VI. REMARKS *on a Mixed Species of EVIDENCE in MATTERS of HISTORY: With an EXAMINATION of a new HISTORICAL HYPOTHESIS, in the Mémoires pour la Vie de PETRARQUE, by the Abbé de SADE. By ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ. F. R. S. EDIN. Judge-Advocate of North Britain.*

[*Read by Mr PLAYFAIR, August 21. 1797.*]

IN matters of historical research, there is a kind of circumstantial evidence which arises from the combination of known or authenticated facts, with critical argument on the import of doubtful passages of authors, which the reasoner endeavours to interpret, by bringing together, comparing, and making the one illustrate the other; so as to draw from the whole a degree of positive and certain information, which those authenticated facts are not of themselves sufficient to convey, and which those passages, taken separately, are incapable of furnishing. This complex species of evidence, it must be owned, is, with respect to its power of conviction, much inferior to that which arises from the ordinary proofs on which authentic history depends; for example, the testimony of actual witnesses to the facts related; or the positive information of authors, derived

from clear and well authenticated records: But, at the same time, as in matters of history we have not always that best kind of evidence on which to found our belief, we are from necessity often compelled to resort to this inferior, circumstantial and analogical species of probation, in order to form to ourselves a rational creed on many matters of doubt, on which the mind is unwilling to rest in absolute uncertainty.

THIS latter species of evidence, too, has its recommendation, from that pleasing exercise which it gives to the reasoning powers: for there is no mental occupation which demands more ingenuity, if we construct ourselves this artificial fabric of argument, or requires more judgment, if we attempt to analyze and examine its foundations when reared by another. The structure of an hypothesis of our own is a delightful occupation to the mind; and a pleasure, perhaps very little inferior to this, is the critical examination of an hypothesis framed by another. We proceed to either undertaking with a zeal, resembling that which is felt by the adventurer on a voyage of discovery. We persevere in it with an ardour which increases with the difficulties we encounter. Like the adventurer, too, we find our chief reward in the research itself, whatever may be the actual value or real importance of its ultimate object.

OF the truth of these observations I have myself had full experience, while, at a season when I thought myself warranted in seeking an amusing exercise of the mind, I began to read over, with some attention, an elaborate work that I had formerly but hastily perused, the *Mémoires pour la Vie de PETRARQUE*, by the Abbé de SADE; a composition which affords one of the most remarkable examples of an historical hypothesis, supported by that compound species of evidence I have mentioned, which consists in the combination of certain authenticated facts, with critical reasoning on the import of various doubtful and contending authorities. As the examination of this hypothesis, and
the

the evidence on which it is built, has afforded me considerable pleasure, while, at the same time, I have flattered myself that the result of this examination has been a complete detection of its insufficiency, I am prompted to submit my remarks to the consideration of this Society, which embraces, in its comprehensive institution, equally the subjects of philosophical research and of historical and critical disquisition.

IN the examination of this hypothesis, I laid down to myself certain rules, which, as they are of a general nature, may, as I imagine, be applied with propriety to all investigations of a similar kind, where the evidence is of that compound species I have mentioned. These rules are the following :

I. WHERE a doubtful fact is to be ascertained, by bringing together, comparing and weighing the sense of various passages of an author's writings, the construction put on *ambiguous* expressions ought to be such as is consonant with the sense of those passages or expressions, which, on the same subject, are *plain* and *unambiguous*.

II. WHERE a person's *character* and *manner of thinking, feeling, or acting*, are clear, from the general tenor of his life and writings, no interpretation ought to be given to doubtful passages of those writings, which contradicts, or is inconsistent with, such *character, sentiments, and conduct*.

III. WHERE many passages concur to establish the belief of the disputed fact, a single passage, though apparently contradictory to that supposition, must not be allowed weight, if it is possible to give it an explanation consistent with that opinion which is better supported.

IV. IN such a case, where many passages concur to establish the belief of a certain fact, and there appear one or two passages in apparent contradiction to that belief, there is room to suspect
either

either an *error of transcription or typography*; or, if such supposition is excluded, *interpolation or fabrication*.

V. IN the supposition of interpolation or fabrication, there must of necessity be included a cogent and adequate *motive*; and therefore, where such motive is utterly wanting, the supposition is not to be indulged.

VI. WHERE this motive is apparent, the presumption of *falsehood* is in proportion to the strength of the motive, the facility of executing the deception, and the weight of the opposing evidence.

VII. WHERE a passage is suspected of interpolation or fabrication, it is most material to attend to the sense of the *context*, or what immediately precedes and follows the passage in dispute; as its *consonancy or dissonancy* is strong matter of corroboration.

IF these rules of evidence are well founded, they will afford a just criterion for the decision of all questions of historical controversy, where the evidence is of a compound, circumstantial and presumptive nature; and where our belief is the consequence not of authority but of argument. Of such a nature is that hypothesis of the Abbé de SADE, which I shall now proceed to examine.

THE literary world owes very high obligations to FRANCIS PETRARCH; and it has been laudably zealous in repaying them by a grateful tribute of admiration and encomium. There is no character among the moderns whose talents have been more the subject of panegyric, both among his cotemporaries and with posterity; nor is there any whose life has so frequently employed the pen of the biographer. The Baron de la BASTIE, one of the latest of those biographers, enumerates at least fourteen, and most of these authors of some reputation, who have professedly written biographical accounts of this eminent man;

not

not to mention a still more numerous class, who have incidentally treated of his life and literary character in critical dissertations, journals, and memoirs of the state of literature of his age and country.

AMIDST this variety of research, it is natural to suppose that much has been brought to light, and, it is even a reasonable suspicion, that where there has been such ardour of investigation, there can remain but little subject of new discovery. So thought M. de la BASTIE, when, in the years 1740 and 1741, he published his excellent Account of the Life of PETRARCH, in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* *. He was not aware, that within a few years from the date of his own publication, the world was to receive a work, containing at least ten times the quantity of all that had ever been written on the subject of PETRARCH, and professing to be only *materials* for the composition of a Life of this remarkable man. The work I here allude to, is *Mémoires pour la Vie de PETRARQUE*, by the Abbé de SADE; a book which has met with considerable approbation from the public, and which merits the praise it has obtained; as, along with a very minute detail of the life of PETRARCH himself, and a very full account of his writings, it contains much curious and instructive information relative both to the literary and political history of the times which it commemorates. In a work which is extended to three large volumes in quarto, and which has been the fruit of the most elaborate research, not only into all the printed works illustrative of the manners and history of the 14th century, but into public records and the archives of private families, it cannot be denied, that much new light has been thrown on the principal object of that research, the *history* and character of PETRARCH. But it will be a matter of regret to many readers, that the consequence

* Vols. xv. and xvii.

sequence of these elaborate inquiries, should be a diminution of that esteem which the world has hitherto entertained for this eminent man, in the most important point of his character, his *morals* *.

THE works of PETRARCH give evidence of his abilities as a Politician, Theologian, and Philosopher; and it is in these characters that he appears chiefly to have been distinguished by his cotemporaries; but it is not on these foundations that the lasting structure of his fame has been reared. It is to those incomparable verses, in which he has celebrated the accomplishments and bewailed the fate of the beautiful LAURA, that PETRARCH has been indebted for his permanent reputation. The history of the poet's passion for his lovely mistress, must ever be regarded as forming the most interesting portion of his annals. His character, in fact, took its tone from that predominant affection, which influenced his studies, his habits of life, and all his pursuits and occupations. A love so pure, so ardent, and so lasting, is difficult to be paralleled in the history of human nature. PETRARCH was the passionate admirer of LAURA for twenty-one years, while she was in life; and with unabated ardour of affection, he is said to have bewailed her loss for twenty-six years after her death.

THE works of the poet himself bear the strongest testimony that this passion, so remarkable both in its fervency and duration, was an honourable and virtuous flame. PETRARCH aspired to the happiness of being united to LAURA in marriage. We have reason to believe, from the evidence of his own writings, that the heart of LAURA was not insensible to his passion; and, although the term of his probation was tedious and severe, he had grounds for a hope, approaching to confidence, that he

was

* Of this work of the Abbé de SADE, Mrs DOBSON has given a very amusing epitome, in her *Life of PETRARCH*, 2 vols. 8vo.

was at last to attain the end of his wishes. Such are the ideas that we must entertain, from the writings of the poet himself, of the nature and object of his passion ; and such has been the uniform and continued belief of the world with regard to it, from his own days to the present. At length comes into the field a hardy but most uncourteous Knight, who, with a spirit very opposite to that of the heroes of chivalry, blasts at once the fair fame of the virtuous LAURA, and the hitherto unfulfilled honour of her lover ; and, proudly throwing down his gauntlet of defiance, maintains, that LAURA was a married woman, the mother of a numerous family ; that PETRARCH, with all his professions of a pure and honourable flame, had no other end in his unexampled assiduity of pursuit, than what every libertine proposes to himself in the possession of a mistress ; and that the lovely LAURA, though never actually unfaithful to her husband's bed, was sensible to the passion of her *Cicisbeo*, highly gratified by his pursuit, and, while she suffered on his account much restraint and severity from a jealous husband, continued to give him every mark of regard which, without a direct breach of her matrimonial vow, she could bestow upon him. Such is the hypothesis of the author of the *Mémoires pour la Vie de PETRARQUE*, on the subject of the loves of PETRARCH and of LAURA ; and the establishment of this hypothesis, so injurious to the honour of both, is, in fact, the main scope of that most elaborate work.

THE principle of sympathy is a noble part of the constitution of the human mind ; and is, perhaps, the basis of all the social affections. In forming our opinions of the characters and conduct of other men, we involuntarily place ourselves in their situation, and we judge of them as we should wish to be judged ourselves in similar circumstances. Hence, in every doubtful case, where the conduct of another is found to admit of opposite constructions, a candid mind will ever give its decision on the side of

virtue and of honour. Hence, likewise, the warmest indignation arises in every ingenuous breast, on observing in others a violation of this rule of candour, in a propensity to form unfavourable opinions of conduct or of character ; we are prompted eagerly to scrutinize the foundations of such illiberal opinions ; and we conceive it a duty we owe to virtue and to honour, a task enjoined us by the respect due to our common nature, to refute the calumny, expose the artifices of the aggressor, and restore the injured to his just estimation.

PREVIOUSLY to the appearance of the work of the Abbé de SADE, those authors who had written the Life of PETRARCH, had, in treating of LAURA, universally acknowledged, that much uncertainty prevailed with regard to the real name, family and rank of this celebrated personage. In general, however, we find but two different opinions on this subject. The one is, that her parents were of an honourable family in Provence ; and that her father * resided at a small country seat or village in the territory of Avignon, near to the sources of the Sorga : the other, that she was sprung from the house of SADE, a daughter of that family, which is of an ancient date, and considerable rank in the city of Avignon. The former of these opinions, which has been adopted by almost all the Italian authors, is founded on a variety of passages in the writings of the poet himself, of which I shall afterwards take particular notice. The latter opinion, which

* To this gentleman VELUTELLO has given the name and title of HENRI CHIABAU, Lord of Cabrieres. This, however, is founded on too slender an authority to entitle it to credit. It is, in fact, only a conjecture of VELUTELLO himself, who was at pains to search the baptismal register of the parish in which Vaucluse is situate ; and, finding that a child of the name of LAURA was registered as being born to HENRI CHIABAU, Lord of Cabrieres, on the 4th of June 1314, he thence concluded, there being no other registration of that name which could possibly apply to the object of his research, that this, for certain, was the mistress of PETRARCH.

which is that which chiefly prevails at Avignon, where the poet passed a considerable part of his life, is founded on the following circumstances.

IN the Ambrosian Library at Milan, there is preserved a manuscript copy of VIRGIL, which is said to have been the property of PETRARCH; and on the margins of which are many notes, alleged to be in the handwriting of the poet. One of these, which is written on the first page of the MS. is in the following words :

* “ LAURA, propriis virtutibus illustris, et meis longum celebrata carminibus, primum oculis meis apparuit, sub primum adolescentiæ meæ tempus, anno Domini 1327, die 6. mensis Aprilis, in Ecclesia Sanctæ CLARÆ Avinioni, horâ matutinâ ; et in eadem civitate, eodem mense Aprilis, eodem die sexto, eadem horâ primâ, anno autem 1348, ab hac luce lux illa subtracta est ; cum ego fortè tunc Veronæ essem, heu fati mei nescius ! rumor autem infelix per literas LUDOVICI mei, me Parmæ reperit, anno eodem, mense Maio, die 19. manè. Corpus illud castissimum atque pulcherrimum, in loco *Fratrûm Minorum* repositum est, ipso die mortis, ad vesperam. Ani-

R 2

“ mam

* TRANSLATED.

“ LAURA, illustrious by the virtues she possessed, and celebrated during many years by my verses, appeared to my eyes, for the first time, on the 6th day of April, in the year 1327, at Avignon, in the church of St Claire, at 6 o'clock in the morning. I was then in my early youth. In the same town, on the same day, and at the same hour, in the year 1348, this light, this sun withdrew from the world. I was then at Verona, ignorant of the calamity that had befallen me. A letter I received from my LUDOVICO, on the 19th of the following month, brought me the cruel information. Her body, so beautiful, so pure, was deposited, on the day of her death, after vespers, in the church of the Cordeliers. Her soul, as SENECA has said of AFRICANUS, I am confident, returned to heaven, from whence it came. For the purpose of often dwelling on the sad remembrance of so severe a loss, I have written these particulars in a book that comes frequently under my inspection. I have.

“mam quidem ejus, ut de AFRICANO ait SENECA, in cœlum
 “unde erat rediisse mihi persuadeo. Hoc autem ad acerbam rei
 “memoriam, amara quâdam dulcedine scribere visum est, hoc
 “potissimum loco qui sæpe sub oculis meis redit; ut cogitem
 “nihil esse debere quod amplius mihi placeat in hac vita, et
 “effracto majori laqueo, tempus esse de Babylone fugiendi,
 “crebra horum inspectione, ac fugacissimæ ætatis æstimatione
 “commoneat. Quod præviâ DEI gratiâ facile erit, præteriti
 “temporis curas supervacuas, spes inanes, et inexpectatos exitus
 “acriter et viriliter cogitanti.”

