FRANCESCA DI RIMINI

rnia
l

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO

FRANCESCA DI RIMINI

FRANCESCA DI RIMINI IN LEGEND & IN HISTORY

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH OF

CHARLES YRIARTE

BY

ARNOLD HARRIS MATHEW

(*de jure* EARL OF LANDAFF)

AUTHOR OF "WOMAN SUFFRAGE," "THE LIFE OF SIR TOBIE MATTHEW," "AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH LITERATURE," ETC. ETC.

LONDON

DAVID NUTT, 57-59 LONG ACRE

1908

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh.

PREFACE

It is perhaps worthy of note that in spite of Dante's great fame early in the fourteenth century, his *Divina Commedia* did not supply subjects to contemporary artists. Even the great painters of the Renaissance ignored it, and at the present time the tragedy of Francesca di Rimini is not found among the works exhibited in the National Gallery. Dante's treatment of the story has usually been regarded as entirely fanciful, and the narrative itself as mere legend and romance.

It is, however, in its main features, historical, though the historian may find difficulty in determining with precision where it becomes necessary to disentangle fiction from fact. This I have endeavoured to do in the follow-

ing brief account of that pathetic tragedy which Dante has immortalised in the *Inferno*, and which was destined to be re-enacted upon the dramatic and the lyric stage for all time.

Of the contemporary representatives of the Polenta and Malatesta families, all that is known concerning them will be found in these pages.

Whilst I have generally followed in the footsteps of Francesca's talented biographer, Monsieur C. Yriarte, I have also, to some extent, supplemented his account of her.

ARNOLD HARRIS MATHEW.

CHELSFIELD, KENT.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE v

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE POLENTA AND MALATESTA FAMILIES 1

Political conditions—Establishment of the republics—The Condottieri—Their foundation of dynasties.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE COMEDY 16

Francesca—The Hunchback—Paolo il Bello—The historical descriptions of the murderer and of the tragedy.

CHAPTER III

DANTE AND FRANCESCA 35

Contemporary witnesses—Boccaccio and the legend—The relations between Paolo and Francesca.

CHAPTER IV

PAGE

THE SITE OF THE TRAGEDY . . . 71

Was it at Rimini, Pesaro, or Sant' Arcangelo?—Examination of the evidence as to each—The opinions of Tonini and Monsignor Marino Marini—Conclusion.

CHAPTER V

RÉSUMÉ OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE . 87

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta—Dante is the reputed historian of the tragedy—His legend compared with authentic history.

FRANCESCA DI RIMINI

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE POLENTA AND MALATESTA FAMILIES

Political conditions—Establishment of the republics—The Condottieri—Their foundation of dynasties.

IT would be interesting to attempt to throw some light upon the historic event which has aroused so much discussion, and upon which the famous episode of the fifth canto of the *Inferno* of Dante's "Divine Comedy" is based, viz. the murder of Francesca di Rimini and Paolo Malatesta by Giovanni, the husband of Francesca and brother of Paolo. All that has been done, hitherto, is, that a great many documents have been published by Italian scholars, the text of the old chronicles has been criticised, and statements which appeared

to be of much too well-established a kind to be subjected to the affront of analysis have been called in question. Now, what we want is to systematise all this material, to realise the actors, and to place them against their proper historical background, and—this is the most essential point—to trust only the most trustworthy sources of information, so that we may be able to disentangle the thread of historical fact, and the individuality of each actor, from the legend that has crystallised round them; for Dante's legend has, by virtue of his genius, become a more living thing than the historical fact.

The day of large historical compositions is over, and gone too is the old broad treatment of epochs, where the "philosophy of history" is emphasised by focussing the light on the highways and chief events, while the byways and individual actions are lost in obscurity. The modern method is, in the phrase of the day, to *reconstruct* a figure; that is to say, by accumulating detail round a single point, a

figure that had hitherto been but a "walking personage" in the crowded stage of history is brought into prominence.

The proportion of the legendary to the historical element in Dante's episode is the problem we have to consider. At Sienna the Maremma is associated with Pia di Tolommei; at Pisa J. J. Ampère wished actually to touch with his hand the ruined stonework of Ugolino's monument, in which Rossini saw the remains of the Hunger Tower; and how many have followed in the footsteps of Francesca and Paolo, and Giovanni Malatesta at Rimini, Pesaro, and San Arcangelo, to see if there are any records or monuments to their existence! The history of these periods is extremely obscure, but there are a certain number of historical circumstances which are capable of documentary proof, and which make us realise the true nature of the event, and enable us to form some idea of what seems, at first sight, a legend, floating upon the stream of history, as those two "sad spirits,"

who will never be separated, float upon the "air malign" of the second circle of the Inferno.

If we consider the story in its relation to history, we find that both victims and their murderer belonged to those powerful and dominant families which, later, founded ruling dynasties in some of the cities of Northern Italy on the shores of the Adriatic. The Polentas and the Malatestas are already called "lords" of Rimini and Ravenna, and they become, later, *lords* in the full sense of the term. Our period is the second half of the thirteenth century, and the epoch of the dawn of the Italian republics; but later an important change takes place, which, in course of time, tends to the formation of local dynasties. These dynasties hand down their power regularly for many centuries, and some of them, like the family of Montefeltro, Dukes of Urbino, the Polentas, and the Malatestas, will become famous in history. It is also the period of the dawn of municipal liberty, and we shall not

fully understand the progress of events unless we realise how, upon the ruins of the Western Empire, new powers were set up, which were virtually independent, although they never denied the nominal temporal supremacy or suzerainty of the Pope, nor that of the Emperor who succeeded to Charlemagne's Empire of the West.

The Political State of the Country at the time of the Assassination

At the close of the ninth century, the breaking up of the Carolingian monarchy had brought in its train the division of Italy into an infinite number of petty powers, none of which were theoretically, but the majority of which were virtually, independent. This condition of anarchy was a step towards the setting up of the feudal system. Everywhere there were centres of power, which were, in themselves, the germs of authority; and, by a sort of political atavism, the new feudal divi-

sions that arose—such as Duchies, Marquisates, and Counties—corresponded almost exactly to the territorial divisions of the old Roman provinces. At the head of these divisions were Dukes, Marquises, and Counts, while the secondary cities were governed by their deputies. The clergy were by no means excluded from temporal power in cities, and, indeed, they often assumed both the civil and religious government of them;—they were counts in their palaces, bishops or archbishops at the cathedral, and generals in the field, and were all-powerful in every sphere; while obedience was more readily tendered to a spiritual authority with an army at its back.

The majority of these dukes, marquises, and counts were of German extraction, though Italian in language, interests, and politics; the bishops, on the other hand, were almost all of them Italians, but clerical or lay, each of the chiefs, in their several duchies, marquisates, and counties, had full governing powers, and formed the upper class of feudal society. Be-

neath them came their deputies in town and country, vassals more or less submissive, according to their power and importance, and holding the fortified castles within the cities, or the *castelli* in villages on the country side. Beneath them again stood an urban and a rural feudal nobility, the former with their palaces in the towns, the latter with their castles, which were often fortified, if they stood in a dangerous position, or were liable to attacks. The labouring class were serfs, but in the towns there was growing up a class, remarkable for its industry, morality, and feeling for personal dignity, which became known, later, as the Burgess, or middle class. From the time of the Romans this class had always had its own special governing body, called, by a very natural association of ideas, the *consulate*, and from the eleventh century the Burgess class had its own municipal magistrates, the consuls.

This immense feudal fabric, in Italy, owed allegiance — at any rate in theory — to a supreme head, the Emperor of the West, the

successor to Charlemagne; and the Emperor considered himself its suzerain. But there was a germ of weakness in this relation from the very beginning, owing to the fact that this authority was not always well defined, and that the Emperor was a long way off, and the Pope sometimes held him in check; and between the rival powers there had arisen various new centres of power. While the feudal hierarchy of dukes, marquises, and counts were each struggling to augment their powers at the expense of the others, feudalism became disorganised, armies wasted away in their disputes, and dukes, marquises, and counts disappeared, while the urban and provincial governors were only tolerated if their government had been clement to the lower classes. This was the cause of a very great change, by which the municipal authority, from its humble beginning of Consuls and Rectors, gradually grew to be a governing power able to keep that of the nobles in check. The overlordship of the King of the Romans, the Emperor of the West, still existed,

but its strength had to be actually felt before this suzerainty was admitted.

In their internal feuds, the nobles forgot the existence of the Emperor, until the day came when, being worsted by some neighbour on whose power they had had designs, they were reduced to appeal to their suzerain. As, after all, it *was* his concern, the Emperor either came in person or sent help. Again, if a duke or a count levied exactions from his vassals, they in their turn remembered the suzerainty they had thought so little of shortly before, complained to the Emperor, who again intervened, and sent sometimes a bishop, but more often specially deputed persons (*missi*), to act in the interests of the oppressed parties. In 1037 Conrad the Salic had given the feudal nobility of the principal duchies and counties protection against their immediate suzerain, whether duke or count, and armed with this, the nobility now began to raise their heads, and set up castle against castle within the walls of the towns. Opposition was an easy matter, for the feudal

nobility were united by a common bond, as were the intermediary and the lowest classes. Only the people who lived in the country, isolated in the valleys or on the mountain slopes, and scattered here and there on the plains, were bound to suffer in the struggle. The massing of troops in the towns soon became a source of danger to the feudal nobility and their suzerains, and as each party wanted a supporter in the bitter struggle which was to ensue, the feudal party leaned to the side of the Emperor, while the civic party inclined to that of the Pope. Such was the origin of that immense conflict which spread over Italy, and which brought in its train the deposition of popes and the excommunication of emperors — a struggle known to history as the war of the Guelfs and the Ghibellines.

