

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO.¹

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MAZZINI, the most prophetic figure of the nineteenth century, declared in a famous passage his confidence in the European mission of his country. "The Third Italy," destined to be born of the long agony of the struggle with Austria without and the papacy within, was not merely to be a nation, restored to unity and independence; it was to intervene as an original voice in the complex harmony of the European nationalities, contributing of its own inborn genius something which no other could contribute. "We believe devoutly that Italy has not exhausted her life in the world. She is called to introduce yet new elements in the progressive development of humanity, and to live with a third life. It is for us to begin it." Were Mazzini to return to life to-day, how far would he regard his prophecy as fulfilled? Beyond question his lofty idealism would receive some severe shocks. He would find a Third Italy indeed, exulting in its national unity and in its rank and freedom as a great Power, but not more capable than the other nations of evolving, as Mazzini would have had it, the "large internationalism" which is not the antithesis of patriotism, but its indispensable completion and crown; not less prone than they to interpret national glory in terms of territory, and national greatness in terms of wealth.

Yet he would have found, also, in the Third Italy, a real renaissance, a genuine rebirth of genius and power, and this in ways so individual as to justify in a rare degree the anticipation that Italy would give something vitally her own to the new Europe. Open any serious Italian book to-day, and you will note a kind of intellectual concen-

¹ An elaboration of the lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library, 8 January, 1919.

tration, a girding up of the loins of speech and thought, in striking contrast with the loose-tongued volubility of most Italian writing, in verse or prose, of the mid-nineteenth century. You note also a new tone of critical mastery and conscious equality. Italy in the last century was still the "woman-people," the pathetic beauty, languid still after the gentle torpor of two centuries, and whose intellectual life with some brilliant isolated exceptions, faintly reflected that of the more masculine nations north of the Alps. To-day she has not only critically mastered all that Europe has to give, she sits in judgment upon us, and the judgment she pronounces has again and again been one of those which in disposing of old difficulties opens new ways. Benedetto Croce, who in his critical review, the *Critica*, is bringing intellectual Europe to his reader's doors, has in his original philosophic work subjected the philosophic systems of Europe to a revision, and has succeeded in a great measure to their authority.¹ A thinker less known, even to cultivated Italians, Aliotta, has surveyed in a book of extraordinary penetration and philosophic power, the "idealistic reaction against science" in the nineteenth century. And when we look to creative literature, we find in this Third Italy, together with a profusion of those fungoid growths of which the modern age has in the West been everywhere prolific, two or three poets, at least, of great, even dazzling, genius, for whom no predecessor, in Italy or elsewhere, had in any important sense prepared the way. One of these, after pouring forth poems, dramas, novels, in prodigal abundance for forty years, became the most vociferous, and possibly the most potent, of the forces that drove Italy into the war, and was until lately the idol of the whole Italian race. - Even to-day, after the sorry collapse of his adventure, the man in whom Europe, irritated and impatient, sees only a sort of Harlequin-Garibaldi, impudent where his predecessor was sublime, and florid where he was laconic, is still, for multitudes of his countrymen, the hero-poet who took the banner of *Italianità* from the failing or treacherous hands of diplomats and statesmen, and defended it against the enemy without and the enemy within, with the tenacity of maturity and the ardour of youth. Certainly, one who is beyond all rivalry the most adored

¹ Much of this paragraph is repeated in substance from an article, by the writer, on "The Higher Mind of Italy," in the *Manchester Guardian*, 15 March, 1920.

poet, in any country, of our time, who has fought for Italy with tongue and pen and risked his life in her service, and whose personality might be called a brilliant impressionist sketch of the talents and failings of the Italian character, reproducing some in heightened but veracious illuminations, others in glaring caricature or paradoxical distortion—such a man, as a national no less than as a literary force, claims and deserves close study.

Before entering, however, upon the detail of his life and work, let me assist our imagination of Gabriele d'Annunzio by quoting from the vivid description given by Mr. James Bone of a meeting with him at Venice in the summer of 1918. The poet, fifty-six years old, was then at the height of his renown; Fiume was then unthought of. His great exploit of flying over Vienna and dropping leaflets inviting her in aureate imagery to make peace, was on every tongue. The gondoliers took off their hats as they passed his house on the Grand Canal, and he had to register all his letters to prevent their being abstracted as souvenirs. Mr. Bone was talking with the airmen at an aerodrome on one of the islands in the lagoons there:—

“Conversation died instantly as an airman, very different from the others, came hurrying towards us—a rather small, very quick, clean-cut figure, wearing large smoked glasses and white gloves with the wrists turned down. . . . The nose was rather prominent, complexion not dark but marked a little, the whole profile very clear, making one think not of a Renaissance Italian but of a type more antique, an impression accentuated by his rather large, beautifully shaped ear, very close to the head. The body denied the age that was told in the face, for all its firmness. One's first impression was of a personality of extraordinary swiftness and spirit still at full pressure, remorselessly pursuing its course 'in hours of insight willed'. . . . The whole surface of d'Annunzio's personality suggested a rich, hard fineness, like those unpolished marbles in old Italian churches that gleam delicately near the base where the worshippers have touched them, but above rise cold and white as from the matrix. . . . There was something of the man of fashion in the way he wore his gloves, and in his gestures, but nothing one could see of the national idol aware of itself.”¹

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 12 September, 1918.

I.

The soldier-poet-man-of-fashion who wore his fifty-six years thus lightly, was born, in 1862, at Pescara, the chief—almost only—town of the Abruzzi, then one of the wildest and rudest provinces of Italy. Its valleys, descending from the eastern heights of the Apennines to the Adriatic, were inhabited by an almost purely peasant population—a hardy, vigorous race, tenacious of their primitive customs, and little accessible to cultural influences. The Church enjoyed their fanatical devotion, but only at the price of tacitly accepting many immemorial pagan usages disguised by an unusually transparent veil of Catholic ritual; while the Law occasionally found it expedient to leave a convicted murderer (as in the *Figlia di Iorio*) to be executed by an angry multitude according to the savage methods their tradition prescribed. The little haven of Pescara—one of the few on Italy's featureless Adriatic coast—was the centre of a coasting traffic with the yet wilder Dalmatian seaboard, a traffic which like all ancient sea-faring, pursued its economic aims in an atmosphere of superstitious observance, mystical, picturesque, and sometimes cruel. In the poetic autobiography ("The Soul's Journey") which occupies the first *Laude* (1903), d'Annunzio sketches vividly his boyhood's home in this Abruzzan country overlooking the sea. Of the persons who composed this home, of family affections, we have only momentary retrospective glimpses. We hear of the father, long dead, when he wrote, from whom he derived his iron-tempered muscles; and of the mother, who gave him his insatiable ardour of will and desire. The three sisters seem to have been like him; the face of the second sister resembled his own "mirrored in a clear fountain at dawn". All that stood between them, he says, was their innocence and his passion. There was, too, an old nurse, to whom in her beautiful old age, when she had retired to a mountain hamlet, the poet addressed some tenderly beautiful stanzas, contrasting his own stormy career with her idyllic peace as she "spins the wool of her own flocks while the oil holds out".¹

