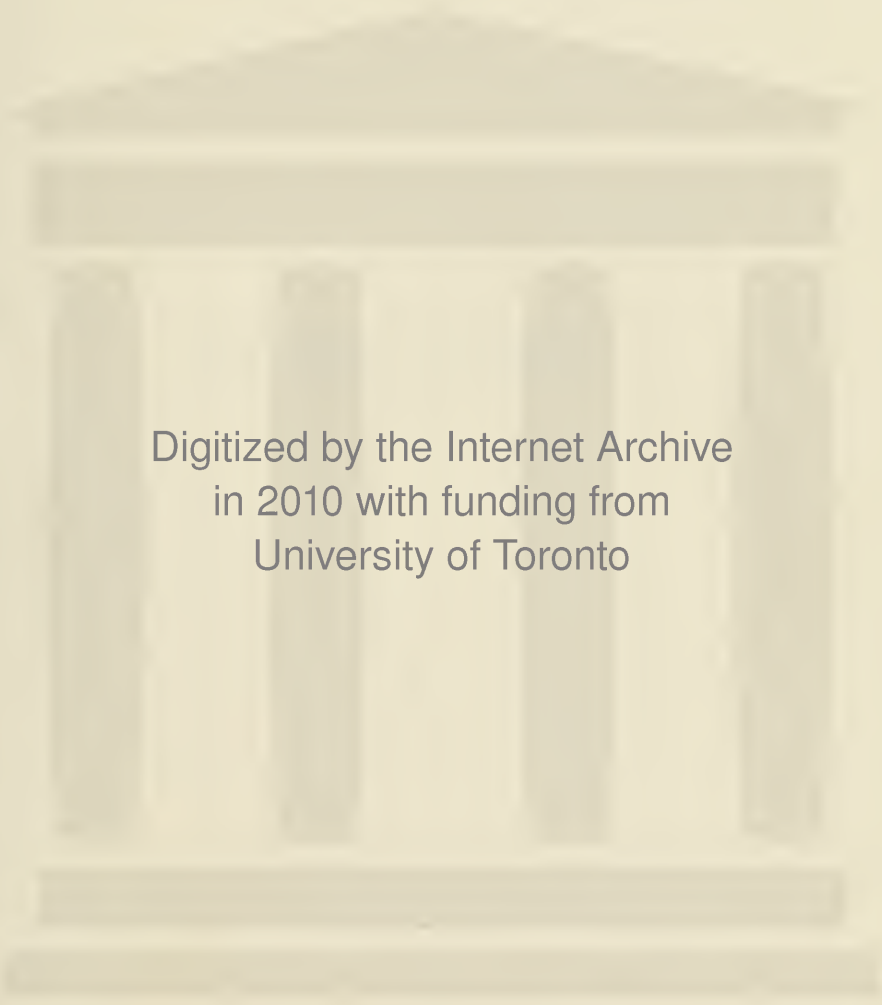

PIETRO ARETINO

PIETRO ARETINO

The Scourge of Princes

By EDWARD HUTTON

With a Portrait after Titian

CONSTABLE & CO LTD
LONDON: BOMBAY: SYDNEY
1922

Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

TO

MY FRIEND

NORMAN DOUGLAS

NOTE

My various debts to previous writers on the subject of this work are duly acknowledged in the notes throughout the book, but I wish here especially to mention Comm. Alessandro Luzio, of Mantua, to whom every writer upon Pietro Aretino owes so much, my friend Professor Cesare Foligno, of Oxford, who has generously given time and thought to reading the proofs, and my friend Comm. Biagi, of Florence, who obtained for me more than one rare *opuscolo*.

INTRODUCTION

ARETINE. The name is infamous. Why? Was the man really the monster he is universally represented to have been from his time to our own? His legend, as the French say, would seem to affirm it. There we read of one who was born in a hospital, the son of a courtesan, and boasted of it; who was without name, without family, without friends and protectors, without education; who at thirteen years of age robbed his mother and fled to Perugia; who at eighteen fled from Perugia to Rome, where he robbed his master, Agostino Chigi, and presently appeared as the creature of Cardinal de' Medici, whom he supported with an infinite wealth of libel, calumny and the most vile and shameless abuse of his rivals for the Papacy, after the death of Leo X; who was kicked out of Rome for writing the notorious *Sonetti Lussuriosi* for Raimondi's infamous engravings; who wandered as a vagabond over Italy, a black-mailer and a beggar; who became a friar in

Ravenna, but whom even the Capuchins were obliged to vomit; who fled to Venice and in the freedom of that great Republic lived like a prince on begging and threatening letters; who kept a harem and worse in his palace on the Grand Canal, for no vice was a stranger to him and no calumny too outrageous; who hung a picture of the Virgin in his house and said it was a portrait of his mother and thus declared himself to be Antichrist; who was the spy of Italy's worst enemies, Charles V and Francis I, and who died as a dog dies without a thought of repentance in the midst of a howl of blasphemy and laughter; over whose grave was written:

> Qui giace l' Aretin poeta tosco,
> Che disse mal d' ognun, fuor che di Dio,
> Scusandosi col dir, non lo conosco.

Was Aretino really the monster this legend portrays, or is he now to be whitewashed: with the discovery of new documents, on better evidence than our forefathers possessed to be at any rate excused with Alexander VI and Lucrezia Borgia or acquitted altogether with Machiavelli?

No. Modern scholarship should propose itself no such task in regard to Aretino. The

man was a monster: a monster certainly, only not a magician. To listen to some of his biographers one might think he owed his success to sorcery or magic. But the truth is that nothing was further from him than enchantment. He was a monster, it is true: to deny that is to belittle him; but above all he was a man of his day, perhaps the most free and complete expression of the age in which he lived—the sixteenth century. That, and his enormous ability, together with the fact that he founded the modern Press and used the hitherto unsuspected weapon of publicity with an incomparable appreciation of its power, are his chief claims upon our notice.

Something evil and corrupt had entered into the civilisation of all Europe at this time, and not least of Italy. The Middle Age which had held out to humanity so great a promise, had in some inexplicable way and for some inexplicable reason failed, failed in endurance and in life. The fifteenth century had been full of disaster almost everywhere save only in Venice, and even Venice could not escape the spiritual disaster which that century made apparent. For with the sixteenth century we are face to face with the spiritual break-up of

Europe and European society. Something evil, depraved, venal and mean appears. The pen is bought and sold, futile praise and blame are purchased by popes, kings and prelates, and we see a monster appear, a monster of genius blackmailing and blackmailing successfully every authority, every power. That monster was Aretino, and he was at home in Venice and in Venice passed no inconsiderable portion of his days. For the Venice of the sixteenth century was a promised land for such as he. A city of wealthy merchants, an aristocratic oligarchy fast degenerating into plutocracy, in which snobs abounded as well as scholars, Venice was then the greatest independent metropolis in Europe, insolent, and artistic, the great asylum for exiles, for the proscribed, the chance poor scholar, the perverted and the corrupt. For she could offer to all of them alike this great gift: liberty. And it is in the letters of the very type and paragon of all these together that we find perhaps the best picture of the city at this time—in the letters of Aretino who, vile as he was, was yet a man of genius; scoundrel though he was, was yet full of humanity; brutal though he was, was yet full of pity and love for the miserable, the unfortunate, the

poor; ignoble though he was, was yet able to dominate the Italy of his time; whom Francis I honoured, Charles V spoke with familiarity, and Ariosto surnamed *il divino*. Here in Venice he was the friend of Titian, the correspondent of Michelangelo. Here in Venice he lived like a prince, though he had nothing solid under his feet; he was as insolent as a condottiere, though he had rendered no service; he was the most famous man in the city, though his record was merely infamous. An epoch had appeared which was an anarchy, in which everything was questioned, everything doubtful; in which anything might happen and anything might be thought to be true; an epoch without principles and without authority: in which a charlatan of genius might do anything, might destroy the unity of Europe or the spiritual and philosophical basis upon which Europe stood, by one multiple weapon—calumny.

This age—the age of Luther and the revolt of the barbarian—is in itself admirably summed up and expressed by Aretino. He, too, refused authority and tradition and appealed only to private judgment. As a writer this is his value, in this resides his originality. "I am a free man," he boasts. "I do not need

to copy Petrarca or Boccaccio. My own genius is enough. Let others worry themselves about style and so cease to be themselves. Without a master, without a model, without a guide, without artifice I go to work and earn my living, my well-being and my fame. What do I need more? With a goose-quill and a few sheets of paper I mock myself of the universe."

It is because Aretino is a man of genius, and because he sums up and expresses that disastrous age of anarchy, its complete moral disorder and collapse, its delight in insulting and disregarding the past, its repudiation of every ancient authority and tradition, that he is worth studying. And if we add to this that he contrived a weapon for his own ends which has in our own day come to be more powerful than any established government or elected parliament or hereditary monarchy—publicity, the Press—there is more than sufficient excuse for this book.

Aretino's virtues as a writer are to be discussed there; but we ought to note that, great as these virtues are, they are always those of a journalist, never those of a man of letters. His great strength is his spontaneity,—the ability to write what is in his head almost without a

second thought. This is the very life of his plays and the soul of his letters. If we find something more thoughtful in the *Ragionamenti* it is but an illusion, those curious dialogues are the first effort of "realism" in European letters; and had the great paper he in fact conducted ever really existed, would have taken their place as the *feuilletons* along with his letters which are the leading articles, his religious works which are the articles for Sunday, and his verses whose only virtue is that they comment without scruple and in the most lively and unrestrained fashion upon the events of the day.

In the face and the voice of Aretino we see the face and hear the voice of that virile, mean and irresponsible age in which Europe foundered, and, perhaps finally, broke up as an entity. It is an ignoble face for all its intelligence, it is an uncertain voice for all its assurance. For Aretino lacked and sought his whole life long what the world has lacked and sought ever since his day—security.

Nevertheless, his qualities must not be obscured by their defects. He had very special qualities. His mind was not profound or distinguished, nor was his nature elevated or noble; but it was, though brutal, energetic

and ardent, and his work remains perhaps the most significant and certainly the nearest to life of any Italian writer of his day. How far in his actuality and realism, in the wonderful picture of life he gives us, are we from the romantic stories of Ariosto, the intellectual propositions of Machiavelli, the mere charm and music of Tasso, the courtliness of Castiglione, the pedantry of Bembo. His work has the odour of life, the smell of the city, its confusion, rapidity, injustice, the discomfort of its crowded streets, the vehemence of its public life, its noise, and its enormous and futile gestures which mean so much for a moment. There lies his greatness; and his glory and his shame are that if he was the creature of his time, he was the creature also of those who seemed to control it, that if he spoke his mind, as he often did, he more often fawned upon his patrons or spat in their faces, and always for money.

Even here we should distinguish and have compassion. We must grasp the state of society and not Italian society alone, in his time. Everyone was "on the make." Francis I of France thought he could be Emperor. Henry VIII of England thought he could be Pope. Charles V thought he could be lord of

the whole earth. Both Francis and Charles thought they could swallow Italy. Force and fraud and intrigue and bribery were the means used by everyone without scruple. No more than these men was Aretino a parasite. It was an age when it was impossible to live by Letters. The patron was necessary for a poor man, and as Aretino said, he lived by the sweat of his pen.[1] It might seem certain that the patron got what he deserved. And in a society rapidly going to pieces, continually at the mercy of outrage and war, in the midst of whose futility even the Eternal City was sacked, it is at least not surprising and perhaps not unnatural that an adventurer of genius like Aretino found the best weapon in his pen, which alone, whether of quill or iron, was the only weapon that was able to inspire respect, of which all men were afraid. And with what incomparable freedom and force he wielded that weapon his letters bear witness.

Such a man, living in such a time, was bound to acquire a legend, and it is with the idea of establishing the facts in regard to his legend, of drawing out of it something that may pass as his biography that I have written

[1] *Lettere*, II, 58.

this book. I cannot hope to have been just, for too much is hidden from us for justice; but at least I have hoped to show that the monster was human, though he remain a monster to the end.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER I.	BIRTH AND EDUCATION (1492–1516) .	3
II.	ARETINO IN ROME UNDER LEO X (1516–1522)	19
III.	ARETINO AND PASQUIN (1522–1523) .	33
IV.	MANTUA (1523)	47
V.	IN ROME UNDER CLEMENT VII (1523–1525)	57
VI.	IN LOMBARDY WITH GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE (1526) . . .	87
VII.	VENICE (1527–1531)	107
VIII.	VENICE (1531–1533). THE HOUSE OF ARETINO	131
IX.	THE ARETINES	153
X.	ARETINO AND FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V (1533–1539)	171
XI.	ARETINO'S SECRETARIES . . .	183
XII.	ARETINO'S FRIENDS	197
XIII.	LATER YEARS	219
XIV.	ARETINO AS WRITER	235

I

BIRTH AND EDUCATION

(1492–1516)

I

BIRTH AND EDUCATION

AREZZO AND PERUGIA

PIETRO ARETINO was born in Arezzo in the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, April 19–20, 1492. He himself tells us this in various letters,[1] which together with the following sonnet from his hand fix the date, since we know that Easter Day in 1492 was on April 22.[2]

In questa chiara sacrosanta notte
A la qual segue di Venere il die,
Dalle fedeli creature pie
Riverito con lagrime dirotte,
Natura fuor delle materne grotte
Trasse il mio spirito ne le membra mie,
Dirò con sorti più buone che rie ;
Poi che a soffrirle ho le voglie incorrotte.

[1] In referring to Aretino's *Lettere* I use the Paris Edition in 6 vols. of 1609. The splendid new edition, edited by FAUSTO NICOLINI (Laterza, Bari, 1913–1916), is as yet incomplete.

[2] See letter to Giovio written in May, 1545 (*Lettere*, Parigi, 1609), III, 141, in which he says he was in his fifty-fourth year ; another written in July of same year (III, 153), in which he says he had reached the age of fifty-three years ; and another written in November, 1552 (VI, 111), in which he says that he has passed his sixtieth birthday.

Patì Gesù per la salute altrui
Nel punto che ne l'alvo più non giacqui
E che da carcer tal libero fui
In quel che al mondo apparendo non tacqui
Quasi piangessi la croce di lui
Per me Cristo morì, per Cristo io nacqui.[1]

All who have written on Pietro Aretino until the last few years[2] have asserted that he was a bastard: that his father was Luigi Bacci, a gentleman of Arezzo, and his mother a nameless prostitute, Tita. Well, it was a century of bastards, but Aretino was not one of them. How did this legend, for legend it is, arise?

It seems to have arisen largely through Aretino's fault. His Letters everywhere lend colour to his supposed bastardy. "I was born in a spedale," he says, "but with the soul of a King."[3] "They say," he writes in another place, "that I am the son of a courtesan, it may be so."

[1] *Rime diverse di molti Eccellentiss. Autori* (Venice, 1545, *et seq.*), I, 211.

[2] See MAZZUCHELLI, *Vita di P. A.* (Padua, 1741—Second Edition, Brescia, 1763). I refer always to this second edition, which is "revised and enlarged." Cf. CHASLES, *Études sur W. Shakespeare, Marie Stuart et L'Arétin* (Paris, 1851). GAUTHIEZ, *L'Arétin* (Paris, 1895). F. DE SANCTIS, *Storia della Lett. Ital.* (Milan *Treves*), p. 95 *et seq.*

[3] *Capitolo a Cosimo de' Medici* in F. BERNI, etc. *Opere burlesche* (*Firenze*, 1723), III, p. 10. *Lettere*, I, 67; III, 109; VI, 261.

But there is more than this. He continually calls Francesco the son of Luigi Bacci brother,[1] and in one place asserts that Francesco is "*tutta una pasta*" with himself.[2] Most convincing of all he writes in 1551: "I do not speak of the death of my father, but of that of my brother (Cecco Bacci),"[3] which seems conclusive, for Francesco the son and Luigi Bacci the father died almost at the same time.[4]

Nevertheless, Aretino was not the illegitimate son of Luigi Bacci, though it would seem he was not reluctant to let people think so. In that century certainly, and perhaps not then alone, such a man as Aretino vastly preferred to be thought the bastard of a gentleman than what he was, the legitimate production of a shoemaker.

Yes, the Scourge of Princes was the son of a presumably nameless shoemaker called Luca and of his wife Tita, both of Arezzo.[5] Two

[1] *Lettere*, I, 132; V, 74; V, 166; IV, 74. Also in *Lettere scritte all' A.* (Bologna, 1874, 2 vols. of 2 parts), Francesco signs "Vostro caro fratello," II, i. 277.

[2] *Lettere*, V, 215.

[3] *Lettere*, VI, 50, "Entro non in la morte del mio padre . . . ma in quella del fratello (Cecco Bacci)."

[4] See *infra*, p. 9.

[5] See Alessandro Luzio, *La Famiglia di P.A.* in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. Ital.*, IV (1884), 361, *et seq.*

documents of the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, published by Alessandro Luzio, have established this fact beyond dispute. In one of them a certain Medoro Nucci whom we already know from Aretino's Letters[1] suddenly quarrels with Aretino and directs an insulting letter to him : " To Aretino Pietro, the son of Luca the Shoemaker."[2] This Medoro Nucci was of Arezzo —a strange and restless creature. He came to Venice about 1550, and Aretino with his usual imprudent generosity brought him and his wife Angelica to his house. For some time their relations were cordial, and Angelica expressed herself as grateful to Aretino for his kindness to her husband,[3] and Aretino wrote her an affectionate reply.[4] His letters to Nucci are those of an intimate friend ;[5] but presently a quarrel breaks out in which the Duke of Florence's ambassador at Venice is involved. Aretino considered Nucci ungrateful and attacked him. He replied in the letter, whose direction I have already quoted, which begins " *Bufone, Cativo.*"

[1] *Lettere*, V, 165.

[2] " Allo Aretino Pietro de Lucha calzolaio." See Luzio, *op. cit.* p. 385, who prints the document itself from the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze :* " Carteggio dell' amb. Del Pero col Duca Cosimo, Venezia, 1555."

[3] *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 199.

[4] *Lettere*, V, 246.

[5] *Lettere*, V, 166, 239.

This letter in which Aretino was proclaimed as the son of a shoemaker by an Aretine, who was likely to know what he was talking about, was a great embarrassment to the Scourge of Princes, then in all the glory of his amazing fame. At length he determined to make a clean breast of it. He sent the letter to Duke Cosimo de' Medici, with a covering letter from himself in which he confesses that he is the son of Luca the shoemaker, and then characteristically turns it into a boast: "I say that I glory in the title that he gives me to vilify me —inasmuch as it should teach the nobles to procreate sons like him whom a shoemaker has begotten in Arezzo. . . . Yes, I am born of a mender of shoes."[1]

Possibly Aretino was surprised that the Duke made so little, as he did, of such tremendous news. For Cosimo replied, very sensibly, having many very serious things to think of just then, that Aretino who had "grown old in experience" should not worry about such attacks as Nucci's.[2] That was all.

But this confession of Pietro's settles the

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.* 386–7, "Dico che mi glorio del titolo che per avilirmi egli dammi, conciosiachè ai nobili insegna a procrear figliuoli simili a quello, che un calzolaio ha generato in Arezzo. . . . Io natoci d'uno acconciator di scarpe."

[2] Luzio, *op. cit.* 367, *n.* 2.

matter. All his enemies used the knowledge without mercy. Nicolò Franco, for instance, says :

> Ch' esca da far stivali agli Aretini . . .
> É vero ancor, secondo si favella
> Che il padre tuo sia un povero calzolairo ?

And the author of the *Vita di Pietro Aretino*, ascribed formerly to Berni,[1] says that Aretino was the son of a father, "villano e calzolaio." But Aretino is not to be put out of countenance. "I receive honour from being born of base blood in Arezzo, for none of my blood were what I am . . . I can give nobility to others."[2]

This being established, what are we to make of all those allusions to the Bacci in his letters ? This, that when he speaks of the Bacci as his brothers he does not mean his blood brothers, but his fellow citizens of Arezzo,[3] and his friends.[4] As regards the fact that he writes of the death of his father and of his "brother" Francesco Bacci in the same sentence, it is to be explained by the curious coincidence that

[1] Ed. Milano, Daelli : in Bib. Rara. (1864).

[2] *Lettere*, VI, 134.

[3] Thus he calls the Camaiani and Tarlato Vitali brothers, both of Arezzo. Vasari he called son (see later).

[4] *Lettere*, IV, 66. This letter to Gianbattista Bacci is very enlightening on this point.

his own father Luca and Luigi and Francesco Bacci all died about the same time.[1]

We know thus that Aretino was the son of Luca the shoemaker, of whom we know nothing. What of his mother, Tita ? She too is nameless ;[2] but that he honoured and loved her we know.

In 1548 Aretino applied to Vasari with the most eager prayers for a copy of the portrait that existed in Arezzo of Tita, his mother. " If your letters alone have rejoiced me," he writes, " what consolation I should have felt in my heart of hearts if with them I had received the portrait of her of whom I was born in Arezzo ? I beg, nay I pray you by whatever you have in you of loving-kindness and virtue, to put aside every other business and to copy and send me by the courier Lorenzetto in Florence the portrait of my mother which is near the door of San Pietro [should be Sant' Agostino], where she stands before the Angel in the likeness of the Virgin Annunciate. Your style is of so rare a grace that I shall find an effect so living as almost to persuade me,

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.* 375–6. Gualtiero had died in 1541, cf. *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 277.

[2] Aretino had relations named Bonci. Nicolò and Fabiano were (*Lettere*, II, 158) his uncles ; but we do not know whether they were Tita's brothers or Luca's.

in seeing the picture, that I saw her alive. . . . And then witness is borne by the fact that she is represented as Mary, Mother of Christ, to the sacred goodness of so modest a woman."[1]

Vasari was slow to comply with Aretino's wishes, and in another letter Aretino emphasises his need of a faithful copy, for Lappoli, though a poor artist, had made a good likeness. In 1549 Aretino writes to thank Vasari for the portrait which had arrived, and he tells him amidst his thanks how deeply he has been moved by the picture.[2] He showed it to his

[1] *Lettere*, V, 66, written from Venice in December, 1548. Cf. VASARI, *Vite* (ed. Milanesi, Florence, 1906), III, 220. Vasari says : "From the hand of Matteo Lappoli there is in another chapel on the left as we enter by the side door of the church, a fresco representing Our Lady with the Angel of Annunciation ; in the figure of the Angel is the portrait of Giuliano Bacci. . . . Above the same door on the outside Matteo painted another Annunciation with St. Peter and St. Paul on either side. The face of the Madonna is the portrait of the mother of Pietro Aretino, the very famous poet." All these works have perished. Vasari was, of course, also of Arezzo. Aretino had greeted him in his first attempts as a painter, saluting his splendid promise (*Lettere*, II, 183). He invited him to make the *apparato* for the recital of *La Talanta* (VASARI, *op. cit.* VIII, 283), and encouraged him to marry Niccolosa Bacci though she was noble and he plebian (*Lettere*, V, 166, 215). Vasari returned Aretino's affection (VASARI, *op. cit.* VIII, 250), served him as an intermediary with his relations in Arezzo (VASARI, *op. cit.* VIII, 248), and did him many good offices with Duke Alessandro de' Medici, and was able to procure him drawings by Michelangelo (VASARI, *op. cit.* VIII, 266–7).

[2] *Lettere*, V, 114 (April, 1549).

friends and visitors, and Doni, hating him, makes capital for his hate out of it. "You are an Antichrist, a limb of the Great Devil. One sees the picture of the Virgin Annunciate that you have in your rooms, the portrait painted by Messer Giorgio Vasari that he was made by you to copy because you said it was an effigy of your mother. So to all you say: This is my mother, showing the Madonna. Thus you compare yourself to Jesus Christ, just like Antichrist."[1]

It is certainly wonderful and very Italian, this affection and respect for his mother in a man like Aretino, already old and insolent with successful blackmail and good fortune. And it is moving to see him with Titian trying to find a likeness in that portrait to Adria, his little daughter, and finding that "in the forehead, the eyes and the nose" the portrait is so like Adria that the child would seem rather to be the daughter of Tita than of him, Pietro.[2]

[1] Doni, *Terremoto* (in *op. cit.* F. Berni (Milano, Daelli, Bibl. Rara), II, 204.

[2] *Lettere*, V, 114. Adria was his daughter by Caterina Sandella, perhaps the most important of his "Aretines"—the women who lived in his house (see below). Of Adria, Mauro, one of the interlocuters in the *Vita di P. A.* by the pseudo-Berni (*op. cit.* F. Berni, Daelli, Milan, II, 191), says: God knows if she is his: "la dev' essere di più albumi che le frittate de frati."

This *Vita* is by an unidentified author, and was written in 1538. It is a tissue of calumnies.

Of the rest of Aretino's family we know a very little. Tita had two daughters by Luca, but the name of the elder has escaped us. The younger was called Francesca, and was living with her father in 1536 when Duke Alessandro de' Medici deigned to visit her.[1] Aretino sent her small presents from time to time,[2] and got together a dot for her. For this he was beholden to the generosity of the Cardinal of Ravenna, Benedetto Accolti, an Aretine.[3] Francesca was married early in 1537 to Orazio Vanotti, a soldier,[4] with whom she lived in poverty,[5] but only for a few years. She died very young in childbirth. Her children, they were twins, born at this time were looked after by friends of Aretino's.[6]

Of Aretino's childhood we know nothing. He himself tells us that he was taught by his mother in Arezzo, where he grew up,[7] and that

[1] *Lettere*, I, 64, "Fermossi la vostra alta persona dinanzi a la casa dove io nacqui, inchinandosi a la sorella mia . . ." (cf. III, 15).

[2] VASARI, *op. cit.* VIII, 348 (Letter from Vasari, 15th July, 1534).

[3] *Lettere*, I, 143. See *Lettere all' Aretino*, I, i. pp. 60, 67.

[4] *Lettere*, III, 14.

[5] *Lettere*, II, 159.

[6] *Lettere*, III, 173.

[7] *Lettere*, II, 250, ". . . mi insegnò mia madre in Arezzo dove nacqui e crebbi.'

he was only at school long enough to learn the elements of his religion.[1] His work shows us that he knew very little Latin and certainly no Greek.

He is reported to have left Arezzo suddenly, fleeing because he had written a sonnet against indulgencies;[2] and a certain air of likelihood is lent to this story, which is generally given the date of 1511, when he was nineteen, by D'Ancona's discovery of a book of verses by Aretino, published in Venice in 1512.[3] We know, therefore, that he was writing verses at this time, and if we can believe the title—Opera *nova*—that they were not the first he had written or even printed. Moreover, the first of the sonnets in this volume has the following prefatory note: "Alquante cose de uno adolescente Aretino Pietro, studioso in questa facultà (sic) et in pictura." There follows a sonnet in which the author talks of imperilling

[1] *Lettere*, I, 200, "Veramente io che tanto andai a la scuola quanto intesi la Santa Croce fatimi bene imperare componendo ladramente merito scusa e non quegli che lambiccano l'arte dei Grecie e dei Latini tassando ogni punto. . . ." Again he says (II, 242) that he never had a master (*precettore*).

[2] Girolamo Muzio, *Lettere Catholiche* (Venice, 1571), p. 232.

[3] D'Ancona, *La poesia pop. it.* (Livorno, 1906), p. 160, *n.* 3. The book has this title: *Opera nova del fecundissimo giovene Pietro Pictore Arretino, zoè strambotti, sonetti, capitoli, epistole, barzellette, et una desperata* (*Impresso in Venetia per Nicolò Zopino nel MCCCCCXII a dì XXII de Zenaro*).

himself in fear in his little boat on the sea of poetry, moved to sing, not in hope of the laurel but only to satisfy one more worthy, Francesco de Bontempi of Perugia.[1]

This note leads us to believe that Aretino was studying at Perugia in 1511–12, and not only literature but painting. That he knew a great deal about painting his letters would lead us to suppose, and his knowledge helps to explain his comprehension of Titian's art, and his appeal as a critic to Sebastiano del Piombo and other masters later. We have other reasons to believe that he had studied painting,

[1] See A. Luzio, *P.A. nei primi suoi anni a Venezia* (Torino, 1888), pp. 109 *et seq.* Alessandro Luzio has put every student of Aretino under so great a debt by his exquisite and patient scholarship that no gratitude can be enough. Here he has worked out D'Ancona's discovery and identified the Pietro Pictor Aretino with the Scourge of Princes. The sonnet of P.A. referred to continues thus :—

Ma sol per satisfar quel che più deggio
Francisco de Bontempi perusino
Che per altri occhi al mondo più non veggio.
E lui fia scorta col [suo] terso latino
E fida tramontana al piccol seggio
Del rude socio suo Pietro Aretino.

It is probable that this Francisco Bontempi is the same as the Francesco Buoncambi of Perugia of *Lettere*, I, 48. P. A. himself tells us in that letter that he was brought up (*stato allevato*) in Perugia, which he calls his own country (II, 146 ; V, 278, 304) and "the garden where flowered his youth" (I, 49).

for a lampoon written against him in 1532 when he was in Venice and attached to a column of the Rialto makes allusion to the rumour that he had once been a painter.[1]

That is really all we know about his advent to and his sojourn in Perugia. There seems no real ground for believing Mazzuchelli's story, which dates from a hundred years after Aretino's death, that he had to flee thence because, having seen in a public building a picture representing the Magdalen at the feet of Christ holding up her arms in supplication, he went by night and painted there a lute that the saint appeared to hold in her hands. The only value this story would seem to have is that it bears witness in a distorted fashion to the fact that he had studied painting at Perugia.

His life in that hill city, still one of the loveliest of Italy, though uncertain and difficult as he tells us,[2] seems on the whole to have pleased him. At any rate, he often alluded to the city and always with affection. "Perugia

[1] A. Luzio, *op. cit.* p. 111. The lampoon read :—

"... Non havessi lassato il tuo pennello,
Se pyntor fustu un tempo, come io odo."

[2] *Lettere*, IV, 190, written reminiscently when "il tempo mi caricassi delle sue infinite giornate"—a wonderful phrase.

is dear to me as my own country," he writes to the Priori of that city,[1] and again; "Perugia is my true fatherland because there I grew to manhood"—*mi sono allevato da grande.*[2]

[1] *Lettere*, II, 146. [2] *Lettere*, IV, 183.

II

ARETINO IN ROME UNDER LEO X
(1516–1522)

II

ARETINO IN ROME UNDER LEO X (1516–1522)

ONE day Aretino left Perugia and set out for Rome. We do not know in what year this happened. If we wished to believe his enemies[1] he was taken to Rome by his father, who, to give him employment, put him out to service in the house of Agostino Chigi, the rich and famous Sienese banker. He was not there long, for having stolen a silver cup, he entered the service of Cardinal San Giovanni, and when he died found employment with Pope Julius II; but having been dismissed he went off to Lombardy and thence came to Ravenna, where he became a Capuchin friar, but unable and unwilling to put up with such a life he threw off the habit, returned to Rome and entered the service of Pope Leo X, who had been elected to the throne of St. Peter in 1513.

[1] e.g. the PSEUDO-BERNI, *Vita dell' Aretino*, written to deride, expose, and attack him.

If there be any truth in this amazing story we can know nothing of it; there is nothing in any of Aretino's letters to support a single line of it, nor do we find any other confirmation for it.

So far as we know Aretino remained in Perugia till the year 1516 when he was twenty-four years old, when, as likely as not, " on foot, and only furnished with what he had on his back,"[1] he came to Rome.

We are led to believe that it was in 1516 that he first came to Rome by more than one passage in his letters. He tells us that he " wasted seven years in the service of the two Medici popes,"[2] while he makes no mention of Julius II. We know that he finally left Rome in 1525. Leo X died in 1521, so that he would have " wasted " four years with him if he left Chigi and entered the Pope's service in 1518, which leaves him three years to be " thrown away " with Clement VII as cardinal and pope and gives him just over a year with Chigi if, as we suppose, he came to Rome in 1516.[3]

No doubt Aretino came to Rome to seek his fortune, pushed on by an adventurous spirit,

[1] L'Ammirato, *Opuscoli* (Florence, 1642), II, 265.

[2] *Lettere*, I, 64; V, 271; VI, 114. See also the sonnet quoted by Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni*, p. 3, *n.* 3.

[3] N. Franco commenting in a sonnet on Aretino's statement

to find, if he might in the gorgeous Court of Pope Leo X, the eldorado he was always seeking, till he found it in Venice, as we shall see.

