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LAURENT DE PREMIERFAIT'S FRENCH VERSION OF THE *DE CASIBUS VIRORUM ILLUSTRIUM* WITH SOME NOTES ON ITS INFLUENCE IN FRANCE

I

That Boccaccio's great history of the fall of unfortunate princes, the *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*[1], was, directly or indirectly, a work of very considerable importance for at least two centuries after its compilation is a fact well known. Nor does any reader of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* need to be reminded that in all probability the Latin work passed into English poetic tradition solely through the medium of the French prose version made by Laurent de Premierfait. The French work, like its Latin original, is somewhat rare, not having been considered worthy of a modern edition, and since it is by no means insignificant, both in itself and in its literary relations, a general description of it may not be without interest.

Its author, Laurent de Premierfait, clerk of the diocese of Troyes, and confidential adviser to Jean Chanteprime, conseiller du roi de France, seems to have been a professional translator. Between 1400 and his death in 1418 he turned into French, among other works, Cicero's *De Senectute* and *De Amicitia* and, through a Latin version prepared for his use, Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Of the *De Casibus* he made two versions: the first in 1400, according to Hauvette a rendering so literal, even servile, that he who would understand it must be fairly proficient in Latin[2]; the second, finished in 1409, and dedicated to the Duke of Berry, son of that John of France with whose downfall the *De Casibus* ends. This second and much amplified version naturally superseded the first[3].

Laurent's own preface, which supplements that of Boccaccio, is of considerable interest[4]. He lavishes praise upon the writer of this "tresnotable et exquis liure", points out the value of translations, and defends himself for having covered the ground a second time. Every man, he says, has the right to better his own work or to amend that of another, if he does it "par bonte de couraige et par mouuement de pure charite". In adding to the book of "Boccace" he is in no way reflecting upon a work "de tressingulier prix et de noble exemple de vertus". He has merely added where the "tresgrant et renomme historien" has been so brief as to mention names only. In the dedication which follows he embarks on a tedious exposition of Fortune in terms of doctrine – her wheel, and why worldly things are subject to her. He then speaks with some eloquence of the condition of the church and the three estates of the realm.

In his expressed and modest desire to be above all clear, Laurent succeeded almost too well. If to make very few mistakes in understanding his author, and those few mostly

unimportant, to omit little or nothing, and never deliberately to falsify what he found, is to be a good translator, he deserves praise. It may even be granted that some of his additions help to elucidate Boccaccio's very casual references, and that whole passages are rendered quite straightforwardly. But in the transformation from compressed, if stilted, Latin, into slow-paced and voluble French, the character of the original work is almost lost, the movement is slackened, the personality of Boccaccio obscured. There is a distinct tendency to revert to the chronicle, or at least to the mediaeval sort of compilation from which Boccaccio had diverged. Laurent evidently considered his task as primarily historical – as we have seen, he calls Boccaccio historian, "homme moult excellent et expert en anciannes hystoires et toutes aultres sciences humaines et diuines[5]". The additional sources which he himself conscientiously consulted would, of course, be chiefly histories – Justin, Livy, Orosius, Vincent de Beauvais and the rest – but he shows a marked tendency to ignore the classical poets, so that even when he has used Ovid he suppresses his name[6]. Moreover, his constant intrusion of chronology and genealogy recalls the omniscient inaccuracy of the world chronicles. Thus a casual reference to Cadmus in the story of Dido produces the totally uncalled – for information that "cestuy roy Cadmus frere dudit Phenix apres la creation du monde trois mil sept ans quatre vingtz et quatorze trouua la forme des lettres[7]".

In his hands the book grows to more than twice its original size. An obscure figure flits across the stage set by Boccaccio, with a word over his shoulder in passing, so to speak, concerning his misfortunes. Laurent tells his story for him in full. Such additions he does not label as his own, and the effect of them is totally to destroy the proportion of the original, the balance of full-length and partial portraits. He also adds episodes, with a preference for the marvellous. Sometimes, though not often, he embarks on comment of his own, as when the wearing of the purple by the upstart Juba inspires a digression on the extravagance of French and Italian clothes[8]; or a eulogy of Cicero and rhetoric leads him to expound the five branches of rhetoric[9]; or the use of the phrase, "the golden age", in connection with Saturn serves as a text for a jeremiad on the deterioration of the clergy:

> "Les ministres telz quelz de maintenant ne sont pas telz que len doiue appeller leurs siècles dor, ne dargent, ne de cuyure, mais de orgueil, dauarice et de luxure, en considerant les corrompues meurs des le tresgrant iusques au trespetit[10]. "

