocese, while fortune yet smiles upon you. You have all you want: let us leave superfluity to misers. We shall have no fine tapestries, but our hangings will be decent. Our tables will not be sumptuous and loaded with many courses, but we shall have enough to suffice us. Our beds will not be covered with gold or purple, nor our chimneys or stairs be of marble; but we shall only sleep the easier. The hour of death approaches, and warns me to limit my desires. I confine myself to the cultivation of my gardens. I am going to plant in them fruit-trees, which shall refresh me with their shade when I go to fish under my rocks. The trees I have are old, they want to be renewed. I beg of you to order your people to procure some pear and peach trees for me at Naples. I work for my old age, which I beseech you to favour and protect. This is written to you in the midst of the woods from your hermit of the Sorga.’

About this time there was a great contention with respect to those islands we call the Canaries, and which the Romans named the For-

tunate isles ; they are situated in the Atlantic ocean near the kingdom of Morocco ; they were called Fortunate from the fruitfulness of the land, and the softness of the air. In effect they have a perpetual spring. The rigours of winter are not felt in this climate, and the heats of summer are softened by the zephyrs which continually arise to temper and refresh the air. These islands were lost as it were in the decline of the Roman empire ; but the Genoese found them out again in the thirteenth century. Lewis of Spain, the eldest son of Alphonzo king of Castile, and Blanche daughter of St. Lewis, who was charged with a negociation to the pope from the king of France, took it into his head to ask Clement to bestow on him the government of these islands. Clement, who claimed the right of giving kingdoms and reigning over kings, and who, naturally generous and benevolent, gave a kingdom with the same ease as he would bestow a benefice, granted this request ; and crowned Lewis at Avignon with all possible magnificence, and made a fine discourse himself upon the occasion : Lewis agreeing to sacrifice his life and wealth to drive the infidels out of these islands ; to establish the true faith ; to hold his kingdom from the holy see, and pay

an annual tribute. These things settled, the pope put the crown on his head, and the scepter in his hand; and ordered him to walk in procession through the streets of Avignon with this fine regalia, and a most splendid train. Unfortunately this pompous march was disturbed by a thunder shower, which turned this most august ceremony into a jest.

The new king, abandoned by all his court, arrived at his palace wet to the skin: a true prognostic that he would reign over nothing but fogs. In truth Lewis gained nothing by this election but the golden crown, and the pretty name of Prince of the Fortunate, just suited to the hero of a romance. But as to Clement, he enjoyed two very sensible pleasures, the giving an entertainment, and the making of a king. It was said, continues Petrarch, who gave this detail to the bishop of Cavailon, that the English, who looked upon the islands that form their kingdom as the most fortunate of all others, were alarmed when they learnt that the pope had given them away. Nothing can better paint the ridiculous fear of a proud and barbarous people, who were persuaded that nature had treated them better than all others, and that their superiority in all things was never to be called in question.

There is a bon-mot related of Don Sancho, the brother of this Lewis, with which I shall close this account, as it is very similar to it.

Don Sancho having been proclaimed king of Egypt by the pope, who expected great things from his bravery, experience, and excellent education, asked his interpreter who accompanied him (for he understood not the Latin tongue) what was the reason of those shouts of applause. ‘Sire,’ replied he, ‘the pope has created you king of Egypt.’ ‘We must not be ungrateful,’ replied the prince; ‘go thou and proclaim the holy father caliph of Bagdat.’ ‘This,’ concludes Petrarch, ‘is what I call a pleasantry well worthy of a king. They give to Don Sancho an ideal kingdom: he returns the favour with a chimerical pontificate.’

One day Petrarch went to walk in a delightful place near Avignon, where he often met Laura: or, if she was not there, the objects around enchanted him, and recalled a thousand pleasing sensations. As he was meditating in this delightful situation, he wrote the following lines:

‘Stream ever limpid, fresh, and clear,
Where Laura’s charms appear renew’d!

Ye flowers that touch her gentle breast !
Ye happy trees on which she leans !
Ye scenes embellish'd by her steps !
If grief shall close these wretched eyes,
May some kind hand when I am dead
Cover me with this happy earth,
And lightly spread it round my tomb :
'Twill shed delight on my abode :
'Twill make me fearless of its gloom.
And when my fair majestic nymph
Shall visit this delightful spot ;
When she shall view my silent dust,
And mark the change her love has wrought :
Then will she waft a gentle sigh ;
Then will she drop a tender tear ;
And like an infant at the breast,
Who cannot speak its soft distress,
So will the heart of gentle Laura bleed,
And in sad silence treasure up its woe.'

1345. After the departure of Petrarch from Italy, the commotions at Parma increased. Azon de Corregge, who had expressed the highest regard for Petrarch, and had loaded him with benefits, gave him the most pressing invitation to come to Verona, whither he had retired and taken up his abode. William de Pastrengo, and other of his friends, joined in

this entreaty. Petrarch was tenderly attached to Azon, whose disposition and manner of thinking suited him in all respects. And these kind invitations staggered the resolutions he had formed, to which some other motives were added for his quitting Avignon. He had been now fourteen years attached to cardinal Colonna, who had done very little for him, and his fortune was very moderate. This master, who loved Petrarch tenderly, and had always behaved to him like a brother, was become difficult to please, unsatisfied, exacting; at least he appeared so in the eyes of Petrarch, whose free and independent spirit could not brook the least authority. The love of his country was always uppermost in his mind, and perhaps he flattered himself he should be able to promote its peace. To these motives were joined some secret reasons he did not think proper to divulge. And on these accounts he formed the resolution to quit Avignon, Laura, and Vaucluse. He went to disclose his design to cardinal Colonna, who was much displeased at it.

‘What whim has taken you,’ said he, ‘to go and settle in Italy? You are inured to this country; you have passed your youth in it; you are known, loved, and esteemed; you have

many ties here ; why should you think of leaving it ?

‘ My master,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ new times, new cares ! This country is become odious to me. The land produces nothing but aconite. It is desolated by hail and the northern winds, and its waters are corrupted with lead. I am displeased with every thing here, even with the air I breathe. I came poor, and I leave it still poorer. There is a pride or arrogance in this court to which I cannot submit. Even you, who was so good, so gentle, so easy to live with formerly, permit me to say it, you are become restless, difficult, unsociable, and there is no living with you. When we are young, we can bear these things ; but I feel that my humour changes with my years, and that I cannot support this life. I know nothing more ridiculous or melancholy than to grow old in slavery. Permit me to die free, and continue to indulge me with your favour.’

‘ Ungrateful !’ said the cardinal with vivacity, ‘ and is it thus you acknowledge the goodness you speak of ? If I have not done for you all I wished, I have loved you sincerely, and set aside every distinction that birth had created between us.’

‘ Love is repaid by love,’ replied Petrarch.

‘ I have loved you ever since I had the honour of knowing you, and I shall never cease to love you. Here then we are equal.’

‘ But,’ replied the cardinal, ‘ what obliges you to determine with so much precipitation? All that you say of Avignon, have not you known it long? or is it a discovery that you have just made?’

‘ I confess,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ that I have known it long. But I have been detained by habit, by my attachment for you, and my love for Laura. Every thing alters with time. My hair, which is become grey, warns me to change my manner of thinking, and my life. Love suits not with one of my age. My friend Azon has given me a higher relish for the beauties of Italy, our country. The air is purer, the water clearer, the flowers more beautiful. The roses have a finer perfume; the fruits and herbs a finer taste. It is time I should go there to enjoy my liberty, and take possession of my father’s sepulchre; there is not a moment to lose. I ask your permission to depart.’

‘ Go!’ said the cardinal with indignation. ‘ You are an inconstant. You will be soon weary of the life you are going to lead; you will regret that you have left, and I prophesy

you will wish to return to it. I formed your youth; you have learned all that you know in my house. It is very disagreeable to me that another should reap the advantage. I am like the labourer who beholds a stranger gather the fruit of his pains; like the merchant who seeks from afar those merchandises he is deprived of enjoying. I do not hide from you my grief for your loss; but know I can make a shift to live without you. I foresee you will be always poor.'

The representations of the cardinal, and the solicitations of his friends, could not alter the resolution of Petrarch. He went to take leave of Laura. As she was ignorant of the motive of his visit, she received him with a smiling face: but when he had explained himself, and she found he was to leave Avignon, she changed colour, cast her eyes to the ground, and kept silence. 'There was something so touching in her manner,' says Petrarch, 'no words could describe it. It seemed to say, "Alas! you are going Petrarch! Ah! who will rob me of my faithful friend?"'

When Petrarch had bid adieu to Laura, and his two dearest friends in Avignon, the cardinal and Socrates, he set out by land and went across Piedmont to Parma. He staid

there only a few days to settle his affairs, the city being still in commotion, and then embarked upon the Po to go to Verona, where he was impatiently expected.

The son of Petrarch, whom he had brought up secretly at Avignon, was now eight years old. Petrarch was determined to entrust his education with Renaud de Villefranche, who was esteemed an excellent master. This no doubt was one of Petrarch's secret motives for removing to Italy. He had not been long there before he repented, and, as cardinal Colonna had foretold, wished himself at Avignon again. In leaving Laura he had left the half of himself; and the delightful hills and charming valleys she frequented were ever present to his mind. Petrarch was informed by Sen-nucio d'Elbene, that the cardinal was extremely desirous of his return, and that Laura suffered too much. It is certain she was in very great affliction for the loss of Petrarch. His friend Socrates also did all he could to engage him to return to Avignon, and wrote him the following letter :

‘ What demon has taken possession of you ? How could you bring yourself to abandon a country where you spent your youth so agreeably, and with so much success ? How

can you live so far from Laura, whom you tenderly love, and who is so much grieved at your absence? If these things cannot touch you, reflect on the friends you have left here, who languish for want of your society, and ardently beseech you to return. Think of your Socrates, who cannot live without you. The sovereign pontiff asks continually where you are, what you are doing, and why you do not return. What charms can that country have for you which is a prey to the fury of war? Your protector, your friend Azon also is mortal; your fortune depends on his single life: and who knows whether his affection will last? Alas! upon whom can we depend in this world?’

Petrarch made this reply :

‘ You lose your time, my dear Socrates : my resolution is taken. I have cast anchor in the place where I am. The Rhone with all its rapidity, nor even Laura herself, can draw me from hence. To stagger my resolution, you set before me the errors of my youth and my fatal passion. Alas ! I was when young too much engrossed by perishable attractions, too much tormented all my life with a fatal passion. I have left these things behind me, and I am making hasty advances to the end of my

career. The friends I have left, above all yourself, my dear Socrates, would be the strongest motives for my return. But is it not just you should come once to me in Italy, who have been so often for your sake at Avignon? The sovereign pontiff flatters me by the honour of his regard; but shall a thirst after riches and honours make me wander for ever? Is it not better to enjoy with tranquillity the little that I possess? If that friend thinks I want more, the distance of my situation need not prevent his good will. Whose influence is more extensive than his who with one hand opens the gates of heaven, and with the other shuts those of hell? But I am content with my lot, and I desire nothing beyond it. Alas! I know it, Italy is torn to pieces by intestine divisions, and threatened with foreign wars: but where can we live without peril, or find glory in the midst of peace? My friend, it is true, is mortal: but should he die, his glory and his virtues will survive. I can never suspect his affection and fidelity. If probity and candour have any habitation upon earth, they dwell in his heart. We live in the most perfect union, and this union promises to continue. Our time is divided by various employments, and the freedom and cheerfulness of our con-

versations make our days and nights pass insensibly away. When my passion for solitude comes on, I fly the city, and go wandering about the country without care or fear. In the summer, seated in the shade on a green lawn, or reclining on the bank of a river, I defy the heat of the dog-days. The autumn approaches, and I shall repair to the woods followed by the Muses. How much to be preferred is this life to that we lead in a court where envy and ambition reign ! I tread with delight upon the dust of Italy. Its air appears more pure and serene, and my eyes contemplate with joy the stars which shine over it.

‘ When death shall terminate my labours, it will be a great consolation for me to repose myself in the arms of this tender friend, who will close my eyes, and deposit my remains in its mother earth. And when time, which nothing can resist, shall have mouldered away my tomb, the air of this beloved country shall gently agitate the ashes it enclosed.’

One should have supposed Petrarch well resolved, from this letter, to take up his future abode in Italy ; yet such was the irresolution of his character, that soon after this he returned to Avignon. Some great business, he said, occasioned him to depart with precipitation. This

business was doubtless his love of Laura, and that inquietude of mind which attended him every where.

He set out from Verona about the end of November 1345. The troubles of Lombardy obliged him to take his route through Switzerland. William de Pastrengo would accompany him. They slept at Peschiera, a little town on the lake of Garda, the prettiest situation one can behold. They passed the greatest part of the night in conversation. The next morning, when they arrived at the confines of Brescia and the Veronese, where they were to separate, Petrarch in a fit of grief fell upon the neck of his friend, and with a flood of tears said to him, 'Dear friend, it is with extreme concern I leave you to return into a foreign land. Perhaps I shall never see you again, but I shall love you while my life remains. Neither time nor distance can ever efface these feelings, which are deeply engraved on my heart. Take care of yourself, and never forget your Petrarch.' William de Pastrengo was in too much distress to be capable either of speech or motion: he held his friend in his arms, and it was not without difficulty they were separated. This account is in a letter of William de Pastrengo, in which, after expressing his un-

easiness for a journey undertaken in so inclement a season, across mountains buffeted by the winds and covered with snow, he speaks with pleasure of his life at Avignon.

‘ You have passed the Alps,’ says he to him. ‘ I have no longer any uneasiness about that ; from hence I see you paying homage to our lords the cardinals : you make way for the first, you bow to a second, a third gives you his hand, and you are embraced by a fourth. You pay to each of them the most profound obedience. I see you performing duty at your church of Saint Agneol, and from thence returning through the Elysian fields. You attach yourself to your Colonna, cultivate your laurel, and rejoice under the shadow of your Delphic crown. I felicitate your happiness ; it gives me less envy than pleasure : adieu, my dear Petrarch.’

Petrarch went on horseback from Lyons to Avignon along the banks of the Rhone. So impatient for the sight of Laura, he wished to follow the current of that rapid stream, which in the lofty mountains takes its source, and runs to pay its tribute to the ocean.

‘ Nor sleep nor hunger stops thy happy course ; while I, though love attracts, must linger far behind. If thou shouldst pass a beau-

teous vale, and feel the air more calm and pure, suspend thy course; for there sometimes the object I adore graces thy banks. Perhaps (shall I indulge the flattering thought?) she waits me there, and chides my long delay. Be thou my messenger of love: salute my fair one, and announce my presence.'