Soon after his arrival in Rome we find him living in the house and under the protection of Agostino Chigi, the Sienese banker.[1] This man had come to Rome in poverty in 1485, and had made an immense fortune. He had established over a hundred branches of his bank throughout Europe and among the Turks. He was a great shipowner, his fleets counted not less than 100 merchantmen, and he had 20,000 workmen in employment. His profusion was only second to that of the Pope. He cared, however, little for letters, but very eagerly patronised painting. His villa in Trastevere, now called the Farnesina, is perhaps the best memorial of his greatness. For him Raphael painted there the Triumph of Galatea, and Giulio Romano the Story of Cupid and

that he had wasted seven years in Rome in the service of the Medici Popes thus divides this service :—

> Aretin, gran pietate t' ha la gente
> Udendo che ti fur assassinati
> Sett' anni traditori, ch' hai gettati
> Con Leon quattro, e tre col ser Clemente.

Cf. Mazzuchelli, *Vita di P. A.* (Brescia, 1763), p. 17. This would bring Aretino's advent to Rome forward to 1517.

[1] *Lettere*, I, 126 ; II, 232 ; III, 163 ; IV, 166. Cf. *Lettere all' Aretino* II, i, 278–9.

Psyche which Raphael had designed. He had, too, a marvellous collection of furniture, among which was an ivory bed inlaid with gold and silver and precious stones; he had fountains and vases of silver, made by the most famous craftsmen, and marvellous tapestries. His stables were designed by Raphael, and held one hundred horses and harness of gold and silver. When these stables were newly finished Chigi used them as a banqueting hall and entertained there no less a Vicar of Christ than His Holiness Pope Leo X. Even Leo was amazed. "I was at my ease in your company before this entertainment," said the Pope. "Do not change your attitude," replied Chigi, "this place is humbler than you think;" and drawing aside the tapestries he discovered the mangers which were hidden. When later he again entertained the Pope in the Loggia of his garden by the Tiber, the silver plates and dishes, as soon as they had been used, were thrown by his orders into the Tiber. We have here, perhaps exaggerated, the usual ostentation of the parvenu. At the same time Chigi was not a fool, and the plate thus flung away was carefully caught in nets stretched for the occasion beneath the water to be drawn in

when the banquet was ended. On another occasion when the Pope dined with him each guest was served in plate that bore his own arms. This was at the banquet which Chigi, then fifty-four years old, gave to celebrate his marriage with one of his mistresses, by whom he had had several children. The Pope himself joined their hands, rejoicing no doubt at such a triumph of religion and morality. But Chigi was prudent to the end; having thus paid homage to the person and prejudices of the Vicar of Christ, he read his will to the Pope as chief magistrate of Rome and thus registered and, as he hoped, legalised it. Chigi's great rival was the Florentine Lorenzo Strozzi, whose taste in banquets was all grotesque and macabre. He was nowhere beside Agostino Chigi.[1]

It was in this celebrated banker that Aretino found his first protector in Rome.

In what capacity did he enter the Chigi household?

His calumniators say that it was as a mere domestic servant he appeared there, and further that he was presently dismissed for stealing a silver cup. Knowing Aretino as

[1] Cugnoni, in the *Archivio Romano*, II, 37, has published the biography of Agostino Chigi, written by his descendant Fabio Chigi, afterwards Pope Alexander VII.

we do, as a violent libeller who puts Berni and Franco quite in the shade, it would seem unlikely, if this were true, that he would not have covered the name of Agostino Chigi with ridicule and shame. Instead of that, whenever he speaks of him it is quite without bitterness. Writing of the difficulty of finding a friend in the merchant class he says : " I always hated the poverty of their wealth ; but my fate, to laugh at me, when I was little more than a youth, shoved me up against Agostino Chigi, where I might have died if he had been a mere merchant, but I revived my soul with the splendours, the banquets, the pomp which often amazed Leo the inventor of the grandeur of the Popes."[1]

Certainly in Chigi's service he saw the whole life of Rome in the *cinquecento* pass before his eyes. There he saw Raphael, Iacopo Sansovino, Sebastiano del Piombo, Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine, many poets, scholars and men of letters, Bembo, Castiglione then ambassador for Federigo Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, Tebaldo, Accolti and Paolo Giovio, and many too of those who pass before us so vividly in his letters.

Probably when at last he left the protection

[1] *Lettere*, I, 126.

of Chigi he was already known as a writer and a wit. Certainly in the earlier years of Leo X, Aretino was already writing. Rossi[1] cites a pastoral comedy in which after speaking of the poets of the Roman Court such as Bembo, del Castiglione and others the writer names Aretino.

> L' altro Aretino el qual sol si cognomina
> Fra pastor Toschi in cantar dolce e libero
> Che il bene e il male in lingua sciolta domina.

It was then with an established reputation that he passed to the court of Leo X.

The "golden age" of Leo X was to shine with so much lustre because of the appalling darkness and confusion which followed it, and which it had helped to produce, or at least had done nothing to hinder. In a few years Europe was to be split asunder, the most desolating revolution since the fall of the Roman Empire, and from the same barbarous quarter, was to overwhelm Christendom and civilisation; and Rome itself was to be taken and sacked by the barbarians. All this was to befall within ten years of Leo's death. The change that came over the fortunes, not only, though especially, of Italy, in politics, in

[1] V. Rossi, *Pasquinate di P. A. ed anonime* (Palermo-Turin, 1891), pp. xxvii and 117.

literature, in art and in society, in life itself, was so appalling, so sudden and so complete, that it seemed inexplicable, and it is little to be wondered at that, ever since, the pontificate of Leo X has been thought of as a golden age.

And the Pope, if he were not so great a man, so far-seeing a politician or so intellectual a force as his father Lorenzo de' Medici, was involved in far greater affairs, and if not equal to them, seemed to be. His *savoir vivre* never failed him. And in truth he was entirely successful in this, that he made Rome the real capital of Italy and perhaps of the world. This was his great achievement, and it makes all that comes after seem more tragic, if that be possible, than it really was. Leo not only filled Rome with artists and men of letters, he made it the centre of Italian life and society, of a society changing so rapidly, of which Agostino Chigi and Lorenzo Strozzi were the portents. Such achievements as theirs would have been impossible till then. Leo enjoyed it all : lived in public, laughed and joked like a secular monarch, enjoyed the vulgar wit and antics of buffoons and the ridiculous spectacle of human degradation. He lived generously and on the whole nobly ; but his taste was insecure, though it may have been his cynicism

which encouraged a host of wretched poetasters, and it was certainly a cruel wit which permitted the crowning on the Capitol of the ridiculous versifier Barbarella, a priest of Gaeta, an old man of sixty, who, dressed as a noble of Imperial Rome, "declaimed his ridiculous verse to a mischievous mob outside the Vatican," and then was mounted on the back of an elephant to ride in triumph to the Capitol.

But such practical joking, certainly rare, though not rare enough, only shows us how secure that world thought itself to be. In such a world it was easy for our Pietro to keep his feet and his head. He must have enjoyed it all immensely, though perhaps not without a certain boredom in its best moments and achievements: the genius of Raphael, for instance, could he have grasped it, would have perished in his hands: but it was far beyond his reach, with the lark at heaven's gate.

No doubt so physically sane a being as Aretino never failed to enjoy those papal hunting excursions at Viterbo, hawking for partridges, gorgeously angling at Bolsena or hunting the wild-boar at Civita Vecchia or the stag at Magliana in the marshes of the Campagna. Truly might he say that he wasted four years with Leo in Rome; but he wasted

them well. He must have enjoyed prodigiously the jousts, the hunting, the comedies, the burlesques, the prodigality—above all the prodigality. If he did not enjoy it all, the Pope did. It is Aretino himself who tells us that Leo was universal in his appreciation of everything that belonged to his time from buffoons to men of learning,[1] though sometimes it may have been difficult to distinguish between them. And from Aretino's point of view too there must have been much to delight in: it was just the time and just the place in which to get on—for a brilliant and quite unscrupulous young man.

It is true that we have nothing of his belonging to this time, but his writings were probably satires and pasquinades by which he made himself feared; so that it came to be said that if you wished to attain anything at Rome it was necessary to have the goodwill—or not to have the illwill—of Pietro Aretino. A bad enemy!

> Fa sol che l' Aretino ti sia amico
> Perchè gli è mal nemico a chi l' acquiste.
> Io ho più volte viste le sue rime . . .
> Dio ne guardi ciascun dalla sua lingua.[2]

[1] *Lettere*, I, 25.
[2] Cf. Rossi, *op. cit.* 151.

The future Scourge of Princes was already adept, it seems, in the gentle art of persuasion, not to say blackmail. Yes, his career as a journalist had begun.

In those days words seem to have been worth money, to have been as good as money—some words. So they are still, as the "yellow journalist" knows. And here was the first and most splendid of the tribe, sprung fully armed from the head of—Janus. Yes, Aretino had found himself, and experienced—with what joy!—the explosive quality of naked "truth" when stated with "spirit and audacity";—say rather impudence and scurrility. He had discovered his road, a road he was to follow very far—too far. He prepared his way. He made enemies, of course: Rome was not yet without a memory of manners and tradition: but also friends; and both were to be a great part of his power. Chief among the friends was Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, later to be Clement VII, whom he was to exalt—and later to vituperate.

But Aretino, unlike his great successors of to-day, did not confine his diet to humbug: he devoured life with a brutal appetite to which nothing came amiss. If he studied and flattered and lampooned and blackmailed the

great, he also studied and sympathised with and understood the poor, the wretched and the vicious, and of this his terrible Medusa works, the *Cortigiana* and the *Ragionamenti*, are the result. He grasped the whole of the life of his time, except the flowers, if ever man did. It is a pity that his grasp was without delicacy or mercy.

And if here in Rome he first saw the luxury of life as well as the most wretched and horrible vice: it was here too, for the first time, he received a vision of art, of beauty, above all of antiquity. And in this he was more fortunate than he knew or perhaps deserved. What he made of it all we may perhaps see in the course of his life.

But at this point two misfortunes befell him. The first was the death of Agostino Chigi in 1520: the second the death of Pope Leo X in December, 1521. The glory of the *cinquecento* was departed, and it is strange to realise that it really filled less than a quarter of those hundred years. It was a strange glory, the glory of a sunset: but no one, least of all Pope Leo, regarded those clouds in the north.

III

ARETINO AND PASQUIN

(1522–1523)

III

ARETINO AND PASQUIN

(1522–1523)

POPE LEO X died in the evening of December 1, 1521. His death was so sudden that poison was suspected. The whole City was in an uproar which was soon to involve the whole world. In this uproar Aretino saw his chance. The Conclave and the election of a new Pope in the uncertain and confused circumstances of the time offered Aretino full scope for his peculiar talents. He threw the immensity of his voice into the cause of his candidate as became the first journalist of the modern world. This candidate was, of course, his protector Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the bastard son of that Giuliano de' Medici who had been murdered in the Pazzi Conspiracy in 1478. His journal was *Pasquino*.

According to Mazocchi, Pasquino was a schoolmaster who had a bitter tongue, and lived in Rome in the fifteenth century. But, by the end of that century, and especially in

those early years of the beginning of the sixteenth, this name had been transferred to an antique and mutilated statue which had been recently excavated and set up at the corner of the Piazza Navona. To this statue it had become the custom to affix learned squibs on the papal government and famous persons generally. Pasquin had lately taken a partner in the form of another statue excavated in the Campus Martius, and popularly known as Marforio (a foro Martis). The regular form of "pasquinade" now became that of a dialogue of question and answer in which Marforio was usually the questioner. These pasquinades became famous all over Europe. Pasquin, indeed, is of the modern world and is a sign of the return of free satire, anonymous and violent and often as vulgar and salacious as anything in antiquity. He is not really of the people: he is the creation of the learned, of scholars and men of letters.[1] He is part of the Renaissance, and, in the age of Aretino, was bound to be abused. But he was already famous before Aretino transformed him for his own purposes during the election of Pope Adrian VI.

[1] Cf. Gnoli, *Le origini di maestro Pasquino*, in *Nuova Antologia*, Ser. III, Vol. XXV.

In the early months of 1521, while Baldassare Castiglione was acting as Ambassador for Federigo Gonzaga at the Court of Leo X, Federigo writes to ask him to obtain for him "the verses that are used to be attached to the statue of Pasquino every year; not only those of last year but also of many years."[1] Castiglione replies on the 9th April to say that "the verses you ask me for are not to be had until the second of May, for such is the custom. Of those of past years I have not found a single one, for they ordinarily appear in a flash and are written and sent out and never seen again, for they are usually almost like improvisations."

These verses were even then distributed in fly-sheets, it might seem, precisely as the

[1] A. Luzio, *P. A. e Pasquino* in *Nuova Antologia*, Ser. III, Vol. XXVII (1890), pp. 679 *et seq.* V. Rossi, *Pasquinate di P. A. ed anon. per il Conclave e l' Elezione di Adriano VI* (Palermo-Torino, 1891). V. Rossi thinks the transformation of Pasquino from pedant to satirist took place earlier than 1521. A. Luzio, *op. cit. supra*, thinks it took place at this election of Adrian VI. It is probable that Aretino had already tried his hand and begun the transformation of Pasquin during the life of Leo. See the line from a pasquinade, probably from his pen in *La Cortigiana*, II, 8, referring to Leo X. The *festa* of Pasquin was on April 25, St. Mark's Day. The pasquinades which the Marquis asks for were not those of Aretino, but of the scholastic pedants who had created the custom. It was not usual, before the election of Adrian VI, to publish pasquinades except for the feast of Maestro Pasquino.

" istorie " are cried and sold in *La Cortigiana*[1] and as songs and verses are sold to-day on coloured single sheets of paper in Tuscany. These verses were not of the people at all but had a literary and scholastic character. The transformation of Pasquino from pedant to satirist seems to have been accomplished on the occasion of the death of Leo X and was the work of Pietro Aretino. Aretino himself describes his Pasquino as " the Master of clear and free truth, the salvation of Rome for ever,"[2] and in *La Cortigiana* he says again: " Who is Maestro Pasquino? One who caulked Lords and Monsignori."[3]

Aretino it is who transforms Pasquin, turns him into his " journal " and furiously abuses the right of criticism, comment and free speech, for his own purposes and those of his protector Cardinal de' Medici, candidate for the papal

[1] *La Cortigiana*, Act I, Sc. 4. (Furfante selling Istorie and Messer Maco and a Sienese.)

Furf. A le belle istorie, a le belle istorie.

Mac. Sta' cheto; che grida colui?

Sien. Debbe esser pazzo.

Furf. A le belle istorie, istorie, istorie, la guerra del Turco in Ungheria, le prediche di Fra Martino, il Concilio, istorie, istorie, la cosa d'Inghilterra, la pompa del Papa e de l'Imperadore, la Circumcision del Vaivoda, il sacco di Roma, etc.

[2] *Lettere*, II, 260.

[3] *Cortigiana*, I, Sc. 22. " Uno che ha stoppati . . . Signori e monsignori."

crown. During the election he and Antonio Lelio Romano were the two rival pasquinade writers, "Pietro nel Borgo, Antonio in Parione," which seems to mean that Antonio used the original statue of Pasquin, while Aretino used Marforio, for the Region of Rome named Parione embraces the Piazza Navona.

Aretino had already given proof of his excellent quality as a libellist. Whether or no the *Testamento dell' Elefante* is his[1] it is certain that even under Leo X his bitter tongue had won him power and popularity. The Conclave was his chance. Such a man could not be silent in such an opportunity.

It is reported that one day Paul III asked a certain Fra Baccio what was the finest *festa* that was celebrated in Rome; and that the friar replied: "When the Pope dies and they make another." The time of the *sedia vacante* has been indeed from that time almost to our own days a time of disorder and wild celebrations—in other words, of *festa*.

Aretino on this occasion threw himself into the clamour of Rome with all his energy. He wrote pasquinades daily as the modern journalist writes articles, but with a fury, an

[1] V. Rossi, *Un Elefante famoso*, in *Intermezzo*, I, pp. 28–30.

energy and perhaps a wit, certainly with a wealth of personal abuse, unknown to the English press of our day; and by this means he became famous through the world. He gathered about him all that was most unscrupulous and irresponsible, libellous and witty in the City and he certainly made no secret of the authorship of his work in that great moment. " Everyone says ' I am amazed that the College [of Cardinals] cannot silence Pietro Aretino.' "

> Dice ognun', Io stupisco che il collegio
> Non posso far tacer Pietro Aretino.[1]

In *La Cortigiana* he gives us the first verses of several of the pasquinades he wrote at this time[2] when he attacked every candidate except Cardinal de' Medici with the vilest abuse, and he reminds his candidate later, when he had

[1] Sonnet XLIII.

[2] *La Cortigiana*, Act III, Sc. 8.

> " Da poi che Costantin fece il presente
> per levarsi la lebbra da le spalle ? "
>
> " Cuoco è San Pier, s' è Papa un' de' tre frati."
>
> " Piacevi, monna Chiesa bella e buona,
> per legittimo sposo l' Armellino ? "
>
> " O Cardinali, se voi fossi noi,
> chè noi per nulla vorremmo esser voi."

V. Rossi, *op. cit.*, has published a collection of these pasquinades.

become Clement VII, of his services on this occasion.[1]

It is perhaps needless to add that Aretino's work had no effect whatever upon the election. Did it then have no effect at all ? On the contrary, it fulfilled the mission of all such efforts in our day as in his ; it amused the cynical among the Signori and it roused at once the interest and the anger, and expressed the worst instincts of the vulgar, the *popolo*. It also made him an immense fame.

But such work can no more be excused in his day than in ours, when it is, though less violent, much more widely practised. Aretino's use of Pasquin exceeded all bounds ; it consisted wholly of calumny and personal abuse. We look in vain in it for any sense of the enormous gravity of the situation or of the sacredness of the work then doing. Nor can we find any sense of responsibility. Aretino was working for personal ends at least as much as were any of the Cardinals he abuses. He blackguarded them one by one, revealing whatever he could learn in regard to them, true or false, covering everyone of them, except

[1] *Lettere*, I, 20. " Quel buon servitor che vi fui, quando la mia vertù che si pasceva de la laude vostra si armò contra Roma nel vacar de la sede di Leone."

Cardinal de' Medici, with contempt and ordure. He became known as "Cancelliere di Pasquino," Chancellor of Pasquin, and his tavern as the "Accademia di Pietro Aretino."

The College of Cardinals did not silence him, far more probably because it was wholly indifferent to him than because he was protected by one of their number, or because he amused and kept the *popolo* quiet. They had more important matters to think of than Maestro Pasquino.

It was perhaps the most tragic moment in the modern history of Europe. It is possible that had the right candidate been elected all might even yet have been saved. If this were so the whole future of Europe and the world lay at that moment in the hands of the men Aretino was covering with offal. It is easy to be wise after the event, and it is probable that the religious unity of Europe was irretrievably lost already and that nothing could have then saved it. But of all this the Cardinals had no knowledge: they were altogether unaware what was at stake. They grasped the political situation, understood the rival powers, Spain and the Empire and England arrayed against France: Charles V and Henry VIII against Francis I: they understood this and in

childish folly sought to use these mighty weapons each for his own personal ends. Did they realise what these still half barbarous masters were? Here is Francis I telling them that if they elect Medici "neither I nor any man in my kingdom will obey the Church of Rome."[1] Here is Henry VIII of England, whose father had usurped the throne and who was later to thrust England herself out of Christendom, intriguing with the Emperor to procure the election of Wolsey. Here is Wolsey, who "will not accept the dignity unless the Emperor and King deem it expedient and necessary for their security and glory, my object being to exalt your Majesties. "Then," says Henry, "like father and son we will dispose of the Apostolic seat, its authority and power, as though they were our own, and we will give law to the whole world."[2] There seems to have been no illusion anywhere about the election: the illusion was about the future.

The political balance in Italy, of course, favoured the League, and it seemed necessary to elect a Pope favourable to Charles V and Henry VIII. This was done: but such were

[1] Brewer Calendar, No. 1947, Fitzwilliam to Wolsey.
[2] Lanz, *Monumenta Habsburgica*, II, i. 510.

the jealousies within the Conclave that the tragic position of Europe and the Church was increased by the election of a Cardinal who was absent from Rome and the Conclave: Adrian of Utrecht, who had been the Emperor's tutor and was then acting as his Viceroy in Spain and who took the name of Adrian VI.

There followed a universal bewilderment which the Cardinals seem to have shared. Why had they elected this unknown foreigner? They did not know. "They stood dejected before the Roman mob, which screamed and cursed upon their treachery for robbing Rome, nay even Italy, of its Pope. . . . Each slunk home followed by a howling crowd: but Cardinal Gonzaga plucked up courage and with a smile thanked his clamorous attendants for being content with abusive words: 'We deserve the most rigorous punishment,' he said, 'I am glad you do not avenge your wrongs with stones.'"[1]

All this rage, Aretino, like the true journalist he was, interpreted and expressed. An unknown foreigner from Utrecht, a foreigner incapable of understanding the soul of his

[1] See JOVIUS, *Vita Hadriana*, VI, 113, and cf. CREIGHTON, *History of the Papacy*, VI, 221.

own time, or the language of Italy, had been made Pope by inadvertence. The Romans exclaimed with Berni :

> Onde diavol cavò questo animale
> Quella bestiaccia di papa Leone ?
> Che ! gli mancò di fare un Cardinale ?

and Aretino :

> Costui è pur del popol, per più doglia
> Che alzando il dito con la morte scherza :
> O nostri dolci campi, o rio destino !

Unfortunately Aretino and the Romans were justified in some measure by the hopeless incapacity of the Pope. It was a very difficult situation : the political situation was in itself enough to test the genius of any Pope, and then infinitely more serious was the German revolt, the question of reform, the moral and philosophical situation of Europe. Adrian certainly seems to have perceived this better than any of his Cardinals : but it was useless, as he was wholly incapable of doing anything or getting anything done. He was not a man of his time. He hated art and regarded even the Laocoon as an impious work. He loathed the splendour of the *cinquecento*.

But such a " bestiaccia " would certainly have claws, and Aretino fled to Bologna, where he received a letter describing the arrival of

the Pope in August, 1522.[1] As Maestro Pasquino had fled the Pope turned his wrath on the statue in Piazza Navona and wanted to throw it into the Tiber. But the Duca di Sessa, Charles V's ambassador to Adrian, told him that Pasquin could croak like a frog even under water. "Let him be burned then," cried Adrian. "Nay," was the answer, "a burned poet will not want adherents who will crown the ashes of their Maestro with malicious songs and hold solemn commemorations on the place of his martyrdom."

[1] V. Rossi, *op. cit.* 164.

IV

MANTUA

(1523)

IV

MANTUA

(1523)

ARETINO had fled. Before the advent of Pope Adrian VI he was far away. It is probable that he left the City with his patron, Cardinal de' Medici; but the first trace we actually have of him is in the summer of 1522 when we find him in Bologna, where he received a letter dated July 31, 1522, and addressed "To that Aretino who makes such beautiful sonnets—in *sedia vacante*." It opens fantastically enough:

"I have not written you earlier, not because I had done nothing, thank God, but because I did not know what title to give you in superscription. *Spectabili Viro* is convenient for Gismondo Chigi because he is a merchant; *Excellentissimo* one says to those who bear arms like Ottavio Orsini, Signor Franco Malatesta de' Medici and Rienzo da Ceri; *Ecregio* is all right for one like Moro de' Nobili; *Cristianissimo* I was about to call you

and *Cattolico*, but I remembered you were a bit of a heretic and never went to Mass and so I will keep that for Girolamo Beltrami and for that Fiscale." He ends by addressing him as *Carissimo*.[1]

This letter was sent to him in Bologna; later he was in Milan; in February, 1523, he was in Florence with Cardinal de' Medici, but not for long. Did the Cardinal find his presence embarrassing since Adrian was Pope? At any rate we soon find him on his first visit to Mantua, where Marquis Federigo Gonzaga was to remain his patron for so long.

On the 3rd February Cardinal de' Medici had written to the Marquis of Mantua as follows:

"Messer Pietro, the bearer of the present, for his rare virtues, is so grateful and acceptable to me, that for no other person than your Excellence should I have deprived myself of him. However, having sought leave from me to come to you I have conceded it to him freely. Pray excuse both him and me if his coming has been tardy, for neither of us is in fault: but two not little infirmities which have come upon him. . . . I am sure that Messer

[1] V. Rossi, *op. cit.* App. iii, pp. 164, *et seq.* Arch. di Firenze, Carte Strozz. F. 137, già, 133, c. 255, F. 369, già, App. ix, c. 114.

Pietro is not wanting in the desire to serve your Excellence as myself."[1]

Before the 24th February Aretino had arrived in Mantua, for on that day the Marquis writes to the Cardinal in Florence :

" I do not doubt that the presence of Messer Pietro Aretino is an honour to the Court of Your Excellence and a delight. . . . The charm that I find so copiously in the aforesaid Messer Pietro constrains me to retain him. . . ."[2]

Evidently Messer Pietro was a success. But it seems that Cardinal de' Medici was not prepared to spare him for long. On March 12 he writes to the Marquis agreeing to leave Aretino with him for " a few more days," and then on March 23 Messer Abbatino informs the Marquis that it is said that " the Pope and certain Cardinals have written to Medici that he must deliver Aretino to them on account of certain new things (*alcune nuove cose*) that have appeared in Rome " and that Messer Pietro must return to Florence immediately. Messer Abbatino had had an interview with Cardinal de' Medici at Careggi on the 21st.[3]

[1] See Baschet, *Doc. inediti su P. A.* in *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, Serie III, Vol. III, Pt. ii, p. 110.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12, for letters of L'Abbatino, cf. A. Luzio, *op. cit.* in *Nuova Antologia*, Ser. III, Vol. XXVIII, p. 687.

It is not, however, till April 15 that the Marquis writes to Cardinal de' Medici that Aretino is departing. He speaks of his bitter regret at losing him: "I should not have been able to give him leave, which he demanded of me instantly, if he were not returning to your Reverend Excellence. . . ."[1]

Aretino had enjoyed his stay at Mantua. On the first of March he had written a long letter to Gualtieri Bacci of Arezzo in which he boasts of his success. There he says: "I find myself at Mantua with the Signor Marchese and so much in his good graces that he leaves sleep and food to discourse with me and says that he has no other pleasure in life. He has written things of me to the Cardinal that are very honourable. If I decide to stay with him he will grant me 300 scudi, *all' entrata*. He has given me the very rooms that Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino had, when he was turned out of his State, and has given me a steward. There are always at my table great gentlemen, and in fine no gentleman, whoever he may be, could do more. Hence all the Court adores me, and that one appears blessed who has one of my verses; and however many I make the Signore has them copied,

[1] Baschet, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

and some of them I have made in praise of him. And so I stay on and all day he makes me presents which you shall see at Arezzo. Even at Bologna I began to receive gifts. It was the Archbishop of Pisa who had had made for me a cloak of black satin enriched with gold. There never was anything finer. . . . I think that this Easter we shall be at Loreto (if it be pleasing to God) where the Marchese goes *per voto*, and on this journey I shall satisfy the Duke of Ferrara and the Duke of Urbino, who both wish to know me, and the Marquis will bring me to their Most Illustrious Lordships."[1]

Whether in fact, as the Marquis's letter to the Cardinal quoted above seems to show, Aretino actually returned to Florence, it is certain that, with the Pope enquiring for him, the Medici did not want him. He apparently decided to send him away again and this time to the famous Giovanni de' Medici, called *Delle Bande Nere* and *Il Gran Diavolo*, a daring and even great soldier then in command of the Florentine forces at Reggio Emilia.

Here Aretino was completely at home. He

[1] This letter is not in the collected Paris edition of Aretino's Letters (1609); it will be found in part in MAZZUCHELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 18, and completely in GAMURRINI, *Istor. Geneal. d. Famiglie nobili Toscane ed Umbre*, III, 332.

and Giovanni perfectly understood one another, for they shared the same tastes, the same love of adventure, the same audacity, the same unscrupulousness, the same prodigality. They were like brothers, as Aretino was, in verse and letters, to bear witness later. It was perhaps Giovanni delle Bande Nere who first gave him the title of *Flagello dei Principi* (The Scourge of Princes).[1] And it was in Aretino's arms he was to die.

From Reggio "On the Vigil of the Body and Blood of Christ," Corpus Christi that is, 1523, Aretino writes to the Marquis of Mantua, cursing the Pope and sending him as a present "three ebony combs of which one, the blackest, Venus must have used to comb her golden hairs. However, there are divers opinions. Some say that it was the comb of the royal concubine of Cardinal di Grassis, others other things; but I am of opinion that this comb belonged to the most holy religious Laundress of the Pedant Adrian. I got it by necromancy. The other three . . . Maestro Pasquino gave me."

The whole letter is a semi-obscene burlesque and jest at the Pope and the Sacred College. It is not to be wondered at that Adrian

[1] See G. G. Rossi, *Vita di Gio. de' Medici* (Milan, 1833), 56.

suppressed the feast of Pasquin on the 25th April, that year. But on the 14th September Pope Adrian VI was dead.

Almost alone in his last days, deserted and despised by the whole College, when he came to die the Cardinals hastened to him to demand where he had hidden his money. They seem to have been quite ignorant of the fact that the papal finances were already bankrupt before Leo's death. The Pope told them that all he possessed was a thousand ducats. Still unbelieving they rejoiced with the Roman populace when at one o'clock on the afternoon of the 14th September the last *Pontefice Barbaro*, the last foreign pope, died. The people garlanded his doctor's house and above the garlands was written LIBERATORI PATRIAE—to the Liberator of the country. And Aretino wrote the Pope's epitaph and Pasquino gave it to Rome :

> Qui iace Adrian sesto, homo divino
> Cio è tedesco—figlio a un cimatore.
> Che 'l fe far Cardinal l' Imperatore
> Perchè gli insegnò leggere a tozzino . . .

and the rest of it.

But Aretino was in luck. In November Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, his protector, became Pope Clement VII.

V

IN ROME UNDER CLEMENT VII
(1523–1525)

V

IN ROME UNDER CLEMENT VII

(1523–1525)

THE election of Clement VII "by inspiration" was brought about by the intervention of the Ambassador of Francis I. Cardinal Medici had entered the Conclave assured of the support of Charles V and, he alone of all the Cardinals there, sure that Henry VIII would not oppose his election. Colonna and Soderini, however, were against him, and it was only when the intervention of the French Ambassador on his behalf broke up the Colonna party, that he was elected "by inspiration." The French had seen this at any rate—that Cardinal Medici was a weak man incapable of pursuing a determined policy: though pledged to the Emperor he was not likely to be loyal to anyone. They decided to support him and he became Pope.

The choice was perhaps the best possible in the circumstances. Adrian's election had made Wolsey's impossible and it was very

necessary to please the Romans. They rejoiced, expecting to see the "good old times" of Leo X return.

But the future is veiled from man and the Romans were not more blind than the Cardinals. It is true that Clement grasped something of the danger of the German revolt; but the Italian danger was nearer to him and he must deal with it. The French and the Germano-Spanish Imperialists were fighting in Lombardy and Romagna: the Marquis of Ferrara was in possession of Reggio, the Temporal Power was threatened. He decided to deal with Italy first.

The two counsellors of the new Pope were Giovanni Matteo Giberti and Nicolas Schomberg. They well reflected the discord of Europe. Giberti, another bastard, a man of some learning and piety, was the son of a sea captain who had entered Cardinal Medici's service as a boy. Pope Clement made him Bishop of Verona; his secretary was Berni. Schomberg was a German who, while in Italy, had been converted by Savonarola and had entered the Dominican Order at San Marco in Florence. Later he had become an adherent of the Medici and had been brought to Rome by Leo X as a professor of theology. He was Archbishop of Capua. Now Giberti's

sympathies were with France: Schomberg's with the Imperialists.

Whether Clement did well or no to consider the Italian situation first it was certainly the nearer. Aretino, who rushed to Rome to greet his old patron, came straight from the camp of Giovanni delle Bande Nere. He of course looked for his reward for the fight he had made for Cardinal Medici at the previous election. Nor was he disappointed. The Pope received him with favour and appreciation. Pasquino was silent: silent that is so far as Aretino's voice and pen were concerned. He was not, however, to be prevented from asking questions:

> Marforio, che vuol dir che il tuo Pasquino,
> Dal dì che fu costui Papa creato,
> È quasi muto affatto diventato,
> Nè più riprende i vizi l' Aretino ? . . .
> Pietro Aretino che sta tanto in favore
> Come la rana fu preso al boccone
> E talor canta, ma non vuol toccare
> Dal maioringo, che sarebbe errore
> Perchè lo fa sfoggiar come un' barone. . . .[1]

But Fortune. . . .

