CHAPTER II
FROM FREEDOM TO SERVITUDE

The year of Italian national disaster, 1494, ended in happiness for young Lodovico Ariosto. The recitations at Pavia, and possibly the success of the elegy on the death of the Duchess, may have convinced Count Niccolò that his son might find a better way to the favour of princes than by following the laws. Seeing that all his efforts to compel him to keep to texts and glosses were in vain, and that time was being wasted, he at length yielded to the persuasions of his kinsman, Pandolfo di Malatesta Ariosti, and left his son at liberty to follow his own bent. In his poetical epistle to Pietro Bembo, some thirty-six years later, Lodovico represents himself as having been almost destitute of classical learning at this time; but there is doubtless some generous exaggeration here, with a view to painting in the strongest colours his debt of gratitude to the man under whose influence he now fell:

* Passar venti anni io mi trovavo, et nopo
  Haver di pedagogo, chè a fatica
  Inteso havrei quel che tradusse Esopo.
  Fortuna molto mi fu allora amica,
  Che mi offese Gregorio da Spoleto,
  Che ragion vuol ch'io sempre benedica.
  Tenea d' ambe le lingue i bei secreti,
  E potere giudicare se miglior tacea.
  Hebbe il figliuol di Venere o di Teti.
  Ma allora non curai saper di Hecuba
  La rabiosa ira, e come Ulisse a Rheso
  La vita a un tempo e li cavalli rube;
  C'io volesse intender prima in che hevve offeso
  Enea Giano, che' bel regno da lei
  Gli dovesse d' Hesperia esser conteo;*
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Ch' io saper ne la lingua do gli Achei
Non mi reputo honor, s'io non intendo
Prima il parlar de li latin mieli.1

Little seems known of this Gregorio da Spoleto, save that he had been an Augustinian friar, had been prior of the convent of Sant' Agostino in Siena and lecturer at the Sienese Studio in 1459, had returned from the cloister to the world, and was now living in Ferrara in the palace of Rinaldo d'Este, the Duke's half-brother. It does not appear that he held a chair at the Studio, but he was probably teaching the younger Estensian princes and holding classes for more distinguished pupils, who came to him in Rinaldo's palace, the 'Paradiso,' which in after years became the seat of the University. This was but a few paces from the house of Count Niccolò Ariosti, in the present Via Giacomo di Pallone. Gregorio was at least happy in his most famous pupil. Historically a mere shadow, he lives in Messer Lodovico's verse, Italian and Latin alike, as the very type of a devoted and stimulating teacher, one that inspired personal love no less than reverence and gratitude.

Under Gregorio's guidance, Ariosto plunged into the Latin poets in something of the same spirit as that in which Keats romped through Chapman's Homer, and himself turned to composing Latin poetry. So rapid was his progress that he is said to have been chosen, at the reopening of the Studio in the autumn of 1495, to recite an oration in Latin verse in praise of Philosophy, in the presence of the hereditary prince, Don Alfonso, in the Duomo; we are told that the poem was much applauded by the discerning as promising a brilliant literary future for its author, and that he was

1 'I found myself passing twenty years and in need of a schoolmaster, for with labour could I have understood him who translated Aesop.
2 'Fortune then was right friendly to me, for she offered me Gregorio of Spoleto, whom justice wills that I should ever bless.
3 'Of both languages he held the godly secrets, and could judge whether the son of Venus or of Thetis had been better sung.
4 'But then I cared not to know the frenzied anger of Hecuba, and how Ulysses took from Rhesus at once his life and his horses;
5 'Because I wanted first to hear in what Aeneas had offended Juno, that the fair realm of Hesperia should be denied him by her;
6 'For I should not count it an honour to be learned in the language of the Greeks, if I did not first understand the speech of my Latins.' (Sotiro vi. 165-180).
pointed out to sons by their fathers as an example to follow.\(^1\) We have no documentary evidence to support this;\(^2\) but a poem in Latin hexameters (or, perhaps, we should say some fragments of a poem) is extant, which must be accepted as Ariosto's since it was selected by Pigna from the materials offered him by the poet's son, and which ostensibly is this very eonam; but it exhibits in many respects so much maturity that we are driven to the conclusion that either Gregorio lent considerable aid to his pupil, or Messer Lodovico himself rewrote these portions of his poem in after years.\(^3\)

The two most important friends of this epoch in Ariosto's life were two men of noble rank and high position, who were destined to acquire fame in very dissimilar fields—Alberto di Leonello Pio and Ercole di Tito Strozzi.

The famous conspiracy of the Pio against Duke Borso and the harsh punishment of the sons of Galasso Pio, in 1469, had by no means ended the dissensions that attached to the lordship of Carpi. Leonello and Marco Pio had dispossessed their cousins, only to leave this heritage of family discord to their own sons—Alberto, the younger Leonello, and Giberto. The mother of Alberto and Leonello was Caterina Pio (the sister of that phoenix of the Quattrocento, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola), who, after the death of her husband, the elder Leonello, in 1477, married Rodolfo Gonzaga, who died a hero's death at Fornovo. Alberto had something of the character and disposition of his maternal uncle, albeit debased by the factional, intriguing spirit of his father's House. He had already been instructed in Latin by Aldo Manuzio and in philosophy by Pomponazzo at Carpi, where, after the death of his father, he shared the lordship with his uncle Marco.

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\(^1\) Gabriele Ariosti, Garofolo, Fornari.

\(^2\) Zambotto, to whom we owe our information about these university erations, and in many cases the names of the young students who delivered them, does not mention this. It may, however, be observed that, although his Chronicle goes down to December, 1504 (and not to 1496 only, as Carducci, p. 142, seems to imply), Zambotto was probably absent from Ferrara on this occasion, as in October, 1496, he went with his family to Mantua to enter upon an office there to which he had been appointed by the Marquis (MS. ed., i. 275). In what capacity could Lodovico have delivered such an oration?

\(^3\) Carm. i. 1, to which Baruffaldi gave the title De Laudibus Philosophiae. For a full discussion of this question, see Carducci, pp. 137-144.
ALFONSO D'ESTE, HEREDITARY PRINCE OF FERRARA (1492).
MEDAL BY NICCOLO FIORENTINO.
After the latter's death, Alberto left his brother Leonello to carry on the petty struggle with Marco's son, Giberto, and he came to Ferrara in 1494, to study under Gregorio da Spoleti. It is as the generous patron of Aldo Manuzio, and as the magnificent employer of Baldassare Peruzzi, that Alberto chiefly lives in the story of literature and art; but the student of politics will rather know him as the restless, faithless intriguer of the pontificates of Julius and Leo—a man who was, perhaps, his own worst enemy. He was a year younger than Ariosto, with whom he established a warm friendship, but had a more matured mind; the brilliant hey-day of his youthful manhood as yet gave little presage of his unhappy latter end.

