

the snout until they are rendered useless for purposes of attack, when, according to Darwin, they become serviceable for defence in the frequent fights which take place during the rutting season. At the same time, the canines of the upper jaw begin to develop outwards and upwards, and these take the place of the lower ones as offensive weapons. The wild boar is a native of the temperate regions of Europe and Asia, where it inhabits the deepest recesses of forests and marshy grounds. Vambéry, in his recent journey through Central Asia, found them in enormous numbers in the extensive swamps of Turkestan. They appear to have been denizens of British forests at least till the reign of Henry II., after which they are not heard of till the time of Charles I., when an attempt to restock the New Forest with them failed. In the reign of William the Conqueror any one killing a wild boar was liable to have his eyes put out. After reaching maturity the boar becomes a solitary animal, unless during the breeding season, when it seeks the female, and at this time they engage in fierce contests with each other, although these, it is said, seldom lead to fatal results, as they contrive to receive the blows on their tusks, or on the specially tough skin which covers their shoulders. The Indian Wild Boar (*Sus indicus*) is undoubtedly polygamous, and there are several facts which point to a similar habit in the European boar. Both species are nocturnal, issuing from their coverts at twilight in quest of food. This is chiefly of a vegetable nature, consisting of roots which it ploughs up by means of its broad muscular snout and of grain; although they are also known to devour the smaller mammals, birds, and eggs. The female is ordinarily a timid creature, but shows great courage and fierceness in defence of its young. It associates with other females for mutual protection against wolves. The wild boar was for many centuries a favourite beast of chase with the nobility of Europe. It was hunted on foot with the spear,—its great strength, and its ferocity when at bay, rendering the sport alike exciting and dangerous. The gun has now superseded the spear in European boar-hunting, but owing to the comparative scarcity of the boars it is now little practised. In India, however, where these animals abound in the jungles, it is still a favourite sport, the boar being pursued on horseback and speared. The bristles of the boar are much used in the manufacture of brushes.

BOAT-BUILDING. See SHIP-BUILDING.

BOBRUISK, a town of Russia, in the government of Minsk, 110 miles S.E. of that city, in 53° 15' N. lat. and 28° 52' E. long., on the right bank of the Berezina, near the confluence of the Bobruiska, on the high road from Mogileff to Brest Litovsk. Bobruisk was an unimportant place in 1508, when the Moscovite army, sent by the Emperor Basil against the Polish king Sigismund, advanced towards it. In the 17th century there existed a castle, which was burned down in 1649. When the Minsk government was incorporated with Russia, Bobruisk was a small borough; but in 1795 it was raised to the rank of chief town of a department in the Minsk government. In the beginning of the reign of Alexander I. there was erected at Bobruisk, by the advice of General Osterman, a fort, which obtained great importance in 1812, and was made equal to the best in Europe by the Emperor Paul I. The fort proper is built on a height exactly at the confluence of the Bobruiska with the Berezina, nearly a mile from the town. On the right bank of the former river is another small fort, called Fort Frederick William, well supported by a line of defences. In 1860 the population of Bobruisk was 23,761, of whom 11,394 were Jews. It has 2 Greek churches, 17 synagogues, a military hospital, and a departmental college. The only industrial establishments are two potteries. On the river near the town there is a har-

bour, by which grain and salt are imported from the southern governments.

BOCCACCIO, GIOVANNI. Comparatively little is known of Boccaccio's life, particularly of the earlier portion of it. He was born in 1313, as we know from a letter of Petrarch, in which that poet, who was born in 1304, calls himself the senior of his friend by nine years. The place of his birth is somewhat doubtful,—Florence, Paris, and Certaldo being all mentioned by various writers as his native city. Boccaccio undoubtedly calls himself a Florentine, but this may refer merely to the Florentine citizenship acquired by his grandfather. The claim of Paris has been supported by Baldelli and Tiraboschi, mainly on the ground that his mother was a lady of good family in that city, where she met Boccaccio's father. The balance of evidence is decidedly in favour of Certaldo, a small town or castle in the valley of the Elsa, 20 miles from Florence, where the family had some property, and where the poet spent much of the latter part of his life. He always signed his name Boccaccio da Certaldo, and named that town as his birthplace in his own epitaph. Petrarch calls his friend Certaldese; and Filippo Villani, a contemporary, distinctly says that Boccaccio was born in Certaldo.