Nothing could be more flattering to Petrarch's self-love than the reception given him on his return. He was received by the pope and all the court with joy, and the highest marks of favour. The place of apostolic secretary was vacant at that time. It was a post of great honour, and led to an intimate connection and confidence with the pope. It was laborious; but, to compensate for that, the revenue was very considerable. Clement, who loved Petrarch, and who wished to fix him in his court, offered him this place; his friends also entreated him to accept of it, but nothing could prevail upon him; he was constant and unshaken, always answering that he would be free, and that he hated even golden chains. The same motive had engaged Horace to refuse the place of secretary to Augustus. Upon his refusal, it was given to a Neapolitan named Francis. Petrarch knew and had corresponded with him. 'He is a good man,' says he, 'and

my friend, as he says ; but illiterate, and without reputation.'

The melancholy event that happened at this time at Naples affected Petrarch extremely. We have seen the dreadful commotions in that court. Prince Andrew had never yet been crowned in that kingdom, though acknowledged king in some foreign courts. The disgust and contempt of queen Joan toward him increased every day ; she could not support those rough and vulgar manners which his unpolished education had given him, and which were so contrary to the gallantry and magnificence which reigned at Naples. Fond of her cousin, the prince of Tarentum, and governed by the Catanese and her cabal, she would never allow her husband the smallest share in the government, or express the least attachment towards him, and, it was thought, hated him for his weakness of constitution. In the midst of these dissensions, however, she proved with child : this event, and the solicitations of the Hungarians, above all the monk Robert, awakened Andrew from his lethargy, and determined him on revenge. The pope, long solicited by the Hungarian party, could no longer defer this coronation, and he fixed a day for it, on the condition that prince An-



Kirk del.

Bulley sculp.

drew should claim no right to the kingdom, which at his death was to succeed according to the will of king Robert. Every thing was settled, when the Catanese and her cabal, seeing no other means to prevent the triumph of their enemies, conspired against the life of prince Andrew. To render the execution of this plot more easy, they engaged the court to go and pass the month of September at Aveisa, a little town between Naples and Capua, very delightfully situated.

On the eighteenth of this month, at night, Andrew, almost entirely undressed and stepping into the queen's bed, was summoned as for affairs of great consequence, and was told a courier was arrived from Naples in haste with dispatches for him. Scarcely was the prince got out of the chamber to go through the adjoining gallery, when the conspirators, after the door of the queen's apartment was shut, fell upon him with fury. One of them muffled him with gloves to smother his cries; others threw a cord with a running knot round his neck, and hung him by it upon a balcony which looked into the garden; and some who were in the garden pulled him with so much force by the feet, that the blood streamed out of his nose and eyes. In fine, having exercised all

forts of cruelty and abuse on his body, they let him fall into the garden, where they were going to bury him, when a Hungarian woman, nurse to the prince, put them to flight by the violence of her cries.

Queen Joan was suspected of being concerned in this shocking assassination. Her antipathy to her husband, her love for Lewis prince of Tarentum, her union with the conspirators, who were either her lovers or her domestics, were strong suspicions, which she confirmed by marrying the prince she loved before the time of mourning for her husband was expired, and by her negligence in attempting to discover the accomplices in his murder. Some historians, however, justify her from having any hand in this black crime, and she was unanimously cleared from it by the court of Rome: also Petrarch and his friend Boccace did not believe her culpable. It is to be wished a young queen to whom Petrarch was attached, and who was a descendant of the great king Robert, could be justified; but it is hardly to be doubted that she knew of the plot which was executed at the very door of her chamber, by her lovers, her confidants, and her servants; and to know and not prevent it, certainly made her partaker of the crime. It is not however surprising she

should be acquitted, for she was only eighteen years of age, and extremely beautiful.

The bishop of Cavaillon was almost a witness of this catastrophe. He had been made a cardinal by Clement since his residence at Naples. In indignation for so horrible an outrage, and disgusted with every thing in this debauched court, which he had not authority enough to remedy, he requested his dismissal, and embarked in a galley the 23d of December to return to Avignon. The next day, which was Christmas eve, a violent tempest cast him on the coast of Herculano, where they landed with difficulty. At midnight there came a courier from the queen, desiring him to come back to Naples to baptize the child she had just brought into the world. The pope, whom she had requested to stand godfather, had left to her choice the person that should represent him on this occasion, and she gave the preference to the bishop of Cavaillon. This prelate, though fatigued by the tempest, set out immediately for Naples, and as soon as the ceremony was over returned to his ship, which sailed immediately. The queen, having no hopes of ever seeing him again, named for her chancellor, in his place, the bishop of Montcassin, sent by the pope with the bishop of Padua to

take care of the little child, and preside over its education. The bishop of Cavaillon suffered in his second navigation a more dreadful tempest than in the former, from which he was miraculously delivered by the intercession of St. Magdelane, which he assures us of himself in a life he wrote of that saint; and which he dedicated to the archbishop of Lyons, who had a great zeal for her, and founded a chapel to her honour in that metropolis. This life is in the library of St. Victor at Paris. The bishop, thus delivered from the peril with which he was threatened, arrived safely at Avignon in January 1346. What a joy for Petrarch again to see so dear a friend! He wished to have a particular account of the events at Naples from so good a judge: writing some time after on this subject, to Barbatus of Sulmone, he says:

‘ I foresaw that some dreadful calamities threatened this unhappy kingdom; but I own I did not imagine that a young and innocent prince would be the first victim sacrificed to barbarity. I recollect no action like this in the tragedies of old: but our age, fruitful in crimes, produces scenes of horror unknown to the ancients, and which will prove the astonishment of posterity. O unhappy Aveise! the com-

mon rights of humanity have been violated within thy walls, and thy subjects turned from their sacred allegiance to their king. How could a prince of such hopes, the most innocent of men, how could he deserve such cruel treatment? Had he died by the sword, or by poison (the common fate of kings), it would have been less affecting; but he was strangled like a thief, and torn to pieces by the fury of wild beasts. I forbear to mention the outrages on his body: why may I not by silence conceal all such horrors as these from posterity?

We will now return to a more agreeable subject. From the situation of Laura, when Petrarch went to take leave of her, we may imagine the joy she felt at the sight of that faithful friend, who, she feared, was gone from her for ever. She did not, however, express outwardly all that passed in her soul, but she mixed nothing that was severe in her behaviour to him. Laura had this year some deep subject of grief. Petrarch does not say what, but it is probable it was the death of Ermeffenda her mother. She was penetrated with the most lively sorrow. It appears that Petrarch had now free access to her house, and that he went to console her on this occasion. 'I went,' says he, 'to express my tender interest in Lau-

ra's grief. Love, who was my guide, has engraved for ever on my heart her looks and expressions.

‘ Her sighs would have stopped a river's course, and calmed the rage of Jupiter. Tears stood in her eyes; those eyes radiant as the sun. She joined patience with sorrow, and the divine harmony of virtue with every burst of woe. Were there ever, said Love, so many charms, united with such sentiment and truth?’

A very celebrated author says, Grief never appeared so lovely and divine as in this picture of Laura drawn by the pen of Petrarch.

This year, 1346, Petrarch passed almost wholly at Avignon, and was witness to a violent quarrel between two of the principal cardinals about the election of an emperor; cardinal Taillerand and cardinal de Commenges. They disputed the matter in full council, each supported by the cardinals, who were also divided into two parties. Taillerand and his side insisted that Charles of Luxemburg should be emperor, which the Gascon cardinals opposed. Petrarch says these two cardinals resembled two bulls grazing in the pastures of St. Peter, who threaten each other with their horns, and make the forests resound with their

bellowings. In the heat of their dispute they exclaimed in the most injurious manner, and without any regard to the presence of the pope. The cardinal de Commenges reproached the cardinal de Taillerand with having imbrued his hands in the blood of king Andrew. Provoked beyond measure at such a reproach, the cardinal de Taillerand rose from his seat to strike the cardinal de Commenges, who was got up with the same design on his part; and they would certainly have fought, if the pope and their brethren had not separated them. This indecent behaviour caused a great cabal in the court of the pope; the courtiers and servants of both parties went always armed, their palaces were barricaded, and, if they had not been brought to a reconciliation at last, in all probability much blood would have been shed. ‘This comes,’ says Villani, a historian of that time, ‘from the fault of those popes who admit into the sacred college such proud and powerful lords. This is the example they give us poor laity, and thus they imitate the humility of the apostles, whose representatives they are.’

Among the feasts that the pope gave this year to honour the presence of the king of Bohemia, and Charles prince of Moravia, his

son, who was designed by his father for the empire, and came to concert the measures with the pope for his election, the city of Avignon gave a magnificent ball in a hall finely illuminated, at which were collected all the beauties of that city and of Provence. Charles, who was a gallant prince, having heard much of Laura, whom her beauty, and the love of Petrarch, had rendered so celebrated, sought her every where in this assembly, and having discovered her in the crowd, he passed by all the ladies whose age or rank gave them the right of superior homage, and when he was near her, he cast down his eyes and bowed his head after the French fashion. Every body was pleased with so great a mark of distinction given to Laura, to whom it was so justly due. This gave Petrarch a high idea of this prince's discernment, and a sympathy for him, which caused him afterwards to take a singular interest in his fame and happiness.

Petrarch went according to custom to keep his Lent at Vacluse. The bishop of Cavailon, desirous to enjoy with him the delights of solitude, went for fifteen days to the castle I have mentioned, built on the top of the rock, which seemed a fitter habitation for birds than for men. From what they had seen at Avig-

non and Naples, they were both disgusted with great cities, and the intrigues and cabals of courts; and returned to a country life with double relish, the charms of which they delighted to dwell upon and describe in their general conversations.

Philip had so much pleasure in all Petrarch's works, that one day, when he went to see him at Vaucuse, and finding him in his library, he asked him for something to read. Petrarch presented to him the works of Cicero and of Plato. 'Those are not the things I want,' said the bishop bowing his head, 'give me something of your own.'

Soon after this Petrarch sent to cardinal Colonna the account of his war with the Naiads, written in Latin verse.

'You have heard me speak,' says Petrarch, 'of my war with the Naiads. The contest is about our boundaries; and the merits of the contest may be easily understood. Near the source of the Sorgia there are some huge rocks, which rise aloft on each side, and, projecting into the air, receive the winds and the clouds. The streams run at the feet of these rocks, and form the kingdom of the Naiads.

'The Sorgia issues from a cavern, and rolls her fresh and glassy waves over a variegated

bed of pebbles, which resemble emeralds. I am possessed of a little rocky district in the midst of these waves; and here it is that I have endeavoured to make an establishment for the Muses, who are driven almost from every part of the world. Hence this formidable war. The Naiads take it very ill that I introduce foreigners into their dominions, and that I prefer nine old maids to a thousand young virgins.

‘ By levelling the rocks, and with much labour, I had formed a little territory which began to be covered with verdure. When lo! a troop of enraged Naiads rushed with fury from the rocks, and ravaged my infant settlement! Alarmed with this sudden eruption, I instantly mounted the rocks, to observe the havoc which was made. As soon as the storm was over, I came down, much ashamed to have been thus vanquished, and immediately re-established my little state. Scarce, however, had the sun made his circuit round the world, when the Naiads returned again to the charge, carried every thing before them, and made deep lodgments in the hollows of my rocks.

‘ Filled with resentment, I resumed my operations, determined to accomplish my design. But I was obliged soon after to go into

other countries, and was under the necessity of abandoning the enterprize. I had the good fortune, however, to restore the Muses to the Roman state, where they were become in a great measure strangers, and fixed them in the capitol. Six years had elapsed, during which time I had often crossed the sea, and had passed and repassed the Alps. At length I returned to the seat of war, and found not the least remains of my labours. The enemy had taken advantage of my absence, and had again ravaged my little kingdom. Nay, they had even established a colony of fish, which I observed swimming about much at their ease.

‘ Roused with indignation, I again take arms. I enlist under my banner the shepherd, the farmer, and the fisherman. The sun likewise, the moon, and the dog-star, appear as my auxiliaries. We attack the rocks with iron, and rend away prodigious masses. We open the bowels of the earth, and tear out her bones. In fine, the Naiads are a second time driven from the territory, and the Muses are once more established.

‘ The Naiads, as they roll their waves along my shores, see with regret their own defeat, and my triumph. At present they utter only some vain murmurs and ineffectual threats;

but I foresee their intentions, and am well aware of their wiles. They are waiting till Aquarius shall pour out his streams, and till the mountains shall be covered with snow and ice; and then they expect that the cavern will send forth her swelling billows to their aid. But I am guarded on every side. Some immense rocks, which have with difficulty been ranged about my territory, are a sufficient barrier against their utmost efforts. And I am not dismayed, though I should be attacked by all the waters of the Po and the Araxes. The Muses are now securely fixed on their new Parnassus; you see the mountain with the double summit, the springs of Hippocrene, the woods of the poets, &c. &c.

‘ If you prefer the repose of the country to the bustle of the town, come and enjoy it here. Be not frightened with the homeliness of my fare, or the hardness of my beds. Even kings themselves are sometimes cloyed with their luxuries, and seek out a plainer diet: the variety delights, and they return to their former pleasures with more exquisite relish. But if you think otherwise, bring with you the richest dainties, and the viands of Vesuvius; your vessels of silver, and every thing which can court the sense. Leave the rest to me,

You shall have a bed upon the green turf, under the shade of the trees; a concert of nightingales; figs, raisins, and water fresh drawn from the coolest springs. In one word, you shall have every thing which can be supplied by the hand of nature, the only source of true pleasure.'

The war with the Naiads was finally terminated the following year; and Petrarch gives the cardinal an account of this accommodation in another Latin epistle.

'It is now ten years since this war commenced. The siege of Troy, and the conquest of Gaul by our forefathers, were not of longer duration. Every effort was ineffectual. The Naiads were victorious. I threw down my arms, and my territory was subdued. I raised no more banks, no more rocks, to check their progress; henceforward they moved at liberty; and, like a cautious pilot, I adapted my sails to the course of the wind,

'It was a great pleasure to me to drive the Naiads from their empire; but then the war was to be renewed every year. The summer was favourable to my projects, but the winter restored again to the enemy all my conquests. Might I be allowed to draw a parallel between the labours of a poet and those of the greatest

princes, I should compare my enterprize to that of Xerxes, who threw a bridge over the Hellespont; to that of Cæsar, who attempted to bind with chains the horns of Brundisium; or to that of Caligula, who exhibited on the sea of Baiæ the third example of a mad and unbounded pride.

‘ My plan is now changed. I find it is impossible to conquer nature, or subdue the elements. I have given therefore a free course to the Naiads, and have placed the Muses in a little nook towards the bottom of the rocks. They are secured by a kind of rampart which the Naiads can never overthrow without sapping the foundations of the mountain. The habitation is very small, but it is sufficient; for the Muses have few visitors, and are not at all beloved by the vulgar.’

It appears that cardinal Colonna accepted this invitation of Petrarch’s, and that he passed no year without visiting his hermitage. We will now return again to Laura.

She had a friend who was wise and amiable, and who was in the interests of Petrarch as much as virtue and honour. permitted: she wished him to be loved, but with a pure and tender friendship. When she saw him rejected, and almost in despair, she encouraged him,

and reanimated his spirits; but she restrained him also when he required it. On the other side, she did all she could to engage Laura to treat Petrarch with less rigour. One day, when she represented to him the tender expressions of love in Laura's countenance and behaviour when he deserved them; 'Incredulous!' adds she; 'and can you after all this have any doubt of her affection?' This friend appears in the vision of the death of Laura, where she is described as a soft voice speaking to Petrarch.

