GIOVANNI VILLANI.[1]

AMONG the many accusations that have been made against modern writers by the exclusive lovers of ancient literature, none has been more frequently repeated than the want of art manifested in the conception of their works, and of unity in the execution. They compare the Greek temples to Gothic churches, and bidding us remark the sublime simplicity of the one, and the overcharged ornament of the other, they tell us, that such is the perfection of antiquity compared with the monstruous distortions of modern times. These arguments and views, followed up in all their details, have given rise to volumes concerning the Classic and the Romantic, a difference much dwelt on by German writers, and treated at length by Madame de Staël in her "L'Allemagne."[2] All readers, who happen at the same time to be thinkers, must have formed their own opinion of this question; but assuredly the most reasonable is that which would lead us to admire the beauties of all, referring those beauties to the standard of excellence that must decide on all merit in the highest resort, without reference to narrow systems and arbitrary rules. Methinks it is both presumptuous and sacrilegious to pretend to give the law to genius. We are too far removed from the point of perfection to judge with accuracy of what ought to be, and it is sufficient if we understand and feel what is. The fixed stars appear to abberate;[3] but it is we that move, not they. The regular planets make various

excursions into the heavens, and we are told that some among them never return to the point whence they departed, and by no chance ever retrace the same path in the pathless sky. Let us, applying the rules which appertain to the sublimest objects in nature, to the sublimest work of God, a Man of Genius,—let us, I say, conclude, that though one of this species appear to err, the failure is in our understandings, not in his course; and though lines and rules, "centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,"[4] have been marked out for the wise to pursue, that these in fact have generally been the leading-strings and go-carts of mediocrity, and have never been constituted the guides of those superior minds which are themselves the law, and whose innate impulses are the fiats, of intellectual creation.

But zeal for the cause of genius has carried me further than I intended. Let us again recur to the charges brought against modern writers, and instead of cavilling at their demerits, let me be pardoned if I endeavour to discover that which is beautiful even in their defects, and to point out the benefits we may reap in the study of the human mind from this capital one—the want of unity and system.

It is a frequent fault among modern authors, and peculiarly among those of the present day, to introduce themselves, their failings and opinions, into the midst of works dedicated to objects sufficiently removed, as one might think, from any danger of such an incursion. This has sometimes the effect of a play-house anecdote I once heard, of a man missing his way behind the scenes, in passing from one part of the house to the other, and suddenly appearing in his hat and unpicturesque costume, stalking amidst the waves of a frightful storm, much to the annoyance of the highly-wrought feelings of the spectators of the impending catastrophe of a disastrous melodrame. Thus the Poet, in propriâ personâ,

will elbow his way between the despairing fair one and her agitated lover; he will cause a murderer's arm to be uplifted till it ought to ache, and his own hobby will sometimes displace the more majestic quadruped that just before occupied the scene.

These are the glaring defects of the intrusion of self in a work of art. But well-managed, there are few subjects, especially in poetry, that excite stronger interest or elicit more beautiful lines. To sit down for the purpose of talking of oneself, will sometimes freeze the warmth of inspiration; but, when elevated and carried away by the subject in hand, some similitude or contrast may awaken a chord which else had slept, and the whole mind will pour itself into the sound; and he must be a critic such as Sterne[5] describes, his stop-watch in his hand, who would arrest the lengthened echo of the deepest music of the soul.[6] Let each man lay his hand on his heart and say, if Milton's[7] reference to his own blindness and personal circumstances does not throw an interest over Paradise Lost,[8] which they would not lose to render the work as much no man's or any man's production as the Æneid—supposing *Ille ego*[9] to be an interpolation, which I fondly trust it is not.

This habit of self-analysation and display has also caused many men of genius to undertake works where the individual feeling of the author embues[10] the whole subject with a peculiar hue. I have frequently remarked, that these books are often the peculiar favourites among men of imagination and sensibility. Such persons turn to the human heart as the undiscovered country. They visit and revisit their own; endeavour to understand its workings, to fathom its depths, and to leave no lurking thought or disguised feeling in the hiding places where so many thoughts and feelings, for fear