Boccaccio, an illegitimate son, as is put beyond dispute by the fact that a special licence had to be obtained when he desired to become a priest, was brought up with tender care by his father, who seems to have been a merchant of respectable rank. His elementary education he received from Giovanni da Strada, an esteemed teacher of grammar in Florence. But at an early age he was apprenticed to an eminent merchant, with whom he remained for six years, a time entirely lost to him, if we may believe his own statement. For from his tenderest years his soul was attached to that "*alma poesis*," which, on his tombstone, he names as the task and study of his life. In one of his works he relates that, in his seventh year, before he had ever seen a book of poetry or learned the rules of metrical composition, he began to write verse in his childish fashion, and earned for himself amongst his friends the name of "the poet." It is uncertain where Boccaccio passed these six years of bondage; most likely he followed his master to various centres of commerce in Italy and France. We know at least that he was in Naples and Paris for some time, and the youthful impressions received in the latter city, as well as the knowledge of the French language acquired there, were of considerable influence on his later career. Yielding at last to his son's immutable aversion to commerce, the elder Boccaccio permitted him to adopt a course of study somewhat more congenial to the literary tastes of the young man. He was sent to a celebrated professor of canon law, at that time an important field of action both to the student and the practical jurist. According to some accounts—far from authentic, it is true—this professor was Cino da Pistoia, the friend of Dante, and himself a celebrated poet and scholar. But, whoever he may have been, Boccaccio's master was unable to inspire his pupil with scientific ardour. "Again," Boccaccio says, "I lost nearly six years. And so nauseous was this study to my mind, that neither the teaching of my master, nor the authority and command of my father, nor yet the exertions and reproof of my friends, could make me take to it, for my love of poetry was invincible."

About 1333 Boccaccio settled for some years at Naples, apparently sent there by his father to resume his mercantile pursuits, the canon law being finally abandoned. The place, it must be confessed, was little adapted to lead to a practical view of life one in whose heart the love of poetry was firmly rooted. The court of King Robert of Anjou at Naples was frequented by many Italian and French men of letters, the great Petrarch amongst the

number. At the latter's public examination in the noble science of poetry by the king, previous to his receiving the laurel crown at Rome, Boccaccio was present,—without, however, making his personal acquaintance at this period. In the atmosphere of this gay court, enlivened and adorned by the wit of men and the beauty of women, Boccaccio lived for several years. We can imagine how the tedious duties of the market and the counting-house became more and more distasteful to his aspiring nature. We are told that finding himself by chance on the supposed grave of Virgil, near Naples, Boccaccio on that sacred spot took the firm resolution of devoting himself for ever to poetry. But perhaps another event, which happened some time after, led quite as much as the first mentioned occurrence to this decisive turning point in his life. On Easter-eve, 1341, in the church of San Lorenzo, Boccaccio saw for the first time the natural daughter of King Robert, Maria, whom he immortalized as Fiammetta in the noblest creations of his muse. Boccaccio's passion on seeing her was instantaneous, and (if we may accept as genuine the confessions contained in one of her lover's works) was returned with equal ardour on the part of the lady. But not till after much delay did she yield to the amorous demands of the poet, in spite of her honour and her duty as the wife of another. All the information we have with regard to Maria or Fiammetta is derived from the works of Boccaccio himself, and owing to several apparently contradictory statements occurring in these works, the very existence of the lady has been doubted by commentators, who seem to forget that, surrounded by the chattering tongues of a court, and watched perhaps by a jealous husband, Boccaccio had all possible reason to give the appearance of fictitious incongruity to the effusions of his real passion. But there seems no more reason to call into question the main features of the story, or even the identity of the person, than there would be in the case of Petrarch's Laura or of Dante's Beatrice. It has been ingeniously pointed out by Baldelli, that the fact of her descent from King Robert being known only to Maria herself, and through her to Boccaccio, the latter was the more at liberty to refer to this circumstance,—the bold expression of the truth serving in this case to increase the mystery with which the poets of the Middle Ages loved, or were obliged, to surround the objects of their praise. From Boccaccio's *Ameto* we learn that Maria's mother was, like his own, a French lady, whose husband, according to Baldelli's ingenious conjecture, was of the noble house of Aquino, and therefore of the same family with the celebrated Thomas Aquinas. Maria died, according to his account, long before her lover, who cherished her memory to the end of his life, as we see from a sonnet written shortly before his death.

