Beatrice D'Este, Duchess Of Milan 1475-1497

A Study Of The Renaissance

Julia Cartwright

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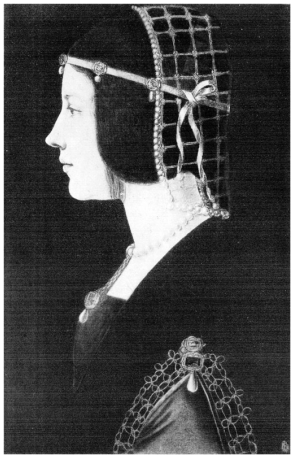
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Bianca Sforza by Ambrogio de Predis.
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BEATRICE D'ESTE

DUCHESS OF MILAN

1475-1497

A STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE

BY

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

(MRS HENRY ADY)

Author of "Madame," "Sacharissa," "J. F. Millet"



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PREFACE

During the last twenty years the patient researches of successive students in the archives of North Italian cities have been richly rewarded. The State papers of Milan and Venice, of Ferrara and Modena, have yielded up their treasures; the correspondence of Isabella d'Este, in the Gonzaga archives at Mantua, has proved a source of inexhaustible wealth and knowledge. A flood of light has been thrown on the history of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; public events and personages have been placed in a new aspect; the judgments of posterity have been modified and, in some instances, reversed.

We see now, more clearly than ever before, what manner of men and women these Estes and Gonzagas, these Sforzas and Viscontis, were. We gain fresh insight into their characters and aims, their secret motives and private wishes. We see them in their daily occupations and amusements, at their work and at their play. We follow them from the battle-field and council chamber, from the chase and tournament, to the privacy of domestic life and the intimate scenes of the family circle. And we realize how, in spite of the tragic stories or bloodshed and strife that darkened their lives, in spite, too, of the low standard of morals and of the crimes and vices that we are accustomed to associate with Renaissance princes, there was a rare measure of beauty and goodness, of culture and refinement, of love of justice and zeal for truth, among them. As the latest historian of the Papacy, Dr. Pastor, has wisely remarked, we must take care not to paint the state of morals during the Italian Renaissance blacker than it really was. Virtue goes quietly on her way, while

vice is noisy and uproarious; the criminal forces himself upon the public attention, while the honest man does his duty in silence, and no one hears of him. This is especially the case with the women of the Renaissance. They had their faults and their weaknesses, but the great majority among them led pure and irreproachable lives, and trained their children in the paths of truth and duty. Even Lucrezia Borgia, although she may not have been altogether immaculate, was not the foul creature that we once believed. And the more closely we study these newly discovered documents, the more we become convinced that this age produced some of the most admirable types of womanhood that the world has ever seen. When Castiglione painted his ideal woman in the pages of the "Cortigiano," he had no need to draw on his imagination. Elizabeth Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, and Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, were both of them women of great intellect and stainless virtue, whose genuine love of art and letters attracted the choicest spirits to their court, and exerted the most beneficial influence on the thought of the day. Isabella, whose vast correspondence with the foremost painters and scholars of the age has been preserved almost intact, was probably the most remarkable lady of the Renaissance. The story of her long and eventful life—a theme of absorbing interest—yet remains to be written. The present work is devoted to the history of her younger sister, Beatrice, Duchess of Milan, who, as the wife of Lodovico Sforza, reigned during six years over the most splendid court of Italy. The charm of her personality, the important part which she played in political life at a critical moment of Italian history, her love of music and poetry, and the fine taste which she inherited, in common with every

princess of the house of Este, all help to make Beatrice singularly attractive, while the interest which she inspires is deepened by the pathos of her sudden and early death.

If in Isabella we have the supreme representative of Renaissance culture in its highest and most intellectual phase, Beatrice is the type of that new-found joy in life, that intoxicating rapture in the actual sense of existence, that was the heritage of her generation, and found expression in the words of a contemporary novelist, Matteo Bandello—himself of Lombard birth—when with his last breath he bade his companions live joyously, "*Vivete lieti!*" We see this bride of sixteen summers flinging herself with passionate delight into every amusement, singing gay songs with her courtiers, dancing and hunting through the livelong day, outstripping all her companions in the chase, and laughing in the face of danger. We see her holding her court in the famous Castello of Porta Giovia or in the summer palaces of Vigevano and Cussago, in these golden days when Milan was called the new Athens, when Leonardo and Bramante decorated palaces or arranged masquerades at the duke's bidding, when Gaspare Visconti wrote sonnets in illuminated books, and Lorenzo da Pavia constructed organs or viols as perfect and beautiful to see as to hear, for the pleasure of the youthful duchess. Scholars and poets, painters and writers, gallant soldiers and accomplished cavaliers, we see them all at Beatrice's feet, striving how best they may gratify her fancies and win her smiles. Young and old, they were alike devoted to her service, from Galeazzo di Sanseverino, the valiant captain who became her willing slave and chosen companion, to Niccolo da Correggio, that all-accomplished gentleman who laid

down his pen and sword to design elaborate devices for his mistress's new gowns. We read her merry letters to her husband and sister, letters sparkling with wit and gaiety and overflowing with simple and natural affection. We see her rejoicing with all a young mother's proud delight over her first-born son, repeating, as mothers will, marvellous tales of his size and growth, and framing tender phrases for his infant lips. And we catch glimpses of her, too, in sadder moods, mourning her mother's loss or wounded by neglect and unkindness. We note how keenly her proud spirit resents wrong and injustice, and how in her turn she is not always careful of the rights and feelings of her rivals. But whatever her faults and mistakes may have been, she is always kindly and generous, human and lovable. A year or two passes, and we see her, royally arrayed in brocade and jewels, standing up in the great council hall of Venice, to plead her husband's cause before the Doge and Senate. Later on we find her sharing her lord's counsels in court and camp, receiving king and emperor at Pavia or Vigevano, fascinating the susceptible heart of Charles VIII. by her charms, and amazing Kaiser Maximilian by her wisdom and judgment in affairs of state. And then suddenly the music and dancing, the feasting and travelling, cease, and the richly coloured and animated pageant is brought to an abrupt close. Beatrice dies, without a moment's warning, in the flower of youth and beauty, and the young duchess is borne to her grave in S. Maria delle Grazie amid the tears and lamentations of all Milan. And with her death, the whole Milanese state, that fabric which Lodovico Sforza had built up at such infinite cost and pains, crumbles into ruin. Fortune, which till that hour had smiled so kindly on the Moro and had raised him to

giddy heights of prosperity, now turned her back upon him. In three short years he had lost everything —crown, home, and liberty—and was left to drag out a miserable existence in the dungeons of Berry and Touraine.

"And when Duchess Beatrice died," wrote the poet, Vincenzo Calmeta, "everything fell into ruin, and that court, which had been a joyous paradise, was changed into a black Inferno."

Then Milan and her people become a prey to the rude outrages of French soldiery. Leonardo's great horse was broken in pieces by Gascon archers, and the Castello, "which had once held the finest flower of the whole world, became," in Castiglione's words, "a place of drinking-booths and dung-hills." The treasures of art and beauty stored up within its walls were destroyed by barbarous hands, and all that brilliant company was dispersed and scattered abroad. Artists and poets, knights and scholars—Leonardo and Bramante, Galeazzo and Niccolo—were driven out, and went their way each in a different direction, to seek new homes and other patrons. But the memory of the young duchess—the *Donna beata* of Pistoja and Visconti's song—lived for many a year in the hearts of her loyal servants, Castiglione enshrined her name in his immortal pages, Ariosto celebrated her virtues in the cantos of his "Orlando Furioso," and far on in the new century, grey-headed scholars spoke of her as "*la più zentil Donna d'Italia*"—the sweetest lady in all Italy.

And to-day, as we pace the dim aisles of the great Certosa, we may look on the marble effigy of Duchess Beatrice and see the lovely face with the curling locks and child-like features which the Lombard sculptor carved, and which still bears

witness to the love of Lodovico Sforza for his young wife.

In conclusion, I must acknowledge how deeply I am indebted to Signor Luzio, keeper of the Gonzaga archives at Mantua, and to his able colleague, Signor Renier, for the assistance which they have lent to my researches, as well as for the help afforded by their own publications, in which many of Isabella and Beatrice d'Este's most interesting letters have already been given to the world. The State archives of Milan and Mantua are the principal sources from which the information contained in the present volume is drawn, and a list of the other authorities which have been consulted is given below.

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From a photograph by SIGNOR D. ANDERSON, of Rome. *frontispiece*

SFORZA MS. ILLUMINATED
From a private photograph. *To face p. 83*

ALTAR-PIECE, ASCRIBED TO ZENALE, WITH PORTRAITS OF LODOVICO SFORZA, BEATRICE D'ESTE AND THEIR SONS
From a photograph by SIGNOR D. ANDERSON, of Rome. *To face p. 284*

GALEAZZO DI SANSEVERINO, BY AMBROGIO DE PREDIS
From a photograph by SIGNOR D. ANDERSON, of Rome. *To face p. 304*

TOMB OF LODOVICO SFORZA AND BEATRICE D'ESTE IN THE CERTOSA OF PAVIA
From a photograph by FRATELLI ALINARI, of Florence. *To face p. 389*

BEATRICE D'ESTE

CHAPTER I

The Castello of Ferrara—The House of Este—Accession of Duke Ercole I.—His marriage to Leonora of Aragon—Birth of Isabella and Beatrice d'Este—Plot of Niccolo d'Este—Visit of Leonora to Naples—The court of King Ferrante—Betrothal of Beatrice d'Este to Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Bari—And of Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga.

1471-1480

In the heart of old Ferrara stands the Castello of the Este princes. All the great story of the past, all the romance of medieval chivalry, seems to live again in that picturesque, irregular pile with the crenellated towers and dusky red-brick walls, overhanging the sleepy waters of the ancient moat. The song of Boiardo and Ariosto still lingers in the air about the ruddy pinnacles; the spacious courts and broad piazza recall the tournaments and pageants of olden time. Once more the sound of clanging trumpets or merry hunting-horn awakes the echoes, as the joyous train of lords and ladies sweep

out through the castle gates in the summer morning; once more, under vaulted loggias and high-arched balconies, we see the courtly scholar bending earnestly over some classic page, or catch the voice of high-born maiden singing Petrarch's sonnets to her lute.

St. George was the champion of Ferrara and the patron saint of the house of Este. There year by year his festival was celebrated with great rejoicings, and vast crowds thronged the piazza before the Castello to see the famous races for the *pallium*. It is St. George who rides full tilt at the dragon in the rude sculptures on the portal of the Romanesque Cathedral hard by; it is the same warrior-saint who, in his gleaming armour, looks down from the painted fresco above the portcullis of the castle drawbridge. And all the masters who worked for the Este dukes, whether they were men of native or foreign birth—Vittore Pisanello and Jacopo Bellini, Cosimo Tura and Dosso Dossi—took delight in the old story, and painted the legend of St. George and Princess Sabra in the frescoes or altar-pieces with which they adorned the churches and castle halls.

The Estes, who took St. George for their patron, and fought and died under his banner, were themselves a chivalrous and splendour-loving race, ever ready to ride out in quest of fresh adventure in the chase or battle-field. Men and women alike were renowned, even among the princely houses of Italy in Renaissance time, for their rare culture and genuine love of art and letters. And they were justly proud of their ancient lineage and of the love and loyalty which their subjects bore them. The Sforzas of Milan, the Medici of Florence, the Riarios or the Della Roveres, were but low-born upstarts by the side

of this illustrious race which had reigned on the banks of the Po during the last two hundred years. In spite of wars and bloodshed, in spite of occasional conspiracies and tumults, chiefly stirred up by members of the reigning family, the people of Ferrara loved their rulers well, and never showed any wish to change the house of Este for another. The citizens took a personal interest in their own duke and duchess and in all that belonged to them, and chronicled their doings with minute attention. They shared their sorrows and rejoiced in their joys, they lamented their departure and hailed their return with acclamation, they followed the fortunes of their children with keen interest, and welcomed the return of the youthful bride with acclamations, or wept bitter tears over her untimely end.

Of all the Estes who held sway at Ferrara, the most illustrious and most beloved was Duke Ercole I., the father of Beatrice. During the thirty-four years that he reigned in Ferrara, the duchy enjoyed a degree of material prosperity which it had never attained before, and rose to the foremost rank among the states of North Italy. And in the troubled times of the next century, his people looked back on the days of Duke Ercole and his good duchess as the golden age of Ferrara. After the death of his father, the able and learned Niccolo III., who first established his throne on sure and safe foundations, Ercole's two elder half-brothers, Leonello and Borso, reigned in succession over Ferrara, and kept up the proud traditions of the house of Este, both in war and peace. Both were bastards, but in the Este family this was never held to be a bar to the succession. "In Italy," as Commines wrote, "they make little difference between legitimate and illegitimate children." But when the last of the two, Duke Borso, died on the 27th of May,

1471, of malarial fever caught on his journey to Rome, to receive the investiture of his duchy from the Pope, Niccolo's eldest legitimate son Ercole successfully asserted his claim to the throne, and entered peacefully upon his heritage. Two years later, the next duke, who was already thirty-eight years of age, obtained the hand of Leonora of Aragon, daughter of Ferrante, King of Naples, and sent his brother Sigismondo at the head of a splendid retinue to bring home his royal bride. After a visit to Rome, where Pope Sixtus IV. entertained her at a series of magnificent banquets and theatrical representations, the young duchess entered Ferrara in state. On a bright June morning she rode through the streets in a robe glittering with jewels, with a stately canopy over her head and a gold crown on her flowing hair. Latin orations, orchestral music, and theatrical displays, for which Ferrara was already famous, greeted the bridal procession at every point. The houses were hung with tapestries and cloth of gold, avenues of flowering shrubs were planted along the broad white streets, and ringing shouts greeted the coming of the fair princess who was to make her home in Ferrara. The happy event was commemorated by a noble medal, designed by the Mantuan Sperandio, the most illustrious of a school of medallists employed at Ferrara in Duke Borso's time, while Leonora's refined features and expressive face are preserved in a well-known bas-relief, now in Paris. Ercole and his bride took up their abode in the Este palace, a stately Renaissance structure opposite the old Lombard Duomo, a few steps from the Castello, with which it was connected by a covered passage.

The charm and goodness of the young duchess soon won the heart of her subjects. From the first she

entered eagerly into Ercole's schemes for ordering his capital and encouraging art, and brought a new and gentler influence to bear on the society of her husband's court. There, too, she found a congenial spirit in the duke's accomplished sister, Bianca, that Virgin of Este, who was the subject of Tito Strozzi's impassioned eulogy, and whose Latin and Greek prose excited the admiration of all her contemporaries. This cultivated princess had been originally betrothed to the eldest son of Federigo, Duke of Urbino, but his early death put an end to these hopes, and in 1468 she married Galeotto della Mirandola, a prince of the house of Carpi, who lived, at Ferrara some years, and afterwards entered the service of Lodovico Sforza and served as captain in his wars.

On the 18th of May, 1474, the duchess gave birth to a daughter, who received the name of Isabella, always a favourite in the house of Aragon, and was destined to become the most celebrated lady of the Renaissance. A year later, on the 29th of June, 1475, a second daughter saw the light. Her appearance, however, proved no cause of rejoicing, as we learn from the contemporary chronicle published by Muratori—

"A daughter was born this day to Duke Ercole, and received the name of Beatrice, being the child of Madonna Leonora his wife. And there were no rejoicings, because every one wished for a boy."

No one in Ferrara then dreamt that the babe who received so cold a welcome would one day reign over the Milanese, as the wife of Lodovico Sforza, the most powerful of Italian princes, and would herself be remembered by posterity as "la più zentil donna in Italia"—the sweetest lady in all Italy. At least the

name bestowed upon her was a good omen. She was called Beatrice after two favourite relatives of her parents. One of these was Leonora's only sister, Beatrice of Aragon, who in that same year passed through Ferrara on her way to join her husband, Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and whose presence, we are told by the diarist, gave great pleasure to both duke and duchess. The other Beatrice was Ercole's half-sister, the elder daughter of Niccolo III., who had long been the ornament of her father's court, when she had been known as the Queen of Feasts, and it had become a common proverb that to see Madonna Beatrice dance was to find Paradise upon earth. In 1448, at the age of twenty-one, this brilliant lady had wedded Borso da Correggio, a brother of the reigning prince of that city, and, after her first husband's early death, had become the wife of Tristan Sforza, an illegitimate son of the great Condottiere Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan. Although her home was now in Lombardy, Beatrice d'Este remained on intimate terms with her own family, and her son Niccolo da Correggio was known as the handsomest and most accomplished cavalier at the court of Ferrara. He had accompanied his uncle Duke Borso on his journey to Rome, and had been one of the escort sent to conduct Duchess Leonora from Naples.

In the summer of the year following Beatrice's birth, the hopes of the loyal Ferrarese were at length fulfilled, and a son was born to the duke and duchess on the 21st of July, 1476. This time the citizens abandoned themselves to demonstrations of enthusiastic delight. The bells were rung and the shops closed during three whole days, and the child was baptized with great pomp in the Chapel of the Vescovado, close to the Duomo. The infant received

the name of Alfonso, after his grandfather, the great King of Naples, and a "beautiful fête," to quote one chronicler's words, "was held in honour of the auspicious event in the Sala Grande of the Schifanoia Villa." On this occasion a concert was given by a hundred trumpeters, pipers, and tambourine-players in the frescoed hall of this favourite summer palace, and a sumptuous banquet was prepared after the fashion of the times, with an immense number of *confetti*, representing lords and ladies, animals, trees, and castles, all made of gilt and coloured sugar, which our friend the diarist tells us were carried off or eaten by the people as soon as the doors were opened.

But a few days afterwards, while Duke Ercole was away from Ferrara, his wife was surprised by a sudden rising, the result of a deep-laid conspiracy, secretly planned by his nephew, Niccolo, a bastard son of Leonello d'Este. Niccolo's first endeavour was to seize on the person of the duchess and her young children, an attempt which almost proved successful, but was fortunately defeated by Leonora's own courage and presence of mind. The palace was already surrounded by armed men, when the alarm reached the ears of the duchess, and, springing out of bed with her infant son in her arms, followed by her two little daughters and a few faithful servants, she fled by the covered way to the Castello. Hardly had she left her room, when the conspirators rushed in and sacked the palace, killing all who tried to offer resistance. The people of Ferrara, however, were loyal to their beloved duke and duchess. After a few days of anxious suspense, Ercole returned, and soon quelled the tumult and restored order in the city. That evening he appeared on the balcony of the Castello, and publicly embraced his wife and

children amid the shouts and applause of the whole city. The next day the whole ducal family went in solemn procession to the Cathedral, and there gave public thanks for their marvellous deliverance. A terrible list of cruel reprisals followed upon this rebellion, and Niccolo d'Este himself, with two hundred of his partisans, were put to death after the bloody fashion of the times.

A year later, when the danger was over and tranquillity had been completely restored, Leonora and her two little daughters set out for Naples, under the escort of Niccolo da Correggio, to be present at her father King Ferrante's second marriage with the young Princess Joan of Aragon, a sister of Ferdinand the Catholic. The duchess and her children travelled by land to Pisa, where galleys were waiting to conduct them to Naples, and reached her father's court on the 1st of June, 1477. Here Leonora spent the next four months, and in September, gave birth to a second son, who was named Ferrante, after his royal grandfather. But soon news reached Naples that war had broken out in Northern Italy, and that Duke Ercole had been chosen Captain-general of the Florentine armies. In his absence the presence of the duchess was absolutely necessary at Ferrara, and early in November Leonora left Naples and hastened home to take up the reins of government and administer the state in her lord's stead. She took her elder daughter Isabella with her, but left her new-born son at Naples, together with his little sister Beatrice, from whom the old King Ferrante refused to part. This bright-eyed child, who had won her grandfather's affections at this early age, remained at Naples for the next eight years, and grew up in the royal palace on the terraced steps of that enchanted shore, where even then Sannazzaro was dreaming of

Arcadia, and where Lorenzo de' Medici loved to talk over books and poetry with his learned friend the Duchess Ippolita. Beatrice was too young to realize the rare degree of culture which had made Alfonso's and Ferrante's court the favourite abode of the Greek and Latin scholars of the age, too innocent to be aware of the dark deeds which threw a shadow over these sunny regions, where the strange medley of luxury and vice, of refinement and cruelty, recalled the days of Imperial Rome. But the balmy breath of these Southern climes, the soft luxuriant spell of blue seas and groves of palm and cassia, sank deep into the child's being, and something of the fire and passion, the mirth and gaiety, of the dwellers in this delicious land passed into her soul, and helped to mould her nature during these years that she spent far from mother and sister at King Ferrante's court.

In these early days many personages with whom she was to be closely associated in after-years were living at Naples. There were scholars and poets whom she was to meet again in Milan at her husband's court, and who would be glad to remind her that they had known her as a child in her grandfather's palace. There was Pontano, the founder of the Academy of Naples, who was busy writing his Latin eclogues on the myrtle bowers of Baiae and the orange groves of Sorrento. There was her aunt, the accomplished Ippolita Sforza, Duchess of Calabria, who had learnt Greek of the great teacher Lascaris in her young days at Milan, and whose wedding had brought the magnificent Lorenzo to the court of the Sforzas. And for playmates the little Beatrice had Ippolita's children: the boy Ferrante, whose chivalrous nature endeared him to his Este cousins, even when their husbands joined with the French invaders to drive him from his father's throne; and

the girl Isabella, who was already affianced to the young Duke Giangaleazzo, who was in future years to become her companion and rival at the court of Milan. Here, too, in the summer of 1479, came a new visitor in the shape of Duchess Ippolita's brother, Lodovico Sforza, surnamed *Il Moro*, himself the younger son of the great Duke Francesco. On his elder brother Sforza's death, the King of Naples had invested him with the duchy of Bari, and now he promised him men and money with which to assert his claims against his sister-in-law, the widowed Duchess Bona and the minions who had driven him and his brothers out of their native land. In June, 1477, only a few days after Leonora and her children left Ferrara, the exiled prince had arrived there on his way to Pisa, and had been courteously entertained by Duke Ercole in the Schifanoia Palace. Since then he had spent two dreary years in exile at Pisa, fretting out his heart in his enforced idleness, and pining for the hour of release. That hour was now at hand. Before the end of the year, Lodovico Sforza had, by a succession of bold manœuvres, driven out his rivals and was virtually supreme in Milan. The first step which the new regent took was to ally himself with the Duke of Ferrara. The houses of Sforza and Este had always been on friendly terms, and Ercole's father Niccolo had presented Francesco Sforza with a famous diamond in acknowledgment of the services rendered him by the great Condottiere. When Francesco's son and successor, Duke Galeazzo Maria, was murdered in 1476, his widow, Duchess Bona, had renewed the old alliance with Ferrara, and a marriage had been arranged between her infant daughter Anna Sforza and Duke Ercole's new-born son and heir Alfonso. In May, 1477, this betrothal was proclaimed in Milan,

and a fortnight later the nuptial contract was signed at Ferrara. The union of the two houses was celebrated by solemn processions and thanksgivings throughout the duchy, and the infant bridegroom was carried in the arms of his chamberlain to meet the Milanese ambassador, who appeared on behalf of the little three-year-old bride. Seven years afterwards, Duchess Leonora sent a magnificent doll with a trousseau of clothes designed by the best artists in Ferrara, as a gift to the little daughter-in-law whom she had not yet seen.

In 1480, Lodovico Sforza formally asked Ercole to give him the hand of his elder daughter Isabella, then a child of six. Lodovico himself was twenty-nine, and besides being a man of remarkable abilities and singularly handsome presence, had the reputation of being the richest prince in Italy. Duke Ercole further saw the great importance of strengthening the alliance with Milan at a time when Ferrara was again threatened by her hereditary enemies, the Pope and Venice. Unfortunately, his youthful daughter had already been sought in marriage by Federico, Marquis of Mantua, on behalf of his elder son, Giovanni Francesco; and Ercole, unwilling to offend so near a neighbour, and yet reluctant to lose the chance of a second desirable alliance, offered Lodovico Sforza the hand of his younger daughter, Beatrice. The Duke of Bari made no objection to this arrangement, and on St. George's Day, Ercole addressed the following letter to his old ally, Marquis Federico:—

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD AND DEAREST BROTHER,

"This is to inform you that the most illustrious Madonna Duchess of Milan and His Illustrious

Highness Lodovico Sforza have sent their ambassador, M. Gabriele Tassino, to ask for our daughter Madonna Isabella on behalf of Signor Lodovico. We have replied that to our regret this marriage was no longer possible, since we had already entered into negotiations on the subject with your Highness and your eldest son. But since we have another daughter at Naples, who is only about a year younger, and who has been adopted by his Majesty the King of Naples as his own child, we have written to acquaint His Serene Majesty with the wish of these illustrious Persons, and have asked him if he will consent to accept the said Signor Lodovico as his kinsman, since without his leave we were unable to dispose of our daughter Beatrice's hand. The said Persons having expressed themselves as well content with the proceeding, out of respect for the King's Majesty he has now declared his approval of this marriage, to which we have accordingly signified our consent. We are sure that you will rejoice with us, seeing the close union and alliance that has long existed between us, and beg your Illustrious Highness to keep the matter secret for the present.

"HERCULES, DUX FERR., ETC.[1]

Ferrara, 23rd April, 1480."

It is curious to reflect on the possible changes in the course of events in Italian history during the next thirty years, if Lodovico Sforza's proposals had reached Ferrara a few months earlier, and Isabella d'Este, instead of her sister Beatrice, had become his wife. Would the rare prudence and self-control of the elder princess have led her to play a different part in the difficult circumstances which surrounded her position at the court of Milan as the Moro's wife?

Would Isabella's calmer temperament and wise and far-seeing intellect have been able to restrain Lodovico's ambitious dreams and avert his ruin? The cordial relations that were afterwards to exist between Lodovico and his gifted sister-in-law, the Moro's keen appreciation of Isabella's character, incline us to believe that she would have acquired great influence over her lord; and that so remarkable a woman would have played a very important part on this larger stage. But the Fates had willed otherwise, and Beatrice d'Este became the bride of Lodovico Sforza. Her royal grandfather, old King Ferrante, gave his sanction to the proposed marriage, although he refused to part from his little grandchild at present, and when, five years later, Beatrice returned to Ferrara, she assumed the title and estate of Duchess of Bari, and was publicly recognized as Lodovico's promised wife. She had by this time reached the age of ten, and her espoused husband was exactly thirty-four.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Luzio-Renier in Archivio Storico Lombardo, xvii. 77.

CHAPTER II

Lodovico Sforza—Known as Il Moro—His birth and

childhood—Murder of Duke Galeazzo Maria—Regency of Duchess Bona—Exile of the Sforza brothers—Lodovico at Pisa—His invasion of Lombardy and return to Milan—Death of Cecco Simonetta—Flight of Duchess Bona—Lodovico Regent of Milan.

1451-1582

Lodovico Sforza was certainly one of the most remarkable figures of the Italian Renaissance. He has generally been described as one of the blackest. "Born for the ruin of Italy," was the verdict of his contemporary Paolo Giovio, a verdict which every chronicler of the sixteenth century has endorsed. These men who saw the disasters which overwhelmed their country under the foreign rule, could not forget that Charles VIII., the first French king who invaded Italy, had crossed the Alps as the friend and ally of Lodovico Moro. They forgot how many others were at least equally guilty, and did not realize the vast network of intrigues in which Pope Julius II., the Venetian Signory, and the King of Naples all had a share. Later historians with one consent have accepted Paolo Giovio's view, and have made Lodovico responsible for all the miseries which arose from the French invasion. The bitter hatred with which both French and Venetian writers regarded the prince who had foiled their countrymen and profited by their mistakes, has helped to deepen this sinister impression. The greatest crimes were imputed to him, the vilest calumnies concerning his personal character found ready acceptance. But the more impartial judgment of modern historians, together with the light thrown upon the subject by recently discovered documents, has done much to

modify our opinion of Lodovico's character. The worst charges formerly brought against him, above all, the alleged poisoning of his nephew, the reigning Duke of Milan, have been dismissed as groundless and wholly alien to his nature and character. On the other hand, his great merits and rare talents as ruler and administrator have been fully recognized, while it is admitted on all hands that his generous and enlightened encouragement of art and letters entitles him to a place among the most illustrious patrons of the Renaissance. To his keen intellect and discerning eye, to his fine taste and quick sympathy with all forms of beauty, we owe the production of some of the noblest works of art that human hands have ever fashioned. To his personal encouragement and magnificent liberality we owe the grandest monuments of Lombard architecture, and the finest development of Milanese painting, the façade of the Certosa and the cupola of Sta. Maria delle Grazie, the frescoes and altar-pieces of the Brera and the Ambrosiana. Above all, it was at the Milanese court, under the stimulating influence of the Moro, that Leonardo da Vinci's finest work was done.

As a man, Lodovico Sforza is profoundly interesting. Burckhardt has called him the most complete among the princely figures of the Italian Renaissance, and there can be no doubt that alike in his virtues and in his faults, he was curiously typical of the age in which he lived. Guicciardini, who was certainly no friend to him, and regarded him as the inveterate foe of Florence, describes him as "a creature of very rare perfection, most excellent for his eloquence and industry and many gifts of nature and spirit, and not unworthy of the name of milde and mercifull;" and the Milanese doctor Arluno, the author of an unpublished chronicle in the Biblioteca

Marciana at Venice, says, "He had a sublime soul and universal capacity. Whatever he did, he surpassed expectation, in the fine arts and learning, in justice and benevolence. And he had no equal among Italian princes for wisdom and sagacity in public affairs." Contemporary writers describe him as very pleasant in manner and gracious in speech, always gentle and courteous to others, ready to listen, and never losing his temper in argument. He shared in the laxity of morals common to his age; but was a man of deep affections as well as strong passions, fondly attached to his children and friends, while the profound and lasting grief with which he lamented his dead wife amazed his more fickle contemporaries. Singularly refined and sensitive by nature, he shrank instinctively from bloodshed, and had a horror of all violent actions. In this he differed greatly from his elder brother Galeazzo Maria, who was a monster of lust and cruelty, intent only on gratifying his savage instincts, and as callous to human suffering as he was reckless of human life. Lodovico, as his most hostile critics agree, was emphatically not a cruel man, and rarely consented to condemn even criminals to death. But, like many other politicians who have great ends in view, he was often unscrupulous as to the means which he employed, and, as Burckhardt very truly remarked, would probably have been surprised at being held responsible for the means by which he attained his object. Trained from early youth in the most tortuous paths of Italian diplomacy, he acted on the principle laid down by the Venetian Marino Sanuto, that the first duty of the really wise statesman is to persuade his enemies that he means to do one thing and then do another. But in these tangled paths he often over-reached himself, and only succeeded in inspiring all parties with

distrust; and, as too often happens, this deceiver was deceived in his turn, and in the end betrayed by men in whom his whole trust had been placed. Another curious feature of Lodovico's character was the strain of moral cowardice which, in spite of great personal bravery, marked his public actions at the most critical moments. This sudden failure of courage, or loss of nerve, that to his contemporaries seemed little short of madness, absolutely inexplicable in a man who had faced death without a thought on many a battle-field, ultimately wrought his own downfall as well as that of his State.

And yet, in spite of all his faults and failings, in spite of the strange tissue of complex aims and motives which swayed his course, Lodovico Sforza was a man of great ideas and splendid capacities, a prince who was in many respects distinctly in advance of his age. His wise and beneficial schemes for the encouragement of agriculture and the good of his poorer subjects, his careful regulations for the administration of the University and advancement of all branches of learning, his extraordinary industry and minute attention to detail, cannot fail to inspire our interest and command our admiration. In more peaceful times and under happier circumstances he would have been an excellent ruler, and his great dream of a united kingdom of North Italy might have been well and nobly realized. As it was, the history of Lodovico Moro belongs to the saddest tragedies of the Renaissance, and the splendour of his prosperity and the greatness of his fall became the common theme of poet and moralist.

The story of Lodovico's childhood is one of the pleasantest parts of his strangely chequered career. He was the fourth son of Francesco Sforza, the

famous soldier of fortune who had married Madonna Bianca, daughter of the last Visconti, and reigned in right of his wife as Duke of Milan during twenty years. On the 19th of August, 1451, a year and a half after the great captain had boldly entered Milan and been proclaimed Duke, Duchess Bianca gave birth at her summer palace of Vigevano to a fine boy. This "*bel puello*," as he is called in the despatch announcing the news to his proud father, received the name of Lodovico Mauro, which was afterwards altered to Lodovico Maria, when, after his recovery from a dangerous illness at five years old, his mother placed him under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin. On this occasion Bianca vowed rich offerings to the shrine of Il Santo at Padua, and in discharge of this vow, her faithful servant Giovanni Francesco Stanga of Cremona was sent to Padua in February, 1461, to present a life-size image of the boy richly worked in silver, together with a complete set of vestments and of altar plate bearing the ducal arms, to the ark of the blessed Anthony. In documents still preserved in the Paduan archives the boy is twice over mentioned as *Lodovicus Maurus filius quartus masculus*, but the silver image itself bore the inscription, "*Pro sanitate filii*. Lodovici Mariæ, 1461."[2] There can, however, be little doubt that Maurus was the second name first given to Lodovico, and that this was the true origin of the surname *Il Moro* by which Francesco Sforza's son became famous in after-years. The most ingenious explanations of this name have been invented by Italian chroniclers. Prato and Lomazzo both say that Lodovico was called Il Moro because of the darkness of his complexion and long black hair. Guicciardini repeats the same, but Paolo Giovio, who had seen Lodovico at Como, asserts that his complexion was

fair, and he owed this surname to the mulberry-tree which he adopted as his device, because it waits till the winter is well over to put forth its leaves, and is therefore called the most prudent of all trees. As a matter of fact, there is no doubt that the surname was given to Lodovico by his parents. "He was first called Moro by his father Francesco and his mother Bianca in his earliest years," writes Prato, and we find the same expression in the verse of a Milanese court poet: "*Et Maurum læto patris cognomine dictum*." The name naturally provoked puns. The dark-eyed boy with his long black hair and bushy eyebrows went by the nickname of Moro, and as he grew up, adopted both the Moor's head and the mulberry-tree as his badge. These devices in their turn supplied the poets and painters of his court with themes on which they were never tired of exercising their wit and ingenuity. Moors and Moorish costumes were introduced in every masquerade and ballet, a Moorish page was represented brushing the robes of Italy in a fresco of the Castello of Milan, while mulberry colour became fashionable among the ladies of the Moro's court, and was commonly worn by the servants and pages in the palace. Lodovico early gave signs of the love of literature and the great abilities which distinguished him in after-life. His quickness in learning by heart, his extraordinary memory, and the fluency with which he wrote and spoke Latin amazed his tutors. And he was fortunate in receiving an excellent education from the first Greek scholars of the day. Madonna Bianca, the only daughter of Filippo Maria, the last Visconti who had betrothed her before she was eight years old to Francesco Sforza, proved herself the best of wives and mothers. By her courage and wisdom she helped her husband to gain possession of her dead father's

duchy, and won the hearts of all her subjects by her goodness. While Francesco was engaged with affairs of state, she directed the studies of her children, and gave her six sons an admirable training in learning and knightly exercises. "Let us remember," she said to her son's tutor, the learned scholar Filelfo, "that we have princes to educate, not only scholars." We find her setting the boys a theme on the manner in which princes should draw up treaties, and desiring them in her absence to write to her once a week in Latin. Several of these letters are still preserved in the archives of Milan. There is one, for instance, in which Lodovico, then sixteen years old, tells his mother that he is sending her seventy quails, two partridges, and a pheasant, the result of a day's sport in the forest, but takes care to assure her that the pleasures of the chase will never make him neglect his books.

Many are the pleasant glimpses we catch of the family circle, whether in the Corte vecchia or old ducal palace of the Viscontis at Milan, in the beautiful park and gardens of the Castello at Pavia, or in their country homes of Vigevano and Binasco. We see Duke Francesco riding out with his young sons through the streets of Milan, visiting the churches and convents that were rising on all sides, the new hospital, which was the object of Madonna Bianca's tender care, the oak avenues and gardens with which she loved to surround her favourite shrines. We find the boys at home, helping their mother to entertain her guests with music and dancing, and accompanying her on visits to the noble Milanese families. One day their grandmother, Agnese di Maino, came to see the duke's sons with an old gentleman from Navarre, who went home declaring that he had never seen such wise and well-

educated children; another time we hear of a Madonna Giovanna coming to spend the day at the palace, and dancing all the evening with Lodovico Maria; and when the duchess took her younger children to visit Don Tommaseo de' Rieti, general laughter was excited by the little four-year-old Ascanio, the future cardinal, who walked straight up to a portrait of the duke, exclaiming, "There is my lord father!" When the newly elected Pope Pius II., who as Eneas Sylvius Piccolomini had often been in Milan, came to visit the duke in 1457, he found Galeazzo reading Cicero, and his little brothers with their cherub faces sitting round their tutor, intent on his discourse; while on one occasion their sister Ippolita, the pupil of the great Constantine Lascaris, pronounced a Latin oration in honour of His Holiness. On Christmas day, a festival which was always celebrated with much pomp at Milan, each of the duke's four elder sons came forward and recited a Latin speech, and Lodovico delighted all who were present by the ease and grace of his bearing, and the eloquent periods in which he extolled his father's great deeds in peace and war.

The duke himself always singled out Lodovico for especial notice, and said the boy would do great things. It was, no doubt, his sense of the youthful Moro's talents that made Francesco choose him, at the age of thirteen, to be the leader of the body of three thousand men which were to join in the Crusade preached by Pope Pius II. On the 2nd of June, 1464, the ducal standard, bearing the golden lion of the house of Sforza and the adder of the Visconti, was solemnly committed to the charge of the young Crusader, before the eyes of the whole court, on the piazza in front of the old palace, which was gaily decorated for the occasion with garlands

and tapestries. But the Pope died, and the idea of the Crusade was abandoned. Lodovico, however, was sent by his father to Cremona, the city which had been Duchess Bianca's dowry, and whose inhabitants were among the most loyal subjects of the Sforza princes. Here he lived during the next two years, enjoying his foretaste of power, and making himself very popular with the Cremonese. In 1465, his accomplished sister was married to Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, and Lorenzo de Medici came to Milan for the nuptials. Then these two men, who in days to come were to be so often named together as the most illustrious patrons of art and letters in the Renaissance, met for the first time, and discovered the mutual tastes which in future years often brought them into close relation.

The sudden death of Duke Francesco in 1466 brought a change in Lodovico's position, and the ingratitude with which the new duke, Galeazzo, treated his widowed mother, naturally irritated his brothers. In October, 1468, Bianca retired to Cremona, where she died a week after her arrival —"more from sorrow of heart than sickness of body," wrote her doctor. The good duchess was buried by her husband's side in the Duomo of Milan, and was long and deeply lamented both by her children and subjects, and by none more than her son Lodovico, who always remembered his mother with the deepest affection. But he remained on good terms with Galeazzo, and was deputed by the new duke to receive his bride, Bona of Savoy, when the princess arrived at Genoa, from the French court, where her youth had been spent with her sister, the wife of King Louis XI. During the next ten years Lodovico lived in enforced idleness at the Milanese court, and, freed from the restraint of his parents' authority,

abandoned himself to idle pleasures. All we have from his pen at this period are two short letters. In one, written from Milan and dated April 19, 1476, he asks the Cardinal of Novara to stand godfather to the illegitimate son whom his mistress, Lucia Marliani, Countess of Melzi, had borne him, and who was to be baptized at Pavia. The other is an affectionate letter addressed from Vigevano a year later to Lucia herself, rejoicing to hear of her well-being, and looking forward to seeing her after the feast of St. George. Whether the son was Leone Sforza, afterwards apostolic protonotary, or whether he was the child whose death Lodovic lamented a few years later, does not appear, but all his life the Moro retained a sincere regard for the mother, Lucia Marliani, and left her certain lands by his will.

Meanwhile, in the conduct of his elder brother Galeazzo he had the worst possible example. Once in possession of supreme power, the new duke gave himself up to the most unbridled course of vice and cruelty. The profligacy of his life, and the horrible tortures which he inflicted on the hapless victims of his jealousy and anger, caused Milanese chroniclers to describe him as another Nero. He was commonly believed to have poisoned both his mother and Dorotea Gonzaga, the betrothed bride of whom he wished to rid himself when a more desirable marriage presented itself. These charges were probably groundless, but some of his actions went far to justify the suspicions of madness which he aroused in the minds of his contemporaries. When, for instance, he ordered his artists to decorate a hall at the Castello at Pavia with portraits of the ducal family in a single night, under pain of instant death, the Ferrarese Diarist had good reason to describe the new Duke of Milan as a prince guilty of great crimes

and greater follies. At the same time, Galeazzo showed himself a liberal patron of art and learning. He founded a library at Milan, invited doctors and priests to the University of Pavia, and brought singers from all parts of the world to form the choir of the ducal chapel. During his reign a whole army of painters and sculptors were employed to decorate the interior of the Castello of the Porta Giovia at Milan, which his father had rebuilt when he gave up the ground in front of the old palace to the builders of the Duomo, and which now became the chief ducal residence. Under his auspices printing was introduced, and the first book ever produced in Italy, the Grammar of Lascaris—a Greek professor who had taken refuge at the court of the Sforzas on the fall of Constantinople—appeared at Milan in 1476. The splendour of his court surpassed anything that had been yet seen. Great rejoicings took place in 1469, when Lorenzo de Medici came to Milan to stand godfather to the duke's infant son, and Galeazzo was so delighted at the sight of the costly diamond necklace which the Magnificent Medici presented to Duchess Bona on this occasion, that he exclaimed, "You must be godfather to all my children!" The wealth and luxury displayed by the duke and duchess when they visited Florence two years later with a suite of two thousand persons, scandalized the old-fashioned citizens, and, in Machiavelli's opinion, proved the beginning of a marked degeneracy in public morals.

For a time the Milanese were amused by the *fêtes* provided for them, and dazzled by the sight of all this splendour; but retribution came in time, and on the Feast of St. Stephen in the winter of 1476, Duke Galeazzo was assassinated at the doors of the church of S. Stefano by three courtiers whom he had

wronged. The Milanese chronicler Bernardino Corio gives a dramatic account of the scene, which he himself witnessed, and relates how Bona, who was haunted by a presentiment of coming evil, implored her lord not to leave the Castello that morning, and how three ravens were seen hovering about Galeazzo's head on that very morning, when, in his splendid suit of crimson brocade, the tall and handsome duke entered the church doors, while the choir sang the words, "*Sic transit gloria mundi*."

"The peace of Italy is dead!" exclaimed Pope Sixtus IV. when the news of Galeazzo's murder reached him. And the issue proved that he was not far wrong. In her distress, the widowed duchess, who seems to have been fondly attached to her husband, in spite of his crimes and follies, addressed a piteous letter to the Holy Father owning her dead lord's guilt, and asking him if he could issue a bull absolving him from his many and grievous sins. In her anxiety for Galeazzo's soul, she promised to atone as far as possible for his crimes by making reparation to those whom he had wronged, and offered to build churches and monasteries, endow hospitals, and perform other works of mercy. The Pope does not seem to have returned a direct answer to this touching prayer, but he took advantage of Bona's present mood to hurry on the marriage of Caterina Sforza, the duke's natural daughter, with his own nephew, Girolamo Riario, which had been arranged by Galeazzo, and which took place in the following April. Lodovico was absent at the time of Galeazzo's assassination, and with his brother Sforza, Duke of Bari, was spending Christmas at the court of Louis XI. at Tours. They had not been banished, as Corio asserts, but, tired of idleness and fired with a wish to see the world, they had gone on a journey to France,

and, after visiting Paris and Angers, were on their way home when the news of the duke's murder reached them. But if any hope of obtaining a share in the government had been aroused in Lodovico's heart, it was doomed to speedy disappointment. Cecco Simonetta, the able secretary and minister who had administered the state under Galeazzo, kept a firm hold on the reins of government, ruled the Milanese in the name of Duchess Bona and her young son Gian Galeazzo. The Sforza brothers soon found their position intolerable, and the intervention of a friendly neighbour, the Marquis of Mantua, was necessary before they could obtain any recognition of their right. At his request, Bona agreed to give each of her brothers-in-law a suitable residence in Milan, as well as a portion of 12,500 ducats from the revenues of their mother's inheritance, the city of Cremona. Filippo Sforza, the second of the brothers, who is described as weak in intellect and a person of no account, was content to live peaceably in Milan, where his very existence seems to have been forgotten by his family, and where the only mention of him that occurs again is that of his death in 1492. The other brothers were sent to Genoa, where an insurrection had broken out, and succeeded in subduing the rebels and restoring peace. But when they returned to Milan at the head of a victorious army, with their kinsman the valiant Condottiere Roberto di Sanseverino, a movement was set on foot among the old Ghibelline followers of Duke Francesco to obtain the regency for Sforza, Duke of Bari. Cries of *Moro! Moro!* began to be heard in the streets of Milan. Simonetta, becoming alarmed, threw Donato del Conte, one of the Ghibelline leaders, into prison, upon which Sanseverino and the Sforzas loudly demanded his release. Simonetta gave

them fair words in return, and induced the dissatisfied chiefs to meet in the park of the Castello, where they agreed to lay down their arms. But Sanseverino, suspecting treachery, set spurs to his horse, and, riding with drawn sword in his hand out of the city through the Porta Vercellina, crossed the Ticino, and did not pause until he was in safety. His companions soon followed his example. Ottaviano Sforza, the youngest of the family, a brave lad of eighteen, was drowned in crossing the swollen Adda, and his three remaining brothers were condemned to perpetual exile. Sforza was banished to his duchy of Bari, in the kingdom of Naples, Ascanio to Perugia, and Lodovico to the city of Pisa.

During the next eighteen months Lodovico lived at Pisa, fretting his heart out in exile and wasting the best years of his life, as he complained to Lorenzo de Medici. His friend could only counsel patience, for, sympathize as he might with the banished prince, Lorenzo was closely allied with the rulers of Milan, and Lodovico soon saw that his only hope of seeing his native land again was to be found in the support of Ferrante, King of Naples, the sworn foe of the Medici. This monarch looked on Simonetta as a traitorous villain who had taken advantage of Bona's weakness to usurp the supreme power in Milan, and wrote to King Louis XI, begging him to come to his kinswoman's help and assist in restoring the Duke of Bari and his brother to their rights. But the French king had no wish to be drawn into the quarrel, and when Ferrante endeavoured to obtain the restoration of his exiled kinsmen by fair means and had failed, Sforza and Lodovico resolved to try the fortunes of war once more. Roberto di Sanseverino, whose mother had been a niece of Duke Francesco, and who had large estates of his own in Lombardy, placed his

sword at their disposal, and they knew they could reckon on the secret support of their Sforza and Visconti kinsmen in Milan. Among these, Lodovico had a devoted partisan in Beatrice d'Este, the sister of Duke Ercole of Ferrara, who had lately been left a widow for the second time by the death of her husband, the brave soldier Tristan Sforza, and who kept up a secret correspondence with the exiled princes. Early in February, 1479, the Sforza brothers and Roberto di Sanseverino landed in Genoa and boldly raised the standard of revolt. Simonetta retaliated by confiscating their revenues and proclaiming them rebels, while he hired Ercole D'Este and Federigo Gonzaga to join the Florentines in resisting the advance of the Neapolitan forces. In the midst of these warlike preparations, Sforza Duke of Bari died very suddenly at Genoa. His death was attributed, after the fashion of the day, to poison secretly sent him from Milan; but, as Corio remarks, many persons thought that his excessive stoutness was the true cause of his decease. Lodovico, whom the King of Naples immediately invested with the dukedom of Bari in his brother's stead, now crossed the Genoese Alps and boldly invaded the territory of Tortona. But the enterprise was a perilous one, and the allied forces of Milan were preparing to crush his little army, when an unexpected turn of fortune altered the whole condition of affairs. Duchess Bona, a very beautiful woman, but, as Commines remarks, "*une dame de petit sens*" had become infatuated with a certain Antonio Tassino, a Ferrarese youth of low extraction, whom Galeazzo had appointed carver at the royal table, and who, after the duke's death, had made himself indispensable to his mistress. The *liaison* had created a coolness between the duchess and her prime minister, of which Beatrice d'Este and

some of the Sforza party cleverly availed themselves to widen the breach. They deplored the growing arrogance of Simonetta, and lamented the success of his intrigues against Lodovico, who was his sister-in-law's nearest relative and rightful protector. Acting on their suggestion, Bona took a sudden resolve. She sent a messenger to invite Lodovico to return to Milan in his nephew's name, and late in the evening of the 7th of October, 1479, the Moro, leaving the camp at Tortona, arrived in Milan, and was secretly admitted into the Castello by the garden door. The duchess and her son, Gian Galeazzo, a boy of ten, received him with open arms, and great was the joy among all the Ghibellines of Milan, when they heard to their surprise that Duke Francesco's son was once more among them. Simonetta looked grave, as he well might, when he heard the news. "Most illustrious duchess," he said to Bona the next day, "do you know what will happen? My head will be cut off, and before long you will lose this state." But he proceeded to congratulate Lodovico on his return, and was received by him in the most courteous manner. When the news of these events reached the rival camps outside Milan, a truce was proclaimed, and the leaders on either side disbanded their armies. The object of the expedition was attained, and Lodovico restored to his rightful place at Milan. But neither Roberto di Sanseverino nor the other Ghibelline leader could be content while their hated rival Simonetta was still at large. They sent messengers to Lodovico, imperiously demanding his summary punishment, and declaring that they would never lay down their arms until he and his confederates were imprisoned. After some delay, Lodovico yielded to their demand; Bona's faithful secretary was arrested and sent to Pavia with his

brother, while the fickle populace sacked their houses. Congratulations poured in from all the kinsfolk of the Sforza family. Caterina Sforza, the illegitimate daughter of Duke Galeazzo, who had been brought up by Bona with her own children, wrote from Rome, where she was living with her husband, Girolamo Riario, Count of Imola and Forli at the papal court, to rejoice with her brother the young duke over the fall of the hated minister; "*quelo nefandissimo Cecho* the murderer of our family and our flesh and blood." Now at length, he adds, she will be able to visit Milan and see her beloved mother once more in peace and safety. And her husband's uncle, Pope Sixtus IV., himself wrote to congratulate both duke and duchess on the arrest of Simonetta and the restoration of peace and tranquillity. Lodovico was now formally associated with Duchess Bona in the regency, and his brother Ascanio was recalled and advanced to the dignity of Archbishop of Pavia. Before many months were over peace was concluded with Florence, and with the full approval of King Ferrante, the Duke of Ferrara accepted Lodovico Sforza as his future son-in-law.

Meanwhile party feeling still ran high in Milan, and the Ghibellines, with Sanseverino and Pusterla at their head, never ceased to clamour for Simonetta's head. People began to complain that Lodovico, who had been brought back to power by the Ghibellines, was after all a Guelph at heart, and a traitor to his party. In vain the Moro advocated milder measures, and wrote a letter to Simonetta, offering to release him on payment of a ransom. The old secretary, who was upwards of seventy years of age, refused, saying that he was ill and weary of life, and had no fear of death. At length Lodovico, vexed by the continual recriminations of his Ghibelline followers, reluctantly

gave way. Bona signed the death warrant of her old servant, and on the 30th of October, 1480, Simonetta was beheaded in the Castello of Pavia. His brother Giovanni, an able and learned scholar, was released, and lived to write the famous Sforziada, or history of Duke Francesco's great deeds, which he dedicated to his son Lodovico.

Already one-half of the unfortunate minister's prophecy had come true; the other half was soon to be fulfilled. For a few months Bona rejoiced in her freedom from the cares of state, and left all to Lodovico, "who could do her no greater pleasure than not to speak of these things," says Commines. She herself was treated with the utmost respect, and spent her time in feasting and dancing, and loaded her favourite with honours. Tassino lived in rooms next to her own, and rode out with the duchess on pillion behind him. But her favourite, encouraged by the folly of his mistress, became every day more indolent, until one day he kept Lodovico Sforza and the chief officers of state waiting at the door of his room while he finished his toilet. Yet nothing could cure Bona's infatuation, and she went so far as to beg Lodovico to appoint her minion's father to be governor of the *Rocca* of Porta Zobia (Giovia), as the Castello of Milan was called. Fortunately Eustachio, who had been appointed to the post by Duke Galeazzo, and solemnly charged to hold it, in case of his own death, until his son was of age, refused to give up the keys; and the young duke and his brother Ermes were conducted into the Rocca, while at the same moment Tassino received an order from the Council to leave Milan. This he did without delay, taking with him a large sum of money and many valuable pearls and jewels which he had received from the duchess. When Bona heard of her

favourite's flight she flew into a frantic rage, and, "forgetful alike of honour and maternal duty," as Corio writes, she renounced her share of the regency, saying that she placed her son in his uncle's care, and left Milan. "Like some demented woman," continues Corio, she fled as far as Abbiategrasso, where she was detained by Lodovico's orders, and not allowed to proceed to France as she had intended. In the end, however, she effected her purpose, and retired to her brother-in-law's Louis XI.'s court, where she remained during the next few years, vowing vengeance against Lodovico, and bitterly repenting her weakness in having consented to his return. So Lodovico Moro, "that hero of patience and cunning," as Michelet calls him, at length attained his object, and found himself sole Regent of Milan. *Merito e tempore* was the motto which he had chosen for his own, and which he placed in golden letters on his shield, and illuminated on the vellum pages of his favourite books, in the firm belief that all things come to the man who can learn to bide his time. Henceforth his head appeared together with that of his younger nephew on all coins and medals, and the words *Lodovico patrue gubernante* inscribed below.

Pandolfini, the Florentine ambassador, who had watched his course with profound interest, sent a minute report of the latest developments of public events to Lodovico's friend, the Magnificent Medici. A year before, when Lodovico had just returned to Milan, the envoy remarked, "Signor Lodovico is very popular here, both with the people and with Madonna." Again, a little later, he wrote, "Madonna trusts much in Messer Lodovico's good nature." Now he added, "The whole government of the kingdom is placed in Lodovico's hands." He could not refrain from an expression of admiration at the peaceable

manner in which this revolution had been accomplished. "With what ability and skill he has effected this sudden change!" And he added, "I tell him, if he uses his opportunities well, he will become the arbiter of the whole of Italy."

FOOTNOTES:

[2] Caffi in A. S. L., xiii.

CHAPTER III

Wars of Venice and Ferrara—Invasion of Ferrara—Lodovico Sforza and Alfonso of Calabria come to the help of Ercole d'Este—Peace of Bagnolo—Prosperity of Ferrara, and cultivation of art and learning at Ercole's court—Guarino and Aldo Manuzio—Strozzi and Boiardo—Architecture and painting—The frescoes of the Schifanoia—Music and the drama—Education of Isabella and Beatrice d'Este.

1482-1490

Such was the prince to whom Duke Ercole had betrothed his younger daughter, and who had suddenly become one of the chief personages in North Italy. But more than ten years were to elapse before the child-bride even saw her affianced

husband. During that time both Milan and Ferrara passed through many vicissitudes, and at one moment Beatrice's father and his state were reduced to the utmost extremity.

The Venetians availed themselves of the troubled state of Lombardy and the civil strife that divided the house of Sforza, to attack their old enemy the Duke of Ferrara. In 1482 Roberto di Sanseverino, the valiant captain who had been one of the chief instruments in restoring his kinsman Lodovico Sforza to his country, left Milan in a rage, because he did not consider his salary sufficient, and offered his services to the Republic of Venice. With his gallant sons to help him, he invaded the territory of Ferrara at the head of an army of seventeen thousand men, and carried all before him. The Pope as usual took up the quarrel of the Venetians, in the hope of sharing the spoil, and while Ercole's ally, King Ferrante of Naples, was engaged in resisting the papal forces, the Genoese, who had revolted against Duchess Bona in 1478, and elected a doge of their own, occupied Lodovico Sforza's attention. The Ferrarese troops were completely defeated in a battle under the citadel of Argenta, many of the Ferrarese leaders were slain, and the duke's nephew, Niccolo da Correggio, and three hundred men were taken prisoners to Venice. Sanseverino made good use of his advantage, and his son Gaspare, better known by his nickname of Fracassa, marched to the very gates of Ferrara, and planted the Lion of St. Mark on the peacocks' house in the ducal park. Meanwhile the plague had broken out in Ferrara, and so great was the scarcity of wheat in the beleaguered city, that Battista Guarino, the tutor of the young Princess Isabella, applied to her betrothed husband Francesco Gonzaga for a grant of corn to save him from

starvation. Worse than all, Duke Ercole himself lay dangerously ill within the Castello, and a report of his death was circulated through the city. At this critical moment Duchess Leonora once more showed her courage and presence of mind. Seeing the greatness of the danger, she sent her children with a safe escort to Modena, and calling the magistrates together, she harangued them from the garden loggia, and bade them be true to their old lords of the house of Este. The citizens, moved to tears at the sight of Leonora's majesty and courage, shouted with one voice, "Diamante!"—the watchword of the house of Este, and vowed to die for their duke. In their enthusiasm, the people broke open the palace doors, and rushing into the chamber where Ercole lay on his sick-bed, covered his hands with kisses, and would not be satisfied until they had heard his voice again and knew him to be alive. After this outburst of loyalty, they rallied bravely to the defence of the city. Every man who could bear arms in Ferrara helped to man the walls, and the country-folk, rising in thousands, harassed the invading army and cut off their supplies. Fortunately, help was at hand. On the one hand, Lodovico Sforza's troops checked the advance of the Venetians on the side of Modena; on the other, Ercole's brother-in-law, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, himself rode at the head of fifty horsemen and a troop of infantry to the help of the beleaguered city.

Throughout the long struggle that followed, Lodovico Sforza proved himself a wise and faithful friend of the house of Este, and it was chiefly owing to him that Ferrara preserved her independence. But the duke and his people had to make great sacrifices on their part, and at the peace of Bagnolo, which was finally concluded in 1484, seven towns were ceded

to Venice, and the fertile district of Rovigo in the Polesina, "*un petit pays*," in the words of Commines, "*tout environné d'eau et abondant a merveille en tous biens*."

A period of renewed peace and prosperity followed upon these disastrous wars. Ercole, although in his early youth he had proved himself a valiant soldier, had in reality far greater taste for the arts of peace than for those of war, and now devoted himself to the more congenial task of adorning Ferrara and cultivating letters. His father Niccolo III. had been the first prince in Northern Italy to take part in the revival of Greek learning that had been set on foot in Naples and Florence. He it was who, in 1402, revived the ancient University of Ferrara, and invited the best scholars of the day to give lectures to its students. At his prayer, the Sicilian Hellenist Aurispa, who had travelled to Greece and Constantinople in search of Greek manuscripts, fixed his residence at Ferrara; while Battista Guarino of Verona became the tutor of Niccolo's own son Leonello, and inspired the young prince with that ardour for learning which made him the most accomplished ruler of his time. It was Niccolo, again, who invited the celebrated Paduan doctor, Michele Savonarola, to fill the chair of medicine at the University of Ferrara. Michele's son became court physician to Ercole, and his grandson, the famous Dominican friar, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who had forsaken the study of medicine to take the vows of a preaching brother, delivered his first course of Lent sermons in Ferrara during that troubled year 1482.

The General Council held at Ferrara in 1438 brought some of the first Greek Oriental scholars together in that city, and Niccolo d'Este himself

assisted at many of the discussions held by these learned professors. His son Leonello, besides encouraging students by his own example, devoted great pains and expense to the University library which he founded, while his successor, Duke Borso, pensioned poor students, who were clothed and fed at his cost. Ercole now followed in his father's and brother's steps with so much success that under his reign the University of Ferrara became the foremost in Italy, and boasted no less than forty-five professors, while the number of students reached four hundred and seventy-four. In those days the most renowned scholars of the age flocked from all parts of Italy to hear Guarino lecture; and Aldo Manuzio, the great printer, and his illustrious friend Pico della Mirandola, the phœnix of the Renaissance, came to Ferrara to sit at the feet of this revered teacher. Here Aldo acquired the passion for Greek literature which made him inscribe the word Philhellene after his name on his first printed books. Here, in his own turn, he lectured on Greek and Latin authors to the cultured youth of Ercole's court, and here he would have set up his printing-press, under his friend Duchess Leonora's patronage, if the Venetian war had not forced him to leave Ferrara. Both from the court of Alberto Pio at Carpi, where he found refuge with a kinsman of the Estes, and at Venice, where he founded his famous printing-press, he kept up frequent communications with the duke's family, and dedicated books to young Cardinal Ercole, and bound and printed choice editions of Petrarch and Virgil for his sister Isabella d'Este. But if Duke Ercole emulated the zeal of his predecessors in the encouragement of classical learning, he surpassed them all in his love of travel, of building, and of theatrical representations. During the next twenty

years he indulged freely in all of these favourite pursuits.

His opportunities of travel, indeed, were limited by the duties of his position; but whenever he could find leisure, he gratified his roving taste by paying frequent visits to Milan or Venice, where the magnificent palace bestowed upon his ancestor Nicolas II. in the last century, but confiscated during the war with Ferrara, had been restored to him at the peace of Bagnolo. In 1484, he took Duchess Leonora there with a suite of seven hundred persons. On this occasion the palace originally decorated by Duke Borso was sumptuously restored, and the Doge and Senate entertained their guests with princely hospitality. A more distant pilgrimage to the shrine of S. Jago of Compostella in Spain, which Ercole had planned in 1487, had to be abandoned, owing to the opposition of Pope Innocent VIII.; but eight years later the duke paid another visit to Florence, on the pretence of discharging a vow which he had made to Our Lady of the Annunziata. To the last the adventurous disposition of the Estes, the love of seeing and hearing new things, marked his character and governed his actions.

Meanwhile his imagination found plenty of food for activity at home, and nothing interfered with his love of building or with the delight which he took in the stage. Under him, Ferrara became one of the finest cities in Italy. Her broad streets and spacious squares, her noble statues and imposing monuments, the stately symmetry of her well-kept ways, made a deep impression on Lodovico Sforza when he visited his wife's home. At the beginning of his reign Ercole had sent to Florence to borrow Alberti's Treatise on Architecture from Lorenzo de' Medici, and had

carried out his improvements on the principles advocated by the Renaissance architect. On every side new churches and palaces rose into being, a lofty Campanile was added to the ancient Lombard Cathedral, an equestrian statue of Niccolo III. and a bronze effigy of Duke Borso adorned the piazza in front of the Castello. Soon Ercole's subjects caught their duke's passion for building, and vied with him in erecting new and sumptuous houses. His brother, Cardinal Sigismondo, raised the Palazzo Diamante, that magnificent Renaissance structure in the Via degli Angeli. The Trotti and the Costabili, the Strozzi and Boschetti, all followed suit and built palatial residences in the neighbourhood.

These fine buildings were surrounded with spacious gardens. One of Ercole's first improvements had been to lay out the noble park outside the town, and to people it with stags and goats, with gazelles and antelopes and the spotted giraffes which Niccolo da Correggio describes in his poems; and on the gates leading from the city were marble busts carved by the hand of Sperandio, the famous medallist who had worked so long for the ducal house, and who has left us portraits of all the chief personages at the Ferrarese court. The courtyard of the ancient Este palace was adorned with wide marble staircases, the villa of Belfiore was enlarged and beautified, while that of Belriguardo, twelve miles from the city, on the banks of the Po, became celebrated as the most sumptuous of all the stately pleasure-houses in which Renaissance princes took delight. No pains or expense were spared in the decoration of these luxurious country houses. The terraced gardens and marble loggias were adorned with fountains and statues, the halls were hung with costly tapestries and gold and silver embroideries. Eastern carpets

and carved ivories, cameos and intaglios, precious gems and rare majolica from Urbino and Casteldurante were brought together in the Camerini of the Castello and the halls of the Schifanoia palace, that favourite Sans-Souci of the Este princes close to the court-church of S. Maria in Vado and to the convent of Leonora's friends, the nuns of S. Vito. In this charming retreat, where Borso and Ercole alike loved to escape from the cares of state, we may still see the remnants of these splendid decorations which once adorned these halls: the painted arabesques and stucco frieze of children playing musical instruments, the barrel-vaulted ceilings, and marble doorways with their rows of cherub heads and dolphins. There the unicorn which Borso took for his device, figures side by side with the imperial eagle granted him by Frederic III when he came to visit Ferrara, and the fleur-de-lis of France, which the Estes were privileged to bear on their coat-of-arms. There we still see fragments of the frescoes on the months and seasons of the year which Cossa and his scholars painted at the bidding of successive dukes. Borso is there on his white horse as he rides out hunting, attended by falconers and pages leading his favourite greyhounds in the leash; or looking on at the races of St. George's Day, surrounded by scholars and courtiers, dwarfs and jesters, and fair ladies clad in glittering robes of cloth of silver and gold. All the pageant of court-life in old Ferrara, as it was in the days when Duke Ercole reigned and Isabella and Beatrice d'Este grew up under the good Duchess Leonora's care, passes again before our eyes, as we linger in these low halls of the little red-brick palace among the fruit trees of this deserted quarter.

Niccolo III. and his elder sons had all been liberal patrons of art, and had invited the best artists they

could find from other parts of Italy. Vittore Pisanello and Jacopo Bellini had both of them visited Ferrara and painted portraits of the Este princes—that of Leonello, with his long hooked nose and low forehead, is still preserved at Bergamo, and Piero de' Franceschi, the mighty Umbrian, is said to have supplied a design for Duke Borso's tomb. But it was in later years, under Ercole's reign, that this little group of native artists arose, and that Cosimo Tura and his followers founded the school which gradually spread to Bologna and Modena and boasted such masters as Lorenzo Costa and Francia, or helped to mould the genius of a Raphael and a Correggio. Tura himself remained at Ferrara all his life, painting altar-pieces for Duchess Leonora's favourite churches, as well as frescoes in the duke's villas and portraits of the different members of the ducal family in turn. In 1472, before the Duke's marriage, he painted the portrait of Ercole—strange to say—together with his illegitimate daughter Lucrezia d'Este, to be sent as a present to his bride, Leonora of Aragon, at her father's court of Naples. Again, in the summer of 1485, he was called upon in his capacity of court painter to paint the likeness of the youthful Isabella for her affianced husband, Francesco Gonzaga; and before the year was out he had to perform the same task for the other little bride, who had just returned from Naples. The following paper in the Ferrarese archives fixes the exact date of the portrait, which was evidently sent as a Christmas gift to Lodovico Sforza at Milan. "On the 24th of December, 1485, Cosimo Tura received four gold florins from the duke, for painting from life the face and bust of the Illustrissima Madonna Beatrice, to be sent to Messer Lodovico Maria Sforza, Duca di Bari, consort of the said Beatrice—Carlo Continga taking it to him."

Unfortunately, both of these portraits have perished, and the only representation of Beatrice as a girl that we have is the sculptor Cristoforo Romano's well-known bust in the Louvre.

While the native schools of painting became active and prosperous under Ercole's auspices, a flourishing school of arts and crafts arose in Ferrara under the immediate patronage of the duchess. From the day of her marriage, Leonora not only showed that intelligent love of art and learning which might have been expected in a princess of the house of Aragon, but a warm interest in the well-being of her subjects, together with excellent sense and a strong practical bent. At her invitation, tapestry-workers from Milan and Florence came to settle at Ferrara, and skilled embroiderers were brought over from Spain. The duchess herself superintended these workers, selected the colours and patterns, and became an authority in the choice of hangings and decoration of rooms. While Ercole had an insatiable passion for gems and cameos, antique marbles and ivories, Leonora showed an especial taste for gold and silver metal-work. Silver boxes and girdles curiously chased and engraved were constantly sent to the duchess by Milanese goldsmiths, and among the workers in this line whom she frequently employed was Francesco Francia, the goldsmith painter of Bologna. In 1488, this artist sent her an exquisite chain of gold hearts linked together, which excited general admiration, and may perhaps have been intended as a bridal gift for Elizabeth Gonzaga, the sister of Isabella's betrothed husband, who visited Ferrara that spring, on her way to Urbino. Leonora's own jewels were said to be the finest and most artistic owned by any princess of her day, and, as in the case of other Renaissance ladies, formed no

inconsiderable portion of her fortune; and, in consequence, they were frequently pawned to raise money for her husband's wars. The duchess's famous necklace of pearls, we learn, was repeatedly lent by the duke to bankers or goldsmiths in Rome and Florence as pledges for the repayment of loans advanced during the war with Venice.

Music was another of Ercole's favourite pastimes, and the choir of his court chapel at one time rivalled that of Milan, which was held to be the best in Italy. Violinists and lute-players were brought from Naples to Ferrara, French and Spanish tenors were included among the singers who accompanied the duke on his journeys. A still more distinctive feature of his court were the theatrical representations, which became a prominent part of all the palace festivities, and which undoubtedly owed much to the duke's taste for dramatic art. Under his directions, a spacious theatre was fitted up in the old Gothic Palazzo della Ragione on the cathedral square. Here Latin comedies were performed before an audience which included the most learned classical scholars of the day, and Italian dramas were seen for the first time upon the stage. In 1486, an Italian version of the *Menœchimi*, translated by Ercole himself, was acted here, with interludes of masques and morris dances, violin music, and recitations. This was followed, a year later, by a performance of *Cefalo*, one of the oldest of Italian dramas, a pastoral play composed by Niccolo da Correggio, chiefly taken from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," and which is said to have suggested the subjects of Correggio's famous frescoes in the Abbess of San Paolo's parlour at Parma. Each Christmas and carnival these theatrical representations were repeated, and many were the distinguished visitors who came to Ferrara to witness

these celebrated performances. The *Amphitryon* and *Cassina* of Plautus were frequently given. On one occasion, a play adapted from a dialogue of Lucian's by Matteo Boiardo was acted. Another time, at the wedding of a Marchese Strozzi, a Latin comedy written by the bridegroom's brother, Ercole Strozzi, was performed before the whole court. Sometimes, by way of variety, sacred subjects were placed upon the stages. Tableaux of the Annunciation and the history of Joseph were introduced, accompanied with recitations and music. While the duke was known to have a strong preference for classical plays, the duchess and her daughters took pleasure in lighter forms of literature, and encouraged the songs and romances which courtly poets wrote for their benefit in the *lingua vulgare*. A new school of Italian poets sprang up at Ferrara in the last years of the century. Antonio Tebaldeo, the friend of Castiglione and Raphael—"our Tebaldeo," whom Pietro Bembo declared Raphael had painted in so lifelike a manner that he was not so exactly himself in actual life as in this portrait—had his home at Ferrara in these early days, and enjoyed the favour of the Marchioness Isabella in his later years. While the elder Strozzi, Tito, had the reputation of being the best Latin poet of the day, his son Ercole belonged to the circle of younger scholars, and, like his friends Bembo and Ariosto, wrote elegant Italian verses as well as Latin epistles and orations. Then there was the blind poet Francesco Bello, the author of the "Mambriano," that heroic poem on the favourite Carlovingian legend; Andrea Cossa of Naples, who sang his own *rime* and *strambotti* to the music of the lute; Niccolo da Correggio, called by Isabella d'Este and Sabba da Castiglione "the most accomplished gentleman of the age, the foremost man in all Italy, in the art of poetry

and in courtesy," who devoted his muse to the service of gentle ladies, and composed *canzoni* and *capitoli* or set Petrarch's sonnets to music for Isabella and Beatrice's pleasure. And among Ercole's courtiers at Ferrara there was one still greater, Matteo Boiardo, Count of Scandiano, who was intimate with both duke and duchess, and held many high posts at court. He was a member of the splendid suite sent in 1473 to escort Leonora from Naples to Ferrara, and afterwards held the important post of Governor of Modena during many years. But in the midst of official labours and court duties, Matteo was all the while engaged in writing his his great work of the "Orlando Innamorato," that wonderful epic in which classic and romantic ideas are mingled together as strangely as in Piero di Cosimo or Sandro Botticelli's paintings. The first cantos of his poem, begun in 1472, were published at Venice in 1486, with a dedication to Duke Ercole, and the work was continued at intervals throughout his life, and was only interrupted by the death of the poet. This took place in 1494, when the first French armies were first seen descending upon Italy, and the sweet singer of high romance broke off abruptly with a prophetic note of warning in his last accents—"While I am singing, I see all Italy set on fire by these Gauls, coming to ravage I know not how many fresh lands, alas!"

In this city which was at once the home of Italian epic and Italian drama, at this court where the boy Ariosto was to take up the song that dropped from the lips of Boiardo, and to wear the laurel in his turn, the young princesses of Este grew up. There were three of them, for Lucrezia, the duke's illegitimate daughter, had found a kind mother in the duchess, and was brought up with her young step-sisters

Isabella and Beatrice, until in 1487, she became the wife of Annibale Bentivoglio, and went to live in Bologna. Under Leonora's careful and vigilant eyes, these maidens were trained in all the culture of the day. Their classical studies were directed by Battista Guarino, the son of the learned Verona humanist, the same who begged the Marquis of Mantua for a grant of wheat that he might the better be able to teach his betrothed bride Madonna Isabella during the famine at Ferrara. With him they learnt sufficient Latin to read Cicero and Virgil, as well as Greek and Roman history. Music and dancing were taught them almost from infancy. They learnt to play the viol and lute, and sang *canzoni* and sonnets to the accompaniment of these instruments. Beatrice, we know, was passionately fond of music. She employed the great Pavian Lorenzo Gusnasco to make her clavichords and viols of the finest order, and like her father, she never travelled without her favourite singers. Isabella herself had a beautiful voice, and sang with a sweetness and grace which charmed all hearers. The most accomplished poets of the Renaissance, Pietro Bembo and Niccolo da Correggio, Girolamo Casio and Antonio Tebaldeo, were proud to hear her sing their verses, and the Vicenza scholar Trissino, forestalling Waller in this, wrote a *canzone* addressed to "My Lady Isabella playing the lute."

Messer Ambrogio da Urbino began to give Isabella dancing lessons almost as soon as she could walk. Later on a certain Messer Lorenzo Lavagnolo, who had taught Elizabeth and Maddalena Gonzaga, the young sisters of the Marquis of Mantua, and had afterwards been sent to the court of Milan to teach Duchess Bona's daughters, came to Ferrara. This master, who was commended to the Duchess of Milan by the Marchioness Barbara of Mantua as

superior to all other professors of the art of dancing, gave lessons to Isabella and her sisters, as we learn from a letter which she wrote to her affianced husband, thanking him in her sister's name and her own for having sent so excellent a teacher to undertake the task, and recommending this faithful and devoted servant to His Excellency's notice. A bill for making dresses and scenery that were employed in a "*festa*" composed by Messer Lorenzo for the duke's daughters is preserved in the Gonzaga archives, and at Lucrezia's wedding, in 1487, this renowned master travelled to Bologna to direct the *fêtes* given in honour of her marriage.

Some knowledge of French seems to have formed part of an Italian lady's education at this period, but even Isabella, with all her quickness and talent, was never able to speak French fluently, and Beatrice had recourse to interpreters when she received the visit of King Charles VIII. at Asti, and was required to make civil speeches in reply to his compliments. But they read Provençal poetry and translations of Spanish romances from the rare volumes, sumptuously bound in crimson velvet with enamelled and jewelled clasps and corners, that were among the most precious treasures of Duchess Leonora's cabinet. Above all, they took delight in French romances, such as "*I reali di Francia*"—that book which was so popular with Italian ladies, and became familiar with the exploits of Roland and the paladins of Charlemagne's court. As they bent over their embroidery-frames at their lady mother's side, in the painted camerini of the Castello, or under the acacias and lemon-trees of the Schifanoia villa, they listened to the wonderful fairy tales which Matteo Boiardo recited, and heard him tell how Rinaldo of Montalbano was pelted with roses and lilies and

made captive by Cupid's dames. Now and then, on summer evenings, they were allowed to join in the water-parties at Belriguardo, and float down the stream in the ducal bucentaur to the sound of the court violins, or else take part in those hunting expeditions for which Beatrice developed a passionate taste in after-years. As the frescoes of Schifanoia show, hunting was always a favourite pastime at the court of Ferrara. The duke kept many hundred horses in his stables, and the greatest care was bestowed upon his breed of dogs and falcons. When Borso went to Rome in 1471, he took in his retinue eighty pages, each leading four greyhounds in a leash; and when he entertained the Emperor Frederic III. at Ferrara, he presented him with fifty of his best horses. Ercole often received gifts of Barbary horses from the Sultan of Tunis or the famous Gonzaga stables that were reckoned the best in Italy, and bought Spanish jennets and steeds of Irish race to improve his own breed. And Duchess Leonora owned a special breed of greyhounds which were held in high esteem, and a pair of which she sent to Caterina Sforza, Madonna of Forli, at the humble request of this adventurous lady.

But it was only on very rare occasions that the young princesses of Este were allowed to leave their studies, which occupied their whole days, and, as we learn from their different preceptors' letters, absorbed their whole attention. Nor, we may be quite sure, was their religious education neglected under the eye of their mother, a sincerely devout and pious woman, who took pleasure in the converse of learned Dominicans and Carmelites, and paid frequent visits to S. Vito, close to the Schifanoia villa, and to the Convent of Corpus Domini, in which church she was buried. Her many charitable works,

the liberality with which she helped her poorer subjects, relieved their wants, and gave dowries to virtuous maidens, as well as her munificence in adorning altars and churches with rich ornaments, are recorded by every Ferrarese historian. Sabadino degli Arienti places her high among the illustrious women of the age, and says her deeds cannot fail to have opened the adamant doors of Paradise, while Castiglione speaks of her excellent virtues as known to the whole world, and pronounces her worthy to have reigned over a far larger state. With the pattern of this admirable mother before their eyes, with all that was choicest in art and fairest in nature around them, Leonora's daughters grew up to womanhood, and insensibly acquired that enthusiasm for beauty in all its varied forms, that fine taste and perception which distinguished them above their contemporaries, which made Isabella at the end of her long life still the most attractive woman of her day, and which caused the bravest soldiers and the wisest scholars to lament the untimely death of the youthful Duchess Beatrice. In all the difficult and tangled ways which they were separately called upon to tread, the breath of scandal, the slander of idle tongues, never sullied their fair names. Both princesses held fast to the ideal of their girlhood, and, leading the same pure and spotless life, left the same gracious memory behind them, alike in the old Mantuan city on the banks of the classic Mincio, where Isabella's presence lingers like some delicate perfume about the *Camerini* of the ancient Castello, and in that grander and more splendid court where Beatrice reigned for a few brief years by the Moro's side at Milan.

CHAPTER IV

Isabella d'Este—Lodovico Sforza delays his wedding —Plot against his life—Submission of Genoa—Duke Gian Galeazzo—The Sanseverini brothers —Messer Galeazzo made Captain-General of the Milanese armies—His marriage to Bianca Sforza —Marriage of Gian Galeazzo to Isabella of Aragon—Wedding festivities at Milan—Lodovico draws up his marriage contract with Beatrice d'Este.

1485-1490

Isabella d'Este, the eldest of Ercole's and Leonora's two daughters, early displayed the striking beauty and great qualities that distinguished her in after-years. Her regular features and delicate colouring, her ready wit and gracious manners, charmed all the visitors to Ferrara. The letters of princes and ambassadors were full of her praises. The Mantuan envoy who was sent to Ferrara in 1480, to arrange the terms of the marriage contract, was amazed at the little bride's precocity. The six-year-old child not only danced charmingly before him, but conversed with a grace and intelligence which seemed to him little short of miraculous. All her teachers told the same story. Whatever Madonna Isabella did was well done. Her quickness in learning, her marvellous memory, and application to her studies were the

theme of every one at court. She was the apple of her father's eye, her mother's most sweet and cherished companion—"*la mia carissima e dolce figliuola sopra altre*." When she married and left home for Mantua, her poor old tutor shed tears at the loss of his favourite pupil, and wandered through the castle recalling her every word and movement; while for weeks the good duchess could not bear to enter the room or open the windows of the room which her darling child had occupied, and which was now left empty and desolate.

By the side of this brilliant creature, her younger sister, the little Beatrice, passed comparatively unnoticed. Her name is scarcely ever mentioned in the records of the period. Yet she was only a year younger than Isabella, and if all had gone well, the double wedding of the two sisters was to have been celebrated at the same time in February, 1490. But Lodovico Sforza had shown no inclination to press the matter. He professed the most cordial friendship for the Duke of Ferrara, who had every reason to be grateful for his help in the Venetian wars, and entertained Ercole magnificently when, in 1487, he paid a visit to Milan. But when the question of her marriage was mooted, he made excuses and suggested further delay. The extreme youth of the bride, the urgency of affairs of state, were all brought forward as excellent reasons for putting off the marriage until a more convenient season. During the ten years after his return to Milan, Lodovico's time and thoughts had been fully occupied. The internal as well as the external affairs of his state, the attacks of public enemies and private foes, alike demanded his whole energies. But so far Fortune had favoured him in a wonderful way. An attempt was made by Duchess Bona's confessor to assassinate him on the

steps of Saint Ambrogio at Christmas, 1485, but fortunately failed, because that day Lodovico entered the church by a side door to avoid the crowd. The sympathy excited by this cowardly attempt on his life, and by his recovery from a dangerous illness which brought him to the point of death, helped to strengthen his position at home, while complete success attended his arms and diplomacy. On the one hand, Venice was forced to accept his terms of peace; on the other, Genoa, sorely pressed by her old rival Florence, appealed to the Regent of Milan for assistance, and once more recognized the supremacy of Gian Galeazzo Sforza. A cardinal's hat was obtained for Ascanio Sforza, in whom Lodovico found an able and loyal supporter both in Rome and Milan. And when, in 1488, Lodovico's niece, Caterina Sforza, turned to him for help against the conspirators who had murdered her husband and seized the Rocca of Forli, a Milanese army under young Galeazzo di Sanseverino was promptly sent to her assistance. The citadel was besieged and captured, and the rights of Caterina and her son Ottaviano were triumphantly vindicated. Thus on every side the house of Sforza was restored to its former dignity, and the great Condottiere's name was respected and honoured. The Milanese once more enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity, and Lodovico was able to devote himself to his favourite pursuits, the encouragement of learning and of the fine arts. Even at the most anxious and busiest times, in the midst of the war with Venice and the negotiations for the league against her, Lodovico had found time to carry on his brother's schemes for the decoration of the Castello of Milan, and to help forward the works of the Duomo and the Certosa of Pavia. He had begun to rebuild the palace of

Vigevano on a splendid scale, and had set on foot a vast system of irrigation for the improvement of the ducal estates. Besides encouraging the rising school of native artists, he had invited the best foreign architects and painters, sculptors and poets, to his court. Already Bramante of Urbino was the chief architect at the ducal court, and now Lorenzo de' Medici sent a young Florentine master to Milan who played the lute divinely, and whose varied talents might prove serviceable to his friend Lodovico. So Leonardo da Vinci came to the court of the Moro, and found in him so genial and understanding a patron, so generous and kindly a friend, that he settled at Milan, and remained in the duke's service for the next sixteen years. Thus Lodovico Sforza had shown himself a wise and excellent regent, and had earned the gratitude of both prince and people, while the young duke in whose name he governed was growing up to man's estate. From his birth Gian Galeazzo had been a frail and sickly child, subject to constant feverish attacks, and in the year 1483 was so dangerously ill that at one moment his doctors despaired of his recovery. As he grew older, it became plain that his mind was as feeble as his body. He was utterly incapable of applying himself to serious business, far less of administering state affairs. His whole days were spent in idleness and pleasure, in hunting and drinking. Horses and dogs were the only objects in which he took any interest. Under these circumstances, it became plain that Lodovico would remain the actual ruler of Milan even though his nephew bore the title of duke. All outward respect was paid to Gian Galeazzo; he lived in great state, with a household and officers of his own, and was surrounded by regal pomp on public occasions. Clad in ducal robes, he appeared seated

on a throne erected in front of the Duomo when the Genoese patricians arrived at Milan, and received their homage as duke of the principality of Genoa. His brother Ermes, his sisters Bianca and Anna, shared his state, and when Bianca's betrothed husband the young prince of Savoy died, she was formally affianced in the Duomo to the eldest son of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary. But the real sovereign of Milan was Lodovico Duke of Bari. Here and there a jealous or discontented Milanese nobleman might grumble, but the majority of the duke's subjects felt that in these troublous days a strong hand was needed at the helm, and knew that they had this strong man in the Moro.