But it is not often ideas which start Laurent off on tracks of his own. He has a zest for imparting knowledge, often very unnecessarily and clumsily. It is not always chronological, as in the example quoted above; he is fond of genealogical trees of almost biblical proportions. Details of campaigns also interest him, and he is very specific as to the number of slain in any particular battle. Geographical addenda are his speciality; he has to expound the topography of Palestine in narrating the history of Saul[11], and rarely allow a name to pass unexplained, even at the most dramatic moments, or in the heart of a sen-

tence. Another phase of his pedagogic zeal is his anxiety to define words which he thinks may be unfamiliar; this is natural when it concerns such technicalities as the Roman "comities", but it goes much further. In the story of Rehoboam he adds after quoting the king's rash speech, "I will chastise you with scorpions", "Cest a dire de bastons qui ont aux boutz pointes de fer ou plombees[12]". He finds it necessary to explain "amphitheatre[13]" and the "porches" of the Temple[14], and more surprising, must define, in his chapter on poverty, "les choses superflues", – "cest assauoir les choses sans les quelles len peult bonnement viure[15]". His etymology is also at times entertaining, as when he informs his readers that Angleterre is so called because "celle isle est comme vng anglet et destou.[16]". Such remarkable derivations are not, of course, usually his own, nor is he unique in introducing them.

In addition to all this there is a good deal of inexcusable verbiage and pedantic diction. He is continually referring us back conscientiously to "what I said in the third chapter of the preceding book". Most wearisome of all is the constant doubling of epithets. Part of a sentence chosen at random will illustrate this more than sufficiently:

> "Les anciens ont appelle oysinetez les lieux sollitaires et requois qui sont sans noise et sans tumulte, et qui sont loing de citez et de villes esquelles sont communement noises et tensons."

This diction has a slight legal flavour, which is to be traced also in the formal and frequent use of "the said": "ladicte cite", "Medea fille dessusdict Oetha", and so on. Such useless padding vitiates the whole book. The dramatic quality of Boccaccio's Latin disappears also. Descriptive epithets are inept and colourless. Every hero is likely to be dubbed "ung trespreux et vaillant chevalier". Even the "villains" of the piece are "noble". Adam and Eve are both "sage et noble". (In Laurent's preface to his translation of the *Decameron*[17] they become "Sire Adam et Dame Eve"). Fortune herself becomes far more conventional, though the number of references to her multiplies. When Laurent tries, as he occasionally does, to vary or enliven the action by added detail or direct speech, the effect is generally ludicrous. Thus where Boccaccio gave only a brief account of Hercules, Laurent expands it through pages, the description of the hero's death alone taking up almost three columns. We are told how the poison acted, and then how

> "... par la douleur que il sentoit si tresgriefue il couroit par la forest comme vng thoreau qui parte vng iauelot fiche dedans son corps. Il transgloutissoit dedans soy les gemirs et les plours. il trembloit... il par rage rompoit les arbres de la forest. il arrachoit les pierres de la montaigne."

At long last he died, and

> "... apres longs pleurs et haulx criz philottes son escuyer dessusdit selon la maniere ancienne gardee entre les nobles brusla le corps du preux et noble cheualier hercules[18]."

Most impressive of all Laurent's flights of this sort is the speech which, quite unaided by Boccaccio, he puts into the mouth of Lucrece to her husband:

> "Cestuy corps qui est et tien et mien et presque quil nest pas mien. Car toy qui est mon espoux tu es le chief et seigneur de mon corps et compaignon de doulces et ameres fortunes."

And again: "en mon corps et le tien". And yet again: "mon corps qui est comme iay dit commun entre toy et moy[19]". Here is surely far too much of mine and thine. Lucrece is not speaking in a law court.

That the effect of Boccaccio's artificial, but telling use of contrast was not lost upon Laurent is evident from his occasional employment of a series of balanced contrasts on his own account. And very occasionally he has a happy phrase, perhaps by accident. His rendering of one dignified passage of his original which shows him at his best may be quoted. Boccaccio writes:

> "Nos stipule flammulam euestigio in cinerem redeuntem, seu flores purpureas et estu modico austro flante inarcentes fore videbimus[20]."

In Laurent this becomes :

> "Nous verrons que nous sommes comme vne flambesche destincelle qui tantost se tourne en cendre. Nous verrons que nous sommes comme fleurettes vermeilles qui fleurissent par vng pou de chaleur quant le vent de midy souffle[21]."