THE evidence of this note, supposing it authentic, positively fixes the burial-place of PETRARCH's LAURA to have been in the church of the *Fratres Minores*, or Cordeliers, at Avignon. At the distance of near two hundred years from the death of LAURA, (*anno* 1533,) a Florentine gentleman, of the name of MANELLI, being at that time at Avignon, amused himself in making researches into every particular relative to the history of PETRARCH and of LAURA; and, with the aid of two others, MAURICE de SEVES* and a M. BONTEMPS, who were instigated

have thus prepared for myself a pleasure mingled with pain. My loss, ever present to my memory, will teach me, that there is no longer any thing in this life which can afford me delight: That it is now time that I should renounce Babylon, since the chain which bound me to it with so tender an attachment, is broken. Nor will this, with the assistance of Almighty God, be difficult. My mind, turning to the past, will set before me all the superfluous cares that have engaged me; all the deceitful hopes that I have entertained; and the unexpected and afflicting consequences of all my projects.”

* PROBABLY MAURICE SCEVE, a French poet, cotemporary with CLEMENT MAROT, of whose composition there are some pieces in the 4to edition of the works of MAROT, published at the Hague, 1731, by the Abbé LANGLET du FRESNOY, (under the fictitious name of the Chevalier GORDON de PERCEL).

ted by a like curiosity, examined every quarter of this church of the Cordeliers, in the hope of tracing some memorial of LAURA, whom, on the evidence of the manuscript note on *Virgil*, they believed to have been there interred. In one of the chapels of that church, called *Capella della Croce*, in which was the burial-place of the family of SADE, they found a large flat stone, which bore no inscription whatever. This, if it afforded no indication of being the grave of LAURA, at least gave no proof to the contrary; they therefore opened the grave in quest of further evidence. At first they perceived nothing but earth, intermixed with small bones, among which was an entire jaw-bone. Examining, however, more minutely, they discovered a little casket of lead, fastened with a brass wire, on opening which they found a piece of parchment, folded, and sealed with green wax, together with a medal of bronze, on the one side of which was the figure of a very little woman, (*figura d'una donna picciolissima*), in the attitude of uncovering her bosom with both her hands; and around, in the way of legend, were only these four letters, M. L. M. I.

IN endeavouring to explain this inscription, it occurred to MAURICE de SEVES, that the four letters might probably be thus interpreted, *Madonna LAURA morta jace*. This was plainly nothing more than conjecture; and, had the tomb contained no other evidence of a more decisive nature, all hitherto discovered had been of little consequence to ascertain the object of inquiry. The sealed parchment was, therefore, next examined; and, although it is owned that the writing was at first quite illegible, the characters being so defaced, (as well they might, after lying two hundred years in the dissolved materials of a human body), yet MAURICE de SEVES, by examining it exposed to the strong rays of the sun, is said to have at last made out distinctly

stinctly the following sonnet, of which he took a fair transcript* :

*Qui riposan quei caste e felici ossa
Di quella alma gentile e sola in terra.
Aspro't dur sasso hor ben teco hai soterra
El vero honor la fama e belta scossa.
Morte ha del verde Lauro svelta e mossa
Fresca radice, e il premio de mia guerra
Di quattro lustri ; e piu se anchor non erra
Mio penser tristo ; e il chiude in pocha fossa.
Felice pianta : in borgo de Avignone
Nacque e mori : e qui con ella jace
La penna, el stil, l'inchiostro e la ragione.
O delicate membrà, O viva face
Che anchor me cuoci e struggi, inginocchione
Giascun preghi IL SIGNOR te accepti in pace.*

THIS

* THE sonnet is here given exactly, as to orthography and punctuation, from the copy which the Abbé de SADE says he took from the original.

THUS almost literally translated :

Here now repose those chaste, those blest remains
Of that most gentle spirit, sole in earth !
Harsh monumental stone, that here confin'ft
True honour, fame and beauty, all o'erthrown !
Death has destroy'd that Laurel green, and torn
Its tender roots ; and all the noble meed
Of my long warfare, passing (if aright
My melancholy reckoning holds) four lustres.
O happy plant ! Avignon's favour'd soil
Has seen thee spring and die ;—and here with thee
Thy poet's pen, and muse, and genius lies.
O lovely, beauteous limbs ! O fire divine,
That even in death hast power to melt the soul !
Heaven be thy portion, peace with God on high !

THIS sonnet is apparently written in the person of PETRARCH; but being, in the judgment of BEMBO, BECCATELLI, MURATORI, and the best of the Italian critics, very inferior, in point of merit, to the other compositions of the poet, they have supposed it the work of another, who had here assumed his character, in composing an epitaph in honour of LAURA. It is remarked, from the evidence of the note on VIRGIL, that PETRARCH was at Parma at the time when LAURA was interred at Avignon; and therefore, that this inscription, though written under his character, could not possibly be of his composition. If, however, such an inscription was actually found in 1533, in the tomb of the church of the Cordeliers, whoever was its author, it would seem very clearly to indicate, that this was in reality the grave of PETRARCH'S LAURA; and the place of her interment, being a chapel erected by the house of SADE as a burial-place for all of their family, a strong confirmation thence arises, of the tradition current at Avignon, that LAURA was of that family; and a reasonable foundation seems to be laid for that hypothesis of the author of the *Mémoires*, that she was the same person with LAURA de NOVES, who was married to HUGH de SADE, and from whom the whole of the branches of that family now existing are lineally descended.

THERE are, however, many circumstances that tend to bring into doubt, or rather that seem entirely to confute, this fundamental fact, that LAURA either died or was buried at Avignon.

IF we admit the evidence of the note on VIRGIL, LAURA was *born* at Avignon, and *died* in the same place. The works of the poet, indeed, contain the most positive information that LAURA *died* in the same place where she was *born*, and where she had passed the greatest part of her life; but they likewise furnish evidence that this place was not Avignon, but some small village or country-seat in the territory of Avignon, near to the source of the *Sorga*, or the fountain of *Vaucluse*.

IN the *Trionfo della Morte*, Part 2. the poet feigns that LAURA, on the night after her death, appeared to him in a vision: and, in the course of a long conversation, in which she acknowledges, that she had ever felt for him a mutual passion, and endeavours to satisfy him, that every singularity of her conduct, however harshly he might at the time have judged it, was prompted by the sincerity of her affection for him; she says in one passage,

*In tutte l'altre cose assai beata,
In una sola a me stessa dispiacqui;
Che'n troppo umil terren mi trovai nata:
Duolmi ancor veramente ch'io non nacqui
Almen più presso al tuo fiorito nido;
Ma assai fu bel paese ov' io ti piacqui.*

“Fortunate enough I was in other respects: this only I
“regretted, that the place of my birth was too humble: at least
“I had cause to repine at this circumstance, that it was not
“nearer to the beautiful country of thy nativity. Yet that
“region was indeed sufficiently beautiful where I had the hap-
“piness to please thee.” It was impossible that LAURA could have termed the city of Avignon *umil terreno*, or that she could have been ashamed of it as the place of her birth. At that time Avignon was the Papal residence, and one of the most splendid cities in the south of Europe; a city, indeed, where luxury and corruption of manners had attained to such a height, that PETRARCH himself characterizes it by the epithet of the *Gallic Babylon* *.

IN the fourth sonnet of the 1st Part of his *Sonetti e Canzoni*, the poet has the following remarkable allusions, which may per-
haps

* EPIST. lib. sine tit. Ep. 16.

haps be thought to border a little on impiety. Divine Providence, he observes, has thought fit to display its wonders, by choos'ing its most illustrious instruments, either from a servile condition, or from a low and obscure place of origin. Of this he gives for examples, the mean occupations of the Apostles, the obscurity of the birth-place of our Saviour, who, disdain'ing imperial Rome, chose an inconsiderable town of Judæa for the place of his nativity; and lastly, the humble origin of the matchless LAURA, that resplendent sun of beauty, who rose upon the world from a small obscure village:

*Ed or di picciol borgo un sol n' ha dato,
Tal, che natura e 'l luogo si ringrazia,
Onde sì bella donna al mondo nacque.* Son. 4. Part. 1.

THE situation of this *picciol borgo*, or small village, is likewise distinctly pointed out. It was in the neighbourhood of the hills that rise above the fountain of *Vaucluse*, the spring of the *Sorga*. The poet sends a present to a friend, of two birds which he had caught, and he accompanies the gift with a sonnet, in which the birds are supposed thus to address the person to whom they are sent:

*A piè de' colli, ove la bella vesta
Prese delle terrene membra pria
La donna, che colui ch' a te ne 'nvia,
Spesso dal sonno lagrimando desta;
Libere in pace passavam, &c.* Son. 8. Part. 1.

“ At the foot of those hills where that fair nymph was born,
“ who oft causes him who sends this present to pass the sleepless
“ night in tears, we once enjoyed the sweets of liberty,” &c.

134 EXAMINATION of an HISTORICAL HYPOTHESIS

IN the 37th sonnet of the second Part, PETRARCH, addressing himself to the spirit of LAURA, thus expresses himself :

*Mira 'l gran sasso donde Sorga nasce,
E vedravi un che sol tra l'erbe e l'acque
Di tua memoria e di dolor si pasce :
Ove giace 'l tuo albergo e dove nacque
Il nostro amor.———*

“ Behold,” says he, “ yonder great rock from whence the Sorga
“ springs, and there thou wilt see a solitary being, who, amidst
“ the green fields and streams, feeds on thy remembrance and
“ on his own sorrows. 'Twas there thy habitation lay ; and
“ there our loves began.”———

IN the 155th sonnet of the 1st Part, (*Almo Sol,*), the poet, addressing himself to the sun, complains, that when his light is withdrawn, and the night comes on, he is deprived of what he most delights in, the shadow that falls from that low hill, “ where
“ sparkles that sweet fire ; where from a slender twig the beautiful laurel grew ;” and he laments, that the darkness hides from his eyes “ that blessed spot, where, with its mistress, his heart
“ for ever dwells.”

*O sole,——
—Fuggendo mi toi quel cb' i' più bramo :
L' ombra che cade da quell' umil colle,
Ove sfavilla il mio soave fuoco,
Ove 'l gran lauro fu picciola verga ;
Crescendo, mentr' io parlo ; a gli occhi tolle
La dolce vista del beato loco,
Ove 'l mio cor con la sua donna alberga.*

So, in the 40th sonnet of the 2d Part, the poet says,

Quella per cui con Sorga ho cangiat' Arno.——

a passage clearly marking, that his preference for the Sorga arose from LAURA's residing on its banks.

THE 17th Canzone, Part. 1., (*Di pensier in pensier*), furnishes a similar inference :

—————*Oltra quell' alpe,
Là, dove 'l ciel è più sereno e lieto,
Mi rivedrai sour' un ruscel corrente,
Ove l'aura si sente
D' un fresco ed odorifero laureto :
Ivi è 'l mio cor, e quella che 'l m' invola.*

“ Beyond those hills where the air is mild and serene ; beside
“ the rushing brook, where the gale wafts from yon fresh laurel's
“ leaves its rich perfume ; 'tis there she dwells who rest me of
“ my heart.” On this passage GESUALDO remarks, in a note,
“ Era presso al fiume, ov' albergava Madonna LAURA, che si
“ dolce spirava.” “ It was near the river where lay the residence
“ of LAURA, that laurel whose fragrance was to him so delight-
“ ful.”

IN the 52d sonnet of the 2d Part, the poet thus describes his feelings on returning to Vaucluse, after the death of LAURA :

*Sento l'aura mia antica ; e i dolci colli
Veggio apparir onde 'l bel lume nacque
Che tenne gli occhi miei mentr' al ciel piacque
Bramosi e lieti ; or li tien tristi e molli.—
Vedove l'erbe, e torbide son l'acque ;
E voto e freddo 'l nido in ch' ella giacque.—*

“ Once more I breathe that dear accustomed air : Once more I
“ view those beautiful hills, whence that resplendent light arose
“ which once gave joy to these eyes ; while heaven so pleased to
“ bless me with her sight ; but now, alas ! has steeped them for

“ ever in tears.—Widowed are those green fields,—and turbid
 “ is that stream,—and void and cold the nest in which she
 “ lay.”

MANY passages of the poet's writings likewise very clearly indicate that LAURA died in the same place where she was born, and where she had passed the greatest part of her life.

THUS, in the 53d sonnet of the 2d Part :

*È questo 'l nido in che la mia Fenice
 Mise l' aurate e le purpuree penne ;
 Che sotto le sue ali il mio cor tenne.—
 E me lasciato hai quì misero e solo,
 Tal, che pien di duol sempre al loco torno
 Che per te consacrato onoro e colo.
 Veggendo a' colli oscura notte intorno
 Onde prendesti al ciel l' ultimo volo.—*

“ Here is the nest in which my Phœnix lay, and couched her
 “ golden and empurpled wings ;—and here she left me miserable
 “ and alone. Thus, for ever a prey to grief, I turn me to that
 “ dear spot of earth which she has consecrated, and which, on
 “ that account, I venerate and honour : I view those hills, now
 “ dark and desolate, from whence she winged her flight to
 “ heaven.”

So, likewise, in that beautiful sonnet on his return to Vaucluse, *Valle, che de' lamenti miei se' piena*, &c. he gives the most explicit intimation, that the grave of LAURA was in that very place, and amidst the same scenes where he so often had enjoyed the happiness of her society :

Valle,

*Valle, che de' lamenti miei se' piena ;
 Fiume che spesso del mio pianger cresci ;
 Fere silvestre, vaghi augelli, e pesci,
 Che l' una e l' altra verde riva affrena ;
 Aria de' miei sospir calda e serena ;
 Dolce sentier, che sì amaro riesci ;
 Colle, che mi piacesti, or mi rincresci,
 Ov' ancor per usanza amor mi mena ;
 Ben riconosco in voi l' usate forme,
 Non, lassò ! in me ; che da sì lieta vita
 Son fatto albergo d'infinita doglia.
 Quindi vedea 'l mio bene , e per quest' orme
 Torno a veder, ond' al ciel nuda è gita
 Lasciando in terra la sua bella spoglia. Son. 32. Part. 2.*

Thou lonely vale, where in the fleeting years
 Of tender youth I breath'd my am'rous pain ;
 Thou brook, whose silver stream receiv'd my tears,
 Thy murmurs joining to my sorrowing strain ;
 I come, to visit all my former haunts again !
 O green-clad hills, familiar to my sight !
 O well-known paths, where oft I wont to rove,
 Musing the tender accents of my love !
 Long use, and sad remembrance now invite,
 Again to view the scenes which once could give delight !
 Yes, ye are still the same !—though here I meet
 No more that angel form, which beauty shed
 On universal nature ! Her dear feet
 Oft trod your paths :—here rests in hallow'd earth her head !

