

Literature, &c.

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A SKETCH FROM ITALIAN HISTORY.

FROM THE FRENCH.

By Miss Mary E. Lee.

Among the great men whom the era of the 16th century produced, none possessed more astonishing qualities than Cosmo de Medici, son of the celebrated Giovanni de Medici, captain of the Black Band. At the early age of twenty he recovered through his extraordinary perseverance and address alone, the Ducal seat at Florence, which had been founded by his ancestor, Cosmo, the father of his people, and Lorenzo, the parent of letters. In 1537, he became Duke of Florence; in 1555, Duke of Sienna; and in 1563 Duke of Tuscany; and it was to his personal valor and energy alone, combined with a strong national love of country, that he owed his rapid progress in power. Constantly refusing alliance with France, although the same was repeatedly proffered by his relative, Catherine de Medici, he united with the Emperor against the French nation. Great vices were, however, mingled with Cosmo's noble qualities, and history pronounces a severe judgment on his character when she styles him crafty, cruel and avaricious. In truth, this man, who freed himself from his personal enemies by means of the sword and poison—who erected gallows in each quarter of his splendid capital—who did not hesitate to lay heavy monopolies on the citizens, for the purpose of contributing to his personal pleasures—was yet indefatigable in erecting splendid buildings for public utility, became the patron of savans, painters and poets, founded the University of Pisa, and was constantly watchful over the national honor and liberty of Italy.

Cosmo had four sons by Leonora of Toledo. The two oldest, who served in the Imperial army, were distinguished by their bravery and paternal attachment, while the younger, Don Garcia and Cardinal Giovanni de Medici, dwelt at the court of Florence, where their continued disputes and mutual dislike often won from their father the prediction of some unhappy issue.

Anxious to perpetuate the memory of the two great battles of Montemerte and Scannagallo, which he had won from the Marshal de Strozzi, the grand duke instituted the Order of St. Stephens, in 1562. When elected Grand Master, by Pope Pius XIV., Cosmo sought to add to their numbers the most illustrious names of Italy. His two sons, Peter and Francis, were made chevaliers, the Cardinal Giovanni was created Grand Prior, and Don Garcia alone received no title, a slight which rankled secretly in his bosom, although he so carefully concealed his disappointment as even to deceive the crafty duke himself. Pleased by his apparent submission, the duke one day promised, that if Garcia would endeavour to overcome the antipathy which he so openly declared toward his brother, he would reward his forbearance by bestowing on him the first promotion in the order, which might prove vacant. The youth, with apparent humility, consented to his father's wishes; and as the noble and confident spirit of his elder brother met with eagerness every advance on his part, the court of Florence soon rejoiced in the sudden reconciliation which seemed to exist between the pair.

About this time, Cosmo de Medici being chosen arbiter between the Sultan Solymen II. and the Republics of Genoa and Venice, prepared to receive their embassies with all possible magnificence. Painters, sculptors, and architects assembled in crowds at the Palace Pitti, San Giovanni, and Cappolini, which were selected as the residences of the plenipotentiaries. The numerous baths of porphyry and marble, which were constructed in the Cappolini palace, destined for the Turkish ambassador, were estimated at forty thousand crowns. Florence, rousing herself from the lethargy which had so long palsied her energies, showed deep interest in the coming festivity, and brought forth all the treasures of the famous Hotel de Ville. Services of gold, buffets of ebony inlaid with precious metals, goblets and cups carved by the best artists of the Florentine school, all were brought into requisition; while orders for flour, honey and perfumes were extended in every direction. Fruits and grapes, ripened at the foot of Vesuvius, were purchased at great expense. The fishermen of Sicily were ordered to reserve their best stores for Florence—while the hunters of Lombardy and Piedmont engaged to furnish game. Above all, a band of Greek artists too' possession of the arsenal, and laboured to devise the most splendid illuminations and the newest pyrotechnics. Nothing was wanting to the proper reception of the ambassadors.

The news of this promised *fetes* soon extended itself throughout Italy, and Florence was crowded with the elite of the young nobility of Naples, Milan, Pisa, Verona, and Venice. Every road leading to the Tuscan capital was filled with cavalades, equipages, and armorial litters.

'To Florence! to Florence!' was the general cry, yet under far gayer circumstances than when Regulus shouted 'To Carthage! to Carthage!'

Cosmo entered with the warmest enthusiasm into the luxurious and costly preparations which were every where making; for, like a skilful diplomatist, he wisely calculated that

the expense incurred by the state, would return with interest into the public coffers, and he rejoiced in having given the first signal to the universal prodigality. He frequently visited the palaces to mingle among the artists and workmen, where his presence was ever hailed with cries of rejoicing by the populace, and when his counsellors hinted at the enormous expenses incurred by the city, his answer was, 'Vox populi, vox Dei!'

