

Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.--Part V.

A prince of such a temper could not be satisfied with having repelled the insolence of a Barbarian. It was the right and duty, it might be the interest and glory, of Manuel to restore the ancient majesty of the empire, to recover the provinces of Italy and Sicily, and to chastise this pretended king, the grandson of a Norman vassal. The natives of Calabria were still attached to the Greek language and worship, which had been inexorably proscribed by the Latin clergy: after the loss of her dukes, Apulia was chained as a servile appendage to the crown of Sicily; the founder of the monarchy had ruled by the sword; and his death had abated the fear, without healing the discontent, of his subjects: the feudal government was always pregnant with the seeds of rebellion; and a nephew of Roger himself invited the enemies of his family and nation. The majesty of the purple, and a series of Hungarian and Turkish wars, prevented Manuel from embarking his person in the Italian expedition. To the brave and noble Palæologus, his lieutenant, the Greek monarch intrusted a fleet and army: the siege of Bari was his first exploit; and, in every operation, gold as well as steel was the instrument of victory. Salerno, and some places along the western coast, maintained their fidelity to the Norman king; but he lost in two campaigns the greater part of his continental possessions; and the modest emperor, disdaining all flattery and falsehood, was content with the reduction of three hundred cities or villages of Apulia and Calabria, whose names and titles were inscribed on all the walls of the palace. The prejudices of the Latins were gratified by a genuine

or fictitious donation under the seal of the German Cæsars; but the successor of Constantine soon renounced this ignominious pretence, claimed the indefeasible dominion of Italy, and professed his design of chasing the Barbarians beyond the Alps. By the artful speeches, liberal gifts, and unbounded promises, of their Eastern ally, the free cities were encouraged to persevere in their generous struggle against the despotism of Frederic Barbarossa: the walls of Milan were rebuilt by the contributions of Manuel; and he poured, says the historian, a river of gold into the bosom of Ancona, whose attachment to the Greeks was fortified by the jealous enmity of the Venetians. The situation and trade of Ancona rendered it an important garrison in the heart of Italy: it was twice besieged by the arms of Frederic; the imperial forces were twice repulsed by the spirit of freedom; that spirit was animated by the ambassador of Constantinople; and the most intrepid patriots, the most faithful servants, were rewarded by the wealth and honors of the Byzantine court. The pride of Manuel disdained and rejected a Barbarian colleague; his ambition was excited by the hope of stripping the purple from the German usurpers, and of establishing, in the West, as in the East, his lawful title of sole emperor of the Romans. With this view, he solicited the alliance of the people and the bishop of Rome. Several of the nobles embraced the cause of the Greek monarch; the splendid nuptials of his niece with Odo Frangipani secured the support of that powerful family, and his royal standard or image was entertained with due reverence in the ancient metropolis. During the quarrel between Frederic and Alexander the Third, the pope twice received in the Vatican the ambassadors of Constantinople. They flattered his piety by the

long-promised union of the two churches, tempted the avarice of his venal court, and exhorted the Roman pontiff to seize the just provocation, the favorable moment, to humble the savage insolence of the Alemanni and to acknowledge the true representative of Constantine and Augustus.

But these Italian conquests, this universal reign, soon escaped from the hand of the Greek emperor. His first demands were eluded by the prudence of Alexander the Third, who paused on this deep and momentous revolution; nor could the pope be seduced by a personal dispute to renounce the perpetual inheritance of the Latin name. After the reunion with Frederic, he spoke a more peremptory language, confirmed the acts of his predecessors, excommunicated the adherents of Manuel, and pronounced the final separation of the churches, or at least the empires, of Constantinople and Rome. The free cities of Lombardy no longer remembered their foreign benefactor, and without preserving the friendship of Ancona, he soon incurred the enmity of Venice. By his own avarice, or the complaints of his subjects, the Greek emperor was provoked to arrest the persons, and confiscate the effects, of the Venetian merchants. This violation of the public faith exasperated a free and commercial people: one hundred galleys were launched and armed in as many days; they swept the coasts of Dalmatia and Greece: but after some mutual wounds, the war was terminated by an agreement, inglorious to the empire, insufficient for the republic; and a complete vengeance of these and of fresh injuries was reserved for the succeeding generation. The lieutenant of Manuel had informed his sovereign that he

