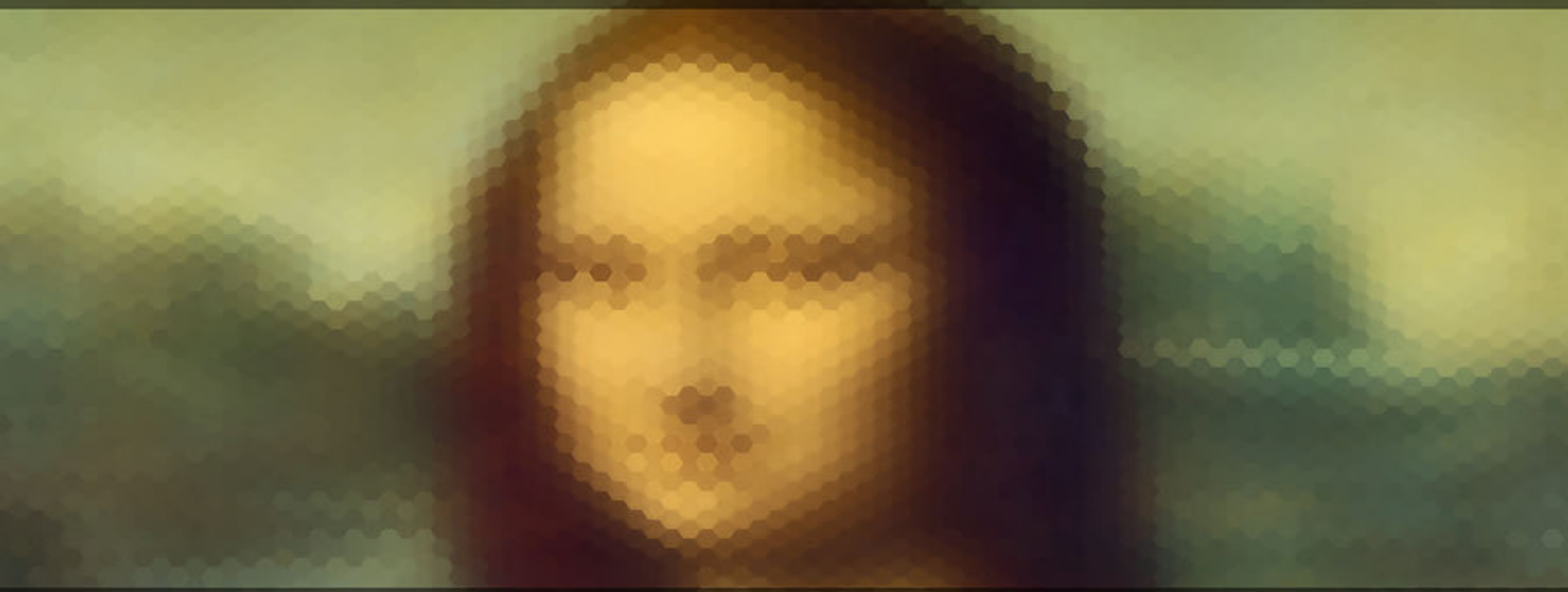
THOMAS ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE



A DECADE OF ITALIAN WOMEN

Thomas Adolphus Trollope

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Table of Contents

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

The degree in which any social system has succeeded in ascertaining woman's proper position, and in putting her into it, will be a very accurate test of the progress it has made in civilisation. And the very general and growing conviction, that our own social arrangements, as they exist at present, have not attained any satisfactory measure of success in this respect, would seem, therefore, to indicate, that England in her nineteenth century has not yet reached years of discretion after all.

But conscious deficiency is with nations at least, if not always with individuals, the sure precursor of improvement. The path before us towards the ideal in this matter is a very long one; extends, indeed, further than eye can see. What path of progress does not? And our advance upon it will still be a sure concomitant and proof of our advance in all civilisation. But the question of more immediate moment is, admitting that we are moving in this respect, are we moving in the right direction? We have been *moving* for a long time back. Have we missed the right road? Have we unfortunately retrograded instead of progressing?