The constitution of Laura was very delicate; her frequent confinements in childbed, and some domestic chagrins, had exhausted her so much, that, though still young, her health began to decline, and she drooped apace, which touched Petrarch to the soul. 'Virtue,' says he, 'would disappear with Laura, the world would be another chaos, and no sun would enlighten its dark mansion. O Heaven! grant me to die before Laura, that I may never see so dreadful an event.' Laura had a complaint in her eyes this year which was extremely painful; she was even threatened with the loss of sight.

'My tears,' says Petrarch, 'were dried up; my state peaceful and happy; when a thick cloud threatened with a total eclipse the sun of

my life. Oh Nature, thou wife and tender mother, canst thou have the heart to destroy the finest of thy works ?'

Petrarch went often to see Laura in her confinement : he found her one day cured of her complaint ; and by a sort of sympathy, the cause of which lovers can better explain than physicians, the defluxion passed immediately from the eyes of Laura to those of Petrarch : he looked upon this passage, this communication, as the greatest favour he had received at the hands of love. ' I fixed my eyes on Laura's,' says he, ' and that moment a something inexpressible, like a shooting star, darted from them to mine ; this is a present from love in which I rejoice ; how delightful it is thus to cure the darling object of one's soul !'

Petrarch would have been too happy in so much kindness from Laura, if a little quarrel had not happened between them, which for a time gave him the most sensible concern. One of those meddling envious people, who are found in every place, and who delight in troubling the peace of families with their false and idle tales, and above all aim at dividing those hearts which are united in the bonds of love or friendship, got it reported to Laura, that Petrarch imposed upon her ; that she was not the

real object of his love and of his verses; but that under her borrowed name he hid from the public a passion he had for another lady to whom his poetry was secretly addressed. Laura, too much like her sex in this particular, gave ear to a report so destitute of all probability: she deprived Petrarch of her presence and conversation, and took every precaution to prevent the possibility of his seeing her. He, on his part, watched for her every where, and by these little stratagems he sometimes obtained a sight of her. ‘My joys,’ says he, ‘are like the bright days of winter, of flattering aspect, but short duration.’

This little anecdote, with many others, may serve to remove the doubt some have unjustly entertained of the strength of Laura’s affection for Petrarch, representing her as a coquette pleased only with his praises and admiration. But how different does her character appear to those who study it attentively; and, in particular, how undivided and constant was her love! Sure characteristics of a perfect affection, and directly opposite to the behaviour of those women who are famed for coquetry. I doubt not that her ruined constitution was owing, as to many private chagrins, only hinted at by Petrarch (such as an unkind husband, and

the perceiving in some of her children dispositions that were unpromising), so the decay of her health might arise also from her anxiety in her frequent separations from Petrarch, especially the last, which she had so tenderly lamented, and that attention in all her conduct toward him which will wear out a mind formed with the sensibility of Laura's. And to this we ought to impute her weakness in crediting so absurd a report ; the only weakness, except her love itself, that appears in her character. She was however too reasonable to continue for any time so unjust a quarrel. She was convinced of the innocence of Petrarch, and received him as usual. Our poet, re-established in the good graces of Laura, recovered his lost tranquillity.

It may be recollected that Petrarch was made archdeacon of Parma, and kindly treated by Hugolin de Rossi the bishop. An occasion offering to add a prebend to it, the pope did not let it slip, but gave it to Petrarch. The other canons, who looked upon him with envy, did all they could to embroil him with the bishop. The character of Hugolin was too easily wrought upon ; that softness of manners, and that good-nature which rendered him so amiable in society, occasioned great defects in his public

character. He was apt to believe all that was said to him, and flatterers turned him which way they pleased. The enemies of Petrarch persuaded this bishop that Petrarch was gone to Avignon to calumniate his character, and that he only staid there to gain this end. Petrarch, informed of these false reports, and solicitous to preserve the good opinion of the bishop, wrote him the following letter :

‘ I can hold no longer. Permit me to disburthen my heart to you. Nature has endued you with a sincere, kind, and equitable disposition. I am attached to you ; but you have conceived unjust suspicions of me, which have no foundation. I know not what serpents have breathed their venom around you. Permit me to debate this matter. We are in the month of December, when slaves among the ancients were allowed to say every thing to their masters. There are a set of envious spirits, who delight to separate friends. Let such be put away ; I have no contest with them, I despise them from my soul. I will have you only, my father, for my witness and my judge : if you condemn me, I will appeal from you to your conscience ; that shall absolve me. They tell you I am come to this court to do you a mischief. I seek to hurt any one ?

I! who from my childhood have suffered with patience all the wrongs done to me from those who owed me service? Have I ever returned evil for evil? Have I ever set a snare even for my enemies? Have I attacked the reputation of any one, his property, or his person? Let my life be examined with the strictest severity, nothing of this sort will be found in it. Attacked by those who hated me, I have often contained my anger in my breast, to the hazard of being thought a coward. Sometimes I have lamented and complained: the dove and the lamb do so too. There is not a single person whose reputation is wounded by my tongue. I have only to accuse myself of some letters in which I answer my censurers without naming them. I never in any justification have passed the bounds of decency and humanity. I have rather imitated the moderation of Scipio, who would never revenge any affront he had received from his countrymen. I think with the satirist, that vengeance should be left to women; and when grieved to the bottom of my soul, I trust my cause to God. Having thus treated my enemies with gentleness, am I capable of attacking my friends? A lamb among wolves, shall I become a wolf among lambs? Of what use would it be to me to fly

cities and public affairs, to seek solitude, repose, and silence, if my place was among the wicked?

‘ I now experience the truth of what was told me, that to learn to live well is the most difficult of all arts. The event of our conduct seldom answers the intention. I have in my life passed for a magician and forcerer, because I loved to be alone, and to read Virgil. Apuleius merited this accusation better than myself, which he refuted by his elegant work called the Golden Ass. How difficult is it to save the bark of reputation from the rocks of ignorance! Exercise your genius, pass whole nights in labour, give to the public a good book; if there is any thing in it (as there must be many things) which the ignorant do not understand, they will say immediately you are a forcerer. But this is a trifle. I would rather they should attack my understanding than my heart: I would rather pass for a magician than a knave. But even into this precipice am I fallen which I have always avoided with care. Envy pursues me to my most secret retreats. Persius had reason for this exclamation, How vain are the cries of men, how frivolous their occupations! The only motives which induce men to do evil, to wrong one another, are hatred, wrath, envy,

fear, or hope. I hate you, my father! You have never done me any evil: on the contrary, before I had the honour of filling up the first place after yours in your church, you treated me with an unmerited distinction. As to wrath, that could have no place; our conversations were always peaceful and friendly. As to envy, I take God and my conscience to witness I never envied any man; I wish I could say as much of contempt. Content with my lot, I have more reason to fear the envy of others towards me. My father, if I might speak with so much freedom, I would add, I pity your fate, and that of your brethren who have the weight of a diocese to support. But trouble and perplexity is the lot of all who play a first part on the stage of this world. And lastly, as to hope, would that cause me to injure you? Your fall would never be my rise. And allow me to assure you, I would not exchange my repose for your labours, my poverty for your riches. It is not that I despise your fortune; but if I was offered the same rank, nothing would persuade me to accept of it. I should not speak in this manner, perhaps, if I had not known the sovereign pontiff, and those men who shine around him in the Roman purple. But the connexion I have had with them

has convinced me that their felicity is a shadow without a reality. Pope Adrian IV. says, in his *Philosophical Trifles*, "I know no person more unhappy than the sovereign pontiff. Labour alone, were that his only evil, would destroy him in a short time. His seat is full of thorns, his robe stuck with points, and of an overwhelming weight. His crown and tiara shine, but it is with a fire that will consume him. — I have risen by degrees," adds he, "from the lowest to the highest dignity in this world, and have never found that any of these elevations made the least addition to my happiness. On the contrary, I feel it impossible to bear the load with which I am charged."

'I will add in vanity that, had I emulated your dignity, I might have possessed a more valuable situation than yours; but I have always preferred a modest liberty to a brilliant slavery. If the person who would so highly have honoured me was not still alive, I would not have made this boast: and it should rather appear that my heart was disposed towards you, when I accepted the archdeaconry of your church, after refusing more considerable benefices. What, say my enemies, then, does he absent himself for? What is he doing at court? I will tell you. I languish, I suffer, I lose my time;

the greatest loss we can sustain in this world : but I cannot resist some friends who detain me. It would be easier for me to tell you what I do not do, than the business I am employed in. I hurt no one but myself : instead of injuring you, I would be of service to you if possible. To suspect a man who thinks this is an error : to hate him, will be a cruelty. I conjure you, by all that is most sacred, banish suspicion : it is the bane of friendship. Vouchsafe to receive me among the number of your friends. I have long trusted in this indulgence. If you doubt my fidelity, put it to the proof. If you judge me unworthy of your kindness, cast me off without harshness. You will lose nothing by rejecting me ; but your reputation would suffer, and that would be a great loss to you.'

Petrarch had a friend at Parma, called Luke Christien. He was born at Rome, and possessed a benefice at Placentia. He was attached to the house of Colonna, and was often at the cardinal's. Petrarch had lately resigned to him a canonry of Modena, which the pope had conferred on him, and which, according to the custom of that age, he might have held with his archdeaconry. To this friend he gave his letter for the bishop of Parma, charging him to second it with all that friendship could suggest.

‘ You know better than any one,’ said Petrarch, ‘ what I think of our bishop, when he is not furrounded by flatterers, who are the pest of the great. We shall see what will be his answer to my long letter. Examine him with attention: the pen alone will not pourtray the heart; the air, the gesture, the colour, the voice, the forehead, the foot, the hand, the eyes, the eyebrows, all speak. But to those who are absent this language is lost. Be very observant of these things, and suffer me not to be deceived. I have done all that I could to dissipate unjust suspicions. I have kindled the lamp of truth, if he will open his eyes to behold it. If not, I have discharged my conscience, and shall use no further arguments. Constraint will never produce conviction.’

Some days after this Petrarch went to Vaucluse with his friend Socrates. The bishop of Cavaillon sent a message to them immediately on their arrival, inviting them both to come and see him without any ceremony in the same dress they were in. Petrarch replied by the following billet:

‘ Yesterday we quitted the city of storms to come and take refuge in this port, and taste the sweetness of repose. We have only coarse garments, such as suit the season of the year,

and the place we inhabit. We will come to you in this rustic fashion, since you will have it so. We do not scruple appearing thus in your town; and the desire we have to see you is so strong, as to rise above all other considerations. Of little consequence is our outward appearance before a friend who can read the most secret thoughts of our hearts. If you wish to see us often, you will not refuse the indulgence we ask, that you will always prove your friendship by treating us with the utmost freedom.'

These journeys of Petrarch to Vacluse were short. It appears that his affairs at Avignon detained him. Sometimes he passed only a day to prune his trees, and look round his gardens. He gives a pleasing description of one of these days in a letter to William de Pastrengo:

'My disgust to the city, and love of the country, has brought me to this fountain, which has the virtue of giving wings to the imagination. You recollect that field formerly covered with stones; at present it is become a garden enamelled with flowers. The river Sorgia refreshes it on one side; I have enclosed it with a wall to the south, and high rocks on the other side shade it from the morning sun.

On these rocks the birds make their nests; some deck them with moss, others with the leaves of trees. It is a charming sight to see these tender animals just peeping from their eggs, and soon after with fear and quaking trying their little wings, and seizing with their timid beaks the food that is brought them. When I walk in the meadows on the banks of my river, when I examine the trees I ingrafted myself, and the laurels I have transplanted from foreign countries, the image of my dear William appears to me on every side; the hillock on which we sat, the bank on which we reposed, the ducks and drakes we diverted ourselves with making in the water that was running at our feet. Here we entertained ourselves with recalling the Muses from their long exile, with comparing the Greek and Latin poets; here we gave ourselves up to the delights of unrestrained conversation, and should have forgotten our evening refreshment, had we not been reminded by the shades of night.

‘ In the midst of such agreeable ideas time passes imperceptibly, the day wears; and I found I must depart. I had scarcely got out of the narrow passage which encloses this valley, when the wings of darkness came over me, and I redoubled my steps. Descending along the

side of the river, I perceived a groupe of men and women, who were coming towards me. The French luxury, which has confounded the dress of the sexes, prevented me at first from distinguishing them; but, as they approached nearer, their faces became plain, and the ambiguity disappeared; I discovered ribbands, necklaces of pearls, ornaments on the head, rings, and gowns edged with purple. We saluted each other. What an agreeable surprise, my dear William! I discovered the object of your love, the beauty whom I observed you so enchanted with. What a countenance! What features! With her bow and quiver, I should have taken her for Diana. I see my friend with pleasure in the eyes of this nymph. After saluting me, she took hold of my hand, and we entered into conversation. But first I addressed myself to the company. "May I ask," said I, "without impertinence, what is the intention of your walk?" "We are going," they answered, "to see that fountain so much spoken of." But I was not thus to be deceived. Your beautiful mistress was not ignorant of your situation here; and this journey was a good excuse to seek your image, and retrace your steps. I read this in her face; and all those who know by experience the ready stratagems

of love would have been of the same opinion. Her steps were quick ; she had an ardour, a gaiety, a satisfaction in viewing these places, which could arise from nothing but this passion. I would return with her to the fountain. I thought I was with you, that I saw and heard you. The eyes of your nymph sparkled with that vivid flame, the warmth of which is so delightful to lovers. We conversed about you ; and I should have been there still if night had not separated us.'

1347. Petrarch had not seen his brother since he had taken the habit, which was five years. He went thither in the beginning of February, and was received by them as a messenger from heaven. What was his joy to see that brother whom he so tenderly loved, and whose taste for the world had given him so much anxiety, content with the state he had embraced, and not regretting that he had forsaken ! The Carthusians, who had heard Petrarch spoken of as the finest genius and the most eloquent man of his age, flattered themselves he would give them some discourses suited to their condition. He staid only one day and night with them ; but at his departure he promised to send them a treatise on the happiness of a monastic life : and he kept

his word. The intention of this work was to compare the peace and harmony of their state with the uneasy and turbulent lives led by the people of the world. In his letter he writes thus :

‘ My desires are fulfilled. I have been in paradise, and seen the angels of heaven in the form of men. Happy family of Jesus Christ ! How was I ravished in the contemplation of that sacred hermitage, that pious temple which resounded with celestial psalmody ! In the midst of these transports, in the pleasure of embracing the dear deposit I confided to your care, and in discoursing with him, and with you, time ran so rapidly that I scarcely perceived its progress. I never spent a shorter day or night. I came to seek one brother, and I found a hundred. You did not treat me as a common guest. The activity, the ardour with which you rendered me all sorts of services, the agreeable conversations I had with you in general and particular, made me fear I should interrupt the course of your devout exercises. I felt it was my duty to leave you, but it was with extreme pain I deprived myself of hearing those sacred oracles you deliver. I did propose to have made you a short discourse ; but I was so absorbed, I could not find a moment to think

of it. In my solitude I ruminate over that precious balm which I gathered, like the bee, from the flowers of your holy retreat. I shall write to you the things I ought to have said. I believe myself always with you.'