Such happy phrasing is, however, rare. In general there is little elegance; Laurent cannot rise to Boccaccio's most powerful rhetoric, and as he is likely to turn the exclamatory Latin sentences into statements of fact, the forcefulness of the original is lost.

To condemn a man, however, because he lacks artistic skill is rather beside the point, especially since Laurent was certainly well esteemed in his own day, and his book highly regarded. A more important question is to discover how much humanistic feeling he displays in comparison with his original. His honourable defence of the poor and their rights in his prefatory address to the Duke of Berry bas been put forward as an indication of his broadmindedness, even as an advance on Boccaccio[22]. It has also been noted that he not, only retains Boccaccio's remarks on tyrants, but has added to them, and repeated them in other places[23]. Yet there eau never at any time be complete silence on such themes. Violent denunciation was part of the stock in trade of the mediaeval preacher, and at the very

time when Laurent was writing the misery of France as a result of the Hundred Years' War had evoked calls for reform from churchmen and laity alike[24]. Gerson, the great chancellor of the University of Paris, preaching before the court in 1405, used stronger language than Laurent, and at intervals throughout the century formal complaints were laid before the Estates. The poets also – Chartier wrote his *Quadriloge Invectif* in 1422, and earlier, about 1400, had appeared *La Complainte du povre Commun et des Povres Laboureurs de France*. Laurent's preface may show his humanity, but it is not therefore humanism. It is a familiar tune – rather a sad one when one reflects that it is heard with little variation in La Bruyère three hundred years later, and in the writings of an English traveller in France after still another century. Nor is Laurent ahead of his time, any more than Boccaccio, in advocating tyrannicide, or describing the ideal prince. In fact, he is following with his usual thoroughness a doctrine expounded by one of the earliest and best known political treatises of the Middle Ages, John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus*[25]. That his interest in such a matter must have been wholly academic is evident from the tone of exaggerated respect in which he everywhere addresses the Duke of Berry, whose misgovernment of the province of Languedoc was so notorious that he had been disgraced, and though later restored did not dare to show his face again in the province[26].

Even if Laurent is only indulging in the usual fulsomeness of courtly address when he tells his patron that "Saint Jaques, en sa canonique epistre, commanda moy estre subiect in Roy... et aux ducs comme a ceux qui du Roi sont envoyez et commis[27]", such a form of speech shows at once that the basis of his political thinking is thoroughly feudal, and thoroughly French, since in France the theory of feudalism was most logically and completely carried out. His addition to Boccaccio on obedience, which is a quite general discussion, is as follows:

> "Se aucun doncques soit roy ou prince qui de dieu ait receu seigneirie entre les hommes, il conuient quil confesse comme vray est quil est varlet et seruiteur de dieu; il est dongues tres fol se il ose exposer a son plaisir le mandement de son sage seigneur... Le varlet aussi est fol qui veult plus obeyr a son propre iugement que au iugement de celluy qui luy commande[28]."

The red cross, he tells us, is worn by the Templars to show that they are "cheualiers de Jesuchrist de qui les armes sont vne croix rouge et taincte de sang vermeil[29]". In the chapter on the Fall of Jerusalem he remarks that if the Jews were so punished for the murder of Christ, Christians will suffer far greater penalties,

> "... car au baptesme nous qui deuenons cheualiers et vassaulx de Jesuchrist promettons expressement seruir et obeyr a luy et non a autre[30]."

This is characteristic feudal and chivalric expression. Laurent's thinking had certainly not gone beyond his mode of speech.

Equally stereotyped is his religious expression. He is one of those not uncommon clerics who are churchmen first and Christians second. He speaks of "Holy Church", and "the Catholic Church", as Boccaccio never does; he is more inclined to comment on and reprove heresy than Boccaccio, and quite ready to insist on the rights of the clergy. His criticism of his order seems to come from the inside. He easily breaks into scriptural or doctrinal expression, as when in the dialogue with Fortune he makes Boccaccio say that he might have had great matter to declare the marvellous works and the glory of God the all-powerful, "pere de toutes choses par qui toutes choses sont faictes, qui est vng dieu en tierce personne et en vne diuine essence[31]". And he gladly introduces the familiar vices and virtues in their never-ending conflict.

