

## LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

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### LETTER I.—PISA.

WE have adopted the present form of communication with the reader for these articles, because we found the use of one's plural privileges inconvenient in travelling. An author must reverse on these occasions the custom of his legitimate brother *we's*, and travel *cognito*; otherwise his personal experiences will sometimes have a very ludicrous and inconsistent effect. He will not be able to move about with so much freedom, or give the results of his impressions and encounters with such vivacity, as if he were unhampered with a body corporate. It is not every body, like Cerberus or a king, who can be "three gentlemen at once," and at the same time lose nothing of his loco-motion. Therefore, be it known once for all, that when we travel, though in company, we are one, and shall use the first person accordingly; being, nevertheless, at all other times, more than one, and ready to prove it beyond a doubt upon the head of any one else, who shall dispute our miscellaneousness.

Pisa, one of the oldest cities in Europe, and supposed to have originated in a colony from its Grecian namesake, was at one time the most flourishing city in Tuscany. But the sea deserted it; and with the sea gradually departed all its modern importance. What it retained longest, and up to a late period, was its renown as a place of learning and education. But even that has departed now. It has indeed an

university, whose name is loth to abandon it; and the education, to those who are very much in earnest about it, is worth procuring, because private tuition, of a very attentive kind, is to be had for a trifle; and the university lectures may be attended gratuitously.\* The science most in request is medicine, or rather surgery. The name of Professor Vaccà<sup>1</sup> (a man in the prime of life, with an intelligent and pleasing countenance) is known all over Europe. There is also another liberality, truly becoming the study of letters, and worth the imitation of countries that pique themselves on their advances beyond superstition:—men of any sect or religion can take all the degrees in the university, except those in divinity or canonical law. One of the most interesting sights now in Pisa is a venerable Greek Archbishop, who takes his walk on the Lungarno every evening. It is understood that he is superintending the education of some Greek youths, and that he puts the receipts of his office to the noble purpose of assisting it. Prince Alexander Mavrocordato,<sup>2</sup> who joined his countrymen last year in their great struggle, and to whom Mr. Shelley has dedicated his *Hellas*,<sup>3</sup> was studying here when his glorious duty called him off. I know not on what errand a rich Russian comes to the same place; but the other evening, in the cathedral, I saw one of the sons of the late Marshal S. His semi-barbarous, fair, active-looking, and not ill-natured face, formed a curious contrast with the procession of dark southern heads, that was passing him up the middle of the church. His brother, who is said to be handsome, is here also. I was told they

\* The writer of this article, for some weeks, had the pleasure of interchanging some English and Italian reading with the Abate Giuliani, an elegant scholar; and there is a young man of the name of Giannetti, who made a very kind and attentive master to his children, and promises to be an excellent instructor.

had been in Pisa about a year, and were *ricchissimi* (very rich)—a word which an Italian utters with a peculiar gravity.

What renders Pisa interesting now, and will continue to render it so as long as it exists, is its being left to a comparative solitude, and its containing one of the most singular, and many of the most ancient specimens of the arts, in Italy. It now stands five miles from the sea, and so completely out of the ordinary roads of communication, that the writers of elaborate works upon Italy do not think it incumbent upon them to notice it. Such however as have a true taste for their subject, cannot be well satisfied with themselves for the omission. Let the reader imagine a small white city, with a tower also white, leaning very distinctly in the distance at one end of it, trees on either side, and blue mountains for the back-ground. Such is their first sight of Pisa, as the traveller sees it in coming from Leghorn. Add to this, in summer-time, fields of corn on all sides, bordered with hedge-row trees, and the festoons of vines, of which he has so often read, hanging from tree to tree; and he may judge of the impression made upon an enthusiastic admirer of Italy, who is in Tuscany for the first time. It looks like a thing you have dreamt of, and answers most completely to the imagination.

In entering the city, the impression is beautiful. What looked white in the distance remains as pure and fair on closer acquaintance. You cross a bridge, and cast your eye up the whole extent of the city one way, the river Arno (the river of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio) winding through the middle of it under two more bridges; and fair elegant houses of good size bordering the wide pavement on either side. Thus is the Lung'arno, or street along the Arno. The mountains, in which you now discover the look of their marble veins (for it is from these that the marble of Carrara comes)

tower away beautifully at the further end, and seem much nearer than they are. The Arno, which is about as wide perhaps as the Isis at Oxford, is sandy coloured, and in the summer-time shrunken; but still it is the river of the great Tuscan writers, the visible possessor of the name we have all heard a thousand times, and we feel what a true thing is that which is called ideal.

The first novelty that strikes you, after your dreams and matter-of-fact have recovered from the surprise of their introduction to one another, is the singular fairness and new look of houses that have been standing hundreds of years. This is owing to the Italian atmosphere. Antiquity every where refuses to look ancient; it insists upon retaining its youthfulness of aspect. The consequence at first is a mixed feeling of admiration and disappointment; for we miss the venerable. The houses seem as they ought to have sympathized more with humanity, and were as cold and as hard-hearted as their materials. But you soon find that Italy is the land, not of the venerable, but the beautiful; and cease to look for old age in the chosen country of the Apollo and the Venus. The only real antiquities are those in Dante and the oldest painters, who treat the Bible in an ancient style. Among the mansions of the Lungarno is one entirely fronted with marble, and marble so pure and smooth that you can see your face in it. It is in a most graceful style of architecture, and has a curious symbol and motto over the door, which is the second Pisan mystery. The symbol is an actual fetter, attached with great nicety of taste to the middle stone over the door-way: the motto, *Alla Giornata* (For the Day, or the Day's Work). The allusion is supposed to be some captivity undergone by one of the Lanfreducci family, the proprietors: but nobody knows. Further up on the same side of the way, is the old ducal palace,

