THE DAWN OF
THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING.

I

BY THE EDITOR.

HISTORY is concerned with the tracing of the evolution
of human affairs, and as we study it we are constantly
being driven further back for a new starting-point.

For that reason we divide history roughly into four main
divisions: ancient, classical, medieval, and modern. This is
purely for the sake of convenience, for such are the interrelations
and overlappings of one period with another that it is impossible
to study any one period without going back to the preceding
period to seek the causes which brought about such lines of
difference as appear to exist when viewed from our modern point
of view. Each generation as it looks back sees a change in the
perspective and is unable to look with the same eyes as its pre-
decessors.

For example: if we want to understand the forces which
operated in the Renaissance we have to turn back the pages
of the history of the Middle Ages until we trace the origin of
those forces to be away back in the classical period, in those
golden days when literature was preserved and cultivated for
her own sake, when she walked alone and had not yet entered
into partnership with commerce.

The term “Renaissance” or “Revival of Learning” means
the recovery of a lost culture and the renewed diffusion of a
lost spirit, which had been slumbering.

The common feelings of humanity were being aroused;
Europe was ripe for a change in almost all the relations of Church
and state, but the break was not a sudden one.

From the twelfth century onwards to the fifteenth century
there had been a gradual stirring of minds, a growing desire for
light, the first large result of which was the scholastic philosophy,
commonly referred to as "Scholasticism", which was an attempt to codify all existing knowledge under certain laws and formulae, so as to reconcile it with the conception of truth which dominated the Middle Ages—that of the universal empire and the universal church.

Hence, the standard of truth adopted by the Schoolmen was that to which the Church had given her sanction.

But in the middle of the fourteenth century scholasticism began to wane, the age of Church domination was about to expire. Rome had lost its guiding hand, and a new intellectual movement set in, which stood for progress and reform, known as "Humanism".

It was recognised that there had been a time when men had used their faculties of mind and imagination without fear of reproof, when they were not bound by formulae nor restricted to certain paths, but were free to seek knowledge in every field of speculation, and beauty in every field of fancy. These men bequeathed to posterity a literature different in quality and in range from anything that had been written for a thousand years.

The pagan view, which was also the view of the Founder of Christianity, was now once more proclaimed, that man was not only to toil and suffer but also to enjoy, and it brought with it a claim for mental freedom and the full development of man’s being.

In this way the barriers so long imposed on the exercise of reason were broken down and the new intellectual movement set in. Even so, we must resist the temptation to exaggerate the darkness of the Middle Ages in order to enhance the brightness of the succeeding ages. In the Middle Ages the dark cloud had a silver lining and the light of religion was never entirely eclipsed, while in the Revival the new light was sometimes dimmed and obscured by the mists of paganism.

If we turn back the pages of history to that epoch-making event in the history of Europe, the Fall of Rome, in 476 A.D., which marks the commencement of the so-called Middle Ages, we shall find that it was followed by a rapid decline of education and general culture.
The barbarian invaders of Italy were strangers to the civilisation and social life out of which the classical literature had arisen. The ancient culture found no place in the life they brought with them. The schools were swept away, libraries disappeared, and learning was stripped of her ancient glories and was expelled from her favourite haunts. Culture and the means of developing it was not only difficult, but was less necessary than the work of defence of hearth and home, when those barbarian invaders were battering at the gates of the city.

Yet, in those days of pillage, of bloodshed, and of revolution, there were places of comparative light where the lamp of truth was kept burning. Monasteries had commenced to multiply in the West, and also in the East as early as the fourth century. In 528 A.D. the first house of the Benedictine Order was founded at Monte Cassino, and thenceforward, wherever established, this order was a powerful agency for good. It created in the West almost the only homes of learning and education, and constituted by far the most civilizing agency in Europe, until it was superseded as an educational instrument by the growth of the universities.

To the Benedictines is largely due the survival of the Latin classics. Indeed, it would be difficult to overrate their services as guardians of books in the darkest ages of Europe.

The 5000 Greek and 3000 Latin manuscripts of the Bible, or parts of it, which have come down to us and constitute the sources of our knowledge of the books of the sacred volume, except for a few fragments of papyri recently recovered, were written during the Middle Ages.