But of household drama, such as dominates the experience of most children, little seems to have existed for this child. Certainly it vanishes completely, in the retrospect of the man of forty, beside the drama enacted with prodigious intensity of colour, animation, and

¹ Dedication of *Il Poema Paradisiaco* (1892).

passion, by his imperious senses. The contrast is here acute between d'Annunzio and his co-heir of the Carduccian tradition, Pascoli, whose poignant memories of childhood, instead of being effaced by the energy of his sense-life, permeate it through and through, giving a "deep autumnal tone" to almost every line he wrote. He spoke in later life of his "profound sensuality" as a gift which had brought him poetic discoveries denied to colder men, and this is no doubt true if by "sensuality" we understand, as we ought, that d'Annunzio is prodigally endowed with all the senses, that eye and ear feast on the glory and the music of the world and live in its teeming life, that his lithe body thrills with the zest of motion, that imagery is the material of his thinking and the stuff of his speech; and that the passion of sex, so acutely and perilously developed in him, is just one element in this prodigal endowment of his entire sense-organism, which is a main source of the artistic splendour of his work. In the early pages of the *Viaggio* we see the young boy drinking in with a kind of intoxication the simple sights and sounds of the farm—the rhythmic fall of the flails on the threshing-floor, the pouring of the whey from the churn, the whirr of the spool in the loom, the scampering of wild ponies with streaming manes over the hillside, or again, out at sea, the gorgeous scarlet or gold sails scudding before the wind, each with its symbolic sign. Even the inanimate world became for his transfiguring senses alive; "it was a lying voice," he cries, "that declared that Pan is dead". The mere contrasts of things, the individual self-assertion shown by a tree, for instance, in not being a rock, produced in him an excitement analogous to that which made Rupert Brooke, in his own words, "a lover" of all kinds of common things for being just definitely and unmistakably what they were. So that a conception apparently so thin and abstract as "difference" can assume for him the shape and potency of an alluring divinity: "Diversity," he cries, "the siren of the world! I am he who love thee!"

And then, with adolescence, came the passion of sex; for d'Annunzio no shy and gradual discovery, but a veritable explosion, before which all obstacles, moral and material, vanished into air. He tells it with the frankness of a child of the South, and the self-conscious importance of an egoist for whom the events of his own physical history could only be fitly described in terms of epic poetry, with its contending nationalities and ruined or triumphant kings. "O flesh!" he

cries, "I gave myself up to thee, as a young beardless king gives himself up to the warrior maid who advances in arms, terrible and beautiful. She advances victorious, and the people receive her with rejoicing. Astonishment strikes the gentle king, and his hope laughs at his fear."¹ And from the first this new passion allies itself with the rest of his sense-organism, irradiating eye and ear and imagination, "giving to every power a double power," as Biron says in *Love's Labour's Lost*, "Thou wast sometimes as the grape pressed by fiery feet, O flesh, sometimes as snow printed with bleeding traces; I seemed to feel in thee the winding of trodden roots, and to hear the far-off grinding of the axe upon the whetstone". The young erotic was already growing towards that observant psychologist of eroticism who pervades so many gorgeous but repulsive pages of his novels.

He was also growing, more slowly and as yet invisibly, to other and more notable things. In the first published poems of the boy of eighteen, and the second, *Canto Novo*, two years later, there is not much more than the reflexion of this intense and pervading "sensuality" (in the large meaning above indicated), in a speech moulded upon the diction and rhythms of Carducci. The great master, then at the height of his fame, had still to do much of his most splendid work. D'Annunzio, who never ceased to revere him, was to become his principal inheritor; but the heir added so much of his own to the bequest that he can only at the outset be regarded as his disciple. The elder poet's influence was in any case entirely salutary. The classical severity and nobility of style which distinguished the *Rime Nove* and the *Odi Bàrbare* from the florid and facile romantic verse of the day, contributed to temper the dangerous luxuriance of d'Annunzio, and to evoke the powers of self-discipline and tenacious will which lay within; while Carducci's exultation in radiance and clarity, his noon-day view of life, his symbolic sun-worship and his hatred of all twilight obscurantism and moonlight nebulosity, equally enforced the more virile strain in d'Annunzio, the "stalk of carle's hemp" which, far more truly than in Burns, underlay the voluptuous senses.

This background of harder and tougher nature was already manifested when d'Annunzio, a few years later, turned to tell in prose some stories

¹ *Laus Vitæ*, 232 f.

of his native province. There is little in the *Novelle di Pescara* of love, less of luxury or refinement ; we see the Abruzzan village folk at feud, fanatical and ferocious, the women cheering on the men, the Church in its most ceremonial robes blandly but helplessly looking on. "The Idolaters" tells how the men of a certain village plan to set the bronze statue of the saint upon the church altar of another neighbouring village. They assemble at night and march through the darkness with the image on a cart. In the other village the men await them in force, and a savage battle takes place in the church, ending in the rout of the assailants with much slaughter, and the ignominious mutilation of the image of their patron saint. And all this grim matter is told in a style admirably strong and terse, bold and sharp in outline, direct and impersonal in statement, untouched by either delicate feeling or weak sentimentality. D'Annunzio's sensuality asserts itself still, as always ; but it appears here as a Rubens-like joy in intense impressions ; now a copper-coloured storm sky, now a splash of blood, betrays his passion for the crude effects of flame and scarlet, most often where they signify death or ruin. He imagines voluptuously as always, but his voluptuousness here feeds not in the lust of the flesh, but in the lust of wounds and death. When he describes the fighting in the church, he spares you as little as Homer ; you are not told merely that a man was stabbed, you are made to see the blade shear away the flesh from the bone. His men are drawn with the same hard, pungent stroke, and a visible relish for scars, gnarled features, frayed dress, and all the maimings and deformities, due not to weakness or decay, but to battles recent or long ago, the blows and buffets received in the tug with fortune. There is little either of sybarite effeminacy in the painting of old Giacobbe, for instance, the leader of the insurgents, a tall, bony man, with bald crown and long red hairs on nape and temples, two front teeth wanting, which gives him a look of senile ferocity, a pointed chin covered with bristles, and so forth.

D'Annunzio was intrinsically of the Abruzzan race ; the tough hardy fibre of the peasant folk was his, and the deep inborn attachment to his blood and kin was to produce, twenty years later, his greatest work, as a like attachment lifted Mr. Shaw, almost at the same moment, to the rare heights of *John Bull's Other Island*. But much had to happen to the young provincial before he could thus discover to the full the poetry of his province.