By degrees Lodovico removed those governors of cities and fortresses whose loyalty he had reason to suspect, and replaced them by confidential servants. Filippo Eustachio, captain of the Castello of Milan, a brave and honest man, Corio tells us, who had refused to yield up the keys of the Rocca to Bona's minion, but whose brothers had been implicated in the plot against Lodovico's life, was one day arrested by the duke's orders, and imprisoned at Abbiategrasso; he was afterwards released, no evidence of his guilt being produced, but his post was filled by one of the Moro's servants. Chief among the trusted captains in whom Lodovico placed his confidence were the Sanseverini brothers, "i gran Sanseverini," as they were called in the court poet's verses, as much on account of their great strength and stature as of the exalted position which they held at the Milanese court. Their father, that turbulent soldier Roberto, after making three desperate attempts to unseat the prince whose return to power he had effected, and being three times proclaimed a rebel and outlaw at Milan, had taken

service under Pope Innocent VIII. and led the campaign against Alfonso of Calabria, as Captain-general of the Church. But before long he quarrelled with the Pope and returned to the service of the Venetian Republic, until in August, 1486, at the age of seventy, he fell fighting with heroic valour against the Imperialists in the battle of Trent. Of his twelve sons, four entered the service of their kinsman, Lodovico Sforza, and rose to high honour and dignity. All of them were mighty men of valour like their father before them, while a fifth, Cardinal Federigo, was to prove a staunch adherent of the Sforzas in days to come. He inherited the giant stature as well as the martial tastes of his family, and at the consecration of Pope Alexander VI. is said to have lifted Borgia in his arms and placed him on the high altar. The eldest of the brothers, Giovanni Francesco, Count of Caiazzo, succeeded to his father's estates in Calabria, but lived at Milan, and became one of Lodovico's chief captains. Both Gaspare—the gallant soldier known by his surname of Captain Fracassa—and Antonio Maria, the husband of the fair and learned Margherita Pia of Carpi, a beloved friend and cousin of the Este princesses, were prominent figures at the Milanese court. But the most famous and popular of all the brothers was Galeazzo. This brilliant and accomplished cavalier, who was to play so great a part at the Milanese court, early attracted the notice of Lodovico by his personal charm and rare skill in knightly exercises. As a rider and jouster, he was without a rival. Wherever he entered the lists, at Milan or Venice, at Ferrara or Urbino, he invariably carried off the prize, and was proclaimed victor in the games. And to this prowess in courtly exercises he joined a love of art and learning which especially commended him to the Moro. Unlike his

brother Captain Fracassa, who refused Caterina Sforza's invitation to join in dance and song, saying that war was his trade and he sought no other, Galeazzo was a model of courtesy and grace. All fair ladies had a smile for him. Isabella d'Este and Elisabetta Gonzaga honoured him with their friendship, and Beatrice d'Este found in him the truest of friends and best of servants. Three kings of France, Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francis I., singled him out for special distinction, and after enjoying the highest honour at Lodovico Sforza's court, he lived to become Grand Ecuyer of France in the next century. French Italian chroniclers alike own the fascination of his handsome presence and extol the *gentilezza* of this very perfect knight. Leonardo da Vinci and Luca Pacioli the mathematician had in him a noble, generous patron, and Baldassare Castiglione, who knew him in his youth at Milan, has enshrined his memory in the pages of his "Cortigiano." It was this rare union of qualities which endeared the young Sanseverino to the Moro, who chose him for his intimate friend and companion. On his return from his successful campaign against the Forli rebels, Lodovico appointed him Captain-general of the Milanese armies, a step which naturally excited great jealousy among his rivals, and mortally wounded the pride of Messer Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, an older captain in the same service. Short of stature and rude of speech, with the big nose and rugged features that are familiar to us in Caradosso's medal, this able soldier presented a curious contrast to the brilliant and courtly Messer Galeazzo, whose rival he remained to the end of his life. Yet he knew how to appreciate genius, and after his triumphant return to Milan in 1499, employed Leonardo to paint his portrait and

design his tomb. Although a Guelph by birth, Trivulzio, up to this time, had been one of Lodovico's most active supporters. But when he saw a younger rival preferred to him, he left Milan in disgust and retired to Naples, where he entered King Ferrante's service, and became from that time a bitter enemy of the Sforza's. Meanwhile the Moro loaded his favourite Galeazzo with honours and rewards. He gave him the fine estate of Castelnuovo in the Tortonese, which had once belonged to his father, the great Condottiere Roberto, as well as a house in Pavia near the church of San Francesco and a palace in Milan, near the Porta Vercellina, and allowed him to build a villa and extensive stables in the park of the Castello. As a last and crowning honour, he bestowed upon this fortunate youth the hand of his illegitimate daughter Bianca, a beautiful and attractive child to whom he was fondly attached. Of her mother we have no certain knowledge, but she is generally supposed to have been some mistress of low origin, and Bianca herself is described by a contemporary writer as "*figlia ex pellice nata*." The wedding was solemnized with great splendour in the chapel of the Castello di Pavia, on the last day of the year 1489, but the young princess was still a child, and Galeazzo had to wait five years before he took home his bride. After his marriage he adopted the name of Sforza Visconti, and was treated by Lodovico as a member of his family.

Another wedding which took place about this time was that of the young duke, Gian Galeazzo. He had already entered his twentieth year, and the Princess Isabella of Aragon, to whom he had been betrothed in his father's lifetime, was turned eighteen, so that the marriage could no longer be delayed. In November, 1488, his brother Ermes was sent to

Naples with a suite of four hundred persons, who entered King Ferrante's capital sumptuously arrayed in silk brocade, and amazed even his luxurious courtiers by the splendour of their gold chains and jewelled plumes. At least Isabella's father, Alfonso, who had little love for his brother-in-law, and had already found Lodovico more than a match for his own cunning, could not complain that his daughter had not been honourably treated. After a rough passage in the depth of winter, which sorely tried the patience of the court poet Bellincioni, who was a member of the Milanese suite, the bride landed on the 7th of February, and travelled by land to Genoa and Tortona. There her bridegroom, the young Duke of Milan, was awaiting her, with his uncle Lodovico, and a banquet as memorable for ingenuity as for splendour was given in her honour. Each course was introduced by some mythological personage. Jason appeared with the golden fleece, Phœbus Apollo brought in a calf stolen from the herds of Admetus, Diana led Actæon in the form of a stag, Atalanta followed with the wild boar of Calydon, Iris came with a peacock from the car of Juno, and Orpheus carried in the birds whom he had charmed with his lute. Hebe poured out the wines, Vertumnus and Pomona handed round apples and grapes, Thetis and her sea-nymphs brought every variety of fish, and shepherds crowned with chaplets of ivy arrived from the hills of Arcady, bearing jars of milk and honey to the festive board. At Milan fresh wonders were awaiting the bridal pair. The court of the Castello was hung with blue drapery and wreaths of laurel and ivy, above which the ducal arms, designed in antique style, were seen, supported by figures of Centaurs. Under a seven-columned portico adorned with crimson-and-gold hangings, the duke's sister,

Bianca Maria Sforza, received the bride, and led her to a richly decorated chamber in the Camera della Torre. On the following day the wedding was solemnized with great pomp in the Duomo. The duke and duchess, clad in white, walked hand-in-hand up the great aisles of the church, and finally, were escorted to the rooms prepared for them in the Rocca, and after the Milanese fashion, hung with pure white satin. But the most memorable part of the wedding festivities, and that to which Lodovico himself devoted especial attention, was the performance of an operetta composed by the court poet Bellincioni for the occasion. "It was called *Il Paradiso*" adds the chronicler to whom we owe these details, "because Maestro Leonardo Vinci, the Florentine, had with great art and ingenuity fabricated a paradise or celestial sphere, in which the seven planets were represented by actors in costumes similar to those described by those poets of old, who each in turn spoke the praise of Duchess Isabella."

The festivities were interrupted by the illness of the young duke, who was so much exhausted by the fatigues of these successive entertainments, that he was unable to leave his bed for some weeks. But in the following summer two splendid tournaments were held at Pavia, at which Messer Galeazzo, as Sanseverino is always styled in Milanese annals, appeared with twenty followers in golden armour, mounted on chargers with gold trappings and harness, and, having unhorsed no less than nineteen of his opponents, bore off the first prize, a length of costly silver brocade. The duke and duchess were present with their whole court, but the Ferrarese ambassador remarked that the crowd all shouted, "Moro! Moro!" and that Signor Lodovico was by far the most popular personage with the citizens of

Pavia.

"He is a great man, and intends to be what he is in fact already—everything!" he wrote in his despatches to Ferrara. "And yet who knows? In a short time he may be nobody."

Gian Galeazzo, however, showed no signs of interfering with his uncle in the management of public affairs. On the contrary, he gave full rein to his pleasure-loving tastes, seldom came to Milan, and spent his days at Pavia or Vigevano in the company of his young wife and a few favourites. Duchess Isabella, as time showed, was a woman of strong character and deep feeling, but she never seemed to have acquired any influence over her feeble husband, and found herself powerless to arouse him to any sense of his position, "*La dicte fille*" says Commines, "*etoit fort courageuse et eut volontier donné crédit à son mary, si elle eut pu, mais il n'etoit guère saige et révélait ce qu'elle lui disait*." Lodovico treated both his nephew and niece with the utmost respect, and discussed the situation freely with the Florentine ambassador Pandolfini, saying that King Ferrante's envoy had lately gone so far as to suggest that, since this young man could never rule for himself, his uncle might as well assume the title, as well as the cares, of the head of the state. But this, Lodovico declared, was a crime of which he would never be guilty. "If I were to attempt such a thing," he exclaimed, "I should be infamous in the eyes of the whole world!"

For the present the sense of power, the knowledge that he was the actual ruler, sufficed him, and, as the King of Naples himself recognized, no one could have governed Milan more wisely or well than Lodovico did in his nephew's name. The birth of Duchess Isabella's son, in December, 1490, may have

been a blow to his hopes. But the happy event was celebrated with due rejoicings, the costly presents from the city of Milan and court officials were displayed in the Castello, and the infant heir of the house of Sforza received the name of his renowned great-grandfather, Francesco, together with the title of Count of Pavia.

Meanwhile Lodovico felt that it was time to think of his own marriage, and to keep the troth which he had pledged to the child-princess of Este. His actions, as he well knew, were narrowly watched at the court of Ferrara. Duchess Leonora was beginning to feel anxious about her daughter's future, and the marriage of Anna Sforza with young Alfonso d'Este had also to be arranged. Accordingly in May, 1489, when the Duke of Milan's wedding was safely over, the Ferrarese envoy Giacomo Trotti was sent back to his master duly acquainted with Signor Lodovico's wishes and intentions respecting these important matters.

On the 10th of May, the articles of the marriage contract were finally drawn up and signed at the Castello of Ferrara. They were on the same basis as the marriage treaties which had lately been drawn up between the Marquis Mantua and Isabella d'Este and the Duke and Duchess of Milan. Lodovico was to receive 40,000 gold crowns and 2000 more in jewels as Beatrice's portion. A sum equal to three-parts of the bride's dower was to be chargeable on the goods and lands of Signor Lodovico. If the most illustrious Madonna were to die without children, this dowry was to be returned, as was stipulated in the case of the Duchess of Milan. With regard to the choice and arrangement of the bride's household, and the number of her women, Lodovico was content to

leave all particulars to the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, trusting to their goodness and prudence to settle all these matters on a scale suitable to the birth and rank of a princess of this illustrious house. But he especially begged Duke Ercole to see that Madonna Beatrice was well supplied with clothes and other necessary articles of toilet fitting the position which she would occupy at Milan as wife of the Duke of Bari and Regent of the State. Last of all, the date of the marriage was positively fixed for the month of May, 1490, Lodovico promising to defray all the expenses of the wedding festivities. At the same time it was also decided that Madonna Anna's marriage should take place in July, 1490, by which time Signor Alfonso would have completed his fourteenth year, and the sum due to Messer Lodovico for Beatrice's dowry was to be deducted from that of his niece, who, as a princess of Milan, was to receive a portion of 100,000 crowns.

So Beatrice d'Este's wedding-day was at length fixed, and Duchess Leonora rejoiced in the happy prospect of seeing both her daughters married in the course of the following year.

CHAPTER V

Marriage of Isabella d'Este—Lodovico puts off his wedding—Cecilia Gallerani—Her portrait by Leonardo da Vinci—Mission of Galeazzo Visconti to Ferrara—Preparations for Beatrice's wedding—Cristoforo Romano's bust—Duchess Leonora and her daughters travel to Piacenza and Pavia—Their reception at Pavia by Lodovico.

1490-1491

The young Marquis of Mantua, Gian Francesco Gonzaga, had proved himself a more ardent lover than Lodovico Sforza. He frequently exchanged letters and compliments with his youthful bride, or sent Isabella presents and verses written in her honour by Mantuan poets. After his father's death in 1484, he visited Mantua, and brought Duchess Leonora a Madonna painted by the hand of the great Paduan master, Andrea Mantegna, the court painter of the Gonzagas. In the autumn of the same year, Leonora took her daughter to Mantua for a short visit, where she first met Gian Francesco's sister, Elizabeth Duchess of Urbino, who was to become her dearest friend and constant companion in the early

days of her married life. Four years afterwards, the same Elizabeth, the peerless Duchess of Castiglione and Bembo's adoration, stopped at Ferrara on her wedding journey to her new home of Urbino, and received an affectionate welcome from Leonora and her daughters. The duchess, she wrote, treated her as a mother, while in the Marchesana she had already found a loving sister and friend. On the 11th of February, 1490, Isabella's own wedding was celebrated at Ferrara, and the following morning the bride rode through the streets of the city, with the Duke of Urbino on her right and the Ambassador of Naples on her left hand. On the 12th, the bride set out for Mantua, travelling by water up the river Po in a stately bucentaur presented to Isabella by Duke Ercole, adorned with rich carving and gilding. Her parents and three brothers, Alfonso, Ferrante, and the boy Ippolito, afterwards well known as Ariosto's patron, Cardinal d'Este, with a large suite, accompanied her to the gates of Mantua, where a magnificent reception awaited her. The young marquis had made great preparations to welcome his bride, and, after the fashion of the days, had borrowed gold and silver plate, carpets, and hangings from all his friends and relations, including the famous tapestries of the Trojan war, which were the chief ornaments of the palace of Urbino. The *fêtes* passed off brilliantly, the crowds which assembled in the streets of Mantua were enormous, and the utmost enthusiasm was excited by the youth and loveliness of the bride. The only drawback was the absence of Mantegna, whom Pope Innocent had detained in Rome, in spite of his master's urgent request that the painter might return in time to arrange the wedding festivities.

The void which Isabella left in her old home was

keenly felt alike by her mother and sister. The duchess could not console herself for her daughter's absence, and after spending a delightful week with her sister-in-law Elizabeth on the lake of Garda, among the lemon-groves and gardens of those sunny shores, Isabella and her husband returned to Ferrara in April. Here she found that Beatrice's marriage had been again put off by Signor Lodovico's wish until the summer, and Isabella agreed to return to Ferrara early in July, and accompany her mother and sister to Milan. But when July came and the young marchioness reached Ferrara, she found to her surprise that all these plans had been suddenly changed. Lodovico had once more found it impossible to keep his engagement, and pleaded urgent public affairs and unavoidable pressure of business to excuse his apparent apathy. This time the duke and duchess were seriously annoyed, and began to doubt if Lodovico ever intended to wed their daughter. The question was gravely discussed during Isabella's visit, and a messenger from Milan suddenly reached Ferrara late one evening. It was no other than Messer Galeazzo Visconti, one of Lodovico's most trusted envoys, who had ridden from Milan in great haste, with letters from his lord. The contents of these letters remained unknown. One thing only was clear: they gave the duke great dissatisfaction. And Messer Galeazzo departed the next day, as quickly as he came. "I have tried in vain," wrote Benedetto Capilupi, the Marquis of Mantua's agent at Ferrara, "to discover the reason of all these disturbances. Every one is out of temper, and the duke seems to be very much displeased. M. Galeazzo has left suddenly."

Isabella returned to join her husband at Mantua, leaving affairs in this unsatisfactory state. Beatrice's

wedding seemed further off than ever, and doubts as to her union with Signor Lodovico began to be openly expressed. It was well known at Ferrara, where everything that happened at the court of Milan was minutely reported to Duke Ercole by his faithful envoy, Giacomo Trotti, that Lodovico Sforza had a mistress to whom he was fondly attached, and whom he had for many years past treated with the respect and honour due to a wife. This was Cecilia Gallerani, afterwards the wife of Count Lodovico Bergamini, a young Milanese lady of noble birth, as distinguished for her learning as for her beauty. She spoke and wrote Latin fluently, composed sonnets in Italian, and delivered Latin orations to the theologians and philosophers who met at her house. Contemporary writings abound in allusions to the rare virtues and learning of "la bella Gallerani," the Sappho of modern times. Scaligero wrote epigrams in her honour, Ortensio Lando classes her with Isabella d'Este and Vittoria Colonna among the most cultured women of the age. The novelist Matteo Bandello, himself a friar of the Dominican convent of S. Maria delle Grazie at Milan, is never tired of singing Cecilia's praises, and of describing the pleasant company who met at the countess's palace in Milan or at her villa near Cremona. There, he tells us, all the finest wits, all the most distinguished strangers in Milan assemble, and you may hear valiant captains reasoning with doctors and philosophers, or look at paintings and designs by living artists and architects, and listen to the playing and singing of the best musicians. As a young girl, Cecilia's charms captured the heart of the Moro, who, as early as 1481, bestowed the estate of Saronno, which he had inherited from his brother Sforza, upon her by a deed of gift, in which he extolled her learning and

excellence, and at the same time recalled the merits and services of her ancestors. Soon after Leonardo da Vinci's arrival in Milan, Lodovico employed him to paint the portrait of his fair young mistress, and we have more than one proof of the admiration which the Florentine master's work excited among his contemporaries. In the *Rime* of the court-poet, Bellincioni, we find the following sonnet evidently inspired by this picture and bearing the inscription: "On the portrait of Madonna Cecilia, painted by Maestro Leonardo." The poet seeks to appease Dame Nature's wrath at the sight of this portrait, in which the painter has represented the lovely maiden "listening, not speaking," but so full of life and radiance, that the sun's beams grow dim before the brightness of her eyes. And instead of envying art, he bids her rejoice that this living image of so beautiful a form will be handed down to future ages, and give thanks to Lodovico's wisdom and Leonardo's genius for having preserved this fair face to be the joy and wonder of posterity. "Thine, O Nature," he cries, "is the honour! the more living and beautiful Cecilia shall appear in the eyes of generations to come, the greater will be thy glory! For long as the world endures, all who see her face will recognize in Leonardo's work the close union of Art and Nature."

"Che lei vedrà, così ben che
sia tardo,
Vederla viva, dirà: basti ad
noi
Comprender or quel che è
natura et arte."

On the 26th of April, 1498, a year after Beatrice d'Este's death, her sister the Marchioness Isabella herself wrote to the Countess Bergamini from

Mantua, begging her for the loan of the portrait which Leonardo had painted of her and which she had formerly seen in Milan. "Having to-day seen some fine portraits by the hand of Giovanni Bellini, we began to discuss the works of Leonardo, and wished we could compare them with these paintings. And since we remember that he painted your likeness; we beg you to be so good as to send us your portrait by this messenger whom we have despatched on horseback, so that we may not only be able to compare the works of the two masters, but may also have the pleasure of seeing your face again. The picture shall be returned to you afterwards, with our most grateful thanks for your kindness, and assuring you of our own readiness to oblige you to the utmost of our power, etc.

"ISABELLA D'ESTE.

From Mantua."

Cecilia sent the precious picture by the courier to Mantua, with the following note in reply:—

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND EXCELLENT MADONNA AND VERY DEAR LADY,

"I have read your Highness's letter, and since you wish to see my portrait I send it without delay, and would send it with even greater pleasure if it were more like me. But your Highness must not think this proceeds from any defect in the *Maestro* himself, for indeed I do not believe there is another painter equal to him in the world, but merely because the portrait was painted when I was still at so young and imperfect an age. Since then I have changed

altogether, so much so that if you saw the picture and myself together, you would never dream it could be meant for me! All the same, your Highness will, I hope, accept this proof of my good-will, and believe that I am ready and anxious to gratify your wishes, not only in respect to the portrait, but in any other way that I can, since I am ever Your Highness's most devoted slave and commend myself to you a thousand times.

"Your Highness's servant,
CECILIA VISCONTA BERGAMINA,[3]

From Milan, the 29th of April, 1498."

Since that day when the great Florentine first painted her, Cecilia Gallerani had developed into a handsome matron, and as Lodovico Sforza's recognized mistress she enjoyed a position of great honour at court. For some years she occupied a suite of rooms in the Castello of Milan, where her lover constantly visited her and took the greatest delight in her company. His passion for this beautiful and intellectual woman only seemed to increase 108 with years. She had already borne him one son, the Leone, whom he was known to love so well that his courtiers did not dare tell him the sad news when the child died suddenly in 1487. The Duke of Bari, it was even said, intended ere long to make her his lawful wife, and thus to render her future issue legitimate.

Under these circumstances, it can hardly be wondered if Lodovico Sforza showed some reluctance in keeping the troth which he had plighted to the young princess of Este, while Duke Ercole's vexation was the more pardonable. For a time it seemed as if a rupture between the two houses was inevitable,

and all thought of a union between them must be abandoned. But soon a change came over Il Moro's dream. The difficulties in the way of a closer union with Cecilia Gallerani were great, and must invariably lead to jealousies and quarrels of a serious order. His own position in Milan would be endangered, and fresh hindrances placed in the way of his future designs. At the same time, the alliances with Ferrara and Mantua were both of great importance to the state, and could not be lightly thrown away. So he determined to sacrifice his inclinations to political exigencies, and make Beatrice d'Este his wife.

Accordingly, at the end of August he sent another ambassador, Francesco da Casate, to Ferrara with a magnificent gift for his bride, in the shape of a necklace of large pearls set in gold flowers, with a very fine pear-shaped pendant of rubies, pearls, and emeralds. This costly jewel was duly presented to Beatrice in the name of her affianced husband, and Duchess Leonora wrote forthwith to give her daughter Isabella the good news, informing her that Signor Lodovico hoped she would accompany her mother and sister to Milan that autumn for the wedding. The young marchioness was delighted to accept this invitation, and in the course of a few days she paid another visit to Ferrara, to assist in the preparations for her sister's marriage. Messer Galeazzo Visconti was sent there again to learn the duke and duchess's pleasure as to their daughter's journey, and, after making the final arrangements, left Ferrara on the 26th of November. The bride's departure was fixed for the last day of the year, and the wedding, it was decided, should take place in the chapel of the Castello of Pavia on the 16th of January.

Isabella hurried to Mantua to buy horses and clothes, jewels and plate for her journey, and announced her intention of taking upwards of one hundred persons in her suite, with ninety horses and trumpeters. Afterwards, however, she reduced the number to fifty persons and thirty horses at the request of Lodovico, who begged her to bring as few attendants as possible, owing to the large number of guests who were expected at Milan. Her husband, the Marquis Gianfrancesco, had naturally been included in the invitation, but as a close ally of the Venetians he did not think it politic to appear at the wedding of Lodovico Sforza. The Signory of Venice were known to look coldly on this alliance between Ferrara and Milan, and entertained the deepest distrust of Lodovico's policy. So Isabella decided to join her mother and sister on their journey up the river, and proceed with them to Pavia and ultimately to Milan. Meanwhile another emissary from Milan had arrived at Ferrara. This was the young sculptor, Cristoforo Romano, who was sent to Signor Lodovico to carve a bust-portrait of his bride before she left her father's home. The son of a Pisan sculptor who had settled in Rome, Cristoforo's genius had attracted attention when he was quite a boy, and he had been sent to Milan by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza. The young Roman master was one of those brilliant and versatile artists who especially commended themselves to Lodovico. He sang and played the lute admirably, while his literary tastes made him the intimate friend of Bembo and Castiglione, and a great favourite with the cultured princesses of Mantua and Urbino. He takes a leading part in the dialogues of the Cortigiano, and is frequently mentioned as worthy to rank with Michael Angelo, whose fame he might have rivalled had he not suffered from continual ill

health. As it is, the few works which he left behind him are marked with singular grace and refinement. His bust of Beatrice, now in the Louvre, where for many years it passed as the work of Leonardo, is at once remarkable for its truth and charm. The somewhat irregular features of the maiden of fifteen years are admirably given, the roundness of her cheeks, the pouting lips and slightly *retroussé* nose, and the curling locks are faithfully represented; yet we realize the force of character that lies under this soft, child-like face, and the frank joyousness which made her so attractive. Each stray lock of hair is rendered with delicate accuracy, the brocaded bodice of her gown and the scarf lightly thrown over her shoulders are elaborately adorned with the triangular diamond and other favourite devices of the house of Este. The quaint figure of the two hands holding a veil, from which fertilizing dust falls on the open flower, is supposed to be an emblem of marriage, and is said to signify that Beatrice was already an affianced bride. But since the words "Herculis filiæ" are cut in the marble, it is plain that Cristoforo carved the bust while the young duchess was still in her father's home, and probably took it home with him that autumn to Milan.

That year the winter set in with unusual severity. The bitter frost and cold which man and beast endured that January were long remembered, both in Mantua and Ferrara. On Christmas night it began to snow, and so heavy and continuous was the fall, that by noon on the next day the snow lay three feet deep in front of the Vescovado, or Bishop's house, opposite the Este palace. The Po was frozen over, and the ice on the river never thawed until the first week in February, while the snow lasted till the 12th of March, and some patches might still be seen in the

streets of Ferrara on the 20th of that month.

In the midst of these unwonted rigours, the wedding-party set out on their long journey. The royal brides of these days seem to have been singularly unlucky in the matter of weather. For one thing, they always travelled in the depths of winter. Elizabeth Gonzaga almost died of exhaustion after the sufferings of her journey from Mantua to Urbino in a violent tempest, which kept her ship tossing on the waves of the Po for several days and nights. The fleet which conveyed Isabella and her escort from Naples to Leghorn, narrowly escaped shipwreck off the coast of Tuscany. Bianca Sforza had to ride in December over the roughest roads across the Alps of the Valtellina, to join her Imperial lord at Innsbrück. And now Leonora and her daughters were called upon to brave the terrors of an Arctic winter on their way to Milan.

"On the 29th of December, 1490," writes the diarist of Ferrara, "Madonna Beatrice, daughter of Duke Ercole, went to Milan to marry Signor Lodovico Sforza, accompanied by her mother, Leonora Duchess of Ferrara; and also by Messer Sigismondo, her uncle"—the duke's younger brother, Cardinal d'Este—"and her brother, Don Alfonso, who went to bring home his bride, Madonna Anna, sister of the Duke of Milan and daughter of Galeazzo, and he rode in a sledge because the Po was frozen."[4]

The ladies of the party travelled in rude country carts—"*carrette*"—as far as Brescello, where the Po was navigable, and they were able to continue their journey by water to Pavia. Here Messer Galeazzo Visconti was awaiting them with a fleet of boats and three bucentaurs, by which pompous name the rude barges in which these high-born personages travelled

were glorified. The many discomforts and the actual cold and hunger which the Este ladies endured during the five days which they spent on board these vessels are graphically described in a letter addressed to Isabella's husband by her Ferrarese lady-in-waiting, Beatrice de' Contrari, after the travellers had reached Pavia. The boat which bore the provisions for the party was delayed by stress of weather, so that the travellers were left with but scanty breakfast and no dinner. When at length they anchored near the shore of Toresella at three o'clock at night, the Marchesana and her ladies were in a starving condition. "If it had not been for the timely help of Madonna Camilla, who sent us part of her supper from her barge, I for one," writes the lively lady-in-waiting, "should have certainly been by this time a saint in Paradise." As for going to bed, all wish for sleep was put out of their heads by the rocking of the ship and the uncomfortable berths, and the poor Marchesana was so cold and wretched without a fire that she wished herself dead, and her lady-in-waiting could not keep back her tears. However, at length these miseries were ended, Piacenza was safely reached, on the 12th of January, and the royal ladies and their companions were hospitably entertained by Count Bartolommeo Scotti, and enjoyed the luxury of warm fires and comfortable beds!

"And now that we have arrived," wrote Beatrice de' Contrari to her lord, the marquis, "and are beginning to enjoy these weddings for the sake of which we have suffered so many discomforts, I am thinking seriously of making my last will and testament."[5]

After a day's rest at Piacenza, the bridal party continued their journey up the river, and reached Pavia at half-past four on Sunday afternoon. Here

Signor Lodovico was awaiting them on the banks of the river Ticino, which joins the Po a few hundred yards below the city, with a gallant company of Milanese lords and gentlemen, and himself conducted first Beatrice and then her mother and sister to the shore. Together they rode on horseback over the covered bridge which spans the river, and passed through the long streets until they reached the goal of their journey, and entered the gates of the far-famed Castello of Pavia.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] G. Uzielli, *Leonardo da Vinci e Tre Gentil donne Milanesi*, p. 23.

[4] A Muratori, R. I. S., xxiv. 282.

[5] Luzio-Renier in A. S. L., xvii. 85.

CHAPTER VI

City and University of Pavia—Duomo and Castello—The library of the Castello—Wedding of Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Bari, and Beatrice d'Este, in the chapel of the Castello of Pavia—Galeazzo di San Severino and Orlando—Reception of the bride in Milan—Tournaments and festivities at the Castello—Visit of Duchess Leonora to the Certosa of Pavia.

1491

The ancient city of Pavia, the capital of the Lombard kings before the conquest of Charlemagne, still presents a picturesque and imposing appearance to the traveller, who sees the red-brick walls and gates of the old fortifications and the slender bell-towers of its Romanesque churches rising out of the green plains on the banks of the broad and swift Ticino. But it was a far grander and more beautiful sight in the days when Lodovico Sforza's bride landed near the chapel on the bridge, and in the fading light of the short winter afternoon rode at his side through the chief streets of the old Lombard capital, or, as it was proudly called, the city of a hundred towers. On the princely cavalcade wound, amid a dense crowd of people shouting, "*Moro! Moro!*" up the long Strada Nova, with its marble palaces, and newly painted loggias adorned with busts and frescoes, in front of the stately *Ateneo* with its halls and porticoes for the different schools, which had the reputation of being the finest university in all Italy, and past the rising walls of the new Duomo which Lodovico was building on the site of the ruined basilica of Charlemagne's time. A few months before, the renowned Sienese architect, Francesco Martini, had arrived at Pavia on horseback to give his advice as to the cupola of the new cathedral, accompanied by His Excellency's servant, Magistro Leonardo, the Florentine, and a vast train of servants, and had been entertained at the public expense. Martini had soon left again for Milan, after giving the architect of the Duomo, Bramante's pupil Cristoforo Rocchi, the benefit of his advice, and promising to send him a model of the cupola; but Leonardo had remained at Pavia all the summer and

autumn, turning over old manuscripts in the library of the Castello, and discussing anatomical problems with the professors and surgeons of the university, until a peremptory summons had reached him from the governor of the Castello at Milan, desiring him to return immediately and assist in decorating the ball-room for the wedding *fêtes*. Another visitor, a citizen of Beatrice's own city of Ferrara, had also been at Pavia a few months before—the Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, who had visited the Certosa and Castello of Pavia on his way from Brescia to preach at Genoa, before he was summoned at Pico della Mirandola's request to begin his famous course of Lent sermons in St. Mark's of Florence. But now the duke's painter and the humble friar had both gone their separate ways, Fra Girolamo to startle the scholars of the Medici circle with his thunders, and Leonardo to paint cupids in the halls of the Castello at Milan, and to resume his labours at the great equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza, which Signor Lodovico was longing to see finished. All unconscious of their existence, the young bride of the powerful regent rode at her lord's side and entered the wide courtyard through the great gateway, under the lofty towers of the famous Castello which for over a hundred and fifty years had been the home of Viscontis and Sforzas.

After the cold and fatigue of the long journey in this snowy winter season, the bridal party were thankful to reach the end of their journey and to enjoy a day's rest before the wedding ceremony, which, after consultation with Messer Ambrogio da Rosate, the chief court physician and astrologer, had been fixed for Tuesday, the 17th of January, this being the day of Mars, and therefore especially propitious for the marriage of a lord, who above all

things desired the birth of a son. Throughout his life Il Moro, like many of his contemporaries, had a blind belief in the stars, and placed the most implicit confidence in Messer Ambrogio, who was said to have saved his life during his dangerous illness at Vigevano three years before, and who had been lately called upon to cast the horoscope of Pope Innocent VIII. at the earnest entreaty of His Holiness. "Maestro Ambrogio has been suddenly called to fly to Vigevano," wrote Giacomo Trotti to Ferrara one day in 1489, "because he is a professor of astrology, by which this excellent Signor orders all his actions." The date of Lodovico's journeys, the hour of all important court ceremonies, and even the movements of his armies in time of war, were regulated by the course of the stars. Messer Ambrogio, consequently, became a most important personage at the court of Milan. "Without him," wrote Beatrice's maid of honour to the Marchioness Isabella, "nothing can be done here."

The beautiful park and gardens at Pavia lay deep in snow, their lakes and fountains were all frozen over, but there was plenty to interest and amuse the visitors within the walls of this great Castello, of which they had heard so much, and which was said to be the grandest of royal houses in the whole of Europe. Three or four generations of masters had been employed by successive Visconti dukes to rear this glorious fabric, which in its palmy days must have been a noble monument of Lombard architecture. The long colonnades of low round arches went back to Romanesque days and the times of the first Visconti lords of Pavia; the Gothic windows of the banqueting-hall and upper stories had been finished in the reign of the great Giangaleazzo, and were enriched with slender

marble shafts and exquisite terra-cotta mouldings similar to those that we admire to-day in the cloisters of the Certosa. The vaulted halls were painted with the finest ultramarine and gold, and the arms of Sforzas and Viscontis, the lilies of France and the red cross of Savoy, appeared on the groined roof between planets and stars of raised gold. The vast Sala della Palla, where the dukes and their courtiers indulged in their favourite pastime of "pall-mall," which Burckhardt calls the classic game of the Renaissance, was decorated with frescoes by the best artists of Pavia or Cremona, representing fishing and hunting scenes. Portraits of the dukes and duchesses were introduced, together with lions and tigers, wild boars and stags flying before the hounds, in the forest shades or on the open moor. The ball-room was adorned with historic subjects from the lives of the earlier Viscontis. The poet Petrarch, who had once filled a chair in the university, was seen delivering an oration before the duke; and Giangaleazzo, the founder of the Duomo of Milan and of the Certosa, was represented seated at a festive board laden with gold and silver plate, entertaining foreign ambassadors, with his armour-bearer standing at his side, and his cupbearer pouring out the wine, while huntsmen and falconers with horses and dogs awaited his pleasure. Of later date were the frescoes in the duchess's rooms, representing the marriage of Galeazzo Sforza at the French court and the reception of Bona of Savoy at Genoa, while the paintings which adorned the chapel had only lately been completed by Vincenzo Foppa and Bonifazio da Cremona.

Signor Lodovico was very proud, as he might well be, of this his ancestral home, and of the famous library which he had done so much to improve. He

led his guests from room to room, and showed them all the rare and curious objects—the armoury with its store of ancient coats of mail and hauberks, of swords and helmets of ancient design, and its choice specimens of the engraved and damascened work; the breastplates and greaves that were a *specialité* of Milanese armourers at this period; the wonderful clock of copper and brass worked by wheels and weights, upon which Giovanni Dondi had spent sixteen years of ceaseless thought and toil, and which not only had a peal of bells, but a complete solar system, showing the movement of sun, moon, and planets as set forth by Ptolemy. After Dondi's death, Duke Galeazzo had to send to Paris for a clockmaker who could regulate the works of this elaborate machine, which was so much admired by Charles V. when he visited Pavia in 1530, that he commissioned a mechanician of Cremona to make a similar one for him to take back to Spain. And Messer Lodovico showed them also what he himself held to be his greatest treasures—the precious books adorned by exquisite miniatures from the hand of Fra Antonio da Monza and other living artists, the Sforziada and the Chant de Roland, and the rare Greek and Latin manuscripts which he had been at such infinite pains to collect; the *codici* brought from Bobbio by Giorgio Merula, and the manuscripts which Erasmo Brasca had discovered when *Il Moro* sent him to search for missing texts in the convents of the South of France. For Lodovico himself spared no expense and grudged no time or trouble in order to enrich what he felt to be a great national institution. Two years before he had addressed a letter to the son of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary—the prince who was to have wedded Bianca Sforza—begging him to have a rare manuscript by Festus Pompeius copied for him,

and deploring the "decay of the knowledge of the Latin tongue in Italy, and the loss of so many priceless classical works which the barbarians have carried away."

The sight of these precious and varied treasures were fully appreciated by the cultivated Duchess Leonora, who had grown up among the scholars of her royal father's academy at Naples, and by her daughter, the accomplished Marchesana Isabella, ever eager, as she says in one of her letters, to see and learn some new thing, "*desiderosa di cosa nova*." And Signor Lodovico proved himself the most courteous and pleasant of hosts, conversing with graceful ease on a thousand subjects, and gratifying his new sister-in-law by the marked attention and courtesy with which he treated her.

"I find myself highly honoured and caressed by Signor Lodovico," she wrote to her husband from Pavia; and the discerning eyes of the Ferrarese ambassador, Giacomo Trotti, noticed how much pleasure His Excellency already took in the company of Madonna Beatrice and the Marchesana. On that first day which they spent together at the Castello, Trotti wrote to Duke Ercole, "Signor Lodovico is always at his wife's side, speaking to her and watching her most attentively. And he tells me that it would be impossible for her to give him greater pleasure or satisfaction than she does, and never ceases to praise her."

The first impression which the youthful bride made on her husband was evidently favourable. By all accounts, Beatrice was a singularly lovely and fascinating child. Without the regular features and distinguished air of her sister Isabella, there was a distinct charm in her sparkling dark eyes and jet-

black hair, her bright colouring and gay smile. The contemporary chronicler Muralti describes her in his Annals as "of youthful age, beautiful in face, and dark in colouring, fond of inventing new costumes, and of spending day and night in song and dancing and all manner of delights." In these early days at Pavia and Milan there was, indeed, Trotti tells us, a certain shyness and reserve about her that was only natural and might well be ascribed to maiden shyness and timidity, but in the freedom and gaiety of her new life this soon gave way to the irrepressible mirth and joyousness of youthful vivacity. From the first she seems to have become sincerely attached to Lodovico, who, although considerably older than herself, and already thirty-nine years of age, was a very handsome and splendid-looking man, of imposing stature and striking countenance, with courteous manners and gentle ways. And however often he may have excited her jealousy or wounded her feelings, his young wife never wavered in her love for him, but proved, as he himself confessed, the best and most devoted of companions.

On Tuesday, the 17th of January, the long-delayed wedding finally took place, in the Castello of Pavia. A small but very brilliant company was assembled that day in the ancient chapel of the Visconti. The official festivities were to be celebrated at Milan, where the duke and duchess and their court were awaiting the bride's arrival, and the Ferrarese ambassador was the only foreign envoy present at the wedding. But Lodovico's personal friends and retainers mustered in force, as well as those captains and courtiers who could claim kinship with the house of Este. Niccolo da Correggio was there, as one nearly related to both bride and bridegroom, and

was universally pronounced to be the handsomest and best dressed of all the cavaliers who were present that day. There, too, was Galeotto Prince of Mirandola, the husband of the gifted Bianca d'Este, and Rodolfo Gonzaga, the Marquis of Mantua's uncle, and, conspicuous by their lofty stature and martial air, the four Sanseverino brothers.

The bride, arrayed in a white robe sown with pearls and glittering with jewels, was led to the altar by the Duchess of Ferrara and Marchioness of Mantua, supported by the young Don Alfonso, his uncle Sigismondo, and a select retinue of Ferrarese courtiers and ladies. It was rumoured that the Marquis Gianfrancesco Gonzaga had himself been seen in the crowd assembled in the courtyard of the Castello, and, much to Isabella's surprise, Lodovico asked the marchioness, at the banquet which followed, if this report were true. But Isabella could only reply that if her husband were at Pavia, she was unaware of the fact, and it was not until the last day of the tournament at Milan that the marquis appeared in public.

"The nuptial benediction was pronounced, and the act of espousals confirmed by the ring which Signor Lodovico placed on the bride's finger, and that night the marriage was consummated," were the words of the official proclamation that was made in Milan the next day, and duly notified to the magistrates of the different cities in the duchy as well as to the duke's ambassadors at foreign courts.

On the following morning Lodovico left for Milan, to complete the arrangements for the bride's reception early in the following week. Nothing, he was determined, should be left undone to do honour to his nuptials or to make the occasion memorable

both in the eyes of the people of Milan and throughout Italy. During the summer and autumn preparations had been actively going on, and a whole army of painters, goldsmiths, and embroiderers were at work, decorating the suite of rooms in the Rocca, or inner citadel of the Castello of the Porta Giovia, adjoining the Corte Ducale, where the Moro and his bride were to take up their abode. "Here all hands are busy," wrote the Ferrarese envoy to his master, "and Lodovico takes care that for the duchess nothing is done by halves." When the date of the wedding had been finally determined, every nerve was strained to complete the works within the Castello, and an imperative summons was issued by Messer Ambrogio Ferrari, the chief ducal commissioner, to the governors of Cremona, Piacenza, and Pavia, commanding the immediate return of the painters who were absent in these cities. Among the masters especially mentioned in these letters, we find the names of Bernardino da Rossi, Zenale and Buttinone di Treviglio, Treso di Monza, and Magistro Leonardo. This was none other than the great Florentine, then absent at Pavia, who was required to give his advice, if not to assist, in the actual decoration of the *Sala della palla* on the first floor of the Castello. The vaulted roof of this spacious hall, which was to serve as ball-room on this occasion, was painted in azure and gold to imitate the starry sky, while the walls were hung with canvases representing the heroic deeds of the great Condottiere, Francesco Sforza, whose glorious memory his son Lodovico was always eager to celebrate. At the entrance of the hall, an effigy of the hero on horseback was placed under a triumphal arch, with an inscription recalling his greatness, and saying that by virtue of these mighty exploits his

children now triumph and hold festival in his honour.

At the same time, orders were sent in the duke's name to the seneschals of the castles and towns between Pavia and Milan to see that the roads and bridges were repaired and widened, in order that the bridal party might be able to travel without hindrance or inconvenience. On the 18th of January, invitations were issued to the chief lords in the state, as well as to those foreign princes who were connected by marriage with the Sforza and Este families, the Marquis of Montferrat, the Marquis of Mantua, Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna, and others, requesting them to honour with their presence a three-days' tournament to be held on the great *piazza* in front of the Castello, during the last week in January.

While Lodovico was personally superintending the final arrangements, seeing that the last touches were given to the frescoes in the duchess's *Camerino*, or discussing to the masques and comedies that were to be performed, with Bramante and Leonardo, his bride remained at Pavia with her family and friends. The princesses of Este were well content, for not only were all the treasures of the Castello and library at their disposal, but they had the best of company in the person of Messer Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who had been charged by his father-in-law, Signor Lodovico, to supply his place during the interval of his enforced absence. And certainly no better squire of dames could have been found than this courteous and brilliant cavalier. He took Isabella and Beatrice out riding in the park, and showed them some of the beauties of that wide domain, which in the French chronicler's eyes seemed more like the garden of

Eden than any earthly spot. They could not, it is true, admire those flowery lawns watered by crystal streams, and groves of plane and cypress and myrtle, which charmed the travellers from the north, and made Commines exclaim there was no other region in the world as divinely beautiful as the Milanese land. But they could visit the pleasure-houses and pavilions in the gardens, and hunt the stags and red deer that ran wild in the park. For their amusement Messer Galeazzo let fly some of those good falcons of his, with their jewelled hoods and silver bells, and chased the herons and water-fowl along the lake, while the ducal huntsmen followed in their suits of green velvet embroidered with gold, and blew their golden bugles. Indoors they laughed and sang together, and turned over the leaves of the illuminated missals or the rare folios of the library. And as they talked of Messer Matteo Boiardo's famous new poem and of the old French romances, a lively discussion over the respective merits of the paladins, Roland and Rinaldo di Montalbano arose between the two princesses on the one hand, and Messer Galeazzo on the other. Isabella and Beatrice were all in favour of the knight of Montalbano as the type of Italian chivalry, while Sanseverino, who had kinsmen at the court of France and took delight in French costumes and French literature, was as much at home in France as he was at Milan, and defended the matchless glory of his hero, Orlando. The quarrel waxed warm between them in those idle days, and in the fulness of their youth and high spirits they amused themselves, crying out, "Rolando! Rolando!" on the one side, and a "Rinaldo!" on the other, until one afternoon Messer Galeazzo was acknowledged victor, and even Isabella took up his cry of Roland, but soon returned to her old allegiance, and declared

boldly that she would allow no rival to the wronged knight of Montalbano. The controversy was to be prolonged for many a day, and was to become the theme of more than one merry letter and gay challenge between the Marchesana Isabella and the handsome Sanseverino, who soon won over Duchess Beatrice to his side. So the days flew by until the week was almost over, and the time came to start for Milan. Every hour fresh news reached Pavia of the new wonders and marvellous entertainments that were awaiting them at the Milanese capital, and Isabella's spirits rose high with eager expectation and delight.

"You ought to be here," this lively princess wrote to her youngest brother-in-law, Giovanni Gonzaga, who had stayed behind at Mantua, and was absent from the wedding *fêtes*. And she told him of all the jousts and banquets and balls that were to succeed each other at Milan, this wonderful city which she was longing to see for herself. "And among other *fêtes*," she added, "there will be three of the finest theatrical representations that have ever been seen. But one thing which will make you still more envious is that from Milan we mean to go and visit that glorious city of Genoa, where you have never been! Only think how many new places and lands we shall have seen by the time of our return! We wish you all good things, but fear our wishes will profit you little, and are sure my letter will make your mouth water."

On Saturday the 21st the bridal party set out from Pavia, and, leaving the Certosa on the right, travelled across the Lombard plain to Binasco, where they spent the night at the feudal castle of the Visconti, the ruins of which may still be seen on the heights above the little town. On Sunday morning the

procession entered Milan, and the bride was received by her cousin, Isabella of Aragon, wife of the reigning duke, who had ridden out to meet her at the suburban church of S. Eustorgio, where the bones of the martyred friar, S. Pietro Martire, repose in their shrine of sculptured marble. At the gates Duke Gian Galeazzo and his uncle met them, followed by a brilliant company of Milanese nobles, and Lodovico, clad in a gorgeous mantle of gold brocade, rode through the streets at the side of his youthful bride. A hundred trumpeters marched before them, filling the air with strains of martial music, and the crowds, who had assembled from all parts of Lombardy, thronged around to gaze on the duchess and her daughters, and more especially on the Moro's bride.

The street decorations that day were on the grandest scale. Lodovico had given orders that no expense should be spared, and the magnificence of the pageant amazed the foreign ambassadors and visitors from Mantua and Ferrara. Not only were the walls and balconies hung with red and blue satin or brocades, while wreaths of ivy were twined round the columns and doorways, but one whole street where the armourers had their shops was lined with effigies of armed warriors on horseback, entirely clad with chain-armour and plates of damascened steel. "Every one took these mailed figures to be alive," says Tristan Calco, the admiring chronicler to whom we owe these details. The procession halted on the *piazza* in front of the Castello, and the heralds gave a loud blast of music as the bride was lifted from her horse, and received under the grand portal by the duchess-mother, Bona of Savoy, and her two daughters, Bianca Maria and Anna Sforza. Bona herself had returned to Milan at the French king's request soon after her son's marriage, and had

consented to an outward reconciliation with her brother-in-law, Lodovico. Her daughter Anna's marriage with the heir of the house of Este had always been one of the objects of her fondest wishes, and now she gave Duchess Leonora and her daughters a cordial welcome to her son's court.

On the following day the marriage of Alfonso d'Este and the princess Anna was privately solemnized in the ducal chapel, but the final nuptial benediction was deferred until their return to Ferrara, a month later. Meanwhile the bride's sumptuous trousseau and jewels, as well as the splendid presents received by her, were displayed during the next week in the Castello, before the courtiers who came to pay their homage to the newly wedded Duke and Duchess of Bari. Of Anna Sforza herself we hear little, but her beauty and gentleness are praised by more than one contemporary chronicler, and endeared her especially to her uncle Lodovico, who was sincerely grieved by her early death. She and her husband paid frequent visits to Milan after her marriage, and were very happy in the society of Beatrice, whom she only survived a few months, dying at the birth of her first babe, to the great sorrow of her father-in-law, Duke Ercole. "She was very beautiful and very charming," writes the Ferrarese diarist, "and there is little to tell about her, because she lived so short a time."

The most splendid *fêtes* were yet to come. On the 24th of January, the day after Alfonso and Anna's wedding, three tribunals were erected on the piazza, the one occupied by a group of heralds and trumpeters, the other loaded with precious bowls and dishes of gold and silver plate, the gifts of the magistrates of Milan and other cities to Signor

Lodovico and his bride. The new duchess, accompanied by the other princes and princesses, arrayed in their richest robes and literally blazing with precious jewels, writes an eye-witness, ascended the third tribunal erected in the centre, and received the homage of the deputies of the city; after which two cavaliers, a Visconti and a Suardi, bending on one knee before the bride, took from her hand two lengths of cloth of gold, which were hung in the courtyard, as prizes to be given to the victor in the tournament. That evening two hundred Milanese ladies of high rank were invited to the great ball, or *festa per le donne*, given in the Sala della palla. On this occasion peasant girls from all parts of Italy, clad in the red, white, and blue of the Sforza colours, danced before the court, and "the palm of Terpsichore," we are told, was awarded to a Tuscan maiden.

On the 26th, the Giostra, which was to be the crowning event of the week's festivities, began. At the tournament held in Pavia in honour of Giangaleazzo's wedding, the knights had for the most part appeared in their ordinary attire; but this time, to add greater splendour to the occasion, they entered the lists in companies, clad in fancy costumes and bearing symbolical devices after the fashion of the day. First of all came the Mantuan troop of twenty horsemen clad in green velvet and gold lace, bearing golden lances and olive boughs in their hand, with Isabella's kinsman, Alfonso Gonzaga, at their head. Then came Annibale Bentivoglio, the young husband of Lucrezia d'Este, with the Bologna knights, riding on a triumphal car drawn by stags and unicorns, the badge of the House of Este. These were followed by Gaspare di Sanseverino, with a band of twelve riders in black and gold Moorish

dress, bearing Lodovico's device of the Moor's head on their helmets and white doves on their black armour. Last of all came a troop of wild Scythians, mounted on Barbary steeds, who galloped across the *piazza*, and then, halting in front of the ducal party, suddenly threw off their disguise and appeared in magnificent array, with the captain of the Milanese armies, Galeazzo di Sanseverino, at their head. He planted his golden lance in the ground, and at this sign a giant Moor, advancing to the front, recited a poem in honour of Duchess Beatrice.[6]

These pageants and masques formed an important feature of Renaissance *fêtes*, and were evidently regarded as such by the chroniclers of these wedding festivities, but to us the chief interest of this tournament lies in the knowledge that the Scythian disguise assumed by Galeazzo di Sanseverino and his companions was designed by no less a personage than Leonardo da Vinci. Some of the drawings of savages and masks which we see to-day on the stray leaves of his sketch-books may relate to these figures, but we know for certain that he was actually employed by Messer Galeazzo to arrange this masquerade. In a note in his own handwriting, on the margin of the "Codex Atlanticus," we read, "Item, 26 of January, being in the house of Messer Galeazzo di San Sevˆo, ordering the festa of his Giostra, certain men-at-arms took off their vests to try on some clothes of savages, upon which Giacomo" (the apprentice whom he had already caught thieving at Pavia) "took up a purse which lay on the bed with their other clothes, and took the money that was inside it." The actual share which the great Florentine took in the preparation of the wedding festivities has often been discussed, and we are never likely to know how much of the duchess's cabinet he

painted, or what part he took in the decoration of the city, but at least this characteristic note on the lad whose honesty he had reason to suspect, proves that he was present in Milan at the time, and was the authority to whom Lodovico's son-in-law naturally turned for advice in planning this masquerade. Incidents of this kind help us to realize how many and varied were the offices Leonardo was called upon to discharge in his master's service, and how frequent were the interruptions which interfered with the painting of his pictures or the modelling of his great horse.

After this pageant, the serious business of the Giostra began, and the tilting-matches lasted during three whole days. Among the foremost knights who distinguished themselves on this occasion, the chronicler and court poet mention the Marquis of Mantua, who entered the lists in disguise; young Annibale Bentivoglio, who wounded his hand badly, but refused to leave the ground; the Marchesino Girolamo Stanga, one of Isabella d'Este's especial friends and of Beatrice's most devoted servants; and Niccolo da Correggio, who was universally admired in his suit of gold brocade. All four Sanseverini brothers fought in the lists with their wonted skill and valour, but once more Messer Galeazzo, *Gentis columen*, came off the victor and proved himself unrivalled in courtly exercises, both as jouster and swordsman. On the last day of the tournament the prizes were given away, and Messer Galeazzo was conducted triumphantly to the Rocca, and there received the *pallium* of gold brocade from the bride's own hand.[7] As soon as Lodovico recognized the Marquis of Mantua, he sent him a pressing invitation to take his place with the ducal party; and Gianfrancesco, unable to refuse so courteous a

request, joined his wife and sat down with the rest of his kinsfolk to the family banquet, which was held that night in the Castello.

A curious letter, addressed by the Duke of Milan to his uncle Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in Rome, gives a full and minute account of this tournament, which Giangaleazzo describes as one of the most important events of his reign, and which he begs may be fully reported to His Holiness Pope Innocent. He dwells on the extraordinary magnificence of the sight, on the number and size of the lances used, which were more numerous and larger than ever before seen on these occasions, and ends with a splendid tribute to Messer Galeazzo, who both in valour and fortune surpassed all others. On the other hand, we recognize the cunning of Lodovico in the despatch addressed on this occasion by the ducal secretary to the Milanese envoy at Bologna. Here the incidents of the Giostra are briefly recounted, and great stress is laid on the valour displayed by Messer Annibale Bentivoglio, who, notwithstanding his wounded hand, broke many lances, and, in spite of his great youth, proved himself as skilled a jouster as any, and won no less glory than if he had borne off the prize, which he would certainly have done if fortune had served him as well as he deserved.

The wedding festivities were now brought to a close, and were unanimously pronounced to have passed off with brilliant success. Nothing now remained for the bride's mother but to take leave of her daughter and return home. Accordingly, on the 1st of February, Duchess Leonora set out on her homeward journey, with her son and his newly-made bride and the Marchioness Isabella, accompanied by an escort of two hundred Milanese gentlemen, with

Anna's brother, Ermes Sforza, and the Count of Caiazzo—Gianfrancesco, the eldest of the Sanseverino brothers—at their head. Both Leonora and Isabella were anxious to see the Certosa, of which they had heard so much, on their way back to Pavia, and Lodovico, glad to do the honours of this famous abbey, in which he took a just pride, sent a courier with the following letter to inform the prior and brothers of the Duchess of Ferrara's visit:—

"Since, besides the other honours which we have paid to the illustrious Duchess of Ferrara, we are above all anxious to show her the most remarkable things in our domain, and since we count this our church and monastery to be among the chief of these, we write this to inform you that the said duchess will visit the Certosa on Wednesday next, on her return home. And we desire you to give her a fitting reception, and to prepare an honourable banquet for the duchess and her company, which will number about four hundred persons and horses. No excuse on your part can be allowed, since this is our will and pleasure. And above all you will see that an abundant supply of lampreys is prepared. But we are quite sure that you will do your best to pay honour to the duchess, since otherwise we should feel obliged to do a thing that would be displeasing to you, and send our chamberlain to provide for her honourable entertainment."[8]

The prior and brothers of the Certosa knew their own interest too well not to comply with this somewhat imperious missive, and left nothing undone which could gratify their illustrious guests. Isabella's curiosity for the beautiful and marvellous was amply gratified, and in Lodovico's future letters to his sister-in-law we find more than one allusion to

"our church and convent of the Certosa, which you saw when you were at Pavia." After spending the following night at the Castello di Pavia, the duchess and her large party embarked on the bucentaurs that were awaiting them at the junction of the Ticino and the Po, and reached Ferrara on the 11th of February, there to begin a new series of splendid entertainments in honour of Don Alfonso's marriage with this Sforza princess.

FOOTNOTES:

[6] Porrò in A. S. L., ix. 501, etc.

[7] T. Chalcus, *Residua*, 90.

[8] C. Magenta, *I Visconti e Sforza nel Castello di Pavia*, i.

CHAPTER VII

Beatrice Duchess of Bari—Her popularity at the court of Milan—Giangaleazzo and Isabella of Aragon—Lodovico's first impressions—His growing affection for his wife—His letters to Isabella d'Este—Hunting and fishing parties—Cuzzago and Vigevano—Controversy on Orlando and Rinaldo—Bellincioni's sonnets.

1491

We have seen how the childhood and early youth of Beatrice d'Este had been spent, first at her grandfather the King Ferrante's court at Naples, afterwards in her own home at Ferrara. Under the watchful eye of a wise and careful mother, she had been trained in all the learning and accomplishments of the day, but had been allowed little liberty or opportunity of revealing her strong individuality. Her charms and talents had been thrown into the shade by the superior beauty and intellect of the Marchioness Isabella, and until the day she landed at Pavia she had been regarded in the comparatively insignificant light of the younger and less gifted sister. Now all this suddenly changed. At the age of fifteen, Beatrice d'Este found herself the wife of the ablest and most powerful prince in Italy, released from all the restraints hitherto imposed upon her and placed in a position of absolute freedom and independence. From the quiet regularity of the sheltered life which she had led at Ferrara by her mother's side, she suddenly found herself transplanted to the gayest and most splendid court in Italy, surrounded by every luxury that wealth could give and every beautiful object that taste could devise. The bravest captains and the most accomplished artists of the day were at her feet, ready to obey her orders and gratify her smallest fancy. Leonardo and Bramante were at hand to arrange pageants and masquerades, to paint *amorini* on her mantelpiece or mythological fables along the frieze of her rooms, to build elegant pavilions, or lay out labyrinths and lakes in her garden. Bellincioni and a dozen other poets celebrated her name and recorded her words and actions in verse; learned scholars and commentators read Dante to her when she cared to listen. Niccolo da Correggio not only

wrote sonnets and canzoni for her to sing but invented new patterns for her gowns; and Cristoforo Romano laid down the sculptor's chisel to play the lyre or viol for her pleasure. For her the wise man of Pavia, Lorenzo Gusnasco, fashioned cunningly wrought instruments, lutes and viols inlaid with ebony and ivory, and organs inscribed with Latin mottoes; and the wonderful tenor, Cordier, the priest of Louvain, sang his sweetest and most entrancing strains in the ducal chapel. For her amusement the court jesters laughed and chattered and played their foolish tricks—Diodato, who had followed her from Ferrara, and the witty clown Barone, the petted favourite of Isabella d'Este and Veronica Gambara and a dozen other great ladies. And Messer Galeazzo was ready to risk his life and ruin his best clothes, all for the sake of his duchess. From the moment of Beatrice's arrival at the Milanese court she won all hearts, less by her beauty than by her vivacity and high spirits, her bright eyes and ringing laugh, her frank gladness and keen enjoyment of life. How favourable was the first impression which the young duchess made upon those around her, we learn from the letters which the Ferrarese envoy and ladies-in-waiting addressed almost daily to her anxious parents, during the first few weeks after her marriage. Every little incident, each word or act that is likely to please Duchess Leonora, is faithfully reported by these good servants, in their eagerness to allay the natural fears of the loving mother for the absent child in her brilliant but difficult position. The demeanour of Signor Lodovico towards his wife, all he said and thought of her, was narrowly watched by Giacomo Trotti, and duly repeated in his letters to Ferrara. For the present this was eminently satisfactory. "Signor Lodovico," writes the

ambassador during the wedding festivities at Milan, "has nothing but the highest praise both for his wife and the Marchesana. He is never tired of saying how much pleasure he takes in their company.

"Here jousting and tilting, feasting and dancing, are the order of the day. Signor Lodovico is delighted with his wife's appearance, and to-day, when she gave away the prizes, he kissed her repeatedly in the eyes of all the people."

And again a few days later, when the festivities were ended and the ducal family were enjoying a little rest before the party broke up, he writes—

"Whenever Lodovico Sforza is wanted, he is always to be found in the company of his wife, of the Marchesana, of Don Alfonso and Madonna Anna, with whom he is never tired of talking and laughing, exactly as if he were a youth of their own age."

On the 6th of February, after the departure of the duchess and her children, Trotti wrote again, remarking, "Signor Lodovico seems to think of nothing but how best to please and amuse his wife, and every day he tells me how dear she is to him."[9]

Among the Ferrarese ladies who had remained at Milan, in attendance on the young duchess, was her cousin, Polisenna d'Este, who, being considerably older and more sedate, and no longer either young or beautiful, had for these very reasons been placed by Leonora in her daughter's household, and desired to keep her informed of all that happened. Early in February this lady-in-waiting wrote the following letter to Isabella d'Este, in terms that were well calculated to reassure both the anxious sister and mother as to Beatrice's happiness and her husband's behaviour:—

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MADONNA AND DEAR MARCHESANA,

"Since I have remained here after your Highness's departure from Milan, continually in the company of your sister, the illustrious Duchess of Bari, and of her husband, Signor Lodovico, I will no longer delay to discharge my duty in sending you some comforting words as to the well-being and happiness of the said duchess. I cannot express how happy she is to see herself every day more affectionately caressed and petted by her husband, who seems to find his sole delight in giving her every possible pleasure and amusement. It is indeed a rare joy to see them together and to realize what cordial love and good-will he bears her. God grant it may last long! And I felt that I must write this good news to your Highness, knowing that it would give you especial satisfaction. I will only add that the air here seems to suit her particularly well, and that she is certainly very much improved and stronger in appearance, and seems every day to grow more beautiful. I beg of your Highness to commend me to Madonna Beatrice and Collona.

"Your Highness's servant,
POLISSENA D'ESTE.

From Milan, 12th of February, 1491."

And Beatrice herself wrote to Isabella in answer to her letter from her sister, describing the festivities at Ferrara, where her presence had been sadly missed by her affectionate relatives.

"I leave you to imagine how much content and

delight your letter of the 17th has given me. For in it you give me so full and vivid a description of the successful *fêtes* in honour of the wedding of Madonna Anna, our brother's wife and dearest sister, that I seem to have been present there myself. And since you know well how much I love and respect you, I am sure you will understand how glad I was to hear from you. Your letter, indeed, gave me greater pleasure than any which I have received since you left here, and I am quite sure that all of these pageants and spectacles were distinguished by the utmost beauty and gallantry, as you say, since they were all planned and arranged by our dear father, who orders these things with consummate wisdom and perfection. I can well believe that my absence has been a real grief to you, and that these *fêtes* have given you but little pleasure, since I was not there. For my own part, I cannot deny that, now I am without your company, I feel not only that I am deprived of a very dear sister, but that I have lost half of myself. And if it were not for the new and continual amusements which my illustrious husband provides every day for my pleasure, I should have been inconsolable until I could be once more with you. But since our hearts and thoughts are still one, and we are able to exchange letters constantly, I beg you to take comfort as I do, and rest content in feeling that, now these ceremonies are all over, we can at least speak to each other by means of letters, written with our own hands, as you have promised me."[10]

This simple, warm-hearted letter, which breathes all the frankness and affection of Beatrice's nature, is written, like most of her early letters, in her own hand. The words are often badly spelt, and her handwriting is larger and less formed than that of

Isabella, which it otherwise resembles. But owing to the multiplicity of interests and occupations that claimed her time after the first years of her married life, the young duchess generally employed a secretary, and has left comparatively few letters. Lodovico himself addressed several letters to his sister-in-law, to whom he was sincerely attached, and in order to facilitate the intercourse between the two sisters, and as he said, to leave Isabella no excuse for not answering his communications, he sent a courier regularly every week to Mantua, with orders to await the Marchesana's pleasure and bring back her letters.

"Loving you cordially as I do," he writes, a fortnight after her departure, "and, knowing that I have in you a very dear sister, nothing can give me greater pleasure than letters from your hand. I thank your Highness most sincerely for all that you tell me, and most of all for your warm expressions of affection and for saying how sorry you were to leave us, and how not even the splendid *fêtes* in Ferrara could console you for being deprived of our presence. All I beg of you is to write often, and I will see that your letters are brought here."

Besides her sister and brother-in-law and Madonna Polisenna, Isabella had another correspondent at the court of Milan, in the person of Messer Galeazzo di Sanseverino, with whom she had formed a warm friendship at Pavia, and who had promised to give her frequent news of her sister, while at the same time he still carried on the battle over Roland and Rinaldo which had been started in the park of the Castello at Pavia. He too, writing on the 11th of February, was able to assure the Marchesana that all was going well, and that the relations between her

sister and Signor Lodovico left nothing to be desired.

"My Duchess," as he always calls the mistress to whose service he had pledged his sword and life, "perseveres in showing Signor Lodovico an affection which is truly beyond all praise, and, to put it briefly, I am satisfied that there is such real attachment between them, that I do not believe two persons could love each other better."

The presence of this young and joyous princess gave a touch of romance to court life, and inspired men like Galeazzo and Niccolo da Correggio with a chivalrous devotion to her person. Every one was ready to obey her wishes, and eager to win her smiles and to earn her thanks.

Even Giangaleazzo, the feeble duke who seldom took pleasure in anything but horses and dogs, and often treated his own wife in a brutal way, felt the charm of this bright young creature, and was stirred out of his usual apathy by the coming of Beatrice. In a letter which he addressed to the Duke of Ferrara after the wedding festivities, he went out of his way to express the affection with which this charming princess, his wife's cousin and his uncle's wife, has inspired him.

"I cannot," he writes, "sufficiently express how much joy this marriage has given me, and how glad I am to see the singular virtues and talents of *Madonna la sposa*." And after formally congratulating the duke on his daughter's marriage, and on the renewed alliance between the two houses, he goes on to say how much he rejoices in his uncle's happiness, which will, he feels sure, only increase his own. "For by means of this marriage, besides the two sisters which God had already given us, we have now gained a third, whom by God's grace we shall not love less

than the two who are ours by nature."

Giangaleazzo's own wife, Duchess Isabella, a virtuous and high-minded princess whose own merits were sadly hampered by her husband's weakness and folly, was much beloved by her own servants, but inherited the proud reserve of the Aragonese race, and led a secluded existence with her lord, who hated town life and seldom showed his face in Milan. But this young wife of Lodovico, it was easy to see, would soon throw her into the shade. Beatrice's presence lent a charm to the most tedious court functions. Her high spirits and overflowing mirth threw new zest into every pursuit. Grave senators and wise statesmen listened to her words with interest, and grey-headed prelates tolerated her merry jokes and smiled at her irrepressible laughter. She sang and danced, and played at ball and rode races, and took long hunting and fishing expeditions to the royal villas in the neighbourhood of Milan. "My wife," wrote Lodovico to his sister-in-law three months after his marriage, "has developed a perfect passion for horsemanship, and is always either riding or hunting."

The regent himself was too deeply engaged in state affairs, and devoted too much time and attention to the details of administration, to be able to accompany his wife as a rule. But she had a devoted comrade in her husband's son-in-law, whom he deputed to escort the duchess on her more distant expeditions. Since his betrothal to Lodovico's daughter, Galeazzo had enjoyed all the privileges of a son, and was already, what the Moro had promised to make him, the first man in the state. He assisted at all state audiences, and was the only person present when Lodovico received foreign ambassadors. He

shared the Moro's private life, and always dined alone with the duke and duchess when there were no other guests at their table. His letters to Isabella d'Este give lively accounts of the expeditions which he took in Beatrice's company during the first few months of her married life.

"This morning, being Friday," he writes on the 11th of February, 1491, "I started at ten o'clock with the duchess and all of her ladies on horseback to go to Cussago, and in order to let your Highness enter fully into our pleasures, I must tell you that first of all I had to ride in a chariot with the duchess and Dioda, and as we drove we sang more than twenty-five songs, arranged for three voices. That is to say, Dioda took the tenor part, and the duchess the soprano, whilst I sang sometimes bass and sometimes soprano, and played so many foolish tricks that I really think I may claim to be more of a fool than Dioda! And now farewell for to-night, and I will try to improve still further, so as to afford your Highness the more pleasure when you come here in the summer."

But Messer Galeazzo's story does not end here. A day or two later he takes up the thread of his discourse again, and describes the pleasant day which the duchess spent at Cussago, one of Lodovico Sforza's favourite villas on the sunny slopes of the Brianza, six miles from Milan, on the way to Como.

"Having reached Cussago," he goes on, "we had a grand fishing expedition in the river, and caught an immense quantity of large pike, trout, lampreys, crabs, and several other good sorts of smaller fish, and proceeded to dine off them until we could eat no more. Then, to make our meal digest the better, directly after dinner we began to play at ball with

great vigour and energy, and after we had played for some time we went over the palace, which is really very beautiful, and, among other things, contains a doorway of carved marble, as fine as the new works at the Certosa. Next we examined the result of our sport, which had been laid out in front of the place, and took back as many of the lampreys and crabs as we could eat with us, and sent some of the lampreys to his Highness the duke. When this was done, we went to another palace and caught more than a thousand large trout, and after choosing out the best for presents and for our own holy throats, we had the rest thrown back into the water. And then we mounted our horses again, and began to let fly some of those good falcons of mine which you saw at Pavia, along the river-side, and they killed several birds. By this time it was already four o'clock. We rode out to hunt stags and fawns, and after giving chase to twenty-two and killing two stags and two fawns, we returned home and reached Milan an hour after dark, and presented the result of our day's sport to my lord the Duke of Bari. My illustrious lord took the greatest possible pleasure in hearing all we had done, far more, indeed, than if he had been there in person, and I believe that my duchess will in the end reap the greatest benefit, and that Signor Lodovico will give her Cussago, which is a place of rare beauty and worth. But I have cut my boots to pieces and torn my clothes, and played the fool into the bargain, and these are the rewards one gains in the service of ladies. However, I will have patience, since it is all for the sake of my duchess, whom I never mean to fail in life or death."



SFORZA MS. ILLUMINATED *From a private photograph.* ToList

Galeazzo was a true prophet, and in the British Museum we may still admire the beautifully illuminated deed of gift, adorned with friezes of exquisite cherubs and medallion-portraits of Lodovico and Beatrice, by which the fair palace and lands of Cussago became the property of the young duchess. This favourite villa of the Visconti had been left by Francesco Sforza to his son Lodovico, who had employed a host of architects and painters to adorn its walls. Bramante is said to have reared the noble bell-tower and portico that are still standing, while Milanese or Pavian sculptors carved the medallions bearing the Sforza arms, and the portrait of Lodovico that may still be seen on the arcades of the loggia. To-day the once beautiful country-house is a ruin; the marble doorway which Galeazzo and Beatrice admired, carved it may be by that same Cristoforo Romano to whom we owe the portal of the Stanga palace, and that of Isabella d'Este's studio at Mantua, has disappeared. Only the fragments of frescoes and the rich terra-cotta mouldings and slender columns of the elegant *cortile* recall the joyous day which Beatrice d'Este and her ladies spent

at the villa. But their memory sheds a glamour on the scene, and in the story of those Renaissance days, among so much that is dark and sinister, it is pleasant to recall this picture of the young duchess and her gallant cavalier singing songs for pure gladness of heart as they rode out together in the fair spring morning.

"One thing only," wrote Messer Galeazzo, "was wanting to our pleasure, and that was the sweet company of yourself, fair Madonna Marchesana." And with a sigh he tells her how much she is missed in the Castello of Milan, and how often he wishes he could find her in Madonna the Duchess of Ferrara's rooms, having her long hair combed and curled by her favourite maidens Teodora and Beatrice and Violante, to all of whom he sends courteous greeting. Then he returns to the old controversy over Orlando, and replies to a gay challenge which Isabella has sent him in a letter to Signor Lodovico, only wishing she were here to defend Rinaldo in person, or rather to be made to own the error of her ways, and to confess that the knight of Montalbano is not to be compared to Roland! But he warns her that if she perseveres in this heresy, he will draw up such an indictment of Rinaldo's faults as will fill her with confusion, and make her recognize with shame his inferiority to Roland, that baron of immortal fame, of whom nothing but good can be said. Isabella, however, stuck to her colours, and, a whole month later, Messer Galeazzo sent her a long letter from Vigevano, in which he drew up an elaborate parallel between the conduct of the two paladins, as recorded in Boiardo's poem, and ended with a splendid eulogy of Roland.

"Roland the most Christian! Roland the pure and

strong, prudent, just, and merciful servant of Christ, the true defender of widows and orphans! Of his valour I will say nothing, this being known to all the world; but this I say, that when I think of my worship for Roland, however sad and ill disposed I may be feeling, my heart rejoices, and I become glad of heart and joyous again."

So he begs her, for the love that he bears her Highness, to try and amend her ways and recant her errors, and do penitence in this Lenten season for her fault, after the example of the great apostle St. Paul, who was converted to the Christian faith, and became an elect son and mighty preacher of the gospel, bringing many to righteousness and enjoying the high favour of our Lord God. For Roland, the Marchesa may know for certain, has his place in Paradise with the saints, "and in serving him you will be serving God; but if, on the other hand, you persevere in your false opinions, you will find that you are serving the devil, who accompanied Rinaldo both in his life here and afterwards in his death. And remember," he adds in conclusion, "when the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch!"

Nothing daunted by this long harangue, Isabella retorted in an equally lengthy epistle, flatly denying the charges brought against Rinaldo as false and unsupported by a tittle of evidence. Galeazzo replied in another bantering letter, assuming the part of a priest, and exhorting the fair sinner to confess her faults in these holy days of Passiontide, lest she should incur greater damnation, and drive her soul into the devil's jaws.

"And since this is the hour of penitence and contrition," he concludes, "I would once more beg and pray your Highness to return to the true faith

and devotion of Roland, having before your eyes the good example of our most illustrious duchess, your sister, who has acknowledged her errors, and become a sincere follower of Roland, as a good Christian, and is now gone to Milan to obtain pardon.

"Your most humble and devoted servant,
GALEAZ SFORTIA VICECOMES,
Armorum Capitaneus.[11]

Vigevano, 30th of March, 1491."

Isabella, however, still remained obdurate, declaring that on no account would she follow Beatrice's changeable conduct, and was ready to defend her hero against a hundred thousand opponents. Upon which Galeazzo reminded her that, for all her boastings, she had been constrained to yield to his single-handed efforts in the park at Pavia, and had ended by taking up his cry of "Roland." The more pity that she should turn her back upon the good cause now, and prove the inconstancy of woman's nature! But he consoled himself by reflecting that the Marchesana would soon be back at Milan, when he would easily be able to make her give up Rinaldo, and once more cry "Roland" as she had done before.

This letter was written by Galeazzo on the 13th of April, after which the subject dropped for a while, until it was revived by a visit which his brother, Gaspare Fracassa, paid to Mantua in the summer with his wife, Margherita Pia, a great friend of the Marchesana and Duchess of Urbino. Isabella could not resist the opportunity of returning the charge, and sent Messer Galeazzo, by his brother's hands, a challenge to battle, couched in approved terms, and

indicating her choice of arms and of the scene of action. Galeazzo replied in the most courteous language, declaring himself absolutely at the service of his fair challenger, and assuring her that her coming is awaited with the utmost impatience by Signor Lodovico, the Duchess of Bari, and her humble servant.

Meanwhile Isabella prepared herself for the fray by collecting all the information on the subject that she could possibly obtain. In that same month of August, when Galeazzo sent her the last-named letter from his villa at Castelnuovo, near Tortona, the Marchesana wrote to the Mantuan ambassador at Venice, desiring him to send her all the poems and romances concerning French paladins at the court of Charlemagne which he could discover. At the same time she addressed a letter to her old friend, Messer Matteo Boiardo, at Ferrara, requesting him to send her the concluding cantos of his poem, the "Orlando Innamorato," which had not as yet been given to the world. The poet replied that, to his great regret, he was unable to comply with her wish, since the cantos in question were not yet written; and Isabella could only beg him to let her have a copy of the two earlier books, in order that she might refresh her memory by reading them once more.

But the Marchesana's intended visit to Milan was, after all, put off, and Messer Galeazzo was called away to more arduous duties in camp and field. The debate, which had been prolonged with so much wit and ingenuity on both sides, came to an abrupt ending. It was left to the Florentine poet, Bellincioni, in whose verses the smallest incidents that took place at court were faithfully reflected, to celebrate this "praiseworthy and memorable duel of intellect

between these two august personages." At Beatrice's command Bellincioni wrote three sonnets illustrating the arguments brought forward on either side. In the first, he adopts Isabella's standpoint, and is all in favour of Rinaldo. In the second, he sees a vision of Roland with the saints in Paradise, and declares almost in the same language as Galeazzo, that whereas Rinaldo was only a brave soldier, Roland was able and virtuous as well as valiant. Finally, in the third, he exhorts the illustrious marchioness to recant her errors, since the Scriptures tell us that it is human to err, and not to follow the bad example of Pharaoh who hardened his heart, but to see how immeasurably inferior Rinaldo was to his rival, and to become, with Messer Galeazzo and others of his merit, a true Christian and follower of Roland.

The whole controversy is a curious instance of the deep interest which these great ladies of the Italian Renaissance and their courtiers took in literary subjects, and especially in the romances of the Carlovingian cycle. This interest was not confined to the upper circles of society, but spread through all classes, and was no doubt largely increased by the songs and the improvisations of strolling minstrels and Provençal story-tellers. First of all the Florentine Pulci, and after him Boiardo and Bello of Ferrara, sought inspiration in the same source, and later on their example was followed by Ariosto and Tasso. And Poggio, writing in the fifteenth century, tells us how in his day a worthy citizen of Milan, after hearing one of these wandering *cantatores* chanting the story of Roland's death with dramatic action and effect, went home weeping so bitterly that his wife and friends could hardly console him or induce him to dry his tears. "And yet," remarks the grave historian, "this Roland they tell of has been dead

well-nigh seven hundred years."

Unfortunately, Isabella's share in this singular and interesting correspondence has perished, and only Messer Galeazzo's letters survive. These may still be seen in the Gonzaga Archives, where they were first discovered by Signor Alessandro Luzio and Signor Rodolfo Renier. These learned writers are in some perplexity as to the identity of the writer, since the letters are signed Galeaz *Sfortia Vicecomes*, and internal evidence will not allow them to have been written by any Galeazzo Sforza or Visconti then living. But there can hardly be a doubt as to who the writer actually was. Galeazzo di Sanseverino had been adopted by Lodovico Sforza when he married his daughter Bianca, and from that time used the surname of the ducal house, *Sfortia Vicecomes*, and very frequently added his title of *Armorum Capitaneus*, captain of the armies of Milan. His well-known patronage of artists and love of letters, as well as his intimate connection with the duke and duchess, all point in the same direction; and if any further proof were needed, the mention of his brother Gaspare, and the allusion to Galeazzo by name in one of Bellincioni's sonnets on the subject, and the fact that one of the letters is dated from his own villa of Castelnuovo, near Tortona, would be sufficient to settle the question. The champion of Orlando and the faithful servant of Beatrice d'Este was, it is evident, none other than the friend of Leonardo and Castiglione—that ideal knight, Galeazzo di Sanseverino.

FOOTNOTES:

[9] G. Uzielli, *Leonardo da Vinci*, etc., p. 26.

[10] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[11] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

CHAPTER VIII

Relations between Lodovico and Beatrice—Cecilia Gallerani—Birth of her son Cesare—Her marriage to Count Bergamini—Beatrice at Villa Nova and Vigevano—The Sforzesca and Pecorara—Lodovico's system of irrigation in the Lomellina—Leonardo at Vigevano—Hunting-parties and country life—Letters to Isabella d'Este.

1491

All these caresses and adulation, all the expeditions and hunting-parties and *fêtes* in her honour, were naturally very delightful to this young princess of fifteen summers, who had till now hardly left home, and who flung herself with such boundless enjoyment into every new form of amusement. Life for her was full of mirth and rapture; a long prospect of endless pleasures seemed to open before her as the first breath of spring passed over the green Lombard plains, and the delicious gardens of the Castello of Milan and the long avenues on the sunny terraces of Vigevano burst into leaf. The world seemed waking into new bliss, and Duchess Beatrice was the gayest

and gladdest of its creatures. So at least she appeared to those who saw her in the full enjoyment of chase or dance. But there was a darker side to the picture. Lodovico looked on his young wife as a joyous and fascinating child, as he told Giacomo Trotti, "*lieta di natura et molto piacevolina*," and thought that as long as he treated her with consideration and respect, and at the same time allowed her every possible indulgence, he might continue to go on his own way and take his pleasure in whatever form he chose. But he soon found out his mistake. This young wife of his, full of mirth and high spirits as she was, had a deeper nature and a stronger will than he suspected. If a constant round of amusements could have satisfied her, she might have accepted the playful caresses of her indulgent husband, and been content with the share of affection which he bestowed upon her. But Beatrice asked for more than this. She was bent on having sole possession of her lord's heart—of reigning there at least without a rival. And when she discovered that Lodovico had a mistress actually living in the Castello, whom he visited constantly and loved passionately, her whole being rose up in arms. Her proud spirit would not brook a rival, and she vowed the duke must choose between his mistress and his wife. When the Ferrarese envoy saw the newly wedded duke on his way to Cecilia Gallerani's rooms within a month after his marriage, he was full of gloomy forebodings. But Lodovico was perfectly frank with him, and did not attempt to conceal his actions or the motives of his conduct. For a while Beatrice spent her time riding or hunting about the country with Messer Galeazzo and her ladies, and remained in happy ignorance of the true state of affairs. But this could not last long. Soon a rumour of Cecilia's presence in the Rocca reached

her ears; she heard how often the duke was seen in her company, and was told that before many weeks were over his mistress was likely to bear him a child. The first intimation which we have of this rude awakening which had come to the young duchess is in a letter addressed by Trotti to Duke Ercole, which he sends in the strictest confidence, begging his master to allow no one but our illustrious Madonna to read it, and then to burn it without delay.[12] In this letter he says that Beatrice has absolutely refused to wear a certain vest of woven gold which her husband had given her, if Madonna Cecilia ever appeared in a similar one, which it seems was also Lodovico's present. The duke himself, he adds, had been to see him that day, and had promised faithfully that he would put an end to his *liaison* with Cecilia, and would either marry her to one of his courtiers or desire her to become a nun. Lodovico, it is plain, had realized that the situation had become impossible, and that he could not keep up his relations with his old mistress without causing open scandal. He was true to his promise, and that carnival he broke off the connection which gave Beatrice so much pain, and wrote to Giacomo Trotti from Vigevano on the 27th of March, informing him that he had decided not to see Madonna Cecilia again, and that after her child's birth she had agreed to become the wife of Count Lodovico Bergamini. This strange compact was duly carried out.

On the 3rd of May, the duke's discarded mistress gave birth to a son, who received the name of Cesare; and in the following July, Cecilia Gallerani was married to Count Lodovico Bergamini of Cremona, one of the Moro's most loyal servants and subjects. Her trousseau on this occasion was of the most sumptuous description, and it was noticed that

the corbeille which held her gowns bore the ducal arms. At the same time the Duke of Bari presented her with the stately Palazzo del Verme, originally built by his ancestor, Filippo Maria Visconti, for the great Captain Carmagnola, on the *piazza* of the Duomo, as a token of his regard and a heritage for her infant son. Court painters and sculptors were employed to decorate the halls and porticoes with frescoes and medallions of the finest marble, and at the time of the French invasion, eight years later, Countess Bergamini's palace was described as the finest private house in Milan. Cecilia devoted herself to the classical studies in which she had taken delight from her earliest youth, and entertained her learned friends in her town house or at her villa near Cremona until she died in advanced old age, some years after the last of Lodovico's sons had ceased to reign over Milan. Lodovico seems to have kept his promise loyally, but always treated Cecilia and her husband with marked favour, and acknowledged the boy Cesare as his own son.

A curious letter addressed to him by the poet Bellincioni, in February, 1492, when the duke was absent from Milan for a few days, begins by informing Lodovico that he has given Duchess Beatrice a pastoral which she wishes to send her husband, and goes on to say that he was dining yesterday with Madonna Cecilia. He tells Lodovico how he had seen her son Cesare, who had grown into a very fine child—"*quale è grasso, dico grasso!*"—and how he had made the little fellow laugh. In the same letter he complains of all that he has to suffer at the hands of envious detractors, and by way of ingratiating himself with the duke, reminds his Highness that he had always prophesied Madonna Cecilia's child would prove to be a boy. Bellincioni

himself composed several sonnets in honour of Cesare's birth and of his accomplished mother. And among the exquisite miniatures of the little Maximilian Sforza's Libro del Gesù in the Trivulzian library, we find a picture of Lodovico and Beatrice's child sitting at dinner with his mother and a lady bearing the name of Cecilia, in whom tradition sees the duke's old mistress, Countess Bergamini.