It is true Aretino began well. By August,

[1] See *Nuova Antologia*, August, 1890: "Marforio, what have you to say now that thy Pasquino, from the day this Pope was created, is become almost completely silent, nor any longer does Aretino resume his old ways. . . . Pietro Aretino who now is in such favour. . . ."

1524, he is so securely established that he writes to ask the Marquis of Mantua to come to Rome.[1] The Marquis cannot make up his mind to come, but on November 13 he writes very fulsomely to Aretino to thank him for having everywhere, and especially in the Pope's presence, spoken honourably of him, the Marquis. He has heard this from his Ambassador Messer Francesco Gonzaga. He begs Aretino to continue to speak well of him and asks for "something" he has lately written for to be sent him.[2]

On the same day Francesco Gonzaga writes to the Marquis to say that he has officially thanked Aretino for his kind words as he had been instructed to do, and adds, "I told him how pleased you were to be praised by learned persons like himself."[3]

Learned persons! Learned indeed in the craft of success. On the same day we have an *Imperio Ricordato* to the Marchesa Isabella informing her that the Pope has made Aretino a Knight of Rhodes.[4]

But Aretino was doing other things for the Marquis besides praising him. On November 23 the Marquis writes to his Ambassador instructing him to thank, "in our name,

[1] Baschet, *op. cit.*, p. 116. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Pietro Aretino, not only for his so willing praise, but for having procured me things that delighted me and that I have so much desired to have, namely, the portrait of Pope Leo, of most happy memory, and that of the present Pope as Cardinal from the hand of Raphael of Urbino, which long since the Pope was approached about and which he has so willingly conceded and so promptly. . . . Tell him we expect that picture with the greatest longing in the world, and if the commission to send it is not yet given, see that it be done. . . ."[1]

On the 30th Francesco writes to the Marquis that he has read his letter to Aretino and that "this evening" Aretino will speak to the Pope of the picture. The correspondence continues, Aretino acting as intermediary with the Pope, who wants the picture copied.[2] Aretino sends the Marquis, at his request, a Canzone he has written in praise of the Datario,[3] and in February[4] he wishes to send the Marquis "a Laocoon in *gesso*, a copy of that in the Belvedere made by the hand of a very excellent Maestro" (Jacopo Sansovino), and says that he will try to find an antique Head for the

[1] Baschet, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–23.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

Marquis.[1] In June he is again writing pasquinades and the Marquis wants them.

Judging from these letters all might seem to have gone well with Aretino: but this was not altogether so. As I have said, he began fortunately. Giberti, one of the Pope's counsellors, was his friend. Aretino had written a sonnet in his praise, which he had sent to Vittoria Colonna together with another in praise of herself;[2] but suddenly all was changed, Giberti and Aretino became the bitterest enemies. Of the cause of this quarrel we are ignorant, perhaps it was some personal question of papal favour, perhaps it was political. The former seems the more likely: and with his usual impetuosity and irresponsibility Aretino immediately began to praise and support Giberti's rivals and enemies, the Archbishop of Capua and Girolamo da Schio, Bishop of Vaison.[3] Giberti was furious but patient: he waited his chance. It came.

Giulio Romano had employed Marcantonio Raimondi the famous engraver, Vasari tells us,[4]

[1] The Laocoon was about a braccio high.

[2] Giuliari, *Lett. di V. C.* (Verona, 1868).

[3] See a letter written to P. A. by Giovanni dei Medici, *Lettere all' Aretino* (Bologna, 1874), I, i. 1.

[4] Vasari (Milanesi, Florence, 1906), Vol. V, 418. The engravings numbered sixteen, not twenty (see Aretino, *Lettere*, I, 258, quoted below).

"to engrave twenty (sixteen) plates of figures the character of which was highly offensive; and what was still worse Messer Pietro Aretino wrote a most indecent sonnet for each, insomuch that I do not know which was the more revolting, the spectacle presented to the eye by the designs of Giulio or the affront offered to the ear by the words of Aretino. This work was highly displeasing to Pope Clement, who censured it severely, and if it had not happened that when it was published Giulio had already left Rome for Mantua, he would certainly have been very heavily punished by the Pontiff. Many of these designs were meanwhile discovered in places where they ought not to have been expected, and the work was not only prohibited, but Marcantonio, being arrested for his share in the same, was cast into prison, and would have fared very hardly if the Cardinal de' Medici and Baccio Bandinelli, who was then in Rome and in the service of the Pope, had not interfered to procure his release. And certain it is that the endowments which God has conferred on men of ability ought not to be abused, as they too frequently are, to the offence of the whole world, and to the promotion of ends which are disapproved by all men."

Giulio Romano in producing these obscenities had broken a very noble record. Italy was the Mother of the Arts and especially of the art of painting: and it is enough, as evidence of the very noble and lofty use to which she had put her genius, to remember that in all the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there is not to be found to-day, nor have we any record or rumour of, a single obscenity or even an indecency. Nothing can well excuse Giulio for degrading his art and for the first time. In his defence it might be urged that at least he did not expose these works, if Vasari had not recorded that it was he who employed Marcantonio, the first master of the day, to engrave them.[1]

But what are we to say of Aretino's part in all this. First of all let us hear what he has to say himself. In a letter written to Battista Zatti[2] he describes the affair, asserts that it was he who obtained Marcantonio's release from prison, and tries to defend himself. "Since I obtained from Pope Clement the release of Marcantonio Bolognese, who was in prison for having engraved on wood the XVI Modes, etc., there came over me the wish to

[1] Dolce, *Dialogo della Pittura* (Milan, 1863), records that he engraved them *per trarne utile.* [2] *Lettere*, I, 258.

see the figures which had caused the querulous followers of Giberti to exclaim that this good craftsman ought to be crucified. When I saw them I was overcome by the spirit that caused Giulio Romano to design them. And since the poets and sculptors, ancient as well as modern, used to write and sculpture sometimes, to give vein to their genius, lascivious things, even as in Palazzo Chigi the Satyr of marble bears witness—the Satyr who is attempting to violate a boy, I amused myself by writing the sonnets that are seen beneath the figures, the wanton memory of which I dedicate by leave to the hypocrites, out of patience with their villainous judgment and with the hoggish custom that forbids the eyes what most delights them. What evil is there in seeing a man possess a woman? Why, the beasts would be more free than we! It seems to me that that which is given us by nature for our own preservation ought to be worn round the neck as a pendant and in the hat for a medal.[1] It is the very source from which gushes forth rivers of people. . . . It is that which has made you, that are the first of living surgeons. It is that which has produced the Bembos, the

[1] See Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita* (Trs. Symonde Nimmo, 1896), p. 58: "It was the custom at this epoch to wear little

Molzas, the Fortunios, the Varchis, the Ugolino Martellis, the Lorenzo Lenzis, the Dolcis, the Fra Bastianis, the Sansovinos, the Titians, the Michelangelos and after them the Popes, the Emperors and the Kings: it has begotten the loveliest children, the most beautiful women, with *Santa Santorum:* so that we should command Feasts and consecrate Vigils and Holy Days to it and not shut it up in a bit of cloth and silk. The hands might well be hidden for they play with money, swear falsely, lend at usury, are contemptuous and defiant, tear, shoot, strike, wound, kill. As for the mouth it blasphemes, spits in the face, devours, drinks and vomits. In fine the lawyers ought . . ."

No, it will not do.

In this impudent letter, full of rhetoric and sophisms, Aretino does not defend his sonnets even though he tries to defend himself. Perhaps he realised that no defence was possible. Let us say all that can be said in reprobation of Marcantonio's engravings, still nothing that Marcantonio ever did can have been wholly without beauty, if only a beauty of execution.

golden medals upon which every nobleman or man of quality had some device or fancy of his own engraved; and these were worn in the cap. Of such pieces I made very many, and found them extremely difficult to work."

No such plea can avail Aretino anything. His sonnets are not only impossible; they are doggerel; they have no merit of any kind. Even the Roman world of that day retched at them. He seems to have been so elated by his return to Rome and his privileged position under the new Pope that he wished to show that to him everything was permitted; and furious at what he thought the injustice of hypocrites towards his friend Marcantonio, who had just drawn his portrait, in sheer rage and bravado, he wrote these atrocious things.

To be too generous to Aretino one might remind oneself that he was still a young man, that these sonnets did not come of his own suggestion, but were provoked by the work of two other artists[1] much older than himself and, that if one may believe his own story, he had come upon them owing to his generous

[1] According to MILANESI (Vasari, *Vite*, Florence, 1906), V, 418 *n.*, the order of the Pope for the destruction of the engravings was not altogether successful, though for many years every trace of them was lost. However, among the prints preserved in the British Museum there are nine small fragments of the original series. They have been cut down to such small dimensions as to have no indecency left about them. With them are modern (nineteenth century) drawn copies made from a set formerly in the posseesion of a certain Waldeck, accompanied by a lithographed text giving full particulars of all impressions of these engravings known to exist, or to have existed, in modern times.

interest in Marcantonio, whose release he says he obtained from the Pope. However that may be, such an episode is best forgotten. Unfortunately it throws a sinister light upon certain other works of Aretino which, if these sonnets had never been written, it would have been easier to defend. Unfortunately, too, these sonnets have become the most famous obscene writings of the modern world.

In the arrest of Marcantonio Giberti had played a great part, as Aretino's letter shows : it is astonishing that since Marcantonio was imprisoned, Aretino went free. Perhaps he fled too soon. That he fled is certain and so his absence saved him, as Vasari tells us Giulio Romano's had saved him. Aretino had given Giberti his chance. By August, 1524, he had left Rome.

He went to Arezzo. What was his object in so doing we do not know : perhaps to see his family. He was famous, but still without any certain future.

In Arezzo he received a letter from Giovanni delle Bande Nere begging him to join him. He crossed the Apennine to Fano and found the great Captain there.[1] The moment was important. The vacillating Clement was deciding

[1] He alludes to this in a letter to Mario Bandini (*Lettere*, I, 132).

to join Francis I of France, who, in the autumn of the year, came into Italy to take Lombardy from the Imperialists. No doubt Aretino was present in the campaign with his friend Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who had come into the service of Francis, and he probably showed himself as valiant with the sword as with the pen. It was during this campaign that he first met the unfortunate King of France, who was to be one of his most powerful friends. In spite of all this he seems to have hankered after Rome, whither he returned; but Giovanni delle Bande Nere could not live without him[1] and once more he set out for the North. Yet by November 1 he was back in Rome again, as we have seen, corresponding with the Marquis of Mantua. Pope Clement had forgiven him; he was once more in favour and more powerful than ever. In return Aretino published his *Canzoni*, the first all in praise of the Pope.

> Nè potea veramente
> Per far viver sua sposa in lieto onore
> Farsi Cristo un Vicario oggi migliore . . .[2]

[1] *Lettere all' Aretino*, I, 1, 3. Giovanni tells him the King then at Pavia deplores "that I did not bring you with me as usual . . . and he bade me write you to come, and he made me swear you would obey."

[2] See Luzio in *Giornale Stor. della Lett.*, It. 29 (1897), 231 *n.* 1. The library at Munich possesses a rare volume in 4to,

and there too he speaks of Giovanni delle Bande Nere the great Captain :

> E già il signor Giovanni veder parmi
> Con la mortal e immortal spada invitta
> Statua nell' infedeli ossa intagliarsi
> E veggio ognun eterno il nome farsi.

while in the second poem he exhorts the Emperor to peace.

Some sort of peace too seems to have been established between Aretino and Giberti. So far as Aretino was concerned this seems to have been sincerely made. At any rate, in February, 1525, he writes a Canzone in praise of the Datario which he sent to Mantua as we have seen :

> Nè potea Dio terreno
> Ritrovar mai tra l' universa gente
> Miglior Datario et ei miglior Clemente.[1]

Then there fell on Rome the news of the battle of Pavia (Feb. 24, 1525). The imperialists were victorious and the King of France a prisoner. All was confusion : that facile and bankrupt society had been suddenly lighted up by a flash of lightning. Perhaps

Laude di Clemente VII Max. Opt. P. compositione del divino Poeta Messer Pietro Aretino. In Roma per Lodovico Vicentino e Laudatio Perugino nel 1524 *di Decembre.*

[1] Baschet, in *Arch. St.*, III Ser., Vol. III, Pt. 2 (1866), Doc. XVII.

it was only summer lightning as yet: at any rate, in Rome, it seemed a long way off. Aretino quite at home at the Papal Court takes up his pen to console His Majesty and to prove to him that his captivity instead of being a humiliation really does him honour.[1] It is a fine letter in spite of its sophisms.

It may have been now in the rather uncertain sunshine of the Papal Court that he began to plan, if not to write, one of the best of his Comedies—*La Cortigiana*, the only thing of lasting value, the only piece of literature he had yet set himself to compose. All the rest had been journalism: this should endure. In this remarkable Comedy, the first[2] dramatic work in Italian which completely disregards the classic Latin models of Plautus and Terence and sets life as the writer saw it, the life of his own time, on the stage: we find the real Aretino at last and at his best. He declares himself once and for all, and we see a rebel—yes, his pasquinades might been told us that—but a "realist" in the modern sense of the word, the first in European literature. This is the true value of Aretino, what was best in him. He continually asserts even with regard

[1] *Lettere*, I, 4.

[2] Perhaps I should except Machiavelli's *Mandragola*.

to his most ephemeral work that he has tried to tell the truth. To Bandini he says, for instance, "I have told so many truths to my day." It is a justifiable claim which once and for all *La Cortigiana* and its fellows make good.[1]

Was that Comedy written now in the earlier months of 1525?[2] It might seem so, for he there praises both Pope Clement and Giberti. In this case the figure of Flamminio must have been interpolated later. This may well be, for Flamminio only appears on three occasions, none of them vital to the action, throughout the play. As we shall see Flamminio is himself: but after his final exit from Rome.

If we must think of Aretino as writing *La Cortigiana* after the battle of Pavia in the spring of 1525, it by no means prevented or

[1] In *La Cortigiana*, Act III, Sc. 7. He says again: "I wish to give myself the trouble of telling the truth, I do not wish to have the pleasure of telling lies"; and is answered: "It is this telling the truth that displeases, there is no greater nuisance in the eyes of the Signori than in thy telling of the truth."

[2] A. Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni a Venezia* (Turin, 1888), p. 2, *n.* 2, says that in the Codice Magliabecchiano Cl. VII, *n.* 84, is conserved the first redaction of this comedy, "which must have been composed between February and July, 1525, after the Battle of Pavia and before the wounding of Aretino." He comes to this conclusion from the fact that *la presa del re* is mentioned and at the same time the Pope and the Datario are honourably mentioned. This redaction has many authoritative variants from the play we know.

interfered with his "journalism." In June Pasquino began to speak again, and indeed the *festa* of Pasquino in that year was directed by Aretino.[1] These squibs were written not of course against the Pope, but certainly against the men who surrounded him. Well, affairs had come to such a pass that it was time someone spoke out. Not least was Giberti responsible: not least was he attacked.

He replied: he did not answer or deny the accusations: he replied by attempting assassination. He had Aretino stabbed nearly to death on the night of July 28 by Achille della Volta, who was in his service. Aretino was assaulted as he rode home alone, and Della Volta attacked him with the intention of killing him. By good luck and personal courage and strength Aretino succeeded in escaping: but he was very badly wounded, his right hand was maimed and always remained lame, and he was wounded in the breast as it was thought mortally.[2]

[1] Baschet, *op. cit.*, Docs. XXIV and XXV. He sent one pasquinade to the Marquis, and later the Marquis writes to ask him why he has not sent him others as he had promised.

[2] *Ibid.*, Docs. XXVI and XXVII. In a poem written by Gio. Mauro (*Il primo libro dell' Opere burlesche di F. Berni*, etc. London, 1723, Vol. I, p. 174), we read that: "più colpi ha che dita in una mano." Giberti vehemently denies being responsible in a letter to the Marquis of Mantua (see *infra*).

The report of this attempted assassination of so famous a man soon spread through the City : and everyone guessed who was the author of it. It needed explanation. An explanation was found and put forward. It was said that Aretino had had an intrigue with Giberti's cook, to whom he wrote a sonnet. This sonnet came into the hands of Della Volta, who was also enamoured of her, and in his jealousy and rage he attempted to kill Aretino. The only truth in this story[1] appears to be that it connects Giberti with the assassination and names the actual assassin, the wretched instrument of Giberti's hatred. That Della Volta acted by order of Giberti and that the cook had nothing whatever to do with it, though she may have been one of Aretino's infinite women, is pretty certain.[2]

[1] The story is given by Mazucchelli and by the pseudo-Berni, *Vita dell' Aretino* (Ed. cit.), p. 171.

[2] A. Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni in Venezia* (Torino, 1833), p. 33, says he can find no reason for the attempt on Aretino's life ; he prints the letter from the Marquis of Mantua to Guicciardini (p. 61, Doc. I), in which the Marquis says, "the cause of the quarrel is ugly and known to everyone." Again Luzio prints another letter (p. 90, Doc. XXVIII) from the Marquis to Giberti himself, in which he says, "although one might think you have not done what you have done against him without cause." It is true Giberti answers (p. 90, Doc. XXIX) that what was done "was without my orders, without my consent and without my knowledge " ; but this only proves that he knew what the Marquis was alluding to. He

Aretino was never under any illusion as to his would-be murderer. In a letter written long after (*Lettere*, VI, 8) he cries, " Shame on the Gibertis of the Roman Court who would have been my executioners." Nor was he doubtful of the cause. " If there are lies in what I write : assassinate me again."[1] As for the cook, she perhaps only existed in the mind of the would-be murderer, whose instrument Della Volta was promoted.

Aretino had been very gravely wounded ; he had five wounds in the breast and right hand,[2] but Girolamo da Schio, Bishop of Vaison, writes to the Marquis of Mantua two days after the assault that " with the help of God I hope we shall save him."[3] All Rome was buzzing with

was not likely to admit his crime. Clement VII seems to be aware of it when he says, " We confess the wrong done to P. A.," and Nicolò Franco definitely admits it was Giberti " who sought to eradicate this shame from among men." Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 33, *n.* 2, shows that in 1542 a process was made against Achille della Volta and his brother, Marcantonio, for homicide, and see *infra*, p. 121.

[1] Cf. Luzio, *op. cit.*, 34, *n.* 1.

[2] " Più colpi che ha dita in una mano," *Op. burl.*, I, 174.

[3] Baschet, *op. cit.*, p. 128, Docs. XXVI–XXIX. The letters are as follows :—

" Your Excellence will have learned from your Ambassador the strange chance that befell our Messer Pietro Aretino the other night ; who was, about two hours of the night, and being on horseback, wounded by someone on foot with two stabs in the breast, one of which is like to be mortal. Yet

the crime. Aretino's door was besieged, and Giberti, no doubt to try to deceive public opinion, sent Della Volta himself to enquire for his victim.[1] Then Giberti set on his secretary Francesco Berni, the poet, to publish the story of the cook and generally to abuse Aretino, and when Aretino named his enemies Berni wrote the famous "Sonnet" against him. This "Sonnet" with others by Girolamo Casio are given in extenso by Mazucchelli (pp. 31–34) and are hardly worth reprinting

with the assistance of God I hope that we shall save him. Your Excellence would have lost a devoted and good servant. It is not known whence came such an accident, for the assassin fled and must have acted at the instance of others. But already there are nine persons in prison over this affair, and I think that all is known and that the Pope will make such a demonstration as ought to be made for such a man. . . ." 30 July, 1525.

On August 3, Francesco Gonzaga writes the Marquis that P. A. is getting better of his wounds, "so that notwithstanding they are in the breast and very notably deep, not less by the virtue of a doctor here than by the use of an oil that is perfect for wounds, he is not only out of danger but hopes in a short time to be free of illness. I have visited him. . . ."

On August 11 the Marquis replies to Francesco that he is "pleased that P. A. is better of his wounds and out of danger: in truth his misfortune grieved me much for he was of the number of my cordial friends. I am pleased that you have visited him. . . ."

Then, on October 14, the Marquis learns by letter that P. A. has left Rome and that the writer (Frate Niccolò) thinks that he will go to Mantua to pay his respects.

[1] A. Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 33, *n.* 2.

here.[1] They are full of calumny and fierce abuse: and they naturally estranged Berni and Aretino for life. They prove the fury, the fear and the hatred of Cardinal Giberti, and they succeeded to this extent, that much of their calumny and abuse has stuck to Aretino ever since, so that it has appeared in his biographies as so much fact. We need not be too sorry for him.

One may well ask where was the Pope in this disgraceful affair. Clement VII was weak, Giberti was his man of affairs: he did nothing. An unsuccessful assassination was perhaps not so rare a thing in Rome at that time. All the importance of the affair lay in the notoriety of Aretino.

[1] I will give part of the famous "Sonnet":—

Tu ne dirai, e farai tante, e tante,
Lingua fracida, marcia e senza sale,
Che alfin si troverà pur un pugnale
Miglior di quel d' Achille, e più calzante.
Il Papa è Papa e tu sei un furfante,
Nudrito del pan d' altri, e del dir male;
Un piè hai in bordello, e l' altro allo spedale
Storpiataccio, ignorante, ed arrogante.
Giovammatteo e gli altri ch' egli ha presso,
Che per grazia di Dio son vivi e sani
T' affogheranno ancora un dì 'n un cesso.
Boja scorgi i costumi tuoi ruffiani
E se pur vuoi cianciar, d' di te stesso,
Guardati il petto e la testa e le mani. . . .

And so forth.

Aretino had been wounded at the end of July. He did not recover till October. What was he to do? The Pope would do nothing for him: Giberti and his tools were loudly calumniating him, their daggers would be ready again. Life in Rome had become impossible for him. Pasquino, who had made his fame, had now ruined him. There was nothing for him to do. He was at a loss.

Was it in these moments of convalescence as he gradually came to realise the situation, that in turning the still unpublished pages of *La Cortigiana* he interpolated parts of that so slight portrait of himself under the name of Flamminio, with all his bitter irony and his disgust of the Court of Rome ?[1]

Flamminio. What are you doing in sending Camillo to Court ?[2]

Sempronio. I am sending him to learn all good things of life and manners, that by this means he may come to have a certain useful reputation.

[1] Flamminio only appears in three scenes, which are obviously interpolated and have nothing to do with the action of the play. The scenes are Act I, Sc. 9; Act II, Sc. 6; Act III, Sc. 7. The last scene was certainly written in Venice (see *infra*).

[2] *La Cortigiana*, II, 6. Sempronio is an old man and Camillo is his son.

Flamminio. Manners and useful achievements at Court? Oh, oh!

Sempronio. In my time manners and these good things were only to be had at Court.

Flamminio. In your time the asses kept school. You old fogeys are always going back to what was the rule in the old time: but we are in the modern.

Sempronio. What do I hear, Flamminio?

Flamminio. The Gospel.

Sempronio. Can it be that the world is so worsened?

Flamminio. The world has found it easier to get worse than better: that is all I can tell you.

Sempronio. I am translated, I am astonished.

Flamminio. If you wish to understand, tell me of the goodness of your time and I will tell you part of the miseries of mine: it would take too long to try to tell you all.

Sempronio. To it then. In my time you had scarce arrived in Rome when you found a patron, and, according to your age, your condition and your wishes he gave you office, a room to yourself, a bed, a servant, kept a horse for you, paid the laundress, the barber, the doctor, the medicine, clothes once or twice a year, and when

benefices fell vacant they were honestly distributed among us. Everyone was rewarded in such a way that one never heard any complaint. And if you liked literature or music the master paid for them.

Flamminio. Really ?

Sempronio. We lived with so much affection and so much charity together that we knew no inequality ; it appeared that we were all children of one father and one mother : and each rejoiced in the happiness of his companion as it were his own. In illness each served other as the Religious do.

Flamminio. Tell me more.

Sempronio. That will be enough. And the love of having served at Court is not deceiving me.

Flamminio. Listen now to my experience, courtier of Papa Janni. (Pope Leo X Giovanni de' Medici). In my time there came to Rome one full of all the qualities that one can desire in a man that has to serve at Court, and before he would be accepted even in the servants' hall, he might return to Paradise. In my time there was only one servant among two of us ;

how is it possible that half a man can serve a whole one? In my time five or six persons were given one room ten feet long and eight broad, and he who did not like to sleep on the floor, bought a bed or took one on hire. In my time horses became chameleons unless you provided them with corn and hay from your own purse. In my time you sold your household goods to dress yourself and he who had not any of his own went poor and naked. In my time if you fell really ill in the service of your patron it was made a great favour to find a place for you in Santo Spirito. In my time laundresses and barbers were paid by us, and in my time if any benefices fell vacant they were either given to outsiders or they were cut up into so many pieces and each piece was only worth a ducat; and it would have been better for the Pope if that ducat had not been lawyered about for ten years. In my time not only were no masters paid to teach us anything, but he was persecuted as an enemy who learned anything at his own cost, for the Signori did not wish to have anyone near them who knew more than they. . . .

Sempronio. If it is like this, Camillo shall stay with me.

Flamminio. Let him stay with you ; you don't wish to send him to Court to become a rogue.

Sempronio. How, rogue ?

Flamminio. Rogue is an old story. . . . But after rogue comes traitor. What more ? With an incurable hypocrisy even murder is not proceeded against.

Sempronio. Let us talk of something else.

Just there we seem to see behind all the anger and irony of Aretino and his personal grudge, the Rome of Clement face to face with the Rome of Leo. The darkness was coming : already a sort of twilight lay over the Eternal City. Well might Aretino wonder where he should go.

" I am determined to go elsewhere to die," he says as Flamminio in the third act of *La Cortigiana.* " And I am sick and sorry at heart for that I came here young and I go away old ; that I came clothed and go away naked, that I came in hope and depart in despair."

" But tell me where will you go ? " Valerio asks him. " Into what country, with what

Signore ?" "The world is large," he answers. "But where will you go ?" "I will go to Mantua where the goodness of Marchese Federigo will not deny bread to anyone."

On October 13, 1525, he left Rome, whether quite voluntarily or not we do not know, with a letter from the Bishop of Vaison for the Marquis of Mantua.

VI

IN LOMBARDY WITH GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE

(1526)

VI

IN LOMBARDY WITH GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE

(1526)

ARETINO did not stay long in Mantua. Perhaps he was too weary of Courts, perhaps the Courts were weary of him. At any rate we find him, soon after leaving Rome, in a far more interesting and exciting place than the Court of the Marquis of Mantua—the Camp of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who was fighting an uphill campaign to try and retrieve the fortunes of Francis I, then a prisoner of the Emperor in Spain.

It was a moment of the most extraordinary political confusion : a confusion in which shone a ray of hope for Italy and the Papacy, the last before all was lost in the oncoming night.

All Italy was alarmed when it was known that after the battle of Pavia, Francis had been carried off to Spain. Both Milan and Venice were ready to listen to French proposals ; but all depended on the Pope. The Pope,

uncertain as ever, hoped to form a league of Venice, France and England against the Imperial power in Italy; but the plan of Girolamo Morone, the Milanese Chancellor, to this end, which was, moreover, a league of all the Italian powers to rescue Italy from the barbarians and to place the generalship of the league in the hands of the Marquis of Pescara, then in the Imperial Service—the man chiefly responsible for the victory of Pavia—failed; for Pescara was not to be bought even with a promise of the Kingdom of Naples, and he exposed Morone's scheme to Charles.

Still the Pope remained irresolute. Then in March, 1526, Francis was set at liberty and at once became the centre of new intrigues against Charles. Finally Francis took the lead, and on May 22, 1526, the League of Cognac was published—the "Holy League" for promoting the peace of Christendom in which the Pope, the French King, Venice and the Duke of Milan joined forces and invited Charles V and Henry VIII of England to adhere to them. An army was to be formed to preserve the peace of Italy. At last Clement had made up his mind, or at any rate had committed himself.

Now the success of the League—for Charles

refused to join it and Henry only passively "protected" it—lay altogether, so far as Italy was concerned, in the energy of its action. Pope Clement was at last raising troops as fast as he could, and appointed as his Generals Giovanni delle Bande Nere and Guido Rangoni: Guicciardini the statesman and historian went to Lombardy as his political representative. Venice appointed as her commander the vacillating and ill-starred Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. These armies of about 16,000 men were admitted into Lodi, which gave them command of the Adda and a strong position in the enemy's country from which they could operate with equal ease against Milan, Cremona and Pavia.

The great object of the allies was necessarily to prevent Milan falling altogether into the hands of the Imperialists. The town had already been occupied by the enemy, but the Castello still held out. Owing to the folly and delay of the Duke of Urbino it fell, on July 24.

Now in all the business and fighting and excitement of this new and last attempt to save Italy from the barbarians and the foreigners Aretino had his part, by the side of the only great soldier in the Italian Service —Giovanni delle Bande Nere.

We see him under the walls of Milan with Giovanni: we see him conceive for himself a new career.

> Sotto Milano dieci volta, non ch' una
> Mi disse: Pietro, se di questa guerra
> Mi scampa Iddio e la buona fortuna
> Ti voglio impadronir della tua terra.[1]

Pietro Aretino Marquis of Arezzo! It would have made others beside the old Tarlati uneasy. Aretino, however, does not see its absurdity, and when we remember Sforza we are not surprised. Still he seems to have seen that his destiny was quite other.

> Ma piace al destin ladro che io pur sia
> Povero e vecchio ed ei morto e sotterra.[2]

But that campaign was to end as it began, in misfortune. In November, 1526, while skirmishing before Governolo, Italy's great Captain and Aretino's dear friend, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, was killed.

> Ed ei morto e sotterra. . . .

Aretino himself in one of the most wonderful letters he was ever to write tells us how it all happened.[3]

[1] "Before Milan not once but ten times he (Giovanni delle Bande Nere) said to me: 'Pietro, if I come through this war by the grace of God and good luck, I wish to make you lord of your own country'" (*Op. burlesche* (Firenze, 1723), III, p. 11).

[2] "But it pleased the rogue destiny that I should be poor and old and he dead and underground" (*Op. burlesche* (Firenze, 1723), III, p. 11).

[3] *Lettere*, I, 5.

"When the hour drew near which the fates, with the consent of God, had fixed for the end of our lord, his highness moved, with his usual impetuous fierceness, against Governolo, in the circuit of which the enemy were fortified: and attacking near some foundries, alas, a musket shot him in the leg which had already been wounded by an arquebus. No sooner did he receive the blow than fear and depression fell on the army and ardour and joy died in the hearts of all; and everyone, forgetting his duty, thinking of the mischance, wept, bitterly regretting that fate should so senselessly have laid low so noble and beyond comparison so excellent a leader, at the beginning of such great events and in the deep need of Italy.

The captains who with affection and veneration had followed him, reproaching fortune for their loss of him and his temerity, spoke of his age ripe for the work and of his sufficiency in every undertaking and his capacity in every difficulty. They sighed, remembering the greatness of his ideas and the fierceness of his valour. Nor could they refrain from speaking of how he had been their comrade, nor forget his genius, the astuteness of his spirit, warming themselves with the ardour of their lamenta-

tions while the snow fell blindingly about them, and he was borne away to Mantua on a litter to the house of Signor Luigi Gonzaga; where the same evening the Duke of Urbino came to visit him, for he loved him, and reverenced him to such an extent that he was careful even of giving an opinion in his presence; and this was his merit. And he, as soon as he saw him, was much consoled.

Then seeing his case the Duke said with much feeling: 'It is not enough for you to be famous and glorious in arms, if you do not support your name with the religion and observances in which you were bred.' And he answered—for he understood that the Duke would turn his thoughts to confession—'As in all things I have always paid my debts, I will pay this one also.' And so as the Duke left him he began to talk with me, speaking of Lucantonio with the greatest affection. And I said: 'We will send for him.' 'Do you wish that one like him should leave the war to see the sick?' he answered.

He recalled Conte San Secondo, saying: 'At least if he were here he might take my place.' Sometimes he scratched his head: then laid his fingers on his lips saying: 'What

will happen ?' And often he said: 'I have done nothing amiss.'

But I, exhorted by the doctors, went to him and said: 'I should be doing you wrong if, with deceiving words, I tried to persuade you that death was the cure of all ills, but since it is the greatest happiness to do all things freely let them cut away the havoc of the gun and in eight days you can make Italy Queen that now is slave. And your lameness will be your order instead of that of the King, which you never wished for, because wounds and loss of limbs are the collars and the medals of those who serve Mars.'