II.

In the early eighties d'Annunzio had come to Rome. The little circle of young Carduccians in the capital welcomed the poet's brilliant disciple, who was soon to outdistance them all in sheer splendour of literary gift. More important, however, than any literary or personal influence—for his hard encasing shell of egoism made him extraordinarily immune to the intrusion either of alien genius or of friendship or love—was the deep impression made upon the young Abruzzan by the splendour, the art glories, and above all the historic import of Rome. "The Abruzzi gave d'Annunzio the sense of *race*," says an excellent critic, "Rome gave him the sense of *history*." The magical effect of Rome had hitherto been rendered most vividly in the poetry of other peoples, to whom it was a revelation, or a fulfilment of long aspiration, or the "city of their soul," in Goethe's *Roman Elegies*, *Childe Harold*, or the *Adonais*. How overwhelming to an imaginative Italian, the sight and living presence of Rome could be, may be judged from the magnificent *Ode* of Carducci. The Englishman who is thrilled as he stands in the Forum, or by the mossy bastions of our own Roman wall, may faintly apprehend the temper of a citizen of the "Third Italy" who felt his capital, newly won from the Popes, to be once more in living continuity with the city of Cæsar. Both the nobility and the extravagance of Italian national feeling have their root in this sense of continuity with antique Rome, and this is to be remembered in estimating the perfervid *Italianità* of d'Annunzio, the most striking example both of this sublime idealism and of the childish extravagance it is able to inspire.

The work of the next years abounded in evidence of the spell which Rome had laid upon his sensuous imagination. He poured forth novels and poetry, charged with an oppressive opulence of epicurean and erotic detail, but saved those by the clear-cut beauty of the prose, the other by the strokes of bold and splendid imagination.

Andrea Sperelli in *Il Piacère* (1889) and Tullio Hermil in *L'Innocente* (1892), are virtuosos in æsthetic as well as in erotic luxury, and the two allied varieties of hedonism reflect and enforce one another. Sperelli is artist and connoisseur, of unlimited resources and opportunities, and neither he nor his mistress could think love tolerable in chambers not hung with precious tapestry and adorned with

sculptured gold and silver vessels, the gift of queens or cardinals of the splendour-loving Renaissance. No doubt there is irony in the picture too; the native stamina in d'Annunzio resists complete assimilation to the corrupt aspects of the luxury he describes, and he feels keenly the contrast between the riotous profusion of the "new rich" of the new Rome and the heroism and hardships of the men of the *Risorgimento* who had won it.

The poetry of this period is less repellent because its substance, though not definitely larger or deeper, is sustained and penetrated by the magic of a wonderfully winged and musical speech. His *Elegie Romane* (1892)—a rare case of his emulating another poet—are inferior in intellectual force to Goethe's, which yet have as lyrics an almost pedestrian air in comparison with the exquisite dance of the Italian rhythms. The sonnets of the *Isottèo* and *Chimera* (1885-8) show a concentration rare in the later history of the Italian sonnet. And any reader who thinks d'Annunzio incapable of writing of love without offence may be invited to try the charming idyll of Isaotta Guttadauro. To be sure the scenery and circumstances are sumptuous and opulent as usual. The simple life and homely persons traditional in idyll are remote; but poetry did not absolutely fly from Tennyson's touch when he turned from his Miller's and Gardener's daughters to put Maud in a Hall; and neither does she retire from d'Annunzio's Isaotta, in her noble mansion. The lover stands at sunrise in the "high hall garden" under her window and summons her in a joyous morning song to come forth. It is late autumn, the house is silent, but the peacocks perched on the orange trees hail the morning in their raucous tones. The situation is that of Herrick's May morning song to Corinna, but though Herrick loved jewels and fine dresses not a little, the contrast is piquant between the country simplicity of these Devonshire maids and men, and the aristocratic luxury of Isaotta. "Come, my Corinna, come! Wash, dress, be brief in praying"—bids Herrick; but no such summary toilette will serve the Italian. Isaotta will rise from her brocaded bed and her white limbs will gleam in a marble bath, and her maid pours amber-scented water on them, while the woven figures of the story of Omphale look on from the walls. At length Isaotta comes out on to her vine-wreathed balcony and playfully greets *messèr cantore* below. She is secretly ready, we see, to surrender, but makes a show of standing out for terms. They will wander

through the autumnal vineyards, and if they find a single cluster still hanging on the poles, "I will yield to your desire, and you shall be my lord". So they set out in the November morning. The vineyards, lately so loud with vintage merriment and song, are now deserted and still. Not a cluster is to be seen. She archly mocks him; "What, has subtle Love no power to give you eyes?" They meet peasant women going to their work, and one of them asks him, "What seekest thou, fair sir?" And he replies: "I seek a treasure". A flight of birds rises suddenly across their path with joyous cries; they take it as a sign, and gaze at each other, pale and silent. Then unexpectedly he sees before him a vineyard flaming in full array of purple and gold; and a flock of birds making a chorus in its midst. "O lady Isaotta, here is life!" I cried to her with rapt soul; and the chorus of songsters cried over our heads. I drew her to the spot, and she came as swift as I, for I held her firmly by the hand. Rosy was the face she turned away from me, but fair as Blanchemain's when she took the kiss of Lancelot, her sovran lover, in the forest. "O Lady, I keep my pact; for you I pluck the fatal untouched cluster. Then she gave me the kiss divine."

III.

The last word of the Isaotta idyll—*souvrhumano*—rendered above "divine," was an early symptom of a development of formidable significance in the prose and poetry of d'Annunzio during the next twenty years. The "Superman" had not yet been discovered when he was a boy, but the spirit to which *souvrumanità* appeals had from the first run in his blood. His passion for sensation, for strong effects, for energy, even for ferocity and cruelty, was the concomitant of a genius that strove to shatter obstacles, to bend others to its will, and reshape its experience, as the opposite genius of Pascoli submissively accepted experience, hearing in all its vicissitudes reverberations of the mournful memories in which his soul was steeped. When d'Annunzio accordingly, in the early nineties, discovered the work of Nietzsche, he experienced that liberation which comes to every man who meets with a coherent exposition of the meaning of his own blind impulses, and a great new word for his confused and inarticulate aims. In Nietzsche he found a mind more congenial to him perhaps than any other he had known, more even

than that of his master Carducci, but, unlike his, congenial mainly to what was most perilous and ill-omened in himself. He loftily admitted the German his equal, a great concession, and when Nietzsche died, in 1900, wrote a noble dirge "to the memory of a destroyer," of the *Bàrbaro enorme* "who lifted up again the serene gods of Hellas on to the vast gates of the Future".