Eroele Strozzi (the great-grandson it will be remembered, of Carlo Strozzi, the adherent of the Parte Guelfa and associate of St. Catherine of Siena, who was exiled from Florence in the Tumult of the Ciompi) was several years older than either Alberto or Lodovico, and stood in no need of Gregorio's instructions; debarred from an active career by his lameness, he had devoted himself heart and soul to letters from his boyhood, and was already bidding fair to rival the fame in Latin poetry of his father, Messer Tito Vespucciano. The latter frequently invited Ariosto to his house, delighted in his conversation, and encouraged a friendly rivalry between him and Erocole.

A political dissension and an assassin's knife, respectively, were to end Lodovico's friendship with Alberto and Erocole. A warmer, more intimate affection was naturally that which united him to his beloved kinsman, Pandolfo Ariosti, the merest, most unsubstantial of shadows to us now (no poems or writings of any kind of his are extant), who shared his pursuits, stimulated him by his example, and apparently gave promise of a brilliant future. One of Lodovico's earliest attempts in Latin verse is an epitaph composed of three distichs for Pandolfo's brother, Folco Ariosti, who fell in 1495, at the age of twenty-four, slain by a cannon-shot while fighting under the banner of France and the command of the Orsini in defence of a castle in Puglia which was assailed.

1 *Carm. iii. 16.*
by the Aragonese forces of King Ferdinand—who, after the hurried retreat of King Charles and the battle of Fernovo, was rapidly winning back the Kingdom.

If Ariosto touched the Italian lyre at all in these years, it was but seldom and lightly—though he undoubtedly revelled in the new edition of the unfinished poem of Count Matteo Maria Boiardo. This youth of Ariosto, in Carduca's much-quoted phrase, 'was all Latin.' 'The fact is that Ariosto, even apart from his natural inclination to the Roman poets, could not in the years of his youth and in Ferrara have helped writing Latin. When Lodovico Ariosto reached his twentieth year, the spring of the classical Renaissance semin-ated by Leonello d'Este and by Guarino da Verona was in Ferrara in its most luxurious vegetation, and inebriated the souls of all with its colours and with its perfumes: all loved, hated, sinned, dreamed in Latin.'

Boiardo had broken off his Orlando in despair on the first advent of the ultramontane barbarians in the invasion of Charles VIII in 1494; Francesco Bello brought his Mambriano to an abrupt close in the rumours of a fresh invasion in 1496, 'for the fury of the Gallic tempest draws the ancients out of my memory.' In harsh contrast to these are almost the first words in song of their great successor. It was in the summer of 1496, when Charles was at Lyons, and all Italy was agitated with hope or fear at the rumours of three French armies preparing and a great fleet about to set out, that Ariosto wrote his first real poem: the Horatian ode in alcaics, Ad Philetroem:

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Quid Galliarum navibus aut equis
Paret minatas Carolus, asperi
Fureor militiae tremendo,
Turribus saevis ruinam:
Ramus quid hostis prospiciat sibi,
Me nulla tangat cura, sub arbuto
Incentem aequae ad murmur cadentis,
Dum segetes Corydona flvae
Durum fatigant, Philiroe meum,
Si mutum optas, ut mihi saepius
Dixisti, amorem, fac corolla
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1 Carducci, p. 37.
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Purpureo variata flore
Amantis udim cumcument caput,
Quam tu atienti nexceris manus;
Mecumque cepite hoc necumbens
Ad cytharem canto suave.\(^1\)

But the rejected stanzas of the ode, in the poet's autograph manuscript at Ferrara, show us that this seeming indifference was, so to speak, artistic rather than moral. Wretched, he sang, the lot of the hireling soldiers who sell their blood for gold; impious the ingratitude of the despots of Italy, who despoil the children of those who had fought to make them potent: \textit{Sint miseri, ut libet esse: non mihi haece sit libido}. \textit{'Ah,'} writes the modern successor of Dante and Ariosto, 'the poet of the Satires is already approaching in the first song of the youth of twenty-two! He does not understand, does not yet see Italy; but well he sees and knows and understands the Italian rulers, and protests that he will not serve them. So it is; great geniuses are not born slaves nor flatterers.\(^2\) And, or ever his short period of liberty closes, Ariosto will speak out once even more plainly.

For a while, indeed, Lodovico was free and needed not to heed the Court or courtly susceptibilities. Not so his father. This was the time when Duke Ercole was drinking in the prophecies of Fra Girolamo Savonarola, seeking advice and direction from his cell in San Marco at Florence for things both spiritual and temporal, endeavouring to make all Ferrara conform to the Friar's rigid ideals of faith and morals. Ferrara swarmed with monks and nuns, whom young Lodovico probably hated profoundly. His own father was one of the first victims, when Fra Girolamo bade the Duke put a check upon the exactions and evil government of his officials. Count Niccolò Ariosti was at Lugo, as ducal commissary in Romagna, when, in the November of this year, 1496, he put

\(^1\) 'Let Charles prepare with Gallic ships and horses, and threaten ruin to the towers of Italy with fearful martial fury; let his foe make ready for self-defence; to me it shall matter nought, as I lie in the shade hearing the falling water, while the yellow cornfieldl is weary and wearied Corydon. Philo, if thou wouldst have me love thee as thou hast often told me, crown the moist head of thy lover with a varied garland of purple flowers which thou hast twined with glowing hand; and, reclining with me upon this award, sing softly to the lute' (Carm. i. 8).

\(^2\) Carducci, pp. 151-153.
an innocent man to the torture in order to make him deliver up to justice the name of a villain who had done him wrong, whom, for the sake of his own honour, he was shielding. Ercole instantly deprived the Count of his post, condemned him to pay a fine of five hundred gold ducats, and never again to hold any office in his dominions.¹

Civil war on a miniature scale had broken out this summer at Carpi, where the followers of Alberto, who had temporarily returned to his city, and those of Giberto fought with artillery in the streets. From Ferrara, Duke Ercole sent Francesco Ariosti (the poet's uncle) and Giovanni Valla as his commissaries, to intervene. To them he writes, on July 2, that he is coming personally to Carpi in ten or twelve days, 'to adapt these difficulties and controversies'; the commissaries are to inform 'the magnificent Signori dei Pii' of this, and to exhort them in the Duke's name to concord; they are to keep in their hands the castle of Soliera 'with the least demonstration that is possible and without summoning more troops, but quietly and courteously and with such dexterity that no disturbance of any kind arise through this.' Novi was similarly occupied by the soldiery of the Estensi.² The Duke's personal intervention brought about a sort of peace, but it was short-lived. While Alberto and Giberto were arranging the terms at Ferrara, Leonello suddenly seized the gates of Carpi; Giberto at once hurried to Bologna to get aid from Giovanni Bentivoglio, his father-in-law; Alberto appealed similarly to Mantua and Mirandola, to the kinsmen of his wife and mother. A series of petty conflicts spread all over the divided dominions of the Pio, until, in 1500, Giberto ceded his half of the fief to the Duke of Ferrara, receiving Sassuolo with other smaller places in exchange.³ Alberto, considering that the rights of his family were deeply injured by his cousin's act, refused to make a similar cession or exchange, and only waited until the death of Ercole, whose

¹ Diario Ferrarese, coll. 337, 338.
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personal character doubtless inspired the same respect in him as it did in all the other potentates of Italy, to become the deadly enemy of the House of Este.