There are persons who think so. And there are not wanting, in the great storehouse of history, certain periods, certain individuals, certain manifestations of social life, to which such persons point as countenancing the notion, that better things have been, as regards woman's position and possibilities, than are now. There are, painted on the slides of Mnemosyne's magic lanthorn, certain brilliant and captivating figures, which are apt to lead those who are disgusted with the smoke and reek of the Phœnix-burning

going on around them, to suppose that the social conditions which produced such, must have been less far from the true path than our present selves. Nay, more. There have been constellations of such stars, quite sufficiently numerous to justify the conclusion, that the circumstances of the time at which they appeared were in their nature calculated to produce them.

Of such times, the most striking in this respect, as in so many others, is that fascinating dawn time of modern life, that ever wonderful "rénaissance" season, when a fresh sap seemed to rush through the tissues of the European social systems, as they passed from their long winter into spring. And in the old motherland of European civilisation, where the new life was first and most vehemently felt—in Italy, the most remarkable constellations of these attractive figures were produced.

The women of Italy, at that period remarkable in different walks, and rich in various high gifts, form in truth a very notable phenomenon; and one sufficiently prevalent to justify the belief, that the general circumstances of that society favoured the production of such. But the question remains, whether these brilliant types of womanhood, attractive as they are as subjects of study, curiously illustrative as they are of the social history of the times in which they lived, are on the whole such as should lead us to conclude, that the true path of progress would be found to lead towards social conditions that should be likely to reproduce them?

Supposing it to be asserted, that they were not so necessarily connected in the relationship of cause and effect with the whole social condition of the times in which they lived, as that any attempt to resuscitate such types need involve a reproduction of their social environment; even then the question would remain, whether, if it were really possible to take them as single figures out of the landscape

in which they properly stand, they would be such as we should find it desirable to adopt as models of womanhood? Are these such as are wanted to be put in the van of our march—in the first ranks of nineteenth century civilisation? Not whether they are good to put in niches to be admired and cited for this or that virtue or capacity; nor even whether they might be deemed desirable captains in a woman's march towards higher destinies and better conditioned civilisation, if, indeed, such a progress were in any sane manner conceivable; but whether such women would work harmoniously and efficiently with all the other forces at our command for the advancement of a civilisation, of which the absolute *sine quâ non* must be the increased solidarity, co-operation, and mutual influence of both the sexes?

It may be guessed, perhaps, from the tone of the above sentences, that the writer is not one of those who think that the past can in this matter be made useful to us, as affording ready-made models for imitation. But he has no intention of dogmatising, or even indulging in speculations on "the woman's question." On the contrary, in endeavouring to set before the reader his little cabinet of types of womanhood, he has abstained from all attempt at pointing any moral of the sort. The wish to do so is too dangerously apt to lead one to assimilate one's portrait less carefully to the original than to a pattern figure conceived for the purpose of illustrating a theory. Whatever conclusions on the subject of woman's destiny, proper position, and means of development are to be drawn, therefore, from the consideration of the very varied and certainly remarkable types set before him, the reader must draw for himself. It has been the writer's object to show his portraits, more or less fully delineated according to their interest, and in some measure according to the abundance or the reverse of available material, in their proper setting

of social environment. They have been selected, not so much with any intention of bringing together the best, greatest, or most admirable, nor even the most remarkable women Italy has produced, as with a view of securing the greatest amount of variety, in point of social position and character. Each figure of the small gallery will, it is hoped, be found to illustrate a distinct phase of Italian social life and civilisation.