Petrarch composed this treatise 1347. He passed the Lent of this year at Vaucluse, according to custom. His friend Lelius, who came with him, was obliged to leave him before the end of April; and, not being able to bid him adieu, went away without saying a word. A little event which happened at Thor furnished Petrarch with an occasion to write to this friend soon after his return to Avignon. Thor is a little town, two leagues from Vaucluse. The duke of Ancefunne, a descendant from Laura by the mother's side, is the present lord of Thor. Gerard Amic possessed it at this time: he was a man given up to debauchery; persuaded that every thing upon earth ought to contribute to his pleasures, he looked upon the whole world as his seraglio. A young man, fond of a girl who lived near him, obtained her person under the promise of marriage. The girl, who was very pretty, was so unfortunate as to please this lord, who used every stratagem to seduce her, but in vain. Love to this youth prevailed over vanity and interest.

Gerard, not enduring the pre-eminence given to another, had him accused before his tribunal of violating this maiden, and he was cast into prison. When the girl was interrogated, she denied the violation, and frankly confessed she had consented to all that passed, and only demanded from her lover that he should perform his promise of marrying her: the young man wished nothing so much. ‘Let them take off my irons,’ said he, ‘and I am ready to do what she asks of me.’ They were both free, and of a suitable age and station. This affair, which was very plain, took an unhappy turn, because the rival was also the judge, and determined on revenge. He therefore threatened the young man that he should be hanged for this offence. So great an injustice raised all the neighbourhood of Thor against him. The touching situation of these young persons, who loved one another, and were desirous of being united, interested every body in their behalf. Some friends of Petrarch came to beg him with tears in their eyes to employ his credit in the court of Avignon to save this unfortunate youth, whose life was in such imminent peril. Petrarch sent express to Avignon his faithful fisherman with this letter for Lelius:

‘It happened with us as with Pompey and

Cornelia, who had not the power when they parted to bid one another adieu. Words are, in fact, but the shadows of our thoughts. Of what use are long discourses between friends whose souls are diffused into each other? I have a good work to propose to you, and I hope you will co-operate with me in it.' Petrarch then mentions the fact, and says:

'My friend, both you and I have experienced the distresses of love, and it is but just we should lend our aid to those who suffer from this passion. It is true, the great soul of our master is exempt from these weaknesses; but he is not the less sensible to human misery. Let them not say, that in the country they feel not the flames of love: it is a mistake; that little god extends his empire over all nature: every thing that breathes is subject to his laws. Virgil says, the follies he occasions ought to be pardoned; but he adds, if the gods of hell know how to pardon. I doubt that Bellerophon, who has no humanity, will be as inexorable as these gods themselves. Heated by jealousy, he thirsts after the blood of a rival preferred to himself. Beg our master to write to him to demand the liberty of this unhappy prisoner. The courier who brings you my letter is the young man's friend: he

will tell you his name, and add every minute circumstance. Whatever be the event, you and I have done all that depends on us to succour these unfortunate lovers, whose situation is more affecting than can be expressed.'

Three days after this, the letter from cardinal Colonna to the lord of Thor not being arrived, Petrarch was obliged to send the same courier again to Avignon. The report was spread abroad that the young man was to be condemned and executed immediately, and that his irritated judge shut his ears against every solicitation. Petrarch was again besought to write to Lelius; and with his letter he sent him some virgin oil from Vacluse (so they call the oil which runs from the olive without being pressed); and he adds, 'I should think that Minerva, who discovered the olive tree, had quitted Athens for Vacluse, if in my Africa I had not placed her at Lerici and Porto Venere.' Petrarch does not tell us what was the event of this affair. It marks the despotism of the lords of provinces, and the humanity and public spirit of Petrarch, who could not bear tyrants of any sort, either great or small, or any thing that tended to encroach on the liberty of human nature. This manner of thinking caused him however to favour Rienzi's

usurpation, which he repented of afterwards, and for which he had been bitterly reproached. This extraordinary affair was as follows :

Nicholas de Rienzi, whom the reader will recollect on an embassy to Rome, had long conceived the project of drawing the Roman people out of their lethargy, and the slavery they were held in. His conversations with Petrarch, who was persuaded Rome ought to govern the world, no doubt confirmed him in this astonishing enterprize. He discharged his office of apostolic notary, given him by the pope, with great appearance of honour, justice, and disinterestedness ; and went about declaiming every where against the injustice of the great. After he had thus prepared the minds of the people for a revolution, he caused little emblematical pictures to be stuck up every where, which expressed the misery of the Romans in their present state, compared with their past grandeur and felicity. These emblems he explained, and took the occasion to harangue the assembly with sighs, groans, tears, and expressions of indignation. He then assembled in secret those who appeared best prepared for his confidence. Stephen Colonna, who would never have suffered such meetings, was absent. When he had worked up

the Romans to the disposition he wished, he assured them of sufficient means to re-establish the good state of Rome ; which was a phrase of raillery with its present great men. ‘ In the funds of the apostolic chamber,’ adds he, ‘ I have all that is necessary for this enterprize. But God forbid I should touch it without the will of the sovereign pontiff.’ This was a cunning turn to rest his conduct on the pleasure of the pope : and though the Romans were much disgusted with the holy father for enriching the city of Avignon with their spoils, they did not choose openly to oppose him, and were pleased with Rienzi, who had found a pretext to retain this money at Rome without offending the pope.

They unanimously therefore proclaimed Rienzi their chief, and devoted themselves to his will : he made them sign an oath, to which he first put his own name, to procure the good state of Rome.

In May 1347 he had it cried in the streets, by sound of trumpet, that each citizen should come without arms the next night to the church of the castle of St. Angelo, at the ringing of the great bell. It was inconceivable how a man without name, support, or dignity, should think of convoking an assembly of con-

spirators by the sound of trumpet. It succeeded however, and the Roman people ran in crowds to the church at the time appointed, where Rienzi had thirty masses for the Holy Spirit, repeated almost together, at which he himself assisted from midnight till nine in the morning, which was the day of Pentecost, when he chose that it might be believed he was inspired by the Holy Ghost. He then went out of the church with his head bare, but armed, and a hundred men to escort him armed likewise. The people followed him in crowds, without any knowledge of what he was going about; he walked at the side of Raimond bishop of Orviette, the pope's vicar. He was a good man, a great canonist, but little suited to represent the sovereign pontiff, as his assisting on this occasion is a proof, which he ought with all his power to have opposed. In the midst of this train, who redoubled their acclamations, Rienzi marched straight to the capitol, and mounted the tribunal, from whence he harangued the people, and proposed all the regulations they wished for; freedom from oppression, peace, plenty: which were to be accomplished at the pope's expence, and on pretence of serving him. The presence of his vicar appeared to justify him in all, and to give

a sanction to his authority. Rienzi was declared by the people, as Vespasian was by the senate, sovereign of Rome with unbounded authority. Rienzi, at the summit of his wishes, consented to accept their offer only on two conditions: the first, that they should give him the pope's vicar for colleague: the second, that the pope should approve what they had done. The good bishop supported a very ridiculous part in this scene: it is not known whether he approved it, or found it of no use to oppose his single authority. Rienzi, after having dismissed the people, took possession of the palace, from whence he drove out the senators, and dictated his laws from the capitol.

There never was an example of a revolution so quick, so tranquil, and so singular, in all its circumstances. The great lords of Rome had regarded Rienzi as a buffoon, who diverted the people by his wit; and even the Colonnas invited him to their palace for their amusement, and looked upon him as a fool. What was the astonishment of old Stephen Colonna when he learned what had passed! He came to Rome, and expressed his discontent. Rienzi, by a writing, ordered him to leave Rome directly. Stephen took the writing and tore it,

saying, 'I will have that fool thrown from the windows of the capitol.' But, perceiving that the commotion was general, and they were going to surround his palace, he mounted his horse, and retired to Palestine, where his family resided. He had scarcely time to stop at St. Laurent to eat a morsel of bread.

Rienzi in the mean while published the strictest orders for the punishment of all the public malefactors, and all known villains; and this necessary severity gained him the hearts of the people, to which he joined an exact justice in the regulation of public affairs. The noise of this transaction soon spread over Europe. The court of Avignon was seized with a panic terror, but when they read the letters sent by Rienzi and the bishop of Orvietti, whom they had obliged to write in concert with him, they were a little reassured. These letters breathed nothing but zeal for the church, disinterestedness, and the deliverance of Rome from misery and oppression; and concluded by requesting the confirmation of an authority he had only accepted at the will of his holiness, and which he meant to exercise in conjunction with his vicar. The court of the pope, though extremely shocked at this enterprise, thought it

best to dissemble and appear to approve what they could not prevent.

The pope confirmed Rienzi with the bishop in their rights, exhorting them to merit the continuance of his protection and regard. Rienzi then required the people to invest him with an authority that should render him independent of any but themselves; under the title of tribune, and to associate the pope's vicar with him: the people assented to this, and proclaimed both of them with the greatest acclamations. Rienzi, informed by his spies that the nobles he had banished to their castles held secret assemblies, cited them to his tribunal, and they were forced to obey. Stephen Colonna the younger was the first, and appeared extremely moved; he obliged him and the other lords to an oath, that they would never take up arms against him or the Roman people. After this he determined to make an example of terror of a young nobleman, who was immersed in vice, and detested for his acts of violence. He was the nephew of two cardinals, and had been himself a senator. Rienzi had him taken by force out of his palace; they tore him from the arms of a young widow to whom he was just married, and dragged him

to the capitol, where he was judged, condemned, and executed the same day, almost under the eyes of his wife. From her windows she could see the body of her husband hanging at the post, where he remained two days. He cut off the head of another lord, who had done something against his orders; and then dragged to prison in open day Peter Agapit Colonna, who had been senator that year. These examples rendered the nobles more circumspect and complying. After these transactions Rienzi reformed all the public abuses; the success of his endeavours was incredible: the highways became sure; the people resumed the cultivation of the lands; pilgrims came and went in safety; commerce revived, and even the markets and shops became schools of sincerity and truth. A Bolognese returning from Babylon, where he had been slave of the sultan, said, that this prince having heard there had appeared an extraordinary man at Rome who did justice and protected the people, cried out in disorder, 'that Mahomet and Elias were come to the succour of Jerusalem.' Rienzi now sent couriers to all the states of Italy; his view was to unite and form them into one great republic under Rome. Many of them entered into his views, and, what was more

flattering, the king of Hungary sent a solemn embassy to him to decide the affair of his brother Andrew's death. It was solemnly pleaded before Rienzi, who was seated on his throne, having his crown on his head, and in his hand a silver apple with a cross; but he deferred giving judgment on a matter which must have armed against him one of the powers in dispute. Philip of Valois, king of France, was almost the only power who was not dazzled by the sudden elevation of the tribune, and who formed a just idea of his character.

The letters of Petrarch to Rienzi prove their union, and Petrarch's detestation of the insupportable tyranny exercised by the nobility over the people. Most of these nobles were strangers who came from the borders of the Rhine, the Rhone, from Spoletta, &c. to settle at Rome, and had taken from those who had a right to them the public offices and honours. Their palaces in that city, and their castles in the country, were so many fortresses, where they shut themselves up, and from whence they only made excursions to commit all sorts of violence and robbery; and Rienzi acted at first in the best manner, and took the wisest methods to destroy their tyranny.

An enterprise so hardy as Rienzi's could not

be executed without envy, and drawing a great number of enemies upon its author: he appeared often in a magnificent chapel, surrounded with iron bars, which he had built in the capitol, where divine service was celebrated with all imaginable pomp, being seated on a sort of throne, the barons of Rome standing before him with their arms crossed upon their breasts, and their cowls let down on their backs; they were often seen in this humiliating situation. In the progress of these memoirs we shall find the dreadful consequences of this transaction of Rienzi's. We shall here only subjoin Petrarch's first letter to him, and Rienzi's answer.

After having exhorted the Romans to unite against the tyrants who oppressed them, and pillaged from the public treasure to enrich themselves, and to concur with their tribune in the re-establishment of the republic, Petrarch thus addresses himself to Rienzi:

‘ Intrepid man! who dost alone support the heavy weight of the republic, watch with more care over its bad citizens than over its declared enemies. Modern Brutus! let the example of the ancient be ever before you. He was a consul: you are a tribune. Let history be consulted, and it will be seen that the consuls

have sometimes done atrocious things against the people. The tribunes, on the contrary, have always been their most zealous defenders. If the first consul sacrificed his own children to the liberty of his country, what ought we not to expect from a tribune? Be advised by me, and yield nothing to friendship or to blood, but hold as your worst enemy whoever is the enemy of the public freedom. Illustrious man! the Romans and their posterity will owe to you the happiness of living and of dying free!

‘I had two requests to make you. The first of them I learn you have already fulfilled, and that you undertake nothing without first strengthening your soul in receiving the body of the Lord with the requisite dispositions of mind. I cannot enough commend this devout practice, which I meant to propose to you. My second desire was, that you should imitate Augustus, who employed that small portion of time which he could gain from his public occupations in reading or hearing the history of those great men whose characters might serve as models for himself.

‘Why can I not unite with you to procure so great a good? But my situation will not permit me: by my pen alone can I discharge

my duty as a citizen. If you persevere as you have begun, you will hear me sing your praise in a higher key, and spread your fame throughout the world. You have laid excellent foundations; justice, truth, peace, and liberty. In your letters are seen the greatness of your courage, and the dignity of the Roman people, without invading the respect due to the sovereign pontiff. Your expressions, though firm, are modest; they have nothing in them either of a slavish fear, or a foolish presumption; and it is doubtful whether your actions or style are most to be admired. They say you speak like Cicero, while you act like Brutus. You ought to consider yourself as a man placed on an eminence, from whence he is exposed not only to the discourses and criticisms of men who now exist, but of all those who shall succeed them. If I am not deceived, you will be always spoken of, but in a very different manner, according to the variety of human opinion. But I am persuaded nothing can make you abandon so glorious a cause. The edifice that you raise will be solid, and those who attempt to overthrow it will be overthrown themselves. I approve your method of preserving minutes of your letters, that you may avoid all contradiction in what you are saying and what you

have said. Write as if all the world were to read.

‘Adieu! deliverer of Rome.’

Rienzi sent this answer to Petrarch:

‘Nicholas, severe and clement, tribune of liberty, peace, and justice, and the illustrious deliverer of the sacred republic of Rome, to the noble and virtuous signior Francis Petrarch, worthily crowned poet, and our very dear fellow-citizen, health, honour, and perfect joy.