The only extant letter of Ariosto's that belongs to this epoch in his life is also written, like the poetry, in Latin. It is addressed to Aldo Manuzio, and is an appeal to the great Venetian publisher to send for sale what books he has printed of Marsilio Ficino and other translators of Platonic literature to Ferrara, where Sebastiano dall'Aquila, who is teaching both medicine and philosophy at the Studio, 'readeth Plato in the Timaeus on feast-days with a very great audience.' The writer knows that Aldo can supply him and his friends with what they want, from Alberto Pio, 'who, when he returned from thee to us some days ago, brought amongst others a volume in which certain works of some Platonists were collected.'

It was in the year of this letter, 1498, that Pietro Bembo—then about twenty-nine years old—came to Ferrara with his father, who had been appointed Visdomino by the Republic of Venice. With him Ariosto contracted a friendship which was destined to prove life-long. Pietro Bembo spent the next two years in the city of the Estensi, and frequently returned to their Court later on. His influence was most undoubtedly a wholesome one on the literary circles of Ferrara. As competent a poet in the Latin tongue as Tito Vespasiano Strozzi himself, and already a sounder Greek scholar than any of the Ferrarese, Bembo had none of the pedant's scorn for the vernacular; to him the great masters of the Italian Trecento—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio—were sacred classics no less than the poets of Greece and Rome; his own Italian lyrics lacked the genuine inspiration of Boiardo, but set a higher standard of grace and style, and were written in far purer Tuscan. It was, perhaps, his influence as much as the love of Barbara Torelli that converted Ercole Strozzi to write his sonnets in the language of Petrarch. He did, indeed, dissuade Ariosto

1 Letter i., January 5, 1498. The documentary records of the presence of Sebastiano dall'Aquila as reader in law and medicine at the Studio seem to run from January, 1495, to August, 1502. Cl. Pardi, op. cit., pp. 96, 110; Bertonelli, op. cit., p. 189.
from his intention of producing an epic in the vernacular, but mainly on the ground that, comparing what the younger poet had already achieved in Latin with his first attempts in Italian, the decided superiority of his Latin lyrics seemed to show that his special genius lay there. This, however, is a point to which we shall return.

To these years, that immediately followed the coming of Bembo to Ferrara, belong the majority of Ariosto's Carmina, ranging from the lovely Tibullian elegy, *Ad Pandulphum Ar Cecilium*—Pandolfo singing among the Fauns and Dryads in the shade of the woods of Copparo, while the writer is fettered to the city, held fast in the bonds of a woman's hair—to the harsh, obsene, but intensely effective iambics, *In lenam*, in which the bitterness and disillusion of a fruitless, degrading passion is poured out in furious invective, hardly unworthy of Catullus. And now, while the snowy hands of Phyllis or Philiroe weave their garlands, the poet can spare a thought for his country, when Pope Alexander is prompting King Louis of France to a new invasion of Italy:—

'*Inter laeta rosaria
Tristes cura magis tempora aseyrio
Uagnento melita insilis,
Et saevit penitus, si furor, Alpibus
Suevo Flaminis impetu
Iam spretis, quastiat Celticus Ausones.
His est qui super impiam
Corvicem gladius penditus imminet.'*

The sword fell indeed, and the French conquest of Milan in 1499 cost Ariosto his preceptor and his last opportunity of learning Greek. Lodovico Sforza was not the sole victim of his own intrigues and ambition. Isabella of Aragon, the widow of his hapless nephew, Gian Galeazzo, fled with her daughter Bona to Ischia; but her son Francesco, the rightful

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1. CARM. 1. 7 and 17. The latter has been translated by Cardani into the *endecasillabo adriatico*, the corresponding Italian metre, pp. 193, 194.
2. Amongst jovous bowers of roses, and care the more asails brows that are soft with Assyrian ointment, and rages inwardly. If the Frenchman, when he has spurned the Alps at the Priest's fierce bidding, smite the Italians. This is the sword that hangs suspended over the impious neck (CARM. 1. 9).
heir to the duchy, was forced to go as a prisoner into France, and, at his mother's request, Gregorio da Spoleto followed him as tutor:—

'Mi fu Gregorio da la sfortunata
Duchessa tolto, e dato a quel figliuolo
A chi haves il Zio la signoria levata.
Di che vendetta, ma con suo gran duolo,
Vide ella presto, ahiné, perché del fallo
Quel che peccò non fu punito solo.
Col zio il nipote, e fu poco intervallo,
Del stato e de l'haver spogliati in tutto,
Prigioni andar sotto il dominio gallo.
Gregorio s' prieghi d' Isabella indulto
Fu a segui il discepolo là dove
Lasciò, morendo, i cari amici in lutto.\(^\text{1}\)

In March, 1499, according to Zambotto's Chronicle, Francesco Ariosti died at Modena, where he was captain. If he had really been guilty of treason during the Venetian war, at least no suspicion seems to have attached itself to him; he retained his sovereign's confidence to the last; his body was brought back to Ferrara and buried with very great honour in San Francesco.\(^\text{2}\) His brother, Count Niccolò, did not long survive the loss of Ercole's favour; but died in February, 1500. For both uncle and father, Lodovico composed epitaphs; and, in his lament for the latter, filial affection and genuine respect ring unmistakably true.\(^\text{3}\) Francesco had left considerable wealth and possessions to his son, the Count Rinaldo, who now became the head of the Ariosti, and who was an only son. Niccolò's substance, though adequate, was much less substantial, and he left a large family, the whole care of which—mother, four younger brothers and five sisters—now devolved upon Lodovico; he was compelled to abandon

\(^{1}\) Gregorio was taken from me by the unfortunate Duchess, and given to that son from whom the uncle had taken his dominions.

\(^{2}\) For which she soon saw the vengeance, but to her great grief, alas; for he who sinned was not punished alone for the crime.

\(^{3}\) With the uncle the nephew (and but a short while after), utterly despoiled of their state and possessions, both went as prisoners under the Gallic rule.

