

**VALPERGA: OR, THE LIFE AND
ADVENTURES OF CASTRUCCIO,
PRINCE OF LUCCA. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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Valperga: Or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. In Three Volumes. Vol. II
by Mary Shelley

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MARY SHELLEY

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OR, THE

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OF

CASTRUCCIO,

PRINCE OF LUCCA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FRANKENSTEIN!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

VALPERGA.

CHAPTER I.

Conference of Castruccio and Galeazzo Visconti—of Castruccio and the Bishop of Ferrara.

WHEN Castruccio and Euthanasia arrived at Florence, they found the citizens celebrating a festival : the bells were ringing ; the country people were flocking into the town ; and the youths of both sexes, of the highest rank, and richly dressed, were parading the streets, covered with wreaths of flowers, and singing the poems of Dante, or his friend Guido, to the accompaniment of many instruments. Castruccio said : “ I must ask you, fair Euthanasia, who are so learned in Florentine customs, to inform me of the meaning of this gaiety.”

“ Indeed, I am entirely ignorant. I know that during peace joyful meetings take place

every May, among the young nobility ; but this seems a general festivity. Let us ask that grave gentleman in the black capuchin, if he knows the reason of a merriment, which at least has not communicated itself to his face."

The man, on being asked, replied : " You must be but lately arrived, not to have heard of the cause of our rejoicings ; the Florentines, Madonna, are celebrating the occurrence of a most favourable omen with which God and St. John have blest our city. Yesterday one of the lionesses kept at the expence of the republic, brought forth five whelps."

" And is this the momentous occasion of so much serious amusement ? " asked Castruccio, laughing.

" My lord," said the man, " you are a stranger in this town ; or you would not find cause for laughter in this event. The Florentines keep a number of lions, as the signs and symbols of their strength ; and God and St. John have plainly manifested on many occasions, that the prosperity of Florence, and the welfare of the lions are bound together. Three of the finest and largest died on the eve of the fatal battle of Monte Catini."

“So these wise republicans, whom you, dear Euthanasia, so much vaunt, believe in these childish omens. I would wager my best charger, that their records are full of the influence of stars, and the appearance of comets!”

“And I do not at all know that you would lose: indeed their noblest citizens have a great faith in astrology and portents. If you speak of a scarcity, they will tell of a meteor; if you say that the king of France has lost a battle, they will assure you that the whole kingdom has become, by the will of God and St. John, weaker and more miserable, ever since Philippe le Bel seized upon the Florentine usurers. We love to find a cause for every event, believing that, if we can fit but one link to another, we are on the high road for discovering the last secrets of nature. You smile at the celebration of the birth of these lion’s whelps; yet I own that it pleases me; how innocent, yet how active, must the imagination of that people be, who can find cause for universal joy in such an event!

“It is this same imagination more usefully

and capaciously employed, that makes them decree the building of the most extensive and beautiful building of modern times. The men who have conceived the idea, and contributed their money towards the erection of the Duomo, will never see its completion; but their posterity will, and, if they be not degenerate, will glory in the noble spirit of their ancestors. Many years ago, when the Florentines warred with the Siennese, they took by storm a tower of great strength, which commanded a most important pass. They destroyed the tower; and, when half demolished, they filled it up with carth, and planted there an olive tree, which still flourishes, an emblem of the peace which would follow their conquests."

Castruccio staid only a few days at Florence; and, recommending himself to the constancy and love of Euthanasia, he took an affectionate leave of her, and hastened on his journey to Rovigo, where he had promised to join Galeazzo Visconti.

Galeazzo, having now succeeded to his father in the tyranny of Milan, was the most powerful chief of Lombardy. He was about

thirty-five years of age : he had all the characteristics of an Italian face, arched brows, black eyes, an aquiline nose, and a figure where there was some strength and little grace. He had a great portion of talent, quickness in the combination of plans, yet not sufficient patience to watch their progress, or perseverance to carry them through. He was crafty, ambitious, and vain ; yet, where his own interests were not concerned, he was good-natured, and on all occasions exceeded even the Italians in the courtesy of his demeanour. He had seen much of the world, and suffered many misfortunes ; this gave him a pliancy of disposition, as well as of manner, which made him appear more kind-hearted than he really was ; for in truth he never for a moment lost sight of his own interest ; and, if he sometimes wandered from the path which led to its attainment, want of judgement, and not of inclination, caused the error.

He wished to attach Castruccio to his party and designs. He saw in him the head of the Ghibeline faction in Tuscany, and the tamer of his Florentine enemies. He felt that his own situation was precarious ; but, if he could gain

Castruccio for his ally, he hoped to awe his enemies. More than all, he desired the destruction of the Guelph strong-hold, Florence; and Castruccio was to become its destroyer. He heard of his peace with that city with dismay; he trusted it could not last; but the very name of it blasted his hopes. He wished to see the consul, and to win him to the plan which he had conceived would conduct to the full ascendancy of the Ghibelines; and, circumstances leading him to Rovigo, he had intreated Castruccio to visit him there, making the intended restoration of Ferrara to the marquess of Este the pretence of this request.

The friends met with every demonstration of regard. Galeazzo watched with care every word, by which Castruccio might reveal his intentions, before he would venture to communicate his own wishes. Their first topic of conversation was the immediate business before them, the restoration of the marquess Obizzo to the sovereignty of Ferrara. "This town," said Galeazzo, "which so long obeyed the Este family, is now in the hands of the Guelphs, and the vicar of the Pope, with a