The canonised Saint, that most extraordinary product of the "ages of faith," highly interesting as a social, and perhaps more so still as a psychological phenomenon;—the feudal Châtelaine, one of the most remarkable results of the feudal system, and affording a suggestive study of woman in man's place;—the high-born and highly-educated Princess of a somewhat less rude day, whose inmost spiritual nature was so profoundly and injuriously modified by her social position;—the brilliant literary denizen of "La Bohème;"—the equally brilliant but large-hearted and high-minded daughter of the people, whose literary intimacies were made compatible with the strictest feminine propriety, and whom no princely connections, lay and ecclesiastical, prevented from daring to think and to speak her thought, and to meet with brave heart the consequences of so doing;—the popular actress, again a daughter of the people, and again in that, as is said, perilous walk in life, a model of correct conduct in the midst of loose-lived princesses;—the nobly-born adventuress, every step in whose extraordinary *excelsior* progress was an advance in degradation and infamy, and whose history, in showing us court life behind the scenes, brings us among the worst company of any that the reader's varied journey will call upon him to fall in with;—the equally nobly-born, and almost equally worthless woman, who shows us that wonderful and instructive phenomenon, the Queen of a papal court;—the humbly born artist, admirable for her successful combination in perfect

compatibility of all the duties of the home and the studio;—and lastly, the poor representative of the effeteness of that social system which had produced the foregoing types, the net result, as may be said, of the national passage through the various phases illustrated by them:—all these are curiously distinct manifestations of womanhood, and if any measure of success has been attained in the endeavour to represent them duly surrounded by the social environment which produced them, while they helped to fashion it, some contribution will have been made to a right understanding of woman's nature, and of the true road towards her more completely satisfactory social development.

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA.

Table of Contents

(1347–1380.)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

HER BIRTH-PLACE.

There are not many chapters of history more extraordinary and more perplexing than that which relates the story of St. Catherine. Very perplexing it will be found by any, who may think it worth while to examine the record;—which is indeed well worthy of examination, not only as illustrative of one of the most obscure phases of human nature, but also as involving some highly interesting questions respecting the value of historic evidence.

Of such examination it has received but little. Among Catholics the "legend" of the Saint is to this day extensively used for such purposes as similar legends were intended to serve. Orthodox teachers have used the story unsparingly as stimulus, example, and testimony. But orthodox historians have passed over it with the lightest tread and most hurried step; while such Protestant readers as may have chanced to stray into the dim, despised wilderness of Romish hagiography, have in all probability very quickly tossed the volume aside, compendiously classing its subject in their minds with other dark-aged lumber of martyrs, who walked with their heads in their hands, and saints who personally maltreated the enemy of mankind.

Yet a very little consideration of the story will show, that it cannot with fairness be thus summarily disposed of. After

seeing large solid masses of monastic romance and pious falsehood evaporate from the crucible of our criticism, there will be still found a very considerable residuum of strangely irreducible fact of the most puzzling description.

It is to be borne in mind, moreover, that the phenomena to be examined are not the product of the dark night-time of history, so favourable to the generation of saints and saintly wonders. Cock-crow was near at hand when Catherine walked the earth. The grandsons of her contemporaries had the printing-press among them; and the story of her life was printed at Florence in the ninety-seventh year after her death. While the illiterate Sienese dyer's daughter was working miracles, moral and physical, Petrarch and Boccaccio were still writing, and Dante had recently written. Giotto had painted the panels we still gaze on, and Niccolò of Pisa carved the stones we yet handle. Chroniclers and historians abounded; and the scene of the strange things recorded by them was at that time one of the centres of human civilisation and progress. We are there in no misty debateable land of myth and legendary song; but walk among familiar facts of solid well-authenticated history, studied for its lessons by statesmen, and accepted as the basis of theories by political philosophers. And yet, in the midst of these indubitable facts, mixed with them, acting on them, undeniably influencing them, we come upon the records of a story wild as any tale of Denis or Dunstan.

SIENA.

When once launched on the strange narrative, as it has come down to us, it is somewhat difficult to remember steadily how near we are all along to the solid shore of indisputable fact. Holding fast to this, therefore, as long as may be, we will approach the subject by endeavouring to obtain some idea of the material aspect of the "locus in quo."

