

Walker & Bennett, Ph. Gr.

Albert Brown, 1881.

1881.

THE MEN IN THE RING AND THE BOOK

(ROBERT BROWNING)

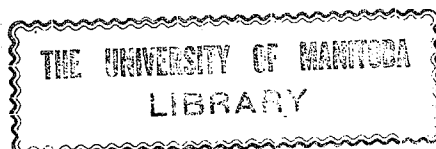
- BY -

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BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF ENGLISH, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA,
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

APRIL, 1928



CONTENTS

Introduction.

Chapter I - Count Guido Franceschini.

Chapter II - Giuseppe Caponsacchi.

Chapter III - The Lawyers.

1. Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis.
2. Juris Doctor Johannes-Baptista Bettinius.

Chapter IV - The Pope - Innocent XII.

Chapter V - The Gossips in Street and Saloon.

1. Half Rome.
2. The Other Half Rome.
3. Tertium Quid.

INTRODUCTION

"So absolutely good is truth." (Hodell)

"So in this book lay absolutely truth
Fanciless fact, the documents indeed." (Gest)

"All for the truth's sake, mere truth
Nothing else!" (The Ring and the Book, I, 881)

The following outline is an attempt to put briefly before the reader, the characters and story of the chief men whom Robert Browning has portrayed in his poem entitled The Ring and the Book.¹

Efforts have been made during the narrative to give the bare facts of the case as rendered in the pages of The Old Yellow Book the source book of Browning's story which is edited and translated by Charles W. Hodell, and published by the Carnegie Institute of Washington.²

Since the smaller edition of this source book has been published in the Everyman Series,³ there has been an inclination on the part of some critics to charge not only Browning but Hodell also with using too much license in their translation and use of the old Italian story, which culminated in a final tragedy in Rome in the year 1698.

Probably the critic who has the greatest authority to pass judgment, is John Marshall Gest, the Judge of the Orphan's Court, Philadelphia;⁴ who being engaged in legal procedure, has endeavored to show, where the legal

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1. The Ring and the Book, a poem in 12 books by Robert Browning.
 2. The Old Yellow Book, source of Browning's The Ring and the Book, in complete Photo-Reproduction, with Translation, Essay and Notes, by Charles W. Hodell, published by the Carnegie Institute of Washington, July 1908, Publication No. 89, The Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore, M.D., U.S.A.
 3. Everyman's Library, Edited by Ernest Rhys, Poetry and Drama, The Old Yellow Book being a supplementary volume to The Ring and the Book. Translated and edited by Charles W. Hodell, Vol. No. 503; London, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.; New York, E. P. Dutton & Co. First issue of this edition 1911. Reprinted 1917.
 4. The Old Yellow Book, Source of Browning's The Ring and the Book, a new translation with explanatory notes and critical chapters upon the poem and its source, by John Marshall Gest. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1927. Copyright 1925. Printed in the U.S.A.

matters translated by those who are not so well versed in law as in literary attainments, suffer somewhat in accuracy.

In order, therefore, to produce as unbiased a presentation as possible both these authorities, although at times contradictory to each other, have been used in the information contained in the following pages, where necessary for enlightenment.

The Old Yellow Book itself is a collection of documents and pamphlets, bearing upon the trial of Guido Franceschini for murder or homicide. There are eighteen pamphlets in the collection, sixteen printed by the Court (the Reverend Apostolic Chamber), and two unofficial pamphlets not printed.

In addition, there are certain manuscript pages which the collectors have added, including a title page, (p.1); a table of contents, (pp. 3, 4); three letters concerning the case, and telling of Guido's execution, (pp. 235 - 40 a transcript of the court record of the Tuscan trial, and condemnation for the wife's flight from her husband's home, (pp. 5 - 8).

These were all made into one volume by the Florentine lawyer, Gencini, to whom the manuscript letters at the end of the book were written by Archangeli, del Torto and Ugolinucci. Gencini was a patrician of Arezzo, Fisc of the Holy Office, and appeared to be a lawyer of some standing in Florence.¹

The documents formed no connected narrative, but each was used to establish or deny some point of law. For the defence, there are seven, three by Archangeli, three by Spreti, and a Summary of their evidence. Then for the Fisc or prosecution, there are another seven, consisting of two arguments by Gambi; three by Bottini; and two Summaries of their evidence. In addition to these there are two "Anonymous Pamphlets", No. 10 on Guido's behalf, and No. 15

1. Modell, Op. Cit. pp. 237-38.

to support the Prosecution. Next, is an argument by Lamparelli in vindication of Pompilia's honor; and finally, an Instrument of final judgment, absolving her from the adultery charge.

The Deputy for Criminal cases presided, Marco Antonio Venturini (the Governor was Pallavicino), and it is very probable that the Congregation of the Governor aided Venturini in his decisions.

The title given to the Book of documents was as follows:-

Romana Homicidiorum - may
Better translate, - "A Roman murder case;
Position of the entire criminal cause
Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
With certain four the cutthroats in his pay,
Tried, all five, and found guilty and put to death
By heading or hanging as befitted ranks,
At Rome on February Twenty-two,
Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety-Eight:
Wherein it is disputed if, and when,
Husbands may kill adulterous wives, yet scape
The customary forfeit."

The adjective Romana simply states where the case was held. With regard to the translation of Homicidiorum, the legal critic would use Homicides rather than murder, as the latter word was not used in those days, and was really a term used technically in English rather than Italian law.¹

The plea for the defence was entirely that of honoris causa, whilst the prosecution object to this, as the vengeance was delayed so long; and they present five technical aggravations as criminal offences as well as the real murders.

When Browning obtained the book, it was a volume of small quarto size, bound in yellow vellum, old with age (hence its name), and contained about two hundred and fifty pages.²

1. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 24 - 28.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 236 - 238.

The Pamphlets contained the sworn testimony of Francesca Pompilia, and Caponsacchi (the wife and supposed lover), taken ten days after their arrest at Castelnuovo on their way to Rome. Letters are inserted also which testify to Francesca's purity; to the ill treatment she received in the Franceschini household, and the supposed "Love letters", which the husband brought forward as evidence to establish the adultery charge. Letters from the Bishop and Governor of Arezzo are there, which appear to warrant Guido in his quarrel and indignation against the Comparini, (the pseudo parents of Francesca).

Many pamphlets, however, seem to be missing from the records, including the confessions of Guido and his accomplices. These may have been withheld purposely by Cencini, out of respect to the Franceschini family. Brief extracts alone are to be found. (pp. 127-130).

The "Anonymous" pamphlets were written while the trial was proceeding at Rome, and the first writer endeavored to create a feeling in favor of Guido, whilst the response openly accused the first pamphleteer of trying to create wrong impressions for the populace to read. As the pamphlets were widely circulated throughout the city, scandal and gossip concerning the case must have been abundant.

The three "Manuscript" letters included in the Book, are written in a "crabbed" handwriting, and comment upon events in Rome, on the eve of Guido's execution. They tell of the delay in favor of Guido, when his plea for clericate privilege was presented to the Pope, (February 18 - 21), and of the Pope's refusal and order, that the judgment of the Court was to remain unaltered. Archangeli wrote this one, Gaspero del Torte, and Carlo Ugolinucci, wrote the second and third respectively.¹

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 238, 242.

Such then was the little book purchased by Robert Browning for a "lire", (about eight pence in English money), from the old market barrow, in San Lorenzo Square, in June 1860, when "pushed by a Hand always above the shoulder."

After the poet's death the book was given to Balliol College, Oxford, by his son, as promised.

In addition to The Old Yellow Book, Browning had an anonymous manuscript sent to him. It had been found in London, and was written by a person who sympathized with Pompilia. It does not give facts quite correctly in one or two instances, but it supplies some interesting details, such as the name of the son born to Francesca Pompilia, (Gaetano); the fact that Guido inflicted twenty two wounds upon his wife; that the murdered bodies were displayed to the public in the San Lorenzo Church. It also gives a description of the pursuit and capture of the assassins, and their execution.

Two other fragments of evidence were used by Browning, one, a sketch of Guido just before his execution, the water color drawing of the Franceschini arms (by Barone Kirkup); and finally another pamphlet was discovered in the Royal Casanatense Library, Rome. This was not seen by Browning at all, but has been added to the contents of the Source Book.¹

In the trial itself there were two stages: first, the opening by Counsel for defence, followed by the answer of the counsel for the Fisc. This was followed by a request for the infliction of torture, which later the Court ordered to be administered. (Much doubt and criticism have arisen as to the legality of the Vigil infliction, and as to whether it really was administered to Guido).²

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 242, 243.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., c. 28.

The second part of the trial then commenced, when full confession was made, and the result ended in the execution of the five murderers. Much confusion is liable to ensue, concerning the actual court lawsuits connected with the case. The first, was a civil suit in 1694 against the Franceschini, by Pietro Comparini, for the recovery of the portion of the dowry already paid, and for the annulment of the dowry contract. This was justified by the plaintiff, on the knowledge that Francesca Pompilia was not his daughter legally. Guido won the case, but Pietro appealed, and it was never settled, as the murder was committed three years later.

Then, in May 1697, a criminal case was instigated by Guido against his wife and Caponsacchi, for flight and adultery. As a result, Caponsacchi was relegated to Civita Vecchia in September 1697, and Pompilia removed to the Convent of Scaletta, but no definite decision was actually reached.

A further suit was made, charging Pompilia and Guillichini with theft and adultery, and the driver Venerino ^{was} cited as accessory.

Guillichini was sentenced by the Court at Florence, to five years in the galleys, (later commuted to a period to be held during the Governor's pleasure); Pompilia was already in the Scaletta prison, and Venerino was dismissed.¹

In the fall 1697, after leaving the monastery Scaletta, Pompilia issued a divorce suit against Guido, and Guido also took advice with reference to divorce claims. Nothing was decided, however, and the murders terminated all the cases.

The murder trial was the last, this ended with sentence of death, February 18th, 1698, and the executions took place February 22nd, 1698.

1. (a) Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 8, 9.
(b) Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 12, 13.

The legal history of the book is closed by the clearing of Pompilia's name by Lamparelli. Tighetti, trustee of Pompilia, was sued for Pompilia's heritage by the Convertite Monastery, but by means of the decree finally reached in September, 1698, this claim was dismissed.¹

In Browning's use of the Book it will be found that the poet used all the material, and allowed many speakers to voice their opinions and prejudices, by means of a series of monologues. This gives the reader many phases, from different angles, of the same story.²

Details are enlarged, illuminated, and given new and spiritual meanings, by the way Browning reveals them and subjugates them to his requirements. His creative art and genius, are used without actually contradicting the statements of the Source Book. The Church and its environments are well criticised by the various speakers.

In the title, The Ring and the Book, Browning has placed much significance. He has taken for his model the work of Italian goldsmiths, who mix an alloy with soft gold, in order to work the metal without injury. When the ring is completed, an acid is applied to the work which burns away the alloy and leaves the ring in its beauty and unharmed.

Browning has paralleled this in his poem. The crude facts of the legal papers in The Old Yellow Book, furnished the gold, and the added rotation, enlarged details, interesting descriptions, and artistic architecture created by the poet, forms the alloy. To the reader is left the task, of burning away the alloy, and discovering the gold of Truth of which the Ring is composed, beneath all its crudities and additions.³

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1. (a) Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 19 - 24.
(b) Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 243, 245.
 2. Ibid, p. 251.
 3. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 230, 232.

The chief actors, and the Roman populace, the lawyers, and the Pope as the Church representative, form the circle of Dramatis Personae in the story, and each in their various monologues, develop their own characters and personalities, for the reader's benefit. The Pope is portrayed in a soliloquy, (voicing many of Browning's own philosophies and theories), as the head of the Church, and the temporal personation of God.

There are twelve books in all, giving respectively Browning's reason, treatment, and summary of the story; then, three books voicing the opinions of the Roman populace, those on the wife's side, those who upheld the husband, and the upper strata of society. Next, the so called villain of the story appears, Guido Franceschini, who tries to justify his crimes; then the hero Caponsacchi, the ideal priest and saint of the story; he is followed by the little wife, Pompilia, whom Browning adorns with Madonna-like virtues and wisdom; the lawyers for the defence and prosecution follow; next comes the Pope, voicing his nineteenth century views, in a seventeenth century atmosphere. Guido is then allowed another monologue, in which to display his venom and utter abandonment to evil; finally, the last book, called the Book and the Ring, gives after accounts of the execution, the clearing of Pompilia's name, and various other items conveyed by correspondence to Cenci.¹

The language of the original documents, (with the exception of the Anonymous pamphlets), is in Latin. It is extremely difficult for the modern translator to decipher, as much of the colloquial Latin used by the lawyers and their clerks, has no equivalent in the modern language; and no lexicon or dictionary can be found, that meets the special need of the vocabulary used in that period.²

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Preface.

2. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 35, 37.

It may interest the reader to know, that Marshall Gest has found within recent years, what is probably the only reference to the Guido trial in Italian legal literature. "Franciscus Dynus, an Etrurian lawyer and judge, published in 1713 his *Decisiones Criminales*," concerning the case of a man executed in 1688 for homicide of his wife. In his discussions of the authorities, whereby a husband can be excused, he mentions Guido. After summarizing the chief facts of the case, he concludes as follows:

"Although the 'causa honoris', - and his honor had been completely ruined, - made a strong impression on the minds of the judges, especially because it is thought of much importance among the Arretines, yet, the serious nature of his excess, (beyond his legal rights,) being considered, and the attendant circumstances, that infinitely increased the crime, he was delivered over to death with the assassins. This was done, notwithstanding his plea of clergy, viz: that in the Ecclesiastical State, subsequent matrimony does not take away the privilege of the Court, de Cler. Conjug., Trivis, dec. 48 n. 22; since in 'most atrocious' crimes, the punishment is not mitigated in the case of a clerk."¹

In the Essay,² Hodell has added to his valuable collections in the Source Book, he emphasizes Browning's love of motivation and truth. He further adds, that the poet has deduced his principles by the historic method from the facts, and from his own personality. breathed upon them a living spark, making them assume greater significance, moral beauty, and vigor.

In his comment on Browning's work, Marshall Gest says: "For anatomical purposes, the cadaver of a pauper or a convict, will embellish the dissecting room as well as the body of imperious Caesar dead and turned to clay, and the

1. Gest, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 616, 617.

2. *The Making of a Great Poem*, Hodell, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 227-291.

persons depicted on the pages of The Old Yellow Book exhibited all the passions one is likely to see anywhere in life; avarice, lust, jealousy, anger, envy, malice, revenge, whence follow falsehood, trickery, theft, adultery, homicide, assassination. Therefore,

‘Let this old woe step on the stage again!
Act itself o'er anew for men to judge.’ ”



Tratto de Sinfelice Guido Franceschini il quale
Decapitato in Roma alli 14. di marzo 1598.

GUIDO FRANCESCHINI

CHAPTER I

COUNT GUIDO FRANCESCHINI

"But here's the capital mistake; the Court
Found Guido guilty, - but pronounced no word
About the innocency of his wife." (The Ring and the Book,
Bk. XII, ll. 694-696)

On January 3rd, 1698, all Rome was aroused, and young and old, rich and poor alike, were discussing with horror and eagerness, the gruesome details of a shocking tragedy committed the previous night in the precincts of the city.

As a proof that the story was true, it was quite easy to walk a few steps and view the mutilated bodies of an aged couple who were the ^{victims} ~~sittins~~. They were lying in the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina. Rumor would have it, that in a couple of days this terrible sight would be augmented by a third body, that of a young and beautiful woman, who had become the mother of a henny boy just a short two weeks since.

It was, moreover, whispered that the murderer was the husband of the young woman and father to the new born babe, and if report spoke truly the police would effect a capture in a very short time.¹ According to the Source Book an arrest was effected that same night in a tavern at Merluccia, just beyond the bounds of the city. Five men were discovered carrying firearms, also swords (which was strictly illegal) and the swords were stained with blood.² Chief among this suspected group was a certain nobleman named Count Guido Franceschini of Arezzo, who had been the topic of town gossip for many months, on account of the ill-will existing between himself and his wife, and her relations.

1. The Old Yellow Book, Source of Browning's The Ring and the Book in complete Photo-reproduction, with Translation, Essay and Notes, by Charles W. Hodell, published by Carnegie Institution of Washington, July 1908, pp. 212-213.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 51, cf. p. 64, also p. 136.

The Count was supposed to be the instigator of the crime, as his motives were in all probability easy to suspect, considering all the recent scandals. The other four who completed the band, were country clods, who, either from feelings of loyalty, or for pecuniary reward, had apparently assisted Count Guido in the terrible work. The men, it appeared, all came from Arezzo, and were named respectively, Domenico Gambassini of Florence, Alessandro Baldeschi of Castello, Francesco Pasquini Antonii of the Marquisate of Monte Acuto and Elasio Agostinelli of Popolo town and dwelling at the Villa Quarata.¹ These malefactors "The Four hard hands", were put in prison, to await the charges to be preferred against them, one of which would certainly be that of an infringement of the Bull of Alexander VIII which forbade the carrying of daggers and swords, such as these men had in their possession.²

Before pursuing any further the Court of enquiry, it would be better to spend a short time reviewing the history of Count Guido Franceschini, and in establishing, if possible, the chain of motivation that had caused him to occupy his present degraded position.

Unlike most of the characters of the principal actors in the Source Book, no confession of Guido remains extant, and a few remarks from the lawyers added to information gained from the Secondary Source (the London manuscript) and the Caeanatense pamphlet, furnish the sole material for building up his life and character.³

In one of the documents given in the Source Book, Guido was supposed to be fifty years old when executed at Rome, February 1698. But in the actual records of Arezzo his baptism is entered, and from this entry it

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 51; cf. p. 25; also p. 62.

2. Ibid. p. 51.

3. Ibid. pp. 127-128.

would appear the scribe was at fault. His birthday is recorded as January 24th, 1657. Thus, at his death he would be forty-one, and at his marriage he would be thirty-seven instead of forty-six as the writer states.¹

According to the public statistics in Arezzo the Franceschini family were of secondary rank only, and came originally from a much lower class of society. In some way not discovered, they grew into power and in the fifteenth century members of the family became gonfaloniers in the city of Arezzo. Tracing the family history onward it appears to have become quite extinct after Guido's death, and the former Palazzo Franceschini in the Via dei Cenci, no longer exists. Comments and notices were also entered in the records, referring to the extreme poverty and almost entire lack of income suffered by the family.²

The member of the house now in the public mind was known as Count Guido Franceschini; ^{he} and was really the younger of three brothers,³ and was expected to carry on the issue of the house, as both his brothers were dedicated to the Church, and so were unable to marry.⁴ Count Guido was of very poor personal appearance, described as "Low in stature, thin, pallid, having a prominent nose, black hair, and a very heavy beard." In a rough sketch taken shortly before his execution, he looks coarse and unpolished, due partly to the fact that he is dressed in rough country garb as a disguise.⁵

Previous to his marriage Guido had been employed in the service of a Cardinal. This patron (Cardinal Neri) was a member of the Embassy, but was not a popular man, and failing to please either the Grand Duke or the

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 298, Note 44.

2. Ibid., p. 171.

3. One Word more on Brownings by Frances Theresa Russell, Associate of English Stanford University. Stanford University Press, 1927.

4. The Country of the Ring and the Book, by Sir Fred. Treves, Bart., G.C.V.O., C.B., LL.D. Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1913; p. 11, states eldest in family Paolo, aged 43, second son Girolamo, aged 39, third son aged 35.

5. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 213.

people, he resigned his office and retired to his country home at Assisi.

This may have had some influence on Guido's career and inability to rise in the profession for preferment.¹

Guido had evidently taken a few minor clerical orders, as proved by letters found in the records, and by means of a reference to these orders found in a document written in the eighteenth century by a person who had been following the Franceschini criminal suit very closely. The document was found among a number of famous criminal cases that were bound together in one volume. The tenth narrative was the Franceschini murder story.²

Guido had reached a fairly mature age, and had achieved no fame, was of a very gloomy disposition, and weak in temperament. His lack of wealth and his ordinary unprepossessing appearance, and in all probability the unpopularity of his patron kept him back time and time again, while younger men passed him in the fight for promotion.

Much of his time was spent in loafing around the shops of certain female hair-dressers in Rome, who were able to regale their customers with idle talk concerning the families of the nobility and well-to-do middle class, whose head gear they superintended.³

Guido had a brother who was advancing brilliantly in the estimation of his patron, and making himself quite an assured position in Rome. This brother, the Abate Paolo, saw Guido's lack of initiative and suggested that the best way for his brother to recoup the family fortunes would be to make a good marriage. Both men knew it would be useless looking for a wife among the upper

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 209, cf. p. 217.

2. Ibid. pp. 235-239, cf. p. 238, Note. 42.

3. Ibid. p. 169.

ranks of Roman society, as the lack of means and the unlucrative appointment Guido held would immediately cause a scornful refusal from any of the wealthy aristocratic class.

So Guido betook himself oftener to the circle that gathered in the hairdressing establishments, and talked very glibly and boastingly about his country estates, his superior birth, and the family property. At the same time he signified his need of a suitable partner to share all these glories, intimating that wealth would be considered before rank in such a partner, and also suitable reward would be given to the person who assisted him in finding this eligible connection.¹

In the Piazza Colonna was a peruke maker who had received help from the Abate Paolo and others in setting up her business, and this woman promised her assistance. One day she confided to the brothers Franceschini that she thought she had found a family who would fit into their scheme very nicely at all points. The girl in question was a certain Francesca Pompilia, the only child of Pietro and Violante Comparini.

This Francesca would in all probability not only have a suitable dowry, but was the heiress to a reversionary interest at her parent's death of twelve thousand scudi. Moreover, the Comparini were of inferior rank, and would be impressed by the rank of the Franceschini family, and it was whispered among certain acquaintances that the mother, Violante Comparini, was "very anxious to establish her daughter in the home of persons of good birth."²

This aroused most joyful anticipations of success in the hearts of Guido and the Abate. They persuaded the hair dresser to broach the matter to the mother, and promised if the marriage was effected she should receive a

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 217; also cf. p. 169; also p. 209.

2. Ibid., p. 209; cf. p. 169; also p. 217.

sum of two hundred scudi for her assistance.¹

The subject was discussed between Violante Comparini and the hair dresser, and it was agreed, that the husband's consent could easily be obtained, if the Franceschini wealth, rank, et cetera, were verified in writing by reliable persons.²

When the Franceschini approached the Comparini family about the marriage they made certain representations about their property and income. The latter was definitely stated to be seventeen hundred scudi. This was also confirmed by friends of the Comparini.³

As Guido's brother, the Abate Paolo, Secretary to Cardinal Lauria, had won favor with the Cardinal, the latter graciously agreed to assist in the drawing up of the marriage settlements.⁴

Pietro, meantime, had made enquiries and found that the worldly wealth of his proposed son-in-law had been grossly overstated. When explaining this to his wife he met with scorn and denunciation, so positive was she that some middle-class friend, envious of their possible union with a noble family, had told her husband falsehoods with intent to stay the marriage. Nothing could shake her convictions that the Franceschini family ranked among the highest in the land, both in birth and wealth.⁵

As far as Pietro was concerned the matter was ended, but Guido cajoled Violante and flattered her so much that she allowed the marriage to take place without Pietro's knowledge. As far as the locality and date can be ascertained it was in the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, in December, 1693.

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 218.

2. Ibid., p. 218.

3. Ibid., p. 218; cf. p. 209; also p. 170; also p. 171.

4. Ibid., p. 218.

5. Ibid., p. 218.

that the wedding was solemnized.¹ (Evidently this date is a doubtful one for when the records were searched by Browning no date or entry of the wedding could be found. Cardinal Lauria had some hand in the marriage, and his death occurred in November. One writer, a later critic, definitely says the marriage occurred on Sunday morning the sixth of September, and that the banns were properly published.)²

However, once the marriage was enacted, Pietro had to acquiesce and simply allowed his wife to do as she pleased. The dowry was arranged to Guido's satisfaction, the sum settled to be twenty-six hundred scudi (or twenty-six bonds). Part of this money had already been paid to the Franceschini family - a matter of seven hundred scudi. Moreover, it was arranged that Pompilia would succeed to the reversionary interest also, and Guido was given absolute control of the finances present and future for all the family. Then it was decided that mutual benefits might accrue, if both households united - hence the Comparini accompanied the young couple to their home.³

(In the pamphlet written by an anonymous writer stirring up sympathy for Guido, it is stated that this bargain suited the Comparini, as much as the Franceschini, because Pietro had been in difficulties some time, and had had to appeal to the Papal Palace for alms secretly; and he thought Paolo would probably do something to help him get his business into a settled order.)⁴

But after the first welcome with its customary ceremony was over, life in the palace did not please the Comparini at all. Quarrels and hostilities occurred continually. Guido's mother, Donna Beatrice, a proud avaricious woman, was accused of parsimony in the housekeeping, depriving them

1. Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 170-171.

2. (Modell, Op. Cit., p. 302, Note 85.

(Russell, Op. Cit., p. 117.

3. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 218; cf. p. 209; also p. 303, Note. 85.

4. Ibid., p. 219.

of even the real necessities of life. Suffering from a lack of food and warmth, actually having to endure personal abuse with a sword from Guido's other brother, Girolamo,¹ Violante became so incensed that she vowed she must leave the palace.²

She attacked Pietro, blamed him entirely for arranging the marriage with its consequent evils, and begged him to take her away. Just at this time new aggravations occurred on account of the promotion of the Abate Paolo. His patron died and the Abate became Secretary (in Rome) of the Religious Order of Malta. This increased the family haughtiness and widened the breach between them and the Comparini.

Pietro, allowing Violante as usual to gain her way, promised to do what he could to get away.³

One evening, Pietro, after spending the evening with a friend, upon returning home found himself unable to gain admittance. Pompilia heard him, and begged her husband to allow her to descend and open the door. This was permitted and as she stepped outside, the door was fastened against them both. As they were entirely shelterless, Pompilia had to pass the night with a friendly neighbor, and Pietro retired to a local inn to sleep.

(The servant, who was dismissed at this period from the household, and who gave testimony to the cruel treatment the Comparini received, states that it was Violante who heard Guido at the door, and called upon the family to help him gain entrance, but no one would let him in. Another quarrel ensued, and Violante and Pietro both had to go out that evening. The former went to Doctor Borri, and the latter dined and slept at the inn.)⁴

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 40.
2. Ibid., p. 41.
3. Ibid., p. 419.
4. (Ibid., p. 117.
Ibid., p. 41.)

Witnesses also came forward to testify that the persecution of Pompilia was so continual and distressing in the Franceschini household, that she had many times to seek protection from the Governor, the Bishop, and the neighbors, and the public talk was very busy over the matter. The letter containing this statement was signed by six witnesses, one of them being a priest of Arezzo.¹

A letter shown in Court was written by the Governor of Arezzo to the Abate Paolo. In it the writer, 'The Honorable Marzi-Medici', says he regretted to have to mention all the scandals that had happened since the coming of the Comparini. He mentions Pompilia's appeal to the Bishop, also states that the Comparini took their daughter's jewellery, which he made them return. So shocking did he consider their behaviour, consorting with vulgar people, slandering the Franceschini family, that he remonstrated with them. He threatened them with prison and punishment, if they did not behave themselves. He then claims they left Rome after this, leaving behind them a bad reputation.²

Whatever the immediate cause, it appears that this much was true, that the Comparini decided to return to Rome. As Guido had the power of attorney over all their possessions, they had to beg some money from him. They managed to obtain a sum which barely paid their fare, and was just sufficient to purchase a small quantity of furniture.³

Directly they had left Arezzo, Pompilia was directed to mark over some writings for Guido to send to the Abate Paolo. In this letter she is supposed to protest her gratitude at her pseudo parents' departure, stating as a reason for this, that they influenced her to rebel against her husband's authority, and to speak falsehood of Guido's brother, Girolamo. She also states

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 42.

2. Ibid., pp. 68.- 69.

3. Ibid., p. 219.

Ibid., p. 118.

Ibid., p. 87.

that her false parents bade her administer poison to her husband's people, and kill her husband so as to be able to seek a new lover.¹

(Of course the plea that Pompilia could not write or read until later when stationed at ^{Castelnuovo} Castelnuovo, makes this letter a very much disputed piece of evidence.)²

Guido's mortifications were only at the beginning, apparently, for shortly after the foster parents' departure a communication was received from the Judiciary department, informing him that owing to a certain confession made by Violante Comparini at the Pope's Jubilee, he would no longer be in receipt of any dowry for his wife. It was customary for the Papacy to grant a free pardon and amnesty to any penitent, who had committed a crime and wished to unburden himself with assured safety, at the time of the Jubilee celebration³. Violante taking advantage of this had confessed that the girl-wife Pompilia was the descendant of a prostitute woman, who had allowed the child to be adopted in order to provide for its future welfare.⁴

The knowledge of this duplicity lay entirely with Violante who had deceived her husband as well as the rest of the world, when she found that unless an heir could be produced, the income from the reversionary bonds would

1. (Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 87.

(Ibid., p. 59; cf. pp. 42-45.

2. Ibid., p. 197; cf. p. 120, also p. 87.

3. The Jubilee, a great ecclesiastical event, originated by Boniface VIII, February 23rd, 1300, declared that year and every hundredth year thereafter a Jubilee, and pardon of sins was granted, if for thirty days the churches in Rome should be visited by the penitents. This brought wealth and visitors to Rome so that the Jubilees were held very frequently. Innocent XII held one in November 1691, and another to invoke Divine aid for peace among his people on December 8th, 1693. One was held in December 1695. But as Violante's confession pre-dated this, it is likely her confession was made in December, 1693. The Old Yellow Book. Source of Browning's The Ring and the Book. A new translation with Explanatory notes and critical chapters upon the poem and its sources. John Marshall Gest, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1927; pp. 97, 98.

4. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 172; cf. p. 120.

pass to another member of the family.

Judge Gest has made certain statements which are interesting with reference to the Comparini - Franceschini story.

He claims, for one thing, that the true facts of Pompilia's birth as claimed by Violante in her confession at the Jubilee were verified by six witnesses, yet Thomatus decided in Guido's favor and Pietro appealed to the Sacred Rota, but the case was not finished.¹

Evidently the woman felt that she had nothing to gain or lose, now that Guido had shown his grasp and greed so plainly, and, therefore, she intended to "Hoist" the Franceschini family, "with their own petard".

Not content with this well-aimed blow, the public were made cognisant of the whole sordid story, and the name of Guido was dragged down into the depths. Pietro thought this publicity would cause the marriage to be annulled. But the astute Guido consulted one or two authorities on the matter and, as no definite advice could be found, he decided to ignore or contradict the statement, whichever seemed best, lest he should lose all chance of winning the dowry, by the absolute proof of his wife's illegitimacy.

As a result of an appeal to the Court, the case was tried by Judge A. C. Tommati, and Pompilia was allowed to remain in quasi-possession of her daughter-ship, and the Comparini had to stand in quasi-possession of parenthood. Pietro made an appeal against this, and the case was sent to the Sacred Rota before Monsignor Melines. This left undecided the question of the Nullification of the dowry - agreement. Pietro was able to make the transfer of the dowry bond "so trickily, that the Franceschini had to bear the expense," whilst not even receiving the income from it.²

1. John Marshall Gest, Op. Cit., p. 8; also Pamphlet 15.

2. Rodell, Op. Cit., pp. 118-119; cf. John Marshall Gest, Op. Cit., p. 142, Section 2.

All this while the unhappy Pompilia was realizing the full force of the Franceschini hatred. She was hourly threatened with death, and found it impossible, as a girl of sixteen, to bear the trials unaided. Even the nobility, including those connected with the family, like Conti and Guillichini, were sought for the purpose of protection. Nothing, however, could be done except make protests and insist on temporary peace. Pompilia spent days shut up in her room, and Guido openly talked about a mixture of poison he was preparing, which would quiet his wife without having to recourse to the use of arms.¹

During this time Pompilia begged an Augustinian Friar, named Romano, to aid her, and he advised her to write to her parents. When he found she could not write he promised to write either to his Superiors or to the parents themselves, but no results ever occurred, and the letters were never traced.² At last Canon Conti the relative of the house, fearing to take any stand in the matter himself, offered to introduce Pompilia to his friend, Canon Caponsacchi, "whose spirit had stood every test."³

But the priest Caponsacchi hesitated at such a request, as it was somewhat awkward to take a wife away from her husband's protection, even if only to place her under her parents' care. But driven by pity and actual fear of personal danger to the young wife, he banished his scruples, and agreed to allow Pompilia to travel under his charge to Rome, he himself having to go there for private reasons.⁴

The day was arranged when the flight should take place, a carriage was secured, and the journey commenced. The journey started on April twenty-

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 42; cf. p. 143, also p. 173.