‘Your amiable letter, full of rhetorical flowers and just reasoning, has enchanted all those who have read or heard it. Your exhortations, founded on solid motives and the examples of the greatest men of antiquity, delight and animate to virtue. We know you too well not to render justice to your prudence and goodness, or to doubt the sincerity of your sentiments for us and for the city. We see clearly in your letter your attachment, and your zeal for the good state of Rome. We love you, and so do all the Romans; and we wish we were able to contribute to your advancement and happiness. Would to God you were at Rome; your presence would decorate that city, as a precious stone adorns the ring of gold in which it is set. The soul of this peo-

ple is liberty, the sweetness of which they begin to taste.

‘ Things will naturally return to their former state. This city, after having suffered for several ages the most cruel bondage, beholds, praise be to God, its chains at present broken. There is no peril, no death to which the Romans would not expose themselves, to preserve the precious good in which they now rejoice. Be persuaded that you will find us always ready to do every thing that can contribute to your satisfaction.

‘ Given in the capitol where justice reigns, and where we live with uprightness of heart, the 28th of July, the first year of the deliverance of the republic.’

Rienzi after this wrote to the pope, that all he did was by the command of God, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. ‘ It would have been impossible for me,’ says he, ‘ to have reduced to submission the power of the greatest of tyrants, of princes, in so short a time, or even to have conceived the idea of so noble a work, but from a divine operation.’

Rienzi then informed the pope, that he had raised three hundred thousand florins in a tax on salt, which paid nothing before. This news not have displeased a court where lux-

ury and magnificence rendered money so necessary, had not the tribune applied this augmentation of the revenue to supply the troops whom he held in pay for the maintenance of his own power, under the specious pretext of the public safety. In this letter he makes the strongest protestations of respect, attachment, and obedience, to the pope, whom he acknowledges for his sovereign: whenever he speaks of the city of Rome, or the Roman people, he says always, 'your city, your people.' It is to this letter Petrarch alludes when he praises the style and sentiments of Rienzi, who covered, under this artful veil of submission, his usurpation of the pope's authority.

Petrarch passed the month of September at Avignon. The ninth of that month he obtained letters of legitimation for his son John, who was about ten years of age. He is called in these letters a scholar of Florence, and qualified by them to possess any benefice without the necessity of mentioning this blot on his birth, or the dispensation obtained from the pope. We see by these letters that the mother of John was not a married woman, which justifies Petrarch from adultery.

Nothing was now talked of at Avignon but the follies of Rienzi, with his increase of power

and success : he became vain and insolent ; his head was not strong enough to bear so quick a rise from the moderate to the most elevated fortune : he was blinded by power and intoxicated with wealth, and passed all at once from the greatest simplicity to an excess of magnificence and ostentation little suited to his former declarations, and the part he had undertaken to support : he affected the airs of a sovereign, an extreme luxury in his clothes and in his furniture, and his table was covered with dainties sought from distant climates, and the most rare and exquisite wines. His wife, who was young and handsome, never appeared in the streets without the most splendid train ; a chosen band of youth formed her guard, ladies of the first quality attended her, and young damsels walked before her, fanning off the flies and cooling the air. All the relations of Rienzi forgot their original, and imitated this parade. His uncle, who was brought up a barber, never walked abroad without a cavalcade of the principal citizens. To complete all, Rienzi took it into his head he would be made a knight, without reflecting that this affected title of nobility clashed with his oath as tribune ; and he gave orders that the pomp of this ceremony should equal the triumphs of an-

cient Rome. No spectacle was ever more sumptuous: it drew to Rome an incredible multitude of spectators, who confessed nothing equal to it had ever been seen; and above all they admired the order that reigned through the whole. It was a custom for those who would be made knights to bathe themselves the preceding evening. Rienzi, who would do every thing in a new manner, took it into his head to bathe himself in a bason of porphyry in the church of St. John de Lateran, in which it was thought the emperor Constantine bathed after being cured of his leprosy by pope Sylvester; he would have his bed also placed in that part of the church surrounded with columns of St. John. As he was stepping into this bed a circumstance happened which appeared ominous. The bed, though new, sunk under him. The day after he was made knight, he went to hear mass in the chapel of pope Boniface, seated upon a throne surrounded with all the nobility of Rome. They observed in this mass the solemnities used at the consecration of kings. In the midst of these sacred mysteries, Rienzi advanced toward the people, and said, with a loud voice, ‘We cite to our tribunal Lewis, duke of Bavaria, and Charles, king of Bohemia, to judge of their

pretensions to the empire, and the princes, who call themselves electors, to produce the titles of their right to such election, which, as I find in the archives, belongs to the people of Rome.' The pope's vicar, who was present, and did not expect such an extravagance as this, remained for a time confounded ; but, recollecting himself, he thought it his duty to make his protestations against it by a notary : while they were reading them, the tribune ordered the instruments to sound, that they might not be heard. Fifteen days after this Rienzi was crowned again with seven crowns, and with the same pomp, in the church of St. John de Lateran. These seven crowns were allusions to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. When these feasts were over, the people's eyes were opened, and they reflected with concern on the profanation of the churches, the insolent citation of the emperors and electors, and the insupportable pride and luxury of Rienzi and his relations.

Petrarch was at Avignon while these things passed, and either did not hear of them, or his enthusiasm for the liberty of Rome, the period of which he flattered himself was hastening under the government of Rienzi, did not suffer him to believe them : he was engaged also at this time in the news received from the king-

dom of Naples, which was in great commotion.

Lewis, king of Hungary, was determined to pursue and punish the murderers of his brother. Clement VI. fulminated against them the most terrible bulls, and appointed Bertrand de Bouze, great justiciary of the kingdom, to proceed openly against them; but in private letters he ordered him to keep secret the informations he should gain, that in case the queen or the princes of the blood should be found guilty, he might acquaint the pope, who should reserve to himself their judgment, to save the troubles it might cause to that kingdom. The greatest part of those guilty were discovered and punished. Queen Joan could not save the three principal persons, the Catanese, Robert de Cabones, and Soncia, and their cabal: they gave them the torture in a place by the sea, in sight of all the people; but a rail prevented their depositions being heard. The Catanese could not support the agonies of the torture; she died before she got to the place of execution; Robert and Soncia had their flesh torn off with red hot irons; they had put gags in their mouths to prevent their speaking. This was not enough to satisfy the king of Hungary. He considered the

queen and the two princes, who were his cousins, as the real authors of his brother's murder, and, finding that neither the pope nor the tribune would act in this affair, he determined to transport himself with an army to Naples. To impress the more terror, he had a black standard carried before him, on which was painted the strangled figure of his brother Andrew. He sent a natural brother of his before him to besiege the city of Sulmone. Petrarch was still at Avignon, when he was informed that the Hungarians had entered Italy, and were set down before Sulmone: this made him very uneasy for the fate of his friend Barbatus, who resided at Sulmone since the death of king Robert; and he wrote him the following letter:

‘ In the midst of the cares which overwhelm me, your situation is my greatest uneasiness. I love no one more than my dear Barbatus; I feel this strongly at present. Love is credulous, timid, and restless; it fears every thing. What I long predicted is now come to pass. I always said a crime so horrid could not remain unpunished; but what have the people of Italy done, who are going to be the victim? God, who revenges the guilty, will not punish the innocent; but I need not fear for Italy; the

rebels on the contrary will be treated as they merit, while the tribunal now established shall be in vigour. My apprehensions are for Naples, that queen of cities, and Capua, formerly so powerful; torrents from the shores of the Danube are coming down on that flourishing country. A tempest from the north always covers it with thick clouds; for I learn hostilities are begun, and that Sulmone, your country, and the country of Ovid, is to be the first victim. What would Ovid say if he was to behold the Barbarians, he despised and hated, govern that city which gave him birth? Would it not have been better that his bones had been covered with their earth, than his monument insulted in the middle of his country? But grief makes me wander: I tremble for you. I do not see wherein I can succour you; but sometimes more can be done than is perceived. Command me as you have a right: I have some influence with the Roman people and the tribune. If I can be of any use to you with them, dispose of my mind and of my pen; both the one and the other are at your service.

‘ I have a house in a distant and tranquil corner of Italy: it is small, but large enough for two persons who have only one heart and

one soul. Riches and poverty are both banished from this mansion, and the door of it is shut against licentiousness; it is filled with good books, and wants my presence; I have been absent from it two years. Come, and seek in it an asylum. Whatever happens, I shall never be easy till I know your life to be in safety.'

Petrarch thought of quitting Avignon again, and returning to Italy. 'I am prevented,' says he, 'by my old comrades, who would drag me for ever to assemblies: in vain I tell them such places no longer amuse me. A thousand paths of ambition or avarice are pointed out to me: when I say I am content with my lot and desire nothing beyond it, they maintain that I am playing a farce. I cannot even obtain from my tailor that my clothes should be wider, or from my shoemaker an easy pair of shoes. I find but one remedy for all my evils: a little corner of the earth where I may live as I please, and be no longer what I have been. Change of air is of use to the sick: ingrafting softens the sap of the tree; roots are perfected by transplanting; and, I think, contrary to the opinion of the world, we ought not to become old where we have been young.' The love of his country, and his dislike to Avignon, were the motives which engaged Petrarch to return

to Italy, and balanced in his heart his love for Laura. All the lords of Italy had wrote to desire he would come among them; and among these James de Carrere, who was become governor of Padua, a man of great merit, invited Petrarch in the most obliging manner to come and settle at Padua.

Lewis of Gonzague, the lord of Mantua, had sent also to Petrarch a man in his confidence, with a sum of money to engage him to come to him at Mantua; to which Petrarch wrote this answer:

* I would have brought you my thanks for your letter, but it is not in my power. I grow old in this place; and am the sport of fortune. I return your money by Peter de Creme, your gentleman, because I am not at liberty to comply with your desire. I am hastening to my goal, unable to bear the fatigues of a long journey. My soul, wounded by love, cannot tear itself from Avignon. Was I to come to you, so far from being of any use, I should be only a burden. Frequent indispositions and an habitual melancholy require relief from others, and allow not the attention necessary for a courtier. However, you may chance to see me in the spring, if cardinal Colonna will permit. In the mean time, let not your benefits go be-

yond my wishes or deserts: your generosity would not justify your imprudence.'

Petrarch had friends at Florence who invited him to return to his country, and gave him hopes that the estate of his family, which had been confiscated when his father was exiled, would be restored to him again. He had left his son John at Verona, and he wished to see him and judge of the progress he made in his studies: he was now above ten years of age, and his education became very interesting to Petrarch. And though Rienzi had lost much of his glory, Petrarch was not entirely cured of his enthusiasm towards him, and he had even thoughts of going to Rome to encourage him in his pursuit of liberty. All these motives united, having determined Petrarch to quit France and settle in Italy, he went to communicate his design to the pope, and to know his commands.

Clement loved Petrarch. He looked upon him as an ornament to his court, and wished to fix him there. He had offered him with this view several considerable benefices, which he had always refused, saying, he was not worthy of them: and the pope had condescended so far as to entreat him earnestly to accept them. But it was to no purpose; Petrarch would

take no employment which should deprive him of liberty.

‘ You refuse all my offers,’ said the pope ; ‘ ask what you will, and you shall obtain it.’

‘ Holy father,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ since you are determined to serve me, I resign to your pleasure, and leave it to you to choose for me. You know better than I do what will suit my disposition and your liberality. When any place of that kind shall become vacant, vouchsafe to remember your servant.’

This constant refusal of all the dignities offered him will appear to many persons incredible. But a letter he wrote to Socrates, from whom he hid no secret of his heart, proves the truth of this beyond a doubt :

‘ I continue unshaken in my resolution. Whether it is modesty or meanness, or whether it is courage and strength of mind, as some persons of merit have thought, I have never desired a great fortune. All the world knows this ; and you can witness it more perfectly than any one. You have sometimes praised, and sometimes blamed me for it, according to circumstances. You have said to me, “ Do not you fear that your firmness will be esteemed obstinacy ? ” I have not yet, however, repented my conduct. Every elevated situation

is a suspicious one ; there is a fall beneath it. If I am indulged with that mediocrity preferable to gold, of which Horace speaks, and which has been promised me, I will accept it with pleasure and gratitude. But if they will give me a heavy charge, I will persist in refusing it, and shake off the yoke. I prefer poverty to slavery ; but I need not fear the former as things go at present. You are fully informed of my determination ; speak of it to our friends, and to the lord of lords when you shall find occasion. I have never hid my thoughts ; but there are people who must be told the same thing often to understand it. Your eloquence will reach them. One speaks with more force, and is listened to more favourably, for a friend than for oneself. Make them feel that true liberality is neither slow, crabbed, nor unwilling, and thinks only of the person it would oblige ; and that it bends to their desires instead of limiting them. The offer of treasures to a man who asks a small sum is a decent method of refusing him.'

The moderation of Petrarch was not greater than the bounty and condescension of the pope. He must have heard his declamations against the court of Avignon, and free expressions concerning himself, and the interest he

took in the enterprize of Rienzi for the Roman liberty. It must be owned that Clement deserved the name he bore.

Petrarch spent a good part of the autumn at Vacluse, to prepare for his departure to Italy, and re-establish his health, which had been much disordered.

Before he left Avignon, he went to take leave of Laura. He found her at an assembly she often frequented. 'She was seated,' says he, 'in the midst of those ladies who are her general companions, and appeared like a beautiful rose in a parterre, surrounded with flowers smaller and less blooming. Her air was more touching than usual. She was dressed perfectly plain, and without pearls, garlands, or any gay colours. Though she was not melancholy, she did not appear with her usual cheerfulness. She was serious and thoughtful. She did not sing as usual, nor speak with that sweetness which charmed every one. She had the air of a person who fears an evil not yet arrived. In taking leave, I sought in her looks a consolation for my own sufferings. Her eyes had an expression I had never seen before in them. I deposited to their keeping my heart and my thoughts, as to faithful friends on whom I could with safety depend. Her al-



tered clothes and air, her countenance, a certain concern mixed with grief which I saw in her face, predicted the sorrows that threatened me.'

When Petrarch saw Laura in this situation he could hardly restrain his tears. Laura knew not how to bear a separation from this friend of her heart, whom she was to lose perhaps for ever. When the hour of this separation came, she cast upon him a look so soft, tender, and pure, that he confesses he had never been so touched before. 'Must I never,' says Petrarch, 'never see again that beautiful face, those kind looks which relieve the tender heart?'

While these were passing at Avignon, and Petrarch was re-establishing his health at Vaucluse, Rienzi no longer kept any measures with the court of Rome. Intoxicated more and more, he undertook to exterminate the great lords of Rome. Some historians say, he bribed a person to assassinate them who afterwards avowed the plot. However this was, he invited a great number of them to dine with him, under the pretence of asking their advice; and had some of them taken by force, and put into the capital prisons. Among these were old Stephen Colonna, and John his grandson, Peter Agapit Colonna, the Ursines, and other great

barons of Rome. They passed the night in agonies, uncertain what would be the fate prepared for them. Old Stephen, shut up in an empty hall where there was no bed, walked backward and forward with a quick step all night, knocking often and beseeching the guard in vain either to open the door or to kill him. What a night for such a hero! who, after having escaped a glorious death in battle, sees himself on the point of ending his days by the scrivener and the hangman.