said to be the scene of the murder of Don Garcia by his father, which is the subject of one of Alfieri's tragedies:<sup>4</sup> and between both, a little before you come to the old palace, is the mansion still belonging to the family of the Lanfranchi, formerly one of the most powerful in Pisa. Part of the inside is said to have been built by Michael Angelo. The Lanfranchi were among the nobles, who conspired to pull down the traitorous ascendancy of Count Ugolino,<sup>5</sup> and wreaked that more infamous revenge on him and his young children. I need not remind the reader of the passage in Dante; but perhaps he is not aware, that Chaucer has worthily related the story after him, referring, with his usual modesty, for a more sufficing account, to "the grete poete of Itaille." See the Monk's Tale,<sup>6</sup> part the last, entitled "Hugelin of Pise." The tower in which Ugolino was starved, was afterwards called the Tower of Famine. Chaucer, who is supposed to have been in Italy, says that it stood "a littel out" of Pisa; Villani<sup>7</sup> says, in the Piazza of the Anziani. It is understood to be no longer in existence, and even its site is disputed. It is curious to feel oneself sitting quietly in one of the old Italian houses, and think of all the interests and passions that have agitated the hearts of so many generations of its tenants; all the revels and the quarrels that have echoed along its walls; all the guitars that have tinkled under its windows; all the scuffles that have disputed its doors. Along the great halls, how many feet have hurried in alarm! how many stately beauties have drawn their quiet trains! how many huge torches have ushered magnificence up the staircases! how much blood perhaps been shed! The ground-floors of all the great houses in Pisa, as in other Italian cities, have iron bars at the windows, evidently for security in time of trouble. The look is at first very gloomy and prison-like, but you get used to it. The bars

also are thin, round, and painted white, and the interstices large; and if the windows are towards a garden, and bordered with shrubs and ivy, as in the Casa Lanfranchi, the imagination makes a compromise with their prison-like appearance, and persuades itself they are guards only in time of war, but trellises during a peace-establishment. All the floors are made for separate families, it having been the custom in Italy from time immemorial for fathers and mothers, sons and daughters-in-law, or vice versa, with as many other relations as might be "agreeable," to live under the same roof. Spaciousness and utility were the great objects with the builder; and a stranger is sometimes surprised with the look of the finest houses outside, particularly that of the ground-floor. The stables used often to be there, and their place is now as often occupied by shops. In the inside of the great private houses there is always a certain majestic amplitude; but the entrances of the rooms and the staircase on the ground floor are often placed irregularly, so as to sacrifice everything to convenience. In the details there is sure to be a noble eye to proportion. You cannot look at the elevation of the commonest door-way, or the ceiling of a room appropriated to the humblest purposes, but you recognize the land of the fine arts. You think Michael Angelo has been at the turning of those arches,—at the harmonizing of those beautiful varieties of shape, which by the secret principles common to all the arts and sciences, affect the mind like a sort of inaudible music. The very plasterer who is hired to give the bare walls of some old unused apartment an appearance of ornament, paints his door-ways, his pilasters, and his borders of leaves, in a bold style of relief and illusion, which would astonish the doubtful hand of many a gentleman "in the higher walks of art." It must be observed however, that this is a piece of good

taste which seems to have survived most others, and to have been kept up by the objects upon which it works; for the arts are at present lying fallow in Italy, waiting for more strenuous times.

I was so taken up, on my arrival at Pisa, with friends and their better novelties, that I forgot even to look about me for the Leaning Tower. You lose sight of it on entering the town, unless you come in at the Lucca gate. On the Sunday following however I went to see it, and the majestic spot in which it stands, with Mr. Shelley. Good God! what a day that was, compared with all that have followed it! I had my friend with me, arm-in-arm, after a separation of years: he was looking better than I had ever seen him—we talked of a thousand things—we anticipated a thousand pleasures — — — I must plunge again into my writing, that I may try to forget it.

The Leaning Tower stands in a solitary quarter of the city, but in illustrious company. Mr. Forsythe,<sup>8</sup> a late traveller of much shrewdness and pith, (though a want of ear, and an affectation of ultra good sense, render him sometimes extremely unfit for a critic on Italy,—as where he puts music and perfumery on a level,) has been beforehand with the spot itself in putting this idea in my head. “Pisa,” says he, “while the capital of a republic, was celebrated for its profusion of marble, its patrician towers, and its grave magnificence. It still can boast some marble churches, a marble palace, and a marble bridge. Its towers, though no longer a mark of nobility, may be traced in the walls of modernized houses. Its gravity pervades every street; but its magnificence is now confined to one sacred corner. There stand the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Leaning Tower, and the Campo Santo; all built of the same marble, all varieties of the same architecture, all venerable with

“years, and fortunate both in their society and in their solitude.”—Forsythe’s Italy, 1801.