of shocking the tender consciences of those inexpert in the task of self-examination, delight to seclude themselves. As a help to the science of self-knowledge, and also as a continuance of it, they wish to study the minds of others, and particularly of those of the greatest merit. The sight of land was not more welcome to Columbus,[11] than are these traces of individual feeling, chequering their more formal works of art, to the voyagers in the noblest of terræ incognitæ, the soul of man. Sometimes, despairing to attain to a knowledge of the secrets of the best and wisest, they are pleased to trace human feeling wherever it is artlessly and truly pourtrayed. No book perhaps has been oftener the vade-mecum of men of wit and sensibility than Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy;[12] the zest with which it is read being heightened by the proof the author gave in his death of his entire initiation into the arcana of his science. The essential attributes of such a book must be truth; for else the fiction is more tame than any other; and thus Sterne may become this friend to the reading man, but his imitators never can; for affectation is easily detected and deservedly despised. Montaigne[13] is another great favourite; his pages are referred to as his conversation would be, if indeed his conversation was half so instructive, half so amusing, or contained half so vivid a picture of his internal spirit as his essay. Rousseau's Confessions,[14] written in a more liberal and even prodigal spirit of intellectual candour, is to be ranked as an inestimable acquisition to this class of production. Boswell's Life of Johnson[15] has the merit of carrying light into the recesses not of his own, but another's peculiar mind. Spence's Anecdotes[16] is a book of the same nature, but less perfect in its kind. Half the beauty of Lady Mary Montague's Letters[17] consists in the *I* that adorns them; and this *I*, this sensitive, imagi-

native, suffering, enthusiastic pronoun, spreads an inexpressible charm over Mary Wollstonecraft's Letters from Norway.*[18]

An historian is perhaps to be held least excusable, if he intrude personally on his readers. Yet they might well follow the example of Gibbon, who, while he left the pages of his Decline and Fall[19] unstained by any thing that is not applicable to the times of which he treated, has yet, through the medium of his Life and Letters,[20] given a double interest to his history and opinions. Yet an author of Memoirs, or a History of his own Times, must necessarily appear sometimes upon the scene. Mr. Hyde gives greater interest to Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion,[21] though I have often regretted that a quiet *I* had not been inserted in its room.

And now drawing the lines of this reasoning together, it may be conjectured why I like, and how I would excuse, the dear, rambling, old fashioned pages of Giovanni Villani, the author of the Croniche Fiorentine; the writer who makes the persons of Dante's Spirits[22] familiar to us; who guides us through the unfinished streets and growing edifices of Firenze la bella, and who in short transports us back to the superstitions, party spirit, companionship, and wars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Dante's commentators had made me familiar with the name of Villani, and I became desirous of obtaining what appeared to be the key of the mysterious allusions of the Divina Comedia. There is something venerable and endearing in the very appearance of this folio of the sixteenth century.[23] The Italian is old and delightfully ill-spelt: I say delightfully, for it is spelt for

*I cannot help here alluding to the papers of "Elia," which have lately appeared in a periodical publication.[24] When collected together, they must rank among the most beautiful and highly valued specimens of the kind of writing spoken of in the text.

Italian ears, and the mistakes let one into the secret of the pronunciation of Dante and Petrarch[25] better than the regular orthography of the present day. The abbreviations are many, and the stops in every instance misplaced; the ink is black, the words thickly set, so that the most seems to have been made of every page. It requires a little habit to read it with the same fluency as another book, but when this difficulty is vanquished, it acquires additional charms from the very labour that has been bestowed.

I know that in describing the outward appearance of my friend, I perform a thankless office, since few will sympathise in an affection which arises from a number of associations in which they cannot participate. But in developing the spirit that animates him, I undertake a more grateful task, although, by stripping him of his original garb and dressing him in a foreign habiliment, I divest him of one of his greatest beauties. Though in some respects rather old fashioned, his Italian is still received as a model of style; and those Italians who wish to purify their language from Gallicisms,[26] and restore to it some of its pristine strength and simplicity, recur with delight to his pages. All this is lost in the English; but even thus I trust that his facts will interest, his simplicity charm, and his real talent be appreciated.

In the course of his work, Villani thus recounts the motives that induced him to commence his history:—

"In the year 1300, according to the nativity of Christ, on account of its having been said by many, that in former times, every hundred years after the nativity of Christ, he that was pope at that period gave great indulgencies, Pope Boniface VIII,[27] who then held the Apostolic office, through reverence for the same, gave a great and high indulgence in this manner: that whatsoever believer visited during all that