IN one of his Latin eclogues, in which the poet celebrates LAURA under the fictitious name of GALATEA, three nymphs, NIOBE, FUSCA and FULGIDA, are introduced in conversation, and one of them asks the others to point out to her the place
 where

where GALATEA was buried ; which FULGIDA does in these words :

*Carpe iter, qua nodosis impexa capistris
Colla boum, crebrasque canum sub limine parvo
Videris excubias, gilvosque ad claustra molossos :
Hic locus tua damna tegit ; jamque aspice contrà,
Hic GALATEA sita est.*——

“ Take your way yonder, where you will see the oxen yoked
“ by the neck, and the watch-dogs guarding the entry of a small
“ house. That hides from your sight what you are in search
“ of ; for on the other side of it is the burial-place of GALA-
“ TEA,” &c.

It is evident that the passages above quoted from the writings of the poet himself, ascertaining both the place of LAURA's birth and of her burial to have been in the country, in some small village or villa in the neighbourhood of the hills, and of the source of the Sorga, stand in direct contradiction to the manuscript note on *Virgil**, and to the sonnet said to have been found in the grave

* THE note on *Virgil*, when contrasted with many passages of the poet's writings, exhibits likewise other intrinsic evidences of forgery. This note bears positive testimony, that PETRARCH saw LAURA for the first time at matin-prayers in the church of St Claire at Avignon. But, from many passages of the poet's writings, it appears, that his first interview with LAURA was in a solitary walk in the fields. Thus, in the 8th *Ballata*, Part. 1. (*Nova angeletta*):

*Nova angeletta sovra l' ale accorta
Scese dal cielo in su la fresca riva,
Là 'nd io passava sol per mio destino :
Poi che senza compagna e senza scorta
Mi vide ; un laccio che di feta ordiva
Tese fra l' erba, ond' è verde 'l cammino :
Allor fui preso. —*

So,

grave of the church of the Cordeliers. The question, then, is, To which of the opposing proofs are we to give our faith? To this question we shall certainly not long hesitate to give an answer, when we consider, that the one class of proofs admits of no suspicion of fabrication or imposture; while the other is extremely suspicious, and may be altogether a forgery. It is impossible to suppose, that numberless passages, interspersed through the works of PETRARCH, indicating the place of LAURA's birth and death, all naturally connected with the subject treated of, though some furnishing their evidence not in positive terms, but only by inference, should every one of them be fabricated; and that the forger should have been able to

So, likewise, sonnet 157. Part. 1. :

*Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
Verde, m' apparve con duo corna d'oro,
Fra due riviere a l'ombra d'un alloro.*

And yet more clearly, in the 3d of his Latin eclogues :

*DAPHNE, ego te solam deserto in littore primum
Aspexi; dubius hominemne Deamne viderem.*

The evidence arising from these passages, that PETRARCH's first interview with his mistress was not in a church, but in the fields, is thus controverted by the Abbé de SADE. " Je suis persuadé que ces allégories qui présentent des images riantes de la campagne doivent être entendues des dehors d'Avignon, ou des charmes du printemps, qui est la saison dans laquelle PETRARQUE vit LAURE pour la première fois. Convenoit-il qu'il parlât de l'église de S^{te} CLAIRE en rapellant la première époque de son amour? Un poète qui parle de ces choses-là, est bien-aîsé d'égayer la scène; il n'ira pas la placer dans une église: et sur une chose si peu importante en elle-même, il ne doit pas s'assujettir à la vérité historique; il se permet toutes les fictions qui peuvent rendre ses vers agréables." (Notes, vol. i. p. 57.). If this mode of reasoning is to be admitted, it is equally effectual against those passages which the Abbé has brought in support of his own hypothesis, as those which militate against it; and tends, indeed, to invalidate the whole evidence brought from the poems of PETRARCH in proof of any part of his history.

to insert all these fabricated passages in every one of the manuscripts of the author's works which are to be found in Europe. Nor even, should we allow this strange undertaking to have been practicable, is it possible to figure a motive capable of inducing to the attempt? For, what interest had any man to shew, that the LAURA of PETRARCH was born and died in an obscure residence in the country, while nothing more was proved to ascertain her origin or connections? But this reasoning will not apply to those proofs which are brought to shew that LAURA was born and died at Avignon. The manuscript note on *Virgil*, and the sonnet said to have been found in the grave, stand evidently in a very different predicament. Here the forgery was easy; the motive to it strong and alluring. At the distance of two hundred years from the death of PETRARCH, it was no difficult matter for the possessor of this manuscript of *Virgil*, which is said to exhibit a great number of notes on its margin, in the genuine handwriting of the poet, to have fabricated one additional note in imitation of that handwriting, of which he had before him so many specimens; nor did it require a great measure of ingenuity to compose a single sonnet, written in the person of PETRARCH, and that too perhaps of equal merit with many of his genuine compositions. Of both forgeries the motive was probably the same, which has instigated the Abbé de SADE to the compilation of his elaborate work, the desire of vindicating to this house the relation to so celebrated a personage as the LAURA of PETRARCH: though, as we shall presently see, the Abbé's hypothesis goes beyond the pretensions of his ancestors, and much further than the evidence of this note and sonnet can conduct him; even supposing both were of the most certain authenticity.

WE have already remarked, that the purpose of the search into the graves in the church of the Cordeliers, was to ascertain
the

the truth of that report, which gave the LAURA of PETRARCH to the house of SADE. Two or three persons, zealous in this research, unite their endeavours for that purpose, and their investigation is naturally directed to the family burial-place, which is a chapel of that church termed *Capella della Croce*. Among other monuments in this chapel a gravestone is discovered, which bears no inscription; and, on opening the grave, some bones are found, and a casket, containing a medal and a parchment. The medal has on it the figure of a very little woman. Here, say our antiquaries, is, in all probability, the figure of LAURA *. Around the figure are four letters, M. L. M. I. This, says one of them, (MAURICE de SEVES), is undoubtedly to be interpreted, *Madonna LAURA morta jace*; though it is confessed that monumental inscriptions and the legends of medals are rarely found in the vernacular tongue; and though M. L. M. I. might have been read twenty different ways, with as much plausibility as in the way that MAURICE chooses to read it. The point, then, being already settled that this must be the grave of LAURA, the parchment, to be sure, must contribute its relative evidence to the same effect. This parchment, however, is found at first to be utterly illegible: a fact not at all surprising. The wonder is, that the parchment itself should have been discoverable: for, parchment being an animal substance, must, one should naturally suppose, have gone into total dissolution, in much less time than two hundred years, when inclosed in the same coffin with a putrefying carcase, from the juices of which a leaden box, shut only with a brass wire, would be a very insufficient protection. But the parchment is said to have been actually found. It could not, however, be read without the aid

VOL. V.—P. II.

T

of

* WE do not recollect any passage of the writings of PETRARCH which marks that LAURA was of small stature: nor is it easy to conceive how the medal, representing only a single figure, could accurately determine the size or stature of the person represented.

of the strongest light. It therefore was not read in the little dark chapel of the church *. MAURICE de SEVES, in all probability, puts it in his pocket, and takes it home for his deliberate examination. He had already given his opinion on the legend of the medal, which ascertained LAURA's relation to the grave. His credit, therefore, as an antiquary, is at stake to support this opinion, by the further evidence of the rotten parchment; and next day he produces a fairly written sonnet, which he declares to have copied from the original, of which, with much pains, he had at length been able to decypher the characters. The original is never afterwards heard of. A copy, written likewise on parchment, is preserved at this day among the archives of the family of SADE, which they pretend to be the original, found in the grave, and regard accordingly as a most precious document. But, though mutilated a little to give it the air of antiquity, as its writing is extremely distinct, and may be easily read, that circumstance of itself demonstrates, that it cannot be the parchment which, even two hundred years ago, was not without the utmost difficulty decyphered by MAURICE de SEVES, with the aid of a very strong light.

THE sonnet or epitaph itself is generally esteemed a poor composition; and the Italian authors are indignant that it should ever have been suspected to have come from the hand of PETRARCH: but PETRARCH's compositions are not all of transcendent merit; and its intrinsic character is not, perhaps, of itself, sufficient to bring its authenticity into doubt. The medal and the lead box are said to have been seen about the middle of the present century, in the possession of the monks of the Convent of St CLAIRE; but there they are no longer; and the

Abbé

* "SACELLUM, in quo illud (sepulchrum) videtur, obscurum est. Sinistra ingressus habet altare muro adstructum, ante quod, sub grandi faxo, sine omni ornatu et inscriptione, LAURA cubat." PHIL. THOMASINI, *PETR. Rediviv.* p. III.

Abbé de SADE mentions a shrewd conjecture of the Superior of the Convent, "that they had been sold to some *Seigneur Anglois*." Monks are very dexterous in the fabrication of all sorts of relics, and it was no bad policy of the *Fratres Minores*, to attract the notice of strangers to their convent, by the exhibition of a medal and a lead box, the evidences of a curious and disputed point of history: nor is it at all improbable, that afterwards a knavish friar, more studious of his own interest than that of his convent, might have purloined those precious relics, and got his own price for them.

SUCH is the history of those celebrated documents, which are said to prove the place of LAURA's birth and death to have been Avignon, and to ascertain that her grave was in the chapel of the church of the Cordeliers in that city, and in the burial-place of the family of SADE. I have stated fairly the whole of this evidence, which rests entirely on the manuscript note on *Virgil* and this miserable sonnet; and I leave that evidence to be balanced by those numberless passages of the poet's undoubted and authentic writings, which most unequivocally assert, that LAURA was neither born, nor died, nor was buried, at Avignon; but that she was born in a small village or country residence in the neighbourhood of Vaucluse, where she passed her life in tranquil and humble retirement*; that she died there, and was buried in the same place. If the proofs on both sides

T 2

are

* *In nobil sangue vita humile e queta,* Son. 180. Part. 1.

Non la conobbe il mondo mentre l' hebbe :

Conobbil' io ch' a pianger qui rimasi. Son. 67. Part. 2.

With what propriety or confidence with truth could the poet have thus expressed himself of LAURA de NOVES, the wife of a person of high rank, and who had passed the whole of her life in all the gaiety and splendour of the court of Avignon? Still less would the pious PETRARCH have borrowed a Scripture expression, addressed to the Saviour of the world, (St JOHN's *Gospel*, chap. xvii. v. 25.) and applied it, falsely too, to the object of an adulterous passion.

are impartially weighed, I am much deceived, indeed, if any person competent to judge of this species of evidence, will hesitate to decide that the latter is infinitely preponderating.

THE arguments by which the Abbé de SADE has endeavoured to invalidate the positive evidence contained in the writings of PETRARCH, that LAURA was born, lived and died in an obscure retreat in the country, are not undeserving of attention; as they are strong examples of that laboured sophistry, which is usually employed when one endeavours to support a weak or false hypothesis.

AVIGNON, says the Abbé, though a city of some celebrity, was far inferior in splendour to many of the Italian cities; and the mind of PETRARCH, being filled with the idea of their magnificence, might not unnaturally have termed the former *picciol borgo*. Unfortunately, PETRARCH at this time knew nothing of the splendid cities of Italy, but by description. He was born at *Arezzo*, an inconsiderable town in the Florentine territory; and he was no more than seven years of age, when he, together with his whole family, removed to Avignon. This city, therefore, was at any rate the most splendid he had ever seen; unless perhaps he had had a transient glimpse of Florence on his journey. It could, indeed, be only a distant prospect; for his father was then in a state of banishment from that capital, and durst not enter it. We may judge, then, with what propriety PETRARCH could have given the epithet of *picciol borgo* to Avignon, then the seat of the Papal residence, the perpetual resort of the most splendid embassies from all the sovereigns of Europe; and rendered illustrious, as the Abbé de SADE himself informs us, by frequent visits of the most celebrated princes, many of whom had actually built palaces there*; a city, too, where, as the

* "LES Princes, non contents d'envoyer des Ambassadeurs au Pape dans les moindres occasions, ne dédaignoient pas d'aller souvent en personne à Avignon, traiter avec

the same author acknowledges, the vast concourse of strangers had necessarily introduced every species of voluptuousness and debauchery *.

BUT supposing for a moment that Avignon, thus populous, splendid and luxurious, really seemed a *picciol borgo* in the eyes of PETRARCH, whose mind, as the Abbé says, was filled with the great idea of the cities of Italy, (what we have indeed shewn to be only an *idea*, as he had never seen them), we cannot allow the same false estimate in the mind of LAURA, with respect to the most considerable city which, for certain, *she* had ever seen. If she had been born at Avignon, it certainly must have merited in her eyes a very different estimation from that of an *umil terreno*, which she was ashamed to avow as the place of her nativity. Yet such, we have seen, the poet describes to have been her estimation of the place of her birth; the only circumstance, she says, respecting her origin, of which she had reason to be ashamed †.

BUT the *picciol borgo* and the *umil terreno*, says the Abbé, was not properly the city of Avignon itself; it was only a suburb, a *fauxbourg* of that city, and thus might well have merited those epithets.

avec lui des grands intérêts de leurs états. Le Roi de Majorque et le Dauphin de Viennois y avoient même des demeures fixes.—Le palais du Roi de Naples étoit où l'on voit à-présent le monastère de S^{te} URSULE, qu'on appelle *les Royales*, parcequ'elles habitent le palais d'un Roi. Un grand concours d'étrangers dans une ville, y entraîne nécessairement la licence et la débauche," &c. *Mem. de PET.* tom. i. p. 68.