I know not whether my first sensation at the sight of the Leaning Tower, was admiration of its extreme beauty, or its threatening attitude. I remember being exceedingly struck with both. Its beauty has never been sufficiently praised. Its overhanging aspect seems to menace the houses near it with instant destruction. The inclination is fourteen feet out of the perpendicular, and has singularly escaped the exaggerations of travellers and pictures. We wonder that people should build houses underneath it, till we recollect that it has probably stood thus ever since it was built, that is to say, for nearly six hundred and fifty years; and that habit reconciles us to any thing. “The Leaning Tower at first sight,” says Mr. Matthews, in his *Diary of an Invalid*,<sup>9</sup> “is quite terrific, and exceeds expectation. There is, I believe, no doubt of the real history of this tower. The foundation-ground gave way during the progress of the building, and the architect completed his work in the direction thus accidentally given to it. Accordingly, we find in the construction of the upper part, that the weight is supported in a way to support the equilibrium.” He means, that something of a curve backwards is given to it. Mr. Forsythe seems to ridicule opinions to this effect; but I can only say, that such was the impression on my own eyes, before I called to mind anything that had been said about it. The structure was begun by a German artist, William of Inspruck,<sup>10</sup> and finished by Italians. Several other towers in Pisa, including the Observatory, have a very visible inclination, owing to the same cause,—the sinking of the soil, which is light, sandy, and full of springs; and surely nothing is more probable than an attempt on the part of the builders of so beautiful a structure to counteract the consequences of



the foundation's having given way. The tower is a campanile or belfry to the Cathedral. It was the custom in Italy to make the belfry a separate building, and the custom was a good one; for it afforded variety, and prevented barbarism. The height of the tower is about 150 feet, but it looks more, on account of its happy situation and the lowness of the houses near it. Let the reader imagine the Monument of London sheathed in an open work of eight stories of little columns, and leaning in a fine open situation, and he will have some idea of this noble cylinder of marble. The sheath is its great beauty, and gives it an extraordinary aspect of richness and simplicity.

With regard to the company in which it stands, let the reader suppose the new square at Westminster Abbey, converted into a broad grass walk, and standing in a much more solitary part of the town. Let him suppose at one end of this walk the Leaning Tower, with some small but elegant houses on one side of it, looking down the grass plot; the Baptistery, a rotunda, standing by itself at the opposite end; the public hospital, an extremely neat and quiet building, occupying the principal length of the road which borders the grass plot on one side; on the other side, and on the grass itself, the Cathedral, stretching between the Leaning Tower and the Baptistery; and lastly, at the back of the Cathedral, and visible between the openings at its two ends, the Campo Santo or Burial Ground, a set of walled marble cloisters full of the oldest paintings in Italy. All these buildings are detached; they all stand in a free, open situation; they all look as if they were built but a year ago; they are all of marble; the whole place is kept extremely clean,—the very grass in a state of greenness not common to turf in the South; and there are trees looking upon it over a wall next the Baptistery. Let the reader add to this scene a few boys playing

about, all ready to answer your questions in pure Tuscan,—women occasionally passing with veils or bare heads, or now and then a couple of friars; and though finer individual sights may be found in the world, it will be difficult to come upon an assemblage of objects more rich in their communion.

The Baptistery is a large rotunda, richly carved, and appropriated solely to the purpose after which it is christened. It is in a mixed style, and was built in the twelfth century. Mr. Forsythe, who is deep in arches and polygons, objects to the crowd of unnecessary columns; to the “hideous “tunnel which conceals the fine swell of the cupola;” and to the appropriation of so large an edifice to a christening. The “tunnel” may deserve his wrath; but his architectural learning sometimes behaves as ill as the tunnel, and obscures his better taste. A christening, in the eyes of a good Catholic, is at least as important an object as a rotunda; and there is a religious sentiment in the profusion with which ornament is heaped upon edifices of this nature. It forms a beauty of itself, and gives even mediocrity a sort of abundance of intention that looks like the wealth of genius. The materials take leave of their materiality, and crowd together into a worship of their own. It is no longer, “let every “thing,” only, “that has *breath*, praise the Lord;” but let every thing else praise him, and take a meaning and life accordingly. Let column obscure column, as in a multitude of men; let arch strain upon arch, as if to ascend to heaven; let there be infinite details, conglomerations, mysteries, lights, darkneses; and let the birth of a new soul be well and worthily celebrated in the midst of all.

The Cathedral is in the Greek style of the middle ages, a style which Mr. Forsythe thinks should rather be called the Lombard, “as it appeared in Italy first under the Lombard princes.” He says, that it includes “whatever was grand or

“beautiful in the works of the middle ages;” and that “this “was perhaps the noblest of them all.” He proceeds to find fault with certain incongruities, amongst which are some remains of Pagan sculpture left standing in a Christian church; but he enthusiastically admires the pillars of oriental granite that support the roof. The outside of the building consists of mere heaps of marble, mounting by huge steps to the roof; but their simplicity as well as size gives them a new sort of grandeur; and Mr. Forsythe has overlooked the extraordinary sculpture of the bronze doors, worthy of the same hand that made those others at Florence, which Michael Angelo said were fit to be the gates of Paradise. It is divided into compartments, the subjects of which are taken from Scripture; and if the doors at Florence surpass it, they must be divine indeed. The relief is the most graceful and masterly conceivable; the perspective astonishing, as if in a drawing; and equal justice is done to the sharp monstrosities of the devil with his bat-wings, and the gentle graces of the Saviour. There is a great number of pictures in the Cathedral, good enough to assist rather than spoil the effect, but not remarkable. I have not been present when the church-service has been at its best; but the leader does not seem to rely much on his singers, by the noise which he makes in behalf of time. His vehement roll of paper, sounds like the lashing of a whip. One evening, in August, I saw the whole inside of the Cathedral lit up with wax in honour of the Assumption. The lights were disposed with much taste, but soon produced a great heat. There was a gigantic picture of the Virgin displayed at the upper end, who was to be supposed sitting in heaven, surrounded with the celestial ardours; but she was “dark with excess of bright.” It is impossible to see this profusion of lights, especially when one knows their symbolical meaning, without being struck