But although Cecilia remained at court, and even maintained friendly relations with her famous lover, she never seems to have given Beatrice cause for jealousy again, and her name is never again mentioned in Giacomo Trotti's confidential despatches to his master. Only the singular fact that Beatrice d'Este's portrait was never, so far as we know, painted by Leonardo, the supreme master at her husband's court, may well be owing to the remembrance that he had formerly painted Cecilia Gallerani. The proud young duchess who would not wear a robe similar to that bestowed upon his mistress by her husband, may naturally enough have declined to have her portrait painted by the same artist, however excellent a master he might be. But whether or no this was the true reason of this strange omission, there was certainly no portrait of Beatrice d'Este by Leonardo's hand in Milan a year after her death, or her own sister Isabella would not have applied to Cecilia Gallerani for the loan of her picture as an example of Leonardo's art. From this time, however, the young duchess succeeded in winning her husband's heart, and for many years to come retained undivided possession of his roving affections. On the 20th of April, Trotti wrote to Ferrara that Signor Lodovico had been to see him on the second or third day in Easter week, and had spoken with the greatest warmth and affection of his

wife, with whom he spent his whole time, and whose charming ways and manners gave him the greatest pleasure. Madonna Beatrice is, as he says, not only of a joyous nature, but of noble and elevated mind, and at the same time very pleasing and no less modest. And in May, when Cecilia's son was born, the duke himself told his wife the news, repeating his determination never again to renew the old connection. His letters to Isabella d'Este abound in the same expressions of genuine love and admiration for his young wife. He is never tired of dwelling on her perfections, on her courage and fine horsemanship, and looks on with an indulgent smile at her wildest freaks and escapades.

Early in March he and Beatrice went to Vigevano, accompanied as usual by Messer Galeazzo and a few courtiers and ladies. All his life Lodovico retained especial affection for this old Lombard town, where he had been born, and which he had greatly improved and beautified during the last few years. By his care the streets were paved, and new houses erected; the buildings of the ancient Forum, which dated back to Roman times, were restored; and the church repaired and adorned with pictures, and decorated by the hand of the sculptor Cristoforo Romano.

"At Vigevano," writes the contemporary Milanese chronicler Cagnola, "a place very dear to the house of Sforza, Lodovico made a fair and large *piazza*, and adorned it with many noble buildings and a fine park, which he filled with beasts of prey for the pleasure of the ducal family. He also laid out some most beautiful gardens, and since all this country was very dry and arid, he constructed aqueducts with great artifice and ingenuity, and brought water

into the place in such abundance that these lands, which had hitherto been sterile and barren, bore fruit in great quantities. And so entirely did he improve and alter the whole place that, instead of Vigevano, it might well be called *Citta nova*."

At the same time Lodovico rebuilt on a magnificent scale the old castle which crowns the heights above the valley of the Ticino, and employed Bramante to design the lofty tower and the arcaded courts with delicate traceries and terra-cotta mouldings in the finest Lombard style. This favourite palace of the Moro's has been turned into a barrack, and little remains of its former splendour; but Bramante's tower is still standing, and on the north gate of the keep we may read a significant inscription placed there by the citizens of Vigevano, recording the many benefactions of this most illustrious duke, who loved his native city so well, and was never tired of heaping benefactions on her people. "By his care not only was this splendid house raised from the ground, and the square of the old Forum restored to its pristine shape, but the course of rivers was turned, and flowing streams of water were brought into this dry and barren land. The desert waste became a green and fertile meadow, "the wilderness rejoiced and blossomed as the rose."

The same sentiments inspired the verses in which Galeotto del Carretto, one of the most accomplished poets of Beatrice's court, celebrated Lodovico's improvements in this his favourite country house:

"Vigevano, che gia fu gleba
vile,
Ha fatto adorno, e gli agri a
quel contigui
Ha coltivati con saper utile,

E i steril campi, e al far
fructo ambigui
Fertili ha facto et abondanti
prati,
E d'acqua ticinèse tutti
irigui."

Both Cagnola and Galeotto refer, no doubt, to the vast system of irrigation which Lodovico constructed at immense pains and expense to fertilize this district of Lomellina, and which may well have earned the gratitude of its inhabitants. The great Naviglio Sforzesca, which has resisted the ravages of time, formed part of this admirable system, and was probably constructed under the supervision of Leonardo, who was often at Vigevano with Lodovico, and who in later years became his chief engineer. It was here, in the immediate neighbourhood of Vigevano, that Lodovico established his model farm for the encouragement of agriculture. Like all the Moro's other undertakings, this was planned on a splendid scale. The villa itself was an imposing quadrangular building, with four lofty towers, and a noble gateway adorned with a Latin inscription cut in gold letters on a tablet of massive marble, and bearing the date 1486. These lines, composed at the duke's request by Ermolao Barbaro, the learned Venetian scholar, who was a personal friend of his, and represented the republic at his court, record how Lodovico, the son of one Sforza Duke of Milan, and uncle and guardian of another, brought water to fertilize this barren province, and was the builder of this fair house, "*villaque amenissima a fundamentis erecta*." In order to carry out his schemes, the duke acquired a large extent of land in the neighbourhood, partly by purchase, and partly by the confiscation of

territory, which, as Corio remarks, naturally provoked much discontent among individuals, and did not help to increase Lodovico's popularity, although in the end it largely benefited both the state and posterity. He proceeded to dig canals, and bring water on the one side by the Naviglio Sforzesca from the Ticino, and on the other by the Mora Canal from the Val Seria. Then, with the help of exports from Vicenza and Verona, he introduced the culture of the mulberry with excellent results, and planted large vineyards. Here he tried various experiments in the culture of the vine, such, for instance, as that of burying vines in winter, which Leonardo noted down when he visited Vigevano in March, 1492. At the same time Lodovico brought vast flocks of sheep from Languedoc, and built the large farm known as La Pecorara, close to the new villa. La Grange, as they called this farm, aroused the admiration of the French chroniclers who followed Louis XII. in his invasion of Lombardy, more than any other of the beautiful and marvellous houses and enchanted gardens which they saw in this wonderful land of Milan. Robert Gaguin cannot find words in which to express his amazement at the marvellous number of beasts that he saw there—horses, mares, oxen, cows, bulls, rams, ewes, goats, and other beasts with their young, such as fawns, calves, foals, lambs, and kids —or the massive pillars and lofty vaulting of the stables, which are described as being larger than the whole of the Carthusian convent in Paris.

"The farm itself," he writes, "is finely situated in a wide meadow about four leagues in circumference, with no less than thirty-three streams of fair running water flowing through the pastures, and well adapted for the practical uses of agriculture, since they serve for the bathing and cleansing of the

animals as well as for the watering of the grass. The plan of the farm-buildings is a large square, like some noble cloister, and in the park outside are barns and ricks of hay and other produce. In the central courtyard are the houses of the governors and captains who direct all the work on the farm. In the outhouses, which are built in the shape of a great cross, the labourers have their homes, together with their wives and families. Some of these clean and tend the cattle or groom the horses. Others milk the herds of cows at the proper time. Others, again, receive the milk and bear it into the dairies, where it is made into the great cheeses which they call here Milan cheeses, under the superintendence of the master cheese-maker. The exact weight of everything, that is to say, of the hay, milk, butter, and cheese, is carefully recorded, and there is an extraordinary wealth and abundance of all these things."

These Milan cheeses were so highly esteemed by the French invaders in 1499, that Louis XII. took back a large quantity with him to Blois, and kept them for several years in a room especially devoted to that purpose. They were preserved in oil, and are mentioned in one of his wife Anne of Brittany's inventories of the year 1504.

Such were the manifold industries which this far-seeing prince established on his royal domain, less, as he said, for actual profit than for the encouragement of better methods in agriculture and the promotion of his poorer subjects' prosperity. And over all he kept the same keen and vigilant eye, paying attention to every detail and providing for every contingency. The management of this model farm and the progress of the extensive works that

were being executed in the new palace of Vigevano filled every moment that he could spare from affairs of state at Milan. But on this occasion his especial object in visiting his native city was, as he tells Isabella d'Este, to stock the park with game of all kinds—deer, chamois, hare, and pheasants—as well as the wild boars and wolves for the more serious sport known as *la grande caccia*.

"I am hoping to go to Vigevano on Monday," he writes from Milan on the 26th of February, "with my wife, and intend to make extensive preparations for fresh hunting-parties, so that when you are here we may be able to give you the more pleasure. As for my wife, I really believe that since your departure she has not let a single day pass without mounting her horse!" And later in the summer he says, "My wife has become so clever at hawking that she quite outdoes me at this her favourite sport."

Beatrice herself gives a lively account of her country life during the spring of 1491, in a charming letter which she addressed to her sister from Villa Nova, another of Lodovico's delightful pleasure-houses in the valley of the Ticino between Milan and Pavia.

"I am now here at Villa Nova, where the loveliness of the country and the balmy sweetness of the air make me think we are already in the month of May, so warm and splendid is the weather we are enjoying! Every day we go out riding with the dogs and falcons, and my husband and I never come home without having enjoyed ourselves exceedingly in hunting herons and other water-fowl. I cannot say much of the perils of the chase, since game is so plentiful here that hares are to be seen jumping out at every corner—so much so, that often we hardly

know which way to turn to find the best sport. Indeed, the eye cannot take in all one desires to see, and it is scarcely possible to count up the number of animals that are to be found in this neighbourhood. Nor must I forget to tell you how every day Messer Galeazzo and I, with one or two other courtiers, amuse ourselves playing at ball after dinner, and we often talk of your Highness, and wish that you were here. I say all this, not to diminish the pleasure that I hope you will have when you do come by telling you what you may expect to find here, but in order that you may know how well and happy I am, and how kind and affectionate my husband is, since I cannot thoroughly enjoy any pleasure or happiness unless I share it with you. And I must tell you that I have had a whole field of garlic planted for your benefit, so that when you come, we may be able to have plenty of your favourite dishes![13]

"Ex Villa Nova, 18 Martiji, 1491."

It is plain from this letter that harmony had been restored between the wedded pair, and that the rock on which Beatrice's happiness had seemed likely to founder had been fortunately avoided.

The passing cloud that cast a shadow on her bright young life had rolled away, and this letter breathes the serene happiness of the spring airs about her. But her affection for her sister was warmer and stronger than ever, and hardly a day passed without some fresh expression of her impatience for Isabella's return—an impatience which both Lodovico and Galeazzo seem to have shared.

On the 21st of April, after describing a successful wolf-hunt from Vigevano, in which the Duke and

Duchess of Milan and their courtiers had all taken part, Lodovico writes—

"The whole distance must have been at least thirty miles, yet on the way home both the duchesses stayed behind the rest of us, to make their horses race one against the other; and if your Highness had been here, I think you would have entered the lists and tried your luck against them. And since you must come soon, and are expected by us impatiently, I will remind your Highness to bring some of those fine Barbary steeds which your illustrious lord the marquis keeps in his stables, and then you will easily be able to beat all the others."

Again, on the 16th of May, Lodovico writes in the same strain—

"I am as sorry as you are that you could not be here for these wolf-hunts, because, as you said in the letter written with your own hand on the 5th instant, I am quite sure you would have given us proofs of your spirit and courage. I must, however, tell you that your sister's boldness is such that I think even you would hardly come off victor in this contest, especially as, since you were here, she has made great progress both in the arts of horsemanship and of hunting. All the same, I am so impatient to see you together and to match your courage one against the other, that it seems to me a thousand years until your arrival!"

Beatrice, it appears, was absolutely fearless in the presence of danger, and faced an angry boar or wounded stag with the same lightness of heart. The greater the risks she ran, the higher her spirits rose. This feature of his young wife's character aroused the Moro's highest admiration. In a letter of the 8th of July, after recounting the various incidents of a long

day's hunting, he tells the Marchesa what a narrow escape Beatrice has had from an infuriated stag which gored her horse.

"All at once we heard that the wounded stag had been seen, and had attacked the horse which my wife was riding, and the next moment we saw her lifted up in the air a good lance's height from the ground; but she kept her seat, and sat erect all the while. The duke and duchess and I all rushed to her help, and asked if she were hurt; but she only laughed, and was not in the least frightened."[14]

Isabella herself was burning with eager desire to join Lodovico and Beatrice in these hunting-parties, and have a share in the thrilling adventures which they narrated in their letters, But her husband the marquis was away all the spring and early summer; first at Bologna, where he attended his brother Giovanni Gonzaga's wedding, and afterwards with his sister the Duchess Elizabeth at Urbino. After his return to Mantua he fell ill, and when he recovered it was already late in August, and Isabella was compelled very reluctantly to decline Lodovico Sforza's pressing invitations. Money was scarce at the court of Mantua, and the expenses of a journey to Milan were heavy. So she contented herself with going to see her mother that autumn at Ferrara, and put off her visit to Milan until the following spring, much to the disappointment of Beatrice and her husband. Lodovico wrote her word that he had been arranging a tournament at Pavia in honour of the christening of Gian Galeazzo's son, the little Count of Pavia, but that since she would not come, he had made up his mind to put it off and have no jousting.

FOOTNOTES:

[12] G. Uzielli, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[13] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[14] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

CHAPTER IX

Isabella of Aragon and Beatrice d'Este—Ambrogio Borgognone and Giovanni Antonio Amadeo—Cristoforo Romano and his works at Pavia and Cremona—The Certosa of Pavia—Illness of Beatrice—Her journey to Genoa —Correspondence between Isabella and Lodovico Sforza—Visit of the Marquis of Mantua to Milan.

1491-1492

In the frequent letters which Lodovico and Beatrice both of them addressed to the Marchioness of Mantua, as well as in those of Giacomo Trotti to the Duke of Ferrara, we find many allusions to the Duke of Milan's wife, Isabella of Aragon. This princess, who was Beatrice's first cousin and only five years older than Lodovico's wife, is mentioned not only as present with her husband at all court festivities and hunting-parties, but as her constant companion in all her occupations and amusements, both at Vigevano and Pavia. In after-days, when Lodovico had a son of his own and was suspected of designs on the ducal

crown, Duchess Isabella bitterly resented his conduct and that of his wife. But there is absolutely no foundation for Corio's statement that this rivalry between the two duchesses began at the time of Beatrice's wedding, and that from the moment of her arrival at Milan, Lodovico's wife objected to yield precedence to the Duchess of Milan. The Milanese chronicler wrote after Lodovico's fall, and always assumed the truth of the worst charges brought against the Moro and his wife. Unfortunately, his hasty and inaccurate statements have been repeated by Guicciardini and other contemporaries, and accepted as literally true by later writers. In this case Corio probably looked back on the past through the medium of the present, and judged the actors in the drama by the light of their later conduct. In any case, there is absolutely no trace of any jealousy or rivalry between the two young duchesses in the private letters and court records of the period. On the contrary, Isabella seems to have welcomed her cousin's presence joyfully, and to have found that the dull life which she led by the side of her feeble husband was sensibly brightened by Beatrice's company.

Bellincioni, whose verses certainly mirror the court life of the day, if they also breathe the incense of flattery, wrote several sonnets in which he descants on the close friendship and companionship of the two duchesses, and the love that bound them together in the tender bonds of sisterly affection. He is never tired of praising the concord that reigned in the ducal family, and the pleasure that Beatrice took in Isabella's little son, who was constantly seen in her arms.

"And when the ladies ask if she does not wish for a

son of her own, she replies in sweet accents, 'This one child is enough for me;' and straightway all her courtiers repeat and extol her answer."

But more trustworthy than the rhymes of court poets is the evidence to be found in the letters describing the daily round of life at Milan or Pavia and Vigevano. Here Isabella and Beatrice are mentioned as joining in the same games and sports, whether playing at ball, sometimes even trying their strength in wrestling matches.

"The two duchesses," writes the Ferrarese ambassador, on the 28th of April, "have been having a sparring match, and the Duke of Bari's wife has knocked down her of Milan."

Sometimes their escapades were of a decidedly undignified order. But practical jokes were much in vogue among these exalted lords and ladies of the Renaissance. For instance, we find Beatrice's brother Alfonso and Messer Galeazzo, disguised as robbers, breaking into the house of Girolamo Tuttavilla, one of Lodovico's favourite ministers, at midnight, and leading him blindfold on a donkey through the streets of Milan and into the Castello, where he was released amid peals of laughter. And the two young duchesses seem to have celebrated this Eastertide, which they spent at Milan, by the wildest freaks.

"There is literally no end to the pleasures and amusements which we have here," writes Lodovico, on the 12th of April, to his sister-in-law at Mantua. "I could not tell you one-thousandth part of the tricks and games in which the Duchess of Milan and my wife indulge. In the country they spent their time in riding races and galloping up behind their ladies at full speed, so as to make them fall off their horses. And now that we are back here in Milan, they are

always inventing some new forms of amusement. They started yesterday in the rain on foot, with five or six of their ladies, wearing cloths or towels over their heads, and walked through the streets of the city to buy provisions. But since it is not the custom for women to wear cloths on their heads here, some of the women in the street began to laugh at them and make rude remarks, upon which my wife fired up and replied in the same manner, so much so that they almost came to blows. In the end they came home all muddy and bedraggled, and were a fine sight! I believe, when your Highness is here, they will go out with all the more courage, since they will have in you so bold and spirited a comrade, and if any one dares to be rude to you, they will get back as good as they give! From your affectionate brother,

"Lodovico."[15]

Isabella, for all her wisdom and prudence, does not seem to have been in the least scandalized by her sister's behaviour, and replied that she would have done worse if any one had ventured to insult her; upon which Lodovico remarked—

"Your letter in answer to my description of my wife and the duchess walking about Milan with cloths on their heads, delighted me. I am sure you have far too much spirit to allow rude things to be said to you, and when I read your letter, I could see the angry flash in your eye, and hear the indignant answer that you would have had in readiness for any one who dared insult you."

The next letter we give was written on the 12th of June, from the Castello di Pavia, where the ducal family spent that summer, and is of special interest

on account of the allusions which it contains to the famous sanctuary of the Certosa.

"I have spent several days lately at the Certosa, which your Highness, I know, visited when you were last here. And since I did not think the choir-stalls in the church were in any way suitable or equal in beauty to the rest of the building, I went back there the day before yesterday and had them taken down, and have ordered new stalls to be designed in their place. And as I was returning, the duke and duchess and my wife came to meet me, and attacked me suddenly, and in order to defend myself, I divided my retainers, who were most of them riding mules, into three squadrons, and charged the enemy in due order, so there was a fine scuffle! Then we came home to see some youths run races, with lances in their hands, and after that we went to supper. And since those illustrious duchesses took it into their heads to return again to the Certosa, they went back there yesterday morning, and when it was time for them to return, I went out to meet them, and found that both duchesses and all their ladies were dressed in Turkish costumes. These disguises were invented by my wife, who had all the dresses made in one night! It seems that when they began to set to work about noon yesterday, the Duchess of Milan could not contain her amazement at seeing my wife sewing with as much vigour and energy as any old woman. And my wife told her that, whatever she did, whether it were jest or earnest, she liked to throw her whole heart into it and try and do it as well as possible. Certainly in this case she succeeded perfectly, and the skill and grace with which she carried out her idea gave me indescribable pleasure and satisfaction."[16]

The passage is eminently characteristic both of the Moro and his wife. We see on the one hand the spirit and resolution which made Beatrice, in the words of the Emperor Maximilian, not merely a sweet and loving wife to her lord, but a partner who shared actively in all his schemes and lightened every burden; and on the other, we understand the admiration which this force of character and tenacity of purpose excited in Lodovico's weaker and more easily swayed nature. Beatrice's masquerade recalls another curious feature of the day—that taste for Turkish costumes and interest in Oriental habits which had sprung up in Italy during the forty years which had elapsed since the fall of Constantinople. In Venice, Gentile Bellini and Carpaccio were already showing signs of this familiarity with Eastern habits by the Turkish costumes and personages who figure in their pictures; and a troop of Turks were introduced into a masque written by the Milanese poet, Gaspare Visconti, and acted before the Court. These strangers from the far East, attracted by the fame of the great city of Milan, were supposed to arrive in a boat on the Lombard shores, singing the following chorus:—

"Bel paese è Lombardia
Degno assai, ricca e galante.
Ma di gioie la Soria
E di fructi è più abbondante
Tanta fama è per il
mondo
Del gran vostro alto Milano,
Che solcando il mar
profondo;
Siam venuti da lontano,
Gran paese soriano,

Per veder se cosi sia,
Bel paese di
Lombardia."

Still greater interest attaches to Lodovico's description of his own visit to the Certosa and of the alterations which he effected in the choir. This famous church and monastery had been the pride of successive Dukes of Milan, since the day when Galeazzo Visconti laid the first stone in his park of Pavia a hundred years before. Viscontis and Sforzas had alike helped to enrich their ancestor's mighty foundation, and to carry on the work. But the Certosa owes more to Lodovico Sforza than to any other member of the dynasty. From the day when he returned to Milan and took up the reins of government in his nephew's name, to the last sad moments when his state was crumbling to pieces, this great shrine was the special object of his solicitude. In his eyes, as he said in the letter informing the Prior and brothers of Duchess Leonora's visit, the Certosa was the jewel of the crown, the noblest monument in the whole realm. The completion of the façade and the internal decoration of the great church and chapels was one of the objects that lay nearest to his heart. A whole army of architects and sculptors, painters and builders were employed under his orders; and so great was the store of precious marbles, brought there from Carrara and other parts of Italy, that the place was said to resemble a vast stone quarry. During the twenty years that the Moro reigned as Regent and Duke in Milan, the new apse built in Bramante's classical style, the central cupola, and the beautiful cloisters with their slender marble shafts and dark red terra-cotta friezes of angel-heads, all

rose into being. Then Ambrogio Borgognone decorated the roof of nave and apse, and designed the elaborate *intarsiatura* of these very choir-stalls to which Lodovico alludes in his letter to Isabella d'Este. And then the same Lombard master painted these frescoes and altar-pieces of grave saints and gentle Madonnas, which still adorn the side chapels with their solemn forms and rich golden harmonies. Many of these are ruined, others we know are gone. The fragments of the noble banners with portraits of kneeling figures, which the artist painted for processional use on solemn occasions are now in our National Gallery. There, too, is that loveliest of all Perugino's Madonnas, with the warrior Archangels at her side, and the perfect landscape beyond, which the Umbrian master painted in the last years of the century, by the Moro's express command, for his favourite sanctuary.

But the crowning work of Lodovico's days was the façade of the great church which, after many different attempts, was finally begun in 1491, and mostly executed during the next seven years. This magnificent creation, the triumph of Lombard genius, was designed by a native architect, Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, or Di Madeo, as he signs himself, a peasant lad who had grown up in his father's farm close by, and whose earliest independent work is said to have been a group of angels on the marble doorway leading from the church into the cloisters. He had afterwards been employed at Bergamo, where the Colleoni Chapel and the effigy of the great Condottiere's young daughter, the sleeping virgin Medea, still bear witness to his poetic invention and rare decorative skill. One of Lodovico's first acts after his return to Milan had been to recall Amadeo to Pavia, and in 1490, this gifted artist was appointed

Capo maestro of the Certosa works. To his delicate fancy and exquisite refinement we owe much of the lovely detail in the church and cloisters, the singing angels of the portals, the reliefs on Gian Galeazzo's monument, and in the monks' lavatory, and the medallions of the Sforzas over the doorways of the choir. There we may see the strongly marked features and refined expression of the great Moro, between his brother and his nephew, while above the opposite portal are the four Duchesses of Milan, Bianca Maria Visconti, Bona of Savoy, Isabella of Aragon, and Beatrice d'Este with the same soft, beautiful face, the same long coil of hair and jewelled net that we see in her portrait in the Brera or in Cristoforo Romano's bust in the Louvre.

But the wonderful marble façade, with its great central portal and round-headed windows, its historical reliefs and marvellous wealth of decorative sculpture, is Amadeo's grandest creation. We know not how far it was completed before 1499, when his labours as chief architect of the cathedrals of Milan and Pavia compelled him to give up his post at the Certosa; but in much of the ornamental detail—in the angels that adorn its branches of the candelabra between the windows, in the profusion of carved trophies, armorial bearings, burning censers, cherub-heads, leaf-mouldings, flowers and fruit that has been lavished on every portion of the west front we recognize his handiwork. And this façade of the Certosa, more than any other architectural work of the age, bears the stamp of Lodovico Sforza's peculiar genius. Alike in the abundance of classical motives and in the amazing wealth of invention and infinite grace that inspired the whole conception, we recognize Lodovico's passionate love of the antique and minute attention to detail. We know that he was

constantly on the spot, as the letter to his sister-in-law proves, and that when absent from Pavia the works of the Certosa were constantly in his mind. He was always writing orders to Amadeo to buy marbles and hurry on the work, always urging the prior to hasten the completion of the church, or inquiring in Florence and Rome for new masters to paint altar-pieces for the Certosa. And to-day, when so many of his noblest creations have perished, when the glorious pile of the Castello of Milan, with its stately towers and frescoed halls, rich decorations and vast gardens, has been defaced and battered by the hands of barbarian invaders, when Leonardo's fresco is a wreck and the tomb of Beatrice broken to pieces, when Vigevano and Cussago are in ruins, and the matchless library of Pavia has been scattered to the winds, we rejoice to think that the Certosa remains to show us how splendid were the dreams and how rare the skill of artists in the days when Lodovico Sforza reigned over Milan.

One of the finest artists who was working at the Certosa under Lodovico's eye in the summer of 1491, was the accomplished Roman sculptor, Giovanni Cristoforo Romano. We remember how he had been sent to Ferrara in the autumn of the previous year to execute a bust of Beatrice for his master. Since then he had gone back to his work at the Certosa, where he was employed upon the monument which Lodovico was raising to his ancestor Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the founder of the great Carthusian Abbey. His exact share in this noble work, which was begun in 1490, remains uncertain, but both the effigy of this duke and the figure of the Madonna and Child in the upper part of the monument are generally ascribed to his hand. At the same time Cristoforo had promised to design the chief portal of the ancient

Stanga palace in Cremona, which was being restored by Lodovico's Superintendent of Finances, the Marchese Stanga, known in court circles as the Marchesino, to distinguish him from his father, Duchess Bianca Maria's faithful servant. That June the Marchesino was married at Milan to a daughter of Count Giovanni Borromeo, and on this occasion, doubtless, he employed the gifted Roman sculptor to design the magnificent doorway which now adorns the Louvre and is a masterpiece of classic elegance. But now a fresh invitation reached Cristoforo from another quarter.

The Marchioness of Mantua had seen the Roman master's bust of her sister Beatrice when she came to Milan in the winter for the wedding festivities, and was seized with an ardent wish to have her features carved in marble by the same unrivalled artist. On the 22nd of June she wrote to Beatrice from her favourite villa at Porto, near Mantua, begging her to ask Lodovico if he would kindly allow "that excellent master, Johan Cristoforo, who carved your Highness's portrait in marble," to come to Mantua for a few days, that he might render her the same service. Beatrice, who was always ready and anxious to gratify Isabella's wishes, replied that she had shown the letter at once to her husband, and that Lodovico would gladly comply with her sister's request, and had written to beg the Marchesino—for whom Johan Cristoforo was working at that moment—to send this master to Mantua. "No doubt by this time," he adds, writing from Pavia on the 15th of July, "Messer Cristoforo is already on his way to Mantua."

But the sculptor, like most great artists, took his time about his work, and would not be interrupted or

hurried, even to please so charming and illustrious a lady as Isabella d'Este. He wrote a courteous note to the Marchesa from Pavia, saying how gladly he would have obeyed her summons on the spot, and how deeply he regretted that this was impossible, since he could not leave the work upon which he was engaged for the Marchesino unfinished. But he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing her some day. Meanwhile he suggested that she should order two pieces of fine marble from Venice, and see that they were very white and without stain or vein of colour. Isabella, however, was not easily discouraged, especially where excellent masters and works of art were in question, and, as she wrote on another occasion to Niccolo da Correggio, liked to have her wishes gratified on the spot. This time she wrote to the Marchesino himself, begging him to send Messer Johan Cristoforo to Mantua as soon as possible. Now Giovanni Stanga, besides being a finished courtier, was on intimate terms with the fair Marchesana herself and with all her family. Only a few weeks before, Isabella had written him a charming letter of congratulation on his marriage, and he often sent presents of silver boxes and ornaments both to her and Duchess Leonora. So, when his own doorway was finished, he did his best to induce the sculptor to oblige the marchioness. But Cristoforo had evidently no intention of leaving Pavia at present. The summer months slipped away, and still Isabella waited in vain. At length, in October, she heard from the Marchesino that Messer Cristoforo feared it was impossible for him to come to Mantua at all this year, since his whole time was spent in working at the Certosa, besides which he was one of the Duchess of Bari's singers, and must obey her wishes and travel with her, now in one direction, now in another. "At

present," adds the writer, "he is with her in Genoa."

It was not, in fact, until after Beatrice's death that Isabella obtained Lodovico's leave for his favourite sculptor to visit Mantua. By that time the duke's affairs were in dire confusion, and seeing there was little hope of further employment and none of certain pay, Messer Cristoforo left the Milanese court sorrowfully and went to Mantua, where he carved the lovely doorway still to be seen in Isabella's studio of *Il Paradiso* at the top of the grim old Castello, and designed the beautiful medal of the marchioness herself, which was praised as a divine thing at the Court of Naples, and which the old scholar Jacopo d'Atri kissed a thousand times over, for the sake of its beauty and of the likeness which it bore to the beloved mistress whom he had not seen for so many years. Afterwards we know Cristoforo moved on to Urbino, where Bembo and Emilia Pia and the good duchess all gave him a glad welcome, and Castiglione enshrined his memory in the pages of the *Cortigiano*. Then, again, we find him in his native city, Rome, searching for antiques in the ruins of the Eternal City, and examining the newly discovered Laocoon with Michelo Angelo, until at last the incurable malady which had long undermined his strength put an end to his life, and he died in the prime of manhood at the Santa Casa of Loreto. But his best work was done, and his happiest years were spent, in the service of Duchess Beatrice, at the court of Milan.

If Lodovico did not always care to part from his best artists at Isabella's request, he rarely failed to oblige his charming sister-in-law in other matters. Presents of game and venison, choice vegetables and fruit, artichokes and truffles, apples and pears or

peaches, were constantly borne to Mantua by his couriers; and in return Isabella would send him the famous salmon-trout of the Lake of Garda, that were accounted such rare delicacies, and which Lodovico was fond of seeing at table, especially, as he often remarked, in Lent. The correspondence between the two courts was briskly kept up that year, although Isabella was unable to visit Milan. Lodovico himself rarely missed a post, and complained repeatedly that Isabella was not so regular a correspondent as himself.

"Certainly, my affection for your Highness is greater than yours for me," he says, writing in September, 1491. "It is plain that I think of you much oftener than you think of me, and I know for certain that I write far more letters to you than you ever write to me."

But Isabella was unwearied in the applications which she made constantly to her brother-in-law on behalf of persons who, rightly or wrongly, had been accused of offences against the laws of Milan. Often, it must be owned, these suppliants whom she recommended to mercy proved to be criminals of the worst type; and quite as often the *protégés* whom she sent to Milan turned out to be utterly worthless characters. This made her a little ashamed of the perpetual recommendations with which she troubled Lodovico, and explains the apologetic tone of a note which she addressed to him in June, 1491, on behalf of some suppliant for money.

"The letters of recommendation which I have received in this case are so urgent that I feel it would be brutal to refuse the petition I send you, especially since they are addressed to me by private friends. But if your Highness complains, as you may justly

do, of the frequency of my appeals, I must ask you to impute their persistency less to me than to my innate compassion, which induces me to intercede for all who ask in good faith. But the truth is, your Highness has given me so many tokens of affection that many persons who seek your favour apply to me, trusting to my powers of intercession. And since I should be well content to let the whole world know the love and kindness which your Highness shows me, I grant these requests the more easily, because I remember what good fruit my recommendations have hitherto borne."

Sometimes, when the Marquis Gianfrancesco was away from Mantua, we find his wife consulting Lodovico on affairs of state, asking him to prevent her neighbour Galeotto della Mirandola from constructing a canal which may injure her subjects, or appealing to the Sanseverino brothers in the case of a faithless servant of hers who had sought shelter under the Count of Caiazzo's banners. Beatrice, in her turn, occasionally sent her servants and subjects with recommendations to Mantua. For instance, that July a Milanese soldier named Messer Giacomello arrived at the court of the Gonzagas, with letters from the Duchess of Bari and Messer Galeazzo di Sanseverino, asking for leave to fight a duel with a man of Ascoli who had insulted him; and the marchioness, ignorant of the customary method of treating these challenges, referred the case to her husband in a long and elaborate statement.

Towards the end of September Beatrice fell ill, and for some days her husband was seriously uneasy about her. The anxiety which he showed, and the attentions with which he surrounded her, were duly reported by Giacomo Trotti in a letter to Ferrara.

"Signor Lodovico," he wrote on the 18th of September, "does not leave his wife's bedside by day or night. He is always with her, and thinks of nothing but how he can best please and amuse her. The only cause of regret he has is that as yet there are not any signs of the birth of a son and heir."

Lodovico's concern for his young wife was genuine. He wrote daily reports of her health to Isabella and her mother, and on the 4th of October rejoiced to be able to tell the Marchesana that her sister had once more been able to assist at a boar-hunt, which had taken place six miles from Pavia.

"Yesterday your sister came to look on at a boar-hunt, six or seven miles from here. She drove to the spot in a chariot with a raised seat at the back, very much like the pulpits from which friars preach! Here she stood up, to be out of danger, and enjoyed herself immensely, as being placed at such a height, she could see the whole hunt better than any one else."

A few days later he wrote again to say he had decided to send his wife to Genoa, since the air of Pavia was not healthy, he felt convinced, at this season of the year, and in the hope that change would help to complete her cure.

"To-morrow my wife starts for Genoa *incognita*. I am sending her, first of all, to give her pleasure and do her health good, and, secondly, to prepare the way for your Highness when you come here next."

Unfortunately, we have no further particulars of this visit to Genova la Superba, that city which both the sisters were so anxious to see, and the letters in which Beatrice described this journey to her husband have either perished or still lie buried in some

private archives. All we know is that Cristoforo Romano was among the singers who accompanied the duchess on this occasion, although she travelled *incognita* and took only a few persons in her suite.

By December Lodovico and his wife were again settled in Milan, where they received an unexpected visit from the Marquis of Mantua in the first week of that month. Gianfrancesco's own wife was absent with her mother at Ferrara, and without even informing Isabella of his intention, he suddenly arrived at Milan, and spent a week at the Castello with the Duke and Duchess of Bari. As a rule, the company of the marquis, a brave soldier, but not apparently a very attractive person, with his short ungainly figure and rugged features, his dark complexion and rough manners, was not particularly agreeable to his polished brother-in-law; but he received a kindly welcome from both his hosts on this occasion, and was highly gratified with the honours and attention that were paid him. Isabella, on her part, was overjoyed to hear of the kindness with which her husband had been treated at the court of Milan, and declared that his letters gave her as much pleasure as if she had been with him herself. Lodovico did his guest the honours of his palace and city, showed him the treasures and jewels of the Castello, and sent him home loaded with gifts. Among other presents which Gianfrancesco received from his brother-in-law were a pair of lions which the Moro, who was constantly sending to Africa for wild beasts, showed him in his menagerie, and promised to send him as soon as they were sufficiently tame. Some weeks, however, passed before they were pronounced fit to travel safely, and it was not till February of the following year that they were sent to Mantua, with a note from

Lodovico, explaining that the keeper who accompanied them was accustomed to wild beasts, and would teach Gianfrancesco's servants how to treat them.

FOOTNOTES:

[15] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[16] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

CHAPTER X

Claims of Charles VIII. to Naples—Of the Duke of Orleans to Milan—Intrigues of the Venetian Senate, of Pope Innocent VIII., and of Ferrante and Alfonso of Naples—Visit of the French ambassadors to Milan —Treasures of the Castello—Jewels of Lodovico Sforza—Isabella of Aragon and her father—An embassy to the French court proposed—Secret instructions of the Count of Caiazzo—*Fête* at Vigevano—Tournament of Pavia.

1491

The most important event at the court of Milan that winter was the visit of the French ambassadors. The young King of France, Charles VIII., now that he had emancipated himself from his sister's tutelage and felt himself his own master, was beginning to cherish secret dreams of conquest, and already turned envious eyes towards the kingdom of Naples, that ancient heritage of the House of Anjou. His own ardour for military glory was fanned by the presence at the French court of several exiled noblemen, who

had fled from Naples to escape the harsh rule of King Ferrante and his hated son Alfonso, and were burning to avenge their wrongs. Chief among these were Antonio, Prince of Salerno, the head of the great Sanseverino family, and his cousin, the Prince of Bisignano, both of whom were in constant communication with their kinsmen at the Milanese court. At the same time, Charles VIII.'s brother-in-law and cousin, Louis, Duke of Orleans, a valiant and ambitious prince just thirty years of age, who had inherited the Lombard town of Asti from his grandmother, Valentina Visconti, and claimed the Duchy of Milan in right of his descent from the Visconti dukes, rejoiced at the prospect of advancing his pretensions against the rival House of Sforza.

Already more than one invitation to cross the Alps had reached the young French king from Italy. In January, 1484, when Venice was waging a desperate war against Milan and Naples, Antonio Loredano was sent to the French court with secret instructions to remind Charles VIII., who had just succeeded his father, Louis XI., that the kingdom of Naples had formerly belonged to his family, and that, besides occupying a throne to which he had no right, Ferrante of Aragon had instigated Lodovico Sforza to usurp the crown of Milan. The Venetian envoy was further desired to inform the Duke of Orleans that Lodovico evidently intended to make himself Duke of Milan in his nephew's stead, and to point out that Louis could not find a better moment than this, to assert his own claim to the duchy of his Visconti ancestors.

"Say all you can to instigate the Duke of Orleans to undertake this enterprise," were the secret instructions of the Ten, "and tell the French that if

they wish to dethrone the tyrant Ferrante and seize Naples, they will never have a better opportunity."[17]

A month later the Venetian Government sent another message to Louis of Orleans, urging him to invade Milan, and offering him the help of their forces. The duke was by no means averse to the suggestion, but Anne de Beaujeu, who governed France during her brother's minority, wisely declined to meddle in the quarrels of Italian States, and by August peace had been concluded between Venice and Milan.

Five years afterwards Pope Innocent VIII., having quarrelled with King Ferrante, invited Charles VIII. to invade Naples, and offered him the investiture of this important fief of the Church. But at that time the French monarch had no leisure to think of a foreign expedition. He was already engaged in war with Maximilian, King of the Romans, and in a fierce quarrel with the States of Brittany over the regency of that province during the minority of young Duchess Anne, the betrothed bride of the future Emperor, whose first wife, Mary of Burgundy, had died in 1482. Finding that there was no prospect of help from this quarter, the Pope had been forced to come to terms with Ferrante, whose armies threatened Rome, and made peace with Naples in January, 1492.

Meanwhile Charles VIII. had mortally offended the King of the Romans by sending back his daughter Margaret, to whom while yet Dauphin he had been formally betrothed by his father, Louis XI., and who had been educated in Touraine for the last six years, and taking Maximilian's affianced bride, Anne of Brittany, for his wife. The marriage was solemnized

in the Castle of Langeais in December, 1491, and two months afterwards the new queen was crowned at Saint Denis. Maximilian now sought to form a coalition against Charles, to avenge his injured honour; and his ally, Henry VII. of England, sent a letter to Lodovico Sforza, asking him to join the league and invade France from the south.

Under these circumstances Charles VIII. was naturally anxious to strengthen the old alliance which had existed between his father and the House of Sforza. Even before his own marriage, in the summer of 1490, Lodovico had sent Erasmo Brasca on a private mission to the French king, to ask for a renewal of the investiture of the Duchy of Genoa, originally granted to Francesco Sforza by Louis XI. Since those days, Genoa had been lost during the regency of Duchess Bona, and only recovered in 1888, by Lodovico's successful negotiations. Now Charles VIII. gladly granted the regent's request, and proposed to send an embassy to Milan in the course of the next year. Lodovico, on his part, prepared to give the French ambassadors a splendid reception, and in March, 1491, wrote to his chief secretary, Bartolommeo Calco, from Vigevano, giving minute instructions for the preparation of a suite of rooms in the Castello, where the Most Christian King's envoys were to be lodged. Since, at that time, extensive improvements were being made in other parts of the palace, Lodovico gave up his own rooms on the ground floor for the use of these distinguished strangers. The chief ambassador, the Scottish noble, Bernard Stuart d'Aubigny, Chamberlain to King Charles, he wrote word, would occupy the Duchess of Bari's apartment, known as the Sala della Asse, from the raised platform at one end of the room, and would use the duchess's boudoir, with the painted

Amorini over the mantelpiece, and the adjoining chambers for his dining and robing room. The second ambassador, Jean Roux de Visque, was to occupy Lodovico's apartments; and the third, King Charles's doctor, the Italian Teodoro Guainiero of Pavia, would be lodged in the rooms of Madonna Beatrice, Niccolo da Correggio's mother, and of the duke's secretary, Jacopo Antiquario. All of these rooms had been decorated and hung with rich tapestries and curtains of velvet and brocade for Lodovico's wedding a year before, but on this occasion he desired that canopies adorned with the *fleur-de-lys* should be placed over the beds, and that other changes should be made in the hangings and furniture. And since there was not room in the Castello, where the court officials and servants who were daily lodged and fed within its precincts already numbered some two hundred, for the whole of the suite, the remainder were to be entertained at the duke's expense at the different inns of the city, at the sign of the Stella, the Fontana and Campana.

A few weeks later the ambassadors arrived at Milan, and were magnificently received by Lodovico and his nephew, both of whom wore sumptuous vests of white Lyons brocade, presented to them in the French king's name, at the ceremony of investiture which followed. Giangaleazzo was formally invested with the Duchy of Genoa, and did homage to the representative of his suzerain, the French king, in the presence of the whole court. Among the members of the ducal family present on this occasion was the duke's elder sister, Bianca Maria, who still remained unmarried since her affianced husband, the son of Matthias Corvinus, had been driven from the throne of Hungary, after his father's death in 1490. The splendour of the

ceremony, and the dazzling white velvet suits worn by her brother and uncle, were long remembered by this princess of seventeen, who spent most of her time with her mother, Bona, at Abbiategrasso. More than seven years afterwards, when poor Giangaleazzo was dead, and the Sforzas' throne was already tottering to its fall, Bianca Maria, then the wife of the Emperor Maximilian, wrote from Fribourg, begging her uncle to try and procure her a robe of the white velvet woven at Lyons, "like the vests worn by yourself and my brother, of blessed memory, on the day when he was invested with the Duchy of Genoa."[18] The young empress, whose mind, as her husband complained, never rose above childish things, and who, in the lonely splendour of her grim castles in the Tyrol, pined for the brightness of her fair Milanese home, had set her heart on a gown of this material, and begged her kind uncle to excuse her if she asked too much, assuring him that nothing else could give her so much pleasure.

The beauty of Milan, with its stately Castello and white marble Duomo, its spacious streets and long rows of armourers' and goldsmiths' shops, its beautiful gardens and frescoed palaces, made a deep impression upon these strangers from the North. Never had they seen so fair a city or so rich a land. Marvellous were the tales they had to tell their countrymen of the splendid court where they had lived like princes, and of this wealthy and magnificent Signor Lodovico, who had entertained them in so royal a manner.

But although the investiture of Genoa had been provisionally granted, and a treaty of alliance agreed upon, several articles of the league still remained to be discussed. Negotiations dragged on all through

the year, chiefly with regard to certain castles belonging to Charles's ally, the Marquis of Montferrat, which had been seized by the Milanese. Niccolo da Correggio was sent to France in the summer to endeavour to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion, but nothing was finally settled until the winter, when Charles decided to send a second embassy to Milan. This time one of the former envoys, Jean Roux de Visque, was selected for the office, and, together with Le Sieur Pierre de Courthardi, left Paris early in December, and arrived at Milan in January, 1492.

Lodovico himself received the ambassadors in the Castello, and entertained them with his wonted magnificence. A treaty was drawn up, by which Charles agreed to recognize all the claims advanced by the Duke of Milan, and admitted the Duke of Bari by name as governor of his nephew into the defensive and offensive league concluded on the 13th of January, and on the 19th the French ambassadors left Milan. Before their departure, however, Lodovico, anxious to do his guests honour and at the same time impress them with his wealth and the vast resources at his command, himself conducted them over the Treasury of the Castello, which was deservedly regarded as one of the principal sights of Milan.

There, in the heart of the Rocchetta, close to his own apartments, was the vaulted room, decorated with frescoes by Leonardo and Bramante, and known as the Sala del Tesoro. Here, piled up in enormous chests, were the vast store of gold ducats which he kept as a reserve fund for the State, and the priceless jewels that were his own private property. Here, too, in oak presses, secured by ingenious contrivances

devised expressly for the purpose by Leonardo, were the treasures of gold and silver plate, the salvers and goblets, the dishes and vases of antique shape, in which the Moro took especial pride, and which were only exhibited on festive occasions. Milan was at this time one of the richest states in Italy. The revenue of the duchy, under Lodovico's wise and careful rule, exceeded the sum of 600,000 ducats—that is to say, double the revenue of Naples, and more than six times as much as that of Mantua, and was only surpassed by that of Venice, which amounted to 800,000 ducats; while, according to the same table, the revenue of England in the fifteenth century was calculated at 700,000 ducats, and that of France at 1,000,000 ducats. And here, too, in the Sala del Tesoro, were the jewels belonging to Lodovico, a collection which at this time included some of the most famous gems in the world. A few of these which he pawned to a Venetian merchant in 1495, were valued at 150,000 ducats, and a list, which is still preserved in the Trivulzio library, gives a description of the different jewels which in the troubled times at the close of his reign were pledged to bankers in Rome and Milan.[19] There was the balass ruby, called *El Spigo* or "the ear of corn," which was valued at the enormous sum of 250,000 ducats; and the jewel of *Il Lupo*, "the wolf," consisting of one large diamond and three choice pearls, which the goldsmiths priced at 120,000 ducats. There was the famous *Puncta*, or diamond arrow, given by Duchess Beatrice's grandfather, Niccolo d'Este, to Francesco Sforza; and the *Caduceus*, a favourite device of the Moro's, wrought in large pearls, each of which was said to be worth 25,000 ducats; while the balass ruby, known as the Marone, often worn as a brooch by Beatrice, was valued at 10,000 ducats.

Another balass bore the effigy of Lodovico, and the insignia of the Moraglia, or Mulberry, was composed of emeralds, diamonds, and pearls. This jewel was frequently worn by the Moro himself, at state banquets, as well as the famous Sancy diamond, which had been found on the body of Charles the Bold after the battle of Nancy, and afterwards acquired by Lodovico, whose agents were always in search of precious stones of fine water and rare workmanship.

Such were a few of the treasures which the regent displayed before the dazzled eyes of the French ambassadors. Unfortunately the presents which he gave them on their departure seemed to them poor and insignificant, after the marvels which they had seen in the Castello, and their cupidity was but ill-satisfied.

"The French envoys," wrote the Florentine ambassador, Pandolfini, to his master, Lorenzo de Medici, "are gone away disappointed with Signor Lodovico's gifts, expecting to receive a handsomer present after seeing all the splendours of the Treasury."[20]

Lodovico now determined to send an embassy to the French court to return the king's civilities and congratulate him on his marriage. He was the more anxious to strengthen his alliance with France on account of the growing estrangement between himself and the royal family of Naples. Hitherto, indeed, King Ferrante had maintained cordial relations with the Regent of Milan, whose claims to this position he had been the first to support, and whose marriage with his granddaughter Beatrice formed a new link between the Houses of Aragon and Sforza. But his son Alfonso, Duke of Calabria,

who had frequently visited Milan during the long war with Venice, had never forgiven Lodovico for treating with the Venetians independently, and made no secret of his hatred for his brother-in-law. The quarrel between the two princes was naturally embittered by the complaints which Alfonso received from his daughter Isabella, Duchess of Milan. Her miserable husband, Giangaleazzo, showed less inclination than ever to take his proper place at the head of affairs, and abandoned himself to low debauchery. In his drunken fits it was even said that he forgot himself so far as to strike his wife.

"There is no news here," wrote the widowed Marchioness of Montferrat from Milan to her envoy at Mantua, on the 2nd of May, 1492, "saving that the Duke of Milan has beaten his wife."[21]

But the proud and high-spirited duchess began to resent the subordinate position in which she and her husband were placed at their own court, and she tried to instil her keen sense of this injustice into Giangaleazzo's feeble mind. When Lodovico came to Pavia that spring, his nephew began by refusing to see him, but before long he forgot his wrongs, and after behaving for a few days like a sulky child, was on the most affectionate terms with his uncle when they met again. Isabella soon found that no dependence could be placed upon this foolish youth, who cared for nothing but his dogs and horses, and repeated everything that she said to Lodovico. So she devoured her griefs in silence, and only gave utterance to her sorrows in her letters to Naples.

Meanwhile, Alfonso did his utmost to stir up enemies against Lodovico, while, with habitual duplicity, he sent flattering messages to his brother-in-law, and begged for the continuance of his

friendship. That February envoys were sent from Naples to France, under pretence of buying horses and dogs for hunting, but with secret instructions to persuade Charles VIII., if possible, to break with Lodovico Sforza, and refuse to acknowledge him as Regent of Milan. Charles, however, was too much intent on his own plans for the conquest of Naples to pay any heed to these proposals, and the only result of Alfonso's intrigues was to strengthen the alliance between France and Milan.

Gianfrancesco, Count of Caiazzo, the eldest of the Sanseverino brothers, was chosen by Lodovico as chief ambassador to the French king, and received secret instructions to show Charles VIII. the proposals which had been made to the Regent of Milan by the King of England and Maximilian, King of the Romans.

"Let him know by this means," runs the letter, still preserved in the Milanese archives, "how unwilling we are to act in any way against his interests, and let him see that we have preferred his alliance to that of the mightiest monarchs in Europe. Take care also to insist on the importance of the Duchy of Milan and on the exalted position that we occupy in the eyes of other Italian States. And assure him that we are his firm and loyal friends, whose constancy neither threats nor promises can ever shake."[22]

Count Carlo Belgiojoso, Galeazzo Visconti and Girolamo Tuttavilla, Count of Sarno, who was himself one of King Ferrante's exiled subjects, were selected to accompany Caiazzo on his mission. On the 23rd of February they left Milan, and reached Paris towards the end of March.

Not only had Lodovico given his envoys minute instructions as to the language they were to hold in

treating with the French king, but the clothes they were to wear, the presents which they bore to Charles VIII. and his queen, the very day and hour of their entry into Paris, were all regulated by his orders. His astrologer, Ambrogio di Rosate, had fixed upon the 28th of March as the most propitious moment for Caiazzo to enter Paris, and on that day, accordingly, the Milanese ambassadors, splendidly arrayed in rich brocades and cloth of gold, rode through the streets of the capital, and under the walls of the old Louvre, where the king and queen had their abode. On the following day, Charles himself received the envoys, and Galeazzo Visconti delivered a long Latin discourse prepared by Lodovico. On the 30th they were presented to the queen, and a few days afterwards they accompanied the royal party on a hunting expedition in the forest of Saint-Germain, but found the sport of a rude and fatiguing description, and complained that both men and animals were very savage in their habits. Every detail of the proceedings was faithfully reported to Lodovico by Antonio Calco, the secretary of the mission. For his benefit and that of Beatrice, he not only describes the costumes of the royal pair—the king's gorgeous mantle of Lyons velvet, lined with yellow satin, and the queen's gold brocade robe and cape of lion skin lined with crimson—but gives a minute account of Anne of Brittany's coiffure, a black velvet cap with a gold fringe hanging about a finger's length over her forehead, and a hood studded with big diamonds drawn over her head and ears. So curious were Beatrice and her ladies on these matters, that Lodovico wrote on the 8th of April from Vigevano, desiring Calco to send him a drawing of the French queen's costume, "in order that the same fashion may be adopted here in Milan." At the same

time Lodovico desired Caiazzo to show especial civility to the Duke of Orleans, assuring him that the Dukes of Bari and Milan both regarded him as their own kinsman, and hoped that the love and friendship between them would be that of brothers. The ambassador was further empowered to offer the hand of Bianca Sforza, the duke's unmarried sister, to James IV., the young King of Scotland, through Stuart d'Aubigny, the Scottish nobleman whom Charles VIII. had sent as his envoy to Milan. Meanwhile, King Ferrante's emissaries were doing their best to stir up the Duke of Orleans against his Sforza rivals, and had secretly offered his granddaughter Charlotte in marriage to the youthful Scottish monarch.

But for the moment Lodovico's star was in the ascendant, and his influence reigned supreme at the French court. Charles VIII. formally ratified all the conditions of the treaty which had been signed at Milan in January, and wrote to inform Pope Innocent that he had entered into close alliance with the house of Sforza, and would regard any injury done to the Dukes of Milan and Bari as a personal wrong.

The object of the embassy being accomplished, Count Caiazzo, Galeazzo Visconti and Tuttavilla took leave of the French king and returned to Milan on the 5th of May, leaving Count Belgiojoso as permanent envoy at Paris. The triumph of Lodovico's diplomacy was complete, and without shedding a drop of blood, or making any warlike demonstration, he had outwitted all his foes and secured the alliance of his most powerful neighbour.

The good news gave fresh zest to the pleasures of Beatrice's court that summer, and to all the memorable enterprises upon which Lodovico was

engaged at home.

Early in March the Duke and Duchess of Bari left Milan to take up their abode at Vigevano, and held a series of brilliant *fêtes* and hunting parties in this newly-finished palace. The works upon which Bramante and his companions had been employed for years past were finished, the great hall with its richly-wrought marble capitals, the noble tower and imposing porticoes, were all complete. The last stone was in its place, and on the great archway that formed the entrance to the stately pile, Lodovico placed this proud Latin inscription, bearing the date, 1492.

"LUDOVICUS MARIA SFORTIA VICECOMES PRINCIPATU JOANNI GALEACIO NEPOTI AB EXTERIS ET INTESTINIS MOTIBUS STABILITO POSTEAQUAM SQUALLENTES AGROS VIGEVANENSES IMMISSIS FLUMINIBUS FERTILES FECIT AD VOLUPTARIOS SECESSUS IN HAC ARCE VETERES PRINCIPUM EDES REFORMAVIT ET NOVIS CIRCUMEDIFICATIS SPECIOSA, ETIAM TURRI MUNIVIT POPULI QUOQUE HABITATIONIS SITU ET SQUALORE OCCUPATAS STRATIS UT EXPEDITIS PER URBEM VIIS AD CIVILEM LAUTICIAM REDEGIT DIRRUTIS ETIAM CIRCA FORUM VETERIBUS EDIFICIIS ARCAM AMPLIANT AC PORTICIBUS CIRCUMDUCTIS IN HANC SPECIEM EXORNAVIT. ANNO A SALUTE CHRISTIANA NONAGESIMOSECUNDO SUPRA MILLESIMUM ET QUADRIGENTESIMUM."

He had given back peace to his nephew's realm and had vanquished external foes and quelled internal dissensions, he had brought rivers of water to make the barren fields of Vigevano fertile, and

had rebuilt the ancient Forum and raised fair porticoes and fine houses round the wide square. And now, as a crowning gift to this his native city, he had restored and beautified the ancestral castle of the illustrious house of Sforza and had reared stately halls and a fair tower to make Vigevano a home of perpetual delight.

During the continual round of amusements in which these festive weeks were spent, Beatrice had little time for writing, and the only letter we have from her hand during this visit to Vigevano is one addressed to her sister Isabella, in which she begs for information respecting Father Bernardino da Feltre, a famous revivalist preacher of the Franciscan order, who had travelled through the cities of Central Italy, preaching repentance and founding the charitable institutions known as Monte di Pietà for the relief of the poor.

"A report has reached us here," wrote the young duchess, "that the venerable Father Bernardino da Feltre, who has been preaching in Verona this Lent, was heard to declare from the pulpit that he had received a message from heaven, warning him that he would die in Holy Week, after miraculously opening the eyes of a blind man. Now I am very anxious to know if this report is true, and since at Mantua you are sufficiently near Verona to learn the truth of these tales, I beg you to make inquiries and let me know the result."

A fortnight later, Isabella, who had been absent from Mantua, was able to satisfy her sister's curiosity and at the same time answer a previous note in which Beatrice had given her a bad character of one of the Marchesana's *protégés*, an archer in Fracassa's service. She writes:—

"Most illustrious and honoured Sister,

"Only yesterday I received two letters which you wrote to me on the 16th and 17th of April: the one in answer to my recommendation of Malacarno, Signor Fracassa's archer, the other regarding a report which had reached you as to certain words which Fra Bernardino da Feltre is said to have spoken at Verona. In reply to your first letter, I assure your Highness that if I had ever dreamt Malacarno could be guilty of such detestable crimes, I would never have pleaded his cause, since naturally I hate such conduct. But as I had been told his faults were trifling, I consented to intercede with you on his behalf; and now I hear the bad character he bears, am well satisfied to hear the punishment which he has received, and praise your illustrious consort's prudence, while at the same time I thank you for the very kind expressions in your letter. As to Fra Bernardino's supposed prophecy that he would die this Holy Week after miraculously opening the eyes of a blind man, I find that there is absolutely no truth in the report you mention. Neither at Verona, nor yet at Padua, where he has also been preaching, did he ever use such language, which indeed his humility would forbid, and as I have learnt from a monk who attended his sermons. All the same, in order to satisfy you and make sure of the truth, I have made further inquiries, the result of which I now lay before you, begging you to commend me warmly to your illustrious lord.[23]

"Mantua, May 2nd, 1492."

From Vigevano, Lodovico and his wife moved to

Pavia, where the summer months were spent in entertaining a succession of guests, and, as before, Beatrice and Isabella joined together in hunting parties and amusements of every description. Giangaleazzo had totally forgotten his passing vexation, the clouds which darkened Isabella's sad life seemed to lift for the moment, and once more harmony reigned in the ducal family. The *fêtes* in honour of her son's christening, which had been postponed in the previous summer, were now celebrated with increased splendour. Bramante was summoned to arrange a succession of dramatic performances, and a grand tournament was held in the park of the Castello, in which Messer Galeazzo and his brother and all the most skilled jousters at court took part. And the Moro's accomplished friend, Ermolao Barbaro, the young Venetian patriarch, who had been once more sent as envoy to Milan, composed a wonderful Latin epigram in honour of the occasion, praying Pallas not to avert her face in sorrow at the sound and tumult of war, which is after all but a mimic display, and calling upon her, the goddess whose wisdom Lodovico honours above all the thunders of Jove, to bless the great house of Sforza, illustrious alike in the arts of war and peace.

FOOTNOTES:

[17] Secret Archives of the Venetian Senate, Reg. 31, fol. 123, 131, etc., and Reg. 32, fol. 87.

[18] F. Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza*.

[19] C. Trivulzio in A. S. L., iii. 530.

[20] V. Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII. en Italie*, p. 228.

[21] G. Uzielli, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[22] Archivio di Milano, *Potenze esterne Francia*.

[23] Luzio Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

CHAPTER XI

Intellectual and artistic revival in Lombardy—Lodovico and his secretaries—Building of the new University of Pavia—Reforms and extension of the University—The library of the Castello remodelled—Poliziano and Merula—Lodovico founds new schools at Milan—Equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza—Leonardo's paintings at Milan—Lodovico as a patron of art and learning.

1492

The year 1492 was one of great enterprises. The intellectual and artistic movement which Lodovico Sforza had inaugurated was now in full vigour, and the fruits of his wise and enlightened rule began to appear in every direction.

"Now that the wars were ended," writes Corio, "an era of peace and prosperity began, and everything seemed on a firmer and more stable foundation than it had ever been in times past. The court of our princes was most splendid, full of new fashions, rich clothes, and endless delights. Here Minerva and

Venus vied with each other, while beautiful youths and maidens came to learn in the school of Cupid, Minerva held her gentle academy in Milan, and that illustrious prince, Lodovico Sforza, brought men of rare excellence from the furthest ends of Europe at his expense. Here the learning of Greece shone, together with the prose and verse of the Latin race. Here the muses of poetry, and the masters of sculpture reigned supreme; here came the most distinguished painters from distant regions; here night and day were heard sounds of such sweet singing, and such delicious harmonies of music, that they seemed to descend from heaven itself."

Foremost among the "men of singular merit" whom Lodovico attracted to his court and retained in his service, were his two secretaries, Bartolommeo Calco and Jacopo Antiquario of Perugia. Both were men of great learning and discernment, fired with the same passion for arts and letters as their master, and as liberal as he was in assisting poorer scholars. Calco was Lodovico's right hand and chief adviser in his great schemes for beautifying cities and palaces. He delivered his orders to the countless artists in his employment, arranged court festivities and generally conducted the duke's correspondence. Jacopo Antiquario was more purely a scholar, who protected other men of letters, and helped them generously in time of need. His honest nature and kindly actions made him singularly beloved, and a contemporary describes him as the most learned of good men, and the best of learned men; while his intimate friend, the great printer, Aldo Manuzio, has immortalized his memory in the beautiful epistle in which he dedicates the Moralia of Plutarch to this man, whose name, he prays, may go down to future ages linked with his own. Both of these secretaries proved able

assistants in the great revival of art and learning which is Lodovico's lasting title to fame. Chief among these was the reform and extension of the University of Pavia. During the troubled times that followed Galeazzo Sforza's death, this ancient University had sunk to a very low ebb. The professors remained unpaid, and in many cases ceased to lecture, the buildings were small and inconvenient and the students lawless and riotous. Lodovico set himself with a stern hand to repress abuses on the one side, while on the other he grudged neither time nor money in promoting the cause of learning. A letter which he addressed to the students from Vigevano in August, 1488, only a few weeks before the dangerous illness which almost ended his life, deserves to be quoted, if only as an example of the attention which he gave to every detail of administration.

"Not a day passes," he writes, "but I hear of some fresh misconduct on your part, some crime committed or some uproar excited in the city, by you who are scholars of the University. Even last Holy Week your behaviour towards certain gentlemen and citizens of Pavia was justly the cause of scandal and complaint. Such things are not to be borne, nor do I intend to bear them any longer. Schools are intended for learning, and the object of all study and learning is that we may know how to live well, and, by our good conduct and fair lives, gain honour and praise both in the eyes of God and man. We do not see that the human and divine laws, in which you are daily instructed, produce any good effect if you can behave as you have done in this case towards peaceable citizens, especially in these holy days when the fear of God should, above all, control your ways and actions. If you thus neglect the laws of good living, nothing but confusion can be the result.

And know that, unless you speedily return to better ways, and show more respect for our holy religion, and more honourable treatment of our honest citizens, no love of learning will induce me to countenance such misconduct. For to repress crime, keep Italy in peace, and maintain the honour of our illustrious lord duke, is the first and chief object of our endeavours."

Meanwhile, Lodovico neglected no means of improving the condition of both professors and scholars of the University. In 1489, the magnificent new Ateneo which he had planned was completed, and the different schools of medicine, jurisprudence, fine arts and letters, were brought together under the same roof. The most distinguished foreign scholars were invited to occupy the different professional chairs, their salaries were raised and their numbers increased. Giasone del Maino, who was professor of law at Pavia for fifty-two years, and whose reputation as jurist attracted students from all parts of the world, received the large salary of 2250 florins at this time, while Giorgio Merula of Alessandria, the historian, who for many years was professor of rhetoric at the University, and received only 375 florins in 1486, had his salary raised in 1492 to 1000 florins. Next to the law schools, that of medicine was the most noted for its excellence at Pavia, and among its distinguished professors were Alvise Marliani, who was said to rival Aristotle in philosophy, Hippocrates in medicine, and Ptolemy in astronomy, and who was court-physician in turn to Lodovico Sforza, to his son Maximilian, and to the Emperor Charles V.; and Ambrogio of Varese, who occupied the chair of astrology, and taught the science of Almansor, as it was termed. This favourite servant of the Moro received the title of Count and the castle

and lands of Rosate from Gian Galeazzo in 1493, "for his services," so ran the patent, "in saving my illustrious uncle the Duke of Bari's life." Oriental study was another branch of learning that Lodovico especially encouraged. Count Teseo de' Albonesi of Pavia became noted as the first Chaldaic scholar of his age, and in 1490, the Moro established a chair of Hebrew, and appointed the Jew Benedetto Ispano to be the first professor, with express injunctions to study the text of the Bible. This experiment, however, proved a failure, and so few scholars attended his lectures that at the end of a year the chair was abolished. At the same time, new colleges were opened, and scholarships founded for poor students; and in 1496, Lodovico being then reigning Duke of Milan, granted the professors of law, medicine, philosophy and fine arts, an exemption from all taxation. Under his fostering care the University flourished as it had never flourished before. Scholars from all parts of Europe came to attend Giasone di Maino's lectures, the number of professors reached ninety: that of students was said to be three thousand. As the Milanese poet Lancinus Curtius sang in his Latin rhymes, "The fair-skinned Germans with their long hair flowing on their necks, the English and the knights from Gaul, the Iberian from the golden sands of Tagus, all hasten thither from the far North. The rude Pannonian lays aside his military cloak to join the eager throng who crowd into the virgin temple and seek the Helicon of Phoebus under the carved dome of wisdom, which bears Lodovico's name above the stars."

But the Moro patronage of learning was by no means limited to Pavia. He did his utmost to revive the ancient University of Milan, which had long fallen into decay, and founded new and flourishing

schools in this city. The best Pavian professors Merula and the Greek Demetrius Calcondila amongst others, were invited to lecture to the Milanese students. Fra Luca Pacioli of Borgo San Sepolcro, the famous mathematician, came to teach them geometry and arithmetic, and Ferrari occupied the first chair of history ever founded in Italy, while the priest Gaffuri became the first public instructor in the new school of music. In short, as a contemporary writes, there was not a science of any description that could not be learnt at Milan in the days of Lodovico Sforza.

The endowment of research was another point in which Lodovico showed himself to be in advance of his age. He granted liberal pensions to Bernardino Corio and Tristano Calco, "the Milanese Livy," who continued the history of the Visconti begun by the Alessandria professor and addressed letters in his own hand to the private owners of valuable manuscripts, requesting the loan of works that would assist these writers of Lombard history, "in order that a perpetual memory of the great deeds done by our ancestors may be preserved for future generations." From his earliest years history had been one of Lodovico's favourite studies, and an illuminated volume of extracts from Greek and Roman history which he compiled under his tutor Filelfo's direction at the age of fifteen may still be seen in the library of Turin. And in riper years, amid all the pressure of State affairs and political anxieties, he never let a day pass without having some passages from ancient and modern history read aloud to him by his secretaries. So wise and enlightened a prince well deserved the high praise bestowed upon him by the Bolognese scholar, Filippo Beroaldo, and the great Florentine, Angelo Poliziano, with whom Lodovico

frequently exchanged letters, and who in one of his effusions thus addresses his princely friend: "All the world knows you to be a prince of brilliant genius and singular wisdom, while above all others you cherish the noble arts and show your love for these intellectual studies which we profess." The jealousy of his own subjects was often roused by the favour with which Lodovico regarded scholars of other nationalities, and on one occasion a fierce quarrel arose between Merula and Poliziano, in which the Lombard historian stooped to the vilest personalities. Another Pavian professor with whom he had a controversy over certain commentaries of Martial, had, it appears, ventured to hint that Merula did not really know Greek, an insinuation which provoked the most violent display of anger on his part, and when Poliziano endeavoured to appease both parties, the affronted Lombard flew at him like a small terrier attacking some big mastiff. All Lodovico's tact and courtesy were needed to allay the storm, and when at length Merula died in 1494, the duke ordered the immediate destruction of all the papers relating to this deplorable controversy, of which all parties, he felt, had good reason to be ashamed. The remodelling of the library of the Castello di Pavia was another important work which was carried out in the year 1492, by Tristano Calco the historian and kinsman of the chief secretary, under the eye of Lodovico himself, while he and Beatrice spent the summer at Pavia. All the rare and precious manuscripts which he had been at such pains to collect in France and Italy and Germany, and the ancient books contained in the library were catalogued and arranged for the use of students. For Lodovico was not only bent on enriching the ducal library, but was determined to make its treasures

accessible to scholars of all nationalities. He allowed contemporary historians, Corio, Merula, and Tristan Calco himself, to borrow manuscripts freely, and, what was even more admirable in those days of persecution, gave permission under his own hand and seal to a Jewish scholar, named Salomone Ebreo, to live in the Castello with his family, in order that he might translate Hebrew manuscripts into Latin for the promotion of theological studies, and also be enabled to study the text of the Hebrew Bible belonging to the library.

It is melancholy to reflect on the sad fate of this priceless collection, upon which Lodovico and his ancestors had expended so much care and thought. In 1499, the bulk of the library of the Castello was carried off to Blois by Louis XII. and its precious contents were dispersed. Some were taken to Fontainebleau by Francis I. and afterwards by Henry Quatre to Paris, where they are still the glory of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Others again found their way into different public and private collections, and may be seen at Madrid and St. Petersburg, in London and Vienna, still bearing the inscription "De Pavye au roi Louis XII.," which tells us that they once formed part of the Sforza Library. An illuminated manuscript of Aulus Gellius, and another of the "Triumphs" of Petrarch, encircled with miniatures and bearing Lodovico's name, which originally belonged to the same collection, are among the treasures of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Many more no doubt have disappeared, lost in the general anarchy and confusion which prevailed in the Milanese during the century after the Moro's fall.

The newly discovered art of printing was also liberally encouraged by Lodovico, one of whose

protégés, Alessandro Minuziano, set up a printing press in Milan before Aldo Manuzio had settled in Venice, and in the course of the year 1494, published twenty-two books, including a Latin dictionary by Dionigi Este and complete editions of Cicero and Tacitus, Pliny and Suetonius, as well as the works of Filelfo and the Sonnets and Triumphs of Petrarch. In 1496, a treatise on music by Franchino Gaffuri was published, with a dedication to the duke, and was followed by the appearance of several works on harmony.

The munificence of Lodovico stirred up others to follow his example. His secretary Bartolommeo Calco founded free schools, where Greek and Latin professors lectured free of charge to poor Milanese students; and two other noblemen, Tommaso Grassi and Tommaso Piatti, endowed similar institutions. The new passion for learning spread from Milan and Pavia to other cities, and even Lombard villages had their public schools and lecturers. Everywhere the same thirst for knowledge was felt and the same respect for scholars was shown. For as Signor Lodovico wrote to his friend Poliziano, at Florence, "Both natural inclination and the example of our ancestors have inspired us with ardent love for learned men and an eager desire to honour and reward them to the best of our power."

If the intellectual movement which took place during the twenty years of Lodovico Moro's rule in Milan commanded general admiration; if learning flourished there as it had never done before, the widespread revival of art in Lombardy was a still more remarkable feature of the period. This indeed was the province in which Lodovico's true genius was most apparent, and in which his own fine taste,

vast power of organization and minute attention to detail, all made themselves felt and bore rich fruit. "This," wrote Isabella d'Este—herself no mean judge of these matters—from Lodovico's court, "is the school of the Master and of those who know, the home of art and understanding."

Throughout the Milanese, architects and engineers, painters and sculptors, with a host of minor craftsmen, were carrying out the vast projects that emanated from this one man. The decoration of the capital was naturally among the chief objects of his ambition.

"In the year 1492," writes the chronicler Cagnola, "this glorious and magnanimous prince adorned the Castello di Porta Zobia with many fair and marvellous buildings, enlarged the Piazza in front of the Castello, and removed obstructions in the streets of the city, and caused them to be painted and beautified with frescoes. And he did the same in the city of Pavia, so that both these towns, that were formerly ugly and dirty, are now most beautiful, which things are very laudable and excellent, especially in the eyes of those who remember these cities as they were of old, and who see them as they are to-day."

Chief among Lodovico's most honoured and trusted servants was Bramante of Urbino, whose genius excited so marked an influence on the development of Lombard architecture, and who was to the builders what Leonardo became to the painters of Milan. "Signor Lodovico loved Bramante greatly, and rewarded him richly," writes Fra Gaspare Bugati, a Dominican friar of S. Maria delle Grazie, the Moro's favourite church, which this great architect did so much to beautify. During this year, Bramante, having

finished the palace of Vigevano and completed the new buildings at the royal villas of Abbiategrasso, Cuzzago and other places, upon which he had been long engaged, began several important works in Milan itself. The new cloister or Canonica attached to the ancient basilica of S. Ambrogio, with its graceful columns and dark-green marble capitals, and the apse of S. Maria delle Grazie, soon to be crowned with that matchless cupola that remains among Bramante's most perfect works, were both begun in 1492. A few years before, between 1485 and 1490, he had built the Baptistery of San Satiro, which another of Lodovico's chosen artists, the great Como sculptor, Caradosso, was now engaged in modelling the lovely terra-cotta frieze of children and the medallions bearing, it is said, his own portrait and that of Bramante. The noble church of S. Maria presso San Celso, which in Burckhardt's opinion combines magnificence and simplicity better than any building of the Renaissance, was the work of Bramante's assistant, Dolcebuono, and owed its erection to the munificence of Lodovico, who laid the first stone in 1491. Nor were churches and palaces the only buildings upon which Lodovico lavished his gold and employed his most distinguished masters. In those days, the hospitals of Rome, Florence, Venice and Siena were the finest in Europe, and when Luther visited Rome, he is said to have been more impressed by the size and splendour of the hospitals, than by anything else in Italy. The great Moro, determined not to allow Milan to remain behind his age in this respect, employed Bramante to adorn the Gothic buildings of the Ospedale Maggiore with the arched windows and stately porticoes that we still admire, while he encircled the cloisters with marble shafts and terra-cotta mouldings after his

own heart. And in 1488, after his own recovery from illness, and that terrible visitation of the plague which had carried off fifty thousand inhabitants of Milan in six months, Lodovico founded the vast Lazzaretto, which still deserves its proud title, and may well be called a "glorious refuge for Christ's poor."

Meanwhile the works of the Duomo of Milan, that other great foundation of the Visconti dukes, were being vigorously carried on. In 1481, Lodovico had nominated his favourite Pavian master, Amadeo, the architect of the Certosa, as Capomaestro in succession to Guiniforte Solari; but the Councillors of the Fabric declined to accept his suggestion, and sent to Strasburg for a German architect, John Nexemperger of Graz, who held the office for some years, but effected little, and was finally dismissed in 1486. After his departure, the ruinous state of the central cupola requiring immediate attention, Lodovico invited Luca Fancelli, the chief architect of the Gonzagas at Mantua, to visit Milan, and by his advice Leonardo, Bramante, and other leading masters were invited in 1487 to design models for a new cupola. On this occasion Leonardo executed a model, which, however, does not seem to have satisfied the Fabbricieri, and after applying in vain to his ambassador in Rome and Florence for a master able and willing to undertake the task, Lodovico returned to his first choice, and appointed Amadeo and Dolcebuono, architects of the Duomo, with powers to alter and perfect the models of the cupola submitted to them for inspection. In order to strengthen their hands and satisfy himself, Lodovico invited Luca Fancelli of Mantua and Francesco Martini of Siena to decide on the respective merits of the models already prepared. Caradosso was sent to

conduct Martini from Siena, while Gaffuri, Professor of Music, escorted Fancelli from Mantua by the duke's orders, and both masters were richly rewarded for the pains and presented with silken vests and clothes for their servants over and above the pay to which they were entitled.

On the 27th of June, 1490, a meeting was held in the Castello, at which Lodovico presided, and after much deliberation the final execution of the cupola was entrusted to Amadeo and Dolcebuono. Bramante himself was not present on this occasion, but he approved highly of the model selected, and praised its lightness and elegance.

As for Leonardo, he was absorbed in other studies, and had apparently ceased to take any interest in the subject. After allowing his first model to be spoilt, and receiving payment for a second which he never began, he had, as already mentioned, accompanied the Sienese architect, Martini, to Pavia, to give his opinion on the new Duomo in course of erection. There he lingered, studying anatomy or discussing scientific and philosophical questions with the University professors, until he was recalled to Milan, to assist in the preparations for Beatrice's wedding *fêtes*. Many and varied were the tasks on which Leonardo had been employed since the day, some eight years before, when the Magnificent Medici first sent him to his friend at Milan. In the letter which the young master, proudly conscious of his powers, himself addressed to Lodovico Sforza, offering him his services, he had, first of all, retailed at length his different inventions "for the construction of bridges, cannons, engines, and catapults of fair and useful shape hitherto unknown, but of admirable efficiency in time of war," after which he proceeded to give the

following account of his artistic capacities:—

"In time of peace I believe I can equal any man in constructing public buildings and conducting water from one place to another. I can execute sculpture, whether in marble, bronze, or terra-cotta, and in painting I am the equal of any master, be he who he may. Again, I will undertake to execute the bronze horse to the immortal glory and eternal honour of the duke, your father, of blessed memory, and of the illustrious House of Sforza. And if any of the things I have mentioned above should seem to you impossible and impracticable, I will gladly make trial of them in your park, or any other place that may please your Excellency, to whom I commend myself in all humility."

The master had kept his word, and justified the confidence which from the first Lodovico Sforza placed in him. According to Vasari and the biographer of the Magliabecchiana, who wrote about 1540, Leonardo originally attracted the Moro's notice by the surpassing charm with which he played on a silver lyre of his own invention, and afterwards fascinated him by his conversation. But from the moment of his arrival at Milan the Florentine artist was employed by his new master to paint portraits and frescoes, to construct canals, arrange masques and pageants, or invent mechanical contrivances for use on the stage or in the house. A thousand different studies in his sketch-books and manuscripts bear witness to the strange variety of subjects upon which his versatile genius was brought to bear. But the most important work upon which Leonardo was engaged, and that which lay nearest to Lodovico Sforza's heart, was the equestrian statue of Duke Francesco Sforza. This, we learn from the master's

own words, was the true reason that brought him to Milan. In a letter to the Fabbricieri of the Duomo of Piacenza, he describes himself as Leonardo the Florentine whom Signor Lodovico brought to Milan to make the bronze horse, and says that he can undertake no other task, for this will fill his whole life, if indeed it is ever finished! Countless were the designs, endless the different forms which the great master made for this model, which was, after all, never to be cast in bronze, and was destined to perish by the hands of French archers. At one time it seemed as if he could neither satisfy himself nor yet his master. In July, 1489, Pietro Alamanni, one of Lorenzo de' Medici's agents, wrote to ask his master if he could send another artist capable of executing the work to the Milanese court.

"Signor Lodovico," he says, "wishes to raise a noble memorial to his father, and has already charged Leonardo da Vinci to prepare a model for a great bronze horse, with a figure of Duke Francesco in armour. But since His Excellency is anxious to have something superlatively fine, he desires me to write and beg you to send him another master, for although he has given the work to Leonardo, he does not feel satisfied that he is equal to the task."

Probably Lodovico's confidence had been shaken by Leonardo's endless delays and hesitation, but a few months later the master was at work again, this time it appears on a completely new model of the great statue. On April, 1490, we find the following memorandum in Leonardo's writing:—

"To-day I commenced this book, and began the horse again."

But soon another interruption came to interfere with the progress of the great work. There was the

visit to Pavia, and the decoration of the ball-room in the Castello, and the wedding *fêtes*, and the tournaments in which Messer Galeazzo sought his help. And in this year—1492—we find Leonardo at Vigevano with the Moro in March, making designs for a new staircase for the Sforzesca, and studying vine-culture, and later in the summer drawing plans of a bath-room for Duchess Beatrice, and of a pavilion with a round cupola for the duke's labyrinth in the gardens of the Castello. It was in this same year, according to Amoretti, that he finished the beautiful painting of the Holy Family, upon which he had long been engaged. This may have been the picture ordered by Lodovico as a gift for the art-loving King of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, when his niece Bianca Maria was betrothed to that monarch's son.

"Since we hear that His Majesty delights in pictures," wrote Lodovico to Maffeo di Treviglio, the ambassador whom he was sending to Hungary in 1485, "and we have here a most excellent painter, with whose genius we are well acquainted, and who, we are sure, has no equal, we have ordered this master to paint a figure of Our Lady, as beautiful and perfect and holy as he can imagine, without sparing pains or expense. He has already set to work, and will undertake nothing else until this picture is finished, and we are able to send it as a gift to his said Majesty."

The painter who had no equal could be none other than Leonardo; but it would be interesting to know if this picture, originally destined for Matthias Corvinus, was the Nativity eventually given by Lodovico in 1493 to Bianca Maria's future husband, the Emperor Maximilian. All traces of this altar-

piece, however, as well as of the Bacchus and other subjects which Leonardo painted for the Moro, have vanished; and the only works that remain to us of his Milanese period are the cartoon of the Virgin and St. Anne now in the Royal Academy, and the "Vierge aux Rochers" in the Louvre, which was originally painted between 1490 and 1494 for a chapel in San Francesco of Milan, the church where the great Condottiere Roberto di Sanseverino was piously buried by his sons, after his death in the battle of Trent. The fame which Leonardo had attained, and the high esteem in which he was held by the Moro, is proved by the verses of contemporary poets, and especially by those of his fellow-countryman, Bellincioni, the court-poet who died in 1492.

"To-day," he sings, "Milan is the new Athens! Here Lodovico holds his Parnassus; here rare and excellent artists flock as bees to seek honey from the flowers; here, chief among them all, is the new Apelles whom he has brought from Florence." In the volume of Bellincioni's Sonnets, published soon after his death by the priest Francesco Tanzio, the name Magistro Leonardo da Vinci appears in a marginal note, and in another sonnet inscribed to "Four illustrious men who have grown up under the shadow of the Moro," the editor gives the respective names of these famous individuals as "the painter Maestro Leonardo Florentino, the goldsmith Caradosso, the learned Greek scholar Giorgio Merula, called the sun of Alessandria, and Maestro Giannino, the Ferrarese gun-founder."

"Rejoice, O Milano," sings the poet in these verses —"rejoice above all, that within your walls you hold one who is foremost among excellent artists, Da Vinci, whose drawing and colouring are alike

unrivalled by ancient or modern masters."

The fact that Lodovico was able to keep this great master at his court during so long a period is the best proof we have of his knowledge of men and love of art. These sixteen years were the most brilliant and productive of Leonardo's life. Never again was he to enjoy a freedom and independence so complete, never again was he to find a master as generous, as stimulating to his powers of brain and hand as the great Moro. It was not only that Signor Lodovico gave him the large salary of 2000 ducats—about £4000 of our money—"besides many other gifts and rewards," as Leonardo himself told Cardinal de Gurk, but that he was himself so fine a connoisseur and understanding a patron. More than this, he knew how to deal with men of genius, and could make allowance for their wayward fancies, and humour their caprices with infinite tact and kindliness. And from the little that we glean of his intercourse with Leonardo, he seems to have treated him rather as an equal than as a subject, and more like a friend than a servant.

The glimpses that we catch of Leonardo's private life from the writings of contemporaries, whether in Bandello's *novelle*, or in Bellincioni's *rime*, all give the same pleasant impression, and show the ease and liberty which he enjoyed at the court of Milan. And in his own "Trattato" (Cap. 36) the painter describes himself as living in a fine house, full of beautiful paintings and choice objects, surrounded by musicians and poets. Here he sits at his work, handling a brush full of lovely colour, never so happy as when he can paint listening to the sound of sweet melodies. The spacious atelier is full of scholars and apprentices employed in carrying out

their master's ideas or making chemical experiments, but careless of the noise of tools and hammers, the fair-haired boy Angelo sings his golden song, and Serafino the wondrous *improvisatore* chants his own verses to the sound of the lyre. Visitors come and go freely—Messer Jacopo of Ferrara, the architect who was "dear to Leonardo as a brother," the courtly poet Gaspare Visconti, and Vincenzo Calmeta, Duchess Beatrice's secretary, or, it may be, the great Messer Galeaz himself, whose big jennet and Sicilian horse the master has been drawing as models for the great equestrian statue standing outside in the Corte Vecchia. There, among them all, the painter bends over his canvas seeking to perfect the glazes and scumbles of his pearly tints, or trying to realize some dream of a face that haunts his fancy with its exquisite smile. He has, it is true, many labours—"*a tanta faccenda!*" as he wrote to the councillors of Piacenza—and at times he hardly knows which way to turn, but he is his own master, free to work as he will, now at one, now at another. He has no cares or anxiety. He can dress as he pleases, wear rich apparel if he is so minded, or don the plain clothes and sober hues that he prefers. He has gold enough and to spare; he can help a poorer friend and educate a needy apprentice, or save his money for a rainy day; and, above all, he has plenty of books and leisure to meditate on philosophical treatises, or ponder over the scientific problems in which his soul delights. He can find time to jot down his thoughts on many things, to write his great treatise on painting, and to draw the wonderful interlaced patterns inscribed with the strange words which have puzzled so many generations of commentators. And he has friends, too, dear to his heart—Messer Jacopo, and the wise Lorenzo da Pavia, that master

of organs whose hands were as deft in fashioning lyres and viols as in drawing out sweet sounds, with whom he loved to commune of musical instruments and eternal harmonies, and the boy Andrea Salai, with the beautiful curling hair, whom he loved to dress up in green velvet mantles, and shoes with rose-coloured ribbons and silver buckles.