The two heads of western Christendom, Henry IV. and Pope Gregory VII., who took opposite sides in a single-handed duel, gave an added intensity to the struggle by their action in the war of Investitures. The Em-

peror had the support of the majority of the feudal chiefs, while the Pope had on his side the dukes and counts who had long since shaken off the imperial yoke. His principal support, however, lay in the higher class of the towns, and the wealthy owners of palaces within the town walls, who were neither counts nor dukes. The quarrel between the Pope and the Emperor ended in a compromise, but the principal towns of Northern and Central Italy shook off the yoke of feudalism, and formed themselves into independent republics. In each of these republics the government was at first carried on by officers called consuls, who were always chosen from noble and influential families, or from those who had become enriched by commerce or industry. To control the power of the consuls, a council, and often a senate, was appointed, which was also a reminiscence of the ancient Roman forms of government. This state of things lasted for fifty years, and during this period the theoretical rights of the Emperor were not

disputed, though they were consistently ignored. Later, Frederick Barbarossa struggled for thirty years to bring the towns back to their feudal allegiance under the government of the feudatories he had appointed. Thus the Pope, the rival power, and the supporter of the autonomy of the towns under his authority, represented the cause of Italian liberty, while the Emperor stood for subjection to a foreign yoke. In 1183 the treaty which led to the Peace of Constance defined the rights of the Emperor and the Italian communes. The influence of Roman tradition, the needs and requirements of the day, had changed the condition of Northern Italy, and this was legally recognised, while, in return, the republics ratified certain conditions—homages, tributes, and obligations which they considered of little practical import, and which they would repudiate, if need be, at the earliest opportunity. Such was the origin of the Italian republics; and we shall also indicate here the rise of the Imperial vicars, for while the Polentas are styled in

their genealogies consuls and rectors, the early Malatestas are given the title of Imperial vicars.

Towards the close of the twelfth century the now enfranchised communes were constantly torn by party strife within their walls, and very frequently engaged in struggles with the neighbouring republics, which happened to be swayed by the opposing faction, whether Ghibelline or Guelf. About this time, on the death of the last king of Naples of the Norman race, the popes somewhat inconsistently called the son of their old enemy Barbarossa, Henry VI., to the throne. The latter, who was at war with three successive popes, made a determined stand against the communes, and supported the feudal lords against their oppressed and revolting subjects, thus putting all his strength into the side of the scale of petty local tyrannies. The descendants of the early dukes and counts of German descent were exhausted, but during the gradual and painful birth of local liberties,

and in the slow transformation of the power of feudalism into the power of the communes, there had arisen certain active and powerful personalities, whose political talents were further enhanced by unquestioned military skill; the class, the *Condottieri*, to which both the Malatesta and Polenta families belonged, began to take the place of the old feudal suzerains, and founded local dynasties, some of which were still in existence towards the sixteenth century.

The palace of the Polentas at Ravenna is severe and prison-like. A tablet on its façade tells us, "Questa casa fu un tempo dei Polentani che ebbero la gloria di accogliere ospitalmente Dante Alighieri."

It is interesting to find that Dante's daughter, Beatrice, lived for many years at Ravenna. An inscription on the convent of Santo Stefano states that she devoted herself to God, being "wroth with the world's wickedness, having seen her father through the evil dissension of citizens condemned to a perpetual exile,

and to become a beggar for the bread of strangers."

They will show you in the Pineta "Dante's walk" beside the canal under the stone-pines, "the gentle and windless shade" of which he writes. He doubtless knew the church of Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, and possibly watched the painting of the frescoes executed there about this time, but now faded to the colour of ashes and roses. The fresco represents an old woman, and one young and beautiful, looking out of a window, which, in spite of its archaic characteristics, aroused the enthusiasm of Arthur Symons: it is "the calm and eager face of Francesca da Rimini; the bright gold hair wreathed with green leaves, the long neck, the long sensitive hands, the long straight line of nose and forehead, and the wide eyes looking down from an open window as if for the first sight of Paolo." [1]

[1] "The Romance of the Italian Villas," E. Champney.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE COMEDY

Francesca—The Hunchback—Paolo il Bello—The historical descriptions of the murderer and of the tragedy.

TURNING a moment from history to fiction, let us take the account Dante gives in his "Divine Comedy": [1]—

And I began: "O Poet, willingly
Speak would I to those two, who go together,
And seem upon the wind to be so light."
And he to me: "Thou'lt mark, when they shall be
Nearer to us; and then do thou implore them
By love which leadeth them, and they will come."
Soon as the wind in our direction sways them,
My voice uplift I: "O ye weary souls!
Come speak to us, if no one interdict it."
As turtle doves, called onward by desire,
With open and steady wings to the sweet nest
Fly through the air by their volition borne,
So came they from the land where Dido is,

[1] *Inferno*, canto v., lines 73–142 (Longfellow's translation).

Approaching us athwart the air malign,
So strong was the affectionate appeal.
" O living creature, gracious and benignant,
Who visiting goest through the purple air,
Us, who have stained the world incarnadine,
If were the King of the Universe our friend,
We would pray unto him to give thee peace,
Since thou hast pity on our woe perverse.
Of what it pleases thee to hear and speak,
That will we hear, and we will speak to you,
While silent is the wind, as it is now.
Sitteth the city, wherein I was born,
Upon the seashore where the Po descends
To rest in peace with all his retinue.
Love that on gentle heart doth swiftly seize,
Seized this man for the person beautiful
That was ta'en from me, and still the mode offends me.
Love, that exempts no one beloved from loving,
Seized me with pleasure and this man so strongly,
That, as thou see'st, it doth not yet desert me;
Love has conducted us unto one death;
Caïna waileth him who quenched our life!"
As soon as I had heard those souls tormented,
I bowed my face, and so long held it down
Until the Poet said to me: " What thinkest?"
When I made answer, I began: " Alas!

How many pleasant thoughts, how much desire,
Conducted these unto the dolorous pass!"
Then unto them I turned me, and I spake,
And I began: "Thine agonies, Francesca,
Sad and compassionate to weeping make me.
But tell me, at the time of those sweet sighs,
By what and in what manner Love conceded
That you should know your dubious desires?"
And she to me: "There is no greater sorrow
Than to be mindful of the happy time
In misery, and that thy Teacher knows.
But, if to recognise the earliest root
Of love in us thou hast so great desire,
I will do even as he who weeps and speaks.
One day we reading were for our delight
Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthrall.
Alone we were, and without any fear.
Full many a time our eyes together drew
That reading, and drove the colour from our faces.
But one point only was it that o'ercame us!
When as we read of the much-longed-for smile
Being by such a noble lover kissed,
This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,
Kissed me upon the lips all palpitating.
Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.
That day no farther did we read therein."

And all the while one spirit uttered this,
The other one did weep so, that for pity,
I swooned away as if I had been dying,
And fell, even as a dead body falls.

Such is the episode of the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, and as Ampère has said, "There is nothing in all poetry simpler and yet more profound; more pitiful, yet more restrained; purer, and at the same time more passionate, than this story." What Dante has told us we may look upon as additional historical matter, and not mere poetic fiction. At first the poet does not name the two; they are "sad spirits" floating in the air, yet, as he has implored in the name of "Love which leadeth them," the woman answers, and the mere relation of her birthplace, her love and her death, are enough to unveil her identity to Dante, who now calls her by her name, "Francesca"; for her story was widely known throughout Italy at the time he wrote, and Dante, as we shall see later on, had good cause to be made "sad and compassionate to weeping" by her relation.

Francesca was the daughter of Guido di Lamberto di Polenta, lord of Ravenna, who was known as *il Minore* to distinguish him from Guido *il Vecchio*. Polenta is the name of an ancient fortress in the territory of Ravenna, near Bertinoro, which gives its name to the family. Later on the Polenta family, which had become wealthy, made its home at Ravenna, and took its place among the urban feudal nobility, who held the *castelli* within the city walls under their feudal lords. The first Polenta of whom history makes mention is a certain Geremia who appears about 1169. A century later, Guido gives his daughter in marriage to Giovanni di Malatesta, son of Malatesta da Verucchio, lord of Rimini. The real title of Guido was that of Viscount of the Archbishopric, which shows that in the middle of the thirteenth century the lord of Ravenna was a prelate. Guido himself, a turbulent and ambitious man, possessed of remarkable courage, often driven from Ravenna by party factions, and constantly at war with his neighbours the Counts of Bagnacavallo, was

an adherent of the Pope. When the Emperors of Germany were in power, he quitted Ravenna with his men, and took refuge in some fortress or town swayed by the Guelf faction to which he belonged. He did not actually become lord of Ravenna until the Emperor, Rudolph of Hapsburg, ceded the city to Pope Gregory, whose right to it he had previously disputed. Guido appears first as consul, then as rector; in 1259 he is podestà at Cesena, and again in 1264. At the battle of Trentola (13th June 1275) he behaved with such gallantry in marching to occupy Cervia, that he was chosen to hold the highest power in Ravenna. His mission there was to drive out the faction of the Traversari, and from that time onwards his position was unquestioned. To this period must be assigned the marriage of his daughter with a son of Malatesta da Verucchio of Rimini. Guido, who was considered a firm supporter of the Church, fought successfully against Montefeltro and the Ghibellines in 1282, and the Pope, Martin IV., still further

increased his possessions by conferring on him all the confiscated property of the rebels of Bertinoro. He retired from public life in 1299, leaving the supremacy of his family assured, and his power to his son. But he kept his vote in council, it appears, for his signature is found appended to an Act dated 1306.