Not only so, but our knowledge of the Latin and also of the Greek classics, except for a few papyri recently recovered, rests upon the copies produced during the Middle Ages in the religious houses of the East and West.

To-day the classical scholar wishes the holy fathers had thought more about his cherished authors of Greece and Rome, whilst the pious puritan historian blames them for patronizing the romantic allurements of Ovid or the loose satires of Juvenal.

The truth is that these holy fathers were attracted by the perfection of form attained by many of the old authors
whose works they studied with a view to mastering the language that had long been traditional in the teaching of the Church, and remained the only medium of literary expression in Western Europe. These monks were genuine book-lovers, they encouraged learning, they cherished the books they had rescued from the destruction of war and time and husbanded them as intellectual food for posterity.

In any study of the Revival of Learning, no matter how superficial, we must resist the temptation to regard it as a sudden and single event with a fixed and definite date. It was a gradual, protracted process resulting from a long series of causes.

In the classic soil of Italy the revival was slowly called into being by the prevailing spirit of intellectual freedom, by the social and political condition of the country, by the continuous traditions of the Latin language, by the central witness of the existence of Greek in the region of Magna Græcia, as Italy was known, by the survival of the remains of ancient sculpture and by the abiding presence of the ruins of Rome.

But the great and general enthusiasm of the Italians for classical antiquity did not display itself before the fourteenth century. For this a development of civic life was required which took place only in Italy and not until then. It was needful that noble and burgher should first learn to dwell together on equal terms, that highest and lowest should come together in a manly brotherhood, and that a social world should arise which felt the want of culture and had the leisure and means to obtain it.

But culture as soon as it freed itself from the fantastic bonds of the Middle Ages could not at once without help find its way to the understanding of the physical and intellectual world. It needed a guide and found it in the ancient civilization with its wealth of truth and knowledge in every spiritual interest. Both the form and substance of this civilization was adopted with admiring gratitude and it became the chief part of the culture of the age.

Macaulay in his essay on Machiavelli declares: that “during the gloomy and disastrous centuries which followed the downfall of the Roman Empire, Italy had preserved, in a far greater
degree than any other part of Western Europe, the traces of ancient civilization. The night which descended upon her was the night of an Arctic summer. The dawn began to reappear before the last reflection of the preceding sunset had faded from the horizon.” But Professor Sandys prefers to say: that “although the night was luminous the sun was absent and Petrarch was the morning star of a new day”. Or, as Renan in his study of Averroës describes him, “the first modern man”.

No one will deny to Petrarch the honour of being the link between the mediæval and modern world, of standing on the confines of two worlds, and of looking backwards and forwards. But Petrarch does not stand alone. There were other stars in the sky before the star of Petrarch arose, although not of the same magnitude.

Among his immediate precursors were two scholars of Padua. One, the eloquent and learned Lovati, who died in 1309, was the first to recognize the rules of metre followed by Seneca; the other, his younger contemporary and the inheritor of his literary interests, was the eminent statesman, historian and poet, who died in 1329, Albertino Mussato, the author of poems abounding in reminiscences of Vergil, Ovid and Lucan, and of works in prose recalling Livy’s eulogies of old Roman heroes.

Another precursor was Giovanni del Vergilio of Bologna, who in 1319 had the temerity to send to Dante a Latin epic in which he criticised the great poet’s preference for Italian rather than Latin as the language of the Divina Commedia. His claim to be regarded as a precursor of the Renaissance rests mainly on his admiration of Vergil, whose name was assumed by himself, or was won from others by his success as an exponent or imitator of the Roman poet.

A still earlier precursor was the eminent notary of Florence, Brunetto Latini, who died in 1290. During his exile in France (1260-67) he wrote Il Tesoro, the work by which he still lives, in which he takes delight in quoting the classics. He is immortalized by Dante in the 15th canto of the “Inferno,” where he confesses that it was from Brunetto he learned “how man makes himself eternal”.
The claims to fame of these four scholars rests upon their admiration and imitation of ancient Latin models.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was also a precursor in the same sense that he broke away from the mediæval tradition by writing his great poem not in Latin but in the Tuscan tongue, in his proud self-consciousness as a poet, and in his personal longing for fame. It is true that in his poem he firmly maintains the emptiness of fame, although in a manner which betrays that his heart was not free from the longing for it.\(^1\)

It was a new thing to find such wide learning outside the clerical order. No more learned layman can be met in the age of the Revival. Yet he was true to the strictest theology of the Middle Ages. The speculative basis of Dante's great poem is furnished by the scholastic combination of Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy.