\(^{4}\) Gregorio was induced by Isabella's prayers to follow his pupil thither, where, dying, he left his dear friends to mourn' (Satire vi. 184-190).

\(^{5}\) MS. cit., p. 331.

\(^{6}\) Carus. iii. 4 and i. 16.
his studies and his cherished intention of learning Greek, turning, as he puts it, from Mary to Martha:—

'Mi more il padre, e da Maria il pensiero
Dritto a Marta bisogna ch'io rivolga,
Ch'io muti in sguardi et in vachette Homero;
Trovi marito e modo che si tolga
Di casa una sorella e un'altra appresso,
E che l'eredità non se ne dolga;
Coi picioli fratelli, a i quali successo
Ero in luogo di padre, far l'ufficio
Che debito e pietà m'aveva commesso;
A chi studio, a chi corte, a chi esercito
Altro proseguir, e procurar non pieghi
Da le virtudi il molle animo al vitto.'

But it was a genuine labour of love, and all his brothers were destined to do him credit in the camp and Court alike, while to the crippled Gabriele, who shared his studies and devoted himself to letters, he seemed a hero of almost superhuman mould. Still it was hard to make ends meet; there were times when the poet seemed utterly crushed beneath the burdens he had to bear, above all when, shortly after his father’s death, he had the great sorrow of losing his beloved kinsman, Pandolfo:—

'Ma si trovò di tanti affanni caro
Allor la mente mia, ch’ebbi desider
Che la coca al mio fil fesse la parca.
Quel la cui dolce compagnia nutrile
Solea i miei studi, e stimulando inaniz
Con dolce emulzìone solea far ire,
Il mio parente, amico, fratello, anzi
L’anima mia, non messa non, ma intiera
Senza ch’aluna parte me ne avanzi,
Morl, Pandolfo, poco dopo: ah fera
Soss’ a ch’avesti allor, stirpe Ariosta,

1 1 My father dies, and I must needs turn my thought from Mary to follow Martha, must change Homer for records of household expenses;
I must find a husband and how to settle in life one sister and another after her, without the heritage suffering therefrom.

1 With my little brothers, to whom I now stood in place of their father, I must fulfil the office that duty and piety had committed to me.

1 Proposing study to one, the Court to another, other profession to a third, and taking care that their tender minds turn not aside from the virtues to vice' (Satires vi. 199-210).

Of Ariosto’s sisters, Taddea married Antonio dal Leone; Dorotea and Virginia became Dominican nuns; nothing is known of the other two.
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Di ch'egli un ramo e fosse il più bello era!
In tanto honor, vivendo, 'l'avria posta,
Ch' altra a quel né in Ferrara né in Bologna,
Onde hai l'antiqua origine, s'acosta.1

For a while Ariosto had still the consolation of his friendship with Alberto Pio. We have two pieces extant addressed by him to Alberto about this time. In one—a long and curiously interesting poem in hexameters—he condoles with him on the death of his mother, Caterina Pico Gonzaga.2 In the other, an alcaic ode beginning Albertae, proles ineluta Caesarum, he rejoices with him in the rumour (a false report as it proved) that Gregorio da Spoleto is about to return to Italy: 'My Gregorio, him to whom through Apollo we both owe so much, though I far more than thee—for, if there is anything praiseworthy in me, it is all from him. O joy! he will come back who gave me shape when I was a mere useless, inert log of wood. O joy! I shall see him who gave me more than my own father. Good Gods, I shall again embrace that lovable man.'3

Alas! The increasing needs and difficulties of Messer Lodovico's position were soon to deprive him of his sturdy independence. We may read the last (for the present) utterance of his freedom in the elegy to Ercole Strozzi, written apparently in 1560, after the second and final occupation of Lombardy by the French. The news has come that the Greek humanist and Latin poet, Michele Marullo, has been accidentally drowned in the Cecina. This if true (as it was) is a worse misfortune for all lovers of the Muses than is the ruin of Italy. But why?—

1 My mind was then laden with so many sorrows that I longed for Fate to put an end to my vital thread.
2 He whose sweet company was wont to nourish my studies and urge them onward by the stimulus of sweet emulation,
3 'My kinsman, friend, brother, nay, my very soul (not half, no, but the whole without any part of it remaining to me),
4 Pandolfo, died, soon after. Ah! a fierce stroke didst thou then receive, House of Ariosto, of which he was a branch and perchance the fairest!
5 Had he lived, he would have put thee in such honour that no other, neither in Ferrara nor in Bologna, whence thou hast thy origin of old, comes near it.' (Satire vi. 214-228).
1 Carm. i. 2.
2 Carm. i. 3.
THE KING OF COURT POETS

Nam foret haec gravior iactura mihique tibique,
Et quemcumque sacrae Phocidos antea invent,
Quam vidisse malâ tempestate (improba seclī
Condicio!) elades et Latīi interitum,
Nuper ab occiduis illatam gentibus, olim
Pressa quibus nostro colla fuere inamo.
Quid nostra a Gallo regi an servire Latino,
Si sit idem hinc atque hinc non leve servitium?
Barbaricae esse est peius sub nomine quam sub
Moribus? At ducibus, Diī, date digna naelis,
Quorum quam imperium gliscente tyrannide tellus
Saturnī Gallo pertulit ante truces;
Et servate diu doctuque pinnque Marullum,
Redditeque actutum sequem cun sociis:
Qui poterit dulci eloquio, monitisque servare,
Quos Musarum laustus plurimo ab anno tali,
Liberam et immunem (vinci etis corpore) mentem
Reddere, et omne animo tollere servitium.
Sit satia abruptum nuper flevisse parentem:
Ah grave tot me uno tempore damna pati! ?

But Lodovico’s time was soon to come himself to serve these ‘evil rulers’ and to tune his lyre to a very different note. With his Epithalamium, at the beginning of 1502 for the marriage of Alfonso d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia, he first comes forward as a Court poet, hailing this much-married lady as pulcherrima Virgo. Its finest lines are, perhaps, those that picture, with some genuine poetic inspiration, the rise of this latest-born and goodliest city of the Renaissance:

Ommia vertuntur: medici quae moenibus olim,
Hinc viridi ripē, hinc limosae obducta palūde,

