

Since I was up  
of late years the Society has discovered Literature.  
The result has been perfectly delightful. Instead of  
niggling about with ethics, the papers have become  
bright and broad, and handle the weekly verbs  
with ~~a~~ <sup>growing</sup> lucidity. The discussions too  
have gained <sup>greatly</sup> in appeal. ~~I used not to understand~~  
anything I heard, but now, though ~~unable to~~  
~~anything~~, I am almost certain that I understand  
it. We are entering (are we not?) upon an  
ampler field. We have left Thought behind us,  
and are almost past Conduct. Passion and  
Beauty ~~are~~ <sup>are indising out,</sup> ~~remain~~, and in their treatment we  
promise ourselves inexhaustable joys. What a long  
way literature has brought us! Where shall we  
not get to if we discover history & also?

It is therefore my intention to describe a group  
of embryos who existed at Rome in the ~~group~~  
~~before~~ <sup>he</sup> Tomlinson! <sup>(Carra)</sup> <sup>shall</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>must</sup> assume a certain  
amount of historical knowledge, or the description  
will never get done. Please do not be tiresome.  
When I say 'The Papacy' or 'The spirit of the

Renaissance' or 'The unhappy peninsula, distracted  
 by ~~intermediate stages~~<sup>if gifted</sup>, please ~~accept~~<sup>consult</sup> the phrases as  
 any honest phenomenon would ~~accept~~<sup>consult</sup> them, and do  
 not twist them into something different on the learning.

It is true that there embryos ~~to~~<sup>are an</sup> ~~may~~ have a real  
~~existence as allegorical~~ <sup>and may be not far from a solid</sup> But we cannot come to that  
 until we have considered them <sup>as facts.</sup> <sup>They appear to Grayovius Buckhurst</sup> <sup>a Partis</sup>

The ~~fourteenth~~<sup>fifteenth</sup> century <sup>before</sup> was wearing to its close, when  
 there might have been observed, very early in morning,  
 the figure of an undersized man. He was descending  
 the ~~Avantine~~<sup>Aurincis</sup> or the Esquiline - he had some property  
 on citta - and was making his way towards the Capitol,  
 on which was situated the ~~Roman~~ University. In  
 one hand he held ~~his~~ some lecture notes, in the other  
 a lantern to guide his feet through the mud and  
 the fallen masonry, ~~while~~<sup>that</sup> the feet themselves were  
 shod in ~~boots~~<sup>buskins that were</sup> closely imitated from the antique.  
 A good many other people had got up early too,  
 and morning after morning, year after year, the man  
 lectured on classical <sup>not</sup> addressed a crowded audience. The bulk of them

were civil servants from the government offices  
 over at the Vatican, but some of them were the sons

of Cardinals, and some were the local nobility, who  
~~had shunk out from their fortresses, in the Colosseum~~  
~~or the Palatine, in the hope of improving their~~  
 position by culture. He spoke to them in Latin and  
 of Latin: he spoke of Ennius and Varro and the  
 earlier greatness of Rome; never a word of Greek  
 past his lips: fearing to spoil his pronunciation, he  
 had refused to learn Greek. On and on he went,  
 his ~~eloquence~~ <sup>stuttering, but</sup> moving the audience to tears; they cried  
 and he cried. <sup>(Diana broke over the Holy City</sup> ~~As he went home, it was lighter. He~~  
 could see the ruins of antiquity, and the contrast  
 between them and the images in his mind was more  
 than he could bear. He stood motionless, mesmerized,  
 and tears filled his eyes again. But his life was  
 not ~~altogether~~ <sup>very</sup> unhappy. When he got back there  
 were his ducks to feed, and his chickens, and his  
 vines to cultivate according to the precepts of Columella,  
 and he liked fishing, and snoring blackbirds, and  
 picknicking out in the Campagna, <sup>(with his friends.)</sup> ~~what, you with~~  
 ask me, ~~was the name of this attractive old card?~~  
 I cannot tell you. No body knows. His real name

has been forgotten. We only know his assumed name, which was Pomponius Laetus. And why did he assume

this name? Your question brings me to the main subject of the paper. ~~To money or position he was indifferent. He did not care for money or position.~~

The bastard of a princely family, when his cousins asked him to stop, he wrote back to them as follows "How do you do. I cannot do as you want. Good bye." What, you will ask, was the name of this attractive old card? No

body can tell you. His name has been lost. His cousins were the Sanesevini of Salerno, but he himself is only remembered by his adopted name of Pomponius Laetus.