"Such," he tells us, "was I, Leonardo the Florentine, at the court of the most Illustrious Prince Signor Lodovic." And what the Moro was to Leonardo that he showed himself to other artists and men of letters. In the poet's words, he was the magnet who drew men of genius (*virtuosi*) from all parts of the world to Milan. He might be an exacting and critical master, he was certainly never satisfied with any work short of the best—even Leonardo, we have seen, did not always find him easy to please—but once he discovered a man who was excellent in any branch of knowledge, he thought no cost too great to retain him at his court. And so the foremost scholars and the finest artists, Giorgio Merula and Lancinus Curtius, Caradosso and Cristoforo Romano, Bramante and Leonardo, were all drawn to Milan in turn, and, having once entered the Moro's service, remained there until the end.

"We know, O most illustrious Prince!" wrote Tanzio in his preface to Bellincioni's Sonnets—"we know that you, the Chief of the Insubrians, are no less a lover of your country than of your glorious father, in whose honour you have reared that mighty and immortal work, the great Colossus, which, like himself, remains without a rival. We see you equally anxious to glorify both his memory and your own great city. We see Milan, by your care, not only adorned with peace and wealth, with noble churches

and edifices, but with rare and admirable intellects, who all turn to you in their hour of need, as the rivers flow into the vast ocean."

Nor was it only in Milan and Pavia that this revival made itself felt. The new impulse spread from city to city. The lovely Renaissance façade of S. Maria dei Miracoli at Brescia was completed in 1487, and the great Church of the Incoronata at Lodi, begun in 1488, was continued during the next twenty years under the superintendence of Dolcebuono and Amadeo. Bramante supplied designs for the new façade and portals that were added to the cathedral of Como in 1491, and for the majestic church of Abbiategrasso, close to this favourite country house of the Sforzas. A number of other churches, both in Milan and the neighbourhood, were designed by him or his scholars, and bear witness to the revolution which he had effected in Lombard architecture. At Piacenza and Cremona, at Saronno and Lugano, new churches and palaces arose, and the famous Sanctuary of Varallo in the Val Sesia was founded in 1491 by that devout personage, Messer Bernardino Caimo, on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The same passion for building and decoration prevailed everywhere. On all sides poets and scholars celebrated Lodovico's name as the Pericles of this new Athens, and joined in the chorus of praise which inspired Pistoia's famous line—

"E un Dio in cielo
e il Moro in terra."

"There is one God in heaven and the Moro upon earth."

CHAPTER XII

Beatrice d'Este as a patron of learning and poetry—Vincenzo Calmeta, her secretary—Serafino d'Aquila—Rivalry of Lombard and Tuscan poets—Gaspare Visconti's works—Poetic jousts with Bramante—Niccolo di Correggio and other poets—Dramatic art and music at the court of Milan—Gaffuri and Testagrossa—Lorenzo Gusnasco of Pavia.

1492

Lodovico Moro, as we have seen, was justly extolled by his contemporaries as the most illustrious Mecænas of his age. As Abbé Tiraboschi, the learned historian of Italian literature, wrote ninety years ago, "If we consider the immense number of learned men who flocked to his court from all parts of Italy in the certainty of receiving great honours and rich rewards; if, again, we remember how many famous architects and painters he invited to Milan, and how many noble buildings he raised, how he built and endowed the magnificent University of Pavia, and opened schools of every kind of science in Milan; if besides all this we read the splendid eulogies and dedicatory epistles addressed to him by scholars of every nationality, we feel inclined to pronounce him the best prince that ever lived." And in Beatrice d'Este, Lodovico possessed a wife admirably adapted

to share his aims and preside over his court. Both her birth and education fitted her for the position which she now occupied. Her youth and beauty lent a new lustre to the court, her quick intelligence and cultured tastes led her to appreciate the society of poets and scholars. The natural love of splendour, which she shared with the Moro, went hand-in-hand with artistic invention. Her rich clothes and jewels were distinguished by their refinement and rare workmanship. The fashions which she introduced were marked by their elegance and beauty. She took especial delight in music and poetry, and gave signs of a fine and discriminating literary judgment. And like Lodovico, she knew not only how to attract men of genius, but how to retain them in her service. Where, again, asks Castiglione, who had known her in her brightest days at Milan, shall we find a woman of intellect as remarkable as Duchess Beatrice? And her own secretary, the writer known as "*l'elegantissimo* Calmeta" in the cultured circles of Mantua and Urbino, has told us how much men of letters owed to her sympathy and help. In the life of his friend, Serafino Aquilano, written seven years after Beatrice's death, when the Milanese was a French province and the Moro a captive at Loches, Calmeta recalls the brilliant days of his old life at Lodovico's court, and speaks thus of his lost mistress:—

"This duke had for his most dear wife Beatrice d'Este, daughter of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, who, coming to Milan in the flower of her opening youth, was endowed with so rare an intellect, so much grace and affability, and was so remarkable for her generosity and goodness that she may justly be compared with the noblest women of antiquity. This duchess devoted her time to the highest objects. Her

court was composed of men of talent and distinction, most of whom were poets and musicians, who were expected to compose new eclogues, comedies, or tragedies, and arrange new spectacles and representations every month. In her leisure hours she generally employed a certain Antonio Grifo"—a well-known student and commentator of Dante—"or some equally gifted man, to read the Divina Commedia, or the works of other Italian poets, aloud to her. And it was no small relaxation of mind for Lodovico Sforza, when he was able to escape from the cares and business of state, to come and listen to these readings in his wife's rooms. And among the illustrious men whose presence adorned the court of the duchess there were three high-born cavaliers, renowned for many talents, but above all for their poetic gifts—Niccolo da Correggio, Gaspare Visconti, and Antonio di Campo Fregoso, together with many others, one of whom was myself, Vincenzo Calmeta, who for some years held the post of secretary to that glorious and excellent lady. And besides those I have named there was Benedetto da Cingoli, called Piceno, and many other youths of no small promise, who daily offered her the first fruits of their genius. Nor was Duchess Beatrice content with rewarding and honouring the poets of her own court. On the contrary, she sent to all parts of Italy to inquire for the compositions of elegant poets, and placed their books as sacred and divine things on the shelves of her cabinet of study, and praised and rewarded each writer according to his merit. In this manner, poetry and literature in the vulgar tongue, which had degenerated and sunk into forgetfulness after the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, has been restored to its former dignity, first by the protection of Lorenzo de' Medici, and then by the influence of this rare lady, and others

like her, who are still living at the present time. But when Duchess Beatrice died everything fell into ruin. That court, which had been a joyous Paradise, became a dark and gloomy Inferno, and poets and artists were forced to seek another road."

Calmeta himself was a prolific writer both of verse and prose, whose translation of Ovid's *Ars amandi*, dedicated to Lodovico Moro, was highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and whom Castiglione introduces among the speakers of his *Cortigiano*. Like his friends Niccolo da Correggio and Gaspare Visconti, Beatrice's secretary was a fervent admirer of Petrarch, and wrote an elaborate commentary on the *Canzone*, "*Mai non vo' più cantar como io solea*," which he dedicated to Isabella d'Este and sent her with a letter expressing his conviction that no one before him had ever fully understood this profound and subtle poem. Another of Beatrice's *protégés* was Serafino, the famous improvisatore of Aquila in the Abruzzi, a short and ugly little man, whom Cardinal Bibbiena once laughingly compared to a carpet-bag (*valigia*)! But in spite of his dwarfed stature and elfish appearance, Serafino sang his own *strambotti* and eclogues so well, and had so fascinating a way of accompanying himself on the lute, that the Este and Gonzaga ladies all entreated him for new verses, and literally wrangled over the man himself! Like Calmeta and many others, however, after spending some time at the courts of Mantua and Urbino, he came to Milan, and devoted his talents to the service of Duchess Beatrice until her death, after which he went his way sadly, and sought shelter in his old haunts. Most of his time after this was spent with the good Duchess Elizabeth at Urbino, where the Milanese refugees found a warm welcome, and where Serafino was caressed and *fêted* by all the

great ladies in turn, until a premature death closed his career, and he died in Rome in 1500, lamented in prose and verse by the most cultured spirits of the age.

While Beatrice encouraged these foreign poets to settle at Milan, Lodovico invited the Tuscans Bellincioni and Antonio Cammelli, surnamed Pistoia, to his court, in the hope of refining and polishing the rude Lombard diction. The priest Tanzio, writing after Bellincioni's death in 1492, remarks that this influence had already borne fruit, and that the sonnet, which was practically unknown in Milan before Bellincioni's coming, was now diligently cultivated there. But, not unnaturally, a bitter rivalry sprung up between the Lombard and the Tuscan poets, and a fierce poetic warfare was exchanged between them. Bellincioni's suspicious and quarrelsome nature is revealed in his letters to his patron, in which he is always complaining of the envious detractors whose wicked tongues are employed in backbiting him day and night. His own character was by no means free from the same imputations; and the Ferrarese poet, Tebaldeo, the friend of Raphael and Castiglione, composed a witty epitaph, in which he warns passers-by to avoid the last resting-place of this singer, who had made so many enemies in life, lest he turn in his grave and bite them. Bellincioni's bitterest foe was a certain Bergamasque poet, Guidotto Prestinari, who wrote many odes and songs in honour of Beatrice, and represented the old Lombard school. On one occasion this misguided person even dared to attack Leonardo, and wrote a sonnet in which he jeers at the great painter for spending his time in hunting for curious worms and insects on the hills of Bergamo, when he visited his friends of the Melzi family. Leonardo

scorned to take any notice of these petty insults, but in his letter to the councillors of Piacenza we see the contempt which he had for Lombard artists—"those rude and ignorant workmen," as he calls them, "who boast they will get letters of recommendation from Signora Lodovico or his Commissioner of Works, Messer Ambrogio Ferrari, when not one of them is fit to undertake the task." And certain epigrams in the Windsor Sketchbook are plainly directed against the false and venal science of the astrologer Ambrogio da Rosate, whose name is given in the margin, and show how cordial was Leonardo's hatred of the duke's all-powerful favourite.

Fortunately, both Leonardo himself, as well as Calmeta and Pistoia, were on friendly terms with Gaspare Visconti, who, originally a scholar of Prestinari, became the chief representative of the Lombard school of poetry at Milan, and whom Beatrice's secretary places next to Niccolo da Correggio among the best poets of her court. This popular poet and polished cavalier was a great favourite, not only with Beatrice and her husband, but with Galeazzo di Sanseverino, the Marchesino Stanga, and all the chief personages at court. Born in 1461 of noble Milanese parents, he married Cecilia, daughter of Cecco Simonetta, Duchess Bona's ill-fated minister, and was advanced to the dignity of *Eques Auratus* and ducal councillor. After the death of Bellincioni he succeeded to the post of court poet, and was often employed by Lodovico to address complimentary verses to other princes or to write sonnets on passing events, whether his theme were a royal wedding or the death of a favourite falcon. His most important work was a romance entitled "Paolo e Daria," founded on Bramante's discovery of a tomb containing the ashes of these lovers, when the

foundations of his new cloisters at S. Ambrogio were being laid in the year 1492. The incident excited great interest at court, and Gasparo dedicated his poem to Lodovico—"*mio Duca*"—and introduced an eloquent eulogy in honour of his friend Bramante in the first canto. In the following year he published a volume of rhymes, dedicated to Niccolo da Correggio, who sent the book to the insatiable Isabella d'Este, saying this would please her better than any verses that he could write. Finally, in 1496, he formally presented the duchess with a copy of his poems, written in silver letters and gold on ivory vellum, and enriched with miniatures of rare beauty. This sumptuous volume, bound in silver-gilt boards enamelled with flowers, and containing 143 sonnets as well as epistles on love and other philosophical and theological subjects, was dedicated to Beatrice in the following words:—

"To the Most Illustrious Duchess of Milan, Gaspare Visconti, Having been told by many honourable persons, chief among whom is Messer Galeazzo Sanseverino, that the said duchess graciously pleads my cause with His Excellency the Duke, I beg of her to accept this book, dedicated to her by her humble servant." The same grateful sentiments inspired the lyric which followed, in which the poet implored the duchess to use her well-known influence with her lord, and incline his will to look favourably upon her servant's prayer—

Donna beata! e Spirito
pudico!
Deh! fa benigna a questa
mia richiesta
La voglia del tuo Sposo
Lodovico.

Io so ben quel che dico!

Tanta è la tua virtu che ció
che vuoi
Dello invitto cuor disponer
puoi."[24]

An ardent lover of Petrarch, to whose poems these of the Milanese poet were often compared by his admirers, Gaspare Visconti took the lead in a lively poetic contest with Bramante on the respective merits of Dante and Petrarch, The discussion was carried on during many weeks, in the presence of the duchess and her courtiers in the beautiful gardens of Vigevano, or in those fair pleasure-houses by the running streams in the park at Pavia, where Beatrice and her ladies spent the long summer days. Gaspare found animated supporters in his friends Calmeta and Niccolo da Correggio, who was himself an enthusiastic admirer of Petrarch, and on one occasion journeyed twenty-five miles from Correggio over the worst roads in the world to see the remote village of Rosena, where the Tuscan poet had composed some of his finest *canzoni*. On the other hand, Bramante had the duke and duchess on his side. We know how, at the end of a long day's work, Lodovico loved to listen to the reading of the "Divina Commedia" in his wife's boudoir, and ponder the meaning of that great vision of heaven and hell. And when the catastrophe of Novara had crushed his last hopes, and he was borne a captive into the strange land, the only favour he asked of his victors was the loan of a volume of Dante, "*per studiare*"—in order that he might study the divine poet's words. One of Gaspare's sonnets on the subject, which was afterwards printed, bears this inscription: "These

verses were not written with any pretence of deciding between the merits of these two great men, but solely to answer Bramante, who is a violent partisan of Dante."

Another poetic tourney, in which both the great architect and his friend Visconti were the chief combatants, turned on Bramante's supposed poverty and the complaints with which he filled the air, calling on all the gods in heaven to help him in his misery. This was in the summer of 1492, and not only Gaspare, but Bellincioni, who was then living, and Mascagni of Turin took up the parable, and charged Bramante with begging for a pair of shoes, when all the while he was receiving five ducats a week from the duke, and was secretly hoarding up a store of gold. To this Bramante replied in a sonnet full of allusions to Calliope, Erato, and all the Muses, begging his friends for pity's sake to give him a crown, if they would not see him left barefoot and naked to battle with rude Boreas. A whole series of curious sonnets from Bramante's pen has been lately discovered by M. Müntz among the Italian manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and reveal the burlesque side of the great architect's character, and the biting wit which made his opponents give him the name of Cerberus.[25]

These poetic jousts or encounters of wits were a favourite amusement of the cultured princesses of the Renaissance and their courtiers. Thus it was that Poliziano and Ficino discussed philosophical questions before Lorenzo in the gardens of Careggi or on the terraces of Fiesole; so Castiglione and Bibbiena reasoned of art and love with Duchess Elizabeth and Emilia Pia, in the palace of Urbino, till the short summer night was well-nigh over and the

dawn broke over the peaks of Monte Catria. And at Milan, where in Beatrice's days there was less pedantry and more freedom and gaiety than in any court of the day, these lively debates found especial favour. The most brilliant courtiers and bravest knights, the gravest scholars and officers of state alike took part in them. Messer Galeazzo, as we have seen, was an adept at the game, and could wield his pen and challenge fair ladies in defence of Roland as gallantly as he couched his lance to ride in the lists or wielded his sword in the thick of the battle. So, too were the Marchesino Stanga and his friend Girolamo Tuttavilla. Both these noblemen were great sonnet-writers, and are classed by Pistoia among those illustrious lords, who, like Messer Galeazzo and Signor Lodovico himself, were poets and writers as well as statesmen and generals.

Bramante addressed several of his sonnets to Count Tuttavilla, who in his turn had a lively controversy in rhyme with the Marchesino. And when, in the spring of 1492, Tuttavilla accompanied the Count of Caiazzo on his embassy to France, Gaspare Visconti sent him a sonnet asking for the latest news from Paris, which Duchess Beatrice and all her ladies were dying to hear.

"Tell me if the Queen of France is fair, and how the king appears in your eyes—whether he is cruel or clement, inclined to walk in the paths of virtue or of vice. And tell us, too, if the people of Paris seem to fear the English and the Spaniard, and if they are true followers of Mars? Tell us how the crowds who walk the streets are clad, and what customs and manners they have, and how they speak, and what they think. Tell me how many students their University numbers, and in what branches of

learning they excel. Tell me the names of their lawgivers and historians, and if any classical antiquities are to be found in Paris. Tell me how the Abbey of S. Denis is built, and what style of architecture prevails in the far North? And tell me, too, if I dare ask, have you perchance in Paris found some fair lady to bend a gracious smile upon you, and console you for all that you have left behind?"

Girolamo Tuttavilla replied in verses of the same light and airy strain, alluding to the fierce contest over Dante that waged between Dottore Bramante and his foes, and laughing at friend Bellincioni's furious rages, but saying that he at least is wiser, and will take the *viâ media* and steer warily between the two contending parties.

But the best poet at Lodovico's court, a sweeter singer and a finer scholar than the much-praised Bellincioni or the gay Visconti, was Niccolo, the "gran Correggio" of Gaspare's song. The son of that accomplished princess of Este, Beatrice the Queen of Festivals, reared by her in all the culture of Ferrara, this singularly polished and handsome personage was in the eyes of his contemporaries the model of a perfect courtier. To have known him was in itself a liberal education. Sabba da Castiglione, that fastidious scholar and refined writer of the sixteenth century, counted himself fortunate because as a boy he had seen and known "this most famous, most courteous and gifted cavalier in all Italy." Ariosto saw him in his vision upholding the Fountain of Song, and chanting in his own lofty and noble style —

"Un Signor di
Correggio

Con alto stil par che
cantando scriva."

Niccolo had come to Milan in Beatrice's bridal train, and remained there ever since, highly valued and beloved by Lodovico and all the ducal family, riding in jousts and tournaments, going on foreign missions, and composing songs and eclogues for that young duchess whose death was one day to inspire some of his most touching verses. But the Marchesa Isabella was the true goddess of his adoration, the mistress to whom his heart and lyre alike were pledged, who was for him, not only "*la mia patrona e signora*," but "*la prima donna del mondo*," "the first lady in all the world." For her he translated Breton legends and Provençal romances; for her he set Virgil and Petrarch to music; for her fair sake, old and stiff as advancing years have made him, he is ready to break a lance or join once more in the dance. At Christmas-time, in the last days of 1491, the impatient Marchesana had written to remind him that she had never yet received the eclogue which he had promised to send her at her brother Alfonso's wedding, and refused to be put off with any other verses, saying that his poems pleased her more than those of any living bard. When in later years she found that Niccolo was inclined to transfer his allegiance to her sister-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia, she was sorely affronted, and after his death entered into a long contention for the possession of the book of poems which he had left behind.

There were many other poets of Beatrice's court whose names were famous in their day, but have long ago been forgotten, and whose works have passed into oblivion with all that vanished world. There was Lancino di Corte, or, as he preferred to

style himself, Lancinus Curtius, the writer of Latin epigrams; and Antonio di Fregoso, the noble Genoese youth who, like Niccolo, won Calmeta and Ariosto's praises, and whose poetic disputes with Lancinus were a feature of Cecilia Gallerani's entertainments; and Baldassare Taccone of Alessandria; and Pietro Lazzarone of the Valtellina. There was Galeotto del Carretto, the Montferrat poet and historian, who left his home at Casale to compose plays and sonnets for Beatrice, and who, like Niccolo da Correggio, was one of Isabella's favourite correspondents, and sent her eclogues and strambotti to sing to the lute. When Beatrice died he had just finished a comedy dedicated to this princess, which he afterwards sent to Isabella, begging her to accept it both for his sake and that of the lamented *Madonna Duchessa sorella*, who had taken pleasure in reading his effusions. And there was another Tuscan poet, Antonio Cammelli of Pistoia, who composed a whole volume of sonnets dedicated to "that most invincible Prince, the light and splendour of the world, Lodovico Moro." These sonnets are of great interest, less on account of their poetic merit than because of the fidelity with which they commemorate political events. The invasion of the French, the conquest of Naples, the battle of Fornovo, the peace of Vercelli, the proclamation of Lodovico as Duke of Milan, his coronation *fêtes* at Milan and Pavia, are all carefully recorded. Nor does the series end here; in another sonnet the poet takes up the note of warning, and bids Lodovico beware of the new King of France and, ceasing to dally with Fortune, prepare to defend his fair duchy. The next time Pistoia took up his pen, it was to wail over the duke's fall and the ruin of Italy, and to hurl curses on the head of the false servants who had betrayed their trust and yielded up the Castello to their master's

foes. This, at least, may be said to Pistoia's credit—he did not forget his generous patron in the days of adversity; and when Pamfilo Sasso, the Modena bard who had basked in the sunshine of the Moro's favour, assailed the fallen duke in his verses, Pistoia rose up in defence of his old master, and fiercely rebuked the cowardly poet.

"I send you," wrote Calmeta to the Marchioness of Mantua in 1502, in a letter enclosing Pistoia's verses, "an invective against Sasso for certain sonnets and epigrams which he printed at Bologna against our Duke Lodovico Sforza, and which some people say that I wrote. It was never my habit to attack others, but if I had wasted a little ink in defending so illustrious a prince, I hardly think I should deserve much blame."[26]

Before the coming of Beatrice there had been no theatre in Milan, but Lodovico had done his best to encourage dramatic art. As early as 1484, he had written to the Duke of Ferrara, asking him to lend him a Bolognese actor, Albergati by name, who was also a skilled mechanic, to give sacred representations during Holy Week in Milan. The presence of Duke Ercole's daughter naturally gave a fresh impulse to the growth of dramatic art, and after Lodovico's visit to Ferrara in 1493, a theatre was erected in Milan. Courtiers and poets vied with each other in the production of plays and masques at each successive Christmas or Carnival. In 1493, Niccolo da Correggio wrote a pastoral entitled *Mopsa e Daphne*, which was performed at court that Carnival, and which he afterwards sent to Isabella, promising to explain its allegorical meaning at their next meeting. Another time, Gaspare Visconti composed the masque with the chorus of Turks, to which we have

already alluded, for representation before the duke and duchess. On one occasion a piece called *La Fatica* was acted at the house of Antonio Maria Sanseverino, whose wife, Margherita of Carpi, was the sister of Elizabeth Gonzaga's beloved companion, Emilia Pia, and herself a learned and cultivated princess. On another a representation described as *La Pazienza* was given before the court, in honour of a visit which Cardinal Federigo Sanseverino paid to Milan.

Music, as Calmeta tells us, was another art that flourished in an especial manner at the Milanese court. Both Lodovico and his wife were passionately fond of music, and the delicious melodies that daily resounded through their palace halls were the theme alike of chronicler and poet. When first Lorenzo de Medici had sent Leonardo to his friend's court to charm the Moro's ears with the surpassing sweetness of his playing, he had brought with him a well-known musician and maker of instruments, Atalante Migliorotti, who stood high in Lodovico's favour, and spent much of his time at Milan. We find Isabella d'Este writing to her friend, Niccolo da Correggio, in 1493, begging him to procure her the loan of a silver lyre, given him by Atalante, that she may learn to play this instrument; and in the following year the marchioness herself stood godmother to the Florentine musician's infant daughter, who was called Isabella after her illustrious sponsor. And in 1492 we find Lodovico writing to thank Francesco Gonzaga for allowing a certain Narcisso, who was in the Marquis of Mantua's service, to visit Milan, and saying what exquisite pleasure this singer's voice has afforded him. The following summer, Isabella, in her turn, begged her sister to allow her favourite violinist, Jacopo di San Secondo, to spend a few

weeks at Mantua; and on the 7th of July Beatrice wrote to desire his return. "Since you are back at Mantua, I think you will not want Jacopo di San Secondo much longer, and beg you to send him back to Pavia as soon as possible, since his music will be a pleasure to my husband, who is suffering from a slight attack of fever." This Jacopo was a famous violin-player of his day, who had settled at the Moro's court, and who after Lodovico's fall left Milan for Rome, where he became the friend of Raphael and Castiglione, and is said to have served as model for the laurel-crowned Apollo of the Parnassus, in the Vatican Stanze. Another of Beatrice's favourite singers was Angelo Testagrossa, a beautiful youth who sang, we are told, like a seraph, and who, after the death of this princess, accepted Isabella's pressing invitation to Mantua, where he composed songs and gave her lessons on the lute. Testagrossa is said to have sung in the Spanish style, which was much in vogue at Milan, where a Spaniard named Pedro Maria was director of the palace concerts, and is frequently mentioned in Bellincioni's poems. The priest Franchino Gaffuri, as already stated, occupied the first chair of music ever founded in Italy. Besides this master's works on music, another treatise on harmony, composed by a priest named Florentio, and dedicated to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, is preserved in the Trivulzian Library, with a fine miniature of Leonardo playing the lyre as frontispiece.

Both the Flemish priest Cordier, with the wonderful tenor voice, and the accomplished master Cristoforo Romano were, as we know, among the chosen singers who accompanied Beatrice on her travels. And there was one more gifted artist, who, like Atalante Migliorotti, was both a skilled musician and a mechanic, and whose whole life was devoted

to the construction of musical instruments of the choicest quality, Lorenzo Gusnasco of Pavia. It was Lodovico Moro who first discovered the rare talents of this "master of organs," as he was styled by his contemporaries, and it was for Beatrice's use that he began to make those wonderful clavichords and lutes and viols that made his name famous throughout Italy. In his hands the manufacture of musical instruments was carried to the highest pitch of excellence. He grudged no labour and spared no pains to make his work perfect. The choicest ebony and ivory, the most precious woods and delicate strings were sought out by him; the best scholars supplied him with Greek and Latin epigrams to be inscribed upon his organs and clavichords. In his opinion both material and shape were of the utmost importance, because, as he wrote to Isabella d'Este, "beauty of form is everything," "*perche ne la forma sta il tuto*." The work of this gifted maker naturally acquired a rare value in the eyes of his contemporaries. Sabba da Castiglione and Teseo Albonese praise him as the man who, above all others, has learnt the secret of combining lovely melodies with beauteous form, just as a divine soul is enshrined in a fair body. Painters and scholars alike took delight in Lorenzo's company. He was the intimate friend of Giovanni Bellini and Andrea Mantegna, of Pietro Bembo and Aldo Manuzio, of Leonardo and Isabella d'Este. It was in these festive days, in the Castello of Pavia, that Lorenzo da Pavia first met both the great Florentine and the accomplished princess who set so high a store on his friendship. For more than twenty years Isabella corresponded regularly with this gifted artist, and employed him not only to make organs and lutes for her, but to buy antiques and cameos, Murano glass

and tapestry, choice pictures and rare books. Whether she wished for a *fantasia*, or Holy Family from the hand of Gian Bellini, or a choice edition of Dante or Petrarch from the press of Aldo Manuzio, it was to Messer Lorenzo that the request was addressed. In 1494, the Pavian master moved to Venice, where he found it easier to procure materials for his trade, and was able to carry on his work on a larger scale. By this time his fame had spread far and wide through Italy. He made an organ for Matthias Corvinus, the King of Hungary, and another which he himself took to Rome for Pope Leo X. But his relations with Duchess Beatrice were not interrupted by this change of abode. In that same year he made her that clavichord which Isabella describes as the best and most beautiful which she had ever seen, and which she never ceased to covet until, after her sister's death and Lodovico's fall, she obtained possession of the precious instrument.

It was at Venice, in the early spring of 1500, that Leonardo da Vinci once more met this master, whom he had formerly known so well at Pavia and Milan. There the two artists who had lived together for many years in the Moro's service conversed sadly of the terrible catastrophe which had overwhelmed their old master in sudden and inevitable ruin, and mourned over the disastrous fate which had plunged the fair Milanese into confusion and misery. Then, as they looked back on the happy days of their former life, and talked of their old companions, the painter brought out a drawing which Lorenzo immediately recognized as the portrait of Isabella d'Este, the illustrious princess, who was proud to call herself their friend.

"Leonardo," he wrote the next day to the

Marchesana, "is here in Venice, and has shown me a portrait of your Highness, which is as natural and lifelike as possible."[27] This drawing, which the princess describes in a letter to the painter as being *ni carbone* and not in colours, is now one of the treasures of the Louvre, and has an inestimable value, both as the work of Leonardo and as a genuine portrait of the most brilliant lady of the Renaissance.

FOOTNOTES:

[24] Uzielli, *Ricerche*, i.: Renier, *Gaspare Visconti*.

[25] *Gazette des B. Arts*, 1879, p. 514.

[26] Renier, *Sonetti di Pistoia* p. 35.

[27] A. Baschet, *Aldo Manuzio*, pp. 70-75.

CHAPTER XIII

Visit of Duke Ercole to Milan, and of Isabella d'Este—Election of Pope Alexander VI.—Bribery of the Cardinals—Influence of Ascanio Sforza over the new Pope, and satisfaction of Lodovico—Hunting-parties at Pavia and Vigevano—*Fêtes* at Milan—Visit of Isabella to Genoa—Lodovico's letters—Piero de Medici—King Ferrante's jealousy of the alliance between Rome and Milan.

1492

That summer Isabella d'Este at length accomplished her long-intended visit to her sister, whom she had not seen since the wedding *fêtes*. Early in July she received a pressing invitation from Lodovico himself, urging her to accompany her father, Duke Ercole, who was expected at Milan towards the end of the month. But, as she wrote to her husband, who was then in Venice, it was quite impossible for her to start on her journey at this early date. In the first place, half of her household was in bed, ladies and servants alike were suffering from a feverish epidemic which had attacked the whole court; and in the second place, many preparations were necessary if she were to appear at Milan in state worthy of the Marquis of Mantua's wife. "Of course, if you wish it," she adds proudly, "I will set off alone, in my chemise, but this I think you will hardly desire."

Signor Lodovico's invitation, however, was gladly accepted, and Isabella made every preparation to start by the middle of August. She sent to Ferrara, urging her favourite goldsmith, as he loved her, to finish a necklace of a hundred links by next week, and begging him to lend her some more jewelled chains for the use of her courtiers and maids-of-honour. And the same day she wrote to the Venetian merchant Taddeo Contarini, excusing herself for her delay in paying for some jewels which she had lately bought, since her visit to Milan necessarily entailed heavy expenses. By the 10th of August she was able to start on her journey, and spent a night on the way at Canneto with her kinswoman, Antonia del Balzo, wife of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga of Bozzolo, who came to meet her with two beautiful daughters. "Messer

Andrea Mantegna himself," exclaimed the marchioness, "could not paint fairer maidens!" On the 12th, she reached Cremona, where Lodovico's cousin, Francesco Sforza, was awaiting her, and a crowd of people hailed her arrival with enthusiasm. After spending a night in the Episcopal palace, she went on to Pizzighettone, where she discovered that her best hat had been forgotten, and sent a messenger back to Mantua with the key of her black chest, desiring one of her servants to look out her hat with the jewelled feather and send it after her by a flying courier. On the 15th, the Marchesana reached Pavia, where both the Duchesses of Milan and Bari rode out to meet her, and placing her between them, after many embraces, conducted her through the city. Here the two dukes and all the ambassadors were awaiting her, and a troop of trumpeters and outriders escorted the party up to the castle gates. That evening she supped alone with Beatrice, and the hours flew by in delightful intercourse. Both sisters were in the highest spirits, and Isabella anticipated the greatest pleasure from her visit, only regretting that her husband had not been able to accompany her.

"The only news here," she wrote next day to the marquis, "is the election of this new Pope, which fills every one with great joy, and is said to be entirely due to Monsignore Ascanio, who will, they say, be the new Vice-Chancellor."

On the 25th of July, Innocent VIII. had breathed his last, and on the 6th of August, the conclave met to elect a new Pope. Among the twenty-three Cardinals of which the Sacred College then consisted, three were prominent candidates for the papal tiara. First of all there was Cardinal Roderigo Borgia, the

oldest and wealthiest of the group, who held the three most important archbishoprics in Spain, as well as innumerable benefices in the rest of Christendom, and whose scandalous vices amid the general corruption of morals in Rome offered no bar to his advancement to the chair of St. Peter. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, the rich and powerful brother of Lodovico Moro, was the second candidate for the tiara; while the third was Giuliano della Rovere, Cardinal of S. Pietro in Vincula, whose well-known French sympathies, as well as the influential position which he had occupied in Rome under his uncle, Sixtus IV., made him unpopular with most of his colleagues. When Ascanio Sforza saw that he could not ensure his own election, he threw his whole influence on the side of Borgia, who lavished his gold and promises freely among the other members of the Sacred College, with the result that he was elected on the 11th of August, and proclaimed Pope under the title of Alexander VI. The secret Archives of the Vatican[28] give full particulars of this election, which was obtained by the most flagrant simony, and proved a prelude to the days of confusion and misery which Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican of Florence, daily prophesied were in store for the Church. Ascanio Sforza was the first to reap the reward of his base compliance. The new Pope loaded him with favours, and openly acknowledged his indebtedness both to him and Lodovico, while at Milan the event was hailed with public rejoicings, and joy-bells and solemn processions celebrated the accession of this pontiff, who was destined to prove the most bitter enemy of the House of Sforza.

"Signor Lodovico," wrote the Ferrarese envoy, our old friend Giacomo Trotti, to his master, "is in the

highest spirits at the success of his brother's efforts. Cardinal Ascanio is likely, people say, to administer all the papal estates, and will be every bit as much pope as if he sat in Alexander's chair."

Isabella's letters to her husband give the same impression. On the 19th of August she wrote from Pavia—

"To-day I dined with Signor Lodovico and my sister in their rooms, according to our usual habit of taking our meals together, sometimes in my rooms, sometimes in theirs. After dinner he dismissed all the company, excepting the Duke and Duchess of Milan, myself, and my companions, whom Signor Lodovico invited to remain, and with his own lips he read aloud a letter from his ambassador in Rome, saying that His Highness had sent for him, and addressed him in the following terms: 'Take note of my words. I acknowledge that I have been made pope by the action of Monsignore Ascanio, contrary to all expectations, and in a truly miraculous manner. I mean to show myself the most grateful of popes. It is my pleasure that he should sit in my chair, and dispose of my spiritual and temporal estate as if I were myself,' with many other affectionate words. Cardinal Ascanio has already received the first proofs of his gratitude, since, besides the vice-chancellorship, the Pope has given him his own furnished house in Rome, as well as the city of Nepi, and many other things. And His Highness has already dined with him in private.

"Besides this, Signor Lodovico read us a letter which the Pope had written with his own hand to Monsignore Ascanio, complaining that he had not seen him for half a day, a period which seemed to him more like a thousand years, and begging him to

come to him at once, since he had many things of the utmost importance to settle with him. After describing this interview, the said Monsignore went on to tell how warmly His Holiness spoke of Signor Lodovico, saying that he was determined to maintain the most cordial relations with His Highness, and profit in all cases by his advice, and only wished that he were seated in his chair. All of this, my dear lord, affords the court here reason for the greatest rejoicings, and I have expressed both in word and gesture the pleasure which your Highness and I take in these things, because of our close union with Signor Lodovico."

The marchioness goes on to describe a hunting-party, in which the whole court had taken part.

"Yesterday, about four o'clock, all of these lords and ladies rode out with me to a place called S. Pirono, some four miles from Pavia, and had fine sport. White tents were erected in the meadows on the edge of the forest, and in the midst a *pergola* of green boughs, under which the duchess and I took our places, the duke and others, whether on horseback or on foot, occupying other tents. One stag of the eight which were found there, ran out of the wood, followed by eight of the Duke of Bari's dogs. Messer Galeazzo galloped after it with a long spear, and killed it before our eyes. To-morrow we dine at Belriguardo, and go on to supper at Vigevano, where we expect my father, who is to arrive on Thursday."

Duke Ercole had reached Pavia on the 4th of August, and had paid a visit to the Certosa with his son-in-law, after which he returned to Ferrara, where his presence was required, owing to urgent affairs of State connected with the Pope's death. Now he once more joined his daughters, accompanied by his son

Alfonso and a troop of actors and pages skilled in singing and reciting poetry. Among them was young Ariosto, the bard of the Orlando Furioso, who was to celebrate the praises of all the princely personages present at Pavia and Vigevano, in his great poem, and who on this occasion probably met Leonardo for the first time. *Fêtes* and hunting-parties now succeeded each other every day. Even the King of Naples' ambassadors went out hunting, and one of them succeeded in wounding a wild boar. Isabella sent her husband wonderful accounts of the thrilling adventures and splendid sport which afforded the two sisters such unfeigned delight.

"To-day," she wrote on the 27th of August, "we went out hunting in a beautiful valley which seemed as if it were expressly created for the spectacle. All the stags were driven into the wooded valley of the Ticino, and closed in on every side by the hunters, so that they were forced to swim the river and ascend the mountains, where the ladies watched them from under the *pergola* and green tents set up on the hillside. We could see every movement of the animals along the valley and up the mountain-side, where the dogs chased them across the river; but only two climbed the hillside and ran far out of sight, so that we did not see them killed, but Don Alfonso and Messer Galeazzo both gave them chase, and succeeded in wounding them. Afterwards came a doe with its young one, which the dogs were not allowed to follow. Many wild boars and goats were found, but only one boar was killed before our eyes, and one wild goat, which fell to my share. Last of all came a wolf, which made fine somersaults in the air as it ran past us, and amused the whole company; but none of its arts availed the poor beast, which soon followed its comrades to the slaughter. And so,

with much laughter and merriment, we returned home, to end the day at supper, and give the body a share in the recreations of the mind."[29]

Four venison pasties were despatched to Mantua the next day as a present to the marquis, whose absence from these expeditions his wife never ceased to regret, and for whom, at least in these early years of her married life, she had a genuine affection.

"All of these days," she writes on the 22nd, "I have been trying to write to Your Highness, but have never been able to find time, as I am always in my sister's and Signor Lodovico's company. Now I have at length snatched a moment, and hasten to pay you a visit in mind, since I cannot do so in person. For greater even than all the pleasures which I am enjoying here, is the satisfaction I receive when I hear that you are well and happy." A week later she wrote again: "It really seems an age since I saw Your Highness, and, pleasant and delightful as it is here, I begin to get a little tired of these scenes, but rejoice at the prospect of paying a visit to Genoa before long." And in an affectionate letter to her mother, she says that sometimes in the middle of the finest hunt she remembers with a pang how long it is since she has seen her, and how far away she is from Ferrara, and the thought throws a shadow over the brightest sunshine and the gayest pastimes.

After a succession of boar hunts at Novara and Mortara, Lodovico and Beatrice took their guests to Milan on the 15th of September, and Isabella entered the capital on horseback between the two young duchesses, while "the old Duchess Bona," she tells her husband, "and her daughter Madonna Bianca, with many other ladies, were awaiting me in my rooms in the Castello, the same suite which Signor Lodovico

occupied at the time of his wedding."

The duke's mother still remained at court, and occupied rooms in the Castello, although she made no secret of her aversion for her powerful brother-in-law, and was secretly intriguing against him with her nephew, Charles VIII. At her request the French king wrote a letter to Lodovico, desiring him to give the duchess's mother leave to come to France for his wife Anne of Brittany's confinement. But the Moro, fearing the effect of Bona's presence at the French court, courteously declined Charles's invitation, alleging as an excuse the fact that both Bona's daughter-in-law, the Duchess Isabella, and her young sister-in-law, his own wife Beatrice, were expecting similar events early in the next year, while her daughter Bianca was of marriageable age and needed her mother's protection. At Milan new pleasures awaited Isabella. Theatrical representations in honour of Duke Ercole, were given by the Delle Torre family and other noble houses, and Isabella spent long days with her sister in the park and beautiful gardens of the Castello, among the roses and fountains which Lodovico loved. He was never tired of beautifying and enlarging the grounds, which now extended three miles round the Castello, and sent to Mantua for a pair of swans to adorn the lake, saying how much he liked to watch the movements of these white-plumed birds upon the water. To his sister-in-law, as Isabella always repeated in her letters, the Moro showed himself the kindest and most generous of hosts, and was unwearied in providing for her amusements and gratification.

"To-day," she writes on the evening after her arrival at Milan, "Signor Lodovico showed me the treasure, which Your Highness saw when you were

last here, but which has lately received the addition of two large chests full of ducats, and another full of gold quartz about two and a half feet square. Would to God that we, who are so fond of spending money, possessed as much!"[30]

After which characteristic expression, the Marchesana proceeds to tell her lord that the date of her departure for Genoa has been fixed for the last day of September, and to describe her brother-in-law's preparations for the visit. Before her departure, he made a splendid present, which she describes in a letter written on the 20th of September. "Yesterday Signor Lodovico sent me, with the Duchess of Milan and Bari, to look at some sumptuous brocades which he had seen in the house of one of the richest merchants here. When we came home, he asked me which I considered the finest. I replied that what I had most admired was a certain gold and silver tissue embroidered with the twin towers of the lighthouse in the port of Genoa, bearing the Spanish motto, *Tal trabalio mes plases par tal thesauros non perder*."

The Moro praised her good taste, saying that he had already had a *camora*, or robe, made for his wife of this material, and begged her to accept fifteen yards of the same stuff, and wear it for his sake.

"This brocade," wrote Isabella joyfully to her husband, "is worth at least forty ducats a yard!" And without delay she sent for a tailor to cut out the gown, in order that she might wear it once before she left Milan.

The Marchesino Stanga and Count Girolamo Tuttavilla were chosen to escort Isabella to Genoa, where she was received in state by the governor Adorno, and splendidly entertained at the Casa

Spinola by the chief citizens. Beatrice's delicate state of health had prevented her from accompanying her sister on this journey, but she still persisted in taking long hunting expeditions, and one day when she and the Moro were staying at Cuzzago, encountered a savage boar which had already wounded several greyhounds.

"My wife," wrote the Moro to his sister-in-law, "came suddenly face to face with this furious beast, and herself gave it the first wound, after which Messer Galeazzo and I followed suit, so that the boar must have had great pleasure in feeling how much trouble it had given us and to what dangers its hunters had been exposed."

The result of this long and fatiguing hunting expedition was that Beatrice fell seriously ill. Lodovico was much alarmed, and sent daily bulletins both to his sister-in-law and to her mother at Ferrara. "There is no fresh news to give you here," he wrote on the 6th of October. "My whole days are spent at the bedside of my dear wife, endeavouring to distract her thoughts and amuse her mind as best I can during her illness."

Isabella, who had intended to return home from Genoa, hurried back to Milan at the news of her sister's illness, and did not leave her until she was convalescent. During these weeks Lodovico showed himself the most devoted and attentive of husbands, and his letters to Isabella are full of the practical jokes and witty dialogues and repartees with which he and Messer Galeazzo amused the duchess. The following letter affords a characteristic specimen of the kind of fooling which these great Renaissance lords and ladies carried on at the expense of the half-witted jesters and buffoons who were attached to

their different households:—

"DEAR SISTER AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND EXCELLENT LADY,

"You know what good sport we had in the wild boar-hunts at which you were present this last summer. Poor Mariolo, you remember, could not be there, first because he was ill at Milan, and afterwards because he was required to keep my wife company during her illness, and was much distressed to have been absent from these expeditions, when he heard that even the king's ambassadors had wounded a wild boar. And he told us all what great things he would have done, had he only been present. Now that my dearest wife is better, and begins to be able to go out-of-doors again, I thought we would have a little fun at his expense. Some wolves and wild goats having been driven into a wood near La Pecorara, which, as you know, is about a mile from here, on the way to La Sforzesca, Cardinal Sanseverino had a common farm pig shut up in the same enclosure, and the next day we went out hunting, and took Mariolo with us. While we hunted the wolves and wild goats, we left the pig to him, and he, taking it for a wild boar, chased it with a great hue and cry along the woods. If your Highness could only have seen him running after this pig, you would have died of laughter, the more so that he gallantly tried to spear it three times over, and only succeeded in touching its side once. And seeing how proud he was of his prowess, we said to him, 'Don't you know, Mariolo, that you have been hunting a tame pig?' He stood dumb with astonishment, and stared as if he did not know what we could mean, and so we all came home infinitely amused, and every one asked Mariolo if he

did not know the difference between a wild boar and a tame pig!

"Your brother,
LODOVICO MARIA SFORTIA.[31]

Vigevano, December 6, 1492."

The most remarkable thing about these letters is that a prince who was engaged in so much and varied business, who himself conducted a vast correspondence in which the most intricate diplomatic questions of the day were involved with his envoys at the different European courts, and personally superintended every detail of administration, while at the same time he gave minute instructions to the hundreds of architects, sculptors, and painters in his service, should have found time to write these bantering epistles to his sister-in-law. One of these letters, for instance, is devoted to a long account of the jokes that passed between Messer Galeazzo and the duchess at table, how Messer Galeazzo begged to be allowed a taste of the duchess's soup, and complained that he was forgotten now that the Marchesana was no longer there, and how Beatrice told him she would write and tell her sister, to which he replied, "Tell her whatever you like, as long as I get my soup!"

Yet at this very moment, when he penned these joking letters to Isabella, Lodovico was engaged in some of the most difficult and anxious negotiations with other States.

During Ercole d'Este's visit, the question of sending the customary congratulations to the new Pope had been discussed, and Lodovico had suggested that the ambassadors of the four allied powers—Milan,

Naples, Florence, and Ferrara—should send a joint deputation, both as a mark of special honour to His Holiness, and as a public manifesto to foreign powers of the strength of these united States. The step, he was confident, would produce a good effect both on the King of the Romans and Charles VIII. of France, whose designs on Italy were already exciting alarm. Both the Duke of Ferrara and King Ferrante, who had been consulted through his ambassadors, when they came to hunt at Vigevano, agreed readily to Lodovico's proposal, and the only person to raise objections was Piero de' Medici, who had lately succeeded his father as chief magistrate of Florence, and pretended to the same power. The death of his friend Lorenzo had been sincerely deplored by Lodovico, who, before many months had passed, began to discover how weak and contemptible a character his son possessed, and had already consulted his astrologer as to the influence which this young man would have upon his own fortunes. Now the vain and foolish youth refused to join in the proposed embassy to the Vatican, because he wished to appear alone before Alexander VI. and impress that new Pope by the magnificence of his apparel and retinue. Not content with frustrating the Moro's plan, Piero induced King Ferrante to withdraw his consent to the joint deputation, a step which did not tend to improve the strained relations that had existed for some time past between Naples and Milan. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere had retired to Ostia in disgust at the election of the Borgia Pope, leaving Ascanio Sforza all powerful at the Vatican, and the Pope availed himself of every occasion to show his friendship for Lodovico. Already a marriage had been proposed between Alexander's daughter Lucrezia Borgia and Giovanni Sforza, Prince of

Pesaro, and the King of Naples looked with alarm on the friendly relations that existed between the Holy See and Milan. "Alexander VI.," said Ferrante, bitterly, "has no respect for the Holy Church, and cares for nothing but the aggrandisement of his own family. Rome will soon become a Milanese camp."

But while Lodovico Sforza looked with suspicion on the intrigues of Ferrante's son Alfonso, and was anxious to strengthen his alliance with other powers, he had as yet no thought of inviting the French to invade Italy. On the contrary, the whole tenor of his private letters and public despatches was marked by the same anxiety to maintain cordial relations with the different Italian states, in order that they might present a united front to foreign enemies. However friendly were his advances to the King of France, he had never by word or hint given him the slightest encouragement to invade Italy or assert his claim to the crown of Naples. It was only when he saw peace restored between Charles and Maximilian, on the one hand, and on the other a treaty of alliance concluded between the Pope and the King of Naples, that he began to tremble for his own safety, and suddenly changed his policy. But for the moment counsels of peace prevailed, and the ambitious Moro could look forward with hope and confidence to the coming year, that promised to bring him new joys, and perchance the fulfilment of his long-cherished desire, in the birth of a son and heir.

FOOTNOTES:

[28] Pastor's "History of the Popes," vol. v. p. 383, etc.

[29] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 350, etc.

[30] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

[31] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

CHAPTER XIV

Birth of Beatrice's first-born son—The Duchess of Ferrara at Milan—*Fêtes* and rejoicings at court and in the Castello—The court moves to Vigevano—Beatrice's wardrobe—Her son's portrait—Letters to her mother and sister—Lodovico's plans for a visit to Ferrara and Venice.

1493

On the 25th of January, at four o'clock on a winter's afternoon, Beatrice gave birth to a son in the Rocchetta of the castle of Milan.

"Signor Lodovico's joy at the birth of his first-born son is beyond all description," wrote Giacomo Trotti to his master, Duke Ercole. Duchess Leonora was present on the occasion, and herself announced the happy event in a letter to her daughter Isabella, who promptly sent a special envoy with her congratulations to the Duke of Bari and her sister. A fortnight before, Leonora had set out for Pavia, where Trotti had been sent to meet her, and crowds shouting *Moro! Moro!* had everywhere hailed her

arrival. Three days later, she reached Milan in time to make the last preparations before the birth of her grandson. The child, a fine healthy boy, received the name of Ercole, in compliment to his grandfather, the Duke of Ferrara, but was afterwards called Maximilian, when the emperor became his godfather after his marriage to Bianca Sforza. The auspicious event was hailed with public rejoicings. The bells rang for six days, and solemn processions were held, and thanksgivings offered up in all the churches and abbeys of the Milanese. Prisoners for debt were released, and the advent of the new-born prince was celebrated with as great honour as if his father had been the reigning duke. Already some of the courtiers attached to Giangaleazzo's household began to whisper that the birth of Francesco, the little Count of Pavia, two years before, had been celebrated with far less pomp. But in the same week Duchess Isabella, who was residing in the *Corte ducale* of the Castello, gave birth to a daughter, who received the name of Bona, so that, as Lodovico informed the foreign ambassadors, there was double cause for rejoicings.

Full and elaborate details of the ceremonies observed on this occasion, and of the splendid *fêtes* that attended the recovery of the two duchesses, were sent to Isabella d'Este at Mantua by her mother's maid of honour, Teodora degli Angeli. Every particular of the decorations in the rooms of the Castello, the colour of the hangings and the draperies of the cradle, the gowns worn by the different princesses at their successive appearances in public, was faithfully reported for Isabella's benefit. On the eve of the young prince's birth, the sumptuous cradle and layette prepared for his reception were shown to the Ambassadors, chief

magistrates, and nobles of Milan, and displayed on tables covered with gold and crimson brocade, lined with Spanish cat, in the Sala del Tesoro, adjoining Beatrice's rooms. All through the next fortnight costly gifts for the young duchess and her new-born babe were received from the magistrates of Milan and the chief towns of the duchy, and principal courtiers. On Sunday, the 4th of February, the ambassadors, councillors, magistrates and court officials, together with many noble Milanese ladies, were invited to present their congratulations to Beatrice, and that evening the gifts presented to her were publicly displayed in the Sala del Tesoro. The doors of the shelves along the walls were thrown open, and the splendid gold and silver plate, the massive jars, bowls, vases, and dishes, which they contained, were ranged in tiers on a stand, protected by iron bars and guarded by two men-at-arms wearing ducal liveries. The seneschal of Lodovico's household, Ambrogio da Corte, received the guests at the doors of the Rocchetta, paying each of them the honours due to his rank, and conducted them to the Sala del Tesoro. There they were received by stewards clad in silver brocade, who led them through a suite of rooms adorned with gilded columns and hung with white damask curtains richly embroidered with equestrian figures and other Sforzesque devices, into the presence of the duchess. This chamber was still more richly decorated than the others. "Indeed, it is calculated," writes the admiring maid of honour, "that the tapestries and hangings here are worth 70,000 ducats." Two pages guarded the doors, and within, near the fireplace, Duchess Leonora sat at her daughter's bedside, accompanied by two or three ladies. Beatrice's own couch was gorgeously adorned with draperies of

mulberry colour and gold, and a crimson canopy bearing the names of Lodovico and Beatrice in massive gold, with red and white rosettes and a fringe of golden balls which alone was valued at 8000 ducats.

"All," exclaimed Teodora—"*bello e galante*, beyond words!"[32]

After paying their respects to the illustrious mother, the guests passed on into the room of the new-born child—*la camera del Puttino*. Here the walls were hung with brocades of the Sforza colours, red, white, and blue, and tapestries, embroidered with all manner of beasts and birds and fantastic designs. But the golden cradle itself, which had been made in Milan, was the most beautiful thing of all, with its four slender columns and pale blue silk canopy enriched with gold cords and fringes. "Truly rich and elegant beyond anything that I have ever seen!" writes the ecstatic maid of honour, whose eyes were fairly dazzled by the sight of all these splendours, and who, as she told Isabella, was lost in wonder and admiration at the magnificence of the Milanese court. After a glimpse of the royal infant, sleeping under his coverlid of cloth of gold, watched over by Beatrice's ladies, the visitors were conducted into Signor Lodovico's hall of audience, where he received the ambassadors and chief councillors, and through the adjoining room, occupied by his favourite astrologer, Messer Ambrogio da Rosate —"without whom nothing can be done here," remarks Teodora—back to the entrance hall, where the seneschal was in waiting to escort them to the gates.

Messer Ambrogio, as Teodora opined, had to be consulted before the duchess was allowed to leave

her bed. This was on Wednesday, the 24th of February, on which day both the royal ladies issued from their rooms at the same hour. "Now at length," wrote the lively maid of honour to Isabella, "I am able to inform your Highness that the illustrious Madonna your sister has left her room, and those poor tormented souls whose task it has been for so many nights to bring in shawls to spread over the presents, are at last freed from their labours."

That same day, both the young duchesses went in state to S. Maria delle Grazie, to return thanks and praise to God for the birth of their children. The royal ladies rode in the Duchess of Ferrara's chariot, a sumptuous carriage hung with purple, and were accompanied by Leonora herself and five other Sforza princesses—Alfonso d'Este's wife, Anna; Duke Giangaleazzo's sister, Bianca Sforza; Signor Lodovico's daughter, Bianca, the youthful bride of Galeazzo Sanseverino; Madonna Beatrice—Niccolo da Correggio's mother—and Madonna Camilla Sforza of Pesaro. The toilettes worn on this occasion were exceptionally rich, as Teodora relates. "Our Madonna, Duchess Leonora, wore black, as usual, but was very gallantly adorned with her finest jewels. The Duchess of Bari had a lovely vest of gold brocade worked in red and blue silk, and a blue silk mantle trimmed with long-haired fur, and her hair coiled as usual in a silken net. Duchess Isabella wore gold brocade and green velvet enriched with crimson cords and silver thread, and a mantle of crimson velvet lined with grey silk. Both ladies were covered with jewels. Madonna Anna's *camora* was of cloth-of-gold with crimson sleeves, lined with fur and edged with gold fringe. One fine invention which I noticed was a new trimming made of grey lamb's wool, but there was no end to the variety of colours and fringes

or to the beauty of the jewels."

After hearing a solemn Te Deum and other canticles very beautifully sung by the choir of the ducal chapel, the whole party drove to the house of Count Della Torre, who entertained the dukes and duchesses, ambassadors and councillors, and all the chief gentlemen and ladies of the court at a splendid banquet. On the following day the duchesses and princesses were entertained at a feast given by Niccolo's mother, Madonna Beatrice, in her rooms in the Castello, and appeared in fresh costumes and still more splendid jewels. On Friday no *fête* was given, but most of the youthful princes and princesses went out hunting in the park, and three stags were killed in the course of the day. Beatrice appeared in a riding-habit of rose-tinted cloth, and a large jewel instead of a feather in her silk hat, and rode on a black horse. Madonna Anna wore black and gold, with a pearl-embroidered crimson hat, and her sister Bianca also appeared on horseback, while Duchess Leonora spent the day with old Duchess Bona in her rooms.

On Saturday a *fête* was given at the house of Gaspare di Pusterla. Beatrice looked particularly charming with a feather of rubies in her hair, and a crimson satin robe embroidered with a pattern of knots and compasses and many ribbons, "after her favourite fashion," adds Teodora. It is these very ribbons that we still see to-day, both in the few portraits that we have of the short-lived duchess, and in the marble effigy upon her tomb. Isabella of Aragon appeared on this occasion, in a gown embroidered with books and letters, a favourite device of Renaissance ladies; while Anna Sforza was all in white, "because it was Saturday," explained

Teodora, and she had vowed to wear no colours on that day for a certain number of weeks. This was a common practice with many Italian princesses who had lately recovered from illness or given birth to a child, and one to which we find frequent allusion in the correspondence of Isabella d'Este. On Saturday all the court attended high mass at S. Maria delle Grazie, and a last entertainment was given, this time by Duchess Beatrice herself, in the Rocchetta.

The next day, Lodovico took his wife and mother-in-law, with the Duchess of Milan and their other guests, to Vigevano, to enjoy a little rest and country air. But here fresh amusements awaited them, and the splendour of Beatrice's wardrobe and the treasures of her *camerini* filled the Ferrarese visitors with wonder and envy. On the 6th of March, Bernardo Prosperi wrote to tell Isabella that our Madonna had been conducted by the jester Mariolo over Beatrice's "*guardaroba*," and had seen all the splendid gowns, pelisses, and mantles which had been made for her during the last two years, about eighty-four in all, "besides many more," adds the writer, "which your sister the duchess has in Milan." The costliness of the materials, and the rich and intricate embroidery which covered satins and brocades, made Leonora exclaim that she felt as if she were in a sacristy looking at priests' vestments and altar frontals. After examining all of these fine clothes, the duchess was taken into two other *camerini*, where Beatrice, after the fashion of great ladies in those days, had collected her favourite books and *object d'art*. One cabinet was full of Murano glass of delicate shape and colour, of porcelain dishes, and majolica from Faenza or Gubbio. Another held ivories, crystals, and enamels engraved in the same style as Lodovico's vases in the

treasury at Milan. Perfumes and washes filled another case, while a separate cabinet was devoted to hunting implements, dog-collars, pouches, flasks, horns, knives, and hoods for falcons. "There was, indeed," added Duchess Leonora's attendant, "enough to fill many shops."

The evenings at Vigevano were enlivened with music and singing, and, by Lodovico's orders, a band of Spanish musicians who had been sent from Rome to Milan by his brother, Cardinal Ascanio, came to play before Beatrice and her mother, who both admired the sweet strains of their large viols, and examined the shape and size of their instruments with curiosity. On Sunday theatrical representations were given, and Beatrice appeared in a wonderful new gown made of gold-striped cloth, with a crimson vest laced with fine silver thread "arranged," wrote an admiring lady-in-waiting, "in the most graceful fashion. This your sister wore," she adds, "because it was Carnival Sunday; but even now, although Lent has begun for most of us, Carnival is not yet over for these highnesses, since Signor Lodovico and his duchess, Messer Galeazzo, the Duke and Duchess of Milan, and many of their courtiers, have received dispensations from Rome to eat meat all the same."[33]

Meanwhile Beatrice's little son was growing into a strong healthy child, and her letters are full of the beauty and perfections of her precious babe. Again and again, in her notes to Isabella, she talks of "my son Ercole," with all a young mother's proud delight.

"I cannot tell you," she writes to her sister, "how well Ercole is looking, and how big and plump he has grown lately. Each time I see him after a few days' absence, I am amazed and delighted to see how

much he has grown and improved, and I often wish that you could be here to see him, as I am quite sure you would never be able to stop petting and kissing him."

Isabella, on her part, wrote warmly to her sister in return, saying how much she longed to see her beautiful boy—"*il suo bello puttino*" and "not only to see him, but to hold him in my arms and enjoy his company after my own fashion."

Duchess Leonora returned to Ferrara at the end of another week, and one of Beatrice's first anxieties was to have a portrait of her child painted for her mother. On the 16th of April, she wrote from her favourite country house Villa Nova, where she had brought the babe to enjoy the sweet spring air—

MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MADAMA MINE, AND DEAREST MOTHER,

"Your Highness must forgive my delay in writing to you. The reason was that every day I have been hoping the painter would bring me the portrait of Ercole, which my husband and I now send you by this post. And, I can assure you, he is much bigger than this picture makes him appear, for it is already more than a week since it was painted. But I do not send the measure of his height, because people here tell me if I measure him he will never grow! Or else I certainly would let you have it. And my lord and I, both of us, commend ourselves to your Highness, and I kiss your hand, my dearest mother.

"Your obedient servant and child,
BEATRICE SFORTIA DA ESTE,
with *my own* hand.[34]

To the most illustrious Lady my dearest Mother,

Signora Duchessa di Ferrara."

The baby's portrait was forwarded to Mantua for Isabella's inspection, together with a letter from her mother, saying—

"I enclose a drawing which has been sent to us from Milan, to show how well our grandson thrives, and certainly, if we have been already told how flourishing he is, this gives us a living witness to his beauty and well-being. And if you ask me whether the portrait is a good one, I need only tell you who has sent it and who is the master who has done this

drawing, and then I am sure you will be satisfied."

Leonora's words excite our wonder as to who the artist could be whose name of itself would be enough to satisfy Isabella of the excellence of the work. As Signor Luzio has already remarked,[35] it is impossible to read these words without thinking that Leonardo must have been the artist employed by Lodovico on this occasion to take a sketch of his infant son. But the drawing of Ercole has vanished, and the painter's name remains unknown.

Another name which recurs frequently in Beatrice's letters to both her mother and sister at this time, is that of a Spanish embroiderer, named Maestro Jorba, noted for his rare skill, who was in the service of the Duchess of Ferrara, and was left by her at Vigevano in April, to design hangings and gowns for Lodovico's wife. On the 14th of March, Jorba was sent back to Ferrara with a letter from Beatrice to her mother, expressing her satisfaction with his work; and in April, Leonora sent her a new design for a *camora* which the clever Spaniard had invented.

"I have to-night," wrote Beatrice in reply, "received the design of the *camora* made by Jorba, which I admire very much, and have just shown it to my embroiderer, as your Highness advised. He remarks that the flowers of the pattern are all the same size, and since the *camora* will naturally be cut narrower above than below, the flowers ought to be altered in the same proportion. I have not yet decided what will be the best thing to do, but thought I would tell you what Schavezi says, and wait to hear what you advise, and then do whatever you think best."

Later in the same year, we find Maestro Jorba once more at Milan, working for Duchess Beatrice, much to the annoyance of her sister Isabella, who was

anxious to secure the services of the skilful embroiderer, and offered him a salary of two hundred ducats a year if he would settle at Mantua. Jorba, however, seems to have preferred to remain at Ferrara, and only paid occasional visits to the princesses of Este at Milan and Mantua.

Throughout April, all the tailors and embroiderers, goldsmiths and jewellers, in Beatrice's service were busy making preparations for a visit which their mistress was shortly to pay to her old home. Before Leonora left Vigevano the Moro had promised to bring his wife and child to Ferrara in May, and had decided to send Beatrice to Venice, with her mother Duchess Leonora, who was going to spend a few days with her son Alfonso and his wife, at the palace of the Estes on the Canal Grande. He had further intimated his intention of paying a visit to his sister-in-law at Mantua on the way. Isabella, who had just accepted an invitation from the Doge, Agostino Barbarigo, to visit Venice for the Feast of the Ascension, was somewhat dismayed when the news reached her, and looked forward with no little alarm to the prospect of entertaining her splendid brother-in-law. She wrote off without delay to consult her husband on the subject—

"Madama sends me word that Signor Lodovico has decided to visit Ferrara in May, and gives me the list of the company who are to attend him, which I enclose for you to see. For my part I can hardly believe it, but shall be sorry if I am at Venice when such *fêtes* are being held at Ferrara. Your Highness must decide what you think is best for the honour of our house, since when I was at Milan Signor Lodovico told me that if he came to Ferrara he would visit Mantua on the way. No doubt you will do what

seems to be most prudent, and will let me know your wishes. But perhaps I may be mistaken.[36]

"Mantua, 9th of April, 1493."

Isabella was still more disturbed when she heard that Lodovico intended to send his wife to Venice. Her pride shrank from the bare notion of appearing before the Doge and Senate at the same time as her sister, whose sumptuous apparel and numerous suite she felt herself unable to rival. "Nothing in the world," she wrote to Gianfrancesco, who was then at Venice as captain-general of the Republic's forces, "will induce me to go to Venice at the same time as my sister the duchess."

And she insisted on her desire to appear before the Doge, not as a guest and foreign visitor, but as a daughter and servant, begging that she might be treated without any pomp or ceremony.

Fortunately, whether from political motives, or from his usual attention to his astrologer's advice, Lodovico deferred his visit to Ferrara until the middle of May, and himself wrote a courteous letter to Isabella, expressing his regret that he would after all be unable to accept her invitation to Mantua, since he found himself obliged to visit Parma. The marchioness, thus happily relieved from her fears, set off for Ferrara on the 4th of May, and proceeded to Venice a week later, having doubled the number of her retinue, and strained every nerve to present an appearance which should not offer too marked a contrast with Beatrice's regal splendours.

FOOTNOTES:

[32] L. Porrò in A. S. L., ix. 327.

[33] Porrò, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

[34] A. Venturi in A. S. L., xii. 227.

[35] Archivio Storico Lombardo, xvii. 368.

[36] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

CHAPTER XV

Lodovico's ambitious designs—Isabella of Aragon appeals to her father—Breach between Naples and Milan—Alliance between the Pope, Venice, and Milan proclaimed—Mission of Erasmo Brasca to the king of the Romans—Journey of Lodovico and Beatrice to Ferrara—*Fêtes* and tournaments—Visit to Belriguardo, and return of Lodovico to Milan—Arrival of Belgiojoso from France.

1493

The birth of Beatrice's son marks a new development in her husband's policy. Up to that time the Moro seems to have been content to govern in his nephew's name, and had rejected with horror King Ferrante's suggestion that he should depose Gian Galeazzo as incapable, and reign in his stead. But whether it was that Beatrice in her turn had become ambitious to bear the title of Duchess of

Milan and see her son recognized as heir to the crown, or whether the birth of his son stirred up new desires in her lord's breast, it is certain that the spring of 1493 was a turning-point in Lodovico's career. From this time he began to aim at reigning in his nephew's stead, and applied himself in good earnest to obtain legal recognition of his title. In the first place, the birth of Ercole, and the extraordinary honours paid to the child and his mother on this occasion, had the effect of exasperating Isabella of Aragon, and exciting new and bitter rivalry between herself and Beatrice. Gian Galeazzo, sunk in idle pleasures and debauchery, had long ceased to take any interest in the government of Milan, or to show the least wish to assert himself. He was recognized on all hands as altogether unfit to rule—in the words of the historian Guicciardini, "*incapacissimo*." But with his wife it was different. In public she controlled her rage and appeared with her cousin at *fêtes* and state ceremonies, but in private she wept bitter tears. Already her father, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, had begged his sister Duchess Leonora and her husband to try and induce Lodovico to restore the Duke and Duchess of Milan to their rightful position, and the good duchess, who was on friendly terms with Bona of Savoy and with her own niece, Isabella of Aragon, did all in her power to soften the rivalry between the two young princesses. But after her departure from Milan, Isabella's ill-concealed anger broke out, and, according to Corio, she wrote the memorable Latin letter to her father.

"It was then," writes the Milanese chronicler, "that the duchess, being a princess of great spirit, refused to endure the humiliations to which she and her husband were exposed, and wrote to Alfonso her father, after this manner: 'Many years have passed,

my father, since you first wedded me to Gian Galeazzo, on the understanding that he would in due time succeed to the sceptre of his father and ascend the throne of Galeazzo and Francesco Sforza and of his Visconti ancestors. He is now of age and is himself a father; but he is not yet in possession of his dominions, and can only obtain the actual necessaries of life from the hands of Lodovico and his ministers. It is Lodovico who administers the state, treats of war and peace, confirms the laws, grants privileges, imposes taxes, hears petitions, and raises money. Everything is in his power, while we are left without friends or money, and are reduced to live as private persons. Not Gian Galeazzo, but Lodovico, is recognized as lord of the kingdom. He places prefects in the castles, raises military forces, appoints magistrates, and discharges all the duties of a prince. He is, in fact, the true duke. His wife has lately borne him a son, who every one prophesies will soon be called Count of Pavia, and will succeed to the dukedom, and royal honours were paid him at his birth, while we and our children are treated with contempt, and it is not without risk to our lives that we remain under the roof of the palace, from which he would remove us in his envious hatred, leaving me widowed and desolate, destitute of help and friends. But I have still spirit and courage of my own; the people regard us with compassion, and look upon him with hatred and curses, because he has robbed them of their gold to satisfy his greed. I am not able to contend with men, and am forced to suffer every kind of humiliation. There is no one here to whom I can speak, for even our servants are given us by him. But if you have any fatherly compassion, if a spark of royal or noble feeling still lives in your heart, if love of me and the sight of my tears can move your soul, I

implore you to come to our help, and deliver your daughter and son-in-law from the fear of slavery, and restore them once more to their rightful kingdom. But if you will not help us, I would rather die by my own hands than bear the yoke of strangers, which would be a still greater evil than to allow a rival to reign in my place.'"

This letter was probably composed by the historian, but there is no doubt that it reproduces the wronged duchess's sentiments, and that Corio does not exaggerate the effect which his daughter's indignant appeal produced upon Alfonso. "Shall we suffer our own blood to be despised?" he is said to have exclaimed, when he called upon his father to avenge his daughter's wrong, and at the same time pointed out how fraught with danger to the realm of Naples was the existence of so powerful and independent a prince as Lodovico. But the old king preferred to have recourse to his usual expedients of cunning and intrigue, and while he employed every artifice to undermine Lodovico's influence both at the other courts of Italy and in France, he sent ambassadors to congratulate the Moro on his son's birth, and only expostulated in a friendly manner with his kinsman. Lodovico himself, however, was too astute not to see the dangers which threatened him, and he became doubly anxious to form a close alliance with the Pope, and with his old enemies the Signory of Venice. Early in 1493, Alexander VI., now Lodovico Sforza's firm friend, proposed a new alliance between himself, Milan, and Venice to the Doge and Senate, and Count Caiazzo was sent by Lodovico to negotiate the terms of the treaty, which was to hold good for twenty-five years, and had for its express object the maintenance of the peace of Italy. Ferrara and Mantua both joined the new

league, which was solemnly proclaimed at Venice on St. Mark's day, when, after high mass, the Doge conferred the honour of knighthood on Taddeo Vimercati, the Milanese ambassador, and the banners of Milan and of the Pope were borne in procession round the Piazza.

In order to confirm the alliance, Lodovico not only agreed to visit Ferrara in May, but also decided to send his wife at the head of an embassy to Venice, as a proof of his friendship for his new allies. Four experienced councillors, Count Girolamo Tuttavilla, Galeazzo Visconti, Angelo Talenti, and Pietro Landriano, were chosen to accompany her, and an elaborate paper of secret directions was drawn up by Lodovico himself, dated the 10th of May. On the same day a still more important paper of instructions was delivered by the Moro to Erasmo Brasca, the envoy whom he sent that week to Germany. This agent was instructed to lay two proposals before Maximilian, King of the Romans. In the first place, he was to offer him the hand of Bianca Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan's sister, with the enormous dowry of 400,000 ducats. In the second, he was to ask Maximilian, on Lodovico's behalf, for a renewal of the investiture of Milan, formerly granted to the Visconti dukes, but never obtained by the three princes of the house of Sforza. As, on the extinction of the Visconti race, the fief ought to have returned to the empire, it was in the emperor's power to bestow the duchy upon Lodovico, whose title would thus be rendered perfectly legal, while Gian Galeazzo would become the usurper, he himself, his father, and grandfather having only held the dukedom by right of a popular election, which had never been confirmed by the emperor. This, then, was the proposal which the Moro secretly made to

Maximilian, whose father, the Emperor Frederic III., was at the time still living, but was known to be in very failing health. The King of the Romans was by no means insensible to the advantages of an alliance with the powerful Regent of Milan, or to the large dowry which Bianca Maria would bring with her to replenish his empty coffers. Some objections were raised by the German princes, who chose to consider this marriage with a Sforza princess beneath the imperial dignity, but Maximilian himself readily consented to all Lodovico's conditions, and promised to grant him the investiture of the duchy of Milan as soon as he succeeded his father, only stipulating that this part of the agreement should be kept secret for the present. The royal bridegroom was to receive three hundred thousand ducats as Bianca's dowry, while the remaining hundred thousand, which represented the tribute dues on the investiture of the duchy, as an imperial fief, were to be paid when this part of the transaction was accomplished.

Meanwhile Maximilian had already entered into negotiations with Charles VIII., who, in his anxiety to undertake the expedition of Naples, was ready to make any sacrifices in other directions; and on the 15th of May the Treaty of Senlis was concluded between the two monarchs. Lodovico's ambassador, Belgiojoso, accompanied the French king to Senlis, and kept his master fully informed of all that happened at court. But while the Moro had repeatedly assured Charles of his friendly intentions, he had hitherto prudently abstained from offering any device as to the young king's warlike designs against Naples, and had, it was well known, opposed them. When in March, Charles VIII. had begged him, as a personal favour, to send him his son-in-law, Galeazzo di Sanseverino, of whose knightly prowess

he had heard so much, in order that he might confer with this distinguished captain on military questions, Lodovico absolutely refused to consent, fearing the suspicions which Messer Galeazzo's presence at the French court might excite.

Such was the state of political affairs when, on the 18th of May, 1493, Lodovico and Beatrice, with their infant son, arrived at Ferrara. They spent the night before their arrival at the palazzo Trotti, in the suburbs, and on the following morning entered the town by the bridge of Castel Tealde. After riding in state up the Via Grande and the Via degli Sablioni to the Castello they visited the Duomo, attended mass, and made an offering at the altar. The Piazza was decorated with green boughs and bright draperies, and crowds thronged the streets, shouting "*Moro! Moro!*" as the young duchess rode by in all her bravery, escorted by her brother Alfonso and Madonna Anna, who had ridden out to meet her, with a gay company of Ferrarese lords and ladies. That day Beatrice wore the *camora* of wonderful crimson brocade, embroidered with the lighthouse towers of the port of Genoa, and a velvet cap studded with big pearls, "as large as are Madama's very largest gems," wrote the faithful Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, "as well as five splendid rubies."

On this occasion Lodovico was determined to dazzle the eyes of the world by his splendour, and the robes and jewels of Beatrice were the wonder of Ferrara and Venice. Ten chariots and fifty mules laden with baggage followed in their train, and Prosperi describes one marvellous new *camora*, which Beatrice brought with her, embroidered with Lodovico's favourite device of the caduceus worked in large pearls, rubies, and diamonds, with one big

diamond at the top. Not to be outdone by her sister-in-law, Madonna Anna appeared in a crimson and grey satin robe, adorned with letters of massive gold, and borrowed her mother-in-law's finest pearls for the occasion, so that, as Prosperi reports, her jewels made almost as fine a show as those of the duchess. Nor was this rivalry in clothes and jewels limited to the royal ladies themselves. Our lively friend, Duchess Leonora's maid of honour, Teodora, gives Isabella an amusing account of the keen emulation that existed between the Milanese and Ferrarese ladies who were to accompany the two duchesses to Venice.[37] Beatrice's ladies each wore long gold chains, valued at two hundred ducats apiece, and her chief maids of honour had been provided with some of their mistress's brocade robes for the occasion. Hearing of this, the Ferrarese ladies begged duchess Leonora to give them similar necklaces, and did not rest until they were supplied with chains valued at two hundred and twenty ducats apiece. And since it transpired that Beatrice had given some of her ladies strings of pearls for their paternosters, Madama presented each of her attendants with pearl rosaries of a still handsomer and costlier description. When Signor Lodovico saw this, he went up to Beatrice, saying, "Wife, I wish all of your ladies to wear pearl rosaries;" and straightway ordered some much larger and finer ones to be made for the Duchess of Bari's attendants. "But Madama," adds Isabella's correspondent, gleefully, "has given some of her smaller pendants to our ladies, a thing which I do not think the duchess can supply; and there is one other point in which the duchess's suite will come off the worst. Madama has had pelisses of green satin with broad stripes of black velvet made for all her ladies, which they are to wear at Venice, and is

taking a fresh supply of jewels to lend them when they arrive. This I think the duchess can hardly manage."

However, the next day Prosperi reports that the famous goldsmith Caradosso has just arrived with a quantity of rubies and diamonds, which Messer Lodovico has bought for two thousand ducats, and is having strung into necklaces for his wife's ladies.

A week of brilliant festivities had been arranged by Duke Ercole in honour of his son-in-law. A splendid tournament was held one day on the Piazza in front of the Castello. "Messer Galeazzo rode in the lists," writes the old chronicler of Ferrara, "with all his usual *gentilezza*, and carried off the prize against his brothers Caiazzo and Fracassa, Niccolo da Correggio, Ermes Sforza, and all other rivals. Afterwards, taking a massive lance in his hand, he charged a gentleman of Mirandola, broke his lance, and unseated him, so that both horse and man rolled over together. And Lodovico sent one hundred ducats to the soldier of Mirandola, because he fought so well. Another day a single-handed contest between a Milanese and a Mantuan man-at-arms was held in the courtyard of the castle, and won by the Mantuan, and Lodovico gave him a satin vest with a gold fringe and skirt of silver cloth, and the Marquis of Mantua and others made him fine presents."[38] Then came the horse-races for the *pallium*, which Don Alfonso won, and at which Gianfrancesco Gonzaga's famous Barbary horses made a splendid show. A beautiful *festa* was also held one afternoon in the gardens, at which all the court assisted, and in the evenings, theatrical representations of the *Menæchmi* and other Latin plays were given, which pleased Lodovico so well that he declared he must build a theatre at Milan on

his return. Amongst the pieces given on this occasion was a comedy, of which the plot, Prosperi remarks, appeared to be aimed against Signor Lodovico, but it seems to have given him no offence.

The Moro was apparently in the highest good-humour, courteous and affable, after his wont, to all, and full of proud delight in his wife and child. He admired the palaces and gardens of Ferrara, and surveyed Duke Ercole's latest improvements with keen interest. The width and cleanliness of the streets, struck him especially, and he determined to follow the duke's example and remove the forges and shops which blocked up the road and interfered with the traffic and the pleasantness of the prospect at Milan. But of all the sights which he saw in Ferrara, what pleased him best was Ercole's beautiful villa of Belriguardo. On Saturday, the 25th of May, after Beatrice and her mother had started for Venice, Ercole took his son-in-law and the Milanese nobles to spend the day at this his favourite country house, and entertained the party at a banquet in the famous terraced gardens on the banks of the Po. The same evening Lodovico found time to write to his wife, in which he tells her how much he is enjoying the loveliness of the summer evening at Belriguardo.

"I would not for all the world have missed seeing this place. Really, I do not think that I have ever seen so large and fine a house, or one which is so well laid out and adorned with such excellent pictures. I do not believe there is another to rival it in the whole world, and did not think it possible to find a villa at once so spacious and so thoroughly comfortable and well arranged. To say the truth, if I were asked whether Vigevano, or the Castello of Pavia, or this place was the finest palace in the world—the Castello

must forgive me, for I would certainly choose Belriguardo!"[39]

From Belriguardo, Ercole and his son-in-law proceeded to visit Mirandola, the castle and principality of Bianca d'Este's husband, Count Galeotto, and the court of the scholar princes of Carpi, who were intimately connected with the Sanseverini and other noble Milanese houses. After visiting Modena, the ducal party returned to receive the Venetian ambassadors at Ferrara, and accompanied them to Belriguardo, which Lodovico was not sorry to visit a second time. Here the Moro took farewell of his hosts, and, leaving his infant son at Ferrara to await his mother's return, he set out for Parma, on his way back to Milan.

Here at Torgiara, in the Parmesana, he was joined by his envoy, Count Belgiojoso, who, in his anxiety to bring his master the latest news, had ridden the whole 600 miles from Senlis in six days. This faithful servant had already written to give Lodovico details of the treaty concluded between Charles VIII. and Maximilian, and had informed him of the French king's resolve to invade Italy without delay. Now, at his master's summons, he rode to Parma as fast as relays of the fleetest horses could take him, and fell seriously ill on the day after his arrival. The news which he brought determined Lodovico in the policy which he was about to adopt, and decided him to withdraw all opposition to the French king's expedition against Naples. Charles VIII. now appeared as the friend and ally of Maximilian, and even consented to support Lodovico's suit with the King of the Romans. "It seems strange," wrote the Florentine ambassador at the French court to Piero de' Medici, "that the king should support Signor

Lodovico in a thing so harmful to the interests of his cousin the Duke of Orleans' claims, but so it is, and this will show you the influence that now predominates in the royal counsels."

Belgiojoso reached Torgiara, in the district of Parma, on the 4th of June, and on the 24th, Maximilian sent the despatch from the castle of Gmünden, by which he accepted the hand of Bianca Sforza in marriage, and promised Lodovico Sforza the investiture of the duchy of Milan as soon as he himself should receive the imperial dignity. In the same month of June, the marriage of the Pope's daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, to Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro was celebrated with great pomp in the Vatican, and the Pope and cardinals joined in the orgies which followed. But old King Ferrante gnashed his teeth with rage, and his son Alfonso vowed vengeance against the hated Moro and all his crew. And in the Duomo of Florence, the fiery Dominican friar, Fra Girolamo of San Marco, preaching with passionate fervour to the crowds who hung on his lips, boldly denounced the shameless profligacy that reigned in high places, and warned the Church and the world of the avenging sword of the Lord.

FOOTNOTES:

[37] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

[38] Muratori, R. L. S., xxiv. 284.

[39] E. Motta in *Giorn. st. d. lett. Ital.*, vii. 387.

CHAPTER XVI

Visit of Beatrice and her mother to Venice—Letters of Lodovico to his wife—Reception of the duchesses by the Doge at S. Clemente—Their triumphal entry—Procession and *fêtes* in the Grand Canal—Letter of Beatrice to her husband —The palace of the Dukes of Ferrara in Venice.

1493

The spring of 1493, as we have already said, proved a turning-point in Lodovico Sforza's policy. And it also marked a new period in the life of Beatrice d'Este. Up to this time the young duchess was a bright and joyous child, intellectual and cultivated like the other ladies of her family, but eager, above all, to enjoy the splendour and gaiety of her new life, to taste of every pleasure, and fling herself into every passing amusement. But now she appears in a new light. For the first time, on this visit to Venice, she takes a leading part in political affairs, and comes before the Doge and Senate as her husband's ambassador and spokeswoman. Here we see this princess, who was not yet eighteen years of age, assuming the character of orator and diplomatist, and revealing these talents which excited the admiration of the Emperor Maximilian and made him pronounce her unlike all other women.

In selecting his young wife for this important mission, Lodovico had acted with his usual prudence and forethought. He saw her remarkable powers of

mind, and trusted implicitly in her womanly tact and charm. When the Venetian Senate first heard that Lodovico was to visit Ferrara, they announced their intention of sending ambassadors to request him to accompany the two duchesses to Venice. But the Moro felt that, at this critical moment of his negotiations with both Charles VIII. and Maximilian, his presence at Venice might lead to awkward questions and excite the suspicion of these princes. So he preferred to send his wife, whose journey with her mother and brother would appear rather in the light of a party of pleasure, and whose youth and charms would disarm suspicion, and at the same time exert a beneficial influence on the counsels of the Republic. In the written instructions which he gave Tuttavilla and the other envoys who accompanied Beatrice, they were desired to lay especial stress on the honour which the rulers of Milan were doing the Signory of Venice by the choice of so exalted a lady to be their messenger.

"The presence of the most illustrious Duchess of Bari is the best proof their Excellencies can have of the singular satisfaction with which the Dukes of Milan and Bari regard the conclusion of this league. In sending, the one his aunt, the other his wife, who is the dearest thing that he possesses, to congratulate the Signory on this auspicious occasion, they show you how great and exceptional is the pleasure which they feel at this alliance between our two states."

On Saturday, the 25th of May, the Duchess of Ferrara, with her two daughters, Beatrice Duchess of Bari and Madonna Anna Sforza, and her son Alfonso, accompanied by a large retinue numbering in all 1200 persons, sailed down the Po into the Adriatic, on their way to Venice. Beatrice was accompanied by

Antonio Trivulzio, Bishop of Como, Francesco Sforza and his wife, and several other Milanese gentlemen of rank, besides the four ambassadors already named, and in her train were the famous Flemish tenor Cordier and the other court singers of the ducal chapel. On the 20th the party reached Chioggia, where they were entertained in the houses of noble Venetian families, and on the following day sailed up between the islands, under the long sandy shore of the Lido, into the port of Venice. At Malamocco, the fort on the southern point of Lido guarding the entrance of the harbour, they were received by a deputation of patricians, while at S. Clemente the old Doge, Agostino Barbarigo, himself came out to meet them in the bucentaur, followed by an immense company of boats and gondolas in festive array.

"Of all cities that I have ever known, Venice is the one where the greatest honour is paid to strangers," wrote Philippe de Commines, when, a year and a half later, he came to Venice as ambassador from his most Christian Majesty. And on this occasion the welcome offered to the wife of the powerful Moro was grander, and the *fêtes* given in her honour were more splendid, than had been seen for many years.