Dante had the highest regard for Aristotle, for in the limbo of the unbaptized in a green meadow surrounded by the sevenfold walls of a noble castle, the poet sees “the Master of them that know”, with Plato and Socrates hard by and, amongst others, Tully and Livy, and the moralist Seneca with Avicenna.\(^2\)

Dante was one of the most profound scholars of his times, and in his works he makes constant reference to the Latin classics. These references to ancient literature have been collected and classified as follows: from the “Vulgate” 500, from Aristotle 300, from Vergil 200, from Ovid 100, from Cicero 50, from Statius and Boethius 40 to 50, and so on.

Dante knew nothing of Greek, so that his quotations are from the Latin Aristotle. Like the mediæval scholar he lay in bondage to the Latin versions, and it was high time that a revival of learning should restore a knowledge of the Greek texts, and extend the range of study by inspiring it with a new interest.

The passion for Latin continued until the middle of the seventeenth century. Latin was considered to be more noble than the vernacular. Poggio regretted that Dante had composed his great poem in Italian, and Dante himself seems to have had some scruples for he began his “Inferno” in Latin

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\(^1\) “Paradiso”, vi; “Purgatorio”, v, xi; “Inferno”, vi.

\(^2\) “Inferno”, iv, 130-144.
verse; and there seems to be little doubt that like Petrarch and Boccaccio later he hoped to attain immortality by his Latin rather than his Italian works.

A certain prejudice against pagan learning and especially against pagan poetry seems to have been traditional in the Christian community.

In the third century Tertullian asked what Athens had to do with Jerusalem, or the Academy with the Church. St. Jerome enquired what concern Horace had with the Psalter, or Vergil with the Gospel, or Cicero with the Apostles. Yet St. Jerome agreed with Origen that it was as lawful for Christians as for Jews to spoil the Egyptians, and, after due precaution, to appropriate any prize they had captured from the hands of the enemy.

The prejudice lived on among churchmen. Cicero had supplied a model for the Latin of the Fathers and of their successors in the Middle Ages, but even Cicero might be studied with undue devotion.

A more liberal spirit animated Cassiodorus in the sixth century, when he exhorted his monks to study the liberal arts and to follow the example of Moses who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Doubtless, many of those who entered the monastery were drawn to it as a place of quiet, a home of learning and leisure, where they could live apart from the strife of tongues and the tumult of war.

The influence of such studious votaries of the religious life must have done much to counteract the traditional prejudice against the pagan classics, and intelligent readers of Latin could not fail to be attracted by the perfection of form attained by many of the old classical writers whose works they studied with a view to mastering the language that had been traditional in the teaching of the Church. In this way an interest in the classics had succeeded in surviving the censure of the Church.

The scholar who more than any other has left the impress of his personality upon the history of the beginnings of modern history was Petrarch, whose life covers the period of seventy years, between 1304 and 1374. He was born in exile at Arezzo,
was taken at an early age to Avignon, was educated mainly at Montpellier and Bologna, and spent sixteen years at Vaucluse. His early travels in France and Germany were followed by repeated visits to Rome, where in recognition of his powers as a Latin rather than an Italian scholar he was crowned with the laurel on the Capitol in 1341.

Familiar with Parma, Verona and Vicenza he hardly ever saw his ancestral city of Florence. He spent eighteen years in Milan, stayed for a time in Padua and Venice and passed the final years of his life at the quiet village of Arquà, amid the solitude of the Euganean hills.

It is of Petrarch that Byron in Childe Harold (iv, 32) has said:

"If from society we learn to live
'Tis solitude should teach us how to die."

In the year before his death he wrote to a friend expressing the hope that death might find him reading and writing or, if it pleased Christ, praying and in tears. His desire was partly gratified for on a July morning in 1374 death came upon him in his library, where his attendants found him with his head resting upon an open book and they fancied at first he was only sleeping.