Why Guido di Lamberto da Polenta married his daughter Francesca to Giovanni Malatesta, surnamed *il Sciancato*, son of his neighbour Malatesta da Verucchio, lord of Rimini, is a moot point. Luigi Tonini of Rimini, a distinguished scholar and historian, who has collected and compared a great number of documents, and a mass of historical evidence relating to the marriage and the murder, has been unable to come to any conclusion as to the real object of the marriage. About this there are two theories. The first, which has the sanction of Muratori and Clementini, and is drawn from the chroniclers of the fourteenth century, is that Guido called in the aid of Malatesta da Verucchio, who was the most

powerful Guelf chief of the province, in order to make himself supreme at Ravenna. Malatesta, then Captain of the People at Bologna, sent his son Giovanni, and with his aid Guido won his victory over the Traversari. Francesca, by this theory, is the reward for Giovanni's services. The second theory, which entirely contradicts this, is that Malatesta was the leader of the opposite faction at Trentola, and that the marriage was a pledge of the reconciliation of the two families. Boccaccio supports this theory; but, unfortunately, he is not a contemporary authority. It has been objected that there never were any differences between Guido and Malatesta, because both belonged to the same party, the Guelfs. But, even in this case, local hostilities were always possible, and rivalry between neighbouring powers was frequent during the Middle Ages. Tonini, as we have said, comes to no definite conclusion, but he states that there is no trace of any hostility between the two houses in first-hand documents; while Litta, in his valuable

historical work on the genealogies of Italian families, says that "if the theory be true, and that it was a pledge of reconciliation, the marriage must have taken place *after* the battle of Trentola." In any case, whether it was a pledge for the future, or a reward for past aid against the Traversari, there is no doubt about the marriage itself, which must have taken place between 1275 and 1276.[1] There was indeed a second link between the two families, for we see by the will of Malatesta da Verucchio, father of Giovanni (quoted by Tonini), that Maddalena, Giovanni's sister, married Bernardino da Polenta, brother of Francesca. Unfortunately the will does not give the date of this second marriage, but it must be later, and must have taken place some time between Francesca's marriage and her death—probably between 1275 and 1280; for, according to Litta's genealogies, Bernardino is the youngest

[1] There is no reason why the authors of the libretto of the opera *Françoise de Rimini* (by Ambroise Thomas) should have placed the action in 1170.

brother. History is silent on the subject of the wife of Guido di Polenta *il Minore*, Francesca's mother. Francesca was the eldest daughter and one of the two legitimate children of a family of five, which included her brothers Guidaccio, Lamberto, and Bernardino, and her sister Samaritana. The Polenta family died out about 1447. The exact date of Francesca's birth is not given in any genealogy, but it must have been some time between 1255 and 1260. In the Polenta and Malatesta families the women usually married between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and this was probably Francesca's age when she married in 1275, and her age is thus known within five years approximately.

Il Sciancato

Our authority for the early facts about Giovanni Malatesta is the *Codice Membranaceo*, a collection of authentic documents prepared for the use of his family by Pandolfo Mala-

testa, the original manuscript of which is still in existence in the Gambalunga Library at Rimini.

The whole Malatesta family—"a poisoned race"—is a curious study. The first of the family named—after Hugo, the head of the race who appears in 1132—is Giovanni, who lived at Penna Billi in the Montefeltrino, and who in 1150 received the citizenship of Rimini. His son, who had the same name, was the man whose evil and violent humours won for him the ominous surname of *Malatesta.* In 1197 the Malatesta appear as making amends for wrongs done to their "mother country." At this period they were lords of the castle of Verucchio. They gradually gathered force and following; for the city was constantly at war with its neighbours, or taking part in the eternal struggles between the Pope and the Emperor. In 1239 Malatesta *il Vecchio* married a daughter of Pietro degli Onesti, and his son, Malatesta da Verucchio, was the father of Giovanni *il Sciancato.* The name of Malatesta

recalls the passage in the *Inferno* (canto xxvii.) in which Dante describes the lord of Rimini as "*the old mastiff*"—

> *Verucchio's ancient mastiff and the new*
> *Who made such bad disposal of Montagna,*
> *Where they are wont, make wimbles of their teeth.*

Malatesta da Verucchio was born in 1212, and married three times. He had eight children by these marriages, and by his second wife, Concordia, he had three sons, Giovanni, Paolo, and Malatestino. Malatesta da Verucchio, at the time of the Polenta marriage, was the virtual master of Rimini, though he was not as yet officially recognised. Later on, however, the family founded a dynasty, and remained in power for many years, with the title of Vicars of Holy Church in the cities of Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, and Fossombrone.

In 1275 the marriage of Giovanni with Francesca di Polenta took place. Giovanni was, as we said, the eldest son of Malatesta da

Verucchio, and though the correct date of his birth is not given, that of the birth of his younger brother Paolo (1252) is established by a legal document, and his age may be guessed from the date of his tenure of office as podestà. He was rugged and deformed in person, and lame from a malformation of the hip, whence his name of Giovanni *il Sciancato* ("John the hipped"); he was also known as Gianciotto and Lanciotto. A man of daring courage and swift decision, implacable in his hates, he had already, at the age of twenty, won a reputation as a soldier, and was considered as the natural successor to Malatesta da Verucchio, who was, even at that time, aged, but who survived him, and lived to be a hundred years old. He took his share in the party warfare of the day, and when his father was busy with other schemes, and unable to defend his own possessions, it was Giovanni who took the field, and very often succeeded in his enterprises.

It was a common thing at this time to

entrust a stranger—a soldier or politician—with the government of the towns of the Italian republics, under the title of podestà, and from 1278 until 1304 Giovanni constantly appears as podestà at Forlì, at Faënza, and at Pesaro; and, confirmed in his tenure of office, he returned three times running to his post in the towns of the Romagna. From the fact that he was podestà in 1278, we can guess his age, for no one was eligible for that office unless he was thirty years old. Giovanni was therefore born in, if not before, 1248, and might be nearly thirty at the time of his marriage with Francesca.

In 1275 he proved so useful to Guido da Polenta in helping him to drive out the Traversari from Ravenna as to win in reward the hand of Francesca. We shall see, from the only records that we have, that Francesca was suspected, and proved to have deceived him, and died by his hand, about 1285. By Francesca he had one daughter, Concordia, to whom he had given his mother's name. She

appears in the will of the centenarian Malatesta da Verucchio, who advises his grandchildren not to trouble *il Sciancato* about the dowry of Francesca di Polenta, the mother of Concordia. After the murder of Francesca, Giovanni married Zambrasina, daughter of Tibaldello dei Zambrasi di Faënza, the widow, in 1282, of Tino d' Ugolino Fantolini, who met his death at Forlì. By his second wife, Giovanni had three sons, Tino, Guido, and Ramberto; and two daughters, Margherita and Rengarduccia. In 1295 Giovanni was already established at Rimini, and was virtually master there during the lifetime of his father. In 1294 he built the famous fortress known as the *Rocca Malatestiana* to overawe his new vassals, and in 1304 he died at Rimini and disappeared from history. It will be remembered that he is only indirectly and allusively mentioned by Dante in the line—

Caïno attende chi ci vita spense—

"The circle of Cain waits for him who quenched

our life"; the word *Caïno* being an allusion to the relationship between him and Paolo.

Paolo il Bello

Paolo, the third actor in this drama, "This one who ne'er from me shall be divided," as Francesca says, was the younger brother of Giovanni, and son of the centenarian Malatesta da Verucchio. He was known, from his beauty, as Paolo il Bello, and though by some years Giovanni's junior, he married earlier. When only seventeen years old he was married, in 1269, to Orabile Beatrice, daughter and heiress of Uberto, Count of Chiaggiolo, then only fifteen years of age. This county, which included Cusercolo, Valpondi, Segano, and other places of minor importance, was entirely dependent upon the suzerainty of the Church at Ravenna, and was included in the diocese of Sarsina. On the death of Uberto, on March 15, 1203, Malatesta da Verucchio stepped into his place, thus depriving Orabile Beatrice of

her rights. Her uncle by marriage, who happened to be also a bitter enemy of the Malatestas, Guido, Count of Montefeltro, a member of that noble house, afterwards famous in the annals of Pesaro and Urbino, loudly protested against the injustice of this. Accordingly, on 28th August 1269, the difference was arranged by the union of Paolo and Orabile, and the betrothal took place at Urbino, in the church of Santa Croce, where Orabile signed a document renouncing her claim to her inheritance, thus leaving her father-in-law, Malatesta da Verucchio, in possession. He, on his side, agreed to give his daughter-in-law a dowry of 6250 "lire of Ravenna and Ancona." This deed gives the age of the bride as fifteen years. The original of the document, which is printed by the Count Battaghini, is in the Archivio Brandolini at Forlì. It is written in Latin, and is transcribed in the Appendix of the *Selva Genealogica* of Brancaleone at the Gambalunga Library at Rimini; and Tonini also quotes it *in extenso*. The importance of

the deed lies in the fact that it shows that the Malatesta marriages were made with political objects in view, like those of crowned heads. As in 1269 Paolo Malatesta, at the age of seventeen, marries the daughter of the Count of Chiaggiolo, to cover a high-handed act of usurpation on his father's part, so in 1275 Francesca di Polenta is sacrificed to Giovanni, who was lame and a rough soldier, in order to secure or strengthen an alliance with the Polenta family. As a natural result, Paolo's wife is forsaken for Francesca, while Francesca, discovered in a love affair, or in open unfaithfulness with her brother-in-law, falls with her lover, by her husband's dagger.