When d'Annunzio wrote these words the Hellenic enthusiasms nourished by his acute sense of beauty in a nature utterly wanting in the Hellenic poise, had won, partly through Nietzsche's influence, an ascendancy over his imaginations which made it natural for him to render the Superman in Hellenic terms. The serene gods of Hellas symbolised for him the calmness of absolute mastery, of complete conquests, all enemies trampled under foot or flung to the eternal torments of Erebus. This mood detached him wholly from Shelley and Byron, and the young Goethe, who had gloried in Prometheus, the spirit of man struggling against supreme deity, baffled and finally overthrowing him; he now, like the riper Goethe, adores the serenity of Olympus. "O Zeus, Father of Serene Day, how much fairer than the chained and howling Iapetid seemed in thy eyes the silent mountain and its vast buttresses fresh with invisible springs." And besides Prometheus, Zeus has another enemy, Christ—the foe of beauty, and lord of the herd of slaves with their slave-morality of pity and submission. "O Zeus, he cries, I invoke thee, awaken and bring on the Morrow! Make the fire of heaven thy ploughshare to plough the Night! Thou only canst purify Earth from its piled-up filth."

We are not to look in all this for even so much of definite ethical or philosophic content as we find in Nietzsche. If Nietzsche was a poet imagining in philosophic terms rather than a philosopher, d'Annunzio was hardly capable of abstract thought at all. On the other hand, Nietzsche could still less rival d'Annunzio in creative faculty, and the series of d'Annunzian characters inspired or touched by the spirit of Nietzschean *sovrumanià* may be set against the richer intellectual and spiritual substance of *Zarathustra*. No doubt this influence was not wholly salutary; Nietzsche's heady draught intoxicated his brain with visions of colossal and ruthless power, begetting images of supermen and superwomen magnificent in stature and equipment, in the glory of their flame-like hair, and the crystalline beauty of their speech, but wholly unreal and impossible. Neverthe-

less, there were fortunate moments when the vision of power, constrained by a human and moving story to work within the limits of humanity, became a source not of unreal extravagance, but of heroic and sublime truth. And these moments, though few, atoned for much splendid futility.

The first traces of the "Superman's ideal appear in *Le Vergini delle Rocce* (1896).¹ The three maidens, princesses, are all in different fashions athirst for the infinite. Massimilla longs to surrender herself in absolute devotion; Anatolia is conscious of boundless creative power; she would fain become the propagator of an ideal race; she knows that of her substance a Superman may be born. Violante's infinity is the poet's power of dreaming himself king of infinite space; in dream she has lived a thousand magnificent lives, moving through all dominations as securely as one treading a well-known path. In the most diverse things she has discovered secret analogies with her own form, and poets have seen in her the mystery of Beauty revealed in mortal flesh after secular ages, across the imperfections of innumerable descendants.

But vague aspirations such as these merely disclosed the temperament to which *sourumanità* appeals. For Nietzsche this ideal was not to be dreamed of, but to be fought for, by the ruthless suppression of all the "human" affections and weaknesses, within and without, that stood in its way. To overcome humanity was the indispensable step to the coming of the Superman. For the Italian, with his "vast sensuality," his prodigal endowment of very "human" lusts, this rigorous doctrine was not, it may well be thought, altogether made, any more than the kindred saying of Goethe that self-limitation is the secret of mastery, was one that he could readily assimilate. Yet there was something in him, as we have seen, to which the call to self-making appealed, even if it had not been the price of power. The tenacious fibre of the Abruzzan showed itself in a capacity for hardy even ascetic life amazing to those who know only the hothouse atmosphere of his novels. Some of his most sumptuous prose and verse was poured forth in the absolute seclusion of monastic cells, or in wild peasant houses far from civilization; and only the most iron industry could have

¹ Gargiullo, *Gabriele d'Annunzio* (1912), to whose account of the poet's *sourumanità*, as well as of the grouping of his work in general, the present essay is indebted for much suggestion.

achieved the enormous value of his work. Hence he can put into the mouth of Claudio Cantelmo, in the *Vèrgini*, these evidently autobiographic words : "after subduing the tumults of youth, I examined whether perchance . . . my will could, by choice and exclusion, extract a new and seemly work of its own from the elements which life had stored up within me".

There is a glimpse here of a finer psychological and a deeper ethical insight than we often find in d'Annunzio, and it might have led a man of richer spiritual capacity to a loftier poetry than he was ever to produce. But on the whole the clue thus hinted was not followed up, and the tough nerve which might have nourished the powerful controlling will of a supreme artist, often served only to sustain those enormities of the ferocious and the grandiose which make dramas like *Gloria* and *La Nave* mere examples of the pathology of genius.

In the meantime, novels and poems and dramas poured forth. The prolific later nineties saw the famous novel *Fuoco* (1900), a picture of Venetian splendour as gorgeous as that of Rome in *Piacère*, but touched with the new joy in power ; and the dramas *Sogno d'un Mattino di Primavera* (1897), *Gioconda*, and *Città Morta* (1898): The last named, one of the most original tragedies of our time, may be counted among the examples of work in which the audacities of d'Annunzio's *souvranità* are justified. The fine and the morbid strains in him, passion for life, Hellenism, enthusiasm, perverse erotics, cross and mingle in its texture, but from them is somehow evolved an action that reproduces as nearly as a modern dramatist may the horror excited in ancient spectators by the doom of the House of Atreus. Nothing indeed could be less Greek than the structure and persons of the play. Leonardo, a young archæologist, is excavating in the ruins of Mycenæ. With him are his sister, Beata Maria, and their friends Alessandro and Anna his wife, a cluster of human flowers, full of living charm and sap, transplanted into the "dead city". But the dead city is not merely dead ; it is mysteriously fraught with the power of the vanished past to control and dominate the present and the future. Its mouldering ruins are the arena of a struggle between Death and Life, in which death triumphs and life receives the mortal blow. Leonardo, obsessed with the Oresteia, is haunted at night by visions of terrific blood-stained figures, and has no thoughts by day but of penetrating the secrets of their tombs. Alessandro, full of the joy

of life, seeks to detach him from these preoccupations. "I hoped he would have come with me and gathered flowers with those fingers of his which know nothing but stones and dust," and he is drawn to Beata Maria, herself the very genius of glowing youth, "the one live thing, says her friend Anna, in this place, where all is dead and burnt . . . it is incredible what force of life is in her . . . if she were not, none of us could live here, we should all die of thirst". "When Beata Maria speaks, he who hears forgets his pain, and believes that life can still be sweet." She herself is devoted to the brother whose passion seems to estrange him so far from what she loves. She shares his Hellenic ardour, and innocently recites Cassandra's prophecy in the *Agamemnon*, with Cassandra's wreath on her golden locks, of "an evil, intolerable to the nearest kin, and irreparable, preparing in this house". Anna, struck with mysterious fear, stops her; but the ominous words have been spoken, and foreshadow a real doom. Beata Maria, the unconscious Cassandra, will suffer Cassandra's fate. The indestructible virus of the dead city will poison the glory of youth. The incestuous passion which desolated the House of Atreus is not extinguished in the crumbling dust of their tombs. A horrible infection seizes Leonardo. He struggles vainly with an impure passion for his sister. In only one way can his love be purified, a way grievous for him, and yet more grievous for her. She must die; and he slays her among the tombs of the "dead city" which has thus again laid upon the living its mortal hand.