No one perhaps of the more important cities of Italy retains the visible impress of its old republican medieval life to so remarkable a degree as Siena. Less favoured by fortune than her old enemy, and present ruler, Florence, she has been less benefited or injured by the activity and changes of modern days. And the city retains the fossilised form and shape which belonged to it at the time when its own stormy old life was finally crushed out of it. The once turbulent, energetic, and brave old city, sits there still, on the cold bleak top of a long spent volcano—emblem meet enough of her own nature and fortunes—grim, silent, stern, in death. The dark massy stone fronts, grand and gloomy, of old houses, built to defy all the vicissitudes of civic broils, and partisan town-fighting, still frown over narrow streets, no longer animated by the turbulent tide of life which filled them during the centuries of the city's independence.

The strange old "piazza," once the pulsating heart, whence the hot tide of the old civic life flowed through all the body of the little state, still occupies its singular position in the hollow of what was in some remote ante-Etruscan time, the crater of a volcano. Tall houses of five or six stories stand in a semicircle around this peculiar shell-shaped cup, while the chord of the arc they form, is furnished by the picturesque "palazzo pubblico," with its tall slender tower of dark brick, and quaintly painted walls. Like the lava tide, which at some distant period of the world's history flowed hence down the scored sides of the mountain, the little less boiling tide of republican war and republican commerce, which Siena was wont to pour out from the same fount, is now extinct and spent. But such lazy, stagnant, unwholesome life as despotism and priestcraft have left to Siena, is still most alive in and around the old piazza.

Up the sides of this doubly extinguished crater, and down the exterior flanks of the mountain, run steep, narrow, tortuous and gloomy, the flagstone-paved streets of the old

city. So steep are they in some parts, that stairs have to take the place of the sloping flagstones, which are often laid at such an angle of declivity as to render wheel-traffic impossible. On the highest pinnacle of the rim, overlooking the hollow of the once crater, stands the Cathedral, on such uneven ground, that its east end is supported by a lofty baptistery, built underneath it on the rapid descent. In the most ornamented style of Italian-gothic architecture, and picturesque, though quaint, in its parti-coloured livery of horizontal black and white stripes in alternate courses of marble, the old church still contains a wonderful quantity of medieval Sienese art in many kinds. Carving in wood and in stone, painting in fresco and in oil, inlaid work and mosaic, richly coloured windows and gilded cornices, adorn walls, floor, and roof, in every part. The whole history of art from the early days, when Sienese artists first timidly essayed to imitate barbaric Byzantine models, to its perfect consummation in those glorious ages which immediately preceded the downfall of Italian liberty, is set forth in this fine old church, as in a rich and overflowing museum. Some half dozen popes sleep beneath sculptured tons of monumental marble in different parts of it—among them two of the very old Sienese family of Picolomini.

FONTEBRANDA.

On another peak, or spur, of the deeply seamed mountain, stands the huge unornamented brick church and monastery of St. Dominic, so situated, that between it and the Cathedral is a steep gorge, the almost precipitous sides of which the old city has covered with stair-like streets. Deep at the bottom of this gorge, near a gate in the city wall, which runs indefatigably up and down the mountain ridges and ravines in its circuit around the spacious city, now a world too wide for its shrunken population, is that old fountain, which one passing word of the great poet has

made for ever celebrated. Here is still that Fontebranda,[1] which, with all its wealth of sparkling water, the thirst-tormented coiner in the thirtieth canto of the Inferno, less longs for than he does to see in torment with him those who had tempted him to the deed he was expiating.