year continuously for thirty days (and fifteen days for strangers who were not Romans) the churches of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, to all these he gave full and entire pardon, both of sin and punishment, for all their sins confessed or to be confessed; and for the consolation of Christian pilgrims, every Friday and holiday, the Veronicia del Sudario[29] of Christ was exhibited at St. Peter's.[30] On this account a great part of the then existing Christians performed this said journey, both men and women, from distant and diverse countries, both far and near. And it was the most wonderful thing that ever was, that, during a whole year there were in Rome, besides the people of the city, two hundred thousand pilgrims, without including those on the road going and coming; and all were well furnished and satisfied with all manner of food, as well the houses as the persons; and this I can witness, who was there present, and saw much accrued to the Church from the offerings of the pilgrims, and all the Roman people became rich through the commerce occasioned by them. I, being at the Holy City of Rome, on account of this blessed pilgrimage, observing the magnificent and ancient things there, and knowing the great achievements and history of the Romans, written by Sallust,[31] Lucan,[32] Titus Livius,[33] Valerius,[34] Paul Orosius,[35] and other masters of history, who narrated small occurrences as well as great, and even those that happened at the extremities of the universal world, to give note and example to those to come after them; and although, with regard to their style and order, I was not a disciple worthy the doing so great a work, yet, considering our city of Florence, the daughter and creature of Rome, which had achieved high things in her ascent, and was now, like Rome, on her decline, it appeared to me to be right to collect in this volume a new Chronicle of all the deeds and ordinances of

that city; and as much as was in me to seek, find, and narrate past, present, and future times, while it shall please God. So that I shall recount at large the deeds of the Florentines, and all other famous events of the universal world, as far as I can learn, God giving me grace, in hope of which I began this enterprize,[36] considering the poverty of my talent, on which I should not have dared rely. And thus, through the grace of Christ, having returned from Rome in his year 1300, I began to compile this book, in reverence to God and the blessed Messer Santo John,[37] in commendation of the city of Florence."—(Book VIII. Cap. 36.)

Villani begins his history with the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues; and then relates how king Atalante, the fifth in descent from Japhet, the son of Noah,[38] colonized in Italy and built the town of Fiesole.[39] He commemorates the siege of Troy,[40] and how Antenor and the younger Priam came over to Italy, and severally built the towns of Padua and Venice;[41] and that the descendants of the latter became kings of Germany and France. The history of Rome is slightly skimmed over, and he mentions that, after the discovery of Catiline's plot,[42] several of the conspirators entrenched themselves in Fiesole, which was accordingly besieged by the following leaders: "Count Rainaldo, Cicero, Tiberinus, Machrimus, Albinus, Cn. Pompeius, Cæsar Camertinus, Count Seggio, Tudertino, that is of the Soli,[43] who was with Julius Cæsar and his army." [44] Under such an assemblage of generals Fiesole fell, and Florence arose from its ruins.

But these strange anachronisms and unfounded fables, though made amusing by the gravity and minuteness of Villani, are not the qualities which constitute his principal merit. He grows more interesting and more authentic as he advances from the creation of the world to his own times;

and nine-tenths of his book are occupied by the narration of events which occurred during the course of his own life. He describes characters in the style of one well read in human nature, and who, by living at a period when civil discord awakened the most violent passions and disclosed the workings of the heart carefully veiled for our politer eyes, and by mingling in the game where each the smallest individual risked fortune, family and life,—had penetrated into every diversity of character. His anecdotes make us familiarly acquainted with the private habits and ways of thinking of those times; his accounts of civil commotions and wars are worthy of that which he was—an eye-witness. It is true, that in the midst of grave matter of fact, the strangest stories will force their way. I own that these digressions are to me by no means the least pleasant part of his work, and as they are disjoined from the rest of his history, they by no means injure his character of an exact historian, which stands high on all matters appertaining to Italy and his immediate times. I confess that while reading a spirited narration of the Battle of the Arbia,[45] or the murder of Buondelmonti and the rise of parties in Florence,[46] or any other historic fact of the kind, I come with pleasure to a chapter entitled—"How the Tartars first left the mountains where Alexander the Great had confined them," and read under that head the following wild and poetic story:—

"In the year of Christ 1202, the people called Tartars came out from the mountains of Gog and Magog, called in Latin the mountains of Belgen. This people are said to have descended from that tribe of Israel which the great Alexander, king of Greece, who conquered all the world, shut up in these mountains, on account of their wicked life (*per loro brutta vita*) that they might not mix with the other gene-

rations. And through their cowardice and vain credulity, they remained shut up from the time of Alexander until this period, believing that the army of this king still surrounded them. For he, with wonderful mechanism, commanded immense trumpets to be made, and placed on the mountains, which every wind caused to sound and trumpet forth with a great noise. Afterwards, it is said, that owls built their nests in the mouths of those trumpets, which put an end to the artifice by stopping the sound: and on this account the Tartars have owls in great reverence, and their principal lords wear the feathers of owls, by way of ornament, in their caps, in memory that they caused to cease the sound of these trumpets. For this circumstance reassured the people, who lived in the manner of animals, and were of innumerable numbers; so certain among them passed the mountains and finding no enemy on their summits, but only this vain sound of these tower-exalted trumpets, they descended to the plains of India, which were fertile, fruitful, and of a mild climate; and returning and reporting this news to their families and the rest of the people, they assembled together, and made, through divine intervention, a poor blacksmith called Cangius their general and lord. And when he was made lord, he received the name of "Cane," that is the emperor in their language. He was a valourous and wise man; and through his wisdom and valour he divided the people into tens, hundreds, and thousands, under captains fitted to the command. And first, he ordered all his principal subjects to kill their first-born sons, and when he found himself obeyed in this, he issued his command to his people, entered India, vanquished Prester John, and conquered all his country." (Book V. Cap. 27.)[47]