~~(We do not know when he came to Rome, but only early in his professorship he made friends with several members of his audience. They would meet at his~~

house to discuss deeper points of archaeology or grammar. These studies ramified and overshadowed the whole of life, and at last the meetings coalesced into a <sup>private</sup> secret society which was supposed to be <sup>entirely</sup> secret, in which all their names were <sup>concealed</sup> and which was

known in after years as the Roman Academy. There was a

ritual: each member adopted as an antique name. Hence Pomponius <sup>Laetus</sup>, and we also ~~heard of~~ <sup>heard of</sup> Sabellius

his biographer, of Callimachus, of Splanicus, of Asclepiades, and Augustinus Campanus, of Petrejus, and above all

of <sup>the committee</sup> Platina the papal librarian. There was an annual banquet - in honour of the <sup>Romulus</sup> ~~foundation~~ <sup>birth day</sup> of Rome. There

were numerous suppers, ~~existing~~, according to some accounts

~~of herbs out of Pomponius' garden~~ which in early days  
 consisted of herbs ~~of~~ out of Pomponius' garden, but, as time  
 went on became perfectly delicious and were washed  
 down with costly wines. Members would read papers  
 and discuss: ~~sometimes~~ <sup>if</sup> a bishop ~~would~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~be~~ present ~~at~~ <sup>he</sup>  
 open proceedings by a prayer for the dead; or Pomponius  
~~would~~ ~~be~~ led off with an address; or elegiac couplets ~~would~~ <sup>were</sup>  
 be recited. The discussions proper were on varied topics,  
 starting with Republican Rome but getting a long way  
 adieu away from it. When the bishop was present they  
 may have kept fairly orthodox, but generally the  
 Academicians flew like moths into that brilliant mist-  
 brilliant of heresies - the doctrine of the Three Impostors.  
 Moses was a charlatan, Christ a seducer of the people,  
 Mohammed, though extremely clever, was only looking  
 after his own interests. Thus all religions are false, and  
 what fools are we to be bound by them. Let us eat  
 and drink, let us love women and one another, for  
 to-morrow we die. Pomponius ~~he~~ was a Deist, ~~and~~ <sup>who</sup>  
 believed in a life after death: the younger members  
 were more daring, and held that the mind will never  
 be again when once it has been parted from the body.  
 They determined to enjoy themselves, they grew wilder and  
 more drunken, they acted farces in the Atellan style,  
~~and rumours of their proceedings spread over the city~~

whilst they went down into the Catacombs and  
 signed their pseudonyms over the early Christians,  
 they blasphemed, they made friends with <sup>heretics</sup> Turks, they  
 prophesied the death of the Pope. Speaking phrenomally,  
 they were not serious: three quarters of their remarks  
 must have been jokes, and they had not the least  
 intention of conspiring against the Papacy. Speaking  
 apototically they were serious: they made as good use  
 of their lives as men than could make. They increased  
 every value by secrecy, and the years from ~~1668~~ <sup>1669</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup>  
<sup>352</sup> ~~1668~~ must have been an uninterrupted heaven  
 of friendship, merriment, and wisdom.

~~The name of the Pope at that time was Paul II.~~  
<sup>serenely and peacefully</sup>

The Pope of that day <sup>was a heavy and handsome</sup>  
<sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ called Paul II. He liked everyone to be happy.  
 Though fond of meat, he could not <sup>hear to see the</sup>  
 hearts being driven to the butchers. <sup>though a strict disciplinarian</sup>  
<sup>always</sup> inflicted the minimum sentence ~~on criminals~~, and  
 when people objected to his leniency replied with  
 emphasis "Is it indeed so small a ~~thing~~ thing to take  
 the life of so wonderful a work of God as is man - a  
 creature too on whom Society has for many years  
 expended so much pains?" And so, instead of killing  
 the criminal, he sentenced him to light penal servitude  
 for life. The poor loved him, <sup>He suited them exactly</sup> He would sit by their