The date of the death of Paolo's wife, Orabile Beatrice, is uncertain. She bore her husband two children, one of them a son, named Uberto. This youth, who is said to have inherited his father's beauty and spirit, grew to manhood, when he indiscreetly announced his intention of avenging the murder of his father. When Gianciotto heard of this resolve, his

natural impulse was to compass the death of the young Uberto as promptly as possible, and this he is said to have done in a particularly perfidious and atrocious manner. He caused Uberto to be enticed to a banquet, where two of Gianciotto's bastard sons suddenly sprang upon him like tigers, and stabbed him to the heart with their stilettos.

CHAPTER III

DANTE AND FRANCESCA

Contemporary witnesses—Boccaccio and the legend—The relations between Paolo and Francesca.

TAKING the central fact of the murder as our starting-point, let us consider how it struck the imagination of the time, and its effect on those who, if not contemporary, were very nearly so; the direction that public opinion took in the district where the murder took place; and what influenced Dante to make use of the incident. Did he merely take it as so much poetic material, or did he wish to brand a Guelf leader as a murderer, and what was the connection between him and the Polenta family?

If Francesca's guilt is once admitted, there is some justification for the action of her husband —an action which, even under our modern laws, carries with it no disgrace for the murderer. "Kill the woman" is the well-known

remedy of a French dramatic author, and Giovanni did not hesitate to sacrifice two lives. But as no extenuating circumstances are even hinted at in the "Divine Comedy," we are inclined to pity the two, who would appear in the simple statements of any genealogy as guilty, and that with every reason to check them, on the downward paths of passion.

Dante was a contemporary. As he was born at Florence in 1265, he was ten years old at the time of Francesca's marriage, and he had grown to manhood, and had also written some poetry, when the murder took place. It is impossible that the poet, with his temperament, and conscious of his own passion, which has become immortal, should have been indifferent to "the pity of" the story. He must have had full knowledge of it. He had friends at Pesaro, at Forlì, and at Ravenna; he might have known Paolo Malatesta in 1282, at Florence, when Paolo was *capitano del popolo*. The memory of Francesca must have been kept alive by a more personal and intimate

tie, for, after her history had become a popular legend, "an old, unhappy, far-off thing," Dante, grief-stricken, and with his career as a soldier and ambassador ended, came to "eat the bread of exile" at Ravenna, in the very house where she was born, and which was then the home of Guido Novello da Polenta, lord of Ravenna, a poet like Dante, and a distinguished soldier, the son of Ostasio di Polenta, a grandson of Francesca's father, Guido il Minore.

Dante's presence at Ravenna was not the result of accident, or of the caprice of the poet-prince; it was his second visit, and it is possible that here, in a place so nearly associated with her, he may have been able to gather together the threads of the unhappy story. A proof that his connection with the Polenta family was no new one, is to be found in the dedication to Guido Novello, at the head of the *canzone* on the death of Henry VII. It has sometimes been stated that Dante wrote the episode of Paolo and Francesca in

return for the hospitality of the Polentas, but, as a comparison of dates shows, it is a Polenta who proves his gratitude to Dante by offering him an unfailing and unflagging protection, which is an honour to his memory and to the town of Ravenna.

Of the "Divine Comedy," the first five cantos were certainly written at Rome, about April 1300. Dante was ambassador of the Florentine republic when Boniface VIII. proclaimed the first jubilee. It was here, and in a mood of religious contemplation, that he wrote the first cantos of the *Inferno*, and among them the fifth, which contains the episode. Writing thus, he was only separated by fifteen years from the event; and fifteen years are but a short space in the life of a story which has become immortal.

From the year 1307 onwards, Dante wandered here and there in the Romagna, and it was not until 1317 that he accepted the hospitality of Guido Novello, at whose court he remained until his death on 14th September 1321.

His country was his no longer; for he had made the "great renunciation" in the famous letter in which, with all the fire of a poet and a patriot, he refuses to stoop to pass under the low gateway, to re-enter Florence. Guido's hospitality was prompted by two motives—family feeling, and the respect of a poet for the greatest poet of the day; for Dante, by idealising the frailty of Francesca in his poem, had thrown a veil of pity upon her story and her sin. On Dante's death, Guido paid him the last honours. He had the body carried to San Pier Maggiore (later San Francesco) by the first citizens of Ravenna, he ordered public mourning for him, and read a funeral oration of his own composition, in which he praised Dante for having used Italian instead of Latin in his poems. He publicly placed the poet's laurel on Dante's tomb, and was about to raise a monument to him which should be worthy of his memory, when he was forced, by political troubles, to leave his dominions. It was Bembo, Prætor of Ravenna for Venice,

and father of the famous cardinal, who at last provided a final resting-place for the poet's remains, and commissioned one of the greatest artists in Venice in the fifteenth century, Pietro Lombardi (1483), to design his tomb.[1]

The Evidence of Contemporary or Early Writers

Let us now consider the value of the various authorities which may aid us in the task of separating the actual from the legendary story. As, however, we are still in the "dark ages" of history, and do not know the real truth about the more important events of the day, it may be doubted whether we can hope to reconstruct, with any semblance of truth, a minor episode in the history of a little town on the shores of the Adriatic, at the close of

[1] Signor Gasparo Martinetti Cardoni of Ravenna had published a book, *Dante Alighieri in Ravenna, memorie storiche con documenti*, containing documents relating to Dante's stay in Ravenna, and the singular fate of his remains.

the thirteenth century. Before consulting the historians proper, let us first sift the evidence of the chroniclers, or those still earlier commentators, who attempted to explain the text of the "Divine Comedy" soon after its appearance. The first of these in point of date are Dante's sons Pietro and Giacopo Alighieri. Ten years after the death of his father, Giacopo thought it his duty to finish the *Paradiso*, but he gave up the task, and contented himself with writing a Latin commentary upon it. Next came Giacopo della Lena, Gradenigo, and the first of the public commentators, Giovanni Boccaccio, who in 1373 filled the *Cathedra Dantesca* at Florence. Giacopo Alighieri's commentary throws no light on the subject, while Giacopo della Lena's, which is copied almost word for word by Gradenigo, will be quoted later on. Boccaccio's commentary, on the other hand, is by far the most important; the authority of his name makes his evidence of interest, and it is very probable that his account gives the real truth.

Boccaccio and the Legend

In 1373, fifty years after the death of Dante, and during a lull in the political storms of the day, there arose a sudden and enthusiastic cult for him; Florence decided to pay an annual sum of one hundred florins to a *lector publicus* whose duty it was to explain the text of Dante. Boccaccio was the first to fill the chair. The *Provvizione* of the Republic is dated 12th August, and on 3rd October Boccaccio gave a lecture in the hall of a monastery near San Stefano, not far from the Ponte Vecchio; he continued his lectures until his death in 1375, and the year before it his commentaries appeared, and have often been reprinted since then. Pisa followed suit; then Bologna, where the famous Benvenuto da Imola was appointed lecturer; and in 1398 Piacenza, where Galeazzo Visconti filled the chair. All Italy, indeed, was bent on doing honour to the poet's

memory, and the commentators became so numerous that the elucidation of Dante's text brought with it "no light, but rather darkness visible." This commentating and lecturing still goes on; and the bibliography of Dante fills several volumes.

The farther we go from the thirteenth century, the more difficult it becomes to throw new light upon the question. Some important pieces of evidence had been discovered from manuscripts, monastic registers, legal documents, &c., but all the best historians, from Guicciardini, Rossi, Clementini, Marco Battaglia, and a host of others, down to those of a more recent period, used the same materials, until modern writers introduced the principle of working only from original and first-hand documents, for which they have searched religious houses, palaces, public repositories, and municipal buildings. Two modern scholars, Luigi Tonini, the historian of Rimini, and Monsignor Marino Marini, the historian of Sant' Arcangelo, prefect of

the archives of the Vatican, working on this system, have collected a certain number of documents from local sources, but without attempting to work them up into a complete picture. The former, whose history of Rimini was unfortunately never finished, was persuaded that the murder took place at Rimini, while the latter is in favour of Sant' Arcangelo. We will consider their theories later on, but let us first take Boccaccio's commentary, which is what he delivered as a lecture in Florence in 1373. It was translated from his commentary by Leigh Hunt, in "Stories from the Italian Poets," Appendix II. :—

"You must know that this lady, Madonna Francesca, was daughter of Messer Guido the Elder, lord of Ravenna and of Cervia, and that a long and grievous war having been waged between him and the lords Malatesta of Rimini, a treaty of peace by certain mediators was at length concluded between them; the which, to the end that it might be the more firmly established, it pleased both parties to

desire to fortify, by relationship; and the matter of this relationship was so discoursed, that the said Messer Guido agreed to give his young and fair daughter in marriage to Gianciotto, the son of Messer Malatesta. Now, this being made known to certain of the friends of Messer Guido, one of them said to him: 'Take care what you do; for if you contrive not matters discreetly, such relationship will beget scandal. You know what manner of person your daughter is, and of how lofty a spirit; and if she see Gianciotto before the bond is tied, neither you nor any one else will have power to persuade her to marry him; therefore, if it so please you, it seems to me that it would be good to conduct the matter thus: namely, that Gianciotto should not come hither himself to marry her, but that a brother of his should come and espouse her in his name.'