* OF the very great populousness of this city at that time, we may form a general idea from a remarkable and melancholy proof. The pestilence which ravaged Italy and the south of France in the year 1348, and of which BOCCACCIO has given, in the introduction to his *Decamerone*, a most eloquent and impressive description, cut off, in the space of three months, a hundred and twenty thousand of the inhabitants of Avignon. *Hist. Pissol. Mem. de PETR.* tom. ii. p. 456.

† SEE *suprà*, p. 132.

epithets. To this we shall answer by a single question, which has been well put by M. de la BASTIE to those who contend for LAURA'S being born at Avignon: "Que dirions-nous d'un poète, qui adressant la parole à quelqu'un qui seroit né dans le fauxbourg St^e Germain, croiroit devoir le plaindre de ce qu'il n'est pas venu au monde dans une ville considérable? Ceux qui naissent dans ce fauxbourg, font-ils moins nés à Paris?"

BUT, continues the Abbé, we find, in a fragment which is printed at the end of all the editions of the works of PETRARCH, the following expression:

*Dove Sorga e Durenza in maggior vaso
Congiungon le lor chiare e torbide acque;—
Ivi, ond' a gli occhi miei el bel lume nacque.—*

"That beautiful luminary was born where the *Sorga* and the *Durance* unite their clear and turbid streams in a larger channel." Can any thing, says he, mark more precisely the situation of Avignon?

THE answer is, *first*, The authenticity of this fragment is not admitted. It is not found in the best manuscripts of the works of PETRARCH, nor have VELUTELLO, GESUALDO, or BEMBO, given it a place in their editions. In the splendid edition printed at Venice in 1756, it is found in an appendix, which the editor entitles, "Giunta d'alcune compositione del PETRARCA che si dicono da lui rifiutate." It is therefore a document of no authority whatever. But, *secondly*, Even supposing it genuine, the description there given does by no means mark precisely the situation of Avignon. The *Sorga* and the *Durance* do not join their streams at Avignon. The *Sorga* falls into the Rhône five miles above Avignon, and the *Durance* six miles below that city. These rivers, therefore, though they unite their streams by both
falling

falling into the Rhône, do not mark out Avignon as the point of junction, but rather mark the boundary of one side of a district termed the *Venaissin*, which comprehends the country for several miles adjacent to Avignon; and therefore, the description is equally indicative of *Vaucluse* and of *Cabrieres*, as it is of Avignon.

BUT this passage, supposing it genuine, will find its best explanation by a similar one, which occurs in the 10th of the poet's Latin eclogues, entitled *LAUREA occidens*; in which he bewails the death of his mistress under his favourite allusion of a *Laurel*:

————— *Fuit alta remotis,*
Silva locis qua se diversis montibus acti
Sorga nitens Rhodano, pallensque Ruentia miscent.
Hic mihi, quo fueram Tusco translatus ab Arno,
Sic hominum res fata rotant, fuit aridulum rus,
Dum colui indignè, atque operi successit egestas.——
Verum inter scopulos nodosaque robora quercûs,
Creverat ad ripam fluvii pulcherrima Laurus :
Huc rapior.———
Has ego delicias et opes, hæc regna putavi.——

“ In a remote quarter of that country where the Sorga and Durance unite their streams, was a thick forest, where, after I was removed from the Tuscan vale of *Arno*, I possessed a little barren country seat.—Here, amidst the rocks and thickets of oak, near the borders of the stream, grew a most beautiful Laurel. This favourite object engrossed all my care. In this spot was my kingdom, and here I found my supreme delight.” Nothing certainly can more accurately picture the scenery of *Vaucluse* and its vicinity, where the poet feigns his beautiful Laurel to have sprung, amidst the rocks and thickets.

IN the 13th Canzone (*Se 'l pensier*), the poet addresses himself to a beautiful stream, on the borders of which his mistress was wont frequently to walk. The commentators, in endeavouring to identify the scenery to which this poem refers, have, with great appearance of probability, supposed this rivulet to be the *Coulon*, which runs near to Cabrieres, where LAURA is believed to have dwelt, and conclude it to have been the same rivulet in which he had once surprised his mistress bathing, quite naked, an incident to which he alludes in the first Canzone. But this supposition, contradicting his theory, appears to the Abbé de SADE quite unnatural and absurd. He finds a basin or pond in a garden close by the walls of Avignon, which corresponds to a miracle with every thing here alluded to. As to the rivulet of Coulon, says he, it is no less than a *mile and a half* distant from Cabrieres, a circumstance which puts its pretensions out of the question; as this would have been rather too long a walk for a lady, *promenade un peu forte pour une dame*; and PETRARCH himself must have crossed a steep hill, and walked at least *four miles and a half*, before he could have seen her there.

IN a similar strain of weak and inconclusive reasoning, this author attempts to invalidate the evidence of the sonnet with which PETRARCH accompanies his present of the birds, caught at the foot of those hills where lay the birthplace of LAURA. Part of the city of Avignon, says the Abbé, is situated on a rocky eminence; and although the foot of that rock is now all built over, and comprehended within the precincts of the city, yet, in those days it *might* have been open ground, and PETRARCH *might* there have amused himself in fowling, and have caught the birds in question.

So likewise in the 184th sonnet (*Il cantar nuovo*), where the poet describes the pleasures of the morning in the country, the valleys resounding with the sweet song of the birds, and the
murmuring

murmuring of the clear rivulets *, and tells, that rising early to hail the morning rays, he had the fortune to see two suns rise at the same moment; the sun that marks the vicissitude of day and night, and LAURA, who at that instant eclipsed his radiance by her own: the Abbé, with his usual facility of perversion, cites this sonnet as a proof that PETRARCH used frequently to walk the streets of Avignon before daybreak, to have the pleasure of seeing his mistresses open her windows.

BUT the most amusing instance of this sophistical perversion of an author's clearest expressions, is to be found in the construction which is attempted to be put on the passage above quoted from the Latin eclogue of GALATEA †.

Carpe iter, qua nodosis impexa capistris, &c.

“ Take your way yonder, where you will see the oxen yoked
“ by the neck, and the watch-dogs guarding the entry of a small
“ house.—On the other side of it is the burial-place of GALA-
“ TEA.” This has been ever reckoned as one of the most decisive testimonies, that the burial-place of LAURA was not in the city of Avignon, but in the country. It was necessary, therefore, to take off the force of this strong piece of evidence. It is admitted,

* *Il cantar nuovo, e 'l pianger de gli augelli
In su'l di fanno risentir le valli,
E 'l mormorar de' liquidi cristalli
Giù per lucidi freschi rivi e snelli.—
Così mi sveglia a salutar l' aurora,
E 'l sol, ch' è seco; e più l' altro, ond' io fui
Ne prim' anni abbagliato, e sono ancora:
I' gli ho veduti alcun giorno ambedui
Levarsi insieme, e 'n un punto e 'n un bora
Quel far le stelle, e questo sparir lui.*

Son. 183. Part. 1.

† SEE *suprà*, p. 138.

admitted, on all hands, that LAURA is figured under the name of GALATEA : but the yoked oxen, and the watch-dogs guarding the entry of a small house, how can they possibly be applied to a church in the city of Avignon, or indeed to any thing else than a farm-house in the country ? Nothing is more clear, say the advocates for this hypothesis ; the *oxen* yoked by the neck are the *friars* of the convent, the *fratres minores, qui ferunt jugum obedientiæ, laboris et religionis* ; the *dogs* guarding the door are the same *friars*, (both dogs and oxen), who may well be termed dogs, because they *bark* so much in their sermons ; *frequentes vigiliis canum, prædicantium scilicet et latrantium*.

I PRESUME I have given a sufficient specimen of the Abbé de SADE's ingenuity in accommodating and bending to his own purpose those passages of the poet's writings which are in the most direct contradiction to his hypothesis ; nor would an unprejudiced critic desire a more satisfying proof of its futility, than the miserable shifts to which its defenders are put in order to support it. This hypothesis, however, must yet be more thoroughly canvassed ; and, for that purpose, I begin with a brief detail of its whole particulars.

THE Abbé de SADE endeavours to prove, that the mistress of PETRARCH was LAURA de NOVES, the daughter of AUDIBERT de NOVES, a gentleman of noble birth in Provence ; that she was born at Avignon, in 1307 or 1308 ; that she was married, in 1325, to HUGH de SADE, the representative of a very ancient and honourable family in the territory of Avignon, to whom she bore eleven children ; that she died at Avignon, in the year 1348, and was interred in the burial-place of the house of SADE, in the Church of the Cordeliers in that city. The Abbé, who is himself a younger son of that family, has proved the whole of those leading circumstances, in the history of his *progenitrix* LAURA de NOVES, by authentic documents in the archives of the house of SADE ; and he has particularly established the certainty

tainty of these facts, " that this LAURA, *the wife of HUGH de SADE*, was born, died, and was buried at Avignon." If, therefore, it is equally demonstrable that the LAURA of PETRARCH was neither born, died, nor was buried at Avignon, it is plain she was a different person from LAURA de NOVES. The evidence of these latter facts we have already seen. It is clear, positive, and unambiguous. It might, therefore, be sufficient to rest the matter here without farther argument; for an hypothesis must fall of itself, when the main props on which it is built are demolished. But I am tempted to go a great deal farther: and, allowing that the question as to the place of LAURA's birth and death were still a matter of doubt; nay, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that the LAURA of PETRARCH had, according to the tradition current at Avignon, been connected, in some way or another, with the house of SADE, and on that account had been interred in the burial-place of that family; supposing, in short, the authenticity both of the note on *Virgil*, and the whole story of the grave, the medal and the parchment; I shall now proceed to shew, and, as I trust, to prove to absolute conviction, that this LAURA, connected as we shall suppose her with the house of SADE, and buried in their family-vault, *was never married*.

AND here, I must previously remark, that the report which, it is allowed, was current at Avignon, that LAURA belonged to the family of SADE, was not that she was *connected by marriage* with that family, but that she was herself a descendant of that house. The opinion that she was connected with it by marriage, was never entertained by any one of the family, till it found its origin in the whimsical vanity of this author of the *Mémoires*, the Abbé de SADE, who has laboured, in this voluminous work, to convince the world, that he himself is actually sprung from the body of the illustrious LAURA. That she was *a daughter* of the house of SADE, had been a tradition, though, as we have

seen, a very ill founded one, for some centuries. "The opinion
 "regarding LAURA," says VELUTELLO, "which was current
 "at Avignon, may have, in a great measure, arisen from one
 "GABRIEL de SADE, an old nobleman of that city, with whom
 "I happened to converse a great deal at two different times,
 "when I was at Avignon. He set forth, that he was descend-
 "ed from one HUGH de SADE, a brother of JOHN, who was
 "the father of Madonna LAURA, whom he understood to have
 "been the same who was celebrated by PETRARCH; and he
 "told me, that this JOHN de SADE had some possessions at
 "Gravesons, about two leagues from Avignon, where he lived
 "always in summer, but passed the winter at Avignon; and
 "that this LAURA, the daughter of JOHN de SADE, was, after
 "her death, interred in the family burial-place, in the Church
 "of the Cordeliers. But," continues VELUTELLO, "what con-
 "vinced me that this old man's story was altogether a fiction,
 "was, that being asked at what time this LAURA lived, he said,
 "that by a certain testament which he had seen, she must have
 "been a grown woman between the years 1360 and 1370:
 "Now we are certain," adds VELUTELLO "that PETRARCH'S
 "LAURA died in the year 1348."

I QUOTE this passage for two reasons; *first*, To shew that VE-
 LUTELLO, who lived within 150 years of the time of PETRARCH,
 who had been at the utmost pains to investigate every trace of
 the history of LAURA, (a subject which he has treated in a se-
 parate dissertation), and who had himself conversed with this
 old gentleman of the family of SADE, from whom he supposes
 the report of LAURA'S relation to that family to have actually
 originated, did not himself give credit to the story, but con-
 jectured it to be a mere fiction, and the offspring of the old man's
 vanity; and I mention it, To shew, *secondly*, that this report,
 thus traced nearly to its origin, did not make LAURA a *married*
woman, or connected with the house of SADE by marriage, but

a *daughter* of one of that family, namely of JOHN de SADE. At this time, therefore, when it may be presumed the relation in which this celebrated person stood to their house, if there was any truth in it at all, must have been better known than it is now, we find there is not the smallest idea of that hypothesis, which the present representatives of this family are so anxious to establish, namely, that she was connected with them by marriage. Instead of being the wife of a M. de SADE, and the mother of a numerous progeny, we find, on going back two centuries, that the family themselves believe her to have been a *daughter* of one of that house; nor is it discovered till the present age, which is above 400 years after this lady's death, that she was the *wife* of their ancestor, the mother of all the surviving branches of that house; and consequently, that from her illustrious blood is sprung the whole race, now existing, of that family, and among the rest the ingenious Abbé, the author of this important discovery, which it has been the labour of his life to prove and authenticate.

ONE should have naturally imagined, that this gentleman, so proud of his ancestry, might have remained content with that portion of renown which appears to have satisfied the vanity of his forefathers, the attributing to their house the honour of having produced this illustrious lady. And indeed it is not easy to conceive how, in any just balance of moral estimation, the one species of adscititious merit should outweigh the other. On the contrary, a rigid moralist would infallibly decide, that there was more real honour that accrued to a family from having produced the pure, the chaste, the coy, the maiden LAURA, the model of female dignity and propriety, the object of an ardent, but virtuous affection to the most illustrious character of the age; than from having acquired by marriage, a connection with a lady, who, whatever were her personal charms, had no title to the praise of exalted virtue, or of true female dignity;
who,

who, while joined in wedlock to a respectable husband, and the mother of eleven children, continued, for above twenty years, to put in practice every artifice of a finished coquette, to ensnare the affections, and keep alive the passions, of a gallant, whose attachment, from the celebrity of his name, was flattering to her vanity.