The next day the tribune had the bell of the capitol sounded, which assembled the people. The great hall was hung with red and white silk, the common signal of Rienzi's executions.

He sent to each baron a cordelier, to confess and give them the sacrament. Their consternation was so extreme, when they found the tribune had condemned them to death, and that they must prepare for it, that they lost the power of speech. The greatest part of them however submitted, and received the communion; but Stephen Colonna refused, saying, he was not in a proper situation. Some Romans however persuaded Rienzi not to put these nobles to death. He brought them therefore before the people, and mounting the tri-

bunal, said it was owing to the favour of the people, to whom he made them bow, and swear future fidelity. The next day he made them dine with him, and loaded them with presents, and after dinner they attended him as in cavalcade through the streets of Rome.

When these nobles were at liberty, they retired into their castles, and meditated the means of revenge. The people who revolted against Rienzi's proceedings, joined by degrees with these lords, and promised to let them into the town when a proper occasion should offer, for Rienzi having heard of the revolt, had ordered the gates to be shut. In a too precipitate attempt to force an entrance, young John Colonna, not followed as he imagined by his party, was pulled off his horse, and had a sword plunged three times into his breast, so that he died upon the spot. His birth, youth, and beauty, could not touch these barbarians. This was the youth who received Petrarch at Palestrina, and was newly married to a very amiable and beautiful woman. He was only twenty years of age. Stephen Colonna his father, who was at the head of the rear-guard, being come to the gate of the city, and seeing the populace assembled, as if he had a presentiment of his misfortune, asked where his

son was. As no one replied, he pushed his horse under the gateway, where by the side of the wall lay the body of this young man so dear to him, covered over with blood. Seized with horror at this mournful sight, he turned about in haste, and was going away ; but paternal tenderness brought him back again, to see if his son had any remains of life. Perceiving him without motion, trembling with grief and rage, he was returning, when an enormous machine fell upon him from a tower, and he was surrounded by the enemy, who pierced him with wounds. Encouraged by the death of these two persons, they came out of the city without order, and fell upon the troops who were filing off. Peter Agapit Colonna was their next victim ; he had fallen from his horse, and sought his safety in flight ; but the rain, which had made the ground slippery, and the weight of his arms, which he wore for the first time, were great hinderances to his design, and he was taken among some vines under which he lay concealed : his prayers and tears could not save his life ; they massacred him in cold blood. Two others of this family perished on this fatal day.

The tribune went to the church of St. Mary to thank God for this success, and alluding to

the death of the Colonnas, he said, ' I have this day cut off an ear which neither the pope nor emperor was ever able to accomplish.' The bodies of the Colonnas were carried to the church of the monastery of St. Mary d'Ara Celi, wherein was their chapel: that of Stephen was so disfigured, it could not have been known but for some signs of life still remaining. Several ladies related to them ran in grief to the chapel, to pay their last duty and attend their funeral rites. Rienzi ordered his guards to drive them out of the church, and would not allow these illustrious persons any obsequies: he even threatened to have their bodies dragged to the place allotted for those of malefactors. This obliged them to convey them secretly to the church of St. Sylvester; and the nuns of that house (which was founded by the Colonnas for those relations who chose to take the veil) buried them there without the usual rites.

When old Stephen Colonna, who was more than fourscore and ten years old, was informed of these dreadful losses, he did not shed a tear, or suffer a sigh to escape him; he only said, with his eyes fixed on the earth, ' The will of God be done. Is it not better to die than groan under the yoke of a madman ?'

It is Petrarch that relates this, to whom we will now return.

He set out from Vaucluse the 20th of November 1347, leaving his friend Socrates in his little house. Their separation was extremely affecting. Petrarch took the road to Genoa, because it was the nearest way to Florence, where some friends waited for him. The evening before his departure he received a letter from Lelius, who informed him of the news received at Avignon concerning Rienzi's misconduct and follies. At a town where he stopped before he reached Genoa, Petrarch returned this answer to Lelius :

‘ I am so fatigued, I cannot write you a long letter. This is the third night I have passed without sleep. My employments, and the bustle of removing, have scarcely suffered me to breathe. My rest will never be composed till I can bring my mind to see every thing with an equal eye. I am now far upon my road. Nothing is so painful as a long deliberation on the conduct we shall pursue. On the contrary, nothing is more delightful than the state of that soul which, after having been long restless and uneasy, is come at last to a fixed determination. *The end of doubt is the beginning of repose.*’

‘ It was a thunder-stroke to me to receive your account of the tribune. I have nothing to reply. I feel the destiny of my country ; on whatever side I turn there is cause to mourn. Rome torn to pieces, Italy disfigured : what will become of me in these public disorders ? Others may contribute their strength, their riches, their power, or their counsel : I can offer nothing but my tears.’

When Petrarch arrived at Genoa, he wrote a letter to Rienzi, reproaching him with his change of conduct :

‘ I have often applied to you the words of Scipio Africanus in Cicero, “ Who is it that flatters my ears with such agreeable news ? ” Oblige me not to say at present, Who is it wounds my ears by such unhappy rumours ? You alone can tarnish the lustre of your reputation ; the foundation of your glory can only be destroyed by yourself. You know the path you have taken to rise ; it is by the opposite path you must fall. You are not ignorant that it is more easy to incur the one than to accomplish the other. You had arrived at the summit of virtue and glory ; stand firm, and suffer not your enemies to exult, or your friends to grieve at your destruction. It is not easy long to preserve a great reputation. I wrote

an ode in your praise; constrain me not to place a satire in its room. I should not address you thus without good reason. But I learn things that oblige me to change my opinion concerning you; and that force me to say what Cicero said of Brutus, "I blush for you! You was the protector and support of the good; you are now becoming the chief of vagabonds." What a sudden, what an unforeseen change! God is incensed against us! What is become of the good genius which inspired you; or, to speak the language of the people, that familiar spirit with whom you had so many secret conversations, and who enabled you to do things above the strength of man? But about what am I tormenting myself! I cannot overrule the destinies: the things of this world will be determined by the decrees of the Eternal. God grant, however, I may not live to see this change.

'I was hastening to you; but I shall change my route. Rome, dear country, adieu! I shall see you no more. I would sooner go to the furthest east if what I have learned is true. But ought I to believe it? Is it possible that so good a beginning should be followed by so bad an end? Ah! would to Heaven I may have been deceived: with what pleasure should I

retract my error ! You see I seek to solace my grief by doubt : was it not for this I should speak to you with still more severity. Falsehood is become a common and a venial sin : but nothing can expiate his crime who betrays his country. If you regard not your own reputation (which I can scarcely believe), have yet some consideration for mine. You see what a storm threatens, what a crowd of censurers are gathering round me ; be again yourself while you may : examine what you have been ; what you are ; from whence you arose ; whither your actions tend ; what are the offices you should fill up ; and you will find that you are the minister, not the master of the republic.'

Instead of going to Florence, as Petrarch intended, he went to Parma ; there he received the account of the dreadful catastrophe that had befallen the house of the Colonnas. We do not readily believe afflicting news ; but when he saw the letters that confirmed it, he was overwhelmed with grief : he had ever a tender friendship for young Stephen, and compared him to Marcellus the grandson of Augustus, whom Virgil has so finely praised, and who was the delight of the Romans. He wrote on this occasion a long letter to cardinal

Colonna in the style of Seneca, full of dry sentences and perplexed periods, according to the fashion of those times for letters of condolance. News was now brought to Parma that the tribune, abandoning himself to all kinds of injustice, the people rose against him, and hung him up in effigy on the walls of his palace. He went from Rome to Naples to seek the protection of the king of Hungary; his wife escaped in the habit of a nun, and went to him there. The terror of him was so great, that the lords, who were absent from Rome in their own castles, did not venture, till three days were passed after his departure, to return again into the city.

1348. Petrarch went in January to Verona, where his friends and his son impatiently expected him. On the twenty-fifth of this month, being in his library, he felt the ground tremble under him, and heard a hollow noise; the walls shook, and the books were thrown from the shelves: he went out of his room terribly alarmed, and saw his servants and the people of Verona running here and there in the greatest consternation. They cried out aloud, persuaded that the world was at an end. All contemporary historians speak of this earthquake; they agree that it began in the Alps.

It did great mischief at Pisa, Bologna, Padua, and Venice, but still more in Tyrol and Bavaria, where whole towns were buried in ruins. More than sixty villages in one canton were destroyed by the fall of two mountains. A comet preceded, and the plague came after this dreadful earthquake. It is generally agreed that the plague came originally from Cathoy (so they then called China) and from Tartary; in the space of a year it desolated Asia; from Asia it passed to Africa, where it made great havoc. It was reported of Albachefer, who was lord of almost all Barbary, that being on a journey to look at a road which he was making through the deserts of Babylon to pass to the Indies, they came to inform him the plague was in his kingdom, that fourscore of his wives were already dead of it, and a great number of his courtiers. The idea struck him, that this plague was a punishment from Heaven because he was not a Christian; and he sent his admiral to notify it throughout his kingdom that he would be baptized. A little after this an European vessel landing on his coast, he asked what was the condition of the Christian world? They told him that the plague destroyed a great many; and he altered his mind about baptism when he found that Christians died as

well as Saracens. The contagion was carried into Europe by some Genoese and Catalonian merchants who came from Syria and traded to the Indies: they disembarked with their infected merchandise in Sicily, and from thence at Pisa and Genoa, from whence the mortality spread all over Europe. From Marfeilles and Catalonia it came into Spain and France; 1348 and 1349 it ravaged the borders of the ocean and the islands. In 1350 it extended to Germany and all the north; so that in three years it spread universally.

Since the deluge history furnishes no example of so dreadful a scourge. Various but chimerical have been the causes to which it was ascribed, as from fire coming out of the earth, from whence issued a corruption that infected the air, and insects rained from heaven. 'And some ascribed it to the operation of the heavenly bodies,' says Boccace, 'when they ought to have imputed it to the anger of God for our enormous iniquities.' With some it began by bleeding at the nose, a sign of inevitable death; with others, by swellings of the size of an egg or apple under their arms, which soon after mortified, and dispersed over the body in black or blue spots. Few lived beyond the third day, some died on the first, commonly without

any fever. It proved beyond the art of the wisest physician to cure this desperate malady. In France and Germany, where the Jews were mortally hated, they accused them of having poisoned the fountains, and some of them having gone to the Indies on purpose to bring the plague to the Christians; and they were cruelly persecuted on this account. Some suspected the poor eunuchs, and others the nobles, of this evil. Clement VI. whose understanding and knowledge raised him above all vulgar prejudices, and particularly those of that age, took the part of the Jews with great warmth; and he published two bulls, by which, after vindicating them from this enormous crime, he forbade any one to prosecute or force them to be baptized.

When Petrarch returned to Parma, in March 1348, this contagion was got into Italy, but not spread far. He brought with him his son John, to place him under Gilbert de Parme, an excellent grammarian, and to have him under his own eye.

Luchin Visconti, lord of Milan, and who had obtained the lordship of Parma, wrote a very obliging letter at this time to Petrarch. He was valiant, and governed his states with wisdom. It appears that he was the most

powerful lord in Italy, and even in Europe. He reigned over seventeen great cities, and had always in pay four or five thousand troopers. His nephews and some of the Milanese nobles having conspired against him, it had alarmed him so much that he had always two mastiff dogs to follow him, who at the least sign from their master devoured those he pointed to ; and they always slept at the door of his chamber. His wife was of the illustrious family of Fiesque. She was the most beautiful woman of her age. Her love of dress and pleasure was extreme ; but she had not that modesty which heightens female charms. Proud of her rank, and fond of parade, she delighted in nothing but feasts and noisy diversions. Her love of intrigue was not for some time discovered by her husband, who prevented even her desires, by procuring her a succession of brilliant entertainments. And on a vow she had made to St. Mark, which she went to fulfil at Venice, he prepared the ceremony for her, and she embarked upon the Po, with a train of ships ornamented in so superb a manner, that it resembled the navigation of Cleopatra to meet Anthony. The handsomest lords and ladies of the court attended her. After traversing the states near the Po, she passed Mantua, Verona, and Padua.

They paid her the greatest honours every where.

It is easy to imagine what must result from such a medley of persons of both sexes, governed by a princess of so much gallantry. Isabella kept no bounds, and most of her ladies followed her example, so that this was called the voluptuous navigation. Those ladies who were more prudent than the rest, revealed on their return the most secret anecdotes of this expedition; and the husbands had nothing to do but to console each other. Luchin Visconti was not the last informed of his wife's amours with Gonzague the lord of Mantua, and Dondoli the doge of Venice. He was more affected with this account than so great a man ought to have been; and, though he was so fond of his wife, he resolved to get rid of her, and exterminate the house of Gonzague. He was naturally melancholy, and became more gloomy than usual. He was often seen with his brow bent, his looks wild, and biting his nails. Isabella, who soon perceived by his outward manner what passed within, prepared for him a slow poison. Such was his situation when Petrarch came to Parma; to which was added a body tormented by the gout, and by the poison which circulated in his veins.

This unfortunate prince sought consolation in the commerce of the Muses, and the innocent pleasures of his garden. When he heard of Petrarch's arrival in his state, he wrote to ask him for some plants from his garden, and some verses from his Muse, which flattered our poet, who returned the following answer :

‘ Your letter exceeds my hopes. I render thanks to fortune for the correspondence of a great prince, who is willing to forget the inequality between us. While my gardener is collecting the plants, my Muse shall produce the lines you ask for. The pleasure of serving you will render my labour easy. Your great soul, without ceasing occupied in the most important affairs, will perhaps disdain such trifles. I know it is the manner of thinking in our age. But I know also that Cæsar and Augustus, those masters of the world, loved to repose in the bosom of the Muses, and preferred their soft sounds to that of drums and trumpets. I speak not of Nero, the name of that monster would füll my tongue, and chase away the Muses. The emperor Adrian was so devoted to them, that the approach of death did not prevent his composing ; and even at the instant of separation between his soul and body he produced some very fine verses.

‘ What shall I say of Antoninus, who obtained the empire by his merit, and would not quit the name of philosopher for the title of emperor, persuaded that the first was much superior to the last? Formerly letters were thought necessary, not only to be a king, but to be a man. Times are sadly changed, and kings now make war against letters.

‘ God forbid I should name the ignorant kings of this age. Pollio said, speaking of Augustus, “ It is not safe to write against those who can proscribe. We must attack the dead alone, they cannot forbid us.” As to me, I accuse in general, and name no particular person. But the princes I speak of copy the emperor Licinius, who said that letters were a public pest. Marius, though of a base origin, thought otherwise, and preferred the poets because they would celebrate his exploits. And where is the man so base as not to love glory? Glory is acquired by virtue, but preserved by letters. The memory fails, pictures are effaced, and statues are broken: letters alone are a durable treasure, which the people have taken from their princes, who have ceded to them the empire of wit. Wise men must therefore be sought from the people, and not from those

kings who, as a Roman emperor calls them, writing to a king of France, are only crowned asses. As for you, sir, to whom nothing is wanting but the title of king, I hope every thing from you. If my verses should please you, you will find me more liberal of them than you may imagine, or my occupations seem to promise.'