"Gianciotto was a man of great spirit, and hoped, after his father's death, to become lord of Rimini; in the contemplation of which

event, albeit he was rude in appearance and a cripple (*Sciancato*), Messer Guido desired him for a son-in-law above any one of his brothers. Discerning, therefore, the reasonableness of what his friend counselled, he secretly disposed matters according to his device; and a day being appointed, Paolo, a brother of Gianciotto, came to Ravenna with full authority to espouse Madonna Francesca. Paolo was a handsome man, very pleasant, and of a courteous breeding; and passing with other gentlemen over the courtyard of the palace of Messer Guido, a damsel who knew him pointed him out to Madonna Francesca, through an opening in the casement, saying, 'That is he that is to be your husband;' and so indeed the poor lady believed, and incontinently placed in him her whole affection; and the ceremony of the marriage having been thus brought about (*e fatto poi artificiosamente il contratto delle sponsalizie*) and the lady conveyed to Rimini, she became not aware of the deceit, till the morning ensuing the marriage, when she beheld

Gianciotto rise from her side; the which discovery moved her to such disdain, that she became not a whit the less rooted in her love for Paolo. Nevertheless, that it grew to be unlawful I never heard, except in what is written by this author (*Dante*), and possibly it might have so become; albeit I take what he says to have been an invention, framed on the possibility, rather than anything which he knew of his own knowledge. Be this as it may, Paolo and Madonna Francesca living in the same house, and Gianciotto being gone into a certain neighbouring district as governor, they fell into great companionship with one another, suspecting nothing; but a servant of Gianciotto's, noting it, went to his master and told him how matters looked; with the which, Gianciotto being fiercely moved, secretly *returned to Rimini;* and seeing Paolo enter the room of Madonna Francesca, the while he himself was arriving, went straight to the door, and, finding it locked inside, called to his lady to come out; for Madonna Francesca and

Paolo having descried him, Paolo thought to escape suddenly through an opening in the wall, by means of which there was a descent into another room; and therefore, thinking to conceal his fault either wholly or in part, he threw himself into the opening, telling the lady to go and open the door. But his hope did not turn out as he expected; for the hem of a mantle which he had on, caught upon a nail, and the lady opening the door meantime, in the belief that all would be well, by reason of Paolo's not being there, Gianciotto caught sight of Paolo as he was detained by the hem of the mantle, and straightway ran with his dagger in his hand to kill him; whereupon the lady, to prevent it, ran between them; but Gianciotto, having lifted the dagger, and put the whole force of his arm into the blow, there came to pass what he had not desired—namely, that he struck the dagger into the bosom of the lady before it could reach Paolo; by which accident, being as one who loved the lady better than himself, he withdrew the

dagger and again struck at Paolo, and slew him; and so leaving them both dead, he hastily went his way, and betook him to his wonted affairs; and the next morning the two lovers, with many tears, were buried together in the same grave."

It is Leigh Hunt, the translator of this passage, who speaks of the episode of Francesca as standing in the *Inferno* "like a lily in the mouth of Tartarus."

Boccaccio's account, though not contemporary, and the work of a *raconteur*, a past-master in the art of skilful presentation of facts and the sketchings of plots, is an historical document dating from 1373, of the highest value and importance. It has, however, been severely criticised by some authorities, and a vindication of it is perhaps not unnecessary.

Though a poet, Boccaccio is supposed to be accurate and reliable, and in this particular case there are many circumstances in his favour, such as his early date, the authority of his name, and a statement he makes in the

first chapter of his Commentaries, which proves that while preparing his lectures he had taken trouble to investigate facts about Dante, before writing or publicly commenting upon him. He says that he had wished to speak of the event "with a brave man, Ser Piero di Messer Gardino da Ravenna, who had been one of Dante's most intimate friends and servants in this town."

If, then, we have not the exact truth, we have something very like it; at the very least, Boccaccio, in explaining the episode in the fifth canto of the *Inferno* in a public lecture, must have echoed local traditions faithfully. It should be noticed, however, that there is a misstatement contained in the very first line, for Francesca was not the daughter of Guido il Vecchio, but of Guido il Minore; but the real relationships have only been established recently, by the patient researches of modern genealogists. Boccaccio gives no proofs, but he is decided in his view of the understanding between Paolo and Francesca: though a poet

and a *raconteur* himself, he almost accuses Dante of having exaggerated "by an invention" the degree of Francesca's guilt. He is very explicit upon the circumstances of the marriage, and states that the deformed Gianciotto was substituted for his brother, Paolo il Bello, by a trick, in the dark. He briefly indicates the high spirit of the young girl, the unprepossessing appearance and deformity of the husband, and by the contrast of the beauty and amiability of Paolo, the natural result of such an ill-assorted marriage is hinted at. The trickery used is an added provocation, and is quite in keeping with the times. It corresponds, too, with what we have already said of the habit of those nobles of forming political alliances, without any consideration for the feelings of their children.

In a writer who usually has no objection to a risky situation, Boccaccio is curiously cautious and restrained in his account. He does not accuse Francesca, and he even suspects Dante of having made her fault greater than it really was. He takes her part from the moment

that the lady showed her from the window "her husband that was to be." *E cosi si credea la buona femmina. Di che Madonna Francesca incontanente in lui puose l'animo et l'amor suo.* She incontinently placed in him her whole affection; he is young and handsome, her ideal takes actual shape, and the *buona femmina* vows her love to the man she had seen. The deceit, which has not been disproved by any documentary evidence, is also clearly stated by Boccaccio. The author of *Chiose sopra Dante* (which was once attributed to Boccaccio), and the historians Rossi and Clementina, state that Francesca was first betrothed to Paolo. This, however, is impossible, since Paolo was married six years before his elder brother.[1] We may conclude from Boccaccio's story that a substitution *did* take place, and that if we take his account

[1] Though the authors of the libretto of *Françoise de Rimini* did not choose to follow history in their fiction, they have adopted this theory. The story Boccaccio tells would have made a far finer drama.

quite literally, Giovanni introduced himself by night, when the lady was conveyed to Rimini. "The morning ensuing the marriage," when it was light, he must have risen from her side—there is no doubt about the meaning of the text: *Non s'avvide primo dello inganno, che assa vide la matina seguente al di delle nozze, levar da lato à se Gianciotto.*

Boccaccio's account is consistent: he admits the deceit, and shows the natural consequences of it. The "discovery moved her to such disdain, that she became not a whit the less rooted in her love for Paolo." He admits that they "fell into great companionship"—*dimestichezza;* but, as we have seen, when it comes to the point of telling us how far the lovers went, he refuses to do so, and says that he is inclined to believe that Dante's account is "an invention framed on a possibility rather than on anything he knew of his own knowledge"—*Piuttosto fizion formata sopra quello, che era possibile ad essere avenuto, che io non credo, que l'autore sapesse che cosi fosse.*

We may notice, by the way, an expression used in the account of the servant who denounces them—*ciò che delle bisogne sapeva.* Perhaps this is only an ordinary use of the word (*le bisogne* = matters, affairs), but only those who have studied fourteenth-century Italian can tell if there is any analogy in meaning between this word and *la besongne*, as Montaigne understood it.

In continuing Boccaccio's account, we may notice the rock upon which two distinguished historians have split. Gianciotto had "gone into a certain neighbouring district as governor (*podestà*); the two lovers saw each other freely, the servant betrayed them, and the husband secretly returned to Rimini." Now, if Boccaccio's evidence is accepted as trustworthy, it is impossible to see why Monsignor Marini, prefect of the archives of the Vatican, in his *Osservazione critiche intorno a Francesca da Rimini*, should have tried to prove that the murder did not take place at Rimini, but at Sant' Arcangelo, a small place

about six miles from Rimini; which many persons have visited, to see if there were any ruins of a fortress or palace of the thirteenth century, which might have belonged to the Malatesta family, and where the murder might have taken place.

Let us continue our examination of Boccaccio's story. The two lovers are discovered together, and they are killed; but Boccaccio states quite clearly that the death of Francesca is the result of an accident. Gianciotto was about to strike his brother, but Francesca tried to ward off the blow, "into which he had put the whole force of his arm"—*avveva gia alzato il braccio con lo stocco in mano, e tutto si gravava sopra il colpo.* Before it could reach Paolo, the dagger struck into the bosom of Francesca: *prima passò lo stocco il petto della donna, che egli aggiugnesse à Paolo,* and Gianciotto is heart-broken, "being as one who loved the lady better than himself." He withdraws his dagger, and strikes and kills his brother. Thus in Boccaccio's version there

are many extenuating circumstances for the murder. The first fatal blow is an accident, as Boccaccio says, and the second is struck after the death of Gianciotto's first victim, whom he passionately loved. He leaves the two lying dead, and returns to his office—an important point, for he was podestà, and as podestà he was prevented by law, and by the custom of the time, from taking his wife with him to the place where he held office. He must have thus left his post to revenge himself, or to ascertain the lovers' guilt—if they were indeed guilty. The bodies are taken up, and with many tears—*con molti lacrime*—are buried in the same grave. This last circumstance is curious, and though only a minor detail, it is possible to draw conclusions from it. The burial of the lovers in the same grave is a point upon which every one is agreed, and we might even quote a curious document in support of it, which has been considered by some as conclusive. That such a burial was possible in the case of these

two lovers—who were each, we must remember, married—there must have been a strong feeling of sympathy for them in the town, and pity for their death. We may wonder, though love—even guilty love, when atoned for by such a death—would naturally create a profound feeling of pity in a nation so emotional, ardent, and passionate as the Italian, how it was possible that the Malatesta family could have allowed the glorification of an offence for which there was so little excuse, in the very town they dominated, and in the very scene of the wrong-doing. It was certainly treating Orabile Beatrice, Paolo's lawful wife, with very scant consideration.