It is thus to be expected that his general literary outlook will be narrow, his spirit constrained. He has no grasp of antiquity, is not at home in the past. He takes particular pains to rationalize the myths. Cerberus is for him a great dog belonging to King Pluto, and Pluto is the king of the Mollosses. The hydra is merely a lake "qui tant auoit de sources quil degastoit les pays[32]". Venus is only a very wicked woman. "Car il fut notoire en Chipre que le roy vulcanus son mary la trouua couchee avec vng sien escuyer dont les poetes faignirent que lescuyer estoit vng dieu appelle Mars[33]." This happens repeatedly and consistently. As Koeppel pointed out[34], the explanations all come from the *Genealogiae*, and Laurent regularly chose the most rationalistic of the interpretations there offered. But this is a sign of narrowness, not of modern scepticism. Christian legend is accepted with no shadow of hesitation. Laurent must be at pains to confound the gods of the Gentiles, without being able, as men could do at the Renaissance, and as Boccaccio had done, to accept them as a poetical inheritance without thought of their worship in past ages. In another connection the result is the same. If he doubts whether a wolf or a dog would suckle a human child, it is surely because the child is Romulus or Oedipus and not a Christian saint. Concerning other natural marvels, where religion is not to be regarded, he is utterly credulous. He adds, for instance, to the tale of King Arthur, that in the island of Britain is found

> "... vne pierre precieuse appellee gagates... Quant elle est chaulde elle dechasse les serpens venimeux. Elle monstre hommes et femmes et bestes entachez de rageuse maladie. Elle demonstre entre plusieurs hommes et, femmes lesquels soient vierges, par eaue elle sembrase, et par huylle se estainct et refroide[35]."

Though he follows Boccaccio obediently in his praise of Alcibiades his own addition to his original proves that he did not very well understand the spirit of what he was writing.

> "Le noble courage saulte hors de la closure du corps et par la grandeur de soy il embrasse la rondeur de la terre et par sa legierete il surmonte les estoilles."

The soul makes an effort to

> "... attraire la pesanteur du corps ou pays naturel. Cest assauoir ou ciel qui est le droit pays du courage."

It often, however, takes a wrong way to do this. So far so good, and so far Boccaccio. What follows is Laurent's addition – that God opens a way for man to mount to heaven, but as a pagan, "Duke" Alcibiades had no clear knowledge of it[36].

Thus the *De Casibus* in its French trappings is definitely mediaeval in thought. In expression it is equally so. Dame Fortune, Dame Simplesse, and Dame Nature suggest the terms of the familiar allegory. "La belle Rachelle" might have stepped out of one of the romances, with any of the "nobles Chevaliers" in whom Laurent abounds. Paris finds "la belle Helene qui lors se soulaçoit au ieu de la palestre auec plusieurs autres gentilz hommes et femmes de Grece" in very mediaeval fashion[37].

There is in this, too, something of the graciousness which one associates with the typical French romance. And Laurent is truly French as well in the definition of civilization which he interjects into Boccaccio's account of Aulus Vitellius Caesar. When Saturn, "ancien roy de Crete", came to Italy, he found that the people there lived almost like beasts, without public religion, mutual conversation, merchandise, marriage, "ne autre affinitez", or cultivation of the land. The emphasis on social intercourse here is in direct contrast with Lydcrate's matter of fact English rendering of the passage, which omits "mutual conversation" entirely, and puts the practical matter of tilling the soil in the place of honour[38].

In a work mainly historical and didactic, concerned chiefly with earlier times, there is little room for any expression of what may be called French nationalism, or rather patriotism, the development of which might naturally be expected as a result of a long and disastrous struggle against the national foe, and which was soon to be incarnated in the Maid of Orléans. Such references as can be found in Laurent accordingly gain in significance. He is to say the least chilly in his treatment of Arthur, who bad become an English hero, though originally as much a part of the French romantic heritage as of the English. It is not surprising to find that in relating the death of John of France, a prisoner in England, he throws out a suggestion of treachery – John died in the hands of his enemy, "par vne manier de mort indigne et miserable et incongneue a plusieurs[39]". Most interesting of all is the expansion, extending to half a column, of Boccaccio's reference to Dante in Book IX. The Florentine poet, who had received from God and from Nature the spirit of poetry, in his wanderings visited Paris and there found among other new volumes the Book of the Rose, in which is described "le paradis des bons et lenfer des mauuais en Francois". And he desired "en langage Florentin soubz autre maniere de vers rimez contrefaire au vif le liure de la rose, en ensuyuant tel ordre comme fist le diuin poete Virgile ou sixiesme liure que len dit Eneide". As literary criticism this does not do much honour to Laurent's powers of perception, but it speaks volumes for his patriotic enthusiasm over the great miediaeval achievement of French poetry – even though the spirit of

that work was quite beyond his understanding when he could describe the *Roman* as "vne vraye mapemonde de toutes choses celestes et terriennes[40]". It is on a par with his exposition of the moral purpose of the *Decameron* in the preface to his translation of it[41].