1 ‘This would be a heavier misfortune for me and for thee and all whom the grots of sacred Phocides delight, than to have beheld (wretched condition of the age) the devastation and the ruin brought of late in direful tempest upon Latium by the western nations whose necks in olden days were pressed by our yoke. What matters it to us whether we serve a French or an Italian king, if there be the same hard slavery in either case? Is it worse to be under a barbarian name than under barbarian morals? But, Gods, give their deserts to the evil rulers, under whose waxing tyranny the land of Saturn has endured dominion before the savage Gauls; and preserve for long the learned and pious Marullus, and speedily restore him safe and sound to his companions; that with the sweet eloquence and austere precepts, which he draws in copious draughts from the stream of the Muses, he may give back a free and stainless mind (even if the body be fettered) and take away all servitude from the soul. Let it be enough to have but lately wept for a father taken from me. Ah, it is hard for me to suffer so many losses at once!’ (Carm. i. 6).
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Angustas capiebat opes Ferraria panper,
Angustaque domos, angustaque templum Deorum;
Apta tamei tenui populo, teneique senatu;
Finitimis inter tantum nune uniit urbes,
Quantum inter Bacchi collis pater Apenninus,
Eridanusve inter fluvios, quos accipit infrive,
Quosque supra e timid Hesperia Neptunii ueterque.
Num, ubi piscato pellebaat gurgitie lintrem,
Ast ubi in aprico sillabat rebus campo,
Regia templum, dominus, forae, compita, curia, turres
Herculeique decent muri, portaque, viaeque;
Vixque suo pepulo ampla, potenti et moribus sequis
Et paribus studiis generi contendere Martis.
At nullis tantum lectat Ferraria cultus,
Quam quod te dominam accipias, palcherrima Virgo.1

And in another poem of this same date (though the scene by a poetic fiction is laid some years earlier), addressed to Lucrezia on or shortly after her marriage, we have the first picture of Ariosto among the poets of Italy. In Erocle Strozzi’s Venatio, dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia,2 an imaginary hunt is depicted, given by Charles VIII of France in honour of Cesare Borgia, at the time when the Most Christian was preparing to invade Italy; Ippolito d’Este, Galeazzo da San Severino, and Niccolò da Correggio accompany the king; the chief Italian poets of the day follow the chase. We see Marullo, Bembo, Tebaldeo, Pontano, the aged Tito Strozzi, Timoteo Bendedei; the two Picos, Giovanni and his nephew, Gian Francesco; and last of all young Ariosto, absent-minded, dreaming of erotic elegies and the treacheries of the fair, lets loose his two dogs from the leash in pursuit of an elk:—

1 All things change. Ferrara which of old, girt round by lowly walls, on one side the green river-bank, on the other the marshy lagoon, in poverty held but slender resources, narrow houses and narrow temples of the Gods (albeit enough for her scanty people and scanty senate), now stands out among the neighbouring cities as much as Father Apennine among the vine-clad hills, or the Po among the rivers which in the sea, on either hand receives above and below out of all Italy. Now, where they pushed their boats over the fish-abounding waters or dried their nets in sunny fields, royal temples shine fair, houses, squares, roads, palaces, the towers and walls of Hercules, and gates and streets; hardly is she ample enough for her people, able to contend with equal manners and the like studies with the sons of Rome. But of nought that she possesses does Ferrara boast so much as that she is receiving thee as mistress, O most beauteous Virgin.3

2 Hercole Strozzi Titii filii Venatio ad diem Lucretiam Borgiae Ferrariae duces, in Aldo’s Strozzi poetas, pp. 14-20.
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‘Pardalus et Tygris, thersa haec, gortynius ille,
Ambo animis cursuque pares, postrema tenebant;
Quos piger extruxit, Ariosto, emitis, ademptam
Dum tibi Pasiphaen turpi indiginaris ab Haeno,
Divisusque aito mentem, committere tristeis
Intempestivis elegis meditaris amores.’

The hounds dash into the trunk of a huge oak and are killed. Ariosto, whom we know from occasional references in his own writings to have been a lover of dogs, weeps and laments over them, while the elk escapes for a moment only to fall by an arrow from Niccolò da Correggio.

But now the fortunes of the House of the Ariosti were being restored. After struggling for more than a year, Lodovico appealed for aid to Duke Ercole; and, early in 1502, almost immediately after Lucrezia’s coming to Ferrara, he was appointed captain of the Rocca of Canossa, in his own native Reggian district. The superb panorama of plain and mountain, that hourly lay open to his gaze from this stronghold of the Estensi, probably moved him as little as those distant historical associations that attract us to Canossa from Reggio to-day. Nevertheless, this was a peaceful and happy epoch in his life; for he could come down at intervals to the plain, to attend to the land that had been left to him at his father’s death, and solace himself in his natal city, il natio nido mio, where his mother’s nephew, Sigismondo Malaguzzi, had a villa and estate. In his poetical epistle to Sigismondo, Ariosto has described the place and this pleasant interlude in his life:—

‘Gia mi fur dolci inviti a empir le carte
Lì luoghi ameni, di che il nostro Reggio,
E ’l natio nido mio, n’ ha la sua parte.
Il tuo Maurician sempre vagheggia,
La Bella stanza, il Robane vicino,
Da le Naiade amato ombroso soglio,
Il lucido vivaio, onde il giardino
Si cinge intorno, il fresco río che corre
Rigando l’herbo, ove poi fa il molino.

1 ‘Panther and Tigress, the one of Thracian, the other of Cretan breed, well matched in courage and in speed, held the rear; which thou, lazy Ariosto, dost lose at the last, whilst thou broodest over Pasiphae snatched from thee by base Hemus, and, abstracted in thought from all else, dost sadly ponder how to confide thy loves to untimely elegies.’
FROM FREEDOM TO SERVITUDE

Non mi si può de la memoria torre
Le vigne e i solehi del secondo laco,
La valle, e il colle, e le ben posta torre.
Cerrando hor questo et hor quel loco opaco,
Quivi in più d'una langua e in più d'un stile
Rivi trae e sin del gorgoneo laco.
Erano allora gli anni miei fra Aprile
E Maggio belli, ch'or l'Ottobre dietro
Si lasciano, e non pur Luglio e Settemier.
Ma nè d'Asca potrò né di Libetro
L'ameno valle, senza il cor sereno,
Far da me uscir loconda rima o metra.\(^1\)

The little village of San Maurizio well deserves a visit for Ariosto’s sake to-day. A short walk from the Porta San Pietro of Reggio, less than two miles along the high road to Modena, will bring us to it. The place is still in part as he describes it. Here is the little stream of the Rodano, ’beloved shady seat of the Naïades’; and, when once the bridge is crossed and the dusty high road left behind, we have vineyards and cornfields, pleasant meadows and wooded ground stretching away south-westwards towards the Apennines. The water-mills are still here, the fresco rio and the bright gardens, as when he wrote. The casino of the Malaguzzi villa still stands—an oblong, red-brick building like a large farmhouse, a little way off the road to the right. A small part of it is still occupied by contadini; but the rest remains much as it was. There are two large rooms decorated with indifferent frescoes in honour of the Malaguzzi—one of them giving an interesting picture of the Piazza del Duomo of Reggio in the sixteenth

\(^1\) Of old the pleasant places, of which our Reggio, the nest where I was born, has its share, were sweet incitatives to me to set pen to paper.