It was determined that the entree of the ambassadors should take place on the thirteenth of November, 1562. On the morning of that very day, Cardinal Giovanni entered the Duke's apartment, and, after a friendly greeting, prayed that his father would grant him a small request.

'Sire,' he observed, 'you are about to become the object of general homage and felicitation; and, as the arbiter of three great nations, it is well perhaps that the statesman should not be harassed by those paternal claims which the presence of your children might produce. Allow me, then, to pass this important day in the pleasures of the chase, at our castle of Rossignono. It is a pastime which I have long desired, and the present moment seems most favorable to the gratification of my wish, for, as a cardinal, I cannot well appear at the reception of a Turkish ambassador, since the purple of a prince of the Church may not stand side by side with the robes of a follower of Mahomet.'

'Giovanni,' answered the grand duke, with an affectionate smile, 'speak out frankly and acknowledge that you hope on this day of general public festivity, to be able to yield more freely than ordinarily to the pleasures of the chase, those rude pleasures, so little suited to the profession which you bear.'

The youth's face lit up with a warm blush, as he smilingly acknowledged his father's discernment, and the grand duke, pleased by his openness, readily assented to his request, only inquiring who were to be his companions.

'Don Garcia has expressed himself desirous of accompanying me,' answered the cardinal, 'and my young friends, the Count of Novarro, the Marquis of Castleforte, Aldobrandini, and Chigi, all declare that they prefer a fete of Diana to the noisy gayety of the city.'

'You say that your brother means to accompany you,' rejoined the duke, and his brow knit, and a sudden gloom flitted over his features, as he seemed about to refuse the first permission. But fearful of reviving the former distrust of the brothers, by any expression of suspicion, he shook off his anxiety, and after an affectionate embrace, quietly observed—'Now go, my son—rejoin your brother, and a pleasant day's sport to you both.'

Scarcely had the youth descended the palace steps, than, unable to shake off his anxious presentiments, the grand duke summoned his faithful attendant, Alberic Castini, and exclaimed—

'Mount quickly as possible on horseback—follow the cardinal as though thou wast his shadow, and bring him safe back to the palace on this very night.'

'I pledge my life for his return,' replied the domestic, in a tone of firm resolution.

'The snare is already set—hasten—fly,' exclaimed the anxious father.

Alberic uttered not another word—and just then, as he hurried from the apartment, there was a discharge of cannon from the fort, the city bells pealed out their merriest chime, announcing the entry of the ambassadors into the capital; and chasing the cloud from his lofty brow, the grand duke placed the crown upon his head, muttering, 'I have done the father's part—now I must act the sovereign's' and, preceded by his guards, stiff in costumes of gold and steel, he took the way to the saloon, and seated himself on the ivory throne of Lorenzo de Medici. The immense palace was resplendent with lights, and, on that particular afternoon, Florence, the always successful rival of Rome and Venice, seemed to have displayed all the wonders of the famous garden of the Armida. In one place the waters of the Arno, spouting high in the air, formed beautiful *jet d'eau* on the verdant terraces; in another, showers of the gaudiest and sweetest flowers in profusion on the heads of thousands of maidens who danced graceful quadrilles in the midst of the marble amphitheatre, dedicated in days of yore to Marius, the conqueror of the Cimbri; farther on, a vast theatre offered various diversions to the populace in the pochimello of Naples, the harlequin of Boulogne, the pantaloons of Sienna, the scaramouche of Rome, and the trivelin of Bergamo.

Merchants from all parts of the world were installed in the elegant shops, which had arisen, as if by enchantment, along each bank of the Arno. Turks, Syrians, and Marseillais, dressed in their national costumes, displayed rich stuffs and precious tissues; while the vendors from Hungary, Spain and Flanders, sought to win notice by shining Toledo daggers and poignards of the truest steel; chaplets and crucifixes of rosewood.

The Portuguese merchants, hastening from the lately discovered Indies, spread out rare and foreign fruits, huge tortoiseshells, parrots of every hue, and robes of ostrich feathers; while the jugglers of Rome and France, mounted on gaudy cars, captivated the populace by the recital of imaginary tales, wonderful cures, and unheard-of acts of legerdemain. As the people of Florence, noisy, turbulent, intoxicated with joy, and saturated with perfumes, gave themselves up to an excess of pleasure, the gondoliers of the Arno, resting on their oars, floated along the river, and chanted in measured harmony the sweetest and most voluptuous songs.

The enormous clock of the cathedral struck midnight, and the signal for the display of fire-

works before the palace was now given. Cosmo de Medici, with the Turkish ambassador on one hand, and those of Venice and Genoa on the other, had just taken their seat in the alcove, when a domestic was seen advancing precipitately through the guard, and approaching the duke, he murmured so as to be heard by him alone, 'Sire, the cardinal, your son, has been found dead in the forest of Rossignono.'