with the source from which Dante took his idea of the beatified spirits. His heaven, filled with lights, and lights too arranged in figures, which glow with lustre in proportion to the beatitude of the souls within them, is clearly a sublimation of a Catholic church. And it is not the worse for it, that nothing escapes the look of definiteness and materiality like fire. It is so airy, joyous, and divine a thing, when separated from the idea of pain and an ill purpose, that the language of happiness naturally adopts its terms, and can tell of nothing more rapturous than burning bosoms and sparkling eyes. The Seraph of the Hebrew theology was a Fire. But then the materials of heaven and hell are the same? Yes; and a very fine piece of moral theology might be made out of their sameness, always omitting the brute injustice of eternal punishment. Is it not by our greater or less cultivation of health and benevolence, that we all make out our hells and heavens upon earth? by a turning of the same materials and passions of which we are all composed, to different accounts? Burning now in the horrors of hell with fear, hatred, and uncharitableness, and now in the joys or at least the happier sympathies of heaven, with good effort, courage, gratitude, generosity, love? When Dante was asked where he found his hell, *he* answered, "upon earth." He found his heaven in the same place; and no disparagement either to a future state. If it is impossible for the mass of matter to be lost, or even diminished, it seems equally impossible for the mass of sensations to be lost; and it is surely worth while, whatever our creeds may be, to take as much care as possible that what we have to do with it, may be done well, and rendered worth the chance of continuance.\*

\* See an ingenious article on this subject in Tucker's *Light of Nature*,<sup>11</sup> which however is not imagined as highly as it might be, or illustrated with as much as he could reasonably have deduced from nature.

The crowning glory of Pisa is the Campo Santo. I entered for the first time at twilight, when the indistinct shapes, colours, and antiquity of the old paintings wonderfully harmonized with the nature of the place. I chose to go towards evening, when I saw it again; and though the sunset came upon me too fast to allow me to see all the pictures as minutely as I could have wished, I saw enough to warrant my giving an opinion of them; and I again had the pleasure of standing in the spot at twilight. It is an oblong inclosure, about the size of Stratford Place,<sup>12</sup> and surrounded with cloisters wider and lighter than those of Westminster. At least, such is my impression. The middle is grassed earth, the surface of which, for some depth, is supposed to have been brought from Palestine at the time of the crusades, and to possess the virtue of decomposing bodies in the course of a few hours. The tradition is, that Ubaldo Lanfranchi,<sup>13</sup> Archbishop of Pisa, who commanded the forces contributed by his countrymen, brought the earth away with him in his ships; but though such a proceeding would not have been impossible, the story is now, I believe, regarded as a mere legend. The decomposition of the bodies might have been effected by other means. Persons are buried both in this enclosure and in the cloisters, but only persons of rank or celebrity. Most of the inscriptions for instance (of which there are some hundreds, all on marble, and mixed with busts and figures) are to the memory of Pisans in the rank of nobility; but there are several also to artists and men of letters. The most interesting grave is that of Benozzo,<sup>14</sup> one of the old painters, who lies at the foot of his own works. Here is a handsome monument, with a profile, to Algarotti,<sup>15</sup> erected by Frederick of Prussia. Pignotti,<sup>16</sup> the fabulist, has another; and Fabroni,<sup>17</sup> the late eulogist of eminent Italians on handsome paper, has a bust so good-natured and full of

a certain jolly gusto, that we long to have eat olives with him. In truth, these modern gettings up of renown, in the shape of busts and monuments to middling men of talent, appear misplaced, when you come to notice them. They look in the way. But the old pictures, which they seem to contradict and interfere with, reconcile them at last. Any thing and every thing mortal has its business here. The pretensions of mediocrity are exalted into the claims of the human being. One blushes to deny the writers of amiable books what one would demand for one's own common nature; or to think of excluding a man for doing better than hundreds of the people there, merely because he has not done so well as some who are not there. Pignotti and Algarotti, at last, even harmonize with some sprightly figures who play their harps and their love-songs in the pictures, and who flourished hundreds of years ago, as their readers flourish now; and even the bustling and well-fed amenity of Monsignor Fabroni is but a temporary contradiction, which will be rendered serious some day by the crumbling away of his marble cheeks, or the loss of some over-lively feature. Let him, for God's sake, live in inscription, and look treats in stone.

Besides these modern pieces of sculpture, there has been for some years a collection of ancient marbles, chiefly urns and sarcophagi, together with some fragments of the early Italian school. It is so impossible to pay proper attention to any large collection of art, without repeated visits, that I do not pretend to have given it to the old pictures, much less to the marbles. The first impression is not pleasant,—their orderly array, the numerals upon them, and the names of the donors upon the walls behind, giving the whole too much the air of a shew-room or common gallery. The pictures form part of the sentiment of the place as a burial

ground, and would certainly be better by themselves; but the antiquity of the marbles reconciles us at last. From the glance I took at them, many appear to be poor enough, but several very good. I noticed in particular one or two sarcophagi with reliefs of Bacchus and Ariadne, and a head supposed to be that of a Roman Emperor, and looking quite brutal enough. As to the Paganism, I do not quarrel, like Mr. Forsythe, with the presence of things Pagan in a Christian edifice; not only because the Pagan and Catholic religions have much that is in common externally, their draperies, altars, incense, music, winged genii, &c.; but because from a principle which the author of a new Comment on Dante<sup>18</sup> has noticed, there is in fact an identity of interests and aspirations in all these struggles of mortal man after a knowledge of things supernatural.\*