"Never," wrote Taddeo de' Vimercati, the Milanese ambassador, "was lord or lady received with greater joy, or more magnificently entertained than the duchess has been on this occasion." And in his letters to his wife Isabella, the Marquis of Mantua, who had arrived at Venice three days earlier, and was among the spectators of his mother and sister-in-law's triumphal entry, dilates on the extraordinary honours that were paid them, on the vast concourse of people assembled to greet their arrival, and the exultation with which they were received. He

describes the procession of barks and gondolas, filled with ladies in gay toilettes, that were seen rowing across the lagoon many hours before the arrival of the illustrious visitors, and tells how the old Doge—the same whose venerable figure is familiar to us in Giovanni Bellini's altar-piece, at Murano—made his way to S. Clemente early in the afternoon, and retired to rest for an hour or two, in a chamber prepared for his Serene Highness, until the Ferrarese bucentaurs were seen in the distance. Gianfrancesco dwells on the number and beauty of the gaily decorated barges and triremes, and describes the magnificent loggia hung with tapestries and wreaths of flowers which had been erected in front of the *palazzo* occupied by the Milanese ambassador, at the entrance of the Canal Grande. But what impressed him most of all were the thundering salvoes of artillery which burst from the fleet of galleys, from the arsenal and the Milanese embassy, at one and the same moment, as about five o'clock the Ferrarese bucentaurs reached Malamocco and entered the Venetian waters. "The whole air," he writes, "was filled with confusion, when these demonstrations of great rejoicing burst simultaneously upon our ears."

Isabella d'Este, who had herself lately returned from Venice and was now with her beloved sister-in-law, Elizabeth Duchess of Urbino, at the villa of Porto, devoured her husband's letters greedily, although she professed indifference, and wrote to her mother, "To me all these ceremonies seem very much of the same nature, and are all alike very tedious and monotonous."

There was one point, however, upon which Gianfrancesco confessed himself unable to gratify his wife and sister's curiosity. "I will not attempt," he

says, "to describe the gowns and ornaments worn by these duchesses and Madonna Anna, this being quite out of my line, and will only tell you that all three of them appeared resplendent with the most precious jewels."[40] Fortunately, this omission was supplied by one of Beatrice's secretaries, Niccolo de' Negri, who, in a letter to Lodovico, informed him, on the day of her arrival at Venice, that the duchess wore her gold brocade, embroidered with crimson doves, with a jewelled feather in her cap, and a rope of pearls and diamonds round her neck, to which the priceless ruby known as El Spigo was attached as pendant. But the best account we have of Beatrice's visit to Venice is contained in four of her own letters addressed to her husband, which have been preserved in the archives of Milan. They were originally published twenty years ago by Molmenti, who, however, omitted some portions which are given here, and transcribed some of the dates incorrectly. Unfortunately, several of the letters in which Beatrice daily recorded the events of this memorable week for her lord's benefit are missing. But although the narrative is incomplete, it is none the less of rare value and interest. The first two letters after her departure from Ferrara are missing, but in their stead we have two notes from Lodovico, which show how tenderly he thought of his absent wife, and how carefully he followed her movements. On the evening of the 25th, he wrote the letter that has been already quoted, from Belriguardo; on the 26th, he sent her a second note in reply to the letters which he had just received. In one of these Beatrice had apparently given a lively account of her triumphs at cards in the games which she had played with her companions on board the bucentaur. Like Isabella d'Este and most of her contemporaries, the

duchess was very fond of *scartino* and other fashionable card-games, and had the reputation of being exceptionally lucky. In the course of the year 1494, Lodovico informed Girolamo Tuttavilla, who was at one time treasurer to the duchess, that his wife had won no less than three thousand ducats, all of which she declared had been spent in alms. "When I remarked that this seemed a very large sum, the duchess confessed she had paid some of it to embroiderers and other craftsmen. Even then I fail to see how she could have disposed of more than a few hundred ducats. At this rate I fear she will be unable to buy lands or build new houses, but when you return from Naples, we must try and carry out some plans better worthy of your name."

On this occasion Beatrice seems to have won a considerable sum of money at the game of *britino* during her journey to Chioggia, and had apparently informed her husband of her good luck, for he writes in reply—

"My dearest Wife,

"It has given me the greatest pleasure to hear from your last letters that you have been winning your companions' money, and since I conclude you have been playing at *buttino*, I hope you will remember to keep account of your winnings, so that you may keep the money for yourself. But I only say this in case you win, as if you lose, I do not care to hear about it. Commend me to the illustrious Madonna Duchessa, our common mother, as well as to Don Alfonso and Madonna Anna, and salute all the councillors for me.

"Your most affectionate husband,
"Lodovicus Maria Sfortia.[41]

Belriguardo, 26th of May, 1493."

The first of Beatrice's letters that we have was written on the evening of her arrival at her father's house in Venice and is dated May 27.

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE AND EXCELLENT LORD, MY DEAREST HUSBAND,

"I wrote to you yesterday of our arrival at Chioggia. This morning I heard mass in a chapel of the house where I lodged. The singers assisted, and I felt the greatest spiritual delight in hearing them, Messer Cordier as usual doing his part very well, as he did also yesterday morning. Certainly his singing is the greatest consolation possible. Then we breakfasted, and at ten we entered the bucentaur, dividing our company between the middle-sized and small bucentaur and a few gondolas, which were prepared for us, as being safer, since the weather was still rather stormy. My most illustrious mother, Don Alfonso and Madonna Anna, with a very few servants, entered the small bucentaur, and the other ladies and gentlemen travelled on the larger bucentaur, or in small gondolas, while I entered another gondola with Signor Girolamo, Messer Visconti, and a few others, so as to lighten the small bucentaur and travel more comfortably, as we were assured. So we set out and reached the port of Chioggia, where the ships began to dance. I took the greatest delight in tossing up and down, and, by the grace of God, did not feel the least ill effects. But I can tell you that some of our party were very much alarmed, amongst others Signor Ursino, Niccolo de' Negri, and Madonna Elisabetta. Even Signor

Girolamo, although he had been very frugal, felt rather uncomfortable; but no one in my gondola was really ill, excepting Madonna Elisabetta and Cavaliere Ursino, at the port of Chioggia. Most of the others, especially the women, were very ill. The weather now improved so much, that we arrived at Malamocco in quite good time. Here we found about twenty-four gentlemen, with three well-fitted and decorated barges, one of which we entered, with as many of our suite as it could hold, and were honourably seated in the prow. Several Venetian gentlemen now entered our barge, and a certain Messer Francesco Capello, clad in a long mantle of white brocade, embroidered with large gold patterns, like your own, delivered an oration to the effect that this illustrious Signory, having heard of your presence at Ferrara, had sent two ambassadors to show the love they bear you, and that now, having heard of my Lady Mother's and my own visit to Venice, they had sent the other gentlemen who received us at Chioggia, and now, as a further token of their affection, sent these to Malamocco, to express the great pleasure the Signory felt at our coming, and to inform us that the Doge himself, with the Signory and a number of noble matrons, were about to give us welcome and do us honour to the best of their power. My mother, with her usual modesty, begged me to reply, but I insisted on her saying a few words, and afterwards began to speak myself. But hardly had she finished speaking, and before I had begun, than all the gentlemen ran up to kiss our hands, as they had done the day before, so that I could only express my feelings by courteous gestures.

"Then we set off towards Venice, and before we reached S. Clemente, where the Prince was expecting

us, two rafts came towards us, and saluted us with the sound of trumpets and firing of guns, followed by two galleys ready for battle, and other barks decked out like gardens, which were really beautiful to see. An infinite number of boats, full of ladies and gentlemen, now surrounded us, and escorted us all the way to S. Clemente. Here we landed, and were conducted to a spacious pavilion hung with drapery, where the Prince, accompanied by the members of the Signory, met us and bade us welcome, assuring us how eagerly our presence had been desired, and saying that my lord father the duke and your Excellency could do him no greater pleasure than to send us, whom he looked upon as his dear daughters. All this and much more concerning the fatherly love which he bore us, he hoped to be able to express at a future occasion. Then he placed my lady mother on his right and myself on his left, with Madonna Anna next to me, and next to my mother the Marquis of Mantua and Don Alfonso—the Marchese having arrived with the Prince—and so he conducted us on board the bucentaur. On the way we shook hands with all the ladies, who stood up in two rows behind the Prince, and then sat down in the same order. All of our ladies shook hands with the Prince, and we set out again on our journey, meeting an infinite number of decorated galleys, boats, and barks. Among others, there was a raft with figures of Neptune and Minerva, armed with trident and spear, seated on either side of a hill crowned with the arms of the Pope and our own illustrious lord, together with your own and those of the Signory of Venice. First Neptune began to dance and gambol and throw balls into the air to the sound of drums and tambourines, and then Minerva did the same. Afterwards they both joined hands and danced together. Next

Minerva struck the mountain with her spear, and an olive tree appeared. Neptune did the same with his trident, and a horse jumped out. Then other personages appeared on the mountain with open books in their hands, signifying that they had come to decide on the name that was to be given to the city on the mountain, and they gave judgment in favour of Minerva. This representation was said to signify that the existence of states is founded on treaties of peace, and that those who lay the foundations will give their name to future kingdoms, as Minerva did to Athens.

"As we sailed on, we saw many other barks and galleys, all richly decorated. Among them was one galley of armed Milanese, with a Moor in the centre, armed with a spear, and bearing shields with the ducal arms and your own fastened to the stern and prow. Round this Moor were figures of Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, and Wisdom with a sceptre in his hand, all of which made a fine pageant, and the firing of guns and cannons at the same time sounded quite splendid.

"Besides these there were many barks representing the different arts and crafts of Venice, very beautiful to see. And so we entered the Canal Grande, where the Prince, who talked to us all the way with the utmost familiarity and kindness, took great pleasure in showing us the chief palaces of this noble city, and pointing out the ladies, who appeared glittering with jewels at all the balconies and windows, besides the great company—about a hundred and thirty in number—who were already with us in the bucentaur. All the palaces were richly adorned, and certainly it was a magnificent sight. The Prince showed us all the chief objects along the canal, until

we reached my father's palace, where we are lodged, and where the Prince insisted on landing and conducting us to our rooms, although my mother and I begged him not to take this trouble. We found all the palace hung with tapestries, and the beds covered with satin draperies adorned with the ducal arms and those of your Excellency. And the rooms and hall are hung with Sforzesca colours, so you see that in point of good entertainment, good company, and good living we could desire nothing better. This evening three gentlemen came to visit me in the name of the Signory, and made the most splendid offers, beyond all that could have been expected, for my pleasure and convenience. To-morrow, if the audience has taken place, you shall hear more. I commend myself to your Highness.[42]

"Venice, May 27, 1493."

"*Era stupendissima cesa a vedere!* It was a magnificent sight!" exclaimed Beatrice. And indeed the scene was one which would have stirred a less impressionable nature than that of this young princess, who was so keenly alive to joy and beauty, and who now for the first time saw "this most triumphant city of the world," in all the loveliness of the summer evening. Both the Milanese ambassador and the Marquis of Mantua said they had never seen the like. The blue waters of the lagoon swarmed with boats and gondolas decked with flowers and streamers of the gayest hues, the Venetian Gothic palaces along the canal were hung with Indian and Persian carpets. The rich colours of Oriental stuffs relieved the dazzling whiteness of Istrian stone, and festoons of fresh leaves and flowers were twisted round their columns of porphyry and serpentine.

From each carved balcony and painted window fair Venetian ladies looked down in their sumptuous robes, glittering with gold and gems, and the air rang with the *Vivas* of the crowds who filled the gondolas or flocked along the Riva to see the gay pageant. It was a spectacle such as Venice alone could offer in these days of her glory, when the Canal Grande was, as Commines justly said, the finest street in the whole world.

And the Palazzo to which the old Doge conducted Beatrice and her mother was the oldest and one of the grandest in that long avenue of palaces. Originally built for the Pesaro family, it had been presented to Niccolo II. of Este in gratitude for his services when, a hundred years before, he had supplied the Republic with corn during the long war against Genoa. Since then the house had been repeatedly sequestered during the wars between Venice and Ferrara, and had only been restored to Duke Ercole after the conclusion of the peace of Bagnolo. Now its ancient walls, dating as far back as the year 900, had been freshly decorated with frescoes, and the long arcades and loggias, with their massive pillars and Byzantine capitals of grey marble, were enriched with shields carved with the unicorns and lilies of the house of Este. Within, the spacious halls were lavishly adorned with gilding and variegated marble, with fine pictures and the painted *cassoni* and chairs which we still admire on old Venetian palaces, while the tapestries and hangings bearing Sforza devices and the Moro's favourite mottoes met Beatrice's eyes at every turn. As she wrote in her joyous letters to her husband, there was nothing lacking that could charm the eyes or please the mind, and the courtesy and hospitality of the venerable old Doge and of the Venetian

Signory left nothing to be desired.

FOOTNOTES:

[40] "Storia di Venezia nella Vita privata," p. 60.

[41] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

[42] Molmenti, *op. cit.*, p. 693.

CHAPTER XVII

Fêtes at Venice in honour of the Duchess of Ferrara and Duchess of Bari—Beatrice d'Este has an audience with the Doge and Signory—Explains Lodovico's position and his treaties with France and Germany—Visit to St. Mark's and the Treasury—*Fête* in the ducal palace—The Duchess visits the Great Council—Takes leave of the Doge—Return to Ferrara.

1493

A series of *fêtes* had been arranged by the Doge and Signory of Venice in honour of their illustrious guests, and the order in which they took place is given by the Marquis of Mantua in a letter to his wife. On Tuesday races were held in the piazza for a *pallinum* of twenty yards of crimson velvet; on

Wednesday afternoon a regatta took place on the Riva. Amongst other amusing contests, Pietro Bembo tells us there was a race between boats rowed by four women, a thing never before seen in Venice, and which, on account of its novelty, excited the greatest amusement. "In which marvellous contention," says Bembo, "a thing happened which added greatly to the pleasure of the spectacle and to the general mirth. A bark won the race that was rowed by a mother and her two daughters and one daughter-in-law, this being arranged out of compliment to Duchess Leonora, who has herself two daughters and one daughter-in-law."

On the morning after her arrival, Beatrice received a visit from three gentlemen sent by the Doge to confer with her on the object of her mission. Much to their surprise and admiration, says Romanini, the Venetian historian, the young duchess, who was not yet twenty years of age, requested to be allowed the honour of an audience with the Signory. Before leaving the Este palace these gentlemen assisted at mass, which was privately celebrated in the duchess's rooms, and heard Cordier sing, as we learn from a short note addressed to Lodovico on the morning of the 28th.

"This morning," she writes, "as soon as I was dressed, I heard mass sung in my own rooms. Messer Cordier sang, and, as usual, did his part admirably, which pleased me greatly, both on account of the rare delight which his talent gives me, and because on this occasion the gentlemen who had been sent to see me by the Doge were also present, and expressed the greatest admiration for his singing."

Beatrice and the four Milanese ambassadors were then escorted to the ducal palace, where the young

duchess was admitted to the Sala del Collegio, and laid her husband's memorial before the Signory. But, as M. Delaborde remarks, the language which Beatrice employed on this occasion differed considerably from the written instructions which had been given to the Milanese envoys by Lodovico. During the interval, Belgiojoso's despatches relating to the Treaty of Senlis, and announcing the French king's fixed intention of undertaking an expedition against Naples, had produced a sensible alteration in Lodovico's policy. In the letter of the 10th of May, the ambassadors were desired to congratulate the Venetian Signory in the most cordial terms on the conclusion of the league between Milan, the Pope, and the Republic, and to dwell especially on the importance of being in readiness to resist foreign invasions at this critical time when the French monarch and the King of the Romans were about to settle their differences. But when Beatrice herself addressed the Signory, she insisted on the excellent relations of Lodovico as Regent of Milan with both France and Germany, and, after setting forth the pains which her lord had taken to oppose the French expedition, laid Belgiojoso's latest despatch before the Signory. In this missive the Milanese envoy informed Lodovico of Charles the Eighth's intention to send an envoy to Milan, Venice, and Rome, and seek the help of these powers in carrying out his designs for the conquest of Naples. Beatrice, addressing the Venetian Signory in her lord's name, asked their advice as to the answer which he should give to the French king, and ended by informing them of his negotiations with Maximilian for the investiture of the duchy of Milan, which, she added, were already far advanced. After some deliberation, the Signory returned a courteous but evasive answer,

begging the duchess to assure her husband of their most friendly sentiments, but saying that the French king's proposals required grave consideration, and that they must, first of all, communicate with the Pope as head of the League.

At a second conference which the Doge had with the young duchess on the 1st of June, Beatrice, acting under Lodovico's directions, laid stress on the fact that her husband as regent was all-powerful in Milan, and could dispose of the treasure and castles of Lombardy at his pleasure. The Doge understood by this, as we learn from the secret records of the Venetian Government, that the real aim of the duchess was to discover how far the Republic was disposed to uphold Lodovico's claim to the ducal title, but he merely returned a civil answer and repeated his professions of friendship. If Beatrice's mission, however, secured no very tangible result from the wise and crafty Venetian, her charms made a deep impression upon the old councillors, who one and all marvelled at her wisdom and eloquence, and grudged no pains or expense to give her pleasure. "No honours," writes Cardinal Bembo, "were held too great for these royal ladies, who in those joyous times had come to see the city, nor was any kind of pleasure or generous liberality lacking in the splendid *fêtes* with which they were entertained on this memorable occasion." As for Beatrice herself, she was enchanted with the beauties of Venice and the courtesy of her hosts, and longed to see and hear all the wonders of the famous city. The greater part of these days was spent in visiting the chief sights of the place—the great Dominican and Franciscan churches, S. Zanipolo with the tombs of the doges and the Gothic shrine of S. Maria Gloriosa with Giovanni Bellini's newly painted Madonnas in all

their radiant loveliness, the graceful Renaissance buildings of S. Maria dei Miracoli and the Scuola di S. Marco, which the Lombardi had lately finished. Like all royal visitors, the duchesses were conducted over the arsenal, which Commines justly calls the finest thing of the kind in the whole world, and were shown not only the fleet of a hundred ships in port, but the galleys in course of construction, the men making the oars, the women and children at work on the sails and ropes, the sulphur and saltpetre mills, and the splendid armoury, all enclosed within lofty walls, and guarded by twin towers crowned with the winged lion. And they saw what was indeed one of the wonders of the world—the glorious front of St. Mark's just as we see it in Gentile Bellini's great picture, with the many domes and myriads of pillars, the glittering mosaics and famous bronze horses, and the crimson standards floating from the three tall Venetian masts on the Piazza. We are not told whether Beatrice, like her sister Isabella d'Este, ascended the Campanile to enjoy the wonderful prospect over the lagoons, but we know that she went to hear the singing of the Augustinian nuns, a community of noble Venetian maidens as famous for the many scandals attached to their society as for the perfection of their musical services. Above all things in Venice, the duchesses admired the magnificent pile of the ducal palace and the noble mural paintings on which the Bellini and their fellow-artists were at work in the Great Hall, a sight of which the great fire of the sixteenth century has deprived future generations.

But the most splendid *fête* given in Beatrice's honour was the banquet, ball, and torchlight procession that were held on Thursday in the ducal palace. That same morning the duchesses attended

mass in state at St. Mark's, and by the Doge's request the Milanese choir took part in the service. Beatrice's letters to her husband give a full account of the day's festivities—

"MOST EXCELLENT AND ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, MY DEAREST HUSBAND,

"To continue my relation of what is happening here day by day, I must now inform you that this morning my illustrious mother, Don Alfonso, Madonna Anna, and I, with all our company, set out for St. Mark's, where the Prince invited both us and our singers to assist at mass and see the Treasury. But before reaching St. Mark's, we landed at the Rialto, and went on foot up those streets which are called the Merceria, where we saw the shops of spices and silks and other merchandise, all in fair order and excellent both in quality and in the great quantity and variety of goods for sale. And of other crafts there was also a goodly display, so much so that we stopped constantly to look at now one thing, now at another, and were quite sorry when we reached St. Mark's. Here our trumpets sounded from a loggia in front of the church, and we found the prince, who advanced to meet us at the doors of St. Mark's, and placing himself as before, between my illustrious mother and myself, led us to the high altar, where we found the priest already vested. There we knelt down with the prince and said the confession, and then took the seats prepared for us and heard mass, which the priest and his assistants sang with great solemnity, and our singers did their part, and their singing greatly pleased both the Prince and all who were present, especially that of Cordier, who always takes great pains to do honour

to your Highness. After mass, we accompanied the Prince to see the Treasury, but had the greatest difficulty in the world to get in, because of the crowds of people who were assembled there, as well as in the streets, although every one tried to make room for us, even the Prince crying out to try and clear the way. But at last the Prince himself was forced to retire on account of the great pressure of the crowd, and left us to enter with only a few others, and even then we had the greatest difficulty to get in. Once safely inside the Treasury we saw everything, which was a great pleasure, for there was an infinite quantity of most beautiful jewels and some magnificent cups and chalices. When we came out of the Treasury, we went on the Piazza of St. Mark, among the shops of the Ascensiontide fair which is still going on, and found such a magnificent show of beautiful Venetian glass, that we were fairly bewildered, and were obliged to remain there for a long time. And as we walked along from shop to shop, every one turned to look at the jewels which I wore in the velvet cap on my head, and on the vest embroidered with the towers of the Port of Genoa, and especially at the large diamond which I wore at my breast. And I heard people saying one to the other—'That is the wife of Signor Lodovico. Look what fine jewels she wears! What splendid rubies and diamonds she has!'

"At last, since the hour was already late, we went home to dine, and by this time it was nearly two o'clock.[43]

"Venice, May 30, 1493."

The day's labours, however, were hardly begun, and in her next letter Beatrice resumes her story—

"After dinner and a little rest, a large company of gentlemen came to conduct us to the *festa* at the palace. We travelled in barges, and, when we reached the palace, were conducted into the Great Hall. There a grand tribunal was erected at one end of the hall, in two divisions running the whole length of the walls, and in the centre of the hall a square stage was placed for dancing and theatrical representations. We ascended the tribunal, where we found a number of noble Venetian ladies, one hundred and thirty-two in all, richly adorned with jewels. On the wing to our right as we entered sat the Lord of the Company of 'the Potenti'—'a group of the famous company of La Calza, which included the wealthiest and most illustrious youths of Venice'—seated on a throne under a canopy of gold brocade, with Don Alfonso as a member of the company on his right hand. We took our seat on the left wing, and sent Madonna Anna to take her place by the Lord of the Company. The Prince was not present on this occasion, being too old and infirm to take part in such fatiguing entertainments; but a certain Messer Constantino Privolo occupied his place, as the oldest member of the Signory. The chiefs of the *festa* led out several ladies to dance, two or three at a time, and then came to ask if some of our ladies and gentlemen would not also take part in the dance. So, to show our friendly intentions, we agreed, and Conte Girolamo da Figino and a few others danced. Of the women, the wife of Count Francesco Sforza, the daughters Messer Sigismondo and of Messer Raynaldo, and a few others, also danced. During the dancing, by reason of the excessive heat of the room, my head began to ache, and as my throat also felt a little sore, I left the hall and retired to rest in another room for an hour. When I returned, it was already

dark. A hundred lighted torches hung from the ceiling, and a representation was given on the stage, in which two big animals with large horns appeared, ridden by two figures, bearing golden balls and cups wreathed with verdure. These two were followed by a triumphal chariot, in which Justice sat enthroned, holding a drawn sword in her hand inscribed with the motto *Concordia*, and wreathed with palms and olive. In the same car was an ox with his feet resting on a figure of St. Mark and the adder. This, as your Highness will readily understand, was meant to signify the League, and as in all their discourses to me the Prince and these gentlemen speak of your Highness as the author of peace and tranquillity of Italy, so in this representation they placed your head on the triumphal arch above the others. Behind the chariot came two serpents, ridden by two other youths, dressed like the first riders. All these figures mounted the tribunal in the centre of the hall, and danced round Justice, and after dancing for a while, their balls exploded, and out of the flames, an ox, a lion, an adder, and a Moor's head suddenly appeared, and all of these danced together round the figure of Justice. Then the banquet followed, and the different dishes and *confetti* were carried in to the sound of trumpets, accompanied by an infinite number of torches. First of all came figures of the Pope, the Doge, and the Duke of Milan, with their armorial bearings and those of your Highness; then St. Mark, the adder, and the diamond, and many other objects, In coloured and gilded sugar, making as many as three hundred in all, together with every variety of cakes and confectionery, and gold and silver drinking-cups, all of which were spread out along the hall, and made a splendid show. Among other things, I saw a figure of the Pope surrounded by ten

cardinals, which was said to be a prophecy of the ten cardinals whom the Pope is going to make to-morrow! The banquet was spread out upon the stage, and the dishes were handed round with many of these triumphs, and the Pope and the Duke and Duchess of Milan fell to my share. When the banquet was finished, we had another representation, in which the two youths on serpents played the chief part. A messenger arrived, riding on a triumphal car in a boat, bearing a letter in a packet, which he presented to the Lord of the Company, who opened it, and, after reading the letter, handed it back to him; then he entered the boat again and left the hall, followed by the others on their serpents. This last figure was said to be a herald who had been sent to announce the proclamation of the League, and a little while afterwards the triumphal car of the League, as described above, appeared again, followed by four giants. The first one carried a horn of foliage and fruit, the two next bore two clubs with gold and silver balls, or catapults, while the last carried a cornucopia, similar to that borne by the first giant in his hand. Then came four animals in the shape of Chimeras ridden by four naked Moors, sounding tambourines and cymbals or clapping their hands. They were followed by four triumphal cars, bearing figures of Diana, Death, the mother of Meleager, and several armed men—four or five persons in each chariot, the whole intended to represent the story of Meleager, which was fully set forth, from his birth to his death, with interludes of dances. The whole fable would take too long to repeat, but Gian Giacomo Gillino will be able to recite it from beginning to end, if you care to hear it. This was the conclusion of the whole *festa*. After this we entered our boats, and the clock struck one

before we got home. The bishop of Como was sitting by me all the evening, and his infinite weariness at the length of the performance, and his dislike of the great heat in that crowded hall, made me laugh as I never laughed before. And in order to tease him and have more fun, I kept on telling him that there was still more to come, and that the acting would go on till to-morrow morning; and it was most amusing to see him stretch himself first on one leg, then on the other, and to hear him complain, 'My legs are worn out. When will this *festa* ever come to an end? Never again will I come to another.' I really think that his sighs and groans gave me as much pleasure as the *festa* itself. When at length we reached home, I supped frugally and then went to bed, as it was already three o'clock. The gown that I wore after dinner was of crimson and gold watered silk, with my jewelled cap on my head, and the rope of pearls with the Marone as a pendant. I commend myself to your Highness. Your Excellency's most affectionate wife,

BEATRICE SFORTIA VISCOMTIS.[44]

Venetina, May 31, 1493."

On the back of this letter are the words—

"To the most illustrious Prince and excellent Lord, my dearest husband, the Lord Lodovico Maria Sfortia, etc. *Ubi. sit. cito. cito.*"

On Saturday, the 1st of June, Beatrice wrote another letter, in which she describes her visit to the Great Council and final interview with the Doge, but makes no mention of political affairs, which were no doubt reserved for a separate despatch.

"To-day after dinner," she begins, "we went to the palace, honourably attended by many Venetian gentlemen, to visit the Great Council, and were conducted into the Great Hall. Here in the centre of the hall we found the Prince, who had descended from his rooms to meet us, and who accompanied us to the Tribunal, where we sat in our usual order, and the Council began to vote by ballot for elections to two different offices. When this was over, my lady mother thanked the Prince for all the honours which had been paid us, and took her leave. When she had finished speaking, I did the same; then, following the instructions which you had given me in your letter, I offered myself as a daughter to obey all the Doge's commands. The Prince replied that he needed no thanks, for he had only done what might be expected from a father for a beloved daughter, excusing himself if anything had been left undone, and begging I would not impute what was lacking to him, but to the failure of his servants to discharge their duties, and assuring me once more that his will could not be better disposed towards me. Then he once more expressed the paternal love which he cherished towards our most illustrious duke, towards your Highness and myself, and again placed himself and his Government at the disposal of your Excellency, with many very generous expressions, begging me to salute your Highness and beg you to be of good courage, and tell you that the Signory accepted all my offers, and would, if need be, avail themselves gratefully of your help. After this, I replied again in similar terms, and he again desired me to greet you warmly from him, and beg you to take good care of your own health and person. Our councillors were then presented to him, and Monsignore da Como returned thanks very courteously and repeated our

expressions of gratitude, as was convenient, and then took leave. He also replied in suitable terms to all that the Prince had said to me, which speech I will not repeat here, for fear of wearying your Excellency.

"The Prince then rose and accompanied us to the foot of the great staircase, and here shook hands and left us. After that we went to visit the Queen of Cyprus at Murano, where she received us with great honour and gave us a beautiful entertainment. We also visited the shrine of St. Lucia, and so ends my tale for to-day. To-morrow morning, by the grace of God, we hope to set out on our journey at eight o'clock. I commend myself to your Excellency.

"Your most illustrious lordship's wife,
BEATRICE SFORTIA.

Venice, 1st of June, 1493."

And so, with a pleasant trip across the sunny waters of the lagoon and a *festa* in the beautiful gardens of Caterina Cornaro, that royal lady who never neglected an opportunity of showing her friendship for the house of Este, Beatrice's week at Venice came to an end. The success of her visit had been complete, and both the Milanese ambassador and Niccolo de' Negri were eloquent on the splendour of the *fêtes* held in her honour and the favourable impression which she had made on these grave and reverend signers.

The secretary especially, in his letters to Lodovico, dwells with complacency on the admiration which the young duchess's gowns and jewels, and still more her own charms, had excited among the Venetians. "On every occasion the duchess appeared clad in new and beautiful robes and glittering jewels. Her jewels,

indeed, were the wonder of the whole town. But I shall not be wrong if I say that the finest jewel of all is herself—my dear and most excellent Madonna, whose gracious ways and charming manners filled all the people of Venice with the utmost delight and enthusiasm, so that your Highness may well count himself what he is—the happiest and most fortunate prince in the whole world."

FOOTNOTES:

[43] E. Motta, *op. cit.*, p. 390, etc.

[44] Motta e Molmenti, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XVIII

Return of Beatrice to Milan—Visit of Duke Ercole and Alfonso to Pavia—Death of Duchess Leonora—Beatrice's *camora* and Niccolo da Correggio's *fantasia dei vinci*—Marriage of Bianca Maria Sforza to Maximilian, King of the Romans, celebrated at Milan—Letter of Beatrice to Isabella d'Este—Wedding *fêtes* and journey of the bride to Innsbrück—Maximilian's relations with his wife—Bianca's future life.

1493

On the 2nd of June, Beatrice and her mother left Venice and returned to Ferrara, where she once more embraced her infant son and enjoyed a few days' rest after all her *fêtes* and journeyings. The 7th of June was spent at Belriguardo, and from this favourite villa the young duchess wrote to her sister, expressing her regret that she would be unable to visit Mantua on her return to Milan.

"I would most willingly come to see you at Mantua, as I had hoped to do, and as you know I still desire, and should very much enjoy a few days with you in the country, but my husband is exceedingly anxious for my return. So I must beg your Highness to let me enjoy a sight of you in the bucentaur, and not to insist upon my landing this time."

Isabella complied with her sister's request, and went to meet the duchess at Revere, where Beatrice stopped for a few hours on her way up the Po, to join her husband at Pavia. Lodovico was naturally impatient, not only to see his wife again, but to hear from her own lips all that had happened at Venice. And he on his part had much to tell her of the news which Belgiojoso had brought from France, and of the despatches which he received from Erasmo Brasca in Germany.

The summer months were spent in the Castello of Pavia, where Beatrice nursed her husband in a slight attack of fever, and afterwards received a visit from her father and brother. They arrived on the 25th of August, bringing with them a troop of actors to perform the *Menœchmi* and some of the other comedies which had pleased Lodovico so much at Ferrara. Duke Ercole himself, as usual, took keen interest in these theatricals, and before he left home sent to borrow two complete Turkish costumes and

turbans from the Marquis of Mantua, in order to supply deficiencies in his actors' wardrobe. Three days after his arrival, Borso da Correggio, a young nephew of Niccolo, who had travelled to Pavia with the duke, sent the following note to give his cousin Isabella the latest news of her family:—

"Most illustrious Sister and honoured Lady,

"We arrived on the 25th at Pavia, and were received by these excellent lords and ladies with the usual formalities. We find both of the duchesses well and happy, one of them, indeed—her of Milan—expects the birth of another child shortly, but our own duchess is as gay and joyous as ever. On the 27th the comedy of *The Captives* was acted, and the performance went off very well. To-day *The Merchant* is to be given, and will, I hope, prove equally successful. To-morrow we are to have a third. Our way of living is as follows. Early in the morning we go out riding. After dinner we play at *scartino*, or else at 'raising dead men' and '*l'imperiale*,' and other card games, till it is bed-time. The players are, as a rule, the Duke and Duchess of Bari together, Ambrogio da Corte, and some third man, whoever may happen to be present. To-day your father the duke, Don Alfonso, and Messer Galeaz Visconti are playing at pall-mall against Messer Galeaz Sanseverino, Signor Girolamo Tuttavilla, and myself. The Duchess of Milan does not join us in these games, and only appears at the theatricals. The Duke of Bari is more devoted to the duchess than ever, and is constantly caressing and embracing her. My lord your father is altogether intent on the comedies. When they are ended, hunting-parties will begin, and we shall all be ready for the quails."

These amusements were unexpectedly interrupted by the news of Duchess Leonora's serious illness, a gastric affection which ended fatally on the 11th of October. The death of this virtuous and admirable lady was deeply lamented both by the members of her immediate family circle and by the subjects to whom she had endeared herself by her goodness of heart. Funeral orations in her honour were delivered both at Mantua and Milan, and Ariosto pronounced a panegyric in verse over her grave. The young Duchess Beatrice, who had been with her mother at Venice so lately, wept bitter tears, and for several weeks could scarcely be persuaded to leave her room. Some anxiety was felt respecting her sister Isabella, who, after being married for three years, was now expecting the birth of her first child, and during ten days the news was concealed from her. But by the end of that time the Marchesa began to be uneasy, and to inquire why she received no letter from Ferrara. Soon the sad news reached her from Milan, "whether out of mere imprudence or by some malicious design, we cannot discover," wrote one of her ladies to the absent marquis. Isabella, however, showed her usual prudence and self-control. After the first burst of grief, she bore her loss with fortitude, and found distraction in putting herself, her rooms, and her household into mourning. In her anxiety to appear elegant, even in her grief, we find her asking Beatrice to send her some of the white lawn veils that were made in Milan, since she could find none to her taste in Mantua. And at the same time, she begged one of her friends at the Milanese court to give her minute details as to the colour and material of the mourning worn by the duchess. On the 25th of October, her correspondent replied—

"Although I have not yet been able to see the

Duchess of Bari, since she still remains entirely in her room, yet, in order to satisfy your Highness, I have made inquiries as to the kind of mourning that she wears. Her Excellency is clad in a robe of black cloth, with sleeves of the same, and a very long mantle, also of black cloth, and wears on her head a black silk cap with muslin folds, which are neither grey nor yellow, but pure white. She hardly ever leaves her room, and Signor Lodovico spends most of his time with her, and they two and Messer Galeaz have their meals alone in their rooms."[45]

A fortnight later, Beatrice roused herself from her grief to help her husband in the preparations for his niece Bianca Sforza's wedding to the Emperor Maximilian. The death of the old Emperor Frederic III., who breathed his last at Linz on the 19th of August, and the elevation of his son to the imperial throne, had hastened the development of Lodovico's plans. The King of the Romans, as he was still called, until he could be solemnly invested with the imperial insignia, now proposed to send ambassadors to Milan, before the end of the year, to solemnize his espousals with the Princess Bianca and bring his bride across the Alps to Innsbrück. The date of the wedding was fixed for the last week in November, and Lodovico prepared to celebrate the event with fitting splendour. The widowed Duchess Bona was transported with joy at the prospect of this exalted alliance, and forgave the Moro all his sins in her delight at seeing her daughter become an empress. On her part, Beatrice prepared to lay aside her mourning for the occasion, and appear in a new and wonderful robe at her niece's wedding.

Accordingly she wrote to Isabella on the 12th of November, asking her sister's leave to make use of a

design for a new *camora*, which had been suggested by Niccolo da Correggio.

"I cannot remember if your Highness has yet carried out the idea of that pattern of linked tracery which Messer Niccolo da Correggio suggested to you when we were last together. If you have not yet ordered the execution of this design, I am thinking of having his invention carried out in massive gold, on a *camora* of purple velvet, to wear on the day of Madonna Bianca's wedding, since my husband desires the whole court to lay aside mourning for that one day and to appear in colours. This being the case, I cannot refrain from wearing colours on this occasion, although the heavy loss we have had in our dear mother's death has left me with little care for new inventions. But since this is necessary, I have decided to make a trial of this pattern, if your Highness has not yet made use of it, and send the present courier, begging you not to detain him, but to let me know at once if you have yet tried this new design or not."[46]

The courier to Mantua brought back word that the marchioness had not yet made use of Niccolo's invention, and begged that her sister would feel herself at liberty to adopt the idea and "satisfy her appetite." Beatrice ordered the *camora* to be put in hand without delay, and Messer Niccolo had the satisfaction of seeing the duchess appear in this robe at the imperial wedding. The subject is of special interest, because this same pattern is repeated in the sleeves of Ambrogio de Predis' portrait of Lodovico's fair young daughter Bianca, which must have been painted about this time, and was probably adopted at the wish of Beatrice, who was fondly attached to her youthful step-daughter. Again, this same linked

tracery or "*fantasia dei vinci*," as it is called in Beatrice and her sister's letters, is to be seen both in the decorations that adorn the ceiling of a hall in the Castello of Milan, and on the vaulting of the sacristy in St. Maria delle Grazie. And as Mr. Müntz[47] has lately pointed out, this same interlaced ornament, or *vinci*, in which the Belgian professor, M. Errera, sees a play upon the great painter's name, forms the motive of the famous circular engravings bearing the words "*Academia Leonardi Vinci*," which have given rise to so many conjectures as to the existence of that mysterious institution. All these repetitions of the pattern invented by Niccolo da Correggio, and adopted by Beatrice d'Este for her wedding robe, show how fashionable the *fantasia dei vinci* became at the Milanese court, and lead us to imagine that Leonardo himself may have had some part in the original design.

On the 5th of November, Lodovico wrote a note to Vigevano, where he and Beatrice had retired after Duchess Leonora's death, informing his father-in-law that he was on the point of returning to Milan to receive the imperial ambassadors, Gaspar Melchior, Bishop of Brixen, and Jean Bontemps. These important personages arrived on the 7th, and were met by Lodovico and his nephew, the Duke of Milan, at the Porta Orientale, opposite the newly erected Lazzaretto, and conducted in state to their rooms in the Castello. Here the German envoys were loaded with gifts, and magnificently entertained during the next three weeks. The nuptial ceremony was put off a week, to allow time for the arrival of the special envoys whom at the last moment Charles VIII. had decided to send, to do homage to his allies, and finally took place on St. Andrew's festival, the 30th of November, in the Duomo of Milan.

The street decorations on this occasion surpassed anything which had been seen before; the doors and windows were wreathed with ivy, laurel, and myrtle boughs, and the walls hung with tapestries and brocades embroidered with the armorial bearings of the different royal houses connected with the Sforza family. The adder of the Visconti, the cross of Savoy, and the imperial eagle were seen side by side with the mulberry-tree and other favourite devices of the Moro and his race, while all manner of strange and fantastic emblems were introduced by private owners, and one house exhibited the effigy of a crocodile, "a creature never before seen," remarks the historian, Tristan Calco, "in our city." But the most striking feature of the whole was the triumphal arch erected on the piazza in front of the Castello, and, by Lodovico's orders, crowned with Leonardo's model for the colossal equestrian statue of the great captain, Francesco Sforza. This clay horse, to which the Florentine master had devoted so many years of arduous labour, and which had cost him such infinite thought and care, was now at length completed, and the Milanese poets with one voice celebrated the praise of Lodovico, who had ordered the work,—

"Per memoria del padre un
gran colosso;"

and the fame of Leonardo, whose rare genius had produced this unrivalled statue—

"Guarde pur come è bello
quel cavallo
Leonardo Vinci a farli sol s'è
mosso
Statura bon pictore, e bon
geometra

Un tanto ingegno rar dal
ciel s'impetra."

So Baldassare Taccone sang in his poem on Bianca's wedding, while a greater scholar, Lancinus Curtius, recorded the completion of the long-expected work in the following epigram:—

"Expectant animi,
molemque futuram
Suspiciunt; fluat æs; vox
erit: Ecce deus!"

The court poet Taccone waxes eloquent over the splendour of the procession, led by Messer Galeazzo, captain-general of the armies, and the beauty of the bride, whose tall and slender figure showed to advantage in her gorgeous apparel, with her long fair hair flowing over her shoulders, as she rode through the streets bowing in response to the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd. He paints the marvellous scene inside the Duomo, where the venerable Archbishop of Milan sang mass in the presence of the most brilliant assembly ever seen within its walls, and the firing of guns and ringing of bells marked the moment when the Bishop of Brixen placed the imperial crown on the bride's head. Taccone describes the glittering array of chandeliers and vases, designed after Signor Lodovico's favourite antique fashion, which adorned the high altar, the blaze of a thousand wax lights which illumined the majestic choir, the sweet perfumes of incense and celestial harmonies of the music that filled the air. And, like a true courtier, he contrives to make everything, decorations, music, and processions, redound to the praise of the great Moro, the author of all the glories of Milan.

But we have an equally minute and perhaps more interesting description of the scene from Beatrice's own pen, in a letter which she sent to her sister Isabella from Vigevano on the 29th of December. The marchioness, whose state of health prevented her from being present on the important occasion, had begged her sister to send her full accounts of the ceremony, but, owing to the *fêtes* which followed the wedding and the journey of the court as far as Como with the imperial bride, a whole month elapsed before Beatrice was able to fulfil her promise.

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LADY AND DEAREST SISTER,

"I told you some time ago that I would let you have a full account of the triumphant display held in Milan, at the marriage of her Most Serene Highness the Queen of the Romans, and I certainly desired the chancellor to send you this account. But since you write that it has never reached you, the fault must rest with the said chancellor, and you must excuse me for this apparent neglect.

"On the last day of the past month the nuptials took place, and in preparation for this solemnity, a portico was erected in front of the Chiesa Maggiore of the city of Milan, with pillars on either side, supporting a purple canopy, embroidered with doves. Within the church, the aisles were hung with brocade as far as the choir, in front of which a triumphal arch had been erected on massive pillars. This was entirely painted, and bore in the centre an effigy of Duke Francesco on horseback, in his ducal robes, with the ducal arms and those of the King of the Romans above. This triumphal arch was square in shape, and ornamented with pictures of antique feasts, and the imperial insignia and the arms of my

husband were placed on the side towards the high altar. Beyond this arch were steps that led up to a great tribunal erected in front of the high altar. On the left was a small tribunal from which the Gospel was sung, hung with gold brocade; on the right was another, adorned with silver brocade; and behind these tribunals were seats ranged in order and covered with draperies, for the councillors and other feudatories and gentlemen. In the extreme corners of the choir were two raised stages, one for the singers, the other for the trumpeters, and in the space between were seated the doctors of law and medicine, with their birettas and capes lined with fur, each according to his rank. The altar itself was sumptuously adorned with all the silver vases and images of saints which you saw in the Rocchetta when you were at Milan.

"The street leading to the Duomo was beautifully decorated. There were columns wreathed with ivy all the way from the bastions of the Castello to the end of the piazza, and between the columns were festoons of boughs bearing antique devices, and round shields with the imperial arms and those of our house, and Sforzesca draperies were hung above the street all the way from the Castello to the Duomo. Many of the doors had their pillars wreathed with ivy and green boughs, so that the season seemed to be May-time rather than November. On both sides of the street, the walls were hung with satin, excepting those houses which have lately been adorned with frescoes, and which are no less beautiful than tapestries.

"On the morning of the day, at about nine o'clock, the reverend and magnificent ambassadors of the King of the Romans rode to the church, honourably

attended by the Marchese Ermes, the Count of Caiazzo, Count Francesco Sforza, the Count of Melzo, and Messer Lodovico da Fojano, and took their seats on the grand tribunal, close to the small tribunal covered with cloth of gold, on the left as you go in, this being counted the most honourable place, as it is the Gospel side. At ten o'clock, her serene Highness the Queen ascended the triumphal car which our dearest mother of blessed memory gave me when I was at Ferrara, and which was drawn on this occasion by four snow-white horses. The queen wore a vest of crimson satin, embroidered in gold thread and covered with jewels. Her train was immensely long, and the sleeves were made to look like two wings, which had a very fine appearance. On her head she wore an ornament of magnificent diamonds and pearls. And to add to the solemnity of the occasion, Messer Galeazzo Pallavicino carried the train, and Count Conrado de' Lando and Count Manfredo Torniello each of them supported one of the sleeves. Before the bride walked all the chamberlains, courtiers, officials, gentlemen, feudatories, and last of all the councillors. The queen seated herself in the centre of the car, the Duchess Isabella being on her right, and myself on her left. The said duchess wore a *camora* of crimson satin, with gold cords looped over it, as in my grey cloth *camora*, which you must remember; and I wore my purple velvet *camora*, with the pattern of the links worked in massive gold and green and white enamel, about six inches deep on the front and back of my bodice, and on both sleeves. The *camora* was lined with cloth of gold, and with it I wore a girdle of St. Francis made of large pearls, with a beautiful clear-cut ruby for clasp. On the other side of the chariot were Madonna Fiordelisa"—an illegitimate daughter

of Duke Francesco Sforza, who occupied rooms in the Castello,—"Madonna Bianca, the wife of Messer Galeazzo; and the wife of Count Francesco Sforza. The chariot was followed by the ambassadors who have been sent by his Most Christian Majesty of France to honour these nuptials, and after them came the envoys of the different Italian powers, according to their rank, then the lord duke and my husband on horseback. These were followed by about twelve chariots containing the noblest maidens of Milan, who had been especially chosen and invited to attend the solemnity, and the ladies of the queen, all wearing the same livery, with tan-coloured *camoras* and mantles of bright green satin. Both the Duchess Isabella's ladies and mine were riding in these chariots. And as we drove to the Duomo in this procession, all the shops and windows on the road were hung with satin draperies and filled with men and women, and it was impossible to count the crowds of people who thronged every part of the streets.

"When we reached the gates of the Duomo, we alighted from the chariots and found Madonna Beatrice waiting to receive the bride, with a number of noble ladies, and we proceeded as far as the steps of the tribunal, where the ambassadors of the King of the Romans advanced to meet the queen, whom they conducted to her place on the great tribunal in front of the high altar. Then we all took our proper places —that is to say, the ambassadors mounted the tribunal covered with cloth of gold, the queen was led to the tribunal of silver brocade, between the French ambassadors, while behind them were seated the envoys of the other powers, the duke and my husband, Duchess Isabella and myself. The other honourable relatives of the bride occupied a lower

range of seats, and the central part of the tribunal was filled with a large number of ladies. On the queen's side, the councillors, feudatories, and other courtiers, officials, and chamberlains occupied the remainder of the seats. As for the rest of the people, the church, which is a very large one, could not contain them all.

"When we were all in our places, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Milan entered in full vestments, with the priests in ordinary, and began to celebrate mass with the greatest pomp and solemnity, to the sound of trumpets, flutes, and organ-music, together with the voices of the chapel choir, who adapted their singing to Monsignore's time. At the singing of the Gospel, two of the priests in ordinary of the cathedral bore the incense, the one to the ambassadors of the King Maximilian, and the other to the queen, the duke and duchess, and my husband and myself, who were opposite. The Pax was given, when the right time came, by the Bishop of Piacenza to the king's representatives, and to us others who sat on the other tribunal by the Bishop of Como. After mass had been celebrated with the greatest solemnity, the queen rose from her place between the ambassadors of his Most Christian Majesty, and, accompanied by the duke and my husband, Duchess Isabella and myself, and followed by all the princes of the blood, advanced to the altar. The ambassadors of King Maximilian advanced on their side, and we all stood before the altar, where Monsignore the Archbishop pronounced the marriage service, and the Bishop of Brixen first gave the ring to the queen, and then, assisted by the archbishop, placed on her head the crown, which act was accompanied with great blowing of trumpets, ringing of bells, and firing of guns and shells. And the said

crown was of gold, enriched with rubies, pearls, and diamonds, set in the form of arches meeting in the shape of a cross, and on the top of all was a figure of the globe, crowned with a small imperial cross, after the pattern given by the ambassadors, in obedience to the king's directions.

"After this, every one walked in procession to the gates of the Duomo, the above-named feudatories bearing the train and sleeves. Then the women, as well as the men, mounted horses, and a *baldacchino* of white damask lined with ermine was prepared, under which the queen rode, preceded by the ambassadors and the whole court, with the duke and my husband at their head. Next to the queen rode the ambassadors of her husband the king, the Bishop of Brixen being on the left hand, outside the *baldacchino*, and so the long procession moved towards the Castello. All the clergy of the city of Milan, richly apparelled and very devout in appearance, were drawn up between the Castello and Duomo, both on the way thither and on the return journey. Messer Zoan Francesco Pallavicino and Messer Francesco Bernardo Visconti acted as the queen's staff-bearers, from the Duomo to the Castello. The *baldacchino* was carried all the way by doctors robed in the manner described above, and behind the queen rode the duchess and myself, followed by the relatives, courtiers, and invited guests, all on horseback. Then came the ladies of the queen, those of the duchess, and my own, all sumptuously clad and making a splendid show, and finest of all was the queen, with the imperial crown on her head. Nothing but gold and silver brocade was to be seen, and the least well-dressed persons wore crimson velvet, so that the costumes were a marvellous sight, besides the infinite number of gold

chains worn by knights and others. All those who were present agreed that they had never seen so glorious a spectacle. And the ambassador of Russia, who was among the spectators, declared that he had never seen such extraordinary pomp. The nuncio of His Holiness the Pope said the same, as well as the French ambassador, who declared that, although he had been present at the Pope's coronation and at that of his own king and queen, he had never seen as splendid a sight. Your Highness may judge from this how full of pleasure and glory these nuptials have been. All the people shouted for joy, and so at length we reached the Castello of Milan, where the procession broke up and the crowd dispersed. I wished for your presence many times during the whole ceremony, but since this desire of mine could not be satisfied, I thought I would give you this account with my own hand. Commending myself to your Highness as ever,

"Your sister,
BEATRIX SFORTIA VICECOMES ESTENSIS DUCHISA
BRI..[48]

Vigevano, December 29, 1493.

To my illustrious lady and most dear sister the lady Isabella
di Gonzaga Estensis, Marchionissæ Mantuæ."

The splendours which Beatrice describes with so much enthusiasm did not end with the bride's return to the Castello. Here Bianca's magnificent trousseau was exhibited before the admiring eyes of the ladies of Milan. It was valued at 100,000 ducats, and included not only rich clothes and costly jewels, but

gold and silver plate for use in the royal chapel and on the dinner-table, altar fittings and bed-hangings, mirrors and perfumes, and a vast store of fine linen, carpets, saddles and horse-trappings of the most sumptuous description. The court poet goes on to tell how Duchess Bona welcomed her daughter with tears of joy, and how during the next two days high festival was held in the Castello. There was a tournament, in which the "gran Sanseverini" once more proved their valour, and Messer Galeaz as usual bore off the prize, followed by much feasting and dancing, and a grand display of fireworks. "So many torches and lights illumined the darkness of night, that all Milan blazed as if the city were on fire."

On the third day after the marriage ceremony, the queen started on her journey across the Alps, attended by Maximilian's ambassadors and a numerous suite, which included her brother, Ermes Sforza; her cousin, Francesco Sforza; the Archbishop of Milan; the poet Gaspare Visconti; and the great jurist Giasone del Maino, as well as Erasmo Brasca, who was to resume his post of envoy to the King of the Romans. The Duke and Duchess of Milan, Lodovico and Beatrice, and Bona of Savoy all accompanied Bianca as far as Como, where the bishop and clergy came out to meet her, and conducted her in state to the cathedral. After a solemn thanksgiving service, at which all the court assisted, the queen and the German ambassadors spent the night in the episcopal palace, while the other princes and princesses were entertained in the houses of distinguished courtiers in the town. On the following morning the bride took leave of her family, and embarked on a richly decorated barge fitted out by the royal citizens of Torno and rowed by forty

sailors, while her suite followed in thirty smaller boats, painted and decked out with laurel boughs and tapestries. Niccolo da Correggio, whose daughter Leonora was one of the ladies chosen to accompany Bianca on her journey, has described the beauty of the scene that morning, the blue waters of the lake covered with glittering sails, the shores crowded with people in holiday attire, and the joyous sounds of music that filled the air as the gay *cortége* left Como. The bridal party reached Bellagio in safety, and after spending the night at the Marchesino Stanga's castle, started on their journey towards the upper end of the lake. But hardly had they left the shore, than the weather changed and a violent storm scattered the fleet in all directions. The poor young queen and her ladies wept and cried aloud to God for mercy, and their companions were scarcely less terrified. Only Giasone del Maino preserved his composure and smiled at the terror of the courtiers, who gave themselves up for lost, while he exhorted the frightened boatmen to keep their heads. Fortunately, towards nightfall the tempest subsided, and after tossing on the waves for several hours, the queen's barge with part of the fleet managed to put back into Bellagio. The next day a more prosperous start was made, and on the 8th of December the party set off on horseback to cross the mountain passes. But the hardships of the journey were not yet over. A rough mule-track was the only road that led in those days over the Alps that divided the Valtellina from the Tyrol, "that fearful and cruel mountain of Nombray," as the Venetian chronicler calls the pass now crossed by the Stelvio road. No wonder the sight of those precipitous cliffs filled the Milanese ladies with terror, and they shrank from exploring such barbarous regions in the depth of

winter. One maid of honour had to be left behind at Gravedona, unable to bear the fatigues of the journey, and Bianca herself complained bitterly to Erasmo Brasca of the hardships which she had to endure. "The queen," wrote the ambassador to Lodovico, "conducts herself well on the whole, but often complains that I deceive her, by telling her, each morning when she mounts her horse, that she will not find the road so rough to-day, and then, as ill luck will have it, it turns out to be worse than ever." At length, however, on the 23rd of December, the travellers reached Innsbrück, and Bianca was kindly received by Maximilian's uncle, the Archduke Sigismund of Austria, and his wife, with whom she spent Christmas and beguiled the winter days with dancing and games, while Erasmo Brasca went on to meet the King of the Romans at Vienna. Even then some weeks passed before this laggard bridegroom joined his newly wedded wife, and Erasmo Brasca's mind was sorely perturbed at his prolonged delays and excuses. Bianca, however, whose childish mind was easily distracted, found plenty of amusement in her new surroundings and wrote long and affectionate letters to her uncle Lodovico, telling him how she and the Archduchess Barbara had been dressing up their ladies *à la Tedesca* and *à la Lombarda*, and how the court painter, Ambrogio de Predis, who had accompanied her from Milan to paint Maximilian's portrait, had just made a picture of the archduchess, which greatly pleased her. And she informs her uncle that the German princess had sent to ask her for a portrait of Signor Lodovico, which she had been very anxious to see and had studied with the greatest interest.

Finally, on the 9th of March, Maximilian arrived at the castle of Hall, where his bride met him, and the

marriage was at length consummated, "to the confusion of all our enemies," as Brasca wrote triumphantly to his master on the following morning. This union, in which Lodovico's friends and foes alike acknowledged a master-stroke of successful diplomacy, was not destined to prove a very happy one. From the first Maximilian looked with critical eyes on this bride of twenty-one, who was thirteen years younger than himself, and told Erasmo Brasca that Bianca was quite as fair as his first wife, Mary of Burgundy, but inferior in wisdom and good sense to that princess, adding that perhaps she might improve in time. He treated her kindly to begin with, and gratified her by the handsome robes which he gave her in order that she might appear attired in German fashion at her coronation. Before long, however, he began to find fault with her extravagant habits, and complained that she had spent 2000 florins, presented to her by the city of Cologne, in one single day. Brasca himself felt obliged to remonstrate with her on her foolish tricks, especially for eating her meals on the floor instead of at table, and other bad habits which annoyed the emperor, while the violent friendship which she made with one of her ladies, Violante by name, led to continual intrigues and quarrels. Maximilian soon began to find her presence wearisome, and to leave her mostly to herself, and when he found that his hopes of an heir did not seem likely to be realized, he allowed the poor empress to lead a very dull and solitary life. Left alone, as she often was for weeks, in the vast, gloomy castle of Innsbrück, Bianca pined for the bright and sunny villas and palaces of Milan, and looked back sadly on the gay years of her old life. She was constantly writing affectionate letters to her uncle, asking him to give places and pensions to her old friends and

servants in Milan, and begging him for portraits of himself and Beatrice, as well as for the silks and feathers, the jewels and perfumes, with which her thoughts were always busy.[49]

But, to do her justice, she proved a loyal friend to Lodovico in his darkest days, and when his children lived in exile at Innsbrück, they found a kind and loving protector in the empress during the few remaining years of her life. From the year after her marriage her health began to droop, and she became gradually weaker, until in 1510 she died of this lingering illness, and was buried in the Franciscan church of Innsbrück, where the bronze effigy of Maximilian's Lombard bride, robed in the rich brocades which she loved so well, still adorns his sumptuous mausoleum.

FOOTNOTES:

[45] Luzio-Renier. *op. cit.*, pp. 380-382.

[46] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

[47] "Leonardo da Vinci," by Eugène Müntz, vol. i. p. 226.

[48] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

[49] F. Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza*

CHAPTER XIX

State of political affairs in Italy—Vacillating policy of Lodovico Sforza—Death of King Ferrante of Naples—Alliance between his successor Alfonso and Pope Alexander VI.—Lodovico urges Charles VIII. to invade Naples—Sends Galeazzo di Sanseverino to Lyons—Cardinal della Rovere's flight from Rome—Alfonso of Naples declares war—Beatrice at Vigevano—The Gonzagas and the Moro—Duchess Isabella and her husband at Pavia.

1493-1494

While Lodovico's newly-formed alliance with Maximilian strengthened his hands on the one hand, on the other it helped to aggravate the strained relations already existing between himself and the royal family of Naples. The promise of the investiture of Milan, which he had received from the emperor, soon became known; it was freely discussed that autumn both in Rome and Venice, and gave Alfonso of Calabria good reason to take up arms in defence of his son-in-law Gian Galeazzo's rights. But King Ferrante still hesitated to declare war against Milan, and, while he raised forces and made preparations for the defence of his dominions, was far more concerned to detach Lodovico from the French alliance than to interfere in the domestic affairs of Milan on behalf of his granddaughter and her husband. In August he succeeded in making peace with Pope Alexander, and even consented to a marriage contract between his granddaughter Sancia, and Godfrey Borgia, the Pope's young son. This new departure alarmed Lodovico seriously, and produced a marked alteration in his foreign policy. When Charles the Eighth's envoy, Perron de' Baschi, visited

Milan in June, he met with polite but vague answers from the Moro, and received no distinct promise of support in the conquest of Naples. But early in September, Count Belgiojoso returned to France, and lost no time in seeking an interview with the king. "Is your Majesty going to undertake the expedition or not?" were his first words. "Signor Lodovico is anxious to learn your intention."

"I have already told Signor Lodovico my intentions a thousand times over, by envoys and letters," replied the king, petulantly, and proceeded to intimate that if the Moro played him false, he would support the Duke of Orleans in reviving his old claims on the Milanese. Belgiojoso hastened to assure Charles of his master's friendly sentiments, upon which the king's ill temper mollified, and he said, "Then I will regard him as a father, and seek his advice in everything."

All the same, when Charles repeated his request that Lodovico should send him Messer Galeazzo, and expressed his great wish to see the hero of so many tournaments in person, the Moro once more gave an evasive answer, and told Belgiojoso that he could not spare his son-in-law at present. The Pope showed his friendliness to the house of Este by including Beatrice's brother Ippolito, a lad of fifteen, among the twelve cardinals whom he created that September, his own son, Cesar Borgia, being another of the number. In November he sent Lodovico his cordial congratulations on his niece's marriage with the emperor, and presented Maximilian with a consecrated sword.

"This is the state of affairs in Italy at present," wrote the chronicler Malipiero on the 25th of September, 1493. "The Pope is in league with

Lodovico of Milan. Maximilian, King of the Romans, has been elected emperor, and has taken Bianca Sforza to wife with 400,000 ducats, and Lodovico is to be invested with the duchy of Milan by him as emperor. At Rome Cardinal Ascanio's affairs prosper, and Lodovico of Milan is on intimate terms with the Pope and all of his allies. And Duke Ercole has sent his son Alfonso to France to tell King Charles that his troops will have free passage to Naples through his dominions, because he is the father-in-law of Lodovico."

Under these circumstances, old King Ferrante, becoming desperate, made a last effort to win over Lodovico to his side, and implored him to use his influence to stop the French monarch, warning him that the tide of events might in the end prove too strong for him. "The time will come," replied Lodovico proudly, "when all Italy will turn to me and pray to be delivered from the coming evils." In his anxiety to recover the Moro's friendship, the old king even thought of coming to Genoa himself to meet his granddaughter's husband, and arrive at some agreement. But early in the new year he fell ill, and died of fever on the 25th of January, at the age of seventy.

The death of Ferrante and accession of his son Alfonso, the father of Duchess Isabella, and a personal enemy of the Moro, brought matters to a crisis. The old king could never conquer his dislike of the Pope, and had only given a reluctant consent to the proposed marriage of his granddaughter with a Borgia. Alfonso, on the contrary, was ready to agree to any terms which might conciliate Alexander VI., and employed every artifice to obtain the Pope's support, and that of Piero de' Medici against France

and Milan. In spite of the compliments that were exchanged on both sides upon his accession, Alfonso's enmity to Lodovico Sforza was well known at Naples, and the Milanese ambassador, Antonio Stanga, warned Lodovico to beware of assassins and prisoners, since, to his certain knowledge, the "new king has paid large sums of money to several Neapolitans of bad repute, who have been sent to Milan on some evil errand." After much vacillation on the Pope's part, and prolonged negotiations with both France and Naples, he was induced by the Orsini, who were staunch allies of the house of Aragon, to grant Alfonso the investiture of Naples, and to send his son, Cardinal Juan Borgia, to officiate at his coronation. A papal bull was addressed to Charles VIII., warning him not to invade Italy at the peril of his soul, and Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, whose influence had been hitherto all-powerful with the Pope, left the Vatican and retired to his own palace. The Pope's change of front finally determined Lodovico's policy. From this moment he threw himself heart and soul into the alliance with France, and left no stone unturned to bring Charles VIII. into Italy. In an important letter which, on the 10th of March, he addressed to his brother, Cardinal Ascanio, who shared all his secrets, he reminds him that he had originally been no friend to the French invasion.

"It is not true," he writes, "that the whole movement proceeds from me. It was the Most Christian King who took the initiative, which is proved by the appeal for the investiture of Naples, which he addressed to the late Pope Innocent, and also by many letters written on the subject by our own hand. When the Treaty of Senlis was signed, he sent his envoy to tell me that he meant to invade

Italy. At that moment, seeing how badly the King of Naples had behaved against the Holy Father, I was not sorry to come to the help of His Holiness. I ceased to dissuade the Most Christian King from the enterprise. I approved his resolution, and now he is at Lyons."

As late as the 6th of February, Lodovico had again declined to send Messer Galeazzo to France, saying that every one would think he had come to hasten the king's movements, and that in this way Charles would lose the honour of the campaign. But when the news of the alliance between Alfonso and the Pope reached him, he made no further difficulties, and on the 1st of April, Galeazzo started for Lyons. On the 5th, he entered the town secretly, disguised as a German, and, accompanied only by four riders, made his way to the royal lodgings, and saw the king privately, this being the day which had been selected by Lodovico's astrologer, Ambrogio da Rosate, for his arrival at court. On the following morning he made his public entry, attended by a suite of a hundred horsemen clad in the French fashion, which Messer Galeazzo himself commonly affected. The king received him with the utmost cordiality, and conducted him immediately to see the queen, whom he presented with a magnificent Spanish robe in Lodovico's name, together with choice specimens of Milanese armour, jennets from his own famous breed, and several handsome silver flagons filled with fragrant perfumes, in which Charles took especial delight. The French king fell an easy victim to this brilliant cavalier's personal charm. He insisted on seeing him ride in a tilting match before the court, and could talk of nothing but Messer Galeazzo's feats of horsemanship, whether in council or at table, and even when he went to bed. He

bestowed the order of St. Michel upon his guest, and, among other marks of favour, he invited Galeazzo to his private rooms, where he sat with a few of his favourites, and, taking one of the fairest maidens by the hand, presented her to his visitor. Then the king himself sat down by another, and so they remained for some hours in pleasant conversation."

In his reply to Belgiojoso, who duly reported these events to his master, Lodovico dwells with infinite satisfaction on the great honours which have been paid to his dear son, and rejoices to hear that his Majesty has introduced him into his private apartments, and even shared his domestic pleasures with him. The presence of Galeazzo di Sanseverino at Lyons had, no doubt, the effect of counteracting the intrigues of the Duke of Orleans and the Aragonese party at the French court, and the confidence with which he inspired Charles dissipated any doubts which the king may have entertained of Lodovico's honesty. "The mission of Signor Galeazzo," wrote Belgiojoso, "has been crowned with success. Without his coming, the enterprise would have been utterly ruined."

Another and still more powerful advocate of the expedition now appeared at Lyons in the person of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who, in Guicciardini's opinion, "was the fatall instrument of all the miseries of Italy." This bitter enemy of the Borgias had been repeatedly threatened with assassination by the Pope's creatures, and, feeling that Ostia was no safe place for him, he embarked one night in a fisherman's bark and fled first to Savona and thence to Genoa. Here, with Lodovico's assistance, he managed to proceed on his journey to France, and on the 1st of June reached Lyons, where

his vehement invectives against the Pope and urgent entreaties helped to hasten the king's preparations. At the same time Erasmo Brasca, acting under Lodovico's orders, succeeded in disarming Maximilian's opposition to the French king's invasion of Italy, and wrote to his master on the 14th of June, informing him that the French ambassador had just left Worms with an assurance from the emperor that he would not impede that monarch's designs upon Naples. When, ten days later, Galeazzo di Sanseverino returned to Milan, the die was cast, and the French invasion of Italy was at length finally determined. Meanwhile the long-expected rupture between Milan and Naples had taken place. On the 8th of May, Alfonso was crowned by the papal nuncio, Juan Borgia, after the marriage of the Princess Sancia to Godfrey Borgia had been solemnized on the previous day. A fortnight later, as the king rode in state, accompanied by all the foreign ambassadors, to church on the Feast of Corpus Christi, he took occasion to ask the Milanese envoy, Antonio Stanga, if the news which reached him from Lyons were true, and the French king's enterprise, after being almost given up, had now been decided upon, owing to Messer Galeazzo's visit. The ambassador listened deferentially, cap in hand, but courteously disclaimed all knowledge of such information.

"Tell Signor Lodovico," returned the king, "that he will be the first to rue the day when the French set foot in Italy."

"Before I had time to reply," writes Stanga, "the other ambassadors had arrived to salute his Majesty, and I did not see him again alone."

A few days later the Milanese envoy was abruptly

dismissed, and war declared against Milan. Alfonso committed the first open act of hostilities by seizing Lodovico's principality of Bari. At the same time a fleet was equipped to attack Genoa, and the land forces prepared to join the papal army and march through Romagna against the Milanese.

The winter of 1494, "that most unhappie year for Italy," writes Guicciardini, "for that in it was made open the way to infinite and horrible calamities," was spent by Lodovico and his wife at their favourite palace of Vigevano. After Bianca's wedding they had retired there, to spend the remaining period of Beatrice's mourning at this country retreat, and did not leave until the spring was well advanced. From here Beatrice wrote on the 3rd of January to rejoice with her sister Isabella on the birth of her first child, a daughter, who received the name of Leonora, after their beloved mother. The duchess congratulated her sister in affectionate terms, and signed herself, "*Quella che desidera vedere la Signoria Vostra*." She who desires to see your Highness,

BEATRICE SFORZA D'ESTE."[50]

Below she added messages from her baby-boy: "Ercole begs me to commend him to your Highness, and to his new cousin."

Perhaps Beatrice was the more cordial and warm in expressing her affection for her sister because of the difference that had lately arisen between her husband and the marquis, who had lately been invited to take the command of the King of Naples' troops in the war against Milan. This offer he eventually declined, as well as an invitation from the French king to enter his service; but on this and

other occasions his attitude excited Lodovico's displeasure, while the Moro's somewhat imperious request annoyed both Gianfrancesco and his wife. For one thing, Isabella could not forgive the way in which her brother-in-law desired that fish from the lake of Garda should to sent to Milan at his pleasure, and wrote to her husband on the 1st of February in the following terms:—

"I am quite willing to see that fish should be sent to Milan occasionally, but not every week, as he requests in his imperious fashion, as if we were his feudatories, lest it should appear as if we were compelled to send it, and it were a kind of tribute."

But although Beatrice's exalted position and the splendour of the Milanese court sometimes excited Isabella's envy, and Lodovico's pretensions ruffled her equanimity, nothing ever disturbed the happy relations between the sisters. Beatrice was always frank and generous in her behaviour to Isabella, and the marchioness remained sincerely attached to her, and in her letters to her beloved sister-in-law, the Duchess of Urbino, constantly assures her that she holds the next place in her heart to that occupied by her only sister, "*la sorella mia unica, la Duchessa di Bari*."

It was at Vigevano that winter, on the 28th of January, that Lodovico drew up the deed of gift by which he endowed his wife with his palace lands of Cussago, as well as the Sforzesca and other lands in the district of Novara and Pavia. The deed, signed with his own hand, and richly illuminated by some excellent miniature painter of the Milanese school, is preserved in the British Museum, and is an admirable example of contemporary Lombard art. Medallion portraits of Lodovico and Beatrice are painted on the

vellum, together with a frieze of lovely *putti*, supporting their armorial bearings, and a variety of Sforza devices and mottoes, interspersed with festoons of foliage and fruit, torches and cornucopias. Lodovico's strongly marked features and long dark hair are relieved by the richness of his dark blue mantle sown with gold stars, while Beatrice wears a gold *ferronière* on her brow. Her dark brown hair is coiled in a jewelled net, a lock strays over her cheek, as in Zenale's portrait in the Brera altar-piece. Her mauve bodice is enriched with gold arabesques, and a cross of pearls hangs from a long chain she wears round her throat.

There were no *fêtes* that spring at Milan or Pavia. The treasury was exhausted by the great expenses of the Empress Bianca's wedding, and the court was still in mourning, while Lodovico's time and thoughts were absorbed in diplomatic correspondence and preparations for war. But there were gay hunting-parties at Vigevano, in which Beatrice joined with all her wonted spirit and love of sport.

"I must thank you for your pleasant account of my brother's hunting-expeditions," wrote Lodovico on the 18th of March to his old favourite, Count Tuttavilla, who was staying in Rome with Cardinal Ascanio; "but I really think, if my brother were here and could join in our hunting-parties, he would find them even more delightful." In the same letter he gives Girolamo a hint of the deed of investiture which he was hoping to receive from Maximilian.

"I have nothing else to say, saving that, by reason of the warm friendship we entertain with his serene Majesty the King of the Romans, as well as with the Most Christian King, to which we may add the love which his Holiness bears us, I hope soon to give you

some good news which will greatly please you."[51]

Girolamo Tuttavilla, the old and tried servant to whom this letter was addressed, had left Milan in February, owing to a quarrel with Galeazzo di Sanseverino and his brothers, whose haughty manners gave frequent offence to other Milanese courtiers. Both Lodovico and Beatrice, to whom Tuttavilla was sincerely attached, did their best to allay his displeasure, and Cardinal Ascanio tried to induce his guest to use greater moderation in speaking of Messer Galeazzo and his brothers; but, although Girolamo kept up friendly relations with the duke and duchess, the wound was never healed, and he refused to return to Milan. He afterwards entered the service of the young King Ferrante of Naples, and when a league was formed to oppose the French invaders, was appointed to command the cavalry, but found himself once more brought into contact with his old rivals Galeazzo and Fracassa, who were at the head of the Milanese contingent, and soon parted company with them, complaining that Messer Galeazzo would obey no one. But he never renounced his allegiance to Lodovico, and sent him and Beatrice his most hearty congratulations when the Moro became Duke of Milan.

The Sanseverini brothers seem frequently to have given offence to Lodovico's other ministers by their proud bearing. Even the mild and patient Erasmo Brasca incurred Messer Galeazzo's displeasure by repeating some reports about his French leanings which had reached the German court, and had to send an apology before he could obtain pardon for his mistake. But nothing could diminish the favour with which Lodovico regarded his son-in-law, and during his absence at Lyons we find him busy in

preparing a new and splendid palace at Vigevano to receive Messer Galeazzo and his youthful bride. In a letter which the Moro addressed on the 11th of May to his superintendent of works, the Marchesino Stanga, we find a mention of this building, as well as of the decoration of several rooms in the Castello of Milan.

"MARCHESINO,—We have given orders that the rooms which are being added on the garden side should be furnished according to the enclosed list, and desire that you should provide Messer Gualtero with the necessary money, 127-½ ducats, which you will charge on the extraordinary fund. You will provide in the same way for the moneys which I have assigned for the building of Messer Galeazzo's palace, and for the conduits for watering the Giardinato and the adjoining lavatories, also for the painting of the hall and dining-room occupied by the chamberlain of my illustrious consort, so that they may be fit for use, as arranged, by the end of the month."[52]

Neither the pressure of political affairs nor the anxieties of approaching conflict could destroy Lodovico's interest in artistic matters in the decorations of the Castello or the furnishing of his new rooms. The object which at this time lay nearest to his heart was the completion of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the Dominican church which he had taken under his especial protection, and which he intended to be the burial-place of his family. Even now Bramante was engaged in constructing the new cupola, and before long his favourite painter Leonardo was to set to work on his great Cenacolo in the refectory.

While Lodovico and Beatrice were pursuing these

different objects of their ambition, the unfortunate Duchess Isabella was eating out her heart in the Castello of Pavia. After the imperial wedding, at which she had made so brave a show, she and Gian Galeazzo retired to Pavia, and were rarely seen in public again. The duke's health and mental condition became every day more enfeebled, and his wife devoted herself wholly to him and her children. That winter she gave birth to a second daughter, who was named Ippolita after her grandmother, but died at the age of seven. And now, as if to increase the sadness of her forlorn condition, came the prospect of war with Naples, and the invasion of her father's dominions by a foreign monarch, who entered Italy as the ally of Lodovico, the usurper of her husband's throne. But melancholy as her surroundings were, and keenly as she felt the sight of her rival Beatrice's prosperity, the privations which she and her husband were forced to endure have been greatly exaggerated. According to Corio, they were often destitute of food and necessaries, and reduced to the verge of starvation. This chronicler, however, was not only frequently inaccurate in his statements, but had a spite against Duchess Beatrice, whose character and actions he totally misrepresented, while, after Lodovico's fall, his ingratitude towards his former master drew down upon him the bitter reproaches and invective of Lancinius Curtius. In this instance his statements are refuted by the bills for the expenses of the ducal household, which are still preserved in the Milanese archives. From these records we learn that Isabella's ladies were as numerous and as richly dressed as those of any reigning sovereign, and that her *camoras* and jewels were as sumptuous as Beatrice's own. Gian Galeazzo's stables were always well filled with horses and

hounds, for Lodovico was too wise to grudge his nephew anything that tended to occupy his thoughts and distract them from public affairs. And during his last illness the unfortunate duke announced his intention of giving dowries to a hundred poor maidens on his recovery, which affords another proof that his poverty was not so great as Corio has declared. But none the less it was a bitter mortification for a king's daughter of the proud house of Aragon to see herself and her husband left with the mere semblance of power, while her cousin reigned in her place.

FOOTNOTES:

[50] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

[51] Gabotto, G. *Tuttavilla*.

[52] Luca Beltrami, *Il Castello di Milano*.

CHAPTER XX

Arrival of the Duke of Orleans at Asti—The Neapolitan fleet sent against Genoa—The forces of Naples repulsed at Rapallo—Charles VIII. at Asti—Beatrice d'Este entertains him at Annona—The king's illness—His visit to Vigevano and Pavia—His interview with the Duke and Duchess of Milan—Last illness and death of Giangaleazzo Sforza—Lodovico proclaimed Duke at Milan—Mission of Maffeo Pirovano to Maximilian.

1494

On the 10th of July, the Duke of Orleans crossed the Alps with the advanced guard of the French army, and arrived at his own city of Asti, the fief which had formed part of the dowry of his grandmother, Valentina Visconti. Lodovico Sforza went to meet him at Alexandria on the 13th of July, and held a council of war there. The naval preparations that were being made at Genoa were the chief subject of discussion, and Orleans asked for a loan of sixty thousand ducats, which the Moro undertook to arrange. This was the first meeting

between these two princes, who were destined to become such bitter enemies in days to come. Even now it was well known that the Duke of Orleans assumed the title of *Dux Mediolani*, and his deeply rooted aversion to the Moro was no secret at Milan. But both princes had the same courtly and polished manners, and Lodovico on his part took care that nothing should be wanting in the entertainment of his rival. The other ambassadors watched the scene with curious eyes, but the first impression which Louis of Orleans made upon them was distinctly unfavourable. "He has a small head with not much room for brains," wrote Pietro Alamanni to Piero de' Medici; "Lodovico will soon get the better of him."

Much interest was excited among the Milanese ladies by the arrival of the French duke, and Benedetto Capilupi, who had been sent from Mantua to invite Beatrice to the christening of her infant niece, Leonora Gonzaga, wrote to Isabella on the 23rd of July—

"The duchess says that when the Duke of Orleans comes here, she will have to leave off her mourning and dance, and be kissed by the duke, who will kiss all the maids of honour and all the court ladies after the French fashion. Barone, the jester, says that when he has kissed Madonna Polissena d'Este, he will be tired of it and will go no further. When the Count Dauphin and other princes of the blood royal arrive, the duchess sends your Highness word that you will have to come too and receive some of these kisses."

The Duke of Orleans, however, had no time to waste in paying his respects to the ladies of Beatrice's court. Directly after his interview with Lodovico, he went on to Genoa to fit out the French fleet to oppose that in which Alfonso's brother, Don

Federigo, had already sailed to attack Genova. Twice over during the next few weeks the Neapolitan forces landed at Porto Venere and Rapallo, but each time they were repulsed by the Genoese and French troops, supported by a strong Milanese contingent under the gallant Fracassa and Antonio di Sanseverino, after which Don Federigo retired to the harbour of Leghorn, and was soon recalled to defend Naples itself against the French. On the 27th of July, the Count of Caiazzo received the *bâton* of command from Lodovico's hands on the piazza in front of the Castello of Milan, and started at the head of fifteen hundred foot soldiers and light cavalry to join the French army that was marching into Romagna to meet the forces led by Ferrante Duke of Calabria. On the 23rd of August, Isabella d'Este came to Parma at her brother-in-law's invitation to meet him and the French ambassador, and see the first French troops under La Trémouille and Stuart d'Aubigny—the Marchese d'Obegnino, as the Italians called him—march through the town. The spectacle, however, was less imposing than she expected, only about four hundred light cavalry riding past, as she describes it, in some confusion and disorder.

Meanwhile Charles VIII. had at length crossed the Alps and after pawning the jewels of his allies, the Marchioness of Montferrat and Duchess of Savoy, to pay his troops, arrived at Asti on the 9th of September. Here he was received with great honour by Lodovico and his father-in-law, Duke Ercole, who rode out to meet him on his entry into the town. The magistrates and citizens welcomed him as their liege lord, and the illiterate French barons were amazed to hear a child of eleven, Margareta Solari, declaim a Latin oration with perfect ease and fluency. Two days afterwards Beatrice herself arrived at the castle

of Annona, in the neighbourhood of Asti, bringing her choir of singers and musicians, and accompanied by eighty ladies especially chosen for their beauty and rich attire, and gave the king a magnificent reception. Charles advanced, cap in hand, to greet the duchess, and, beginning with Beatrice and Bianca, the young wife of Messer Galeazzo, kissed all the ladies present. The beauty and vivacity of the young duchess made a deep impression upon the susceptible French monarch, who could not take his eyes off her, and after spending some time with her in lively conversation, begged her to allow him to see her dance. Beatrice readily complied with his request, as she tells Isabella in the following letter, written from Annona on the 12th of September:—

"About noonday the king came here to pay me a friendly visit with the chief lords of his court, and remained for about three hours with me and my ladies, conversing with the greatest familiarity and affection. I assure you that no prince in the world could have made himself more agreeable. He desired to see my ladies dance, and then begged me to dance before him, which seemed to give him great pleasure."[53]

The young king himself, short and ill proportioned as he was, with round shoulders and a large head, a very wide mouth and big nose, cut but a very sorry figure by the side of the stately Moro and the handsome Sanseverini brothers; but his good nature and genial manners atoned for his want of presence, and surprised Beatrice and her ladies, who had expected a far more formidable personage. "He was little in stature and of small sense, very timid in speech owing to the way in which he had been treated as a child, and as feeble in mind as he was in

body, but the kindest and gentlest creature alive," says Commines, who accompanied Charles to Asti, and was sent on as ambassador to Venice. Guicciardini's judgment is more severe—

"And for the increasing of the infelicities of Italy, he whose coming brought all these calamities, was void of almost all the gifts of nature and the mind. For it is most certaine that King Charles from his infancie was of complexion very delicate and of body unsound and diseased, of small stature, and of face, if the aspect and dignitie of his eyes had been taken away, foule and deformed, his other members bearing such equal proportion that he seemed more a monster than a man. He was not only without all knowledge of good sciences, but scarcely he knew the distinct characters of letters; his mind desirous to command, but more proper to any other thing, for that being environed alwayes with his familiars and favourites, he retained with them no majestie or authoritie; he rejected all affaires and businesse, and yet if he did debate and consider in any he showed a weak discretion and judgment. And if he had anything in him that carried appearance of merite of praise, yet being thoroughly weighed and sounded, it was found farther off from vertue than vice. He had an inclination to glory, but it was tempered more with rashness and fury than with moderation and counsell: his liberalities were without discretion, measure, or distinction, immoveable oftentimes in his purposes, but that was rather an ill-grounded obstinacy than constancie, and that which many call bountie deserved more reasonably in his the name of coldnesse and slacknesse of spirit."[54]

The splendours of the court of Milan, and more especially the toilettes of the Duchess Beatrice and

her ladies, amazed the French chroniclers, who have left us a graphic description of the scene at the castle of Annona. The poet André de la Vigne, in his rhyming chronicle "Le Vergier d'honneur," describes Beatrice's sumptuous apparel in the following lines:—

"Avecques luy fist venir sa partie
Qui de Ferrare fille du duc estait;
De fin drap d'or en tout ou en partie
De jour en jour volontiers se vestait
Chaines, colliers, affiquetz, pierrerie,
Ainsi qu'on dit en ung commun proverbe,
Tant en avait que c'etait diablerie.
Brief mieulx valait le lyen que le gerbe.
Autour du col bagues, joyaulx carcaus,
Et pour son chief de richesse estoffer,
Bordures d'or, devises et brocans."

And in his "Histoire de Charles VIII." (1684) Godefroy quotes the following letter, written by an eye-witness from the French camp to the king's sister, Anne Duchess of Bourbon, for whose benefit Charles had Beatrice's portrait painted by Jean Perréal and sent to Moulins:—

"People crowd to meet and welcome the king from all parts, princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses. Only this morning a new one has arrived, the description of whose dress will, I am sure, please you. First of all, when she arrived she was on a horse with trappings of gold and crimson velvet, and she herself wore a robe of gold and green brocade, and a fine linen *gorgerette* turned back over it, and her head was richly adorned with pearls, and her hair hung down behind in one long coil with a silk ribbon twisted round it. She wore a crimson silk hat, made very much like our own, with five or six red and grey feathers, and with all that on her head, sat up on horseback as straight as if she had been a man. And with her came the wife of Seigneur Galeaz' and many other ladies, as many as twenty-two, all riding handsome and richly apparelled horses, and six chariots hung with cloth of gold and green velvet, all full of ladies. They had intended to visit the king in his lodgings, but this he would not allow, and, in order to appear gracious, said that he would visit them, but he did not go to their lodgings that day, feeling unwell. The next day, after dinner, he went to see this lady, whom he found magnificently arrayed, after the fashion of the country, in a green satin robe. The bodice of her gown was loaded with diamonds, pearls, and rubies, both in front and behind, and the sleeves were made very tight and slashed so as to show the white chemise underneath, and tied up with a wide grey silk ribbon, which hung almost down to the ground. Her throat was bare and adorned with a necklace of very large pearls, with a ruby as big as your 'Grand Valloy,' and her head was dressed just the same as yesterday, only that instead of a hat she wore a velvet cap with an aigrette of feathers fastened with a clasp made of two rubies, a

diamond, and a pear-shaped pearl, like your own, only larger. After that the king had paid her a visit, he returned to his house, but first he had some conversation with her, and made her dance in the French fashion, with some of her ladies. And I can assure you, madame, that she danced wonderfully well in the French fashion, although she said she had never danced in this manner before. If the king were not going to send you her picture, to show you the fashion of her dress, I would have endeavoured to obtain one to send you myself."

