

Giovanna d' Aragona, Duchessa d' Amalfi by Domenico Morellini

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*Giovanna d' Aragona, Duchessa d' Amalfi*. Spigolature storiche e letterarie (a proposito d' una novella di Matteo Bandello). Da DOMENICO MORELLINI. Cesena: G. Vignuzzi e C., 1906. 8vo. 93 pp.

If it cannot be said that Sig. Morellini's modest brochure is of first rate importance to students of the Jacobean drama, it may yet be recommended as a work of very considerable interest. The source of the *Duchess of Malfi* has always been familiar in Bandello's novel, and this is perhaps all the students of the drama care to know, but Webster's editors have nevertheless repeatedly puzzled themselves as to the historical facts underlying the story, and Sig. Morellini has made, so far as we are aware, the first serious attempt to determine what these may have been. Bandello gives ample details for the identification of the Duchess, but so small has been the general knowledge of her history that it has even been suggested (by the present writer) that there might have been some confusion between Amalfi and Melfi. Anyone who has investigated the question knows the exasperating habit of the Amalfian chroniclers in the early sixteenth century, after for many years faithfully reproducing all insignificant local gossip, of suddenly launching out into the *haute politique* of the French invasion and so cheating one of just those records which they were in the best position to preserve. That Bandello's account, however, is based neither on confusion nor imagination appears from two allusions which have survived. One, dated Aug. 14, 1509, by an anonymous chronicler of Amalfi, records the meeting of the Aragonian brothers with the Duchess, which forms the opening scene of Webster's play; the other, mentioning her flight from Loreto in company with Antonio Bologna, occurs under the date Nov. 17, 1510, in the diary of Giacomo the Notary which was printed in 1845. So much was known from Matteo Camera's *Memorie storico-diplomatiche dell' antica città e ducato di Amalfi*, the second volume of which was published at Salerno in 1881, and we are bound to add that Sig. Morellini's quotations are by no means as accurate as we could wish. This somewhat impairs our confidence in those portions of his work which are based upon books and documents which we have been unable to consult, but we have no reason to suppose that his general conclusions are invalidated. Finding Bandello's narrative thus substantiated we naturally begin to inquire how far we may reasonably accept his testimony as to the general outline of events at least. There seems to be good reason to suppose that he based his account upon the testimony of the actors themselves and that he even appears in his own narrative in the character of Delio. His novel thus acquires serious historical value. It is his own version of the story, unfortunately, which appears to underlie the *chroniques scandaleuses* of the Corona manuscripts, but it is in the main confirmed by a Neapolitan tradition, preserved in Filonico's manuscript *Lives* (extant in the Nazionale at Naples), which must presumably be independent since it represents Giovanna's death as due to poison.

Sig. Morellini's pamphlet also contains an account of the well-known plays by Lope de Vega and John Webster, which is welcome considering the very general unfamiliarity with English among Italian scholars. There are, it is true, a rather unreasonable number of misprints in English names and quotations, nor has the author in every case fully grasped Webster's meaning. Thus he paraphrases 'Let us not venture all this poor remainder In one unlucky bottom,' by 'Non vogliate permettere che noi tutti, infelici, periamo travolti dal tragico fato'; whereas the evident sense is: 'Non avventuriamo quel poco che ci resta in un solo fatale legno.' But Sig. Morellini's aim has rather been to introduce Webster's play to his countrymen than to offer either detailed criticism, or adequate versions of his own; and we can only join with him in hoping that this portion of his work may achieve its object by being quickly superseded. The historical side of his labours deserves the welcome of all students interested in literary origins.

W. W. GREG.

#### MINOR NOTICES.

Nearly ten years have elapsed since Miss Eleanor Hull set about the task of interpreting Ireland's past to the English public. In that time she has given us a volume on the Cuchullin saga and two admirable little books on early Irish history. Her latest work, *A Textbook of Irish Literature*, Part I (Dublin, M. H. Gill and Son: London, D. Nutt, 1906), is the first instalment of a history of Irish literature intended 'to meet the requirements of the students under the Intermediate Board.' More than half the book is, of course, taken up with a description of the contents of the older mythological tales and heroic sagas. Then follow various chapters dealing with the earliest literature connected with the church and the work of the official poets and bards. Miss Hull knows her sources very thoroughly and is quite at home with her subject. She has a keen eye for the dramatic element in the ancient tales, but at the same time she does not attempt to conceal their weaknesses. We heartily recommend this volume to any reader who wishes to gain some idea of the contents of early Irish manuscripts, and he may rest assured that he will not be offended by any of those extravagances which we are unfortunately accustomed to expect from Irish writers when dealing with anything that concerns their own country.

E. C. Q.

The results of Dr Carl Herbst's Dissertation on *Cupid's Revenge by Beaumont and Fletcher und Andromana, or the Merchant's Wife in ihrer Beziehung zu einander und zu ihrer Quelle* (Königsberg, Hartung'sche Buchdruckerei, 1906), are slender. After a few general remarks con-