2. Ibid., p. 210.

3. Ibid., pp. 173 - 174; cf. p. 211.

4. Ibid., p. 174; cf. p. 211; cf. pp. 73 - 74.

ninth at one o'clock in the morning, and lasted until seven o'clock in the evening of April thirtieth. All unnecessary delays were avoided, and, except for such details as changing horses, the journey was pursued with great rapidity, so that the distance of seventy miles including the times of stoppage, was accomplished in forty-two hours.¹

Castelnuovo was reached the second morning at dawn, and, according to the Source Book, Pompilia remained in her room as she was faint and over fatigued, in fact almost on the verge of a collapse, while Caponsacchi superintended arrangements and urged the driver to make an early start for Rome.²

When Guido discovered the flight of Pompilia he found that a certain jewel box was open and that both money and jewels were missing from it.³ He started in pursuit of his wife and arrived at Castelnuovo about an hour after the arrival of the Canon and Pompilia. When he approached the couple Pompilia far from being frightened "mustered her courage" and seizing Caponsacchi's sword (which was on the table) she unsheathed it, and thrust at Guido, calling him a tyrant and a betrayer.

Nonplussed by this attitude, Guido called in the aid of the authorities, and the Governor of the place had the couple arrested. They were incarcerated for a time in Castelnuovo, but later removed to the New Prisons at Rome.⁴

Here they were charged with adultery and flight. The Abate Paolo was left in charge of matters, receiving from Guido authorization to "carry on and defend all lawsuits and causes civil or mixed", in all affairs appertaining to the case. This authority was lawfully signed and witnessed by the Notary Public of Arezzo, on October seventh, sixteen hundred and ninety four.⁵

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 74.

2. Ibid., p. 149; also p. 220.

3. Ibid., pp. 7 - 8.

4. Ibid., p. 15; cf. p. 96; also p. 221 and p. 211.

5. Ibid., p. 129; also p. 157.

Paolo, wearying of the taunts and jibes that were being cast at the family, made an appeal to the Pope asking that a special sitting (Congregatio) might be held, to consider all the lawsuits now pending connected with the Franceschini case, the daughtership, the marriage nullification, the dowry, the flight, and the adultery. The Pope, however, did not consider this necessary, and simply replied, "The case rests with the judges."¹

Legal proceedings of the most rigorous kind, were instituted against Caponsacchi and Fomplia but no proof of absolute misconduct could be proved; the love letters² written at the time of flight, were much quoted by the opposite side, and emphasis given to the driver's evidence (Borai Venerino), who stated that he saw the couple "cheek to cheek", as he occasionally glanced backward. This testimony, however, did not count for much, as the driver admitted he was "driving with such velocity, that the carriage seemed to be flying", hence, it was presumed the roughness of the road, and the speed, might cause him to be deceived. Either way kissing and love letters did not prove adultery such as was charged against the prisoners.³

Finally, the Court intimated to Caponsacchi, in running away with a wife from her husband, he had been rather rash, even if his motives were good, and he must be made to realise his lack of prudence. Therefore, he was to be sentenced to three years relegation at Civita Vecchia.⁴ The decree of banishment read as follows, "Giuseppe Maria Caponsacchi, of Arezzo, for complicity in flight and running away of Francesca Comparini, and for carnal knowledge of the same, has been banished for three years to Civita Vecchia."⁵

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 121.

2. Ibid., pp. 73 - 83.

3. Ibid., p. 63; cf. p. 7; also p. 94; and p. 147.

4. Ibid., p. 106; also p. 140.

5. Ibid., p. 83.

This, of course, looks as if the Court deemed the prisoner guilty on all the counts. But Spreti, when summing up for Guido and his associates, explains that Caponsacchi was a foreigner, also, ^{that} the actual wording of the decree, "could not be altered unless both sides were heard."

(Lamparello also explains this phase of the sentence, as being left in its original words, which he later had modified, but as Francesca Pompilia had had no hearing, the first charge had to stand as cited.)¹

With regard to Pompilia, she was considered a ward of the Court, as her several lawsuits were as yet unsettled. She was, therefore, sent as a prisoner, (with the consent of Paolo as attorney for Guido,) to the Monastery of the Scalette, on the Lungara, and Guido was to be responsible for her food. When it was found she was pregnant, arrangements were made for her to stay with her parents, the Comparini, (the Abate's consent being obtained,) and they assumed charge of her upkeep. Pompilia had to sign a bond of good faith, and the Comparini were under bond of three hundred scudi for her safety, et cetera.²

The Abate Paolo, about this time, received an intimation that it would be better to resign his office of Secretary of the Religious Order of Malta, because it was felt in certain circles, that selfish motives rather than injured family honor, were prompting him in his actions against Pompilia and her parents. So great was the scandal, and the avoidance of his friends so marked, that Paolo decided to leave Rome, and go to a place where the disgrace was not known.³

He first realized all the money he could upon his furniture and

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 200.

2. Ibid. p. 179; cf. p. 181 and p. 51.

3. Ibid. p. 26; cf. p. 122.

books, and made the Governor of Rome pay over to him the forty-seven scudi that was found upon Pompilia's person at Castelnuovo.

Soon after this, news of Pompilia arrived, stating that she had a son, whom she had named "Gastana, after the saint to whom she made her vows"; moreover, the baby had been sent out to nurse, to ensure its safety.¹

Guido, had meantime been living a morbid life; he would not go into exile, dreading the comments people might make upon his courage, which had not made itself very apparent at Castelnuovo, where he had called the law to aid him, instead of personally administering vengeance. He realized the gossip attached to his every movement, so made up his mind to ^{gain} at least gain some requital for all his trials; he decided that the Comparini and the sixteen year old wife must be killed, out of his way.²

Among the employees in his country home, Guido had "a daring and wicked laborer" (Alessandro Baldeschi), to whom he used to rave about the shame brought upon the family, by his wife and her parents. This man agreed that the Comparini and Guido's wife, merited severe vengeance. He promised to employ three other bold and trusty men at the lowest possible price, and ask them to assist in some deed of punishment. One of these, Francesco Pasquini Antonio, asked Guido if he did not intend to give his wife a beating, and Guido replied that she deserved more than a beating, she deserved death. In the evidence given later by these ruffians, it appears that Guido told them in the presence of the keeper of the vineyard, that his wife, father-in-law, and mother-in-law, all had to be killed, because they had "lent a hand to their daughter in her ill-doing", and had also wished to have him (i.e. Guido) killed.³

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 211; cf. pp. 176 - 177.

2. Ibid., p. 10; cf. p. 122.

3. Ibid., p. 51; also p. 211; c.f. p. 122.

The five plotters left Arezzo, and reached Rome on Christmas Eve.

In the Ponte Milvio, there was a villa left by the Abate Paolo, and Guido remained there in hiding nine days, awaiting a favorable opportunity to carry out his revenge. All the ways of the Comparini household were spied upon, and on the evening of January the second, sixteen ninety-eight, about seven o'clock, they approached the Comparini home.¹

Two men, Biagio Agostinelli and Domenico Gambassini, were left to watch the door, while Guido himself knocked at the door, calling out that he had a letter from Caponsacchi, from Civita Vecchia.

The moment the door was opened by Violante, she was struck down dead. Pompilia ran out to a neighboring locksmith, and gaining no help, returned, and crawled under the bed. She was dragged out, and twenty wounds inflicted upon her by her husband. Pietro Comparini had already been fatally wounded, and ^{was} crying out for confession. Guido dragged Pompilia over, and throw her across the feet of her father. One of the ruffians then lifted Pompilia by her hair, and let her fall again, so as to reassure Guido of her death.

The criminals succeeded in escaping, despite the uproar that ensued; Guido wanted to go off alone, but the others decided they must all keep together, and follow the same route. But, one man left a cloak behind, and Franceschini left his cap, and these led to their identification later. According to popular report, Pompilia implored the Holy Virgin to grant her time to confess herself, and as the request was allowed, she also lived long enough to tell her attendants, who the murderers were, and also that Guido had said, "Let us lose no time, but return to the vineyards." After the surgeon and confessor had been summoned, the police were soon put on Guido's track.²

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 51; also p. 211; cf. p. 122.

2. Ibid., pp. 211 - 212; cf. p. 51, also p. 11.

Captain Patrizi was sent to arrest the criminals; he found that they had left the vineyard for the highway. Later, he heard they had been unable to get horses, for Franceschini, by some oversight had neglected to obtain the necessary order, so that despite threats and explanations the journey had to be continued on foot to Baccano. There in the inn of Merluccia, Patrizi discovered them. Guido had in his possession one hundred and fifty scudi, and the daggers they carried were still stained with the blood of their victims. The captain of the police, Patrizi, received a scratch from one of the weapons, and being unduly heated after his long ride, died a few days after he had effected the criminals' arrest. An examination of the dagger used by Guido, showed it to be a Genoese style, which, being triangular in shape, left incurable lacerations in addition to the wound.¹

News of the arrest spread quickly, and a great crowd gathered; the criminals were tied on their horses and conducted to Rome. When Guido heard that his wife still lived, and had been able to testify against him, he seemed almost as if he were deprived of his senses.²

It appeared that while the two men previously mentioned had held the doors, Guido with the aid of Francesco Pasquini of Castello, and Alessandro Baldeschi of the same town, had committed the murders.³

The bodies of the unfortunate Comparini were placed on view in the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, and the populace were shocked at the wanton cruelty displayed by the murderers. Violante's features were so hacked, that they were absolutely indistinguishable.

Pompilia lingered a few days, her patience, resignation and faith,

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 212.
2. Ibid., p. 212; cf. p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 213.

under the terrible affliction, caused all who came near her to marvel. She begged God's forgiveness and pardon for Guido, and both priests and doctors who were in attendance upon her vowed that such a pure soul was bound to go to heaven, and that in both body and soul she was completely innocent.¹

Guido and his accomplices were questioned, and as they would not confess, torture was applied. One writer says, Baldeschi caused Spreti to have the case delayed, because though the cord was administered for torture twice, the former prisoner refused to confess despite the fact that he swooned under the treatment. Finally he made a confession, and revealed also, a plot made by his companions and himself to kill Franceschini and rob him of his money, because he had not paid them when they left Rome, as he ^{had} promised them before the crime.²

The Advocate and Procurator wrote such able defences that they have become memorable, but the features of the crime were so manifold, each separate one practically such as would incur the death penalty, that sentence was bound to be passed unfavorably. Guido was to die on the Mannaia, out of respect to his clerical orders, and the other four were to perish on the gallows.

Behold, on the morning of February the twenty-second, in the Piazza del Popolo, were revealed huge erections consisting of two great gallows and the mannaia. Many stands had been erected for the sightseers, and some seats were valued at six dollars apiece, so rare a sight was it felt to be, to see a nobleman in such a plight!³

In the prison, the news of the completion of the sentence had been announced at two o'clock in the morning. The prisoners had been placed in the

1. Hedell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 213; cf. p. 182; also pp. 45 - 48.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 335. *Note* 524 and 526; cf. *Gest Op. Cit.* pp. 97 - 98; also p. 166, p. 28; cf. p. 135; and p. 52; cf. p. 223.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 213; cf. pp. 223 - 224.

Consorteria, and two priests sent to them for confessional, the Abate Panciatichi and Cardinal Acciajoli; then at two o'clock p.m. the Brotherhood of Death arrived, and the condemned men knew that all hope of reprieve was gone.¹

Guido appeared stupefied, but yielded himself with composure to the inevitable. He threw himself into the arms of the Frati, with expressions of true contrition, stating that all he wished for now was "the mercy of God,"

His companions being of coarser fibre and of lower birth, did not yield at all patiently to their fate. Baldeschi, the eldest, seemed as if he were hardened by crime, while the youngest, Francesco, appeared stunned at the sentence. Domenico felt, as he had only held the door, he should be allowed to go free, and also claimed immunity from punishment because he was a minor. (This plea had been advanced on behalf of Francesco, whose birthday records made him not quite twenty-four, and the age limit for the full penalty was supposedly twenty-five.)

At last, however, "the Divine mercy entered their hearts," and they became penitent and sought for pardon.

Each criminal was placed in a separate cart, Guido being the last, and accompanied by the Brotherhood of Death, the procession started. Guido Franceschini fixed his gaze upon the crucifix, and when the cart stopped before the door of the Agonizzanti church, where Sacrament was offered to delinquents before execution, he knelt down, and audibly repeated parts of the *Miserere*. So penitent did he appear, that the audience ^{was} moved to tears of sympathy.

1. Modell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 213.

The four men also showed signs of devout sorrow, especially Biagio Agostinelli. They then proceeded to the Piazza del Popolo. Agostinelli was executed first, then Gambassini was the second, Pasquini was the third, Baldeschi fourth, and Franceschini the last. When the latter mounted the platform, he asked forgiveness for his sins and begged them to say "a Pater, an Ave, and Salve Regina," for him. The confessor then announced his reconciliation to his condition; and his neck was adjusted to the mannaia, and with "the name of Jesus upon his lips", he was beheaded.

At the time of his death, he was clad in a brown cloth coat, black shirt, a goatshair vest, a white hat, and a cotton cap. These were the clothes he had worn as a disguise when he came to Rome to perpetrate the crime. (He was dressed in these clothes when sketched).

After the execution, the people were shown Guido's head. The Pope reigning at this time was Innocent XII in the year 1698.¹

Thus ended the Franceschini story, according to the material afforded by the Source Book, with its additions the Secondary Source, and the Casanatense Manuscript.

But in order to get a better knowledge of Count Guido, one or two special circumstances may be yet quoted from The Old Yellow Book compilations.

The entire charge laid against, not only Guido but also the whole family, was the one of "Greed". Thus Bottini, in replying to the Anonymous Writer, who was striving to stir up sympathy for Guido, says in his defence, "This sad catastrophe did not proceed from injured honor, but from damnable greed." This can easily be seen, for he married Pompilia because, "it was taken for granted that after the death of her supposed parents, she would surely fall

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 213; cf. pp. 224 - 225.

hair to considerable property." Later, Bottini states, "the third suit is a criminal suit, which is still pending in the Tribunal of his Excellency the Governor, and is the pretended adultery; this suit was brought under the impulse of greed, in order to gain the entire dowry."¹

The marriage settlements, also, were drawn up in such a way that the Franceschini family controlled all the income of the Comparini, and these latter people were left penniless, while insults and abuses were heaped upon them, in order to cause their early deaths.²

Referring to the way Guido neglected to avenge his honor at Castelnuovo personally, Bottini says, "His very manner of pursuit, showed his mind had turned towards legal vengeance, for the purpose of winning the coveted dowry," more than recovering his honor by the vengeance of his own hand. Also, "We should rather assert he was waiting for his wife's confinement, which took place on December the eighteenth, in order that he might make safe the succession to the property, for which he was eagerly gaping, because he immediately put into effect, his depraved plan by destroying his wife and her parents with an awful murder. A comparison of dates will make this easy to see."

(Guido went home on October the twelfth, sixteen ninety-seven, and waited until January the second, sixteen ninety-eight.)³

Bottini also bade the same writer, to refrain from saying that the murders were committed to appease Guido's offended honor, "for much better foundation would have been in his pages, had he consulted the truth, namely, that these crimes had arisen from deluded self interest." Guido committed

1. Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 168 - 169.

2. Ibid., p. 170.

3. Ibid, Op. Cit., p. 151.

the crime because "his tricks were unmasked", and "the lucre vanished," and the lawsuits not settled.¹

The advocates for Pompilia, also, stress very much upon the insane jealousy of Guido, which hedged Pompilia in on every side. He went so far as to forbid her to show her face at the window, and in the Caponsacchi trouble, he offered to kill her with a pistol. Even Conti, a relative of Guido's by marriage, (his brother had married Guido's sister), was included in the list of possible admirers of Pompilia. Conti's death also occurred under rather suspicious circumstances, as he apparently knew too much of the Franceschini troubles for Guido's peace of mind.² Guillichini likewise was sentenced to the galleys for five years, another victim to Guido's rage and jealousy. His absolute knavery in the "Love Letters" seemed to have been fully suspected by Lamparelli, who says, "They were not acknowledged by Pompilia, nor was the identity of the handwriting proved," nor "would it be improbable that they might have been framed by the husband," for he was there when they were found, and he hoped thereby to fix the crime of adultery upon his wife.³

That Guido was capable of this, is proved by his forgeries concerning his income, which he made out for the Comparini's benefit. When his own brother, remonstrated with him upon making a statement that could so easily be proved false, Guido put the blame upon Violante, saying she bade him do this, "so as to make her husband agree to the marriage."⁴

With regard to the infliction of the torture, it seemed to be a universal opinion that a noble could not have the extreme torture of the "Vigil" administered. Spreti argues on this point, stating that Guido was protected

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 173.

2. Ibid., p. 177; cf. pp. 297 - 298; Notes 35 - 36, also pp. 8 - 9.

3. Ibid., p. 197.

4. Ibid., p. 117.

under the Constitution of Pope Paul V, who in his seventy-first rule says, "A crime must be very atrocious, and the accused must be burdened with the strongest proofs", before extreme torture can be ordered. But mere death, does not constitute the punishment for "an atrocious crime". This implies burning, mutilation, and such like as a penalty. Therefore, "such a death as ignominious and infamous, has no place with the persons of nobles."¹

Biagio Agostinelli also was not subjected to the Vigil torture as it was proved he only held the door while the crime was committed.²

The charges preferred against Guido, as shown by Cambi, General Procurator of the Fisc, were:-

- (1) The carrying of arms contrary to the Constitution of Alexander VIII,
- (2) Breaking into the sacred precincts of the home with murderous intent, and in disguise,
- (3) Lessa Majestas (i.e. criminal insult offered to the majesty of the prince, the law or authority. Guido had under this ruling been guilty of:-
 - (a) Assembling armed men (four being an assembly,)
 - (b) Murdering a prisoner who was under the charge of the State,
 - (c) Had apparently murdered (Pietro) through anger over a lawsuit.³

The announcement made by Antonio Lamparelli, Procurator of Charity, in the Court presided over by Antonius Benturinus, is the best refutation of all Guido's charges made against his wife, in his defence of his guilt and crimes:-
"Proof is not established as regards the pretended adultery, and therefore, the memory of the same Francesca (Pompilia) should be and is entirely restored

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 28; cf. p. 105.

2. Ibid., p. 127; cf. p. 114.

3. Ibid., pp. 53 - 55.

to her pristine reputation."¹

Before leaving the records of The Old Yellow Book, it would be interesting to note the remarks made concerning the rest of the Franceschini family, who certainly were no help to either Guido or Pompilia, in their problems. The mother, Donna Beatrice Franceschini, is not shown in a favorable light, in any part of the plot. According to the testimony of the servant, no warmth or comfort was allowed, to any of the Comparini, eavesdropping was considered quite justifiable, and shutting out Pietro, providing poor meals, watering the wine, guarding the disbursement of the food, all such petty and ignoble devices, seemed the ordinary course pursued by the lady of the house.² In the Casanatense pamphlet she is recorded as being, "A proud, avaricious woman who governed the household despotically, and took to stinting even in the necessary food."³

The Canon Girolamo, the middle brother, also makes a very contemptible character, from the history provided in the records. On one visit to the Bishop Pompilia says, he offered her poison;⁴ and it appears almost certain that he had made dishonorable proposals to his sister-in-law. This testimony was found in one of the forged letters, where Pompilia is represented as saying such a thing "that she had been dishonorablely solicited by Girolamo", was untrue.⁵

The Abate Paolo, seems to have played a prominent part in all these affairs. He is distinctly represented in one document as aiding Guido

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1. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 204.
 2. Ibid., pp. 38 - 39; pp. 40 - 42.
 3. Ibid., p. 319.
 4. Ibid., p. 10.
 5. Ibid., p. 44 (Part of forged letter).

in gaining over Violante to agree to the marriage.¹

It was Paolo who tried to get all the charges settled by the order of the Pope, probably anxious to gain the money concerned in the dowry, but the Pope left the matter entirely "with the judges".²

He it was who, to the sure knowledge of Judge Venturini and Monsignor the Most Illustrious Governor, agreed that Pompilia be transferred to the Comparini home, from the Scalette Nunnery, and that the husband should not pay for his wife's upkeep.³

Spreti depicts the Abate as in extreme plight; he felt the ridicule of all men directed towards his family, and often burst into tears; he even contemplated throwing himself into the river, so heavy was the disgrace attached to the Guido Franceschini affairs. Spreti says. "He decided at last to abandon Rome, the Court, his hopes and possessions, his affectionate and powerful patrons, and whatever property he had accumulated during thirty years in the same city." and "went to a strange and to an unknown clime."⁴

But in the Response to the Anonymous letter, the Abate is shown taking care to get the money found upon Pompilia at Castelnuovo, before he left Rome (forty-eight scudi), and "for which he had clamored continually." The same writer says, if the truth about the Abate were told, he would be discovered as the founder of all the scandals. It was he who urged Guido on to the murders, since he, "by dint of industry and trickiness" arranged the marriage. "It was he, who was very sensible of having been proved to be the man of guile,

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 169.
2. Ibid, p. 121.
3. Ibid, p. 175.
4. Ibid, pp. 121-122.

who had been deluded by his own trick." Also "he rests convicted of this, because the said Abate Paolo was the manipulator of all they did, nor was a straw moved without his assistance." As soon as he had received the money, "he left Rome, to take part in the planning of that notorious murder which followed a little later."¹

Thus, the Book gives Guido's history, with the background of sordid greed and tragedy behind him. What then has Browning done to make the world interested, in the twentieth century, in this sinister and evil character?

The author has treated him as he has all the other characters in the sordid story; he has done even as Elisha did to the widow's son,² breathed upon the dead characters, mouth to mouth, eye to eye, until they live in the flesh again; and they play their parts for the modern world to see and criticise. The cunning, low, intriguing Guido has had his cruelty raised to the highest degree, because Browning has "fused the inert" mass, with the full tale of human degradation.³

The poet forces himself to look upon the lowest specimens of humanity, and Guido, besides being Browning's "ideal villain" is probably the worst villain in literature; but despite the villainy, Browning has such faith and optimism in God's scheme of things, that he feels assured a chance will be given to Guido and his type, to fight a way back to better things. He, himself, believed in fighting for advancement spiritually, and "Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better."⁴

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1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 176 - 177.
 2. The Poetical Works of Robert Browning. The Ring and the Book. In two volumes, Vol. II, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, 1902. (All rights reserved). Bk. I, ll. 760 - 771.
 3. Ibid, Bk. I, ll. 469 - 470.
 4. Epilogue to Asolando, Robert Browning, l. 12.

The material that the poet had provided, and from which he created his Guido, was very meagre. A modern writer says very truly, that the Source Book is taken up with the trials, which are to prove Guido guilty of murder, and every argument is about him.¹ But, he only leaves one written document behind him to prove his actual interest in the case, and that is an order, which makes his brother the Abate Paolo Franceschini, his attorney in all the lawsuits and matters referring to his wife Francesca Pompilia. There is no deposition left giving Guido's statements of his case; whether the suppression was made in consideration of the rest of the family, or whether Gencini, the Florentine attorney who collected the papers, could not secure them, is not known, but the Source Book has no such records.

A sketch of Guido was in Browning's possession, and this shows the prisoner in the clothes he wore when disguised ready for the murder. The sketch is dated February 22nd, 1698.² There is no doubt, this must have helped Browning to visualize the description given in the Source Book, for he is described as:- "A beak-nosed, bushy-bearded, black-haired lord, lean, pallid, low of stature, yet robust," and again, "Little, long-nosed, bush-bearded, lantern-jawed." (The picture was sent to Browning from a friend in England, who bought it with other papers at a sale.)³

Frances Russell says, speaking of the sketch, "If behind that dull stupid countenance there did lurk a brain, capable of cajoling judges and bribing priests, of confessing to a strain of the sentimental cavalier, of hatching an elaborate scheme for getting rid of his wife, and keeping her dowry, and of executing this plan with adroit skill and patience, of justifying his course by the sanction of a well-formulated social and moral philosophy, then, one might indeed ask, 'What's in a face?'"⁴

1. One Word More on Browning, Frances I. Russell, Op. Cit., pp. 116 - 117.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 299, Note 47.

3. Ibid, p. 298; Note 45; cf. Ring and the Book, Bk. I, ll. 780 - 783; also Bk. IV, ll. 718 - 719.

4. One Word More on Browning, Frances T. Russell, p. 117.

Browning also received a copy of the Franceschini coat-of-arms. This was a water-color sketch, made by the poet's friend Seymour Kirkup, an artist. (These facts are written by the artist on the picture. Memoranda also on the sketch, probably states from whence the copy was obtained.) The arms represent a greyhound tied to a tree, straining at a leash, and Browning makes this attitude typical of the Franceschini greed.¹

In the second trial, the poet makes Guido say,

"We turned the furze a tree
To show more, and the greyhound tied thereto
Straining to start, means swift and greedy both."

In the final book of Browning's, someone is speaking of the babe not knowing whether it died, or lived to be,

"A true scion of the stock
Which bore the blazon shall make bright my page,-
Shield, Azure on a Triple Mountain, Or
A Palm-tree, Proper whereunto is tied
A Greyhound, Rampant, striving in the slips!"²

Browning draws upon his imagination, and depicts Guido, the most skilfully of all his gallery of bad men. His conjectures and questionings connected with Guido were many: Why should this man, a type unfortunately of many others, be allowed to exist and carry out his terrible plans? Why should God, the "All-loving Father", let monsters like these live and contrive so much evil?³

He feels personally there must be some state or condition where, with God's help, such a sinner must be able to unmake and remake his soul, or God's work would be vain: Men, even at their worst, contain the germ of spiritual dignity, and despite their hostility to its development, they are

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 299, Note 47; cf. Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 2161-2166.

2. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XII, ll. 822 - 824.

3. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 247.

bound to listen to it some time.¹

"Art may become a direct means of inculcating truth," and so the artist includes men like Guido, in the same gallery as Caponeacchi, because all human lives are interesting, and all knowledge of a man's heart gives sympathy for mankind.

Guido seems to have arranged his whole life, in one desperate struggle against his Maker and righteousness. Conventionally, the poet shows him possessing all that Society requires from her aspirants, but morally, he is barren and corrupt; "We pronounce Count Guido devilish and damnable," says the poet.² His noble birth he uses as a marketable commodity to purchase ease and lucre. His period of service in the church, is to afford him help when he is in danger of his life. His advocate says,

"My client boasts the clerkly privilege,
Has taken minor orders many enough,
Shows still sufficient chrism upon his pate
To neutralize a blood stain."

Guido's orders did not prevent him from marrying, but are sufficient to let him "slip from underneath your power, the temporal," and slide inside the Church's robe.³

Guido's actions in the poem prove that tribulation did not refine him. He is a very wolf in sheep's clothing, and directly the Comparini's daughter, and money, are in his power, he shows his fangs and bites. Thus says Browning,

"At Guido's wolf face whence the sheepskin fell,
The frightened couple, all bewildered,
Rushed to the Governor, - who else rights wrong?"⁴

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1. Robert Browning as a Religious Teacher, A. C. Pigen, B.A., Scholar of King's College. The Burney Essay for 1900; London, C.J. Clay & Sons, Cambridge University Press Warehouse. Ave Maria Lane, 1901, pp. 106 - 107.
 2. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. I, ll. 246 - 247.
 3. Ibid, Bk. I, ll. 259-268.
 4. Ibid, Bk. III, ll. 989 - 994.

His wife's meekness and innocence seem to goad him still further into brutal acts of resentment and spite. He tells his listeners when revealing his soul at the last hearing in Court, he resented, "The thirteen years' old child, with milk for blood", who looked at him with "amazed look, all one insuppressive prayer". When he tried to embrace her, he felt "the neck writhe", the hand go "rigid stark." Why because being old should he "miss the daisied mile", and "all the red froth of life's cup"?¹

Browning's Guido is a man of intellect, a man of self control at first. He has an intellectual activity like Milton's Satan, which shows him the path into deeper sins. The clergy of the sixteenth century were corrupt and base, and Browning makes Guido able to use the same wily sophisms, the intrigue, artifice and cunning, then in vogue, so that his black seems white, and right seems wrong, as he unfolds his thoughts before the reader, in his own language and style. Every phase displayed by Guido in his downward course, and in his sophistry makes more apparent to the reader the moral insight of the poet, and shows how every instinct is in revolt against Guido's cowardice, Browning is trying to show what the aims and ideals of a really bad man are, to show the spiritual Guido as he exists to himself.²

The Guido of Browning, unlike the man in the Source Book, shows evidence of literary training; he also is quite conversant with every day topics; the easy way the Tuscan nobles did as they pleased; (while he "is trapped, because he played some prank his grandaie played;") he knows what Opera is being played; he can forecaste the papal election, and sneer over the Molinists.³

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1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 964 - 1110.
 2. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 276.
 3. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 103 - 115.

At his first hearing, according to the poem, Guido is meek and is duly grateful to be allowed to sit and have wine. He deplores his poverty, and shows himself disappointed by Dame Fortune all his days. He flatters his judges, quotes his Bible, shows he is no worse than most of their circle in Rome. He whines (now and again using biting sarcasm,) and admits the murders, but puts up all kinds of justifications. His marriage he knows was a commercial bargain, but had it been with a lady of rank, he might have been able to have found his heart in response but,

"Pompilia was no pigeon, Venus' pet,
That shuffled from between her pressing paps
To sit on my rough shoulder, - but a hawk,
I bought at hawk's price and carried home
To do hawk's service,
.
And should she prove a haggard, - twist her neck!"¹

True, he made her write to his brother but it was only to show her, her duty:

"Forced her to take the right step, I myself
Was marching in marital rectitude!"²

As regards holding back at Castelnuovo, he was no doubt slack, but he had always been reared in a belief which revered law and religion, and he found he could not break this feeling. But he has been outmated and is beaten.

"Let me, a man, manfully meet the fact,
Confront the worst of the truth, end, and have peace!"³

Pathetically he describes the way the news reached him of his son's birth, just as he had decided that there were no sons of the Franceschini to carry on the name! His paternal feelings were all outraged, should he let it live? No, he still would fight, - and he asks "Quis pro Domino?"⁴

The response came from his rustic servants, they accompanied him to

1. The King and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. V, ll. 701 - 710.
2. Ibid., Bk. V, ll. 858 - 859.
3. Ibid., Bk. V, ll. 1391 - 1393.
4. Ibid., Bk. V, ll. 1463 - 1549.

Rome, and stayed with him during the nine days of inactivity there.

In the Source Book it is merely told, that the nine days were spent in watching¹ the Comparini household and finding out its ways, but Browning's Guido has other wires to pull, so he says:-

"I was at Rome on Christmas Eve,
Festive balls - everywhere the Feast o' the Babe,
Joy upon earth, peace and goodwill to man!
.....
Nine days o' the Birth-feast did I pause and pray
To enter into no temptation more.
.....
I stopped my ears even to the inner call
Of the dread duty, only heard the song
"Peace upon earth", saw nothing but the face
O' the Holy Infant and the halo there
Able to cover yet another face
Behind it, Satan's which I else should see."²

At last he determined to test his wife, by using the name of Caponsacchi, he did so, with the fearful results which they all know. Had Pompilia opened the door, "the tender thing who once was good and pure, was once my lamb and lay in my bosom", all crime might have been avoided; but it was "the hag", "the mock mother" who came, and carried away by fury and impulse of passion, he "abolished the detested life." Now, he is regardless of life, see how he neglected the pass for the horses, he was even sleeping when arrested, like a child, because his mind was at rest! He could have let the men commit the murder, or, he might have used a dose of "acquetta" and hidden his homicides. Seeing all these things, the judges can only follow one course, - free him, and let him live for now:- Health is returned, and sanity of soul", and instinct bids him save his life, for "there's the mother's age to help", - "the fugitive brother", to be bidden back, "the spirit-broken youth at home", and "last best gift, - my son again, - I take

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 211.

2. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. V, ll. 1581 - 1612.

him at your word". All these lives are dependent on the repentant, saddened Guido:¹

And now, we come indeed to Browning's Guido, for in the second book, Browning makes his villain portray his whole soul in its full downward course. There is no warrant for this in the Source Book, it shows the way that Browning, who has always been interested in criminal cases, thinks a psychological view of a bad man's motives would appear in the ordinary course of development.