Villani was a Guelph, that is, an adherent to the papal and republican party. He repeats all the calumnies that

had been invented to prejudice the Italians against the house of Swabia,[48] and he appears to believe the miracles and dreams of various pontiffs with catholic credulity: One of his principal heroes is Charles d'Anjou,[49] a cruel, faithless, but heroic tyrant; and it is thus that he paints his character with the partiality of a partizan, and the lively touches of one personally acquainted with the character whom he hands down to posterity:—

"Charles was wise and prudent, brave in arms, severe, and much feared and redoubted by all the kings in the world; magnanimous, and of high spirit to carry on any great enterprize, firm in adversity, secure and veracious in keeping his promises, speaking little and doing much. He seldom laughed, if ever; chaste as a monk, and catholicly religious. As a judge he was merciless, and of ferocious aspect. He was tall and strongly made, of an olive complexion, with a large nose; and he appeared far more majestic than any other lord. He watched much, and slept little; using to say, that sleeping was so much time lost. He was generous as a knight of arms, but desirous of acquiring lands, dominion, and wealth, whence he might provide for his enterprizes and wars. He never took delight in *uomini di corte*, courtiers and games." (Book VII. Cap 1.)

History does not present in any of her pages so strong a contrast as that between the characters of the rivals for the crown of Naples. Manfred[50] was the natural son of Frederic, the last Emperor of the house of Swabia. Refusing to bow the neck to the yoke of papal tyranny, three successive Pontiffs pursued him with unbending malignity and hatred; they at length bestowed his kingdom upon Charles d'Anjou, and invited him over to conquer it. It is hardly fair to give the character of the intrepid, noble, and unfortunate Manfred in the words of his enemy, for such Villani was. But the

actions of these two princes are a comment upon the words of the historian, and enable us to form an impartial opinion. "This same king Manfred," says Villani, "was the son of a beautiful woman belonging to the Marquess Lancia of Lombardy, to whom the Emperor was attached. He was a handsome man like his father, but dissolute and luxurious in the extreme; he was a musician, a singer, and was pleased to see buffoons and *uomini di corte*; he kept mistresses, and always dressed in green. He was generous and courteous, and of noble demeanour, so that he was much beloved and followed; but his life was epicurean; scarcely believing in God (*for God read the Pope*)[51] or his saints; he was an enemy of holy church and of priests; was a greater confiscator of church riches than his father: he was rich, through the treasure left by the Emperor and by king Conrad,[52] and because his kingdom was fruitful and abundant. And while he lived at war with the church, he rendered his kingdom prosperous, and so rose to great dominion and riches by sea and land. He had for wife the daughter of the despot of Romania (the Emperor of Constantinople)[53] by whom he had several children."—(Book VIth, Cap. 47.)

The great crime of Manfred consisted in his forming a small army of Saracens, whom he used to defend himself against his papal enemies, who were devotedly attached to him, and by whose means he had risen to dominion again, after he had been reduced to flight and impotence. Even in the above garbled account of the noblest king and the most accomplished cavalier that ever existed, we may trace his excellencies. His kingdom prosperous, himself adored by his subjects, we may excuse his love for courtly amusements; and beloved by his wife, we may doubt the excess of less pardonable faults. The actions of Charles are a long list of crimes. He involved Naples in a bloody war, and shewed no mercy to the van-

quished. After the death of Manfred, who happily for himself died on the field of battle, his wife Sibilla, whose high birth Villani has commemorated, and her children, were imprisoned in Calabria, and there, as this partial historian shortly narrates (*da Carlo fatto morire*) put to death by Charles. Every noble partisan of Manfred lost his life on the scaffold, and the line of unfortunate victims was closed by the young and gallant Coradino.[54] His newly conquered kingdom was driven to desperation by his extortions and cruelties, and the Sicilian vespers at length delivered that miserable island from his merciless gripe. Such was the catholicly religious Charles.