\(^2\) Ever do I longingly recall thy Mauriziano, that pleasant dwelling near the Rodano, beloved shady seat of the Naïades.

\(^3\) The clear fish-pond wherewith the garden is girded round, the fresh brook that runs watering the grass where afterwards it supplies the mill.

\(^4\) Never shall I forget the vines and furrows of fertile Bacchus, the valley, the hill, and the well-placed tower.

\(^5\) Seeking now this and now that other shady place, there in more than one style and in more than one tongue did I draw waters from the lake of the Muses.

\(^6\) Fair were these my years between April and May, which now are leaving October behind, not only July and August.

\(^7\) But neither of Asca nor of Libethrum could the pleasant valleys bring from me cheerful rhymes or measures, without a heart at peace’ (Sat. iv. 115-135).
century. Thence we go up into three rooms, in which the poet himself stayed and wrote. The walls and ceilings are daubed with later frescoes, but otherwise the rooms retain their original appearance. It was still mainly with Latin odes that these dolci inviti impelled him a empir le cortè, while a beautiful woman of Reggio, whom he calls Lydia, swayed for a while his heart;¹ but a few Italian lyrics may also, perhaps, be assigned to this epoch, and he was already dreaming of the Orlando of his future epic, in which he was to finish what another citizen of Reggio had so nobly begun.

About this time, Ariosto appears to have indulged in a discreditable intrigue with a woman named Maria—practically one of his own servants—by whom he had an illegitimate son, christened Giovanni Battista, whose existence he kept concealed, and who left Ferrara at an early age to become a soldier.

Towards the end of the year 1503, Ariosto gave up the captainate of Canossa, and returned to Ferrara, to enter the service of the unworthy patron whose name, as he wrote in after years, he was to make 'with clear trumpet perchance sound higher than ever dove winged its flight.'²

Ippolito d'Este, the third son of Duke Ercole and Leonora of Aragon, was born in March, 1479, nearly a year after his bastard half-brother Giulio, the son of Isabella Arduino—that Giulio whose name and fortunes were linked to his from the beginning. On Sunday, June 5, 1485, writes Zambotto: 'After High Mass had been sung in the cathedral of Ferrara at the high altar by a certain bishop, the first ecclesiastical orders were given to Don Ippolito da Este, legitimate and natural son of our most illustrious Duke, Lord Ercole, in presence of his mother, Madama the Duchess, Madama Leonora of Aragon, and also to Don Giulio, natural son of the said our Duke.'³ On the death of Gurone d'Este, in the March of the previous year, three rich abbeys had fallen vacant: Nonantola, Gravello, Marola; and Ercole promptly demanded them of Pope Sixtus for these two children. The

¹ Cf. especially Crem. i. 10: Haec corte Lepidi sunt regia soecnia.
² Sat. i. 229-231.
³ MS. cit., f. 165.
Pope, however, gave Nonantola to Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, his own nephew, and Marola to the Cardinal of Pavia. Ercole sent Lodovico Paolucci to Rome to strive his utmost that 'at least we have that of Nonantola for Don Ippolito, which we would not for anything in the world consent that others should have, instead of our own folk. If the Holiness of our Lord had to live for ever, we should not mind so much; but considered that, when he dies, things may probably change form, and that Nonantola once belonged to the Bolognese, who are desirous of having it back, and that the influence of a Legate of Bologna who should have that abbey could make us lose Nonantola and overturn our State (because its rights extend to the gates of Modena, to the Reggian district and to the Ferrarese), we do not think that we can suffer it to pass into the hands of any one else, be he who he may.' But Giuliano was as tenacious then as cardinal as he was to prove later on as pontiff, and Nonantola remained in his hands. At the Duke's request, in 1486, Pope Innocent VIII 'commended' the monastery of Pomposa to Ippolito and created him a protonotary apostolic. 'And we exhort thy Nobility,' he wrote to the young prelate's father, 'to take care that he be brought up in good morals and in letters, so that he may be judged worthy of thee, his father, and be promoted to greater things.'

After this first step, Ippolito's advance was rapid. The next year, 1487, saw him Archbishop of Esztergom in Hungary, which see he changed ten years later for the bishopric of Zagrab, or Agram; he was raised to the cardinalate with the title of Santa Lucia in Silice by Alexander VI. in 1493, and received the archbishopric of Milan in 1498, to which in 1503 he added the bishopric of Ferrara itself. Under his patronage, Monsignor Giulio obtained a few small benefices only, though the Cardinal assured their father that he saw his brother's interests with the same eyes as his own. Licentious

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2 *Brief to the Duke of Ferrara*, January 3, 1486. Archivio Vaticano, xxxix. 19, f. 107. It is somewhat instructive to compare this with the curious letter from the Archivio di Modena in which Ercole, nine years later, admonishes Ippolito concerning the duties of a cardinal. See *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, Appendix ii. Document 16.
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and worldly, haughty and overbearing. Ippolito was utterly devoid of reverence for God or man; some ability as a diplomatist, according to the cynical, materialistic standpoint of the age, coupled to physical courage and a certain amount of skill in military matters, was the nearest approach to virtue he possessed.

On Ippolito's appointment to the see of Ferrara, Ariosto addressed an epigram to him, extolling the new bishop—for his chastity.¹ The licentiousness of Ippolito's life being a matter of public notoriety, this has been described as outrageous and impudent adulation. But it is obviously no more than a jape, in somewhat questionable taste, and was presumably accepted by his most reverend and illustrious Lordship in the same spirit. It was, as we saw, towards the end of this year, 1503, that the poet entered his service, as famigliere, one of the attendant gentlemen of his household; which was a fresh and most grievous impediment to his studies, as the Cardinal scorned poetry, and kept him continually employed, dashing from place to place on diplomatic and other missions:—

¹ E di poeta cavallar mi feo:
Vedi se per le balle e per le fosse
Io potero imparar greco o caldeo.
Mi maraviglio che di me non fosse
Come di quel philosopho, a chi il sasso
Ciò che inanzi sapea dal capo scosso.²

A Mantuan friend of Ariosto's, Lodovico da Bagno, was also in the Cardinal's service in a similar position;³ and, a

¹ Corin. ii. 2.
² He turned me from poet to horse-postman. See if I could learn Greek or Chaldean over the rocks and the ditches. I marvel that I did not share the fate of that philosopher from whose head the stone shook what he knew before (Sat. vi. 238-248).
³ Writing to Ippolito, on January 27, 1504, the Marchesana Isabella says: 'I have taken singular pleasure at hearing that your most reverend Lordship has conferred the Pieve of Mellara upon Lodovico Bagno, your chamberlain; both because of the love that I bear him in particular and because of my affection for his house, and especially for his father, who was my pleasant companion.' And, on the same day, she writes to Duke Ercole: 'I know that your Excellence knows how long and faithfully the late magnifico Messer Guidone da Bagno served this most illustrious House and afterwards myself; for he was a companion to me of such a kind that I am still obliged to him; and therefore I exceedingly desire every advantage and evaluation of his son.' Archivio di Modena, Lettere di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga.
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few years later, the poet managed to place his youngest brother, Alessandro, in the same household in the capacity of ragazzi, or page.