The conclusion outrages our feelings, and betrays d'Annunzio's glaring deficiency in sympathetic power. Whatever pity we feel for Leonardo in his miserable plight is dispelled by his cynical purchase of the purity of his own emotions at the price of his innocent sister's death. Here, as in other cases, d'Annunzio's fundamental want of passion, and the strain of hard egoism which pervaded the movements of his brilliant mind, gravely injured his attempts in tragic poetry. Death was doubtless the only solution; but it must be another death—one that would have saved the "purity" of Leonardo's emotions by ending them altogether.

IV.

Yet d'Annunzio, if an egoist, was an egoist of imagination, and liable as such to irrational intrusions of sympathy which, without

diminishing the vehemence of his egoism, enlarged its scope and enriched its ethical substance. Neither family affections nor friendship had touched his imagination in this way ; but the discovery of Rome had taught him something of the pride of citizenship, and more than the nascent pride of nationality. But in the last year of the century he underwent an experience which turned this nascent emotion into a passion, and the poet himself into a prophet and preacher, in its service, an "announcer" as he was fond of saying, of the cause and creed of *Italianità*.

He had as yet seen nothing of Europe beyond the Alps. In 1900 he made an extensive tour, but in no tourist spirit. An Italian had no need to go abroad for beauty of nature or of art, and d'Annunzio's keen eyes were turned in quite other directions—to the great nations, with their vast resources and their high ambitions ; and he measured their several capacities for success in the conflict which he, among the first, saw to be impending. He was impressed by the threatening development of Germany, and by "the extraordinary development of race-energy" in England. Everywhere the force of nationality was more vehement than ever before. "All the world is stretched like a bow, and never was the saying of Heracleitos more significant : "The bow is called Bios (life), and its work is death".

But where was Italy in this universal tension of the national spirit ? Where was her strung bow ? How was she preparing to hold her own with the 'great progressive nations of the North ? D'Annunzio flung down these challenging questions in his eloquent pamphlet, *Della coscienza nazionale* (1900). To the foreign observer the trouble with Italy did not seem to be defective ambition. She had rather appeared to take her new rôle as a great Power too seriously, blundering into rash adventures abroad when she ought to have been spreading the elements of civilization at home. But d'Annunzio had seen the race for empire in the North, and his call to Italy was the call of an imperialist ; a call for unity of purpose, for concentration of national wealth and strength in the interest of a greater Italy, mistress of the Adriatic if not of the Mediterranean. It was the beginning of a new phase of d'Annunzio's career. He was henceforth a public man, whose voice, the most resonant and eloquent then to be heard in Italy, counted, as poetic voices so rarely do, in the direction of public

affairs. He entered Parliament, a proclaimed disciple in policy of Crispi, the Italian Bismarck.

How did these enlarged ideals affect d'Annunzio's work in poetry? In part, as has been hinted, disastrously. The enlarged ideals lent themselves with perverse ease, in a mind already obsessed with *souvrumanità*, to a mere megalomania, a rage for bigness, only more mischievous in practice, and nowise better as literature, because they were conveyed in terms of navies and transmarine dominions. He had already in his fine series of *Odi Navali* (1893) fanned to some purpose the naval ambitions of his country. He now sounded a loftier note, suited to the vaster horizons of an Italian Mediterranean. These, for instance, are some stanzas from the opening hymn or prayer prefixed to his colossal naval tragedy, *La Nave* (1908):—

O Lord, who bringest forth and dost efface
The ocean-ruling Nations, race by race,
It is this living People by Thy grace
Who on the Sea
Shall magnify Thy name, who on the Sea
Shall glorify Thy name, who on the Sea
With myrrh and blood shall sacrifice to Thee
At the altar-prow.
Of all Earth's oceans make Our Sea, O Thou!
Amen!

But megalomania was not happily the whole result. The older and deeper instincts planted or quickened in d'Annunzio by his earlier experience—the feeling for race and for historic continuity—blended with the new and vehement passion of nationality, communicating to it, in moments of vision, something of their human intimacy, and undergoing in their turn an answering enlargement of range and scope. If his *Italianità* was something more significant than a resonant cry for more ships and territory, it was because it drew warmth and tenderness from the home sentiment for his Abruzzan province deep-rooted in the poet's heart; while the Abruzzan province, in its turn, was seen in the larger and grander setting of the Italian people and the Roman race, but without the distorting nimbus of megalomaniac dreams. This fortunate harmony found expression chiefly in certain poems of the first five years of the new century, the golden period of d'Annunzio's production. To these years belong his two most notable attempts to give to Italy a tragic poetry built upon Italian story.

In the material for tragic poetry no country was richer, but it had been left to the genius of foreign dramatists to give world-wide fame to the stories of Romeo and Juliet, Beatrice Cenci, and Torquato Tasso. Alfieri, the greatest of Italian tragic poets, had devoted his austere art almost solely to classical subjects; and Manzoni's Venetian *Conte di Carmagnola* stood almost alone, as a great Italian tragedy on an Italian theme. In the story of Francesca of Rimini, d'Annunzio found to his hand a native tragic subject of the first order, not yet touched by a tragic poet of genius, Italian or other. That it had been made his own by the supreme poet of Italy hardly disturbed d'Annunzio, deeply as he revered the poet whose words, in the fine phrase of his Dante Ode, clothed Italy like the splendour of day. He was not going to challenge comparison with Dante's marmoreal brevity. And the poet of Pescara had some title to regard this story of the adjacent Adriatic sea-board of Rimini and Ravenna, as his by right. But the story itself has also exerted its moderating control upon the natural prodigiosity of his invention, so that in his Franciscan tragedy, it is possible to recognize a general conformity to traditional technique.

