

made on his mind by the charming Valley of Vaucluse, after death had robbed him of Laura; the smaller poems of Boiardo, the friend of Hercules d'Este; and, more recently, the stanzas of Vittoria Colonna.*

When classical literature acquired a more generally-diffused vigor by the intercourse suddenly opened with the politically degenerated Greeks, we meet with the earliest evidence of this better spirit in the works of Cardinal Bembo, the friend and counselor of Raphael, and the patron of art; for in the *Ætna Dialogus*, written in the youth of the author, there is a charming and vivid sketch of the geographical distribution of the plants growing on the declivities of the mountain, from the rich corn-fields of Sicily to the snow-covered margin of the crater. The finished work of his maturer age, the *Historiæ Venetæ*, characterizes still more picturesquely the climate and vegetation of the New Continent.

Every thing concurred at this period to fill the imaginations of men with grand images of the suddenly-extended boundaries of the known world, and of the enlargement of human powers, which had been of simultaneous occurrence. As, in antiquity, the Macedonian expeditions to Paropanisus and the wooded alluvial valleys of Western Asia awakened impressions derived from the aspect of a richly-adorned exotic nature, whose images were vividly reflected in the works of

* I would here refer to Boiardo's sonnet, beginning,

Ombrosa selva, che il mio duolo ascolti,

and the fine stanzas of Vittoria Colonna, which begin,

Quando miro la terra ornata e bella,
Di mille vaghi ed odorati fiori

A fine and very characteristic description of the country seat of Fracastoro, on the hill of Incassi (Mons Caphius), near Verona, is given by this writer (who was equally distinguished in medicine, mathematics, and poetry), in his *Naugerius de Poetica Dialogus*. Hieron. Fracastorii, Op. 1591, Part i., p. 321-326. See, also, in a didactic poem by the same writer, lib. ii., v. 208-219 (Op., p. 636), the pleasing passage on the culture of the *Citrus* in Italy. I miss with astonishment any expression of feeling connected with the aspect of nature in the letters of Petrarch, either when, in 1345 (three years, therefore, before the death of Laura), he attempted the ascent of Mont Ventour from Vaucluse, in the eager hope of beholding from thence a part of his native land; when he ascended the banks of the Rhine to Cologne; or when he visited the Gulf of Baiæ. He lived more in the world of his classical remembrances of Cicero and the Roman poets, or in the emotions of his ascetic melancholy, than in the actual scenes by which he was surrounded. (See *Petrarchæ Epist. de Rebus Familiaribus*, lib. iv., 1, v 3 and 4; p. 119, 156, and 161, ed. Lugdun., 1601). There is, however, an exceedingly picturesque description of a great tempest which he observed near Naples in 1343 (lib. v., 5, p. 165).