But to return to Villani: although a violent party-man, he dwells with fond regret on the time when there was neither Guelph nor Ghibeline in Florence. "It is from these names," he says "that great evil and ruin fell upon our city, as mention will hereafter be made: and we may well believe, that it will never have an end, if God does not terminate it." This (as it were) figure of speech, of recurring to the good old times, is common to all recorders of the past, from Homer[55] downwards. But it is more natural in Villani, since he himself beheld the festive meetings of his countrymen changed into murderous brawls, and after having seen all that claimed the common name of Florentines live in brotherly amity, he witnessed the irremediable rent which divided them into Guelph and Ghibeline, the palaces of Florence razed through the violence of party, and the estates of the vanquished confiscated. Examples of the rich and happy becoming poor and wretched were familiar to him, and the further sting was added, that these calamities were not occasioned by what may be called the natural evils of life—neither by pestilence, war, nor famine—but by civil discord, originating in words only, and where the wisest and best, branded by a

name, became the victims of the new-born hatred of former friends.

After the manner of Livy,[56] Villani delights to tell of monsters, of comets, of meteors, and portents. In one place he tells us how "Philip le Bel,[57] king of France, caused to be made prisoners all the Italians in that kingdom, under pretence of taking usurers; but at the same time he caused to be taken, and liberated only upon ransom, many honest merchants as usurers; for this he was much blamed and hated, and henceforward the kingdom of France went declining, falling, and coming from bad to worse."

Perhaps the best idea that I can present of the general nature of this book, will be in giving some of the heads of the chapters in the order they occur. As for instance:—(Book VIII. Cap. 12.) "How the nobles of the city of Florence took arms to destroy and oppress the popular government." (Cap. 13.) "How Pope Boniface made peace between king Charles, and the Florentines, and Don Giamo of Arragon, king of Sicily." (Cap. 14.) "How the Guelph party was driven out of Genoa." (Cap. 15.) "Of certain novelties and changes that arrived among the lords of Tartary." (Book IX. Cap. 291.) "How a new small money was coined at Florence." (Cap. 292.) "Of a miraculous fall of snow in Tuscany." (Cap. 293.) "How Castruccio endeavoured to betray Florence." (Cap. 294.) "How there was accord between some of the elected lords in Germany." (Cap. 295.) "How Castruccio, lord of Lucca, possessed himself of the city of Pistria, by means of treason." (Cap. 296.) "How Messer Raimondo of Cardona came to Florence, as Captain of War." (Cap. 297.) "How the Duke of Calabria, with a great army, made a descent upon the Island of Sicily." (Cap. 298.) "Of signs that appeared in the air, which," as Villani says, "made all who saw them, dread future danger and troubles in the city."

I will conclude my extracts and remarks by his chapter upon the death, character, and writings of Dante.

Book IX. Of the Poet Dante, and how he died. (Cap. 135.)

"In this same year (1321) in the month of July,[58] Dante died at the city of Ravenna, in Romagna, having returned from an embassy to Venice in the service of the lords of Polenta,[59] with whom he lived. He was buried with great honour, in the guise of poet and great philosopher, at Ravenna, before the gate of the principal church.[60] He died, an exile from the commune of Florence, at the age of about fifty-six years. This Dante was an antient and honourable citizen of Florence, of the divison[61] of the gate of San Piero.[62] His exile from Florence was thus occasioned. When Messer Carlo di Valois,[63] of the house of France, came to Florence in the year 1301, and exiled the *Bianchi* (*a party so called*) as we have before related, this same Dante was the highest governor of our city, and of that party, though a Guelph.* And thus, free from guilt, he was driven out with the *Bianchi*, and exiled from Florence, whence he retired to study at Bologna, and afterwards to Paris, and other parts of the world. He was very learned in almost every science, though a layman; he was a great poet, a philosopher, and a perfect rhetorician, as well in writing, either prose or verse, as in speaking. He was

*Villani, who was townsman and contemporary of Dante, appears to have also been his friend, and to wish to reinstate him in the good graces of the Florentines, by saying that he was a Guelph. Dante, as a reasonable man, endeavoured to reconcile the absurd differences of all parties, but he was not a Guelph. His discrepancy of opinion from Villani may be gathered from the opposite judgments that they pass on the same persons. The poet prepares a choice place of torture for Boniface VIII in his dreary hell,[64] while Villani exalts him as a saint. Dante rails at all the Popes; Villani respects them all. Dante sweetly and pathetically dwells on the wrongs and virtues of Manfred, and places him on the high road to heaven.[65] Villani vituperates him, and consigns him as a *scomunicato*[66] to the devil.