The paintings on the walls, the great glory of Pisa, are by Orgagna,<sup>19</sup> Simon Memmi,<sup>20</sup> Giotto,<sup>21</sup> Buffalmacco,<sup>22</sup> Benozzo, and others,—all more or less renowned by illustrious pens; all, with more or less gusto, the true and reverend harbingers of the greatest painters of Italy. Simon Memmi is the artist celebrated by Petrarch for his portrait of Laura; Buffalmacco is the mad wag (grave enough here) who cuts such a figure in the old Italian novels; and Giotto, the greatest of them all, is the friend of Dante, the hander down of his like-

\* See a "Comment on the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri," just published. It is written in the style of one who has been accustomed to speak another language, and ventures upon some singularly gratuitous assumptions respecting the doctrine of eternal punishment: but the poetical reader will consider it a valuable addition to the stock of criticism on Dante, and wish that the author may continue it. It contains some happy local illustrations, a complete account of the real history of Paulo and Francesca, a settlement of the question respecting Beatrice, and a variety of metaphysico-theological remarks in as good and deep a taste as those above-mentioned are idle.

ness to posterity, and himself the Dante of his art. High as this eulogy is, nobody will think it too high who has seen his works in the Campo Santo. They are of the same fine old dreaming character, the same imaginative mixture of things familiar with things unearthly, the same strenuous and (when they choose) gentle expression,—in short, the same true discernment of the “differences of things,” now grappling with a fiend or a fierce thought, now sympathising with fear and sorrow, now setting the muscles of grim warriors, now dissolving in the looks and flowing tresses of women, or setting a young gallant in an attitude to which Raphael might have traced his cavaliers. And this is more or less the character of the very oldest pictures in the Campo Santo. They have the germs of beauty and greatness, however obscured and stiffened, the struggle of true pictorial feeling with the inexperience of art. As you proceed along the walls, you see gracefulness and knowledge gradually helping one another, and legs and arms, lights, shades, and details of all sorts taking their proper measures and positions, as if every separate thing in the world of painting had been created with repeated efforts, till it answered the original and always fair idea. They are like a succession of quaint dreams of humanity during the twilight of creation.

I have already mentioned that the pictures are painted on the walls of the four cloisters. They occupy the greater part of the elevation of these walls, beginning at top and finishing at a reasonable distance from the pavement. The subjects are from the Old Testament up to the time of Solomon, from the legends of the middle ages, particularly St. Ranieri (the patron saint of Pisa) and from the history of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, &c. with the Day of Judgment. There is also a Triumph of Death. The colours of some of them, especially of the sky and ship in the voyage of St. Ranieri, are



wonderfully preserved. The sky looks as intensely blue as the finest out of doors. But others are much injured by the sea air, which blows into Pisa; and it is a pity that the windows of the cloisters in these quarters are not glazed, to protect them from further injury. The best idea perhaps which I can give an Englishman of the general character of the paintings, is by referring him to the engravings of Albert Durer,<sup>23</sup> and the serious parts of Chaucer. There is the same want of proper costume—the same intense feeling of the human being, both in body and soul—the same bookish, romantic, and retired character—the same evidences, in short, of antiquity and commencement, weak (where it is weak) for want of a settled art and language, but strong for that very reason in first impulses, and in putting down all that is felt. An old poet however always has the advantage of an old painter, because he is not obliged to a literal description of arms, legs, and attitudes, and thus escapes half his quaintness. But they truly illustrate one another. Chaucer's *Duke Theseus*,<sup>24</sup> clothed and behaving accordingly—his yawning courtiers, who thank king Cambuscan<sup>25</sup> for dismissing them to bed—his god Janus keeping Christmas with his fire-side and his dish of brawn, &c.—exhibit the same fantastic alternations of violated costume and truth of nature. The way in which he mingles together personages of all times, nations, and religions, real and fictitious, Samson and Turnus with Socrates, Ovid with St. Augustin, &c. and his descriptions of actual “purtreyings on a wall,” in which are exhibited at once, Narcissus, Solomon, Venus, Cræsus, and “the porter Idleness,”<sup>26</sup> resemble the manner in which some of the painters of the Campo Santo defy all perspective, and fill one picture with twenty different solitudes. There is a painting for instance devoted to the celebrated anchorites or hermits of the desert. They are represented according to their seven-

ral legends—reading, dying, undergoing temptations, assisted by lions, &c. At first they all look like fantastic actors in the same piece; but you dream, and are reconciled. The contempt of every thing like interval, and of all which may have happened in it, makes the ordinary events of life seem of as little moment; and the mind is exclusively occupied with the sacred old men and their solitudes, all at the same time, and yet each by himself. The manner in which some of the hoary saints in these pictures pore over their books and carry their decrepit old age, full of a bent and absorbed feebleness—the set limbs of the warriors on horseback—the sidelong unequivocal looks of some of the ladies playing on harps, and conscious of their ornaments—the people of fashion, seated in rows, with Time coming up unawares to destroy them—the other rows of elders and doctors of the church, forming part of the array of heaven—the uplifted hand of Christ denouncing the wicked at the Day of Judgment—the daring satires occasionally introduced against hypocritical monks and nuns—the profusion of attitudes, expressions, incidents, broad draperies, ornaments of all sorts, visions, mountains, ghastly looking cities, fiends, angels, sybilline old women, dancers, virgin brides, mothers and children, princes, patriarchs, dying saints;—it is an injustice to the superabundance and truth of conception in all this multitude of imagery, not to recognise the real inspirers as well as harbingerers of Raphael and Michael Angelo, instead of confining the honour to the Massacios<sup>27</sup> and Peruginos.<sup>28</sup> The Massacios and Peruginos, for all that ever I saw, meritorious as they are, are no more to be compared with them, than the sonnetteers of Henry the Eighth's time are to be compared with Chaucer. Even in the very rudest of the pictures, where the souls of the dying are going out of their mouths in the shape of little children, there are passages not unworthy of Dante or Mi-