There is a well-attested tradition that he died while illuminating (in other words annotating) his copy of a Latin Homer. His manuscript is now, or was until recently, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the trembling hand that marks the close of the notes on the "Odyssey" confirms the tradition that they were his latest work.

Half-way up the slope to Arquà his little house may still be seen, and the room in which he died.

Samuel Rogers in his poem "Italy" says:

"... Knock and enter in.
This was his chamber. 'Tis as when he left it;
And this his closet. Here he sate and read,
This was his chair; and in it, unobserved,
Reading or thinking of his absent friends,
He passed away as in a quiet slumber."

To speak of Petrarch as the first modern man is entirely just. He was the first to realize in the new age the supreme
importance of the old classical literature, to regard that literature with a fresh intelligent and critical interest, to appreciate its value as a means of self-culture and as an exercise of some of the highest faculties of man.

He was no slavish imitator of classical models. In prose he is mainly inspired by the philosophical works of Cicero and by the moral letters of Seneca. In verse his model was Vergil. But he realised the importance of catching the spirit of an author without appropriating the actual language. He was attracted by the perfection of form which he found in the Latin classics. From his earliest youth he had, we are told, a keen ear for the melodies of Latin verse and historical prose. Whilst he was a student at Montpellier he spent the time he was supposed to be devoting to the study of law in the perusal of his favourite Latin authors.

One day his father suddenly appeared on the scene, and realising what was happening, he tore his son’s treasures from their place of concealment and flung them on the fire. When the son burst into tears at the grievous sight the father so far relented as to snatch two volumes from the flames, the one a copy of Vergil the other the *Rhetoric* of Cicero. Those two authors became the principal text-books of the Revival. Petrarch describes them in one of his poems, “Trionfo della fama,” as the two eyes of his discourse.

In his very boyhood Petrarch had been smitten with the charm of Vergil, and even in his old age he was still haunted by the mediæval tradition of the allegorical significance of the *Æneid*. But unlike the mediæval admirers of Vergil he does not regard him as a mysteriously distant being, he finds in him a friend and he is candid enough to criticize him.

Next to Vergil in order of admiration he placed Horace, to whom he addresses a poetic epistle in no less than 138 lines.

He was familiar with many other Latin poets and prose writers, but such was his admiration for Cicero, and such was the spell that Cicero cast over him that in his old age he is prompted to say that “the eloquence of this heavenly being is absolutely inimitable.”

At the commencement of Petrarch’s career only a few of
Cicero’s writings were known; the others known to be lost were the constant theme of his quest, and whenever in his travels he caught a distant view of some secluded monastery he hastened to the spot in the hope of finding the object of his search.

In 1333 he experienced the first joy of discovery when he found at Liège two speeches of Cicero. In 1345 he found another manuscript containing the letters to Atticus and Quintus, and the correspondence of Brutus.

No sooner had Petrarch discovered these letters to Atticus than he at once indited a letter to Cicero himself apprising him of his find. This was the first of his letters to dead authors.

Here are some passages from his first letter:

"I have read thy letters through to the end most eagerly—letters for which I had diligently searched far and wide, and which finally I came upon where I least expected.

"I have heard thee speak on many subjects, give voice to many laments, and waver frequently in thy opinions O, Marcus Tullius. Hitherto I know what true counsel thou gavest to others, now at least I have learned to what degree thou didst prove mentor to thyself.

"Wherever thou mayest be, hearken in turn to this—I shall not call it advice—but lament, a lament springing from sincere love and uttered not without tears, by one of thy descendants who most dearly cherishes thy name. O, thou ever restless and distressed spirit, or, that thou mayest recognise thine own words, O, thou rash and unfortunate old man! Why such countless enmities and rivalries bound to prove of absolutely no benefit to thee? . . . What false lustre of glory involved thee . . . and hurried thee to an end unworthy of a philosopher? Alas, forgetful of the admonitions of thy brother, forgetful of thy own numerous and wholesome precepts, like a traveller in the night didst thou bear the light in the darkness, and didst enlighten for those following thee the path on which thou thyself didst stumble most wretchedly. . . . I grieve at thy lot, my friend; I am ashamed of thy many great shortcomings, and take compassion on them. . . . Forsooth, what boots it to instruct others, of what profit to discourse eternally, on the virtues, and that, too, in most eloquent terms, if, at the same time, one turns a deaf ear to his own instructions? Ah, how much better had it been for a man of declining years, and especially for one devoted to studies, even as thou, to have lived his last days in the quiet of the country meditating on the everlasting life, and not on this fleeting one."