This time, Guido is not suave or meek, he is in a fetid cell, vapor drops off the wall as it condenses, and a miserable lamp is there to give light to the gloom, on account of the presence of the two priests, or darkness would prevail. The priests are represented by the poet, as cowering over the Crucifix in silent horror, at the enraged and blasphemous Guido, who realises all his sham penitence and mock meekness have failed, and he has to undergo the penalty for his crime. He jibes and taunts at the priests, reminds them of their lineage, which he claims is no better than his own; then he assures the Abate he never will be Pope, that the hacking cough he has will kill him in a year, and finishes by assuring them both, that they will be rushed with the crowd when times change and "end in foam."

Then he pleads to them, wants them to contradict the statement that he, a Franceschini, is condemned. It is nonsense to say he has to die at sunset: Probably they are telling him this for a trick; "All honest Rome approved" his part, surely his last plea which he "hooked on to the Clergy's revealing his tonsure", must save him! How dare the Pope condemn him, he who is the Shepherd of the flock, who knows Christ's order is, "One soul outweighs

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. V, ll. 1619 - 2058.

the world". Then instead of "abrogating, nullifying, disallowing and ignoring", to the detriment of Guido, let him save Guido's soul.

He had always believed in Law, and the law had given the Pope the chance to save him but lo! he flings the chance aside, and orders the sacrifice of Guido as a warning that Law must be upheld.¹

Then the Mannaia, have they ever seen how it grips into the soft part of the neck,

"The blade cleaves it best,
Out trundles body, down flops head on the floor!"

"It is all very well to lose your ring, tablets, kerchief, but, your head."²

There is no need of repentance on his part, he has to pay the penalty, he the wolf who is to be "thrust down and down to where hell gapes", he may as well drop his sheepskin garb, and show his teeth. It is not his fault he led such a life, the very church he joined forced him to deceit, and bade him "wear sheep's wool,

"Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide the noise
By mimicry of something like a bleat!"³

There is only one form of repentance he feels, and that is on account of his incompetence in being caught. But who would have thought that in trying to get his horses to fly to Tuscany, he would have had to deal "With the one scrupulous fellow in all Rome", who stared, and refused to be bribed or threatened!⁴

They need not offer him the crucifix, his heart is petrified, they are petrified too, or they would help him to escape this chain of evil that has caught him in its mesh. He is impenitent, and impenitence should not be slain, he is wronged, he never meant to do big wrongs, but an overwhelming

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 1 - 1237.

2. Ibid., Bk. XI, ll. 127 - 221.

3. Ibid., Bk. XI, ll. 821 - 826.

4. Ibid., Bk. XI, ll. 1633 - 1648.

number of small deeds have suddenly arisen in one great array, to "send his soul straight to perdition", to die an atheist:¹

Suppose he had wronged his wife, suppose she was innocent, and all he thought, but circumstantial evidence such as he had seen in the plays, even then he had need of pity, not scorn, for it would need the "eye of God" to look through to the heart, and know the truth.

Yes, that reminds him, he will presently be under the eye of God, what can he say to Him? If he keeps his presence of mind enough to be able to speak, he will say:-

"Do Thou wipe out the being of me, and smear
This soul from off Thy white of things, I blot!
I am one huge and sheer mistake, - whose fault?
Not mine at least, who did not make myself!"²

His sum total of wrong was, he took a wrong turn when he married. He was no worse than other men in society; no finger was ever crooked at him before; everything about his wife was wrong. She was "a nullity in female shape", her "stone strength of grim despair", just goaded him on all the time. Even in her dying, she injured him by living long enough to tell her story, for he meant to have told the world that he had caught her in Caponsacchi's arms, and that the priest had slipped away in the darkness.³

Browning's final scene ends in a frenzied note, the wretched man vows he cannot "unhate his hates", if the chances came he would again kill Pietro and trample on Violante, he "lived and died a man", and "right will be done to such."⁴

But when the Brotherhood of Death approaches, he begs them to leave him alone, all he has said is untrue, chain him down as much as they like, but

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 2281 - 2289.
2. Ibid, Bk. XI, ll. 934 - 940.
3. Ibid, Bk. XI, ll. 1288 - 1733.

let him live, he does not want to die! Then comes Browning's psychological moment, for in his despair, the abandoned wretch calls upon the State, the Church, God, and finally, upon his wife Pompilia, for protection,

"Abate, - Cardinal, - Christ, - Maria, - God . . .
Pompilia will you let them murder me?"¹

Then Browning leaves his reader to solve the problem, had the good triumphed over evil at the last moment?

Probably the way Browning has allowed the Pope to sum up Guido's character, is one of the best examples in the book, of his power as a creator. There is absolutely no basis for the Pope's interference as regards the Sources Book facts. The Pope refused the Abate a special sitting, and his signature was found on the death warrant, but that was all he had to do with the case historically. The Pope is depicted sitting in his gloomy cell at the end of a day in February, trying to solve the problem of Guido's guilt or otherwise. He has been referring to all the actions of his predecessor, but at last decides he will do what his conscience directs. If he errs, then later he "will face Guido's ghost nor blench a jot", for he is only human and so "ignorance is his sorrow, not his sin."

Reviewing Guido as the evidence shows him, he finds he has a sound body, a solid intellect, great birth, a traditional name, culture, and "conversancy with the faith". He had got enough orders in the church to shield him when needed, "God his arm frocked which, bare, the law would bruise;" he is of all men "religion's parasite."

He shows an outside covering of veneer, hoping thereby to deceive the world, but, at every opportunity he drops the mask; he sheds his nobility, his culture and his faith, and, "Plays the trickster, if not cut purse".

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 2414 - 2427.

and dips into all the world's filth.

"One black mark impinges the man,
That he believes in just the vile of life".¹

Even in his marriage, he had not one natural instinct that a man should have,
not the "mere liking of the eye", the "true longing of the heart",

"All is the lust for money; to get gold, -
Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder!"²

So to get these he married, took Pompilia as his wife "with all
these lies so opposite God's truth", on his lips.

Then, when he found the Comparini his equal in deceit, "when he
finds none may boast monopoly of lies and tricks", he resolves to dishonor his
wife, by thrusting her into sin, and so set free the gold he longs to obtain.
(This idea is Browning's own creation.)

But Pompilia's innocence and purity conquer, she will die, but not
in sin, and the Pope reflects,

"O God,
Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest, from Thy hand?"

Then, by intrigue, and forged love letters, and a vile messenger,
priest and wife are put into terrible temptation, for:-

"There is passion in the place
Power in the air for evil as well as good",

but the plot is foiled by "God's gift of a parity of soul that will not take
pollution," and the place of temptation,

"No lamp will mark that window for a shrine,
No tablet signalize the terrace, teach
New generations which succeed the old
The pavement of the street is holy ground."³

Guido has a second chance "to go softly all his days", when

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. X, ll. 1 - 512.
2. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 540 - 543.
3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 641 - 670.

Fompilia has been placed in safety; but he spurns it, and with "Craft, greed and violence complets revenge", determining this time to "Crush the tree, branch and trunk and root, besides."¹

When the child is born, he cries, "Soul at last the mine is thine". The three he hates so actively can be killed, and through the babe he will inherit everything, and why not, for he represents the child who has "the gold in his curls."²

But after carrying out the murder, "One touch of fool in Guido the Astute!" spoiled all, and he is captured, because he lacked horses. The Pope reflects,-had Guido but known it, probably this was the hand of God sent to protect him from death by the hands of the robbers.

"Such I find Guido," says the Pope, "midmost blotch of black
Discernible in this group of clustered crimes
Huddling together in the cave they call
Their palace outraged day thus penetrates."³

In reading Hodell's remarks in his chapter, "The Making of a Great Poem", at the end of the Source Book, it is clearly seen that Browning really meant to keep strictly to details only given by actual facts. But there is no doubt his "Fancy" has outleaped the "gold", the alloy has made itself a permanent place in the poem, impossible to overlook. This is no doubt due to the artist in Browning, and his love for creating his psychological problems in all their highest and most ultimate capacity.

Frances Russell points out most distinctly and cuttingly, a few of the points evaded which would spoil Browning's pictures of "the ideal villain", "the ideal hero", and "the ideal saint". Chief among these, the author says,

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. X, ll. 715 - 737.
2. Ibid, Bk. X, ll. 752 - 774.
3. Ibid, Bk. X, ll. 868 - 872.

may be mentioned - the ignoring of the list of clothes and jewellery Pompilia was supposed to take away with her; the fact that Pompilia hid under the bed;¹ that she died in the Comparini house in the Via Vittoria, where she had lived as a little girl. (Browning makes the scene of her death in a hospital nearby, that of Saint Anna, but the death is entered in the records accurately, of the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina.)²

Then the letter writing has always been more or less of a mystery. Pompilia declared on oath that she could not write in May 1697. Later, she seems to have been able to write at Castelnuovo to her parents on May 3rd, 1697.

The lawyers who were against Guido, avoided any serious argument about this, they merely contented themselves by stating the letters had not been proved to be in her handwriting, that she had refused to acknowledge them as hers, that if she did write them that did not imply she was guilty of adultery. The letter to Paolo, they denounced either as a forgery or written under compulsion. Lamparelli did suggest that probably Guido wrote the love letters to gain his ends.³

The way that Guido met his death as related in the Source Book, is quite different from Browning's poem. Guido died in a dignified fashion according to the facts, but Browning's Guido died a raving, frenzied, cowardly brute, who may have just been saved at the last moment, even as the dying thief on the cross, by using Pompilia's intercession and mercy to aid him.⁴

Browning states that Guido claimed divorce, but events do not warrant this.

The apparent discrepancy in the time that Pompilia and Capensacchi arrived at the inn in Castelnuovo is given a very easy theory by Browning.

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1. One Word More on Browning, Frances T. Russell, Op. Cit., pp. 114 - 115.
 2. The Country of the "Ring and the Book", Treves, Op. Cit., p. 76.
 3. A Commentary upon Browning's The Ring and the Book, A. K. Cook, Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, New York, Toronto, Melbourne, Cape Town, Bombay, 1920, pp. 285 - 289.
 4. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 223 - 224; cf. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XI, ll. 2413 - 2427.

Pompilia says they arrived at dawn, Caponsacchi says they arrived in the evening. The poem says, Caponsacchi paced the corridor all night; but according to one of the depositions Caponsacchi slept and was not aroused until Guido came, and found ^{Pompilia} ~~Pompilia~~ with him ⁱⁿ the same room.¹

The Cardinals Acciajuoli and Panciatichi, who spent the last hours with Guido in his cell, are shown by the poet as trembling and hiding their faces, appalled by Guido's terrible blasphemy. But in the documents, Guido is quiet, self controlled and contritious. Both these men, moreover, are capable well cultured men, who would not shrink from any criminal however depraved. Panciatichi had a relative who was confirmed in his office, as secretary, by Innocent XII upon his promotion to the pontificate. Guido says the family is a new one, but they were in their palace in 1300, and history reports that Napoleon lodged there in 1796. The Acciajuoli family also were descendants of a line of ancestors who had held dukedoms in Athens in the fifteenth century, they were of Florentine origin.²

In the poem, Guido fictionizes pathetically about his father, who he claims came of very ancient lineage and who was a glorious spendthrift. Consequently, to make up for this, his descendants were very penurious as to income and habits. But this is decidedly contradicted in the Source Book, where it distinctly says the family were of secondary rank and notoriously poor.³ An error has been perpetrated too, about the age of Guido, he states himself as fifty, while records in his native birthplace make him forty-one at his death, and at the time of marriage, four years earlier, thirty-seven.⁴

Guido is supposed in the poem to state that "the Pope will die next

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 73; cf. p. 75.

2. A Commentary upon The Ring and the Book, H.K. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 238. Notes, 2 and 3.

3. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 298. Note 36, cf. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. V, ll. 140 - 234.

4. Ibid., p. 298, Note 34.

year", when he is sneering at the Cardinals' thoughts of probably being in the conclave for the Papacy. This, however, is not true, for the Pope lived until September 27th, 1700, and Guido was predicting in February 1698.¹

Another anachronism is made by the poet, when Guido says he saw Albano's masterpiece, which was supposed to have just been painted at the time the mannaia was first seen by Guido; but Albano died in 1660, and according to statistics and records Guido then could only have been two years old, having been born in 1658. Attention has also been drawn to the great alteration Browning has made in the ages of the brothers. He makes Guido the eldest, and Canon Girolamo the younger. But the Abate Paolo was the eldest and Guido himself the youngest.²

Browning suggests that Cardinal Neri is the one who helped Guido in arranging the marriage, but according to the records, it was Cardinal Lauria, Paolo's patron who did this, and his death occurred soon after the marriage.³

It would be easy to continue pointing out these small matters wherein Browning has felt fit to change the facts to suit his fancy. Equally abundant would be the cases if the true knowledge of the poet in regard to the current history and methods in Italian territory were pointed out. Paintings, ecclesiastical history, civil history, law, anatomy, archaeology, literature have been used, in order to make his characters live, and with Guido as his mouthpiece, who as a cleric and noble was supposedly cultured, the information is simply continuous, vivid and of historical value in its portrayal of the times.

It must be left as Browning meant it to be, for the reader to weigh the facts and fancy, in order to see how much the "fused life" has made living,

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1. The History of the Pope (during the last four centuries), Leopold Van Ranke, (Mrs. Foster's translation revised in accordance with the latest German edition by G. R. Dennis. Vol. III, London, Geo. Bell & Sons, 1908, Section VI Report 153.
 2. A Commentary upon Browning's The Ring and the Book, A. K. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 240, Note. 272.
 3. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 218.

"the inert stuff" of the old Concini documents, and to wrench truth from the story, which he had placed ready for their search.

CHAPTER II

CAPONSAACCHI - THE IDEAL HERO

"In thought, word and deed,
How throughout all thy warfare thou wast pure,
I find it easy to believe." (Bk. X, ll. 1169 - 1171).

Caponsacchi as shown in the annals of The Old Yellow Book presents no very attractive personality to the reader. He is apparently strongminded enough, once he has decided it is right, to defy conventions in order to save the little wife of Guido; but the duty was performed in a cold perfunctory way as an uncongenial yet inevitable task.

From the records of the Pieve of Arezzo one finds that Guiseppe Maria Caponsacchi was born March 26th, 1673, and was invested as Canon November 26th, 1693. On May 15th, 1702, of his own accord, he resigned his position.

The family is all but extinct, but some rumor is still preserved in its legends, concerning a priestly ancestor who ran off with a woman. The family are of excellent birth and noble rank.¹

When giving his deposition in Court (after the murders had been committed by Guido) Caponsacchi says most emphatically, "I have no profession, but am a Canon of the Pieve of Santa Maria of Arezzo, and am merely an archdeacon."²

In a letter written to her parents after the flight, Pompilia tells them she fled with a gentleman unknown to them, but who was a great friend of Guido's relative Guillichini. The latter was sick and unable to accompany her and says she; - "My life was not worth an hour's purchase, for Guido my husband had certain suspicions which were not true, and on account of these

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 297; Notes 26 and 27.

2. Ibid., p. 73.

he wished to murder me;" hence she fled with Caponsacchi.¹

When the matter got into the Courts dispute occurred between the opposite lawyers. Those on behalf of the guilty husband tried to insinuate that many communications occurred between Pompilia and the priest at this time; and the forged love letters were shown as witnesses of improper conduct and a base love. They were made to play an important part in the so-called correspondence.

Many proofs were given of Guido's insane jealousy at this time, among them that Pompilia was forbidden to show her face at the window. As Caponsacchi passed in the street below and stayed to talk to the "hussies", Guido decided Pompilia must be attracting his notice, and muttered threats of vengeance on every side. Indeed, after the theatre episode when Conti had thrown the confetti into her lap, Pompilia was so frightened that she managed to speak to Caponsacchi, and asked him to avoid the street altogether.

Very sternly but decisively the Canon refused this request, and matters grew worse within the Franceschini palace. At last, in desperation, Pompilia waited until her husband was away and then begged Caponsacchi to take her to Rome, as she had heard he was going there. She told him, "It was his duty as a Christian to help free a poor foreign woman."²

The priest told her that he did not wish to meddle at all in the affair, because his friends in the city would think ill of such a deed, knowing he was friendly to the house.³ Pompilia states that she finally induced him to allow her to accompany him, and it was arranged that a handkerchief should be dropped as a signal that Caponsacchi had a carriage ready. Again delay ensued and the priest pretended that he was unable to procure a conveyance.

1. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 127.

2. Ibid., p. 71.

3. Ibid., p. 71, cp. pp. 172 and 173.

Finally, the last Sunday of the month arrived (April 30th), and the handkerchief was dropped. Pompilia waited until Guido was asleep, and then she procured a few of her own belongings in the shape of clothes and took some money from the strong box. Charge was made against Pompilia by Spreti, that she had robbed Guido of much jewellery and clothing, but Pompilia asserted that the things she took, apart from the money were hers. Evidently the list which was examined at Castelnovo agrees with this statement.¹

The carriage conveyed the two people, with extreme haste, towards Rome. No stop of any duration was made until Castelnovo was reached, and here they were overtaken by Guido, and handed over to the Governor of the city.²

Pompilia in her narrative says that before throwing herself upon Caponsacchi's mercy she begged the aid of the Governor, the Bishop, and finally that of an Augustinian friar. The latter told her to write to her parents, and when she definitely assured him that she could not write, he promised to do it for her, but no result ensued.³

In Caponsacchi's deposition concerning the same events, he tells that a letter was brought to him by a certain Maria, a servant belonging to the Franceschini. In this letter, Pompilia asks him to take her to her parents who were in Rome, as her life was not safe with her husband, and she had no one to help her. Caponsacchi says that he sent a reply by the same maid, expressing his reluctance to run any such risk.⁴

Later on, requests were flung out of the window of the house as he passed by, imploring him to change his mind. One of these notes, it was reported, had been picked up by a woman and carried to Guido, and the latter

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 71 - 72.
2. Ibid., p. 72, also p. 75.
3. Ibid., p. 71.
4. Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

had threatened to kill Pompilia and also Caponsacchi. To end the matter, and to "free himself from every difficulty, and to save the said Francesca Pompilia from death" he sent a note to the house.

In the note, he stated that he would take her with him to Rome as she desired, in order to save her from death. He received a note in reply accepting his offer, because Guido still threatened her life.¹

On the evening of April 28th, they hired a carriage belonging to Agostino, the owner of a tavern in Arezzo. They left the city at the San Clemente gate, and drove towards Perugia. Castelnuovo was reached on Tuesday evening, the last day of April.

Francesca Pompilia said she was suffering and could not pursue the journey without some rest, "she cast herself clothed on a bed, and I also rested, clothed, on another bed in the same chamber,"² says Caponsacchi,

Caponsacchi had told the host to call them at three or four the same morning. He failed to do so, and the husband of Francesca arrived, had them arrested by the authorities, and later taken to Rome.³

In summing up evidence, Bettini the counsel, who was trying to prove Guido guilty, says a witness asserted "presumptively," that a room with only one bed was ordered by Caponsacchi. The latter states that he did not ask for more than one bed, as he meant to keep guard while Pompilia rested. The Advocate also says, Pompilia was obliged to rest in order "to refresh her strength which had been exhausted by the swift journey they had made."⁴ He further claimed that Pompilia avoided saying they had made a long stay at the inn, when she was cross examined, because of her modesty, and the lie would not

1. Nodell, Op. Cit., p. 74.

2. Ibid., p. 75.

3. Ibid., p. 75.

4. Ibid., p. 199.

affect her honor.¹

Guido's jealousy was fully testified to, in the evidence given both by Pompilia and Caponsacchi, and, owing to the failing strength of the former, Castelnuovo formed the background for many striking incidents, such as the alleged sword drawing, the finding of the supposed love letters and stolen treasures, as well as the scene of the actual adultery.

The Advocate strongly denied any adultery on the part of Pompilia, and asserted emphatically, "the Canon gave his aid only out of pity and Pompilia's honor was kept entirely untouched."²

Even the driver of the carriage, Borsi Venerino, defined as the "third accused", was charged with aiding the culprits in their wrong doing.³

Guido's advocates, Archangeli and Spreti, tried to prove clandestine visits from Caponsacchi to Pompilia whilst in Arezzo, but these charges all fell before the decided opposition of their opponents. One witness actually testified that as the Ave Maria sounded she saw the door of the Franceschini open, and Caponsacchi came out, and that Pompilia who had a light in her hand afterwards fastened the door.⁴ Another charge with reference to this was supposed to be in letter number eleven where Pompilia was supposed to have suggested to Caponsacchi, that it would be better to use the back door in preference to the front.⁵

Bottini, the Advocate for Pompilia, undertook the entire denial of all these matters, including the kissing during the journey, the clandestine meetings, the alleged letters, and adultery at Castelnuovo. The kissing

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 199.

2. Ibid., p. 61.

3. Ibid., p. 7.

4. Ibid., p. 11, of p. 93.

5. Ibid., p. 61.

could not have been witnessed even if it had occurred, as Venerino was driving so quickly that he seemed to fly. That Caponsacchi called upon Pompilia for a sinister purpose could easily be refuted, for there was only one witness to prove this, and she was a public harlot.¹

That Caponsacchi really went to aid Pompilia in her need could be asserted by Guillichini, a relative of the house, who stated, "no ill could come of it because there was not the slightest sin between them." Even the brother who lived in the same house admitted he "knew nothing of the talk of any intimacy existing", between the two.²

With reference to the letters, Bottini said that if they were written by Pompilia, (and seeing she could not write this seemed impossible), they must have been written with a pretence of love, to coax Caponsacchi to take her to Rome. Pompilia herself denied her ability to write; Caponsacchi says he received the letters, but had no knowledge as to the writer.

Guido charged Pompilia with administering a drug to the household with Caponsacchi's knowledge, in order to be able to escape. The Advocate said even if it were so, this only proved flight and not the more serious charge of adultery.³

On one point there was conflict. Caponsacchi said that they reached Castelnuovo at half past seven in the evening, and all other evidence seemed to coincide with his; but Pompilia claimed that the dawn was breaking when they reached the inn.⁴

The Advocate for Guido seemed to think the fact that Caponsacchi was in "laic garb", proved his guilt. But Bottini claimed that this was no such

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 63.

3. Ibid., p. 146; cf. p. 161.

4. Ibid., p. 74; cf. p. 73, also p. 94.

thing, as a priest was not forbidden to lay aside his clerical costume when travelling. Probably he thought it wiser to do so in order to avert scandal which naturally would arise at the sight of a woman "in the flower of her age", and "with no small reputation for beauty" travelling with a priest, and no woman-servant with her. (Archangeli claimed this is a proof almost of adultery).¹

In answer to the sleeping charge, Bottini asserted Capensacchi was discovered keeping guard over Pompilia, and endeavouring to have the horses² harnessed ready to resume the journey.

Lamparelli (for Pompilia's defence), in his summing up claimed that the reply of the Canon to Guido when rebuked for the flight at Castelnuovo, shewed a man whose mind was free from guilt. He said "I am a gallant man, and what I have done, I have done to free your wife from the peril of death". This can be testified to by one Jacopo son of Simon.³

In his deposition Capensacchi referred to the letters which seemed a debatable point. He said that he did not know whether Pompilia could write or not. He recognized the letters which the supposed Francesca had sent to him. That out of two letters which he was charged with writing, one bore a close resemblance to his writing, but was not his; the other did not even resemble his writing. He further stated that he received no letters from Pompilia, except those which bore reference to her flight. He concluded, "I marvel that the Fisc pretends that, before the flight several other love letters had been sent to me by the said Signora Francesca; for she was a modest young woman and such actions would be out of keeping with her station and birth. I therefore declare the abovesaid pretense is false and without

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 94; cf. p. 148.
2. Ibid., p. 149; cf. p. 180, also p. 107.
3. Ibid., p. 196.

foundation. I turn back to say to your Honor that in the prison of Castelnuovo there was not found by the authorities anything whatsoever. And if your Honor tells me that certain love letters were found, which the Fisc pretends are those sent me by Signora Francesca, I say and respond that it is not at all true."¹

The time between May the thirteenth and September 24th, 1697, elapsed before the decree was issued against Caponsacchi. It read as follows, "Tuesday, September Twenty-fourth, sixteen hundred and ninety-seven. Guiseppe Maria Caponsacchi, of Arezzo, for complicity in flight, and running away of Francesca Comparini, and for carnal knowledge of the same, has been banished for three years to Civita Vecchia."²

In the anonymous writer's response he said with reference to this decree, "Since judgment could not fall according to the designs of the Franceschini, as there was no proof in the trial of any offence either in the wife or in the said Caponsacchi, the Most Religious Judges, who in prudence were judging rigorously (for the purpose of giving some satisfaction to the Franceschini brothers in their strong insistence, rather than because of the obligations of justice), banished the said Caponsacchi to Civita Vecchia for three years. Caponsacchi straightway obeyed this sentence and has never left the place assigned him."³

Such are the main facts that Browning found in the Source Book concerning the man whom he has portrayed as his "Ideal hero". Browning has created a much greater priest, however, in his Ring and the Book than the cold, nonchalant priest who simply took the poor little Francesca Pompilia to Rome because he could not avoid it.

1. Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 75 - 76.

2. Ibid, p. 83.

3. Ibid, p. 175.

The poet has added passionate worship, spiritual love and meaning, reverential service, and self-sacrifice to his story. Few details of the flight are actually given in the Source Book, and Browning has made a vivid picture, which causes the reader to breathe freely when the carriage has at last started on its journey away from the villainous Guido.¹

In judging of the way Guido should have treated his wife, and in showing Caponsacchi's treatment of her, the poet has not judged his methods by the prevailing standards of the day, but by the standards of absolute right and wrong. Hence Caponsacchi is a soldier saint, a Christian hero, a St. George, who is just the antithesis to Guido in every respect. He loves the little Pompilia, but not in any sentimental or sensual way. To him she is as the Madonna, the type of Motherhood, the embodiment of womanly virtues, and as such he gives her a passionate worship mingled with a reverential awe, that shows itself in deeds of self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, and service. A hot, impulsive indignation also, tinged all the feelings of the priest towards those who wronged the object of his devotion.² Probably this is why Browning is so insistent upon his view of Caponsacchi, as the St. George, who rescued Pompilia from the dragons, typified by the Franceschini family and their cruelties. Five times the hero is mentioned in the poem as St. George. The picture by Vasari in the Church of Caponsacchi (the Pieve) may also have caused Browning to connect the two, and it was in keeping with this idea, that he changed the date of flight from April 29th to April 23rd, the morning (early) of St. George's Day.³

Very strongly does Browning show the reader his doctrine of the

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 287.
2. Ibid. p. 287.
3. Ibid. p. 28.

"Great Hour", or "Special moment",¹ in his account of the impression made upon Caponsacchi by Pompilia. It was an instantaneous effect, an absolute conversion; for Caponsacchi immediately set aside his life of careless conceit and frivolity, and began to question his position in regard to the Church, his faith in God, and his duty to mankind. By his "alloy", his creative art, his psychological comprehension and imagination, Browning has shown a love existing between Caponsacchi and Pompilia that is eternal and partaking of the Divine.

With reference to the youth of Caponsacchi, Browning has amplified the scanty knowledge afforded by The Old Yellow Book. He is like Guido in the ranks of the nobility, but of the first rank, and he had been trained to enter the Church. According to the poet, the priest was a good specimen of manhood, with "a proper leg, and curls that clustered round his tonsure".² When on trial before his judges he informed them that he was

"A younger son o' the House
Oldest now, greatest once, in my birth-town
Arezzo, I recognize no equal there".³

The family Capo-in-Sacco (Head i' the Sack) were turned out of Fiesole, at the time it was ruined by the Florentines, and they remade their home in the Mercati Vecchio, Florence. Here stands the palace with its "towers to attest", and with its arms which were "those of Fiesole itself".⁴

Caponsacchi says his reason for entering the priesthood was not because of its pecuniary advantages, but because a certain Bishop of Arezzo who was his ancestor, and who was "looked to as a saint", giving his revenue to the poor, and helping the needy and sick, had made him wish for the same kind of life, even

1. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 115.

2. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., ll. 785 - 787.

3. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 221 - 224.

4. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 230 - 236.

in his boyhood.

"This was my father's father's brother. You see
For his sake, how it was I had a right
To the self-same office, bishop in the egg."¹

All went smoothly with Caponsacchi until he was called upon to
take his vows, definitely.

"Declare the world renounced and undertake
To become priest and leave probation - leap
Over the ledge into the other life,
Having gone trippingly hitherto up to the height
O'er the wan water. Just a vow to read!"²

Too well he knew "the naked worldiness and unspirituality of the
Roman Catholic Church of that period", and moral turpitude seized him at the
thought of his inability to conform. He asked his Bishop, therefore, to
choose "a worthier stronger man". But his bland superior chided him for his
"qualmish conscience, and boyish ingenuousness". There was no need to follow
the vows with such austerity and renunciation, they could be taken "in an
easier sense", so that he could walk with the saints and dance with the world,
Even as the Jews "boggle" over the name of God, and substitute sounds to avoid
using the actual name in their synagogues, so he could "jumble his consonants
and vowels" and "O'er the hard places slide with a smile". Then in full
dignity the Bishop adds:-

"Guiseppe Maria Caponsacchi mine
Nobody wants you in these latter days,
To prop the Church, by breaking your backbone
As the necessary way was once we know,
When Diocletian flourished and his like.
That building of the buttress-work was done
By martyrs and confessors: let it bide,
Add not a brick, but, where you see a chink,
Stick in a sprig of ivy or root a rose
Shall make amends and beautify the pile:
We profit as you were the painfulest
O' the martyrs".³

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. VI, ll. 240 - 258.
 2. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 261 - 267.
 3. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 270 - 300.

Therefore with the full approval of the Bishop, Caponsacchi may abandon his scruples, avoid the narrow path of asceticism trodden by the ancestor whose saintly life he wished to emulate, and twine himself around the Church as a decorative tendril rather than as a brick in its integral structure for said the wily sophist who gave him advice,

"Here's a rubblestone
Unfit for the front o' the building, stuff to stow
In a gap behind and keep us weather tight;
There's porphyry for the prominent place."¹

Caponsacchi as the "porphyry" can enslave the fair sex for the Church, by cultivating "that superior gift of making madrigals" so as to rival the "Adone" of the Neapolitan Marino, that was captivating the fancy of the cultured circle with its immoral and decayed euphuisms. Then the Bishop will be able to point out this last acquisition to the Church as young, noble, poetical and popular, adhering to the Church because it "tempted him" more than the world.²

Thus

"Mingling each its multifarious wiles
Now Heaven, now earth, now Heaven and earth at once,
Had plucked at and perplexed their puppet here
Played off the young frank personable priest;
Sworn fast, and tonsured plain, heaven's celibate,
And yet earth's clear accepted servitor,
A courtly spiritual Cupid, squire of dames."³

Caponsacchi trying to please God and Mammon, thus became "a prince of sonneteers and luteist", he read the Breviary, was punctual in his Church, wrote rhymes and "was as diligent at the post where beauty and fashion ruled". He became Sub-deacon, Canon, an authority at 'Tarocci' (the fashionable card game), a connoisseur of ladies' fans. His benignant patron meanwhile gave hints to no promising a pupil: "Crowd sail and crack cordage" for Rome must be the eventual harbor.

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. VI, ll. 313 - 316.

2. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 330 - 335.

3. Ibid., Bk. I, ll. 1018 - 1025.

"Keep a polished presence, a genteel manner, wit
At will, and tact at every pore of you."

Pay your compliments to the Countess as well as her daughter, and do not attempt to preach lessons during Passion week - as the Archbishop prides himself upon his own "masterly handling" of it.

"Therefore don't prove so indispensable
At the Fieve, sit more loose in the seat, nor grow
A fixture by attendance morn and eve!"¹

Now Browning introduced into this easy life of dalliance, the theory of his "Great Hour Doctrine", and the priest who had become "a fribble and coxcomb", was rushed by new emotions, and "the old is rapt away", in one epochal moment. This was achieved by the sight of Francesca Pompilia, whom he saw at the theatre one evening when he had ^{gone} ~~gone~~ thither, in company with Canon Conti. The latter noticed Caponsacchi's abstraction and observed his earnest gaze at the young lady and said, "I'll make her give you back your gaze," and tossed a bag of confits into her lap. Pompilia turned in her seat and favored both the priests with a "strange beautiful smile." Conti then informed his friend that this was his new cousin, who had married Guido Franceschini, "the old scapegoat who lurked at the back of the box," jealously watching his young wife. Conti also bade Caponsacchi not to let Guido see his interest in the lady, as report said, that he already beat her, and "she's breaking her heart quite fast enough" as it is.²

So much does Caponsacchi alter through the influence of Pompilia that for him began "the rational consequences of irrational motives", and for him "the past was a sleep and life began." He left his usual round of society life, ignoring alike "Lightskirts" and the "Courtess". His attention

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. VI, ll. 336 - 367.

2. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 395 - 446.

and regularity at Church, coupled with his musings and premeditated air, caused his Bishop to quizzically ask, "Are you turning Molinist?" But instead of an indignant response, the serious young man replied with a counter question, "What if I turned Christian?"¹

Browning then depicts the changed Caponsacchi deciding to visit home, in order to search his heart, for he realized that all his past achievements and aspirations had left him. During the interval before Lent was ended, he spent the time in musing and praying. It was at this period he was reported to have received the letters, which Guido claimed Pompilia had written. These were carried by Guido's "light o' love", the servant. When he failed to respond to these epistles which he felt sure were penned by Guido, he found notes thrown in at his window, put in the Church, slipped in the door-sill and even "scribbled word, twist page and page o' the prayer book." These letters contained reproaches urging he was "not flesh but adamant."²

As Caponsacchi knew the current gossip about Guido's marriage, he sent replies at various times, with the intention of provoking Guido in return for his craftiness. The letters contained references to the "incarnate meanness, cheat and spy".³ In one letter he wrote,

"I am a priest, you are wedded wife
. . . . What made you - may one ask
Marry your hideous husband? 'Twas a fault
And now you taste the fruit of it".⁴

Browning then arranged that Caponsacchi meets Pompilia face to face, when he is passing the house in reply to a hint of Guido's; he intended to give the intriguing husband a little of the condign punishment he so richly

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1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Sk. VI, ll. 464 - 474.
 2. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 507 - 629.
 3. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 604 - 606.
 4. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 532 - 534; also ll. 598 - 599.

merited. Pompilia reproached Caponsacchi for writing to her in the strain he had, yet pleaded her need of help, especially now God has graced her with the promise of motherhood. She explained her inability to write or read and begged him to save her from Guido who had threatened to kill her.

Eloquently the poet makes the pleader tell of her futile visits to the Governor and Archbishop; the unfulfilled promises of the Friar to write to her parents, and finally her reliance upon Caponsacchi as her last resource. The Governor said "the strong should help the weak", said Pompilia.¹

"Take me as you would take a dog I think
Masterless left for strangers to ill-treat".²

Instead of the reluctant compliance which the historical Caponsacchi accorded in the Source Book to this request, Pompilia received a promise that her wish should be granted.³

Caponsacchi then returned home to ponder

"Pompilia spoke, and I at once received
Accepted my own fact, my miracle,
Self authorized and self-explained - she chose
To summon me and signify her choice.
. I gave a passing glance
To ascertain ugly cloud-shape goblin ahred
Of hell smoke, hurrying past the splendid moon,
Out now to tolerate no more darkness,
And saw right through the thing that tried to pass
For truth and solid, not an empty lie".⁴

All night he paced the city, torn by inward storm and stress, while:-

"Into another state under new rule
I knew myself was passing swift and sure;
... so I
Lay, and let come the proper throes would thrill
Into the ecstasy and outthrob pain."⁵

Browning then brings him into his own church, without any will or

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit. ll. 701 - 822.
2. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 813 - 814.
3. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 881 - 884.
4. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 918 - 927.
5. Ibid., Sk. VI, ll. 946 - 973.

volition on his own part, just as David was carried home after his knowledge of the infinite love of God evinced in his Incarnation. Caponsacchi realized the dead passion which the Church demanded, the bonds which rivetted him to the Bride, "the mystic Love of the Lamb." They were empty and hollow "the scranuel voice", which dragged him away from life and bade him "Come be dead with me". (The poet was no doubt urging some of his own objections to the ascetic life and especially his great objections to the Confessional, used by the Roman Church). But Caponsacchi remembered how recently his vows were made, and felt that the authoritative word that held him to the Church was "God's".¹

Thus he put duty first and renewed his faith in God, and left Him "to find some new way, by one miracle the more", to save Pompilia.² But his passivity was swept aside by Pompilia herself who urged her need of his help, so much that he decided "to leave the show of things to the Lord of Show, and Prince of the Power of the air",³ and take Pompilia

"By the little hand,
Till she reached Rome, and let her try to live."⁴

The poet shows him then closing his Summa written by Thomas Aquinas, and as he does so, he reflected that it was a Saint Thomas to whom the Virgin gave her mantle, as a sublimation of his faith, when she was passing into Heaven, "I too have seen a lady and held a grace," said Caponsacchi.⁵ In his exalted mood, all the trivial things of earth appeared far away, and he was surprised, that his servant should remind him of a vigil at the Church for St. George's Day! Far more important was it to his mind that a carriage and laic

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VI, ll. 974 - 1013.
2. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1029 - 1033.
3. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1020 - 1021.
4. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1779 - 1780.
5. Ibid., Bk. VI, 1096 - 1105.

dress should be procured for his proposed journey to Rome, even if Conti was absent, and Crispi sour and sulking.¹ But Faith upheld him for "there's God, He reigns and rules", and,

"Through each familiar hindrance of the day
Did I make steadily for its hour and end, -
Felt time's old barrier-growth of right and fit
Give way through all its twines, and let me go.
Use and wont recognized the excepted man,
Let speed the special service - and I sped
Till, at the dead between midnight and morn,
There was I at the goal before the gate."²

Throughout the journey Browning keeps before the reader's mind, the adoration and reverence Caponsacchi felt for Pompilia. Just as they are leaving the city he said, referring to the coming of Pompilia to the carriage,

"Began a whiteness in the distance, waxed
Whiter and whiter, near grew and more near
Till it was she; there did Pompilia come;
The ^{white} I saw shine through her was her soul's
Certainly, for the body was one black,
Black from head down to foot."³

Later he fancied they were two martyrs waiting for the trumpet to arise for the resurrection morn,

"So through the whole course of the world they wait
The last day, but so fearless and so safe:
No otherwise, in safety and not fear,
I lie, because she lies too by my side.
You know this is not love, Sirs - it is faith."⁴

During parts of the journey Pompilia was in mental agony and seeing her suffering thus he exclaims,

"Why in my whole life I have never prayed:
Oh, if the God that only can, would help!
Am I his priest with power to cast out fiends?
Let God arise and all his enemies
Be scattered!"⁵

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1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VI, ll. 1106 - 1116.
 2. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1124 - 1132.
 3. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1139 - 1144.
 4. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1163 - 1193.
 5. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1299 - 1303.

When Guido reached them and ordered his helpers to ascend to the room where Pompilia was resting, Capensacchi felt the desecration thus committed and says:-

"Up we all went together, in they broke
O' the chamber late my chapel."¹

After her death he told his judges,

"I never touched her with my finger-tip
Except to carry her to the couch, that eve,
Against my heart, beneath my head, bowed low,
As we priests carry the paten."²

"I stand here guiltless in thought, word and deed,
To the point that I apprise you, - in contempt
For all misapprehending ignorance
O' the human heart, much more the mind of Christ,
That I assuredly did bow, was blessed
By the revelation of Pompilia."³

"For Pompilia - be advised
Build churches, go pray! You will find me there,
I know, if you come."⁴

"Pompilia will be presently with God;
I am on earth, as good as out of it,
A relegated priest."⁵

He finished his impassioned lament with the picture of what his life might have been under different circumstances, had he been able to lead it "companionsed by the woman there"; so that all he came in contact with, would, due to her influence be "the true, the good, the eternal", to learn

"Not by the grandeur, God g
But the comfort, Christ."⁶

This warm impetuous loving man was far removed from the formal priest who took Pompilia away to avoid further annoyance, and it is from the

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1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VI, ll. 1514 - 1515.
 2. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 1617 - 1620.
 3. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 1860 - 1866.
 4. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 1981 - 1983.
 5. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 2074 - 2076.
 6. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 2081 - 2096.

poet's, "Own personal resource of manly devotion of chivalrous daring, of passionate indignation of wrong, of spiritual tenderness and reverence, he created a Caponsacchi." These are all personalities borrowed from the poet's own character.¹ He shows us a great character which in addition to his culture is "acceptedly, needfully and illustratively splendid", "a man with his soul at its finest", emerging clean and high from life's smoky ordeals.²

Like Browning himself Caponsacchi at the cry of need, became a man of action able to conceive and carry out his plans. They both acted in defiance of conventions leaving their reputations to the world's mercy. Each trusted in God for the issue and in this certainly the poet had the happier fate. The task that Caponsacchi assumed belonged rightly to the Comparini or Guido, but all the depth of character, all his inherited chivalry and religious ideals responded to the call of distress.

Hence Browning shows us a St. George, and repeatedly used the term in his poem. He, like saints of old, stepped aside into the ^{byways} to save a life for his Master. St. George had to fight dragons, but Caponsacchi undertook a sterner task. He had to trample down life-long conventions, consecrated duties, with a pre-deliberated plan that knew the cost beforehand. To take away a wife was a direct disobedience to law and against all precedents.³

But with a clear singleness of purpose, following the gleam upon his path, Caponsacchi achieved the impossible and reached his goal,

"Learning anew the use of soldiery,
Self abnegation, freedom from all fear.
Loyalty to the life's end."⁴

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1. Hodell, Op. Cit., (Everyman Edition), Introduction, p. 16.
 2. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 117; also The Quarterly Review, pp. 68 - 87, Article by Henry James, The Ring and the Book, John Murray, Albemarle Street, London; Leonard Scott publication, New York. July 1912 (Vol. 217).
 3. Robert Browning, G. H. Herford, New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., March 1905, Copyright 1905, pp. 168 - 185.
 4. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Sk. X, ll. 1208 - 1210.

In the first book Browning refers to Caponsacchi's dramatic entry upon the scene to save Pompilia from her fate as heralded by,

"The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash
.....
As, in a glory of armour like Saint George,
Out sprang the young good beautiful priest
Bearing away the lady in his arms."¹

Then, Pompilia herself on her death-bed talked of him as her "soldier-saint" and assured him, "No work begun shall ever pause for death." She further stated how Canon Conti told her he himself could not help to take her to Rome, for:- "Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth," but

"Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint George
To slay the monster, set the Princess free
And have the whole High-Altar to himself;
I always think so when I see that piece
I' the Pieve, that's his church and mine you know."²

(Conti referred here of course to the Vasari painting of St. George and the dragon.)

Bottinè when trying to defend Pompilia referred to the rescue by the priest, said he is

"One juvenile and potent, else mayhap
That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him."³

Then further Browning puts the date back to St. George's Day as the day Caponsacchi helped to carry Pompilia away. (Early morning of Tuesday, April 23rd).⁴ Finally the intensely modernized and human St. George when addressing his helpless judges, (who sat silent awed at the dreadful tragedy which had terminated their guardianship of Pompilia) said,

1. The King and the Book, Bk. I, ll. 583 - 587.
2. Ibid., Bk. VII, ll. 1787; also ll. 1314 - 1327.
3. Ibid., Bk. IX, ll. 601 - 602.
4. Ibid., Bk. VI, ll. 1110 - 1118.

. . . . "I rise in your esteem Sirs
Stand up a renderer of reasons, not
The officious priest would personate St. George
For a mock Princess in undragoned days"
. for "There was
A Princess, was a dragon belching flame
And should have been a Saint George also."¹

Caponsacchi cannot be dismissed without noting the terrible denunciation which Browning has made him utter against Guido Franceschini. Perhaps no other parallel can be found in modern literature to equal that tragic picture of Guido and Hudas "made monstrous by much solitude" living in eternal companionship,

"Pushed by the general horror and common hate,
Low, lower, - left at the very lodge of things."

"Till at the doleful end
At the horizontal line, creation's verge
From what just is to absolute nothingness,"
"Not dying but just sliding out of life."²

J. A. Hutton says in speaking of Browning's Caponsacchi, "It was the revelation of Pompilia's holiness, which was the key that opened Caponsacchi's heart, but it was God, not Pompilia who entered there."³

Since the publication of The Old Yellow Book, Browning has been charged by some critics with using so much "alloy", that his original "gold" has deteriorated and changed its form entirely.⁴

The writer, F. T. Russell, speaking of Caponsacchi says "far from adhering "with fidelity to his material", there is the "miraculous conversion of a matter-of-fact young cleric who maintained simply that he saw his duty and did it, albeit reluctantly and because urged thereto by an unfortunate young woman, into a triple extract of Galahad, Persius and Saint George". Also in order to have the episode occur on St. George's Day, the poet had "to push the calendar back a week or so."⁴

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VI, ll. 1769 - 1777.

2. Ibid, Bk. VI, ll. 1908 - 1931.

3. Guidance from Robert Browning in Matters of Faith, J.A.Hutton, M.A., Edinburgh and London, Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier (1903)

4. Russell, Op. Cit., pp. 118 - 119.

Marshall Gest also has even attacked Hodell's translation of The Old Yellow Book. In speaking of Browning's representation of Caponsacchi he claims that Caponsacchi, "was not a priest, and was never called a priest in The Old Yellow Book." He states that Bettini in his monologue specially mentioned that he was not a priest, but despite all this, the poet makes him "a soldier priest, a saint, a Christian hero and a St. George", in such a way that to the reader who knows the actual facts the matter becomes "nauseating".¹

With regard to the saving of Pompilia, the same critic says it was merely self-interest that prompted Caponsacchi. Guido had threatened the "squire of dames", who in addition to the "hussies" with whom he flirted, had included Pompilia in his flirtations, the wife of Guido.² He (Gest) translates the charges against Caponsacchi as being "Complicity in flight, seduction and carnal knowledge", while Browning and Hodell translate the same passage, which involves the seduction, into "a running away of Francesca Comparini."³

A further indictment is made, that the Caponsacchi profession, biography and romance with Pompilia are all an improvisation of the poet's; that the pamphlets and letters were used with "discrepancies", in order to "enhance the nobility" of the lovers, and to "increase the vileness of Guido".⁴

The same author denies that the given facts were such as to provide the poet with his passionate chivalrous priest, had he "made it a principle to use fact as he found it"; or if he had avoided substituting "a substantiated fact of the Book by one more agreeable to his feelings."⁵

A little insight into Hodell's view of the use made by Browning of his material, may help to mitigate the implied censure of the former critic, and

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 9.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

3. Ibid., p. 11.

4. Russell, Op. Cit., p. 119.

5. Ibid., pp. 119, 120.

aid the reader in adjusting a balance.

"The material was not worthless in itself; but upon it the spiritual power of the artist had to work with life-giving mastery until he too became a creator and reached man's highest function."¹

Referring to the character of Caponsacchi portrayed by the poet he says, "All this element is added by the creative instinct of Browning. We have little evidence in the Book that the flight with Pompilia had been more than a superficial adventure to the real Caponsacchi. His rise to the noble attitude of his later manhood is as much the creation of the poet, as is the worldly masquerade before his meeting with Pompilia."² "The Caponsacchi as thus conceived is worthy of his important place at the heart of Browning's masterpiece, and is as great a creation as any in the whole range of Browning's poetic world."³

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 231.

2. Ibid., p. 238.

3. Ibid., p. 239.

CHAPTER III

THE LAWYERS

Hyacinthus de Archangelis
Johannes-Baptista Bottinius

The chief authority upon which the Roman Law was founded, was the Corpus Juris of Justinian, "containing Institutes, Digest, Codex, and Novels".¹

These were arranged in 527 A.D., and put into effect in April 529 A.D. At the time when The Old Yellow Book was written it was customary when referring to these books (about fifty in number) to indicate the paragraph in question, by the title, the first words of the law, and the section.²

Attached to this work was a "Glossary" in which every important word was minutely explained.

Accursius was the chief compiler in this branch. He was a Florentine, and later became a professor at Bologna. He lived to be seventy-eight (presumably 1201 - 1279). One critic says, speaking of the Corpus Juris, "there are no books in the world so fine, so ornate, so elegant as the Texts of the Pandects, but the bordering of them, to wit, the Glass of Accursius, is so filthy, scandalous, and mean, that it is nothing but dirt and villainy."³

Most of the lawyers, however, claimed that the testimony of the Glossary was more helpful, and much to be preferred to the original text.

The mass of documents with its laws, comments, citations, and notes, was so immense, that one author says the work of more recent days seems but the achievement of "Pignies"; also, that even to undertake to read all this

1. Gost, Op. Cit., p. 5.

2. Ibid, p. 53.

3. Ibid, p. 53.

array of law, would be an "audacious" task.

Following in the footsteps of the Glossators were the Commentators, (the Post-Glossators), whose comments were of much more value as references, than those of their predecessors.¹

There is no doubt but that the earlier documents were rendered much easier to understand by these additional elaborations, and that they made the task more within the comprehension of the later or more recent writers and students. In these modern times, many errors can of course be detected, but in those days, no accurate historical investigations were possible, and consequently, their methods were chiefly analytic.²

Chief among the works referred to in The Old Yellow Book, are the Commentaries on the Corpus Juris, and Commentaries on other Codes of Law, such as Raynaldus, and especially those writers of Local Laws, whose works are embellished by general discussions and treatises. Many Tractates on the Practice or Theory of Law, "either Civil, Criminal, or Canonical", are referred to by the counsels and advocates. Questions (i.e. discussions) containing moot topics in law discussed by such men as Farinacci, and Consilia, (i.e. arguments) which arose during the actual practice of eminent lawyers, were often quoted as references.

When the counsel in argument laid down a special law, although it was used with reference to the particular case in hand, he was considered to have given a general opinion, that could be used in all similar trials.³

References were taken from the Decisiones or Vota. These were the actual judgments imposed by the Court at various times, and, if it were necessary the actual arguments pertaining to the decision in question, might be quoted.

1. Cest, Op. Cit., p. 54.

2. Ibid., pp. 54, 55.

3. Ibid., pp. 56 - 58.

In the seventeenth century, in Italy, decisions were quoted in arguments, in much the same way as they are at the present time.

The 'Decisions' of the Sacred Rota (of Rome), those of the Italian States' Courts, and those of Spain, Germany, and France were held in much esteem. The basis of the methods adopted by these Courts was the Corpus Juris, "except as modified by local customs and laws."¹

Equally huge in its bulk was the "Corpus Juris Canonica", with its array of Glossaries and Commentaries. It was used for illustration, but where the Civil Law failed, its principles were freely employed.

In the Ecclesiastical Courts, if the subject was not defined by the Canon Law, the Civil Law was followed. If there was a difference of opinion, "the Civil Law was followed in the courts where the land was not held by the Church", but in the Ecclesiastical districts the Canon Law prevailed.^{2 3}

The "Communis Opinio Doctorum", or, the general opinion of authorities was much observed; many examples³ were collected and an effort made to obtain a general or uniform rule concerning these examples.

The Bible was often used as a reference, and the ancient writers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Horace were much quoted.

Then legal maxims, short pithy sentences used to express some general principle in law, "like popular proverbs in common conversation", were stated "to point the argument".

The aggregation of these references and authorities, produced an immense mass of precedents and details. In many cases, the citations and

1. Gent, Op. Cit., pp. 59 - 61.

2. Ibid., pp. 61 - 62.

3. In the trial of Guido Franceschini the Canon Law and its Commentators were often quoted, but the case was tried "in the secular court, and the law administered was the general criminal law."

quotations given are but a repetition, but the commentator's name was added as an additional authority, with no idea of plagiarism.¹

In the actual Courts at the time The Old Yellow Book was written, it must be noted that there were many States each with its own Court, or Court of Appeal (the Senate); occasionally the local court was called, "The High Court of the District".

The States of the Church (including Rome), were subjected to Papal Power, and this extended to Ferrara and district of the river Po, and included Bologna and Perugia. Naples in the South, Sicily, Sardinia, Venice, and Milan, all had their own methods of justice, and each system was absolutely independent of its neighboring State.²

The Sacred Roman Rota, the Supreme Court of the Ecclesiastical State, was very important, and consisted of twelve judges appointed by the Pope. Many explanations of the term "Rota" have been suggested, but the most generally adopted explanations were either, it arose from the position assumed by the judges who sat at a round table; or, because each judge viewed the case in turn; or, because the porphyry pavement of the Court room (the camera) contained the figure of a wheel; or, finally, because of the universal jurisdiction of the Court in matters ecclesiastical. Sprengel called it in one of his arguments the "Sacred Consulta".³

"The jurisdiction of the Rota was both beneficial or Ecclesiastical, and profane or Civil." In its position of ecclesiastical authority it was universal, but its civil administration was confined to the Papal States.

Among its members there would in all probability be, "one German, one Frenchman, two Spaniards, eight Italians, including three Romans, and one

1. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 63 - 64.

2. Ibid., p. 65.

3. Hodell, Op. Cit., Pamphlet 2, pp. 25 - 27.

(b) Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 65 - 66.

member each from Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, Tuscany, and Milan."¹

In its own districts the decrees of the Rota were final, whilst in other localities it was recognized as very reliable and authoritative.

The Reverend Apostolic Chamber "was composed of the Cardinal Camerlengo, the Governor of Rome as Vice Camerlengo, the Treasurer General, the Auditors and President of the Chamber, the Advocate of the Poor, the Advocate of the Fisc, and the commissarius of the Chamber with twelve clerks. Its jurisdiction included all matters concerning the Fisc, and the Ecclesiastical revenues from leases, rents, feuds, accounts of officials, etc."

The Governor of Rome had authority in both civil and criminal administration. In the civil department, he was represented by two members, but in the criminal only by one.² In addition to these officials there was the "Bargello or Sheriff with three hundred police officers or sbirri".³

The Auditor of the Camera, had charge of the ordinary jurisdiction of the Curia Romana in both civil and criminal departments. He, like the governor, had two deputies in the civil, and one in the criminal cases.^{4 5}

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1. Josephus Molines, Judge of the Rota, who had control of the Comparini appeal against the Camera Thomatus, was of Spanish birth.
 2. In The Old Yellow Book, Governor Pallavicino was the Governor, and Marco Antonio Venturini was his deputy, and he had charge of the trial of Pompilia and Caponsacchi, and later of the trial of Guido and his accomplices; (a) Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 295; note 7. (b) Ibid, p. 22, Pamphlet 2, also p. 205, and p. 293.
 3. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 66 - 67.
 4. Thomatus was the *locum tenens* for the Auditor of the Camera in The Old Yellow Book. This representative was stated by Hodell to be H. G. Thomatus, but the H. and G. are representative of his office only, and his full name was Domenico Thomatus. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 315, Note 262, cf. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 67.
 5. Spreti says in The Old Yellow Book that the Franceschini case was taken to the Supreme Tribunal; Mr. Hodell says this was the Court of Ultimate appeal, but it was the Rota to which the appeal was taken, that by itself was the Court of ultimate appeal. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 185.

In the punishments awarded by the Civil Law, the supreme penalty was death. This could be dealt out in many different ways, by "burning, beheading, or in the case of slaves, crucifixion; sometimes criminals were condemned to fight with wild beasts, butchered to make a Roman holiday."¹

At the time Guido was condemned to death the customary method was by beheading or hanging. On account of his rank Guido was beheaded, whilst the *socci* were hanged.² Even at this period it was quite permissible to cut the body to pieces, or if the crime was one of heresy, burning might be employed.

Strangely enough, the sentence of "capital" punishment did not necessarily imply death. It really involved a loss of "caput", i.e. loss of liberty, citizenship, and family ties.

Condemnation to the mines was one of the most dreaded sentences; it meant really a life of drudgery and exhausting labor. It was a popular form of punishment during the Middle Ages, and the quick-silver mines in Spain were worked entirely by convicts. The banishment from civilization made this a severe chastisement, resembling much the sentence given in a case of outlawry, under the English constitution.

In former times, deportation to an island had been employed in many cases. But at the period when The Old Yellow Book's history was recorded, this had been succeeded by banishment to the galleys.^{3 4}

Among the mediocre punishments, that of relegation was considered the most severe; the prohibition was set against some particular province or district either for a period or for life. This sentence did not include loss

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 68.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 190 - 191.

3. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 68 - 69.

4. Gullishini was a sufferer to this law, being exiled to the galleys for a period subject to the pleasure of His Serene Highness - he was sentenced to five years at the galleys at first. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 8 & 9.

of property.¹

Flogging, scourging with sticks, pecuniary fines, and deprivation in rank, were also among common usage in court punishments.

Under the Roman Law there was much restraint exercised with regard to imprisonment either for life or short sentence periods. In the case of such minor offences as debtor's troubles, prison sentences were imposed, but the prisons were regarded only as temporary shelters during the enforced detention before trial.²

In the examination all the evidence was placed before the Court in writing, in the form of "memorials"; one side presented the case in writing, and then the opposite side presented their memorial in reply or defense. No verbal pleadings or charges were made at all in the presence of the court.

Under ordinary procedure, the criminal was cited to appear, or arrested if flight anticipated, in order to make the examination for release if innocent, or detention if seemingly guilty.

Neither the Advocate or Procurator of the defendant was allowed to be present, but torture was permitted if required.⁴ The *socci* were examined and punished equally with the leader. The name, country, age, occupation, worldly position and other details were recorded concerning the prisoner, and an oath was administered which ensured only the truth, being told. Should there be cause to doubt the answers of the defendant, or if he refused to answer, he could be fined or tortured according to the Judge's decision.

Questions were dictated to the Notary in Latin, and then changed to the vernacular for the benefit of the prisoner, if he were uneducated; then the Judge reported the answers to the Notary, who recorded them in the same

1. The sentence passed on Caponsacchi was of this degree. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 83.

2. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 69.

3. Treves, Op. Cit., p. 79.

4. This was employed in the case of Guido and his companions. Guido probably confessed at sight of torture without receiving it. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 213.

language that they were made (i.e. either in Latin or the vernacular). Judges were warned against any abuse in their report of the answers given to them. They were also advised to seek Divine aid in their tasks, and to be impervious to emotion, betraying neither anger or pity. But they might use any method in order to entrap the defendant, so that catch questions or a pretense of earlier knowledge was considered quite allowable if it led to avowal.

The first examination which was more or less informal, was known as "de plano", (i.e. on the level ground, hence often out of court), this was in contrast to the "question", which was used if the first system did not succeed in eliciting the necessary facts.

Following this process, access to the defendant was allowed on the part of the advocate and procurator, so that the defence might be prepared. A copy of the case with its various testimonies and statements could be demanded by the prisoner if he wished.¹

In the early Roman era, no freeman could be subjected to torture, this was reserved for slaves, the idea being prevalent that by this means alone, the truth could be obtained. But the rule became lax, and later, the only persons exempt from torture were the nobility and clergy.²

The Inquisition confirmed the method of torture, and thereby caused its almost universal use, until European countries adopted it, in both Civil and Canon law, with all its extremes. In Italy particularly, the Ecclesiastical and Roman Law both endorsed its adoption, and many cruel sufferings were undergone by its recipients. It was applied not as a tribute to cruelty, but merely as an ordinary part of a system of punishments.

1. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 70 - 73.

2. It was under this privilege that Archangeli resented torture being even offered to Guido as a threat, he claimed immunity for him on account of the clericate
Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 37; also p. 105, cf. p. 28.

Most of the great criminal lawyer^{ers} in Italy, seemed to feel that it was a mistake to use this cruelty in order to gain confessions, and Raynaldus proved that the Bible contained no precedent for it, and he also admitted, that the truth was not always procured even with the aid of these extreme measures. To support this, he cited a case where innocent men put to the torture confessed guilt, and were only saved from death by the confession of the real murderer.¹

Four common punishments at this period were known, respectively, as the Cord, the Vigil, the Taxilli, and the Sibilli. The Cord treatment involved great cruelty due to the grasp of cords which were tightly bound round the body and limbs of the prisoner. The culprit was then suspended above the ground, and jerked up and down with great force. In addition to this, streams of cold water were poured upon his bare back. In the Vigil punishment, means were employed to prevent the prisoner from gaining the respite of sleep. Two guards were placed one on either side of the sufferer, and it was their duty to prod him every time there was an indication of his falling asleep. This treatment, however, as time went on, degenerated into the most cruel torture by the combination of the Cord and Vigil punishments as one. So severe was the strain to which the prisoner was subjected, that many died from the terrible tension to which the arms alone were put, especially did this happen if the offender were at all delicate. The Taxilli was a means of torture used upon the feet, which were first placed in strained positions by the insertion of wedges made of wood. The Sibilli was a punishment reserved for women and boys, and concentrated its force upon the fingers using intense pressure to cause pain.

Milder forms of punishment in vogue at this period were starvation, then thirst augmented by the use of salted foods, the deprivation of sleep for

1. Gest. Op. Sit., p. 73.

forty hours (a mild form of the Vigil), then a foot torture, consisting of an application of grease to the soles of the feet and further the feet tortured by being placed over a fire. Another torture was called the Water Cure, and under this ordeal, the prisoner was made to drink unlimited quantities of lime water or vinegar. Insects, such as beetles or hornets were often placed upon the nude body to cause local irritation.¹

At the time The Old Yellow Book was compiled, the Vigil was only supposed to be applied for the "most atrocious" crimes, but so many precedents had been added to the original statutes, that excuses could be furnished for its usage in almost all cases.²

Crimes were by law divided into four classes, trivial, atrocious, more atrocious, and most atrocious. It was left to the presiding Judge to consider all the attendant circumstances, and to decide to which of these classes the crime should be relegated. This involved consideration of the weapons used, for example if poison was traced, it was considered as more atrocious than the sword; if a crime was committed under cover of darkness it was worse than one perpetrated in daylight; treachery employed under the guise of friendship, homicide, and such conditions, helped to make the judge decide as to which class the crime should belong. Any offence which involved the clergy, or a person of rank, either as the offender or the receiver of offence, was judged with greater severity, and more stringent punishments were accorded to the aggressor.^{3 4}

In all the books of precedent, a solemn warning was issued to the

1. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 80 - 84.

2. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 28.

3. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 91 - 93.

4. In the case of Guido being both a cleric and a noble, the additional five aggravations added to the murders already admitted, caused him to become liable under the punishments in the "most atrocious" class of crimes. Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 53 - 55.

Judge bidding him "to render his judgment as best he could according to the custom of his own country", and also reminding him that "a judge must not suppose the bodies of the defendants to have been created by nature for him to mangle".¹

With all these precedents and citations summoned to their aid, the lawyers engaged in the Franceschini trial in Rome February 1698, brought their case to a close by the imposition of the death penalty upon the five prisoners who were before the Court.²

The records of the trial were found fastened together in one volume and had originally belonged to a Florentine lawyer named Francesco Gambini a patrician of Arezzo Fisc of the Holy Office and a man greatly esteemed in his native city.³

According to these pamphlets Guido Franceschini was on trial for murder (*Romana Homicidiorum*) i.e. a Roman case of Homicides. The adjective "Roman" denotes the place of trial, and homicide was the form of word used in Italy, signifying the same as the Anglicized word "murder".

Eighteen pamphlets comprised the volume known as The Old Yellow Book, and five of these were for the defense, seven for the prosecutor, two anonymous pamphlets, three summaries, and one pamphlet for the vindication of the wife of Guido, and an "Instrument of Final Judgment" absolving her from the charge of adultery.⁴

To the papers after "*Romana Homicidiorum*", Bettini the Fisc had added "*cum qualitate*", (i.e. with aggravating circumstances, whilst Gambi the procurator of the Fisc had inserted "*Sacridii*", instead of *Homicidiorum* which

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 95.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 190 - 191.

3. Ibid., p. 296, Note.12.

4. Refer to "Introduction", pp. 5 - 7; also Gest Op. Cit., pp. 25 - 26; cf. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 238 - 240.

implies "slaughter". All briefs bear the imprint of the Reverend Apostolic Chamber, with the exception of the anonymous pamphlets.¹

The arguments employed are rather involved in style, but Gambi states frankly that he only had three hours in which to prepare his paper.² All the arguments are logical, and evident efforts have been made to concentrate on the matter to be presented, rather than on the method of representation. The lawyers have used appropriate language, and one side was endeavoring earnestly to convict, whilst the opposition was working equally hard to gain acquittal for the prisoners.

In English course it is customary to have criminal cases conducted by lawyers who work for a salary (in the prosecution). In Italy, however, the State officials had to manage both defense and prosecution. Their services were not restricted to so termed "Paupers", although originally there is no doubt this was an understood fact. The Advocate of the Poor received a stated salary for defending (in either civil or criminal cases) but was allowed the privilege of accepting a fee if his client was sufficiently wealthy. In rank he was considered above the Advocate of the Fisc, and could appear in secular courts. (This was not allowed to the clericate). The Advocates (both of the Poor and the Fisc) were chosen from the Aula Consistorialis, and whilst originally seniority alone decided who the candidates were, it had now become a matter for the Pope's decision.³

The Emperor Adrian had been the first to institute the office of the Advocate of the Fisc, who was supposed to represent the State in all civil and criminal actions with "truth and justice". Officially both advocates were

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 27, cf. "Introduction", pp. 3 - 4.

2. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 133.

3. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 38 - 40, cf. Hedell, Op. Cit., pp. 323 - 324. Notes 368, 370, 374, 374, 377.

on an equality.¹

The modern Barrister and Attorney illustrate the relative positions of an advocate and a procurator. The former argues the case in court, and the latter prepares and arranges the actual facts of the case.² Gambi seems to have been a junior colleague to Bottini, and Spreti also (Advocate of the Poor) refers to Bottini as one older than himself, and states that he has respected him since boyhood.³ Whilst Archangeli is presumably the equal of Spreti (the former the Procurator, and the latter the Advocate of the Poor), he is undoubtedly given greater precedence. The Procurator Pauperum had to visit the prisoner daily, and make a report at least once a week, to the Advocate Pauperum on the case.⁴

The emissaries of the Procurator Charitates (represented by Lamparelli in The Old Yellow Book) had to visit the prisons and were allowed to provide "wine, medical attention, spiritual consolation including the celebration of Mass, and bury those who died."⁵ There appeared to be no Advocate of Charity,

The Procurator of Charity received a salary and had duties similar to those of the Procurator of the Poor, but his position was quite different; the welfare of the prisoners mentally, physically and spiritually was his concern.⁶ In legal defence the Procurator Charitates only attended to matters of secondary importance.⁷

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 40.

2. In The Old Yellow Book however the arguments of Advocate and Procurator appeared of equal value.

3. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 184. cf. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 41.

4. Ibid., p. 41.

5. Ibid., p. 42.

6. Hodell has translated Procurator of Charity as Procurator of the Poor, incorrectly. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 201.

7. Lamparelli in this capacity attended to the needs of Pompilia whilst imprisoned as she had no legal guardian and also attended to the claim made by the Convertite convent against his client. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 202 - 206. Gest, Op. Cit., pp. 42 - 43.

Bottini was evidently learned in his profession as Franciscus Dynus states in his book published 1713, that he was advised to study under Bottini when in Rome. The latter at this time was a Marquis, and Advocate of the Sacred Consistory, also the Fisc, and was more than equal to the ancient and modern lawyers. Jeannes Dominicus Raynaldus a contemporary who had written a book¹ says "Bottini was a man of the highest integrity, and the most amiable traits of character." he was supposed to have published a legal treatise of which he was the author.² Archangeli is mentioned also by Dynus, as one of the three auditors of the Criminal Court of Florence, he also wrote articles concerning the Law.³

Dynus and Raynaldus both speak well of Spreti, the former states that Spreti is to be promoted on account "of his piety and other virtues"; the latter praises the character and erudition of the advocate.⁴ Gambi is mentioned also in the Observations of Raynaldus, their acquaintance having commenced in Ravenna of which city Gambi was a native. Raynaldus says that Gambi fulfilled with great praise, judicial office in Genoa, Lucca, Ravenna, Rome and Solobna; he was made Procurator of the Fisc by Pope Innovent XII. He was known for his courtesy, gentleness and uprightness. Another writer at the same period says "Gambi was distinguished not less for learning than for integrity."⁵

Thus from all accounts it would appear that the lawyers engaged in the courts connected with The Old Yellow Book trials, were men of known skill and integrity.

1. This was revised just about the time of Guide's execution.

2. Gest. Op. Cit., p. 43.

3. Ibid., p. 43.

4. Ibid., p. 43.

5. Ibid., p. 44.

The Governor of Rome at this time Venturini, occupied his position for twenty years.¹

The main arguments in the Source Book were not to defend or accuse Guido of homicide, for that was admitted, but to prove him guilty or not guilty of the death penalty, according to whether his plea for vengeance for personal dishonor was legitimate or otherwise.

Thus arose questions concerning the validity of the Vigil torture, which was offered to Guido and used upon his confederates. Archangeli protested that Guido's case was not a "most atrocious" crime; that as Guido felt himself attacked in honor and bound to take vengeance, the five aggravating circumstances were not proper charges; and the defence of honor caused all confessions to be nullified.²

The Fisc in response declared the crime was "most atrocious", and the plea of defence for honor could not hold as no adultery had been proved. Therefore Guido and his associates were liable to torture and the penalty of death.³

Archangeli claimed that Pompilia's guilt was fully established by her elopement, the mutual love letters, the exchange of kisses, the sleeping together at Castelnuovo, the use of laic dress by Caponsacchi, the deceit shown by false statements concerning the time of arrival at Castelnuovo and the pretended inability to write.⁴

The Fisc defended his client against these charges, by proving cruelties, threats against her life, and suspicious jealousy practised in the Franceschini home. These were evidenced by the letters of the Governor, the

1. Gest, Op. Cit., p. 44.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., Pamphlets 2, 3 and 9, pp. 22, 33 and 105 respectively.

3. Ibid., Pamphlets 13 and 14, pp. 135 and 159 respectively.

4. Ibid., Pamphlets 1, 2, 6, pp. 10, 22, and 85 respectively.

Bishop and the Abate Paolo. The chief witness against Pompilia was a woman of light character. Advice from relatives such as Cozzi and Guillichini had made Pompilia feel that she could trust Caponsacchi. The most direct and shortest route had been taken to reach Rome. No proof of adultery had been reached, and if the letters were written by his client, it must have been with the idea of fascinating Caponsacchi, so that he would not refuse to take her to her parents. The wearing of laic dress could not be construed into an evidence of guilt.¹

Archangeli's next argument based the guilt of Pompilia in the adultery charge as proved by the conviction of Caponsacchi to relegation and the decree.² He maintained that the sentence imposed was a light one, because Caponsacchi was a foreigner, and the crime was committed outside the Ecclesiastical State.³

In reply, Bottini claimed that neither party had confessed to guilt, that the sentence was a discretionary one only. The words "carnal knowledge" should have been abolished and a general charge substituted. The Roman Court could have sentenced Caponsacchi even if he were a foreigner, and as the adultery (if any) occurred at Castelnuovo, it was well within the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court. Therefore, the imposed relegation proved the offence not serious.⁴

Guido's right to take vengeance "Ex Intervallo" was upheld by his lawyer, who cited the laws of Rome and Greece and other countries to prove that sympathy was always extended to the husband who was dishonored. Even

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., Pamphlets 6, 13, 14, pp. 57, 135 and 159 respectively.
2. Ibid., p. 83, cf. Punishments, thesis p. 15.
3. Ibid., Pamphlets 1, 8, 9, 16, pp. 10, 85, 105, 184 respectively.
4. Ibid., Pamphlets 12, 13, 14, pp. 131, 135, 159 respectively.

the brutes, he maintained, were invulnerable upon this point. He showed by reference to Raynaldus, Farinacius, Caballus and other authorities that even suspicion of guilt, was enough for vengeance to be used; also, that injury to honor was a personal matter, and was, therefore, always immediate and permanent. This made Guido's vengeance not "Ex Intervallo", also it made it justifiable. He therefore had a perfect right to assemble help especially as he only meant to disfigure and not kill his wife.¹

Bottini advanced his opinions to combat these arguments. He stated homicide was not justifiable for adultery, unless the offenders were actually detected in the act; then the vengeance should be immediate. Guido forfeited his right to personal vengeance because he called in the law and sought public adjustment. This pointed to the suggestion that the greed for the dowry restoration animated him rather than revenge for his wounded honor.²

The question of the homicides of the Comparini was the next point to be decided. The Procurator Pauperum decided that Guido was equally dishonored by them as he was by his wife. They disowned Pompilia, and if she had such low origin as they proclaimed, the injury was still worse. Further, they encouraged her to poison and forsake Guido; they received her back in their home and the baby; thus condoning the offence of adultery. Vengeance then was much deserved by this couple.³

But the defense argued the question of rights, as existent between man and wife, does not extend to any outside person. The law forbade private vengeance, so that Guido's resentment had sought an illegal issue. The Abate Paolo would not have allowed Pompilia to reside with her parents had he thought

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., Pamphlets 1, 2, 8, 9, 16, pp. 10, 22, 85, 105, 184, respectively
2. Ibid., Pamphlets 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, pp. 50, 57, 131, 135, 159 respectively.
3. Ibid., Pamphlets 1, 2, 8, 16, pp. 10, 22, 85, 184 respectively.

they were accessories to the adultery offence. (Guido also knew she was to stay with the Comparini). In 1695 Pietro made a will in favor of Pompilia evidently disbelieving the charge against her; and Violante in all probability opened the door to Caponsacchi's supposed call because she owed him gratitude for helping Pompilia^d in her need.¹

With reference to the aggravating circumstances attached to the charge against Guido, notably the assembling of armed men; the carrying of arms; vengeance against people with whom a lawsuit was pending; the slaying of a person when under the custody of the law and in their own home; Archangeli² claimed the 'defence of honor' as a complete answer to all the charges.

But the Fisco contended, that by the seventy-fifth Constitution of Sixtus, and the Banns of the Governor, the assembling of four or more armed men called for the penalty of death. Likewise, the carrying of arms was not only prohibited by the Constitution of Alexander VIII, but the prohibition extended to the retention, manufacture, or introduction of arms, into the Ecclesiastical State under any pretext. Guido was engaged in a lawsuit with the Comparini concerning the dowry, he was therefore liable to the extreme penalty for the homicides under the Constitution of Alexander VI. The last aggravating circumstance, was the invasion of the home, where Pompilia was presumably under the "custody of the law", and therefore should have been immune from danger. Guido had also used disguise, and the pretence of a letter to be delivered, which made the offence more sinister in character.³

Archangeli's defense of the socci, was based upon the assumption that they were mere auxiliaries; that Domenico and Francisus were foreigners

1. Hodell, *Op. Cit.*, Pamphlets 5, 13, pp. 50, 135 respectively.

2. *Ibid.*, Pamphlets 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 16, pp. 10, 22, 33, 85, 105, 184 respectively.

3. *Ibid.*, Pamphlets 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, pp. 50, 57, 131, 135, 159 respectively.

and minors; that Elsius although present, took no part in the homicides.¹

The Convent of Convertites (the St. Maria Magdalena) was founded by Leo X, and was allowed by Statute to claim the property of dissolute women if they died intestate, or, if they did not leave at least one fourth of their property to the Convent.²

But Lamparelli the Procurator Charitates, states, that "the memory of Francesca Pompilia should be absolutely freed from the crime of adultery, unjustly and too bitterly fastened upon her, by her husband, and that it should be declared by a definite decree, that she has not violated her marriage vow."

He succeeded in obtaining the Instrument of Final Decree, on September 9th, 1698, in the "Eighth year of the Pontificate of the Most Holy Father in Christ, and of our Divine Lord Innocent XII, Pope by Divine Providence."³

Browning's treatment of the lawyers in The Ring and the Book, is quite different in tone from the rest of the poem. Gost comments upon this very indignantly. He asserts, that the ridicule and irony ^{cast} upon these men, is utterly misplaced; that in their official capacity both lawyers were efficient and zealous. Further, their integrity was so great, that they "merited the highest praise"⁴

Not only did the poet amuse the public by his travesties of these legal men, but many other writers have seen fit to re-echo his sentiments, and thus perpetrated the falsities. As a man who can speak authoritatively of law, Gost declares that the injustice has been caused, by Browning's lack of real knowledge concerning legal matters.

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1. Hedell, Op. Cit., Pamphlets, 2, 3, 9, 16, pp. 22, 33, 105, 184 respectively.
 2. Gost, Op. Cit., pp. 560 - 561. (Browning confuses this convent with that of La Scaletta throughout The Ring and the Book).
 3. Hedell, Op. Cit., pp. 192 - 206.
 4. Gost, Op. Cit., p. 15.

In his Essay on the Source Book, Hodell points out the fact that Browning was assured when reading the pamphlets, that the lawyers engaged upon the case were entirely devoid of sympathy, or any other human sentiment. Further, he asserts their professional law was wielded "as a cunning machine, devised for defeating real equity and justice"; also, that though they were presenting the case, their knowledge of the true circumstances was both meagre and vague.¹

Browning has created the character of the Procurator Pauperum (Archangeli) in the poem The Ring and the Book as that of a fussy little pedant, with a mental elasticity that rebounded quickly from the legal arguments needed to defend his clients, back to the personal domesticities connected with his supper, and his son's attainments, of which latter the lawyer was inordinately proud.

The consequence is shown, in a series of remarks, in which the grotesque predominates. These are directed towards his little Giacinto, his son and heir, a character which is absolutely fictitious. Mingled with the talk, constant surmises as to the relative niceties produced by a flavoring of fennel or parsley, in the dish of fried liver which is to be served at supper time, bubble forth with ridiculous effect. Now and again he seems enchanted with the skill and sarcasm he intends to put into his arguments, so as to confuse Bottini his rival.

His speeches are interspersed thickly, with the Latin from the Source Book, some of which is the actual Latin used by the historic Archangeli. He refers constantly to the "Gracchus Code", but this also must be a creation of the poet's, as it has no existence among the recognized law compilations.²

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 271 - 272.

2. Cost, Op. Cit., p. 45.

Modell states that of all the grotesque figures that are to be found in other works by the same author, none can compare with that of Archangeli. Even his letter used by the poet in the last book, is caricatured in order to make evident the lawyer's "rascality".¹

His portrayal of the Advocate of the Fisc (Bottini), shows a man animated by professional pride and erudition. In the monologue of The Ring and the Book the Fisc quotes quite fluently from the Source Book Latin, from mythology, history, and literature. But, it is ^{perfectly} perfectly easy for the reader to understand the poet's hostility and irony, beneath the vivid descriptions.²

Modell attributes this attitude on the author's part, to the innate chivalry which Browning had for all women; and the inconsistency in Bottini's arguments concerning Pompilia's purity and womanhood becomes an offence, to the writer of "O Lyric Love", who believed that woman was part angel and that even her very smile was a benediction. In the Fisc's orations, the most damaging admissions were allowed, such as the love letters, the opiate, and kissings, until a chain of sordid guilt was forged against the fair fame of Pompilia, whose cause he was supposed to espouse. In view of this, Modell says Browning "used his irony and laughter to cement the lawyers together".

The former writer (Modell), however, points out that Bottini's task after all was not to prove Pompilia chaste, but to prove that Guido had sought revenge in a brutal and illegal way, and was, therefore, meriting the ultimate punishment of death. Archangeli's chief aim was to assert the justice of Guido's action under the defence of "the honor cause".³

When speaking of the lawyers, Sir Frederick Treves agrees with Browning, that the men are but nonentities. All Archangeli's interest is

1. Modell, Op. Cit., p. 272, cf. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. XII, ll. 239-260.

2. Ibid., p. 273.

3. Ibid., pp. 272 - 273.

centred in his son and the feast, which is to celebrate the child's eighth birthday. He considers the speech of the Procurator Pauperum (Archangeli), "a chaotic jumble of legal references and citations"; and far from being in the nature of a defence, it is "a pretentious collection of forensic quibblings, babbled forth by a man of little mind and less understanding". The same critic says, the Fise (Bottini) is more "pretentious less disconnected, and at the same time, more florid and verbose."¹

Another author says, speaking of the monologue in The Ring and the Book, devoted to Archangeli, "the effect is very comic, though the alternation or intermixture of lawyer's Latin and domestic arrangements, produces something which is certainly, and perhaps happily, without parallel in poetry."²

There is no doubt but what Browning has made a decided contrast between the beautiful monologue which contains Pompilia's story, and the idealistic soliloquy of the Pope, by the insertion of the two books representing the mediums of the law. This was probably intentional, as the poet wished in his story to emphasize the many aspects of life, in which the grave and grotesque, the tragic and humorous, are inextricably intermingled.

It would be impossible to read the speech of the Procurator Pauperum, without realizing at once, that the poet's aim was to cause amusement and ridicule, against the lawyer. Even the little boy's name is absurd, for his father addresses him by a new diminutive every time, and so such monstrosities are produced as Cinuzzo, Cinucciatolo, Giacinto, etc.³

Equally, the humorous note is struck when the Procurator pauses in his most scholarly harangues to make some remark about the evening's feast. The grandfather interests him as one who will probably leave his son a portion of

1. Treves, Op. Cit., pp. 283 - 286.

2. An Introduction to the Study of Browning, Arthur Symonds, London, J.M.Dent & Co. 29 and 30 Bedford St., W. C., 1906. p. 163.

3. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, cf. l. 46, also l. 290.

wealth, so he wonders if dainties should be partaken by the old man for;

"Last June he had a sort of strangling -- bah!
He's his own master, and his will is made.
So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly
As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace!"¹

Whilst discussing some point in law enacted in the time of Farinacci,
he makes a ludicrous ending by the statement:-

"Law is the pork substratum of the fry,
Goose-foot and cork's-comb are Latinity."²

The cold weather makes him think of Giacinto and his mind takes a
leap Guido-ward, hence,

"I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards
The precious throat on which so much depends!
Guido must be all goose-flesh in his hole,
Despite the prison-straw; had Carnival
For captives! no sliced fry for him, poor Count!"^{3 4}

At the conclusion of a most inflated sentiment, in which he proves
Guido's defence of honor just a natural instinct which may be found alike in
bird, beast, and insect, the thought of flav'orings in the evening meal causes
his thoughts to stray, he reflects:-

"Nothing stings
Fried liver out of its monotony
Of riches, like a root of fennel, chopped
Fine with the parsley."⁵

Even the Scriptures are not immune, for the remembrance of Israel's
complaints when travelling from Egypt to Canaan, away from Pharaoh's bonds, makes
him recall the fact that

("One melon had improved our soup;
But did not Cinocino need the rind
To make a boat with? So I seem to think.")⁶

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, ll. 122 - 125.

2. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 152 - 153.

3. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 280 - 284.

4. The reference to the Carnival here is incorrect, for the real Archangeli's speech
was written in January, and Browning makes it February. Cock, Op. Cit.,
p. 167, Note 283.

5. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, ll. 543 - 546.

6. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 728 - 730.

Apart from the gastronomic humors of Archangeli, the poet makes him absurd in his conceit. He is convinced that the Creator has ^{personally} helped to make him greater than "Old Bachelor Bottinius," by staging the murder and its necessary defence for his special benefit. He exclaims, "

"Now, how good God is! How falls plumb to point
This murder, gives me Guido to defend
Now, of days & the year, just when the boy
Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
For some such illustration from his sire,
Stimulus to himself! One might wait years
And never find the chance which now finds me!
The fact is, there's a blessing on the hearth,
A special providence for fatherhood!"¹

Even the approval of God is not enough to satisfy his ambition; he must arouse the Pope's curiosity, and so will use his eloquence, which he knows will ^{outrival} outrival Bottini, (if only to celebrate Cinotto's birthday), in such a way, that his Eminence will ask:-

"What's this
Rolling from out the restrum, as a gust
O' the Pro Milone, had been prisoned there,
And rattled Rome awake!"²

Inspired by jealousy (a creation of the poet's), the Procurator Fauperum gives a vivid picture of his rival; (Bottini). He designates him as:-

"A lean gutted hectic rascal, fine
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends
'Tis ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.
He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,
Lets Latin glance off as he makes appeal
To saint that's somewhere in the ceiling top".³

He then describes Bottini as he sits in his study, composing his defence of Pompilia, and rehearsing the memorials to himself, he hears:-

"The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes, neck shot forth,
I see him strain on tip-toe, soar and pour
Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at all -
Perorate in the air, then quick to press
With the product! What abuse of type and sheet!"⁴

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, ll. 75 - 83.

2. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 99 - 102. (Pro Milone, Cicero's great speech in defence of Milo on a charge of murder).

3. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 224 - 229.

4. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 236 - 242.

The Advocate Spreti, who did some very excellent work in the trial, is spoken about in "very depreciating way" by Archangeli. The latter decides that Spreti can do the dull parts of the Memorial, while he himself will write the brilliant parts, and employ the "clever tricks of fence". Meantime

"My subordinate, young Spreti, now,
Pedant and prig - he'll pant away at proof,
That's his way!"¹

Much of the pleading employed in the monologue is actually used by the historic Procurator, and is taken directly from the Source Book. But the monologue is filled with Latinisms, quotations from Roman authorities, Biblical precedents and arguments, all jumbled together in a bombastic way, to cause confusion and dismay to his opposing counsel.²

The ingenious explanation given on behalf of Guido, who waited a week in Rome before attempting the murder, is worthy of note. This procrastination the lawyer attributes to his client's zeal and reverence for the feasts at "Natal Time". With righteous indignation he demands:-

"Is no religion left?
No care for aught held holy by the Church?
. must we go prosecute
Secular business on a sacred day!"³

His comment upon the five aggravations to the murder charge, that Bottini is advancing, is that they are:-

"Parasite-growth upon mere murder's back".

and says:-

"We summarily might dispose of such
By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some skit -
So, since there's proved no crime to aggravate,
A fiao for your aggravations, Fisco!"⁴

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. VIII, ll. 275 - 277.
2. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 271 - 272.
3. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, ll. 1075 - 1079.
4. Ibid, Bk. VIII, ll. 1111 - 1115.

His defence is based upon the demand that Guido has the right accorded to primitive man, to kill his adulterous wife, notwithstanding all the restrictions imposed by civilization^{tion} and law, in later times. If this right is not recognized, then women will sin with impunity.

During the monologue, Archangeli quotes Farinacci as his Gamabiel at whose feet he sat, but this must be an anachronism, for Farinacci died in 1631, and thus the lawyer could not have been one of his pupils.¹

His speech when ended, is put aside in view of the supper, and he congratulates himself upon the work for:-

"Landed and stranded lies my very speech
.....
Leviathan into the nose whereof
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with thorn,
And have given him to my maidens for a play!
I' the rough: tomorrow I review my piece,
Tame here and there undue floridity.
Its hard: you have to plead before these priests
And poke at them with Scripture, or you pass
For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant
O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes
By way of illustration of the law."

Thus the Procurator passes, a loving father, an absurd epicure, a rank hypocrite, who persuades himself that Providence is ruling the events in the terrestrial spheres for the special privilege of himself and his family.

In the Advocate of the Fisc, Browning presents another absurdity. Bottini makes eloquent appeals with a view to aiding Pompilia. But in his mean mundane mind, he has condemned her as guilty of the worst charges Guido names. Therefore, whilst pretending to show the chastity and innocence of his client, he is really giving a confession of depravity, and purposely assumes her wrongdoing as true, so that he may have something about which he can argue. For otherwise,

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. VIII, ll. 327 - 329.
2. Ibid., Bk. VIII, ll. 1738 - 1749.

"Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything,
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,
Reason away, and shew his skill about!"¹

He gives a most verbose introduction to impress the judges, then depicts Pompilia as she was in life, "a faultless nature in a flawless form."²

"Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife, -
Crown the ideal in our earth at last!"³

Using Horace to aid him, he tells how in her girlhood, she doubtless possessed,

"Melting wiles, delicioussest deceits
The whole redoubted armoury of love."⁴

Then comes "advancing Hymen", followed by

"Pompilian plaint
Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire."⁵

later,

"The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of femininity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck."⁶

Finally,

"She laudable sees all,
Searches the best out and selects the same."
.....
"Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,
..... but a man of mark,
A priest, dost hear? Why then, submit thyself!
Priest, ay - and very phoenix of such fowl,⁷
Well born, of culture, young and vigorous."

Pompilia then flees to spare Guido the sin of killing her, for,

"Shall he effect his crime and lose his soul?
No, dictates duty to a loving wife!"⁸

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1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. IX, ll. 1440 - 1442.
 2. Ibid, Bk. IX, l. 195.
 3. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 200 - 210.
 4. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 231 - 232.
 5. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 265 - 266.
 6. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 298 - 301.
 7. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 336 - 351.
 8. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 419 - 420.

Bottini goes on to prove that now Pompilia must detain Caponsacchi by her side, so,

"plied
Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,
The witchery of gesture, spell of word,
Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,
Yea stranger, as a champion on her side."

"From all of which, I deduce - the lady here
Was bound to proffer nothing short of love
To the priest whose service was to save her."¹

This, of course, led to

"What enemies allege, were more than words,
Deeds - meetings at the window, twilight trysts,
Nocturnal entertainments in the dim
Old labyrinthine palace."²

When Pompilia actually left her husband, Bottini asks, who so proper witness as a priest?"³ Then on the journey, it was but natural to have a kiss, "sagely and sisterly administered",⁴ just to keep Caponsacchi rewarded for his deeds!

The Castelnuovo incident he explains as a case where:-

"Nature imperiously exacts her due,
Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak:
Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon,
Gives hopes alike and fears a breathing-while."

.....
"Why curb arder here?
How can the priest but pity whom he saved?
And pity is so near to love, and love
So neighborly to all unreasonableness!"⁵

To excuse any wrong doing that may have occurred, he learnedly expounds the different degrees in sinning, for

"Pagans held, we know,
Man always ought to aim at good and truth,
.....

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. IX, ll. 436 - 439, and 509 - 511.
2. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 558 - 561.
3. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 594.
4. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 679 - 680.
5. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 733 - 755.

"But the Pagan yoke was light;
Little sin, by none at all,
Were properly condemned for great; but great,
By greater, dwindles into small again.
Now, what greatest sin of womanhood?
That which unwomans it, abolishes
The nature of the woman, - impudence.
Who contradicts me here? Concede me, then,
Whatever friendly fault may interpose
To save the sex from self-abolishment
Is three-parts on the way to virtue's rank!"¹

Very emphatically he assures his judges, that Pompilia must have written the letter to the Abate Paolo, but, finding later that by her words she had implicated her pseudo-parents, she thought it best to disown the let entirely. She was wiser even than Nero who regretted that he had learned to write, for

"Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried
To read or write I never learned at all!"

Equally insinuating, was the comment he made on his own remark,
"O splendidly mendacious!"²

His unique method of defence causes him to state that Caponsacchi visited Pompilia when she was staying with her parents, quite as a natural thing.

" 'Tis said,
When nights are lone and company is rare,
His visitations brighten winter up."

.....
"He was lonely too,
He, too, must need his recreative hour.
Shall it amaze the philosophic mind
If he, long went the empurpled cup to quaff,
Have feminine society at will,
Being debarred abruptly from all drink
Save at the spring which Adam used for wine,
Dreads harm to just the health he hoped to guard,
And, trying abstinence, gains malady!"³

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. IX, ll. 779 - 799.

2. Ibid., Bk. IX, ll. 836 - 838.

3. Ibid., Bk. IX, ll. 1249 - 1267.

His description and comment on the baby's birth is very absurd, he apostrophises the father, and assures him Pompilia has repaid him with profuse expenditure for all his ill treatment. He says:-

"Pompilia scorns to have the old year end
Without a present shall ring in the new -
Bestows on her too parsimonious lord
An infant for the apple of his eye,
Care of his heart, and crown completing life,
True summum bonum of the earthly lot!"¹

A real studied insult he offers his client, when discussing the father of the babe,

"The babe is handled here from that to this.
Whose the babe? Guido's lamb!
. Nay but of the priest!"

.....
"Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,
The babe in question neither took the name
Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor
Guiseppe, from the sire potential, but
Gaetano - last saint of our hierarchy,
And newest namer for a thing so new!"²

His explanation of the death-bed confessions, is utterly at variance with the poet's interpretation of Pompilia's character, and illustrates fully why Browning felt as he did towards the man, who took such a low view of the "Madonna" the poet loved to describe. Bottini in the monologue says:-

"For to the last Pompilia played her part,
Used the right means to the permissible end,
And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,
She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,
Deigned, for his sake, the catastrophe,
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace
Whereby she told her story to the world."³

.....
"Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself?"
.....

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. IX, ll. 1315 - 1320.
2. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 1332 - 1334, and 1367 + 1372.
3. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 1417 - 1424.

"'Twas charity, in her so circumstanced,
To spend the last breath in one effort more
For universal good of friend and foe:
And, - by pretending utter innocence,
May, freedom from each foible we forgive, -
Re-integrate - not solely her own fame,
But do the like kind office for the priest."¹

In his last effort he says:-

"She confessed before she talked!
The Sacrament obliterates the sin.
What is not, - was not, therefore, in a sense,
Let Molinists distinguish, 'Souls washed white
But red once, still shew pinkish to the eye!'"

Then he states, referring to the relegation of Caponsacchi,

"If he be taxed with guilt,
How can you call Pempili's innocent!"²

At the completion of the speech, the naive conceit of the man is shown, (as Browning saw him), in the closing words:-

"There's my oration - much exceeds in length
That famed pansygyric of Isocrates,
They say it took him fifteen years to pen.
But all these ancients could say anything!
He put in just what rushed into his head,
While I shall have to prune and pare and print.
This comes of being born in modern times
With priests for auditory. Still it pays."³

1. The Ring and the Book, Op. Cit., Bk. IX, ll. 1457 - 1472.
2. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 1496 - 1500, and 1522 - 1523.
3. Ibid, Bk. IX, ll. 1572 - 1579.

CHAPTER IV

THE POPE

"There sits the Pope, his thoughts for company;
Grave but not sad, - nay, something like a cheer
Leaves the lips free to be benevolent,
Which, all day long, did duty firm and fast."

(The Ring and the Book, Bk. I,
ll. 1240 - 1243)

At the beginning of the seventeenth century,¹ Rome, sobered by the Counter-Reformation, appeared decorous and spiritual at least, superficially. But a sub-strata of cupidity and intrigue, still held a prominent place among her adherents.

In order to impress and overawe the populace, immense retinues and lavish fetes were indulged in, by the Cardinals. Every art was encouraged such as literature, architecture, painting and music. Many of the ornate facades, beautiful fountains, and decorative pillars, were erected at this period. In Florence great attention and interest was displayed in the Opera, now appearing on the stage for the first time.

^{Hitherto}
Hitherto Spanish rules of decorum had prevailed, but these were being superseded by French manners and customs in most of the European Courts, and this meant a slackening of etiquette, greater gaiety in dress, and more intimate intercourse between the opposite sexes.

Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle were entirely out of date, and new doctrines and creeds were constantly originating, each of which were adopted by some members of the populace. One of these doctrines which enunciated as

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1. (a) Italy (1494-1790), Mrs. H. M. Vernon (K. Dorothea Swart), Cambridge University Press, 1909, pp. 281 - 319.
 - (b) The History of the Popes (during the last four centuries), Leopold Van Ranke. (Mrs. Foster's translation revised in accordance with the latest German edition by G. H. Dennis), London, George Bell & Sons, 1908; Printed by William Clowes & Sons Ltd., London and Beccles, Vol. II, pp. 354 - 472; Vol. III, pp. 423 - 453.

its chief units, freedom of thought, and reliance upon human reason, brought its advocate Giordano Bruno (1550-1600) to the stake, where he was publicly burnt.¹

Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) produced a book called "Utopia" (the city of the Sun). This appeared almost as if its material had been antedated a couple of centuries, for it insisted upon a four hours working day, and State regulation of marriage. The Inquisition rewarded Campanella by an imprisonment which lasted twenty-seven years.²

A new influence called "Baroque" then appeared. This affected for a period all forms of art and literature, even Guarini and Pallavicini showed traces in their writings. Its chief characteristic was a gross exaggeration in all and every phase. The taint spread all over Europe. In France its devotees were called the "Frocioux"; in England they were known as the "Euphuists", whilst in Italy they were designated as the "Marinists". Their style was especially pleasing to the Jesuits, whose teachings and preachings became filled with metaphors and superfluous conceits.

Its originator was Gianbattista Marino³ (1569-1625), and he was accorded great honor both in France and Italy. In order to show his appreciation of the homage yielded to him, he wrote an epic called "Adonis". Shakespeare's work under the same heading, is simplicity itself compared with that of Marino.

An underlying grossness of vice and sensuality suggesting, even if not naming evil deeds, is covered over with a veneer of allegorical form. Strangely enough all academies and writers were attracted by this insidious

1. Vernon, Op. Cit., p. 283.

2. Ibid, p. 284.

3. For use by Browning in Poem The Ring and the Book. See Bk. VI, l. 333, and ll. 457 - 458.

style. Men such as Milton, Dryden, Racine and Boileau all show its traces in their work at this period.

Traces of the "Baroque period", were left in the false decorations carried out in architecture and paintings, which are characterized by an intense and ponderous realism.

The colonnade of St. Peter's, many fountains and much sculpture were left as tokens of the Baroque style by Bernini, whose power as a genius survived the general tendency of erudities.