I MUST indeed acknowledge, that these notions are drawn from a system of morals, with which the Abbé de SADE and most of his countrymen are but very little acquainted. I know that, in the opinion of most Frenchmen, a handsome married woman derogates not in the slightest degree from the rules either of virtue or of strict propriety, while she amuses herself with the gallant attentions of all the young men of her acquaintance; and the most intimate reciprocation of tender sentiments, while it is only an affair of the heart, is termed *une belle passion* *. This is precisely what the Abbé de SADE supposes to have been the connection of PETRARCH and of LAURA. PETRARCH besieged her with ardent and importunate solicitations, which had for their object the ordinary rewards of a lover. She never actually dishonoured her husband's bed; but she made no scruple to avow to her lover that her heart was sensible to his flame; though at times she found it necessary to feign a rigour and coldness of demeanour in order the better to keep alive the ardour of his passion. "Par ce petit manège," says the Abbé, "cette alternative de faveurs et de rigueurs bien ménagée, une femme tendre et sage amuse, pendant vingt et un ans, le plus grand poète de son siècle, sans faire la moindre breche à son honneur."

* OUR author has even termed this amour, *une passion honnête*, (an honourable passion). Thus, in speaking of Avignon, he says: "Une ville qui fait gloire de l'avoir élevé dans son sein, et d'avoir été le théâtre d'une passion honnête, qui lui a inspiré de si beaux vers." *Mém. de PET.* tom. i. p. 29. And the same expression occurs, tom. i. p. 111. where the Abbé proposes this passion of the poet for the wife of another man, "as a model for all tender and virtuous hearts."

“honneur.” *Mém. pour la Vie de PET. Préface aux François, &c.*
And in the following passages he describes this *petit manège* more particularly :

“LAURE, qui ne vouloit ni se donner à lui, ni le perdre, n’eut
“pas plutôt apperçu les nouveaux efforts qu’il faisoit pour briser
“ses fers, qu’elle mit en usage pour l’y retenir les petites ruses
“qui lui avoient jusqu’alors si bien réussi : air moins sévère,
“regards plus doux, petits mots en passant,” &c. *Mém.* vol. ii.
p. 311.—“LAURE ne pouvoit se résoudre à perdre un amant
“de cette trempe, qui l’aimoit depuis onze ans, et qui faisoit de
“si beaux vers pour elle : le rencontrant un jour dans les rues
“d’Avignon, elle jeta sur lui un de ces regards qui favoient si
“bien le ramener.” *Ibid*, p. 383.—“Ces petites ruses d’une
“coquetterie innocente, que LAURE favoit si bien mettre en
“œuvre, eurent bientôt produit leur effet ordinaire.” *Ibid*.
p. 386.

FROM these passages we may judge, what idea this Reverend Abbé has formed to himself of the character of a respectable married woman, and the mother of a family ; *une femme tendre et sage*, who has the art to keep alive, by all the tricks of a coquette, the passions of her gallant for no less than twenty-one years ; and all this *sans faire la moindre breche à son bonneur*. Observe too, that, for the better part of this period of fascination, the lady herself could owe little of her power to her personal charms ; for, if our author’s hypothesis be true, and LAURA de NOVES, the wife of HUGH de SADE, was the mistress of PETRARCH, this lady must have been a grown woman before her marriage in the year 1325 ; she had been married three years before PETRARCH first saw her ; she bore eleven children in the period of their acquaintance ; and she died when she was about forty years of age, *with all the symptoms of an exhausted constitution*. Yet all the while, this hackneyed and antiquated coquette, regardless of the character of a wife and a mother, is practising her

her *petit manège* of alternate favours and rigours to turn the head of an infatuated *enamorado*, whose passion was in itself an affront to virtue and morality, and amuse him for a lifetime with the expectation of favours which she is determined never to grant. Such, in the system of the Abbé de SADE, is the accomplished LAURA, and such the respectable and virtuous PETRARCH. How absurd, how disgusting, how contemptible the one: how weak, how culpable, how dishonourable the other!

BUT let us now examine the particulars of that evidence on which this author has built an hypothesis, so degrading to those characters whom the world has hitherto united to venerate and admire.

THE Abbé de SADE has, in a note at the end of the first volume of his work, given a short-abstract of the arguments which he has drawn from the works of the poet himself; to shew that the LAURA of PETRARCH was a married woman. I shall take them in the order in which they are given*.

“ALMOST all the world,” says he, “has believed that LAURA was unmarried: *Presque tout le monde a cru que LAURE étoit fille*. VELUTELLO lays it down as a proposition absolutely certain. *Per cosa certa habbiamo da tenere che non fosse mai maritata*. Nevertheless,” says he “it is an undoubted truth that she was a married woman. PETRARCH himself expresses it in such a manner as to put it beyond all question.

“*Imò*, In speaking of LAURA, he terms her, in his Latin works, always *mulier* and *fœmina*, and never *virgo* or *puella*; and in his Italian works, always *madonna* or *donna*, and never
“ *vergine*

* IN a small pamphlet, entitled “*An Essay on the Life and Character of PETRARCH*,” written by the author of these Remarks, and printed in 1784, a brief summary is given of the Abbé de SADE’s arguments proving LAURA to be a married woman, to which the answers are in substance much the same with what the reader will find here, though they are now given in a more ample form, and strengthened by additional matter of proof from the writings of PETRARCH.

“ *vergine, donzella*, appellations always applied to unmarried women, and which sound so peculiarly graceful in both languages.

“ 2dò, IN sonnets 10. 162. &c. the poet speaks of the dress of LAURA, of the garlands she wore on her head, of the jewels and pearls with which she braided her hair; and, in sonnets 151. and 158., he mentions the magnificence of her garments. Now, in the age of PETRARCH, the young unmarried women wore neither garlands, nor pearls, nor jewels; they were dressed in a very simple manner, and appeared very little in public.

“ 3tò, IN sonnets 162. and 185. PETRARCH complains, that jealousy often deprived him of the pleasure of seeing LAURA. Some commentators have indeed supposed this to be meant of the jealousy of her parents, watchful over the honour of their daughter: but this is a forced and unnatural construction; for the term jealousy, *gelosia*, has never been applied to the watchful care of parents for the honour of their children.

“ 4tò, PETRARCH, with the intention of celebrating the victory which LAURA had gained over love, composed, after her death, a poem, entitled The Triumph of Chastity, *Trionfo della Castità*. If LAURA had been a virgin, it is clear that he would have entitled his poem *Trionfo della Virginità*. In this poem, too, he would have given LAURA virgins for her attendants, and not married women. Now, those who follow LAURA to the Temple of Chastity, are LUCRETIA, PENELOPE, JUDITH, DIDO, the Greek HIPPO, HERSILIA, &c. all married women. The single exception is a Vestal Virgin.”

THESE, the author of the *Mémoires* acknowledges, after all, amount to nothing more than strong conjectures. Now follows, says he, something more conclusive.

“ 5tò, PETRARCH, in one of his dialogues with St AUGUSTINE, in speaking of LAURA, says, that her body was exhausted by
VOL. V.—P. II. X frequent

“ frequent childbearing; *corpus ejus crebris partibus exhaustum*.
 “ It is true, that the word *partibus* is thus abbreviated in the
 “ manuscript *ptbs*; and, as it was formerly the current opinion
 “ that LAURA was unmarried, those who had the charge of
 “ printing the Latin works of the poet, have thought proper to
 “ interpret the abbreviation *perturbationibus*, and to print it so
 “ in all the editions of those works: But it ought certainly to
 “ be read *partibus*, for these good reasons: *first*, That the epithet
 “ *crebris* means a repetition of acts, and therefore applies better
 “ to acts of childbearing than to passions. If the author had
 “ meant the latter, he would have coupled the noun with *multis*,
 “ instead of *crebris*. But what passions can we suppose to have
 “ exhausted the constitution of the most prudent and modest of
 “ women, who led a life so simple and so uniform? In the *next*
 “ place, Messrs CAPERONNIER, BOUDOT and BEJOT, of the
 “ King’s Library, who must be allowed to be good judges of
 “ the abbreviations that occur in old manuscripts, have de-
 “ cided, that *partibus* is the proper reading.”

SUCH is the whole of that evidence, drawn by the Abbé de SADE from the works of the poet himself in support of this new hypothesis, that LAURA was a married woman. On this evidence, which, it will be allowed, is of itself extremely inconclusive, I shall now make some remarks. I take the author’s arguments in the order in which they stand.

IMÒ, THE words *mulier*, *fœmina*, in Latin, and *donna*, *madonna*, in Italian, are equally applicable to married and to unmarried women. *Mulier* and *fœmina* mark the sex alone, without reference to the state or condition. ISIDORUS, in his *Origines*, l. xi. c. 3. says: “ *Dicitur igitur mulier secundum fœmineum sexum, non*
 “ *secundum corruptionem integritatis; nam EVA statim facta de*
 “ *latere viri, et nondum contacta a viro, Mulier appellata est, di-*
 “ *cente Scripturâ, Et format eam in mulierem.*” Thus too, in the Roman law, where there is the utmost precision in the use of
 terms,

terms, *mulier* and *ſœmina* are indifcriminately applied to unmarried and to married women. In the 17th law of the *Codex de donat. ante nuptias*, the title bears; “*Donatio ante nuptias facta mulieri in minori ætate, non indiget infinuazione,*” &c. FABER, in his *Theſaurus*, obſerves, on the word *mulier*; “*Variè accipitur vox; aliquando enim communiter de ſexu dicitur, et omnem ætatem ac conditionem ejus amplectitur; itaque et de puellis uſurpatur,*” &c.

IN the ſame manner, *donna* and *madonna* are uſed by the Italians, when ſpeaking either of unmarried or of married women. Every Italian poet terms his miſtreſs *donna* and *madonna*. Thus, ARIOSTO, in the beginning of the 35th canto of the *Orlando Furioſo*, ſays,

Che ſalira per me, Madonna, in cielo;

and in his 1ſt elegy,

*Non e affai Madonna meſi e anni
La fra ſpeme e timor ſin qui ſoſpeſa?*

Thus GUARINI, in the *Paſtor Fido*, att. 1.

*La fede in cor di donna, ſe pur fede
In donna alcuna (ch'io no'l ſo) ſi trova, &c.*

and again,

*Bella donna e gentil, ſollecitata
Da numeroſa ſtuol di degni amanti,
Se d'un ſolo e contenta, e gli altri ſprezza
O non e donna, O ſe pur donna, e ſciocca.*

Thus too, BOCCACCIO, in the Introduction to the *Decamerone*:

Gratioſe e nobili donne, meco penſando, &c.

A thousand instances of the same kind might be given, to shew, that this criticism of the author of the *Mémoires* on the words *mulier*, *fæmina*, *donna* and *madonna*, has no solid foundation.

2dò, THE author of the *Mémoires*, when he says that, in the age of PETRARCH, the unmarried women were always simply dressed, and that the use of garlands, of pearls, and of jewels, was peculiar only to such as were married, assumes a fact of which there is no evidence. MURATORI, in his twenty-fifth dissertation on the dress of the middle ages, proves, that in the north of Italy, about the time of PETRARCH, the dress of the women was remarkably splendid; and he makes no distinction between the dress of the married, and of the unmarried women. He quotes a monk, GALVANEUS, who, inveighing against the luxury of the times, says: “ Mulieres similiter in pejus omnia mutaverunt. Ipsæ namque fragulatis vestibus, scopato gutture et collo redimitæ fibulis aureis, gyrovagantur. Sericis et interdum aureis indumentis vestiuntur. Crinibus crispatis more alienigenarum capite perstringuntur. Zonis aureis fupercinctæ, Amazones esse videntur.” MURAT. *Antiq. Ital.* tom. ii. p. 417.—If such was the splendid attire of the women in the north of Italy, the Court at Avignon importing thence both its manners and its fashions, would not, it is probable, be behind their models in dress, as in every other species of luxury. We have the authority of the Abbé de SADE himself for affirming, that, under the pontificate of CLEMENT VI., the dress of the women at the Court of Avignon was splendid and luxurious in the extreme, (*Mém de PET.* tom. ii. p. 92.); and that this affectation had reached even the lower classes, appears from a proclamation, which it was found necessary a short time afterwards to issue, prohibiting the use of gold, silver, ermines or silk, in apparel, to all women, unless the relations of the Pope, the wives and daughters of the Lord Marechal and Lord Vicar, the

the Baroneſſes and the Ladies of Quality of the city *. Now, from the evidence of this document, extending the exception to the *wives* and *daughters* of perſons of a certain rank, we are undoubtedly warranted to infer, that this ſplendour and luxury of dreſs of the ladies of Avignon, was common to both the unmarried and married women. We know for certain that LAURA was a woman of noble blood. Of this the poet informs us in numberleſs paſſages of his writings. Conſidering, therefore, her rank and condition, her dreſs will certainly appear to diſplay no extraordinary magnificence. In the 10th ſonnet, (*Se la mia vita*), the poet ſays no more than that his miſtreſs wore garlands and green clothes †. In the 162d ſonnet, (*L'aura ſerena*), he ſays, that her hair, which formerly ſhe wore looſe, was now braided and adorned with pearls and jewels ‡; a cuſtomy diſtinction of dreſs, as CASTELVETRO remarks, between young girls (*fanciulle*), and grown women. Now, if the remark of the Abbé de SADE be juſt, that this mode of adorning the hair was peculiar to married women, thoſe paſſages which indicate that LAURA adorned her hair in that manner will prove a great deal more than the Abbé intends they ſhould do: for they will demonſtrate that PETRARCH was acquainted with LAURA while

* “ Quod nulla domina, ſeu mulier, cujuſcunque conditionis exiſtat, exceptis dominabus de parentela domini noſtræ Papæ, et uxorum ac filiarum dominorum Mareſchalli et Vicarii, et exceptis etiam dominabus baroniſſis et majoribus in civitate habitantibus, nunc et in futurum auſa ſit portare in aliqua rauba ſeu veſte, aliquem reverſum de ſubtus nec de ſupra, neque in martis variorum, erminiorum, ſeu quarumcunque aliarum pellium, ſeu rerum, ſive de auro, de argento, nec de ſerico.” *Praconiſationes anni 1372.*—*Mém de PET.* tom. 2. p. 92.