It is even possible that Shakespeare's handling of his Italian tragedy may have afforded a hint. The ruin of Romeo and Juliet results from the feud of the rival houses. The ruin of d'Annunzio's Francesca and Paolo is similarly rooted ultimately in the feud of Guelf and Ghibelline. Her father, a great Guelf captain, has sold her to the lord of Ravenna, as the price of support against the Ghibellines. But when her hand is thus plighted, she has already seen his brother Paolo, with his feminine beauty and luxuriant locks, pass under her window, and the seed of their passion is sown. Francesca has grown up "a flower in an iron soil," and love throughout is set in a frame of war. But she would be no d'Annunzian heroine if she did not respond to the call of life and light. When about to leave Rimini on her marriage she replies to the pleading of her devoted young sister who cannot live without her, "I am going, sweet life, where thou canst not come, to a deep and solitary place, where a great fire burns without fuel". Fire is d'Annunzio's haunting symbol for terrible and splendid things, a symbol, too, for the strange union of cruelty and beauty in his own mind and art, and it does not forecast here only the Inferno flames in which she will move with Paolo so lightly before the wind. In the palace at Ravenna we see her

among her ladies, chafing at her dull seclusion, while the Ghibelline siege rages without. A Florentine merchant displays his gorgeous wares before them, a feast of scarlet and gold. Presently Francesca has climbed to the tower where her husband's brothers are on guard. Bolts and arrows crash against the walls or through the loop-hole. A cauldron of Greek fire stands ready for use. Francesca, to the horror of the soldiers, fires it, and breaks into wild ecstasy at the "deadly beauty" of this "swift and terrible life". A moment later a bolt pierces the curls of Paolo. She thinks he is wounded, and clasps his head. In that embrace he stammers the first word of love. "They have not hit me, but your hands have touched me, and have undone the soul within my heart! . . . *Franc.* "Lost! Thou art lost!" Thus, again, Francesca's fate, like Juliet's, is provoked by the unrelated feud of parties without. But presently the same dissonant entourage thrusts the lovers apart. Paolo is sent as General of the Guelf forces to Florence. Francesca in his absence reads the Lancelot romance with her ladies. But Paolo, unable to endure his exile, posts back to Ravenna, and rushes to her chamber, where she has been reading with her ladies. The romance of Lancelot lies open on the lectern. The place where the reading stopped is marked; it is where Galeotto is urging Lancelot's suit upon Ginevra. They bend over the book together.

Pa. Let us read a page, Francesca!

Fr. Look at that swarm of swallows, making a shadow
On the bright water!

Pa. Let us read, Francesca.

Fr. And that sail that is glowing like fire!

Pa. (reading). "Assuredly,
Lady," says Galeotto, "he does not dare,
Nor will he ask ye anything of love,
Being afraid, but I ask in his name, and if
I did not ask, you ought to seek it, seeing
You could in no wise win a richer treasure."
And she says—

(drawing Francesca gently by the hand)

Now do you read what she says,

Be you Ginevra.

Fr. (reading). And she says: "Well I know it, and I will do
What you command. And Galeotto said:
Grammercy, lady; I beg that you will give him
Your love. . . ."

(she stops.)

Pa. Read further !
Fr. No, I cannot see
 The words.
Pa. Read : " Certainly . . .
Fr. Certainly," she says,
 " I give it him, but so that he be mine
 And I utterly his, and all ill things
 Made good " . . . Paolo, enough.
Pa. (*reading with a hoarse and tremulous voice*).
 " Lady, he says, much thanks ; now in my presence
 Kiss him, for earnest of true love "—You, you !
 What says she now ? What now ?
 (*Their pale faces bend over the book, so that their cheeks
 almost touch.*)
Fr. (*reading*). She says : " Why should
 He beg it of me ? I desire it more
 Than you. . . ."
Pa. (*continuing with stifled voice*). They draw apart.
 And the Queen sees
 The Knight dare go no further. Then she clasps
 Him by the chin, and with a long kiss kisses
 His mouth. . . .
 (*He kisses her in the same way. When their mouths separate
 Francesca reels, and falls back on the cushions.*)
 Francesca !
Fr. (*with hardly audible voice*).
 No, Paolo !

The sequel is too long drawn out, and is marred by the duplicity of all the persons concerned. Malatestino's sleuth-hound cunning brings about the husband's vengeance, but his strategy is animated only by ferocious hatred of the lovers not by any care for justice. By his contrivance, the rough soldier, who has never suspected his own wrongs, returns prematurely from the march, and thunders at the lovers' chamber door : " Open, Francesca ! " The wretched Paolo tries to escape through a trapdoor, but is dragged up by the hair to be slain. But Francesca rushes to clasp him, and the husband's sword pierces her. *Francesca da Rimini*, though a brilliant drama, with innumerable beauties of detail, misses the quality of great tragedy. Of the principal characters Francesca alone excites a fitful sympathy, while Paolo's effeminacy provokes a contempt which diminishes our compassion for the woman whose love he has won. These coward " heroes," who leave their mistresses in mental peril, or slay their sisters, or see their brides borne to execution in their place, seem to

haunt the egoist imagination of the poet, to the grievous hurt of his work. Yet when all is said, *Francesca* is one of the most arresting, though dramatically by no means one of the best plays, produced in Europe during the first decade of the century.

If the *Francesca* owed much to the stimulus and the control of a great historic and literary tradition, the rarer beauty of *La Figlia di Iorio* (1904) was nourished on a yet more potent influence, the old intimate passion for his Abruzzan race and home. In language the more moving because in d'Annunzio so seldom heard, he dedicated "To the land of Abruzzi, to my Mother, to my Sisters, to my Brother in exile, to my Father in his grave, to all my Dead, to all my People between the Mountains and the Sea, this song of the ancient blood". It was, indeed, no mere recurrence to the scenes and memories of his childhood, but a recovery, through them, of the more primitive sensibilities and sympathies which the complexities of an ultra modern culture had obscured or submerged. The shepherds and peasants of this "pastoral tragedy" live and move in an atmosphere fanatically tense with the customs and beliefs of their Catholicized paganism; but no believing poet ever drew the ritual of rustic unreason with more delicate sympathy, or rendered its prayers and incantations in more expressive and beautiful song. For the poetry is not exotic or imposed, like the songs of peasants in opera, it is found and elicited. The young shepherd, Aligi, is drawn into a kind of mystic relationship to Mila di Codra, a witch-maiden dreaded and abhorred over the whole countryside. But a bride has been chosen for him, and the scene opens with the preparations for her coming. Aligi's three sisters are seen kneeling before the old carved oak chest, choosing her bridal robes, and vying with each other in joyous morning carols. A band of scarlet wool is drawn across the open door, a crook and a distaff lean against it, and by the doorpost hangs a waxen cross as a charm against evil spells. Aligi looks on in dreamy distraction, his thoughts far away. The women of the neighbour farms come in procession bearing gifts of corn in baskets on their heads. An unknown girl follows in their train. Presently angry cries are heard in the distance. The reapers are in pursuit of Mila, whose spells have spoilt their harvest, they have seen her enter the house and clamour at the door for her surrender. The frightened women tremble, but Mila has crouched down on the sacred hearth, whence it would be sacrilege to remove her, and Ornella, the

youngest of the sisters, who alone secretly pities Mila, draws the bolts. The storm of menace grows louder, till Aligi, roused from his dreamy absorption by the taunts of the women, raises his hand to strike the suppliant on the hearth. Immediately the horror of his sacrilege seizes him, he implores her pardon on his knees, and thrusts his guilty hand into the flame. Then he hangs the cross above the door and releases the bolts. The reapers rush in, but seeing the cross, draw back in dismay, baring their heads. Aligi has saved his "sister in Christ," but his guilt is not effaced.