The first work of Boccaccio, composed by him at Fiammetta's command, was the prose tale, *Filocolo*, describing the romantic love and adventures of Florio and Biancafore, a favourite subject with the knightly minstrels of France, Italy, and Germany. The treatment of the story by Boccaccio is not remarkable for originality or beauty, and the narrative is encumbered by classical allusions and allegorical conceits. The style also cannot be held worthy of the future great master of Italian prose. Considering, however, that this prose was in its infancy, and that this was Boccaccio's first attempt at remoulding the unwieldy material at his disposal, it would be unjust to deny that *Filocolo* is a highly interesting work, full of promise and all but articulate power.

Another work, written about the same time by Fiammetta's desire and dedicated to her, is the *Teseide*, an epic poem, and indeed the first heroic epic in the Italian language. The name is chosen somewhat inappropriately, as King Theseus plays a secondary part, and the interest of

the story centres in the two noble knights, Palemone and Arcito, and their wooing of the beautiful Emelia. The *Teseide* is of particular interest to the student of poetry, because it exhibits the first example of the *ottava rima*, a metre which has been adopted by Tasso and Ariosto, and in our own language by Byron in his *Don Juan*. Another link between Boccaccio's epic and our literature is formed by the fact of Chaucer having in the *Knights Tale* adopted its main features.

Boccaccio's poetry has been severely criticized by his countrymen, and most severely by the author himself. On reading Petrarch's sonnets, Boccaccio resolved in a fit of despair to burn his own attempts, and only the kindly encouragement of his great friend prevented the holocaust. Posterity has justly differed from the author's sweeping self-criticism. It is true, that compared with Dante's grandeur and passion, and with Petrarch's absolute mastery of metre and language, Boccaccio's poetry seems to be somewhat thrown into shade. His verse is occasionally slipshod, and particularly his epic poetry lacks what in modern parlance is called poetic diction,—the quality, that is, which distinguishes the elevated pathos of the recorder of heroic deeds from the easy grace of the mere *conteur*. This latter feature, so charmingly displayed in Boccaccio's prose, has to some extent proved fatal to his verse. At the same time, his narrative is always fluent and interesting, and his lyrical pieces, particularly the poetic interludes in the *Decameron*, abound with charming gallantry, and frequently rise to lyrical pathos.

About the year 1341 Boccaccio returned to Florence by command of his father, who in his old age desired the assistance and company of his son. Florence, at that time disturbed by civil feuds, and the silent gloom of his father's house could not but appear in an unfavourable light to one accustomed to the gay life of the Neapolitan court. But more than all this, Boccaccio regretted the separation from his beloved Fiammetta. The thought of her at once embittered and consoled his loneliness. Three of his works owe their existence to this period. With all of them Fiammetta is connected; of one of them she alone is the subject.

The first work, called *Ameto*, describes the civilizing influence of love, which subdues the ferocious manners of the savage with its gentle power. Fiammetta, although not the heroine of the story, is amongst the nymphs who with their tales of true love soften the mind of the huntsman.

*Ameto* is written in prose alternating with verse, specimens of which form occur in old and middle-Latin writings. It is more probable, however, that Boccaccio adopted it from that sweetest and purest blossom of mediæval French literature, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, which dates from the 13th century, and was undoubtedly known to him. So pleased was Boccaccio with the idea embodied in the character of *Ameto* that he repeated its essential features in the Cimone of his *Decameron* (Day 5th, tale i.)

The second work referred to is a poem in fifty chapters, called *L'Amorosa Visione*. It describes a dream in which the poet, guided by a lady, sees the heroes and lovers of ancient and mediæval times. Boccaccio evidently has tried to imitate the celebrated *Trionfi* of Petrarch, but without much success. There is little organic development in the poem, which reads like the *catalogue raisonné* of a picture gallery; but it is remarkable from another point of view. It is perhaps the most astounding instance in literature of ingenuity wasted on trifles; even Edgar Poe, had he known Boccaccio's puzzle, must have confessed himself surpassed. For the whole of the *Amorosa Visione* is nothing but an acrostic on a gigantic scale. The poem