One poet alone had the temerity to resist the influence of Marino; this was Alessandro Tassoni, who not only abstained from adopting the prevailing fashion, but wrote a comic poem which was a parody upon the favorite epic "Adone".¹

The dominant factor in all Europe at this time, was Louis XIV, who was aiming to make himself not only supreme in political and social matters, but to compel the French church to yield him obedience to the detriment of the Pope. The Papacy itself was becoming undermined in many directions.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, it had become the custom to bestow preferment upon men of superior birth, only. This was due to the Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667) who decided, that as an earthly potentate filled his court with men of rank, so it was only becoming and probably pleasing to God, to have the noble great employed in His service.

This led to the downfall of many of the conventual buildings, for the secular clergy were thus preferred to the conventuals. Consequently, as few distinguished men entered the monastic life, the monasteries became filled with those who devoted their time to unspirituality and violent licentiousness. So great were the scandals that followed, that many conventual buildings were

1. Vernon, Op. Cit., pp. 288 - 295.

dissolved.

The character of the Church itself had also changed; instead of the pursuit of sanctity, there was a definite striving after temporal pleasures and worldly power and gain. In 1640 - 1650 the churches actually allowed comedies to be performed within their precincts during Lent, and sermons became mere occasions on desired patrons, rather than admonitions.

Even the Jesuits deteriorated at this time, as they relaxed their hitherto rigid laws of initiation, and their ranks were swelled by all office and power seekers. The confessional was subordinated to the general evil, and wealth and patronage could obtain absolutioⁿ and forgiveness without any reserve.¹

Just at this time, a new sect arose called the "Jansenists". Its founders were two students from Louvain, who were anxious to find the true "means of Grace": Their authority was founded upon St. Augustine, and Cornelius Jansen of Holland, wrote a book in which he boldly attacked the Jesuits, and revived interest in "the remission of sins and the means of grace." He personally believed in, and taught, that the life of theoretical ascetism^{CLSM} was the ideal; his co-worker, however, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, (a Gascon by birth), advocated a life of practical ascetism.^{CLSM}

Naturally the Jesuits did not view this sect with much favor. Jansen however, died before his book was published, but Duvergier was imprisoned for many years, as a heretic.

Every class was attracted by the new doctrines. Among its followers were priests, scholars, physicians and nobles of high rank, and its cult spread rapidly in France, Spain, the Netherlands and Rome itself. In the reign of

1. Ranke, Op. Cit., Vol. III, pp. 423 - 435.

Innocent X as pontiff, the Jansenists were even allowed to preach from the pulpit on several occasions.

Later, however, a question arose, which implicated the direct power and authority of the Papacy, and Pope Alexander VII (1655 - 1667) condemned five points in their teaching as heretical. So strongly did the Jansenists hold their position, that Clement IX (1667 - 1669) his successor, had to waive the question, and the decree against them remained ineffective, whilst Rome established undoubtedly a precedent, whereby her decision was not stable.¹

Early in the seventeenth century the Papacy had insisted upon her claim to temporal power, but the various States began to resent this interference, and marriage questions, criminal cases and even matters of heresy, were often decided without any reference to the Church's authority, much to the chagrin of the papal nuncios.

In 1648 representatives of the Pope were present at the Peace of Westphalia, but at the Peace of Pyrennes 1659, the Papal messengers were not even notified. By degrees the States assumed their independence and claimed the right of self-government in affairs both civic and ecclesiastical.²

One of the greatest abuses of the period within the pontifical circles, was the prevalence of "Nepotism". This involved a system of annuitants who drained the resources of the Church, using her revenues and benefits for personal enrichments and gain.³

France was one of the most serious obstacles and problems to the papacy at this time, as she insisted upon making her own rules for the observance of the clergy, and all Rome could do, was to acquiesce.

1. Ranke, Op. Cit., Vol. II, pp. 434 - 448.

2. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 449 - 453.

3. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 457 - 459.

In 1676, Pope Innocent XI succeeded to the papal chair. This divine was well known on account of his placidity and gentleness; he was, however, extremely conscientious, and commenced attacking abuses within the Church, regardless of consequences. He succeeded in averting a state of public bankruptcy, which the spoliations of his predecessors had almost precipitated. Nepotism also received a severe check, under his administration, preferments were given to public servants, the general tax was reduced from four per cent to three.

One of Innocent's attempts at reform resulted in a warning being issued to Louis XIV, who was asked as a servant of the mother church, to beware how he usurped her prerogatives or interfered with her policies, lest his kingdom should receive corresponding punishments.

Louis' reply, was the meeting at St. Germain, where, aided by Bossuet, he tried to limit "the autocracy of the Roman Pontiff." The king had demanded the "regale", (i.e. the emoluments) from all benefices during vacancies, but the papacy declared this illegal. Hence, four resolutions were drawn up and passed by the assembly, each of which had as its ultimate goal, the limitation of the Pope's power.

The first stated, that the sovereigns were not subject to the Pope in temporal matters, neither could he depose them, nor tamper with the allegiance oaths of loyal subjects. Secondly, a general council was superior to the Pope. Thirdly, the Papal power was subject to the regulations of the Council, and the Pope must accept the rules of the Gallican Church. Fourthly, that Papal decisions were not irrevocable, except by consent of the universal church.

These restrictions were embodied as "Articles of Faith", and issued in book form, and no degrees in law or theology were conferred in France, unless the applicant swore to maintain these rubrics.

But the Pope was able to demonstrate his authority by refusing to grant spiritual institution to those who were thus installed. They were able to hold the positions and collect the revenues, but as they were not ordained they could exercise no spiritual functions in the diocese. Consequently, many hundreds of benefices were left destitute of clergy.¹

This fight for supremacy of authority, caused a great amount of petty warfare between France and the papal representatives.

In 1687, the French ambassador entered Rome, and with an armed force to support him, claimed the "right of asylum". As this privilege had been abolished, the Pope publicly censured him, and later interdicted the Roman Church where he had attended high mass.

The Pope also, strange to say, helped the Protestant cause, as he raised subsidies to assist William III who was opposing Louis XIV on the river Rhine; aid was also given to Austria in her struggle against the Turks. The assistance given to the Protestant cause brought its own reward, as it helped to maintain the "balance of power" in Europe, against the encroachments of Louis XIV.²

In 1689 the new pontiff Alexander VIII declared the 1682 decrees "null and void."³ This dignitary was not distinguished in the world of letters, but was very clever and far-seeing in financial matters. The French king thought it advisable to resume at least a semblance of friendship with Rome, so he restored Avignon to the Papal authorities as he had deprived them of that district in 1662, after some fancied insult to the French ambassador. Furthermore,

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1. Europe (1598-1715). Henry Offley Wakeman M.A., Period V, New York, Macmillan Company, London, Macmillan Company Ltd., 1911, Norwood Press, J.S. Cushing & Co., Berwick & Smith, Norwood, Mass, U.S.A., pp. 248 - 251.
 2. Ranke, Op. Cit., Vol. II, pp. 460 - 467.
 3. Ibid, Vol. II, p. 468.

in 1689,¹ Louis upheld Rome in her claim "to refuse the right of asylum."

Alexander VIII was pliable, gentle, easy of access, upright in business and had a great objection to intrigue. By his financial schemes he relieved the country to the extent of two hundred thousand scudi, yet, whilst not encouraging nepotism, he showed affection to his kindred, and was thereby subjected to much criticism.²

In 1691 Antonio Pignatelli succeeded Alexander VIII as Pope Innocent XII. The French needed a man of peace, and after many weary weeks in the conclave it was decided that Antonio would suit their purpose, and would probably ensure conciliation between the French monarch and the Papacy.³

Domenico Contrarini, an ambassador stationed at Rome, gives direct information concerning Innocent XII. From him it is learned, that Antonio Pignatelli was born in 1615, that he was of Neapolitan descent, and belonged to the ducal house of Montelione. Quite early in life, he became a prelate, and held positions in Urbino, Malta and finally in Perugia as governor. As none of these positions held much promise of promotion, Antonio had almost decided to resign his profession.

A change, however, occurred. He was sent to Florence as Nuncio, and then for eight years administered as Nuncio in Poland, and later acted in the same capacity in Germany. This usually meant a direct path to the Cardinal's hat. But some misadventure must have happened, for Antonio was recalled and sent into obscurity as Bishop of Lezze, at the extreme boundaries of Naples.

Instead of protesting as his friends expected, this change was accepted very quietly by the Bishop, who returned thanks for the easy path he would have in life in his new capacity.

1. (a) Vernon, *Op. Cit.*, p. 399.
(b) Wakeman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 207.

2. Ranke, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, p. 367; Report by Giovanni Lando, (Envoy).

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 468.

Contarini (who wrote the report) did not know whom to blame for this set-back, and attributed it to Clement IX (1667 - 1669). Roman authorities however maintain, that both his banishment and recall were due to Clement X (1669 - 1676).

Cardinal Alteri then created him as "maesti di camera", to his uncle, and Innocent XI (1676 - 1689) confirmed him in this position upon assuming the pontificate.

Now his career advanced in the right direction. In 1681 he was made Cardinal, then created Bishop of Faenza, later, Legate of Bologna and then Archbishop of Naples.

After the death of Innocent XI, it was considered in the conclave whether Antonio should become Pope. The choice, however, fell upon the Venetian, Pietro Ottoboni (Alexander VIII). But when the death of the latter occurred, the French Cardinals declared for Antonio, despite the fact that he was of Neapolitan lineage. It took five months before his nomination was effected, but the appointment carried with it the recommendation that "he was a mild and peaceable man."

Innocent XII confirmed Albani and Panciatichi¹ in their offices, respectively, as Secretary of briefs, and Datary, whilst Spada was nominated as Secretary of State with public approval. But the nephews of Alexander (the former Pope) were not confirmed afresh, as Innocent XII meant to abolish nepotism, as his forerunner Innocent XI did. His government was modelled upon that of the latter, but "he refrained from the great austerity and harshness", which in the former Innocent had been the cause of much disapproval.

Therefore, he surpassed his model in clemency, and became noted for the easy way in which the poor were able to obtain access to his presence. Although

1. This was a relative to the Abate Panciatichi mentioned in Browning's poem, Bk. XI, l. 2.

the applicant did not always gain his desire, it had a noticeable effect upon the injustice of the judges and nobles, who were never quite sure what might reach the ears of the pontiff in these audiences.¹

Negotiations had been carried on for the space of two years between France and the Papacy with regard to the four decrees issued in 1682. Finally it was declared by the French clergy that all measures resolved upon, in the 1682 meeting should be considered as non-existent and unsaid. Louis XIV also wrote a retraction (no doubt under the influence of Madame Maintenon) of the Edict containing the four articles.²

Shortly after this, a Bull was issued against nepotism, and twelve thousand scudi only was the amount allowed, for the benefits or revenues to be spent upon kinsmen. No appointments were to be sold, and over a million scudi which had been advanced for that purpose, was returned to its owners.

The writer says, "He (the Pope) thus deprived gold of its power, and made it possible once more for virtue to attain the highest places. The Pope has nothing in his thoughts but God, the poor, and the reform of abuses. He lives in abstemious retirement and devotes every hour to his duties without consideration of his health. In his habits he is most blameless, most conscientious, and disinterested, nor does he seek to enrich his own kindred. He is full of love to the poor, and is endowed with all the qualities that could be desired for the head of the Church."

The chief criticism that the writer advances adversely, is that the Pope does not always act for himself, if it were not for this one drawback he "would become one of the finest of popes." Power was thereby left in the

1. Hanka, Op. Cit., Vol. III, pp. 389 - 392. Report by Domenico Contarini (in Venetian Archives 18 pages).

2. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 468 - 469.

hands of the ministers, as there were no nephews to maintain the honor of the house. The craft of these representatives who knew all the diplomatic schemes well, was employed in hiding the Pope's good qualities, and in outwitting his zeal and efforts at reform. At last it was arranged to make him concentrate upon the new Lateran hospital, then in course of erection, and thus allow his philanthropy a safe outlet. "That nail effectually stopped the Pope's eager progress in reform", says the writer. The same author tells that the pontiff saved nearly two million scudi in his treasury, and is confident that his intentions were those of absolute purity and integrity; he also maintains that his character in all respects was irreproachable and blameless.¹

Niccolò Erizzo (ambassador) who was in Rome during the pontificate of Innocent XII, tells us definitely that "Innocent closed the abyss of nepotism"; he lightened the public burdens and did much to relieve the poor. Yet, despite this, he left a large amount in the treasury. But the cardinals became weary of him, and looked eagerly for release at his death. He on his part had very little regard or esteem for his subordinates. The prevalent opinion among his ministers was, that the Pope's attitude towards the sovereign courts was altogether "too conciliatory." His death occurred on September 27th, 1700.²

An anonymous writer in Rome at this period says of Innocent XII that he abolished useless offices, that the Jewish usurers in the Ghetto quarters were restricted by him from claiming such exorbitant interest, and the ecclesiastical fees which had been taxed to an alarming degree in the early part of the century were now relieved of these exactions.

1. Ranke, Op. Cit., Vol. III, pp. 389 - 392. (Contarini Report Op. Cit.)

2. Ibid., pp. 392 - 397. (Report from Rome by Niccolò Erizzo who was in Rome during all the Pontificate of Innocent XII, and part of the earlier years of Clement XI, 40 pages).

Innocent XII certainly held his office in idealistic esteem. He claimed that he was not the master, but merely the distributor and trustee, for all things appertaining to the Holy See, and his bounty must conform to the laws of justice, and not be confined to the enriching of kinsmen. He says regarding his own wealth, "he was beginning to be poor as a cardinal, but as a pope he became a beggar."

His bull was much opposed when published against nepotism, but once convinced that his actions were right, he was determined and energetic. At the same time he was impartial and honorable, and followed what he considered the true path in life.¹

Louis XIV had contrived his utmost to bring about a religious crusade against England and Holland, because they objected to his despotic and absolute sway on the continent of Europe. Innocent XII, like Innocent XI and Alexander VIII all defeated Louis' aims in this direction.

Yet, although it looks inconsistent it was Innocent XII who advised Charles II of Spain to bequeath his throne to the grandson of Louis XIV. Innocent had a motive for doing this. He wished to prevent Milan and Naples becoming French, and at the same time he was afraid they might fall into the Austrian power, as Austria was allied to the Protestants of the North. He argued that Louis XIV would not occupy the French throne for ever, and after his decease it would be preferable to have the Papacy in the power of a weak Spanish king rather than under the dominance of the Austrian imperialists.²

At this period owing to the decay of the Roman Catholicism, which though not so definite as to be perceptible to the uninterested was gradually

1. Ranke, Op. Cit., Vol. II, p. 471. (An anonymous correspondent writing from Rome in paper No. 146.)
2. Vernon, Op. Cit., pp. 318 - 319.

losing its influence, many sects and doctrines originated among earnest and ardent enthusiasts, who were always eager to seize upon any tenets that looked idealistic.

One of these doctrines was that of Quietism, and it fell to Innocent XII to condemn its beliefs.¹

It had been introduced into Italy from Spain where it was greatly popularized by Michael de Molinos, a Spanish priest. Molinos was born in Saragosa in 1627, he adopted the doctrines of Quietism, a method of mystical devotion, which had been inaugurated by the followers of St. Theresa (1515-1588).² It bade its adherents avoid all doctrines and sacraments, and to view the "Divine Essence" as it was. Life, feeling and action were to be set aside; and the soul set free, was to "enwrap itself in the soft and savory sleep of nothingness, wherein it receives in silence and enjoys it knows not what."

Molinos refused all offers of personal advancement, and declined to practise any of the popular austerities. When he had inculcated his theory in Rome it became very popular, especially winning among its adherents men of powerful minds and elevated thoughts. The priest himself was very attractive personally, and in his brilliant intellectual gifts.

He was lodged in the Vatican by Innocent XI, and from there taught his beliefs. He insisted on "mental devotion, daily communion and inward application of the soul to Jesus Christ and His death."

But he was a menace to the Jesuits, for he taught that confession was not at all necessary, as there was no need for intermediaries or rites between God and man. This of course the Jesuits could not allow, and just when

1. The Age of Louis XIV. Cambridge Modern History planned by the Late Lord Acton, LL.D., Edited by A.W.Gard, Litt. D., G.W.Prothero, Litt. D., Stanley Leathes, M.A., Cambridge, at the University Press, 1908, Vol. V, pp. 88 - 89.
2. For Browning's references to Molinists see pp. 44 - 46 of current chapter.

Molinos was at the height of his reputation, he was arrested. At the same time over seventy of his followers of high rank were imprisoned, and more than two hundred victims were seized by the Inquisition Courts.

Molinos had written a book called "The Spiritual Guide", published 1675 in Rome, and one of the Jesuit fathers who had spoken favorably of the work disappeared and was seen no more in Rome.

Like Galileo, Molinos was finally condemned, September 3rd, 1687, and abjured his faith. His trial had been a long one, and torture had been employed very freely. He died December 1696.

Bishop Burnet the historian (1643-1715) in William III's time said, writing from Rome December 1685, that the Jesuits pretended the conduct and teachings of Molinos were causing schisms in the church, yet he had many supporters and the Pope believed in his sanctity.

Later Fénelon¹ (1651-1715) wrote a book defending Quietism. But Bossuet (1627-1704) who was a great supporter of Louis XIV in his attempts to make the Gallican Church independent, attacked Fénelon's book, charging it with aims directly against the principles of Christianity.

Fénelon² appealed to Rome, and in 1699 Innocent XII was compelled to give his judgment against the book. Twenty-three propositions were declared erroneous, and excommunication fell upon those who either read the book or harboured it in their possessions.

St. Simon³ tells graphically how Fénelon hearing this decision, put aside the sermon he was about to deliver, and gave an able dissertation upon submission to the Church, at the same time publicly retracted his book. This

1. French divine and author, and tutor to the grandson of Louis XIV, the Duke of Burgundy.

2. For Browning's reference to Fénelon see The Ring and the Book, Bk. XII, l. 65.

3. French writer of memoirs 1675-1755, the son of a great favorite of Louis XIII, and Louis XIV.

reaction he confirmed in writing two days later.

Fénelon had written his book to declare war against the Jansenists, and he contented himself afterwards in doing all he could to injure and attack this sect.

Many monasteries were razed to the ground, notably that of Port Royal des Champs, during these fierce struggles between the Jansenists, Quietists, and Jesuits.¹

The Pope Innocent XII in The Old Yellow Book had very little to do with the actual story. It appears that Paolo Franceschini had appealed to him to have the various disputes settled in one sitting, but the request was refused. The Pope also refused the plea of clericate made by Guido to save him from death.²

Also the Second Anonymous Pamphleteer³ says the "Pope was most zealous of justice." The Cassanatense pamphlet⁴ says, when Guido's crimes were reported to the Pope, "he gave commands, that without delay, and with all vigor trial should be brought, this being a case by reason of the consequences that might arise from it, that should be examined into with very special attention.

The Source Book also tells us that the Reverend John Chadwick reporting a conversation with Browning said, "Of the old Pope of the poem too, he spoke with real affection"; he further reports that Browning had a medallion of the Pope presented to him, that he valued very highly.

1. Many references for Melines History - chief ones were:-

(a) Cook, Op. Cit., pp. 306 - 311. (b) John Inglesant, J.N. Shorthouse, A Romance, London, Macmillan & Co., 1882, pp. 331 - 333, also pp. 98 - 99.

(c) Memoirs of Louis XIV and the Regency, by Duke of Saint Simon, Translated by Gayle St. John (in three volumes), Special Introduction by Leon Vallée, Bibliothécaire à la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, St. Dunstan Society, Akron, Ohio, Vol. II, p. 87.

2. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 300, Note. 62 and p. 298, Note 42.

3. Ibid., p. 183.

4. Ibid., p. 223.

The Dublin Review criticised the poet "for making an impossible Pope, who with his liberal thought and unchurchmanlike attitude is unhistoric". It says, "the Poet evidently knew the admirable qualities of this historic Pope, and saw an opportunity to use him as the mouthpiece of his own attitude towards the tragedy. No Pope ever spoke even to himself, the theology and Church polity of this monologue."¹

The Pope is merely Browning's typical wise old man - a brother of Rabbi Ben Ezra and the Apostle St. John.

Hodell says Browning has put "priestly types in every part of the story". Guido and Caponsacchi had been among Rome's priests, Pompilia had grown up under its sway. He has endeavoured to show the Church as she influenced the lives of all people in those days. Paolo, Girolamo, Conti, Romano, Celestino and the Bishop all show the Church in its multitudinous and many-sided phases.

The poet "has presented such a church not in the spirit of satire or criticism", but to show how impossible it was for Pompilia to break away the conventions which closed her in, subject to her husband's cruelties. Browning always feared the sacrifice of "personal religion", to that of "institutional religion".

Browning's Pope is not only the head of the Church, but he is Browning's mouthpiece for expressing the poet's view on the tragedy; views which have been clarified by the able survey of life from a peaceful moment at its close.²

Through the Pope, the poet shows that man is not infallible, all are liable to errors. Doubts have been raised as to whether the pope used by

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 301, Note 62.

2. Ibid, pp. 269 - 271.

Browning is Innocent XI or Innocent XII. But it seems as if Browning must have used Innocent XII for his model, and consulted with Ranke to gain the reports of the two Envoys.

In one of these Centarini draws the reader's attention to the fact that Innocent XII tried to model his life upon that of Innocent XI, but that he was less harsh. He encouraged the poor, gave virtue opportunities of promotion, abolished nepotism, the selling of titles, lived in great retirement, and spent but little on his own needs. Burnet Bishop of Salisbury says his table "did not cost a crown a day". Centarini's Innocent XII was full of zeal for reforms and only lacked ability to act for himself in order to make him one of the world's greatest popes.

Erizzo's Innocent XII abolished nepotism, erected buildings, made harbours, managed to save money. As he was in their way and adopted "too conciliatory" an attitude towards the European sovereigns, ^{the Cardinals} they were anxious for his death.¹

The question must be decided by the Pope's attitude in the poem; does he fulfil the requirements in character and policy such as Innocent XII is depicted as possessing by his contemporaries? Apparently he does, in most of the striking characteristics.

With regard to "Nepotism", Browning's Pope is reported to have,

"peeled off that last scandal-rag
Of Nepotism",

and gave so liberally to the poor that the beholders would say with amusement, "These be the nephews of Pope Innocent!"² Other Half Rome is caused to say,

"But times are changed and nephews out of date
And favouritism unfashionable; the Pope
Said 'Render Caesar what is Caesar's due!'"³

1. Cook, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 301 - 305.

2. *The Ring and the Book*, Bk. I, ll. 318 - 323.

3. *Ibid.*, Bk. III, ll. 1475 - 1477.

With regard to Nicolo Erizzo's statement that Innocent XII "completed the structure of the harbours", in the last book of Browning's poem, one of the correspondents says in speaking of the pope,

"And the old man took daily exercise
Along the river-side; he loves to see
That Custom-house he built upon the bank, 1
For, Naples born, his tastes are maritime".

Bottini in defence of Pompilia when speaking of Guido's situation as "high and dry", says, because he has used a simile from the sea banks with its weeds and mud,

"(The Pope, we know, is Neapolitan
And relishes a sea-side simile)."2

Contarini reports Innocent XII as less harsh than Innocent XI, and definitely states the French cardinals elected him because he was "a mild and peaceful man".

Browning indicates directly that his Pope has all these characteristics, for he prophesies that Guido will not meet with the full penalty incurred by his misdeeds, because of the Pope's mildness. He says:-

"Lastly, what made all safe, the Pope was kind,
From his youth up, reluctant to take life,
If mercy might be just and yet show grace;
Much more unlikely then, in extreme age,
To take a life the general sense bade spare.
'Twas plain, that Guido would go scatheless yet."3

Guido himself when venting his anger upon the two cardinals, after receiving his death sentence, scathingly points out the reputed holiness and sanctity of the Pope then in power which was Innocent XII. He first deploras the fact that even his tonsure had not saved him, and then,

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XII, ll. 50 -53.
2. Ibid., Bk. XI, ll. 372, 373.
3. Ibid., Bk. I, ll. 289 - 294.

"The Pope moreover, this old Innocent,
Being so meek and mild and merciful,
So fond o' the poor and so fatigued of earth,
So fifty thousand devils in deepest hell!
Why must he cure us of our strange conceit
Of the angel in man's likeness, that we loved
And looked should help us at a pinch?
He help?
He pardon? Here's his mind and message - death!"¹

Centarini also tells us, that the Pope (Innocent XII) lives in great retirement and leads an abstemious life.

Similarly Browning's Pope leads a frugal existence, for the poet tells us:-

"His own meals cost but five carlines a day,
Poor priest's allowance, for he claims no more."²

Innocent XII is renowned for giving easy access to the poor and in the poem it is stated,

"The crowd, - he suffers
Question, unrebuked",

or,

"And he was ever mindful of the mob."

Also it is stated, he

"so observed the poor
That men would merrily say, 'Halt, deaf and blind,
Who feed on fat things, leave the master's self
To gather up the fragments of his feast."³

Surely the attributes of Innocent XII are summed up by Browning in the lines:-

"Pope Innocent the Twelfth,
Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute,
With prudence, probity and - what beside
From the other world he feels impress at times."⁴

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XI, ll. 56 - 62.
 2. Ibid, Bk. I, ll. 324 - 325.
 3. Ibid, Bk. XII, ll. 90 and 93; also Bk. I, ll. 319 - 321.
 4. Ibid, Bk. I, ll. 1221 - 1224.

Later, speaking of the Pope he says:-

"What I call God's hand, - you perhaps, - mere chance
Of the true instinct of an old good man
Who happened to hate darkness and love light."¹

Nicolo Erizzo distinctly relates that the Cardinals wished to get rid of Innocent, and the poet says the Pope had "attained to fourscore years and six", so evidently his age was fully ripe.²

Both the Envoys refer to the conciliatory manners of the Pope, and Erizzo makes the definite charge, that he causes the dignity of the Church to suffer by this means. Hence Guido hints at this trait when he says to the Cardinal that the Pope might save him; that he might be petitioned to:-

"Spare one whose death insults the Emperor
Nay, outrages the Louis you love so well."³

Later the Venetian writing to Cenciini says that Guido, contrary to all the expectations in Rome, has been accorded guilty, the one deaf ear to his acquittal being that of the Pope, and

"That old enmity to Austria, that
Passion for France and France's pageant-king
(Of which, why pause to multiply the proofs
Now scandalously ripe in Europe's mouth?)
These fairly got the better in our man
Of justice, prudence and saprit de corps,
And he persisted in the butchery."⁴

The same writer says that

"The King of France has writ
Fresh orders; Fénelon will be condemned;
The Cardinal makes a wry face enough,
Having a love for the delinquent."⁵

The ambassador of France, Bouillon is also mentioned in the last

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XII, ll. 592 - 594.
 2. Ibid, Bk. I, l. 1225.
 3. Ibid, Bk. XI, ll. 2279 - 2280.
 4. Ibid, Bk. XII, ll. 81 - 87.
 5. Ibid, Bk. XII, ll. 64 - 67.

book; the Austrian ambassador had tried to save Guido, but as he has failed the representative of France is pleased, and "Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly."^{1 2}

Browning's Venetian in his account of Guido's execution, makes the Envoy Contarini present as a spectator and boasts that he had to pay six dollars for a seat. He says:-

"And houses, at the edge of the Three Streets,
Let their front windows at six dollars each;
Anguisciola, that patron of the arts,
Hired one; our Envoy Contarini too."³

In the Pope's soliloquy when viewing himself as man not Pope, Browning makes his speaker refer to the long years of training spent by Antonio Pignatelli in the service of the Church as legate, vice-regent, bishop and nuncio, without reaching his Cardinal's hat; but by means of which he gained his great experience as a man. Addressing himself in soliloquy he says:-

"Wherefore, Antonio Pignatelli, thou
My ancient self, who wast no Pope so long
But studiedst God and man, the many years
I' the school, i' the Cloister, in the diocese
Domestic, legate-rule in foreign lands."⁴

Browning allows Guido to predict the Pope's death, and his successor, but neither case is accurate for Guido says the Pope will die next year, and his death occurred two and a half years afterwards (September 27th, 1700). In the case of his successor who ultimately was Albani Clement XI, Guido also errs.

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XII, l. 112.
 2. It must be remembered that the historic Pope was not so complacent, he obtained a retraction of the St. Germain edicts of 1682, also refused to support James II. That although he had to condemn Fénelon he put off the decision from January 1697 until March 1699. Even then he summed up the case in moderate terms by asserting Fénelon erred by loving God too much, and Bossuet by loving his neighbor too little. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 304.
 3. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XII, ll. 114 - 117.
 4. Ibid, Bk. X, ll. 383 - 387.

"The Pope who dooms me needs must die next year;
I'll tell you how the chances are supposed
For his successor; first the Chamberlain,
Old San Cesario, - Colloredo, next, -"¹

Browning makes his correspondent the Venetian also mention these men as likely to be chosen for the pontificate; he states after suggesting "Spada's" name,

"Colloredo has his backers too,
And San Cesario makes one doubt at times."²

Many references are made by Browning to the Molinists - one writer declares there are over thirty references.³ Even the Pope mentions them when he says he will be criticised by all the various sects if he condemns Guido, they will say he is doing that to screen Caponsacchi's scandal, gossip will spread:-

"His last act was to sacrifice a Count
And thereby screen a scandal of the Church!
Guido condemned, the Canon justified
Of course, - delinquents of his cloth free!
And so the Luthers chuckle, Calvins scowl,
So thy hand helps Molinos to the chair
Whence he may hold forth till dooms-day on just
These petit-maitre priestlings, -"⁴

Guido mentions them several times,⁵ Caponsacchi is humorously charged by his Bishop as becoming a Molinist when seriously thinking of his duty at Church;⁶ Pompilia is supposed to have become tainted with its heresy, the bishop reproved her for wishing to enter a Convent, informs her, this is,

"A blasphemy so like these 'Molinists',
I must suspect you dip into their books."⁷

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. XI, ll. 2259 - 2261.
 2. Ibid., Bk. XII, ll. 42 - 47.
 3. Cook, Op. Cit., p. 306.
 4. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 2062 - 2069.
 5. Ibid., Bk. V, ll. 203, 1043, 223, 1238, 1638.
 6. Ibid., Bk. VI, l. 473.
 7. Ibid., Bk. VII, ll. 769 - 770.

Even the lawyers Archangeli and Bottini cannot resist quoting them very often with humor (by the latter).²

Browning gives the Pope's age with inaccuracy making him talk about "my six and four-score years", but the Pope was not quite eighty three then, being born March 1615.

But sufficient evidence seems to be afforded to make the reader recognize the historic pope Antonio Fignatelli, Innocent XII, in the character portrayed by Browning's poem. Browning's pope is a model of Innocent XII as history shows him, self-sacrificing, attentive to the poor and bent upon reforms; but added to these qualities the author had super-added all the characteristics that could be possessed by an idealized perfect Churchman.

As Guido forms the ideal villain, Caponsacchi the ideal hero, so Innocent XII in The Ring and the Book is the transcendent head of the Church, with ideal thoughts and modes of expression, both in his words and actions. He is here only as the servant of his Master, to act as the Mediator between God and man, to devote his life to the good and true, and yet follow his Master's example of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation.²

The historic Pope was not involved in the Guido Franceschini tragedy, beyond refusing privilege of clergy to Guido, but the Pope of Browning has a voice in all matters. He gives a summary of each person's character in the Book; he passes general criticisms upon religion, the world, its weaknesses and its depravity; and there is no doubt that the poet has chosen him as his exponent concerning Church history, and its place in the world.

Browning himself had to deliver a message concerning religion, for he had a great estimate of the place religion played in man's daily life, and

1. Of course these references are all more or less out of date at this period as Molinism had received its death-blow in 1687, its founder being imprisoned nine years, and dying in 1696.
2. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 270 .

he was horrified when he found the evident laxity among "the Shepherds of the Church."

The characters in his poem are such as display to the full the weaknesses of the Roman Catholic Church, and more than ever is the poet convinced as he plunges into his subject, that institutional training in religion is an error, that each individual should have its soul developed separately and characteristically.

No other writer, says one author, has ever dared in English poetry to criticise the Roman Church so unmercifully, and had the papacy issued a ban against the poet it would have caused no surprise.¹

In his poem Browning evidently felt that there was a need of a summing up of the main characters and issues, in a way not fulfilled by the law documents of the Source Book. He allows his Pope to undertake the task; the man who was experienced and matured long ere he entered the Vatican retreat. He, from the close of a saintly life is competent to pass an unbiassed and understanding judgment on man's actions.