'Let it be done,' he answered me.

At this the doctors came in, and, praising the fortitude of his decision, did what they had to do, and, giving him some medicine went out to put their instruments in order. At supper time he was assailed with vomiting, and he said to me: 'The omens of Cæsar. It is necessary to think of other things than of life.' And that said, with hands joined he vowed to go to the Apostle of Galizia (St. James of Compostella). But when the time was come and the skilful men were come in with the instruments they needed, they asked for eight or ten persons to hold him while

the agony of the sawing should last. 'Not even twenty,' he said, smiling, 'would hold me.' And collecting himself, with a perfectly calm face, he took the candle in his own hand to give light himself to the doctors. I rushed away, and putting my fingers in my ears only heard two cries and then he called me. When I came to him he said, 'I am healed.' And turning himself all about made a great rejoicing. And if the Duke of Urbino had not stopped him he would have had them bring forward the foot with the piece of the leg, laughing at us who could not bear to see what he had suffered. And his sufferings were far greater than those of Alexander and of Trajan who kept a smiling face when he pulled out the tiny arrow-head and cut the nerve. In fact the pain which had diminished returned two hours before day with all sorts of torments. And I hearing him knocking feverishly at the wall, was stabbed to the heart and dressing in a moment ran to him. And he, as soon as he saw me, began to say to me that the thought of the poltroons[1] distressed him more than the pain, trying by talking to me to forget his misfortune and to set free his spirit already

[1] Probably an allusion to the Pope and the politicians, e.g. the Datario.

caught in the snares of death. But as day dawned things grew so much worse that he made his will, in which he dispensed many thousands of *scudi* in money and in goods among those who had served him and four *giuli* for his burial. The Duke was his executor. Then he came to confession most Christianly, and when the Friar came in he said to him: 'Father, I, having followed the profession of arms, have lived according to soldierly customs, as I would have lived the life of a religious if I had worn your habit, and if it were permitted I would confess myself before everyone, for I have never done anything unworthy of myself.' Evening was passed when the innate kindness of the Marquis (of Mantua) moved him as did my prayers, to come to him and to soothe him with words very tenderly; nor would I have believed that any prince save Francesco Maria (Duke of Urbino) would have known how to say what he said. He ended with these words: 'Since the pride of your nature has never allowed you to put yourself under any obligation to me, at least grant me this: Ask me some grace worthy of us both.' 'Love me when I am dead,' he replied. 'The force with which you have acquired so much glory,' said the Marquis,

' will bring you, not the love merely, but the adoration not only of myself but of everyone else.'

Finally he turned to me and bade me to ask Madonna Maria to send Cosimo (his son) to him. At this, death which was calling him redoubled his sadness. Already all the household, without any respect for rank, were pushing round the bed mixed with his officers, and, overwhelmed by cold misery, weeping for their head, their hope and the service they were losing with their master, each trying to catch his eye to show him their sorrow and affliction. Thus surrounded, he took the hand of His Excellency and said to him : ' You are losing to-day the greatest friend and the best servant you ever had.' And his Most Illustrious Lordship masking his words and his face, pretending to be joyful, tried to make him believe he would get well. And he for whom death had no terrors, even though he was certain of it, began to speak of the business of the war, proposing things which would have been stupendous if he had been going to live instead of being already half dead. So he remained working things out till the ninth hour of the Vigil of St. Andrew (Nov. 29). And because his sufferings were not to be measured,

he begged me to read him to sleep. And so I did and he seemed to pass from sleep to sleep. At last when he had slept a quarter of an hour, waking, he said: 'I dreamt I was making my will and here I am healed. I no longer feel any pain; if I keep on getting better like this I will show the Germans how to fight and how I avenge myself.' That said darkness fell upon him and he himself asked for Extreme Unction, and having received that Sacrament he said: 'I will not die in all these bandages'; so we placed a camp bed for him and laid him upon it, and while his mind slept he was occupied by death. . . ."

There lay the great captain of Italy on the eve of the great disaster. In that stupendous letter we seem to see his very self; nor can anything else Aretino ever wrote give us a better idea of his own ability as a writer as well as of such nobility as was in him. The last phrase, to speak of nothing else, is a master stroke, grave and large and noble, yet apparently absolutely spontaneous—*Mentre il suo animo dormiva, fu occupato da la morte.*

So the last great Captain of Adventure died in the arms of the first great Adventurer of the Press.

Maria Salviata, Giovanni delle Bande Nere's

wife, in a letter to Aretino addresses him as "the brother and soul of him who had no equal in this world," and asks counsel of him and begs him to write the life of the great captain. Well might Aretino and Italy with him mourn over that grave. Night was come. Within six months of his death Rome was in the hands of the barbarians, sacked and looted and desecrated; the Pope a prisoner in Sant' Angelo.

And what was Aretino to do? His best friend, perhaps his only friend, was dead. Should he find a refuge and his bread at the Court of Mantua? But he hated Courts: and Rome was not to be thought of.[1] As for Mantua, while he was in favour at Rome, Mantua caressed him; but now? He had quarrelled with Clement and Giberti. The times were disastrous, and while the Marquis offered him hospitality for a time while he tried to reconcile him with the Pope,[2] it was only a temporary expedient. He remained at

[1] A. Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni a Venezia* (Torino, 1888).

[2] See the letter from the Marquis to Guicciardini of January 23, 1527. P. A. did not desire to return to Rome as we see from that letter. Guicciardini had already (14 November, 1526) undertaken to do what he could (*Lettere all' A.*, I, 1, 7). The Marquis's letter to Guicciardini is given in Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. 1.

Mantua in painful uncertainty, writing much and in some bitterness. It is to this time we owe the sonnet :

Sett' anni traditori ho via gettati
Con Leon quattro e tre con ser Clemente. . . .[1]

Those poems written at this time, and especially that entitled " Disperata di Pietro Aretino,"[2] gave great offence to the Pope and effectually prevented any reconciliation.

But there was more than this. While at Mantua in this bitter uncertainty in regard to the future, Aretino was not idle. It was the custom of the astrologers of the time to publish at the beginning of the year their prognostica-

[1] Sett' anni traditori ho via gettati
Con Leon quattro e tre con ser Clemente,
E son fatto nemico de la gente
Più per li lor che per li miei peccati
Et non ho pur d' intrata dui ducati
Et son da men che non è Gian Manente,
Onde nel c . . . se ponete mente
Ho tutte le speranze de papati.
Se le ferite vacasser ne havrei
Per diffender l'honor d miei patroni
Motu proprio ogni dì ben cinque o sei.
Ma benefici, offici et pensioni
Hanno bastardi et furfanti plebei
Che i Papi mangeriano in duo bocconi.
E i suoi servitor buoni
Muojon di fame, come che facc' io
Cosa da renegar Domeneddio.

[2] Cod. Marciano, Cl. XI, it. No. LXVI, ac. 255 r. Cf. Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

tions put forward in a form more or less sybilline, not unlike what we know as *Old Moore's Almanac,* which still has its popularity among the common people. But it was not only to the people that these prognostications appealed; they found readers among the highest, and were especially popular in the Courts.

These prognostications were known as *giudizi* and for the most part were divided into paragraphs or *capitoli,* dealing with the weather, the harvests, the different States and their Signori, and the war and so forth. On all such subjects they offered predictions in a vague language that general credulity delighted to decipher. Sceptics were, of course, not wanting: they parodied these *giudizi;* but this did not prevent their being very popular or stop the Signori from instructing their ambassadors to buy them when they came out.

Pietro Aretino with a consummate ability had used these *giudizi* for his own ends and came to make something quite new of them. He discarded the abstruse charlatanism of the astrologers and replaced it with a lively and biting comment upon everything and everybody: in fact he produced a sort of review

or annual, satirical, humorous, and above all crammed with libel, which as often as not was none the less libel for being true. Not the stars, but his own brain, bitter, contemptuous, rapacious, mercenary, his wide knowledge of men and Courts and affairs, his wonderful capacity, won in a bitter school, of judging contemporary life, found expression there. And with his secrets of the antechamber and his libel, he at length produced a review which after all differed fundamentally very little from some of the more scurrillous periodicals of to-day.

And as it is easy to understand, this review of his was widely sought after and even more eagerly read in the semi-isolation of those Italian Courts than in the streets of Rome: and not least by those who desired to see their names mentioned with honour and those of their enemies with contempt.

But an "annual," appearing once a year, was soon not enough for Aretino. He began to issue *giudizi* whenever he felt need of expression or money. His review probably consisted of a loose sheet, or perhaps sheets, such as is sold in the streets or on the country roads of Tuscany to-day and indeed all over Italy, filled with verses. It was thus we may

think that Aretino later issued his "letters,"[1] those letters which in 1538 were collected and issued in book form by Marcolini in Venice and were soon passed through the world. These letters were in fact articles, often daily —in fact, in 1537 he wrote more than two hundred and twenty of them—the work of a marvellous journalist in which we see pass before us the whole life of the time; of a journalist too who knew how to deal with, appeal to, and impose himself upon, his time at least as well as the most successful journalists of to-day have known how to do.

Thus interpreting and expressing public opinion Aretino won a great popularity. As we have seen in *La Cortigiana*[2] these loose sheets were sold in the streets and so were put into circulation and distributed.

In the end of 1526, after the death of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, Aretino, it seems, did not omit to put out his *giudizio* for the New Year. He signed it in the name of

[1] A. Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 7, *n.* 1, tells us that one of these Letters, that to the Venetians (*Lettere*, I, 269) exists to-day in the original fly-sheet in Cod. Ambrosiana H., 245.

[2] See *supra*, p. 78, and *La Cortigiana*, Act I, Sc. 4. A. Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 8, quotes a dispatch of Jacopo Malatesta, Mantuan ambassador at Venice, in which he tells of what befell "in this country a poor man who went selling the *giudizi* through Rialto."

Pasquino and dedicated it to the Marquis of Mantua. We still have a mere fragment of it,[1] but from later letters we know that things fell out so precisely as Aretino had foretold that he was greeted as *Propheta divino* and given other titles of the same kind. The Marquis seems to have been delighted with it till he suddenly received a very strong protest from Rome through his ambassador Francesco Gonzaga.[2] For the *giudizio* poured contempt on Pope, cardinals and prelates and blamed them for the state of Italy. The Marquis, who had found so much to admire in the *giudizio*, was under the necessity of changing his mind and of brusquely getting rid of Aretino. He was in fact so terrified that in reply to Francesco Gonzaga he says he never had any affection for "such a beast" (*simile bestia*) as Aretino and offers the Pope to have him assassinated, and swears he shall not escape this time as he did in Rome. It is unfortunate that we have not the Pope's reply. It would have been edifying to read his reprimand of such an outrageous offer and his reproaches to the Marquis.

But what was Aretino to do? In this ugly

[1] Code Marciano cl. xi. it. No. LXVI, c. 255, and Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[2] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. II, p. 62.

moment of extreme anxiety, his life in danger he turned to Venice. "I will go to Venice maybe, and I will enrich my poverty with her liberty, for there at least is no favourite to assassinate poor men. Certainly she is the Holy City and the Earthly Paradise. . . . Where is peace if not in Venice?"[1]

To Venice he went.

[1] *La Cortigiana*, Act III, Sc. 7.

VII

VENICE

(1527–1531)

VII

VENICE (1527–1531)

THE Venice into which Aretino came on March 25, 1527,[1] was the Venice of Titian, Tintoretto and Sansovino, of Shakespeare's plays, of Montaigne and of Cellini. Its outward appearance is preserved for us in the pictures of the Bellini, of Sebastiano and Mansueti; the landscape of its countryside in the canvasses of Giorgione; and its inhabitants in the innumerable portraiture of Doges, patricians, men of letters and fair women from the hands of Titian and Tintoretto. It is of this city, in which Aldus was then busy giving back to the new world the literature of Greek and Roman antiquity, that we get so wonderful and so living a picture in the Letters of Aretino himself.

That he had chosen well is obvious and he was quickly sure of it. Venice was then the

[1] *Lettere* I, 83. "... questo giorno fornisce i dieci anni che io ricovrato sotto il lembo de la clemenza Venetiana l' ho celebrata sempre" (25 March, 1537).

greatest metropolis in the world, the only city in Italy that was secure from war in the troubles of the time, the only city that was still rich where all others were poor and bankrupt, the only city that was free when the rest were in servitude and danger. Moreover, and not for these reasons alone, Venice was the one city in the world where he could really feel at home. He needed the Press; here it was. He needed liberty; here was its nest; the great independent metropolis of Europe, the great asylum for exiles.

And he loved the place; everywhere in his letters this eager affection, often almost passionate, breaks through. If he compares Venice with his birthplace it is only to exalt the city of his choice. "La patria è matrignia de la severità—one's native land is a cruel stepmother"—recalling De Quincey's reproach to London—"stony-hearted stepmother."

But at Venice "the sun warms all men alike, the moon gives them light and for all the stars shine forth; our true fatherland is that which welcomes us."[1] While how often he says:

> Vinetia ch' è e sarà ed è suta
> Il Diadema del Mondo, e la bellezza;
> La qual il ciel del favor suo tributa.

[1] *Lettere* I, 274–5.

Vinetia impressa da l' alma allegrezza
De la stupenda e provida natura,
Che gentil fassi, in la sua gentilezza. . . .[1]

" Our true fatherland is that which welcomes us." Well, Aretino was certainly known by reputation in Venice, his fame had preceded him, and he was to be received as a famous, man. Moreover he already had friends there. Had he not known Sansovino in Rome ?

Immortal Sansovin voi pur havete
Mostrato al mondo, come ai bronzi e i marmi
Non men senso, che moto dar sapete.[2]

Sansovino was a friend whom Aretino kept to the end of his life, and it was to him he owed the most precious friend of all—Titian. Titian and he seem to have understood one another from the first; they soon became intimate and devoted " gossips " and nothing ever came between them. This was the famous " triumvirate "—Titian, Aretino, Sansovino—and the three saw each other almost every day. Their friendship became indeed famous, and Sansovino commemorated it on the doors of the Sacristy of San Marco, where he placed

[1] *Lettere*, VI, 177. The word *suta* is truncated from *essuta*, and is the same as *stata*, cf. Boccaccio, *Decamerone*.

[2] *Lettere*, II, 191. "Immortal Sansovino, you have shown the world how well you know to give, not only feeling but movement to bronze and marble" (cf. *Lettere*, I, 190).

the heads of Titian, Aretino and himself;[1] and Aretino celebrated the achievement in a sonnet.

Mentre voi Titian, voi Sansovino
In tele e in marmi afficaticate l' arte
Acciò risplenda in riguardata parte
L' essempio d' ogni spirito pellegrino:
Io col zelo del cor, con cui l' inchino
Pingo e scolpisco humilmente in carte
Le gratie che in Lucretia ha infuse e sparte
Natia magnificentia e don divino.
Benche il mio stil non può forma e colore
Al buon di dentro dar; qual puote il vostro
Colorire e formare il bel di fore
Che, s' ei potesse nel suo proprio inchiostro
Ritrar di lei e l' animo e 'l valore,
Le saria tempio il secol d' altri e 'l nostro.[2]

It would be a mistake, as we shall see, to regard this friendship too lightly, to regard it as arising merely in the usefulness of Aretino to the two artists. It is true that Aretino advertises Titian on every occasion, but this is the result of his enthusiasm as a critic and of his friendship for the painter.[3] He con-

[1] Vasari, ed. cit., VII, 506, *n.* 4.

[2] *Lettere*, II, 249. "While you, Titian, and you, Sansovino, on canvas and in marble display your art so that it is resplendent everywhere and the example of every pilgrim spirit: I with zealous heart bowed in homage paint and carve humbly on paper. . . ."

[3] It is possible, though we have no evidence, that Aretino got a commission on the price of the pictures he arranged for

tinually went out of his way to obtain commissions for Titian. He introduced him to the notice and favour of Charles V, for instance ;[1] but everywhere Aretino's letters bear irrefutable witness to his sincere and eager friendship and respect for Titian. Moreover he had, as we have seen, probably studied painting and was a useful critic. This is proved by almost numberless letters,[2] and not least by the sonnets written on Titian's portrait of Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino.

> Se il chiaro Apelle con la man de l' Arte
> Rassemplò d' Alessandro il volto, e 'l petto.[3]

Then in June, 1527, only three months after his arrival in Venice, Titian painted his portrait,

Titian to paint. But perhaps he who was so merciless to all others spared his artist friends. Yet if he did take a commission it is only another mark of modernity in him.

[1] VASARI, ed. cit., VII, 438, *et seq.* Vasari says : "The renowned poet P. A. having left Rome before the sack of that city and repaired to Venice, then became the intimate of Titian and Sansovino, which was both honourable and useful to the former, who was by that circumstance made known wherever the pen of the writer had reached, more especially to certain powerful princes, as will be related in due time. . . . In 1530, when the Emperor Charles V was at Bologna, Titian, by the intervention of Pietro Aretino, was invited to that city by Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, and there he made a magnificent portrait of His Majesty in full armour. . . ."

[2] *Lettere*, I, 180 ; II, 190, 195, 314 ; III, 35 ; V, 288 ; VI, 203.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 179.

now lost to us, and Aretino sent it to the Marquis of Mantua.[1] For whatever that prince may have instructed his Chancellor to write to the Pope he had certainly not yet dared to quarrel with Aretino. A month after his arrival in Venice, Aretino writes to Vincenzo da Fermo[2] and speaks of the "splendid bounty of the Marquis of Mantua" and not long after in August[3] writes to thank the Marquis himself for fifty *scudi* and a doublet of cloth of gold. He has sent him

[1] This portrait probably came to England when the Mantuan collection passed to Charles I. I can find no trace of it at Hampton Court, nor in the Catalogues of the Mantuan sale and the sale of the Royal Collection. It ought not to be difficult to trace, as Aretino, then thirty-five years old, was represented as disdaining the laurel, as his sonnet, which accompanied the picture to Mantua, tells us :—

Togli il lauro per te Cesare e Omero
Chè imperator non son, non son poeta,
Et lo stil diemmi in sorte il mio pianeta
Per finger no, ma per predire il vero.
Son l' Aretin, censor del mondo altero,
Et de la verità nuncio e propheta
Chi ama la virtù con faccia lieta,
Di Titian contempli il magistero.
Et quel ch' idol s' ha fatto il vicio horrendo
Chiuda per non vedermi gli occhi suoi,
Chè anchor ch' io sia dipinto io parlo e intendo,
Federigo Gonzaga, io adoro voi
Et il signor Giovanni anchor tremendo
Ch' altri non c' è che 'l meriti tra noi.

(Cf. Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 13, and in *Marzocco*, July, 1905.)

[2] *Lettere*, I, 10.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 13.

his portrait by Titian and is arranging for Titian to paint the Marquis's portrait, for Sebastiano del Piombo to paint him an easel picture, and for Sansovino to decorate one of the rooms of the palace at Mantua with a Venus "so true to life and so living that it will fill the mind of whosoever looks on it with desire."

That letter, so full of these commissions and thanks, was written in August; but in May the most terrible calamity, as many thought at the time a judgment of God, had fallen upon Italy. Rome had been taken, entered and sacked by the Constable de Bourbon and his barbarous army of Spaniards and Germans. The Pope was a prisoner in Sant' Angelo.

I suppose the most famous account of that disaster is from the pen of Benvenuto Cellini, but Aretino also describes it in the second day of the Second Part of the *Ragionamenti*, and we have a letter to Aretino from Sebastiano del Piombo, who was in Rome, telling him that the Pope had said: "If Pietro Aretino had been with us we should not be here worse than a prisoner."

The account given in the *Ragionamenti* is, of course, not that of an eyewitness and it is too long to translate here. It is, nevertheless,

extraordinarily vivid and was probably given to Aretino by Frate Sebastiano, who had witnessed the sack. "The most pitiful thing it was to hear husbands all red with blood which flowed from their wounds calling their lost wives: those voices were enough to make the great block of marble in the Coliseum weep. . . . But who can tell the horrors of that night? As darkness came on the great pot-bellies who guarded Ponte Sisto took fright and the enemy overflowed from Trastevere into Rome itself. Then arose the voice of the City, enormous, clamorous, the gates went down, everyone fled and hid himself weeping. The streets ran with blood, everywhere was nothing but massacre. Those they were torturing were screaming, prisoners were making supplication, while women tore their hair and the old trembled; all the city was upside down and blessed were they who died at the first blow or in their agony found someone to finish them. . . . Friars, monks, chaplains and all the rest, armed or unarmed, hid themselves in the sepulchres more dead than alive. There was not a corner, or a hole, or a well, or a belfry or a cellar, nor any the most tiny hiding-place which was not full of all sorts of people. Reverend personages were turned to ridicule

and, their clothes torn off, were thrown on their backs and searched and spat on. Nothing was respected, neither the churches, nor the hospitals, nor the palaces—nothing. . . ."

The Sack of Rome in 1527 was perhaps the most awful calamity that has ever befallen Europe in modern times : it struck at the soul. Even Aretino was awestruck by the disaster, which he considers—not without surprise, we may suspect—as a just judgment of God which seemed to make good all he had written against the Court of Rome. He could not miss such an opportunity by remaining silent. He took up his pen and expressed public sentiment in two articles in the form of letters to the Pope and the Emperor.[1] On May 20 he addressed the Emperor begging him to set the Pope at liberty, as he had already liberated his prisoner, the King of France, and to spare Rome. On May 31 he addresses the Pope : " He who falls as Your Holiness has done turns himself to Jesus in prayer without cursing Fate. It was necessary that the Vicar of Christ should suffer for the sins of others, and the justice of Heaven which corrects error would not be manifest to the whole world if your prison did not bear witness. . . ."

[1] *Lettere*, I, 11, 12.

The immense confidence, the impudent air with which he writes both to Pope and Cæsar would seem to give us a very true impression of the position which Aretino conceived for himself. Secure in Venice, free and his own master, he writes to Pope and Emperor almost like an arbitrator He has already found the tone and air of the "leading article," which Jupiter Tonans has but to echo centuries later.

Quite as noteworthy as these articles in the form of letters are his two compositions in verse, a *canzone* and a *frottola*, that, on the same subject—the Sack of Rome—Aretino sent to the Marquis of Mantua.[1] These passionate lamentations stand quite alone in the literature of the Sack. They show us how deeply he loved Rome in spite of his sufferings there, and how well he understood the state of affairs. What had befallen was "the slaughter of the common fatherland more wretched than Jerusalem, Troy or Carthage."

The insolent pasquinade which he issued at the same time, in which Pasquin recounts to his gossip Marforio the ugly quarter of an hour

[1] Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni* (Torino, 1888), pp. 64–70, Docs. IV, V. These verses were printed for the first time by Luzio from Cod. Marc. Cl. XI, it. No. LXVI, c. 282, *et seq.*

he had passed during the Sack, was apparently printed in Siena, and when the Pope saw it it moved him to ask, even in his misery, if it were possible that the world could suffer a Pope to be lashed in so cruel a manner. "We confess the wrong done to Pietro Aretino," he is said to have admitted. Yet Sebastiano del Piombo, who was in Rome during the tragedy, and is probably Aretino's authority for his account of what happened, tells him that the Pope regretted the ready pen of Aretino when he had to write to the Emperor :[1] "If Aretino had been here we should not perhaps be in this place worse than prisoner."[2]

For the year 1528 Aretino published as usual his *giudizio* which the Marquis of Mantua again found delightful.[3] It was much more respectful to the Pope. Aretino, in fact, seems to have been in hope of patching things up and

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i, 12. "Se P. A. ci fusse stato appresso, noi forse non saremmo quì peggio che prigioni, però che ci avrebbe detto liberamente ciò che si diceva in Roma de lo accordo Cesareo, trattato per il Feramosca e il vice Re di Napoli ; tal che noi non avremmo posto la nostra buona volontà in mano de tali."

[2] A month later than his letter to the Emperor, Aretino wrote an *Epistola* in *terzine*, addressed to the King of France, in which he curses the Emperor and asks for the aid of Francis. It is without life and very prolix and tedious (see Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 19).

[3] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Docs. XII–XV.

re-establishing relations with Clement. He even asks the Marquis to intervene. His affairs at Venice were not prospering; he was in deep need of money and in his difficulty he seems to have attempted to establish a lottery, for which the Marquis gave him the necessary patent for Mantua, in the hope of bringing in some thousands of ducats.[1] This evidently failed, and he seems to have quarrelled with Mantua.

The silence that follows between Aretino and the Marquis is curious, because in September, 1527, Aretino had been engaged on a poem in the manner of Orlando Furioso which was to open with an introductory and dedicatory canto in praise of the House of Gonzaga. This poem was *La Marfisa*, and at the end of September the Marquis writes to thank him for the opening which Aretino had sent him.[2] Federigo Gonzaga expected to become immortal; and indeed the poem which, as we have it, opens with the adventures in Hell of Rodomonte and is thus designed as a continuation of the work of Ariosto, in the first edition published without the name of the author in Ancona in 1532, still keeps the

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Docs. IX–XII.
[2] *Ibid.*, Docs. VII–IX, XI, XII, XV, XX.

introduction which had so raised the hopes of the Marquis.

> Date favor dunque alla penna mia
> Che lodar brama et con fervente zelo
> El giemolo e quel ceppo onde uscì pria
> La vostra stirpe et per voi s' alza in cielo,
> Ch' ogni chiara l' altrui genealogia
> Vince l' honor nel sempre verde stelo. . . .

Whatever may have been the cause of the temporary rupture with the Marquis at this time, Aretino was not less in need of a patron. Deprived of the Marquis he tries to win the grace of Francis I of France and, aided by Guido Rangoni, he was this time more successful. Indeed, the French Ambassador at Venice takes him under his protection and he begins to consider leaving Venice for France. Had this happened it is easy to imagine how he would have avenged himself on the stingy Italian princes and not least on the Marquis of Mantua.

His *giudizio* for 1529 shows how much he was then in hope of bringing this to pass. It is full of praise of Rangoni and the French Ambassador, and very contemptuous and disdainful of the Mantuan agent, Jacopo Malatesta and the Mantuan Court.[1] This led to a quarrel

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Docs. XVI–XVIII.

with Malatesta in the presence of the French Ambassador, in the course of which, Aretino, with his usual impetuosity, asserted that he could have said, and truly, much worse things had he wished, of Mantua. But Malatesta so terrified him that he there and then asked pardon and begged him not to inform the Marquis, asserting that he had sinned through jealousy and love of that prince, and promised, even should he go to France, not to speak evil of Mantua in future, and undertook to go on with the *Marfisa*, which was to make the Marquis immortal. This is, alas, a very good portrait of Aretino, which Malatesta gives us : we see him as he was, petulant, impudent, menacing and then abjectly collapsing.

Aretino, however, seems to have kept his promise to this extent at any rate, that he took up the *Marfisa* again and indeed asks the Marquis to obtain from the Pope, then at Bologna for the Congress, a *privilegio* for printing the poem. This was refused. But the Marquis asked Aretino for a *giudizio* on the Congress,[1] and when we remember what that Congress confirmed—the Peace of Cambray, the sacrifice of Venice and the dictatorship of Charles—it would be interesting to

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 18 and 42.

know what the trenchant pen of the first of journalists, who had found an asylum in Venice, had to say of it.

The Marquis at any rate, expecting immortality from Aretino in the midst of the ruins of Italy, was much more concerned with obtaining the necessary *privilegio* from the Pope than with anything else. His Ambassador is busy with it and forces Aretino, in order to obtain it, to make his peace with his worst enemy, Giberti, the Datario. The terms were too abjectly humiliating to have satisfied Aretino: but the Marquis, expecting immortality, is delighted and so writes to Giberti, who in his reply, referring to the statement of the Marquis to the effect that everyone knew who had stabbed Aretino in Rome in 1525, asserts that he had nothing to reproach himself with in regard to Aretino, who had been attacked "without his order, without his consent and without his knowledge."

The peace thus established for the sake of the Marquis's immortality, humiliating as it was for Aretino, was quite insincere on his part, and we cannot wonder at it. As soon as Clement VII was dead Aretino turned on Giberti, and from a much stronger position than he yet held, exposed him to open contempt

in every Court he could think of, covered him with poisonous ridicule, and bade the Bishop read his (Aretino's) religious works and then judge for himself "which of us two is the more pious and godly." Finally he threw at him, "And if what I say is not true you may assassinate me again and I will pardon you."

However, in 1530 Aretino was not in a position to speak his mind. When the Carnival was over in Venice, he decided to spend Lent in a solemn penitence so that he might finally be reconciled with the Pope also. And to this end we see, not only the Marquis, but the Doge, Andrea Gritti, intervene.

There was, in fact, a good deal more at stake than the *privilegio* for the *Marfisa*. Venice, which was giving asylum to Aretino, found it necessary to be at peace with, and to offer no cause of offence to, the Pope who had betrayed her. Hence the intervention of the Doge.

In the life of Aretino this intervention of the Doge on his behalf with the Pope is a point of capital importance. Till then he had been living in Venice without any proof that he was welcome, without any sign of beneficence or support from the Serenissima. He himself tells us in a letter to the Marquis of Mantua

that the Doge had neither seen him nor called him to him.[1] It is from this intervention that his real and stable future in Venice begins.

If, on the one hand it was advisable from the point of view of the Republic that so notorious a resident and refugee should no longer be at open enmity with the Pope, it is equally certain that this intervention on the part of the Venetian government is a sign that Aretino had to be tolerated and recognised. The Press had won, for behind it was public opinion, which it expressed and represented. Aretino thus appears as no longer a simple adventurer tolerated in the shadow of Venetian liberty; the fact that the first Magistrate of the Republic deigns to espouse his cause consecrates officially his popularity, and the fame of the author of the *giudizi* and the pasquinades, the founder of the European Press. His power over public opinion was thus recognised and in consequence asylum and protection could not be denied him. It is significant that it should have been an aristocratic oligarchy which instantly perceived this; and we can understand that it must have been recognised as readily in England, another aristocratic oligarchy, as in Venice. It might have escaped

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. XXXII and p. 35, *n.* 2.

a democracy or a highly centralised government out of which all the democracies come.

Aretino understood perfectly the importance of this act of the Doge and instantly dismissed all thought of going to France and leaving Venice. With an impetuous enthusiasm very characteristic of him he at once sent a long and fulsome letter to the Doge, full of thanks and praise of Venice. "I who in the liberty of this State have learned to be free . . . intend to establish here my perpetual tabernacle. . . . where treason has no place, favour does not encroach on right, cruelty does not reign and the insolence of the effeminate is not to be found; where there is neither robbery nor brutality nor murder; in the mother city elected of God to make the world more famous, to nourish other cities, to soften manners and to give humanity to man. . . ."[1]

More remarkable still than this hymn in prose are certain stanzas by Aretino, which Signor Luzio printed for the first time, in praise of Venice. They are perhaps the best verses he ever wrote, but are unfortunately too long to quote here.[2]

The result of all this is that Aretino promises

[1] *Lettere*, I, 2. The letter is undated.
[2] Luzio, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–40.

to suppress all passages against the Pope and the Datario in the *Marfisa*, to confess himself and to communicate like a good Christian, " which he had not done for some years " ; and the ambassador describes him in a fine letter[1] " with his confession in hand and tears in his eyes " weeping his sins and proposing to change his life. We see the other side of all this in a letter he received from Rome, written May 5, 1530.[2] The Pope had promised him a gift of five hundred *scudi*, and the *privilegio* for printing the *Marfisa*. On April 20 Aretino had written triumphantly to the Marquis that he had received from the Marquis of Monferrato a princely gift of more than one hundred *scudi*[3] and seems to hope to excite the Marquis of Mantua to send him like presents in recognition of his repentance, or at any rate to be a little more liberal.

Towards the middle of September the Bishop of Vaison sent by the Pope to accompany Alessandro de' Medici to the Imperial Court

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. XXXI.

[2] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 60.

[3] When the Marquis of Monferrat left Bologna after the Coronation of Charles V he came to Venice, as P. A. says, especially to see him. He caressed him, left him splendid gifts, and wanted P. A. to be always with him. (*Lettere*, I, 18 ; *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 57 and 68).

passed through Venice, and in the name of the Pope in the house of the Queen of Cyprus consigned to Aretino the *privilegio* for the *Marfisa* and added on his own behalf the gift of a collar,[1] and seems to have proposed to procure for him a *cavalierato* from the Emperor. But Aretino did not want this : it was worthless and could bring him nothing but honour. Instead he desired a fine benefice in Arezzo worth four hundred ducats a year, and he tried through Gonzaga to obtain it from the Pope, but was told that he was too late, but that otherwise the Pope would have been delighted to please Gonzaga, now Duke of Mantua, and Pietro Aretino.[2]

But the troubles of the *Marfisa* were not over. In the very beginning of 1531 Aretino fell into disgrace with the Duke of Mantua, who refused to be reconciled with him in spite of his prayers and excuses. We do not know what the cause of quarrel was precisely : but they were not friends again till 1540, just before the Duke's death.