In the second Act, Aligi and Mila are living together, as brother and sister, in a mountain cavern. He would fain go with his flocks to Rome to seek dissolution of his marriage ; but she knows that happiness is not for her, and she will not hurt him with her passionate love. But in his home they know only that the enchantress has carried off the son from his mother and his virgin bride ; Ornella, the compassionate sister, is thrust out of doors, and now the father, who had returned home only after the reapers had gone, arrives at the mountain cavern in Aligi's absence, and peremptorily summons Mila. She holds him defiantly at bay. He is about to seize her, when Aligi appears on the threshold. In the great scene which follows, the Roman authority of the Abruzzan father over the son overpowers for the moment even the lover's devotion. Not softened by Aligi's humble submission, Lázaro binds him, flogs him savagely, and turns upon Mila, now wholly in his power. At the moment when he has seized her, Aligi breaks free, rushes upon his father, and kills him. The third act opens with the mourning for Lázaro, in long-drawn lyric dirges. Then harsher and fiercer notes are heard, and Aligi, deeply penitent, appears black-robed and bound, borne by the angry mob to bid farewell to his mother before being led to the parricide's death. "To call you mother is no more permitted me, for my mouth is of hell, the mouth that sucked your milk, and learnt from you holy prayers in the fear of God. Why have I harmed you so sorely ? I would fain say, but I will be silent. O most helpless of all women who have suckled a son, who have sung him to sleep in the cradle and at the breast, O do not lift this black veil, to see the face of the trembling sinner. . . ." The crowd tries to comfort her in its rough way, and the mother gives her son the bowl of drugged wine. Suddenly, confused cries are heard in the rear, and Mila breaks her way impetuously through the throng. "Mother,

sisters, bride of Aligi, just people, justice of God, I am Mila di Codra. I am guilty. Give me hearing!" They call for silence, and Mila declares that Aligi is innocent, and she the murderer. Aligi protests: "Before God thou liest". But the crowd eagerly turns its fury upon the dreaded enchantress who owns her guilt, and the cry goes up: "To the flames! To the flames!" Aligi protests again, but with growing faintness, as the deadening potion masters and confuses his brain; till at length, when the bonds have been transferred from his limbs to Mila's, he lifts up his hands to curse her. This breaks down her fortitude. With a piercing shriek she cries: "Aligi, Aligi, not thou, thou canst not, thou must not!" She is hurried away to the stake, only Ornella crying aloud: "Mila, Mila, Sister in Jesus, Paradise is for thee," while Mila herself, now full of the d'Annunzian exultation in glorious ruin, goes to her death crying: "Beautiful Flame, Beautiful Flame!"

A brief résumé such as this inevitably brings into undue emphasis the melodramatic elements of the plot. Yet it is the most human and natural, as it is the most beautiful, of d'Annunzio's dramas. For the strangest things that happen in it are no mere projections of the poet's inspired ferocity or eroticism, as so often elsewhere, but grounded in the real psychology of a primitive countryside, fear, love, hatred, now mysteriously mastered by superstitious awe, now breaking rebelliously from its control, now wrought by its mystic power to else inexplicable excesses.

V.

But even the finest dramatic work of d'Annunzio makes clear that his genius is fundamentally lyrical. The greatest moments of *La Figlia di Iorio* and *Francesca* are uttered in a vein which thrills and sings; while, on the other hand, these moments are often reached by summary short cuts or bold assumptions. And it is fortunate that while he continued to be allured by drama—giving in particular a very individual rendering of the tragedy of Phœdra (1909) d'Annunzio's most serious and ambitious poetry took the form of a kind of grandiose festival of sustained song, the *Laudi* (1903 onwards). We have already quoted from the picture of his childhood drawn retrospectively by the poet of forty. But these passages, though not at all merely episodic, in no way disclose the grandiose conception and design of the

Làudi. "Praises," he calls them, "Praises of the Sky, of the Sea, of the Earth, of its Heroes." The glory of the universe drew a more majestic chant from the poet of the 123rd Psalm, though in his naïve Hebrew way he "praised" only the Maker of these "wonderful works". D'Annunzio's "praise" expresses simply the ravishment of acute sensibilities in the presence of the loveliness and sublimity of Nature and the heroism of man, an emotion Greek rather than Hebraic. Our poet is perhaps the least Hebraic of all modern poets of genius; and if his barbaric violence alienates him almost as completely from the Hellenic temper, he is yet akin to it by his inexhaustible joy in beauty. And in these years of the *Làudi* Hellas had become more than ever the determining focus about which his artistic dreams revolved, the magnet to whose lure even the barbarian in him succumbs. The first book, called *Maia*, after the mother of Hermes, describes the poet's spiritual journey to the shrine of that god of energy and enterprise, whose Praxitelean image, the most magnificent expression of radiant virility ever fashioned by the chisel, had not long before been unearthed at Olympia. It is a journey of discovery, and d'Annunzio invokes for it the symbolism of the last voyage of the Dantesque Ulysses to seek the experience that lay "beyond the sunset". D'Annunzio turns his prow east not west, but he, too, is daring peril in the quest of the unknown. A splendid Proem in terza-rima "To the Pleiads and the Fates," takes us to a rocky promontory by the Atlantic shore, where, on a flaming pyre, the helm of the wrecked ship of Ulysses is being consumed—the fiery consummation which crowns most of d'Annunzio's heroic careers. The modern venturer, too, must disdain safety, not like Galileo turning back into the secure haven, but fronting the pathless sea of fate with no anchor but his own valour. The sequel does not, it is true, accord completely with this Ulyssean vision. Symbolic imagery is interwoven, in this "spiritual journey," with scenes from an actual voyage to Greece, leaves from a tourist's notebook, incidents of steamer-life, games and talk on board, sketches of fellow-passengers, the squalor and vice of Patras. Presently the ship reaches Elis, and then, as we enter the ruins of Olympia, the great past, human and divine, rises up before us. Pericles, Alcibiades, Themistocles obliterate the tourist memories, and the poet holds high colloquy with Zeus, and offers up a prayer, nine hundred lines long, to Hermes—a superb exposition of the future of humanity, as d'Annunzio hoped to see it wrought by the

genius of Energy and Enterprise, Invention and Will, a future dominated by men of rocky jaw, who chew care like a laurel leaf, precipitate themselves on life, and impregnate it relentlessly with their purposes—a significant image, for the d'Annunzian Hermes is fused with Eros (v. 2904). Eros was, indeed, indispensable it might well be thought to a quite satisfying d'Annunzian divinity. Yet in the fine colloquy with Zeus, which precedes, he touches a deeper note, rare with him, of desperate and baffled struggle with his own “vast sensuality”. He begs Zeus for a sign. “I am at war with many monsters, but the direst are those, ah me, which rise within me from the depths of my lusts.” “Thou wilt conquer them, replies Zeus, only if thou canst transform them into divine children.” The solution lay, for him, not through ethics but through art.