The Dantescan pilgrim, who, among his first objects at Siena, runs to visit this precious fountain, finds, not without a feeling of disappointment, a square mass of heavy ugly brickwork, supported on some three or four unornamented arches on each of its four sides. Within is a large tank, also of brick, the sides of which rise about two feet above the level of the soil; and this is perennially filled by a cool and pure spring from the sandstone side of the mountain, which there rises in a broken cliff immediately behind the ungraceful, though classic building. Descending the steep street in search of this poet-hallowed spot, with the Cathedral behind him, and St. Dominic's church high on its peak above and in front of him, the visitor finds that he is passing through a part of the city inhabited by the poorer classes of its people. And near the bottom of the hill, and around the fountain itself, it is manifest to more senses than one, that a colony of tanners and dyers is still established on the same site which their forefathers occupied, when Giacomo Benincasa was one of the guild.

The general aspect of this remote and low-lying corner of the city is squalid and repulsive. Eyes and nose are alike offended by all around them. And the stranger, who has been attracted thither by the well-remembered name of "Fontebranda," hastens to reclimb his way to the upper part of the town; probably unconscious, perhaps uncaring, that within a few yards of him lies another object of pilgrimage, classic after another fashion, and hallowed to the feelings of a far more numerous body of devotees. For a little way up the hill, on the left hand side of the poverty-stricken street, as one goes upwards, among the miserable and filthy-

looking skin-dressers' houses, is still to be seen that of Giacomo Benincasa, in which his daughter Catherine, the future Saint, was born, in the year 1347, and lived dining the greater portion of her short career.

CATHERINE'S BIRTH-PLACE.

The veneration of her fellow citizens during the two centuries which followed her death, has not permitted the dwelling to remain altogether as it was when she inhabited it. The street front has been sufficiently altered to indicate to any passenger, that it belongs to some building of more note than the poor houses around it. Two stories of a "loggia," or arcade, of dark brick, supported on little marble columns—four arches above, and four below—run along the front of the upper part of the building. On the ground-floor, a large portal, like that of a chapel, such as in fact now occupies the entire basement story, sufficiently shows that the building within is no longer a poor dyer's habitation. On the side is a smaller door opening on a handsome straight stone staircase, eight feet wide. By this entrance visitors are admitted to gratify for an equal fee their Catholic devotion or heretic curiosity.

The whole lower floor of the house, once, as tradition, doubtless correctly, declares, the dyer's workshop (as similar portions of the neighbouring houses are still the workshops of modern dyers), is now a chapel. "Virginea Domus," is conspicuously carved in stone above the portal, somewhat unfairly ignoring the existence of poor Giacomo in his own workshop. The walls are covered with frescoes by Salimbeni and Pachierotti, and a picture by Sodoma adorns the altar. Ascending the handsome flight of stone stairs, the visitor finds most of the space on the first floor occupied by another chapel. This was the living room of the family, and is nearly as large as the workshop below. But at the end of it, farthest from the street, and therefore from the light also,

there is a little dark closet, nine feet long by six wide. It is entered from the larger room by a very low door, cut in a very thick wall, and has no other means of receiving light or air. This was Catherine's bedchamber. The pavement of the little closet is of brick, and on this, with a stone—still extant *in situ*—for a pillow, the future Saint slept. The bricks, sanctified by this nightly contact with her person, have been boarded over to preserve them from the wear and tear of time, and from the indiscreet pilfering of devout relic-hunters.

Various treasures of this sort, such as the lamp she used to carry abroad, the handle of her staff, &c., are preserved on the altar of the adjoining chapel: and one or more other oratories have been built and ornamented in and about the Saint's dwelling-place. But the only spot which has any interest for a heretical visitor is the little dark and dismal hole—Catherine's own chamber and oratory—the scene of the young girl's nightly vigils, lonely prayers, spiritual struggles, and monstrous self-inflictions.

"Surely," cries the pious pilgrim, "as holily penetential a cell, as ever agonized *De profundis* rose from to the throne of Grace!"

"Truly," remarks the philosophic visitor, "a dormitory well calculated, in all its conditions, to foster and develop every morbid tendency of mind or body in its occupant!"