was strong enough to quell any domestic revolt of Apulia and Calabria; but that his forces were inadequate to resist the impending attack of the king of Sicily. His prophecy was soon verified: the death of Palæologus devolved the command on several chiefs, alike eminent in rank, alike defective in military talents; the Greeks were oppressed by land and sea; and a captive remnant that escaped the swords of the Normans and Saracens, abjured all future hostility against the person or dominions of their conqueror. Yet the king of Sicily esteemed the courage and constancy of Manuel, who had landed a second army on the Italian shore; he respectfully addressed the new Justinian; solicited a peace or truce of thirty years, accepted as a gift the regal title; and acknowledged himself the military vassal of the Roman empire. The Byzantine Cæsars acquiesced in this shadow of dominion, without expecting, perhaps without desiring, the service of a Norman army; and the truce of thirty years was not disturbed by any hostilities between Sicily and Constantinople. About the end of that period, the throne of Manuel was usurped by an inhuman tyrant, who had deserved the abhorrence of his country and mankind: the sword of William the Second, the grandson of Roger, was drawn by a fugitive of the Comnenian race; and the subjects of Andronicus might salute the strangers as friends, since they detested their sovereign as the worst of enemies. The Latin historians expatiate on the rapid progress of the four counts who invaded Romania with a fleet and army, and reduced many castles and cities to the obedience of the king of Sicily. The Greeks accuse and magnify the wanton and sacrilegious cruelties that were perpetrated

in the sack of Thessalonica, the second city of the empire. The former deplore the fate of those invincible but unsuspecting warriors who were destroyed by the arts of a vanquished foe. The latter applaud, in songs of triumph, the repeated victories of their countrymen on the Sea of Marmora or Propontis, on the banks of the Strymon, and under the walls of Durazzo. A revolution which punished the crimes of Andronicus, had united against the Franks the zeal and courage of the successful insurgents: ten thousand were slain in battle, and Isaac Angelus, the new emperor, might indulge his vanity or vengeance in the treatment of four thousand captives. Such was the event of the last contest between the Greeks and Normans: before the expiration of twenty years, the rival nations were lost or degraded in foreign servitude; and the successors of Constantine did not long survive to insult the fall of the Sicilian monarchy.

The sceptre of Roger successively devolved to his son and grandson: they might be confounded under the name of William: they are strongly discriminated by the epithets of the bad and the good; but these epithets, which appear to describe the perfection of vice and virtue, cannot strictly be applied to either of the Norman princes. When he was roused to arms by danger and shame, the first William did not degenerate from the valor of his race; but his temper was slothful; his manners were dissolute; his passions headstrong and mischievous; and the monarch is responsible, not only for his personal vices, but for those of Majo, the great admiral, who abused the confidence, and conspired against the life, of his benefactor. From the Arabian conquest, Sicily had imbibed a

deep tincture of Oriental manners; the despotism, the pomp, and even the harem, of a sultan; and a Christian people was oppressed and insulted by the ascendant of the eunuchs, who openly professed, or secretly cherished, the religion of Mahomet. An eloquent historian of the times has delineated the misfortunes of his country: the ambition and fall of the ungrateful Majo; the revolt and punishment of his assassins; the imprisonment and deliverance of the king himself; the private feuds that arose from the public confusion; and the various forms of calamity and discord which afflicted Palermo, the island, and the continent, during the reign of William the First, and the minority of his son. The youth, innocence, and beauty of William the Second, endeared him to the nation: the factions were reconciled; the laws were revived; and from the manhood to the premature death of that amiable prince, Sicily enjoyed a short season of peace, justice, and happiness, whose value was enhanced by the remembrance of the past and the dread of futurity. The legitimate male posterity of Tancred of Hauteville was extinct in the person of the second William; but his aunt, the daughter of Roger, had married the most powerful prince of the age; and Henry the Sixth, the son of Frederic Barbarossa, descended from the Alps to claim the Imperial crown and the inheritance of his wife. Against the unanimous wish of a free people, this inheritance could only be acquired by arms; and I am pleased to transcribe the style and sense of the historian Falcandus, who writes at the moment, and on the spot, with the feelings of a patriot, and the prophetic eye of a statesman. "Constantia, the daughter of Sicily, nursed from her cradle in the pleasures and plenty, and educated in the arts and manners, of this fortunate isle, departed long