chael Angelo,—angels trembling at the blowing of trumpets, men in vain attempting to carry their friends into heaven; and saints, who have lived ages of temperance, sitting in calm air upon hills far above the triumphant progress of Death, who goes bearing down the great, the luxurious, and the young. The picture by Titian,<sup>29</sup> in which he has represented the three great stages of existence, bubble-blowing childhood, love-making manhood, and death-contemplating old age, is not better conceived, and hardly better made out, than some of the designs of Orgagna and Giotto. Since I have beheld the Campo Santo, I have enriched my day-dreams and my stock of the admirable, and am thankful that I have names by heart, to which I owe homage and gratitude. Tender and noble Orgagna, be thou blessed beyond the happiness of thine own heaven! Giotto, be thou a name to me hereafter, of a kindred brevity, solidity, and stateliness, with that of thy friend Dante!\*

The air of Pisa is soft and balmy to the last degree. Mr. Forsythe thinks it too moist, and countenance is given to his opinion by the lowness and flatness of the place, which lies in a plain full of springs and rivers, between the Apennines and the sea. The inhabitants also have a proverb,—*Pisa pesa a chi posa*,—which may be translated,

Pisa sits ill  
On those who sit still.

To me the air seemed as dry as it is soft; and most people will feel oppressed every where, if they do not take exercise. The lower rooms of the houses are reckoned how-

\* There is a good description of the pictures in the Campo Santo, written by Professor Rosini,<sup>30</sup> of Pisa, and enriched with some criticisms by his friend the Cavaliere de Rossi.

ever too damp in winter, at least on the Lungarno; though the winter season is counted delicious, and the Grand Duke always comes here to spend two months of it. The noon-day sun in summer-time is formidable, resembling more the intense heat struck from burning metal, than any thing we can conceive of it in England. But a sea-breeze often blows of an evening, when the inhabitants take their exercise. A look out upon the Lungarno at noon-day is curious. A blue sky is overhead—dazzling stone underneath—the yellow Arno gliding along, generally with nothing upon it, sometimes a lazy sail; the houses on the opposite side, sleeping with their green blinds down; and nobody passing but a few labourers, carmen, or countrywomen in their veils and handkerchiefs, hastening with bare feet, but never too fast to forget a certain air of strut and stateliness. Dante, in one of his love poems, praises his mistress for walking like a peacock, nay even like a crane, *strait above herself*:—

Soave a guisa va di un bel pavone,  
Diritta sopra se, coma una grua.<sup>31</sup>

Sweetly she goes, like the bright peacock; strait  
Above herself, like to the lady crane.<sup>32</sup>

This is the common walk of Italian women, rich and poor. The step of Madame Vestris<sup>33</sup> on the stage resembles it. To an English eye at first it seems wanting in a certain modesty and moral grace; but you see what the grave poet has to say for it, and it is not associated in an Italian mind with any such deficiency: that it has a beauty of its own is certain.

Solitary as Pisa may look at noon-day, it is only by comparison with what you find in very populous cities. Its desolate aspect is much exaggerated. The people, for the most part, sit in shade at their doors in the hottest weather, so

that it cannot look so solitary as many parts of London at the same time of the year; and though it is true that grass grows in some of the streets, it is only in the remotest. The streets, for the most part, are kept very neat and clean, not excepting the poorest alleys, a benefit arising not only from the fine pavement which is every where to be found, but from the wise use to which criminals are put. The punishment of death is not kept up in Tuscany. Robbers, and even murderers, are made to atone for the ill they have done by the good works of sweeping and keeping clean. A great murderer on the English stage used formerly to have a regular suit of brick-dust. In Tuscany, or at least in Pisa, robbers are dressed in a red livery, and murderers in a yellow. A stranger looks with a feeling more grave than curiosity at these saffron-coloured mysteries, quietly doing their duty in the open streets, and not seeming to avoid observation. But they look just like other men. They are either too healthy by temperance and exercise to exhibit a conscience, or think they make up very well by their labour for so trifling an ebullition of animal spirits. And they have a good deal to say for themselves, considering their labour is in chains and for life.

The inhabitants of Pisa in general are not reckoned a favourable specimen of Tuscan looks. You are sure to meet fine faces in any large assembly, but the common run is certainly bad enough. They are hard, prematurely aged, and what expression there is, is worldly. Some of them have no expression whatever, but are as destitute of speculation and feeling as masks. The bad Italian face and the good Italian face are the extremes of insensibility and the reverse. But it is rare that the eyes are not fine, and the females have a profusion of good hair. Lady Morgan<sup>34</sup> has justly remarked the promising countenances of Italian

children, compared with what they turn out to be as they grow older; and adds with equal justice, that it is an evident affair of government and education. You doubly pity the corruptions of a people, who besides their natural genius, preserve in the very midst of their sophistication a frankness distinct from it, and an entire freedom from affectation. An Italian annoys you neither with his pride like an Englishman, nor with his vanity like a Frenchman. He is quiet and natural, self-possessed without wrapping himself up sulkily in a corner, and ready for cheerfulness without grimace. His frankness sometimes takes the air of a simplicity, at once singularly misplaced and touching. A young man who exhibited a taste for all good and generous sentiments, and who, according to the representation of his friends, was a very worthy as well as ingenious person, did not scruple to tell me one day, as a matter of course, that he made a point of getting acquainted with the rich families, purely to be invited to their houses and partake of their good things. Many an Englishman would undoubtedly do this, but he would hardly be so frank about it to a stranger; nor would an Englishman of the same tastes in other respects be easily found to act so. But it is the old story of "following a multitude to do evil," and is no doubt accounted a mere matter of necessity and good sense.