There is yet another witness to be called and examined, the evidence of the dead, which Dante has put into the mouth of Francesca. Dante wished to know

> "*at the time of those sweet sighs,*
> *By what and in what manner Love conceded,*
> *That you should know your dubious desires.*"

The spirit who tells the story of the kiss

lets fall that saddest of utterances, which Alfred de Musset thought a blasphemy, and which he did not expect to hear from Francesca's lips :—

Dante, pourquoi dis-tu qu'il n'est pire misère
Qu'un souvenir heureux dans les jours de douleur?
Quel chagrin t'a dicté cette parole amère,
Cette offense au malheur?

She tells him :—

" *Sitteth the city wherein I was born*
Upon the seashore where the Po descends
To rest in peace with all his retinue."

And all who have seen the mouths of the Po, a very retinue of rivers and rivulets—the Tesseno, the Adda, the Olio, the Mincio, the Trebbia, the Barmida, and the Taro—losing themselves in the sand where they enter the sea, have recognised Ravenna. She confesses her love, and the strictest can find nothing to object to in her short relation, which is perfect and complete in its way, and one that artists for many centuries have

tried to paint, without ever succeeding in attaining Dante's poetic level:—

> "*One day we reading were for our delight*
> *Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthrall.*
> *Moved we were, and without any fear.*
> *Full many a time our eyes together drew*
> *That reading, and drove the colour from our faces;*
> *But one point only was it that o'ercame us.*
> *When as we read of the much-longed-for smile*
> *Being by such a noble lover kissed,*
> *This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,*
> *Kissed me upon the lips all palpitating.*
> *Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.*
> *That day no farther did we read therein.*"

That book, of which one passage only "overcame" them, is "The Romance of Launcelot of the Lake, Knight of the Round Table," an old French classic. There was, at one time, a great deal of mistaken ingenuity lavished on the verse—

> "*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.*"

The meaning is, however, quite unmistakable,

and this is the passage which overcame the two lovers :—

" '*Why should I cause myself to be entreated?*' quoth she. '*I am even more willing than you.*' Then the three went apart, and seemed to take counsel together. Then the Queen saw that the knight dared to no more, and took him by the chin, and gave him a long kiss in the presence of Gallehaut." The passage—

"*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse*"—

is explained by what we know of the plot of the story. It is Gallehaut who pushes the Queen into the arms of Launcelot; it is Gallehaut who, by saying that that knight's valiant deeds were only undertaken to please the Queen, with whom Launcelot is passionately in love, makes himself the medium and go-between in their love-affairs; and asks that the Queen should give her knight a kiss, as a reward for his service. The go-between, in the case of Francesca and Paolo, is "The Romance of Launcelot of the Lake," whose most moving

passage they read, as they sat together, and so the Romance, and "he who wrote it," was to them another Gallehaut.

It is interesting to find that before 1300 the old French chivalric romances were widely known in Italy, where they were read in Provençal, in French, and in Latin. It is impossible to say whether the lovers were actually reading when Gianciotto surprised them, but the fact that Dante places the book in their hands is a proof of the far-reaching influences of the earliest French literature upon the other side of the Alps. It is most unlikely that Dante's account is purely fictional, and one is inclined to believe that there must have been some account, some well-authenticated tradition, on which his version is based.

The lips of the lovers meet, and the curtain falls upon them, with that line of supreme reserve—

"*That day no farther did we read therein.*"

This reserve, however, does not satisfy every one,

and many chroniclers and commentators prefer to believe that it was not at this psychological moment, but somewhat later, that Gianciotto knocked loudly at the door of the *Gattolo.*

The Relations between Paolo and Francesca

Our personal conviction, for reasons already stated, is that Boccaccio's commentary is the most trustworthy authority on the subject. His evidence, as we have seen, has been questioned, not only by a few Italian, but by some French commentators, and by some modern historians. To take their criticisms one by one, it has been denied that there was any hostility or actual strife between the Malatesta and Polenta families at this time. This is really only a minor point, for the marriage might equally well have been the result of an offensive and defensive alliance, or of the gratitude of Guido da Polenta to Malatesta da Verucchio for his services in helping him to drive out the Traversari from Ravenna. In the second place, Monsignor

Marino Marini thought that Rimini was not the scene of the murder. He was thus obliged to set aside Boccaccio, who clearly states that Gianciotto was podestà at a neighbouring town, and that he had to *return to Rimini* to find out the truth and discover the offenders. Fauriel, who was the first professor[1] of foreign literature at the University of Paris, and who lectured on the "Divine Comedy," represented Boccaccio's story as the work of a writer of romances, who had the knack of disposing and touching up his originals in the most effective and life-like manner. He does not, however, give any good reason for this opinion of his, and we are thus led to inquire if there is any evidence more conclusive than Dante's or Boccaccio's, before or after their day. The chroniclers who mention the story, however, are not contemporary, but belong to the period immediately following. The Latin chronicle of Marco Battaglia, published by Muratori under the title of *Anonymi*

[1] Founded 1531.

Itali Historia, and whose date is from 1354 to 1385, records the murder incidentally as follows: *Paulus autem fuit mortuus per fratrem suum Joannem Zoctum ex causa luxuriæ commissæ cum Francisca Guidonis filia di Polenta*, *uxore fratris germani Pauli*, *cum qua Paulus passus est mortem.* This is evidence that the murder really happened, but does not throw any light upon the details.

The original manuscript commentary by Jacobus Gradenigo de Venetiis, with illuminated miniatures, once in the possession of Cardinal Garampi and now in the Gambalunga Library at Rimini, is a copy, almost word for word, of another and earlier commentary, that of Giacopo della Lena, published by Vandelin. The handwriting of the manuscript shows that it was written towards the end of the fourteenth century, between 1389 and 1399. It is thus later in date than Boccaccio, but Giacopo della Lena is earlier. Gradenigo—and therefore Della Lena—go much further than Boccaccio in their statements. Before commenting on the

passage, they treat the event as if it were an *Istorietta* or a *Novella*. The somewhat outspoken Italian of the old chronicles, which is a little difficult to translate on that account, runs as follows: "Giovanni, son of Messer Malatesta Vecchio of Rimini, had to wife Francesca, daughter of Messer Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna. This Francesca '*giaceva*' with Paolo, her husband's brother, and her own brother-in-law, and though corrected many times by her husband, neither she nor her love would make an end. So that, at last, it came to pass that Giovanni found them in the act (*suso il peccato*), and spitted them upon a sword, so that they died in one another's arms." This is certainly the fullest account we have, and those who wish for the details of what happened when "The Romance of Lancelot of the Lake" fell to the ground, ought to be satisfied. We must remember, however, that the manuscript of Gradenigo was written about a century after the events.

There are other documents which might be

quoted, but there are none earlier than this. There is Fra Giovanni da Serravalle, who in 1416 wrote a Latin commentary by order of the Fathers of the Council of Constance; and though Gradenigo is explicit enough, Serravalle's Latin may be found more convincing. He describes the already often-quoted episode, mentions the "Lancelot," and after an allusion to its most moving passage, expresses himself as follows: *Hoc lecto Paulus Franciscam intuitus fuit et in tali intuitu palluerunt ambo et rubuerunt tandem habuerunt rem simul. Unus ex familia Ganschiatti (Gianciotto) hoc vidit, et revelavit domino suo, qui posuit se in insidiis, et breviter ambos unum super alium amplexatos interfecit!*

A point to be noticed is that in Boccaccio and in the commentators, Giovanni enters and takes his revenge at once; here, on the other hand, some time elapses between the sin and its punishment. A paragraph from the fifteenth-century *Cronica Pesarese*, by Tommaso Diplovatazio, places the event first at Pesaro, then at

Rimini, and describes it in these words: *Hoc anno* (1296) *ferunt Joannem Sancatum potestatem et capitaneum Pisauri dominam Franciscam filiam domini Guidonis de Polenta Ravennæ Domini, ejus uxorem, gladio confodisse inventam in adulterio cum Paulo Bello fratre dicti Joannis.*

Diplovatazio will be considered later, when we discuss the place, and the date of the murder, for the date he gives is not a possible one.

Next comes Baldo di Branchi, whose chronicle, written in Italian, is dated 1454. His account, translated, is as follows: "In this month (September 1287) a strange thing happened in the house of Malatesta. The aforesaid Malatesta had some years ago married his son Giovanni to a noble lady of Ravenna, by name Francesca, who was a very beautiful person, and it is said for some years past *lei e Paolo usanno insieme.* Gianciotto, who discovered them in the act (*suso il fatto*), slew them both."

Teofilo Betti, whose unpublished *Dellie ose Pesarese* is later, has a delightful description of the scene, but in spite of the refinement of his language, his morality is none of the strictest: *Ognuno sa che furono ambedue trafitti da Giovanni il quale li sorprese nella più interessante e deliziosa operazione che la natura inspira ai mortali.* This Teofilo Betti, who throws such a poetical light upon their sin, gives first Rimini, then Pesaro, as the scene of the event. He names the Gattolo of the Malatestas, or the Tingoli palace in the market-place at Rimini, and at Pesaro, the building where the "Salara" is to-day; but in both cases he merely echoes the traditions current in his days.

