

**VITTORIA COLONNA: A  
STUDY, WITH TRANSLATIONS  
OF SOME OF HER PUBLISHED  
AND UNPUBLISHED SONNETS**

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Sonnets by Alethea Lawley

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**ALETHEA LAWLEY**

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W5

1889.

PREFACE. MAIN

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THERE is no claim in the following pages to present more than a sketch of Vittoria Colonna's life. Her history is veiled in an obscurity which prevents great minuteness of detail, and which conceals many of the hidden particulars which form the charm of biography.

In order to cast some light upon this subject, and to give personality to this sketch, I have for the most part selected for translation into English, those of Vittoria's sonnets which refer to the leading events of her life, and reflect in some degree her own thoughts and words on these occasions.

The attempt to translate these sonnets is difficult under two aspects: in the first place there is only one commentator on Vittoria's poems, Rinaldo Corso; and whenever an intricate or complicated passage occurs in the sonnet of which he is treating, he has no hesi-

tation in omitting the entire passage, and passes on to subjects which are clear and straightforward. From him no help can be looked for or obtained. The other difficulty lies in the obscurity of many of the sonnets in the original. The fact that Vittoria's works were printed without her knowledge or sanction, brought with it the disadvantage of their being published without the corrections and alterations that the authoress alone could give. The result is one which complicates the difficulties for a translator in every way; and I must here acknowledge with grateful thanks the help I have received in this work of translation from a friend. Whatever merit there is in these translations is due to him; his suggestions and alterations having given to my efforts whatever claim they may have to poetic rendering.

I must also express my thanks to Mr. John Addington Symonds, for the generous permission given me to make use of his beautiful translations of Michelangelo's sonnets to Vittoria Colonna.

The sonnets at pages 8 and 47 are by

another friend, to whose advice and encouragement, throughout the whole of my work, I am deeply indebted.

I have been unable to discover the author of the sonnet on pages 96, 97.

The kindness and courtesy I have met with in Italy will ever remain in my memory. To Barone B. Podestà, and Signor Martinelli at the Magliabecchiana Library in Florence, and to Conte Camillo Soranzo, and Professore Signor Taddeo Wiel at the Marciana Library, in Venice, my warmest thanks are due for the unfailing assistance I have received from them, and the kindly readiness with which they have always helped me in my researches.

I have adhered generally to the foreign renderings of titles; the English equivalents, being different, would be apt to give a mistaken impression.

The sources from which I have collected most of the material for the following work are: *Le Rime di Vittoria Colonna, corretti su i testi a penna e pubblicate con la vita della medesima ec.* Roma, 1840, by Cav. Pietro Visconti: *Le Rime*



de Vittoria Colonna, Marchesana di Pescara; colla vita della medesima; scritta da Giovanni Battista Rota; Bergamo, 1760: Rime e Lettere di Vittoria Colonna, Marchesana di Pescara; di G. Enrico Saltini; Firenze, 1860.

The disputes and discussions as to an authentic portrait of Vittoria Colonna are too well known to need comment. The picture of her in the Colonna Gallery at Rome, from which the frontispiece in this book is taken, is, however, generally accepted as a true representation of her. It is a three-quarter picture, said to be by Muziano,<sup>1</sup> and the likeness is that of a beautiful woman of about twenty-eight or thirty years of age. The hair grows in a peak on the forehead, and is of a bright auburn colour; and the poet Galeazzo di Tarsia,<sup>2</sup> who, in the fashion of the

<sup>1</sup> Girolamo Muziano, born at Acquafredda, near Brescia, in 152<sup>o</sup>, would have been too young to have painted the original; and Trollope, in his "Decade of Italian Women," speaking of this portrait, says: "It is supposed to be a copy by Girolamo Muziano from an original picture of some artist of higher note."

<sup>2</sup> Rime di Galeazzo di Tarsia, Edizione Napolitano, 1758 Sonetto 33, e Sonetto 4.

day, professed himself her devoted slave and fervent admirer and adorer, speaks of it more than once, when singing the praises of his lady, as the—

“Trecce d' or che in gli altri giri  
Non è ch' unqua pareggi o sole o stella ;”

while in another place he declares that the sun and his lady resemble each other: “Both with golden locks lucid and shining” (“Ambi con chiome d' or lucide e terse”). The portrait gives the impression of great beauty. The face is small, with a thoughtful, grave expression. The eyes and eye-brows are dark brown; while on her head she wears a white coif fastened by a jewelled band. The forehead is beautifully shaped and developed, and the whole bearing calm and dignified.

FLORENCE, 1888.



## VITTORIA COLONNA.

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### I.

IN the fourteenth century, a castle standing on the lower ridge of the mountains of Albano was the cause of as much vexation and toil to the Romans of that day, as they had experienced of old on the opposite height of Tusculum. Three great Roman families, the Colonna, the Orsini, and the Savelli, had divided among themselves the lovely group of these Alban hills, from whence not only did they swoop down on the neighbouring towns and cities, but could also close the passes to the south, and so secure to themselves undisturbed possession of the surrounding country.

The castle of Marino was the key to one of these passes, and was the scene of strife between Cola di Rienzi<sup>1</sup> and the Orsini, when the castle was held by this family. More con-

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<sup>1</sup> Rienzi, born about 1310, was assassinated in 1354.