As the Browning views are synonymous with the aged prelate's views, it accounts for the large number of critics who charge the poet with allowing anachronisms in his Pope's utterances; many of these anticipate a couple of centuries wisdom and development, in their psychological realism.²

One writer says, "Browning was very much needed in the Nineteenth Century." "He has an unconquerable disposition to elevate the human by joining him to God. The power that animates and governs the world is Divine; man cannot escape from it nor overcome it. But the love that stirs in man's heart is also Divine; and if man will follow it, it shall lead him to that

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1. Condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church, Clyde Stuntz, Methodist Review, New York, 1924, p. 683.
 2. (a) Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 269, 271.
(b) Cook, Op. Cit., pp. 198 - 203.

height where he shall see that Power is Love."¹

So Browning's Pope, despite his sadness at the weakness displayed by the various members of the Church, yet has hope that the Divine in man will conquer in the ultimate issue.² Man is finite, therefore he can only know knowledge granted "according to man's measure", for there:-

"Existent somewhere, somehow, as a whole;
Here, as a whole proportioned to our sense,-
There, (which is nowhere, speech must babble thus!)
In the absolute immensity, the whole
Appreciable solely by Thyself, -
Here by the little mind of man, reduced
To littleness that suits his faculty,
In the degree appreciable too."³

The poet (through the Pope) continues to show how everything from insect to angel fills just his "length and breadth" in the plan of life devolved by God in His Love, sufficient faculty being granted for his measure of comprehension, of that plan.

So much has the Church displayed her weakness in failing to assist Pompilia that the Pope feels as if it has become almost a dead branch; and living virtue has only come from instinctive goodness such as shown by Caponsacchi and Pompilia. He wonders then whether the training is wrong; speaking of the Archbishop he says:-

"Have we misjudged here, over-armed our knight
Given gold and silk where plain hard steel serves best,
Enfeebled whom we sought to fortify
Made an Archbishop and undone a Saint!"⁴

Then the friar who had led a life of fasting and grown used to stone cells, even he hesitates to help Pompilia in her need - hesitates - and decides,

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1. Companionable Books, Henry Van Dyke, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923, pp. 271 - 272.
 2. Robert Browning as a Religious Teacher, A.G. Figon, B.A., The Burrey Essay for 1900, London, C.J. Clay & Sons, Cambridge University Press Warehouse, Ave Maria Lane 1901, p. 20.
 3. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 116 - 123.
 4. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1467 - 1470.

"Great ones could help,
Yet help not, why should small!"¹

So the Friar decides:-

"I break my promise; let her break her heart!"²

Then the Pope still judging his Shepherds, says:-

"These are the Christians, not the worldlings, not
The sceptics, who thus battle for the faith!"³

The 'Convertite Monastery',⁴ instituted to help women because they helped Christ, testified to Pompilia's purity and saintliness, but claimed her possessions when she died because she was a woman of "dishonest life"!

"Such", says the Pope, "is their attestation to the cause
Of Christ, who had one saint at least, they hoped;
But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse
To slander, and an infant heir to cheat?
Christ must give up his gains then! They unsay
All the fine speeches, - who was saint is where.
Why, scripture yields no parallel for this!
The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's coat."⁵

One of the Poet's great beliefs is that man is not infallible.

Hence the Pope when called upon to judge Guido in the poem, turns back to old histories and tries to find a precedent in the decisions made by former popes, notably Stephen and Formosa. At last he is convinced by all he reads, that man's judgment cannot be absolutely reliable. Therefore he will give sentence to the best of his ability, "The Pope for Christ". So wearied by his thoughts he sits at the end of a sombre February day, and finds from the "dismalest of documents" before him that Guido "is guilty".

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, l. 1484. (This refers to the actions of the Bishop and Governor.)

2. Ibid., Bk. X, l. 1485.

3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1486 - 1507.

4. Cook, Op. Cit., Note 1198, p. 48. Explains mistake made by poet between Le Scalette and Santa Maria Maddalena delle Convertite, the former received Pompilia - the latter claimed the inheritance as the property of a loose woman.

5. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 1519 - 1526.

"Perchance that since man's wit is fallible,
Mine may fail here? Suppose it is so, - what then?"

.....
"What other should I say than 'God so willed;
Mankind is ignorant, a man am I:
Call ignorance my sorrow, not my sin'!"¹

Browning sees "Life as Probation", the period on earth merely a training for the future world. The good Pope carries forth this message, shows that every experience in human life is but a step forward in our passage and progress, until we are fitted and ready for the life to come; for

"The moral sense grows but by exercise.
'Tis even as man grow probatively
Initiated in Godship."²

For

"Life is Probation and the earth no goal
But starting point of man; compel him to strive,
Which means, in man, as good as reach the goal."³

The Pope fears that Faith has become too easy, almost a habit, and feels that something is needed to arouse it and make it doubt, in order to make it keen and alive; for:-

"What but the weakness in a faith supplies
The incentive to humanity, no strength
Absolute, irresistible, comperts?
How can man love but what he yearns to help!"⁴

The poet makes his mouthpiece use Euripides to question why man are no better now with all their boasted knowledge, than they were in the fifth century B.C. when he lived?

Neither Christ nor salvation were known, but he "adopted virtue as his rule in life", and morals and religion were taught by him.

But neither Browning nor the Pope answer the question directly,

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 168 - 259.
 2. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1415 - 1417.
 3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1436 - 1438.
 4. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1649 - 1652.

for their doubts are many. The Pope suggests however,

"That was in the day-spring; noon is now;
We have got too familiar with the light."

Christians of today (17th century) are not so earnest or zealous as they were in the spring-time of Christianity.¹

The Pope voicing Browning's ideas, says that God is the real judge of man's conduct, for it is by motives not by results, that the judgment should be made. It is to God then, that Innocent leaves the criticism of his condemnation of Guido,

"For I am ware it is the seed or act,
God holds appraising in His Hollow palm
Not act grown thence on the world below,
Leafage and branchage, vulgar eyes admire.
Therefore I stand on my integrity,
Nor fear at all; and if I hesitate
It is because I need to breathe awhile,
Rest as the human right allows, review
Intent the little seeds of act, my tree -"²

Then speaking of this same decision that Guido is guilty later in his soliloquy he says:-

"Enough, for I may die this very night:
And how should I dare die, this man let live?"³

That "God is Love" is another strong conviction stated by Browning's prelate. It is in this attribute that man's likeness to the Divine is most noticeable. In the world of nature it is easy to discern in mankind strength and intelligence, these are two phases of the Creator; the third is "Love". Man has this possession but in an imperfect state, whilst God is "Love without a limit." This tale is not so manifest to the human eye, but is fully

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 1670 - 1794.
2. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 272 - 280.
3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 2133 - 2134.

divulged by the "Incarnation."¹ The poet writes:-

"Is there strength there? - enough: intelligence?
Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
Not to the human eye in the present state,
An isosocle deficient in the base.
What lacks then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit? So is strength,
So is intelligence; let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
Then is the tale true and God shows complete."²

God in His love has devised pain and suffering in order to develop man and make him able to struggle, to become God-like in his power of self-sacrificing. But for this hope the misery of the world could not be borne, the Pope in his ripe experience adds:-

"I can believe this dread machinery
Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,
Devised - all pain, at most expenditure
Of pain by Who devised pain, - to evolve,
By new machinery in counterpart,
The moral qualities of man - how else? -
To make him love in turn and be beloved,
Creative and self sacrificing too,
And thus eventually God-like."³

One of the most characteristic Browning theories is illustrated by the Pope's attitude toward the pseudo-parents of Pompilia. Browning has no belief in lassitude or indifference, to him even mistaken or wrong vigor is to be preferred in the moral and religious life rather than an apathetic neutral goodness. The Comparini belong to the passive class says the Pope, for they surely helped to cause the murder, they are:-

"Foul and fair,
Sadly mixed natures; self indulgent, - yet
Self-sacrificing too; how the love soars,
How the craft, avarice, vanity and spite
Sink again!"⁴

1. Cook, Op. Cit., pp. 219 - 220, note 1348.

2. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 1363 - 1372.

3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1375 - 1383.

4. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1217 - 1221.

"Go!
Never again elude the choice of tints:
White shall not neutralize the black, nor good
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:
Life's business being just the terrible choice."¹

The Pope feels that with his death the old order of things belonging to his century will also pass out. Confusion of ideals, belief in the materialistic good things of life is leading people to a lower level. But probably the new era will cause an awakening of doubt, this will ensue in logical sequence, courage to seek out the truth and vigor to defend it; for:-

"Is it not this ignoble confidence,
Cowardly hardihood, that dulls and damps,
Makes the old heroism impossible?"²

"What if it be the mission of that age
My death will usher in to life, to shake
This torpor of assurance from our creed,
Re-introduce the doubt discarded, bring
That formidable danger back, we drove
Long ago to the distance and the dark."³

"We have built wall and sleep in city safe:
But if some earth-quake try the towers that laugh
To think they once saw lions rule outside
And man stand out again, pale, resolute,
Prepared to die, - which means, alive at last!"⁴

The belief that Browning has in the "divine spark" of God being in some people and lacking in others, who therefore become mere clods of earth, is evidenced in the summing up of the Pope, when speaking of the men who aided Guido in his villainy. He says that Guido is an apt pupil of the Jesuits and he in turn influences,

"Theselast clods where I track intelligence
By any glimmer, - these four at his beck
Ready to murder any, and, at their own,
As ready to murder him, - such make the world!"⁵

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 1234 - 1236.
 2. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1248 - 1250.
 3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1252 - 1257.
 4. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1259 - 1263.
 5. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 1245 - 1248.

God has a plan evolved for each man's life, and it is due to man's interpretation here on earth that he is enabled to fulfil his final labors in another world. Recognizing the "Predestined Hand", the mouthpiece of the poet says:-

"Choice of the world, choice of the thing I am,
Both emanate alike from Thy dread play
Of operation outside this our sphere
Where things are classed and counted small or great, -
Incomprehensibly the choice is Thine!"¹

Surely and unhesitatingly the Pope utters the Browning optimism in the triumphant victory of good over evil. Guido may be "the midmost blotch of black," he may be a "blot on the white of things," but God could not make a man in vain!

For such a criminal there may be an instant when

"The truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and be saved."²

And thus the Pope's soliloquy ends in a paean of faith and trust in God's power, intelligence; but above all in His perfection of Love which will strive to the uttermost to help even the 'Guidos' of the world to "unmake and remake their souls."³

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. X, ll. 1342 - 1346.
2. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 2127 - 2128.
3. Ibid., Bk. X, ll. 2130 - 2131.

CHAPTER V

THE ROMAN GOSSIPS

Half Rome, Other Half Rome, and Tertium Quid.

"There prattled they, discoursed the right and wrong,
Turned wrong to right, proved wolves sheep and sheep wolves,
So that you scarce distinguished fell from fleece."
(The Ring and the Book, Bk. I,
ll. 645 - 647)

In the twentieth century, when the newspapers print all the details of a criminal case, it is quite easy to discover the trend of popular sympathy. But, in 1698, when the Franceschini trial was being held in Rome, there were no newspapers to help the crowd in its knowledge of facts connected with the case.

The only means of circulating such reports in that period was to publish pamphlets. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that among the collection of papers made by Cencini there are two anonymous pamphlets which were printed and widely circulated, at the time of the trial.

One of these which was known as the "notizie di fatto e ragione", (or Pamphlet 10,) is biased throughout on behalf of the husband Guido.¹ The second paper, which was a response to the first, was known officially as the "Risposta alle notizie di fatto", (or Pamphlet 15).² This pamphlet tried to gain the ear of the public on behalf of Pompilia, to the detriment of the husband.

No direct proof of authorship could be obtained, but it has been tacitly allowed that the lawyers themselves were responsible for these efforts

1. Hedell, Op. Cit., pp. 116 - 126.

2. Ibid., pp. 168 - 183.

to stir up public interest and sentiment. All the evidence, and the various processes, as well as the technicalities of the cases, were known to the writers. The style of writing was professional, although an attempt had been made to adopt a general and popular tone, when making statements.¹

In the first document (Pamphlet 10), the comparative poverty of the Comparini family was stated. The writer said, Pietro "was too indulgent to his stomach," that he was "arrested for debt", and it also definitely claimed that he received secret alms from the Papacy each month.

The arrangement for the marriage was represented as a definite plan on the Comparini side, whereby they "hoped to find some opportune remedy for their necessities;" it was considered also "advantageous to the Franceschini" as they expected to gain possession of the various monies and properties, through Pompilia.

Excuses were made in the pamphlet, for Guido's falsities in representing his wealth as being so much greater than it really was, and Violante was blamed as being the instigator of this deceit, in her efforts to get the marriage settled.²

The family quarrels were all attributed to the "bitter tongue" of Pietro, and the "haughtiness of Violante his wife". The Bishop and Governor, and an old servant, were produced as witnesses to the good intentions of the Franceschini household towards the new-comers.

When the break occurred in the home, Guido was reported as furnishing the parents of Pompilia, with sufficient money to take them to Rome, and to purchase household necessaries. Then in response to this consideration, they issued "a judicial notice" proclaiming a vile parentage for Pompilia, and a

1. Modell, Op. Cit., pp. 299 - 300. Notes 55 and 59.

2. Ibid., p. 301. Notes 63 - 67; Notes 71 - 77.

withdrawal of the dowry payment from the husband!

Needless to say, the Franceschini resented these imputations of low birth, and had many consultations and opinions as to the possibility of a divorce under the circumstances. A compromise was effected, and Pompilia was left in "quasi-possession of her daughtership", and the dowry was to be paid.

Pietro appealed against this to the "Sacred Rota", and, meantime issued pamphlets which insinuated doubts concerning the probity and honor of the Franceschini. No payment or benefit of the income was however obtained by Guido afterwards.¹ The next step, continued the narrator, was the discovery by Guido one morning, of the flight of his wife, who had rifled his jewellery box, and who must have drugged the whole family including Guido, in order to escape undiscovered. Violante and Pietro were blamed for this. Upon over-taking his wife Guido found she was accompanied by the priest Caponsacchi, and, as he saw they were armed and resolute, he handed the case over to the authorities and allowed law to take its course in punishing them.²

Guido was shown by the writer as being unwilling to hurt his wife, "whom he had often held in his arms," and therefore this was an additional reason for not seeking at once, to take private vengeance when he caught her at Castelnuevo with the priest.

The mutual love letters, the use of one bed room, the testimony as to kissings during the journey, were all stressed in this document. The sentence of relegation, was pointed out as evidence of adultery, and Guido marked as an object of pity. Evidence was quoted to prove that even animals resent the breaking of the conjugal tie, and the case of an elephant who helped

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 118 - 119.

2. Ibid., p. 119; p. 314; Note, 255; p. 321. Note 345.

to revenge infidelity to his master on the wife's part, was taken as an illustration.¹

The much-abused husband returned to his home, and left his brother in charge of his affairs. But the brother found he had become the object of derision in his efforts to aid the family honor. The writer thinks, "the doctrines of the Molinists" must have also introduced into Rome, "the power of sinning against the laws of God with impunity."

The Abate Paolo endeavored to get a special sitting from the Pope that would end the case for good and all, but the matter was left for the Judges' decision, the Pope would not interfere.²

Guido was kept embittered during this period of inaction, by boasts and vaunts on the part of Pietro, who was very well supplied with money, (possibly surmised the author, given by some lover of Pompilia's), and who openly triumphed over the downfall of the Franceschini honor.

Insinuations were made that Pompilia tried by means of drugs and powders to prevent her condition of pregnancy becoming known. It was also pretended that the removal to her own home was made in order to avert the scandal, which might accrue to the convent, if her child was born within its walls.³

With this completion of the ignominy of the Abate Paolo, he burst into tears upon several occasions, and then decided to leave his possessions, patrons, and property, which he had accumulated during his thirty years residence in the city. He went forth "to a strange and unknown climate," so as to get away from all the pain and scandal.⁴

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 120.

2. Ibid, pp. 120 - 121.

3. Ibid, p. 121.

4. Ibid, p. 122.

The speaker tried to arouse sympathy on behalf of Guido who is shown torn with anguish over the birth of a child, who does not belong to him, and also who was continually aggravated afresh, by the knowledge of Caponsacchi's visits to his wife in her retirement.

Proof of this guilt was made, when the door of his wife's home was opened at the name of the priest. The writer then affirms, that delirium seized the husband, and caused him to plunge himself, "with deadly catastrophe into the blood of the oppressors of his reputation."¹

So overwhelmed was he with fury, that he did this when people were around and took no safeguards against the punishment for his murders. He set out on the high road, without providing any vehicles, on a journey of about seventy miles. "These circumstances are plain evidences of an offended and delirious mind," the pamphlet states.²

The charge of "aggravated circumstances" by the carrying of arms, calling a conventicle of four helpers, and abusing the sanctity of a home, were all excused under the plea of a delirium and frenzy, caused by the continual insults to Guido's honor. "It is certain that anyone who cares for honor and reputation, would rather die an honored man beneath mannaia, than live for many ages in the face of the world with shame and dishonor," concluded the speaker in defence of Guido.³

In order to prevent the presumed lover paying for the food of Pompilia whilst imprisoned, the author said it was arranged that the Procurator of Charity should attend to this, and re-imburse himself out of the money that was found in Pompilia's possession, when she was taken captive at Castelnuovo.⁴

1. Modell, Op. Cit. p. 123.

2. Ibid. p. 123.

3. Ibid. p. 124.

4. Ibid. p. 125.

Indignation was expressed that the Comparini could again receive as their daughter, one whom they had cast out, and whose reputation they had sullied. The document said, if the wife had observed the laws of "holy modesty", the misfortunes would not have come upon her.

In conclusion it was stated, that there was no doubt, "that Franceschini deserves the indulgence, which the laws give to excesses that find origin from the stings of honor." Further, that, "Franceschini should be punished mildly, to diminish the force of immodesty and impudence. For the woman is not without adherents, who triumph throughout all Rome in a coterie of treachery, both in public and in private. This is for the oppression and derision against husbands, who have regard for their reputation."¹

Such was the fiery document circulated in Rome, to arouse public sentiment on Guido's behalf. This called for the response from the opposition, which was recorded in pamphlet 15 of the series in Cencini collection.²

Of course, in the reply every thing was made to appear justified that Pompilia did, and all Guido's acts are presented in an unfavorable light. The document openly stated, that an attempt had been made to render "Guido's crimes less grave, and to excite compassion," by the distribution of pamphlet 10. Far from Guido having to protect his honor, the writer said decidedly, that Pompilia had never transgressed the "laws of conjugal honor", or lost "her sense of shame."³

The various actions for divorce, for the dowry payment, and the actual marriage itself, were all attributed to the "damnable greed" of Guido, and not to the "sense of injured honor."⁴

1. Hedell, Op. Cit., p. 126.

2. Ibid., p. 168; p. 300; Notes 59 - 61.

3. Ibid., p. 168.

4. Ibid., p. 169.

Guido's mode of life as a loafer around the hairdressing shops, a man out of service, without a ^{saldo} solse in his pocket, who openly proclaimed that he means to make a marriage of convenience, was drawn with an unflattering plainness, in the narrative.¹ All the scheming and craftiness to carry out the marriage agreement was attributed to the Abate Paolo's skill, who managed to win over Violante, by an assumption of grandeur and family wealth. These he held out as a bait, which she should share, if his plans were fulfilled.

Pietro refused consent, when he found the public opinion entertained concerning the Franceschini poverty and greed; but after the marriage had been clandestinely carried out, he had to give the new husband five bonds from the dowry payment, to pay for immediate expenses.²

Taunts were made, at the conditions in the ducal palace, and the fact that in the city records, even the nobility of the family was only rated as of secondary rank.³

In defence of Violante's act with regard to disclaiming the parentage of Pompilia, her conscience and the Jubilee celebration were put forth as extenuating factors. Her age, which was forty-eight at the supposed birth of the child, and the testimony of several witnesses are considered as proofs of her truth concerning this matter.⁴

A graphic picture was drawn of the poor little wife of sixteen years, who had no friends in the household of her husband, who was made a prisoner in her own room, and subjected to threats of poison, and cruelties from every member of the family. When she was able to escape, she tried to enlist the sympathy of the Bishop, Governor, etc., but all were on Guido's side as they

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 169 - 170.

2. Ibid, pp. 170 - 171.

3. Ibid, p. 171; p. 298. Note 38.

4. Ibid, p. 172.

were of the same rank and position in society.¹ Conti was shown as having felt sympathy with the poor little Pompilia, and as he could not accompany her in her flight, he recommended Caponsacchi "whose spirit had stood every test."²

The subsequent flight, the arrest, and cowardice of Guido, who called upon the law to aid him, the desperate attempts to gain the charge of adultery against the wife and priest, were all ironically enumerated by the author of the pamphlet, who said that Guido and the Abate did this "to gain the desired lucre." The Governor, the judge Venturini, and all the notaries of the Court knew this, "and were nauseated" by their importunities.³

After Caponsacchi's relegation, it was stated definitely that he obeyed the order, and "never left the place assigned to him."⁴

No sting was spared the Franceschini by the writer, he asserted that the Abate Paolo was the prime mover behind all the mean and petty acts of Guido; that Lamparelli was not re-imbursed for Pompilia's food, because Paolo got the forty-eight scudi found in her possession, entire, before he left the city for good.⁵

Conti's death was attributed to the fact that he knew too much about the Franceschini and their methods, and Guido's honor-justification was made the subject of endless sarcasm, seeing that he refrained from avenging his wrongs but sought vengeance by the aid of the police, and justice from the law.⁶

The love letters were not proved as coming from Pompilia, and even if she had written them, they did not deserve such a cruel punishment as

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1. Hodell, Op. Cit., p. 173.
 2. Ibid., pp. 173 - 174.
 3. Ibid., p. 175.
 4. Ibid., p. 175.
 5. Ibid., p. 176.
 6. Ibid., p. 177.

the murders committed by Guido. So anxious was the author of the response to prove his point, that he compared Pompilia's actions with those of Judith, who entrapped (with justification apparently) Holofernes by pretence of amatory feelings, in order to win her liberty.¹

The charge of kissing, sleeping in one bed, were all denied and explanations given. The choice of a direct road on the way to Rome, the guardianship that was exercised over Pompilia in her husband's home, were offered as proofs of her chastity, and freedom from the adultery sin.²

Then, continued the pamphlet, why did Guido not stop at the murder of his wife, if it really was his honor and not his greed that was concerned? Why did he kill the old couple Violante and Pietro?

There was no doubt that his wife's dying statement was true; that she had always lived "chaste and faithful to her husband." It must be noticed also, that a special providence allowed her to live four days, despite the fact that she was pulled up by her tresses and thrown to the ground to see if she had any life left in her by Guido. This period enabled her to proclaim her own innocence, and publish the guilt of her husband and his accomplices.³

The narrative concluded, by saying, there was no doubt that the Abate Paolo was the instigator of all the crimes, that finally "he had been deluded by his own trick"; that Franceschini and his companions should pay the penalty merited by their actions, for "these are pernicious to the State, and to that peace and security, which litigants in the Courts of Rome ought to enjoy". The fact that Guido had appealed to law, and that the Pontiff refused to interfere between him and the law, should be proof of the justice which was being

1. Hodell, Op. Cit., pp. 178 - 179.

2. Ibid., pp. 179 - 181.

3. Ibid., p. 182.

administered.¹

Two such inflammatory epistles scattered broadcast throughout the city could not fail to arouse partisanship on behalf of both parties concerned in the trial.²

In his poem The Ring and the Book, Robert Browning has made use of the contents of these two pamphlets mentioned, to form the basis of two of the monologues, using facts and fiction in his own illimitable way, in order to gain the right "restitution."³

Working as Miss Frances Russell indicates in groups of three speakers, there appears the triad of Half Rome, Other Half Rome, and Tertium Quid. As in other sets, the first and second monologues are based upon the Source Book primarily, whilst the third book is the speech of a more or less fictitious person who acts as a critic in reference to the two earlier speakers.⁴

The man who represents Half Rome, is the mouthpiece for the doings mentioned in pamphlet ten. He is a Guidoite and his sympathies are with the husband, who he feels is quite justified in his act of vengeance. It is colloquial in tone as befits a man of the street.⁵

Other Half Rome upholds the sentiments expressed in pamphlet fifteen, and portrays the suffering Pompilia, as a saintly wife betrayed by a vindictive and avaricious husband. Despite the artistic creations introduced by the poet, the main ideas expressed in the narratives are true to the Source Book.⁶

In the third speaker, Tertium Quid, (the third nothing), Browning

1. Hodell, Op. Cit. p. 183.

2. Ibid., pp. 302 - 303. Read Notes 75 - 85; Notes 95 - 98, in connection with this pamphlet.

3. The Ring and the Book, Bks. II and III.

4. Frances T. Russell, Op. Cit., pp. 115 - 116.

5. A. K. Cook, Op. Cit., pp. 30 - 35.

6. Ibid., pp. 53 - 55.

has created the speaker, who relates the story as current news, in an impersonal way, and whilst practically telling nothing new, contrives by his aristocratic and languid cynicism, to show the subject up with startling and entirely surprising aspects; thereby insinuating and suggesting many new turns of thought.¹

These men essentially perform what Browning meant to do by writing his twelve books, from twelve different standpoints. So the two street orators speak of the subject of the murder according to their prejudices, and with the added comments and explanations given by the third speaker it is easy to believe with the poet:-

"We only see according to what we ourselves are."

A man's personal bias or his code of conventions, causes him to judge independently regardless of the revelations of truth.

Browning's work was entirely devoted to a search for adequate motives. He studied the human mind with a psychological interest in order to find out the undercurrent which caused certain actions and phenomena.² Thus Half Rome and his contemporaries were able, by speaking from their different view point, to throw a search light upon the motives prompting Guido and other actors in the story. When speaking of this trait of the poet's, that is the continual probing for motivation, one of his critics says, "Browning has learned to listen, and not to speak," and he has portrayed in his poem The Ring and the Book, a terrible magnanimity and patience; so that his work is the epic of free speech.³

Half Rome is therefore allowed to speak from the distorted vision caused by jealousy. He is suspicious and garrulous. Here is an opportune

1. A. K. Cook, Op. Cit., pp. 72 - 74.

2. Vernon G. Harrington, Op. Cit., p. 318.

3. Canadian Magazine, Vol. XXXVI, Feb. and March 1911, pp. 325 - 335 and 444 - 455 respectively.

moment to say what he thinks about the way women treat their husbands. The man he has cornered as an audience, is cousin to his wife's lover so that a warning may be conveyed or some hint of intimidation suggested.

The speaker has left the church and in his state of mind he observes that "Violante took all her stabbings in the face," and to his jaundiced eye it seemed as if Pietro's body kept aloof from that of his foolish wife.¹

It was this same Violante who began all the trouble, he decided. Did she not deceive her husband, also the proper heirs to the property, and then put a climax to all her perjury by marrying "the child-sheat" to Guido? By this clandestine marriage she still made matters worse by "linking a new victim to the lie."²

The morbid crowd of spectators at the church is noted by this pessimist.

"People climbed up the columns, fought for spikes
O' the chapel-rail to perch themselves upon,
Jumped over and so broke the wooden work
Painted like porphyry to deceive the eye;
Serve the priests right! The organ-loft was crammed,
Women were fainting, no few fights ensued,
In short, it was a show repaid your pains."³

Among the sea of faces he discerns that of the decrepit Luca Cini, who had looked upon corpses in their "setting forth", for over seventy years; but in all his reminiscences no such dire wickedness had occurred as this last dread deed:-

"What with Molinos' doctrine and this deed,
Antichrist surely comes and doomsday's near."⁴

The old man is afraid Pempilia may linger too long, before joining the ghastly corpses in the church, and he would like to be there when she arrives

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 27 - 45.

2. Ibid., Bk. II, l. 64.

3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 92 - 98.

4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 125 - 126.

just to explain to novices the peculiarities of the knife used by Guido:-

"Triangular i' the blade, a Genoese,
Armed with those little hook-teeth on the edge
To open in the flesh nor shut again."¹

His Eminence the Cardinal,² came in at noon by a private door.

But the time-serving curate of the parish rushed into the pulpit, and under the pretense of speaking about the murder, launched forth into condemnation of Molinism and philosophic sins, which:-

"Are sown for wheat, flourish and choke the Church."³

Half Rome then proceeds to explain to his listener how Violante had paved the way for the dreadful crimes which Rome witnessed that day. He described the way the Comparini led a gay life, and for about fifty years had a good time. But when evil days began to dawn and Pietro found there was no child to inherit the usufruct, he became despondent. Then Violante:-

"twixt a smile and a blush,
With touch of agitation proper too,
Announced that, spite of her unpromising age
The miracle would in time be manifest,
An heir's birth was to happen: and it did."⁴

To Pietro the child's birth was the cause of great joy. He made her the centre of his interest in life, became her playmate, romped with her, measured her girlish height against the wall, but alas forgot to work! Consequently, one day there came into this "fools' paradise",

"sudden at the door a tap discreet,
A visitor's premonitory cough,
And poverty had reached him in her rounds."⁵

Violante again used her woman's guile. Pietro "had leanned to dandle and forgot to dig", so the wife decided she must arrange a marriage for her daughter, that would be of great benefit:-

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 147 - 149.
 2. Meant by the poet to be Lauria but who was probably Nerli, Guido's patron.
 3. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 150 - 181.
 4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 220 - 224.
 5. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 270 - 274.

"She who had caught one fish, could make that catch
A bigger still, in angler's policy;
So, with an angler's mercy for the bait,
Her minnow was set wriggling on its barb
And tossed to mid-stream."¹

The new found husband then becomes the object of pity to the
Guidoite. Poor Guido, had spent thirty years in useless effort to gain some
reward for service in the ranks of the Church and its patrons, and now he is
added to the victims of a deceitful woman.

"The pinks and grays about the bait
Persuaded Guido gulp down hook and all."²

In his palace he already was crowded with dependents, a mother
whose

"face had grown meagre, left alone
And famished with the emptiness of hope,
Old Donna Beatrice."

Then there were the brothers, first Abate Paolo a regular priest,

"he swam
With the deftest on the Galilean pool,"

and also a younger brother Girolamo, an applicant for priesthood too. To add
to Guido's burdens, the Comparini family in its entirety, were to remove to
the ducal palace in Arezzo.³

Pietro and Violante

"With just the dusk of the day of life to spend,"
expected to throw off the plebian taint of life and try the taste of nobility's
fare.

"They had not fed for nothing on the tales
Of grandees who give banquets worthy Jove,
Spending gold as if Plutus paid a whim,
Served with obeisances."⁴

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 263 - 265.
 2. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 342 - 343.
 3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 278 - 395.
 4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 429 - 442.

The couple's anger knew no bounds when they discovered the "pinching and paring", "the frugal board", that barely stood for sustenance,¹ so parsimonious was the "debauch" they had anticipated.

"Four months' probation of this purgatory,
Dog-snap and cat-claw, curse and counter-blast,
The devil's self were sick of his own din."²

Every street corner and wine house made merry over the tale of "pretentious poverty", thanks to Violante's spiteful tongue!

"Then, their worst done that way, both struck tent, marched;
Renounced their share o' the bargain, flung what dues
Guido was bound to pay, in Guido's face,
Left their hearts' darling, treasure of the twain
And so forth, the poor inexperienced bride,
To her own devices, bade Arezzo rot,
Cursed life signorial, and sought Rome once more."³

Then not content with the trouble caused, the "Violante nature" inaugurates greater disgrace, "she got pricked in conscience." Therefore availing herself of the "prompt pardon" allowed by the Pope at his Jubilee,

"she confessed
Pompilia was a fable not a fact:
She never bore a child in her whole life."

She was guilty of the fraud having purchased the 'babe from the "filth-heap," where a wanton had found:-

"Motherhood like a jewel in the muck."⁴

Now thinks Half Rome this is where Guido's good qualities are shown, for he, though shocked at the terrible scandal exhibited "birth and breeding, and compassion too," and tried to shield his wife. He felt convinced that Pompilia's youth prevented her from being an accessory to Violante's deceit, so as

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 462 - 484.
2. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 504 - 506.
3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 519 - 525.
4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 535 - 565.

"The black eyes were now her very own,
Not any more Violante's: let her live,
Lose in a new air, under a new sun,
The taint of the imputed parentage
Truly or falsely, take no more the touch
Of Pietro and his partner anyhow!
All might go well yet."¹

To prove his point, the speaker tells that later Pompilia wrote to her brother-in-law the Abate Paolo, and told him how much better the house was, now her parents were no longer there;

"Since whose departure, hell, she said, was heaven,
And the house, late distracted by their peals,
Quiet as Carmel where the lilies live."