Aretino therefore wanted a patron. He turned to Alessandro de' Medici, to whom he proposed to dedicate the *Marfisa* and to sing

[1] *Lettere*, I, 20.
[2] Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. XLII, XLIII.

the "genealogy of the Medici not without disdain for the House of Mantua."[1] Alessandro, however, was not to be caught. So Aretino turned to the pompous Marchese del Vasto, and to him finally the *Marfisa* was dedicated when it was published in Venice in 1535.

In spite of the defection of the Duke of Mantua, Aretino's fame and security and well-being increased from now on almost without a check. Under the protection of the Republic he began to live the life he had always longed for in the midst of peace, wealth, order and luxury. He enjoyed it all enormously and his success was astonishing. Everyone sent him presents and clothes, to shut or open his mouth, voluntarily because they admired him, or unwillingly because they feared him and he begged or threatened them. "With a goose-quill and a few sheets of paper," he writes, "I mock myself of the universe. They say I am the son of a courtesan, it may be so, but I have the heart of a King. I live free, I enjoy myself, I can call myself happy." It was now that he became not so much the Scourge as the Screw of Princes.

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 52, and Doc. XLIII.

VIII

VENICE

(1531–1533)

THE HOUSE OF ARETINO

VIII

VENICE (1531–1533)

THE HOUSE OF ARETINO

SOON after he came to Venice, Aretino had taken up his abode in the house of Domenico Bolani, half-way between the Cà d'Oro and the Rialto Bridge opposite the Rialto in the best part of the Grand Canal.

"I should be wanting," he writes, "in gratitude if I did not praise, and so pay in part what I owe, the divinity of the site of your house, in which I dwell with the greatest pleasure in life. For it is placed not too high or too low, nor too far down nor too far up: but I hesitate to speak of its merits as I should in speaking of those of the Emperor. Certainly he who built it gave it this pre-eminence, that it is on the finest part of the Grand Canal, and as that is the Patriarch of every other canal, and Venice the Popess of every other city, I can say with truth that I enjoy the most beautiful street, and the pleasantest view, in the world. I never go to the window but I

see a thousand persons and as many gondolas at the hours of the markets. The piazzas opposite me are the Beccarie and the Pescaria and the Campo del Mancino, the Bridge and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, and where both meet I have the Rialto crowded with men at business. Here are the grapes in barges, there the game and pheasants in shops, the vegetables on the pavement. Nor do I want water meadows when I see at dawn the water covered with every kind of thing in its season. It is a delightful amusement to watch those who bring in their great plenty of fruits and herbs, pass it to those who carry it to the appointed places. Everything is bustling except the spectacle of the twenty or twenty-five boats full of melons, which, all close together, almost make an island, and there is the business of counting them, judging their perfection and smelling and weighing them. Of the beautiful young housewives shining in silk, with gold and jewels proudly placed on their necks, in order not to lessen the reputation of so much pomp, I do not speak. But who would not split his sides at seeing a boat, laden with Germans just come out of a tavern, wrecked in the cold canal as the famous Giulio Camillo and I did ? He used wittily to say that the entry from the

land side of so well built a house as mine, being obscure and dark, badly planned and with a humble staircase, was like the horror of the name I have acquired by divulging the truth : and then he added that he who came to know me found in my disinterested, straightforward and natural friendship, the same tranquil content that one feels on reaching the portico and in coming on to the balconies above. And then, lest anything might be wanting to my view for delight, to one side I gaze upon the oranges that make gold the base of the Palazzo dei Camerlinghi ; and on the other I see the *rio* and the bridge of San Giovanni Crisostomo. Nor can the sun rise shining in winter without touching my bed, my study, my kitchen, all my rooms. But what I prize most is the nobility of my neighbours. . . ."[1]

This is the house that Aretino calls his "terrestrial paradise."[2] Here he lived for twenty-two years.[3] The house soon became known as the Casa dell' Aretino and one of the streets at the side (? Rio S. Giovanni) was soon called Rio dell' Aretino.[4] "Where do you live ?" the inhabitants of the house were asked,

[1] *Lettere*, I, 169. This house is believed to have stood at the angle of the Rio San Giovanni in the parish of SS. Apostoli.
[2] *Lettere*, II, 35. [3] *Lettere*, VI, 37.
[4] *Lettere*, III, 144.

and they replied: "In Casa dell' Aretino, in Calle dell' Aretino, alla Riva dell' Aretino."[1] Here he received his friends and visitors, who included every sort of person. His house was like an inn. "So many gentlemen break in on me continually with visits that my stairs are worn with their feet like the pavement of the Capitol with the wheels of triumphal cars. I do not believe that Rome itself has ever seen so great a mixture of nationalities as you may see in my house. To me come Turks, Jews, Indians, Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards. You may gather how many Italians I have."[2] He was indeed one of the sights of the city: when you could not see him you felt like Tantalus.[3] So great were the number of his visitors that sometimes they drove him out of the house and he fled to Titian and to his friend and printer Marcolini.[4]

But his house was not only thronged with every sort of visitors, it was full of all his loot, his rich habits and gowns with which he tells us not only Europe but Asia had furnished him. There, too, were his collections of pictures and curiosities. There were very few books. He had perhaps himself written

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, Vol. I, ii, 347.
[2] *Lettere*, I, 205.
[3] *Lettere all' A.*, Vol. I, ii, 262.
[4] *Lettere*, III, 81.

too much humbug to care for them as a genuine man of letters would do.

In the midst of the house was a noble *salone* under a glass dome. There were served his banquets, cooked by an admirable cook, governed by one of his women, of whom we shall speak later, Marietta. He never dined in the town, for according to him the Venetians knew neither how to eat nor how to drink. He kept open house and open table as we have seen, and everyone, from great lords to courtesans, enjoyed his hospitality.

Another great *salone* was lined with ebony cabinets in which he kept his letters; there were separate compartments for those from princes, from cardinals, from captains, from great ladies, from musicians, from painters, from gentlemen and from merchants. Here Titian would often come to paint, for the room was very well lighted.

His own chamber was simple enough and contained only a desk, some pens and paper. This was all he needed. He boasts of his independence of books. "I am a free man. I do not need to copy Petrarca or Boccaccio. My own genius is enough. Let others worry themselves about style, and so cease to be themselves. Without a master, without a

model, without a guide, I go to work and earn my living, my well-being and my fame. . . ."

So much for the house itself: of the view of the world to be seen thence, we have by good fortune a marvellous description in one of his best letters to Titian.[1]

"Signore, my good gossip, despite my admirable habit I dined alone to-day, or rather I dined in company with the quartan fever which serves me as an eternal escort and which does not allow me to taste any food I eat. You see me then rising from the table filled with ennui and despair, having eaten almost nothing. I crossed my arms and leaned over the window-sill, my head and shoulders outside to look on the fair world there, my dear gossip.

"There I saw boats without number, laden with strangers and natives passing up and down the Grand Canal, the aspect of which always delights those who go upon it and seems in its turn to rejoice to bear a crowd of strangers. There were two gondolas tilting, others were having races, and a crowd of people watching the sport filled the Rialto bridge overflowing on to the Riva and the Pescaria, filled the *traghetto* of S. Sophia and the steps of the Casa da Mosto. They applauded and shouted,

[1] *Lettere*, III, 48.

and everyone going about his own affairs threw a glance at the race and clapped his hands. I, tormented and wearied with my fever, lifted my eyes to heaven.

"Indeed, since that day when God created the heavens, never have they been so fair, so full of light, so fair with clouds. It was a sky for the despair of painters, at least for all those who envy you, gossip mine! And the houses, the houses of stone seemed like fairy palaces, here reflecting the pure clear light, there fading away into mist. Under the wandering shadows of the clouds, great white clouds charged with vapour, the buildings took on a thousand new beauties, they seemed no longer to be just buildings but marvellous. To the right a palace was lost altogether in the deep shadow, it might have been built of ebony; to the left the marbles shone dazzling forth as though the very sun had left the firmament and was imprisoned there. Before me the roofs shone with a bright vermilion. Nature, mistress of all masters! How miraculous is her brush, how wonderful her pencil! I know that your pencil, my Titian, is the rival of Nature and you her most well beloved son: so I cried out three times, 'Titian, Titian, Titian, where art thou?'"

In those few lines written to please his friend, how wonderful a picture of Venice Aretino gives us! This man who lived on libel and blackmail and respected nothing but art, was himself an artist. He who had mercy on the poor, the wretched and the miserable and only showed his teeth to the rich, cannot have been wholly bad. His life was shameless, rowdy and disordered, so that Titian remonstrated with him, and tells him his very servants mock him. Yet we know they mocked him because "he treated them rather as his own daughters than as domestics." He laughed at Titian's advice and likened himself to Philip, father of Alexander the Great, who in the midst of his triumphs demanded of the gods a little humiliation. As he says, he whom princes feared—what did he care though his servants respected him not. Yet I think he who was called the scourge of princes was often sad at heart.[1]

There was certainly plenty to sadden him, for all his growing success, and yet so robust was his nature that the most ghastly affairs, the worst betrayals scarcely seem to affect him.

In 1530, there was living in his house, perhaps

[1] See also the letter he writes in 1551 when he leaves this house (*Lettere*, VI, 37).

the first of his secretaries, every one of whom seems to have been a scoundrel and a traitor, a young man, one of his dearest friends, about twenty years old—Lorenzo Veniero. He was a young patrician and the brutal genius of Aretino, which took delight in everything and refused nothing so long as it was concerned with life, seems to have overwhelmed him. He took to imitating the inimitable and prostituted his talents to write a vile and obscene work quite in Aretino's style entitled *La Puttana Errante*.[1] This work made its appearance in 1530 under the auspices of Aretino. The verses were dedicated to Aretino who sent them to the Duke of Mantua, who seems to have appreciated them.[2]

As though the misery of this, with its ruin of so young a man for whom he was responsible, and the horror of the quarrel that followed as to who had really written the obscene thing, were not enough, in the following year, 1531, Aretino hurled himself into a quarrel not his own which was eventually to be the death of the younger adversary, simply to establish relations and curry favour with the other, Monsignore, afterwards Cardinal, Bembo.

[1] See *Op. burlesche*, ed. cit., III, 28–9.
[2] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 21.

It seems that in 1531, a certain young poet named Antonio Broccardo had attacked Bembo, who was a pedant and a reactionary if ever there was one: none the worse for that maybe, but by nature designed to be not the partner but the butt of Aretino. However, Bembo knowing something, certainly, of the weight of Aretino's metal, got Lodovico Dolce to ask him to defend him. Probably he thought Broccardo beneath his own notice. Aretino was delighted and seems to have written some verses, as requested, which have not come down to us and were indeed probably never printed.[1] The controversy became bitter, for those who had not cared to attack Bembo rushed in against Pietro Aretino, and Broccardo even tried to get Bernardo Tasso on his side, but in vain.[2] Then quite suddenly Broccardo died, and as though to show the unreality of these extraordinary cursing matches which disgraced the Renaissance humanists, all is forgotten and forgiven, Aretino himself writing four sonnets in praise of his adversary.[3] Aretino, however, whose blows were always terrible, was accused of having killed a young poet, as the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's*

[1] *Lettere*, I, 98. [2] *Lettere del Tasso* (Padua, 1733), I, 86.
[3] *Lettere*, I, 211–12.

Magazine were later accused in the case of Keats. The whole affair was a storm in a very old teacup, and its chief interest for us, as for Aretino, is that it made Bembo his friend.[1]

Aretino was always throughout his life extremely shy of making enemies among men of letters: his attitude to them is always one of the most abject humility, and this being so, he was naturally delighted to serve so famous a man of letters as Bembo. When Bembo died he wrote sonnets on his death: but these are not more touching or probably more sincere than those he wrote on the death of Broccardo.[2]

The great fact for Aretino was that in taking up Bembo's quarrel he secured himself of his friendship, and this was as great a gain to him in its way as was the goodwill of the Pope, with whom he had made his peace in the previous year.

That Aretino's influence and reputation were increasing we may be sure, if only from the fact that in 1530 the Priori of Arezzo, his native place, named him "Servator della Patria," hoping to win his help for the pro-

[1] P. A. often defended Bembo (see TRUCCHI, *Poesie Italiane* (Prato, 1847), III, p. 211).

[2] *Lettere*, IV, 31 and V, 41. Cf. these sonnets on Bembo with those on Broccardo, *Lettere*, I, 211–12.

tection of the city which, in the anarchy of the time, was in considerable danger from the Imperial Army after the surrender of Florence. Arezzo was respected, whether or not by the intervention of Aretino we do not know.

And Bembo was by no means the only, or even the most famous man of letters who became his friend in these years.

In the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, finally published in 1532, Aretino is named in the last canto among the most famous of his time. Among these he is greeted as,

> . . . Ecco il, flagello
> De' Principi, il divin Pietro Aretino.[1]

Thus were the two titles, "flagellum principum," (scourge of princes) and "il divino" consecrated for Aretino by the greatest poet of the day, and one of the great poets of Italy. Aretino was immensely proud of Ariosto's friendship and on his death in 1533 wrote two fine sonnets in commemoration of his friend :

> L' eterno sonno in un bel marmo puro
> Dormi Ariosto, e 'l tuo gran nome desto
> Col giorno appare in quel bel clima, e 'n questo,
> Di mai sempre vegghiar lieto e sicuro :
> Ma l' alma c' hai nel ciel dice, io non curo
> Pregio si vile ; e il fulgido contesto

[1] *Orlando Furioso*, Canto 46, St. 14.

Delle stelle mirando, un alto e mesto
L' affligge suon teneramente duro.
Le Sorelle di Phebo afflitte e meste
Dicon piangendo, o almo spirito chiaro
Più che 'l Sol senza veli a mezzo il die,
Mira noi, di te vedove che in veste
Di duole, spargiam di fior tuo sasso raro,
E t' inchiniamo ogni hor con voci pie.[1]

" Great loss has the world suffered in such a man who besides his talents was goodness itself," he writes in the prologue of *La Cortigiana*. In 1535 Lodovico Dolce dedicates the *Negromante*, a comedy written by Ariosto for the Roman Carnival of 1520, to Aretino, and altogether we seem to understand that the friendship between the two men was altogether genuine. There was a side in the complex character of Aretino that undoubtedly appealed strongly to the greatest men of that age.

As to the title of " il divino " consecrated but perhaps not conferred upon him by Ariosto, it is easy to exaggerate its importance. It was common, as Mazzuchelli[2] has shown, to many others of that time. Aretino himself confers it not only on Tasso, Bembo, Michelangelo and Dolce but on many others—on CharlesV,

[1] *Lettere*, I, 239.
[2] Mazzuchelli, *op. cit.*, p. 130, *et seq.*

for instance; while he addressed Henry VIII of England as "Divo" and "Deitade." It may have been written by Ariosto in irony; but it is unlikely. It has remained attached to Aretino's name while other names have dropped it because of its extraordinary unfitness, amounting to irony. It was the fashion of the time to confer such titles upon writers. For instance, we have "L'Unico Accolto, Honoratissimo Molza" and many others.

But Aretino needed something more than titles: he needed money.

Since 1531, his relations, as we have seen, with the Duke of Mantua, had ceased. He had got a good deal out of the Duke, as his letters prove, but he had not been ungrateful or ungenerous in return. He had lavished praise upon him and not praise only. He had made him many presents of works of art, pictures, and, in 1529, a magnificent dagger and many other things.[1] But had the Marquis been ten times as ready to give as he was he could not have satisfied Aretino. He was a bottomless well. All the many thousands of *scudi* which, by the wildest flattery, the most scurrilous abuse, threats, blackmail, vile promises of silence or mere importunity and shouting he

[1] Cf. Luzio, *op. cit.*, Doc. XXII, p. 84, and *Lettere*, I, 24.

wrenched out of his correspondents or for which he returns thanks in his letters were not enough for his expense. Nothing less than a State exchequer could have satisfied his prodigality, his love of luxury, and, let it be said, his charity. He was often so hard up that it became notorious : and this is perhaps not surprising if the wells of his prodigality dried up suddenly, as they very likely used to do. In the year 1532, for instance, a column of the Rialto was placarded with verses about it :

Non è banca
Non è botiga a farti credenza . . .

and again :

Chi non ha legna da scaldarsi al focho.[1]

He seems to have spent certainly not less than 10,000 *scudi* in ten years.[2] His liberality to his friends and his charity to the poor and wretched were more than princely, and are among the finer things in his character. Just

[1] "There is no bank, there is no shop to give thee credit." And again, "Who has no wood to warm himself at the fire." These rhymes were posted on the Venetian Pasquino, at first just a column and then after 1541 the "Gobbo di Rialto"—a statue (Sanudo, *Diarii*, Vol. LVII, 102 (No. 1532). Cf. Luzio, in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. It.*, XIV, 367).

[2] *Lettere*, I, 100: "Ho speso dieci millia scudi dal xxvii a questo giorno, senza i drappi d' oro e di seta consumati nel mio dosso e negli altri ; ed una penna ed una foglio gli ha tratti del cuore a l'avaritia" (16 May, 1537).

as he had made return with the greatest generosity for the gifts of the Duke of Mantua, so he sends the Marquis of Monferrat, who had given him 600 *scudi*, a splendid mirror of Oriental crystal worth 300 *scudi*;[1] but his letters are full of such gifts.[2]

As for the poor he not only kept practically open house, but Marcolini records that when he passed by in his boat (*in barca*) "throughout the whole *fondamenta* and over all the bridges, boys and girls and old men and old women ran to him and he handed each of them something for bread."[3] Francesco Doni calls him the banker of the wretched,[4] and Aretino himself says, "It happens that everyone runs to me, not otherwise than if I were the heir of the Royal Treasure. If some wretched poor girl give birth to a child, it falls on my house; if anyone is sent to prison I have to find him in everything; soldiers in rags, pilgrims in affliction, rogues, all come to me. If anyone falls ill in poverty they send him to my hospital for the medicines and to me for my

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, XXXII, p. 94.

[2] *Lettere*, I, 24. He sends a medal with an effigy of Mars by Luigi Anichini ornamented with Oriental crystal, a mirror also of crystal and a picture by Titian (cf. *Lettere*, I, 17, and V, 116).

[3] *Lettere all' Aretino*, II, ii, 354, *et seq.*

[4] *Ibid.*, I, ii, 347.

doctor ; and it is not long since a youth having been wounded not far away, they carried him into one of my rooms, where I, hearing the noise and seeing the man half dead, said I knew how to be host, but not surgeon. So do not wonder that I am always grumbling, that I am dying of hunger and that I am robbed of hundreds and thousands by dogs of servants who do not know how to serve me. . . ."[1] This is merely one letter out of many in which we learn of his goodness to the poor and wretched.[2]

Nor was it only with the poor that Aretino was genuinely popular. Apart from his personal friendships in Venice which we shall deal with later, he was wanted on all sides. Luigi Gritti, the natural son of the Doge and then acting as the King of Hungary's Ambassador in Constantinople, invited him to come to him. It is not surprising to learn that he accompanied his invitation with a large sum of money, but he really seems to have wished Aretino to accept his invitation, for he invites him to join him "to make him (Gritti) happy with his delightful conversation. I will satisfy you

[1] *Lettere*, II, 257.

[2] Cf. *Lettere*, V, 251, for how he celebrated Easter for the poor.

with such a *premio*," he writes, "as no prince will offer you." Aretino accepted the money but did not go.[1]

Then there was Alessandro de' Medici who twice, in 1533 and 1535, tried to induce him to go to Florence, offering to give him the Strozzi Palace if he would do so.[2] Aretino refused to go and, as he could not accept the palace without going to Florence, he refused that also.

There was the Pope also. Clement VII died in 1534 and Alessandro Farnese was elected and took the name of Paul III. He was so friendly, that Aretino thought of returning to the Eternal City.[3] But in fact he was too free, too safe, too happy and too successful in Venice seriously to think of leaving it. His success was as astonishing as it was shameful. His "protectors" were always increasing. If he could boast on the one hand of the protection of Francis I, he soon came to be able to pride himself on that of Charles V also, to

[1] *Lettere*, I, 26 and 30, cf. MAZZUCHELLI, *op. cit.*, 46, *et seq.* He was very hard up at the time. "Misero e vecchio se ne va a procacciarsi il pane in Turchia." Cf. *La Cortigiana*, III, Sc. 7, where Flamminio says that if it were not for the chain the King of France has given him he would go to Constantinople to serve Signore Luigi Gritti. Later in 1551 he regrets he did not go (*Lettere*, VI, 8).

[2] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i, 261 and 263. [3] *Lettere*, I, 34.

say nothing of the Marchese del Vasto, the Conqueror of the Turks, called by the time the new Achilles, and of Antonio De Leyva, Captain General of Charles V in Lombardy. All these men, in whose hands lay the destiny of Europe and of the age, recognised in him the force, the shameful force, of a new instrument and engine—publicity—the Press. They wished to use him and he was ready to be used: they were ready to buy him and he was for sale. Francis I made the first serious bid. In 1533 he sent him a magnificent chain of gold of the value of six hundred *scudi*,[1] weighing eight pounds.[2] It was a fine work of art, exquisitely enamelled, and Aretino, thereafter, was never without it; he is wearing it in all his portraits. Upon it was inscribed: LINGUA EIUS LOQUETUR MENDACIUM, which apparently referred not so much to the lies which Aretino himself owns he told as to the flattering epithets with which he had overwhelmed Francis.[3]

[1] *Dolce Dialogo*, p. 55.

[2] In the *Marescalco*, Act III, Sc. 5, Aretino says it weighed 8 lbs., but in *Lettere*, I, 28, he says 5 lbs.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 28: "Per Dio, che la bugia campeggia così bene in bocca a me come si faccia la verità in bocca al clero." (By God, a lie sits in my mouth as truth in the mouth of the clergy.) Of course, meant sarcastically (see *Lettere*, I, 112). In *Lettere*, II, 9, he says it was his *Cortigiana* which won him

This golden chain, the gift of the King of France, was as it were the crowning of his reputation. Henceforth he was a sort of institution.

this gold chain from Francis I. A. Luzio, *P. A. nei primi suoi anni* (Turin, 1888), p. 53, *n.* 2, argues that the inscription on the chain was *Lingua ejus loquetur* JUDICIUM, referring to P. A.'s *giudizii*, and gives a reference to an unpublished letter of P. A. in which the inscription is thus given. To this I reply that the inscription appears as MENDACIUM in the first and all subsequent editions of P. A.'s published letters, where it is printed in large capitals ; that Signor Luzio has not seen the wit of the notoriously witty French king ; and finally that the inscription is a quotation from Jeremiah ix. 5.

IX

THE ARETINES

IX

THE ARETINES

THAT chain of gold marked the beginning of Aretino's Golden Age in Venice. It crowned him both as a man and as a writer, and the years which follow are filled with his works. We begin to see the amazing variety of his genius and the energy of the man when we note the books he published in the two years, 1533 and 1534.

These begin with the two comedies *Il Marescalco* (1533), *Il Filosofo* (1533), then another comedy, *La Cortigiana* (1534). The two religious works, *La Passione di Gesù* and *I Sette Salmi*, belong to the same year, as do the first and most obscene of the *Ragionamenti* (1534). When we add that all the time he was writing what amounted to a humorous scurrilous politico-financial Review in the form of Letters we may grasp something of the extraordinary fulness of the man's life : though by no means all.

There remain the Aretines. They filled his

house, overflowed on to the *fondamenta*, talked, quarrelled, screamed, sulked, lounged, worked, produced babies, admired themselves and made love all over the Casa, and incidentally eloped and robbed, while they adored, Aretino. There were over a dozen of them whose names we know. As for the nameless. . . .

I do not propose to deal in detail with Aretino's love affairs—the cook of Giberti whom we hear of by chance, Madonna Paola of Reggio under whose portico he used to wait, Isabella Sforza of Mantua who he told the Marquis had redeemed him from worse things than adultery,[1] or the infinite light o' loves that he chased with Giovanni delle Bande Nere,[2] though I must name I think the little Countess Madrina, who forgot her sot of a husband for the young Pietro when he brought her a letter from the Count whom he had left in Milan. After reading this letter, the little Countess looked up at the black-bearded Pietro, that great man, flushed with his ride and dressed in cloth of gold: "My husband," she said, "writes me to do for you all that I should do for him: so you can come

[1] Luzio, *op. cit.*, 22–3.
[2] *Lettere*, I, 242; II, 82–3.

this evening to amuse me."[1] There was also Madonna Marta the Modanese ; in fact, almost as many women as you find in the eight volumes of Casanova. His loves were innumerable ; I will not write of these : I will write of the Aretines.[2]

Paola, Laura, Angela Zaffetta, Caterina Sandella, Angela Sara, Franceschina, Paulina, Angela Sirena, Marietta d' Oro, Pierina Riccia, Chiara, Margherita, La Pocofila, and many others.[3] Who were these women ? His mistresses ? Perhaps, though Angela Sirena I think never was, and Pierina Riccia refused to be. But for the most part they were the women who filled his house, courtesans or others whom he had taken in because they had nowhere to go. He liked to have them about him. Caterina Sandella was the mother of his two daughters. Marietta d' Oro governed the house. But at best they are only profiles, most often little more than names.

In fact they formed a regular harem. Handsome as he was and full of life, more prodigal than the sun and without an afterthought, his house was soon full of all sorts of women who loved him, who depended upon him and

[1] *Lettere*, II, 83, "giacer meco."
[2] *Lettere all' Aretino*, I, ii. 348. *Lettere*, III, 145.
[3] But who is Giulia of the sonnet in *Lettere*, IV, 122 ?

who, as often as not, without his protection, would have been homeless.

The two more important of these women in the life of Aretino were Caterina Sandella and Pierina Riccia. Caterina Sandella reigned as consort. She was a tall and blonde Venetian, quite one of Titian's women we gather, the wife of a certain Bartolo, whom she left for Aretino. By her, in 1537, Aretino had a daughter whom he named Adria because she was born in Venice by the Adrian Sea.[1] Her godfathers were Sebastiano del Piombo the painter and Francesco Marcolini the printer. To Frate Sebastiano he writes on the occasion of her christening:

"Although, Father, there is no need of new ties to unite us two who are already like brothers, yet I have wished to bind us still further with those of the office of godfather, that they may ornament with their benign and sacred customs the friendship which virtue itself has established eternally between us. It has pleased God that the child should be a girl; while I, in the usual manner of fathers, looked for a son: just as if a girl (always

[1] *Lettere*, I, 114. *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 357. The first of these letters is to Sebastiano del Piombo. It is almost as exquisite as that which Boccaccio wrote to Petrarch about his little daughter.

excepting there be a doubt in her virtue, which we must see to carefully, that it be of the best) were not the greater consolation to us. For it is like this : a boy at about his twelfth or thirteenth year begins to pull at the parental curb, and, breaking loose from school and obedience, brings causes for heaviness to those who have begotten him and given him birth. And what is more weighty still, there are the threats and abuse with which he assails his father and mother day and night, from which ensue the chastisements of the law and of God. But a girl is the soft couch which gives repose to the hoary years of those who have begotten her, and never an hour passes but brings pleasure to her parents because of her gentle ways and her diligent care and solicitude for their needs. So that when I had expelled the vexation that came to my heart on seeing that the child was not in my image, I became so vanquished by the tenderness of Nature that I experienced to the utmost all the sweetness of fatherhood. And it was the fear that she might die before tasting many more days of life which led me to have her baptised in my home, with a gentleman to hold her as your proxy, in accordance with the Christian custom. But I contrived the affair rather

hurriedly, because from hour to hour we believed she would fly away to paradise. But Christ has preserved her to be the diversion of my later years and for a witness to the life which others gave to me and which I have passed on to her. For which I render Him thanks, praying that He may continue my life until the time that I shall celebrate her marriage. Till then I must submit to being her plaything; for what are we fathers but the buffoons of our children? They trample upon us in their innocence; they pull at our beards, beat with their fists in our faces, ruffle our hair, and in such coin sell us the kisses and embraces which bind us. But what could be comparable to these satisfactions, if only the dread of some misfortune befalling them did not keep our minds uneasy from hour to hour. Every childish tear they shed, every cry they give vent to, every sigh which comes from their lips or breasts, brings agitation to our hearts. If a leaf but fall from a tree, or a fluff float in the air, at once it appears to us to be a weight which must certainly fall on their heads to kill them; and should Nature but disturb their sleep or dull their hunger, then at once we have apprehensions for their good health. In such wise is the sweet

strangely compounded with the bitter. And the prettier they are the more acute is the dread of losing them. God preserve to me my little daughter, for she is the most engaging creature imaginable, and my life would fail me if she were to suffer, much more to die. Adria is her name, and she is justly so-called, for was she not, by God's will, born in the midst of its billows. And I glory in it; for surely this place is the garden of Nature; and in these ten years that I have lived here I have experienced great contentment, where in Rome I should only have felt despair. And when fate has granted that I should be in your company then I have felt myself happy indeed, for even when you are absent from me I still hold it a great gift to be your friend, gossip and brother."

Her father adored Adria and, even the birth of a second daughter, Austria[1] in 1547, of whom La Sandella was probably also the mother,

[1] She was named Austria in honour of Charles V. He boasted of her birth as evidence of his eternal youth (*Lettere*, IV, 190). Aretino adored this child as he had done Adria. "Austria is as dear to me as life," he says (*Lettere*, V, 45, cf. VI, 200). In 1550 he was in fear of losing her (*Lettere*, V, 229). What became of her we do not know. Perhaps she went into a convent. Cf. *Lettere*, VI, 112, 121, for last reference to her. Was she dead? There was another daughter older I think than Austria, of whom Marcolini speaks in *Lettere all' A.* II, ii. 357; she seems to have died very young.

did not remove her from the first place in his affections. As we have seen he wrote to Vasari that she reminded him of his mother. "Titian," he says, "that excellent painter asserts that never was there so attractive a face as Adria's; especially in the forehead and the eyes and nose we find her so like Tita [his mother] that she would seem rather to be her daughter than mine."[1] His love for her is touching. He had medals struck in her honour,[2] forced princes and dukes to contribute to her dot[3] and finally married her to a rich man in Urbino. This was Diovatelli Rota,[4] and so determined was he to have the dot thus obtained, that he forced Aretino to part with the chain of gold that Philip of Spain had given him.[5] He refused to go through with the

[1] *Lettere*, V, 114.

[2] The medals were by Alessandro Vittoria. One has the bust of Caterina looking to right with inscription CATERINA MATER on obverse, and on reverse bust of Adria looking to left with inscription HADRIA DIVI PETRI ARETINI FILIA. Another was struck, by the same master, of Caterina. Bust looking to left with inscription CATERINA SANDELLA.

[3] As to Adria, see *Lettere*, II, 58, and I, 105. He got her 1000 ducats of dot, but Cosimo de' Medici did not pay his part, knowing the extravagance of P. A., till Adria was married (*Lettere all' A.*, II, i, 21). The other contributors were the Cardinal of Ravenna and Mendoza, ambassador of Charles V.

[4] Of Bergamo. He was resident in Urbino (cf. GUASTI, *Una figliuola di P. A.* in *Arch. Venet.*, Vol. XXIX).

[5] *Lettere*, V, 102.

marriage ceremony until this was done, and even then, when he had obtained it, refused to leave Aretino's house till the whole sum of the dot was completed. It was not till 1550 that Aretino conducted the young married couple to Urbino, where the family of Rota was established.[1]

To greet Aretino and the married couple on this occasion, the Duke of Urbino sent a guard of cavalry eight miles on the road beyond the gate, the city of Urbino was illuminated for the occasion, and the Duke and Duchess received them in person.[2]

But Adria's marriage was not a happy one. Her husband neglected and ill-treated her and she fled to her father[3] who, with some difficulty, patched things up, but without any real success, for we soon find Adria living under the protection of the Duchess of Urbino, who often had to interfere to restore a semblance of peace between husband and wife. Adria died in 1554.[5]

Aretino's love for his children was exquisite.[6]

[1] *Lettere*, V, 67, 68, 71, 77.
[2] *Lettere*, V, 102, 277, and *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 33.
[3] *Lettere*, V, 284, 289.
[4] *Lettere*, IV, 100, 190, 211.
[5] *Lettere*, V, 78, and then VI, 280.
[6] *Lettere*, IV, 202 and 143.