The succeeding books, *Elettra*, *Alcione*, contain a profusion of poetry, some of it sounding notes of tenderness or of meditative reminiscence, which rarely pierce through the metallic clangour of d'Annunzio's grandiose inspirations. The resonant herald of the Third Italy wanders, for instance, among the “Cities of Silence”—decayed, half-grass grown capitals of vanished dukes and kings and extinct republics—Ferrara, Pisa, Pistoja ; oldest and grandest of all, Ravenna, the “deep ship's hull, heavy with the iron weight of empire, driven by shipwreck on the utmost bounds of the world”.¹ So, too, the poet of pitiless virility can sing, in these riper years of childhood, if not with the exquisite tenderness of the ageing Swinburne—his nearest kinsman among English poets—yet with an imaginatively idealizing touch like that of Wordsworth's *Ode* (which possibly d'Annunzio knew) :—

Thou art ignorant of all, and discernest
All the Truths that the Shadow hides.
If thou questionest Earth, Heaven answers,
If thou speakest with the waters, the flowers hear.

The immense plenitude of life
Is tremulous in the light murmur
Of thy virginal breathing,
And man with his fervors and his griefs.²

But the old enthusiasms, too, yield moments of noble poetry. Even beyond the “earth” and the “sea” and “sky,” it is the “heroes,”

¹ *Elettra* : *Città del Silenzio*.

² *Alcione* : *Il Fanciullo*.

and above all the heroes of Italy, who are "praised". Of the sequence of lyrics on the great enterprise of Garibaldi's "Thousand," *La Notte di Caprera*, it is enough to say that it is worthy of being put beside Carducci's Ode. After a quarter of a century Garibaldi's glory was no whit dimmed. On the contrary, Italians who knew how many gross blots defiled the Italy he had helped to win, saw Garibaldi as a figure of ideal splendour and purity on the further side of a foul morass. The bitter disillusion of such minds is powerfully painted in the moving piece : "To One of the Thousand". An old Garibaldian sailor brings his broken anchor-cable to the ship cordwainer to be mended. He looks on, sombre, dejected, silent ; but thinking what he does not say, and his thoughts are like this :—

The anchor-sheet is broken : let it be.
 No hope of mending. Give it up, go home !
 Turn into scourges, cordsman, and halter-nooses
 Thy bitter twine.
 Vilely supine lies the Third Italy,
 A prostitute that every bully uses,
 And in her holy oak-grove's shadow, Rome
 Pastures her swine.¹

But Rome, the eternal City, could only obscure her destiny, not efface it ; disillusion founded on her moments of self-oblivion, was itself the vainest of illusions. That is the faith of the new Italian Renaissance, and d'Annunzio, the fiercest assailant of her oblivious fatuities, attains his sublimest note of "praise" in the great Ode which prophetically arrays Rome in her coming glory as the embodied Power of Man.

It is based on the legend, told by Ovid, of the ship of the Great Mother, stranded in the Tiber mud, and drawn to shore by the Vestal Virgin Claudia Quinta. The opening stanzas tell the story—the dearth in the city, the Sibylline oracle's counsel to bring the image of the Mater Magna, the arrival of her ship in the river, the stranding in the mud, the vain efforts of the entire city to extricate it, until a Vestal Virgin, without an effort draws it to bank. Then the poet interprets the symbolic story :—

So, O Rome, our Rome, in its time
 Shall come from far-off seas,
 Shall come from the deep, the Power
 Wherein alone thou hast hope.

¹ *Elettra : A uno dei Mille.*

So, O Rome, our Rome, in its hour,
A heroic Maid of thy race
Shall draw Her within thy walls.
Not a vessel immovably stuck
In the slimy bed, not an image
Once worshipped in foreign fanes,
Shall her pure hand draw to the shore ;
But the Power of Man, but the holy
Spirit born in the heart
Of the Peoples in peace and in war,
But the glory of Earth in the glow
Divine of the human Will
That manifests her, and transfigures,
By works and deeds beyond number,
Of light, and darkness, of love
And hatred, of life and death ;
But the beauty of human fate,
The fate of Man who seeks
His divinity in his Creature.
Since in thee, as in an imperishable
Imprint shall the Power of Man
Take form and image ordained
In the market-place and the Senate
To curb the dishonour of Men.

O Rome, O Rome, in thee only,
In the circle of thy seven hills,
The myriad human discords
Shall yet find their vast and sublime
Unity. Thou the new Bread
Shalt give, and speak the new Word.

All that men have thought,
Dreamed, suffered, achieved,
Enjoyed, in the Earth's vast bound,
So many thoughts, and dreams,
So many labours and pangs,
And joys, and every right won
And every secret laid bare,
And every book set open
In the boundless circuit of Earth. . . .
Shall become the vesture of thee,
Thee only, O Rome, O Rome !
Thou, goddess, Thou only shalt break
The new Bread, and speak the new Word !

On this note, the climax of his boundless national faith, we will leave d'Annunzio. We are apt to think that the tide of humanity

has ebbed decisively away from the city of the seven hills, and that wherever its sundered streams may be destined finally to flow together in unison, the Roman Forum, where the roads of all the world once met, will not be that spot. Yet a city which can generate magnificent, even if illusory, dreams is assured of a real potency in human affairs not to be challenged in its kind by far greater and wealthier cities which the Londoner or the New Yorker would never think of addressing in these lyrical terms.

Few men so splendidly endowed as d'Annunzio have given the world so much occasion for resentment and for ridicule. His greatest gifts lent themselves with fatal ease to abuse ; his "vast sensuality" and his iron nerve sometimes co-operate and enforce one another in abortions of erotics and ferocity. But the same gifts, in other phases, become the creative and controlling elements of his wonderful style. His boundless wealth of sensuous images provides the gorgeous texture of its ever changing woof. But its luxury is controlled by tenacious purpose ; the sentences, however richly arrayed, move with complete lucidity of aim to their goal ; the surface is pictorial, but the structure is marble. Thus this Faun of genius, as he seems under one aspect compounded with the Quixotic adventurer, as he seems under another, meet in one of the supreme literary artists of the Latin race, a creator of beauty which, however Latin in origin and cast, has the quality that strikes home across the boundaries of race, and has already gone far to make its author not merely the protagonist of the Latin Renaissance, but a European classic.