

ferocious hordes of barbarians, who came prepared to ravage the fair fields of Italy. Forestus of Este, the immediate ancestor of Mary Beatrice of Modena, was, in the year 452, entrusted with the command of the forces sent to relieve Aquileia. He met and put to flight 16,000 of Attila's terrible Huns, and he continued to defy and hold the mighty barbarian at bay, till, by the treachery of some of his soldiers, he was drawn into an ambush, where, it is believed, he was slain by Attila's own hand. His son Acarinus more than equalled his father's fame, and with better fortune maintained the freedom of his country for a much longer period, till he too sealed his patriotism with his blood.¹ Poetry and romance have, perhaps, scattered their flowers among the traditionary glories of the ancient heroes of the line, but those garlands were the votive offerings of the grateful chroniclers and immortal bards of Italy, who, in every age from remote antiquity, found their noblest patrons in the chivalric and munificent princes of the house of Este. No family in Europe has, indeed, contributed more to the progress of civilization, by liberal encouragement of literature and the fine arts.

Our sovereign lady queen Victoria is the representative of the elder branch of this illustrious stock, which, in the year 1000, divided into two distinct houses, in consequence of the marriage of the reigning prince Azo, marquess of Tuscany and Liguria, with the heiress of the wealthy Bavarian family of Wolf or Guelph, when the eldest of his two sons, by this alliance, took the name and estates of his German mother; the younger became the representative of the house of Este in Italy, and his descendants reigned over the united duchies of Ferrara and Modena. Alphonso II. dying in the year 1598 without issue, bequeathed his dominions to his kinsman, Caesar d'Este; but pope Clement VIII., under the pretence that Ferrara was a fief of the papal empire, seized on that territory, and annexed it to his dominions.² After the loss of this fairest jewel in the ducal coronet, the representative of the Italian line of Este was only recognised in Europe

¹ History of the House of Este, dedicated to Mary Beatrice, duchess of York.

² Ibid.