the noblest maker of verses, with the finest style, that had ever been in our language until his own time and later. He wrote in his youth the beautiful book of the "New Life of Love,"[67] and afterwards, when in exile, he wrote twenty excellent moral and amatory *canzoni*.[68] Among other things he wrote three noble epistles;[69] one of which he sent to the government of Florence, mourning his banishment as an innocent man; the other he sent to the Emperor Henry (of Luxembourg)[70] when he was at the siege of Brescia, reprehending his abiding there, with almost the foreknowledge of a prophet: the third was to the Italian Cardinals during the vacancy after Pope Clement,[71] advising them to accord in the election of an Italian Pope, all in Latin, in magnificent language, with excellent sentences and authorities, the which were much praised by the holy men who understood them. He wrote also the *Comedia*, where, in elegant verse, with great and subtle questions of morality, natural philosophy, astrology, philosophy and theology, and with beautiful and new metaphors and similes, he composed an hundred chapters or cantos, of having been in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, in as noble a manner as it is possible to have done. But in this discourse, whoever is of a penetrating understanding may well see and comprehend that he greatly loves in that drama to dispute and vituperate, after the manner of poets, perhaps in some places more than is decent. Probably his exile also made him write his Treatise on Monarchy,*[72] where in excellent Latin he treats of the offices of Pope and Emperor. He

*I must again remark, that Dante and Villani must have been personal friends, or that reverence for the poet's talent made the latter seek for every circumstance that might excuse the opinions of Dante to the Florentines, who were then all Guelphs, and to whom the Treatise on Monarchy was peculiarly obnoxious.

began a comment upon fourteen of his before-mentioned moral *canzoni*, which, on account of his death, he did not finish; and only three were found, the which, from what we see, would have been a great, beautiful, subtle, and eminent work. He also wrote a book entitled, "of Vulgar Eloquence"[74]—which, he says, was to consist of four books, but only two are found, probably on account of his unexpected death, where, in strong and elegant Latin, he reprobates all vernacular Italian. This Dante, on account of his knowledge, was somewhat presumptuous, satirical, and contemptuous. He was uncourteous, as it were, after the manner of philosophers; nor did he well know how to converse with laymen. But on account of his other virtues, his science, and his merit as a citizen, it appeared just to give him perpetual memo-[75] in this our Chronicle, although his great works left in writing bestow on him a true testimony, and an honourable fame on our city."

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EDITORIAL NOTES

[1] Giovanni Villani (c. 1275-1348), Italian diplomat and chronicler. His *Nuova Cronica* is one of the most important sources for Italian medieval history. His *Croniche Fiorentine* (1347) was read by Mary Shelley in preparation for her novel *Valperga* (1823).

[2] Madame de Staël (1766-1817), French-Swiss writer and intellectual. In her *De l'Allemagne* (1810), she describes German Romanticism as a response to the perceived limitations of Enlightenment thinking, particularly in connection with the complexity and emotional depth of the human experience.

[3] Misprint for *aberrate*.

[4] See John Milton, *Paradise Lost* VIII.83. Adam asks Raphael about the motions of the starts, sun, and planets, assuming that other planets orbit the earth. Raphael, however, explains that it is possible, although not certain, that the earth's circular motion on its axis might be responsible for such impression.

[5] Laurence Sterne (1713-68), British novelist, author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67) and *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), in which he blends humour, satire, and experimental narrative techniques.

[6] See chapter 12 in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* III. Sterne contends that critics are so focused on rules and norms (here represented by a stop-watch that the critic insists on checking) that they fail to recognize or are unwilling to acknowledge works of genius.

[7] John Milton (1608-74), English poet, political pamphleteer, and civil servant under the English statesman Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) follows the story of Satan's rebellion against God, his fall from Heaven, and the subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve.

[8] See John Milton, *Paradise Lost* III.1-55 and VII.24-31.

[9] Latin for *I am he*.

[10] Variant of the verb *to imbue*.

[11] Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), Italian explorer. Shelley's allusion is to his first voyage across the Atlantic, which led to the European discovery of the American continent (1492).

[12] Robert Burton (1577-1640), English scholar and author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). He died around the time he had predicted years earlier based on the calculation of his nativity.

[13] Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), French philosopher and essayist best known for his *Essais* (1580-88), which Mary Shelley read between 1818 and 1822.

[14] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), French philosopher and writer, whose *Confessions* (1782-89) are regarded as one of the first modern autobiographies.

[15] James Boswell (1740-95), Scottish lawyer, diarist and biographer. He is known for his celebrated biography of the writer and lexicographer Samuel Johnson, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), read by Mary Shelley in 1820.

[16] Joseph Spence (1699-1768), English scholar and contributor to the early development of the literary biography along with Rousseau and Boswell. He is remembered for his *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters, of Books and Men*, published posthumously in 1820.

[17] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), English writer. Her letters, written during her time in the Ottoman Empire, were collected in the volume *Embassy Letters* (1763).