I need not tell again the story of the horrors that followed the death of Ercole and the accession of Alfonso I., in 1505 and 1506. Finding himself worsted by the bastard Giulio in the love of Angela Borgia, Ippolito—Cardinal of Santa Lucia, the virgin protectress of the blind—stood by while his hirelings all but extinguished the light of his brother's eyes. Giulio for vengeance joined hands with Ercole's second legitimate son, Don Ferrando, in the conspiracy to slay Alfonso and Ippolito together and make Ferrando Duke—that hideous tragedy that consigned the two half-blinded princes to a prolonged living death in the Tower of the Lions.

Unmistakably vile is the poem which Ariosto wrote on this occasion. The dramatic eclogue, written for recitation in parts, was a favourite form of literary art in the Courts of the Italian Renaissance; Girolamo Benivieni with it had begun his literary career in the circle of Lorenzo de' Medici; Boiardo had put it to more admirable use during the Ferrarese war with Venice. Ariosto's Elegy is a poem of nearly three hundred lines in terza rima, in which Melibeo, who together with Mopsos is driving away the flocks and herds that Alfenio has taken from the treacherous Feroo who sought his life, tells a simpler shepherd, Tirsi, the whole story of the conspiracy of Feroo and Iola in the form of a pastoral allegory. Iola, d'ogni viso reo, is represented as a monster of iniquity, no son of Eraclide but the offspring of Ardeusa (Isabella Arduinio) by the abominable Emofilo to whom his master had given the nymph in charge, and who can hardly be identified. The four minor conspirators—Count Albertino Boschetti, Gherardo de' Roberti, Franceschino Boccaccio, and the singing priest Gianni—are figured as the white-haired Silvano and his son-in-law, Boccio, and Gano, fleshy, bland and fat, a vile slave made into a friend by Alfenio's misplaced generosity. Unable to deny that Feroo is the child of Eraclide and la castissima Argynte, the poet contents himself with representing his cowardice as the cause of the failure of the conspiracy and his treachery the ruin of his confederates, the whole poem ending in the most extravagant praises of Alfenio, la nostra guardia e 'l nostro almo
pastore, and of his Licoria, la sua donna casta, saggia, bella, cortese e pellegrina—who is, of course, Lucrezia. Tirsi, who knows nothing of the conspiracy, but is an enthusiastic adorer of Licoria whose marriage with Alfenio he describes as an eye witness, is evidently Ariosto himself; and a conjecture might be hazarded that Melibeo is Ercole Strozzi.

There is merely a casual reference to Ippolito in the Erotyca, though at the end of the Orlando Furioso the whole salvation of Alfonso and Ferrara is laid to his credit. But more of the tragedy finds expression in an earlier canto, where, in the Cave of Merlin, the sorceress Melissa shows the virgin Bradamante the phantom pageantry of her descendants:

1 Coel con voluntà de la donnella
Le dotta incantatrice il libro chiuse.
Tutti gli spiriti allhora ne la cella
Sparirlo in fretta, ove can l'ossa chiuse.
Qui Bradamante, poi che la favella
Le fu concossa usar, la bocca schiusa,
E domandò: Chi son li dua si tristi,
Che tra Hippolyto e Alfonso habbiamo visti?

2 Veninno sospirando, e gli occhi bassi
Parean tener, d'ogni baldanza privi;
E gir lontan da loro io vedea i passi
Dei frati, si che no pareano schivi.
Parve ch'a tal domanda si cangiassi
La Maga in viso, e fe de gli occhi rivi,
E gridò: Ah sfortunati, a quanta pena
Lango instigar d'huomini rei vi mena!

3 O bona prole, o degna d'Hercol buona,
Non vinca il lor fallir vostra bontade;
Di vostro sangue i niseri pur sono;
Qui ceda la inuista alla pietade.
Indi soggiunse con più basso suono:
Di ciò dirit più inanzi non accade.
Statti col dolce in bocca, e non ti doglia
Che'amaraggiare al fin non te la voglia.1

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1 So with the consent of the damsel the learned sorceress closed the book. All the spirits straightway vanished into the cell where Merlin's bones were held. Then Bradamante, now that she was allowed to speak, opened her lips and asked: "Who are those two so sad that we have seen between Ippolito and Alfonso?

2 They came sighing, and seemed to keep their eyes cast down, despoiled
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In the October of this same year, 1506, Ariosto was sent by the Cardinal on a mission to the latter's half-sister, Lucrezia d'Este Bentivoglio, at Bologna—a few weeks before the expulsion of her husband's family from the city that they had informally ruled for so many years. The object of this mission is not known, but it was, perhaps, to arrange about finding a safe retreat for her and her children in the imminent fall of their House. The world has lost Francis's highly praised portrait of this unfortunate princess, nor does Lorenzo Costa's fresco in the Cappella Bentivoglio of S. Giacomo Maggiore suggest the personality of a beautiful woman; but she was to find her place in the Orlando Furioso, with her more favoured sisters in the Palace of Chivalry, among the eight courtly heroines of the Italian Renaissance.

The giogo del Cardinal da Este, however oppressive, had not crushed the poetry out of Messer Lodovico. He had already made much progress with his Orlando when, at the end of the following January, he was sent by his patron to Mantua, to congratulate the Marchesana on her safe delivery of a little son (afterwards to be famous as Ferrante Gonzaga). Isabella, who had been enthusiastic over Boiardo, was intensely delighted at the Cardinal's choice of a messenger, and made Ariosto read out to her for two days the cantos that he had composed. 'By the letter of your most reverend Lordship,' she wrote to him by her secretary, Benedetto Capilupo, 'and by word of mouth from Messer Lodovico Ariosto, I have heard how greatly you are rejoiced at my happy delivery. This has been supremely grateful to me, and so I thank you for this visitation, and particularly for having sent me the said Messer Lodovico; for, besides being welcome to me as representing the person of your most reverend Lordship, he has also on his

of all assurance; and I saw the steps of their brothers move far from them, so that they seemed to shun them.' At this question it seemed that the Enchantress changed countenance and poured tears from her eyes. 'Ah, unhappy ones,' she cried, 'to what great torment does the long incitement of evil men bring you!