† *E laſſar le ghirlande, e i verdi panni.*—

‡ *E le chiome hor avvolte in perle, e'n gemme,
Albora ſciolte, &c.*

while she was unmarried, as they prove, that he had formerly seen her while she wore no ornaments on her head, but appeared with her hair loose, unbraided, and quite unadorned, as the Abbé supposes to have been the fashion of the young unmarried women. Thus, in the 162d sonnet, above quoted, the poet says: "The serenity of the air, and the return of spring, bring
 " to my remembrance the time when I first felt the power of
 " love; when I first beheld that beautiful countenance, and saw
 " those golden locks loosely waving in the wind, which are now
 " braided and adorned with pearls and jewels *." And so likewise, in the 69th sonnet, P. 1. describing the time when he first saw LAURA, he says: "Those golden tresses were then loosely
 " scattered by the wind, which twisted them into a thousand
 " beautiful ringlets:"

*Erano i capei d'oro al'aura sparsi,
 Che 'n mille dolce nodi gli avvolgea.*

If, therefore, as the Abbé de SADE maintains, this braiding and adorning of the hair marked the distinction between the married and unmarried women in the age of PETRARCH, he must admit, on the evidence of those passages where her headdress is so described, that, at the time when the poet was at first acquainted

* *L'aura serena, che fra verdi fronde
 Mormorando a ferir nel volto viemme
 Fammi risovvenir, quand' Amor diemme
 Le prime piaghe, sì dolce e profonde;
 E 'l bel viso veder, ch' altri m'asconde
 Che sdegno e gelosia celato tiemme;
 E le bionde hor avvolte in perle e'n gemme,
 Alhora sciolte, e sovra or tesse bionde:
 Le quali ella spargea sì dolcemente,
 E raccogliea con sì leggiadri modi,
 Che ripensando ancor trema la mente.—*

quainted with LAURA, and became enamoured of her, as she wore her hair in loose ringlets, she was *unmarried*; a circumstance destructive of his whole hypothesis: for LAURA de NOVES was married to HUGH de SADE, as the Abbé has shewn from his own family documents, in 1325; and PETRARCH saw *his* LAURA for the first time in 1327. I shall leave the Abbé to extricate himself from this dilemma the best way he can: for my part I see no possible means of an escape.

BUT the author of the *Mémoires* has, on the subject of the dress of LAURA, either wilfully perverted, or most palpably misunderstood, his authorities. He has quoted sonnets 151. and 158. † in proof of that richness of apparel, which he argues to be characteristical of her being a married woman. The first of these sonnets is a comparison of the poet's mistress to the fabled *phœnix*, which is thus described by PLINY: "Auri fulgore
" circa colla, cætera purpureus, cœruleam roseis caudam pennis
" distinguuntibus." *Nat. Hist.* lib. 10. c. 2.—So PETRARCH, in this sonnet, describes his beautiful Phœnix; her lovely hair *artlessly* floating in ringlets about her neck, and thus forming a natural necklace of gold; her shoulders covered with a purple garment bordered with azure *; thus, in every point resembling the famed Arabian bird. The former part of this description,
which

*Questa Fenice de l'aurata piuma
Al suo bel collo candido, gentile
Forma senz' arte un sì caro monile
Ch' ogni cor addolcisce, e l'mio consuma:
Forma un diadema natural.——
Purpurea vesta d'un ceruleo lembo
Sparsa di rose i belli boveri vela;
Novo habito, e bellezza unica e sola.
Fama nell'odorato, e ricco grembo.
D' Arabi monti lei ripone e cela;
Che per lo nostro ciel sì altera vola.*

† SONNETS 152. and 159. of the Venice edition, 1756.

which applies to the hair, is evidently characteristic of the utmost simplicity of female decoration, and therefore lends no aid to the Abbé's laboured argument. The latter part describes only the colour of the garments of LAURA, and might apply equally to a fine lady, and to a country maiden who wore a crimson cloak with a blue border. As to sonnet 158. which is quoted as proving that LAURA wore garments embroidered with gold and pearls, our author has fallen into a very gross mistake, in giving a literal meaning to what is entirely figurative. The poet is there speaking, not of the dress or garments, but of the personal qualifications and shining accomplishments of his mistress.

*Vedi quant' arte dora, e' mperla e' nnostra
L' habito eletto.—*

This passage CASTELVETRO thus properly interprets: "*Abito* " in questo luogo significa *corpo*, che e come abito e vestimen- " to al' anima, il quale e ornato di maravigliose bellezze e maniere, che egli significa, dicendo, che l'arte lo 'ndora e 'mperla, " e' nnostra, come si farebbe una veste." And such is the interpretation which all the commentators have put on this passage.

3tiò, IN sonnet 162. *, the poet complains, that jealousy had deprived him of the sight of LAURA; and in sonnet 185. † the female companions of LAURA make the same complaint: but in neither of the passages alluded to is there the smallest hint that the jealousy of a husband was here meant. Unless, therefore, the author of the *Mémoires* shall shew, that there can be no jealousy except in the breast of a person who is married, his argument concludes nothing. The word *gelosia*, in Italian, is no more limited in its signification than the English word *jealousy*; both

* *L'aura serena.*

† *Liete, e pensose.*

both meaning the resentment of every species of rivalry. In the first of the sonnets above mentioned, it is most probable that the poet meant that LAURA's own jealousy had frequently deprived him of the happiness of seeing her *. What gives the strongest support to this interpretation, is the association of disdain with jealousy :

*E 'l bel viso ch'altri m'asconde
Che sdegno o gelosia celato tiemme.*

And we know, from some particulars of the life of PETRARCH, that LAURA had sufficient cause both of disdain and jealousy †. It is in this mortifying feature, of an otherwise most virtuous and exemplary character, that we are to seek for the true reason of those changes of deportment which LAURA manifested towards

* ON this passage CASTELVETRO thus remarks : “ Si potrebbe intendere di LAURA che, sdegnata col PETRARCA, gli nascondesse il viso : O, perche fosse innamorata di se stessa, avesse gelosia che il PETRARCA la vedesse :

*Se forse ogni suo gioia
Nel suo bel viso è solo,
E di tull' altro è schiva.* Canz. 13.

Ma meglio è d'intendere de' parenti,

*Dogliose per sua dolce compagnia
La qual ne toglie invidia e gelosia.—* Son. 185.”

† WE learn from his familiar letters, that his passion for LAURA had not restrained him from the indulgence of a meaner amour, with a woman of low manners and of a disagreeable temper ; a passion, of course, in which the heart had no share ; and that, in consequence of this connection, which was even of some years duration, and was a source to him of much disquiet, he had a natural son and daughter ; of the former of whom we find frequent mention made in the course of those letters.

towards her lover, those alternate marks of favour and of cold reserve, and that tedious protraction of the final reward of a passion, unexampled in its ardour and duration.

IN the 185th sonnet, where the female companions of LAURA complain that envy or jealousy had deprived them of her company, the expression may be meant either of her own jealousy, as in the former instance, or more probably, in this place, of the jealousy of her parents. “*Resata in casa per invidia o gelosia de parenti,*” says CASTELVETRO: and the same author remarking that some have suspected from this passage that LAURA was a married woman, acutely observes, that the context plainly indicates that the expression will not admit of that construction: Her companions lament, that they are deprived of her company by that envy or jealousy which repines at the happiness of another, as if it were its own misfortune:

*Dogliose per sua dolce compagna
La qual ne toglie invidia e gelosia
Che d'altrui ben, quasi suo mal, si dole.*

“The man who is truly jealous,” he well observes, “cannot be said to repine at the happiness of another, *as if it were* his own misfortune; for, in reality, *it is* his own misfortune.”

4^{to}, THE author of the *Mémoires* is equally ill-founded in the argument he endeavours to draw from the title of the *Trionfo della Castita*, as in most of his other critical remarks. *Castita* in Italian, *castitas* in Latin, and *chastity* in English, are equally applicable to a virgin as to a married woman. DIANA is celebrated for her chastity as well as PENELOPE. Some of the Doctors have even limited the application of the term *Chastity* to such as are unmarried. “*Castus et continens,*” says AQUINAS, “*sic differunt, quod castus dicitur ante nuptias, continens verò post eas.*”

BUT,

BUT, says the Abbé de SADE, had LAURA been a virgin, the poet would, in this composition, have given her virgins for her attendants, and not married women. Those who follow her to the Temple of Chastity, says he, are all married women, with the exception of a *Vestal Virgin*. Here our author is guilty of a gross misrepresentation. In the poem of the *Trionfo della Castità*, PETRARCH, so far from citing examples only of married women, as LUCRETIA, PENELOPE, &c. says :

*Io non porria le sacre benedette
Vergini cb' ivi fur chiuder' in rima.—*

“ I could not comprehend in rhyme all the sacred virgins that
“ were present :” and he enumerates the nine muses,

—CALLIOPE e CLIO con l' altre sette *;—

together with VIRGINIA and the Vestal TUCCIA. We have here an
Y 2 example

* I AM well aware of the doubt that has been entertained by certain grave and learned authors, with regard to the *virginity* of the Muses. As to CALLIOPE, indeed, the matter was past a doubt ; for her amour with ŒAGRUS, king of Theffaly, was proclaimed by the birth of a son, who made sufficient noise in the world, the famous ORPHEUS ; and therefore BUCHANAN has very guardedly expressed himself, with respect to her, in his epigram :

*CALLIOPE longum cœlebs cur vixit in ævum ?
Nempè, nihil doti quod numeraret, erat.*

For this lady, though a mother, was certainly *cœlebs*, or unmarried ; and this is quite sufficient to refute our author's assertion that the poet had here given LAURA an attendance only of married women. As to the other Muses, whatever may have been their failings in private, (and every one of them has suffered from the breath of scandal ; see *Menagiana*, t. 2.), their state of *celibacy* is authenticated beyond all question ; and I must in conscience believe, that PETRARCH had never heard any of those curious and secret anecdotes of the lives of those ladies, which the penetrating re-
search

example of unpardonable disingenuity in our Abbé, which, occurring in an instance of easy detection, must justly render suspicious many of those authorities which he pretends to have drawn from private sources, such as the archives of his own and other families, where it is impossible for others to follow him, and investigate the truth of his information.

BEFORE I leave this argument I must observe, that, by adopting our author's own mode of reasoning, the works of the poet will furnish us with similar evidence, directly destructive of his hypothesis. If the state of LAURA, whether married or unmarried, is to be determined from that of her companions or attendants, we find, in many other passages of the poetical works of PETRARCH, that he assigns to her an attendance of virgins. Thus, in the 11th eclogue, in which the companions of LAURA lament her death, under the name of GALATEA, one of them says :

*Addam perpetuos celebret quos mundus honores ;
Virgineos addam cœtus, ritusque vèrendos.*

And in the 3d eclogue, employing his favourite allusion, the verdant Laurel, under which he always figures his mistress, he says :

*Purpurea in ripa, Laurique virentis ad umbram,
Virgineam aspicio, cœlo plaudente choream.—*

5th, THE last of the arguments advanced by the author of the *Mémoires*, which he gives as in a manner conclusive on this point, is that which is drawn from the dialogue with St AUGUSTINE, and consists in the interpretation given to the contracted

search and deep erudition of modern authors has brought to light, otherwise he would not have made them the attendants of his LAURA, married or unmarried, to the Temple of Chastity.

tracted word *ptbs*, which is found in some manuscripts of the works of PETRARCH. Our author having frankly enough acknowledged that all the preceding arguments amount only to conjectures, (*ce ne sont là après tout, que de très fortes conjectures,*) might certainly have included the last with equal propriety under the same denomination. His interpretation of the word *ptbs* is evidently nothing more than conjecture; to support which we have only his own opinion, and, as he says, that of Messieurs CAPPERONIER, BOUDOT and BEJOT of the King's Library; although, among the *Pièces justificatives*, we find only the certificate of one of those gentlemen (CAPPERONIER) to that effect; and this expressed with such obscurity and confusion of idea, that we cannot tell what are the characters in the two manuscripts he mentions*. But one thing is plain; before we can admit any conjectural interpretation of this contraction, the Abbé de SADE must prove, that the two manuscripts which bear this contracted word are the oldest of all the manuscripts of the writings of PETRARCH, otherwise his argument concludes nothing; for, if the more ancient manuscripts have the word
at

* " CERTIFICAT de Monsieur CAPPERONIER, Garde de la Bibliothèque du Roi.

" JE soussigné, Garde de la Bibliothèque du Roi, certifie, que dans le manuscrit du Roi, cotté 6502, contenant un ouvrage de PETRARQUE, intitulé, "*De conflictu curarum propriarum, ad AUGUSTINUM,*" fol. 13. cot. 1. on lit, et qu'on doit lire : "*Et corpus illud egregium morbis ac crebris partibus exhaustum multum pristini vigoris amisit;*" lesquels mots se trouvent encore dans le manuscrit cotté 6728. cod. 19. pag. 1. où ils doivent être lus de la même manière. En foi de quoi, j'ai signé le present certificat, en l'hôtel de la Bibliothèque du Roi, ce 16 Juin 1762.

CAPPERONIER."

It does not appear from this certificate that the two manuscripts mentioned bear any contraction of this word at all; yet these are certainly the manuscripts to which the Abbé de SADE here refers as bearing *ptbs*. When M. CAPPERONIER, therefore, declares, *on lit, et on doit lire*, so and so, the expression is as obscure and inaccurate, as the decision is dogmatical and presumptuous.

at full length, *perturbationibus*, the abbreviation in the later manuscripts must be explained in that manner alone. Now, the Abbé has not taken upon him to maintain, that those two which bear the contraction *ptbs* are the most ancient of all the manuscripts; and his silence on that material point is a presumption of his knowledge to the contrary. But, even were we to allow that those two manuscripts were actually proved to be the most ancient, let us see what could thence be concluded. All the other manuscripts, which we shall suppose were copied from those two most ancient ones, and all the editions of the printed works, have interpreted this contracted word, and written it at full length, not *partubus*, as M. de SADE would have it read, but *perturbationibus*. Now, it will not certainly be denied that the writers of those old manuscripts, and the editors of the oldest printed editions, of the former of whom many were probably cotemporary with the author, and of the latter all lived at no great distance of time from his age, were much better able to read and to interpret the abbreviations of the oldest manuscripts, than those critics who have examined them at the distance of four hundred years from the time when they were written. Even admitting, therefore, that the Abbé had proved his two favourite manuscripts to be the most ancient of all extant, and that the question were simply, What is the most natural interpretation to be given to this contraction? we have, in opposition to his opinion, and that of his friends of the King's Library, the direct authority of all the other manuscripts of the works of PETRARCH, and all the printed editions, that the word ought to be read not *partubus* but *perturbationibus*.