best side when they were sick, and he had a little pharm-  
 -acy from which he dispensed medicines gratis. In  
 society too he held his own. Seniority reigned <sup>seemingly</sup> at  
 his table, and he often said that he wished that  
 everyone of his guests could have a nice villa in the  
 country, to retire to in the summer when the town  
 gets so hot. As for literature and art, he did not  
~~recognize~~ <sup>revere</sup> ~~meddle~~ with them, <sup>and is not</sup> looking <sup>his</sup> ~~collection~~ <sup>collection</sup> of precious stones  
 and it is ~~improbable~~ <sup>likely</sup> that the licentious miniature of  
 a Cupid in violet stockings, which D<sup>r</sup> Pastor has  
 been so unfortunate as to discover among the Vatican  
 archives. ~~Still~~ <sup>But</sup> he did not ignore culture entirely. He  
 was obliged to be interested in something, and, since  
 postage stamps had not been invented, <sup>Pope Paul's</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~an~~  
 unrivalled collection of precious stones was unrivalled  
 throughout Christendom.

Such was the man into whose hands the Society  
 was to fall. He was a coward and a fool, and I  
 feel that he was a eunuch, though I have not any  
 authority for saying this. His appearance was handsome.  
 His morals were pure. They ~~did not~~ <sup>do not seem to have</sup> ~~reached~~ their danger.  
 All might have gone well, if it ~~had not been~~ <sup>had not</sup> for an  
 unfortunate episode in the <sup>(only)</sup> life of Platina. By  
 profession Platina was a civil servant, and Ladrian

Platina had is a figure of some importance in the literary history of the century. He was a humanist of the lighter type, and his 'History of the Popes' may still be read with pleasure, ~~for it avoids the~~ ~~for~~ ~~it~~ ~~manages~~ ~~to~~ ~~avoid~~ ~~the~~ ~~Grand~~ ~~Style~~. He was also a poet. He composed the verses to Melozzo da Forlì's <sup>in the Vatican Library</sup> glorious fresco, and in that fresco he himself appears kneeling as Papal Librarian, pointing to the verses that he has just composed. But his normal profession was that of civil servant. Under Pope Paul's predecessor he had bought himself a post in the Chancery. The work, mainly diplomatic, was well paid and desirable socially. In Rome, as at Florence, the civil service had a great tradition behind it, and Platina hoped to follow in the steps of Poggio & Valla, whose Latinity had made princes tremble. His hopes were dashed. When Paul was elected, his first care was to reorganise the government offices, <sup>in</sup> in other words, to dismiss all the clerks in order that the Cardinal Vice



high under the previous pope. Paul II reorganized  
 the government offices - that is to say, he dis-  
~~missed~~ ~~all the clerks~~ so that the Cardinal Vice  
 Chancellor, who was a friend of his, could sell  
 the posts by auction for the second time. Platina  
 lost both his ~~work~~ salary and his ~~cash~~ purchase  
 money, <sup>and his prospects</sup> and it is not surprising that ~~he lost his~~ <sup>his temper followed</sup>  
 head. For twenty nights he clamoured for an interview  
 It was refused, & he resorted to desperate measures.  
 He wrote a letter, threatening the Pope with a general  
 Council of Christendom. <sup>(if the clerks were not reinstated)</sup> The interview followed all  
 too quickly. <sup>He</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>intended</sup> Platina was thrown into prison.

It was winter, and the cells of S<sup>t</sup> Angelo are damp.  
 He emerged crippled with rheumatism. Doubtless the  
 society gave him a glorious supper, but no welcome  
 could comfort him for his first great contact with the  
 world. He, and others <sup>and servants</sup> who had suffered like him,  
 threw personal passion into the heresy of the Three Infidels:  
~~Christ~~ Moses, Christ & Mahomet; Christ is clearly the  
<sup>most</sup> <sup>deceitful</sup> <sup>worst</sup>. The saints are cheap jacks, S<sup>t</sup> Francis is an  
 idiot, astrology, a ~~sure~~ guide, predicts that the

The priests have invented fasting and forbidden men to have more than one wife; astrology, a sure guide, has declared that the Pope <sup>(as operating)</sup> will die shortly. And so things went forward for five years. The sense of fraternity grew stronger. The <sup>Andean</sup> society had a wrong which it did not propose to revenge, but which bound it more passionately in to one.