The passage on Dante also contains such delightful praise of Paris, Laurent's city per se, that it deserves quotation.

> "Entre plusieurs nobles et anciennes citez il [Dante] chercha Paris en laquelle lors estoient et encores sont trois choses les plus resplendissans et notables qui soyent en quelconque autre partie du monde : cestassauoir general estude de toutes sciences diuines et humaines, qui sont figure de paradis terrestre. Secondement les nobles eglises et aultres lieux sacres garnys dhommes et femmes seruans iour et nuyct a dieu, qui sont figure de paradis celeste. Tiercement les deux cours iudiciaires qui aux hommes distribuent la vertu de iustice. Cestassauoir parlement et chastelet qui portent la figure par moytie de paradis et denfer[42]."

This is praise of the crowning glory, not of France herself. But in spite of its quaint mediaeval insistence on symbolism it is of more value as an expression of national feeling than the somewhat set moralizing of Laurent's preface, where he is after all speaking in terms of estates, not of Frenchmen. And as in both spirit and style he has made the *De Casibus* into a very French book, he has also made it more mediaeval. In Laurent the free-spirited and national man of the Renaissance has not begun to exist; he finds the feudal and clerical modes of thought of the passing day of the Middle Ages both safe and pleasant.

II

The wide circulation of Laurent's version, and the names of some of its illustrious possessors are ample proof of its popularity. The Duke of Nemours, Louis of Bruges, the Count of Angoulême, son of John the Good, and other French notables, owned it[43]. Charles of Orléans, a prisoner in England from 1415 to 1440, sent to France for a copy[44]. At least forty-seven manuscripts still exist[45]. But other and more picturesque data can be adduced, which show that Boccaccio attained in France as the Impresario of Fortune[46] a personal and semi-mythical reputation, to which I know no parallel among writers except that of Boethius or Virgil in the Middle Ages. A curious example of this is found in *La Vengeance de N. S. Jésus-Christ*, a mystery play, four days in duration, of the year 1437[47]. In this Boccaccio is twice introduced. On the second day he is first mentioned by name, later tells in conversation with Terence, Horace, and Juvenal, the legend of Sibylla and Augustus, and makes one other speech. On the third day he plays a more important part. As the Roman senate deliberates on the crimes of Nero, Horace proposes that Boccaccio shall write a revelation of the Emperor's misdeeds. Sought out in his lodgings Boccaccio readily consents, and produces an indictment which is read aloud and approved. This "book", in two hundred and thirty odd lines, has been shown by Hauvette

to be simply a versification of the *Des Nobles maheureux*, Bk. VIII, c. iii, with large cuts, a few slight interpolations, but sometimes in the very words of Laurent[48]. Boccaccio himself is obviously a mere name to the pious author of the mystery, who evidently considers him a pagan, and groups him incongruously among those ancients whom Boccaccio delighted to honour. Here all is to the glory of God on the stage. Earlier in the century Boccaccio had been dragged into court as a witness, when before the assembly of the Notables of France Jean Petit, a friar minor, endeavoured to defend the Duke of Burgundy, Jean sans Peur, for the assassination of the Duke of Orléans, by citing the *De Casibus* on tyrannicide[49].

These are hardly literary manifestations of the influence of the *De Casibus* in France. They do, however, illustrate the extremely varied uses to which the book could be adapted, and indicate the extent to which it was known. More purely literary is its contribution to the work of a well known poet of the first part of the century, Alain Chartier. Chartier was primarily a poet, but he was also a satirist, and *Le Quadrilogue Invectif*, 1422[50], a vigorous prose criticism of the estates of the realm, full of abuse of the feudal army and sympathy for the sufferings of the peasantry, is an important document for the understanding of fifteenth century France, inspiring other writings of the same kind later[51]. In the course of this work Chartier passes in review those world empires from which the glory has departed and breaks into an eloquent passage beginning: "Où est Niniue la grant cite", some descriptive details of which seem to have been derived from the *De Casibus*[52]. Elsewhere, in the *Curial*, which Caxton later translated, is to be found the familiar complaint against Fortune the variable, who "rit à plaine gueulle, et bat ses paulmes, quant il meschiet à grans Seigneurs[53]". The same accusation appears in a series of seven ballades, *Le Régime de Fortune*[54]. These, of course, do not necessarily derive from Boccaccio, being part of the general tradition of such ballades; but Chartier's knowledge of Boccaccio is put beyond doubt by a passage in *L'Esperance, ou Consolation de trois Vertus, Foy, Esperance, et Charite*, another fierce attack on the nobles and clergy, where after giving examples of the rise and fall of men and states he concludes:

> "Ia n'est besoing de multiplier exemples en cest endroit. Car se tu prens ton loisir à lire Senecque es Tragedies, Iehan Bocace en son Liure du cas des nobles; tu ne orras autre leçon que de la choiste [chance, in margin] des haulx hommes, la perte des conquereurs, et le raualement de ceulx qui trop ont voulu surmonter[55]."

An even more significant proof of the generative power of the *De Casibus* is to be found in the writings of Georges Chastellain, soldier, diplomat, poet, and after 1455 historiographer to the Duke of Burgundy. Chastellain was a writer of deserved reputation in his day, perhaps a little pompous in style, but capable of dealing with historical facts in an independent fashion, and conceiving history in the light of philosophy. To the reflective melancholy inspired by a contemplation of the passing of human greatness and the vicissitudes of his own turbulent times, he gave expression in ballades which are so

far influenced by Chartier that the *Complainte de Fortune*[56] appears to transpose into verse the "ubi sunt" passage of the *Quadrilogue* already referred to. Then passing from empires to princes in the same poem he proceeds to apply the formula of the falls of the great to contemporary affairs[57]. Among those "qui tant ont en prosperité" and yet have fallen he mentions la Pucelle, the Duke of Gloucester, and Henry VI of England, rubbing shoulders, it is true, in good mediaeval fashion, with Boethius and Job, and presented with considerable moralizing. In another poem he gives the *Complainte* of Hector[58]. Such poems are, I think, inspired directly by Boccaccio, whose influence on Chastellain seems to have been paramount. It finds most striking expression in the long prose tractate entitled *Le Temple de Bocace*, written "par manière de consolation à une désolée Reyne d'Angleterre", Margaret of Anjou, the tragic queen of Henry VI[59]. This imaginative mixture of history and moral consolation is perhaps the most impressive single monument of the *De Casibus* in any language, and for that reason, and because it may very probably have been known in England through the Lancastrian followers of Margaret, I shall summarize it briefly.

Chastellain says that Margaret, whom he has known for a long time, urged him to make her "aulcun petit traité de fortune". He reluctantly consented, and dreaming about his task finds himself in a cemetery among the tombs of all the mighty dead. In the midst of this cemetery is a temple, over the door of which is inscribed a poem beginning:

> "Vecy le temple au noble historien,
> Le concueilleur de tout cas terrien,
> Là où fortune a mys dolante issue,
> Par vanité d'orgueuil entretissue,
> Qui fait tourner mondaine gloire en rien[60]."

He enters the temple and finds within sculptures telling the stories of the dead who lie outside, and a magnificent tomb, which opens of itself, though no hand may touch it. Several kings come in, bloody and sighing, and make reverence to the tomb, the shades of all the unfortunates of his time, a great company[61]. Then follows a queen, "menant en main un roy son seigneur et mari[62]". She boldly addresses the figure of Boccaccio on the tomb, and makes appeal. The tomb opens, the body within revives, "là où assis estoit en un chayère d'or[63]". Then the queen tells her tale and receives consolation and advice in a lengthy dialogue, after which the tomb closes, Boccaccio and the queen vanish, and a voice comes saying, "You have seen and heard – write." And so the dreamer wakes.

It is no part of our present interest to comment on the very considerable grasp of contemporary politics which Chastellain displays in this treatise. Instead we must note the exaltation of Boccaccio as "glorieux historien", "docteur de patience en adversité", "réciteur des tristes matières par manière de compassion, et en préadvisant les hommes de soudaines fortunes[64]"; also the expressed desire to add to his fame[65]. This is very impressive tribute; it is paid, moreover, by one who knew enough about Boccaccio to

understand his relation to Petrarch[66], and has grasped very clearly the dramatic essentials of the *De Casibus*.