'Dead!' muttered the duke. 'Is it thus you have fulfilled your morning's promise, Alberic?' 'Sire,' replied the servant, mournfully, 'as the cardinal and Don Garcia had not taken the usual road, I did not reach the huntsmen until night, and the cardinal was not then with the rest of the party.'

'It is well, carry the body as secretly as possible to my cabinet. Hasten back to Rossignono, and return with Don Garcia. And, hark! Alberic, silence and speed on your life.'

The domestic disappeared through the gay concourse, and, rising from his stately seat, Cosmo now advanced with smiling mien to the balustrade, and received the shouts and welcomes of the populace, as they arose in deafening exultation above the ringing of the bells and the discharge of artillery. The fire-works now commenced, and as the fashion of the times employed an excess of allegory, the first display was made to represent the Temple of Glory, where all the great men of ancient and modern Italy appeared. The Cæsars and the Medici, Raphael and Vitruvius, Cleomenes and Michael Angelo, the Scipios and Pallavicini, while, as a delicate compliment, they had introduced the two great Turkish sultans, Mahomet II. and Solymen into the very centre of the group. The goddess Glory herself was seen descending from Mount Olympus to distribute her laurels, till in the midst of awful thunder and lightning the heavens seemed to open, and received into her immense concave these heroes of the earth. The ingenious and splendid bouquets of flowers, queer squibs and chandeliers of rockets, which shot up in every direction against the midnight sky, the long garlands of variegated lamps, which were reflected to infinity in the silver mirror of the Arno, the beating of tambours, the noise of the halberds, the cries of the immense populace, all clad in festal costumes, all these things awakened admiration in the breasts of the foreign ambassadors, and they seemed as under the influence of a dream, till turning to express their gratification to the grand duke they perceived that he had retired.

The unhappy Cosmo had indeed left the gay fete as soon as possible, since its gaiety and ceremonial only increased the torture of his soul. Traversing unattended the long line of apartments, he at length reached his secret cabinet, and without taking time to lay aside his crown and sceptre, he threw himself on the corpse of his murdered son, which lay on a carpet, whose embroidery and gold were heavy with blood.

'My son! my son!' he exclaimed, as, in utter agony, he clasped the young and lifeless form to his bosom, 'is it thus that I see you fallen beneath the hand of the assassin? Giovanni, my son, vengeance shall yet be yours! Woe to him who plunged the dagger in this young bosom, my Giovanni, my precious boy!'

Just then a low rap at the door announced the arrival of the faithful Castini.

'Sire,' said he, addressing Cosmo, 'your command is executed: Don Garcia waits your summons in the next apartment.'

'It is well,' replied the grand duke, 'bid him enter; and for yourself, retire until this golden ball, falling into its metal basin, shall summon you again to my presence.'

The servant quietly withdrew, and throwing the carpet, as if carelessly, over the bloody corpse, the duke took his seat, in seeming composure, in his ebony chair. Don Garcia now advanced, with a pale and sorrowful countenance, yet utterly devoid of all appearance of agitation, and bending respectfully before his father, inquired the duke's pleasure. For a moment Cosmo gazed fixedly on his face, then breaking the solemn silence, he said—

'And has your hunt of to-day been successful, my son?'

'Yes, father,' replied the youth, 'we had a fine chase, and—'

'And your brother, Don Garcia, where is he?'

'The cardinal followed a stag—'

'Speak! where is he!' again inquired the unhappy father, in tones that seemed to freeze the youth's soul, for now he stood trembling and agitated before the duke. 'Come, then, I will show him to you,' muttered the stern parent, as, rising from his seat, he approached the spot where lay the lifeless corpse, and rising the covering, revealed to the horror-stricken Garcia the beautiful remains of his innocent brother; while, as the youth drew near, torrents of blood gushed from the open wound. 'Garcia, it is thou who hast done this,' he said solemnly, as he laid his hand on the youth's shoulder. 'Kneel instantly before me, confess every circumstance which led to the act, and receive justice from thy father and thy judge.'

Garcia became pale as marble; he seemed as if petrified, and large drops of sweat coursed each other down his rigid features, and mingled with his brother's blood. 'Since you command it, father,' he said, slowly, 'I most acknowledge myself the murderer, but it was Giovanni who first provoked me to anger; it was he who struck me first, and the blood which runs in these veins, could not receive the indignity without revenge.'

'It is false,' exclaimed the duke, 'thou didst first rouse thy brother's indignation; thou must have drawn him into the snare; yes! now thou hast revealed the aim of thy long concealed duplicity. Garcia! thou hast ever hated this young and innocent boy. But stay! the sen-

tence must be immediately executed. Blood calls for blood!'