[18] Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), English writer, philosopher, and early advocate for women's rights. Her *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) blend personal reflections, observations of nature, and a critique of social and political conditions. They were read by her daughter, Mary Shelley, between 1814 and 1822.

[19] Edward Gibbon (1737-94), English historian. Mary Shelley read his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) between 1815 and 1818.

[20] *Memoirs of My Life and Writings* (1796) is an account of Edward Gibbon's life compiled by his friend John Baker Holroyd, 1st Earl of Sheffield (1735-1821). It offers insights into his personal life, intellectual development, and writing. Mary Shelley read it in 1815.

[21] *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, begun in the Year 1641* (1702-04), read by Mary Shelley between 1816 and 1819, is an account of the English Civil War (1642-51) by the Earl of Clarendon. In it, the author refers to himself in the third person as Mr. Hyde.

[22] Shelley's allusion is to Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, which portrays the spirits of several figures contemporary to himself and Villani.

[23] Reference to *Croniche di Messer Giovanni Villani, Cittadino Fiorentino* (1537) edited by Giacomo Fasolo.

[24] Charles Lamb (1775-1834), English essayist, poet and critic. His essays, celebrated for their wit and conversational tone, were published in *The London Magazine* between 1820 and 1823 under the pseudonym of 'Elia' and collected in book form as *Essays of Elia* (1823-33).

[25] Francesco Petrarca (1304-74), Italian poet and humanist, known for his *Canzoniere*, a collection of poems written, like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in *lingua volgare*, or Tuscan vernacular.

[26] Allusion to the efforts of the Accademia della Crusca, a society of scholars of linguistics and philology founded in Florence in 1583 with the aim of maintaining the purity of the Italian language.

[27] Pope Boniface VIII (c. 1235-1303), head of the Catholic Church from 1294 to 1303. Boniface VIII was a controversial pontiff who sought to assert papal supremacy over secular rulers, famously clashing with King Philip IV of France (1268-1314) and issuing the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), claiming the pope's ultimate authority.

[28] Misprint. Incorrect page numbers from 287 to 302.

[29] According to the Christian tradition, the veil of Veronica is the handkerchief or veil impressed with Christ's features that appeared when Saint Veronica, a widow from Jerusalem, wiped Jesus' forehead as he was carrying the cross on Calvary Hill.

[30] St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, one of the holiest sites of Christianity.

[31] Gaius Sallustius Criptus, anglicised as Sallust (c. 86-35 BCE), Roman historian and politician, and the earliest known Roman historian writing in Latin whose works have survived.

[32] Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, known in English as Lucan (39-65 CE), Roman poet, author of the epic poem *Pharsalia* or *De Bello Civili*.

[33] Titus Livius, known in English as Livy, (59 BCE-17 CE), Roman historian. He authored *Ab Urbe Condita* (*From the Founding of the City*), a history of Rome and its people.

[34] Valerius Maximus, first-century writer and author of *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine books of memorable deeds and sayings*), a collection of historical anecdotes, most of which related to Roman history.

[35] Paulus Orosius (flourished 414-417 CE), Roman priest and historian. His *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* is regarded as one of the most influential texts in historiography between antiquity and the Middle Ages.

[36] Archaic form of the noun *enterprise*.

[37] John the Baptist (b. 1st decade BCE-d. 28/36 CE), Jewish preacher and patron of Florence.

[38] Biblical reference: *Genesis* 11.1-9.

[39] Fiesole is an Italian town located four miles north-east of Florence.

[40] In Greek mythology, the siege of Troy marked the final stage of the war fought by the Greeks under king Agamemnon's leadership to reclaim Helen, the wife of his brother Menelaus.

[41] Following the siege of Troy, the Trojan prince Antenor fled with Priam's infant son, Priam the younger, guiding the Eneti to the northern Adriatic, where they settled in Venetia and founded Padua.

[42] Lucius Sergius Catilina, known in English as Catiline (c. 108-62 BCE), Roman senator and politician. He is known for his failed conspiracy to overthrow the Roman Republic in 63 BCE. His attempts to seize power and overthrow the Roman consuls ultimately led to his downfall.

[43] Misprint for *Todi*.

[44] Although five of the leaders were captured, Catiline fled to Fiesole where he gathered his troops to fight against the state, but was ultimately defeated and killed in battle (see Giovanni Villani, *Croniche Florentine* I 36). Following Catiline's ill-fated campaign, the Etrusco-Roman city gained increasing importance thanks to its strategic position between the river and the hill. In the same year, Caesar ordered the construction of a military camp to secure Fiesole owing to the presence of large numbers of Catilinarian supporters.