A grand *fête* was arranged for the following day, but the king fell suddenly ill of small-pox, and had to call in Messer Ambrogio da Rosate to attend him. All his plans were altered, and more than a fortnight elapsed before he was able to leave his room. This delay discouraged the French, who suffered from the great heat, and complained, as Commines tells us, of the sourness of the country wine, the last vintage having been a bad one. All Lodovico's smooth words and tact were needed to keep the leaders in good humour in these trying circumstances. On the other hand, Alfonso of Naples, taking courage, boldly announced that the approach of winter and want of pay would force the French to retreat, and Piero de' Medici sent a troop of Florentine soldiers to join the Duke of Calabria in Romagna. But their triumph was of short duration. On the 6th of October the king had recovered sufficiently to leave Asti, and while most of his army marched direct to Piacenza, he himself travelled by Casale and through the dominions of his ally, the young Marquis of Montferrat, to Vigevano. Here Lodovico and Beatrice once more gave their royal guest a splendid reception, and held a banquet and boar-hunt in his honour during the next two days. The beauty of the palace, and the wealth and

magnificence displayed on all sides, filled the French with wonder; but although Charles took Lodovico's advice on all points, and was apparently on the most cordial terms with his host, he asked for the keys of the castle at night, and desired his guards to keep strict watch at the gates. "The fashion of their friendship was such," says Commines, "that it could not last long. But for the present the king could not do without Lodovico."

On the 13th, Charles slept at the Sforzesca and visited Lodovico's famous farm of La Pecorara, or Les Granges, as the French chroniclers termed this vast farm, where agricultural industries were cultivated on such a splendid scale. They saw the spacious buildings, the stables with their noble columns and separate accommodation for mares and stallions, and the superb breed of horses which were reared under Messer Galeazzo's care; the pastures with their 14,000 buffaloes, oxen, and cows, and as many sheep and goats; and the large dairies, where butter and cheese were made on the most approved system, and marvelled afresh at the industry of the Milanese farmers and the wealth and fertility of this wonderful land. The next day the king went on to Pavia, where triumphal arches had been prepared for his reception, and the clergy and professors of the university hailed his presence in long harangues and complimentary speeches. At first lodgings had been prepared for him in the city, but, according to Commines, some of the king's followers had inspired him with fears of foul play, and he preferred to take up his abode in the Castello itself. Lodovico himself showed him the library and other treasures of his ancestral palace, and took him out hunting in the park. On the 15th, he visited the Duomo and Arca di S. Agostino, and on the 16th, rode out to the Certosa,

where the monks entertained both princes at a grand banquet in a house outside the cloister precincts. In the evenings, comedies were acted or musical entertainments given in the Castello for the king's amusement.

At the time of Charles's visit to Pavia, the Duke and Duchess of Milan and their children were occupying their rooms in the Castello, but during the last few weeks Giangaleazzo had become seriously ill and was unable to leave his bed. Both his wife and his mother Bona were assiduous in their attentions to the sick prince, and Isabella hardly ever left his bedside. The chronicler Godefroy, who has left us so faithful and accurate an account of Charles VIII.'s expedition, describes the splendid *fêtes* given to the king at Pavia, and says that the Duchess Isabella, with her young son Francesco, herself received him at the portico of the Castello, but does not mention his visit to the sick duke. Another trustworthy authority, Corio, tells us that Charles with great thoughtfulness paid a visit to his cousin, who was suffering from an incurable disease, and growing visibly worse, and that the unfortunate duke recommended his wife and children to the king's care. Commines, who was at Pavia three days before Charles, on his way to Venice, says that he saw the little four-year-old prince Francesco, but not the duke, since he was very ill and his wife very sorrowful, watching by his bedside. "However," he adds, "the king spoke with him, and told me their words, which only related to general subjects, for he feared to displease Lodovico; all the same, he told me afterwards that he would have willingly given him a warning. And the duchess threw herself on her knees before Lodovico, begging him to have pity upon her father and brother. To which he replied

that he could do nothing, and told her to pray rather for her husband and for herself, who was still so young and fair a lady."

The Venetian chronicler, Marino Sanuto, gives a more sensational account of the interview. According to him, Isabella absolutely refused to see the king, and, seizing a dagger, declared she would stab herself rather than meet her father's mortal enemy. Lodovico, however, in the end induced her to receive the king, upon which she threw herself in tears at the feet of Charles VIII., and implored him to spare her father and brother and the house of Aragon. The king's kindly heart was touched with compassion at the grief of the unhappy princess, but he only spoke a few consoling words, and promised that her son should be as dear to him as if he were his own son. When Isabella renewed her earnest entreaties on her father's behalf, he replied that it was too late for him to give up the expedition, which had already cost him so much trouble and money, and which was now so far advanced that he could not retire with honour. On the 17th of October, Charles, after assisting at mass in the chapel of the Castello, left Pavia for Piacenza, where he joined the French army and prepared to enter Tuscan territory. Here he learnt that the Duke of Calabria had been worsted in two engagements by the forces of the Count of Caiazzo and the French under d'Aubigny, and was in full retreat. And here on the 20th, a courier from Pavia arrived, bringing Lodovico word that his nephew was dying. He set out at once for Pavia, and met another messenger on the way who told him that the duke was already dead. Two days after Charles VIII.'s departure from Pavia, Giangaleazzo became suddenly worse. A fresh attack of fever was brought on by his own folly in drinking large quantities of

wine and eating pears and apples contrary to his doctor's express orders, in spite of the continual sickness from which he suffered. The next day he was rather better, and in the evening of the 20th, the four doctors who were attending him sent Lodovico an improved account, saying that the duke had slept for some hours, and had afterwards been able to take some chicken-broth, raw eggs, and wine. Now he had fallen asleep again. He was certainly no worse, they added, although still very weak and by no means out of danger. That same evening he spoke cheerfully to his trusted servant, Dionigi Confanerio, and asked to see two horses which Lodovico had sent him, and which were brought into the hall adjoining his rooms for his inspection. Afterwards he spoke affectionately of his uncle, and said he was sure that Lodovico would have come to see him if he had not been obliged to wait upon the French king. And he asked Dionigi in a confidential tone if he thought that Lodovico loved him and was sorry to see him so ill, and seemed quite satisfied with his attendant's assurances on the subject. A former prior of Vigevano, who had known the dying prince from his childhood, and had been summoned to Pavia by the duchess, now paid the duke a visit and heard his confession, after which Giangaleazzo asked to see his greyhounds, which were brought to his bedside, and spoke cheerfully of his speedy recovery before he fell asleep. Early the next morning he died in the presence of his wife and mother and the doctors who had attended him during the last few weeks.

A few hours later Lodovico reached Pavia, and without a moment's delay hastened on to Milan, giving orders that the duke's body should be removed as soon as possible to the Duomo of Milan. There during the next three days the dead prince lay

before the high altar, clad in the ducal cap and robes, with his sword and sceptre at his side, and his white face exposed to view. Meanwhile Lodovico had lost no time. His first act, on his arrival in the Castello, was to summon the councillors, magistrates, and chief citizens of Milan to a meeting on the following day, but even before these dignitaries could be assembled, he called together a few of his immediate friends and courtiers in the great hall of the Rocchetta, and after informing them of his nephew's premature and lamentable end, proposed that his son Francesco should be proclaimed duke in his father's place. Upon this, Antonio da Landriano, prefect of the Treasury, responded in an eloquent speech, dwelling on the danger in these troublous times of placing the helm of the state in the hands of a four-year-old child, and calling on Lodovico, for the sake of the people whom he had hitherto ruled so well and wisely in his nephew's name, to undertake the burden of sovereignty and ascend the ducal throne. "Since the death of Giangaleazzo's father," he said, "we have had no duke but you; you alone among our princes can grasp the ducal sceptre with a firm hand." These last words were hailed with loud applause by the Moro's friends, and when Landriano had ended his speech, Galeazzo Visconti Baldassare Pusterla, the able lawyer Andrea Cagnola, and several other councillors, well known for their devotion to the Moro, all spoke in the same strain.

"It was propounded," writes Guicciardini, "by the principals of the Counsell, that, in regard of the greatness of that estate and the dangerous times prepared now for Italy, it would be a thing prejudicial that the sonne of John Galeaz, having not five yeares in age, should succeed his father, and therefore, as well as to keepe the liberties of the

State in protection, as to be able to meete with the inconveniences which the time threatened, they thought it just and necessary—derogating somewhat for the public benefite, and for the necessite present from the disposition of the laws—as the laws themselves do suffer to constraine Lodovic, for the better stay of the commonweale, to suffer that unto him might be transported the title and dignitie of Duke, a burden very weightie, in so dangerous a season; with the which colour, honestie giving place to ambition, the morning following, making some show of resistance, he tooke upon him the name and armes of the Duke of Milan."

The Florentine historian's account of the transaction is accurate in all but the last particular. Lodovico was indeed proclaimed duke in his nephew's stead, and, clad in a mantle of cloth of gold, rode that afternoon through the streets of the city, and visited the church of S. Ambrogio, to give thanks for his accession to the throne. The ducal sword and sceptre were borne before him by Galeazzo Visconti, the bells were rung, and the trumpets sounded, while the people hailed him with shouts of *Duca! Duca! Moro! Moro!* But he was careful to style himself Lodovicus Dux, and would not assume the title of Duke of Milan until he had received the imperial privileges, confirming his election and granting him the investiture of the duchy. These he lost no time in securing. Already a few weeks before this, Maximilian, mindful of his engagements at the time of his wedding, had sent his wife's uncle the diploma granting him the desired investiture for himself and his sons, both legitimate and illegitimate, in succession. The original deed has never been discovered, but, according to Corio, the diploma was granted on the 5th of September at

Antwerp, with the express stipulation that it was not to be published until after the Feast of St. Martin. This diploma must have reached Lodovico a week or two before his nephew's death, and had been kept secret, in obedience to Maximilian's desires. That memorable day when he rode through the streets of Milan, accompanied by the ambassadors of Florence and Ferrara, he said in reply to the congratulations of the latter, our old friend Giacomo Trotti, "In another month you will hear greater news." "I verily believe you," said the Florentine, Pietro Alamanni, who recorded these words, to Piero de' Medici, "that he means to make himself greater still, and dreams of a kingdom of Insubria and Liguria." And Donato de' Preti evidently thought the same. "Signor Lodovico," he wrote to Isabella d'Este, "is not yet called Duke of Milan, but merely duke, and all documents sent out by the Cancelleria are worded in this manner. Some persons who knew his Excellency well, say that it is his intention to call himself *Rex Insubrium*. On the return of the ambassador who has been sent to the emperor, perhaps this will be announced."

Now that Giangaleazzo was actually dead, the Moro felt that there was no time to be lost in obtaining the publication of the imperial diploma. Accordingly he ordered one of his most trusted agents, Maffeo Pirovano, to start the next day for Antwerp, with letters informing Maximilian and his wife of Giangaleazzo's death, and asking for the prompt despatch of ambassadors with the coveted privileges. And that same evening he wrote long and minute instructions to Maffeo himself and to Erasmo Brasca at Antwerp, urging them to lose no time in laying the case before the emperor. The letter to Maffeo, discovered in the Taverna archives at Milan, and first published by Signor Calvi in his life of

Bianca Sforza, is of especial interest.

"MAPHEO,—We have written this evening to Germany to inform the Most Serene King of the Romans of the death of the illustrious Duke, our nephew, and must now send you to state our case *vivâ voce* to his Majesty, desiring him to give effect in our person to the ducal privileges, which he never consented to give our nephew, in consequence of the wrong which the emperor supposed to have been done him by our father and brother, in holding the duchy without any concession from the imperial authorities. And therefore the said king has conceded these privileges to us, as being innocent of this fault, and as having claims to the title by reason of our maternal descent, but has desired that these privileges should not be made public before the next feast of St. Martin, and before this date will not fix the time and place for the expedition of the said privileges. The approach of this time, the fact that this death has compelled us to take up the succession, have impelled us to send an envoy to the said king, and for this purpose we have made choice of yourself, being persuaded that your faithfulness and prudence will be equal to the gravity of this emergency. And so I desire you to start with the utmost speed, and not to rest till you have found his Majesty, and our councillor and ambassador Messer Erasmo Brasca, to whom you will explain the reason of your coming, and having through his means obtained an audience of his Majesty, you will pay him our dutiful respects, and, after delivering your credentials, by virtue of them will proceed to tell him how immediately after this death the chiefs of the State and of the people of this city approached me to offer their condolences in the customary manner, and signified their fears and anxieties as to

the succession. One and all, speaking in the name of the State, declared that they would have no lord but ourselves, and entreated us with earnest words to accept this dignity, saying that if we refused they would not be content and would have to consider some other mode of action. After this has been explained to the king, you will tell him that, seeing on the one hand the conditions imposed by his Majesty respecting the privileges, which we do not intend to infringe, and on the other the dangers that might arise if the State were left without a lord until the time fixed for the promulgation of the privileges, and being further aware that the people of Milan set the example and draw after them all the rest of the State, we have chosen to accept the burden they offer us, and have ridden through the town in order to satisfy the wishes of the people. And this we have done, in order not to leave the State and city in doubt as to the last duke's successor, without taking either title or armorial bearings, lest we should incur the same blame as that illustrious lord our father. Thus, solely to prove that the State is not left without a lord, and at the same time not to infringe the conditions attached to the privileges, we have taken this name of duke, and will inscribe our name as *Ludovicus Dux* in letters and other documents, without specifying of what place we are duke, so as to observe the commands laid upon us by his Majesty not to publish the privileges before the feast of St. Martin. The full form which we intend to adopt at the said feast will be signified to him after this feast, when we shall adopt the style of *Dux Mediolani* in accordance with this command. But we will abstain from publishing the privileges until we have the approval of the said Majesty, which we hope to obtain as soon as the term which he fixed shall

expire.

"And you will also tell his Majesty that the publication of these privileges carries with it the investiture and enjoyment of the temporal possessions of the duchy, and therefore, as our procurator, you will ask for this investiture with all respect and submission. And you will beg his Majesty to send us an ambassador to declare that he places us in possession of the duchy, in order that he may give the world an outward demonstration of the act that he has already done in private. This, we beg to assure his Majesty, shall ensure a perpetual obligation on our part and that of our posterity towards his Majesty, who may count on the fidelity of this State in all contingencies, most of all in the affairs of Italy, where no State can be greater or of more importance than this one, which has the same influence in Italy as he has in Germany. And since the form of investiture has been given this summer to the Treasurer of Burgundy, you can obtain it from him by means of Messer Erasmo, and we will afterwards send you the imperial mandate that you may arrange this. As to the form of delivery of the temporalities, we desire to follow that which was employed in the cases of former dukes, which we will seek out and let you have. To this effect you will negotiate with the Most Serene King of the Romans, making use of the advise of Messer Erasmo, in order to obtain this concession in the manner that we devise.

"You will also visit our niece, the Most Serene Queen, and condole in our name on the duke's death, which is a common cause of grief to both of us, and will recommend our affairs to her, begging her Majesty to assist you, and to employ great warmth

and fervour in addressing the Most Serene Lord her husband.

"Milan, 22nd October, 1494."

These instructions were followed by a short letter from Lodovico, enclosing the petition to be presented to Maximilian, and urging him to lose no time in reaching his destination.

"MAPHEO,—We enclose the petition for the investiture, and have to-day sent you money and horses. There is nothing more to say, excepting to urge you once more to use all diligence to seek out His Serene Majesty, and with the help of Erasmo leave nothing undone that may induce him to grant the investiture without delay, and at the same time send back with you persons empowered to put me in possession of the temporal possessions of the duchy. Without these two things, all that has been done till now will be of no avail."

On the 21st, Lodovico sent an official intimation of his nephew's death, and of the "incredible grief" which this sad event had given him, to his relatives and allies. On the 22nd, he issued another circular, informing them in well-turned phrases of his election by the people of Milan, and of his consent to take up the burden imposed upon him by the will of his subjects. And on the same day the Mantuan envoy, Donato de' Preti, writing to Isabella d'Este, gave her the following version of affairs: "This morning a meeting was held in the Castello, at which Signor Lodovicus was proclaimed King of Milan in the presence of the gentlemen and councillors assembled in the Rocchetta, no one else being nominated. Few spoke, and very little was said, but Signor Lodovico

was chosen by universal acclamation, or at least with no dissent. This afternoon he came out of the Rocca clad in gold brocade, and rode all round the town for the space of two hours, and the shops are closed, and all the bells of the city are to be rung for three days." At Pavia, where the Moro had made himself greatly beloved both by the citizens and the members of the university, there was great rejoicing when the people heard him publicly proclaimed duke to the sound of fifes and trumpets. "All the people of Pavia," wrote Count Borella, on the 23rd of October, "are filled with the utmost joy and delight, like the loyal and affectionate servants of your Highness that they are, and pray that you may live long to enjoy your exalted dignity."

On the evening of the 27th, the body of the late duke, after lying in state during several days before the high altar in the Duomo of Milan, "was buried in the vault of his ancestors with the greatest pomp and honour," as the Mantuan envoy told Isabella d'Este. "The Marchese Ermes, the Ferrarese ambassador, with the whole house of Visconti, and all the councillors, ministers, and court officials attending, robed in black. An immense concourse of people were present, together with priests and friars innumerable, and the blaze of lighted wax candles was so great in the church that I could see nothing. An eloquent and highly ornate sermon was preached by a Mantuan friar, named Giovanni Pietro Suardo."

And the next day his successor joined the French king in his camp under the walls of Sarzana. He had at length attained the object of his ambition, and was reigning on his father's throne.

"To sum up the whole matter," writes Commines, "Lodovico had himself proclaimed Lord of Milan, and

that, as many people say, was the reason why he brought us over the mountains."

FOOTNOTES:

[53] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

[54] Guicciardini's "Italy," Fenton's English translation, vol. i. p. 34.

CHAPTER XXI

Lodovico joins Charles VIII. at Sarzana—Suspicious rumours as to the late duke's death—Piero de' Medici surrenders the six fortresses of Tuscany to Charles VIII.—Lodovico retires in disgust from the camp—Congratulations of all the Italian States on his accession—Grief of Duchess Isabella—Her return to Milan—Mission of Maffeo Pirovano to Antwerp—His interviews with Maximilian and Bianca—Letter of Lodovico to the Bishop of Brixen—Charles VIII. enters Rome—His treaty with Alexander VI. and departure for Naples.

1494

The short week which had elapsed between the king's departure from Pavia and the return of Lodovico to the French camp had effected a complete

change in the situation. Suddenly the Moro found himself at the height of his ambition, elected duke by popular acclamation, and in actual possession of the throne, while he held in his hands the imperial diploma that was to give him a surer and safer title to the duchy than any of his race had possessed.

"All that this man does prospers, and all that he dreams of by night comes true by day," wrote the Venetian chronicler. "And, in truth, he is esteemed and revered throughout the world and is held to be the wisest and most successful man in Italy. And all men fear him, because fortune favours him in everything that he undertakes."

But already ugly rumours began to be whispered abroad. The unhappy duke, it was openly said at Florence and Venice, had, it was plain, died of poison, administered by his uncle. The moment of his death was so opportune, and fitted in so exactly with Lodovico's plans; the promptness with which the Moro had acted in seizing the crown which ought to have belonged to Giangaleazzo's son, helped to confirm the suspicions that were aroused in the minds of men whom the new duke's policy had inspired with distrust, and who looked with jealous eyes on the success of his diplomacy. The French king's doctor, Theodore Guainiero of Pavia, was quite sure he had detected signs of poisoning in the sick duke's face when he had been present at the interview between his royal master and poor Giangaleazzo at Pavia. Contemporary chroniclers, improving upon this remark, with one voice asserted that the doctor had found evident traces of poison on the body at a post-mortem examination held after the duke's death, ignoring the fact that at that moment Theodore Guainiero was with King Charles

at Piacenza. So the legend grew, and found ready acceptance among both French and Italians, who alike hated the Moro with deadly hatred.

"And if the duke were dispatched by poison, there was none," wrote the Florentine historian, "that held that his uncle was innocent, and either directly or indirectly, as he, who not content with an absolute power, but aspiring, according to the common desires of great men, to make themselves glorious with titles and honours, and especially he judged that both for his proper heritage and the succession of his children, the death of the lawful duke was necessary, wherein ambition and covetousness prevailed above conscience and law of nature, and the jealous desire of dominion enforced his disposition, otherwise abhorring blood, to that vile action."

The careful examination of the various documents connected with Giangaleazzo's death has led recent historians to a different conclusion. "Nothing is further from the truth," writes Magenta, in his history of the "Castello di Pavia," "than that Giangaleazzo died of poison." And Delaborde, Porrò, Cantù, as well as those able and learned scholars, Signor Luzio and Signor Renier, all endorse these statements, and ascribe the duke's death to natural causes. Even Paolo Giovio, who hated the Moro as the man who had betrayed his country to the French, owns that there is much reason for doubting the truth of the accusation brought against him in this instance. Charles VIII., it is plain, did not himself believe in Lodovico's guilt. When the news of Giangaleazzo's death reached him, he caused a solemn requiem mass to be held in the Duomo of Piacenza, and distributed liberal alms to the poor of

the town in memory of his dead cousin. And Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who had remained in attendance upon the king, informed Lodovico, in one of his letters, that the only remark which His Most Christian Majesty had made on the subject was to express his sorrow for the duke's orphan children, and to say that he hoped Signor Lodovico would treat them as his own, to which Galeazzo replied that he might rest assured they would want for nothing. But the suspicion that the duke's end had been hastened by his uncle's act found general acceptance in the French army, and deepened the distrust with which Lodovico was already regarded. At this critical moment, the unexpected action of Piero de' Medici helped to bring about a breach between the Moro and his allies.

When, on the 31st of October, the new duke reached the French camp before the Tuscan castle of Sarzana, he found to his surprise that Piero de' Medici, who up to this time had been the staunchest ally of Naples, had arrived there the day before, to make his submission to King Charles. Sanuto relates how this craven son of the magnificent Lorenzo threw himself at the feet of the French monarch, and promised to accept whatever conditions he chose to impose. Not only did he agree to give the army of Charles free passage through Tuscany, and to dismiss the Florentine troops which he had levied, but he actually promised to surrender the six strongholds of Sarzana, Sarzanello, Pietra Santa, Librafratta, Leghorn, and Pisa. Thus, without a single blow, the city and state of Florence was placed at the mercy of the invaders. Even the French councillors who negotiated the terms of the treaty, were amazed at the readiness with which their demands were accepted, and told Commines afterwards that they

marvelled to see Piero de' Medici settle so weighty a matter with so much lightness of heart, "mocking and jeering at his cowardice as they spoke." Lodovico, on his part, received the news of Piero's disgraceful concessions with ill-concealed disgust. Now that he had attained his own objects, and had nothing to fear from Alfonso, whose armies were in full retreat, he would willingly have seen the progress of the French delayed, and the king forced to winter in Tuscany, and was bitterly annoyed to find that the passes of the Apennines were in the hands of Charles, as well as the castles and ports which he had hoped to obtain for Milan as the price of his alliance. Guicciardini relates how he met Piero de' Medici that day in the camp, and how his old friend's son, anxious to ingratiate himself with the powerful duke, made excuses for not having given him an official welcome into Florentine territory, saying that he had ridden out to meet him, but had missed his way. "One of us certainly missed the way," replied the duke, with a bitter meaning under his courteous phrases; "perhaps it is you who have taken the wrong road."

But he hid his vexation as best he could, when he entered the French king's presence, and boldly asked Charles to give him the castles of Sarzana and Pietra Santa, which had formerly belonged to Genoa. When the king replied that he preferred to keep these forts in his own hands until his return from Naples, Lodovico once more disguised his feelings, and contented himself with asking for a renewal of the investiture of Genoa, formerly granted to his nephew, which he obtained on payment of 30,000 ducats. After this he saw no reason for remaining in the French camp any longer, and, pleading urgent State affairs, he left again for Milan on the 3rd of

November.

"*Et merveilleusement malcontent*," says Commines, "*se partit du Roy pour le reffuz*."

Only the Count of Caiazzo, with a troop of fifty horse, remained in the French camp, while Galeazzo di Sanseverino and Duchess Beatrice's brother, Ferrante d'Este, were the sole Italians to be seen riding in the royal procession when Charles made his triumphal entry into Florence. "Many thought then," adds the Sieur d'Argenton, "that he wished the king out of Italy." A week later he recalled the Milanese troops from Romagna, saying that their presence was no longer needed. For the present, however, the new Duke of Milan took a strictly neutral line, and while he outwardly maintained friendly relations with France, at the same time received congratulatory messages on his accession from the Pope, the Doge and Signory of Venice, and his old enemy, Alfonso of Naples, who forgot all the grievances of the past in his dismay at the approach of the French invaders.

On the 6th of November Lodovico returned to Milan, and joined his wife at Vigevano, where Beatrice had remained during her husband's absence with her infant son. We have no letters to tell us what her feelings were at this eventful period, and do not learn if she joined her husband during the few days of his hurried visit to Milan in October. But we are glad to find that she expressed sympathy with the unhappy widow of Giangaleazzo, and showed real concern for her cousin's melancholy condition. After her husband's death, Isabella's courage and fortitude broke down under the long strain, and for some days she shut herself up in a dark room, and refused to take food, or accept any comfort. Four Milanese councillors waited upon her at Pavia to offer their

condolences, and invited her to come to Milan in the name of the new duke and the people, assuring her that she and her children should be treated with due honour, and retain possession of the ducal residence in the Castello. This attention gratified her, and Paolo Bilia, an old and faithful servant, who had been long in her service, wrote by her desire to Lodovico on the 28th of October—

"My Lady is much pleased to hear that you have accepted the gift which she sent you, and is grateful for the kind messages which she has received from Your Illustrious Consort, as well as the offers which you have made her, and the addresses of the councillors. Under Niccolo da Cusano's treatment her health has certainly improved; and the children are very well, only the boy objects to the black clothes and hangings of the rooms."

A week later the Councillor Pusterla wrote that he visited the Duchess every day, and found her much rested, and already considerably calmer, and was charged to convey her warmest thanks to the duke for his kindness, and express her wish to show herself in all things his obedient daughter. But she still refused to leave Pavia, and shrank from seeing any one but her children and servants.

"The duchess," wrote Donato de Preti from Milan to his mistress Isabella d'Este, "has not yet arrived here, but is expected on Friday. All the rooms and furniture in the Castello are hung with black. To-day a man who came from Pavia is said to have brought word that Count Borella had been sent to ask the duchess for her son Francesco, but that she had refused to send him. This, however, may not be true, for the person who told me is not to be trusted."

On the 29th of November, the same informant

wrote again—

"The widowed duchess has not yet come to Milan. It appears that she has asked leave to remain at Pavia until after her confinement, and this she will certainly do. I hear that she still mourns her dead lord."

Her mother-in-law, Duchess Bona, remained with her at Pavia, and here, on the first of December, she received a visit from Chiara Gonzaga, a sister of the Marquis of Mantua, and wife of Gilbert, Duke of Montpensier, who was captain-general of the French army. This princess, who was now on her way to Mantua, was sincerely attached to both Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, and proved a loyal friend to Lodovico at the French court, while after her husband's death he, in his turn, gave her the benefit of his powerful help in her efforts to obtain the recovery of her fortune from the French king. There seems, however, to have been no truth in the report that the widowed duchess was again with child, and on the 6th of December she finally summoned up courage to return to Milan. On her arrival she was received by Beatrice, and Barone, the jester, who was on the same familiar terms with the Marchioness of Mantua as he was with her sister, sent her the following pathetic account of their meeting—

"Last night the Duchess Isabella arrived in Milan, and our duchess went to meet her, two miles outside the town, and directly they met, our duchess got out of her chariot and entered that of Duchess Isabella, both of them weeping bitterly, and so they rode together towards the Castello, where the Duke of Milan met them on horseback at the gate of the garden. He took off his cap, and accompanied them to the Castello, where they all three alighted, and

placing Duchess Isabella between them, our duke and duchess accompanied her to her old rooms. When they reached these rooms they sat down together, and the Duchess Isabella could do nothing but weep, until at last the duke spoke to her, and begged her to calm herself, and be comforted, with many other similar words. Dear friend, the hardest heart would have been melted with compassion at the sight of her, with her three children, looking so thin and altered by her grief, wearing a long black robe like a friar's habit, made of rough cloth, worth fourpence the yard, and her eyes hidden by a thick black veil. Certainly I, for one, could not help crying, and if I had not restrained myself, I should have wept still more."[55]

Until the death of Beatrice, Isabella of Aragon and her children occupied the rooms in the Castello where she and her husband had formerly resided, and spent the spring and summer in the Castello of Pavia, but the widowed duchess lived in complete retirement during the next two years, and her name seldom appears in contemporary records. Her mother-in-law Bona, retained her rooms until the following January, when the duke desired her to move to the old palace near the Duomo, known as the Corte Vecchia, partly because the use of her apartments was required by the court officials, and partly owing to the intrigues which she secretly practised. Only lately Lodovico's envoys at Antwerp had informed him of the bitter words which Bona wrote against him to her daughter Bianca, words which the empress's secretary thought it wiser to pass over when he read her mother's letters aloud, taking care, he adds, to see that they were burnt before they could do further mischief. A year afterwards, Bona left Milan for good and returned to

France, where she lived at Amboise until the end of 1499, when she came back to her native land of Savoy, and died at Fossano on the 8th of January, 1504.

Meanwhile Maffeo Pirovano, after being delayed on his journey by violent storms and floods, and narrowly escaping with his life from the brigands and highwaymen who infested the streets of Cologne, had at length reached Antwerp and discharged his errand. In his letters to the duke, he gives an interesting account of his interview with the emperor, whose imposing presence and gracious kindness made a deep impression upon him.

"The Most Serene King has the noblest bodily presence as well as the greatest qualities of mind and soul, and as far as you can judge from outward signs, I should say that his Majesty's wisdom and loyalty are beyond dispute, and that there is no prince in the world whom he esteems more highly than your Excellency. And if I asked why all the king's dealings appear slow and tardy, I should say that this was caused by two obstacles, which neither of them proceed from his Majesty's own fault. The first is want of money, and the second the little confidence that he can place in his ministers."

Maffeo was able to give Lodovico satisfactory assurances as to Maximilian's readiness to confirm him in the investiture of Milan. He promised to send the letters forthwith, but desired the duke to allow no one but his brother Cardinal Ascanio to see a copy, and not to publish them before March. "He fears," wrote the Milanese envoy, "in the first place the electors of the Diet, and in the second the wrath of King Alfonso of Naples. But his Majesty promises to speak to the electors as soon as possible, and after

that will have the privileges drawn up by the chancellor, and will send a solemn embassy to put the duke in possession of his dignities and the realm.

The young empress, who, Maffeo remarked, "is not very wise," was overjoyed to see an old friend, and had much to hear about her beloved Milanese home. She wrote an affectionate little note to her uncle, lamenting her poor brother's death and congratulating him on his accession, which she called "a due reward of all the benefits which we have received from your Excellency."[56]

And when Maffeo left Antwerp early in December to return to Milan, he received a whole string of commissions from her Majesty. He was, in the first place, to visit and condole with her mother, her widowed sister-in-law, and her brother Ermes, and to commend the Duchess Isabella and her children especially to the duke. Then he was to beg the duke and duchess to send her their latest portraits, as well as those of her mother, brother, sister-in-law, and her sister Madonna Anna, wife of Alfonso d'Este. There was a special message to Beatrice, begging her for some perfumes and powders, a ball of musk, and a bunch of heron's plumes. And there was another for Lodovico, asking him to try and procure a certain set of pearls from Bianca's half-sister, Caterina Sforza, the famous Madonna of Forli. Last of all, there was an earnest request that the duke would entreat her lord the Most Serene King to come to Italy, and write urgently to him on the subject, without, however, letting it appear that the suggestion had proceeded from Bianca herself.

In these communications between the empress and her family there is no trace whatever of any ill-will to Lodovico and Beatrice, far less any suspicion that

her uncle had hastened her brother's death, although some chroniclers allude to a report that Maximilian's wife held Lodovico to be guilty of this crime. The fact that some rumour of this kind had reached the imperial court seems probable from the Latin letter which Lodovico himself addressed in December, 1494, to the Bishop of Brixen, one of the delegates who were afterwards sent to Milan with the imperial privilege. In this letter the Moro refutes the calumny which he hears had been brought against him in certain quarters, and points out that his nephew's death had been due to natural causes, that the late duke had been ill for many months, and that he had been assiduously attended by his devoted wife and the most skilful doctors, three of whom had known him from his cradle. He alludes to the visit paid to Giangaleazzo a few days before his death by His Most Christian Majesty, and explains that he himself was only prevented from being present at his nephew's death-bed by the necessity of attending on the French king. "Nothing," he adds, "could be more contrary to our nature than so great a crime." In conclusion, he dwells on the fatherly love which he had always shown his nephew, and renews his protestations of devotion to His Most Serene Majesty the King of the Romans. In point of fact, as both Maffeo and Brasca informed their master the subject which disquieted Maximilian at this moment far more than poor Giangaleazzo's death, was the rapid advance of the French king. A rumour had reached the German court that Charles aspired to the imperial title, and intended to make the Pope crown him in Rome. This report filled the emperor-elect with dismay, and he turned to the Milanese envoys with the words, "I know that the Duke of Milan has great power in Italy, and has proved his faith and

good intentions towards myself, but I hope, since he is so wise in everything, that he will make some difference between me and the King of France."

Lodovico, however, needed no warning on this subject, and was as much alarmed as any of his neighbours at the extraordinary success which had attended Charles VIII.'s expedition. Florence and Siena both received him within their gates, and helped him with loans of money and supplies of corn. On the 4th of December he left Siena; by the 10th he was at Viterbo, within sixty miles of Rome, and sent the Pope word that he would spend Christmas in the Vatican and treat with him there. For a moment Alexander VI., encouraged by the arrival of the Duke of Calabria's army under the walls of the eternal city, put on a bold face and defied Charles to do his worst. The same day he arrested the cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Sanseverino at a consistory in the Vatican, upon which Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who was at Viterbo with the French king, rode all the way to Vigevano in three days, to take Lodovico the news of this insult to his family. The duke was furious, and vowed vengeance upon the Pope. But Alexander's courage soon failed him. In a few days his defiant mood gave place to one of abject terror, the two cardinals were released and sent to plead the Pope's cause with Charles VIII., and on the 30th of December Ferrante retired with his troops towards Naples. That same day the French king entered Rome by the Flaminian Gate, and rode in triumphal procession along the Corso with Cardinals Giuliano delle Rovere and Ascanio Sforza at his side, both of them, remarks Commines, great enemies of the Pope, and still greater enemies of one another. Alexander fled for shelter to the Castello Sant'Angelo, and Charles took

up his abode in the palace of San Marco, from which he dictated terms of peace to the terrified pontiff. Already a rumour had reached Milan that the Pope was to be deposed, and that the French king intended to attempt a general reformation of the scandals that disgraced the Church.

"His Most Christian Majesty," remarked Lodovico, drily, "had better begin by reforming himself." And when the Venetian ambassador Sebastian Badoer and Benedetto Trevisano arrived at Vigevano to take counsel with the duke in this perilous state of affairs, he spoke very contemptuously of the king's person and character.

"The Most Christian King," he said, "is young and foolish, with little presence and still less mental power. When I was with him at Asti, treating of important matters, his councillors spent their time eating and playing cards in his presence. Sometimes he would dictate a letter by one man's advice, and then withdraw it at the suggestion of another. He is haughty and ill-mannered, and when we were together, he has more than once left me alone in the room like a beast, to go and dine with his friends."

And he proceeded to remind the Venetian envoys how he had sent his wife, Duchess Beatrice, to warn the Signoria of the critical state of affairs, and how his advice had been neglected, and nothing had been done.

"It is true," the duke added, "that I lent the king money, but at the same time I gave him good advice. 'Sire,' I said to him, 'drive out the tyrant Piero de' Medici, and give Florence her old liberties;' and when I refused to accompany him further, I desired Messer Galeaz to defend the freedom and rights of both Florence and Siena. You see how little the king

has followed my advice and how cruel and insolent he has shown himself. These French are bad people, and we must not allow them to become our neighbours."

In reality, what disturbed the Duke of Milan far more than the success of Charles in the south, was the presence of Louis of Orleans with a body of troops at Asti. When Charles left Asti in October, his cousin was ill with an attack of fever, and had been compelled to remain behind. The close vicinity of this dangerous neighbour, and the boldness with which Orleans asserted his claim on Milan, led the Moro to use all his influence with Maximilian to induce him to join his old enemies, the Venetians, in a common league against the French. While these negotiations were being secretly carried on, the victorious French king had, on the 15th of January, signed a treaty with the Pope, by which the crown of Naples was bestowed upon him, and the chief fortresses of the Papal States were surrendered into his hands until his return. The next day Charles attended mass at St. Peter's, and met the Pope in the Vatican—"a very fine house," he wrote to his brother-in-law, the Duke of Bourbon, "as well furnished and adorned as any palace or castle I have ever seen."

On the 19th of January, he did homage to His Holiness before the College of Cardinals, as Vicar of Christ and successor of the Apostles, and was embraced and welcomed by the Pope in return as the eldest son of the Church. A week later he left Rome and set out at the head of his army on the march to Naples. And the same day he received the news that Alfonso of Aragon, seized with a fatal panic, had abdicated his crown in favour of his son Ferrante, and was on his way to Sicily.

FOOTNOTES:

[55] A Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

[56] F. Calvi, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XXII

Visit of Isabella d'Este to Milan—Birth of Beatrice's son, Francesco Sforza—*Fêtes* and comedies at the Milanese court—Works of Leonardo and of Lorenzo di Pavia—Mission of Caradosso to Florence and Rome in search of antiques—Fall of Naples—Entry of King Charles VIII. and flight of Ferrante II.—Consternation in Milan—Departure of Isabella d'Este.

1495

While Charles VIII. was leading his victorious army against Naples, and striking terror into all hearts throughout the length and breadth of Italy, Duchess Beatrice Sforza, as the wife of Lodovico now styled herself, was joyfully expecting the birth of a second child. Once more great preparations were made in the Rocchetta for the happy event. On the 10th of December her sister Isabella sent her the size and pattern of a cradle which her father had given her before the birth of her little daughter, Leonora, the year before, excusing herself for not writing a longer

letter because she was engaged with her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Montpensier. Duke Lodovico himself, immediately on his return to Vigevano in November, had written begging the Marchesa to come to Milan in January, and on the 15th she left Mantua. On the day after her arrival she paid a visit of condolence to the widowed duchess, whose sorrowful condition filled her with compassion.

"I found her in the large room," writes Isabella to her husband, on the 20th of January, "all hung with black, with only just light and air enough to save one from suffocation. Her Highness wore a cloth cloak, and a black veil on her head, and her deep mourning filled me with so much compassion that I could not keep back my tears. I condoled with her in your name and my own, and she gratefully accepted my sympathy, and sent for her children, the sight of whom increased my emotion."

On the 4th of February, Beatrice gave birth to a second son, a fine boy, who received no less than fifteen names, including those of Francesco Sforza, after his illustrious grandfather. As a child he was called Sforza, but became afterwards known as Francesco, under which name he reigned during the last years of his short life over the duchy of Milan. Isabella d'Este held the infant prince at the baptismal font, and remained at Milan till the end of the Carnival, at the urgent entreaty of her brother-in-law, who himself wrote to beg the marquis for permission to keep his wife a few weeks longer.

Alfonso d'Este and his wife, Anna Sforza, always a favourite at the court of Milan, now joined the ducal party, and took part in the brilliant series of festivities which celebrated Beatrice's recovery and the christening of the infant prince.

"Every third day," wrote Isabella to an absent Milanese friend of hers, Anton Maria de' Collis, "we have triumphal and magnificent festivities, one of which lasted till two in the morning, another was not over till four o'clock. We spend the intervening days in riding and driving in the park or else through the streets of Milan, which has been made so beautiful that if you were to come back here to-day, you would no longer know the place."

In another letter Isabella describes a splendid *festa* at the house of Messer Niccolo da Correggio, at which a representation of the fable of Hippolyte and Theseus, as told in the "*Innamoramento di Orlando*" was beautifully given. And in answer to a letter from her brother-in-law, Giovanni Gonzaga, telling her of an allegorical representation in which the famous Serafino of Aquila had taken part, she writes—

"Here too we are enjoying feasts and pleasures of every description, which afford us the greatest possible delight, and I hope to tell you many things that will excite your Highness's envy. For this is the school of the master of those who know."[57]

Such phrases as these were no small praise on the lips of so accomplished and critical a woman as Isabella d'Este. Another contemporary, the Florentine Guicciardini, who visited the capital of Lombardy, was filled with amazement at the sight, and describes Milan during Lodovico's reign as famous for the wealth of its citizens; the infinite number of its shops; the abundance and delicacy of all things pertaining to human life; the superb pomp and sumptuous ornaments of its inhabitants, both men and women; the skill and talent of its artists, mechanics, embroiderers, goldsmiths, and armourers; and the innumerable quantity of new and stately

buildings which adorn its streets. "Not only," he adds, "is the city full of joy and pleasure, of feasting and delight, but so wonderfully is it increased in riches, magnificence, and glory, that it may certainly be called the most flourishing and happiest of all the cities in Italy."

The stranger from Florence and Venice might well admire the duke's knowledge and taste, and wonder at the splendid results which his enlightened patronage of art and learning had produced. For they saw his great city of Milan as it has never been seen again, before the savage invader had spoiled its charm and defaced its loveliness; when Bramante's churches and porticoes rose in perfect symmetry against the sky, and the glowing tints of Leonardo's frescoes were yet fresh upon the walls. They saw the *Ruga bella*, or Beautiful Way, with its long line of palaces on either side, its painted walls and richly carved portals. They saw the lovely cupola of S. Maria delle Grazie, and the marble cloisters of S. Ambrogio, and the graceful Baptistery of S. Satiro, which Caradosso had lately adorned with his elegant frieze of cherubs and medallions. They saw the stately arcades of the Spedale Grande, and the deep-red brick and terra-cotta pile of the vast Lazzaretto, and the wide streets and piazzas which the duke had laid out "to give the people more light and air." Above all, they saw the great Castello which was the pride of Lodovico's court. These vaulted ceilings and painted halls, these beautiful gardens with their temples and labyrinths, their fountains and statues, these splendid stables with columned aisles and walls adorned with frescoes of horses, which the French invaders admired more than anything else in Milan, were well-nigh complete. But still Lodovico was always planning some new improvements to add to

the charm and pleasantness of the ducal residence. Isabella's friend Leonardo, we know from one of the duke's letters, was engaged at this moment in painting the vaults of the newly built Camerini, while he was still putting the last touches to the famous equestrian statue which the Marchesa now saw for the first time, and which the duke promised should be soon cast in bronze. But the great master's thoughts were taking a new direction, and he was already preparing designs for the mural painting of the Cenacolo, with which Lodovico had ordered him to decorate the refectory of the Dominicans in his favourite convent of S. Maria della Grazie. It was a work after Leonardo's own heart, and he determined to frame an altogether new and original composition, a Last Supper which should be unlike all others in Italy. This time at least the duke's fastidious taste should be satisfied, and the Lombards should be made to own that Leonardo the Florentine was an artist who had no equal.

Another of Isabella's favourite artists, Maestro Lorenzo, the gifted organ-maker, was absent from court, and had left his old home at Pavia to take up his abode at Venice near his friend Aldo Manuzio, the printer. But during this visit the Marchesa saw "the beautiful and perfect clavichord" which he had made for Beatrice, and vowed to leave no stone unturned until she had obtained a similar one. Unfortunately, when she wrote to inform Messer Lorenzo of her wishes, he was engaged in making a viol for the Duchess of Milan, and had also promised Messer Antonio Visconti a clavichord, so that he was unable to satisfy the impatient Marchesa as quickly as she would have liked. Nothing daunted, however, Isabella returned to the charge, and addressed a letter in her sweetest and most persuasive strain to

Count Antonio Visconti, begging him, since her desires were so ardent and she had already waited so long, of his courtesy to allow Messer Lorenzo to begin her clavichord as soon as Duchess Beatrice's viol should be finished. The count naturally enough was unable to refuse the request of so charming a princess, and as usual Isabella got her own way. On Christmas Day, 1496, she wrote joyously to tell her Venetian agent, Brognolo, that Messer Lorenzo had just arrived at Mantua, bringing the precious clavichord, which was as beautiful and perfect as it could possibly be. But the saddest part of the story has yet to be told. After the death of Beatrice, and Lodovico's final ruin, Isabella d'Este remembered the matchless organ which Lorenzo de Pavia had made for her sister, and wrote immediately to the Pallavicini brothers who had joined in the betrayal of the Castello, begging them, if possible, to let her have the instrument. A considerable time elapsed before her wish was gratified, but in the end her perseverance triumphed over all difficulties, and on the last day of July, 1501, she wrote to tell Messer Lorenzo that the beautiful clavichord which he had made for the Duchess of Milan had been given her by Galeazzo Pallavicino, the husband of Niccolo da Correggio's half-sister, Elizabeth Sforza, and would be doubly precious to her as his work and because of its rare excellence.[58] By a strange fate, the fragments of this precious clavichord, which was so highly esteemed in its day, have of late years found their way to the ancient palace of the dukes of Ferrara in Venice. The instrument which the gifted Pavian made for Beatrice, inscribed with the Greek and Latin mottoes chosen by Lorenzo, may still be seen under the roof of her father's old house, in those halls where the young duchess once spent that

joyous May-time long ago.

Another incident which took place at Milan during Isabella's visit, and could not fail to inspire her with the keenest interest, was the arrival of a marble Leda and a number of other antiques that were sent to the duke from Rome, by the goldsmith Caradosso. After the flight of Piero de' Medici and the revolution which had taken place in Florence, Lodovico sent this well-known connoisseur to try and acquire some of the priceless marbles or gems from the Magnificent Lorenzo's collection. But the Florentine magistrates wisely declined to part from these objects of art, which were now the property of the nation, and after Christmas Caradosso went on to Rome. He arrived there to find the French army in possession of the city and everything in the greatest confusion, but in the end succeeded in securing several valuable antiques. The cardinals, to whom Caradosso obtained introductions through Ascanio Sforza, were glad to ingratiate themselves with the powerful Duke of Milan at this critical moment, and the artist was able to inform his master that Cardinal di Monreale had given him a marble Leda—a really good antique, though some limbs of it were missing —and that other prelates had made him liberal offers.

"The Cardinal of Parma asked me yesterday what brought me to Rome. I told him I had come, by your Excellency's desire, to see if I could find any beautiful works in bronze or marble that were to be had for gold. Monsignore asked me if you really cared for these things. I replied, 'Yes, undoubtedly.' Upon which the Most Reverend informed me that he had an antique statue, and begged me to come and see if I thought that you would like it, as if so, he

should be glad to send it as a present to your Excellency. I have seen it, and it is decidedly good.... Monsignore di Sanseverino has promised to show me some fine things, and I hear that Monsignore Colonna and the Cardinal of Siena have also some good things, but, unluckily, they are both of them away from Rome. Since I am here I must do my best to play the rogue. I hope to have enough to load a bark shortly, and send statues to Genoa and to Milan. Meanwhile I should be glad if you would write and thank the Cardinal of Parma for his statue, because it may induce him to send you some more fine works of art, and your gratitude may lead others, who are anxious to gain your Excellency's favour, to follow his example and send you some more beautiful objects, so that the world may become aware how far you surpass all other princes both in magnanimity and in the delight which you take in this most laudable pursuit. On my return to Florence, I will make another effort to obtain some of the precious objects which I saw there, and perhaps this time affairs may be in better order, and I may be more successful in obeying the orders of your Excellency, to whom I commend myself.

"Your servant,
CARADOSSO DE MUNDO.

Roma, February, 1495."

No one sympathized more truly with Lodovico's passion for collecting antiques, or appreciated the treasures of art which he had brought together in the Castello, more fully than Isabella d'Este. As before, this brilliant princess charmed all hearts at Milan. When she asked a favour, whether it was of Count Pallavicino or Madonna Cecilia, of Messer Lorenzo or Gian Bellini, no one could refuse her prayer. When

she received the Venetian ambassadors, the grace and gallantry of her bearing were irresistible. Whatever she did was done well. Her high spirits never failed, her strength never seemed to tire. She could ride all day and dance all night. She could answer Gaspare Visconti's verses in impromptu rhymes, and keep up animated literary controversies with Niccolo da Correggio and Messer Galeaz, or discuss grave political questions with the duke in the wisest and most sagacious manner. "As usual," wrote her secretary Capilupi, "Madonna's gracious ways and lively conversation have charmed every one here, most of all the Signor Duca, who calls her his dear daughter, and always makes her dine with him."

If Lodovico took pleasure in Isabella's company, Beatrice's warm heart glowed with tender affection for the sister whose presence recalled her dead mother and the home of her youth, while Isabella's love for children could not resist the advances of her little nephew Ercole, who followed his aunt about the rooms of the Castello and made her laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks. But the happy peace of these days was destined to be rudely disturbed. Suddenly, on the last day of the month, news reached Milan that the King of France had entered Naples and been crowned King of the Sicilies in the cathedral on the 22nd of February. The young king Ferrante had fled to Ischia with the rest of the royal family, and throughout his dominions the people flocked out along the roads to hail the victor's coming, and welcomed him with shouts of joy. Great was the consternation at the Milanese court that evening, and Isabella wrote to her husband—

"So complete and sudden a downfall appears almost impossible both to this illustrious lord, the

duke, and to us all. It would indeed have been impossible were it not a Divine judgment. This sad case must be an example to all the kings and powers of the world, and will, I hope, teach them to value the love of their subjects more than all their fortresses, treasures, and men-at-arms, for, as we see now, the discontent of the people is more dangerous to a monarch than all the might of his enemies on the battle-field."

The bad news threw a gloom over the gay party in the Castello. All the pleasure and feasting of the Carnival, all the mirth of the dancing and feasting, died away. Isabella and Beatrice thought sadly of their cousin Ferrante, the chivalrous young prince who was a favourite with all his kinsfolk, and his sister, the widowed Duchess Isabella, shed bitter tears over this fresh sorrow. Even comedies and pageants lost their old gaiety and became dull and tedious. "To me this Carnival seems a thousand years long," sighed Isabella d'Este, in a letter to her husband, deploring her prolonged absence and complaining that the duke would not allow her to leave before a certain day, fixed by his astrologer. By the middle of March, however, she returned to Mantua, followed by the most sincere regrets and liveliest expressions of affection on the part of both her sister and brother-in-law.

"In all her actions," wrote Lodovico to the Marquis of Mantua, "this worthy Madonna has shown so much charm and excellence, that, although we rejoice to think you will soon enjoy her presence, we cannot but feel great regret at the loss of her sweet company, and when she leaves us to-morrow, I must confess we shall seem to be deprived of a part of ourselves."

And a week later Beatrice wrote to her sister, "I cannot tell you often enough how strange and sad the departure of your Highness has seemed to me this time. Wherever I turn, in the house or out-of-doors, I seem to see your face before my eyes, and when I find myself deceived, and realize that you are really gone, you will understand how sore my distress has been—nay, how great it still is. And you, I think, will have felt the same grief, because of the love between us. Even little Ercole misses you, and keeps on asking continually in his childish fashion for his aunt, and crying '*Cia, cia!*' and he seems quite lost when he cannot find you anywhere."[59]

Beatrice's strange and sad forebodings were destined to prove all too true. That was Isabella's last visit to her brother-in-law's court, and the sisters never met again. When, thirteen years afterwards, the Marchesa returned once more to Milan and danced in the halls of the Castello, she came as the guest of Louis XII., the king who had conquered Lodovico's fair duchy and brought about the ruin of the house of Sforza. Beatrice had long been dead, her children were in exile, and the Moro was wearing his heart out in lonely captivity within the gloomy prison walls of Loches.

FOOTNOTES:

[57] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 622.

[58] C. dell'Acqua, *Lorenzo Gusnasco*, pp. 19, 20.

[59] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. 622, 623.

CHAPTER XXIII

Proclamation of the new league against France at Venice—Charles VIII. at Naples—Demoralization of the victors—Charles leaves Naples and returns to Rome—The Duke of Orleans refuses to give up Asti—Arrival of the imperial ambassadors at Milan—Lodovico presented with the ducal insignia—*Fêtes* in the Castello—The Duke of Orleans seizes Novara—Terror of Lodovico—Battle of Fornovo—Victory claimed by both parties—The French reach Asti—Isabella's trophies restored by Beatrice.

1495

On the evening of the 27th of February, while the joy bells were ringing in the Milanese churches in honour of the French king's triumph, the duke sent for the Venetian ambassadors.

"I have had bad news," he said. "Naples is lost, and the French king has been joyfully welcomed by the people. I am ready to do whatever the Republic desires. But there is no time to waste; we must act at once."

All eyes now turned to Lodovico as the only man who could save Italy from the French invaders. The emperor and the Venetians had been urging him to declare war against France for the last eight weeks, and now Ferrante of Aragon, in his despair, appealed

to him by the Sforza blood that flowed in both their veins to deliver him and his kingdom from the dominion of the foreigner. The duke himself could not feel safe as long as Louis of Orleans remained at Asti, and declared that he was ready to place himself at the head of a league for the defence of Italy. He wrote to congratulate Commines, the French ambassador at Venice, on his master's success, but the same day he sent the Bishop of Como and Francesco Bernardino Visconti to Venice, there to negotiate a new league between himself, the Signoria, the Pope, the King of the Romans, and the King and Queen of Spain. The presence of the German and Spanish ambassadors, as well as the arrival of the two new Milanese envoys, excited Commines' suspicions, while the long faces and terror-struck air of the Venetian senators, when the news from Naples arrived, reminded him of the Romans after the defeat of Cannæ. But so well was the secret kept that he knew nothing of the league until after it had been signed, late on the night of the 31st of March, in the bedchamber of the old Doge. Early the next morning he was summoned to the palace, and, in the presence of a hundred senators, solemnly informed of the new treaty.

"Magnificent ambassador," said the prince, "our friendship for your master makes it our duty to inform you of all that concerns the state. Know, then, that yesterday, in the name of the Holy Spirit, of the glorious Virgin Mary, and the blessed Evangelist Monsignore S. Marco, our patron, a league has been concluded for the protection of the Church and the defence of the Holy Roman Empire and your own states, between his Holiness the Pope, his Majesty the King of the Romans, the King and Queen of Spain, our Signoria, and the Duke of Milan. Tell this,

we pray you, to your Most Christian Majesty." Before the prince had done speaking, Commines heard the bells of St. Mark's ringing to celebrate the new league, and, still dazed by the unexpected news, he stammered out, "What will happen to my king? Will he be able to return to France?"

"Certainly," replied the prince, "if he comes as a friend to the league."

Without another word, Commines left the palace, but as he went down the grand staircase, he asked the secretary who accompanied him to repeat the Doge's words, since he could hardly take them in. Then he told his gondoliers to row him back to his house, near S. Giorgio Maggiore, and on the way he met the ambassador of Naples, in a fine new robe, with a smiling face, as he well might have, "for this," adds Commines, "was great news for him." Marino Sanuto, who narrates the incident, was much struck by Commines' rage and dismay, and, like a true Venetian, remarks contemptuously, "He did not know how to dissimulate his feelings, as one should do in such a case." And, in the same spirit, he goes on to admire the presence of mind displayed by the Milanese ambassadors, who to all Commines' remonstrances replied courteously, that of course their duke had nothing to do with all this. "They acted," he adds, "as the wise act in the government of states. They persuade their enemies that they mean to do one thing, and then they do another."

At night all Venice was illuminated, and from his covered gondola the French ambassador saw the fireworks and the banquetings that were held at the palaces of the other envoys. He understood what it all meant, and trembled for his king's safety. But he lost no time, and sent warnings both to Orleans at

Asti and to Charles at Naples, of the coming storm. A week or two later he left Venice, and went to meet Charles at Florence. On Palm Sunday, the 10th of April, the League was solemnly proclaimed on the Piazza of St. Mark, and all the ambassadors marched in procession round the square, while images of united Italy, and of all the kings and princes of the League, were carried about in triumph, and the golden rose was given by the Pope to the Venetian ambassador in Rome. "To-day," said the Duke of Milan, "will see the dawn of the peace and prosperity of Italy."

King Charles, meanwhile, unconscious of the dangers that threatened to impede his return home, was revelling in the delights of Naples, and holding jousts and banquets in the sunny gardens and fair palaces of that enchanted bay. "My brother," he wrote to the Duke of Bourbon, "this is the divinest land and the fairest city that I have ever seen. You would never believe what beautiful gardens I have here. So delicious are they, and so full of rare and lovely flowers and fruits, that nothing, by my faith, is wanting, except Adam and Eve, to make this place another Eden."

While the king and his nobles were eating off gold and silver plate and drinking out of jewelled goblets in King Alfonso's tapestried halls, the French soldiers were to be seen lying about in the streets, intoxicated with the strong and luscious wines of Southern Italy. The whole army was given over to luxury and vice, and the outrages which the troops committed soon made them hated by the fickle populace, who a few weeks before had welcomed them as deliverers from the tyrant's yoke. "From the moment of the king's arrival until his departure," writes Commines, "he

thought of nothing but pleasure, and those about him only cared to seek their own profit. His youth may excuse him, but for his servants there could be no excuse." The news of the league between the powers came to startle Charles out of this fool's paradise. On the 8th of April, the Count of Caiazzo was suddenly recalled to Milan, and when Charles asked Lodovico to send him Messer Galeazzo instead, the duke replied curtly that he had need of him at home. By degrees the king began to realize the formidable combination which had arisen against him, and prepared to march northward with the bulk of his army, leaving the Duke of Montpensier with a few hundred French troops and some thousand Swiss mercenaries to defend his newly conquered kingdom. On the 20th of May, he finally left Naples, and on the 1st of June entered Rome by the Latin gate, two days after the Pope had fled to Orvieto. Almost at the same moment, King Ferrante returned to Calabria, and his subjects flocked to join the old banner of the house of Aragon.

Lodovico's first step was to send Galeazzo di Sanseverino with a body of newly raised troops against Asti, on the 19th of April, and to summon the Duke of Orleans to surrender the town and to drop the title of Duke of Milan. In this he was supported by the Emperor Maximilian, who sent an imperious order to Louis forbidding him to assume the title, on pain of forfeiting his fief of Asti. Orleans replied proudly that Asti formed part of his heritage, and that he was ready to defend it to the last drop of his blood against Signor Lodovico or any other foe. At the same time he sent an urgent appeal to the Duke of Bourbon for reinforcements, and prepared to act on the offensive.

On the 14th of the same month, the Duke of Milan wrote a gay letter to Isabella d'Este, informing her of his intention to attack Asti, and regretting that she was not present to join the expedition on her fleet charger. But Asti was too strongly fortified, and the forces under Galeazzo were too raw and ill paid, for him to attempt an assault; so he remained in his camp at Annona, and contented himself with cutting off the supplies of the beleaguered city.

Towards the end of April, the imperial envoys were at length despatched with the long-promised privileges, and in the middle of May they reached Milan, where they were magnificently entertained by the duke and duchess in the Castello. On the 26th of May, the festival of S. Felicissimo, the great ceremony took place. An imposing tribunal, hung with crimson satin embroidered with gold mulberry leaves and berries, was erected for the occasion on the piazza at the doors of the Duomo, and here, after attending high mass, Lodovico Sforza was solemnly proclaimed Duke of Milan, Count of Pavia and Angera, by the grace of God and the will of his Cesarean Majesty, Maximilian, Emperor-elect and chief of the Holy Roman Empire. The imperial delegates, Melchior, Bishop of Brixen, and Conrad Stürzl, Chancellor of the King of the Romans, first read aloud the privileges in their master's name, and then invested Lodovico with the ducal cap and mantle, and placed the sceptre and sword of state in his hands. Giasone del Maino, the celebrated Pavian jurist, recited a Latin oration, after which the duke, accompanied by the imperial ambassadors, and followed by the duchess and a brilliant suite of courtiers and ladies, rode in procession to the ancient basilica of S. Ambrogio to return thanks for his accession. Then the whole company returned, "with

immense rejoicing and triumph," to the Castello, where a series of splendid *fêtes* were given in honour of the occasion, and rich presents were made to the imperial ambassadors and court officials. Two days afterwards another imposing ceremony was held in the Castello, when the heads of houses from the different quarters of the city were assembled, and each citizen in turn swore fealty, first to Duke Lodovico and afterwards to Duchess Beatrice, whom, in the event of his own death, he had appointed to be regent of the State and guardian of his sons. The Marquis of Mantua was among the guests present, and Beatrice felt the keenest regret that the marchioness was unable to accompany him and witness the wonderful scene before the Duomo, which, she exclaims in her youthful enthusiasm," was the grandest spectacle and noblest solemnity that our eyes have ever beheld."

It was the proudest day of Lodovico's life, and his adored wife, who shared the cares of State as well as the festivities of his court, might well join in his exultation. But his confidence in the favours of Fortune and in the security of his position was destined to receive a rude shock. Before the week was ended, on the very day when Beatrice wrote her triumphant letter to her sister, Louis of Orleans, strengthened by the arrival of fresh troops, made a successful sally from Asti at nightfall and appeared before the walls of Novara. The citizens, who were already disaffected by reason of the oppressive exactions of the Duke of Milan, opened their gates, and after a short siege the citadel surrendered. Suddenly the Duke of Milan, who was resting after the fatigues of the recent festivities at Vigevano, heard that his rival, at the head of a strongly armed force, was within twenty miles of his palace gates.

An irresistible panic seized him, and he retired, first to Abbiategrasso, beyond the Ticino, and then to Milan, where he took refuge in the Castello with his wife and children. The Venetian annalist Malipiero records how, on the 20th of June, two Lombard friars arrived at the convent of San Salvador in Venice, bringing word that the duke had fled in terror of his life to the Rocca, and would hardly see or speak to a single soul. "He is in bad health, with one hand paralyzed, they say, and is hated by all the people, and fears they will rise against him." In this critical moment, Beatrice showed a courage and presence of mind which contrasted curiously with her husband's weakness. She sent for the chief Milanese noblemen, spoke brave words to them, and took prompt measures for defending the Castello and city. Fortunately, the Venetian general, Bernardo Contarini, arrived on the 22nd of June at the head of several thousand Greek Stradiots to the duke's assistance, while the French were held in check by Galeazzo's force and compelled to remain within the walls of Novara. This momentary panic over, Lodovico recovered his health and nerve, but his treasury was exhausted by the large subsidies granted to his allies and the extravagant expenditure of the last two years, and the forced loans which he exacted from his subjects created a general feeling of discontent. Galeazzo's force was weakened by continual desertion, and the duke had great difficulty in raising sufficient money to maintain two separate armies. Rumours of the disaffection of the Milanese and of the perils which threatened his ally had reached Maximilian's ears at Worms, and on the 18th of June he sent Lodovico a grave warning by his envoy, Angelo Talenti, begging the duke to place German troops in the fortress of Lombardy, and to

provide guards for the castles of Milan and Como, "in order that he may be able to sleep in peace." Two days later he spoke again to the envoy, and begged him to urge the duke to remove his womankind from the Castello to Cremona, where he heard that he had a fine palace, saying that the presence of women had often caused the loss of citadels. Perhaps, if Maximilian had known Duchess Beatrice as well as he did a year later, he would have thought this warning superfluous. Lodovico, however, thanked his Majesty for his thoughtfulness, and applied himself, with the help of Leonardo, to fortify the Castello of Milan and make it an impregnable citadel. That winter he had appointed Bernardino del Corte, one of his favourite and most devoted servants, to be governor of the Rocca, which held his treasure and jewels together with all his most precious possessions, and on the 12th of January, a fortnight before the birth of Beatrice's child, the new castellan had taken a solemn oath of fealty to the duke and duchess, swearing, with his hand on the crucifix, that he would hold the Castello for his liege lord and lady till his latest breath. Messer Galeazzo and his brother, Antonio Maria di Sanseverino, Giasone del Maino, Ambrogio di Rosate, the astrologer, Galeotto Prince of Mirandola, and Giovanni Adorno, a powerful Genoese nobleman, who had married a sister of the Sanseverini brothers, were all present in Beatrice's room in the Rocchetta on this occasion, and signed the document as witnesses of Bernardino's oath.

Maximilian now sent his long-promised contingent of Swiss and German troops to join the Count of Caiazzo's horse, and the Venetian army, under the generalship of Gian Francesco Gonzaga, and the allied forces, amounting in all to some twenty-five

thousand men, prepared to cut off the retreat of the French king and prevent his return to Asti. "Here I am," wrote the Marquis of Mantua to his wife, "at the head of the finest army which Italy has ever seen, not only to resist, but to exterminate the French." And Isabella wrote back in high spirits at the "great enterprise" that was before him, sending him a cross with an Agnus Dei to wear round his neck in battle, and telling him that her prayers and those of all the priests of Mantua were with him.

On Sunday, the 5th of July, the French army, reduced by sickness and desertion to less than ten thousand in number, and fatigued by long forced marches across the Apennines, descended into the valley of the Taro, and encamped at the village of Fornovo, on the right bank of the mountain torrent. Further along the same bank, down in the plains, lay the army of the league, and, in order to reach Lombardy, the French had to cross the river in full view of the enemy's camp. Early on Monday morning, the 6th of July, Charles, mounted on his favourite charger, "Savoy," and wearing white and purple plumes in his cap, led the van of his army across the Taro, swollen as it was by the late heavy rains. At the same moment, the Marquis of Mantua and the Count of Caiazzo, at the head of their light cavalry, attacked the French rear-guard, and the battle began. Paolo Giovio describes the engagement that followed as the fiercest battle of the age, in which more blood was spilt than in any other during the last two hundred years, although Commines, who was present with his monarch, says that the actual fighting only lasted a quarter of an hour. On both sides the leaders fought with heroic courage. Charles VIII. himself repeatedly led the charge against the Milanese horse, and, calling on the chivalry of France

to live or die with him, dashed into the thickest of the fray. Once mounted on his war-horse, and face to face with the foe, the ugly little deformed man became a true king, and risked his life and liberty at the head of his subjects. Francesco Gonzaga, on his part, performed prodigies of valour, and had three horses killed under him, while his uncle, Rodolfo Gonzaga, and many other gallant knights were left dead on the field. But personal exploits could not atone for his want of generalship, and while the marquis and his immediate followers were engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand fight with the foe, a large body of his reserve remained inactive on the banks of the Taro, and his Stradiots were engaged in plundering the French camp. The result was that, in spite of their superior numbers, the Italian ranks were broken and many of the Venetians fled in confusion towards Parma, while the French succeeded in crossing the river, and, early on Tuesday morning, continued their march across the Lombard plain. But, as the camp and baggage remained in the hands of the allies, the Italians claimed the victory. The Venetians celebrated their triumph with public rejoicings and illuminations on the Piazza of S. Marco, and lauded their brave captain to the skies. Both at Milan and Mantua there was great exultation when the news became known; poets and painters alike did honour to the victors: Sperandio designed his noble medal, and Mantegna painted the Madonna della Vittoria to immortalize Francesco Gonzaga's triumph. But the marquis himself, writing to his wife from the camp the day after the battle, remarks that if only others had fought as he and his followers did, the victory would have been complete, and laments the disobedience and cowardice of the Stradiots, who first plundered

the enemy's camp and then fled, although no one pursued them. "These things," he adds, "have caused me the greatest grief that I have ever known."

Lodovico's congratulations on the victory were coldly worded, and evoked a reply from his brother-in-law, saying that if he had foiled in courage, he would have been a dead man. But the duke could not forgive Gonzaga for allowing the French to pursue their way unmolested. Only the Count of Caiazzo and his brothers had attempted to follow them with their light cavalry, who were too few in number to do the enemy serious damage, and by the 8th of July, Charles and his tired army reached Asti in safety.

"God Himself was our guide," devoutly ejaculates Commines, "and led us home with honour, as that good man Fra Girolamo of Florence had foretold. But, as he said truly, we were made to suffer for our sins, for we were in sore need of food, and so great was our want of water that men drank of the ditches along the road; but no one was heard to complain, although it was the hardest journey I ever took in my life, and I have had many bad ones."

Among the booty which fell into the hands of the marquis after the battle was the French king's tent with all its contents. These included a sword and helmet, said to have belonged to Charlemagne, a silver casket containing the royal seals, besides a set of rich hangings and altar-plate, and a jewelled cross and reliquary on which Charles set great value, because it held a sacred thorn and piece of wood from the holy cross, a vest of our Lady, and a limb of St. Denis, which were objects of his especial devotion. Many of these relics were eventually restored to the king, who, not to be outdone in courtesy, sent the marquis a favourite white horse of

his, which had been captured by the French, gorgeously apparelled in gold trappings. Among the spoils sent to Mantua were a magnificent set of embroidered hangings from the royal tent, and a curious book of paintings, containing portraits of the chief Italian beauties who had fascinated King Charles. These, together with the hilt of the broken sword with which the marquis himself had fought in the *mêlèe*, were joyfully received by Isabella, who counted these trophies among her proudest possessions. She was, accordingly, a good deal annoyed when, a week later, her husband desired her to send back the French king's hangings, as he wished to give them to her sister Beatrice. Her protest on this occasion is very characteristic.

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD,

"Your Excellency has desired me to send the four pieces of drapery that belonged to the French king, in order that you may present them to the Duchess of Milan. I of course obey you, but in this instance I must say I do it with great reluctance, as I think these royal spoils ought to remain in our family, in perpetual memory of your glorious deeds, of which we have no other record here. By giving them to others, you appear to surrender the honour of the enterprise with these trophies of the victory. I do not send them to-day, because they require a mule, and I also hope that you will be able to make some excuse to the duchess and tell her, for instance, that you have already given me these hangings. If I had not seen them already, I should not have cared so much; but since you gave them to me in the first place, and they were won at the peril of your own life, I shall only give them up with tears in my eyes. All the

same, as I said before, I will obey your Excellency, but shall hope to receive some explanation in reply. If these draperies were a thousand times more valuable than they are, and had been acquired in any other way, I should gladly give them up to my sister the duchess, whom, as you know, I love and honour with all my heart. But, under the circumstances, I must own it is very hard for me to part with them.

"Mantua, July 24, 1495."

In this case Beatrice showed herself, as she habitually was, the more generous of the two. The marquis had his way, and sent the four hangings to Milan, followed by a fifth belonging to the suite, which he had in the mean time recovered.

On the 25th of August, Beatrice, having duly received and admired her brother-in-law's gift, sent them all back to Mantua, with the following note, thanking him for his kindness, but declining to accept a present that she felt belonged of right to her sister:—

"I have to-day received, by your Highness's courier, one of the pieces of drapery belonging to the King of France. Andrea Cossa had already brought me the other four, for which I thank you exceedingly; but I feel that, under the circumstances, I ought not to keep them. As it is, I have great pleasure in seeing them all together, and now your Highness can give them back to the Marchesana."[60]

FOOTNOTES:

[60] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. 632, 633.

CHAPTER XXIV

Ferrante II. recovers Naples—Siege of Novara by the army of the league—Review of the army by the Duke and Duchess of Milan—Charles VIII. visits Turin and comes to Vercelli—Negotiations for peace—Lodovic and Beatrice at the camp—Treaty of Vercelli concluded between France and Milan—Jealousy of the other Powers—Commines at Vigevano—Zenale's altar-piece in the Brera.

1495

If the failure of the league to cut off the French king's return to Fornovo had disappointed Lodovico, he found compensation in the news that reached Milan from Naples. Hardly had Charles VIII. started on his march northwards, than Ferrante once more set foot in his own realm and received a joyful welcome from his subjects. On the 7th of July, the day after the battle of the Taro, he entered Naples, where the people took up arms in his favour, and the nobles who had been the first to join the French king hastened to assure him of their loyalty. One by one the castles in the neighbourhood surrendered to their rightful king, and Montpensier with the remnant of his forces retired into the Calabrian fastnesses, to carry on a petty war of depredation and skirmishes

during the winter months. Lodovico hastened to impart the good news to his sister-in-law Isabella, who replied in the following letter:—

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS DUKE OF MILAN AND DEAR LORD,

"The news of King Ferrante's entry into Naples, which your Highness was so good as to send me, has given me the greatest pleasure, both for his Majesty's own sake and for that of your Highness, since it seems to me that all this must help to deliver us the more speedily from the hands of the French. So I congratulate myself with your Excellency, and thank you with all my heart for your kindness in allowing me to share the good news, which has indeed given me the greatest happiness. I only hope that you may soon receive tidings of the recovery of Novara, and begging you to keep me informed of your successes, and to commend me cordially to my sister the duchess,

"I remain, your daughter and servant,
ISABELLA DA ESTE."[61]

"Written with my own hand in Mantua on the 16th of July, 1495."

The siege of Novara, where the Duke of Orleans had been beleagured since the middle of June, was now the centre of interest in Lombardy. Immediately after Fornovo, the Count of Caiazzo's cavalry had joined his brother Galeazzo's force before Novara, and on the 19th of July the Marquis of Mantua encamped under the walls with the Venetian army. The garrison of the besieged city was six or seven

thousand strong, and well provided with arms and ammunition, but already supplies of food were scarce, and men and horses were dying of sickness and hunger. Some dissensions having arisen between Francesco Gonzaga and the other leaders as to the conduct of the siege, the Duke of Milan himself visited the camp of the league on the 3rd of August, bringing with him, says Guicciardini, his beloved wife—"*la sua carissima consorte*"—who was his companion "no less in matters of importance than in actions familiar, and who on this occasion, it is said, chiefly by her advice and counsel brought the captains to an agreement." A council of war was held, and Lodovico's recommendation to blockade the town instead of carrying it by assault was finally adopted. On the 5th of August the duke and duchess were present at a grand review of the whole army, which, with Galeazzo's troops and the German and Swiss reinforcements, now amounted to upwards of forty thousand men. Never in the memory of man, say the chroniclers, had so great and splendid an army been seen in Italy as that which, with flying colours and beating drums, to the sound of trumpets and martial music, marched past the chariot of Duchess Beatrice. First came the hero of Fornovo, Francesco Gonzaga, at the head of his troop of horse, mounted on magnificent chargers, "a sight admirable to behold;" then the infantry, all in excellent order, led by their different Condottieri, in glittering armour; afterwards the artillery, firing big guns, which seemed to rend the air; then the Stradiots armed with lances, targets, and scimitars, and the Venetian cross-bowmen and light cavalry. These were followed by Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who looked his best that day, clad in French attire as a knight of the Order of St. Michel—for which, we are

told, he was sharply reprimanded by the duke—followed by the flower of Milanese chivalry, bearing in their midst the ducal banner with the figure of a Moor, holding an eagle in one hand and strangling a dragon with the other. After Messer Galeaz came his brothers, Antonio Maria and Fracassa, "*ce très-beau et très-gracieux gendarme*," as Commines calls him, each leading his own squadron; and finally the German infantry, consisting of some five or six thousand men.

"It was indeed," writes the Neapolitan scholar, Jacopo d'Atri, who was in attendance on his master, the Marquis of Mantua, "a stupendous sight, and all who were present say that since the days of the Romans, so vast and well-disciplined an army has never been seen." And the Marquis of Mantua, in his letters, never ceased to regret his wife's absence, telling her that she had missed the grandest sight in the world, a thing the like of which she would never see again.

The only drawback to the day's success was an accident which befell the duke's horse, who stumbled and fell as Lodovico passed along the lines, throwing his rider to the ground, and soiling his rich clothes in the mud. "This," remarks the chronicler who tells the story, "was held to be an evil omen, and was remembered afterwards by many who were present that day." After this review, the duke and duchess returned to Vigevano, and the siege of Novara was prosecuted with fresh vigour. In vain Louis of Orleans and his famished soldiers looked out for the French army that was to bring them relief. King Charles had gone to visit his ally the Duchess of Savoy at Turin, and was consoling himself for the toil and disappointments of the campaign by making love to fair Anna Solieri in the neighbouring town of

Chieri. Since his reduced forces were unequal to the task of facing the army of the league and relieving Novara, he sent the bailiff of Dijon to raise a body of twelve thousand Swiss in the Cantons friendly to France, and decided to await their arrival before he took active measures.

Meanwhile he and most of his followers were thoroughly tired of warfare, and the queen never ceased imploring him to return home. The French supplies of men and money were exhausted, and when Charles sent home for reinforcements, Anne of Brittany replied that there were no Frenchmen left to send, only widows weeping for their husbands, whose bones were whitening on the Italian plains. The Venetian ambassador, Commines, who was strongly in favour of peace, had already opened negotiations with some of his friends in Venice, and Charles lent a willing ear both to his proposals and to those of the Duchess of Savoy, who on her part offered to mediate between him and the Duke of Milan. But Briconnet, the Cardinal of S. Malo, Lodovico's old enemy and a staunch partisan of Orleans, defeated these plans by his intrigues, and the French army, leaving Asti, advanced to Vercelli, in the duchy of Savoy, and prepared to take the field. Both parties, however, were growing weary of this prolonged warfare, and Commines declares that in the French camp no one wanted to fight, unless the king led them to battle, and that Charles himself had not the slightest wish to take the field.

At length, early in September, the first detachment of Swiss levies reached Vercelli, and on the 12th the king himself arrived in the camp. His first act was to hold a council of war, which decided in favour of peace, and Commines was sent to treat with the

Marquis of Mantua. The allies insisted on the unconditional surrender of Novara, while Charles VIII. asked for the restitution of Genoa as an ancient fief of the French crown. Nothing was concluded, but a truce of eight days was agreed upon, and prolonged conferences were held at a castle between Vercelli and Cameriano.

On the 21st of September, Lodovico returned to the camp of the league, bringing Beatrice with him, and rode out to meet the French commissioners. Commines gives a minute account of the conferences, which took place in the duke's lodgings at Cameriano during the next fortnight.

"Every day the duke and duchess came to meet us at the end of a long gallery and conducted us to their rooms, where we found two long rows of chairs prepared, and we sat down on one side, and the representatives of the league on the other. First came the ambassadors of the King of the Romans and the King of Spain; then the Marquis of Mantua and the Venetian Provveditori and envoy; then the Duke of Milan and his wife the duchess, seated between him and the ambassador of Ferrara. On their side, the duke was the only spokesman, and on our side one only. But our habit is not to speak as quietly as they do; two or three of us often began to speak at the same time, which made the duke say, 'Ho! ho! if you please, one at a time.' And two secretaries, one of ours and one of theirs, wrote down the articles agreed upon, and before we took leave, read them aloud, the one in Italian, the other in French, to see if there was anything that could be altered or shortened."

Beatrice was present at all the deliberations, and surprised the other commissioners by her cleverness

and quickness, and the ready tact she invariably showed. The duke was now sincerely anxious for peace, and only cared to recover Novara, and to see the French safely out of his dominions, where the presence of Louis of Orleans could not fail to prove a disturbing element. Both he and Commines directed all their efforts to bring matters to a favourable conclusion, but the other commissioners made difficulties, and the Venetian, Spanish, and German ambassadors would decide nothing without consulting their separate governments. The evacuation of Novara, however, was unanimously agreed upon, and on the 26th of September, Orleans and his garrison marched out with the honours of war, and were escorted by Messer Galeaz and the Marquis of Mantua to the French outposts. More than two thousand men had already died of sickness and starvation. Almost all their horses had been eaten, and the survivors were in a miserable plight. Many perished by the roadside, and Commines found fifty troopers in a fainting condition in a garden at Cameriano, and saved their lives by feeding them with soup. Even then one man died on the spot, and four others never reached the camp. Three hundred more died at Vercelli, some of sickness, others from over-eating themselves after the prolonged starvation which they had endured, and the dung-hills of the town were strewn with dead corpses. Yet still Orleans, who, as Commines remarks, had caused all this mischief, was eager for war, and entreated the king to make no terms with Signor Lodovico. He had a strong supporter in the Milanese captain, Jean Jacques Trivulzio, who had entered the French king's service after Alfonso's flight from Naples, and had never forgotten his old griefs against Lodovico and his son-in-law. And on the selfsame day that Novara

was evacuated, the bailiff of Dijon arrived at Vercelli with ten or twelve thousand more Swiss mercenaries, bringing up the whole number to upwards of twenty thousand. So large a body had never been assembled before, and the presence of these rude mountaineers, greedy for spoil and ready to quarrel with friends or foes, created general alarm. The Duke of Milan was now more eager than ever to conclude peace, and when Louis of Orleans and Trivulzio urged the king to break off negotiations and march at the head of the Swiss on Milan, Charles replied curtly that it was too late, for the preliminaries of peace were already signed. He himself had no wish but to return home and send help to his distressed troops in Naples.

Accordingly, on the 9th of October a separate convention was concluded between the King of France and the Duke of Milan, leaving the other Powers to settle their differences among themselves. Novara was restored to Lodovico, and his title to Genoa and Savona recognized, while Charles renounced the support of his cousin Louis of Orleans' claims upon Milan. In return the duke promised not to assist Ferrante with troops or ships, to give free passage to French armies, and assist the king with Milanese troops if he returned to Naples in person. He further renounced his claim on Asti, and agreed to pay the Duke of Orleans 50,000 ducats as a war indemnity, and lend the king two ships as transports for his soldiers from Genoa to Naples. A debt of 80,000 ducats, that was still owing to Lodovico, was cancelled, and the Castelletto of the port of Genoa was placed in the Duke of Ferrara's hands, as a security that these engagements would be kept on both sides. The king, we learn from Commines, still retained a friendly feeling for the Duke of Milan, and invited him to a meeting before he left Italy; but

Lodovico had taken umbrage at certain offensive remarks made by the Count of Ligny and Cardinal Briconnet, and excused himself on plea of illness, while he declared in private that he would not trust himself in the French king's company unless a river ran between them. "It is true," says Commines, "that foolish words had been spoken, but the king meant well, and wished to remain his friend."

The Marquis of Mantua was better disposed towards his Most Christian Majesty, and gladly accepted an invitation to visit the king at Vercelli before his departure. He wrote to his wife in great haste, begging her to send him his finest linen shirts and best gold brocade vest and mantle, together with different sorts of choice perfumes, and the next day duly made his obeisance to the king. He was highly gratified at the courtesy with which he was received, and at the familiar way in which his Majesty conversed, not only with himself, but with his servants, "treating them exactly as if they were his equals" and condescending to lift his hand to his cap each time they saluted him." What impressed this rough soldier most of all was the sight of three cardinals standing among the crowd at the door, "just as the chaplains may be seen in any other house," and among them the cardinal of S. Pietro in Vincula (afterwards Julius II.), "who dares contend with the Pope, and who yet stood here in the humblest and most respectful fashion." Before the marquis left, the king made him a present of two valuable bay horses, remarkable for their fine shape and speed. One of the two was an excellent jumper, and delighted Francesco by the way in which he could clear wide trenches and lofty fences at a single bound, "jumping with all four feet in the air at once."

At the same time Gonzaga's secretary, Jacopo d'Atri, informed the Marchesa that the priest Bernardino d'Urbino and a troop of Mantuan singers had been sent that evening to amuse the king. Charles questioned the chaplain closely about his master's wife, asking for an exact description of her person, height, and features, and being especially anxious to learn if Isabella at all resembled the Duchess Beatrice, and if, like that illustrious lady, she was as charming and gracious as she was beautiful. Don Bernardino replied discreetly that the Marchesa was, to say the truth, even more beautiful than her sister, and surpassed all other ladies by her charm and brilliancy. This roused the king's curiosity to the highest pitch, and he insisted on having a full and particular account of Isabella's talents and accomplishments, as well as of the gowns she usually wore and the fashion of her clothes, and rejoiced to hear she was not very tall, since he himself was short of stature and admired small women. "In short," adds the secretary, "his Majesty appeared quite in love with my description of your Excellency, and if he meets you, will, I am sure, seek to kiss your cheek, not once, but many times. And this being the case, I am glad to be able to tell you that the King of France is less deformed than people say."[62]

The desired meeting, however, was never effected. Immediately peace was signed, Charles VIII. left Vercelli, crossed the Alps with the remnants of his army, and reached Lyons on the 7th of November. Commines, meanwhile, was sent on a further errand to Venice, where he vainly endeavoured to negotiate a treaty, but found the Signoria determined to maintain the cause of Ferrante of Naples. The Venetians were not sorry to disband their army and see the French cross the Alps; but none the less their

indignation was great at the Duke of Milan's breach of faith in concluding a separate peace, and sharp words passed between the ambassadors of Spain and Naples and the Milanese envoy at Venice.

"The best thing, in my opinion," remarks the annalist Malipiero, "would have been for Contarini to give the Stradiots orders to cut to pieces both Duke Lodovico and Ercole of Ferrara, who are the Signory's worst enemies. And the truth is, you should never take part in another's quarrel, or enter the country of a foreign ally, for in these matters no one is to be trusted."