He, however, refused to marry; he hated marriage,[1] nor would he legitimize his children. "They are legitimate in my heart," he said.[2] But from Caterina Sandella and Adria he had all that marriage can give.

In the beginning of the year 1537 Polo Bartolini, one of Aretino's unfortunate secretaries, had married Pierina Riccia and took her to live in Casa Aretino. We do not know who she was: the first mention we have of her is in Aretino's letter to Barbara Rangona,[3] when she is already the wife of Bartolini; but Aretino loved her at once. Adria was not yet born and he protested that Pierina was to be to him in place of a daughter. This seems to have been his first thought in regard to Pierina, and the birth of Adria soon after had put her out of his mind.

After the birth of Adria, Caterina Sandella went to recover at Aretino's Villa alla Gambarare on the banks of the Brenta and took Pierina and her husband with her. Ten days later he writes to Pierina to recall them all to Venice and he writes still in terms of paternal

[1] See letter to Ambrogio degli Eusebii in *Lettere*, I, 105, on marriage, worthy of the Boccaccio of the *Corbaccio*.

[2] *Lettere*, V, 165.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 78.

affection.[1] That was at the beginning of September. A fortnight later he writes to her uncle, Monsignor Zicotto, about her[2] and speaks of her "honesty," and later still on the 10 December he writes to Maddalena Bartolina, her mother-in-law, in much the same terms.[3]

Then, when Polo had abandoned both his master and his wife, Aretino moved by her misery fell in love with her and completely abandoned himself to his passion for this exquisite and fragile child. He loved and adored her; she filled his life, but he got nothing in return, and presently she fell ill of consumption.[4] His devotion knew no bounds, he gave up everything to nurse her, and he nursed her most tenderly. The frightful malady made her almost repulsive, but he tended her like a mother. She had to go to the hills. He took her there, and during a whole winter made journey after journey, across the bitter lagoon, the terrible roads, in wind and snow and rain, to spend a few hours with her. He was frozen with cold and soaked with rain; he made nothing of it. Then she began to get well under his marvellous care. He loaded her with gifts. She got quite well, and returning

[1] *Lettere*, I, 144.
[2] *Lettere*, I, 148.
[3] *Lettere*, I, 236.
[4] *Lettere*, II, 115.

with him to Venice, left his home by stealth with a young lover.[1]

Aretino was beside himself. After four years she returned. He still loved her and took her in. She gave him nothing. She fell ill again. He nursed her as before,[2] but this time in vain. She died,[3] and he never got over this loss; it colours the rest of his life, everything he does, all his thoughts and his work. "O famous doctor in philosophy," he writes to Barbaro, "if only you could teach me to forget."[4]

"I think I died with her," he exclaimed many years later.[5]

Caterina Sandella and Pierina Riccia would seem to have been the two chief women in his

[1] *Lettere*, II, 220, 221.

[2] We see him in anxious consultation with Elia Alfano, the doctor of Casa Aretino, who, in 1542, saved the life of La Sandella (*Lettere*, II, 294). He was a Jew, and Aretino said that "one could learn of him to be a Christian."

[3] In 1545, she died in his arms, "utterly wasted and like a skeleton in the sepulchre" (*Lettere*, III, 187).

[4] "I have loved her," he exclaimed. "I love her and shall love her until the Judgment of the Last Day shall judge the vanity of the senses" (*Lettere*, III, 188). She was twenty years old.

[5] *Lettere*, IV, 137. What truth there may be in the disgusting story of the pseudo-Berni and the similar allusion in the sonnets of Franco I am unable to determine (cf. A. Luzio, *L' A. e il Franco* in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. It.*, Vol. XXIX (1897), 247, *et seq.*, and Sicardi in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. It.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 223).

life ; but his lighter and more evanescent love affairs were innumerable. Among the Aretines we may consider Angela Sara and Marietta d'Oro : they are typical of the rest.

He saw Angela Sara first as he passed under her window in a gondola, and " was burnt by her beauty, splendidly lascivious, proud and passionate." He always compares her to the sun or the moon. She was a Venetian courtesan, as was Angela Zaffetta, whom he praised as the loveliest woman in Venice, and whom we often see sitting between him and Titian at dinner with musicians and other painters. He seems to have had some sort of respect for her. " I give you the palm among all those who have lived your joyous life," he says. " Licence with you always wears a decent mask. Whoever spends his money on you is really persuaded that he is the gainer. How do you manage to make so many new friends without losing the old ? You distribute so well your glances and your smiles and your nocturnal rendezvous that no one complains, and quarrels and curses never come near you."

But he was sometimes deceived and betrayed. Thus when Marietta d'Oro, one of the inhabitants of his harem, wished to go away,

he persuaded her to stay by promising to get her married. In fact, he married her to his secretary, Ambrogio degli Eusebii, a young man of twenty years.[1] Then, to get rid of the young husband Aretino sent him to Francis I to fetch some money that the king had promised him. Aretino accompanied him some of the way to make sure he would go, but when he returned he found that Marietta had looted the house and set sail for Cyprus. All Venice mocked him. Meanwhile, the young husband, having obtained the money from Francis, on his way back, had lost it all at play, in the presence of Cardinal Gaddi, to Rohan.

Aretino did not despair; he forced the Cardinal to make good the loss.

But these things meant nothing to Aretino. He could always defend himself against the world. Where he failed was in defending himself against himself.

Perhaps the most amusing of these affairs was that which he had with the wife of Giovanni Antonio Sirena, whose daughter he had held at the baptismal font. She was very pretty, wrote verses and loved her husband, and Aretino wanted her "platonic friendship." He wrote verses in her honour, in which she

[1] On this young man, see *infra*.

appears as the siren, protesting all the time the high purity of his affection, the chastity of his intentions and his veneration for her. But his ignoble life rendered this public homage dangerous for her. Her relations and her husband interfered, fearing she would be confounded with the crowd of his mistresses. So she was obliged to close her door on the poet and even to refuse to acknowledge him in passing. Then Aretino arose. He wrote to her husband a furious letter, a model of conceit and vanity. "My pen has made Madame Angela Sirena immortal," he writes. "Learn you, that popes, kings and emperors think themselves happy when I desire to keep on good terms with them. Do you know that the Duke of Ferrara has sent me an ambassador with money because I would not go to pay him a visit? Do you know that there is not a woman in the world who would not be proud to be chastely sung and celebrated in my verses? A time will come when this very letter that I send you and that I deign to sign with my own hand will be a title of pride and nobility for your son?"[1]

[1] Cf. Lt.-Col. C. A'Court Repington in *After the War* 1919–21 (Constable, 1922): "I see that my War Diary figures in the *Annual Register* for 1920. L. G. and I are the only people mentioned by name in *The Times* 'Literary

There we have the authentic voice, the true Aretino. And what are we to say of it? We can only say that in his age as in this, what he there makes boast of was almost certainly quite true. He was not only a part of the world he lived in; the world he lived in was unhappily a part of him.

Supplement's' review of the *Register*. The writer says that some people think that I shall outlive my generation. . . . I suppose he means my Diary. Yes, that may live if it is true that *veritas prevalebit*. After ten impressions sold out, of two volumes dealing day by day with the most dramatic and contentious epoch of all time, I have not had a single letter to deny any statement made in it relating to the war. If my contemporaries cannot refute me, how can history do so? A few old cats have squalled privately. How ungrateful, when twenty years hence they will mostly be dead, leaving no memory except in my pages, and on a mouldy and neglected grave in some obscure churchyard."

X

ARETINO AND FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V

(1533–1539)

X

ARETINO AND FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V

YES, that chain of gold which the King of France gave him marked the beginning of Aretino's golden age: but the gold was hardened with so much alloy that one scarcely appreciates its true value. For there was true gold there: certainly in those wonderfully spontaneous and unpremeditated works which, without a model and without a master, he, first of all Italians, poured out like spring water and with much of its sparkle and freshness: certainly, too, in his vast compassion, his all-embracing charity, his feeling for the poor and wretched and unhappy. And this was as spontaneous with him as his comedies. It could not have dwelt in a heart wholly sordid and given to evil: its source was an abundance of life. After all, it was always the rich he took by the throat, always the rich he choked the life out of, always the rich he covered with the mud of his insults and libels

—and then as now they were well able to take care of themselves: the rich and powerful are fair sport whether for saints or for sinners. It was out of them, their money and their folly that Aretino was to carve his livelihood. His weapons were flattery and fear, and he knew how to use them.

Francis I of France might have bound Aretino forever to his car and played upon him for his purposes very much as one uses a motor-horn—and it was a motor-horn of unheard-of depth and hoarseness: it echoed. He failed.

He failed by reason of a very French weakness—meanness. He gave him a chain of gold with a ribald and witty motto upon it, but he failed to give him a pension, he failed to give him security. Aretino was quits with him when he dedicated to him his first religious work, the *Passion of Christ*, in a song full of praise. In return Francis gave him nothing. Yet he could not have failed to see the pale star of Charles V rising higher and higher, drawing up the sky below it the constellation of the Empire as Sirius draws up Canis Major.

Disgusted by the silence and meanness of Francis, who knew his need of money, Aretino, in two short years, deliberately, step by step,

turned from Francis to Charles, and in 1536 wrote him openly prophesying his victory.[1] Charles was quick to grapple to himself a force so potent throughout Italy, and hurried to give him a pension of two hundred *scudi*. Such a pension so ardently desired by Aretino, being fixed, gave him the security he so much needed, which till then he had never enjoyed :

A sostentar delle mie spese il quarto,

as he wrote in his *Capitolo a Francesco*.[2]

In acknowledgment of his generosity, Aretino sent the Emperor an enthusiastic letter of thanks[3] and from then on to the end their relations were always of the best. Charles held Aretino in the highest consideration and gave him his pension without his having to ask, much less beg, for it, as he had had to do from the Frenchman.

Francis was soon regretful enough that he had let Aretino go : and not least in 1536 when, at his wits' end, he disgracefully made alliance with the Turk to break Charles and the Empire. Aretino then wrote him a tremendous letter which reverberated through Europe, and its entire sincerity may be taken

[1] *Lettere*, I, 49.
[2] *Op. burlesche*, III, p. 21 ; cf. *Lettere*, I, 62.
[3] *Lettere*, I, 51.

for granted, for Francis' action had put his beloved Venice in danger.[1] "I am sorry," he writes, "I am not able any longer to call you either King of France or Francesco because one cannot truly call King and Free him who has sued for the aid of the enemies of his God. . . ." and he proceeds to insult the Court of France by saying that it was more used to sweet perfumes than to a soldier's sweat.

There was enough truth in the letter, for the betrayal of Europe was obvious enough, to give it enormous currency and it made a very great impression; so much so that Francis made a real attempt to get Aretino away from the Emperor.

During the moment when, owing to the costs of the war, Aretino's pension was not paid, the French agents approached him, not without hopes of success.[2] For there were many who hoped to dismiss Aretino from Charles, such as De Leyva and Albicante and others who seized this opportunity to forge letters in his style, against the Emperor. It was even announced to Aretino from several

[1] This letter has been published by A. Cappelli, *P. A. e una lettera inedita a Francesco I* (Modena, 1865). Cf. *Lettere*, I, 156, which is the same in content but in more respectful terms.

[2] *Lettere*, I, 101.

sources that Francis would give him a pension of not less than four hundred *scudi*.[1] Aretino immediately wrote to his friend Agostino Ricchi[2] in contempt of this offer, perhaps chiefly because he did not believe it to be genuine or that Francis had so far overcome his native "economy"; as he says, French avarice was unlikely to produce the money, which would evaporate "nel fumo Francese."[3]

But this affair led to one of the famous quarrels of Aretino, that with Albicante. This man, a bad poet and versifier living in Milan, published in 1538 a poem in *ottava* on the Piedmont war and dedicated it to the Duke of Mantua.[4] He sent a copy to Aretino whose friend he professed to be :

Dei principi il flagello,
Al mondo detto Pietro il gran Retino.

But Aretino, instead of praising him, replied in the early months of 1539 with the *Capitolo :*

Salve meschin, volsi dire Albicante . . .[5]

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, ii. 34, *et seq.*

[2] *Lettere*, I, 110.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 111, and cf. *Lettere*, I, 112, *et seq.*, especially p. 113 : "Ma se egli che per non digenerare da la natura francesca non si ricorda de gli amici . . . che saria ricordandosene in ogni tempo ?"

[4] *Historia de la guerra del Piemonte* (Milan, 1538). It is now very rare.

[5] *Op. burlesche*, III, 1.

full of irony and insult and contempt. The poet replied with, "Apologia del bestiale Albicante contra il Divino Pietro Aretino," a feeble attempt to match the irony of the master.[1] The unhappy forger[2] was not valid enough to outroar Aretino; nor did he succeed in making a quarrel between Aretino and the Imperial Court. A single letter from Aretino to Cardinal Caracciolo[3] was enough to clear matters up. At the same time Aretino had so handled matters that his relations with Francis did not cease.[4] Indeed, in 1538 Francis promised him six hundred *scudi*,[5] and in the following year Aretino sent him that *Capitolo* beginning

Cristianissimo Re dopo i saluti,

ending

Pietro Aretino chi aspetta i contanti.[6]

Nor was Aretino without other, if lesser, patrons. In 1537 the horrible tragedy of the assassination of Alessandro de' Medici, Duke

[1] Cf. A. Luzio in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. Ital.*, Vol. XXIX, p. 243.

[2] *Lettere*, II, 69.

[3] *Lettere*, I, 82. This letter, proud, resolute, and evidently sincere, is among the best of the sort he wrote.

[4] *Lettere*, I, 111.

[5] *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 40.

[6] *Op. burlesche*, III, 17–25.

of Florence, by Lorenzino, which seemed to fulfil a prophecy of Aretino's,[1] was not without good results for Aretino, for Cosimo, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, became Duke in place of the murdered prince. Aretino wrote to him at once,[2] recalling his relations with Giovanni, and the Duke replied immediately to say that he would be his friend,[3] "not only for the love you show me, but much more on account of the incomparable friendship, or rather brotherhood, that subsisted between you and that incomparable man, my father." In fact Cosimo sent him many presents of money and other gifts, always writing to him affectionately. And Aretino replied with verses, and had reproduced for him the death mask of Giovanni by Sansovino and the medal by il Danese.

But he lost friends, too. In 1538, the year of the publication and success of his first book of Letters, of the rebellion of his secretary Franco, and of the horrible affair to which I allude in the following chapter, which nearly exiled him from Venice, he lost by death two valued patrons in Andrea Gritti the Doge and Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino. It was to

[1] *Lettere*, I, 64. [2] *Lettere*, I, 92.
[3] *Lettere all' A.*, II, i, 10.

these two men that the first book of the Letters was dedicated. Aretino celebrated the Duke's death in a long poem to the Emperor.[1] Fortunately for him, the successor of Francesco Maria was his sincere admirer and often begged him to visit him and establish himself at his Court.[2]

In the following year, 1539, Aretino regained the friendship of Federigo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, who had been estranged from him for many years;[3] but Federigo died shortly after. His successor, Ercole II, was and remained his friend, sending him money and gifts. This friendship began in 1535,[4] but had apparently been broken when, offended by something Aretino had done, Ercole attempted to have him assassinated in Venice. He did not succeed because Aretino stayed indoors, although unaware, being full of debts; but a servant of Casa Aretino was wounded.[5] The trouble was soon over.

In fact Aretino enjoyed a real golden age during these years in Venice, a golden age that

[1] *Lettere*, II, 59.
[2] *Lettere*, III, 92; *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 5, *et seq.* 12, 32.
[3] *Lettere*, II, 111, *et seq.*
[4] *Lettere*, I, 38 and 40, and VI, 301.
[5] cf. Campori in *Atti e Mem. per le Prov. Modenesi e Parmensi*, Vol. V (1869), fasc. i. p. 29.

was unbroken in its pleasure and even its serenity save by the brief incident of the process of 1538 and by the continual troubles and worries and quarrels caused by his secretaries.

XI

ARETINO'S SECRETARIES

(1536–1542)

XI

ARETINO'S SECRETARIES

ARETINO never had that six hundred *scudi* from the King of France, for the man he sent to get it, Ambrogio degli Eusebii, one of his secretaries, lost it at play to Rohan. As he had lost it in the house of Cardinal Gaddi, with whom Aretino was in bad relations and who was get-at-able while Rohan was not, Aretino wrote him a terrific letter[1] and to the King another asking for justice.[2] But the Cardinal denied that the money was lost in his house[3] and, in any case, Ambrogio the secretary was very young and as it proved a bad lot. Among his inconveniences was the fact that he was in love with Marietta d' Oro, one of the Aretines,[4] and in fact, as we have seen, married her.[5] Not content with losing 600 *scudi* which the King of France sent by him to Aretino, he lost 800 *scudi* he had received in England, managed to get back 200 of them,

[1] *Lettere*, II, 304.
[2] *Lettere*, II, 134.
[3] *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 331.
[4] *Lettere*, I, 105.
[5] See *supra*, p. 166, and *Lettere*, II, 29; *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 40.

but later wrote to Aretino to say he had lost them in a shipwreck.[1] He went to Lisbon, whence he wrote to say he was going to the Indies to carry Aretino's fame to the antipodes. He did actually write him from the Rio de la Plata saying he had preached Aretino's name there and that he repented of his past sins; but by that time Aretino was weary of him.

Aretino was all his life peculiarly unfortunate in his secretaries. The first of these was Lorenzo Veniero, a young patrician who later became a public official and of whom we have already spoken; then Nicolò Franco who utterly betrayed him and became the foremost of his enemies and detractors; then Leonardo Parpaglioni, a Lucchese, and like Franco a poet. He also robbed his master, of two hundred *scudi*.[2] He left Aretino in 1537 to return to Lucca. Aretino wrote him a fine and ironical letter, telling him that he would receive him into his house only if his life were no longer disordered; and later writes again telling him that his desire for fame is vanity, for "fame is the stepmother of death and ambition the dung of glory."

Finally there was the youthful Ambrogio degli Eusebii.

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 41. [2] *Lettere*, I, 80.

But by far the most important of these secretaries was Nicolò Franco.[1] Franco was of obscure parentage in Benevento, where his father lived,[2] his brother Vincenzo being *maestro di Latino* there.[3]

Franco is by no means unknown among the writers of the *cinquecento.* He is, what Aretino called him, a typical pedant and parasite of Letters, imitating and trying to steal what genius has produced, full of envy, hatred, malice and calumny; without spontaniety, empty and vain, he is a very different being from Aretino. He came to Venice in the summer of 1536 and was immediately taken into Casa Aretino, poor and without gear and in rags as he was.[4]

[1] See Carlo Simiani, *La Vita e le Opere di N. Franco* (Roma, 1894), and more especially A. Luzio, *L' Aretino e il Franco* in *Giornale Stor. della Lett. Ital.*, Vol. XXIX (1897), p. 229, *et seq.*

[2] His father was living in 1546 (see *Lettere*, III, 312).

[3] See *Le Lettere di M. Pietro Aretino . . .* (Venice, Curtio Navò e Fratelli, 1539), p. 183. This letter does not appear in the Paris edition of 1609. All the letters in praise of Franco were suppressed in the edition of 1542—the real second edition—some years after Franco's quarrel with P. A. This letter is reprinted by Signor Fausto Nicolini in his splendid but as yet incomplete edition of the *Lettere* (Laterza, Bari, 1913), Vol. I, p. 348.

[4] *Lettere*, II, 97, and *Lettere all' A.*, I, ii. 277. The first of these Letters is a very long one to Lodovico Dolce, written in 1539. It gives an important account of P. A.'s relations with Franco and of his estimate of the man's ability and character.

That a secretary was a necessity for Aretino is not perhaps obvious, until we remember that Achille della Volta stabbed him in Rome had gravely injured his right hand.[1] Perhaps this was the material fact at the bottom of what presently came to be Franco's claim. He had, in fact, acted as amanuensis, but he claimed that he rendered very serious services to Aretino in the way of composition. It is true he is not very precise in his claim[2] but the truth would seem to escape him in the following verses :

Aretin, io t' ho gran compassione
Che ti sia meco a scrivere sfidato,
Et honne conscienza di peccato,
S' io ho due mani e tu non n' hai, boccone.
Di questo dico il vero et n' ho ragione :
Sai che t' ho me lo scrivere aiutato
Havendoti veduto stroppiato,
Et quel che è peggio goffo e ignorantone.

"That I have two hands and you none . . . that you are an ignorant dunce" The first accusation was altogether true, the second true, too, probably, in a sense—Franco's sense. So, a much pleasanter and manlier pedant, Ben Jonson, might throw in Shake-

[1] See *supra*, p. 75, and A. Luzio, *P. A. and N. F.*, *u.s.*, pp. 232, *et seq.*

[2] Luzio, *P. A. and N. F. u.s.*, p. 236.

speare's face that he had "small Latin and less Greek" and should have "blotted a thousand" of his lines. Such men cannot understand the inestimable value of spontaneity and genius, without which all the Latin and Greek in the world will not turn a bad poet into a good one, and beside which all the Latin and Greek in the world is of very small account.

The truth then of Franco's claim seems to have been that he did furnish materials for some of the religious works of Aretino, the *Genesis*, perhaps, and the *Vita di Santa Caterina* and the *Vita di Maria Vergine*.[1] For Aretino himself confesses that he could not read Latin,[2] and though this had little to do with such works as his, for this he was probably dependent on Franco. He was, therefore, within his common-sense right to laugh at Franco as he does[3] for his ridiculous insinuations and claims, "*poveretto, poverello, poveraccio, poverino.*" It is quite clear and indisputable that Aretino was Franco's superior

[1] For the *Vita di S. Tommaso* Aretino received materials direct from the descendants of Aquinas. The other religious works were, as we have seen, published before the advent of Franco.

[2] *Lettere*, III, 189: ". . . sempre mi son' doluto del non essere interprete dello idioma latino."

[3] *Lettere*, III, 145.

in everything. All his best works were written before Franco appeared, except the Letters.

The publication of the first book of these (1538) is one of the most important events in the life of Aretino, both on account of its enormous success, and because it set a fashion which was so extensively followed. He boasted rightly that "the first letters which had been printed in the vernacular," were his.[1] That he felt the fatigue of the horrible manual labour of copying for the press, which every writer feels, we know from his letters to Vasari,[2] whom he begs to send him the letter he wrote him describing the entry of Charles V into Florence in April, 1536. He goes on to say: "I shall be careful to place it with the more than 200 letters I am printing, but they would be more than 2000 if I had all those I have written without keeping copies of the originals. This was a fault of judgment." Vasari sent him the letter he asked for.[3]

It was a considerable work then, to assemble the "copy" for the book which Marcolini

[1] *Lettere*, III, 19. See also the letter to Marcolini his printer printed twice over in the earliest edition (*Le Lettere*, *u.s.* (1539), pp. 96 and 225, and A. Luzio, *P. A. and N. F.*, *u.s.*, p. 239.

[2] *Lettere*, I, 161, written September 23, 1537.

[3] *Le Lettere*, *u.s.* (1539), p. 207.

was to print when he had finished printing the *Architettura* of Serlio[1] which was actually produced in January, 1538.[2] We seem to see Aretino and Franco feverishly copying and collecting the material for the work all through the later months of 1537. And they were not alone. In a letter written to Marcolini, which does not appear in the edition of the *Lettere* of 1609 or in any after 1539,[3] he speaks of the letters as having been "collected by the love that my young men have for what I do." No doubt, among the keenest of these young men was Franco, as the letter written on the 18th December shows.[4]

In spite of their enthusiasm the arrangement of the 1539 edition is bad. From page 97 to the end we have letters of all dates, and in the edition of 1542, no doubt after a hopeless attempt to arrange everything in order of date, all the letters at the end are given the date of December, 1537, which is confusion worse confounded.

In the earlier edition Nicolò Franco, beside the letter already cited, was honoured by the

[1] *Lettere*, I, 150.

[2] Fausto Nicolini, *Il primo libro delle Lettere* (Bari-Laterza), 1913, p. 411.

[3] See *Le Lettere*, *u.s.* (1539), p. 96.

[4] See *Le Lettere*, *u.s.* (1539), p. 196.

splendid letter against imitative pedants[1] which later figured as written to Dolce.[2] He is also referred to in the letter written to Varchi,[3] in which Aretino speaks of him as "Nicolò Franco who after me will be another I," and goes on, "il quale non pur si degna scrivere le cose mie . . . ha composti cento sonetti dei quali io vi mando i quattro qui sotto scritti. . . ." There follow the four sonnets, which are not equal to the praise Aretino gives them; but he was making *réclame* for Franco and certainly knew their real value.[4]

The success of the letters was followed in the spring of 1538 by the greatest peril that had ever befallen Aretino, that of being expelled for ever from the dominions of the Republic, which meant absolute ruin to him. This was caused by a procès for the unnatural offence, at which I have hinted above. I do not propose to touch on the matter in this work; it can have no interest for us.[5] The only thing for him to do was to fly. This he did. By May, however, the Duke of Urbino had

[1] See *Le Lettere, u.s.* (1539), p. 98. [2] *Lettere*, I, 122.
[3] See *Le Lettere, u.s.* (1539), p. 178.
[4] See *Lettere*, II, 97.
[5] Luzio, *P. A. and N. F., u.s.*, p. 243–5. It is to this incident that Franco refers in a whole series of sonnets written in 1541.

extricated him so that he was able to return to Venice. Franco later raked all this misery up against him, but at the time seems to have stood by him and they were still friends in August, 1538.[1]

Then came the open rupture. In November, 1538, Franco published in a splendid format his *Pistole Vulgari*,[2] his own book of letters in the type of Gardane, and Aretino promptly turned him out of the house. He could not put up with such a rival, his own creature; in the second edition (1542) of his own letters the very name of Nicolò Franco disappears.

Envy, and not the horrible affair of the spring, is the real cause of the venomous attacks on Aretino—of the calumnies of the *Vita* and the pseudo-Berni (September, 1538) and the letter to Dolce of October, 1539.

The new secretary was Ambrogio degli Eusebii, of whom I have spoken. He hated Franco, and defended Aretino so strenuously that he stabbed Franco in the face. Aretino disapproved, and Franco promised not to avenge himself on his late master,[3] who, how-

[1] Luzio, *P. A. and N. F.*, *u.s.*, p. 246. Marcolini produced the second printing of the *Lettere* (first book) in September, 1538, and nothing with regard to Franco is yet changed therein. [2] Only the last letter openly attacks P. A.

[3] *Lettere*, II, 97, 98, 112; III, 202.

ever, gave every assistance to Ambrogio in the tribunal, and made him swagger in front of Franco's house while the wounded man was in bed. No wonder Franco turned on Aretino and in his sonnets cursed and calumniated him. There was little else to do, except to leave Venice, which he did.[1] His letters were a failure ; they were directed to persons he most often did not know, and they were certainly never sent. His want of success did not diminish his hate. It was the very reason of his campaign against Aretino.

It is obvious that there must have been some real excuse for Ambrogio, as he was not punished,[2] though it may have been to avoid this that Aretino sent him, as we have seen, to fetch him the money Francis I had promised him.[3] But Franco remained the bitterest of Aretino's enemies, and his attempts to damage the man he hated filled the rest of his life.[4]

[1] He left Venice and went to Casal Monferrato in 1540.

[2] It may be that Ambrogio was vindicating his own "honour" and his wife's. Franco in all his attacks never accuses P. A.

[3] *Supra*, p. 166.

[4] Not content with attacking P. A., he calumniates his friends Pope Paul III, Charles V, Vittoria Colonna and Jacopo and Francesco Sansovino, all friends of "L' Ignorante Aretino ciurmatore." P. A. treated him with pity and contempt. See *Lettere*, II, 124 and 362. And again II, 217 ; III, 242, 326 ; V, 312.

In 1545 the unhappy Franco fell ill, and immediately Aretino forgot his injuries and compassionated him.[1] But as soon as he was able he attacked Aretino again. Aretino however, took no heed of him and even prevented his friends attacking him.[2] However, in a letter written to his enemy in September, 1550, he tells him he is destined for the gallows, and this prognostication came true at last, for in 1568 Franco was hanged by order of St. Pius V for having published the *Priapeia*, an obscene work.[3]

[1] *Lettere*, III, 285.
[2] *Lettere*, IV, 216.
[3] Ammirato, Vol. II, 249.

XII

ARETINO'S FRIENDS

XII

ARETINO'S FRIENDS

AFTER Franco and Ambrogio had been disposed of, in spite of the attacks of the former, Aretino lived a quiet and contented life in Venice. In 1542 Marcolini published the true second edition of the first book of the Letters with forty-four new letters in addition, and his glory was maturing, almost without effort on his part,[1] and in the following year it reached its zenith.

The Emperor Charles V, returning into Germany from Italy, passed through Venetian territory. Guidobaldo della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, was to meet him and receive him on behalf of the Republic of Venice, and he invited Aretino to accompany him on this occasion. After a short hesitation Aretino accepted the honour and agreed to leave his beloved Venice for a short time.

He went to Padua[2] and on to Vicenza and

[1] In the year 1542 he lost his sister Francesca, wife of Orazio Vanotti.

[2] *Lettere*, III, 40.

Verona[1] where, in July, 1543, he awaited the arrival of the Emperor, and he writes to Titian thence of his homesickness for Venice.[2] When the Emperor was approaching he rode with Duke Guidobaldo as far as Peschiera to meet him. Charles no sooner saw Aretino than he spurred his horse towards him, saluted him affectionately and they rode along together, Aretino on his right hand.[3] Among that crowd of cavaliers and lords, courtiers and soldiers bowing and saluting, the son of Luca the shoemaker rode with his great head up, talking to the Emperor, the greatest sovereign and perhaps the greatest man in Europe, the last gigantic figure of the old world that was so rapidly and so surely passing away.

For some miles they rode on thus together, Charles bending friendlily towards the Scourge of Princes, recounting to him the adventures of Algiers, in which the Emperor had lost a fine fleet and army, and flattering him by telling him how all the grandees of Spain read his works and had copies of them. Then, where the pavilion was set, surrounded by a great crowd of his officers and those who had come to receive him, the Emperor listened while

[1] *Lettere*, III, 41 and 28. [2] *Lettere*, III, 36.
[3] *Lettere*, III, 37 and 41.

Aretino read his long and laudatory *Capitolo.*[1] Then they went in, Aretino and the Emperor, to dine together, Aretino on the right hand of Majesty.

Next day the Emperor departed, after in vain inviting Aretino to go with him ;[2] and on his refusal recommending him to the Venetian ambassadors as very dear to himself.[3] Aretino then returned to Venice and, as may be imagined, that return was a veritable triumph.[4] It is an amazing apotheosis accorded to such a man by the melancholy Emperor whose mind was even then half pledged to death.

But however strange, it was an apotheosis indeed. If Betussi[5] records his triumphant entry into Venice, Parabosco[6] bears witness to the amazing position he held in Venice and Italy at this time. Every capital in Italy

[1] *Lettere*, III, 30–4 ; cf. III, 29, *et seq.*, and 37.

[2] *Lettere*, V, 280.

[3] *Lettere*, III, 43, and VI, 37 : " Ecco che il mio non essere punto vano mi facea dimenticar il suo havere chiamato a se cavalcando i venerabili Veneti imbasciatori, a le cui solenni spettabilitadi disse : O amici honorati, certo che non vi sarà grave il dire a la signoria, che io le cheggio in gratia il tener rispetto alla persona dello Aretino come cosa carissima alla mia affetione."

[4] *Lettere*, III, 44.

[5] Betussi, *Il Raverta ; dialogo d'amore* (Venice, 1544).

[6] Parabosco, *I Diporti* [Venice, 1552] (Firenze, 1832).

produced its *Decamerone;* the *Diporti* of Parabosco was one of those produced in Venice. It consists of but seventeen stories, in which we see certain gentlemen of Venice discussing together. They make Pietro Aretino their hero and guide, asking him questions and turning to him for the solution of every difficulty. Well might Aretino say, "I am affectionately regarded by the most esteemed and the most wise."[1] This assertion is entirely borne out by the position given him by Parabosco, and such was the attitude of all Italy towards him at this time.