[45] Fought on 4 September 1260, the Battle of Montaperti was part of the conflict between Guelphs and Ghibellines, two factions supporting the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor respectively. Part of the battle is believed to have been fought near the river Arbia, in Siena. During the battle the people of Florence, who were Guelphs, were defeated by an army of refugee Ghibellines.

[46] Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti (d. 1216), noble Florentine of the Buondelmonti family. According to Villani, Buondelmonte was engaged to a maiden from the Amidei family. However, Buondelmonte fell in love with a woman from the Donati family and ended the engagement. The broken betrothal was viewed as a grave insult by the Amidei, who vowed to seek revenge. Thereafter, the Florentine nobility split into two factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, and became embroiled in a bloody struggle for power.

[47] In the original, chapter 28.

[48] One of the stem-duchies of medieval Germany, governed by members of the Hohenstaufen family.

[49] Charles I, also known as Charles d'Anjou (1226-85), king of Naples and Sicily, and youngest brother of King Louis IX of France (1214-70). In 1266, he became King of Sicily after defeating the last Hohenstaufen ruler, Manfred, in battle.

[50] Manfred (1232-66), illegitimate son of Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) and last King of Sicily of the Hohenstaufen family. His reign was marked by conflict with the Papacy and rival dynasties. In 1266, he was defeated and killed by Charles d'Anjou at the Battle of Benevento, ending the Hohenstaufen rule in Sicily. See also Mary Shelley's "A Tale of Passions" published in the second instalment of *The Liberal*.

[51] Editorial interpolation.

[52] Conrad IV (1228-54), king of Italy and, after the Emperor's death in 1250, king of Sicily as Conrad I. Manfred was appointed vicar of Italy and Sicily for his half-brother Conrad IV, but quickly began pursuing the Sicilian throne for himself.

[53] Editorial interpolation.

[54] Conrad III (1252-68), known by the diminutive Conradin, was Conrad IV's son and the last direct heir of the Hohenstaufen family. After his failed attempt to restore the Kingdom of Sicily to the Hohenstaufen dynasty, he was captured and executed by beheading.

[55] Homer, Greek poet.

[56] Livy, Roman historian.

[57] Philip IV, also known as Philippe le Bel (1268-1314), king of France from 1285 to 1314.

[58] Dante died between 13 and 14 September, as testified by the epitaph by Giovanni del Virgilio, *Theologus Dantes*.

[59] The da Polenta were a noble Italian family. In 1318-19, Guido Novello da Polenta (d. 1330) gave hospitality to Dante in Ravenna, after he had been exiled for his political involvement and the factional struggles between the Guelphs and Ghibellines.

[60] Basilica of San Francesco, a major church in Ravenna which hosted Dante's funeral in 1321.

[61] Misprint for *division*.

[62] Dante belonged to the small urban Guelph nobility and was born in the district of San Martino del Vescovo, in the quarter of Porta San Pietro, Florence.

[63] Charles of Valois (1270-1325), French prince. Charles led several campaigns in Italy, but his attempts to gain power, especially in Florence, were largely unsuccessful.

[64] See Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*: *Inferno* XIX.54-81. Led by Virgil, Dante descends to the third gulf of hell, home of the guilty of simony who hang upside down with their feet ablaze. There, the spirit of Pope Nicholas III foretells that Pope Boniface VIII will soon occupy the very spot where he himself is suspended.

[65] See Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*: *Purgatorio* III.110-41.

[66] Italian for *excommunicate*.

[67] *Vita Nova* (c. 1293) is an early collection of verse by Dante Alighieri. *Vita Nova* marked the beginning of his literary career and laid the thematic and formal foundations for his later work, *The Divine Comedy*.

[68] Reference to the moral and allegorical *canzoni* of the first years of exile. Among them is Dante's "Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute" (*Rime* 47 CIV). The three women allegorically represent Universal Justice, Human Justice, and Natural Law, and point at the general decline in justice that led to Dante's own unjust condemnation and exile.

[69] Only the second and third letters have survived.

[70] Editorial interpolation.

[71] Clement V (c. 1260-1314), head of the Catholic Church from 1305. The letter to the Italian cardinals urging them to elect an Italian pope was aimed at restoring the papal seat in Rome. It was Clement V, formerly the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had moved the papacy to Avignon.

[72] Dante Alighieri's *De monarchia* (1313) is a political essay exploring the relationship between secular and spiritual power.

[73] Misprint. The correct header would be *GIOVANNI VILLANI*.

[74] *De vulgari eloquentia* is a Latin treatise by Dante Alighieri. In this work, Dante argues for the legitimacy and artistic potential of the vernacular, or common language, in contrast to Latin, then the language of scholarship and the Church.

[75] Misprint for *memorial*.