1 These and the succeeding extracts have been drawn from "Petrarch’s letters to classical authors. Translated from the Latin with a commentary by M. E. Cosenza," Chicago, 1910.
In another letter to Cicero, written at Avignon in 1345, Petrarch writes:

"I fear that my last letter offended thee; for thou thyself art wont to designate as just the adage of thy friend in his 'Andria' [Terence] 'Homage begets friends; truth enemies.' If my fear prove true, then accept what may in some degree soothe thy injured feelings. Let not the truth be a source of the humour in every and all instances, I beg of thee. Men, I know, are wont to be angered at justifiable censure, and to rejoice in merited praise. Thou, indeed, O Cicero (speaking with thy leave) didst live as a man, didst speak as an orator, didst write as a philosopher. It was thy life that I found fault with, not thy intellectual powers, nor yet thy command of language. Indeed, I admire the former, and am amazed at the latter. And, moreover, in thy life I feel the lack of nothing except the element of constancy, and a desire for peace that was to have been expected of a philosopher. . . . Whenever thou wast inclined thou didst praise the life of Epicurus and ridiculed his intellect. In thee I ridicule nothing. I take compassion, however, on the life thou didst lead, while . . . I rejoice in thy mental abilities and thy powers of expression. O thou great father of Roman eloquence! Not only I, but all who take delight in the elegance of the Latin tongue render thee great thanks. Thou art the fountainhead from which we draw the vivifying waters of our meadows. . . . It was under thy auspices that I have gained this ability as a writer (such as it is) and that I have attained my purpose.

"For the realms of poetry, however, there was at hand a second guide. The nature of the case demanded that there should be two leaders, one whom I might follow in the unencumbered ways of prose, and the other in the more restricted paths of poetry. It was necessary there should be two men whom I should admire, respectively, for their eloquence and their song. . . .

"Dost thou ask who that other guide is? Thou wilt know the man at once if thou art reminded of his name. It is Publius Vergilius Maro, a citizen of Mantua, of whom thou didst prophesy great things . . . just as thou hadst already granted to Latium the palm in oratory, thou wouldst have done likewise in the case of poetry. I do not doubt, moreover, that thou wouldst have pronounced the Aeneid superior to the Iliad. . . . Believe me, Cicero, if thou wert to learn of the fallen state of our country, thou wouldst weep bitter tears, be it a region of Heaven that thou inhabitest, or of Hades. Forever farewell."

In 1348 Petrarch indited a letter to Seneca in which he begs for pardon if:

"I express myself more sharply than is quite consistent with the reverence due to thy calling and to the peace of the grave. . . . I daily listen to your words with more attention than can be believed; and so, perchance, I shall not be considered impertinent in desiring you in your turn to listen to me once.
"I am fully aware that thou art to be numbered among those whose names are illustrious... but often the most perfect mould of either mind or body is marred by some serious blemish of nature, which speaks in such various language... The juxtaposition of contradictory things always sheds light upon doubtful points.

"And yet do thou, O venerable sir and incomparable teacher of moral philosophy, do thou review with me calmly the great error of thy life. Thou didst fall on evil days, in the reign of the most savage ruler within the memory of man. Thou thyself a peaceful mariner didst guide thy bark, heavily laden as it is with the most precious goods, toward an unspeakably dangerous and tempestuous reef. But I ask why didst thou tarry there? Was it that thou mightest the better evince thy masterly skill in so stormy a sea? None but a madman would have thus chosen. To be sure, it is the part of a brave man to face danger resolutely, but not that of a wise man to seek it. Were the prudent man to be given a free choice, he would so live that there would never be need of bravery, for nothing would ever happen to him that would compel him to make a call upon it. The wise man will rather check all excessive demonstrations of joy and confine his desires within proper bounds... it was folly to remain amongst the shoals... Thou didst see the sword hanging perpetually over thy head... Yet didst take no step to escape from such a perilous existence...