In these verses Petrarch addresses himself to the trees from which suckers had been taken, in this manner :

' Happy trees ! never forget the honour done you by a great prince, in demanding some branches from your stem. Who knows ? Perhaps he will hereafter vouchsafe to gather with his kind hand the fruits these your children shall produce. All Italy admires and respects this prince. The Alps obey, the father Apennine labours for him. The Po with its foamy waves divides his rich estates, and, beholding on each side of their course crowned serpents on elevated towers, bend before their sovereign. His empire spreads over both seas. The transalpine kingdoms fear, and would have him for their master. He entraps crimes in his nets, and represses them by the rein of his laws. He has revived in Hesperia the golden

age, and made known at Milan the great art of the Romans to pardon those who submit, and subdue all those who refuse submission.'

Luchin was of a severe character: but, excepting that blemish, a great prince, and worthy of the praises of Petrarch. He made excellent laws, and understood how to enforce the practice of them. He protected the people against the oppression of the great, pursued crimes with vigour, maintained plenty, and always carried on war out of his states. He had great virtues, and great faults. His commerce with Petrarch did not last long: he died a martyr to jealousy and the poison his wife had given him, the 23d of January 1349.

While Petrarch was at Parma he meditated a journey to Padua, to visit James de Carrore, lord of that city, who had expressed so great a desire to see him. He was just got there, when he received a letter from his friend Socrates, which informed him of the arrival of a young Florentine, his relation, called Francischin, whose father was one of the greatest captains of his age. Francischin was a young man of an amiable heart: he was of a tender and affectionate temper, full of wit and poetic talents. He had presented himself to Petrarch

in 1345 as a relation and countryman. Petrarch became tenderly interested in him, and cultivated his taste for poetry. This young Florentine would never have quitted Petrarch, but from a strong desire to see Paris, and make the tour of France. This was the passion of all the Italians who had wit and wished to cultivate it, and the Florentines above all others. Brunetto, Latini, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace, had set the fashion of this journey. When he left Avignon, he promised Petrarch that, if he was not there at his return, he would seek him wherever he should be. He kept his word, and inquired immediately on his arrival for his master: they told him he was in Italy; on which he instantly embarked at Marseilles, and got to Verona the 6th of April.

Petrarch set out for Parma to meet this dear friend; and wrote these lines to John Anchisee, a learned man in Florence, and the friend of Francischin:

‘ I expect him every day. I have heard of him at Marseilles, where he arrived in good health. He flattered himself with seeing me at Avignon; and I would have waited for him, but I could no longer support that filthy court. He is a treasure I know you die with envy to possess: but be assured that, when I again lay

hold of him, I will hide him safe, for fear of losing him. A good friend is more rare and more precious than gold. We ought to pardon those who possess one, for being avaricious and jealous of him. However, I consent to share him with you; but upon one condition, that you come and enjoy him here with me. I wish that friendship may engage you to take the step I propose; you will be a gainer by it: instead of one, you will procure two friends. From the calm valley of the Parmesan.'

Petrarch was so impatient to see his dear Francischin, so fully persuaded he would arrive every moment, that at the least noise which he heard he quitted with precipitation his books and his pen to go out and meet him. What was his grief when he was told that this dear relation, having stopped at Savona, near Genoa, was dead of a sickness, either brought on by the fatigue of his journey, or by the contagion which began to spread over Italy! He left an aged father, a mother, brothers, and sisters, all inconsolable for his loss; for he was the delight of all his family. 'I feel,' said Petrarch, 'it would be my duty to go and console them; but how can I do this, being inconsolable myself!'

A few days after this Petrarch received a

letter from Lancelot Angiosciola, a gentleman, a foldier, and a knight. His valour and his prudence gained him the love of the king of Bohemia, and many great lords of this time. One part of his letter is pleasant enough. He asks of Petrarch, who had been a martyr to love twenty years, a remedy for that passion.

‘How consoling is it for me,’ replies Petrarch, ‘to find you attacked with my old disease. It appears no longer unworthy of me, nor do I blush for it: but I look upon your application to me for a cure as a pleasantry indeed! Every remedy that can be proposed is only food for this passion: there is but one that our Æsculapius has discovered; but the simples of which it is composed are not in your garden, or are too bitter for your taste. The only secret I have found to prevent the evils of life, is to do nothing without having well examined beforehand in what we are going to embark. In most things we undertake, the beginnings are agreeable; they seduce us; but we should think of the end: they are paths strewn with flowers; where these paths lead to is the most important question.’

James de Castillonchio and Francis Bruni, two young men of cultivated understandings, sent letters to Petrarch, and with them an ora-

tion of Cicero, which he considered as a valuable present; they expressed a great desire to see his Africa. He answered, that his Africa withered for want of watering and culture, and that the plague had silenced his Muse: 'It takes my friends,' says he, 'and leaves me upon the earth; it is my fate at present to groan myself, and reprimand the lamentation of others.'

The plague began now to spread in Italy; the contagion, as I have said, defied the art of all medicine: whether it was really incurable, or they were ignorant of the proper method of treating it, it communicated itself instantly to persons in full health, as the fire lays hold of dry and oily stuff which comes near it. It was caught by touching the clothes of those who had it, or any thing that had been brought near them; and it extended to animals as well as men. 'I saw,' says Boccace, from whom this and the former account is taken, 'two swine groping with their snouts in the rags of a poor man who died of it, and they both expired soon after, as if they had taken the most subtle poison.' This dreadful calamity spread a universal consternation. Solemn processions were made to ask of God the cessation of this scourge; but, perceiving it made every day

further progress, some formed little societies, and shut themselves up in retired houses situated in a good air; there they eat only white meats, and drank the purest wine, avoiding all excess, having no communication with any out of the house; nor would they be informed of what was going on in public. Music, play, and some other innocent pleasures, were their only relaxation.

Others, on the contrary, looked upon it as an infallible preservative to give themselves up to pleasures without restraint: they passed the day and night in taverns, and in those houses where they could find most objects of voluptuousness: nothing was easier than entrance at this time; for as death was hourly expected, every thing was abandoned: no one troubled themselves to shut their doors, and the first comer might take whatever he found without any one to oppose him. Persons of more refinement took the middle part between the abstinence of the one and the licentiousness of the other. They used the things of this world with moderation; they did not confine themselves, but only took the precaution to wear aromatic shrubs and flowers; to preserve themselves from the infection the air was filled with from the sick and dead around them.

In fine, some there were who, as the greatest means of safety, chose a life contrary to humanity and the obligations to society; they quitted their relations and friends, and went wandering from place to place where the contagion had not yet appeared; they vainly thought that God's wrath was limited to the city they had abandoned, and would not pursue them elsewhere. In all these various methods the plague took some and left others. No remedy succeeded: the physicians understood nothing about it; and, which is most astonishing, they acknowledged they did not. All unions were dissolved; relations and friends were separated, and avoided one another: clownish servants did whatever was merely necessary, and sometimes nothing, for great salaries. The ladies of the first rank, the most beautiful and chaste, when attacked by this disease, finding no women who would attend them, took without scruple the first man who offered, whether young or old, sober or debauched, faithful or dishonest; the state of their disorder, and the necessity of assistance, did not permit the care that decency prescribed; and this freedom became afterwards a habit, and altered the manners of those formerly most respected for their delicacy. There were no fu-

neral rites observed; the dead were laid at the door of the house, or thrown out of the window; those whose office it was to inter them, piled them up without distinction on biers or tables, and carried them to the first churchyard without priest or prayers. Numbers died in their houses unknown to any one; the neighbours only discovered their death from the smell of the bodies, which they were careful to get removed for fear of the infection. This dreadful picture drawn by Boccace was descriptive of every city in Italy except Milan, and the north part of the Alps, where this contagion was hardly perceived.

We will now return again to Petrarch. It must be remembered that when he left Avignon, Laura was in a state that gave him great inquietude every time he thought of her, and that was continually: she was so much changed since that time that no one would have known her; this, together with the plague, which took off many of his friends, was no doubt the cause of those dismal dreams and presentiments he was now haunted with. ‘Formerly,’ says Petrarch, ‘when I had quitted Laura, I saw her often in my dreams. Her angelic vision then consoled me; but at present it afflicts and overwhelms me. I think I

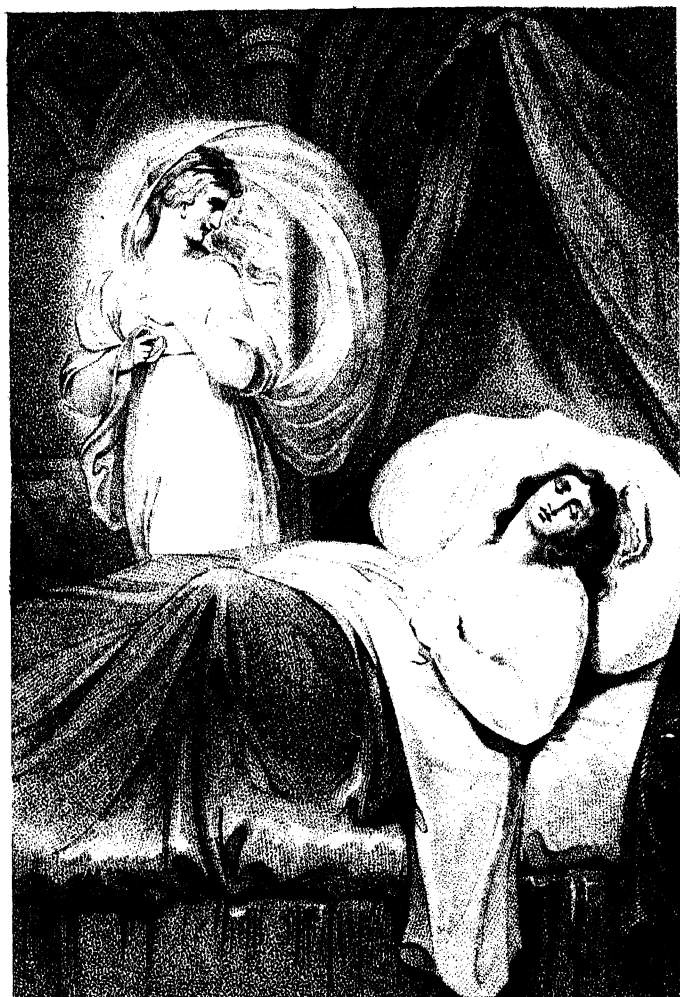
see upon her face compassion mixed with grief. I think I hear her speak to me thus: "Recall that night when, forced to part from you, I left you bathed in tears. I was not able to tell you then, nor would I have done it; but I will tell you at present, and you may believe me, you shall see me no more upon earth." Oh! what a dreadful vision! And can it be true that the light is extinguished which gave me such sweet and consoling reflections? Shall I only learn from dreams an account so interesting to me? Shall she herself come to announce it? No! it cannot be; Heaven and nature forbid. I trust I shall again see that charming face which is my support and joy, and the honour of our age. But if it is true that Laura has quitted her beautiful habitation to fly to heaven, let that day be the last of my life. Uncertain of my state, I sigh, I write, I fear, I hope; my sighs and my verses shall relieve my sorrow. Shall love cease to send his darts to my afflicted heart? Shall my eyes never behold the light of my life? Shall they be condemned to everlasting tears? Alas! I know not what to think. Is Laura fled to heaven, which is her country, without reflecting that she leaves one upon earth who cannot live without her? This uncertainty agitates

me without ceasing. I am no longer what I was. I resemble a man who walks in a path he is not sure of. I open my ears, but I hear no one speak of her I love. I know not what to think, or what to say. My soul floats between fear and hope. Laura is more beautiful more chaste than all others. Perhaps God has taken her from earth to reward her in heaven. If it is so, my pleasures and my pains will soon be at an end with my life. Cruel departure! Why separate myself from her, if I was so soon to lose her?

The sixth of April, Petrarch being at Verona on his way to Parma, always occupied with these black presages which foretold the death of Laura, beheld her that morning in a dream, and they held a long conversation, the account of which from his own words is as follows :

‘ Aurora had dispersed that thick darkness which renders the visions of night confused^a, and a blush of the softest crimson began to enlighten the east, when I saw a beautiful female advancing towards me. Her appearance was

^a Theocritus was of opinion that the dreams which came about the dawn of day were more distinct than those of the night. Horace thought otherwise: *Post mediam noctem visus cum somnia vera*, &c.



like that of the spring, and her head was crowned with oriental pearls. She had quitted a groupe of females crowned like herself; and, as she drew near to me, she sighed, and gave me a hand which had long been the object of my tenderest wishes.

‘ Her presence, and such an extraordinary mark of kindness, diffused through my soul an inexpressible pleasure. “ Do you recollect her,” she said, “ who, by engaging the affections of your youth, led you from the common road of life ?” While she spoke these words, which were accompanied with an air of modesty and earnestness, she sat down under a laurel and a beech on the side of a brook, and commanded me to place myself by her. I obeyed.

“ Not know you ! my good angel !” I said, the tears flowing from my eyes. “ But tell me quickly, I beseech you, whether you are in life, or in death ?” “ In life,” she replied. “ ’Tis you who are in death : and in death must you remain, till the time shall come when you must quit this world. But we have much to say, and little time for our interview. The day is at hand. Be brief therefore, and recollected.”

‘ On my expressing the most pungent grief to hear that she was no more, she said, “ Petrarch ! you will never be happy so long as

you continue to be governed by the prejudices of the world. My death, which is the cause of so much affliction, would be a source of happiness to you, could you but know the smallest part of my bliss." As she spoke these words her eyes were lifted towards heaven, and filled with the tenderest emotions of gratitude. "To the spotless soul," continued she, "death is the deliverance from a darksome prison. It is an evil only to those who are wallowing in the mire of the world."

"But the tortures," I replied, "which barbarous tyrants, such as Nero, Caligula, Mezen-
cius, &c. have inflicted, these exhibit death clothed with terrors." "It is not to be denied," she said, "that death is sometimes accompanied with severe pains. But remember, that the severest pains which can surround a death-bed are the fears of an eternal punishment. For if the soul can cast itself upon God, and place an entire confidence in him, death is no more than a sigh, or a short passage from one life to another."

[I was overwhelmed with sorrow, and ready almost to sink under my distress, when I heard a low and mournful voice utter these words: *This poor mortal is attached to the present life. Yet he lives not, neither is he at peace*

within himself. He is devoted to the world; and shall for ever remain the slave of this devotion. The world is the sole object of his thoughts, his words, and his writings. I immediately recollected a voice which had so often been my consolation; and, on turning my eyes towards the place whence it came, I discovered our well-known friend. She was wont to appear sprightly and gay, now she was serious and grave.']