We have quoted the more important chroniclers from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Those of the sixteenth and the following centuries, and the national historians, have only worked up the old chroniclers, and have repeated what the others have said, because they have all had access to the sources

we have quoted. It has been the work of writers of to-day, and their immediate predecessors, to throw new light upon the actual scene and date of the event, by searching through the documents of the *Archivio Notarile*, the papal briefs, the documents relative to the emancipation of minors, wills, "provisions" or decisions of the rectors, consuls, and podestàs of Rimini, Pesaro, and Sant' Arcangelo. But though they have succeeded in gaining more precise information as to "place" and "time," they have not superseded or disproved the accounts of the chroniclers. Boccaccio had said that Giovanni was podestà, and the place where he held office has been discovered; the date of his absence has been verified, in order to find out that of his return; the murder *was* an established fact, and the scene of it has been discovered. The ages of the husband, the wife, and the lover have been inquired into; whether Paolo was married and had any children; whether Francesca, too, left any descendants; whether Paolo was older or

younger than his brother, and why, in this latter case, was he married before his elder brother? All questions that seem of little interest or importance—and are so to a poet—but which are interesting to the historian, and give an air of reality to the story. Such a question was at the bottom of the violent discussion between Tonini and Monsignor Marino Marini, who were both agreed upon the main facts, but differed upon the questions of time and place.

CHAPTER IV

THE SITE OF THE TRAGEDY

Was it at Rimini, Pesaro, or Sant' Arcangelo?—Examination of the evidence as to each—The opinions of Tonini and Monsignor Marino Marini—Conclusion.

AFTER sifting the evidence of chroniclers and commentators upon Dante, the next thing is to see if there are at Ravenna or Rimini any of those mute witnesses to history, such as monuments or inscriptions, contemporary with the Polenta and Malatesta families.

Francesca has told us that she was born "by the sea-shore"—*su la marina;* and her ancestors must have lived in the seigneurial palace, or castle, of Ravenna. In the very year of her marriage, 1275, her father is invested by the Pope, and the Polenta family begin their reign, which lasts until 1441—

in all more than a century and a half of power.

Both at Ravenna and Rimini, which are places where the water-marks of successive invasions, and the history of the first centuries of the Christian era, are written in indelible characters, we find traces of the visits of every sovereign, from Augustus to the last of the papal legates, in buildings or inscriptions. The five bas-reliefs of the Apotheosis of Augustus, with Cæsar and Livia in San Vitale, the Port of Classis, the mires of Cæsarea are all eloquent of the Roman period, and its four centuries of prosperity. The Arch of Augustus at Rimini, and the pedestal of Julius Cæsar, are full of associations with the emperors, and, from the military harbour of Classis, where Strabo tells us two hundred and fifty ships of war rode at anchor, the Roman fleet could, at a word from the master, set sail for Epirus, Macedonia, Achaia, the Propontis, Crete, and their colonies in the East.

Upon the partition of the world by the Romans, the West fell to the lot of Honorius, and Ravenna was chosen as a refuge against the Barbarians, on account of its strong position on the marshes, which defended its approach. We find traces of its phase as the residence of the Roman emperors, and as the capital of Italy when the Peninsula fell into the hands of the Barbarians, in the tomb of Galla Placidia, sister of Honorius and daughter of the Emperor Theodosius, who became the wife of a Barbarian king, and in the tombs of Honorius, of Constantius, and of Valentinian III., which are still standing, and in good preservation. When the Barbarians got the upper hand, Ravenna became the chief place of residence of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths. His tomb, surmounted by an enormous monolith, which suggests Egypt and the monuments of the Pharaohs, is still to be seen, and in the Piazza Maggiore was his Portico with his anagram curiously carved upon it; and the outposts, as it were, of his

palace, can be traced a few steps from the Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. On the entry of Belisarius into Ravenna, the Barbarians were worsted, and the Byzantine period succeeds the Gothic. The wonderful Basilicas are a testimony to the two centuries of Byzantine rule. Here the epitaphs of the Exarchs may be read on their tombs, and on the walls of San Vitale, which shine with brilliant mosaics, representing great personages of the Byzantine Court — the Emperor Justinian followed by the Archbishop Maximilian, and opposite to him Theodora, surrounded by her court ladies in brilliant costumes, the actress, and Empress of the East, drawn from the scum of the circus, a fit Empress of the Lower Empire, as she appeared to the artists in mosaic of the sixth century, a brilliant, painted, tricked-out wanton.

The Lombards and Charlemagne left no monuments, but marks of their passage in the destruction and ruin they left behind them; and if we remember the spoils which Charle-

magne carried off from Ravenna, to enrich Aix-la-Chapelle, this period will not seem without its distinguishing note.

The period between the Lombards and the rule of the Polenta is one of darkness and disorder, during which Otho the Great, the Holy Roman Emperor, was crowned at Pavia, with the famous iron crown which is still preserved among the treasures of Monza; and the struggle in which the imperial power was exchanged for the feudal, lasted for two centuries and a half.

It is a period of storm and stress, in which the arts of peace had no breathing-space; but we may find in the church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, a monument of the date, erected in commemoration of the repentance of Otho III., the young emperor whose short life was stained by so many crimes — he was only twenty years of age—who came here barefoot, humbled and penitent, after having put John XVI. to the torture and treacherously executed Crescentius, whom he had besieged in the Mole of Hadrian.

Although, when the feudal power rose upon the ashes of the Western Empire, the Imperial vicars became the virtual masters of Ravenna, not a stone, contemporary with their earliest period, survives to bear witness to their rule. We can see the corroded box, now in the museum at Ravenna, which for many centuries held the bones of Dante; we can kneel before the tomb of Braccioforte, and admire the light and graceful façades and the magnificent cloisters of the palaces built by the Proveditore of Venice; and read the inscription near San Vitale, that tells of the murder of Cardinal Alidosio by the Duke of Urbino, in the presence of the Pope, his uncle; we may make a pilgrimage to the *Colonna dei Francesi*, that marks the spot where Gaston de Foix, the hero only twenty years old, fell, in the hour of his triumph, laurel-crowned; even papal legates, Lord Byron, the Gambas, the Countess Guiccioli, names which recur so often in the anecdotal history of more recent times, have left their memories, but not a single ray of light is

thrown by the monuments contemporaneous with the Polentas upon the subject of our inquiry. It is a singular thing that there should be such a blank in the record, and that the Polentas, who are, historically, such vivid personalities, should be the only people who have not left their stamp upon the city where they ruled for more than a hundred and fifty years.

We have been more successful in fixing the actual date of the murder. The evidence rests upon a single stone, which is a proof of the occasional importance of such seemingly unimportant "documents" in an historical inquiry. In 1856 there was discovered in the fortress of Pesaro a fragment of the older portion of the building, bearing the following inscription: *Anno Domini: Millesimo* C C°: LXXXV: *Indictione* XIII: *Temporibus: Domini Honorii Papæ* IIII: *Esistente: Potestate Johanne: Nato: Magnifici viri: Domini Malatestæ.*

Now, in 1285 Honorius IV. was Pope; the dates are in harmony, and the inscription

proves conclusively that in 1285 Giovanni il Sciancato was podestà at Pesaro. There is no doubt that it was from Pesaro that he hastened to surprise Paolo and Francesca. It is possible, of course, that he had been podestà for some time, and that he had filled the office several times over, but this record is against Monsignor Marino Marini's theory; for if Giovanni was podestà at Pesaro at the time of the murder, it would have been impossible for his wife to have been with him, just as it is impossible for an admiral or a captain of a ship to have his wife on board during his naval expeditions. The law is quite clear on this point, and even if there were no law, the custom was invariable in Italy.

Brunetto Latini, Dante's schoolmaster, defines the necessary qualifications of a podestà, in his *Tesoro.* The podestà had to be a stranger, not a citizen of the town in which he was to hold office; and a man of noble family and a distinguished and successful soldier was usually chosen. He had to be at

least thirty years of age, and to belong to the party in power in the district. He was not allowed to bring his wife with him, and, at the same time, he was obliged to keep up a little court, with his notaries, lawyers, registrars, and his military following of knights, squires, and pages. Unless the town had in its service some famous condottiere, the podestà took over the command of the army, and became the political and military head of the State. The name survives in most of the towns of Northern Italy, and in all the Venetian colonies on the Adriatic, but the office to-day is by no means important, and corresponds to that of a syndic or mayor (Podestà-syndaco). Some of these early podestàs were chosen for life, and the palaces where they resided, in the thirteenth century, remain as memorials of the political conditions of the time. Rugged, strengthened with iron, massive blocks of masonry, they still look impregnable in many cases, and able to endure the longest sieges; and most of them have done so. The Bar-

gello at Florence is a curious example of this kind of architecture, which was closely in sympathy with the needs and manners of the day; and most of the towns on the coast of the Adriatic have interesting ruins of such buildings, too often disfigured by a mistaken policy of restoration.

We may assume that it was in 1285, when Giovanni was podestà at Pesaro, that he hurried back to Rimini to surprise Francesca and Paolo. This is in agreement with Boccaccio's statement, but not with Monsignor Marino Marini's theory. In the thirteenth century a disagreement between the bishops of Sant' Arcangelo and the republic of Rimini resulted in a war between the two towns; and he believes that the Malatestas attacked Poggio di Sant' Arcangelo, and that Giovanni and Paolo Malatesta held the fortress in 1288 and 1289. If, he thinks, they had continued to occupy it for so long a period, Giovanni would have had his wife with him, and the discovery and the murder would have taken place at

Sant' Arcangelo. Although Monsignor Marino Marini's work must always claim our respect, and Clementini is on his side, it is impossible to agree with his conclusions. The date of the murder is placed so late as 1288 or 1289, when Giovanni is no longer podestà; and what is more, it is certain that during those years he was fighting round Sant' Arcangelo. Monsignor Marino Marini passes over the single fact that *is* firmly established—viz. that Giovanni was podestà at Pesaro in 1285. We do not agree with those who think the murder took place at Pesaro. That theory passes over the custom, or the law, which prevented podestàs from living with their families in the towns they ruled, and it also passes over Boccaccio's *tornò a Rimini*—a statement which is supported by many of the documents which have been quoted, and which seems to be a true one.