<sup>Next I say that</sup> <sup>As soon as</sup> they had known of the society <sup>as listened to its conversations</sup> for many years. Exactly what they discovered ~~it~~ cannot say, but in the February of 1468 they made a report to the Pope, Herosus ~~condemned~~ and the same evening <sup>practically</sup> nearly all the brothers were arrested. Callimachus, Sclancus and Petrejus had warning and fled; Pomponius Lactus was away at Venice, ~~perhaps~~ <sup>perhaps</sup> visiting a young man whom he loved in that city. But the unfortunate Platina was caught, again tortured, and again thrown into S<sup>t</sup> Angelo, and ~~remained~~ while the licentious poems that were found in the houses of <sup>the</sup> fugitives furnished fresh proofs of their guilt. The Pope was out of his mind with terror. He was menaced by anarchy, <sup>heresy</sup> atheism, paganism, and immorality, and simply did not know where to begin. Only one thing, seemed clear. Literature and history

must be abolished immediately. "If God spares my life" he cried, "I will forbid everyone to read poetry or stories. Children are bad enough as it is: think how much worse <sup>they become</sup> when they read Juvenal and so forth. I ~~know~~ <sup>am aware</sup> that Juvenal rebukes vice, but he reveals it while he rebukes it, and he is like an ill-<sup>advised</sup> <sup>clergyman</sup> <sup>preacher</sup> who tells the congregation of more in-judicious <sup>things</sup> than they would ever <sup>think</sup> <sup>thought</sup> of for themselves. If a man insists on reading, there are plenty of harmless books, but it is better to call things straight by their names, and not to go all <sup>round</sup> about them as in poetry." The Pope Band was right. Literature and History, if not the most effective weapons against Authority, are the easiest to handle, and the Roman Academy had discovered their power.

Meanwhile the prisoners were returning confused answers. It <sup>must</sup> be difficult for a secret society to give a clear account of itself when the lid is taken off suddenly, and they really did not know whether they had been conspiring against the Pope or not. Measured by the standards of fact, exactly what were their jokes, what were their dreams? When Papal soldiers were turning the rack, to what exact extent was Christ an impostor? They took the only course that was open to a lived mind

- they blame one another: the only apostolic course, but it shattered their fraternity for ever. Platina blames Callimachus, a gossip and a drunkard. "Who would have supposed" he writes "that the ridiculous visions of a buffoon could have brought us into such trouble? He pretended to give us treasures and kingdoms, <sup>we laughed, but</sup> and now he goes at large, eating and drinking enormously, while we languish in prison because we have not reported his dreams." Not to have reported Callimachus to the authorities - that is his only crime: otherwise he is blameless. Henceforward, if even a bird speaks disrespectfully of the Pope, his Holiness shall be told at once. He will give up classics and take to theology. He will be Thomas and the four evangelists rolled into one, and all his poetry & prose shall concentrate on this glorious Pontificate of Paul. If only he may come out of prison! "If only, O Father, you will give hope to us who, with clasped hands and bended knees, are waiting for your mercy."

The turn of Pomponius followed. He was extradited, and also tortured in Sant' Angelo. For a time he kept his gaiety, and asked for books, and for a cheerful companion with whom to exchange ideas. Then mischance overtook him. He too ~~of~~ lays the blame on Callimachus. He too is guiltless and asks pardon for his sin. When accused of Paganism, he quotes some verses that he has composed on the Stations of the Cross. When accused of the young Venetian, he quotes the example of Socrates. But it did not much

of the  
granted the example of Socrates. It did not matter  
much what the <sup>prisoners</sup> said as long as they said  
something. The ~~was~~ Pope weighed the evidence,  
weighed it again, <sup>consulted the cardinals,</sup> made pretentious enquiries in  
in Naples and Poland, and gradually came to the  
conclusion that the ~~prisoners~~ were guilty of these  
blissfully only. Had been no conspiracy against  
his person. He found the <sup>brothers</sup> prisoners guilty of  
blissfully only, and dismissed them ~~to~~ with a  
kindly canton. Broken in health, degraded to one  
another and to the world, they were led back to  
their ancient haunts and reorganized in an Academy,  
under official patronage. They outlived their persecutors.  
Platina had even the pleasure of graduating him in his  
'lives of the Popes'. But any thing that may have

15\* 334  
been Apotitic in their existence had gone for ever.

Could they have managed better? In the middle of the trial, in the throng of accusations, most of which were true, could they have conveyed the strength and the dignity and the joy that <sup>had been theirs in secret for a long time</sup> ~~secrecy had given~~ the banquet, the Attellan farces, the fearless interchange of thought - could they have given a clear account of these things, or gone to the galleys for them? Or did they manage as well as they could and better than we shall? Is wonder equal to the inevitable end of such an affair?

1820  
1460  

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360  
352