He had many friends and he kept them. "I keep friends as the misers their treasure, because, of all things given us by wisdom, none is greater or better than friendship."[2] In that seventh scene interpolated, as we have thought, into the third act of *La Cortigiana*, we may find the names of most of these friends, as we may too in the *Marescalco*,[3] and he has recounted them all over again in a dream which he tells to Leonardo, the Ambassador of Urbino, in the first book of the Letters.[4]

Among the most famous of these friends of

[1] *Lettere*, I, 173.
[2] *Lettere*, I, 129.
[3] *Il Marescalco*, Act V, Sc. 3. In the mouth of Pedante.
[4] *Lettere*, I, 231.

his was a host of princes beginning with the Emperor and the Kings of France and England, the Dukes of Florence, Mantua, Ferrara, Urbino and the Doge of Venice. There was, too, the Turkish admiral and pirate, Barbarossa, who sent him gifts.[1] As for the men and women of letters they include all the writers of the time:—Ariosto, Bembo, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Vittoria Colonna,[2] Annibal Caro, Monsignore della Casa,[3] Bernardo Tasso, Benedetto Varchi, Trissino, Speroni,[4] Molza, Agnolo Firenzuola,[5] Paolo Manuzio, too, who writes in 1555 that "he is happy who has your friendship and happier still is he who has your praise;"[6] Alamanni,[7] Bernardo Accolti,[8] Guidiccioni, Benedetto Marcello, Paolo Giovio, Lorenzo Veniero, Girolamo Parabosco, Bernardo Clesio, Cardinal of Trent, Veronica

[1] *Lettere all' A.* II, i. 269, and P. A.'s reply, *Lettere*, II, 201. The pirate calls him "the first of Christian writers"; and Aretino asks him to be generous and merciful to Christian prisoners.

[2] He was not loyal to her. Cf. *Lettere*, I, 7; *Marescalco*, V, 111.

[3] *Lettere*, VI, 62, and V, 104.

[4] *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 324.

[5] *Lettere*, II, 239, and *Lettere all' A.*, II, i. 345.

[6] P. Manuzio, *Tre libri di lettere volgari* (Pesaro-Cesano 1556), 115.

[7] *Lettere all' A.*, I, ii. 326.

[8] *Lettere*, V, 46, and *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 221.

Gambara the poetess whom Vittoria Colonna praised

A cui si inchina
Chi più di bello ottiene . . .

and who wrote to him most affectionately.[1] And all sorts of books were dedicated to him and poems written in his honour.

As for the artists, he had almost more friends among them than among the men of letters. At the head of them we must, of course, place Titian and Jacopo Sansovino. There follow: Giovanni da Udine, Sodoma, Leone Leoni,[2] Moretto, Tintoretto,[3] Vasari, Sebastiano del Piombo, Luigi Anichini the engraver, Giulio Romano,[4] Raimondi, Raphael and Michelangelo.[5] He had known Raphael in Casa Chigi in Rome and always admired him,[6] and he of all men dares to write to Buonarotti that his Last Judgment contained "too many nudes for the holiest temple in the world." Michelangelo at once replied,

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 318, 319; *Lettere*, I, 60, 100, 153, 179, 193.

[2] *Lettere all' A.*, I, ii. 251, and *Lettere*, I, 189. He made at least one medal of Aretino.

[3] *Lettere*, II, 42; III, 110; VI, 22; but cf. Mazzuchelli, *op. cit.*, 64.

[4] *Lettere*, III, 108.

[5] *Lettere*, I, 153. Here he speaks of the Last Judgment.

[6] *Lettere*, IV, 86.

asking Aretino to write as often as possible to him.[1]

The first letter Aretino wrote to Michelangelo is dated September 15, 1537, and is as follows :

" As it is, Venerable Man, a shameful thing and a sin in the soul not to remember God, so it also argues a contempt for wisdom and a want of judgment not to feel for you that veneration which you so highly deserve, since heaven has been pleased to shower upon you all its graces and all its gifts. It is on that account that the idea of a new and perfect nature breathes though concealed under your hands, and that the difficulty of outlines (that great mystery of painting) is so easy to you that you reduce the extremities of the body within the bounds of art; a thing hitherto looked upon by artists themselves as impossible to be brought to perfection; because the extremity ought, you know, to bound itself and to end in such a way that while it makes itself apparent it should set off other objects, as in the figures in the Chapel [the Sixtine] which exercise the judgment no less than they call for admiration.

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, ii. 334. See also *Lettere*, II, 10 ; III, 45, 122, 131 ; IV, 37, 86.

"Now I who by praise or abuse have distributed the greatest quantity of merit or demerit to others in order not to change into nothing the little that I am, salute you. I should not dare to do this if my name, which has reached the ears of all the princes of the earth, had not acquired a certain degree of celebrity. I ought, indeed, to regard you with the greatest respect, since the world has many princes, but only one Michelangelo.

"It is a great miracle that nature can show nothing anywhere, however lofty, but you find it out and impress on your works the same majesty with the immense power of your style and of your chisel. Thus he who sees you dare not regret not having seen Pheidias, Apelles and Vitruvius, spirits which were the shadow of your spirit.

"I rather think it a happy thing for Parrhasius and the other great painters of antiquity, that time has not permitted their works to reach us: which is the only reason that whatever credit we allow to what history relates of them, we hesitate to give them that decided palm of superiority which they themselves would give you, calling you the only sculptor, the only painter, the only architect, if they could judge, as we can, of your immortal works.

"But if it be so, why do you not content yourself with the glory you have already won? It seems to me that it ought to suffice you to have excelled everybody else; yet I conceive that in the End of the World [Last Judgment] which you have now in hand, you are endeavouring to surpass the Beginning of the World [the Creation, etc.] which you have already done; so that your pictures, excelling each other, may assure you of a triumph over yourself.

"Who would not tremble at taking up his brush to trace so tremendous a subject? I see in the midst of a vast crowd Antichrist, with features which you alone could imagine; I see the terror impressed on the face of the living; I see the fading sun, moon and stars whose fires are fast diminishing. The elements seem dissolving. I see all nature horror-struck, barren and shrivelled up in its decrepitude. I see Time emaciated and trembling, who, arrived at his last stage, is reposing on the dried-up trunk of a tree; and while the trumpets of the angels resound through all hearts, I see Life and Death overwhelmed in utter confusion; the one wearied with raising up the dead, the other with striking down the living. Behind I see Hope and Despair bringing up troops of the

good and bad. The sky is filled with ineffable light: Christ throned on clouds environed with splendour and terror and all the hosts of heaven. His face is resplendent with light, and his eyes shining with a soft yet terrible fire fill the virtuous with a lively joy and the wicked with immortal fear. I see the ministers of Hell with intolerable countenances imprisoned, and the glory of saints and martyrs, mocking the Cæsars and Alexanders who have conquered the world but who have always failed to conquer themselves. I see Glory with her crowns and palms trodden under foot, thrown down beneath her own triumphal chariots.

"I hear the Son of God pronouncing the Last Judgment.

"At His voice the good are separated from the wicked; the world crumbles to pieces in the thunder: darkness divides Heaven from Hell.

"In retracing these terrible images I have said to myself one could tremble as much at seeing the work of Buonarotti as at the Day of Judgment itself.

"Do you think that the vow I made never to go again to Rome can hold good against my desire to see such a picture? I would rather be a liar than do so great an injustice to your

genius. I entreat you will believe in the desire I have to extol you."

In answer to that wonderful letter Michelangelo wrote as follows :

"MAGNIFICENT SIR AND BROTHER,—

The receipt of your letter has given me at once both joy and sorrow : joy because the letter came from you who are the only model of knowledge in the world ; and sorrow that having finished part of my picture I am unable to avail myself of the treasures of your imagination which is such that if the Last Day itself had arrived and you had actually witnessed its terror you could not have given a better description of it.

"But in answer to the good opinion you have of me, I will convince you that your letter is a source of great satisfaction to me by asking you to publish it, since Kings and Princes esteem it a very great favour if your pen deigns to notice them.

"If I have anything the possession of which would please you, it is most heartily at your service. Meantime I trust your resolution of not coming to Rome will not prevail over your wish to see the picture on which I am engaged : that would be very disagreeable to

me. I end my letter by recommending myself to you."

It is part of the fame of Aretino that such men as Michelangelo were his friends.

It is, however, in Titian that we come upon Aretino's closest friend: their friendship in fact was famous, and, as I have said, the three, Aretino, Titian and Sansovino, were known as the triumvirate.

We may, perhaps, ask what can have been the attraction of such a man as Aretino for the noble Titian? This certainly: that Aretino who respected nothing else, respected the arts. But to ask such a question is to misunderstand not only Aretino, but still more Titian himself. A thousand things bound them together: interest, for the great journalist of the age could multiply fame as easily as infamy; then life, for Aretino was undoubtedly one of the most living and the most rich personalities of his day: he could give Titian as much as he took from him. All Italy was known to Aretino, he had been kicked out of every Court: he knew everything about everybody, he enjoyed enormously everything about everybody. His intellect, too, was of a high order, he understood everything and perhaps

everybody. In a sense he must have completed Titian. That Tuscan mind, for Aretino was of Arezzo, was like a sword, and in Venice like a sword where all the rest were less keen. His excesses had not dulled his wit or made his irony less biting, less enchanting. He must not only have completed, but have amused Titian. Titian painted him, and he certainly never had a more splendid or a richer subject. He painted him over and over again : in the portrait now in the Pitti Palace, then in that once in the Chigi Palace at Rome. He appears, too, as Pilate in the *Ecce Homo* now in Vienna. They enjoyed life together intellectually, socially and sensually. Aretino is true in his friendship. Indefatigably he advertises Titian, writes innumerable letters about him and his pictures, to Francis I, to Charles V, to Ottaviano de' Medici, to everyone ; writes sonnets on Titian's works and talks, talks to everyone about his friend. His letters are indeed the principal source of information on Titian's life for about thirty years.

As for Aretino : " Titian is to me another I," he writes, and again, " He is I and I am he " ; and again, " When I write to you it is the same as if the letter were from Titian," and Marcolini, who knew them both intimately,

writes to Aretino: "Titian is to you more than a brother." They were not only constantly together, they shared everything. If Aretino received from one of his numerous patrons, or more numerous victims, some delicacy for the table, he writes at once to Titian to come and share it with him, and invites Sansovino and some fair and fragile lady to join them. If Aretino, whose house was like an inn, felt the number of guests too many, he fled to Titian.

We get a glimpse of the triumvirate at dinner in Titian's house in a letter of the time.

"I was invited in the month of August to the house of Messer Tiziano Vecelli, a great painter as everyone knows and the most charming of hosts, to celebrate the *festa* known here as *ferrare agosto*. We were assembled in a delicious garden situated at one extremity of Venice beside the lagoon across which rises the little island of Murano. In waiting for the tables to be laid under the trees, when the heat of the day should be over, we visited the house of the painter full of the most marvellous pictures in the world. Then in the coolness of evening we saw the whole lagoon covered with gondolas, carrying musicians and singers

who, together with the loveliest Venetian girls, began a serenade which lasted till midnight. As for the dinner it was as delicate as it was well ordered: the wines were fine and the accompanying service lacked nothing; at dessert they brought me your letter in which you praise the Latin tongue to the detriment of the Tuscan. Aretino attacked your opinion in the most brilliant and delightful fashion, and I should like to have in ink on paper his discourse. All passed in delight and gallantry. The noble and grave Titian kept all the time a certain restraint; whilst his two friends allowed themselves to be enticed by the charms of the Aspasias of Venice, he contented himself with addressing them charmingly and caressing them; but he only gave them the kiss of Socrates."

This long friendship with Titian is, indeed, the noble side of Aretino's life. His friendship seems disinterested and pure. In such feasts as that set out above we ever see Titian as the grave observer. It is Aretino who, delighting not less than his friend in the beauty and society of women, excites their laughter, animates their passions, flatters and amuses them just as he flattered and amused the greatest princes, but asking in return only

their friendship, which indeed they gave him without reserve. We see at his own dinners all the most celebrated courtesans in the city, and there were conceived those *Ragionamenti* which have been the model of all the obscene works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It might seem certain that what had first attracted Titian to Aretino was the latter's genuine understanding of painting and his gift for criticism. This is attested in many of his letters to artists and others, and not least in such a letter as this to Titian upon his picture of the Annunciation, now lost to us.

"It was a wise foresight on your part, dear gossip, to send the picture of the Queen of Heaven to the Emperor of the Earth. Nor could your genius, whence you draw your marvels of painting, have put to more splendid use the panel on which you have painted this Annunciation. One is dazzled in the blinding rays of light which shine forth from Paradise, whence come those angels poised in divers attitudes over the clouds white, moving and lucent. The Holy Spirit, surrounded by the light of his glory: so living does that Dove appear whose form He has taken that one can almost hear the beat of its wings. The rainbow

that stretches across the sky over the little village lying there in the light of dawn is more true than that which we see after rain at evening. But what can I say of Gabriel, the divine messenger? He fills all things with light, and, glorifying that dwelling, bears himself so meekly in his gesture of reverence that one is forced to believe it was just so he must indeed have come into the presence of Mary. His heavenly majesty is in his countenance, his face is moved with tenderness, and is, as it were, of milk and blood, so closely have you counterfeited nature with your colours. That head is half turned away in modesty while gravely and sweetly he looks down. His hair all in trembling ringlets is fallen into a sweet disorder and his delicate vestment of yellow is as simple as his garb should be, veiling his nudity without hiding anything: it seems that the scarf with which he is girt really plays with the wind. Never has one seen wings which, in variety of plumage and in suppleness, equal his. The lily that he bears in his left hand fills the air with its odour and shines as white as snow, and it seems that his mouth, from which comes forth the salutation that was our salvation, actually pronounces the angelic greeting: *Ave*. I say nothing of the

Virgin first adored and then reassured by the messenger of God, because you have painted her in such a fashion—so marvellously that our eyes dazzle in the light of her regard, so calm and pure that one can scarce meet her look. . . ."[1]

Just there we seem to see the strength and the weakness of Aretino's criticism and apprehension of painting. Its strength lies in its force and in the fact that it is wholly and completely in sympathy with the taste of that day. A picture for him is good or bad in so far as it is a good or bad representation of actual things. He is a pure realist: he has no conception, no suspicion even of any other aim in art. The work of the Sienese school, the whole Byzantine tradition, the exquisite work of the Greeks before Pheidias or of the Gothic sculptors of France and England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would have seemed to him merely barbarous, incomplete and ineffectual. Well, he was nothing if not a man of his time, and we ought to remember that his taste has remained the taste of the whole of Europe until within the last forty years. He is as true to mere life, the appearance of life, its energy, movement and reality in his criticism of art, as he is in his plays and

[1] *Lettere*, I, 180.

dialogues and letters, and in general through all his writings. He is a journalist to the end: and like a true journalist he liked to gossip about his friends, boast of them, blame them, criticize their work and find in them a contribution to his fame. He found them useful for advertisement: for his whole existence, like that of the modern newspaper proprietor and journalist, depended upon publicity: the more the better.

Yet his friends were not all his fame. The Academies honoured him: the Sienese first of all, the Paduan in 1541, the Florentine in 1545. Well may he boast of his renown.

"You think you know all my glory; and you do not know half of it. Medals of me have been struck in gold, in silver, in lead, in copper, in bronze and in plaster. My effigy is placed on the façades of palaces. My head is engraved on combs, on plates, as the ornament of mirrors as that of Alexander, of Cæsar, of Scipio. Those vases they make at Murano are called after me. A breed of horses has been given my name, merely because I accepted one from Pope Clement VII. I sent it to Duke Federigo. The canal that washes one side of this house has been renamed Rio Aretino. My women like to be called Aretines: they even say

stilo Aretino—the style of Aretino. I have nothing to envy anyone. Nor can the breath of envy or the cloud of malice dim my renown or diminish the glory of my house."[1]

Antonio de Leyva, the famous Captain, had announced that Aretino was "absolutely necessary to human life." The greater part of Italy had come to agree with him.

[1] *Lettere*, III, 144; cf. *Lettere*, III, 89, and IV, 162.

XIII

LATER YEARS

(1542–1556)

XIII

LATER YEARS

THE last ten years of Aretino's life are an almost unbroken record of fame and ease. Indeed, they are a sort of transfiguration which seems to have been broken by only one petty episode which in the end turned rather to his credit.

On the publication in 1542 of his Second Book of Letters, Aretino had dedicated it in his rather full-blooded style to Henry VIII of England: *Il Sacratissimo Re d' Inghilterra.* In return Henry had sent him a promise of three hundred scudi *in compenso;* but money slipped through Henry's fingers as water through a sieve; nothing reached Aretino and the years went by.

Rightly or wrongly—as it seems wrongly—Aretino suspected the English Ambassador of having stolen these *scudi* and spent them, nor did he hesitate as his wont was, to say so and to write and publish his accusation.[1]

[1] *Lettere*, IV, 94.

When this came to the ears of the ambassador[1] he determined to give Aretino a lesson, and meeting him one day, he, with six armed men, beat and wounded him.

Aretino says that he could easily have avoided his antagonist, whom he saw coming with his bravoes, but preferred to face him.[2] He was only slightly hurt[3] and he refused to avenge himself, as I suppose he might very easily have done on a foreigner, but said that he wished to leave vengeance to God.[4]

This affair made a great noise in Venice.[5] The Englishman was universally denounced for thus attacking an old man and Aretino's moderation made the best impression. Our ambassador was not long in repenting since he saw he was wrong (which is very characteristic, too).[6] He did all he could to placate Aretino even to getting him his money; and he also stated that he was ready to amend his fault with his own blood. Peace was soon made.[7]

[1] *Lettere*, IV, 283.

[2] *Lettere*, IV, 112 and 114, 183.

[3] *Lettere*, IV, 94: "non ha fatto nè mal nè paura." He speaks of the English nation as it is spoken of still: "colui non fa punto di torto alla insolenza della natione sua" (IV, 114).

[4] *Lettere*, IV, 111 and 127.

[5] *Lettere*, IV, 171.

[6] *Lettere*, IV, 283.

[7] *Lettere*, IV, 138, 141; V, 43, sonnet.

After all Aretino "Huomo libero per Divina Gratia"—was used to such assaults, this was neither the first nor the second: it seems, however, to have been the last. But always his writings, in a semi-barbarous society, must have provoked assault, for in such societies it is always believed that the truth of any statement can be disposed of by force. Had the statement been true in this case, it seems to us, of course, that an assault made upon Aretino could not in any way have disposed of the matter or affected it at all. The eager resentment of a charge of theft on the part of the ambassador of a king, who was then engaged in little else, might have touched the irony of Aretino had he realised it.

Any resentment that may have lingered in his mind, however, must soon have been extinguished under the shower of new honours that soon fell upon him. In 1550 his own city of Arezzo, of which, under the walls of Milan, he had once dreamed of being Lord, conferred upon him the title of Gonfaloniere.[1] This must have pleased him, as he had once been bitter at Arezzo's neglect.[2]

This honour seems to have followed on the

[1] *Lettere*, VI, 56.
[2] *Lettere*, III, 15, *et seq.*

election of Julius III—Del Monte of Arezzo. Paul III had died in 1549. He had always been unfriendly to Aretino, which was not to Aretino's discredit, and in 1545 had been attacked by him for nepotism.

Ai figli de sua figlia padre e nonno,

a wolfish poem biting at all the Farnesi, but now he sang in another strain

Ecco pur, che in prò nostro, ha Dio converso,
In Iulio Terzo, il Gran Iulio Secondo. . . .[1]

He got 1000 gold crowns for this sonnet, and, no doubt, it had much to do with making him Gonfaloniere of his native city, which was also that of the Pope he praised.[2] Nor did the Pontiff withhold his personal gift. In June, 1550, Pietro Aretino was created Cavaliere di S. Pietro and a pension of eighty *scudi* per annum was given to him.[3]

These honours seemed to Aretino to presage a greater—the very scarlet itself—a Cardinal's Hat.

[1] *Lettere*, V, 236.

[2] *Lettere*, V, 281, and *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 224. Here the brother of the Pope writes to tell him that his sonnet was "praised above every other composition in the vulgar tongue or in Latin, by the Pope."

[3] *Lettere all' A.*, II, ii. 33, 224, 352, etc., and *Lettere*, V, 268; VI, 114.

This was by no means an insolent dream of Aretino's: others desired it, others found it a due and commendable honour for the Divine Pietro, as well as he. Titian himself besought Charles V for it on behalf of his friend.[1] He was then in Vienna enjoying a wonderful success. And having come to the Imperial Court with a letter from Aretino he did not hesitate to promote with Charles and the principal personages of the Court this amazing elevation of which very great hopes had already been given Aretino by the pontifical courtiers. He writes to Aretino telling him of his gracious reception and of Charles's intention of giving Aretino's daughter Austria a dowry. In April he writes that the Emperor has sat to him for the noble equestrian portrait now in Madrid, and in May asks Aretino to send him colours, especially lake.[2] It is in July that he

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 245. See II, ii. 99, *et seq.*, and *Lettere*, V, 289, and VI, 102. P. A. himself says: "The public voice in Rome says that the Blessedness of Giulio III wishes that I should live with him in the Court"; but speaks of this as a "miracle." Again he says: "The cry that publishes me for Cardinal aloud is a lying voice." . . . Again, VI, 293, he says, writing Al Sivigliano: "He who wishes to see the difference between your Monsignor and me (can consider) that he is Cardinal while I have not wished to be: this I affirm." P. A. never says that he was offered a Hat and refused it. He says he did not want it. But see Titian's letter below.

[2] *Lettere*, IV, 215 and 252.

first gives Aretino hope of the Cardinalate, and on November 11, 1550, he writes as follows :

"Signor Pietro, Honoured Gossip,—

I wrote to Messer Aeneas that I kept your letters near my heart till occasion should offer to deliver them to His Majesty. The day after the Parmesani's (Aeneas) departure His Majesty sent for me. After the usual courtesies and examination of the pictures which I had brought, he asked for news of you and whether I had letters from you to deliver. To the last question I answered affirmatively, and then presented the letter you had given me. Having read it, the Emperor repeated its contents so as to be heard by His Highness, his son, the Duke of Alva, Don Luigi Davila and the rest of the gentlemen of the chamber. As there was mention of me, he asked what it was that was required of him. I replied that at Venice, in Rome and in all Italy the public assumed that His Holiness was well minded to make you ——, upon which Cæsar showed signs of pleasure in his face saying he would greatly rejoice at such an event, which could not fail to please you, and so, dear brother, I have done for you such service as I owe to a friend

of your standing, and if I should be able otherwise to assist you I beg you will command me in every respect.

"Not a day passes but the Duke of Alva speaks to me of the Divine Aretino because he loves you much ; and he says he will favour your interest with His Majesty. I told him that you would spend the world, that what you got you shared with everyone, and that you gave to the poor even the clothes on your back, which is true as everyone knows. I gave your letter, too, to the Bishop of Arras and you shall shortly have an answer. Sir Philip Hoby left yesterday for England, by land ; he salutes you and says he will not be content till he does you a pleasure himself in addition to the good offices which he promises to do for your benefit with his sovereign. Rejoice, therefore, as you well may, by the Grace of God, and keep me in good recollection, saluting for me Signor Jacopo Sansovino and kissing the hand of Anichino.

Your friend and gossip,

Augsburg, 11 *Nov.*, 1550.[1] Tiziano."

The Hat, however, was never offered. If it had been would Aretino have accepted it ?

[1] *Lettere all' A.*, I, i. 244.

I think there is little doubt that he would have done so, though it would have cost him so much to leave Venice.

This, in fact, he actually did, perhaps still tempted by the hope of the Cardinalate. In February, 1553, the Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, who had been created Captain General of the Church, about to set out for Rome to receive the honour, begged Aretino to accompany him, and sent him one hundred *scudi* for his expenses.[1] Aretino had indeed long contemplated this journey; since 1550 certainly it had been in his mind to go to Rome[2] and only his love for Venice had prevented him.[3] The Pope himself had invited him, and had said that if Aretino came to Rome it would be like a second Jubilee because all the world would flock to see him.[4] But till now he had refused. Was it the hope of a Hat that drew him ?

In Venice he had often discussed the possibility of making the journey,[5] and now finally he consented " to kiss the foot of Giulio."[6]

[1] *Lettere*, VI, 166.
[2] *Lettere*, V, 321.
[3] *Lettere*, V, 281.
[4] *Lettere*, VI, 113 and 160.
[5] *Lettere*, VI, 166, 167.
[6] *Lettere*, VI, 170.

In May, 1553, he left Venice, passed once more by Perugia,[1] and was splendidly received by the Pope "with fraternal tenderness,"[2] and everyone seems to have tried to persuade him to take up his abode in Rome.

It was not to be. Perhaps he was too old to change and too comfortable—nor, without the Hat, was the temptation great enough—to forsake Venice. By August he was in Urbino after visiting Pesaro, on his way back home. He remained some days in Urbino, recited there his *Capitolo* in honour of the Duke and the Pope and then departed for Venice, where he arrived in September never to leave it again.

But it was not to the famous palace Casa Aretino, which was so full of memories, where Titian had painted on the ceiling Marsyas flayed by Apollo, and Mercury and Argus, and the Dance of Salome, and which his innumerable hangers-on had left ruinous,[3] that he returned. He had left that sorrowfully enough in 1551. Since then he had lived on the Riva del Carbìn

[1] *Lettere*, VI, 169.

[2] *Lettere*, VI, 174. Here is another example of the term *fratello, fraterna*, etc. It refers here, as elsewhere with regard to the Bacci, to the fact of common citizenship of Arezzo.

[3] *Lettere*, VI, 37 ; Luzio, *I primi suoi anni*, p. 44 *n.*, thinks that he left because he paid too irregularly for Bolani, his landlord.

in the parish of San Luca in the house of Leonardo Dandolo.[1]

It was thither he returned now to resume his usual life with his friends, living a life very tranquil and serene and happy, ever receiving splendid gifts of money and goods which, with the pensions from Charles V of 200 *scudi* and from others—some 720 *scudi* in all perhaps—gave him security.[2] His mind was as active and powerful as ever.[3]

A last, and what must have been a bitter disillusion awaited him. In 1556 one of his oldest friends, Anton Francesco Doni, a considerable if bizarre writer, born in Florence in 1513, turned on him and attacked him. This man, who had begun life as a Servite friar under the name of Fra Valerio, then had been priest, student of law at Piacenza, printer in Venice in 1544 with Scotto, then printer in Florence, had returned to Venice in 1548, had received every sort of protection from Aretino who had interested Marcolini in him. Now, he who had

[1] Tassini, *Curiosità Veneziana* (Venice, 1887) and *Arch. Venet.*, XXXI (1886); *Lettere*, VI, 99.

[2] In 1540 he says he had 600 *scudi* of income (*Lettere*, II, 213). Badovino del Monte gave him 120 *scudi* p.a. (VI, 173), and maybe there were others. There were many gifts, e.g. (VI, 104) one from the Duke of Urbino of 200 *scudi*.

[3] "Io per me quanto più imbianco la barba, tanto più rinverdisco i pensieri."

always sung the praises of his friend published a libel against him under the title of *Il Terremoto*, prophesying his death in this very year, 1556.

And so it happened.

In a letter from the Florentine ambassador to Cosimo de' Medici dated October 24, 1556, we read : " *Il mortal* Pietro Aretino (no longer *Il divino*) on Wednesday at the third hour of the night was carried off into the next world by a stroke of apoplexy without any decent man being sorry to lose him. May God pardon him."[1] This brutal message scarcely reflects the general feeling, for Aretino and the Florentine ambassador had been bitter enemies for two years.[2]

The fact, however, was true. Pietro Aretino died of apoplexy on October 21, 1556. In a new document which came to light in 1875[3] we learn what we might have expected, that he died suddenly, and also that he was buried in the church of San Luca in a new sepulchre near the sacristy, and that a little before dying he had confessed and received Communion, " weeping very much."

[1] Gaye, *Carteggio*, Vol. II, 337.
[2] Gaye, *Carteggio*, Vol. II, 336.
[3] *Provincia di Arezzo*, 1875, *n.* 35 (Agosto).

Finally in a letter to the Duke from Ludovico Nelli, ambassador for Mantua at Venice, published by Alessandro Luzio,[1] dated October 29, 1556, we read : " *Il povero* Aretino departed to the other world and rather miserably, for one evening about the fifth hour seated in a chair he fell backwards." According to a popular tradition he died in a great fit of laughter.

His tomb in San Luca no longer exists :[2] but tradition has it that over it of old was written :

> Intactus Deus est illi, causamque rogatus
> Hanc dedit. Ille, inquit, non mihi notus erat.

But it certainly seems unlikely that such an epitaph would have been permitted by his very powerful friends or by the Church authorities. Mazzuchelli, his first biographer, will have none of it, but asserts that nothing in the way of an epitaph appeared on the tomb,

[1] A. Luzio, in *Giornale Storico della Lett. Ital.*, Vol. I, 337, and *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, Ser. V, ii. p. 118 : " Il povero A. se ne andò all' altro mondo et certo miseramente, che stando una sera verso le cinque hore in una carega a sedere cascò all' indietro."

[2] Francesco Sansovino tells us that Dolce was also buried in San Luca in the same tomb where first were buried Pietro Aretino and Jeromino Ruscelli (see Preface to Dolce, *Trasformazioni*, F. Sansovino, Venice, 1568).

though all Italy was filled with scornful and ironical verses upon the Scourge of Princes. The jackals could howl at last for the old lion had made his last spring and would roar no more.

XIV

ARETINO AS WRITER

XIV

ARETINO AS WRITER

HAD Aretino lived in our day he would have established a journal, humorous, social, political, satirical, and, even as he did in the sixteenth century, would have made a fortune out of it. But such a statement by no means sums up Aretino: it takes into account less than half his achievement and largely disregards what he actually was.

Who, then, was this Pietro Aretino—*Il Divino —Flagello dei principi?* He was what Titian called him, the *Condottiere* of Literature: and above all a production of his time. Indeed, the spirit of that age of decadence and dissolution, not of Italy alone, but of all Europe as Europe, is very completely represented in Italy by Ariosto, Machiavelli and Aretino—the perfection of form, the hardness and security of the intellect, and the moral anarchy and complete egoism in which the soul is its own prisoner corrupting itself, and in which cynicism takes the place of that charity of which

St. Paul speaks; death, of life. And it is in Aretino rather than in Ariosto or Machiavelli, for he is more complete than either and more vital, that we can best understand that tragic and disastrous moment in which the destiny of Europe was decided: its mixture of moral depravity, intellectual force and artistic sentiment.

Any egoist can say with Aretino: "If I was born to live thus, who will prevent me from living thus? What are you going to do about it?" But few egoists have his enormous appetite: it is one of the really valid things about him. "Why do you spend so much," you say to me? I answer: "Because royal souls show themselves in spending inordinately."

But if he had a great and an omnivorous appetite, he had great energy too, a body of iron, a serene soul, the hide of a rhinoceros and perfect health. Look at his portraits by Titian. He is all there.

It is this man who is a great writer, for it is as a writer that Aretino is really important and not merely interesting. He found letters in Italy dying of pedantry, wholly artificial, and imitative of classical or Tuscan models, Virgil, Plautus, Terence, Petrarca, Boccaccio.

Bembo was even attempting to fix the grammatical forms, and the manner of writing had become mechanical, a matter of rule: one would soon write Italian precisely as one writes Latin, without regard to the living and spoken language. Well, Aretino's whole effect as a writer was to smash up all that pedantry. There is scarcely a page in his six volumes of Letters that does not hold the pedants up to scorn. He was, if any writer ever was, free, spontaneous and full of life. For this cause, if for no other, he should be forgiven all his sins, which for the most part were almost necessary defects of these qualities. But these qualities were invaluable.

What does he mean by pedantry? This: seeing things through the eyes of others, through a veil of preconception, and not directly for oneself; the mistaking of words for things, till the mere expression comes to seem to have the value of an act. He states, and states truly, that it was this pedantry, "this assassination of the dead" that "provoked the heresy against our Faith by the mouth of Luther the worst pedant of all."[1]

Again and again he asserts that poetry cannot

[1] *Lettere*, I, 143.

be written by pedantry, by imitating Petrarca and Boccaccio: "O unstable folk, I tell you and I tell you again, that poetry is a fancy, a whim, a child of Nature in its happiness, and, unless it is that, it becomes a tinkling cymbal and a bell without music."[1]

Just there we seem to perceive a critic direct and decisive and certainly unique in his day. And this great gift of criticism was applied by him almost as securely to the art of painting as to the art of literature. It is no doubt one of the many attractions he had for Titian, Michelangelo and Sansovino.