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

THE SAINT'S BIOGRAPHER.

A great number of devout writers have occupied their pens on "legends" and biographies of St. Catherine, more or less complete in their scope and pretensions. The public library at Siena contains no less than seventy-nine works, of which the popular Saint of the city is the subject. Almost all of them, however, seem to be based more or less directly and avowedly on the work of "the Blessed" Raymond of Capua.

Perhaps some heretic's untutored mind may be so ignorant as not to know that the adjective joined to Raymond in the preceding sentence is not only an epithet, but a title. "Beatification," is a spiritual grade inferior to "sanctification," conferred by the same unerring authority, and implying different and inferior privileges and position.

Childish trash enough it seems. Yet may not possibly some disciple of that modern school of moralists, which teaches that happiness is not, or should not be man's highest and ultimate aim, see in this assertion of the superiority of "sanctification" to "blessedness," one of the many instances in which Rome's pettifogging formalism and unspiritual materialism have fossilised a lofty thought into a low absurdity?

Be this as it may, Raymond of Capua was never in Rome's hierarchy "more than blessed."

This "Beato Raimondo" was "in the world" Raimondo delle Vigne, great-grandson of Pietro delle Vigne, the

celebrated Chancellor of the Emperor Frederick II., who right royally rewarded his life-long services by putting his eyes out. Raymond his great-grandson was a Dominican monk; and became[2] twenty-fourth general of the order, in 1578, at the time when a schism in the Church, divided between two popes, produced a corresponding schism in all the monastic orders. Raymond governed that portion of the Dominican fraternity which recognised the Pope, subsequently acknowledged by the Church as the true one.

Having been sent, in 1367, to preside over the Dominican convent in Siena, he was there by divine[3] intervention, say the learned historians of the literature of the order, appointed confessor and confidant to St. Catherine. The superior sanctity of the penitent was however soon made manifest. For when Siena was ravaged by a pestilence, in 1372, and Prior Raymond having caught it, while ministering to the sick, lay dying, he was miraculously restored to health by the prayers of St. Catherine.

The General of the Dominicans, as he shortly afterwards became, was a man of mark, moreover, beyond the limits of his own Society; for he was employed on several missions and negotiations by the Pope. With such qualifications and opportunities, he certainly would seem to have been the most competent person imaginable to give the world an account of his saintly penitent's career. This he has done in a work often reprinted, and most recently at Milan, in two good-sized octavo volumes, in 1851. The "Life of Saint Catherine of Siena, the Seraphic spouse of Jesus Christ" forms volumes nine and ten of an "Ecclesiastical Library," brought out at a very cheap rate, as a means of supplying the people of Italy in the nineteenth century with wholesome and profitable mental food.

A glance at the nature and quality of this work is desirable for several reasons. In the first place, it is necessary to ascertain how far we can implicitly rely on its statements of matters of fact respecting Catherine's history. In the second place, a knowledge of the mental calibre and intellectual standing of the Saint's confessor, confidant, and friend, cannot but assist us in estimating her own character. And lastly, it is no little interesting to observe what spiritual and intellectual provender is provided in these days for the population of Italy by those who have the education and guidance of her people in their hands.

This widely circulated work is an Italian translation from the original Latin of Father Raymond, executed by Bernardino Pecci, Bishop of Grosseto. In the notice of St. Catherine, in the "Biographie Universelle," it is stated, among a singularly large number of other[4] errors, that Raymond translated into Latin the Life of the Saint from the Italian of Fra Tommaso della Fonte, who preceded him in his office of confessor, making some additions to the original text. But a very cursory examination of the book would have sufficed to show the French writer that, although Father Raymond frequently cites Fra Tommaso as the authority for some of his statements, the entire composition is wholly the work of the former.