There is another argument, which, though independent of documentary proof, is probably more conclusive. It is that though Francesca

was born at Ravenna, she is universally known as Francesca *of Rimini*, for it was at Rimini that she lived, and paid the penalty of her weakness, or her sin, and at Rimini that she was buried.

Then, too, if we sum up the accounts of the chroniclers and historians, we see that the majority tacitly suppose that the scene is laid at Rimini; they do not even think of suggesting any other theory. This negative kind of proof can be drawn from the accounts of Marco Battaglia, Benvenuto da Imola, Fra Giovanni da Serravalle, and Baldo di Branchi; while Giacopo della Lena, Gradenigo, and Boccaccio mention it as the place. Later again, when Silvio Pellico wrote his *Francesca di Rimini* he had no hesitation in placing the scene of his tragedy in the city of the Malatestas, and the same might be said of Count Odoardo Fabri and Lord Byron, if he had carried out his unfinished sketch which we read of in his letters to Murray. Francesca was Francesca da Ravenna; she is, and always

will be, Francesca di Rimini, a living portion of Rimini's history or legend, and eternally associated with its memories, whatever new documents may be discovered in record-offices and libraries.

Another theory, which has the authority of the *Cronica Pesarese*, states: *Aliqui dicunt fuisse Arimini in domo magna quo est in capite Plateæ magnæ.* We do not believe, however, that the large house at the entrance of the Piazza Maggiore belongs to this period. The building, which is called the "house of Julius Cæsar" from the pedestal, a little pillar set up by Sigismondo Malatesta to commemorate Cæsar's crossing the Rubicon, bears an inscription claiming that Cæsar stood on it to harangue his troops, and was restored in 1560. The house passed, through the Tingoli and the Ruffo families, into the possession of Count Carlo Graziani Cisterni, and must have been built on the site of the earlier house the chronicler mentions.

It is a curious thing that the middle class,

which is indifferent to the methods of exact inquiry, is in favour of this theory. There is also a tradition that the sons of Malatesta da Verucchio lived, during their father's life-time, in a house near the old Porta di Sant' Andrea. This house, however, which belonged in the eighteenth century to the Graziani family, is much too modern. All this shows how difficult it is to come to a definite conclusion, but I am inclined to agree, with Tonini, that the Gattolo di San Colomba at Rimini, which stood on the site of the fortress known to-day as the Avanzi della Rocca, was probably the scene of the tragedy. In its present state it is impossible, owing to the alterations that have been made, to discover the remains of the earlier building.[1]

In conclusion, here is a curious extract from a book printed at Rimini in 1581, by

[1] The Castel Malatesta, or fortress, is now mutilated or disfigured by unsightly barracks. The rose and elephant are still traceable on its walls, with the date 1445.

Simbeni, entitled *Il Vermicello della Setá.* The author is Giovanni Andrea Consucci da Sascorbaro, and it is quoted by Tonini :—

"A few days ago, in the church of Sant' Agostino, there were found in a marble tomb Paolo Malatesta and Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta, lord of Ravenna, who were put to death by Lancelotto, the son of Malatesta, lord of Rimini and brother of the said Paolo. These two were discovered in adultery, and slain by a blow with a dagger, as Petrarch says in the 'Triumph of Love.' Their clothes were of silk, and though enclosed for so many years in the tomb, they were found in a perfect state of preservation."

It is impossible to say what Sascorbaro's story is based on. Certainly Boccaccio and most of the chroniclers say that the bodies of the two lovers were buried in the same grave, and Sascorbaro's story—which we give for what it is worth—is in agreement with their accounts. However this may be, Rimini believes firmly in its legend, and in the Gambalunga Palace,

on the walls of the town library may be seen, in a frame, a piece of silk woven with gold, which is believed by the ordinary visitor to be a genuine relic of the garments of Francesca and Paolo.

CHAPTER V

RÉSUMÉ OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta—Dante is the reputed historian of the tragedy—His legend compared with authentic history.

FROM this mass of doubtful and conflicting evidence a few facts stand out clearly and prominently, and give some air of relief to so far-off an historical event. At first there was a school which saw in Francesca a sacrifice to paternal ambition, and poets and painters, sculptors and musicians, represented her as a creature full of youth, grace, and beauty, who, after the cruel deception which substituted Giovanni il Sciancato for Paolo il Bello, fell an easy victim to the man who had gone through the ceremony of marriage with her. Later on, a reaction set in, on the dis-

covery of some new materials, and this was strengthened by the opinions of the first people who took the trouble to work on the subject. A cynical poet went so far as to suggest that, at the time of her death, Francesca

"*N'avait plus tout-à-fait la fraîcheur da matin*";

and another school arose who saw in her a married woman, who was no longer young, yet in love with a mere boy—a not uncommon occurrence.

The truth really lies between the two.

Francesca was beautiful, and both proud and "of lofty spirit," for Dante, who is so sparing of details, gives proof of the energy of her character. It is she who answers him, while Paolo can only weep, and she who brands her husband with the name of Cain. Francesca must have been about eighteen years old when she married in 1275, and at her death she was about twenty-eight. There is no reason to doubt that she was married

to Giovanni by proxy, and that from the very first she loved Paolo with a love that, in the end, cost them both their lives ten years later. We may assume that her intimacy with Paolo was of long standing, and upon her death she left behind her a daughter, Concordia, whom Giovanni had named after his mother.

Giovanni was more than thirty when he married her—since he had already held office as podestà; his physical peculiarities have been described, and his character lives in the pages of the chroniclers of the fourteenth century. In spite of being "rude in appearance and limping," he was a soldier who had won a reputation in the country round, and a shrewd politician. When he suspects his wife, he watches her, and strikes her down: the next day he marries Zambrasina.

A later and a true-blooded Malatesta, faithful to the family type, is Sigismondo, the son of Pandolfo, who was the great-grand-nephew of Giovanni, and the most famous represen-

tative of his race. He poisoned two of his wives, and remained the devoted lover, till his death, of his mistress, Isotta of Rimini (afterwards his third wife), who was celebrated by the poets of the fifteenth century.

Paolo is Paolo il Bello; and even in the legal documents and papal briefs of the day, he is so entitled. There is, however, a stain upon the history of his love, for six years before he saw Francesca he had married Orabile Beatrice, and by her in the first year of their marriage he had a son, Uberto di Paolo; and not long afterwards a daughter, Margherita.

Paolo has the reputation of a beautiful but insipid person, whose "only art was love." It was said of him that "he loved the amusements of peace better than the toils of war," and Benvenuto da Imola, one of the earliest commentators on Dante, has given him a bad character. Francesca, by a strange inconsistency that has been observed before in history, must have been won by his horseman-

ship, his white skin, and his curly hair; it is evident that he was attractive to women. But, in common justice, we must admit that if he was not a soldier like *il Sciancato*, Scepione Ammirato, an historian in the pay of the early Medici, has proved that Paolo took some share in political life, and that in 1283 he was *capitano del popolo* at Florence. It is true that, on the 1st of February of the same year, he states that he has serious business which calls him to Rimini, and asks for leave, which is given him (*licenza di andarsene a casa*). Some who wish to "point the moral" have chosen to conclude that it was not his wife Orabile he was anxious to rejoin, but his brother's wife, who was far more dear to him. It has been supposed that he is to be met with again in history, skirmishing round the Poggio di Sant' Arcangelo, but in first-hand documents there is no sign of him from the (conjectured) date of the murder, while his brother can be traced as late as 1304.

When he made his first and fateful appear-

ance, Paolo is twenty-three—he was born in 1252;—he is surrounded by an atmosphere of love until his death, at the age of thirty-four.

Anything beyond these few facts is conjectural; and it is impossible to reconstruct, in all its details, a minor episode which happened so long ago as 1285. But there seems to be no doubt, from the evidence of the chroniclers, that these few facts are established on a firm footing.

In conclusion, we shall not insist upon their guilt, for human nature is generous in its judgments on such historic frailties, and it is perhaps absurd to take what is largely legend or tradition too seriously. However, we prefer Boccaccio's account, even as a subject for an opera, to the fiction about which Ambroise Thomas wrote his *Françoise di Rimini.* In the historical account there were all the necessary elements, war and love, dramatic possibilities and background, everything that goes

to make a successful and varied play. But poets, so long as they are men of genius, have their licence, and it is idle to criticise their methods pedantically.

But when all is said it is useless to file our evidence, and search all possible sources of information to discover whether the real Francesca, the Francesca of history, was "more sinned against than sinning," for Dante has superseded history. We ought not to pin his airy creations down to earth, nor be disappointed at not finding the actual tomb of Juliet or Romeo's balcony. In spite of the claims of history and historic truth, art remains supreme, and it is useless to call back these ghosts from beyond the grave, "in their habit as they lived," for the poets have already snatched them from the earth, and given them to us in another guise. If certain facts, which it seems impossible to doubt, have given offence to some, they may console themselves by thinking that it is the poet's privilege to infuse a breath of life into his fictions, and it is this

new creation that lives on to all eternity, while every detail that we would add only detracts from the vividness, the reality, the wonderful life-in-death of the "two sad spirits indivisible."

THE END

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
Edinburgh & London

57

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

OCT 18 1993
JUN 23 1993

RET. JUN 17

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

B 000 014 494 9

Unive
Sou
Li