"Thou hadst fallen, O pitiable man into the hands of one who had power to do what he willed, but who willed nothing except it were vile... What couldst thou have in common with such an inhuman and bloodstained pupil? Or with courtiers so repugnant to thy nature? Thou mayest answer 'I wished to flee but could not.'...

"A most trustworthy authority, Suetonius Tranquillus... says that thou didst discourage Nero's reading of the ancient orators in order that thou mightest retain him the longer as an admirer of thine own writings."

Petrarch in his early boyhood had been smitten with the charm of Vergil, and in later years he took him as his model in verse.

Here are a few passages culled from the letter he addressed to him:

"O illustrious Maro, bright luminary of eloquence and second hope of the Latin tongue [he had already given pride of first place to Ciceron], fortunate Mantua rejoices in so great a son as thou, rejoices in having brought to light an ornament to the Roman name that will continue to adorn it throughout the centuries. What region of earth or what circle of Avernus arrests thee now?...

"Dost thou soothe the Elysian groves with thy tender song, or dost thou dwell upon a Tartarean Helicon? And, O fairest of birds, does Homer, who

1 Seneca had been chosen by the Emperor Claudius as tutor to the young Nero.
was of one mind with thee, roam about in thy company? . . . Who are thy present companions? What life dost thou live? These are questions I should gladly hear thee answer. And how near the truth were thy earthly dreams and imaginings? Hast thou been welcomed by the wandering Aeneas, and hast thou passed through the ivory portal by which he found exit? Or, rather, dost thou dwell in that quiet region of heaven which receives the blessed, where the stars smile benignly upon the peaceful shades of the illustrious?

"Wert thou received thither after the conquest of the Stygian abodes . . . on the arrival of that Highest King who, victorious in the great struggle, crossed the unholy threshold with pierced feet, and irresistibly beat down the unyielding bars of hell with his pierced hands and hurled its gates from their horrid-sounding hinges? All this should I like to learn from thee.

"If the shade of anyone lately of this world of ours should perchance visit thee in the silent world, receive from him news I have entrusted to him. Learn from him the present condition of the three cities dear to thee, and the treatment which has been accorded to thy works. . . . Mantua, best of cities is ceaselessly tossed by the disturbances of her neighbours, but shielding herself behind her great-souled leaders, she scorns to submit her unconquered head to the yoke, rejoicing in her unconquered lords and ignorant of the rule of the stranger. It is in this city I have composed what you are now reading. It is here that I have found the friendly repose of thy rural fields.

"Constantly I wonder where it was that thou didst rest upon the sloping sward, or that, reclining in thy moments of fatigue thou didst press with thy elbow upon the grassy turf or upon the marge of the charming spring. Such thoughts as these, O Vergil, bring thee vividly before mine eyes. . . . Farewell forever, O beloved one and pray greet in my behalf thy elders, Homer and the Ascreean."

Petrarch knew no Greek and therefore was in bondage to the Latin translation of Homer and Aristotle and the other classics he desired to know, and in his letter to Homer he opens his heart.

This long letter was written in 1360. Petrarch had been in possession of a copy of the original Homer since 1353, but it was a closed book to him, and it was not until just before the date of the letter that several portions of Homer had been translated into Latin for him by Leonzio Pilato. It was this that gave him a taste of the character of the whole work and induced him to address Homer in the letter from which we make a few extracts:

"I have long desired to address thee in writing, and would have done so without hesitation if I had had a ready command of thy tongue. But, alas! Fortune was unkind to me in my study of Greek. Thou, on the other hand,
seemest to have forgotten the Latin which it was formerly customary for our authors to bring to thy assistance, but which their descendants had failed to place at thy disposal. And so, excluded from the one and the other means of communication, I kept my peace. One man has once again restored thee to our age as a Latin. Thy Penelope did not longer nor more anxiously await her Ulysses than I thee. My hopes, indeed, had been deserting me one by one. Excepting the opening lines of several books of thy poem, wherein I beheld thee, as one sees from a distance the doubtful and rapid look of a wished-for friend, . . . With this exception, then, no portion of thy works had come into my hands in Latin translation. Nothing warranted my hope that I might some day behold thee nigh at hand. . . .