Altar piece ascribed to Zenale with portraits of Lodovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este (Brera)
D. Anderson.ToList

Maximilian, on his part, was satisfied with Lodovico's excuses, and owned that the duke was right to make peace without delay. As for Lodovico, it was with a deep sense of relief that he saw the departure of the last French troops. He invited the

Duke of Ferrara, the Marquis of Mantua, and the Venetian Provveditori to Vigevano, and entertained them all magnificently. When, on his return from Venice, Commines in his turn visited Vigevano, the duke rode out to meet him with charming courtesy, and bade the French ambassador welcome to his beautiful country home. But when they came to business, it was another matter. Commines heard from Genoa that the two ships, which the Duke of Milan was to send to Naples with the French fleet, had received orders not to sail, and when he asked for an explanation, Lodovico told him that he could put no trust or confidence in his master the king. At the end of three days the ambassador took his leave, and just as he was starting on his journey, to his surprise the duke came up to him very civilly, and said that, after all, he wished to keep on friendly terms with his Most Christian Majesty, and had determined to send Messer Galeaz with the ships to Naples, and that before Commines reached Lyons he should receive a letter to this effect. So Commines crossed the Alps with a light heart, and all the way to Lyons he kept looking back, he tells us, in constant expectation of hearing the sound of horse's hoofs behind him. But the duke's messenger did not overtake him, and the ships never sailed from Genoa.

That year the festival of Christmas was celebrated with great joy and splendour at the court of Milan. After the troubled times of the last twelve months, after the dangers which had threatened the very existence of the State, and brought the noise of war to the gates of Vigevano, peace and tranquillity were once more restored, and another era of unclouded prosperity seemed about to dawn. Now that poor Giangaleazzo was dead, and Louis of Orleans had once more crossed the Alps, there was no one to

dispute Lodovico's title or to prevent his son from eventually succeeding him on the throne. Once more he and Beatrice were free to devote themselves to the encouragement of learning and poetry, of painting and architecture; to watch Bramante and Leonardo at work, or read Dante and Petrarch together.

That winter the altar-piece of the Brera, containing the portraits of the duke and his family, was painted by Zenale or some other Lombard master, for the church of S. Ambrogio in Nemo. Here the Madonna and Child are enthroned in the centre of the picture; the four Fathers of the Church, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory, stand on either side; and in the foreground, kneeling at the foot of the throne, are the Duke and Duchess of Milan, with their two children. The Christ-child turns towards Lodovico, and St. Ambrose, the protector and patron saint of Milan, lays his hand on the shoulder of the duke, as, clad in rich brocades and wearing a massive gold chain round his neck, he clasps his hands in prayer. And the gentle Madonna stretches out her hand lovingly towards Beatrice, who kneels at her feet, with the long coil of twisted hair, and the pearls on her head and neck, and her favourite knots of ribbons fluttering from her shoulders or falling over the velvet stripes of her yellow satin robe. Close at her side is the infant prince, Francesco Sforza, with his baby face and swaddled clothes; while opposite, kneeling at his father's side, is the handsome little Count of Pavia. Here, at least, there is no doubt that we have authentic portraits of both Lodovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este, the reigning Duke and Duchess of Milan, towards the close of the year 1495. There is no mistaking the long black hair, the refined features, and long nose of the Moro, while in Beatrice's features we recognize the same youthful

and child-like charm that mark her countenance in Cristoforo Romano's bust or Solari's effigy in the Certosa of Pavia.

FOOTNOTES:

[61] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 627.

[62] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 630.

CHAPTER XXV

The war of Pisa—Venice defends the liberties of Pisa against Florence—Lodovico invites Maximilian to enter Italy and succour the Pisans—The Duke and Duchess of Milan go to meet the emperor at Mals—Maximilian crosses the Alps and comes to Vigevano—His interview with the Venetian envoys—His expedition to Pisa.

1496

"After Fornovo," wrote the Venetian Malipiero, "Lodovico Duke of Milan governed all things in Italy." The departure of the French had left him practically the arbiter between the other Powers, and afforded him fresh opportunities of satisfying his ambitious schemes. He had long cherished hopes of recovering the city of Pisa, upon which the Dukes of

Milan had ancient claims, and in September, 1495, while Orleans still held Novara, he sent Fracassa, at the head of a band of Genoese archers, to help the Pisans defend their newly recovered liberties against the Florentines. Three months later Fracassa was recalled, in tardy compliance with the condition of the Treaty of Vercelli; but early in the following year, the Pisans, finding themselves deserted by the French, turned once more to Lodovico and implored his help. At the same time they sought assistance from the Signory of Venice, who, in March, 1496, publicly took the city of Pisa under the protection of St. Mark, and helped their new allies with liberal supplies of men and money. The Duke of Milan sent a small brigade to join these forces, and strongly encouraged the Venetians to bear the burden of a war from which in the end he hoped to reap solid advantage. But his secret jealousy of Venice, as well as rumours that Charles VIII. was meditating a second French expedition to relieve the distressed garrison of Naples, induced him to seek the help of a new ally In the person of the Emperor Maximilian.

Early in the spring he sent the Marchesino Stanga across the Alps to invite Maximilian to come to the help of Pisa, which as an imperial city had already appealed to him for protection, assuring him that his presence in Italy would maintain the balance of power between Venice and Florence, and curb the French king's ambition. The prospect of descending upon Italy and assuming the imperial crown flattered Maximilian's vanity, but, as usual, his movements were hampered by lack of money. At length he agreed to meet the Duke of Milan on the frontier of Tyrol and the Valtellina, and discuss their future plan of operations together.

On the 5th of July the emperor left Innsbrück for Nauders, and on the same day the duke and duchess, accompanied by Galeazzo di Sanseverino and the Count of Melzi, set out on their journey up the lake of Como to Bormio, in the Valtellina, On the 17th they reached the Abbey of Mals, "an ancient monastery," says Cagnola, "at the foot of those terrible mountains on the way to Germany;" and two days afterwards, received a message from Maximilian, informing the duke and duchess that he was about to pay them a visit, but begging them not to leave their lodgings, as he wished the meeting to be informal and without ceremony. Early on the morning of the 20th, the gay music of hunting-horns woke the mountain echoes, and a hunting-party suddenly appeared at the gates of the old Benedictine abbey. First came a hundred soldiers on foot, bearing long lances, then fifty German lords in hunting-garb, with falcons on their wrists. These were followed by his Imperial Majesty, a princely figure in his simple grey cloth tunic and black velvet cap, with a lion's skin hanging over his thighs, and the badge of the Golden Fleece on his breast. A troop of servants and pages, in the imperial liveries of red, white, and yellow, brought up the rear of the procession, that wound along the steep mountain-side and halted before the convent, where the Duke of Milan had his lodgings.

The Venetian ambassador, Francesco Foscari, hearing of Maximilian's proposed visit, had, on Lodovico's invitation, followed him across the Alps, accompanied by the Cardinal of Santa Croce, the papal nuncio. Both these envoys waited on the emperor at Mals, and that evening Foscari's secretary, Conrade Vimerca, wrote the following account of the meeting between Maximilian and the

duke and duchess in his despatches to Venice:—

"His Majesty alighted with an eagerness which seemed to me only too great, and went upstairs, where he found the duke alone with the duchess, and spent half an hour in close and affectionate intercourse with them both. Afterwards they all three attended mass in the neighbouring church, and his Majesty appeared, leading the duchess with his right hand and the duke with his left, with such demonstrations of love and familiarity as can hardly be described. All three then rode on horseback to the emperor's lodgings at Colorno (Glurns), some eight miles distant, where his Majesty entertained the duke and duchess and all their suite at dinner under a pavilion, which had been erected under the trees. His Majesty insisted on both the duke and duchess washing their hands with him in the same bowl, and, sitting down between them at table, himself helped first one, then the other, from the endless variety of dishes spread out before them. All this he did with an ease and kindness beyond anything that I have ever seen in royal personages. Each time the duke spoke he took off his cap, and his Majesty did the same. After dinner they remained for some while in pleasant conversation, and then rode all three together to another place called Mals, one mile further off, his Majesty bearing all the expenses of the entertainment. To-morrow night they will remain together here, and there will be some time for discussion. I am quite sure," adds the Venetian secretary, "after this that we shall see his Majesty in Italy next August, and this you may hold to be absolutely certain. As for the King of France, they do not even mention his name or think of him any more than if he did not exist."

Although the Signoria of Venice had joined the Duke of Milan in inviting Maximilian to come to Italy, and had promised him their assistance, they were secretly not a little alarmed at the prospect of another foreign invasion, fearing, as one of their chroniclers observes, that the Germans might prove to be even greater barbarians than the French. In the interview which Foscari had with the emperor at Mals, he endeavoured politely to dissuade him from entering Italy with a German army; but, as his secretary remarked, it was too late, for the Duke of Milan willed that he should come. Nor were the jealous Venetians altogether pleased to see the marks of friendship and confidence with which the German emperor honoured Lodovico and his wife. The familiarity with which Maximilian treated both the duke and duchess, and the evident pleasure which he took in their company, seemed little short of marvellous in the eyes of both Foscari and his secretary.

The singular charm and intelligence of Beatrice made a deep impression upon Maximilian, who could not but contrast her brightness and cleverness with the dulness and ignorance of his own Milanese wife. And the duke's polished manners and cultured tastes could not fail to exert a powerful fascination upon a monarch whose genuine love of art and romance made him in his way as remarkable a type of the Renaissance as the Moro himself. Even apart from political considerations, this meeting between the two princes, that summer-time in the mountains of Tyrol, was an event of deep interest, and we can only regret that no record of Beatrice's impressions on this occasion has been left us.

A conference between the emperor, the Duke of

Milan, and the ambassadors was held on the evening of that eventful day, and the details of the convention between the allied powers was finally agreed upon. A new league, which Henry the Seventh of England was afterwards invited to join, was formed between the Emperor Maximilian, the Duke of Milan, the Pope, the King of Spain, and the Venetian Republic; and Venice and Milan promised Maximilian a subsidy of 16,000 ducats if he would cross the Alps with an army, and compel the Florentines to give up Pisa and Leghorn.

On the following day, the Venetian ambassador and the papal legate took their leave, and Maximilian accompanied the duke and duchess over the Alps to Bormio, where he joined in a chamois-hunt, and then rode back with his retinue across the mountains to meet the empress at Tirano. Lodovico and Beatrice travelled back to Milan, where they kept the feast of the "glorious martyr St, Lawrence," on the 10th of August, with unwonted splendour, and then retired to Vigevano to prepare for the emperor's speedy return.

Before the end of the month, Maximilian had once more crossed that "*crudelissima montagna*" of Braulio (Piz Umbrail), and was at Bellagio on the Lake of Como, where Fracassa received him, and with five other Milanese knights held a *baldacchino* over his head as he rode up to the Marchesino Stanga's Castle on the hills.

"But he only brought six secretaries and two hundred horsemen with him, and as before was simply clad in a suit of grey cloth," remarks a Venetian writer: "the pettiest German baron would have come with more pomp!" A few days afterwards, the emperor went on to the ducal villa at Meda, near

Como, where Lodovico met him with the Cardinal di Santa Croce and Foscari, and conducted him, on the 2nd of September, to see Duchess Beatrice at Vigevano. Here he remained for the next three weeks, enjoying the beauties of the Moro's favourite summer palace, and admiring the perfection of Lodovico's latest improvements—the clock recently constructed by Bramante, the marble capitals of the great hall, and the model farm and stables of the Sforzesca. Maximilian had originally intended to visit Milan, and the erection of a triumphal arch in the Roman style had been ordered by the duke, together with other decorations on a vast scale; but at the last moment this idea was abandoned. The Venetian, Marino Sanuto, unkindly suggests that the Moro would not allow the emperor to come to Milan, lest he should see Duchess Isabella's son, who was the rightful heir to the crown. In all probability the true reason lay in Maximilian's dislike of state-pageants, and his preference for the freedom and country pleasures of Vigevano. As he told the Venetian ambassador, he preferred to travel about in different places and enjoy himself in his own way. And His Majesty added, with a frankness by no means agreeable to Foscari and his government, that he had no need of his company, and he preferred to be alone, since Duke Lodovico, with whom he was very intimate, could tell him all that he wished to know. With which distinctly unpalatable piece of information the ambassador had to be content. Maximilian, he was compelled to acknowledge, had come to Italy as the sworn friend and ally of the Duke of Milan, and the Republic must stoop to take the second place in the councils of the League.

If Beatrice's charms had captivated the wise emperor at their first meeting in the mountains of

the Valtellina, he found her a thousand times more fascinating at her beautiful country home, with her children in her arms. He took great interest in both her little boys, and begged that the elder of the two, Ercole, should bear the name of Maximilian, by which he became known in future days. In memory of this visit the emperor's portrait was introduced in the beautiful miniatures which illustrate Maximilian Sforza's Book of Prayers, or Libro di Gesù, still preserved in the Trivulzian Library. Here the young count is represented on horseback, receiving his illustrious cousin, while the words of the Latin oration, which he is in the act of reciting, are illuminated on the front page.

The Venetian Signory had decided to send two special ambassadors to congratulate the emperor on his arrival in Italy, and on the 14th these envoys, Antonio Grimani and Marco Morosini, reached Milan, where they were received by Galeazzo Sforza, Count of Melzi, and lodged in the Palazzo del Verme, then inhabited by Madonna Cecilia Gallerani and her husband Count Lodovico Bergamini, and lately decorated with frescoes and marbles at the duke's expense. Early the next day they travelled by boat to Abbiategrasso, past the fair villas and smiling gardens that charmed the eyes of Jean d'Auton when he travelled along the banks of the Ticino. Here Foscari, who was already in attendance on the emperor, came to meet them, and they rode into Vigevano, where they were received by the Count of Caiazzo and Galeotto della Mirandola, and listened in torrents of rain to a Latin oration that was delivered in Maximilian's name. It was already dark when the ambassadors reached the Castello, but the duke himself rode out to welcome them, and conducted them to their lodgings in the palace of his

son-in-law, Galeazzo di Sanseverino. Here the duke's own daughter, Madonna Bianca, the youthful bride whom Messer Galeaz had brought home a few weeks before, entertained her father's guests, and bade them welcome in the name of her gallant husband, who was laid up with an attack of fever, and was unable to leave his room or attend to business. The next day the ambassadors were granted an audience, at which Marino Sanuto, as a member of Foscari's suite, was himself present. His Majesty, whom the Venetian described as a magnificent-looking man of thirty-seven, with long hair already turning white, and perfect manners, received them at the top of the grand staircase, on the first floor of the Castello. As usual, he was clad in black and wore a long velvet mantle, and a black woollen cap trimmed with cords in the French style, having taken a vow to wear no colours until he had defeated the Turks, while his sole ornament was a gold chain, with the badge of the Golden Fleece, which hung round his neck. He was seated on a daïs, draped with cloth of gold, with the Duke of Milan on his right hand, and the Cardinal di Santa Croce on his left. The ambassadors of Naples and Spain were also present, as well as the Count of Caiazzo, the Marchesino Stanga, Don Angelo de' Talenti, the Bishops of Como and Piacenza, the secretary de' Negri, and other well-known Milanese courtiers. Marco Morosini then pronounced an elegant harangue, which was praised by all present, and graciously accepted by the emperor, who conversed affably with the envoys on general subjects. Afterwards Marino Sanuto was presented to the Duchess Beatrice, who, he remarks, "never leaves her lord's side, although she is once more with child,"—and her two fine little boys, "Ercole, whose name has been changed by His

Majesty's desire to Maximilian, and who is called Count of Pavia, and a second named Sforza." A succession of *fêtes* and hunting-parties was given by the duke for the entertainment of his imperial guest during the next week, and ending with a "*Caccia bellissima*" to which the cardinal-legate, all the princes, ambassadors, and courtiers were invited. Two hundred riders took part in the hunt that day, and "I myself," adds the grave historian, "was there and saw a hare caught by a leopard."

On the 23rd of September the emperor took leave of the Duchess Beatrice, who presented him, as a parting gift, with a superb litter, made of woven gold, richly adorned with fine needlework—"the most beautiful thing which I have ever seen," writes Sanuto, "and valued at a thousand ducats." The duke accompanied his guest as far as Tortona, where he left Maximilian to go on to Genoa, and thence by sea to Pisa.

"There are, people say, three reasons," remarked Marino Sanuto, "why His Imperial Majesty is such fast friends with the Duke of Milan. In the first place, he sees that Lodovico has great power and authority throughout Italy. In the second, he hopes to get some money out of him. And in the third place, he looks on him as a useful ally against the King of France."

Happily for both the emperor and the Duke of Milan's peace of mind, the French king's military ardour had soon died away, and although Trivulzio was sent to Asti, and Orleans would gladly have followed him, Charles the Eighth spent his time in jousts and hunting-parties, and forgot his unhappy subjects in Southern Italy. Ferrante, assisted by a Venetian force under Francesco Gonzaga, recovered one fortress after another. On the 29th of July,

Montpensier, after holding the fortified city of Atella during many months, was forced to capitulate with his five thousand men, and himself died of fever a few weeks later at Pozzuoli. Most of his troops shared the same fate, and few of that gallant army lived to return to France. Suddenly, in the midst of his victorious career, the young king Ferrante, who had a few months before obtained a papal dispensation to marry his father's youthful half-sister, Princess Joan, died of fever, brought on by the fatigues and hardships to which he had exposed himself in the previous campaign. His death was deeply lamented alike by his subjects and his relatives at Milan and Mantua, who retained a sincere affection for this brave and popular prince. Fortunately, his uncle and successor Frederic, the fifth king who had reigned over Naples during the last three years, proved a wise and capable monarch. By degrees he succeeded in capturing the few remaining castles still held by the French, and once more restored peace to his distracted kingdom. Such was the state of affairs that autumn, when the German emperor landed at Pisa on the 21st of October. The citizens received him with acclamations, and, pulling down the French king's statue, as they had broken the lion of Florence in pieces two years before, placed the imperial eagle on the top of the column in the public square. But they were once more doomed to disappointment. Maximilian, finding himself, as usual, ill supplied with both men and money, and being inadequately supported by his allies of Venice and Milan, was unable to prosecute the war against Florence with any vigour. He attempted to besiege Leghorn; but his fleet was scattered and many of his ships were wrecked by a violent storm, after which he gave up

the undertaking, saying that he could not fight against both God and man. One day towards the end of November, he suddenly took his departure, and, leaving Pisa, returned by Sarzana to Pavia. The Venetians saw the failure of this expedition and the fruitless result of their large expenditure of men and money, with great dissatisfaction, and attributed most of the blame to Duke Lodovico.

"Things go badly for the Signory at Pisa," wrote Malipiero, who was himself on board the Venetian fleet that sailed with Maximilian against Leghorn, "and the cause of this is Lodovico Duke of Milan.... His pride and arrogance are beyond description. He boasts that Pope Alexander is his chaplain, the Emperor Maximilian his condottiere, the Signory of Venice his chamberlain, since they spend their money largely to attain his ends, and the King of France his courier, who comes and goes at his pleasure. Truly a fearful state of things!"

And Marino Sanuto remarked, "The Duke of Milan is one of the wisest men in the world, but his success has rendered him very ungrateful to Venice, whose secret enemy he will always remain. He made a great mistake in allowing the Duke of Orleans to escape from Novara, and some day he will be punished for his bad faith. For he never keeps his promises, and when he says one thing, always does another. All men fear him, because fortune is propitious to him in everything. But none the less, I believe that he will not continue long in prosperity, for God is just, and will punish him because he is a traitor and never keeps faith with any one."

The Florentine Guicciardini moralized in much the same strain, saying that Lodovico publicly vaunted himself to be the son of Fortune, "little remembering

the inconstancy of human fame," and flattered himself that he would always be able to govern the affairs of Italy, "with his industrie to turn and winde the minds of every one. This fond persuasion he could not dissemble, neither in himself, nor in his peoples, in so much that Milan day and night was replenished with voices vaine and glorious, celebrating with verses Latine and vulgar and with publicke orations full of flatterie, the wonderfull wisedom of Lodowike Sforce, on the which they made to depend the peace and warre of Italy, exalting his name even to the third heaven."

In those days the bard of Pistoja proclaimed that there was one God in heaven and one Moro upon earth, and sang the praises of this great and divine Duca, who alone could open and close the doors of the Temple of Janus and make peace or war in Italy, while Gaspare Visconti extolled the talents and virtues of Duchess Beatrice as surpassing those of all the most illustrious women of antiquity. Then Leonardo designed that famous series of allegories in his sketch-book, in which Duke Lodovico is represented alternately as Fortune, driving the squalid figure of Poverty away with a golden wand, and throwing his ducal mantle over a helpless youth who flies before the ugly hag; or as supreme Wisdom, wearing the spectacles which can pierce through all disguises, and pronouncing sentence between Envy on the one hand and Justice on the other. Then Bramante painted those frescoes on the walls of the Castello of Milan, in which the Moro was seen crowned and seated on his throne, under a stately portico, administering justice, with four councillors and two pages at his side, while the criminal trembled before him, and officers of state held the scales and prepared to carry out the

sentence. And then, too, somewhere else in the palace, an unknown Lombard master painted that fresco of Italy as a fair queen, with the names of the chief cities embroidered on her robes, and the Moro standing at her side, brushing the dust off her skirts with the *scopetta* or little broom, that favourite emblem which appears in so many illuminated books of the day. On the wall below the painting, the following motto was inscribed:—

"*Per Italia nettar d'ogni bruttura*."

"Take care, my lord duke," the Florentine ambassador is reported to have said, when Lodovico graciously explained the meaning of the allegory —"take care the negro who is so busy brushing Italy's skirts does not cover himself with dust in his turn!" The courteous duke only smiled at the jest, and shrugged his shoulders; but others overheard the remark and repeated it, much to the satisfaction of his foes in Florence and Venice.

The fame of the great and powerful Duke of Milan had reached the distant cliffs of Albion and the palace of Westminster, and that November Lodovico received a letter from Henry VII. of England, rejoicing with his new ally on the conclusion of the League against France, and the visit of the emperor to Italy. The king further informed him that "the treaty had been solemnly proclaimed by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Conturberi, on the Feast of All Saints, in the cathedral church of the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, in our city of London." And our friend, Marino Sanuto, proceeds to improve the occasion by informing us that "this King Enrico has for wife Madonna Ysabeta, daughter of the late King Edward, because he defended the cause of Richard,

brother of the said Edward. And he has two sons, Artur, prince of Squales, which is a neighbouring island, and the Duke of Yorche."

CHAPTER XXVI

Isabella d'Este joins her husband in Naples—Works of Bramante and Leonardo in the Castello of Milan—The Cenacolo—Lodovico sends for Perugino—His passion for Lucrezia Crivelli—Grief of Beatrice—Death of Bianca Sforza—The Emperor Maximilian at Pavia—The Duke and Duchess return to Milan—Last days and sudden death of Beatrice d'Este.

1496

The records we have of Beatrice's private life during this busy year are very meagre and disappointing. Scarcely one of her letters, belonging to this period, has been preserved, while those which her sister Isabella addressed to Milan are almost as rare. The *marchesa's* time and thoughts had been much engaged in public affairs during the absence of her husband with the Venetian forces at Naples, and she had little leisure for correspondence. On the 13th of July she gave birth to a second child, which, to her great disappointment, proved to be another girl, who received the name of Margherita, but only lived a few weeks. Of this event the duchess was duly informed, and, in sending her congratulations, was

able to tell her sister that she was hoping to become the mother of a third child early in the following year. In September the marquis fell dangerously ill of fever, and his wife hurried to join him in Calabria, and, as soon as he was able to move, brought him back by slow stages to Mantua. During that summer, the only letter of interest which Isabella wrote to the Milanese court was a note to her friend, the jester Barone, begging him to find out for her how Messer Galeazzo and others who like him are the glass of fashion, manage to dye their hair black on certain occasions, and afterwards resume the natural colour of their locks, adding that she remembers distinctly to have seen Count Francesco Sforza with black locks one day, and the next with brown.

On the 9th of November, Lodovico wrote an imperative note from Vigevano to the Castellan of the Rocchetta, Bernardino del Corte, desiring him to see that the walls of the new rooms are dry and ready for habitation by the end of the month, since the duchess must have the use of the apartments adjoining the ball-room during her approaching confinement, and telling him to ask Bergonzio, the treasurer, for money, if more should be required. Bernardino replied that the rooms were finished, and that good fires had been lighted to dry the walls, and that the whole suite would be furnished by the following week and ready to receive the duchess. He also informed the duke that the new rooms on the side of the garden would be completed by Christmas, and told him that Bramante, after finishing the arcades of the new gallery between the ball-room and Rocchetta, had begun the design of the new tower. Both Leonardo and Bramante were employed on extensive works in the Castello during the duke's absence that summer, although the Florentine

master, we know, was chiefly engaged in finishing his great fresco in the refectory of the Dominican convent outside the Porta Vercellina. Often during the summer heats, Matteo Bandello, then a young novice of the Order, saw the Florentine master at noonday, "when the sun was in the sign of the Lion," leave the Corte Vecchia, where he was finishing his great horse, and, hurrying through the streets to the Grazie, mount the scaffold, brush in hand, and put a few touches to some of the figures in the Cenacolo, after which he would hurry away as quickly as he came. Often too the young friar watched him at his work; "for this excellent painter," Matteo tells us, "always liked to hear other people give their opinions freely on his pictures." Many a time the young Dominican saw Messer Leonardo ascend the scaffold in the early morning, and remain there from sunrise till the hour of twilight, forgetting to eat and drink, and painting all the while without a moment's pause. Sometimes again he would not paint a single stroke for several days, but just stand before the picture during one or two hours, contemplating his work, and considering and examining the different figures. And the friars were very much annoyed because of the master's delays, and complained to the duke, who paid him so large a sum for the work, that he had not yet begun the head of the traitor Judas. When the duke asked Leonardo why he left this head undone, he replied that during the last year he had been vainly seeking in all the worst streets of Milan to find a type of criminal who would suit the character of Judas, but that if desired he would introduce the prior's own likeness, which he thought would answer the purpose excellently! This answer is said to have amused the duke highly, and Lodovico and his painter had a good laugh together at the expense of

the prior.

But since Leonardo was otherwise engaged, and another painter who had been employed in the Castello suddenly disappeared, owing, we are told, to some scandal in which he was concerned, the duke determined to send to Florence for another artist to complete the decorations of his new rooms. There was evidently no Lombard master whom he considered equal to the task, and since Lorenzo de' Medici had sent him Leonardo, there might be some other artists of rare excellence among his fellow-citizens. So Lodovico wrote to his envoy at Florence, and desired him to let him have a full description of the best painters then living there. In reply, he received the following list, which is still preserved in the archives of Milan, and which is of great interest, both as a monument of the Moro's untiring perseverance in seeking out the best masters, and as a record of the different degrees of estimation in which living artists were held by their contemporaries:—

"Sandro de Botticelli—a most excellent master, both in panel and wall-painting. His figures have a manly air, and are admirable in conception and proportion.

"Filippino di Frati Filippo—an excellent disciple of the above-named, and a son of the rarest master of our times. His heads have a gentler and more suave air; but, we are inclined to think, less art.

"Il Perugino—a rare and singular artist, most excellent in wall-painting. His faces have an air of the most angelic sweetness.

"Domenico de Grillandaio—a good master in panels and a better one in wall-painting. His figures

are good, and he is an industrious and active master, who produces much work.

"All of these masters have given proof of their excellence in the Chapel of Pope Sixtus, excepting Filippino, and also in the Spedaletto of the Magnifico Laurentio, and their merit is almost equal."[63]

This intimation seems to have decided Lodovico to apply to Perugino, whom Leonardo had known as his fellow-pupil in Verrocchio's atelier at Florence, and who was supposed to be in Venice at the time. So his secretary wrote to desire Guido Arcimboldo, the Archbishop of Milan, who was then in Venice, to inquire for the Umbrian master, and see if he could be induced to visit Milan. The archbishop, writing on the 14th of June, replied that Maestro Pietro of Perugia had left Venice six months ago and was back at Florence. Lodovico, however, did not lose sight of the master, and in the following October, by his desire, the monks of the Certosa of Pavia engaged this popular artist to paint an altar-piece for one of their chapels. In the following year the duke returned to the charge, and hearing that Perugino had returned to his native city, wrote two pressing letters to one of the Baglioni, who was the chief magistrate of Perugia, begging him, as a personal favour, to induce Messer Pietro to come to Milan, and offering to pay the artist whatever price he may ask, and to retain him permanently in his service or keep him only for a fixed time, as he may think best. Perugino, however, was then engaged in decorating the Sala del Cambio in his native town, and had already more commissions than he could execute. He declined the Duke of Milan's repeated invitations, and the Moro was obliged to fall back upon Bramante and Leonardo to finish the works in the

Castello.

But although the duke's passion for building new churches and palaces or beautifying those which he had already built, was as ardent as ever, it became more and more difficult to find the money to meet the vast expenditure which his splendid schemes involved. The *fêtes* in honour of Maximilian and the subsidies which had been granted for his expedition had already entailed heavy expenses, and on every side the same complaint was heard. There was no money to pay the salaries of the numerous professors at Pavia and Milan, whose chairs had been founded by Lodovico himself; none to pay the bills for building and furnishing the new rooms in the Castello, or to cast Leonardo's great horse in bronze. Everywhere people were groaning at the heavy burdens imposed upon them, and at Lodi, Cremona, and other places there had been not only murmuring against the duke, but actual rioting and tumults, while in some parts of the duchy the inhabitants were leaving their homes to escape these harsh exactions. Lodovico's most faithful servants began to look grave, and the duke himself could not but be aware of his growing unpopularity among his subjects.

Whether these rumours reached the ears of Beatrice and disturbed her happiness, we cannot tell; but we know that her life was saddened and the gladness of her heart clouded by a new sorrow that autumn. The duke, who for many years past had proved himself a devoted and affectionate husband, and realized better than any one what an admirable companion and partner he had in his young wife, suddenly found a new object for his affections in Lucrezia Crivelli, a beautiful and accomplished

maiden of a noble Milanese family, who was one of the duchess's ladies-in-waiting. Soon Lodovico's passion for this new mistress became publicly known, Leonardo was employed to paint her picture; and, under the date of November, 1496, the annalist of Ferrara writes, "The latest news from Milan is that the duke spends his whole time and finds all his pleasure in the company of a girl who is one of his wife's maidens. And his conduct is ill regarded here." The chronicler Muralti, in his brief and touching account of the young duchess, after recalling Beatrice's charms and joyous nature, tells us that, although Lodovico loved his wife intensely, he took Lucrezia Crivelli for his mistress, a thing which caused Beatrice the most bitter anguish of mind, but could not alter her love for him. And remorse for the pain which he had caused Beatrice gave the sharpest sting to Lodovico's own despair, on that sad day when he wept for his young wife's early death.

That autumn a fresh and unexpected blow fell upon the ducal family, in the death of Lodovico's beloved daughter Bianca, the young wife of Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who died very suddenly at Vigevano, on the 22nd of November. Both the duke and duchess had been fondly attached to this fair young girl who only four or five months before had become the wife of Galeazzo, and was one of Beatrice's favourite companions. Her sudden and premature death threw a gloom over the whole court, and in elegant verse Niccolo da Correggio deplored the loss of the gentle maiden who had gone in the flower of her youth to join the blessed spirits, and grieved for the gallant husband whom a cruel fate had so early robbed of his bride. There can be little doubt that we have a portrait of this lamented princess in the beautiful picture of the Ambrosiana, which, long

supposed to be the work of Leonardo, is now recognized by the best critics as that of Ambrogio de Predis. At one time this portrait was said to represent Beatrice herself, but neither the long slender throat nor the delicate features bear the least resemblance to those of the duchess, while the style of head-dress is equally unlike that which Beatrice wears in authentic representations. Again, some critics have supposed the Ambrosian picture to represent Kaiser Maximilian's wife, Bianca Maria Sforza; but the discovery of Ambrogio de Predis's actual portrait of the empress, and of his sketch of her head in the Venetian Academy, have shown this theory to be impossible. The Venetian Marc Antonio Michieli, who saw this picture in Taddeo Contarini's house at Venice in 1525, describes it as "a profile portrait of the head and bust of Madonna, daughter of Signor Lodovico of Milan," after which he adds, "married to the Emperor Maximilian ... by the hand of ... *Milanese*." The connoisseur had evidently confused the two Bianca Sforzas, but now that this mistake has been explained by a comparison of the Ambrosian portrait with genuine pictures and medals of the empress, there is no difficulty in accepting the remainder of his statement. For we have here, there can be little doubt, the portrait of Lodovico's daughter, by the hand of a Milanese painter, in all probability, as Morelli divined, the court-painter of the ducal house, Ambrogio de Predis. And the German critic, Dr. Müller-Walde, is probably right in his conjecture that the companion picture in the Ambrosiana is the portrait of Bianca's husband, Galeazzo di Sanseverino. This picture has been called by many names, and ascribed to many different hands. It has been described in turn as a portrait of Maximilian, of the short-lived Duke Giangaleazzo,

and of Lodovico Moro himself. But Ambrogio's portrait certainly represents none of the three, and it is far more likely that we have here a likeness of the duke's son-in-law, painted about the time of his marriage to Bianca Sforza. This handsome man of thirty, in the fur-trimmed vest and red cap, with the dark eyes, long locks, and refined thoughtful face, touched with an air of melancholy, may well be the brilliant cavalier who played so great a part at the Moro's court, the patron of Leonardo and Luca Pacioli, and the loyal servant of Duchess Beatrice.

Both the duke and his wife were overwhelmed with grief at Madonna Bianca's death. Lodovico himself wrote to Isabella d'Este that the wound had pierced his inmost heart, and the duchess and Messer Galeaz both expressed their grief in touching words. On the 23rd of November, Beatrice wrote these few sad lines to her sister—

"Although you will have already heard from my husband the duke of the premature death of Madonna Bianca, his daughter and the wife of Messer Galeaz, none the less I must write these few lines with my own hand, to tell you how great is the trouble and distress which her death has caused me. The loss indeed is greater than I can express, because of our close relationship and of the place which she held in my heart. May God have her soul in His keeping!"[64]



Galeazzo Di Sanseverino.
From a painting by Ambrogio de Predis.
(Ambrosiana)
D. Anderson.ToList

All the *fêtes* which had been prepared in honour of the emperor's return to Lombardy were stopped, and the duke and duchess, with their little son, attended by a small suite of courtiers and ladies, in deep mourning, travelled by water to Pavia, to receive their illustrious kinsman when he arrived from Sarzana on the 2nd of December. On this occasion Maximilian behaved with great consideration, and showed deep sympathy with his distressed relatives. Instead of making a public entry through the city, he rode up through the park to the private gate of the Castello, where the duke and duchess met him and conducted him to his rooms. Here he spent the evening alone in their company, and refused to see any one but the little Count of Pavia, for whom he is said to have cherished great affection. The Venetian envoy, Francesco Foscari, hearing of the emperor's arrival, hastened to Pavia, and with difficulty

obtained an audience from His Majesty, who told him that it was impossible for him to visit Milan or remain any longer in Italy, since the German Diet was about to meet, and he had promised to join his son, the Archduke Philip, at Augsburg. A council was held in the Castello to discuss political affairs, but it was plain that the Pisans had nothing more to expect from their imperial ally, and Maximilian was only anxious to be back in Germany. On the 4th he attended a solemn requiem mass for the lamented princess Bianca in the Duomo, and in the afternoon rode out to the Certosa with Lodovico, who showed him all the wonders of that famous church and abbey. On the 6th, the duke took his wife, whose delicate state of health needed rest, back to Milan, and a few days later returned with Foscari to meet the emperor at the ducal villa of Cussago. On the 11th, Maximilian went to Groppello, where he knighted the Venetian ambassador and dismissed him, after which he took leave of the duke, says the chronicler, with many expressions of affection on both sides, and once more set out on his journey across the terrible mountains. His expedition, remarked the Venetian writer, "has effected nothing, and he leaves Italy in still greater confusion than he found her."

Lodovico now joined his wife at Milan in time to receive another guest in the person of Chiara Gonzaga, the widowed Duchess of Montpensier, who was on her way back from France. Since her husband's death at Pozzuoli, this unfortunate lady had been vainly trying to recover her fortune from the French king, and was full of gratitude to the duke for his friendly exertions on her behalf. Both her sons, Louis de Bourbon and Charles the famous Connétable, were fighting with the remnants of the

French army against her brother in Naples, and both were to lose their lives in the wars of Italy, while she herself spent the rest of her existence in poverty and seclusion at Mantua. But to the last she remained a loyal friend to Lodovico, with whom she corresponded frequently. On the 22nd, Chiara left Milan, and the celebration of the Christmas festival began. But the courtiers and ladies-in-waiting noticed the strange and mournful forebodings which seemed to oppress their young duchess. They often saw tears in her eyes, and wondered whether they were caused by her husband's neglect or grief for the loss of Bianca. Day after day she paid long visits to the Church of S. Maria delle Grazie, where the duke's daughter had been laid to rest in this his favourite shrine. There in those last days of the year Beatrice might constantly be seen, spending hours in prayer at the tomb of the young princess, and musing sadly on the vanity of human joys. But no one dreamt how soon her own end was at hand.

On Monday, the 2nd of January, the Duchess Beatrice drove in her chariot through the park of the Castello and along the streets of the city to the Porta Vercellina and the Church of S. Maria delle Grazie, where even then Leonardo was at work upon his great fresco. In the eyes of the people who saw her pass, she seemed in excellent health, and returned their loyal greetings with the same gracious charm. But when she reached the Dominican church, and had paid her devotions at Our Lady's altar, and prayed for the repose of her daughter's soul, she lingered by the new-made tomb, rapt in sorrowful thought, and it was long before her ladies could persuade her to come away. After her return to the Castello that afternoon, there was dancing in her rooms in the Rocchetta until eight o'clock in the

evening, when she was suddenly taken ill. Three hours later she gave birth to a still-born son, and half an hour after midnight her spirit passed away.

That night, contemporary writers tell us, "the sky above the Castello of Milan was all a-blaze with fiery flames, and the walls of the duchess's own garden fell with a sudden crash to the ground, although there was neither wind nor earthquake. And these things were held to be evil omens." "And from that time," adds Marino Sanuto, "the duke began to be sore troubled, and to suffer great woes, having up to that time lived very happily."

Beatrice was gone, and with her all the joy and delight of the duke's life had passed away. The court was turned from an earthly paradise into the blackest hell, and ruin overtook the Moro and the whole realm of Milan, as the poet of the house of Este sang in his *Orlando Furioso*—

"Come ella poi lascerà il
mondo,
Così degli infelici andrà nel
fondo."

FOOTNOTES:

[63] Dr. Müller-Walde in *Jahrbuch d. pr. Kunst*, 1897.

[64] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

CHAPTER XXVII

Grief of the Duke of Milan—His letters to Mantua and Pavia—Interview with Costabili—Funeral of Duchess Beatrice—Mourning of her husband—Letters of the Emperor Maximilian and Chiara Gonzaga—Tomb of Beatrice in Santa Maria delle Grazie—Leonardo's Cenacolo, and portraits of the duke and duchess—Lucrezia Crivelli.

1497

The horror and confusion that reigned in the Castello of Milan that night was long remembered. There was sorrow and consternation among Beatrice's servants, and dismay upon the faces of secretaries and courtiers who stood waiting for news in the halls and porticoes of Bramante's building. The duke's grief was said to be terrible. For some time he refused to see any one, and many days passed before even his children were admitted into their father's presence. But, with characteristic strength of mind, he sent for his secretaries that morning, and himself dictated the letters which bore the sad news to Beatrice's family at Mantua and Ferrara. In that dark hour the passion of his love and sorrow breaks through conventional formalities, and gives a touch of pathos to the brief message which he sent to Francesco Gonzaga—

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS RELATIVE AND DEAREST BROTHER,—

"My wife was taken with sudden pains at eight

o'clock last night. At eleven she gave birth to a dead son, and at half-past twelve she gave back her spirit to God. This cruel and premature end has filled me with bitter and indescribable anguish, so much so that I would rather have died myself than lose the dearest and most precious thing that I had in this world. But great and excessive as is my grief, beyond all measure, and grievous as your own will be, I know, I feel that I must tell you this myself, because of the brotherly love between us. And I beg you not to send any one to condole with me, as that would only renew my sorrow. I would not write to the Madonna Marchesana, and leave you to break the news to her as you think best, knowing well how inexpressible her sorrow will be.

LODOVICUS M. SFORTIA,
Anglus Dux Mediolani.[65]

Milan, January 3, 1497, 6 o'clock."

The same day the duke sent the following intimation to the loyal citizens of Pavia: "Last night at half-past twelve our beloved wife, after giving birth to a son who died at eleven, changed this life for death, which most cruel event snatches from us one who, by reason of her rare and singular virtues, was dearer to us than our own life. You will understand what our grief is and how difficult it is to bear this irreparable loss with patience and reason. We beg of you to pray God for the soul of our dearest consort, and to hold solemn funeral services in the Duomo and in all other churches of the city."[66]

About four o'clock that afternoon, the Ferrarese ambassador, Antonio Costabili, received an unexpected summons to the Castello, and he was

admitted into the duke's presence. We give the details of his interview with the grief-stricken prince, in his own words from a letter which he addressed the same evening to Beatrice's father, Duke Ercole—

"Most illustrious and excellent Lord,

"Although I had received a message to the effect that I need not leave the house before night, as none of your august family could be present at the funeral of our most illustrious Madonna, the late duchess, nevertheless at four o'clock the duke sent two councillors to fetch me, and accompanied by these gentlemen, I went to the Camera della Torre in the Castello, where I found all the ambassadors, ducal councillors, and a very large company of gentlemen assembled. Directly I arrived, his Excellency sent for me, and I found him in his room, lying on the bed, quite prostrate, and more overwhelmed with grief than any one whom I have ever seen. After the customary salutations, I endeavoured, in obedience to the request of some of his councillors, to exhort his Highness to take a little comfort and have patience, trying to make use of whatever words came into my mind at the moment, and entreating him to bear this cruel blow with constancy and fortitude, because in this manner he would give comfort and courage to your Excellency in helping you to bear your grief, and at the same time relieve the anxieties of his own servants, and restore hope and peace to their hearts.

"His Highness thanked me for my kindness, and said that he could not bear this most cruel and grievous sorrow without speaking out the thoughts of his heart freely, and had sent for me, in order to tell me that if, as he was conscious, he had not always

behaved as well as he should have done to your daughter, who deserved all good things, and who had never done him any wrong whatsoever, he begged both your Excellency's pardon, and hers for whose sake his heart was now sorely troubled. He went on to tell me that in every one of his prayers he had asked our Lord God to allow her to survive him, since he placed all his trust and peace of mind in her. And, since this had not been the will of God, he prayed, and would never cease praying, that if it were ever possible for a living man to see the dead, God would give him grace to see her and speak to her once more, since he had loved her better than himself. After many sobs and lamentations, he ended by begging me to assure your Highness that the love and affection which he bore you would never be diminished in the smallest degree, and that he would retain the same warm sentiments for you and for all your sons, as long as he lived, and would prove by his actions the depth and sincerity of his feelings. Then I took my leave, and he told me to go and follow the corpse, with a fresh outburst of sorrow, lamenting her in language so true and natural that it would have moved the very stones to tears. Thus, still weeping, I returned to join the other ambassadors, who all approached and expressed their grief and sympathy with your Excellency in very loving and compassionate words.

"The obsequies which followed were celebrated with all possible magnificence and pomp. All the ambassadors at present in Milan, among whom were one from the King of the Romans, two from the King of Spain, and others from all the powers of Italy, lifted the corpse and bore it to the first gate of the Castello. Here the privy councillors took the body in their turn, and at the corners of the streets groups of

magistrates stood waiting to receive it. All the relatives of the ducal family wore long mourning cloaks that trailed on the ground, and hoods over their heads. I walked first with the Marchese Ermes, and the others followed, each in his right order. We bore her to Santa Maria delle Grazie, attended by an innumerable company of monks and nuns and priests, bearing crosses of gold, of silver and wood, infinite numbers of gentlemen and citizens, and crowds of people of every rank and class, all weeping and making the greatest lamentation that was ever seen, for the great loss which this city has suffered in the death of its duchess. There were so many wax torches it was marvellous to see! At the gates of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the ambassadors were waiting to receive the body, and, taking it from the hands of the chief magistrates, they bore it to the steps of the high altar, where the most reverend cardinal-legate was seated, in his purple robes, between two bishops, and himself said the whole Office. And there the duchess was laid on a bier draped with cloth of gold, bearing the arms of the house of Sforza, and clad in one of her richest *camoras* of gold brocade.

"My dear lord, besides the extraordinary demonstrations of grief which have been shown by the whole people of this city, and by the women quite as much as by the men, which may well be a great consolation to your Excellency, I must tell you how above all others, Signore Messer Galeazzo di Sanseverino has both by his words and deeds, as well as by his demonstrations of sorrow, given admirable expression to the affection which he had for the duchess, and has taken care to make known to every one the virtues and goodness of that most illustrious Madonna. All of which I have felt it my duty to tell

your Excellency, in the hope that it may help to alleviate your sorrow, praying you to maintain the same fortitude that you have always shown hitherto.

"To whose favour I ever commend myself,

"Your Excellency's servant,
ANTONIUS COSTABILIS.[67]

Milan, January 3, 1497."

So, by the light of a thousand torches, at the close of the short winter's day, the long procession of mourners bore Duchess Beatrice to her last resting-place under Bramante's cupola, in the church of Our Lady. It was the duke's pleasure that his dearly loved wife should rest there, before the altar where she had often worshipped, by the side of the young daughter whom they had both loved so well. Only a year or two before, the people of Milan had seen her enter those doors in the bloom of her youthful beauty and the joy of her proud young motherhood to give thanks for the birth of her first-born son. But yesterday they had watched her moving among them, full of life and charm; now they saw her lying there in her gorgeous brocades and jewelled necklace, with her eyes closed in death and the dark locks curling over her marble brow.

It was a tragedy which might well melt the heart of the bravest man and move the sternest to tears. No wonder that men like Galeazzo and the Marchesino, who had shared Beatrice's pleasures, and had seen her so lately foremost in the chase and gayest in dance and song, wept when they saw her lying there cold and lifeless. As the chroniclers one and all tell us, "Such grief had never been known before in Milan."

In Ferrara, the home of Beatrice's childhood, where she was loved both for her own and for her mother's sake, the sorrow was scarcely less.

"On Wednesday, the 4th of January," writes the diarist, "came the news of the death of Beatrice, Duchess of Milan. And the duke was very sad, and so were all the people. And on the 12th, Duke Ercole attended an Office said for the repose of the late duchess in the church of the Dominicans, which was all hung with black, and all the clergy, magistrates, and courtiers were there, carrying lighted torches; all the people wore black, and the shops were closed as if it were Christmas, and more than 400 Masses were said for the repose of her soul, and 660 candles were burnt that day. It was a fine day, but a great quantity of wax tapers were used for this funeral service. As for the Duke of Milan, I will say nothing, because the things he does sound incredible to those who have not seen them. Certainly the extraordinary honours which he pays his dead wife show how dearly he loved her. She has left him two little sons. And all Ferrara sorrows for her death, and I saw many weeping. And so goes this ribald world."[68]

That year no races were held on St. George's Day, at Ferrara, and the *pallium* usually given to the winner was presented by Duke Ercole to the Franciscan Church.

At Mantua there was the same general lamentation, and the same funeral Masses were offered up for the young duchess, who had not yet completed her twenty-second year. Isabella's own sorrow was great.

"When I think," she wrote to her father, on the 5th of January, "what a loving, honoured, and only sister I have lost, I am so much oppressed with the burden

of this sudden loss, that I know not how I can ever find comfort."

And the marquis, writing to Duke Lodovico, says that he had never seen his wife so completely overwhelmed with grief; and that she who has always shown herself full of strong and manly courage in adversity, is now utterly broken down. On hearing this, Lodovico roused himself from the torpor of his grief to try and comfort his sister-in-law, and sent her an affectionate letter by one of his secretaries, begging her to seek the consolation which he himself could not find, and telling her how much he thought of her, even though his own grief and bitterness of soul made it impossible for him to write with his own hand. From all sides letters of condolence flowed in. Elegies and Latin verses recalled the charms and talents of Beatrice and lamented the hard fate which had snatched her away in the flower of life. Among these poetical tributes, Niccolo da Correggio's sonnet on seeing a portrait of the late duchess is perhaps the best.

"Se a li occhi mostri quel
che fosti viva

Morti lor, come te,
nulla vedranno

Ma le parte invisibil tue
staranno.

Po che del secol questa
eta sia priva.

Laude al pictor, ma più
laude in che scriva

Quello a futuri che i
presenti sanno,

Origin e stato e che al
triseptimo anno

Morte spense ogni ben
che in te fioriva.

Ma come excedo tua forma
il pennello

Excederà le tue virtù le
penne

E resterà imperfetto, e
questo e quello."

The poet's complaint that the painter's art can never reproduce one-half of the dead lady's charms is literally true in this instance, and those of Beatrice's portraits which we possess do but scant justice to the brightness and beauty which fascinated young and old among her contemporaries. Two of the letters addressed to Lodovico on this melancholy occasion are especially worthy of mention. One was a Latin epistle from the Emperor Maximilian, in which the writer expresses his cordial regard for the duke and his frank admiration for the lamented duchess whose delightful company he had so lately enjoyed.

The letter bears the date of January 11, 1497, and was written from Innsbrück.

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE AND DEAREST OF KINSMEN AND FRIENDS,

"Having just heard of the sad calamity which has befallen you in the death of your illustrious wife, Beatrice, our most dear kinswoman, we are filled with grief both on account of our great affection for you and of all the gifts of person and mind which adorned that renowned princess, and which now only adds to the heaviness of our mutual loss. Nothing could grieve us more at this present moment than to find ourselves thus suddenly deprived of a relative who was dear to us above all other princesses, and whose surpassing charms and virtues we had lately learnt to value as they deserved. But we are still more distressed to think that you whom we love so well should lose in her, not only a sweet wife, but a companion who in so remarkable a degree shared the burdens of your crown and lightened your cares and cheered your labours by her society. As for her, although she was one of the few women worthy of perpetual regret and eternal remembrance, this premature death is no true cause of sorrow, and we take comfort in the thought that, since we must all die, they are most blessed who die young and who, having lived happily in their youth, escape the innumerable calamities of this miserable world and the evils of a weary old age. Your most fortunate wife enjoyed all that makes life good; no gift of body and mind, no advantage of beauty or birth, was denied her. She was in every respect worthy to be your wife and to reign over the most flourishing realm in Italy. She has left you the sweetest children to recall the face of their lost mother, and to be alike the consolation of your present sorrow and the staff of your declining years. And when the time comes for you to go hence, you

will be able to leave them a peaceful throne and the immortal memory of your name. May the recollection of all the good that you owe her help you to share in these consolations, so that, having already mourned your dear one's death more than enough, your tears may at length be dried and she may rest more safely, while we on our part are once more able to avail ourselves of your help in these difficult and perilous times."[69]

The other letter was written to the duke on the 5th of January, from Mantua, by Chiara Gonzaga, the widowed Duchess of Montpensier, who had so lately enjoyed the pleasure of Beatrice's company at Milan, and who now poured out the fulness of her grief and sympathy with the bereaved husband.

"The piteous and lamentable news of your wife's sudden death, which, my dear lord, I have just received, has so bitterly revived my own sorrows, that I am unable to write to your Excellency as I ought, or speak a single word of comfort, '*Chè medico morbeso mal sana li malatti*'—for a sick doctor cures sick folks badly.—All I can do is to join my tears with your own in lamenting this cruel and grievous misfortune and our mutual sorrow, which I only wish I could bear in your stead. Had fortune only better understood your need and mine, she would have left that blessed soul to enjoy all the prosperity in store for her, and would have allowed death to relieve me from the burden of my tearful and wretched existence. May that Divine Providence, Who orders all things for some good end, give your Excellency comfort and lead this toilsome life to a safe haven."[70]

Maximilian's allusion to the duke's prolonged mourning for his wife agrees with the remarks of the

Ferrarese and Venetian chroniclers. To these men of the Renaissance, accustomed as they were to pass quickly from one phase of life to another and to witness swift and sudden changes of fortune, this inconsolable grief seemed beyond understanding. For a whole fortnight Lodovico remained in a darkened room, refusing to see his children, and taking no pleasure even in their company. No ambassadors were admitted into his presence; even Borso da Correggio, who came from Ferrara, was referred to the Marchesino Stanga and the Conte di Caiazzo, as deputies appointed by the duke to receive condolences. And when Lodovico saw his ministers, they were strictly charged only to speak of business matters, and never to mention the name of the duchess or allude to the duke's recent bereavement. So complete was his seclusion and so profound his melancholy, that those about him began to tremble for his reason. "The duke," wrote Sanuto, "has ceased to care for his children or his state or anything on earth, and can hardly bear to live." But fears of his old enemy Louis of Orleans before long roused him from the apathy and despair, and showed his foes that they had still to reckon with him. Rumours of a French invasion were once more heard; Trivulzio was at Asti with a strong force, and the Duke of Orleans was shortly expected to lead an expedition into Lombardy and assert his claim to Milan.

On the 17th of January, Lodovico shaved his head, came out of his room, and publicly gave the standard and bâton of command to Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who was sent to defend Alessandria at the head of a considerable Milanese and German army. But the French king's health was failing, and the Duke of Orleans, who, since the death of the little dauphin twelve months before, had become the next heir to

the crown, suddenly refused to leave France. Trivulzio was repulsed in an attack on Novi; while an attempt to seize Genoa, which was set on foot by the Cardinal della Rovere and Battista Fregoso, was frustrated by the prompt measures of defence taken by the Duke of Milan and the Venetians.

Meanwhile every possible honour was paid to the memory of Duchess Beatrice. All through the duchy, during the month of January, solemn funeral services were held, and one hundred requiem masses were said daily in S. Maria delle Grazie for the repose of her soul, while a hundred tapers were kept burning day and night round the stone sarcophagus supported by lions in which her remains were interred. The duke himself, clad in a suit of black fustian and wrapt in a long black cloak, which all his courtiers wore as a badge of mourning, attended two or three masses daily, as well as many offices to Our Lady, and sent a hundred gold ducats to the Santa Casa at Loreto, in discharge of a vow which poor Beatrice had made to take a pilgrimage to that famous shrine after the birth of her child.

Marino Sanuto, writing in August, seven months after Beatrice's death, remarks that since his wife's death the duke has become an altered man. "He is very religious, recites offices daily, observes fasts, and lives chastely and devoutly. His rooms are still hung with black, and he takes all his meals standing, and wears a long black cloak. He goes every day to visit the church where his wife is buried, and never leaves this undone, and much of his time is spent with the friars of the convent." And a Dominican historian, Padre Rovegnatino, then living, records how during the whole of the next year Lodovico visited the convent regularly twice a week—on

Tuesday, which, being the day of the week on which Beatrice died, he always kept as a fast, and on Saturday, and on these occasions dined with the prior Giovanni da Tortona and his successor Vincenzo Baldelli.

The decoration and improvement of this church and convent now became the chief object of Lodovico's thoughts. The beautiful shrine which he had already adorned with Bramante's cupola and portico, was now doubly dear to him for the sake of Beatrice and his dead children. The annals of the convent record the multitude of his benefactions to both church and convent, and the cordial relations which he maintained with the Dominican friars to the end of his reign. First of all, he applied himself to raise a monument to the memory of Beatrice immediately in front of the high altar, where her remains were buried. The sculptor whom he chose for this work was Cristoforo Solari, called *Il Gobbo*, or the hunchback, a surname which he had inherited from his father, who seems to have been deformed. The Solari were a race of sculptors, many of whom had been employed at the Certosa, while Cristoforo, who had settled in Venice about 1490, was recalled to Milan about this time and appointed ducal sculptor, on the recommendation of the Marchesino Stanga. It was the duke's pleasure that a recumbent effigy of Beatrice, wearing the rich brocades and jewels in which she had been borne to her rest, should be placed on her tomb, so that future ages should have a perpetual memorial of the young duchess as she had last appeared in the eyes of the servants and people who had loved her so well. And as it was Lodovico's own wish to be buried in the same tomb, the sculptor was to carve an effigy of himself in ducal crown and mantle, lying at his wife's

side in the last slumber. So, at the duke's bidding, the Milanese ambassador, Battista Sfondrati, bought the finest blocks of Carrara marble that he could find in Venice, and the brothers of the Certosa sent seven loads more from their vast stores to Solari's house in Milan. Out of these marbles the sculptor carved a noble bas-relief of the Dead Christ and the two admirable effigies of the duke and duchess, which now adorn the Certosa of Pavia. His task was probably finished before the close of the following year, and the tomb was set up in the *Cappella maggiore* of S. Maria delle Grazie, at a cost of upwards of 15,000 ducats. At the same time Lodovico placed a slab of black marble on the walls of the same chapel, in memory of the dead child whose birth had cost his mother her life, with the following proud inscription:—

"Infelix partus:
amisi ante vitam quam in
Lucem ederer;
infelicior quod matri
Moriens vitam ademi et parentem con
-sorte sua orbavi in tam adverso fato.
Hoc solum mihi potest jocundium esse
Quod divi parentes me, Ludovicus et
Beatrix
Mediolanenses duces genuere,

M.C.C.C.C.LXXXXVII.
Tertio Nonas
Januarii."

The ill-fated child had died before he had ever seen the light of day, and, still more unfortunate in this, he had deprived his mother of life, and left his father widowed and alone; but this at least he could proudly say, "Lodovico and Beatrice, Duke and Duchess of Milan, were my parents."

The walls of the chapel were decorated with rich marbles and gilding, and new altars were set up in honour of Saint Louis and Santa Beatrice, the patron saints of the duke and duchess. Cristoforo was employed to carve reliefs for the high altar, and the duke gave the friars a jewelled crucifix and marvellously wrought set of chalices, patens, candelabra, paci of *niello*, engraved with Beatrice's name and arms. Among other costly gifts, he also presented them with a magnificent *pallium* and richly embroidered hangings for the altar, and a set of illuminated choir-books with enamelled and jewelled bindings, while the Marchesino Stanga gave an organ to the church. Bramante was ordered to complete the cupola as soon as possible, and was employed later to add a new sacristy to the church.

But there was one thing more which lay still nearer to Lodovico's heart. Leonardo's great wall-painting for the convent refectory was well-nigh completed. Cardinal Perault de Gurk, when he visited his friend the Dominican prior towards the end of January, 1497, saw and admired the work of Leonardo, and conversed with the painter, who laughed, Bandello tells us, at his Eminence's ignorance for thinking his salary of 2000 ducats a large one and expressing surprise at the duke's

liberality. Lodovico was now anxious to see the life-sized portraits of himself and Beatrice with their children painted by the great master's hand on the opposite wall. The Dominican historian, Padre Pino, writing in the last century, says that the convent retained a life-sized portrait of that most excellent and famous lady, Duchess Beatrice, in which the sweet gentleness of her nature and majesty of her bearing were faithfully reproduced; and Padre Gattico, a very accurate and careful writer of the sixteenth century who wrote the history of the convent from its foundation, describes how Leonardo da Vinci was employed by Lodovico to paint portraits of himself and Beatrice, with their children kneeling at their feet, on the wall opposite the Cenacolo, but adds that these portraits, being painted in oil, were already in a ruinous condition. The Dominican father's words were all too true, and only the merest fragments of these portraits, which Vasari described as works of sublime beauty, now remain on the wall, where the Lombard artist Montorfano had already painted his fresco of the Crucifixion. That of Beatrice is a mere ghost, but enough remains of Lodovico's figure to show how nobly Leonardo treated his subject, and is of the deepest interest as an example of the great Florentine's art and a faithful likeness of his illustrious patron. A distinct reference to Lodovico's wishes on the subject may be found in the paper of directions which he drew up on the 30th of June, 1497, for his minister the Marchesino Stanga.

"*Memorandum of the things which Messer Marchesino is to do.*

"In the first place, he is to place the ducal arms in gold letters on a marble slab on Porta Ludovica, together with ten bronze medals bearing the duke's

head.

"*Item*: to see that similar tablets are placed on all the public buildings, excepting those in the Castello, which are in charge of Messer Bernardino di Corte, and that medals are placed between them.

"*Item*: to see that *El Gobbo* carves the reliefs for the altar this year, and that he has sufficient marble, and if more is needed, send to Venice or Carrara.

"*Item*: to see that the sepulchre is finished without delay, and to desire *Gobbo* to work at the covering and all the other portions belonging to the tomb, so that it may be ready as soon as the rest of the sepulchre.

"*Item*: to ask Leonardo the Florentine to finish his work on the wall of the Refectory, and to begin the painting on the other wall of the Refectory. If he will do this, some arrangement may be made with him regarding the agreements signed by his own hand, by which he stipulated to finish the work within a certain time.

"*Item*: to see that the portico of S. Ambrogio is finished, for which two thousand ducats have been assigned.

"*Item*: to call together all the most skilled architects to hold a consultation, and design a model for the façade of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which shall be of the same height and proportions as the *Capella Grande*.

"*Item*: to finish the *Strada da Corte*, which the duke wishes to see completed.

"*Item*: to make a head of our Madonna the late duchess, and place it on a medallion with that of the duke on the doors of the chapel in Santa Maria delle

Grazie.

"*Item*: to open a new gate in the walls corresponding to the Porta S. Marco, and call it the Porta Beatrice, and place the ducal arms and letters of the said duchess upon the said gate, as has been done at Porta Ludovica.

"*Item*: to desire that the decorations of the Broletto Nuovo should be finished by August.

"*Item*: to place an inscription in gold letters on black marble above the portraits of the chapel."

This *Memoriale* was signed by the ducal secretary, Bartolommeo Calco, and the following lines were added by Lodovico himself:—

"MARCHESINO,—We have charged you with the execution of the works here mentioned, and, although you have already received our orders by word of mouth, we have for our further satisfaction set them down in writing, to show you how extraordinary is the interest that we take in their completion.

"LUDOVICO MARIA SFORTIA."[71]

The bronze medals here mentioned, which by Lodovico's orders were to be placed on all the chief public buildings, were probably those designed by Caradosso after Beatrice's death, in which the head of the duke and duchess appear side by side.

The name and arms of Beatrice were to be seen everywhere; her portrait was to be placed in the church of the Grazie, and her medallion above the gate. And to-day, in spite of the common ruin which has overwhelmed the palaces and churches of

Lodovico's fair duchy, the armorial bearings of his consort may still be seen painted in the lunette above the Cenacolo, as if the duke wished Leonardo's great painting to be especially associated with her beloved memory; while not only in the Castello of Milan, but on the site of ducal castles and villas throughout the Milanese, blocks of stone and marble carved with the initials of Lodovico and Beatrice are constantly brought to light.

In the midst of these tokens of grief and love for his lost wife, we come upon a strange incident. That May, Lucrezia Crivelli, the mistress whose *liaison* with the duke had caused Beatrice the sorrow which he now remembered with so much remorse, bore Lodovico a son, who was named Gianpaolo, and who became a valiant soldier and loyal subject of his half-brother Duke Francesco Sforza in after days. The Moro, as far as we know, never renewed his connection with Lucrezia after his wife's death. The universal testimony of his contemporaries—"he lived chastely and devoutly, and was a changed man"—seems to bear witness to the contrary; but in the following August he settled Cussago and Saronno, the lands which three years before he had given to Beatrice, upon his mistress as a provision for the son she had borne him, and in the act of donation speaks expressly of the delight which he had found in her gentle and excellent company.

Even more strange it sounds in our ears to find Isabella d'Este, only a year after Beatrice's death, writing to the duke's former mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, to ask for the loan of her portrait by Leonardo's hand, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The fact that a princess of the proud house of Este, and one who, in the eyes of her

generation, was the model of all virtues, should seek a favour from one who had wronged her sister so deeply, affords fresh proof how lightly such *liaisons* were regarded in those days, and may incline us to be more lenient in our judgments of the men and women of the Renaissance.

FOOTNOTES:

[65] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

[66] C. Magenta, *op. cit.*

[67] This valuable and interesting letter is preserved in the State archives of the House of Este at Modena, and was first published by Signor Gustavo Uzielli, in his *Leonardo da Vinci e Tre donne Milanesi*, p. 43.

[68] Muratori, xxiv. 342.

[69] M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, i. 489.

[70] L. Pélissier, *Les Amies de L. Sforza*.

[71] Cantù in A. S. L., 1874, p. 183.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Marquis of Mantua dismissed by the Venetians—He incurs Duke Lodovico's displeasure by his intrigues—Isabella d'Este's correspondence with the Duke of Milan—Leonardo in the Castello—Death of Charles VIII.—Visit of Lodovico to

Mantua—Francesco Gonzaga appointed captain of the imperial forces—Isabella of Aragon and Isabella d'Este—Chiara Gonzaga and Caterina Sforza—Lodovico's will.

1497-1498

While Lodovico was building sanctuaries and raising memorials to his dead wife, his brother-in-law of Mantua had excited the suspicions of the Venetians by his French sympathies, and in April, 1497, was suddenly dismissed from his post of captain-general of the Signoria's armies. Isabella d'Este was deeply distressed, and Francesco Gonzaga declared loudly that this disgrace was the result of Galeazzo di Sanseverino's jealousy and of the Moro's intrigues. In September the marquis and Messer Galeazzo met at a tournament held at Brescia in honour of the Queen of Cyprus. Fracassa was also present with his wife, Margherita Pia, in a chariot driven by twelve fine horses, and both he and the marquis entered the lists with their followers, but the hero of the day was Galeazzo, who appeared suddenly at the head of forty horsemen, all in deep mourning, with hair dyed black, and black and gold armour, and a herald bearing a black pennon with gold griffins. When the joust was over, the queen entertained Fracassa's wife, and all the cavaliers, at supper, and the next day Galeazzo escorted her home over the hills to Asolo. But this meeting did not improve the strained relations between the princes of Milan and Mantua, and the secret intrigues which Francesco Gonzaga carried on both with France and Florence soon came to Lodovico's ears. In November the duke wrote a strong remonstrance to Isabella, complaining bitterly of her husband's ingratitude,

and declaring that he would have exposed his fraudulent conduct in the eyes of the Venetians, and of all Italy, had it not been for the love and regard which he had for her. Isabella was seriously alarmed at the tone of her brother-in-law's letter, and did her best to effect a reconciliation between him and her husband. Her efforts were seconded by her father, Duke Ercole, and his sons, who were often at Milan, and kept up friendly relations with Lodovico after their sister's death. Alfonso and his wife, Anna Sforza, were at the Castello in June, and Galeazzo di Sanseverino himself accompanied the heir of Ferrara to the shop of the famous Missaglia to order a suit of armour which should be "of a gallantry and perfection worthy of Don Alfonso." We hear of a splendid suit of gilded armour, also the work of the Missaglias, being presented to Ferrante d'Este by the Duke of Milan, while Beatrice's youngest brother, the boy-cardinal, Ippolito, succeeded Guido Arcimboldo as Archbishop of Milan, and took up his abode in that city. But a new calamity befell the house of Este that November in the death of Anna Sforza, who, like her sister-in-law, gave birth to a still-born child on the 30th of November, and herself expired a few hours later, to the grief of her whole family, and more especially of Duke Ercole, who, in his advancing years, saw himself bereaved of all of those he loved best. The sweetness and goodness of this princess, the Ferrarese diarist tells us, had endeared her to all the people of Ferrara, and in the shock of her sudden death Lodovico felt a renewal of his own sorrow. In the same week, another Este princess, who had been closely associated with the Milanese court, also passed away. This was the widowed mother of Niccolo da Correggio, that once beautiful and charming Beatrice, who had been known in her

youth as the Queen of Festivals, and who for many years had been a staunch friend of the Moro, and had long occupied rooms in the Castello. After her death, Niccolo, feeling that the last link which bound him to Lodovico's court was severed, left Milan, and returned to his old home at Ferrara. That autumn, Cristoforo Romano also left the court, which Duchess Beatrice's death had shorn of its old brightness and splendour, and entered the service of her sister Isabella d'Este at Mantua, while the court-poet, Gaspare Visconti, died early in the following year. One by one artists and singers were dropping out of sight, and the brilliant company which Lodovico's wife had gathered round her was fast melting away. The gay days of Vigevano and Cussago were over, the deer and wild boars grazed unharmed in these woodland valleys, and when Kaiser Maximilian asked the duke for one of his famous breed of falcons, Lodovico sent him one belonging to Messer Galeazzo's breed, saying that he no longer kept any of his own, and had quite given up hunting since the death of the duchess of blessed memory.

But his love of art and learning was as great as ever, and Fra Luca Pacioli, the able mathematician, who came to Milan in 1496, and dedicated his treatise of *La Divina Proporzione* to Lodovico, describes the laudable and scientific duel of famous and learned men, that was held on the 9th of February, 1498, in the Castello of Milan—"that invincible fortress of the glorious city which is a residence worthy of His Excellency." The duke himself presided at this meeting, which some writers have supposed to be a sitting of an academy of arts and sciences founded by Lodovico, with Leonardo for its president, and left Milan the next day, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Mount of the Madonna at

Varese. Among the many illustrious personages, religious and secular, who were present on this occasion, Fra Luca mentions "Messer Galeazzo Sforza di San Severino, my own special patron," to whom he presented the beautiful illuminated copy of his treatise, now in the Ambrosiana, the Prior of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the doctors and astrologers, Ambrogio da Rosate, Pirovano, Cusani and Marliani, and many well-known jurists, councillors, architects, and engineers, including Leonardo da Vinci, "our fellow-citizen of Florence, who, in sculpture and painting alike, justifies his name and surpasses"—i.e. *vince* = conquers—"all other masters."[72]

Leonardo's Cenacolo, we learn from his friend Pacioli, was at length finished, and preparations were being made for casting his great horse in bronze, but the master himself was chiefly engaged in the study of hydraulics, and was writing a treatise on motion and water-power. In April, however, he was again painting in the Castello, and Messer Gualtero, one of Lodovico's most trusted servants, informed the duke, who was absent for a few days, that both his sons were very well, and that Magistro Leonardo was at work in the Saletta Negra. He would shortly proceed to the Camera Grande in the tower, and promised to complete the decorations by September, in order that the duke might be able to enjoy them next autumn. A note in one of Leonardo's manuscripts speaks of twenty-four Roman subjects, probably small decorative groups in *camaieu*, painted on the vaulting of these rooms, and gives the exact cost of the blue, gold, and enamel employed, but all trace of these decorations has vanished. At the same time Lodovico appointed his favourite master to the post of ducal engineer, and employed him to survey

those vast and elaborate fortifications in the Castello, which excited the wonder of the French invaders.

Two of Amadeo's great architectural works, the cupola of the Duomo of Milan, and the façade of the Certosa, were brought to a successful conclusion in these last years of Lodovico's rule, while the foundation stone of the noble Cistercian monastery attached to S. Ambrogio, now a military hospital, was laid by the duke, and built at his expense from Bramante's designs. The charitable society known as the Confraternity of the Santa Corona, or Holy Crown of Thorns, a name familiar to all who have visited its ancient halls, and seen Luini's fresco, was another excellent institution intended for the relief of the sick poor in their own homes, which was founded under the duke's auspices, and largely supported by his liberality. But once more wars and rumours of war came to disturb the Milanese, and to call Lodovico away from these public works and improvements in which he took delight.

The renewed intrigues of Charles VIII. with the Florentines, and revived fears of a French invasion, induced Lodovico to send Baldassare Pusterla to Venice in February, 1498, to solicit the help of the Signoria, but while these negotiations were going on, a courier arrived from Ferrara with the news of the French king's sudden death. Charles, who was not twenty-eight, had died of apoplexy as he was watching a game of bowls at Amboise, and his cousin, the Duke of Orleans, had been proclaimed king under the title of Louis XII. Sanuto reports that the courier who brought the news from Amboise to Florence had ridden the whole way in seven days, and had killed no less than thirteen horses!

"Magnificent ambassador!" said the Doge to the

Milanese envoy, "you told us that His Most Christian Majesty was on his way to Italy. We hear that he is dead!"

The news was a great relief to most of the Italian powers, to none more so than Lodovico, who saw his immediate fears removed, and did not realize how much reason he had to dread the ambitious designs of his old rival king Louis. But in his eagerness to secure the alliance of Florence, he committed the fatal mistake of affronting the Venetians. He refused to allow a fresh detachment of troops, which they were sending to Pisa, to pass through his dominions, and the Signory in revenge sent an embassy to the King of France with secret orders to take counsel with Trivulzio and negotiate a league with Louis XII. against the Duke of Milan. All Lodovico's hopes were now fixed on the formation of a new league between Maximilian, the Pope, Naples, and Milan. When this was concluded, he offered the generalship of the allied forces, with the title of Captain of the King of the Romans, to the Marquis of Mantua. Still Francesco Gonzaga was not satisfied, and complained that he ought also to be entitled Captain-general to the Duke of Milan, a title which Lodovico refused to take from his son-in-law Galeazzo. However, Isabella, who had already paved the way for this reconciliation, implored her husband to be content for the present with the duke's offer, remarking that the salary was the important thing, and in May the marquis went to Milan, where he received a cordial welcome, and the terms of the agreement were satisfactorily arranged.

Lodovico now announced his intention of coming to Mantua in person, and on the 27th of June arrived there on a visit to the marquis and marchioness,

accompanied by the young Cardinal Ippolito and the German, Spanish, Florentine, and Neapolitan ambassadors, with a suite of a thousand persons. Great was Isabella's anxiety that nothing should be lacking on this occasion, and endless were the pains which she took to do honour to her splendid brother-in-law. She borrowed plate and tapestries from Niccolo da Correggio, and desired her own envoy at Milan, Benedetto Capilupi, to ask Galeazzo Visconti and Antonio Costabili what wines the duke preferred and what clothes he would expect her to wear. Lodovico himself had not yet laid aside his mourning, and Isabella wondered if the rooms of his apartments at Mantua must be hung with black velvet, or if she might venture to relieve them with violet tints, as would, she felt, be more fitting to this festive occasion. The duke, Capilupi replied, would be satisfied with any arrangements the marchesa liked to make, and as for the wines, he found that those usually preferred by his Excellency at supper were clear white wines, rather sweet and new, while at dinner he generally drank light red wine, such as Cesolo, all very clear and new.

The visit passed off successfully, and after three days of *fêtes* and entertainments Lodovico returned to Milan. Francesco Gonzaga, however, still wavered between the duke and the Venetians, and it was not till Lodovico sent Marchesino Stanga and Fracassa to Mantua in November, that the agreement was finally concluded, and Erasmo Brasca delivered the bâton to the marquis in the emperor's name. Isabella herself interviewed the ceremony from a tribunal erected on the piazza in front of the Castello di Corte at Mantua, and the duke wrote a graceful note to his sister-in-law, thanking her for her good offices in the matter. He still constantly sent her presents of choice fruits

or wines and venison, while Isabella, in return, sent him salmon-trout from Garda, and Evangelista, the marquis's famous trainer, tamed the duke's horses. In July Lodovico sent her a basket of peaches, wishing they had been even finer than they were, to be more worthy of her acceptance, and Isabella wrote in reply: "The peaches sent by your Excellency are most welcome, not only because they are the first ripe ones I have tasted this summer, but far more because they are a proof of your gracious remembrance, for which I can never thank your Excellency enough." On New Year's Day, 1499, Lodovico sent the marchioness two barrels of wine—"*vino amabile*"—and two chests of lemons, and in February wrote to thank her for the fish, which were very fine and good and had reached him opportunely, as it was Friday in Lent.

Gifts of artichokes, which were then esteemed a great delicacy, were often sent to the duke by Genoese nobles, and in March, 1499, we find Giovanni Adorno, the brother-in-law of the San Severini, who evidently knew Lodovico's taste for flowers, sending a basket of forty artichokes together with a bouquet of the finest roses. Another characteristic note was the following, written by the Moro to Francesco Gonzaga, in January:—

"I always take great delight in seeing the swans which you sent us some years ago, sailing on the castle moat under these windows. So if you have any others to spare, I beg you to send me some, for which I shall be very grateful."[73]

Two of the last letters, which Isabella addressed to her brother-in-law, are of especial interest, as relating to Giangaleazzo's widow, the Duchess Isabella of Aragon. A few weeks after Beatrice's

death, this unfortunate lady had been desired by the duke to leave her rooms in the Castello, and take up her abode in the old palace near the Duomo. Some contention arose respecting the boy Francesco Sforza, whom Lodovico wished to keep with his own sons in the Rocchetta, and who remained there for a time, only visiting his mother once a week. "You have taken my son's crown away," said the duchess, indignantly, "and now you would take his mother too!" Lodovico is said to have replied, "Madam, you are a woman, so I will not quarrel with you." But in spite of her hatred for Lodovico, Isabella of Aragon still kept up friendly relations with her Este cousins. In 1498, she asked the marchioness for an antique bust, which Andrea Mantegna had brought back from Rome, and which she heard bore a striking likeness to herself. The painter, however, valued the marble so highly that for long he refused to part with it, and offered to send the duchess a cast of the bust in bronze. Isabella d'Este, however, finally prevailed upon him to let her buy the head, and send it as a present to her cousin, whom she declared it resembled in a marvellous manner. At the same time she promised the duchess a replica of a portrait of her brother, King Ferrante of Naples, which she valued too much to part with, but would have copied as soon as possible by Francesco Mantegna. Before satisfying her cousin's wishes, however, the prudent Isabella applied to the duke and ascertained that he had no objection to her action. Again, when in March, 1499, the duchess begged Isabella to let her have her own portrait, the marchioness sent the picture to Lodovico, and asked him for leave to send the picture to Giangaleazzo's widow.

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE AND EXCELLENT DUKE AND DEAR FATHER,

"I am afraid I shall weary not only your Highness, but all Italy with the sight of my portraits; but reluctantly as I do this, I could not refuse the Duchess Isabella's urgent entreaties to let her have my portrait in colours. I send this one, which is not very like me, and makes me look fatter than I really am, and have desired Negro, my master of the horse, to show it to your Highness, and, if you approve, give it to the duchess from me."[74]

Lodovico replied pleasantly that he admired the portrait, and thought it very like Isabella, although it made her look stouter than when he had last seen her, but suggested that perhaps she had grown fatter during the interval. And the picture was duly presented to Duchess Isabella that same day.

The marquis's widowed sister Chiara Gonzaga, Duchess of Montpensier, also kept up an active correspondence with the Moro at this time, and warned him repeatedly of the intrigues against him that were going on at the French court, and of the dangers he had to fear from Trivulzio and the Venetians.

So warm was the friendship between this lady and Lodovico, that a Mantuan doctor wrote from Milan to Francesco Gonzaga, on pretence of having received a commission from the duke to ask for his widowed sister's hand in marriage, and as well as for that of his youthful daughter Leonora on behalf of the young Count of Pavia. The duke wrote back that he had never seen the doctor, and that the whole was a fabrication. As he informed Chiara, he had not the smallest intention of marrying a second time, although he had already received proposals to this

effect, both from Naples and Germany. And, by way of peace-offering, he sent her a beautiful little *niello* pax, as a specimen of the work of his Milanese goldsmiths, and as a proof that he placed himself altogether at her service. In return, Chiara sent him her cordial thanks, and informed him that her brother had given orders for the instant arrest of the mischievous doctor, and would see that he was delivered into the duke's hands.

Another princess, who was in constant correspondence with the Moro during these last years, was his niece Caterina Sforza, the famous Madonna of Forli. Long ago, he had helped her against the conspirators who had killed her first husband and besieged her in the Rocca, and ten years before, Galeazzo di Sanseverino had won his first laurels at Forli. Since those days, Lodovico had been a good friend to this warlike lady in all her perpetual quarrels with her subjects and neighbours. "I should be ready to drown myself, were it not for the trust that I place in your Excellency," Caterina wrote to her uncle in 1496. Now that she had aroused the wrath of Venice by her alliance with Florence, and that Romagna was actually invaded by a Venetian force, the duke sent first Fracassa and then the Count of Caiazzo to her help. In her gratitude she called the infant son born of her third marriage with Giovanni de' Medici, Lodovico, a name which he afterwards changed, to become famous in history as Giovanni *delle bande nere*. But this *virago*, as Machiavelli named the gallant lady of Forli, was by no means easy to deal with, and she was constantly appealing to Lodovico to settle her disputes. One day she welcomed Fracassa as a delivering angel, the next she quarrelled with him violently, and turned a deaf ear to the Moro's advice

to overcome the Condottiere's rudeness by fair words and gentle courtesy. After summarily rejecting his suggestion of a Gonzaga bride for her son, and informing him that she was about to accept the Count of Caiazzo's proposals for her daughter Bianca, she changed her mind, declaring the count to be too old, and suddenly bethought herself of Galeazzo di Sanseverino, as a suitable husband. This proposal, however, the Moro promptly declined in a curt note, telling the countess that Messer Galeazzo had no intention of marrying again.[75]

But the days of the once powerful Moro's reign were already numbered, and the time was coming when he would be in sore need of help himself. His subjects were already grievously discontented. At Milan, Cremona, and Lodi, even in faithful Pavia, there had been tumults and riotings. It became increasingly difficult to exact the loans required to meet the heavy expenses for the national defence, while the ill-paid troops murmured, and in many cases deserted the standard.

"In the whole Milanese there is trouble and discontent. No one loves the duke. And yet he still reigns.... But he is a traitor to Venice, and will be punished for his bad faith." So wrote Marino Sanuto that autumn; while another Venetian chronicler, Malipiero, gave vent to his bitter hatred in these words:

"Lodovico hoped to give the Signory trouble by his alliance with Charles VIII., but God our protector has taken away that monarch's life, and has made King Alvise his successor, who is Lodovico's enemy."

So the year closed gloomily. The political horizon was black and lowering, and Lodovico had lost the wife upon whose courage and presence of mind he

had learnt to lean. He was suffering from gout himself, and was often unable to mount a horse. But he still found pleasure in his artistic dreams and in the vast schemes that filled his brain. Already he had seen many of his plans carried out. Bramante's cupola and sacristy were finished and Beatrice's tomb, with the sleeping form and face, had been exquisitely wrought in marble by the sculptor's hand. Leonardo had completed the Cenacolo to be the wonder of the world in coming ages, and the great equestrian statue was only waiting for better times to be cast in bronze and become a permanent memorial of the proud Sforza race. Now a new and grander vision filled his thoughts. He would rebuild the convent of the Dominican Friars on a vast and splendid scale, and make it the most glorious sanctuary in the world, surpassing even his beloved Certosa, for the sake of Beatrice, and as a living memorial of the love which he had borne to his dead wife.

He began by rebuilding the friars' dormitories, enlarging their gardens, and giving them a good water-supply. Then, on the 3rd of December of this year, 1498, he drew up a deed by which he granted his beautiful villa of the Sforzesca, with the spacious farms and fertile lands which had been his pride and pleasure in past days, to the prior and convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, in perpetuity. In the preamble to the deed of gift, the duke expresses his great love for this church, "where our dead children repose, and our most dear wife Beatrice d'Este sleeps, where, God willing, we ourselves hope to rest until the day of resurrection," and ends with a devout prayer "that God and the Blessed Virgin, the Dominican saints, Peter Martyr, Thomas Aquinas, and Dominic, St. Vincent, St. Katharine of Siena, and

all the saints, will hear the prayers offered at these altars by the brothers of the order, and forgive our failings, increase our merit, preserve our sons, give peace and tranquillity to our subjects, receive the soul of our dearly loved Beatrice into rest eternal, and finally place us, when this life is over, among the holy monarchs and princes of His kingdom." This deed, signed and sealed by Lodovico's own hand, and beautifully illuminated by Antonio da Monza, or some miniaturist of his school, is preserved, together with the former privileges granted to the community during the lifetime of Duke Giangaleazzo, in the collection of the Marchese d'Adda. Each leaf is elaborately decorated with Lodovico's favourite mottoes and devices and other ornaments, while on the first page is a miniature of the duke in black cap and mantle, in the act of presenting the act of donation to the Dominican prior. After the French conquest of Milan, Louis XII. annulled this deed of gift, although the friars escaped further spoliation owing to the protection of the powerful Borromeo family, and, after a long dispute, their possession of the Sforzesca was eventually confirmed by Emperor Charles V. An inscription was placed over the gates of the Sforzesca in honour of Lodovico Sforza and his wife, and the domain remained the property of the convent until the general confiscation of Church lands by Napoleon in 1798. Now Lodovico's foundation has become national property, the remnants of his spacious buildings are used as government schools.