since to enrich the Barbarians with our treasures, and now returns, with her savage allies, to contaminate the beauties of her venerable parent. Already I behold the swarms of angry Barbarians: our opulent cities, the places flourishing in a long peace, are shaken with fear, desolated by slaughter, consumed by rapine, and polluted by intemperance and lust. I see the massacre or captivity of our citizens, the rapes of our virgins and matrons. In this extremity (he interrogates a friend) how must the Sicilians act? By the unanimous election of a king of valor and experience, Sicily and Calabria might yet be preserved; for in the levity of the Apulians, ever eager for new revolutions, I can repose neither confidence nor hope. Should Calabria be lost, the lofty towers, the numerous youth, and the naval strength, of Messina, might guard the passage against a foreign invader. If the savage Germans coalesce with the pirates of Messina; if they destroy with fire the fruitful region, so often wasted by the fires of Mount *Ætna*, what resource will be left for the interior parts of the island, these noble cities which should never be violated by the hostile footsteps of a Barbarian? Catana has again been overwhelmed by an earthquake: the ancient virtue of Syracuse expires in poverty and solitude; but Palermo is still crowned with a diadem, and her triple walls enclose the active multitudes of Christians and Saracens. If the two nations, under one king, can unite for their common safety, they may rush on the Barbarians with invincible arms. But if the Saracens, fatigued by a repetition of injuries, should now retire and rebel; if they should occupy the castles of the mountains and sea-coast, the unfortunate Christians, exposed to a double attack, and placed as it were between the hammer and the anvil, must resign

themselves to hopeless and inevitable servitude." We must not forget, that a priest here prefers his country to his religion; and that the Moslems, whose alliance he seeks, were still numerous and powerful in the state of Sicily.

The hopes, or at least the wishes, of Falcandus were at first gratified by the free and unanimous election of Tancred, the grandson of the first king, whose birth was illegitimate, but whose civil and military virtues shone without a blemish. During four years, the term of his life and reign, he stood in arms on the farthest verge of the Apulian frontier, against the powers of Germany; and the restitution of a royal captive, of Constantia herself, without injury or ransom, may appear to surpass the most liberal measure of policy or reason. After his decease, the kingdom of his widow and infant son fell without a struggle; and Henry pursued his victorious march from Capua to Palermo. The political balance of Italy was destroyed by his success; and if the pope and the free cities had consulted their obvious and real interest, they would have combined the powers of earth and heaven to prevent the dangerous union of the German empire with the kingdom of Sicily. But the subtle policy, for which the Vatican has so often been praised or arraigned, was on this occasion blind and inactive; and if it were true that Celestine the Third had kicked away the Imperial crown from the head of the prostrate Henry, such an act of impotent pride could serve only to cancel an obligation and provoke an enemy. The Genoese, who enjoyed a beneficial trade and establishment in Sicily, listened to the promise of his boundless gratitude and speedy departure: their fleet commanded the



straits of Messina, and opened the harbor of Palermo; and the first act of his government was to abolish the privileges, and to seize the property, of these imprudent allies. The last hope of Falcandus was defeated by the discord of the Christians and Mahometans: they fought in the capital; several thousands of the latter were slain; but their surviving brethren fortified the mountains, and disturbed above thirty years the peace of the island. By the policy of Frederic the Second, sixty thousand Saracens were transplanted to Nocera in Apulia. In their wars against the Roman church, the emperor and his son Mainfroy were strengthened and disgraced by the service of the enemies of Christ; and this national colony maintained their religion and manners in the heart of Italy, till they were extirpated, at the end of the thirteenth century, by the zeal and revenge of the house of Anjou. All the calamities which the prophetic orator had deplored were surpassed by the cruelty and avarice of the German conqueror. He violated the royal sepulchres, and explored the secret treasures of the palace, Palermo, and the whole kingdom: the pearls and jewels, however precious, might be easily removed; but one hundred and sixty horses were laden with the gold and silver of Sicily. The young king, his mother and sisters, and the nobles of both sexes, were separately confined in the fortresses of the Alps; and, on the slightest rumor of rebellion, the captives were deprived of life, of their eyes, or of the hope of posterity. Constantia herself was touched with sympathy for the miseries of her country; and the heiress of the Norman line might struggle to check her despotic husband, and to save the patrimony of her new-born son, of an emperor so famous in the next age under the name of Frederic the Second. Ten years

after this revolution, the French monarchs annexed to their crown the duchy of Normandy: the sceptre of her ancient dukes had been transmitted, by a granddaughter of William the Conqueror, to the house of Plantagenet; and the adventurous Normans, who had raised so many trophies in France, England, and Ireland, in Apulia, Sicily, and the East, were lost, either in victory or servitude, among the vanquished nations.