"[Now] the Greek flavour has recently been enjoyed by me from a Latin flagon. . . .

"Cicero was, in many instances, merely an expounder of thy thoughts; Vergil was ever more frequently a borrower, both, however, were the princes of Latin speech. . . .

"Thy great work is a masterpiece. . . . Our best must appear to you mere prattle and chattering. You are unapproachable. Ye [i.e. Homer and Vergil] are more than mortal, and your heads pierce the clouds. Yet it is with me as with a babe: I love to babble with those who feed me, even though they are skilled masters of speech. . . ."

This long letter ends:

"Farewell for ever. And when thou wilt have returned to the seat of honour, pray give kindly greetings to Orpheus, Linus, Euripides and the rest."

Next to Vergil in order of admiration Petrarch places Horace, to whom he addressed an epistle of 138 lines. We must not do more than quote a few characteristic passages:

"O thou whom the Italian world hails as prince of the lyric song. . . . It is sweet to go with thee whether thou dost propitiate Faunus with his roaming flocks or eagerly hasten to visit the impetuous and fiery Bromius, or perform the secret rites of the golden goddess related to the ivy crowned Bacchus, or sing of Venus ever in need of both. . . .

"Thou dost chisel out the characters of the ancient heroes as though in material more lasting than marble. If thou but befriended one thou dost pen in his behalf fresh words of everlasting and enduring praise, such as time cannot erase. . . .

"Be thou my leader, for I am eager to hear thee sing these strains. Take me whither thou wilt. Lead me over the broad expanse of the sea dotted with sails; to the cloud encompassed peaks of mountains. . . . I shall weary not, I shall gladly guide my slow footsteps in the company of such bards. . . .

"Wherever thou goest, whatever thou doest, pleases me. I am pleased when thou dost so carefully rouse thy faithful friends by giving virtue its due reward; when thou rendest vice with gnashing teeth, and, when, smiling, thou dost
artfully peck at folly. I am pleased when singing sweetly, thou fillest thy
song with tender words of love. . . .

"Whether happy or alarmed, whether sad or angered, under any and all
conditions thou dost give pleasure. . . .

"I shall follow thee with most eager mind, so happily am I drawn captive
by the chords of thy lyre, so soothing is to me the bitter-sweetness of thy pen."

Other letters were addressed to Quintillian, Marcus Varro, Titus Livius and Asinius Pollio, all of which are of entrancing
interest, but we must refrain from any further quotations.

Symonds in his Revival of Learning speaks of Petrarch as
the Columbus of a new spiritual hemisphere, whose efforts to
return to the old world of the Latin classics led to his discovery
of the new world of the Renaissance.

In the dawn of this Revival Petrarch does not stand alone
for close beside him stands his friend Boccaccio.

It was under Petrarch's influence that Boccaccio began to
read the Latin classics and it was at his prompting that Boccaccio
learnt Greek, and thus became the earliest of the Greek scholars
of the modern world.

Petrarch himself had had as Greek tutor a Calabrian monk
named Barlaam, but before he had mastered the elements of
the language, with rare generosity, he recommended his tutor
for a vacant bishopric in Southern Italy, to which he was
appointed and thus deprived himself of his tuition, and ever
after remained in bondage to Latin.

Both Petrarch and Boccaccio were equally eager for literary
fame, and both of them hoped to attain immortality by their
Latin rather than by their Italian works, but their fame rests
to-day upon their Italian writings rather than their Latin.

It may be said, therefore, that in thus looking up to Latin
literature in a new spirit and in resuming the long intermitted
interest in Greek, Petrarch and Boccaccio stand side by side as
the discoverers of a new world which is represented by the
awakening of a strong sense of human individuality, by the re-
awakening of the human spirit from the trance of the Middle
Ages, by the acceptance of the old classical literature as distinctly
human and humanising, and by the recognition of a new and
vital perception of the dignity of man which was the essence
of humanism.
DAWN OF REVIVAL OF LEARNING

Until the time of Petrarch and his immediate precursors it was a new and rare thing to find any serious interest in learning outside the clerical order, and it is quite possible to account for the slow growth of the new spirit of freedom which began to awaken in the twelfth century through the absence, outside the religious houses, of those records of intellectual achievements in that golden age when literature was cultivated for her own sake.

