

Countess of Blessington, *The Idler in Italy*, 2 vols., London: Colburn, 1839.

Vol. I

Aix en Provence

It was this Raimond who was reproached by Dante, in his sixth canto, "del Paradiso," for his conduct to Romieu, in which the ingratitude not unfrequently attributed to the great towards those who have served them, was said to have been strongly marked (p. 306).

Vol. II

Florence

The chaste and stately Gualdrada, referred to by Dante when noticing her grandson Guidoguena,

"Nepote fu della buona Gualdrada,"

seemed to glide past in all the majesty of her beauty. It was of this lady that the story is related, that when the Emperor Otho IV. was present at a festival in Florence, he was struck with her rare beauty, and inquired who she was; when her father had the baseness to answer, that she was the daughter of one who, if it was his majesty's pleasure, would make her admit the honour of his salute. On overhearing this speech, she arose from her seat, and blushing, desired her father to be less liberal in his offers, for that no man should ever be allowed that favour except him who should be her husband. The emperor was delighted by her resolute modesty, and calling to him Guido, one of the bravest of his barons, gave her to him in marriage, raised him to the rank of count, and bestowed on him Cresentino and a part of the territory of Romagna as her portion. I quote the story from memory, and read it in the notes to Dante long ago (pp. 106-107).

§§§

The divine Dante, the Shakspeare of Italy, has noticed these unhappy nuptials, which were followed by so long a series of bloodshed, and led to the war between the Guelphs and Ghibellines.

"Ricorderati anche del Mosca,
Che dissì, lasso, capo ha cosa fatta,
Che fu 'l mal seme della gente Tosca."

Numberless works, perused long years ago, are brought back most vividly to memory, as I saunter through the places where the scenes they described were enacted: and it seems as if youth and its memories were renewed by the vividness with which the histories that then excited such a thrilling interest are recalled to the mind (pp. 107-108).

§§§

Saw the cathedral to-day, founded by Lapo, in 1298, and which boasts the magnificent cupola of Brunelleschi. [...] Two portraits in this cathedral attracted my attention; and one of them possessed a peculiarly strong interest for me—I refer to that of Dante, the Shakspeare of Italy, by Orcagna. This portrait, although but a posthumous one, cannot be viewed without strong feelings of interest; and these are increased by reflecting that the same people who banished the original, were afterwards proud to possess this likeness of him. The ill treatment experienced by poets from their country would form no bad subject for a work in the hands of D'Israeli, whose contemplative and philosophical mind is so well calculated to render justice to it. How much of this ill-treatment, from the days of Dante down to those of Byron, might, if analysed, be attributed to the baleful passion of envy? (pp. 131-132)



Dante is as enthusiastically talked of, and more universally read in his own country, than Shakspeare is with us. We have, it is true, many who read our divine bard with the zest which so inimitable a genius merits; but we have also still more who *talk of*, than who can appreciate his works; and these are precisely the persons who are the loudest in their injudicious praise. But in Italy, every one with any pretension to literary acquirements reads Dante *con amore*; and are honest in their enthusiastic commendations of him.



Siena

The fountain at Siena is visited by all travellers, who taste its sparkling water, immortalized by the praise of Dante (p. 157).



Pisa

The Lung' Arno is bordered by fine palaces, among which the Lanfranchi is conspicuous, not less interesting from the souvenirs of the middle ages attached to it, its founder being the leader of the Ghibilene [*sic*] party at Pisa, and the rival of Ugolino, whose terrible punishment Dante has immortalised, than from having been the residence of Byron (p. 489).