Not even Chastellain, however, had any real knowledge of the personality of Boccaccio and his true position in Italian letters. The author of the *Decameron*, the writer of the Italian poems, was to France, as to England and, Europe in general in the fifteenth century, neither novelist nor poet, butocholar and moral teacher, and so he remained until the Renaissance. In England, however, the most important works inspired by the *De Casibus* were in verse – the *Fall of Princes* itself, Cavendish's *Metrical Visions*, Lyndsay's *Tragedie of the Cardinall*, and *The Mirror for Magistrates*, to name only four of the most obvious examples – and there evolved a tradition of narrative tragedies of fortune in verse which linked on the one hand with the chronicle histories and on the other with an increasing understanding of genuine tragic themes, till the writers of history ceased to be moralists and the conception of tragedy became that of internal conflict, conditioned by external happenings, but not dependent on the irresponsible turnings of Fortune's wheel. In other words, the conception of the fall of princes in England was drawn forward into the path of literary evolution. In France, on the contrary, Laurent's rendering was actually more mediaeval than its original, the more important works derived from it were in prose, and such currents as it started ended in stagnant pools. The fifteenth century French writers on whom it left its mark merely took up the lyrical note of complaint with which they were already familiar, or conceived of Boccaccio as the "doctor of patience". Though what they had to say was well said, always edifying and sometimes interesting, it had no germs of abiding life. There was nothing humanistic about fifteenth century appreciation of the *De Casibus* in France.

Notes

1. Written probably between 1355 and 1360. I have used the edition of Hussner, *Iohannis Bocacii de Cercaldis De Casibus Virorvm Illvstrivm*, [Strasburg, 1475]. The best account of the book is given by Henri Hauvette, *Boccace, Étude Biographique et Littéraire*, Paris, 1914. A useful short account of all Boccaccio's Latin works is given by E. Rodocanachi, *les Œuvres Latines de Boccace, Séances et Travaux de l'Académie des Sciences morales et Politiques*, 1908, t. CLXIX, p. 597-609. See also Hauvette, *Recherches sur le « De Casibus » de Boccace* (extrait du vol. *Entre Camarades*, publié par la Société des Anciens Élèves de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris), Paris, 1901; Attilio Hortis, *Studij sulle Opere Latine del Boccaccio*. Trieste, 1879; the introduction to Lydgate's *FaIl of Princes*, éd. Henry Bergen, *E. E. T. S.*, Ex. Ser. CXXI-CXXIV (1924-1927); and Emil Koeppel, *Laurent de Premierfaits und John Lydgates Bearbeitungen von Boccaccios De Casibus Vinorum Illustrium*, Munich, 1885. All Boccaccio's biographers, as Cochin, Hutton, Koerting, Landau, make some attempt at a description.

2. Henri Hauvette. De Laurentio de Primofato Qui primus Joannis Boccaccii Opera Quaedam Gallice ineunte seculo XV (Thesim), Paris. 1903, p. 40. On Laurent see also Hortis, introduction to the Fall of Princes, and Koeppel.
3. There were two printed edition of the first, five of the second. See *Fall of Princes*, vol. IV, p. 127 f. I have used the edition of 1538, *Bocace des nobles maleureux*, nouellement imprime a Paris Lan Mil Cinq Cens. xxxviii.
4. My quotations from this preface are taken from the *Fall of Princes*, vol. I, p. lii-lvx, since the edition of 1538 not only lacks Boccaccio's prologue, but gives a very brief form of Laurent's, dedicating the work to Charles VIII, and omitting the long address to the Duke of Berry.
5. *Fall of Princes*, vol. I, p. lv.
6. Noted by Koeppel, p. 25. Laurent seems to distinguish "poetes" and "historiens approuuez". Lucan he evidently considers a historian in verse: Bk. VI, f. 138 b.
7. Laurent, Bk. II, f. 30 b.
8. Ibid., Bk. VI, f. 141 a.
9. Ibid., Bk. VI, f. 145 b.
10. Ibid., Bk. VII, f. 164 b.
11. Laurent, Bk. II, f. 25 a.
12. Ibid., Bk. II, 1. 26 b.
13. Ibid., Bk. VIII, f. 181 b.
14. Ibid., Bk. IX, f. 211 b.
15. Ibid., Bk. I, f. 19 b.
16. Ibid., Bk. VIII, f. 190 a.
17. Given in Hortis, p. 743-748.
18. Laurent, Bk. I, f. 14 a.
19. Ibid., Bk. III, f. 48 b-49 a.
20. *De Casibus*, Bk. IX, f. 137 b.
21. Laurent, Bk. IX, f. 202 b.
22. Hortis, p. 655.
23. Ibid., p. 627-628.
24. John Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, a Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries, London, 1924, p. 51-52.
25. Bks. III, VI-VIII. See R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West*, 5 vols. Edinburgh and London, 1903-1928, vols. III, V, *passim*. A short account of the main treatises on political thought in the Middle Ages is given by Lester K. Born, *The Perfect Prince, a Study in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Ideals*, *Speculum*, III (1928), p. 470-504.
26. *Fall of Princes*, vol. I, p. xv.
27. Laurent, Prol. *Decameron* (Hortis, p. 745).
28. Laurent, Bk. II, f. 26 a.
29. Ibid., Bk. IX, f. 211 b.