The Pisans claim the merit of speaking as pure Italian, if not purer, as any people in Tuscany; and there is a claim among the poorer orders in this part of Italy, which has been too hastily credited by foreigners, of speaking a language quite as pure as the educated classes. It is certainly not true, whatever may be claimed for their Tuscan as ancient or popular Tuscan. The Pisans in general also seem to have corrupted their pronunciation, and the Florentines too, if report is to be believed. They use a soft aspirate

instead of the C, as if their language was not genteel and tender enough already. *Casa* is *hasa*,—*cuoco* (a cook) *hoho*,—*locando*, *lohando*,—*cocomero*, *hohomero*,—and even *crazie* (a sort of coin) *hrazie*. But they speak well out, trolling the words clearly over the tongue. There seems a good deal of talent for music among them, which does not know how to make its way. You never hear the poorest melody, but somebody strikes in with what he can muster up of a harmony. Boys go about of an evening, and parties sit at their doors, singing popular airs, and hanging as long as possible on the last chord. It is not an uncommon thing for gentlemen to play their guitars as they go along to a party. I heard one evening a voice singing past a window, that would not have disgraced an opera; and I once walked behind a common post-boy, who in default of having another to help him to a harmony, contrived to make chords of all his notes, by rapidly sounding the second and treble one after the other. The whole people are bitten with a new song, and hardly sing any thing else till the next: there were two epidemic airs of this kind, when I was there, which had been imported from Florence, and which the inhabitants sung from morning till night, though they were nothing remarkable. And yet Pisa is said to be the least fond of music of any city in Tuscany.

I must not omit a great curiosity which is in the neighbourhood of Pisa, towards the sea;—namely, the existence of a race of camels, which was brought from the East during the crusades. I have not seen them out of the city, though the novelty of the sight in Europe, the sand of the sea-shore, and the vessels that sometimes combine with the landscape in the distance, are said to give it a look singularly Asiatic. They are used for agricultural purposes, and may be some-

times met within the walls. The forest between Pisa and another part of the sea-shore, is extensive and woody.

Pisa is a tranquil, an imposing, and even now a beautiful and stately city. It looks like the residence of an university: many parts of it seem made up of colleges; and we feel as if we ought to "walk gowned."<sup>35</sup> It possesses the Campo Santo, rich above earthly treasure; its river is the river of Tuscan poetry, and furnished Michael Angelo with the subject of his cartoon; and it disputes with Florence the birth of Galileo.<sup>36</sup> Here at all events he studied and he taught: here his mind was born, and another great impulse given to the progress of philosophy and Liberal Opinion.



## EDITORIAL NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri (1772-1826), internationally renowned Italian surgeon, academic, and member of the Pisan Circle. He was the son of Francesco Vaccà Berlinghieri, a medical scholar and political figure, involved in the 1798-99 uprisings and the Republican Triennium in Pisa. After studying in Paris, Andrea's brother, Leopoldo, became a Napoleonic officer and died while returning home. Thanks to his widow, Sophie Caudeiron, who animated the literary salon at Pisa's Palazzo Lanfranchi, Andrea Vaccà met Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos (1791-1865), an exile from Turkish rule in Greece who studied at Padua and gave Mary Shelley Greek lessons in exchange for English instruction in Pisa. He played a significant role in the struggle for Greek independence and in Byron's decision to join the Greek Revolution.

<sup>3</sup> The last major poem that appeared in his lifetime, Shelley's verse drama *Hellas* was written in 1821 in Pisa and published in 1822 in London. Dedicated to Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos, it celebrated the Greek Revolution against Turkish rule.

<sup>4</sup> Count Vittorio Amedeo Alfieri (1749-1803), Italian tragic poet whose main theme was the overthrow of tyranny, precursor of the Risorgimento. Set in Pisa, his tragedy *Don Garzia* (*Don Garcia*) was first published in 1789.

<sup>5</sup> Count Ugolino della Gherardesca (c. 1214-89), Pisan nobleman, politician, and naval commander. He was accused of treason, imprisoned in a tower with his sons and grandsons, and rumoured to have eaten them in the face of starvation. The character of Ugolino features in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, XXXII-XXXIII).

<sup>6</sup> Dante's account was retold by Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) in "The Monk's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). The Monk relates seventeen tragedies based on the disastrous endings of a selection of biblical, classical, and contemporary figures, including Count Ugolino.

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Villani (c. 1276-1348), Florentine banker, official, diplomat, and writer, author of the *Nuova Cronica* (*New Chronicles*) on the history of Florence, in which the story of Count Ugolino was reported. After his death, Villani's work on the *Nuova Cronica* was continued by his brother Matteo and his nephew Filippo.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Forsyth (1763-1815) was a Scottish writer on Italy, admired by Byron and Shelley. His *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters, during an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803* were published in London in 1813. Several later editions appeared in the following years.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Matthews (1789-1828), author of the travelogue *The Diary of an Invalid: Being the Journal of a Tour in Pursuit of Health in Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, and France, in the Years 1817, 1818, and 1819* (1820).

