

THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
SALVATOR ROSA.

VOL II.

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THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
SALVATOR ROSA.

BY LADY MORGAN.

One whom no servile hope of gain, or frosty apprehension of danger, can
make a parasite either to time, place, or opinion. *B. Jonson.*

Famoso pittore delle cose morali. *Il Duca di Salviati.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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WITH the life of Masaniello ended all that was laudable in the revolutionary movement, of which he had been the leader and the chief.* Other interests came into play; but the cabals

* “Il semble que Masaniello n'avait paru que pour manifester son génie, sa supreme intelligence, sa capacité, et pour operer les plus grands évènements. En huit jours, cet homme, simple pêcheur, assujettit un grand royaume, le delivre de la servitude, conduit à sa perfection le grand ouvrage de l'abolition, des impôts,” &c.—*Histoire de la Révolution de Naples*.

of a vile and sordid aristocracy, the intrigues of the French government through their agents at Rome, the headlong enterprises of the gallant and unfortunate Duc de Guise (whose object was to erect Naples into a republic), the revolt of the other cities and towns of the kingdom, and the sanguinary contests of factions, fighting not for liberty but for plunder,—all ended in the triumph of the house of Hapsburg, whose tyranny had incapacitated the slaves it had debased, for recovering that liberty of which it had so long deprived them.

Whatever had been the expectations of Salvator Rosa and Aniello Falcone, they ended with the life of Masaniello.* The view which

* Salvator in his fourth Satire, some part of which was evidently sketched on his return from Naples, apostrophizes the spirit and virtues of Masaniello with great force and feeling, and in a strain which recalls Petrarch's invocation to Cola Rienzi.

“ Mira l' alto ardimento, ancor chè inerme

Quante ingiustizie in un sol giorno opprime

Un vile, un scalzo, un pescatore, un verme.

Mira

that event gave them of the character of a people formed in the school of political degradation, dissipated every hope of romantic patriotism.*

Mira in basso natale alma sublime,
Che per serbar della sua patria i fregi,
Le più superbe teste adegua all' ime,
Ecco ripullular gli antichi pregi
De' Codri, e degli Ancuri e de' Trasiboli
S' oggi un vil piscator dà norma ai regi."

La Guerra.

* The people, stunned by the death of Masaniello, exhibited, in the first instance, neither grief nor resentment; and when the partisans of Spain had his body drawn through the city and thrown into a ditch, they looked on, says an impartial historian, "*avec un sang-froid et une insensibilité qui les caractérisent.*" A few days after, the popular feeling arose to frenzy; they recovered the body of their idol, and his funeral was conducted with almost royal magnificence. The remains of the unfortunate Captain-general lay in state in the church del Carmine, covered with a royal mantle; a crown was placed on his head, and the *bâton* of his office and a naked sword were deposited on his bier. With equal pomp, and followed by 80,000 persons, the body was paraded through the city; and as the procession passed the Vice-

Falcone fled to France, where he lived with honour and respect, and died full of years and of fame. Salvator Rosa returned to Rome,—

Faint, weary, sore, embroiled, grieved, and brent,
and glowing with that “smart and inward ire,”
beyond all power, and, perhaps, all inclination
to conceal. The political state of Rome, engrossed and agitated as its society then was by the French and Spanish cabals, favoured his security, and spared him those persecutions which, as an abettor of any revolution, he might in other times have sustained.

Too agitated to still down his bitter and perturbed spirit to the tranquil pursuit of his art, the stings of his lacerated and disappointed feelings found vent in a medium more adapted to give a rapid and ready expression to powerful emotion. Internal evidence refers the composi-

roy's palace, the terrified Duke sent forth eight of his pages to join the cavalcade, and he ordered the guards to pay military honours to the remains of the man he had so basely assassinated.

tion of his magnificent poem “*La Babilonia*,” to this period. This poem is a sort of dramatic eclogue, in which, under a somewhat allegorical form, the character and principles of Salvator himself, the moral and political position of his native country, and the disappointment of all his hopes of its regeneration, are given, with such truth and force, and in such deep and honest bursts of indignation, as cannot fail to excite a sympathy in the reader for the patriot, exceeding even his admiration for the poet,—powerfully as it must be called forth by the merits of a highly poetical composition.

Tirreno, a fisherman on the shores of the Bosphorus, is discovered just as the morning-star ushers in the dawn, flinging all the instruments of his profession into the waves, and giving utterance to an indignant vow to abandon for ever an element and a pursuit which have mocked him with endless disappointment. Ergasto, a traveller, arrives at the moment of this sacrifice, and inquires its cause. The answer of the poet, whose own feelings of

misery come at once upon the canvass, is the very epic of melancholy discontentment—a discontentment engendered by the finest sensibility, blasted in its hopes and its efforts for ameliorating human sufferings, and amending human institutions.

The artful inquiries of Ergasto draw the piscatory misanthropist into a detailed developement of his contempt for society, and lead him to speak of himself and the country of his birth. It is then that the impetuous Neapolitan, smarting under the still-bleeding wounds of his disappointed patriotism, sketches boldly and bitterly a view of that country, the slave of slaves, (*“patria serva dei servi,”*) which seems to glory in the chain to which she has again basely submitted. He sees only in the land of his birth, the “*hated object of his memory,*” (*“l’odioso oggetto della mia memoria,”*) the focus of all abuses in government, of all ridicules and superstitions in society! The memory neither of Virgil nor of Sannazaro, which he venerates, so blinds him

with national vanity, as to render him insensible to the vices of the degraded and despotic nobility, to the miseries of the oppressed people, or to the preponderating influence of knaves and bandits, who every where hold the ascendant. He solemnly renounces Naples for ever; and leaving to others "their sympathy for Vesuvius and Posilippo," he resolves to seek the means of existence and of fame far from the magic circle of that false syren, to whose sweet song he is no longer bound; and who, with all her witcheries, has become the object of his abhorrence, his hatred, and his contempt!

For daring truth, deep feeling, and powerful expression, there is not perhaps any thing in Italian poetry comparable to this satire. Its language is the poetry of passion; and while the feeble Della-Cruscans are seeking in its noble bursts of an almost sublime indignation, for some word that has not been "*bagnato nel Arno*," or some term unauthorized by the *Trecentisti*, the superior intellects and more sensible spirits of all ages and nations, and above