'Mercy! mercy!' pleaded the frenzied youth, as he rolled in anguish at his father's feet.

'There is no mercy for thee,' cried the duke; 'instantly commend thy soul to God, and be thankful that the steps of the scaffold do not run with thy life-blood, for the descendant of the Medici must not suffer such humiliation.'

'Pardon! pardon! if not for my sake, at least for the sake of my brother, whom you so dearly loved,' was now the youth's cry.

'For my son's sake, I might grant you pardon,' added the duke solemnly, 'but in my own name I condemn you; you must die!' and with one stroke of his poignard he stabbed the miserable youth to the very heart.

For a moment the grand duke gazed on the two corpses, as they lay side by side, their life blood mingling in welling streams; then throwing the golden ball into its tingling basin, the attendant obeyed the summons.

'Alberic!' said the duke, with quiet composure, 'remove yonder corpses, they are the remains of my two sons. Bury them secretly in the dungeon of the ducal palace, and extend throughout Florence the news of the sudden illness of the Cardinal Giovanni, and the departure of Don Garcia, whom you may charge with a secret mission to Catharine of France.'

Scarcely had the attendant removed the bleeding remains, when once more casting the ball into the basin, the captain of the guards appeared.

'The dawn is breaking,' said Cosmo, 'let my council be early assembled; for, occupied as we are with the interests of our allies and the peace of Europe, a long period of slumber cannot be permitted to us who hold the destinies of the world in our hands; now retire.'

With these words the grand duke placed on his brow the ducal crown, and rose to meet the assembled council.

From the Columbian Magazine.

THE BEAUTY OF PEACE.

BY L. MARIA CHILD.

'Power itself has not half the might
Of gentleness.'—LEIGH HUNT.

Will you pardon me, courteous reader, if instead, of a story, I give you something more like a sermon? If you ask why I suppose it will not suit you as well, I may answer playfully in the language of old Dr. Mayhew of Boston, who sometimes indulged in a vain pleasantry not usual with clergymen in his Puritanic times. Being asked what was the reason that the Council of Bishops voted the Song of Solomon out, he replied, 'Indeed I cannot tell; except that mankind have always preferred songs to wisdom.'

Moreover you may listen more coldly to the advocacy of peace principles than to other wise words; because few men professing to believe the Christian religion venture to deny their truth while at the same time all agree in giving them a sort of moonlight reputation, a will o' the wisp foundation, as beautiful but impracticable theories. But I cannot help feeling a strong hope, amounting to the faith, that the world will be at least redeemed from the frightful vortex of sin and misery, into which it has been drawn by the prevailing Law of Force. And surely it is a mission worth living for, if I can give the least aid in convincing mankind that the Christian doctrine of overcoming evil with good is not merely a beautiful sentiment, as becoming to the religious soul as are pearls to the maiden's bosom, but that it is really the highest reason, the bravest manliness, the most comprehensive philosophy, the wisest political economy.

The amount of proof that it is so, seems abundant enough to warrant the belief that a practical adoption of peace principles would be always safe, even with the most savage men, and under the most desperate circumstances, provided there was a chance to have it distinctly understood that such a course was not based on cowardice, but on principle.

When Capt. Back went to the Polar Regions, in search of his friend Capt. Ross, he fell in with a band of Esquimaux, who had never seen a white man. The chief raised his spear to hurl it at the stranger's head; but when Capt. Back approached calmly and unarmed, the spear dropped, and the rude savage gladly welcomed the brother man, who had trusted in him. Had Capt. Back adopted the usual maxim, that it is necessary to carry arms in such emergencies, he would probably have occasioned his own death, and that of his companions.

Raymond, in his Travels, says: 'The assassin has been my guide through the defiles of Italy, the smuggler of the Pyrenees has received me with a welcome in his secret paths. Armed, I should have been the enemy of both; unarmed, they have alike respected me. In such expectation, I have long since laid aside all menacing apparatus whatever. Arms may indeed be employed against wild beasts; but men should never forget that they are no defence against the traitor. They may irritate the wicked and intimidate the simple. The man of peace has a much more sacred defence—his character.'

Perhaps the severest test to which peace principles were ever put, was in Ireland, during the memorable rebellion of 1798. During that terrible conflict, the Irish Quakers were continually between two fires. The Protestant party viewed them with suspicion and dislike because they refused to fight, or to pay military taxes; and the fierce multitude of insurgents deemed it sufficient cause for death, that they would neither profess belief in the Catholic religion nor help them to fight for Irish freedom. Victory alternated between the two contending parties, and as usual in civil war, the victors