<sup>10</sup> William of Innsbruck (Meister Wilhelm von Innsbruck), sculptor and architect active in Pisa in the twelfth century.

<sup>11</sup> Abraham Tucker (1705-74), English country gentleman, who devoted himself to the study of philosophy. He wrote his *magnum opus* *The Light of Nature Pursued* (1768-77), originally published in three volumes, under the pseudonym of Edward Search. An abridged edition by William Hazlitt appeared in 1807.

<sup>12</sup> Located in the heart of London's West End, Stratford Place is a quiet cul-de-sac situated to the north of Oxford Street.

<sup>13</sup> Ubaldo Lanfranchi (d. 1207), consecrated Archbishop of Pisa in 1176. He participated in the Third Crusade. According to the legend, the sacred soil of Golgotha was spread on the ground where Pisa's Campo Santo arose.

<sup>14</sup> Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-97), Italian Renaissance painter from Florence (a pupil of Fra Angelico). Mainly active in Tuscany, he also worked in Rome and Umbria.

<sup>15</sup> Francesco Algarotti (1712-64), Venetian polymath, philosopher, and art critic. In 1740 Frederick the Great (1712-86), King of Prussia, conferred on him the title of Count and later paid for the funeral monument to his memory in Pisa.

<sup>16</sup> Lorenzo Pignotti (1739-1812), physician, historian, poet, and writer, regarded by several critics as the best of the Italian fabulists. He taught Physics at the University of Pisa, where he later became Rector.

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<sup>17</sup> Angelo Fabroni (1732-1803), Italian biographer, historian, and clergyman. Dean of the University of Pisa.

<sup>18</sup> Reference to John Taaffe (b. 1787/88), Irish writer and translator, companion of Shelley and Byron in Italy, where he died in 1862. He wrote *A Comment on the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, published in London in 1822 by John Murray.

<sup>19</sup> Andrea di Cione di Arcangelo (c. 1308-68), known as Orcagna, was the most prominent Florentine painter, sculptor, and architect of the mid-fourteenth century. He was employed as architect in the Duomo of Florence.

<sup>20</sup> Simone Martini (1284-1344), exponent of Gothic painting born in Siena. Thought to be a pupil of Duccio di Buoninsegna, according to Giorgio Vasari, he was instead a pupil of Giotto di Bondone. Martini's brother-in-law was the artist Lippo Memmi.

<sup>21</sup> Giotto di Bondone (1266/67-1337), Florentine painter and architect, regarded as the first of the great Italian masters. Probably the pupil of Cimabue, he decorated chapels and churches in Florence, Rome, Padua, Assisi, and Naples with frescoes and paintings.

<sup>22</sup> Buonamico di Martino, known as Buffalmacco (c. 1290-1340), Italian Renaissance painter who worked in Florence, Bologna, and Pisa. He is assumed to be the author of some spectacular frescoes located in the Campo Santo, including *The Triumph of Death*.

<sup>23</sup> Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), the greatest painter, printmaker, and theorist of the German Renaissance, whose work was highly regarded and influential across Europe.

<sup>24</sup> Reference to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, one of the main characters in "The Knight's Tale", the first story in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>25</sup> In Chaucer's unfinished "The Squire's Tale", Cambuscan (possibly Genghis Khan) is the King of Sarra, in Tartary.

<sup>26</sup> See Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale".

<sup>27</sup> Tommaso di Giovanni di Simone Guidi (1401-28), known as Masaccio, was a famous Florentine artist. Despite his brief career, his work exerted a powerful influence on other painters and he is regarded as a pioneering figure of the Early Renaissance in Italy.

<sup>28</sup> Pietro Vannucci (c. 1446/52-1523), known as Perugino, was a Renaissance painter of the Umbrian school and the teacher of Raphael. His work anticipated the ideals of the High Renaissance.

<sup>29</sup> Tiziano Vecellio (c. 1488/90-1576), known as Titian, was the greatest Renaissance painter of the Venetian school. He is considered as an extraordinary master of colour.

<sup>30</sup> Giovanni Rosini (1776-1855), philologist, Professor of Italian Eloquence at the University of Pisa, writer, art historian, publisher, and cultural mediator. He was the first to publish Shelley's pastoral elegy for John Keats *Adonais* (Pisa, July 1821).

<sup>31</sup> Misattribution. According to tradition, these poetic lines were wrongly attributed to Dante. In truth, the canzone "Io guardo i crespi e i biondi capelli" (*Rime*, III) was written by the fourteenth-century Italian poet Fazio degli Uberti. See Fazio degli Uberti, *Rime*, ed. by Cristiano Lorenzi (Pisa: ETS, 2013), pp. 308-312 (p. 311).

<sup>32</sup> English translation.

<sup>33</sup> Lucia Elizabeth Bartolozzi (1797-1856), known as Madame Vestris, was a British actress, opera singer, theatre producer, and manager. She had a profound influence on the development of stagecraft.

<sup>34</sup> Sydney Owenson (1781?-1859), known as Lady Morgan, was an Irish writer, mainly remembered for her controversial personality and work. Her continental travelogue *Italy* was published in 1821 and attacked by *The Quarterly Review*. Percy Shelley and Byron were among her supporters.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Charles Lamb, Sonnet VIII, "Written at Cambridge" (1819).

<sup>36</sup> Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Italian astronomer, physicist, natural philosopher, and mathematician born in Pisa, regarded as the father of modern science.