"O good and worthy sons of good Ercole, let not their fault overcome your goodness; the wretched ones are still of your blood; here let justice yield to pity." Then she added in a lower voice: "It needs not to tell thee further of this. Remain with sweet in the mouth, and do not regret that I will not make it bitter for thee at the end" (Orl. Fur., iii. 69.69).

1 Campori, op. cit., p. 20.

2 Orl. Fur., xlii. 87-89.
own account brought me great satisfaction and, by the narration of the work that he is composing, has made me pass these two days not only without weariness, but with very great pleasure. In this, as in all your other actions, you have had the good judgment to choose the person suited to my condition. Of the talk which (besides the visit) we have had together, Messer Lodovico will give an account to your most reverend Lordship.\footnote{Letter of February 3, 1067. Tiralongo, vii. part 3, p. 101 (note). The conversation probably referred to the affairs of Lucretia Bentioglio, whom Isabella was generously protecting.}

A little later in this same year, Ariosto had his first and only sight of one of the great makers of contemporary history —Louis XII. of France. In May, with his young brother Alessandro, he formed part of the retinue of the Cardinal Ippolito when the latter went to Milan to salute the Most Christian King.\footnote{Camponi, op. cit., p. 32.} Anxious to bind the Estensi permanently to the cause of France, Louis offered a stipend to the Duke, and the Cardinal of Rouen put pressure upon Ippolito to urge his brother to accept; but Alfonso, with very great dignity, would not hear of it:—

'Last night we received your letter,' he wrote to Ippolito,
'by which we understand that the most reverend and illustrious lord Legate persists in holding and in urging upon us that we should accept the pension, since it has been offered us by the Most Christian Majesty with so good a heart and on his own initiative. This has made us ponder again over what he proposes to us, since we know that he loves us, and that he is our protector and singular benefactor and stands to us as a father, and that his counsels should have for us the force of precepts and commands. But the more we have considered it, the more do we think it alien from our duty towards the Most Christian Majesty to accept a pension without any advantage to him. And, although the most reverend and illustrious lord Legate urges us to take it, we are convinced that his most reverend Lordship does so only because he considers our advantage, of which, because of the paternal love he bears us, he is for once thinking more than of what befits the King and us; for, as we know not how we could spend the money in the service of the Most Christian Majesty, we should account it

\footnote{Letter of February 3, 1067. Tiralongo, vii. part 3, p. 101 (note). The conversation probably referred to the affairs of Lucretia Bentioglio, whom Isabella was generously protecting.}
dishonourable if we accepted it, seeing that we could do nothing noteworthy with arms with the pension; and (if perchance he assigned it to us for our living) we have no need of it; for, being as we are in peace through the grace of Our Lord God and of his Majesty, we have enough to live on according to our condition. Your Lordship, then, will make our excuses, and say that the Most Christian Majesty has many ways of benefiting us without spending money, according to the course of events, beseeching him to be pleased to keep this money for more opportune and pressing needs and emergencies. His grace is sufficient for us, which we know and trust will not fail us in our needs. We know that it is he who preserves and maintains us our State, so that we reckon that we have from the hand of his Majesty all the profits and income that we draw and receive from it.\footnote{Letter from Alfonso, dated Ferrara, June 8, 1507, to Ippolito at Milan. Archivio di Modena, Carteggio dei Principi. Alfonso had spent the spring of this year in attendance upon the King at the siege of Genoa.}

The following year, 1508, witnessed the birth of a son and heir to Alfonso and Lucrezia (the future Duke Ercole II.), on April 4, and the mysterious murder of Ercole Strozzi on June 5. Of that still not entirely explained tragedy, and the murdered poet’s love for Barbara Torelli, that is usually believed to have been the cause of it—the \textit{rara donna} of Bembo’s sonnet, who had drawn from Strozzi’s heart \textit{rime leggiadre e conte}, but whose own sonnet on his death far surpasses in fire and pathos any that either her lover or Bembo himself had composed—I have already spoken in full. I will only add that there exists an unpublished document in the State Archives of Modena which possibly throws a new light upon the motives that may have impelled the Duke to order his death. In a long and rather mysterious letter from the Marchesana of Mantua to Alfonso, in the previous year, dated August 15, 1507, Isabella, while professing her unaltered belief in Ercole Strozzi’s good faith, had warned her brother not to communicate secrets to him, on the grounds that ‘Messer Ercole is brother-in-law of Uberto degli Uberti, who is the greatest rascal of this town and my enemy,’ and who comes often to Ferrara to spy, staying with Strozzi.\footnote{Archivio di Modena, \textit{Lettere di Isabella d’Este Gonzaaga}. Cf. \textit{Dukes and Poets in Ferrara}, pp. 519-522.} Is it not possible that
this suggestion may have worked upon the suspicious mind of
the Ferrarese despot and ultimately proved the poet's death-
warrant? No hint is given as to the power for which this
spionage was being done; but, if it were Rome, would not a
reason be at once apparent for the furious accusation launched
against Alfonso a few years later by Pope Julius, of having
been Ercole Strozzi's murderer?

Be that as it may, Ariosto's tribute to Strozzi's memory,
aliike in the Orlando and in the four Latin distichs of his
epitaph, strikes us as frigid and perfunctory. It was, perhaps,
impolitic in a member of the Cardinal's household to bestow
more generous praise upon one on whom the Duke's displeasure,
however secretly, had so terribly fallen.

In the following year, 1509, Ariosto had born to him
a second son, who was christened Virginio. To this son,
whom he always kept by him in later years, the poet was a
devoted father. Virginio's mother was a woman of Modenese
origin, Orsolina Catinelli da Sassomarino, daughter of a
Giovanni da Sassomarino of Modena, who lived in the Pole-
sine di Sant' Antonio, a suburb of Ferrara. The story of
Messer Lodovico's relations with women is always very
mysterious. 'He was much inclined by nature,' writes Garo-
folo, 'to be enamoured of every object where he perceived
beauty and modesty; and, because he loved with great vehe-
mence, he was excessively jealous, and could not endure any
one for rival,' and he adds that he was very secret in his
loves. Most probably, Orsolina remained his mistress for
some years longer—until the great emotional crisis of the
poet's life to which we shall come presently.

For Ariosto, as for Ferrara, an epoch ends in 1509. The
Heraclean city of peace was to be dragged into the great
wars in which the ultramontane sovereigns were struggling
for the possession of Italy, and the poet himself, far from
haunts meet for Apollo, was to be whirled up in the hurri-
cane.

1 Ori. Fec., xiii. 40; Carm. iii. 7.
2 G. Pardi, Un' amante dell' Ariosto.
3 Cf. Ariosto's curious Latin elegy to Bembo, Carm. i. 5.