30. Laurent, Bk. VII, f. 167 b.
31. Ibid., Bk. VI, f. 123 b.
32. Ibid., Bk. I, f. 12 b-13 a (labours of Hercules).
33. Ibid., Bk. II, f. 31 b.
34. Koeppel, p. 23 f.
35. Laurent, Bk. VIII, f. 190 a.
36. Ibid., Bk. III, f. 64 b.
37. Ibid., Bk. I, f. 16 a.
38. Cf. Laurent, Bk. VII, f. 162 a, and *Fall of Princes*, Bk. VII, 11, 887-907.
39. Ibid., Bk. IX, f. 218 b.
40. Ibid., Bk. IX, f. 214 b-215 a.
41. Hortis, p. 744-745.
42. Laurent, Bk. IX, f. 214 b.
43. Hortis, p, 595-599; Léopold Delisle, *le Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, 3 vol., Paris, 1868-1881, vol. I, p. 87, 142, 150. For a few further references see *Fall of Princes*, vol. I, p. xiv-xv.
44. Hortis, p. 595; Delisle, vol. I, p. 106.
45. Hortis lists thirty-five mss. To this I add twelve: Br. Mus. Addit. 11696, 35321, Royal 18 D. vii; Hunterian Mus., Glasgow, 208, 371-372; Huntingdon Lib. 936, 937; Rouen 1440; Cambrai 686; Bergues 63; Carpentras 622; Wolfenbüttel 1572. French mss. in this list are drawn from the *Catalogue General des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France des Departements*, Paris, 1886-1904; the Wolfenbüttel ms. from *Die Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel*, beschrieben von Otto von Heinemann, Wolfenbüttel, 1884-1913. No doubt many more mss. could be added to this list.
46. The phrase is Huizinga's (p. 300).
47. Described by Hauvette, *Pour la Fortune de Boccace en France. Le Mystère de « La Vengeance de N.-S. Jésus-Christ »* (1437) (Estratto dagli *Studi di Filologia Moderna*, 1908).
48. *Pour la fortune de Boccace en France*, p. 6-7.
49. In 1408 (Hortis, p. 632). The sermon is described by Huizinga, p. 208-209.
50. *Les Oevvres de Maistre Alain Chartier*… toutes novvellement reneues… par André Dv Chesne Tovrangeav, Paris, 1617, p. 404 f.
51. Robert Gaguin, *Débat du Laboureur, du Prestre et du Gendarme*; in England, *The Boke of Noblesse*, l475; in Scotland, *The Complaynt of Scotland*, 1549.
52. Chartier, p. 404: the serpents and beasts which inhabit the Tower of Babel, (Laurent, f. 2 b), and, according to the editor of the *Complaynt of Scotland* (ed. J. A. H. Murry, *E. E. T. S.*, Ex. Ser. XVII (1872), p. xxx-xxxi), the silver columns and ivory portals of Ylion in Troy.
53. Chartier, p. 394.
54. Ibid., p. 710-717.
55. Ibid., p. 365.

56. *Œuvres de Georges Chastellain*, publiées par M. le baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles, 1863-1866, 8 vols., vol. VIII, p. 323-346.
57. Ibid., p. 329 f.
58. Ibid., vol. VI, p. 167 f.
59. Chastellain, vol. VII, p. 75-143. First printed in 1517. For its connection with a similar Spanish work see Arturo Farinelli, *Note sulla Fortuna del Boccaccio in Ispagna nell'Eta Media*, *Archiv.* CXIV (1905), p. 420 f.
60. Ibid., p. 80.
61. Ibid., vol. VII, p. 82-96. The list includes Richard II of England, Humphrey of Gloucester, and Suffolk.
62. Ibid., p. 96-97.
63. Ibid., p. 99.
64. He is thus addressed by Margaret, p. 97-98.
65. Ibid., p. 142-143.
66. "Pétrarque son maistre." Ibid., p. 143.

Reference: *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, vol. 14, 1934, p. 512-526.