As for his love of Nature, "Nature mistress of all masters," we have only to read his letter to Titian describing Venice from his window[2] to feel its enthusiasm and sincerity. Yet, so great a critic as De Sanctis can ask why his admiration and love of Nature did not awake in him "any moral impression or elevation." It certainly did not: but why should it? It awoke in him as in any other artist a sheer delight. Surely that was enough? He was not a pantheist to worship Nature, nor, perhaps, would he have cared for the Lesser Celandine. Let us leave the moral

[1] *Lettere*, I, 123.

[2] See *supra*, p. 136 *et seq.*

elevation to Vasari, and only regret that Vasari was totally lacking in Aretino's critical judgment and artistic appreciation of painting; and let us acknowledge in Aretino the first critic of modern art, in painting and letters, who refers us not to the classics but to nature and to life.

This is his value; and he realised what he preached. Every line he wrote came out of his head and his heart, quite spontaneously, in its anger, contempt and derision, its enthusiasm, greed and simplicity. If one feels much the same in regard to Machiavelli and Cellini, their directness and simplicity, one feels too a certain quality in their work not wholly their own: they too seem to invoke the dead. Aretino invoked no one but himself. He was a child of nature and of life; he continually appealed to them and to them only, and almost without culture as he was, he makes up—far more than makes up—in spontaneity what he lacks in scholarship.

If his work is thus without urbanity and certainly without grace, he sought always expression, action, movement—in a word, life. And with what swiftness, with what directness he achieves his end! He has so much energy and facility, such a wealth of

ideas and feelings; and he pours them out with the freshness and the impetus of an inexhaustible spring; and as with such a source, the secret and centre of the whole is in himself, Pietro Aretino.

He seems too, enclosed as he is in the prison of his egoism, to measure all things by himself and not to know that anything can exist for him in itself or apart from its relations to him; it only exists as he is aware of it.

And if this be so, those panegyrics of his, are they panegyrics, or only furious and subtle ironies, almost passionate in their cynicism and absurdity? It may be, he found it easier to speak evil than to speak good, to condemn than to praise; and when we consider the age he lived in, we need not wonder too much: he seems always to have come to bless and remained to curse and castigate.

And everywhere in all his work the style is the man in its sheer genius for expression, its final expressiveness, and again and again in its simplicity. He thanks his benefactors (who often go in fear of that winged pen) for clothes, for food, for jewels, again and again for money, with the simplicity of a

child; and this, if we read him without pedantry, continually moves us.

In now turning very briefly to his works one by one, I shall have nothing to say of the earliest of them, those *Sonetti Lussuriosi* which have become famous, as Voltaire said of Dante, because they are so little read. At the same time let us stay long enough in reach of these obscenities to note their characteristic marks —their spontaneity and their irony. He tells us himself that he saw the works of Raimondi, and "when I saw them I was touched by the spirit that moved Giulio Romano to design them." As for their irony he explains it himself in his letter of defence; it is part of his defence: "the beasts are more free than we."

Of the pasquinades, too, I have said enough in previous chapters of this book, and will only note here the really valid quality in them: namely, that they dealt with life and that it was Aretino who, with them, took Pasquin out of the hands of the pedants and grammarians and gave him life, made him the most popular figure in Rome and through him published what everyone wished to read.

In both these works, in the sonnets as well as in the pasquinades, we see at once a work of rebellion. This rebellion is instinctive; and

we feel this quite as much in what is perhaps his most important achievement, his dramatic works, his *Teatro*, his comedies and tragedy, as in the sonnets and pasquinades. He refuses here above all, where all men were imitators and copyists and pedants, to be anything but himself. Of all the writers of comedies in his day he is the only one, except perhaps Machiavelli, who forgets Plautus and writes what is in his head.

His comedies[1] are among the very best written in Italian before Goldoni; and his Orazia[2] written in verse, the best tragedy in the Italian language. Spontaneous and full of the life that he saw about him, as works of art it must be confessed they are too volatile and spoiled by levity and superficiality. If they are full of life, the life he shows us is common and base and his characters wholly

[1] The publication of the comedies was as follows:

Il Marescalco (Venice, Vitali, 1533) (F. Marcolini, 1536).
Il Filosofo (Venice, Vitali, 1533).
La Cortigiana (Venice, Marcolini, 1534).
Lo Ipocrito (Venice, Bendoni, 1540) (F. Marcolini, 1542).
La Talanta (Venice, Marcolini, 1542).
Quattro Comedie (*Il Marescalco, la Cortigiana, la Talanta* and *Lo Iprocito:* Venice, Marcolini, 1542). I am fortunate enough to possess another edition (1588) without name of printer or publisher, from the library of Firmin Didot with his bookplate. This was printed by John Wolfe in London.

[2] *La Horatia* (Venice, Giolito, 1546).

without nobility of any sort. They live while they move across the scene but they leave us no memory of themselves. Yet nothing can be more lively and vivid than many of his scenes. Take this street scene from the *Cortigiana*, for instance :

FURFANTE (selling loose fly-sheets of stories and verses). MESSER MACO and a SIENESE. Scene : a Street in Rome.

Fur. Fine stories. Fine stories.[1]

Mac. Be quiet. What is that fellow crying ?

Sienese. He must be mad.

Fur. Fine stories, fine stories ; the Turkish war in Hungary, the sermons of Fra Martino,[2] the Council,[3] stories, stories, the English affair,[4] the Pomp of the Pope and the Emperor,[5] the Circumcision of the Vaivoda,[6] the Sack of Rome,[7] the Siege of

[1] " A le belle istorie." There is no English word, but the French word *histoires* translates *istorie* very well.

[2] Martin Luther.

[3] The Council of Trent did not meet till 1545, but from the beginning of the sixteenth century a Council General had been debated.

[4] The English schism in 1534, the divorce of Catherine of Aragon.

[5] The Emperor came to Rome in 1536 to meet Paul III ; but this probably refers to something previous to this.

[6] John, Vaivoda or Duke of Transylvania, having been despoiled of Hungary by his competitor, Ferdinand, threw himself into the arms of Suliman in 1529.

[7] 1527.

Florence,[1] the Conference of Marseilles[2] with the conclusion: stories, stories.

Mac. Run, fly, hurry, Sienese! Here is a *giulio*, buy me the Leggenda dei Cortigiani,[3] that I may make myself courtier before the master comes: but don't you make yourself courtier before me, you know.

Sienese No, the devil! O there, books, speeches, cards. . . . He has turned the corner. I will run after him.

Mac. Run, I say run. O what streets, what streets! I see up there in that window a beautiful lady: she must be the Duchess of Rome. I feel myself falling in love. If I become Cardinal, if I become Courtier she shall not escape me. She is looking at me, she is staring at me. . . .

That short scene, like so many others, is full of life and altogether different from anything else written at this time: it gives you

[1] 1529, undertaken by the Prince of Orange at request of Pope and Emperor to re-establish the Medici.

[2] This conference brought the Pope and Francis I together, and its result was the marriage of Henry II, son of the King, with Catherine de' Medici.

[3] This is the famous treatise of Baldassare da Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*—the Book of the Courtier which appeared in 1518.

the very streets of Rome, and its comedy is full of irony and comment upon the affairs of the day. How often Aretino writes thus and yet it is, we feel, good as it is and far better than anyone else in Italy could achieve, not nearly good enough. It is too light and too superficial. In all these comedies there is no living character, no human being whom we know as an individual: never for a moment is Aretino within measurable distance of creating a Falstaff or a Jourdain, yet he had matter made to his hand. Consider what he makes of Marescalco and what Shakespeare made of Malvolio—a thing eternally living and exquisite: think what he made of Ipocrito and what Molière made of Tartuffe. His work suffers with even the best Italian work of all ages in this, that it cannot build with character or create living human beings who live in and by themselves and endure for ever. He cannot create, he can only give us at his best what he sees and is able to understand. It is amusing to compare the *Marescalco* with *Twelfth Night*, to remember that both were written in the *Cinquecento*, to place this ridiculous and hideous figure of the Marescalco—who is a pederast and hates women and is driven half mad because he has been gulled

into believing that the Duke of Mantua is going to get him married—with Malvolio; and then to listen to an Italian critic telling you that Shakespeare was a barbarian, and English unlike Italian, not a humanistic but a commercial language.

For the *Cortigiana* and the *Marescalco* are probably the best Italian comedies before Goldoni (1740–60). Though published in 1534, the year after the publication not only of the *Marescalco*, but of the *Filosofo*, the *Cortigiana* is the earliest of his plays and in some ways the best, the most vivid and living. It, with the *Marescalco* and *Filosofo*, form a first and distinctive part of Aretino's *Teatro;* the *Ipocrito* and the *Talanta*, written later and published in 1540 and 1542 respectively, are different in manner and perhaps less vital, certainly less modern, original and amusing.

The *Cortigiana*, really without plot, consists of a series of scenes in which we are given a picture of the life of Rome in the time of the Medici popes, full of bitter irony and scorn. Of the *Marescalco* I have already spoken; both these comedies have a passionate and personal note which is lacking in the rest, in which are to be found hints from Boccaccio (in the two principal incidents of the *Filosofo*),

from Sacchetti in two incidents in the *Talanta* (those of Messer Necessitas and of the Pizzicagnolo), and from Boiardo, Terence and Plautus in both.

The *Ipocrito*, as its name implies, deals with a hypocrite and parasite, indifferent alike to good and bad, who only thinks of filling his pockets by the most servile subservience, cunning contrivance and exploitation of others, chiefly women. He is not, however, the chief comic figure of the play: this is Messer Liseo, an old man who, not knowing what to do to remedy the ills of his life in the person of a despotic wife and five daughters whom he cannot marry, turns for advice and help to the Ipocrito, who counsels him to resign himself and to comfort himself with philosophy. The wretched being ends by becoming utterly indifferent and stupid, exclaiming, "*todos es nada . . . nada es todos.*"[1]

When Aretino was already an old man it is said he turned his mind to the production of a work of art for its own sake and wrote his only

[1] One's mind turns inevitably to the great scenes with the Maître de Philosophie of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* of Molière: which Aretino points to, though he cannot compass them. But it is a very great deal here and in his other comedies to have prophesied of such works. No other Italian comedies have this value.

tragedy, *La Orazia*. This has been compared with the work of Shakespeare by critics who cannot have understood what Shakespeare's work really was. The only likeness in any sense to the work of Shakespeare lies in the choice of a story of ancient Rome, the part the crowd plays in the action, and the fact that a certain comic element relieves the tragedy. This is very much but it is all merely superficial. *La Orazia* shows nothing of the genius of Shakespeare, his poetry, his apprehension of life, his power of creating living men and women. It is, in fact, less alive than anything else of Aretino's, and certainly less characteristic and less within his reach than anything he set his hand to.

It is strange to pass from the wholly irresponsible comedies, often gross enough and vulgar enough to have won infinite applause, to the religious works which he must have been writing much about the same time and which were certainly not less popular.[1] But even in his lifetime he was bitterly attacked for daring to use such a pen as his to write of divine

[1] *L' Humanità di Christo* (Venice, Nicolini, 1535) (Marcolini, 1539).

La Passione di Gesù (Venice, Ant. de Nicolini da Sabio, 1534) (Marcolini, 1535).

things,[1] and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which appreciated his ribaldry could not bear his religious works. They, with many of his contemporaries, regarded him as a profaner of holy things, and though many appreciated them, more perhaps thought they ought to be burnt.

The first of these works *L' Humanità di Christo*, of which *La Passione di Gesù* is but the last part, was dedicated to the Emperor; the *Sette Salmi* to Antonio De Leyva, the *Genesis* to the Emperor's brother Ferdinand; the Lives of the Virgin and of St. Catherine to Marchese del Vasto. Were these works but another means then of obtaining money from patrons? He certainly seems to have written ascetic and obscene works together and with equal indifference. Well, the *Ragionamento della Nanna* and the life of St. Catherine of Alexandria were both romances, but what can we say of the *Cortigiana* and the

Gli Sette Salmi di penitentia (Venice, 1534) (Marcolini, 1536).
Il Genesi (Marcolini, 1538).
La Vita di Maria Vergine (Venice, 1539) (*ristampata*, 1545) (Aldus, 1552).
La Vita di Catherina Vergine (Venice, 1539) (Marcolini, 1540)
La Vita di San Tomaso Signor d'Aquino (Gio. de Furri, 1543).

[1] See his defence in his letter to Marcolini, *Lettere*, II, 325 (August, 1542).

Life of Christ? However, according to De Sanctis he draws Christ as a Knight Errant. But was Aretino in these works really as devoid of sincerity as has been thought? I think he was.

He was trying to make a name and a fortune in a certain way. We may regard all his letters as a journal, a humoristic-social-politico-financial journal. Well, these religious works were a part of it.

We have seen the same thing in our own day. A man will make a fortune by running and writing a paper which exists on a sort of libel and abuse, political, personal, financial; in which the people and the poor and half educated—those who will buy his paper—are carefully catered for and exploited, their intelligence, such as it is, exploited without scruple. On Sunday, in a Sunday paper he will write about Christ or the Sermon on the Mount. In Italy he would write about the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. That is exactly what Aretino did. We must regard these "religious" works as articles in his journal, in his review, which never appeared as such but which existed none the less for that. His letters form the main part of this review; they are the "articles." Well, the religious

works are the articles "for Sunday" as we should say. They probably gulled a larger, and perhaps not less important "public" and they no doubt impressed the "princes" whose screw he was, as well. They have, however, their value, not indeed for any religious quality, but as mirrors of a part of that obscure soul.

Let us turn now to the *Ragionamenti*, those curious and obscene *Dialoghi* which appear to have been written at the same time as the religious works, the first being published in 1534.[1] These strange works consist of two parts, each divided into three dialogues filling three days. The First Part contains the Dialogues on the Life of Nuns, the Life of Married

[1] *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia, fatto in Roma sotto una ficaia, composto dal divino Aretino per suo Capricio a correttione de i tre stati delle donne. Egli si e datto alle stampe di queste mese di aprile MDXXXIIII nella inclyta citta di Parigi* [Venezia].

Dialogo di Messer Pietro Aretino nel quale la Nanna, il primo giorno, insegna a la Pippa, sua figliola a esser puttana; nel secondo gli conta i tradimenti che fanno gli huomini a le meschine che gli credano: nel terzo la Nanna et la Pippa, sedendo nel orto, ascoltano la Comare et la Balia che ragionano de la ruffianaria. (Turin [Venezia], 1536.)

La Prima [Seconda] *parte de Ragionamenti cognominato il Flagello de Prencipi, il Veritiere e il Diuino, Divisa in tre Giornate; Doppo lequali habbiamo aggiunte il piaceuol ragionamento del Zoppino, composto da questo medesimo autore per suo piacere.—Commento di Ser Agresto da Ficarvolo, sopra la prima Ficata del Padre Siceo. Con la diceria de Nasi. Bengodi*, 1584. [This was printed by John Wolfe in London.]

Women, and the Life of Courtesans, and is wittily and maliciously dedicated by the author to his monkey. The Second Part contains the dialogues entitled "Pippa's Education," "The Wiles of Men" and "The Bawd's Trade," and is dedicated to Bernardo Valdaura.

Two years after the publication of the Second Part of the *Ragionamenti*, Aretino issued, in 1538, a *Ragionamento de le Corti* in which he attacks the Court of Rome; and in 1543 he published the *Dialogo del Pietro Aretino nel quale si parla del gioco con moralità piacevole*, which has for its subjects games of cards.[1] Neither of these two dialogues has anything to do with the *Ragionamenti* proper—the *Capricci*, as he sometimes calls them in his letters,—The Six Days. They do not form a third part to the *Capricci* as they appear to do in Melagrano's edition of 1589. Bandello, in his *Novelle*,[2] makes a similar mistake when he attributes the *Raffaella* to Aretino. Bandello was a contemporary of Aretino's and a scholar, yet he seems to have had no sense of Aretino's

[1] *Ragionamento nel quale P. Aretino figura quattro suoi amici che favellano de le corti del mondo e di quella del cielo.* (Nova [Venezia], 1538.)

Dialogo nel quale si parla del gioco, con moralità piacevole. (Vinegia per Giovanni, 1543.)

[2] BANDELLO, *Novelle*, Pt. i, Nov. xxxiv.

inimitable style, since he can attribute such a work as the *Raffaella* to him. Nothing would seem to be easier than to reject confidently such a work, which with the *Puttana Errante* and the *Ragionamento del Zoppino* has nothing but its obscenity in common with the work of Aretino. Aretino's page is full of life, hard to read, spontaneous and yet packed tight, worked upon and forged, full of queer instances and odd comparisons, glittering with wit and every sort of comic exaggeration. Such work does not exist outside his pages. His successor was Rabelais; but also Molière. He has the robust joy of the one, but something of the intellectual charm of the other. He takes us not only in spite of ourselves, but in spite of his own animalism and coarseness. He fascinates us with his good-for-nothing but candid women who are so pretty and so amusing, and yet as we know all the time such lamentable, mournful, and even nauseating beings. What sluts he shows us in that mirror he holds up to nature! For his work is a mirror, though it may distort much in malice. He is a realist. The "Dialogue of the Life of Nuns," for instance—we can believe it: even two centuries later Casanova and Rousseau give us only a less brutal picture. And if it

shocks and disgusts us we cannot but be astonished at the robustness of a world which could survive such animalism and confusion, which could not only indulge its appetites so unselfconsciously, but which had such appetites to indulge. There is something valid there at any rate; and if it is impossible for us to realise the scenes he gives us as having actually happened, though we are obviously the gainers, we are losers, too, in that we have lost something of that energy, that zest, which made such an abundance of life delightful even in its rudest expression.

For all these dialogues, obscene as they are, are not lascivious, they have the vigour of life and are filled with action. One could not find a work less "cerebral," as the jargon of to-day has it, than these dialogues. Wholly without atmosphere, naked and dramatic in their objectivity, they leave us cold as ice, and since they expose, and at the top of the voice, the brutal corruption of the time—the time which saw the break-up of Europe, the failure of that philosophical system which had built up Europe, and the domination of the barbarian—they may even have served a useful if not a moral purpose; though it is the last thing their tone seems to hint at, at

least to modern ears. "I have spoken the truth": it is Aretino's continual cry as it was Boccaccio's, and now as in their own day no one can be found to believe them. It is perhaps unnatural to love the truth for its own sake. We think the truth, if it must be spoken, should be uttered with more seriousness, more modesty and with less inordinate joy: not in a shout of laughter, but with severity and sorrow. It is not perhaps our hypocrisy, but our nerves which insist upon this. We are less robust than they, we know as little of their huge laughter as of their enormous and violent gestures: we take our pleasures—and among them the rebuking of sin—sadly. We are no longer capable of their enormities, their spontaneous lusts as of young animals at play: their nakedness seems a little brutal to us who have hidden our own under the daintiest of *lingerie*. But we are still capable of much, and I doubt if there be anything in the Sack of Rome as described in the Second Day of the Second Part of the *Ragionamenti* which we have not matched and overmatched in the late war, and we shall find nothing in the sixteenth century to equal in horror much that was done quite coldly and as a matter of course in the last few years.

But what is so amusing in the *Ragionamenti* is the strange quality they seem to have; a sort of devilish glee, a malignity and malice of observation which find expression in an exuberance of sarcastic particulars, of picturesque expressions, of comic detail, and comparisons. They are, too, filled with a wonderful variety of people and of characteristic scenes, both drawn swiftly from life. Like the *Decameron*, they are full of anecdotes, witty sayings, noisy mirth and enormous laughs, so that if their whole subject were not become impossible to us they might be as universally appreciated as *Pickwick*, or, at any rate, as the books of Rabelais, for as a product of human energy they are surely not less astonishing or less true or less full of life or less in artistic achievement.

In regard to the life-work of their author they have their own place. In the great review or journal which he ran, which never appeared as such, but which existed nevertheless, if the Letters are the articles, the religious works the articles for Sunday, the *Ragionamenti* are the *feuilletons*, and, as must often be the case, by no means the least read or the least popular part of the paper.

Consider the following passage, for instance,

from the Third Day of the First Part. It is absolutely characteristic :—

Nanna. Among the rest, three men, especially, have loved me : one painter and two courtiers ; and the peace that exists between dogs and cats was precisely what there was between them. Each would be on the watch for the moment to come and see me, when he would fancy there was no danger of meeting the other two. It chanced that the painter came late one evening and knocked at the door ; he was let in. He walked upstairs, and as he was just going to sit down beside me one of the courtiers knocked ;—I knew it was he ;—so I got the painter hidden and went to meet the gallant who bawled out on coming upstairs, " The Devil ! Let me catch that cowardly dauber of thieves' mitres here ! " The painter could not hear him, but, while he was pouring out his flood of words, I heard my third lover coming. He warned me by his coughing to go and let him in. I hid him who wanted to smash the painter, and when I opened the door my third lover spat out on the threshold, at first sight, saying to me, " I came expecting to find one of those two beggars with

thee ; had I met him here the least morsel he would have left here would have been his ear."

Now don't fancy because we spoke like that, that he would have kicked the back-side of Castruccio.[1] On the contrary the threat being overheard by the hidden painter and the courtier, who knew nothing of each other being there, both rushed out of their hiding-places to make this boastful last comer eat his words : who on beholding them tried to retreat, but on setting his foot backwards on the first step of the stairs tumbled down to the bottom, while they being blinded by their fury and unable to see clear, fell over him. Then ensued a triangular duel of a dreadful character, bungled together as they were, between those three men who mortally hated one another, so that a crowd of people ran up at the noise ; but they could not get in to separate them, for they kept the door so well shut with their shoulders that it was impossible to open it. The yells increased, the crowd also ; as chance would have it

[1] Castruccio Castracani, Signore of Lucca, a great and redoubtable captain of the fourteenth century, the hero of Machiavelli's essay bearing his name.

the Governour happened to pass that way. He got the door broken in, had my three bullies seized all bruised and bloody as they were, and ordered them to be clapped into the same prison. And they would never have come out of it if they had not made peace among themselves, which they did.

Antonia. Certainly : that was a fine affair.

Nanna. So fine that I used to relate it to all the strangers, and I was near getting a poem written on it by the Jew, Gian Maria. However, I didn't, for fear of being thought a vainglorious person.

Antonia. May the Lord reward thee.

Nanna. Indeed, yes ! But if this story made everyone laugh, the one I will now tell thee amazed them all.

In the height of that favour to which my friends had borne me (thanks to my being a dainty morsel), I contrived to get myself walled up in the Campo Santo.

Antonia. Why not in St. Peter's or St. John's ?

Nanna. Because I wished to excite more pity by burying myself in the midst of all those dead men's bones.

Antonia. A queer idea !

Nanna. Once the news was spread I began to lead a holy life.

Antonia. Before you go on, tell me why this folly of walling thyself up had taken thee.

Nanna. To get myself delivered by my friends and at their expense.

Antonia. Ah, I see.

Nanna. I changed my way of life. First I removed the hangings from my room, then the bed, then the tables. I put on a coarse grey woollen dress ; I got rid of my chains, head-dresses and other useless ornaments ; I began to fast every day (I used to eat in secret) ; I did not altogether stop talking, but said next to nothing to my lovers, and by slow degrees I made them go without me, till they were mad for me. When I was sure that the news of my going to be walled up was sufficiently spread abroad, I took whatever was worth taking in the house, put it all in a place of safety, and distributed a few worthless trifles among the needy for the Lord's sake. When the time arrived, I called together those who thought of themselves as my widowers (it would have been much better for them if I had been really lost to them), I made them sit down, and after a little silence in which I was resolving within myself a few sentences which

I made up myself in my head, having shed a few tears which I succeeded somehow in getting to run down my cheeks, I said to them: "My dear brothers, my dear fathers, my dear children, if one does not think of one's soul one hasn't got one or else doesn't care much about it. But I am axious about mine. My soul has been touched by a Preacher and by the legend of Santa Chiepina, as well as frightened by Hell which I saw in a picture. This is what has caused me to make up my mind to flee the hot house. My sins are not far from being as great as Divine mercy itself: therefore, my dear brethren, therefore, my children, I wish to bury within four walls this wretched flesh, this wretched body, this wretched existence."

At these words sobs rose in the poor creatures' breasts, as in those devout persons who cannot retain their sighs when the priest begins the Passion. But I went on: "No more fineries, no more dresses, no more anything; instead of a prettily furnished room I shall have the narrow space of a bare cell; for a bed, an armful of straw thrown on a plank; for food the grace of God;

for drink the water from heaven, for my golden robe, this!" I pulled from under me a hair-cloth of the coarsest kind upon which I was sitting, and showed it to them. If thou still rememberest the lamentations which the devout make when one shows them the Cross in the Coliseum, thou seest and hearest even here the lamentations of my adorers, who, smothered with grief, spoke but by their tears. When I added: "Forgive me, my brothers!" it was an uproar such as would be raised in Rome were it to be sacked a second time, which God forbid! One of them knelt at my feet, and, unable to obtain anything with his preambles, got up and went to give about twenty raps to his head against the wall.

Antonia. What a shame!

Nanna. Well, the morning on which I was to be placed between four walls arrived; thou wouldst have sworn that all Rome was in the chapel of the Campo Santo, and if you thought of all the crowds that ever came to see Jews baptized you would not be near a quarter of this. You may be sure, too, that those who are about to be hanged next morning, and those who are

going to fight, suffer not more distress than my lovers felt. But why beat about the bush ? I was immured amidst the tumult of the whole congregation. One would say : " The Lord has touched her heart." Another : " She is setting her sisters a good example." Others : " Who would have ever thought it ! " There were some who would not believe even their very eyes ; others stood stupefied, while several laughed and said : " Oh, if she stands it a month let me be crucified." How I pitied, but how I laughed to see, my poor doleful lovers in the chapel, elbowing one another to watch who would speak to me. Nor did the Pharisees guard the Sepulchre as well as they guarded me. At length I begun, at the end of a few days, to lend an ear to the entreaties they were continually making me to persuade me to come out. " One can save one's soul anywhere," they repeated. To tell thee all in two words. They hired and furnished all new for me, so that having left the cell (the walls of which they pulled down as the Jubilee Gate is pulled down as soon as the Pope has knocked away the first brick), I became more brazen-faced than ever.

Everyone in Rome split his sides at it, and those that had foreseen the issue would say to one another in a loud voice: "What did I tell you?"

Antonia. I don't really know how it is possible for a woman to imagine all that thou didst imagine.

Hanna. Whores are not women, they are whores. . . .

Of such is this amazing work.

It is perhaps astonishing that the influence of Aretino upon Italian literature has been much less than, seeing his energy and vitality, we might have expected: and this is unfortunate, for whatever we may think of his subject-matter, he had the root of all good literature in him, in his freedom from pedantry and his closeness to life. His influence in France was much greater, and both Rabelais and Molière, to name only the greatest, would seem to owe him much. In England his work seems to have been altogether ineffective. Perhaps at that time, and indeed at any time, we needed it less than any other people. The only translation into English of any of his works is *The Crafty Whore*, published in London in 1658, which is partly

from the *Ragionamenti*,[1] while Mr. A. Esdaile of the British Museum has pointed out to me that Sir Thomas Wyatt's *Penitential Psalms* were in their earlier part translated and in their later imitated from the *Sette Salmi* of Aretino. It is the only case of Aretino's non-obscene work being translated or ever noticed in English, and it is, unhappily, very dull stuff.

References to Aretino in English works of the sixteenth century are fairly numerous, but they are all the same; they treat him as the great exemplar of the obscene, and to make an "Aretino allusion book" would be very monotonous and profitless.[2]

It is only in our day that something of the

[1] In 1889 Isodore Liseux issued an edition in English of the *Ragionamenti*. *The Ragionamenti or Dialogues of the Divine Pietro Aretino literally translated into English*, 6 vols., with introductions and portrait.

[2] I offer the following examples from Gabriel Harvey as instances :—

GABRIEL HARVEY. *Marginalia*. Ed. G. C. Moore Smith (Shakespeare Head Press, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913), pp. 91, 108, 119, 121, 122, 124, 137, 147, 156, 162, 165, 168, 196, 199.

Passim : "Unico Aretino."

P. 124. Unico Aretino in Italian, singular for rare and hyperbolical Amplifications. He is a simple Orator, that cannot mount as high as the quality, or quantity of his matter requireth. Vaine and phantasticale Amplifications argue an idle or mad-conceited brain : but when the very Majesty or dignity of the matter itself will indeed bare out

significance of this robust and spontaneous writer has been understood. We find in him among much else, not certainly the first obscene writer in literature, but the first journalist, the first writer to see and to use to the utmost th. Press, the power of publicity; and we may think of him as the first of those "Napoleons of the Press" who so largely inspire and control public opinion in the world to-day. As such he has for us an unique interest, for it is well to

a stately and haughty style; there is no such trial of a gallant Discourse and no right Orator.

P. 137. Aretine's infinite mineral of Invention and Amplification: In tanto, et dulci animo, omnia dulcia.

P. 147. Machiavel and Aretine knew fashions and were acquainted with ye cunning of ye world.

Mach. and Aretine were not to learn how to play their parts, but were prettily beaten to ye doings of ye world.

Mach. and Aretine knew ye lessons by heart and were not to seek how to use ye wicked world, ye flesh, and ye Devil.

They had learned cunning enough and had seen fashions enough: and could and would use both, with advantage enough. Two courtesan politics.

Scholars and common youths even amongst ye lustiest and bravest courtiers are yet to learn ye lesson in ye world.

P. 156. Aretine's glory to be himself: to speak and write like himself: to imitate none but himself and ever to maintain his own singularity; yet ever with commendation and compassion of others.

[He speaks of him as among the most inspiring authors with Luther: Machiavelli in politics and Agrippa in mathematics.]

P. 162. "Divine Aretine," "worthie Ariosto," "excellent Tasso," "sweet Petrarch": "four famous heroic poets as valorously brave as delicately fine."

P. 165. He notes that "to cousin the expectation" (is)

study any disease, anything that has become so dangerous, in its genesis.

A great journalist of genius, then, is that what Pietro Aretino comes to? He was this, but he was more than this, as I have tried to show. He seems, as I have said, with Ariosto and Machiavelli to sum up the Italy of his time in a way that no other journalist has ever come to do for any other country at any other time.

one notable point in a Comedy: and one of the singularities of Unico Aretino in his courting Italian comedies.

P. 168. On "I would . . . find some supernatural cause whereby my pen might walk in the superlative degree."

In hoc genere Lucianus excellebat: et post eum plerique Itali: maxime Poetae Aretinus voluit albis equis praecurrere et esse Unicus in suo quodam hyperbolico genere.

P. 196. "Unicus Aretinus erat scriptoris hyperbole, et actoris paradoxum. Illius affectatissima foelicitas fuit, omnia scriptitare hyperbolicè, singula actitare ex inopinato. Qui velit Unicum vincere, eum oportet esse miraculum eloquentiae, oraculum prudentiae, Solem Industriae."

P. 199. Notes that "Angelus Furius (was) the most eloquent Discurser and most active Causer not in this one town or in that one city but in all Italy, yea in all Christendom, yea even in ye whole universal world. . . . Supra ipsum Unicum."

Lodge describes Thomas Nash (1567–1601) as the "True English Aretine," and as he was a fellow "that carried the deadly stock [rapier] in his pen, whose muse was armed with a gag tooth [tusk] and his pen possessed with Hercules' furies" he was, perhaps, not inaptly so named. But in reality he owes little to Aretino, whose influence is found chiefly in his eccentricities and in his free use of the vernacular for his comic effects; and his use of "boisterous" words coined from the Greek, Latin, Italian or Spanish point also to Aretino. Nash, too, was a journalist born out of due time, but not of the calibre of Pietro Aretino.

He is the utter end of the Renaissance, and in a sense its negation. He prophesies. He seems to dismiss the whole past of his country and of civilization with contempt, he cares nothing for long tradition or gentle convention, but engulphs them all in a brutal, malicious and enormous laugh which only the universal elements of life can endure, in which all the flowers of the spirit shrivel and perish. Is it the modern world he thus ushers in with all its more brutal realities, its contempt for beauty, its insistance upon mere life? He seems to thrust a newspaper into our hands and therewith to banish for ever all that was most quiet, holy and of good report. In his rude and irreverent and irrefutable voice we may catch the first accents of the Revolution, in his establishment and success the first glimpse of our Democracy.