Further she told him in the letter that the Comparini had advised her to leave her husband, "to poison his posset cup", take money and jewels and pick out a new companion before fleeing.²

All of which news the Abate duly circulated in Rome, in counter-charge against the scandals spread by the foster-parents, concerning the cruelties and privations they had endured in the Franceschini palace.

Finally the matter reached the Roman courts, and Paolo had to represent his brother and defend the family honor:

"He made what head he might against the pair,
Maintained Pompilia's birth legitimate
And all her rights intact - hers, Guido's now."³

The courts with their usual acumen, ironically says Half Rome, decided that the wife was

"Pietro's child and now not Pietro's child,
As it might suit the gamster's purpose. Thus
Was justice ever ridiculed in Rome:
Such be the double verdicts favoured here
Which send away both parties to a suit
Not puffed up nor cast down, - for each a crumb
Of right, for neither of them the whole loaf."⁴

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 644 - 650.
 2. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 691 - 707.
 3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 729 - 730.
 4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 746 - 752.

Now Pampilia shows her character according to the jealous Half Rome, whose mind was tainted by his wife's levity in love. Instead of quietly and warily leading her life in peace after all this tumult, she,

"Found herself young too, sprightly, fair enough,
Matched with a husband old beyond his age,"

and so she looked around for amusement elsewhere and found - Caponsacchi.¹

Guido was at his country residence busily studying,

"how to wring
Half the due vintage from the worn-out vines
At the villa, tease a quarter the old rent
From the farmstead, tenants swore would tumble soon."

To him pre-occupied with cares at last came knowledge of "the titter",

"the smell o' the fox,
The musk o' the gallant."²

At the first sign of interference, Pampilia rushed off to the Governor and Archbishop and,

"on the public steps thereto,
Wringing her hands, when he came out to see,
And shrieking all her wrongs forth at his feet, -"

The end came when Guido woke one day to find his wife and Caponsacchi fled, and his jewels and money taken also.³

Deliberately and carefully, the bitter Half Rome points out each wrong dealt to the afflicted Guido. He had been drugged with "poison-drench," so that the couple of conspirators might easily escape. He asserts that even the Count's cousin, Guillichini, like the cousin of the man to whom he is speaking, was inclined to "play pranks", and so assisted the wife and priest in their elopement and theft.

Guido's lonely journey in pursuit is traced by the sympathizing

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 773 - 783.
 2. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 814 - 825.
 3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 878 - 881.

narrator, and he tells how Castelnuevo was gained just in time to prove the couple guilty of misconduct, before they reached Rome their goal. Despite the fact that Guido caught his wife in guilt,

"Recumbent upstairs in her pink and white"

the bold hussy used her tongue against her husband so effectually that she won the pity even of the police.

Her woes were told so that

"The popular tide soon turned
The favour of the very sbirri, straight
Ebb'd from the husband, set towards the wife."¹

They reviled the Count, insisted that respect be paid to the priest, and spoke of the wife as a "martyred saint", troubled by "a persecuting fiend."

The Roman Law was then left to show its justice,

"And set the brain behind it to decide,
Between the wolf and sheep turned litigants."²

The letters "in bundled beastliness" were exhibited as a sign of guilt between Capensacchi and Pompilia. But so positive were the denials of both the accused concerning their authorship, that it was almost accepted as a theory that they were forged by the husband.

The Roman judgment was made light,

"The Canon Capensacchi, then, was sent
To change his garb, retrim his tonsure, tie
The clerky silk round, every plait correct
Make the impressive entry on his place
Of relegation, thrill his Civita."³

Pompilia was sent to the Convertite Convent, where she could forget both house and husband "and stay here at peace." Later she was sent home to her parents.

Now Half Rome feels that Guido surely had steed woes enough. He

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 1043 - 1045.

2. Ibid, Bk. II, ll. 1089 - 1090.

3. Ibid, Bk. II, ll. 1216 - 1220.

asks his listener,

"You, Sir, who listen but interpose no word,
Ask yourself, had you borne a baiting thus?
Was it enough to make a wise man mad?"¹

"Corrosives keeping the man's misery raw"

were poured on by "slow distilment", for Pompilia met his claim for divorce
by a counter claim.²

For a while, he relying on his brother the Abate,

"let beat the while
Aresso's banter, Rome's buffoonery,
On this ear and on that ear, deaf alike,
Safe from worst outrage."³

Then

"Here's the last drop does its worst to wound,
Here's Guido poisoned to the bone,"

for in her parents' home, where "muffled Capensacchi might repair", Pompilia
gave birth to a son.

"Gave birth, Sir, to a child, his son and heir,
Or Guido's heir and Capensacchi's son."⁴

Fear Guido's overburdened mind

"Broke down, what was a brain became a blaze."

He summoned

"four hard hands and stout hearts
From field and furrow",

and went to Rome.

The result was what you see, that is how

"the old couple come to be in state
Though hacked to pieces, - never, the expert say,
So thorough a study of stabbing."⁵

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 1260 - 1263.
 2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 1267 - 1270.
 3. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 1302 - 1305.
 4. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 1363 - 1364.
 5. Ibid., Bk. II, ll. 1442 - 1444.

The wife still lingers

("Viper-like, very difficult to slay).
Writhes still through every ring of her, poor wretch,
At the Hospital hard by - survives we'll hope,
To somewhat purify her putrid soul
By full confession, make so much amends
While time lasts."¹

The cynical speaker says, Caponsacchi will be made the hero of the
Carnival. If Guido and his associates are punished, then Half Rome decides,

"in the name of all that's left
Of honor in Rome, civility i' the world
Whereof Rome boasts herself the central source, -
There's an end to all hope of justice more."²

It was a mistake on Guido's part to appeal to Rome, but he

"managed somehow scramble back
Into the safe sure rutted road once more,³
Revenge'd his own wrong like a gentleman."³

Half Rome wishes the Canon's death were added to the other three, but
he has a little satisfaction in feeling that this case will be a lesson to the
"Husbands of wives in Rome"; and a certain young man who hangs around his
house with lute and song, had better be wary, lest he be caught in his own
toils.

Browning's second man of the street, Other Half Rome, is quite a
contrast to the first speaker. He is a bachelor, he is filled with tender
chivalry and admiration for the beauty and endurance of the little seventeen
year old wife. He is absolutely an anti-Guidoite. His monologue is spoken
presumably three days after the murders.⁴ He views Pompilia as a martyred
innocent, and speaks of her as:-

"Little Pompilia, with the patient brow"

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. II, ll. 1444 - 1450.
 2. Ibid. Bk. II, ll. 1472 - 1475.
 3. Ibid. Bk. II, ll. 1527 - 1529.
 4. Ibid. Bk. III

to whom the Madonna has graciously granted a few days extra in life, to enable her to get,

"One glimpse of quiet and the cool blue
To show her for a moment such things were."¹

Other Half Rome thinks the concern Pompilia displays for her boy (Gastano), the effort she makes to right Caponsacchi in the eyes of the world, and her entire forgiveness for her husband, makes her one such as the angels love to help. He bids the onlookers to tell the Molinists this is a miracle indeed.

Many visitors are reported by the writer, as thronging to the bed side to see the dying girl. Among them is Brother Celestine "who noises thus her gifts abroad." Another visitor is "Old Menna Baldi chatters like a jay", who swears her palsied arm "gan prick and promise life", at the touch of Pompilia's bedclothes.² The artist who painted so many Madonnas, Carlo Maratta, has seen the dying girl and hastened to transfer the charming face for his picture "with pencil out and paper squared," for "a levelier face is not in Rome", he cried.³

The gentle bachelor who tells the story, says whoever was in the wrong, no one can deny that this child of seventeen years has been ruined, and he wants to know why the cruelty must be exercised on one so young!

"Go practise if you please
With men and women; leave a child alone
For Christ's particular love's sake."⁴

One of the bedside visitors undertook to explain the crime, which, he asserts was caused by "that doctrine of the Philosophic Sin"; he says,

"Molinos' sect will soon make earth too hot!"⁵

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 2 - 17.

2. Ibid, Bk. III, ll. 46 - 56.

3a. Ibid, Bk. III, ll. 58 - 63.

b. Carlo Maratta (1625 - 1713) portrait painter in Rome.

4. Ibid, Bk. III, ll. 88 - 90.

5. Ibid, Bk. III, ll. 96 - 97.

That Violante did wrong in adopting Pompilia, Other Half Rome does not believe. He thought it to her credit that she had saved the child from

"such a double death as waits
The illicit offspring of a common trull."

The foster parent had made it possible for Pompilia like the birds "to sing God praise on mornings."¹

Very apt and ironical is the description given by the Anti-Guidoite, of the urbane, pompous Abate Paolo, when the latter decides to test out Violante's feelings towards the marriage with his brother.

"One day brought a priest,
Smooth-mannered soft-speeched sleek-checked visitor,
The notable Abate Paolo",

to speak to Violante alone. He gives his

"great flap-hat a gloss
With flat o' the hand between-whiles, soothing now
The silk from out its creases o'er the calf
Setting the stocking clerical again."

The "thin clear grey hold of his eyes",² are never once relaxed during the interview, during which, he represents to the awed woman, his idea of alliance between the Franceschini grandeur and the wealth of her daughter. Certainly Guido could not boast such a plentiful supply of money, but that did not in any way imply actual poverty on his side.

The wily priest, then, draws a picture of the forlorn Count, who despised Rome and its opportunities, but merely longed for the "dilapidated palace shell",³ or the villa in Vittiano, where the city and the summer heats alike can be forgotten. Further, this brother who could not be made great, was anxious to gladden his mother's heart by taking home a wife.

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 208 - 218.
2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 249 - 269.
3. Ibid., Bk. III, l. 306.

Now with brotherly zeal the Abate wishes to see his Guido happy!
The girl he marries must be good, not necessarily wealthy but have a certain
dowry, worldly status need not be hers, for Guido possessed enough of that.
But she must be one who would take,

("The new bent, live new life, adopt new modes,")

and if report spoke aright, here in this very home was hidden the

"Lily of a maiden white with intact leaf
Guessed thro' the sheath that saved it from the sun."¹

Poor Violante's pride was great; but alas! when Pietro tried to
impress his friendly gossips with the honor that had accrued to his family, by
the visit of "Hercules" for the "Hesperian Ball", he was met by hearty laughter
"in his fool's-face."² One and all advised him as to the true condition of the
Franceschini household, and assured him the bait for such advances lay in the
snug provision he had made for his old age, and that of Pompilia's dowry!

"Would the Count, think you, stoop to you and yours
Were there the value of one penny-piece
To rattle 'twixt his palms - or likelier laugh,
Bid your Pompilia help you black his shoe!"³

said the wise old friends.

Then Pietro orders his wife to abolish all thoughts of such a union
from her mind. But under the guidance of the crafty Abate, Violante marries
the thirteen years and five months child, to Count Guido in the Saint Lorenzo
church, with clandestine secrecy.

When the father found the marriage consummated, beyond his power to
alter, he weakly cast his lot in with the daughter and son; for, had not a
Cardinal assisted to make the bonds sure? The son now

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 354 - 366.

2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 384 - 396.

3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 424 - 427.

"took what fell,
Pietro's whole having and holding, house and field,
Goods, chattels and effects, his worldly worth
Present and in perspective, all renounced
In favour of Guido. As for the usufruct -
The interest now, the principal anon,
Would Guido please to wait, at Pietro's death;
Till when, he must support the couple's charge,
Bear with them, housemates, pensionaries, pawned
To an alien for fulfilment of their pact."¹

A terrible outline of the humiliations and deprivations undergone by the Comparini, is sketched by Other Half Rome to his listeners. Finally the couple fled in desperation to Rome, and left "Guido lord o' the prey." Pietro then, relying upon old friendship's mercy begged from door to door, where after the usual "Just as we foretold", he was given

"the dregs o' the cup,
Scraps of the trencher"

or they let him "share the mat with the mastiff."²

Violante's remorse and indignation took another form. She availed herself of the general pardon promised by the Pope's Jubilee, and confessed her wrong doings at Pompilia's birth, sure of the help of Saint Peter in her woes.

Now, the Anti-Guidoite says, Guido betrayed his wolfish nature. His rage and fury knew no bounds. He planned to goad the wife in such a way, that she would seek the path of infamy, in sheer desperation, because all other ways would be barred. Then

"should the loathed form and detested face
Launch themselves into hell and there be lost
While he looked o'er the brink with folded arms."³

Thus commenced a daily, hourly torture, for Pompilia is made to write the letter to the Abate first, the contents of which were spread broadcast

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 504 - 514.
2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 534 - 547.
3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 725 - 727.

throughout Rome, showing why the Comparini fled; for

"See the wife's own word,
Authentic answer."¹

"Accordingly did Guido set himself
To worry up and down, across, around,
The woman, hemmed in by her household bars, -
Chase her about the coop of daily life,
Having first stopped each outlet thence save one
Which, like bird with a ferret in her haunt,
She needs must seize as sole way of escape
Though there was tied and twittering a decoy
To seem as if it tempted, - just the plume
O' the popinjay, not a real respite there
From tooth and claw of something in the dark,
Giuseppe Caponsacchi."²

After the flight, pursuit and murder, the narrator tells of the dying wife, protesting her innocence with every act and every thought, until those around her bedside, physician, man of law, and the

"old bit of battered brass
Beaten out of all shape by the world's sins,
Common utensil of the lazar-house -
Confessor Celestino groans 'Tis truth,
All truth and only truth; there's something here,
Some presence in the room beside us all,
Something that every lie expires before:
No question she was pure from first to last."³

But the lover of beauty and man of sentiment, Other Half Rome, says, that even on her death bed her appeal and beauty was so great, that all were in love with her, so that it would be no wonder if Caponsacchi succumbed to her charms, despite his priesthood and knowledge of the world.

Caponsacchi was "no witless victim", he moved in the same circle as Guido, he must have heard the gossip concerning Guido's treatment of his despised wife. Then after aiding her to escape the bondage, and watching how the shy life flew back into the flower face, could he have kept his hand,

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 767 - 768.
2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 776 - 787.
3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 796 - 803.

"employed all day
At fumbling on with prayer-book pages?
No!
Men are men: why then need I say one word
More than that our mere man the Canon here
Saw, pitied, loved Pompilia!"¹

The alleged "love letters" worry the defender of Pompilia. He cannot understand why Capensacchi swears the lady wrote him passionate letters which he ignored; whilst Pompilia vows she

"never penned a letter in her life,
Nor to the Canon nor any other man."²

Other Half Rome is confident that the priest is a man of truth, intrepid, and reckless, and is sure there is some falsehood in the evidence, to make this argument tell against the honor of the young couple.

The speaker is very strong in his condemnation of the Governor and Archbishop, who refused to help either the Comparini or Pompilia; when from Guido's wolf-face "the sheepskin fell." The Governor remembered Guido was a friend and threatened the old couple that:-

"Wholesome chastisement should soon cure their qualms
Next time they came, wept, prayed and told lies."³

"The Archbishop, not to be outdone
By the Governor, break custom more than he,
Thrice bade the foolish woman stop her tongue,
Unloosed her hands from harassing his gout,
Coached her and carried her to the Count again,
- His old friend should be master in his house,⁴
Rule his wife and correct her faults at need!"

Such was the treatment the poor wife received when she called upon the Church for succour in her distress.

With regard to the flight of Pompilia, Guido also lied. He asserts, says the Other Half Rome, partings, secret meetings, all proved by his woman

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 817; 878 - 882.
2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 909 - 910.
3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 998 - 999.
4. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1007 - 1013.

spy. But these are untrue; it was when the seventeen year old wife stood bereft of all friends, she stood and stared at the open,

"With her wan face to see where God might wait -
And there found Caponsacchi wait as well
For the precious something at perdition's edge,
He only was predestinate to save."¹

There was no other course possible to follow, and the journey towards Rome was pursued precipitously, one aim only in view, to reach the foster-parents, and save the girl-wife from worse than death. Pompilia says she talked told Caponsacchi much,

"Knowing that he knew mere, knew me, knew God
And God's disposal of me, - but the sense
O' the blessed flight absorbed me in the main,
And speech became mere talking through a sleep."²

But human frailty cannot last for ever, and at Castelnuovo a swoon mercifully brought oblivion to the overwrought woman. When she awakened, (the guardian angel meanwhile had given reluctant place to Satan,) and again became cognisant of the world around her, she was in a strange bed in an unknown room. There also, instead of the "heaven of help", the priest who had guided her, stood Guido, maliciously pointing her out to his authorities from whom he claimed help in effecting the arrest of the pair.

No guilty woman would have had the courage that Pompilia showed, says the speaker. So righteous was her anger against her husband, that she sprang up, seized his sword, and would have slain him then, only they held her hands. Guido had expected to find his wife still meek enough to

"Leave him triumphant with the crowd to see,
Guilt motionless or writhing like a worm!"³

Failing to make this adventure suit him, as "this worm turned", he had to recourse to forgery and falsehood; hence

1. *The Ring and the Book*, Bk. III, ll. 1040 - 1044.
2. *Ibid.*, Bk. III, ll. 1135 - 1138.
3. *Ibid.*, Bk. III, ll. 1287 - 1288.

"Love-letters from his wife who cannot write,
Love-letters in reply o' the priest - thank God! -
Who can write and confront his character
With this, and prove the false thing forged throughout."¹

Other Half Rome exults, when he tells how Guido must have "gnawn lip and
gnashed teeth" when trying to catch the fugitives along the road, he was told
that they had refused to stay their flight even to alight, but "counted the
minutes and resumed their course." Even "Satan's laugh was heard," when the
priest met him

"alive
And alert, calm, resolute and formidable,
Not the least look of fear in that broad brow."

He stood there

"in secular costume
Complete from head to heel, with sword at side,
He seemed to know the trick of perfectly."²

Calmly then he spoke:-

"I have saved your wife
From death; there was no other way but this;
Of what do I defraud you except death?"

The husband's answer was to call in the law and give his victims into its grasp.

Justice was awarded; Caponsacchi was to take three years in
relegation at Civita Vecchia; and Pompilia was to be sent to the Convent, to
get the peace she craved, for:-

"Here has a blot surprised the social blank, .."³

and a wife has left her home; a priest has played truant from his church; a
husband, a man of mark has lodged complaint! Thus

"All parties may retire, content, we hope.
That's Rome's way, the traditional road of law;
Whither it leads is what remains to tell."⁴

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1. The Ring and the Book, Sk. III, ll. 1289; 1310 - 1313.
 2. Ibid., Sk. III, ll. 1215; 1246 - 1261.
 3. Ibid., Sk. III, l. 1261.
 4. Ibid., Sk. III, ll. 1416 - 1418.

Guido was left, shorn of all the things he had grasped for,

"When he turned the screw too much
On his wife's flesh and blood."¹

He found

"The world's face an universal grin
At this last best of the Hundred Merry Tales,"

of the "spritely clerk", the moping spouse, the husband who played "Vulcan's part."²

He

"just sneaked
Back to his kennel, tail tucked legs, as 'twere, -
All this was hard to gulp down and digest,
So pays the devil his liegeman, brass for gold."³

But Paolo took a hand, set wheels to work in Rome, tried to gain the
favor of the Pope.

"But times are changed and nephews out of date
And favoritism unfashionable: the Pope
Said 'Render Caesar what is Caesar's due!'"⁴

To Paolo, Other Half Rome attributes the final tragedies, for ere he
left Rome which he did before "mannala" was staged, he told Guido he went,

"To take the one step left."⁵

This apparently meant the murders.

The birth of the babe decided Guido to

"Repair all losses by a master stroke."⁶

He journeyed to Vittiano, took "four sons o' the soil with him". He spent
a week at Paolo's deserted home perfecting his plans, and

"Harangued, equipped, instructed, pressed each clod
With his will's imprint,"⁷

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 1429 - 1430.
 2. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1445 - 1450.
 3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1460 - 1463.
 4. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1475 - 1477.
 5. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1541.
 6. Ibid., Bk. III, l. 1566.
 7. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1575; 1580 - 1581.

and thus achieved his foul murders, with their aid.

His defence was,

"To save my honor which is more than life,
I exercised a husband's rights."¹

But law retorted, none had sinned in such a way as to deserve a punishment like this; further it was only when Guido felt that justice was balancing against him, that he felt the urge of "private honor".

The Other Half Rome sneers,

"That were too temptingly comedious Count!"²

He reminds Guido that the latter had employed fraud and lies, when having a contract with himself in former days, and practically committed a theft. He concludes:-

"If any law be imperative on us all,
Of all are you the enemy; out with you
From the common light and air and life of man."³

The strong defender of Pompilia's name gives place then to Tertium Quid. In Browning's series of actors, this is the third gossip,⁴ the man who represents the aristocratic circles, who tells the story of the homicides free from the prejudices that had influenced Half Rome, and Other Half Rome. The former had sympathized with Guido because of his own wife's encouragement of a lover; and the latter was predisposed toward Pompilia, because of her beauty and her forlorn position, which had called forth his latent chivalry. His hostility to Guido was increased by a remembrance of unsatisfactory business dealings between himself and the Count formerly.

But there is no personal feeling to color Tertium Quid's narrative. He is cynical, indifferent, with impartial blandness; and he tells both sides of the story with cold discernment. Throughout this monologue, Browning has

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. III, ll. 1648 - 1649.

2. Ibid., Bk. III, l. 1674.

3. Ibid., Bk. III, ll. 1691 - 1694.

4. Ibid., Bk. IV.

made references to the customs employed during that period in Roman society.

The "Third Nothing", as he is named is a flatterer; he fawns upon "Her Eminence", "Her Excellency", "the Marquis" and "Her Highness". It is for their benefit he is relating this sordid tale, he wishes to show his familiarity with the every day topics of Rome. There would be no need for a trial if the case were left in the charge of such as he himself, and his friends; it would be easy enough for them "to look through the crimson and trace the lines". He is thankful he does not belong to the

"rabble-brabble of dolts and fools
Who make up reasonless unreasoning Rome",

and who must demand a trial before they can see the Truth.¹

Whilst conversing, he tells one or two listeners to move away, lest they upset the card game of "basset", and jog the elbow of Her Eminence, who is apt to indulge in free speech when offended, or impatient.

The picture of the Comparini is drawn vividly, for the benefit of the audience; they are shown as a couple who lived a selfish life, easily flattered, and easily repaid for a liberal house and table, by knowing the neighbors said, "there was no wine like Pietro's." The wife's ambition was satisfied, when her "load of lace", caused envious sighs, as she passed down the aisle in church.

For fifty years this couple led an easy life, but were brought to a standstill by a host of debtors one fine day! Then for a time, Pietro had to ask for the dele given by Innocent XII, who:-

"picks the first ripe fruit that falls,
And gracious puts it in the vermin's way."²

Vielante

"the old innocent burghess wife,
In her first difficulty showed great teeth."³

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 40; 10. - 11.

2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 119 - 120.

3. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 131 - 132.

She studied the lawyer's documents anew, saw that the Trust Funds were hers if she could produce an heir, "makes up her mind, sees the thing to do."¹

Later she takes her prayer book in hand, but walks past the church, to a sordid street where the washing woman lived. Here, in a grimy room where the realities of life stood revealed in all their nakedness, a bargain was concluded. This was according to the critic, a worse compact than the laundress had ever made,

"far more shameful than the first
Which trafficked her virginity away."²

In conclusion to Violante she promised:-

"Then, six months hence, that person whom you trust,
Come, fetches whatsoever babe it be;
I keep the price and secret, you the babe
Paying beside for Mass to make all straight;³
Meantime, I pouch the earnest-money piece."

With ironical words the talker shows how Violante now triumphant, journeyed her way to church. At the singing of the Magnificat she emphasises the phrase,

"My reproof is taken away,
And blessed shall mankind proclaim me now,"

with such hearty vigor,

"that the officiating priest turns round
To see who proffers the obstreperous praise."⁴

Henceforth it is known that owing to the coming heir Violante:-

"must keep house next six months,
Lie on the settle, avoid the three-legged stool,
And, chiefly, not be crossed in wish or whim,
And the result was like to be an heir."⁵

Whilst balancing the problem as to whether the ethics of the case

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, l. 145.
 2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 182 - 183.
 3. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 187 - 191.
 4. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 196 - 199.
 5. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 207 - 210.

which commenced in a tissue of lies, but ended in saving "the dowry dear, "pure child", from its inherent wretchedness, the speaker suddenly ends his moralizing, to flatter Her Excellency upon the beauty of her sapphire; he wonders where she got "the marvel of a gem."¹

Tertium Quid tells what a good influence the coming of Pompilia had upon the parents. Pietro immediately started to save money, so that his daughter might have a worthy dowry.

"Henceforth no more wilfulness and waste,
Cummings, carousings, - these a sponge wiped out.
All sort of self-denial was easy now
For the child's sake."²

Hence,

"Debts were paid, habits reformed
Expenses curtailed, the dowry set to grow."³

Violante became so good that she was quoted as a model of one happy and therefore good.

The languid aristocrat now paused, to discuss the value of the pearl upon the neck of the Principessa, which he describes as:-

"That great round glory of pellucid stuff,
A fish secreted round a grain of grit!"⁴

He then resumes his tale, tells how Guido Franceschini looked round for money to marry, feeling he could afford in his position to despise mere birth. Throughout his discourse, the speaker skilfully insinuates, that the privilege of birth conveys favors, which the plebian cannot obtain.

Still, he scornfully directs attention to the poverty of the ancient house, with its faithful old servitor who has to be the factotum for all things. It is his duty to prow around the market and purchase the cheapest kinds of

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 246 - 259.

2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 292 - 294.

3. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 297 - 298.

4. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 309 - 310.

food. If a visitor arrives at the palace, it is his privilege to take them round and exhibit the priceless Rafaeles, but he must equally hold his peace concerning the broken ceiling, where the rain trickles in, and which his master cannot afford to mend.

He, the speaker, reviews Guido's course in life. "The Cardinal saw fit to dispense with the latter's services, after "forty-six years' rubbing on hard life."¹ Marriage seemed his only refuge. The woman dealer in perukes, when promised a reward, sent the brothers to Pompilia. There she told them they would find,

"The easy husband and the shrewder wife
In Via Vittoria, - how the tall young girl,
With hair black as yon patch and eyes as big
As yon pomander to make freckles fly,
Would have so much for certain, and so much more
In likelihood."²

Guido was sent to lounge in the Cardinal's ante-room, while Paolo visited the Via Vittoria, as

"Priests play with women, maids, wives, mothers."³

No time was lost over the contract. The Comparini were outside the heaven to which Guido held the key, - so says Violante:-

"Yours be Pompilia, hers and ours that key,
To all the glories of the greater life."⁴

As Pietro refused to sanction the marriage, Violante took it into her own hands and well might Paolo assert anew, -

"Mothers, wives and maids
These be the tools wherewith priests manage man."⁵

Tertium Quid now asks his audience whom they thought was the most deceived, "who the fool, the knave?" For both had promised what they did not

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 409 - 414.

2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 454 - 459.

3. Ibid., Bk. IV, l. 465.

4. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 487 - 488.

5. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 503 - 504.

possess:-

"Having he, not a doct. they, not a child
Honestly theirs, but this poor waif and stray."

Then when the dream was realized, and the poverty of ducal life well tested, the two foolish people screamed, "We are cheated!"¹ Such a noise would irritate at any time, but to hear it from:-

"Gnats which yourself have closed the curtain round," -

"Goes too near the brain and makes you mad."²

In five months, the foster-parents begged just enough of their own money back to furnish their passage to Rome. There seemed to be a little sympathy from Tertium Quid towards Guido, in the sense of outrage and mortification he experienced, by the publicity given to his private affairs, and by Violante's confession at the Jubilee. He could not bear to hear discussed by all men,

"The petty nothings we hear privately
But break down under when fools flock to jeer."³

All the petty meanness of the Franceschini family were written, printed, published abroad. Foolishly the parents rejoiced at their escape from Guido's clutches, but they forget

"A pet lamb they have left in reach outside,
Whose first bleat, when he plucks the wool away
Will strike the grinner's grave."⁴

Guido being Aretine

"Had touch of the subtle air that breeds the subtle wit;
Was noble too, of old blood thrice-refined
That shrinks from clownish coarseness in disgust."⁵

He therefore will not take "up stone and fling" but practised "the finer vengeance". He did not intend

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. Bk. IV, l. 357.
 2. Ibid, Bk. IV, ll. 561 - 562.
 3. Ibid, Bk. IV, ll. 643 - 644.
 4. Ibid, Bk. IV, ll. 665 - 666.
 5. Ibid, Bk. IV, ll. 757 - 759.

"To vex just a body they held dear,
But blacken too a soul they boasted white,
And show the world their saint in a lover's arms,
No matter how driven thither."¹

The commencement of the vengeance began with the letter, which Pompilia had to mark over for the Abate Paolo to read. Pompilia claimed, so the story runs:

"Adam so starved me I was fain accept
The apple may serpent pushed my way."²

This reminds Tertium Quid of the scandal concerning a member of their society, who lost her reputation through a penchant for her negro servant. Her excuse was, that her husband kept her so rigorously tied to virtue, that she had to break bounds in desperation.

Capensacchi, in telling his side of the case, relates how astounded he was to receive avowals of love from the lady of whom he knew nothing. But after one interview with her:-

"He saw the sole and single course to take -
Bade her dispose of him, head, heart and hand
Did her behest and braved the consequence,
Not for the natural end, the love of man
For woman whether love be virtue or vice,
But, please you, altogether for pity's sake -
Pity of innocence and helplessness!"³

But the astute talker says, after all

"- in what rubric of the breviary
Do you find it registered - the part of a priest
Is - that to right wrongs from the church he skip,
Go journeying with a woman that's a wife!"⁴

It would have been better surely, to have provided some woman friend who could have served at need in such a case.

Guido is certain however, that his version of the story is the

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 761 - 769; 696 - 698.
 2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 858 - 859.
 3. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 990 - 996.
 4. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 955 - 958.

correct one. The evidence he gained from the servant-wench tells of lies, cheatings, intrigues, morning and evening visits made, when the husband was absent; these all culminating in the final flight. If proof were incomplete, the letters are surely ample evidence, despite the priest's sneers, who says they were "found", "because he (Guido) needed them."

Many hints were made, by the much injured husband as to the various ways he could have disposed of his wife in the seclusion of the palace. There was the "silent acquetta", "the shattering beam", the "staunch steel", or "trusty cord",

"I' the blind old palace, a pitfall at each step,
With none to see, much more to interpose
O' the two, three, creeping house-dog-servant-things
Born mine and bred mine."¹

Frankly, Tertium Quid assumes the innocence of Pompilia a pose, necessary for the reputation of her son and her friend Capensacchi. She was consistent to the end, for:-

"Having braved heaven and deceived earth throughout,
She braves still and deceives still, gains thereby
Two ends, she prizes beyond earth or heaven;"²

"she frees her lover", and dies revenged on Guido: Even the Tuscan courts had condemned her to the "Stinche", the "House of Punishment, for life." But Rome had given her what she wanted, sent her to her father's home, presented the thief "with the thing he steals."³

Rage and jealousy had made Guido a bull, and bull-like he gave,

"the indiscriminate slaughter, rude
And reckless aggravation of revenge,"⁴

and one does not censure a bull!

Tertium Quid objects to the fact that all her friends insist on

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1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 1069 - 1078.
 2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 1462 - 1464.
 3. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 1513 - 1520.
 4. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 1565 - 1566.

Pomilia's purity, she is all angel, "her parents angels too", and Guido was the fiend who came and

"Hell broke loose on a butterfly."¹

Many gruesome details are filled in by the Third Nothing. He narrates how Guido lifted his wife by her hair to make sure she was dead. He tells of the death of Patrizi the officer, sent in pursuit of Guido. He also shows his knowledge by telling all the various places at which the case was tried; before the Rota with Melinos as judge; before Tommati, and finally before Venturini.

Whatever Guido did, it must be remembered,

"he's a mere man -
Born, bred and brought up in the usual way.
His mother loves him, still his brothers stick
To the good fellow of the boyish games:
The Governor of his town knows and approved,
The Archbishop of the place knows and assists;
Here he has Cardinal This to vouch for the past,
Cardinal That to trust for the future, - match
And marriage were a Cardinal's making."²

At least he should be exempt from torture for he is nobly born, and may be innocent. The speaker begs Her Excellency to say, what she thinks about the crime! But she is going to the play, and Tertium Quid finds he has talked much, but no thanks are offered him. He closes with a speech that shows his mortification:-

("You'll see, I have not so advanced myself
After my teaching the two idiots here.")³

1. The Ring and the Book, Bk. IV, ll. 1593 - 1601.
2. Ibid., Bk. IV, ll. 1603 - 1611.
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