BUT I shall make the author of the *Mémoires* a still more important concession; and I shall even put the case, that instead of *two* manuscripts, perhaps out of two hundred, which read the word contracted thus *ptbs*, while the rest have it at full length *perturbationibus*, the whole existing manuscripts of the author's works had

borne

borne the word thus contracted; and that the question were, Whether it ought to be explained *partubus* or *perturbationibus*? This question, it must be allowed, would be best resolved by considering the sense of the context. Let us now, therefore, see what is thence to be drawn. PETRARCH, in the dialogue in question, feigns a conversation between himself and St AUGUSTINE, in which the latter is endeavouring to convince him of the impropriety of abandoning himself to the influence of a passion, whose imperious power had enslaved to itself, and rendered subordinate, every feeling of his nature. Among other arguments, he urges the folly of setting his whole affection on an object of which death might so soon deprive him. PETRARCH answers, that he hopes he shall never live to see that day; and observes, that, in the course of nature, LAURA being the younger, ought to survive him. To this St AUGUSTINE replies, that such an event is nevertheless the most probable: “*quod corpus illud egregium morbis ac crebris pibis exhaustum multum pristini vigoris amisit.*” Whether ought we, along with all the editors of the printed works of PETRARCH, to explain this contraction by *perturbationibus*, frequent disquietude or conflicts of mind; or, with the Abbé de SADE, to suppose it to mean *partubus* or child-bearing? The answer immediately made by PETRARCH, must resolve the doubt. “It is probable,” says St AUGUSTINE, “that LAURA, though the younger of the two, will soonest be the victim of death; for her constitution, by much sickness, as well as ^{mental inquietude,} ^{child-bearing,} has lost a great deal of its former vigour.”—“I too,” says PETRARCH, “have had my share of mental inquietude, and that more severe than hers, and I am considerably more advanced in life: *Ego quoque et curis gravior, et ætate provectior factus sum.*” If we admit the common reading, the reply is rational and consonant: “I have suffered from the same cause, and more than she has:” If we adopt the interpretation

pretation of the Abbé de SADE, the reply is equally absurd and impertinent to the observation that precedes it.

WITH regard to the critical decision pronounced by the Abbé on the meaning of the word *creber*, viz. that it imports a repetition of *acts*, and that it cannot with propriety be applied to *passions*; it had certainly been proper that he had supported this judgment either by some authorities of professed grammarians, or examples from classical writers. He has done neither; and that for the best of reasons: he had none to produce. *Creber*, as we find from the best authorities, is used precisely in the sense of *frequens* or *assiduus*; and is therefore, with perfect propriety, applied as well to passions as to acts. He observes, that had *perturbationibus* been the proper reading, the author would have coupled it with *multis*, and not with *crebris*; a remark betraying ignorance of grammatical precision: for who is there that needs to be told that *multus*, applying to number, can with no propriety be employed to denote frequency of repetition?

BUT the author of the *Mémoires* asks, What passions we can suppose to have exhausted the constitution of the most *prudent* and *modest* of women, who led a life so *simple* and so *uniform*? To this I answer by another question: How can we, ignorant as we are of the private and domestic history of this lady, pretend to say what causes she might, or might not have had, of anguish and disquiet? How many women of prudence and of modesty are, from unavoidable circumstances of situation, the victims of mental inquietude; and experience, even in a life of the utmost privacy and retirement, the keenest anguish, from the turbulent passions, the malice or the caprice, of those with whom they are connected.

I HAVE now, as I trust, impartially canvassed the whole of those arguments drawn by the author of the *Mémoires* from the
works

works of PETRARCH himself, or what may be termed the intrinsic evidence in support of the material part of his hypothesis, namely, that LAURA was a married woman; nor do I think I presume too much when I say, that I have shewn their absolute insufficiency to prove that proposition. The question might therefore be safely left here; in the confidence, that an hypothesis which is newly brought forward * in opposition to long established belief, and the concurring assent, for ages, of all who have been conversant with the matter of inquiry, and which is shewn to rest on no basis, either of historical evidence or of sound reasoning, does not require the confutation of opposite proof to lay it in the dust: But, as I have already had occasion incidentally to produce some of those testimonies from the works of the poet himself, which tend most positively to disprove this hypothesis, and an abundance of matter of similar import must offer itself to all who have examined those works with any attention, I am prompted to draw yet a little more from this stock of the internal evidence, before I take my leave of the subject.

Imò. PETRARCH has composed 318 sonnets, 49 *canzoni* or songs, and 6 *trionfi*; a large volume of poetry, entirely on the subject of his passion for LAURA; not to mention a variety of passages in his prose works, where that favourite topic is occasionally treated, and even discussed at very great length. In the

VOL. V.—P. II.,

Z

whole

* THIS hypothesis may certainly be termed a new one; since, although TASSONI, and some of the commentators on the Sonnets of PETRARCH have, in their observations on certain passages which the Abbé de SADE produces as proofs of his theory, remarked, that a suspicion might thence arise that LAURA was a married woman, none of them have ventured to affirm (as our author) for certain, that she was so. On the contrary, VELUTELLO's conclusion, after confessing the very imperfect information which could be collected relative to the family, state and condition of LAURA, is: "*Per cosa certa habbiamo da tenere ch' ella non fosse mai mari-tata.*"—"We must hold it for a point absolutely certain, that she was never married."

whole of those works, there is not to be found a *single passage*, which intimates that LAURA was a married woman. Is it to be conceived that the poet, who has exhausted language itself in saying every thing possible of his mistress; who mentions not only her looks, her dress, her gestures, her conversations; but her companions, her favourite walks and her domestic occupations, would have omitted such capital facts, as her being married, and the mother of many children; married too, as the author of the *Mémoires* asserts, to a man who was jealous of her, and who used her with harshness and unkindness on PETRARCH'S account?

2dò. WOULD this harsh and jealous husband have permitted this avowed admirer of his wife, this importunate gallant, who followed her as her shadow wherever she went, and attended her in town and in the country, to see her daily, and converse with her alone, to write to her, to make assignations with her, and to send her presents as tokens of his attachment? Yet, that PETRARCH enjoyed all these liberties, is evident from numberless passages of his works*. That the poet and his mistress were wont even to walk together in the public gardens, is evident from the incident alluded to in the 208th sonnet, *Due rose fresche*: A friend, who met them together in a garden, taking them both by the hand, presented each with a rose, declaring, at the same time, that the sun never shone on a truer pair of lovers. And that their passion was the common discourse

* SON. 41. *Perch' io t' habbia.* Son. 59. *Quando giunse.* Canz. 14. *Perchè quel.* Canz. 15. *Volgendo gli occhi.* Son. 49. *Se voi poteste.* Canz. 12. *Perch' al viso.* Canz. 4. *Nel dolce tempo.* Son. 19. *Mille fiate.* Canz. 8. *Sì è debile.* *Trionf. di Morte*, cap. 2. &c. &c. In the 42d sonnet, (*Se col cieco desir*), PETRARCH complains that LAURA had failed to keep an appointment that she had made with him, and in which, he had flattered himself, he was to be indulged in freely declaring his passion.

discourse of the public, appears from many passages, where the poet dwells on that circumstance as a matter of regret :

—— *Sì come al popol tutto*
Favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
Di me medesimo meco mi vergogno. — Son. I.

3th. PETRARCH, in the 200th sonnet, (*Real natura*)*, records the following remarkable anecdote. At a brilliant assembly and festival, given on occasion of the arrival of a foreign prince at Avignon, LAURA was present, along with the most distinguished ladies of the place. This prince, whom the poet celebrates as a most amiable and accomplished character, curious to see a lady of whom the compositions of PETRARCH had given him so high an idea, eagerly sought her out amidst the crowd, and soon discovered her by her superior beauty and the gracefulness of her demeanour. Approaching her with an air of gentleness united with dignity, and making a sign to the ladies who surrounded her to stand a little apart, he took her by

Z 2

the

* *Real natura, angelico intelletto,*
Chiar' alma, pronta vista, occhio cerviero,
Provvidenza veloce, alto pensiero,
E veramente degno di quel petto ;
Sendo di donne un bel numero eletto
Per adornar il dì festo ed altero,
Subito scorse il buon giudicio intero
Fra tanti, e sì bei volti il più perfetto ;
L' altre maggior di tempo, o di fortuna
Trarsi in disparte comandò con mano,
E caramente accolse a sè quell' una :
Gli occhi, e la fronte con sembiante umano.
Bacciolle sì, che rallegro ciascuna :
Me empìe d' invidia l' atto dolce e strano.

the hand, and (after the fashion of his country) saluted her, by kissing her forehead and her eyes: a mark of regard, says the poet, which was approved of by all the ladies who were present, but which he himself beheld with envy. The commentators are not agreed as to the prince of whom this anecdote is recorded. M. de la BASTIE is of opinion that it was ROBERT, King of Naples, who is known to have distinguished PETRARCH by many marks of friendship and beneficence, and whom the poet has, in various parts of his writings, celebrated with the highest eulogy: and this is likewise the opinion of BEMBO, DANIEL, and others. The Abbé de SADE, on the other hand, has adduced some strong arguments to shew, that the prince here alluded to was CHARLES of Luxembourg, son of JOHN, king of Bohemia. The dispute, as to the persons, is of no consequence; the anecdote must be admitted as true, and it has ever been regarded as highly honourable both for the poet and his mistress. In that light we are assured it was considered by the ladies who were present; and, as it is no part of the female character, to view with complacency an unmerited preference shewn to a rival in beauty or accomplishments, we must hold this as an unequivocal proof, that they considered this flattering mark of distinction as deservedly bestowed, and, of course, that they regarded the attachment of PETRARCH and of LAURA as an honourable and virtuous flame. Now, let it be supposed, with the Abbé de SADE, that this lady, thus highly distinguished as the object of the poet's passion, had been the wife of a man of rank and character, the mother of a family, is it possible to believe that this foreign prince, who is described as a paragon in every courtly accomplishment, should have thus openly braved every law of decency and of propriety, and, in a full assembly (met to do him honour) have insulted, not only the husband of this lady, but every woman of honour or of virtuous character

racter who was present? Is it to be conceived, that the husband of this lady, strongly impressed with the feelings of jealousy on the score of this ardent attachment, as this author himself represents him to have been; and who, in all probability must himself have witnessed the incident here recorded, should have silently and tamely submitted to this gross affront? Is it possible to figure, that the whole assembly should have crowned with their approbation this glaring indignity and violation of decorum?

4th. WOULD this jealous husband have not only patiently witnessed the mutual expressions of this ardent passion for the space of twenty-one years, that his wife was alive; but have complaisantly permitted her gallant, or a friend under his character, to embalm the memory of his mistress by a rapturous love-elegy, to be inclosed in her coffin; the last insult which the honour of a husband could sustain? Yet this, we must believe, if we adopt the hypothesis of the Abbé de SADE: For, if the story of the leaden casket has any truth in it at all, (and its supposed truth is the main prop of that hypothesis), this elegy or sonnet must have been written, either by PETRARCH himself, or by a friend assuming his character.

5th. AN amour of this kind, with a married woman, the mother of a numerous family, under whatever colours this reverend author, in the laxity of the morals of his country may choose to palliate and disguise it, was in itself an offence both against religion and morality, and must have been viewed by the poet himself in a criminal light. But the general morals of PETRARCH were exemplary, his virtue was even of a rigid cast; and, if at any time he was overpowered by the weakness of humanity, his mind, naturally of an ingenuous frame, suffered the keenest contrition, and prompted to an ample atonement, by a sincere avowal of his fault. In this light, however, he never
considers

confiders his passion for LAURA. On the contrary, it appears to have been his glory and pride, and to have exalted him equally in his own esteem and in that of others.

Anima——

*Da lei ti vien l'amoroso pensiero,
Che mentre 'l segui al sommo ben t' invia,
Poco prezzando quel ch' ogni huom desia :
Da lei vien l'animosa leggiadria,
Ch' al ciel ti scorge per destro sentero ;
Si ch' i vo già de la speranza altero. Son. 12.*

Hence has my soul her noblest aims deriv'd,
From that pure flame ; hence rais'd her thoughts on high,
Indignant, spurning what the vulgar train
Of earth-born spirits prize. O best of guides,
That cheer'd with hopes, that proudly lift the soul,
And point the path to heaven !———

“ In amore meo,” says PETRARCH, in his dialogue with St AUGUSTINE, “ nil turpe, nil obscœnum, nil denique præter magnitudinem culpabilis.” *Dial. de contemptu mundi.* “ Illa juvenilem animum ab omni turpetudine revocavit, uncoque retraxit, atque alta compulit spectare.” *Ibid.* “ Amore acerrimo, sed unico et honesto, in adolescentia laboravi, et diutius laborâssem, nisi jam tepescentem ignem mors acerba, sed utilis, extinxisset.” *Epist. ad post.*

To any person who is acquainted with the writings of PETRARCH, and especially with those which were composed after the death of LAURA, it must appear the most bigotted perversion of ideas, to maintain that they are consistent with the notion of his cherishing a passion for a married woman. I shall here translate a few passages from those latter poems.

IN

IN the 289th sonnet, or the 61st of the second part, written after the death of LAURA, we find these strong expressions :

*S' honesto amor, può meritar mercede **, &c.