On the same day, December 3, 1498, Lodovico made his will, a curious and interesting document, which is still preserved in the Milanese archives, and opens with these sentences:

"The holy Fathers teach us that according to the laws of the Eternal kingdom, ordered by God Almighty, the elect may attain to this immortal heritage by purifying their souls from every earthly stain. By mourning for our sins, by giving alms and making reparation for wrong done to others, by fasting, prayers, and good works, we can win everlasting life, as has been decreed by God in all eternity. Believing this truth with our whole heart, in full agreement with the Catholic faith, and desiring to provide for the salvation of our soul as precious above all earthly treasures, so that by the help of God we may rise purified from the stains of this life to enjoy life and peace in the company of the blessed, we order these things."[76] After recommending his soul once more to all the saints, mentioned in the former deed, he desires that his body, the ducal robes and insignia, may be buried on the right of his wife, in the tomb erected by him, in the *Cappella Maggiore* of Santa Maria delle Grazie, and further endows the convent with a rent of 1500 ducats, in order that they may never cease to pray for his own soul and that of his lady, Beatrice. Seven masses, he decrees, are to be said daily for the duke, seven for the duchess, five requiems are to be chanted every Wednesday, and the whole office for the dead is to be used on the 3rd of every month, being the day on which Beatrice died; while in the church of the Sforzesca, masses are to be said in January and June—these being the months of Beatrice's birth and death—for both the duke and his wife. For a whole year after his death, the alms which he has given since the duchess's death are to be continued, a certain number of poor families are to be relieved, and poor maidens and nuns dowered, who are to pray for the souls of Beatrice and of his

children Leone and Bianca. He leaves 4000 ducats to be distributed yearly in alms, and 3000 more to pension his old servants, while 5000 ducats are to be paid to each of his illegitimate sons, Cesare and Gianpaolo. All his debts and those of his mother are to be discharged, and a sum of money equal to that which he, his father, and brother Galeazzo had exacted from the Jews is to be spent in good works. All his gifts to the Duomo of Milan are confirmed, including the rich plate and vestments presented by Azzo Visconti to the chapel of S. Gottardo in the old palace, and removed by Duke Galeazzo to the Castello, but restored by Lodovico.

To this same date, another even more interesting document must be assigned: the political will of Lodovico, which was among the manuscripts brought from Milan by Louis XII., in 1499, and is still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale.[77] This document consists of thirty-four parchment leaves, enriched with delicately painted initials and the monogram of Lodovico and Beatrice, bound in black velvet and fastened with gold clasps. By the duke's orders, it was placed in an iron casket, richly ornamented with silver work, bearing his arms and those of his wife, as well as the Sforza devices of the lion with the buckets and his own favourite emblem of the caduceus. This casket was sealed with the cornelian engraved with Beatrice's portrait, which Lodovico always used after her death, and deposited in the treasury of the Rocchetta, in the charge of the governor of the Castello, to be opened by him and the chief secretary and chamberlain, immediately after the duke's death. The writer begins by explaining that since the premature death of his wife, in whose wisdom and knowledge he placed absolute trust, has deprived his sons of their natural guardian,

he has drawn up the following instructions for their education and guidance and for the proper administration of the State, until the elder of the two, Maximilian Count of Pavia, shall attain the age of twenty.

First of all, he desires the governors and regents set over his son, to impress upon the new duke the love and duty which he owes to his Father in heaven, who is the Disposer of all, and the King of earthly kings, and under Him to his vicar, the holy pontiff, and his Imperial Majesty, Maximilian King of the Romans. And immediately on the present duke's death, his son is to apply to the Cesarean Majesty for a confirmation of the privileges granted to Duke Lodovico as a singular mark of favour, after they had been refused to his father, brother, and nephew. Lodovico then proceeds to give minute directions for the constitution of a Council of Regency, the administration of the finances, the punishment of criminals, appointment of magistrates, and organization of the national defences. A standing army of 1200 men-at-arms and 600 light cavalry is to be kept up, as well as garrisons in the fortresses, and great stress is laid on the selection of tried and trusted castellans. A special paragraph is devoted to Genoa, and Lodovico begs his successor to pay especial attention to the noble families of Adorno, Fieschi, and Spinola, warning him that the Genoese are easily led but will never be driven, and must be treated courteously, and with due regard. All important questions of peace and war and of making new laws are to be referred to representatives of the people, and the voice of the nation is as far as possible to be consulted in these matters. The young duke is to make the Castello his residence, and be as seldom absent from Milan as possible, never going

further than his country houses of Abbiategrasso, Cussago, Monza, Dece, and Melegnano, until he has reached the age of fourteen. After that, he may, if he pleases, cross the Ticino, and visit Vigevano and Pavia, but is recommended to be seldom absent from Milan, if he wishes to keep the affection of his subjects. His education is to be entrusted to none but the best governors and teachers, who are to train him carefully in all branches of religious and secular learning, in good conduct and habits, and in the knowledge of letters, which last is not merely an ornament but an absolute necessity for a prince. From his earliest years he is to take his place in the council, and is to be gradually initiated into the management of affairs, taught to deliver speeches and receive ambassadors, and instructed in all that is necessary to make him a wise and good prince, who cares for the welfare of his subjects and is capable of ruling them in days of peace, and defending them in time of war. One particular on which Lodovico insists is the restraint which he places on his son's expenditure. The young prince is to observe great caution in his gifts to his favourites. Up to the age of fourteen, he is never to give away more than 500 ducats at a time, without the leave of his councillors, and may never give presents exceeding that value to strangers on his own authority, before he is twenty. Similar directions are given for the education of Lodovico's younger son, Sforza, Duke of Bari, and the revenues of his principality are to be carefully invested in Genoese banks until he is of age. The wise management of the ducal stables and of the chapel choir is especially recommended to the regents, and good horses and good singers are always to be kept, for the duke's pleasure and the honour of his name. Minute instructions for the safe custody of

the treasure in the Rocchetta are given, and the very forms to be observed in the payment of public money and in the use of the different seals affixed to public documents are all carefully determined. Great discrimination is to be observed in the appointment of certain ministers, in the choice of the Podesta of Milan, in the selection of Commissioners of Corn and Salt, as well as of the officer of Public Health, since all three of these departments are of the foremost importance in a well-regulated State.

In conclusion, directions are given as to the ceremonial to be observed at Lodovico's own funeral, which is to take place before the proclamation of his successor, who is warned, on pain of incurring the paternal malediction, not to assume the ducal crown until his father has been laid in the grave.

This political testament, which is so characteristic a monument of Lodovico's forethought and attention to detail, and of his enlightened theories of government, bears no seal or signature, but ends with the following lines in the Moro's own handwriting—

"We Lodovico Maria, lord of Milan, affirm these orders to be those which we desire to be followed after our death, in the government of the State, under our son and successor in the Duchy. And in token of this, we have subscribed them with our own hand, and have appended our ducal seal."

FOOTNOTES:

[72] G. Uzielli, *Ricerche sopra L. da Vinci*, i.

[73] L. Pélissier, *op. cit.*

[74] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 650.

[75] P. Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, iii.

[76] Cantù in A. S. L., vi. 235.

[77] Italian State papers, M. 821.

CHAPTER XXIX

Treaty of Blois—Alliance between France, Venice, and the Borgias—Lodovico appeals to Maximilian—His gift to Leonardo and letter to the Certosini—The French and the Venetians invade the Milanese—Desertion of Gonzaga and treachery of Milanese captains—Loss of Alessandria—Panic and flight of Duke Lodovico —Surrender of Pavia and Milan to the French—Treachery of Bernardino da Corte and surrender of the Castello—Triumphal entry of Louis XII.

1499

From the moment of Louis XII.'s accession, he announced his intention of making good his claim to the duchy of Milan. He refused to give Lodovico the title of duke, addressing him as Messer Lodovico, while he styled himself King of France and Duke of Milan, and told the Bishop of Arles that he would rather reign over the Milanese for one year than be King of France during his whole lifetime. At the same time he spoke freely of his plans for the conquest of

Italy, and told his courtiers that he meant one of his sons to be King of Naples, and the other Duke of Milan.

These sayings were duly reported to Lodovico by his own friends at the French court, and chief among them M. de Trano, a Provençal gentleman who was in constant correspondence with Milan, as well as by the Duke of Ferrara's envoy. Ercole himself is described by French agents as "*très attaché à son gendre*" and Marino Sanuto speaks of him as "exceedingly partial to his son-in-law and devoted to him in his secret heart," but he was far too wise and prudent a ruler to oppose Louis XII. openly.

The Pope, long the Moro's firm ally, had turned against him since the dissolution of his daughter Lucrezia's marriage to Giovanni Sforza in 1497, and the presence of Cardinal della Rovere, who returned to Rome towards the end of 1498, increased his hatred of the Sforzas. He was still more drawn to France by the offers of Louis XII. to forward the ambitious designs of his son Cæsar Borgia, who had renounced his cardinal's hat and was seeking the hand of the King of Navarre's daughter. The discovery of these intrigues led to a sharp passage-at-arms between the Pope and Ascanio Sforza in a consistory held on the 3rd of December. The cardinal openly accused his Holiness of bringing ruin upon Italy, upon which Alexander retorted that he was only following the Duke of Milan's example. In vain Lodovico endeavoured to avert the gathering storm by entering into negotiations with the French king, and even approached Trivulzio with that purpose, but all attempts at a peaceable arrangement were frustrated by Galeazzo di Sanseverino and Antonio Landriano's hatred of their old rival and the fixed

determination of Louis XII. to reign in the Moro's stead.

Meanwhile the Venetian envoys were secretly plotting the Duke of Milan's ruin, and on the 15th of April the Treaty of Blois was signed and the partition of the Milanese between France and Venice finally determined. The Signory agreed to invade the duke's territory with an army of 6000 men, and were to receive the district of Cremona in return for their assistance. This was followed by Cæsar Borgia's marriage to Charlotte d'Albret, which took place at Blois on the 10th of May. The Pope's son was created Duke of Valentinois by the French king, and Alexander VI. joined France and Venice and publicly declared that the house of Sforza must be swept off the face of the earth. At the same time, Francesco Gonzaga made secret advances to Louis XII., who accepted his offers of service and advised the Venetians to make peace with him.

In his extremity Lodovico turned to his sole remaining ally, the Emperor Maximilian, and sent Erasmo Brasca and Marchesino Stanga to Fribourg, to beg that a German force might be speedily sent to his assistance, while he earnestly entreated his niece the empress to plead his cause with her husband. Unfortunately, Bianca had little or no influence at the imperial court, and Maximilian, who would gladly have helped the duke, was hampered by want of money and already engaged in war with his turbulent Swiss neighbours. But Bianca did her best for her uncle, and in these last days her letters were his chief consolation. She sent him the latest and most confidential news, and wrote repeatedly from Fribourg and Innsbrück, encouraging him with hopes of speedy help, and reminding him how

triumphantly he had overcome greater dangers in the past.

Even now, when his enemies were closing round him and the last struggle was at hand, Lodovico still clung to his old ideals. The love of art was still the ruling passion of his life, and Leonardo still for him the prince of painters. On the 26th of April, he made the Florentine master a present of a vineyard which he had bought from the monastery of S. Victor outside the Porta Vercellina, probably adjoining a house and piece of land which the painter had already received from him, near S. Maria delle Grazie. During the last few years the duke, we know, had found it increasingly difficult to provide money for his vast enterprises, and from a rough draft of a letter that has been found among Leonardo's manuscripts, we gather that the painter's salary was in arrears, and that his equestrian statue had not yet been cast in bronze:

"Signore," he writes in these fragmentary sentences, "knowing the mind of your Excellency to be fully occupied, I must ask pardon for reminding you of my small affairs.... My life is at your service; I am always ready to obey your commands. I will say nothing of the horse, because I know the times; but, as your Highness is aware, two years' salary is owing to me, and I have two masters working at my expense, so that I have had to advance fifteen *lire* out of my own purse to pay them. Gladly as I would undertake immortal works and show posterity that I have lived, I am obliged to earn my living.... May I remind your Highness of the commission to paint the Camerini, only asking ..."

The painter, we know, had never complained of Lodovico's want of liberality, and before he left

Milan that December, he was able to send 600 gold florins to Florence, but he probably received the vineyard outside the gate in answer to this appeal. In the deed of gift, the duke expressly states that Leonardo, in his judgment and in that of the best judges, is the most famous of living painters, and that, having been employed by him in manifold works, in all of which he has shown admirable genius, the time has come to put the promises which have been made him into execution. Accordingly, the duke presents him with this vineyard, small indeed compared with the painter's merits, but which Leonardo may take as a sign that, as in the past, he will always find the ducal house sensible of his services, and that Lodovico himself will in the future more fully reward the master's excellent acts and singular talents.

A week later Lodovico remembered the altar-piece which Perugino had promised to paint for the Certosa, and on the 1st of May wrote to the Carthusian friars, desiring them to urge the Umbrian painter to complete and deliver the work without delay.

"You know," he wrote, "how much labour and expense we have bestowed on the decoration of the Certosa of Pavia, and how much we rejoice to see that the building is nearly finished. And we have always exhorted yourselves, venerable Prior and brothers, to choose the most excellent artists to paint pictures that may be at once helps to devotion and ornaments of the church. Since, with this intention, we proposed a certain Perugino and a Maestro Filippo, both of them admirable and honoured masters, to paint two altar-pieces, and disbursed large sums in order to obtain these pictures, we are

seriously displeased to find that three years have passed without the work being done. This is unjust both to ourselves and the friars, since it deprives the Certosa of the perfection that we desire to see there, and we must beg you to insist on these excellent masters completing the said altar-pieces within a reasonable term, or else returning the money which they have received. For, as you know, nothing is dearer to our hearts than the things that concern this church and monastery."

Lodovico's exertions were not in vain, at least in the case of Perugino. Before the end of the year, the great altar-piece containing the lovely Madonna and saints, which now adorns the National Gallery, was finished, and while the duke himself wandered in exile beyond the Alps, the Umbrian painter's masterpiece was safely placed in the glorious church which he had loved so well.

This letter relating to the Certosa altar-piece and the gift to Leonardo were the last public acts in which the great Moro showed his love of art and generosity to artists. His fate was sealed, and already his foes were at the door. Before the end of May, King Louis and Cæsar Borgia came to Lyons, and Trivulzio descended upon Asti with fifteen thousand men. A few weeks later the Milanese envoy to Venice was dismissed, and the Venetian army prepared to enter the district of Cremona. Caterina Sforza, almost the only Italian ally who was still faithful to Milan, sent a troop of men from Forli to her uncle's help, but the invasion of Romagna by papal troops hindered her from attacking the Venetians as she had intended. In vain Lodovico sent despairing letters to Maximilian, begging for the promised reinforcements. Week after week went by, and still

the German troops did not arrive. On the 13th of August, Trivulzio invaded the Milanese with a powerful force of well-trained soldiers, and took the castle of Annona. The same day the Venetians crossed the eastern frontier and advanced towards the river Adda. On the 14th Lodovico wrote the following letter to his niece, the Empress Bianca:—

"In our present great anxieties, while the French are attacking us on the one side, and on the other a large Venetian army is advancing, your Majesty's loving letter has been a great comfort, expressing not only the sympathy which you feel in our troubles, but the efforts you have made to induce your husband, the king, to help us in these bad times. What you say of his good-will is not more than we expected, but your kind words have given us unspeakable joy, and we are exceedingly grateful, and beg you with all our heart to continue your offices on our behalf with the king, entreating him to send us help immediately (*presto, presto*). Indeed, his troops ought to be here now, for we are already reduced to extremity, as you will learn from Messer Galeazzo Visconti and others, whom we have sent to your Majesty, praying that help may be speedy and effectual."[78]

Three days after, Bianca herself wrote to say that she had spoken to the emperor, and begged her *maître d'hôtel* to support her request, and that he had solemnly promised to send her uncle help. Maximilian kept his word, and before the month was over despatched a strong German force to the duke's relief. But the sorely needed succour came too late. When the Germans reached the Italian frontier, Milan had already surrendered, and they met Lodovico flying for his life. There were traitors in the

Moro's camp and court. Not only had the Marquis of Mantua broken faith and refused to defend the Milanese against the Venetians, but two of the Sanseverino brothers, Fracassa and Antonio Maria, had for some time past threatened to enter the Venetian service; while Francesco Bernardino Visconti, the Borromeos, and Pallavicini were secretly corresponding with Trivulzio, and the Count of Caiazzo was out of temper and jealous of his younger brother Galeazzo, if he was not, as Corio and other contemporaries affirm, already in league with the French. Galeazzo himself, who had the supreme command of the Milanese forces and held Alessandria with 5000 men, was a brilliant carpet-knight and gallant soldier, but had little experience as a general, and had no confidence in his ill-paid and half-starved troops. When the duke, in a moment of irritation, reproached his son-in-law with thinking too much of fine clothes and fair ladies, Galeazzo boldly told him that his subjects were disaffected and tired of his rule, and that if he did not take vigorous measures, he would lose his state. His words proved all too true. One by one the fortresses of the Lomellina opened their gates to Trivulzio's victorious army, Antonio Maria Pallavicini surrendered Tortona without a blow, and when Galeazzo prepared to relieve Pavia, his troops refused to follow him. At the head of a handful of cavalry, he made a gallant attempt to reach Pavia, but the citizens, alarmed at the approach of the French, closed their gates and refused to admit any armed men.

Alessandria was now the only fortified town in the district which could arrest Trivulzio's onward march, and Lodovico, trusting to Galeazzo's valour, was confident he would be able to hold the town until the arrival of Maximilian's reinforcements. But, to

the amazement of friend and foe alike, on the night of the 28th of August, Galeazzo, attended by only three horsemen, left Alessandria at nightfall, crossed the Po, and, after cutting the bridge behind him, rode as fast as he could go to Milan. There had been dissensions in the garrison, and the soldiers clamoured for pay and refused to fight, but whispers of darker treachery were abroad. The Count of Caiazzo, it was said, had forged a letter purporting to be from the duke, recalling his son-in-law to Milan on the spot, and Galeazzo himself afterwards showed the false orders which had deceived him to the French and Milanese chroniclers who repeat the story. There seems little doubt that Caiazzo's defection was one of the principal causes of Lodovico's ruin, but, whatever the circumstances of the case may have been, it is certain that on the next day the French entered Alessandria without meeting with any resistance, and Trivulzio sent word to his kinsman Erasmo that before the week was over he would dine with him in Milan.

When Lodovico heard that Alessandria was lost, his courage failed him. He determined to seek safety in flight, and prepared to send his sons to Germany under the charge of his brother Cardinal Ascanio Sforza and Cardinal Sanseverino, both of whom had left Rome secretly on the 14th of July, and travelled by Genoa to Milan. Once more the duke called the chief citizens together, and appealed to them, by the love which they bore to the house of Sforza and the memory of the peace and prosperity which they had enjoyed under his rule, to defend Milan against the foreign invaders. But already sedition was spreading among the people. That evening the ducal treasurer, Antonio Landriano, one of Lodovico's ablest and most loyal servants, was attacked by the mob on the

Piazza of the Duomo and mortally wounded.

On the same day—Saturday, the 31st of August—the duke took leave of his sons, and sent them to Como in the charge of the two cardinals and their kinswoman, Camilla Sforza. "A truly piteous and heart-breaking sight it was," writes Corio, "to see these poor children embrace their beloved father, whose face was wet with their tears."

Twenty mules laden with baggage, and a large chariot bearing Lodovico's most precious jewels and 240,000 gold ducats, covered with black canvas and drawn by eight strong horses, followed in the young princes' train. All the rest of the Moro's treasures, including a sum of 30,000 ducats, his vast stores of gold and silver plate, and all Duchess Beatrice's rich clothes and possessions, were left in the Castello, which was provided with ample supplies of food and ammunition, and defended by 1800 guns and a garrison of 2800 men, who had received six months' pay in advance. These the duke entrusted solemnly to the charge of the governor, Bernardino da Corte, leaving him full instructions as to his future course of action, and a system of signals by which he could communicate with friends in the town, and telling him that he would return with 30,000 Germans before a month was over. Both Ascanio Sforza and Galeazzo di Sanseverino, it is said, entertained doubts of Bernardino da Corte's fidelity, and warned the duke not to leave him without a colleague in this responsible office; but Lodovico did not share their fears, and trusted implicitly in the loyalty of this servant, whom he had advanced from a humble position to fill this responsible post and loaded with favours.

After his children were gone, Lodovico drew up a

last deed, by which he left certain of his lands and houses to his friends in Milan, and made reparation to others whom he had wronged. Chief among these was the widowed Duchess Isabella, to whom he gave his own duchy of Bari, in the kingdom of Naples, with a yearly revenue of 6000 ducats in place of her dowry. He restored the lands of Angleria and the fortress of Arona to the Borromeos, gave poor Beatrice's favourite country house of Villa Nuova to Battista Visconti, and divided his different domains among the chief representatives of noble Milanese families, in the hope of securing their allegiance. While he was engaged in this final disposal of his property, a deputation arrived to inform him that a meeting had been held that day in the Dominican hall of La Rosa, at which the Bishop of Como, Landriano, general of the Umiliati, Castiglione, Archbishop of Bari, and Francesco Bernardino Visconti were chosen to form a provisional committee of public safety, and that these councillors had decided to make terms with Trivulzio and admit the French. The duke said that he still put his trust in the people; upon which Visconti asked him why, if this were the case, he had sent his sons and his treasure away? "If you surrender the city to the French," replied the duke, "I will hold the Castello for the emperor." It was his last word. In vain Galeazzo urged him to put himself at the head of his loyal servants, and call upon the citizens of Milan to man the walls against the French and fight or die with their duke. It was already too late. While they were still speaking, news reached the Castello that the people had risen in tumultuous uproar, and that Galeazzo di Sanseverino's stables and the seneschal Ambrogio Ferrari's house had been sacked by the mob. The shops were closed, and the houses in the

principal streets were barricaded. Terror and confusion prevailed everywhere, and Milan seemed in a state of siege. Lodovico now took leave of his faithful servants, and solemnly charged Bernardino da Corte to hold the Castello as a sacred trust. "As long as the Rocca holds out, I know that I shall return; but when that surrenders, the house of Sforza is doomed." With these words he kissed the castellan on the cheek, and, mounted on a black horse, in the long black mantle which he always wore since his wife's death, he rode out, accompanied by his chief senators to the Porta Vercellina. There he turned to his companions, and, with a noble and dignified air, thanked them once more for their faithful services, and bade them all farewell. "*State con Dio*—may God be with you," he said, and, with a last wave of his hand, put spurs to his black charger and rode off.

The sun was setting in the western sky, and the sorrowing courtiers thought that their master had gone to Como. But he alighted before the gates of S. Maria delle Grazie, and, throwing the reins to a page, entered the church where Beatrice was buried. There he knelt in prayer by the tomb of the wife whom he had loved so well and mourned so long—*la sua amantissima duchessa*—while the moments slipped away and his servants waited anxiously outside. At length he rose from his knees, took a last look at the fair face and form lying there in the deep repose of death, and left the church, accompanied by the weeping friars, who followed him with their tears and blessings to the door. Three times he turned round, while the tears streamed down his pale face, and looked at the stately pile, which held all that had been dearest to him in the world—where Leonardo had painted his Last Supper, and where Bianca and Beatrice slept together. Then, in the dusk of the

summer evening, he rode slowly back through the park and gardens of the Castello.

At break of day on the following morning, Monday, the 2nd of September, Duke Lodovico, accompanied by his son-in-law, Galeazzo di Sanseverino, his nephews, Ermes and the Count of Melzi, and his brother-in-law, Ippolito d'Este, and attended by a few armed horsemen, left Milan and rode to Como. Here the fugitives spent the night, and the duke issued a last decree, by which he confirmed the privileges and grants of land which he had granted to the friars of S. Maria delle Grazie. Then he told the loyal citizens of Como that he would soon return at the head of a German army, and rode along the banks of the lake to the mountains of the Valtellina. Often on the road he looked back at the blue waters and lovely shores of that native land which he had been so proud to call his own, and, at last, addressing his companions in the words of the Roman poet, said sorrowfully, "*Nos patriam fugimus et dulcia linquimus arva*."

"Only think, reader," moralizes Marino Sanuto, "what grief and shame so great and glorious a lord, who had been held to be the wisest of monarchs and ablest of rulers, must have felt at losing so splendid a state in these few days, without a single stroke of the sword.... Let those who are in high places take warning, considering the miserable fall of this lord, who was held by many to be the greatest prince in the world, and let them remember that when Fortune sets you on the top of her wheel, she may at any moment bring you to the ground, and then the closer you have been to heaven, the greater and the more sudden will be your fall."

Already Ligny's horsemen were scouring the

country round Como in pursuit of the fugitive, and reports reached Venice that the duke had been captured and Galeazzo slain. By this time, however, Lodovico had crossed the frontier and was safe on Tyrolese soil. At Bormio he met 2000 German troops, who were marching to his relief; and when he reached Innsbrück, he found that the Empress Bianca had prepared rooms for his reception, and received kindly messages from Maximilian, promising him more efficient support as soon as he had settled his quarrel with the Swiss.

Meanwhile Pavia had opened her gates to the French, upon hearing news of the duke's flight, Trivulzio had taken possession of the Castello, and Ligny was occupying the Certosa, while Jean d'Auton knew not whether to wonder most at the rich marbles and sumptuous chapels of the great church, or the vast herds of red deer which roamed in the park.

"Truly," the good Benedictine exclaimed, as he wandered through these flowery meadows with their banks of roses and myrtles, and clear springs of running water—"truly, this is Paradise upon earth!"

On the 6th of September, after a feeble effort on the part of the Milanese nobles to preserve the rights and liberties of the city, the keys were given up to Trivulzio, who entered by the Porta Ticinese with Ligny and two hundred horse, and, after visiting the Duomo, breakfasted in the house of his kinsman, the Bishop of Como.

The Count of Caiazzo had gone out to meet Trivulzio the day before, and had been received with great honour, while his brothers Fracassa and Antonio Maria took refuge with Giovanni Adorno at Genoa, and waited to see how the tide would turn.

Still the Castello held out, and Trivulzio was debating how best to reduce this almost impregnable citadel, when Bernardino da Corte sent a herald to parley with Francesco Bernardino Visconti. At the end of a few days the faithless governor agreed to surrender the Castello, in exchange for a large sum of money and the concession of various privileges for his family and friends. On the 22nd, letters from the duke arrived, telling the castellan to be of good cheer, for the German troops were on their way. But when they reached Milan, the Castello was already in the hands of the French. The treasures of gold and silver plate which the Rocca contained, the money and the precious stuffs, the pictures and statues and furniture which adorned its *Camerini*, were divided between the treacherous governor, Francesco Visconti, and Antonio Pallavicini, while Trivulzio reserved Lodovico's magnificent tapestries, that alone were valued at 150,000 ducats, for his share of the spoil. Then the wonders of antique and modern art which the Moro had collected from all parts of Italy, the paintings of Leonardo and the gems of Caradosso, the Greek marbles and Roman cameos, Lorenzo da Pavia's rare instruments and Antonio da Monza's miniatures, were scattered to the winds. Certain things—the gorgeous altar-plate and vestments of the chapel, with the priceless manuscripts of the Castello of Pavia, and most of the Sforza portraits—were taken to Blois, others found their way to Venice or Mantua, and many fell into unworthy hands and vanished altogether.

Lodovico was lying ill of asthma in the castle at Innsbrück, discussing the best means of relieving the Castello with Galeazzo, when the news of Bernardino da Corte's treachery reached him. For some minutes he remained silent, as if unable to realize the full

meaning of the words. Then he said to the friends at his bedside, "Since the day of Judas there has never been so black a traitor as Bernardino da Corte." And all the rest of that day he never spoke again.

Even the French were filled with horror at Bernardino's treachery, and shunned him like a criminal when he appeared among them. As for his old friends and comrades, the poets and scholars of Lodovico's court, their indignation knew no bounds, Lancinus Curtius hurled bitter epigrams at his head, and Pistoia held him up to the scorn of the whole world in some of his finest sonnets. He did not live long to enjoy the reward of his treachery and it was popularly believed in Italy that he had poisoned himself in his despair, or put an end to his wretched life by falling upon his own sword. Even Charon, sang the poet, shuddered when he heard the traitor's name, and refused to let him enter the gates of Hades.

When the news of the conquest of Milan reached Lyons, Louis XII. crossed the Alps without delay. On the 21st of September he was at Vercelli; on the 26th, at Lodovico's favourite Vigevano; on the 2nd of October he reached Pavia, where the Marquis of Mantua and the Duke of Ferrara, who feared the Pope's vengeance and Cæsar Borgia's army even more than the French, came to meet him.

"Duke Ercole and his two sons," wrote the Ferrarese annalist, "are gone to meet the King of France. As for the Duke of Milan, his name is never mentioned, and you might think that he had never lived."

On Sunday, the 6th of October, he made his triumphal entry into Milan, with the Dukes of Ferrara and Savoy riding at his side; the Cardinals

della Rovere and d'Amboise were in front of him; and ambassadors from all the chief cities of Italy, and a goodly array of princes and nobles, in his train. Francesco Gonzaga, who had so lately been Duke Lodovico's guest, was there. And there, too, were men like Caiazzo and Fracassa, who had eaten and drunk at the Moro's table, and were fighting under his banner only a few weeks before, and with them one, who was still more closely associated with Lodovico and his wife by the ties of blood and friendship—Niccolo da Correggio, the favourite courtier and poet of the Moro, and the cousin of Beatrice.

Conspicuous among them all by his height and majestic bearing was the Pope's son, Cæsar Borgia, while the king himself made a gallant show in his long white mantle embroidered with golden lilies over a suit of royal purple, bearing the ducal cap and sword. Eight Milanese nobles carried an ermine-lined canopy over his head, and the doctors of the University of Pavia were there in their scarlet robes, as they appeared a few short years before at Lodovico's coronation. Fair ladies in gay attire welcomed the victor with their smiles. Everywhere tall white lilies were seen blossoming in the streets that led to the Duomo—Notre Dame du Dôme, as the monkish chronicler calls the glorious pile of dazzling marbles that rose into the summer air. Here the procession paused, and the king walked up the vaulted aisles to pay his devotions at the Madonna's shrine. Then he rode on again, to the sound of trumpets and horns, and the royal guard of Gascon archers led the way up the well-known street, with the frescoed palaces and goldsmiths and armourers' shops, to the gates of the famous Castello, where the victor entered and took up his abode in this proud

citadel of the Sforzas, the core and centre of the Milanese.

In the eyes of the French strangers it was all very marvellous—the beautiful city with its stately palaces and hospitals, and the fair churches with their Gothic spires and pinnacles, their slender creamy shafts and deep red terra-cotta mouldings; the Milanese ladies with their jewelled robes and mantles embroidered with cunningly wrought devices, the flowering lilies and the garlands of laurel and myrtle—all seen under the radiant sunshine and the deep blue of the Italian skies. But what excited their admiration and wonder more than all was the Castello.

"A thing," writes one of them, "truly marvellous and inestimable, with so many large and beautiful rooms that I lost all reckoning. Without are broad lakes, fair running streams, and bridges. There is a fine large square on the side of the town, and on the other are beautiful meadows and woods and the château, where the Moro had his stables, painted with frescoes of different-coloured horses."

King Louis wondered most of all at the strength and completeness of the bastions and excellence of the artillery, exclaiming that never before had he seen so strong and splendid a citadel! And he and all the Frenchmen greatly blamed that second Judas, who had betrayed his master and delivered it up without a blow.

The next morning, his Majesty attended mass at S. Ambrogio, accompanied by the Dukes of Ferrara and Savoy, the Marquis of Mantua, Cæsar Borgia, and all the cardinals and ambassadors, and afterwards visited the church and convent of S. Maria delle Grazie. Here he gazed with admiration on the

Cenacolo of Leonardo, that master of whose genius he had heard so much, and expressed his ardent wish to transfer the famous wall-painting to France, a sentiment which can hardly have gratified the Dominican friars or the Italian princes in his train. The painter was not present on this occasion. His master had fled, the works upon which he was engaged were all interrupted, and on the approach of the French he had left Milan for one of his favourite country retreats in the hills of Bergamo or the mountains of Como, where he could study Nature and pursue his scientific researches in peace. And the French king and Cæsar Borgia, whose genuine appreciation of fine art was well known, did not fail to admire Bramante's fair chapel and that latest masterpiece of Lombard sculpture, the noble tomb which the Moro had raised to be an eternal memorial of his love and sorrow. There were others in his train that day who could hardly look unmoved on the sleeping form of the young duchess with the child-like face and the brocade robes which *Il Gobbo* had fashioned with such exquisite skill. There was her brother-in-law, Francesco Gonzaga, and Niccolo da Correggio, in whose heart that fair face and bright eyes, he tells us, were for ever enshrined; there were her brothers, Alfonso and Ferrante; above all, there was her father, the aged Duke Ercole. The sight of that marble figure, with the soft curling hair and the long fringe of eyelashes and quietly folded hands, must have vividly recalled the memory of his dead child, and of all the joy and brightness that had vanished in the grave with Beatrice. For him at least that must have been a bitter moment.

And there was yet another, young Baldassare Castiglione, that courtly and handsome boy who had been sent to Milan a few years before to finish his

education, and had now followed his master, the Marquis of Mantua, to wait upon the French king. He had been present many a time at those brilliant *fêtes* in the Castello, and had seen Duchess Beatrice in her most radiant and triumphant hour, had talked with Leonardo and Bramante, and looked on Messer Galeaz as the mirror of chivalry. Now he came back to find the scene changed and that gay company all dead or gone. And the next day he sat down to write home to Mantua and tell his mother of all the pomp and splendour of the scenes which he had witnessed. He described the king's triumphal entry, and the great procession in which he had taken part, with all a boy's enthusiasm; but he could not refrain from a sigh over the melancholy change in the Castello, when he told her how these halls and courts, that had once been the home and meeting-place of rare intellects and accomplished artists, "the fine flower of the human race," were now full of drinking-booths and dung-hills—of rude soldiery, who defiled the place with their foul habits and polluted the air with their savage oaths. So passes the glory of the world.

FOOTNOTES:

[78] L. Pélissier, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XXX

Louis XII. in Milan—Hatred of the French rule—Return of Duke Lodovico—His march to Como and triumphal entry into Milan—Trivulzio and the French retire to Mortara—Surrender of the Castello of Milan, of Pavia and Novara, to the Moro—His want of men and money—Arrival of La Trémouille's army—Lodovico besieged in Novara and betrayed to the French king by the Swiss—Rejoicings at Rome and Venice—Triumph of the Borgias—Sufferings of the Milanese—Leonardo's letter.

1499-1500

During the next month Louis XII. remained in the Castello of Milan, joining in hunting-parties with his guests, the Duke of Ferrara and the Marquis of Mantua, and being royally entertained at banquets by the Viscontis and Borromeos and Giangiacomo Trivulzio. Isabella d'Este, eager to ingratiate herself with the French, invited Ligny to visit her, and sent dogs and falcons, as well as trout from Garda, to the king, who told La Trémouille that he had never tasted better fish. And when Cardinal d'Amboise expressed his admiration for Andrea Mantegna's art and told the marquis that in his opinion he was the first master in the world, Isabella hastened to promise him a picture by the great Paduan's hand.

It was a sad time for the followers of Lodovico. The faithful servants who had followed him into exile, saw their lands and houses confiscated and divided among the victors. The Count of Ligny's mother occupied the Marchesino Stanga's house, and Trivulzio's triumph over his rivals was complete when he received the Moro's palace of Vigevano and Messer Galeazzo's fair domain of Castel Novo as his

share of the spoils. But no one suffered more keenly or shed more bitter tears than Giangaleazzo's widow, Duchess Isabella. She had unwisely declined Lodovico's advice to leave Milan when the war broke out, and take refuge on her uncle Frederic's galleys at Genoa. Instead of this, she remained in Milan and sent her son, a child of eight, whom contemporaries describe as beautiful as a cherub, but weak in mind, like his father, to meet Louis XII. on his arrival at the Castello. But, to her dismay, the king refused to allow the young prince to return to his mother, and when he left Milan on the 7th of November, he took the boy with him to France, and made him Abbot of Noirmoutiers, where he lived in retirement until, twelve years later, he broke his neck out hunting. After her son's departure, the unhappy mother, who signed herself "*Ysabella de Aragonia Sforcia unica in disgrazia*" in letters of this period, finally left Milan. Early in 1500 she paid a visit to Isabella d'Este at Mantua, and then travelled by sea from Genoa to Naples, and spent the rest of her life in her principality of Bari. One of her daughters died as a child; the other, Bona, was betrothed to her cousin, Maximilian Sforza, when, in 1512, he was restored to his father's throne. It was Isabella's cherished dream that her last remaining child should reign over the duchy of Milan, where, after all, her own brightest days had been spent; but before the marriage could take place, the young duke had been compelled to abdicate his throne and taken captive to France. His betrothed bride, Princess Bona, married Sigismund, King of Poland, in 1518, and six years later her mother died at Naples.

After Louis XII. left Milan, the severity of Trivulzio's rule, and the violence and rapacity of the French soldiery, led to increasing discontent among

the people, who sighed for the good old days of Duke Lodovico, when at least their life and property, and the honour of their wives and daughters, were safe. Even on the day of the French king's entry, Marino Sanuto remarks that Louis was displeased to find how few of the people cried "France!" while the Venetians were greeted with shouts of "Dogs!" and hardly dared show themselves in the streets. "We have given the king his dinner," said a Milanese citizen; "you will be served up for his supper!" Already, on the 21st of September, the annalist of Ferrara wrote: "The French are hated in Milan for their rudeness and arrogance." And a private letter, written by a Venetian from Milan, in October, confirms Castiglione's account of the confusion and disorder that reigned in the Castello.

"The French are dirty people. The king goes to hear mass without a single candle, and eats alone, in the eyes of all the people. In the Castello there is nothing but foulness and dirt, such as Signor Lodovico would not have allowed for the whole world! The French captains spit upon the floor of the rooms, and the soldiers outrage women in the streets. The Ducheto has been taken from his mother, who weeps all day long. Galeazzo is with Lodovico, Caiazzo with King Louis, Fracassa and Antonio Maria are at Ferrara, and keep up an active correspondence with Lodovico and Galeazzo."[79]

Meanwhile, at Innsbrück, the exiled duke was anxiously watching the course of events, and awaiting a favourable moment to return and claim his own. "I will beat the drum in winter and dance all the summer," was the motto which he adopted, together with the device of a tambourine, in reference to his future hopes. A letter which the well-

known preacher, Celso Maffei of Verona, addressed to him, moralizing over the causes of his fall, and exhorting him to observe the laws of public and private justice, gave Lodovico an opportunity of issuing a manifesto to his adherents. In this curious document he defends his conduct, and declares that he has no reason to reproach himself for anything in his past life. He has always led a Christian life, given abundant alms, listened to frequent masses, and said many prayers, especially since the death of his dear wife Beatrice. He has ever had a strict regard for justice, no complaint of his subjects has ever been left unheard, and since his fall, no one has ever reproached him with injustice excepting the Borromeos, whose alleged wrongs he explains, in a manner to justify his own action. His whole desire has been to love his subjects as his own children, and seek peace and prosperity for his realm. If he raised heavy taxes, it was only in order to defend his people from their enemies, and he never waged war excepting to resist the invasion of hostile armies. Whatever mistakes he may have made, the Milanese have never had reason to complain of him, and have proved this by their fidelity, only a few captains having sold the fortresses in their charge and joined the French. And in conclusion he appeals to his old subjects to restore him once more to the throne of his ancestors.

His appeal was not in vain. Niccolo della Bussola and the architect Jacopo da Ferrara, Leonardo's friend, arrived at Innsbrück in December, bringing the duke word of the disaffection that reigned in Milan, and of the prayers that were daily offered up for his return. Cheered by these tidings, Lodovico determined to leave nothing undone on his part. He pawned his jewels and began to raise forces both in

the Tyrol and Switzerland. In his eagerness to find allies, he applied to Henry VII. of England, and even invited the Turks to attack the Venetians in Friuli. Maximilian helped him with men and money, as far as his slender resources would allow, and summoned the German Diet to meet at Augsburg in February, in the hope of obtaining support from the electors. But the Moro's impatience could brook no delay. At Christmas he came to Brixen, and there succeeded in collecting a force of eight or ten thousand Swiss and German *Landsknechten*, supported by a body of Stradiots and his own Milanese horse. At the head of this little army, Lodovico left Brixen on the 24th of January, and set out on his gallant but ill-fated attempt to recover his dominions.

Meanwhile Girolamo Landriano, the General of the Umiliati, who had been the first to yield Milan to the French, was actively engaged in plotting the restoration of Lodovico, with the help of the leading ecclesiastics in the city. "To say the truth," writes Jean d'Auton, "the whole duchy of Milan was secretly in favour of Lodovico, and all the Lombards were swollen with poison, and ready like vipers to shoot out the deadly venom of their treason." A general rising was fixed for Candlemas Day, but so well was the secret kept, that not a whisper reached the vigilant ears of Trivulzio, and all remained quiet until the last few days of January. On the 24th, a band of children at play, engaged in a mimic fight between the supposed French and Milanese armies, ending with the rout of the French and a procession in which the effigy of King Louis was dragged through the streets tied to a donkey's tail. Some French soldiers, who witnessed the scene, fired on the children, killing one and wounding others, upon which the citizens rose in arms, and drove the

foreigners back into the Castello. This was followed by a more serious riot on the 31st of January, and Trivulzio gave orders for a general disarming of the people, which, however, he was unable to enforce. Already news had reached Como that the Moro had crossed the Alps, and was on his way to Milan.

The course of Lodovico's victorious march is best described in a letter which he addressed to his sister-in-law, Isabella d'Este, on the day after his triumphal entry into his old capital.

"Illustrious Lady and dearest Sister,

"On the 24th of last month we left Brixen by the grace of God, and crossed Monte Braulio into the Valtellina with a body of *Landsknechten*. Monsignore the Vice-chancellor, Messer Galeaz, and Messer Visconti, went on before with the Swiss and Grison infantry, by way of Coire and Chiavenna, and reached the lake of Como on the 30th. Here M. Galeaz fitted out eleven ships, with which he attacked and put to flight the enemy's fleet, and took a fortress occupied by the French. Both the Castle of Bellagio and the town of Torno surrendered to His Reverence, who pushed on with his troops to Como, where he met Monsignore Sanseverino arriving from the Valtellina, and the two cardinals together did the rest. Monsieur de Ligny and the Count of Musocho"—Trivulzio's son—"who held the town with 1500 horse, fled at the approach of the two Monsignori, knowing the feeling of the people, and his Eminence entered Como amidst the greatest rejoicing in the world. M. Galeaz and his light horse pursued the enemy, and Monsignore pushed on towards Milan, hearing from our friends there that his arrival was impatiently desired. On Friday, the last of January, some of the people rose in arms, and M. Gian Giacomo fortified the Corte Vecchia and the Duomo, and, with 2000 infantry, marched through the streets of the armourers, the builders, and the hatters, to make a public demonstration. But our friends waited, knowing that the right moment had not yet come. On Sunday, the 2nd, the French captains, hearing of the cardinals' approach, and knowing the strong feeling in the city, assembled their troops early on the Piazza of the Castello. Our friends were well

prepared, and at the same moment all the bells rang, and the whole city rose in arms. More than 60,000 people attacked the French, and drove them back into the Castello, where they spent the night, without forage for their horses, and on Monday morning, the day before yesterday, they fled from Milan in terror. The bridges had been broken down to hinder their passage, but, luckily for them, the Ticino was low, and they crossed the bed of the river, and retired to Gaiata in safety. And on Monday the Vice-chancellor entered Milan, amidst universal rejoicing, and endeavoured to give chase to the French army, but had not a sufficient number of horse to effect his object.

"On Monday morning we reached Como, after taking possession of the castle on the rock of Musso, and were joyfully received all along the lake, by the chief citizens and gentlemen of the district, who came out in boats to meet us. At the gates of the city, the whole population received us with incredible rejoicing and loud acclamations. Yesterday we slept at Mirabello, a house of the Landriani, about a mile out of Milan. All the way from Como crowds of gentlemen and citizens streamed out to meet us on foot or on horseback, in continually increasing numbers, and cries of *Moro! Moro!* and shouts of joy greeted our steps, whichever way we turned. This morning at sunrise we left Mirabello, and entered the suburb of the Porta Nova, at the hour indicated by our astrologer, but alighted at Gian Francesco da Vimercato's garden, and waited there a little while, to give the gentlemen time to meet us, and enter the city.

"The two cardinals rode out to meet us, and Messer Galeaz and many gentlemen, with a great number of

men-at-arms on foot and horseback, and we marched all through the city and up to the Duomo. All the streets and windows and roofs were thronged with people shouting our name, with such rapture that it would be a thing almost incredible if we had not seen it ourselves. And so with universal rejoicing we have returned here, by the grace of God, and already we hear that Lodi, Piacenza, Pavia, Tortona, and Alessandria have driven out the French, and returned of their own free will to our allegiance. The castle of Trezzo has surrendered, and that of Cassano has been fortified in our name by the Marchesino, and all the towns on the Venetian frontier have declared for us, and before long we hope to have recovered the whole state. The Castello here is still held by 300 French soldiers, but it is badly provided with victuals and fuel, and although they have saltpetre, there is no charcoal to make gunpowder, so we are in good hope of recovering the place, but do not mean to let this delay us for a moment in pursuing our victorious course. The enemy is in full retreat, and we mean to drive them back to the mountain passes, and have already sent M. Galeaz early this morning with the infantry, and all the horse that we have, in their pursuit. Monsignore Sanseverino is gone to-day, and we follow to-morrow with all the horse we can collect and a good number of infantry, the better to carry out our plans. We hear that the soldiers, which were in Romagna, to the number of 250 lances, besides infantry, have been recalled, and have reached Parma, and feel sure that your lord, the Marquis of Mantua, and our other allies will pursue them, and with their help, and the general rising of the people, we trust to obtain complete victory. We tell your Highness these things the more gladly because we feel sure that you have been grieved for

our trouble, and will rejoice with us at these fortunate successes. You will forgive me for not writing in my own hand, because of pressing engagements.

LODOVICUS MARIA SFORTIA,,
Anglus Dux Mediolani, etc., B. Chalcus.

Milan, February 5, 1500."[80]

At the same time Lodovico wrote to Francesco Gonzaga—

"This morning we entered Milan, and it would be impossible to describe the immense jubilation of the whole city and all classes of people, or the extraordinary demonstrations of affection and good-will that we have received on all sides. Our intention is to follow up our victory with the utmost speed, to effect the complete destruction of our enemies, and secure the passes neglecting no precaution. To-day we have sent Monsignore Sanseverino on with ten thousand Germans, and intend to follow with the remaining forces ourselves to-morrow. I hope your Highness will attack and destroy the troops on their way from Romagna, and if they are already gone, join with the forces of our allies and the men of the country in their pursuit, according to the orders that we have already issued."

This sudden revolution took all Italy by surprise. When couriers arrived in Mantua and Ferrara, saying that Duke Lodovico had that day entered Milan in triumph, people refused to believe the news. But it was true. "The Moro has returned," wrote Jean d'Auton, "and has entered Milan, where he has been received as if he were a God from heaven, great and small shouting *Moro!* with one accord. Verily these Lombards seem to adore him. One and all implore

him to drive out the French and become their prince again." When the people saw the well-known form of their old duke riding through the streets, clad in rich crimson damask, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. The two cardinals were at his side, and Messer Galeazzo rode behind him, in a suit of glittering brocade, with tall white plumes in his cap and white shoes, "better fitted," remarks the chronicler, "for the service of Venus than for that of Mars." They took up their abode in the old palace of the Corte Vecchia, near the Duomo, since the Castello was in the hands of the enemy, and the duke issued a proclamation, calling on all loyal subjects to restore the pictures, hangings, and other rare and precious objects, which had been taken from the Castello. The wealthy citizens parted freely with their gold and jewels, the Prior and friars of S. Maria delle Grazie melted down their sumptuous altar-plate, and the canons of the Duomo brought the duke those costly gifts which he had made them in his days of prosperity. Having thus succeeded in raising 100,000 ducats, Lodovico assembled the councillors, and harangued them in eloquent language, reminding them of all they had suffered from the French tyranny, and calling on them to join him in delivering their land from this intolerable yoke. "I, too, have been guilty of mistakes and faults in the past," he added, "but I will repair them. All I ask is to be your captain, not your lord. Help me to drive out the stranger."

Before the week was over, Jacopo Andrea and his friends had succeeded in obtaining the capitulation of the French garrison, and the Castello was occupied by Cardinal Ascanio, whom Lodovico left with a small force at Milan, while he himself went on to Pavia. It was on one of the few days which he spent in Milan that his meeting with the Chevalier Bayard

took place, as recorded in the joyous chronicle of the loyal servant. After a skirmish with some of Messer Galeazzo's horse at Binasco, the young French knight who had been too eager in the pursuit of his foes was taken prisoner, and brought before the duke at Milan. Lodovico, wondering at his youth, asked him what brought him in such hurried guise to Milan, and ended by restoring his sword and horse, and sending him back to his friends under the escort of a herald, to tell Ligny of the courteous treatment which he had received from the Moro, and to say what a gallant gentleman Duke Lodovico was—"*qui pour peu de chose n'est pas aisé à étonner*."

At Pavia the Moro was received with the same enthusiastic joy, and during the fortnight that he remained there the Castello was bombarded and taken by his artillery. The next week his native town of Vigevano welcomed him with open arms, and the French garrison was forced to quit the citadel. But the Venetians held Lodi and Piacenza, and the Duke of Ferrara and Marquis of Mantua, however much they wished their kinsman well, and secretly disliked the French, did not dare to incur their vengeance by any rash action. In vain the Moro wrote passionate appeals to Francesco Gonzaga from Pavia and Vigevano, urging him to come to his help before it was too late, and pointing out how the safety and well-being of Mantua depended upon that of Milan. All the marquis ventured to do was to send his brother Giovanni, with a troop of horse, to help Lodovico in the siege of Novara, which he now attacked with the aid of fifty pieces of artillery sent from Innsbrück.

Meanwhile his foes were every day gaining strength. King Louis had hastily collected a large

army of French lances and Swiss mercenaries under La Trémouille at Asti, who entered Lombardy, and marched to relieve Trivulzio and Ligny at Mortara. On the other hand, the French troops who had gone with Yves d'Allégre to assist Cæsar Borgia in the siege of Forli and conquest of Romagna, speedily retraced their steps to relieve the garrison of Novara. But they could not hold out against the furious assaults of the Germans and Burgundians, and on the 21st of March the castle surrendered, and the garrison marched out with the honours of war. Two days afterwards La Trémouille reached Vercelli at the head of his powerful army, and succeeded in effecting a junction with Trivulzio's forces. This put an end to the Moro's brilliant successes, and it became evident to all that the unequal contest could not be maintained much longer. Seeing himself outnumbered and surrounded on all sides, Lodovico threw himself into Novara, and early in April was besieged there in his turn. But the Swiss, who formed the bulk of his force, murmured because they were not allowed to pillage the towns, and began to communicate secretly with their comrades in the hostile camp. The Moro had sent Galeazzo Visconti to Berne, and at his request the Helvetian Diet issued orders to the Swiss in both armies, forbidding them to fight against their comrades. But the French envoy, Antoine de Bussy, bribed the herald who bore the message to Novara, and only the Swiss in the Moro's service received orders to lay down their arms. The result was that when Lodovico's captains led them out to meet the enemy, they refused to fight, and withdrew in confusion into the city. In vain the duke offered them his silver plate and jewels, till he could obtain money from Milan, and begged them to return to the battle. In vain

Galeazzo, at the head of his Lombards, charged the foe gallantly, killing many of them with his artillery and putting the others to flight. He and his brothers fought desperately, till the sword was broken in Galeazzo's hands and Fracassa was badly wounded. But all their heroism was of no avail. Trivulzio was already in secret treaty with the Swiss, who sent a deputy to the French camp, asking for leave to lay down their arms and return to their own country.

Antonio Grumello, who was in Novara at the time, describes how late one evening, when the duke sat playing chess with Fracassa in the bishop's palace, where he lodged, a spy was led in, who told him that Trivulzio had boasted that the Moro would be his captive in less than a fortnight. "What do you say?" asked Lodovico of Almodoro, the astrologer, who had followed him into exile. But Almodoro shook his head. It was impossible; no planet foretold such a disaster; on the contrary, all the signs were propitious, and he spoke confidently of coming victory. "On Wednesday in Holy Week," continued the chronicler, "the betrayal of Judas began." That day, as Galeazzo was preparing for another sally, the Swiss came to him in a body and laid down their arms, saying they would not fight against their comrades in the other camp. Already one of the gates had been treacherously opened, and the French were in the city. In this extremity an Albanian captain offered the duke a fleet Arab horse and begged him to escape. But Lodovico refused to desert his friends, and would only accept the proposal of the Swiss captains that he and his companions should assume the garb of common soldiers and mingle in the ranks. He covered his crimson silk vest and scarlet hose, hid his long hair under a tight cap, and took a halberd in his hand. In this disguise he was preparing to file out

of the camp in the ranks of the Grison troops, when a Swiss captain named Turman, and called Soprasasso by the Italians, betrayed him to the French. The Swiss, it is said, received 30,000 ducats as the price of blood from Trivulzio, but were discontented with the sum, and quarrelled violently over the gold among themselves; while the traitor had his head cut off on his return home, and such were the execrations heaped upon him by his comrades, that his wife and children were forced to change their name. "*E lo quello*"—"There he is"—were the words in which Turman pointed Lodovico out to a French captain, who immediately laid his hand on the duke's arm and arrested him in the name of King Louis. "*Son contento*," replied Lodovico, calmly; and made no further resistance. "I surrender," he said afterwards, "to my kinsman, Monsignore de Ligny." Accordingly he was delivered to Ligny, who treated him with all respect, and provided him with a horse and apparel suited to his rank.

It is said that at first he declined to meet Trivulzio, but the chronicler Prato describes an interview which took place between the duke and his former captain soon afterwards. Trivulzio, in whose heart the old wrong still rankled, greeted his captive with the words, "It is you, Lodovico Sforza, who drove me out for the sake of a stranger, and, not content with this, have stirred the Milanese to rebellion." Lodovico merely shrugged his shoulders, and replied quietly, "Who among us can tell the reason why we love one man and hate another?"

"And so," adds Grumello, "poor Lodovico was taken captive, and with him Galeazzo and Fracassa; but Galeazzo became the prisoner of the Swiss, and was led away by these Helvetians on a black horse

without a saddle, riding on a sack. And I saw this with my own eyes."

All three of the Sanseverini brothers were claimed by the Bailiff of Dijon as his prisoners, but Antonio Maria managed to escape from their hands, and both Fracassa and Galeazzo were ransomed by their relatives for one thousand ducats a-piece at the end of a few weeks. Fracassa sought his wife at Ferrara, and Galeazzo took refuge with the other Milanese exiles at Innsbrück. The Marchesino Stanga, who was also taken captive at Novara, was imprisoned in the Castello of Milan, and died there before the end of the year.

On the evening of his capture, Wednesday, the 10th of April, Lodovico was taken to the citadel of Novara, where he remained for a week. His faithful friends, the good friars of S. Maria delle Grazie, supplied their illustrious patron with a set of silk and gold and silver brocade vests, hats and shoes to match, scarlet hose, and fine Reims linen shirts. All Lodovico himself asked for was a copy of Dante's "Divina Commedia," that he might study it during his captivity. On the 17th he was conducted by La Trémouille, accompanied by four servants and two pages, to Susa, where he became so ill that he was unable to continue the journey. After a few days' rest he recovered, and was taken over the mountains to Lyons, in charge of M. de Crussol and the king's band of archers.

Great were the rejoicings among the Moro's enemies when the news of his capture was made known. King Louis ordered solemn *Te Deums* to be chanted in Notre Dame of Paris, and himself went in state to give thanks in the church of Our Lady of Comfort at Lyons, while he extolled La Trémouille as

another Clovis or Charles Martel in his despatches. The Pope gave the messenger who brought the news a gift of a hundred ducats, for joy, he said, that the traitor-brood was annihilated. The Orsini lighted bonfires, and the jubilee rejoicings waxed louder and longer through the night. Cardinal Ascanio's palace, with all his treasures of art, was seized by Alexander VI., and his benefices were divided among the pontiff's creatures. In Venice the Piazza was illuminated and all the bells rung, while the children and boatmen sang—

"Ora il Moro fa la
danza,
Viva Marco e 'l re di
Franza!"

and dancing and pageants celebrated the downfall of the Republic's most dreaded foe. Even in Florence the citizens rejoiced over the fall of another tyrant, and raised a crucifix at the doors of the Palazzo Pubblico to commemorate the victory of freedom. Had they known it, they were in reality celebrating the loss of national independence, the beginning of a long reign of slavery and foreign rule. Seldom has the cause of freedom and civilization suffered a worse blow than this betrayal of the Moro at Novara, which left the Milanese a prey to French invaders, and planted the yoke of the stranger firmly on the neck of Northern Italy.

At the news of his brother's capture, Ascanio Sforza left Milan to seek refuge across the Alps, but was himself taken prisoner, with his nephew Ermes, at the Castle of Rivolta, near Piacenza, by the Venetians, who delivered them up to the French king. Both were taken to France, and the cardinal

was detained in honourable captivity in the citadel of Bourges, until, in January, 1502, he was released to take part in the conclave that elected Pius III. With Trivulzio's return to Milan a reign of terror began. The city was heavily fined, the partisans of the Sforza were exiled or imprisoned, Niccolo da Bussola and Leonardo's beloved friend, Jacopo Andrea, were hung, and their limbs drawn and quartered and exposed to view on the battlements of the Castello, in spite of Duke Ercole's intercession on behalf of the distinguished architect. Pavia was sacked by the French, and Lombardy paid with tears and blood for its loyalty to the race of Sforza. The period of anarchy and confusion which followed is described in mournful language by the Milanese chroniclers. During the next forty years, the city was continually taken and sacked by contending armies, her fair parks and gardens were trampled underfoot by foreign soldiery, and her beautiful churches and palaces destroyed by shells and cannon-balls. French and German ruffians tore the clothes off the backs of the poor, and snatched the bread from the lips of starving children. People were everywhere seen dying of hunger and the grass growing in the squares. There were no voices in the streets, often no services in the churches. Silence and desolation reigned throughout the unhappy city. "Blessed indeed," sighs the writer, "were those who were able to seek shelter in flight." Beyond the borders of Lombardy, there were others who grieved over the Moro's fall. In Mantua and Ferrara his friends shed secret tears over his fate. "Duke Ercole is very sad," writes our friend the annalist, "for his son-in-law's sake, and so are all the people." And Caterina Sforza, in her lonely captivity within the walls of the Castel' Sant' Angelo, wept over her uncle's ruin and the

downfall of her race. Far away in Florence, one artist, who had lived in close intimacy with the Moro for many a long year, who had discussed a hundred problems and planned all manner of mighty works with him, heard the news with a pang of regret. Leonardo had been in Venice with Lorenzo da Pavia, the great organ-master, when the wonderful tidings of the duke's return had come. He and Lorenzo must have smiled when they saw the long faces and sinister air of the grave Venetian senators at this unexpected turn of affairs. Eagerly they watched and waited and wondered if these things could be really true, and if the Moro were to reign once more on his fathers' throne, and carry out all the great dreams of his soul. And now it was all over, and the French were supreme in Milan, and the great horse on which the master had spent the best years of his life was used as a target for the arrows of Gascon archers. The duke and Messer Galeaz were captives, Sforzas and Viscontis were in prison or exile, and Jacopo Andrea had died a cruel death. On Leonardo the blow fell with crushing force; but he held his peace, and only the few broken sentences in his notebook remain to tell of his shattered hopes and of his inconsolable regrets.

"The Saletta above ... (left unfinished).

"Bramante's buildings ... (left undone).

"The Castellano a prisoner ...

"Visconti in prison—his son dead.

"Gian della Rosa's revenues seized.

"Bergonzio"—the duke's treasurer—"deprived of his fortune.

"The duke has lost state, fortune, and liberty, and

not one of his works has been completed."

In these last melancholy words we read Lodovico Sforza's epitaph, pronounced over him by Leonardo the Florentine.

FOOTNOTES:

[79] M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, iii.

[80] Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

CHAPTER XXXI

Lodovico Sforza enters Lyons as a captive—His imprisonment at Pierre-Encise and Lys Saint-Georges—Laments over Il Moro in the popular poetry of France and Italy—Efforts of the Emperor Maximilian to obtain his release—Ascanio and Ermes Sforza released—Lodovico removed to Loches—Paolo Giovio's account of his captivity—His attempt to escape—Dungeon at Loches—Death of Lodovico Sforza—His burial in S. Maria delle Grazie.

1500-1508

On the 2nd of May, 1500, barely a month after Lodovico Sforza's triumphant return to Milan, the ancient city of Lyons witnessed a strange and

mournful procession, in which he was again the central figure. That day the King of France's captive was led along the banks of the swift Rhone and through the Grande Rue up to the fortress of Pierre-Encise, on the top of the steep hill that crowns the old Roman city. The scene has been described in a well-known letter by an eye-witness, the Venetian ambassador Benedetto Trevisano, one of the envoys who had been sent, three years before, to meet the emperor on his descent into Italy, and whom the Duke of Milan had entertained royally at Vigevano. The fierce and vindictive tone of the writer, the exultant spirit in which he triumphs over the fallen foe, is another proof of the terror and hatred which the Moro inspired in Venice. Trevisano's letter was written on the evening of the 2nd of May, and addressed to the Doge.

"To-day, before two o'clock, Signor Lodovico was brought into the city. The following was the order of the procession: first came twelve officers of the city guard, to restrain the people who thronged the streets from shouting. Then came the Governor of Lyons and Provost of Justice on horseback, and then the said Signor Lodovico, clad in a black camlet vest with black hose and riding-boots, and a black cloth *berretta*, which he held most of the time in his hand. He looked about him as if determined to hide his feelings in this great change of fortune, but his face was very pale and he looked very ill, although he had been shaved this morning, and his arms trembled and he shook all over. Close beside him rode the captain of the king's archers, followed by a hundred of his men. In this order they led him all through the town, up to the castle on the hill, where he will be well guarded for the next week, until the iron cage is ready, which will be his room both by

night and day. The cage, I hear, is very strong, and made of iron framed in wood, in such a manner that the iron bars, instead of breaking under a file or any other instrument, would throw out sparks of fire. One thing I must not forget to tell you. The ambassador of Spain and I were together at a window when Signor Lodovico passed, and when the Spaniard was pointed out to him, he took off his hat and bowed. And being told that I was the ambassador of your Serene Highness, he stopped, and seemed about to speak. But I did not move, and the captain of the archers, who rode by him, said, 'Go on—go on!' Afterwards the captain mentioned this to the king, who said, 'Do you mean that he refused to pay you any reverence?' adding that such men as this who do not keep faith are bad, and so on. And I replied that I should have felt shame rather than honour if I had received any sign of courtesy from a person of this kind. The king was in his palace, and had seen Signor Lodovico pass, and with him were many other lords and gentlemen, who spoke much of the Moro. His Christian Majesty said that he had decided not to send him to Loches as he had intended, because at certain seasons of the year he himself goes there with his court for his amusement, and would rather not be there with him, as he does not wish to see him. So he has decided to send him to Lys in Berry, two leagues from the city of Bourges, where the king has a very strong castle with trenches wider than those of the Castello of Milan, full of water. This place is in the centre of France, and is kept by a gentleman, who was captain of the archers when his Majesty was Duke of Orleans, and had a body of tried guards who were trained by the king himself. When the Moro alighted from the mule which he rode, he was carried into the castle,

and is, I am told, so weak that he cannot walk a step without help. From this I judge that his days will be few. I commend myself humbly to your Serene Highness.

BENEDICTUS TREVISANUS.[81]
Eques. Orator."

Fortunately, the iron cage seems to have been a fable invented by the Venetian ambassador, and from all accounts the prisoner was well and honourably treated, although the king absolutely refused his request to see him during the fortnight that he remained in the fortress at Lyons. He received visits, however, from several of the king's ministers, who all remarked that if he had been guilty of some foolish actions his words were remarkably wise—"*toutefois moult sagement parloit*." Anger gave place to pity at the sight of this victim who had suffered so terrible a reverse of fortune, and the Benedictine chronicler, Jean d'Auton, deplores the sad fate of this unfortunate prince, who, after many golden days of wealth and prosperity, was doomed to end his life in weary and lonely captivity far from house and friends: "*Somme, si le pauvre Seigneur captif, de deuil inconsolable avoit le cœur serrè a nul devoit sembler merveilles*." The sorrowful destiny of the "*infelice Duca*," who had once boasted himself to be the favourite of fortune—"*Il Figlio della Fortuna*"—became the burden of popular poetry, alike in France and Italy. Jean d'Auton himself gives vent to his feelings in an elegy on the vanity of earthly glories—

"Si Ludovic, qui jadys pleine
cacque
Heut de ducatz et pouvoir

magnifique,
Est en exil, sans targe, escu
ne placque,
Captif, afflict, plus mausain
que cung heticque,
Et que, de main hostile et
inimique,
Malheur le fiere rudement
et estocque—
Gloire mondaine est fragile
et caducque."

The grief of the Milanese bards for their duke's cruel fate found utterance in the following lament:

Son quel duca in Milano
Che compianto sto in dolore
...
Io diceva che un sel Dio
Era in cielo e un Moro in
terra—
E secondo il mio disio
Io faveva pace e guerra
Son quel duca di Milano,"
etc.

Fausto Andrelino wrote a Latin poem beginning with the lines—

"Ille ego sum Maurus,
franco qui captus ab
hoste
Exemplum instabilis non
leve sortis eo;"

and Jean Marot found inspiration in a Venetian song—"Ogni fumo viene al basso"—which he

rendered in the following lines, alluding to the legend of the Moro's fresco in the Castello of Milan: —

"Jadiz fist paindre une
dame, embellie
Par sur sa robe, des villes
d'Ytalie
Et luy au près tenant des
epoussetes,
Voullant dire, par superbe
follie,
Que l'Ytalie estoit toute
sonillie
Et qu'il voulloit faire les
villes nettes.
Le roi Loys, voulant ravoir
ses mettes,
Par bonne guerre luy a fait
tel ennuy
Que l'Ytalie est nettoyé de
lui!
Chose usurpée legier est
consommée,
Comme argent vif qui
retourne en fumée."

From Lyons the captive duke was removed to Lys Saint-Georges in Berry, where he remained during the next four years in the charge of Gilbert Bertrand, the king's old captain of the guard. He was allowed to take exercise in the precincts of the castle and to fish in the moat. According to Sanuto, he was not wholly cut off from his friends. "Since he likes to know what is happening in the world outside, the king allows him to receive letters and to hear the news." But his health suffered from the confinement,

and in the summer of 1501, he became so ill that Louis XII., who was hunting in the neighbourhood, sent his doctor, Maitre Salomon, to see him. The physician was shocked at the prisoner's altered appearance; his long hair, as we learn from a contemporary miniature, had turned entirely white, and there were black circles round his eyes. He sighed constantly, complained of the faithless subjects who had caused his ruin, and asked eagerly for the latest news of the treaty with the King of the Romans. Maitre Salomon told the king that he believed Signor Lodovico was losing his reason, and his account moved Louis so much that he sent to Milan for one of the duke's favourite dwarfs, in order to beguile the weary hours of captivity. Meanwhile, in justice to Maximilian, it must be said that he was untiring in his efforts to obtain the release of his friend and kinsman. For many years he steadily refused to grant Louis XII. the investiture of Milan, unless Lodovico was set at liberty, and repeated his solicitations to this effect with the most unwearied pertinacity. On this point, however, the French king was inexorable. He knew the hold which the Moro had retained on the hearts of his subjects, and would not run the risk of another rebellion by allowing Lodovico to join his children at Innsbrück. At the prayer of the Empress Bianca, he released her brother, Ermes Sforza, in 1502, and a year later allowed Ascanio Sforza to return to Rome, at the request of Cardinal d'Amboise, and give his vote in the papal conclave. After the accession of his old enemy, Giuliano della Rovere, to the papal throne, Cardinal Sforza once more attained a high degree of honour and prosperity, and when he died, in 1505, Julius II. raised the magnificent monument in the church of S. Maria del Popolo to his memory. In

February, 1504, the German ambassador made another strong appeal to the king on his master's behalf for Lodovico's release, but the only concession that he could obtain was some relaxation in the rigour of his treatment. The duke was removed to the château of Loches in Touraine, a healthy and beautiful spot, on the summit of a lofty hill, and was allowed greater liberty and more society.

All contemporary writers agree that he bore his long and tedious captivity with remarkable patience and fortitude. "I have heard," writes the Como historian, Paolo Giovio, "from Pier Francesco da Pontremoli, who was the duke's faithful companion and servant during his captivity, that he bore his miserable condition with pious resignation and sweetness, often saying that God had sent him these tribulations as a punishment for the sins of his youth, since nothing but the sudden might of destiny could have subverted the counsels of human wisdom."

Early in the spring of 1508, the Moro seems to have made a desperate attempt to escape. According to the Milanese chronicler Prato, he bribed one of his guardians, with gold supplied, as we learn, from Padre Gattico, by the friars of S. Maria delle Grazie, and succeeded in making his way out of the castle gates hidden in a waggon load of straw. But he lost his way in the woods that surround Loches, and after wandering all night in search of the road to Germany, he was discovered on the following day by blood-hounds, who were put upon his track. After this, his captivity became more severe. He was deprived of books and writing materials and cut off from intercourse with the outer world. It was then, too, in all likelihood, that he was confined in the subterranean dungeon, still shown as the Moro's

prison. The cell, as visitors to Loches remember, is cut out of the solid rock, and light and air can only penetrate by one narrow loophole. There, tradition says, Leonardo's patron, the great duke who had once reigned over Milan, beguiled the weary hours of his captivity by painting red and blue devices and mottoes on his prison walls. Among these rude attempts at decoration we may still discover traces of a portrait of himself in casque and armour, and a sun-dial roughly scratched on the stone opposite the slit in the rock. And there, too, half effaced by the damp, are fragments of inscriptions, which tell the same piteous tale of regret for vanished days and weary longings for the end that would not come.

"Quand Mort me assault et que
je ne puis mourir
Et se courir on ne me veult,
mais me faire rudesse
Et de liesse me voir bannir. Que
dois je plus guèrir?"

Or this—

"Je porte en prison pour ma device que je m'arme de patience par force

de peine que l'on me fait pouster" (porter) ...

Again, in large letters among the fragment of red and blue paint, we read—

"Celui qui ne craint fortune
n'est pas bien saige."

Even more pathetic, when we recall the joyous days at Milan and Vigevano, where Lodovico listened

to readings from Dante in Beatrice's rooms, is the following version of Francesca da Rimini's famous lines:—

"Il n'y au monde plus
grande destresse,
Du bon tempts soi souvenir
en la tristesse."

At length death brought the desired release. Marino Sanuto briefly records the fact in the following words: "On the 17th day of May, 1508, at Loches, Signor Lodovico Sforza, formerly Duke of Milan, who was there in prison, died as a good Christian with the rites of the Catholic Church." All we know besides is that his faithful servant, Pier Francesco, was with him to the end, and closed his eyes in the last sleep. To this day the place of his burial remains unknown. A local tradition says that he was interred in the church of Loches at the entrance of the choir, but a manuscript account of the Sieur Dubuisson's travels in 1642, preserved in the Mazarin Library, states that Ludovic Sforza sleeps in the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre on the eastern side of the church. On his death-bed, it is said, he desired to be buried in the church of the Dominican friars at Tarascon, but we never hear if his wishes were carried out, and no trace of his burial is to be found in this place. On the whole we are inclined to think the most trustworthy authority on the subject is the Dominican historian of S. Maria delle Grazie, Padre Gattico. In the history of the convent which he wrote a hundred and fifty years after the Moro's death, he tells us that the friars of his convent supplied the duke with means for his unfortunate attempt to escape, and that this having failed, after his death they removed his body to Milan, and

buried him by the side of his wife, Duchess Beatrice. This may very well have been effected during the reign of Lodovico's son Maximilian, who was restored to his father's throne in 1512, and would explain the uncertainty which has always existed at Loches as to the Moro's grave, and the absence of any inscription to mark his burial-place.

For Lodovico's sake, let us hope, the good Dominican's story is true. It is good to think that, after all the distress of those long years of exile and captivity, the unfortunate prince should have been brought back to rest in his own sunny Milanese, under Bramante's cupola, in the tomb where he had wished to lie, at Beatrice's side. There, during the next three centuries, masses were duly said for the repose of Duke Lodovico's soul and that of his wife, on the four anniversaries sacred to their memory, "in gratitude," writes Padre Pino, "for all the benefactions that we have received from this duke and duchess." And to this day, on the Feast of All Souls, the stone floor immediately in front of the high altar, where Beatrice's monument once stood, is solemnly censed, year by year, in memory of the illustrious dead who sleep there, in Lodovico's own words, "until the day of resurrection."

FOOTNOTES:

[81] M. Sanuto. *Diarii*, iii. 320.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Milanese exiles at Innsbrück—Galeazzo di Sanseverino becomes Grand Ecuyer of France—Is slain at Pavia—Maximilian Sforza made Duke of Milan in 1512—Forced to abdicate by Francis I. in 1515—Reign of Francesco Sforza—Wars of France and Germany—Siege of Milan by the Imperialists—Duke Francesco restored by Charles V.—His marriage and death in 1535—Removal of Lodovico and Beatrice's effigies to the Certosa.

1500-1564

After the catastrophe of Novara and the final ruin of the Moro's cause, his loyal kinsfolk and followers were reduced to melancholy straits. A document among the Italian papers in the Bibliothèque Nationale gives a long list of the Milanese exiles who, in the year 1503, were living in exile, and whose lands and fortunes had been granted to French nobles or Italians who had embraced Louis XII.'s party. Among them we recognize many familiar names, Crivellis, Bergaminis, Marlianis, and Viscontis, who had served Duke Lodovico loyally and now shared in his disgrace. Many of these took refuge at Ferrara and Mantua; others went to Rome or lived in retirement on Venetian territory, while as many as two hundred and fifty were living at one time at Innsbrück. A few of these were pardoned in course of years, and obtained leave to return to their Lombard homes, but by far the greater number died in exile.

Chief among those courtiers and captains of the Moro who found refuge at Maximilian's court were

the Sanseverino brothers. Two of these, Fracassa and Antonio Maria, were soon reconciled with King Louis by the powerful influence of their brothers, the Count of Caiazzo and Cardinal Sanseverino. For Galeazzo, the son-in-law and prime favourite of the Moro, a strange future was in store. After his brilliant years at the court of Milan, he, too, tasted how salt the bread of exile is, and how bitter it is to depend on the charity of others. In 1503, he was still living at Innsbrück, where Sanuto describes him as always dressed in black and looking very sorrowful, and held of little account by the German courtiers, although Maximilian always treated him kindly. He accompanied the Emperor to the Diet at Augsburg, and took an active part in his various efforts to obtain Lodovico's deliverance. But a year later, when all hope of obtaining Lodovico's release was at an end, a fresh attempt seems to have been made by the Sanseverino family to reconcile Galeazzo with King Louis. He came to Milan and saw the Cardinal d'Amboise, who embraced his cause warmly, and a petition for the restoration of Galeazzo's houses and estates, as well as the fortune of 240,000 ducats which he had inherited from his wife Bianca, was addressed to the King. The result was that he soon received a summons to the French court, where he quickly won the royal favour, and on the death of Pierre d'Urfé a year later, was appointed Grand Ecuyer de France. From that time Galeazzo became one of Louis XII.'s chief favourites, and seldom left the king's side. In 1507 he attended Louis XII. when he entered Milan for the second time, and was a conspicuous figure in the grand tournament that was held on the Piazza of the Castello. Once more he came back to the scene of his old triumphs, under these changed circumstances, and played a leading

part in the wars that distracted the Milanese. Under Francis I., Galeazzo rose still higher in the royal favour, and won a signal victory over his old rival Trivulzio. The Grand Ecuyer boldly asserted his right to Castel Novo, which Louis XII. had granted to Trivulzio after the conquest of Milan, and, at the age of seventy, the old soldier came to Paris to plead his cause against Messer Galeazzo. But the suit was given against him, and he was thrown into prison for contempt of the king's majesty, and died at Chartres in 1518, bitterly rueing the day when he had entered the service of a foreign prince and led the French against Milan. Galeazzo triumphed once more, and kept up his reputation as a gallant soldier and brilliant courtier, until, in 1525, he was slain in the battle of Pavia, under the walls of the Castello, where, thirty-five years before, he had been wedded to Bianca Sforza.

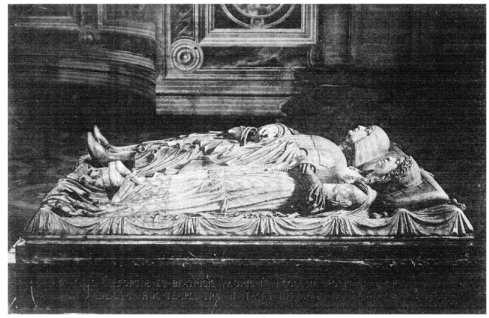
Meanwhile Beatrice's sons grew up at Innsbrück, under the care of their cousin, the Empress Bianca. It was a melancholy life for these young princes, born in the purple and reared in all the luxury and culture of Milan. And when their cousin Bianca died in 1510, they lost their best friend. But a sudden and unexpected turn of the tide brought them once more to the front. That warlike pontiff, Julius II., who, as Cardinal della Rovere, had been one of the chief instruments in bringing the French into Italy, entered into a league with Maximilian to expel them and reinstate the son of the hated Moro on the throne of Milan. They succeeded so well that, in 1512, four years after Lodovico's death at Loches, young Maximilian Sforza entered Milan in triumph, amidst the enthusiastic applause of the people. Once more he rode up to the gates of the Castello where he was born, and took up his abode there as reigning duke.

But his rule over Lombardy was short. A handsome, gentle youth, without either his father's talents or his mother's high spirit, Maximilian was destined to become a passive tool in the hands of stronger and more powerful men. His weakness and incapacity soon became apparent, and when, three years later, the new French king, Francis I., invaded the Milanese, and defeated the Italian army at Marignano, the young duke signed an act of abdication, and consented to spend the rest of his life in France. There he lived in honourable captivity, content with a pension allowed him by King Francis and with the promise of a cardinal's hat held out to him by the Pope, until he died, in May, 1530, and was buried in the Duomo of Milan. His brother Francesco was a far more spirited and courageous prince, who might have proved an admirable ruler in less troublous times, but was doomed to experience the strangest vicissitudes of fortune. After the second conquest of Milan by the French, he retired to Tyrol, until, in 1521, Pope Leo X. combined with Charles V. to oppose Francis I., and restore the Sforzas. Their aims were crowned with success, and by the end of the year Francesco Sforza was proclaimed Duke of Milan, only to be driven from his throne again three years later. After the defeat of Pavia, the young duke, who had won the love of all his subjects, was again restored; but having entered into a league with the Pope and Venice to expel the Imperialists, incurred the displeasure of Charles V., and was besieged in the Castello by the Connétable de Bourbon, who at length forced him to surrender. A prolonged struggle followed, in which Francesco Sforza was often worsted, and at one time forced to retire to Como. In the end, however, he was restored to the throne by Charles V., whose favour he succeeded in recovering,

when, in 1530, that monarch visited Italy to receive the imperial crown. At length this long-distracted realm enjoyed an interval of peace, and a brighter day seemed about to dawn for the unhappy Milanese.

The young duke was very popular with the people, who rejoiced in having a prince of their own once more, and who, in Guicciardini's words, looked to see a return of that felicity which they had enjoyed during his father's reign. When, in 1534, he married Charles V.'s niece, Christina of Denmark, the splendour of the wedding *fêtes*, the balls and tournaments that took place in the Castello, recalled the glories of Lodovico's reign and the marriage of the Empress Bianca. The charms of the youthful bride revived the memory of the duke's mother, Beatrice d'Este, and a richly illuminated book of prayers, prepared in honour of this occasion, and adorned with miniatures and Sforza devices, bore witness to Francesco's artistic tastes, and showed his desire to tread in his father's steps. But these bright prospects were soon clouded. The young duke became seriously ill, owing to a dangerous wound which he had received from an assassin, Bonifazio Visconti, twelve years before, and, after lingering through the summer months, he died on All Souls' Day, 1535, to the consternation of the whole Milanese, On the 19th of November the last of the Sforzas was buried with royal pomp in the Duomo of Milan, and his childless widow, the youthful Duchess Christina, retired to the city of Tortona, which had been given her as her marriage portion. Her portrait, painted by the hand of Holbein, is familiar to us all as well as "the few words she wisely spoke," when, in reply to Henry VIII.'s offer of marriage, she said "that unfortunately she had only one head, but that if she

had two, one should be at his Majesty's service."



Tomb of Lodovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este
Contessa of Pavia.ToList

A week or two later, Lodovico Sforza's only remaining son, Gianpaolo, the child of Lucrezia Crivelli, who had fought gallantly against French and Imperialists in defence of his brother's rights, died on his way to Naples. With him the last claimant to the throne of the Sforzas passed away. The duchy of Milan reverted to the Imperial crown, and this fair and prosperous realm sank into a mere province of Charles V.'s vast empire.

Thirty years after the last Sforza duke had been laid in his grave, the noble monument which the Moro had raised to his wife's memory in S. Maria delle Grazie was broken up. The friars who had known Lodovico and revered his memory were dead and gone, and the Prior then in office, seized with iconoclastic zeal, ordered the monument to be removed from the choir, in accordance with a canon

of the Council of Trent. The tomb was taken to pieces, and Cristoforo Solari's beautiful effigies of the duke and duchess were offered for sale. Fortunately, the news of this act of vandalism reached the ears of the Carthusians at Pavia, and remembering how much they owed to the Moro's generosity, they sent word to a Milanese citizen, Oldrado Lampugnano, to purchase the two marble statues for the Certosa. Oldrado, whose father had been exiled after the Moro's fall, and who was himself a loyal partisan of the house of Sforza, bought Solari's effigies for the small sum of thirty-eight ducats, and removed them to the Certosa, "that shrine which had been so often visited by the said duke and duchess in their lifetime, and for which they had ever shown the greatest love and honour."

There we see them to-day—Lodovico with the hooked nose and bushy eyebrows, in all the pride of his ducal robes, and Beatrice at his side, in the charm and purity of her youthful slumber, surrounded by other memorials of Sforzas and Viscontis, wrought with the same exquisite art and enriched with the same wealth of ornament. After all, these marble forms could hardly find a better home than the great Lombard sanctuary which was so closely linked with the brightest days of Beatrice's wedded life, and which to the last remained the object of Lodovico Sforza's care and love.

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THE END

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Page xi Etude changed to Étude
Page xv di changed to da
Page xvi Belrignardo changed to Belriguardo
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Page 14 II changed to Il
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Page 22 Tristran changed to Tristan
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Page 33 Arragon changed to Aragon
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Page 44 Elizabetta changed to Elisabetta
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Page 41 Galezzo changed to Galeazzo
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Page 177 Arragon changed to Aragon
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Page 187 Phillippe changed to Philippe
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Page 193 Comminnes changed to Commines
Page 195 Romanin changed to Romanini
Page 200 word "of" missing after "the daughters"
and before "Messer Sigismondo"
Page 206 Ambrosio changed to Ambrogio
Page 209 Ambrogie changed to Ambrogio
Page 210 Baldassarre changed

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Page 212 Rochetta changed to Rocchetta
Page 218 Valtelline change to Valtellina
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Page 232 Geneva changed to Genova
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Page 237 Godefroi changed to Godefroy
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Page 255 Guiliano changed to Giuliano
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Page 260 Lazaretto changed to Lazzaretto
Page 266 Arragon changed to Aragon
Page 267 or changed to of
Page 269 Arragon changed to Aragon
Page 272 Giascone changed to Giasone
Page 273 Giovo changed to Giovio

Page 293 de' Negris changed to de' Negri
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Page 345 sus changed to sua
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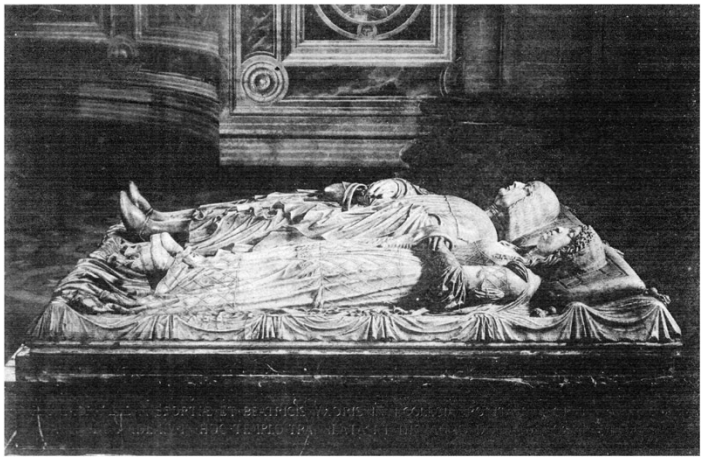
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