An equally short glance at this "Life" will also suffice to convince any one in search of the facts of the Saint's career, that little assistance is to be got from Father Raymond. It is indeed very evident, that the author did not write with any intention of furnishing such. He rarely gives any dates, and scarcely makes any pretence of observing chronological order. He says, that he writes in his own old age, long after the events occurred; owns that he forgets much; and, though carefully and ostentatiously winding up every chapter with a reference to his authorities for the statements contained in it, is yet avowedly throwing

together a mass of anecdotical recollections, as they occur to him. He rarely, if ever, records any unmiraculous and unsaintly doings;—mentions, for instance, that she performed such and such miracles at Pisa, or discoursed in such and such terms at Genoa; but does not give the slightest hint why she went thither, or when. In short, the whole scope and object of the book is devotional, and in no degree historic. It is written for the promotion of piety, and especially for the glory of the Order of St. Dominic, and of the Dominican St. Catherine. The wonders related are evidently intended to cap other wonders. They constantly consist of performances essentially similar to those recorded of older saints, but enhanced by some added circumstance of extra impossibility. And the writer, in his competitive eagerness, often pauses in his narration to point out, that no former recorded miracles have come up to that he is relating in outrageousness of contradiction to the laws of nature.

FATHER RAYMOND'S WORK.

Were it not, however, for these and such like evidences of the *animus* of the writer, and were it not also, it must be added, for the exceeding difficulty of supposing that an undoubtedly distinguished man, a contemporary of Petrarch and Boccaccio, could have believed the monstrous impossibilities he relates as facts—the tone of the book would seem to be that of sincerity. In a subsequent chapter, the reader will have an opportunity of examining some specimens of these extraordinary relations. For the present, as a taste of the quality of this remarkable book, *reprinted in 1851 for wide circulation among the readers of Italy*, and as a means of judging how far it is possible to credit the writer with simple-hearted sincerity, he may take the following passages from a long prologue of thirty pages, which the learned author opens with a quotation from the

Apocalypse, "I saw an angel descending from Heaven, having the key of the Abyss and a great chain in his hand;"—and in which he points out the application of these words to St. Catherine. Having shown at much length that she may well be considered an angel descending from Heaven, he proceeds thus:—[5]

"Finally we find added to the words of St. John, which have been taken as a foundation for this prologue, the following phrase: '*Et catenam magnam habens in manu suâ*;' which, like those that precede them, adapt themselves to our subject, and explain the significance of her name. What wonder is it, that Catherine should have a chain—*catena?* Is there then no agreement in the sound of the two words? Since if you pronounce 'Caterina' with a syncope, you have 'Catena;' and if to 'Catena' you join a syllable, you have the name of 'Caterina.' Shall we attach ourselves then to words and appearances only, neglecting the things and the mysteries signified by these words? Not only the words, but also the things themselves point out to us the applicability. Since *catha* in the Greek tongue signifies that which in the Latin is *universe*.[6] Hence also the Catholic Church is from the force of the Greek word properly called in Latin Universal. Caterina therefore and Catena signify in our tongue University; which thing also a chain—*catena*—manifests in its very nature."

After many pages of such extraordinary nonsense, he arrives at the conclusion, that Caterina certainly means Universality, and that in this name, made Catena by syncope, "lies hidden perhaps no small mystery!"

It does seem wholly incredible, that this should be the best product of the mind of one, chosen out to be the foremost of the Dominicans of his day, and selected by the Pope to be entrusted with important missions. It is difficult not to suspect, that this great-grandson of Frederick II.'s famous Chancellor was a very different man, when subtly

diplomatising in Rome's interest with courts and princes, or when considering in council the interests of his order, from what he shows himself when addressing the people. Surely the *Concio ad Populum* must have differed from the *Concio ad Clerum* as widely as any sect's esoteric ever did from its exoteric doctrines. And the "no small mystery of Caterina cut down by syncope to Catena," was, we may well believe, not the subject of very serious meditations behind the screen on the priestly side of the altar. Is it indeed possible to abstain from the conviction, that we have detected the reverend figure of Father Raymond of Capua, General of the Dominicans, very decidedly laughing in his sleeve at that poor ill-used people, to whose proneness to be deceived, Rome has ever answered with so ready and so hearty a *decipiatur?*

> POPULUS VULT DECIPI; DECIPIATUR.

