

poetry, which flowed through his whole system, could not be directed into the dry and tortuous channels of the law.

Pietro was a general favourite, and as Gravina did not quite forbid his cultivating his poetical talents, he soon became famed, and his fellow students would cluster about Gravina's house at night-fall, and call upon Metastasio, as he was now named, to exercise his improvisatore talents for their amusement. Gravina had preferred when he adopted him to change his name, and yet not wishing him quite to forget the one which was his birth-right, he had contented himself by altering the Italian name Tropossi into its Greek synonyme Metastasio. Though most anxious that Pietro should become a sound lawyer, Gravina could not deny himself the pride and pleasure of exhibiting the talents of the boy, and he frequently gathered literary parties, for the decision of intellectual subjects, and the astonishment of the visitors was always excited by the extempore versification of the young poet, and the ease with which he joined in the Pindaric conflicts with Lorenzini, the famous Cavalier Perletti, and others of the literati of the age. On one of these occasions, he read to a delighted audience, his first tragedy "Ginstino," of which he thus speaks many years after, in writing to a friend.

"My tragedy of Ginstino was written at the age of fourteen, when the authority of my illustrious master did not permit me to diverge from a religious imitation of the great Greek models, and when my own inexperience prevented me from discerning the gold from the lead, in those mines whose treasures were but just opened to me." The tragedy, written thus in strict imitation, was necessarily cramped and frigid, as it allowed but little play to his fancy; and even the language is wanting in the ease and grace which distinguished Metastasio's after writings.

Years thus passed happily on in the pursuit of his studies, and every passing day deepened the affection between Gravina and his pupil; no son could be more devoted to the fondest parent, and no father could feel a more absorbing interest in his child. Gravina gave up many an old prejudice and strict opinion to gratify the youth, and the latter resisted many a wandering inclination, to testify his love and respect for his adopted father. But most unhappily for Metastasio, when he had but just reached his twentieth year, his protector died, and he was thrown an orphan upon the world, for difference of education prevented his finding sympathy in his childhood's humble home. In his sorrow he took refuge in poetry, and found, in the perfect liberty to follow his own tastes, the best soother of his grief.

Gravina's kindness had continued to the last, and he left the whole of his ample fortune to Pietro. This precluded the necessity of his continuing the

study of the law for support, and, of course, it was immediately abandoned; but, unfortunately his taste and the reputation of wealth drew around him a large circle of flatterers, and as his house was ever open to all who appeared to appreciate his compositions, or could pretend to any literary talent themselves, he was much imposed upon. His expences far exceeded his income, and he at last aroused from two or three years luxury, to find his estate almost gone; fearing lest he should become entirely penniless, he reduced his style of living to the most rigid economy, and endeavoured to obtain some office in the Pontifical Court. But the friends who had clustered about him when he was rich, now neglected him, and finding he could receive no aid from them in obtaining the office he sought, and disgusted with their heartlessness, he sold his little remaining property, and proceeded to Naples, bent upon recommencing the study of the law.

Immediately on his arrival at Naples, he sought out Costognolo, the most eminent lawyer of the city, and earnestly implored to be allowed to study under his direction. He promised to devote himself to the law, and to perform all the duties entrusted to him with care and attention. He gave him an outline of his life, and hinted at his reputation for ability, and his poetical accomplishments. This was, however, almost destructive to his hopes, for Costognolo, a strict lawyer, all his imagination and feeling subject to the one dominant principle of law, was horror struck at the idea of a poetical pupil, of one who might by mistake draw out a deed in rhyme, or write an attachment in blank verse; but being pleased with the appearance and manners of Metastasio, he at last agreed to receive him, on condition of his relinquishing the Muses entirely.—So much had the young poet been terrified by the spectre dependance, which, led by want, had peeped in at his window, and scared him by her hollow eye and heavy tread, that he submitted to this exaction, rigorous as it was, and entered into the usual bonds, with Costognolo. By the sweetness of his temper, his diligence in his studies and careful attention to the wishes of the crabbed lawyer, Pietro soon won his confidence and affection, and Costognolo forgot he had ever rhymed, and learned to regard him with real interest and affection, and to hope he would make a reputable advocate. But *circumstance*, that foe to our best intentions, willed it otherwise, and destroyed the fair promise of converting the enthusiastic poet, into the cold, jejune lawyer

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It was the birth-night of the Empress Elizabeth Christina, and all Naples were busy with the splendid pageant which had been prepared with unusual pomp, to celebrate the joyful occasion. The whole city was illuminated, gay bands of masquers filled the streets, which were profusely decorated with flags,