“ If honourable and virtuous love e’er merited a reward, and
 “ if compassion can aught avail, I shall obtain the recompence
 “ of a constancy of affection, which, towards that dear object,
 “ and in the eyes of the world, was as pure as the light of
 “ heaven. Formerly she mistrusted that affection, and was un-
 “ certain of the end and object of my passion. Now she sees
 “ my heart and inmost soul; and thence I trust that in heaven
 “ she now compassionates my sufferings: for oft I behold her
 “ in my dreams, regarding me with looks full of tenderness and
 “ pity; and I fondly hope, that when I too shall have laid aside
 “ this garb of mortality, she will welcome me to those blest a-
 “ bodes, where all true followers of CHRIST, and friends to virtue,
 “ shall dwell for ever in happiness.” Can any person who reads
 this remarkable passage, believe that the love of PETRARCH was
 a criminal and adulterous affection? If he still hesitates on that
 point,

* *S' honesto amor può meritar mercede :*
E se pietà anchor può quant' ella suole,
Mercede havrò ; che più chiara che 'l sole,
A madonna ed al mondo è la mia fede.
Già di me paventosa, hor sa, nol crede,
Che quello stesso, ch' or per me si vuole,
Sempre si volse ; e s' ella udia parole,
O vedea 'l volto, hor l' animo, e 'l cor vede.
Ond' i' spero che 'n fin al ciel si doglia
Di miei tanti sospiri ; e cost mostra
Tornando a me sì piena di pietate :
E spero ch' al por giù di questa spoglia
Venga per me con quella gente nostra
Vera amica di CRISTO, e d' honestate.

point, let him read the following striking apostrophe in sonnet 302.:

*Donna, che lieta **, &c.

“ O Lady, that now standest in the presence of God ; as, sure
 “ thy spotless life has well deserved that place ! O matchless pa-
 “ ragon of all that is excellent in woman ! Now, with the eyes
 “ of Him who sees all things, thou beholdest my faithful love,
 “ my pure and virtuous affection ; and thou seest, that towards
 “ thee my heart felt the same emotions while thou wert on
 “ earth, as now in heaven. O, that, in reward of all my length-
 “ ened sufferings, I soon may join thee there !”

IN the end of sonnet 303., immediately following, he thus expresses himself :

Sol un conforto †, &c.

“ My only comfort is, that she who sees my thoughts, may ob-
 “ tain for me that mercy that I may soon be with her.”

So,

** Donna, che lieta col principio nostro
 Ti stai come tua vita alma richiede,
 Assisa in alta e gloriosa sede.—
 O delle donne altero e raro mostro,
 Hor nel volto di lui che tutto vede,
 Vedi 'l mio amore, e quella pura fede.—
 E senti, che ver te il mio core in terra
 Tal fu, qual hora in cielo.—
 Dunque per ammendar la lunga guerra,
 Per cui dal mondo a te sola mi volsi,
 Prega, ch' io venga tosto a star con voi.*

*† Sol'un conforto a le mie pene aspetto.
 Ch' ella che vede tutti i miei pensieri
 M' impetre gratia ch' i' possa esser seco.*

So, likewise, in the next sonnet, 304. *.

“ O happy day, when, issuing from this earthly prison, and
 “ throwing off the spoils of mortality, bursting from this cloud
 “ of darkness into the splendour of eternal day, I see at once
 “ my God, and the dear object of my love !”

IN his hymn to the Virgin, with which he concludes his sonnets, and which is, perhaps, the most perfect of his compositions, where he confesses all the errors and weaknesses of his life ; and when, from the nature of the subject, he must have deemed it nothing less than impiety to have uttered a falsehood, or even to have palliated or extenuated a crime, he takes merit to himself, in the sight of heaven, for his passion for LAURA ; and thus reasons with the Blessed Virgin, appealing to that clemency which he supposes her peculiar characteristic † :

“ O Blessed Virgin, paragon of clemency and humanity,
 “ let the example of the Almighty Being incite thee to shew
 “ mercy to an humble contrite heart ; and if with such strength
 “ and ardour of affection I have been capable of loving a frail
 “ mortal, what mayst thou not conclude must be my devotion
 “ towards.

* *O felice quel dì, che del terreno
 Carcere uscendo, lasci rotta e sparta,
 Questa mia grave, e frale, è mortal gonna.—
 E da sì folte tenebre mi parta,
 Voltando tanto su nel bel sereno,
 Ch'io veggia il mio SIGNORE, e là mia Donna.*

† *Vergine umana, e nemica d' orgoglio,
 Del commune principio amor t' induca ;
 Miserere d' un cor contrito umile ;
 Che se poca mortal terra caduca
 Amar con sì mirabil fede soglio,
 Che dovrò far di te cosa gentile !—* Canz. 8. Part. 2.

“ towards Thee, the bright example of all excellence !” In perfect union with these sentiments of the poet himself, is that beautiful sonnet, which BOCCACCIO, recently after the death of PETRARCH, composed in memory of his departed friend. It is formed on that favourite thought, which is most natural to the soul on the near prospect of death :

*Or se' salito, caro Signor mio,
Nel regno al qual salir ancora aspetta
Ogni anima da Dio a quello eletta,
Nel suo partir di questo mondo rio.
Or se' cola dove spesso il desio
Ti tirò già per vedere LAURETTA ;
Or se' dove la mia bella FIAMMETTA
Siede con lei nel cospetto di Dio.
Or con SENUCCIO, e con CINO, e con DANTE,
Vivi sicuro d' eterna riposo,
Mirando cose da noi non intese.
Deb ! s' aggrado ti fui nel mondo errante,
Tirami dietro a te, dove gioioso
Vegga colei che pria d' amor m' accese.*

“ Now art thou gone, my dear master, to those blissful seats,
“ to which all the spirits of the just, the elect of GOD aspire,
“ when freed from this abode of guilt. Now hast thou attain-
“ ed that heavenly region, which thy longing desire to see thy
“ departed LAURA had made the object of thy most earnest
“ wishes ; where my lovely FIAMMETTA sits, along with her, in
“ the presence of GOD. Now, with SENUCCIO, with CINO, and
“ with DANTE, thou livest in the blissful assurance of eternal
“ rest ; and delightest in the contemplation of those things
“ which surpass our weak understanding. Oh ! if I was ever
“ dear to thee while in this fleeting scene of existence, draw me
“ now to thyself, where once more I may be happy in the sight
“ of her who was my first, my only love !”

6^{to}. IN the dialogue above quoted, (*De contemptu mundi*, *Dial.* 3.), where St AUGUSTINE is introduced reasoning with the poet, and endeavouring to convince him of the errors of his past life, and particularly to dissuade him from the indulgence of his passion for LAURA, to which he was as much a slave after her death as he had been during her life, the holy father makes use of every argument that can be drawn both from religion and morality: Would he have omitted the strongest of all arguments? Would he have forgotten to urge that LAURA was the wife of another; and, consequently, that his passion was a crime both in the sight of God and man? Yet, to this purpose, there is not a single word in the whole of that various and labour-ed argument.

7^{mo}. IT will be in vain for a disciple of this new hypothesis to attempt its justification, upon the principle that the love of PETRARCH, being entirely of a refined and Platonic nature, might innocently have for its object a married woman, and the mother of a family. The author of the *Mémoires* himself abandons that ground of argument*, which, indeed, cannot be maintained in any consistency with those sentiments which the poet himself has avowed in many parts of his works. The love of PETRARCH was no otherwise distinguished from an ordinary passion than by its fervency and duration. He felt for LAURA the same emotions, which an ardent but honourable lover feels for a most beautiful, amiable and accomplished mistress. He admired the graces of her mind, he revered her virtues, and he was enamoured of the beauties of her person. He owns, that he passionately desired the reward of his love in the possession of this treasure. The poet, who expresses himself thus rapturously in the language of ordinary human love, must abandon all pretensions to a Platonic affection:

A a 2

Con

* *Mémoires pour la Vie de PETRARQUE*, vol. i. note 21.

*Con lei foss' io **, &c.

“ Would that I were with her but a single night, alone, in darkness, where only the stars should behold us ; and might that night last for ever ! Might she never assume a borrowed shape, (like DAPHNE), to escape from my arms ! ”

Deb bor foss' io con vago de la LUNA†, &c.

“ Ah that I were along with ENDYMION, the beloved of LUNA, laid to rest in some green wood ; and that she who consumes my fleeting days were there alone with me, or attended only by love, for one single night ! But might the sun remain for ever beneath the waves ! ”

So in the 58th sonnet,

PIGMALION, *quanto lodar ti dei ‡*, &c.

“ How much, O PIGMALION, hadst thou reason to be content
“ with

* *Con lei foss' io da che si parte il sole !
E non ci vedess' altri, che le stelle,
Sol una notte ; e mai non fosse l' alba,
E non si trasformasse in verde selva
Per uscirmi di braccio.——Canz. 3. A qualunque, &c.*

† *Deb bor foss' io con vago de la LUNA
Addormentato in qualche verdi boschi
E questa cb' anzi vespro a me fa sera
Con essa, e con amor in quella spiaggia
Sola venisse a stars' ivi una notte !
E' l di sì stessè, e 'l sol sempre ne l' onde !*

Sest. 7. Part. 1. *Non ha, &c.*

‡ *PIGMALION, quanto lodar ti dei
Dell' imagine tua, se mille volte
N' avessi quel cb'io sol una vorrei.*

“ with thy image, who enjoyedst a thousand times those delights, which O that I but could once taste *”

THESE passages leave no room for the supposition of that refined and Platonic affection, which it is pretended a virtuous young man may, without blame, indulge for the wife of another. I enter not into the question, how far even a theory of this kind is reconcilable to strict morality, or whether that species of continued attention, that marked esteem and preference, which at least must be rewarded by a corresponding sympathy and regard for the person who expresses them, is materially less injurious to the sacred bond of conjugal affection, than a plan of seduction pursued from its ordinary motives. A moralist might perhaps decide, that where the effect of both is the same, the alienation of the affections of a wife; the garb of virtue and of decency, assumed by the former, is only a higher aggravation of its criminality. But the discussion of this question is superfluous, where the supposition of a Platonic love cannot, as we have seen, be admitted.

8vò. *Lastly*, As the love of PETRARCH for LAURA was an honourable and virtuous passion, so the works of the poet afford sufficient evidence, that he ardently desired to be united to LAURA in marriage, and was even in the near prospect of that happiness :

*Amor con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci !
E se non ch' al desio cresce la speme ;
I' cadrei morto, ove più viver bramo.* Son. 64.

Già

* It is amusing to observe, how even this passage has been strained to admit of an interpretation suited to that Platonic affection which some of his commentators have wished to ascribe to the poet. The pleasures, say they, which PETRARCH here expressed his desire of enjoying, were those which would arise on finding the picture of LAURA endowed, like PIGMALION's ivory image, with speech and understanding. But they own, at the same time, that, as PIGMALION's enjoyments are generally believed to have been less refined, the poet has chosen an unlucky allusion ; and that the obvious sense of the passage is *rien moins que Platonique*.

*Già incominciava a prender securtade
 La mia cara nemica a poco a poco
 De' suoi sospetti ; e rivolgeva in gioco
 Mie pene acerbe, sua dolce honestade :
 Presto era 'l tempo dov' amor si scontra
 Con castitate ; e a gli amanti è dato
 Sederse insieme, e dir che lor' incontra. Son. 47. Part. 2.*

*Tempo era homai da trovar pace o tregua
 Di tanta guerra ; ed erane in via forse. Son. 48. Part. 2.*

*Tranquillo porto avea mostrato amore
 A la mia lunga e torbida tempesta.—
 Già traluceva a' begli occhi 'l mio core,
 E l' alta fede non più lor molesta.
 Abi morte ria, come a schiantar se' presta
 Il frutto di molt' anni in sì poche hore ! Son. 49. Part. 2.*

IN supplement of these authorities from the sonnets of PETRARCH, may be added that report which was current at the time, or at least among the earliest writers who have given any account of the poet's life, namely, that the Pope, who held PETRARCH in the highest estimation, and to whom he was indebted for several valuable ecclesiastical preferments, was extremely solicitous that he should be united in marriage to LAURA, and offered to give him, in that event, a dispensation for retaining his church-benefices. If the story is true, the Pope of whom it is recorded must have been CLEMENT VI., as he is the only one of the Pontiffs, who were PETRARCH's cotemporaries, to whom these characteristics could apply. M. FLEURY, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, is certainly mistaken when he attributes the proposition here mentioned to BENEDICT XII. the predecessor of CLEMENT ; for PETRARCH owed no favour to that Pontiff, whom he has satirized in many parts of his writings, as a
 man

man of barbarous dispositions, mean and fordid propensities, and whose gross ignorance disgraced the high station which he occupied. The anecdote is mentioned by SQUARZAFICHI; as it is likewise by one of the oldest editors of the poems of PETRARCH, in the preface to the Venice edition 1473: though the latter author erroneously names the Pope URBAN V. who did not ascend the papal chair till some years after the death of LAURA. This uncertainty with regard to the person is not, however, sufficient to discredit the fact itself, that the Pope, whoever he was, might, from favour to PETRARCH, have earnestly desired to see him united to the object of his passion.

THE clerical character of PETRARCH ought not to be considered as affording any objection to the supposition, that he ardently wished to be united to LAURA in marriage. Though enjoying ecclesiastical preferments, he had never accepted of any charge which conferred a care of souls. He had frequently been solicited with earnestness to accept of a bishopric; but constantly refused it, either from a sense of his own demerits, when weighed against the qualities he thought requisite for that sacred character, or, more probably, (as he himself indeed hints), from a desire to preserve his liberty, and follow, without restraint, that course of life which he found most congenial to his taste. It is probable, therefore, that his views with respect to LAURA had their influence on this determination; since he was thus at liberty, merely by the sacrifice of some slender pecuniary emoluments, to change his condition at any time he might think proper. Examples of this kind were at that time extremely common; and the story above related, if true, is a proof that the Sovereign Pontiffs were even in use to dispense with the resignation of benefices to their particular favourites in those circumstances.

BUT, whatever weight we may be inclined to give to this anecdote, it is, on the whole, sufficient to our purpose, if while, on the one hand, we have shewn that there is not the smallest
solidity

solidity in all that elaborate fabric of argument, which has been brought to prove that LAURA was a married woman, we have proved, on the other, from the whole tenor of the writings of PETRARCH, the only evidence that applies to the matter, that his affection for LAURA was *an honourable and virtuous flame*. On this subject the reflection of M. de la BASTIE is equally beautiful, as a sentiment of morality, and just, as an observation on human nature: “ *Il n’y a que la vertu seule qui soit capable de faire des impressions que la mort n’efface pas.*”