One other specimen of the quality of this Dominican monk's work may not be superfluous in enabling the reader to make up his mind respecting him and his teaching.

He tells us[7] that Catherine, when in her seventh year, retired one day into some corner of the house, where she could not be seen or overheard, and thus prayed:—

"O most blessed and holy Virgin, first among women to consecrate by a perpetual vow thy virginity to the Lord, by whom thou wast graciously made mother of His only begotten son, I pray of thy ineffable goodness, that without considering my merits or my weakness, thou wouldst be pleased to do me the great favour[8] of giving me for husband Him, whom I desire with all the passion of my soul, thy most Holy Son, our only Lord Jesus Christ; and I promise to Him and to thee, that I will never receive any other husband, and that with all my power I will preserve for Him my purity ever unblemished."

"Do you perceive, O reader!" continues the biographer, "with what order all the graces and virtuous operations of this Holy Virgin are powerfully and sweetly regulated by that Wisdom which disposes all things? In the *sixth* year of her age, while yet seeing her spouse with the eyes of the body, she gloriously received his benediction. In the *seventh* year, she made the vow of chastity. The first of these numbers is superior to all others in perfection: and the latter is called by all theologians, the number of Universality. What then can be understood from this, if not that this Virgin was destined to receive from the Lord the *Universal Perfection* of all the virtues; and consequently to possess a perfect degree of glory? Since the first number signifies Perfection, and the second Universality, what can they signify, when put together, other than Universal Perfection? Wherefore she was properly called Catherine,[9] which signifies, as has been shown, Universality."

This, and some three or four hundred closely printed pages of similar material, has recently (1851) been published at a price, which only a very large circulation could make possible. "And yet," cry the priests and priest-ridden rulers of the nations for whom this spiritual food is provided, "we are accused of keeping our people in ignorance, and discouraging reading! On the contrary, we carefully teach our flocks, and seek but to provide them wholesome instead of poisonous mental food. Here is reading, calculated to make men good Christians, good subjects—and to keep them quiet."

IMMORTALITY OF FALSEHOOD.

Volumes might yet be written, and not superfluously, though many have been written already, on the deliberate, calculated, and intentional soul-murder perpetrated by this "safe" literature! And it is curious to mark how this poor sainted Catherine, and her "blessed" confessor are still

active agents for evil nearly five hundred years after the sepulchre has closed on them!

"Like vampyres they steal from their tombs,
To suck out life's pith with their lying,"

as a poet sings, who has well marked the working of saints and saint-worship in that unhappy land.

Truth is immortal! as is often said. Yes! but men do not perhaps so often consider, that, as far as human ken may extend, falsehood unhappily is in its consequences equally immortal.

CHAPTER III.

Table of Contents

THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

Little reliable information as to the real unmiraculous events of Catherine Benincasa's life is to be obtained, as has been seen, from the pages of her professed biographer. But there is another pietistic work, forming part of the same "Ecclesiastical Library," in which Father Raymond's book has been recently reprinted, that offers somewhat better gleanings to the inquirer into the facts of the case. This is a reprint in four volumes (Milan, 1843–4) of the Saint's Letters, with the annotations of the Jesuit, Father Frederick Burlamacchi. These letters had been already several times published, when the learned Lucchese Jesuit undertook to edit them in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The former editions were imperfect, incorrect, and uncommented. But the Jesuit, jesuitlike, has done his work well; and his notes, appended to the end of each letter, contain abundant information respecting the persons to whom they are addressed, the events and people alluded to in them, and, wherever attainable, the dates at which they were written. To the labours therefore of Father Burlamacchi is due most of the information thrown together in the following concise account of Catherine's career; in which it