Those records had been enshrined in the classical literature of Greece and Rome, which in the early years of the Middle Ages were threatened with the disaster of destruction by the hands of the barbarians, but were rescued by the members of the religious orders and husbanded for posterity.

In the later centuries of the Middle Ages many of the abbots and monks lost the love of learning which was characteristic of their predecessors, with the result that the classical manuscripts were sadly neglected and were either destroyed or allowed to fall into decay.

One of the achievements of the Revival was the recovery of large numbers of the Latin and Greek classics which lay neglected upon the shelves of the libraries or in the lumber lofts of many of the monasteries. In 1333 Petrarch experienced the joy of discovering two speeches of Cicero in one of the religious houses that he visited in his quest for his beloved classics. In 1345 he discovered a volume containing a number of letters of Cicero, the other half of which, containing Cicero’s letters to his familiar friends, was discovered in 1389 by Coluccio Salutati, the learned Secretary of Florence.

Another member of the Florentine circle who captured something of the spirit of Petrarch and Boccaccio was Niccolò Niccoli, a famous scholar and copyist, who for several years directed the operations of the agents of Cosimo de Medici in acquiring ancient manuscripts in foreign lands. He not only collected manuscripts but collated the various readings he found in different copies of the same text, rejected obvious corruptions and restored the true text, and in so doing laid the foundations for textual criticism. At his death it was found that he possessed eight hundred manuscripts, mainly copied in his own hand,
which were destined to find a home in the Medicean Library at Florence.

Among Niccoli’s younger correspondents was Poggio Bracciolini, whose main activity as a collector of manuscripts is comprised within the years 1414 and 1418, which mark the beginning and end of the Council of Constance. Hitherto the quest had been mainly restricted to Italy and France, now it was extended to Switzerland and Germany. Poggio was one of the most successful explorers, having, as one of the Papal Secretaries, exceptional opportunities during two years when the Papal See was virtually vacant.

Within easy reach of the scene of the Council were several monasteries which in turn were explored by Poggio and two friends, both of whom were pupils of Chrysoloras. At St. Gallen they found the abbot and his monks absolutely uninterested in literature, and in one of the towers they found many precious manuscripts lying amidst the dust and damp of a noisome cell. Here it was that Poggio found a complete copy of Quintillian’s “Institutio oratoria,” a work Petrarch had known only in a mutilated form. He carried it off and made a copy of it which kept him occupied for fifty-three days. In other unnamed houses he found other classics which had been lost and at the time were unknown, including a complete Lucretius.

Interest in the recovery of these lost classics was growing and news of the discoveries was sent to the furthest limits of the civilized world.

From a monastery in Northern Europe rumours of a complete manuscript of Livy reached Poggio, but these rumours led to no result. Of the one hundred and forty books of which his works were composed only twenty-nine have come down to us.

Poggio was associated in all with the recovery and preservation of the whole or part of fifteen authors: six poets and nine prose writers.

Other of the humanist scholars were equally keen in their search but were less fortunate.

These discoveries and recoveries were of immense importance and were made principally during the century which intervened
between Petrarch’s first find and 1438, when the Sicilian scholar Aurispa discovered a copy of Pliny’s lost Panegyric. It may be said that the principal Latin classics had been discovered and few remained to be found.

Interesting and important as were these new finds they were few in comparison with the great bulk that had safely descended to us through the Middle Ages to the time of Petrarch.

Another achievement of the Revival was the introduction of a new system of education, which was to revolutionize the existing methods and inaugurate an entirely more human and liberal system.

This new system was based upon classical models and was introduced by four scholars, of whom we may speak as humanist educators.

We propose to deal with these humanist educators in a subsequent issue.

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The literature dealing with the Renaissance is so extensive that we can do no more than select a few of the more significant works which are available to readers in the John Rylands Library.

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