“In the flower of my youth,” pursued Laura, “when you loved me most, and when life was dressed out in all her charms, then was she bitter, compared with the sweetness of my death. I felt more joy at this moment than an exile returning to his wished-for country. There was but one thing which afflicted me. I was to leave you. I was moved with compassion.”

“Ah!” replied I, “in the name of that truth by which you was governed while on earth, and which now you more clearly distinguish in the bosom of Him to whom all things are present, tell me, I conjure you, whether love gave birth to this compassion? Those rigours mixed with softness, those tender angers, and those delicious reconciliations which were written in your eyes, have for ever kept my heart in doubt and uncertainty.”

‘ Scarce had I finished, when I beheld those heavenly smiles which have at all times been the messengers of peace. “ You have ever,” she said with a sigh, “ possessed my heart, and shall continue to possess it. But I was obliged to temper the violence of your passion by the movements of my countenance. It was necessary to keep you in ignorance. A good mother is never more solicitous about her child than when she appears to be most in anger with him. How often have I said, ‘ Petrarch does not love ; he burns with a violent passion. I must endeavour to regulate it.’ But, alas ! this was a difficult task for one whose fears and affections were likewise engaged.

“ I said, he must not be acquainted with the state of my heart. He admires so much what he sees without, I must conceal from him what passes within. This has been the only artifice which I have used. Be not offended. It was a bridle which was necessary to keep you in the right road. There was no other method by which I could preserve our souls. A thousand times has my countenance been lighted up with anger, while my heart has glowed with love ; but it was my perpetual resolution, that reason, not love, should hold the sovereignty.

“ When I saw you cast down with sorrow

and affliction, I gave you a look of consolation. When you were on the brink of despair, my looks were still more tender: I addressed you with a softer air, and soothed you with a kind word: my fears even altered the tone of my voice, you might see them marked on my countenance. When you looked pale, and your eyes were bathed in tears, I said, ‘He is very ill, he will certainly die if I take not pity on him.’ Then it was that you had every succour which virtue could give, and then was you restored to yourself again. Sometimes you were like the fiery horse fretted by the spur; it was then necessary that you should feel the rein, and be managed with the bit. Such has been the innocent artifice by which I led you on, without the least stain to my honour.”

“Ah!” said I, with a faltering voice, and eyes bedewed with tears, “such sentiments would be an ample recompense for all my sufferings, had I but courage to believe them.” “Faithless man!” she said a little angrily, “what motive can I have for this declaration, had it not been the true cause of that distance and reserve of which you have so often complained? In every thing else we were agreed; and honour and virtue were the bonds of our affection. Our love was mutual, at least from the

time I was convinced of your attachment. There was only this difference, that one of us discovered, while the other concealed, the flame. You were hoarse with crying out, 'Mercy! help!' while I opened not my mouth. Fear and modesty permitted me not to reveal my emotions. The flame however which is confined burns more fiercely than that which is at liberty.

"Recollect the day when we were alone, and when you presented to me your sonnets, singing at the same time,

'This is all my love dares say.'

I received them with kindness; and, after such a proof, could there be the least doubt of my affection? Was not this taking off the veil? My heart was yours, but I chose to be mistress of my eyes. This you thought unjust; and yet with what right could you complain? Was you not possessed of the nobler part? Those eyes, which have so often been withdrawn because you merited this severity, have they not been restored to you a thousand times? Often have they looked upon you with tenderness, and would at all times have done so, had I not dreaded the extravagance of your passion.

“ But the morning is far advanced, the sun is emerging from the ocean, and it is with regret that I tell you we must be now separated. If you have any thing more to say, be expeditious, and regulate your words by the few moments which remain to us.” I had only time to add, “ My sufferings are fully recompensed ; but I cannot live without you ; I wish therefore to know whether I shall soon follow you.” She was already in motion to depart, when she said, “ If I am not mistaken, you shall remain a long time upon the earth.”

We may easily imagine the anxiety of Petrarch at these multiplied visions, which so positively foreboded the death of Laura, and the impatience with which he waited for news of her from Avignon. Unfortunately for him the plague had stopped all communication, and the couriers could not pass without the greatest difficulty. At last however, on the ninth of May 1348, Petrarch being at Parma, received a letter from his dear Socrates, who informed him that Laura died of the plague the sixth of April. I will collect every circumstance relative to it that is to be found in the works of Petrarch.

Gui de Chaliac, physician and chaplain to the pope, who attended those who had the

plague, and gives a long account, tells us it began in Avignon in January, and that it lasted seven months: that in the first of these months it shewed itself by continual fever, with spitting of blood; and that those whom it seized died generally on, or at the end of, the third day: that it was most violent in Lent; and that in the three days that preceded the fourth Sunday in Lent, there died at Avignon fourteen hundred persons. We owe this justice to the memory of Clement VI. that he spared neither his attention, care, or charity, to render this calamity less fatal at Avignon than it had been in other places. He gave pensions to physicians to attend the poor: he bought a field out of the city, which he destined to the burial of the infected: he gave considerable sums to those who removed and buried the dead: and he had the most regular police observed to prevent the spreading of the contagion. ‘And he did a more essential kindness than all this,’ says one of his historians; ‘he permitted all his clergy to give a general absolution in their parishes to those who died of this disease. As to himself, he followed the example of one of his predecessors in the same situation; he kept close in his apartment, and had very great fires.’ All the endeavours of

this good pope could not prevent the cruel ravages made by this contagion, which, if we may believe an historian of that time, carried off in the city of Avignon, in the space of three months, a hundred and twenty thousand souls. Gui de Chaliac was seized with it himself, but he survived it.

Laura felt the first attacks of it the 3d of April: she had the fever, with spitting of blood. As she was persuaded she should not live beyond the third day, she took the methods her piety and reason suggested to be immediately necessary. She received the sacraments, and made her will the same day; after which she waited for death without fear or regret. When she was at the point of death, her relations, her friends, and neighbours, gathered around her, though she was attacked with a malady which terrified all the world. It is a singular circumstance that so beautiful a person should be so beloved by her own sex. Nothing can be a higher eulogy on her character. Laura, seated on her bed, appeared quite tranquil: no hideous and threatening phantoms had power over her divine soul. Her companions, who stood round her bed, wept and sobbed aloud. 'We are going to lose a companion,' said they, 'who was the soul of our innocent

pleasures; a friend who consoled us in our chagrins, and whose example was a living lesson. We lose all in losing her. Heaven takes her hence as a treasure of which we were not worthy.'

Though Laura was calm and serene, it cannot be doubted she was sensible of the grief expressed by her companions; but entirely occupied with the state she was just going to enter, she reaped in silence the celestial fruits of her virtue. Her soul departed gently without struggle, like a lamp whose oil is wasted, which grows fainter and fainter, and is clear to the last. She had the air of a weary person who slumbers, and death had penetrated through all her veins, without disturbing the serenity of her countenance.

From the whole of her sentiments and character, we have no reason to believe this account exaggerated. For, 'her road to heaven,' says Petrarch, 'was not to seek in death: she had long known and walked in all the paths that lead to it.'

She died about six in the morning, on the 6th of April 1348. Her body was carried the same day at vespers to the church of the Minor Brothers, and interred in the chapel De la Croix. It was built by Hugues de Sade, her

husband, close to the chapel of St. Ann, which had been erected by his father. The body of Laura was found there with an Italian sonnet of Petrarch's in the year 1533; and it was then proved that the Laura of Petrarch, which some took it into their heads to doubt, was the same with Laura de Noves, wife of Hugues de Sade.

It appears, by the will of this lady, that after several pious legacies she made her husband her heir, to whom she had brought ten children; six boys, and four girls. Her eldest son Poulon, who was the architect of the Metropolitan church at Avignon, and made dean of that church by the bishop, died before Laura, in the twentieth year of his age. Angiere, her eldest daughter, married in 1345 Bertrand Domicellus, lord of Bedarride. She had two thousand five hundred florins for her portion, a very considerable sum at that time. Her mother left her but one florin, probably on account of her ill conduct after marriage, which was such that Clement VI. at the solicitation of her relations, commanded the nuns of St. Catherine d'Apt, on pain of excommunication, to receive her, and keep her shut up for the rest of her life. Audibert became dean of Notre Dame de Dons, where he was placed at twelve years old; and

afterwards provost of Tholouse. Ermeffenda was a nun in the convent of St. Laurence, and procuratrice of that convent. Hugues, or Hugonin, the third son, became the eldest by the death of Poulon, and the entrance of Audibert into the ecclesiastic state. From him descend the three branches of the house of Sade, established at Avignon and in Provence. Margerita, the third daughter, died before Laura. Gorcenete was twice married, and possessed the fortune of her sister Angiere, who made it over to her. Her second husband was Bernard Ancezuine de Caderouffe, of one of the first houses in Provence; and she was married a third time to Raimond de Moulfong, lord of Menamenes. Peter de Sade was canon of the Metropolitan church. Laura left him but one florin in her will. James, and Jaanet, who died young and without issue, she left also one florin each.

It is not wonderful that Laura should alter so early in life, with so many domestic sicknesses and cares, and the grief arising from the conduct of some of her children, particularly her eldest daughter, so delicate as she was on the point of honour herself. And if any of her other children behaved ill, as should appear from her leaving them only one florin, it must

have touched her very sensibly, after the care she took in their education, to inspire them with those sentiments her own heart was filled with. Add to this, she lost her eldest son, who appears to have been amiable, at a very trying period of his life, and some children when young, and had much unkindness to support in the behaviour of her husband.

Modesty was her peculiar characteristic ; and it appears she was not puffed up with her birth, her beauty, or the fame she derived from the praises of Petrarch. She was not only magnificent but elegant in her dress, particularly in the ornaments of her head, and the manner of tying up her hair : and we have seen she wore a coronet of gold or silver, and sometimes for variety a garland of flowers, which she gathered herself in the fields. Petrarch speaks of two rich dresses she had ; the one of purple edged with azure, and embroidered with roses ; the other enriched with gold and jewels. In the first he compares Laura to the phoenix, which naturalists describe with purple feathers and a blue tail strewed over with roses. ‘ Some,’ says he, ‘ place this bird in the mountains of Arabia ; but ’tis flown to our climate.’ It is doubtful whether Laura was fond of all this magnificence. It should seem she only conformed

to it to please her family and support her rank ; for Petrarch says of her in one of his sonnets, that she despised all those vain nets in which mankind were taken captive.

‘ Rank, pearls, rubies, and gold, you reject as a weight that depresses the mind ; and even the rare gem of beauty is only pleasing to you when adorned by virtue, that treasure of treasures.’

She was extremely reserved in her behaviour toward the men ; and this was necessary in the corrupt age in which she lived, and in a city where the most innocent actions were often ill interpreted. An old lady said one day to her, that life was preferable to honour. ‘ What is it I hear ? ’ replied Laura with warmth : ‘ change the order if you please, and place honour before life : without it there is neither beauty nor happiness in the world. A woman who loses this precious treasure, is no better than a mummy, a vile corpse which no one can behold without horror. A gnawing worm devours her continually, and her condition is a hundred times more wretched than that of the dead. The grief of Lucretia in this situation ought to have served instead of a poniard.’

A reserve so uniform and constant generally

renders people serious and rigid, and gives them an air of unpoliteness: but Laura was the contrary of all this; and Petrarch advises all her sex to observe Laura, to look at her eyes, and learn from her how they may unite gaiety, politeness, grace, and the air of fashion, with wisdom and the principles of religion. ‘Imitate,’ says he, ‘if you can, her language and her manners. When she speaks, her eloquence and modesty enchant every heart. When she is silent, her looks charm and instruct; but do not attempt to vie with her in person. Her eyes, her features, are a present of nature, which art will never be able to attain.’

The education of Laura seems to have been like that of other ladies of her age; they were taught to sew and spin, but very rarely to read or to write. Those who knew how to read were called learned ladies, and were much sought, and in high esteem, when they were met with, which was generally in convents. We find that Petrarch always praises the understanding and goodness of Laura, but never speaks of its having been adorned with cultivation: ‘That her words had the dignity of nature, which raised her above her education, and that her voice was a source of continual enchantment, soft, angelic and divine: that it

could appease the wrath, dissipate the clouds, and calm the tempests of the soul.' An elevated turn of mind supplied the advantages of a liberal education, and her sweetness of temper won upon every heart. How touching is it to view this amiable woman, sinking under distresses from an unhappy marriage, from imprudent children, and inwardly pining at heart with an attachment that in a state of liberty would have been her felicity and glory; continually to behold the object of this affection a prey to the agonizing sensations of this fatal and tyrannic passion! Nothing was more simple than the life of Laura, occupied in the education of her children and her domestic cares. She went out only to perform the duties of society, or to enjoy the benefit of the air with the companions of her walks. In the suburbs of the Cordeliers there was a little house built in the Gothic style, with one window to the south, and another to the north, and a stone seat before the door, which was called the house of madam Laura. She used sometimes to sit here alone with a pensive air, musing and talking to herself. In the heat of summer it was a custom anciently at Avignon for the greatest people to sit out at the door for the benefit of the fresh air. She sometimes ap-

peared at sun-rise at the window. What a felicity for Petrarch when he happened to pass that spot! 'I rise,' says he, 'at break of day to salute Aurora, the sun that follows her, and above all that other sun which has dazzled me from my tender youth, and has every day the same bright effect on my heart. Other lovers desire the shades of evening, and hate Aurora: but it is quite the contrary with me; my pleasures are suspended till night folds up her shades.' It appears that Sennuccio, the friend of Petrarch, lived in the neighbourhood of Laura, and that Petrarch had desired he would inform him when Laura appeared at the window, which she often did at sun-rise.

Such was the beautiful, the amiable Laura. I know of no character, however illustrious, that has been done so much justice to as Laura's by the pen of Petrarch, who yet always declares his praises little equal to her worth. I will not undertake to express the grief of Petrarch on this event. 'I dare not think of my condition,' says he, 'much less can I speak of it.' He lived several days without eating or drinking, nourishing himself with his tears.

It was the custom formerly to write down in a book they read the most frequently the thing they wished to retrace. On the manuscript of

Virgil I have mentioned, ornamented with paintings by Simon de Sienna, which was Petrarch's favourite book, he wrote these lines :

‘ Laura, illustrious by her own virtues, and long celebrated in my verses, appeared to my eyes for the first time the 6th of April 1327, at Avignon, in the church of St. Claire, at the first hour of the day : I was then in my youth. In the same city, on the same day, and at the same hour, in the year 1348, this luminary disappeared from our world. I was then at Verona, ignorant of my wretched situation. That chaste and beautiful body was buried the same day after vespers in the church of the Cordeliers : her soul returned to its native mansion in heaven. To retrace the melancholy remembrance of this great loss, I have written it with a pleasure mixed with bitterness in a book I often refer to. This loss convinces me there is no longer any thing worth living for. Since the strongest cord of my life is broken, with the grace of God I shall easily renounce a world where my cares have been deceitful, and my hopes vain and perishing.’

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