



BOOK V.

ITALY.

SUMMARY.

The Fifth Book contains a description of Italy from the roots of the Alps to the Strait of Sicily, the Gulf of Taranto, and the region about Posidonium; likewise of Venetia, Liguria, Agro Piceno, Tuscany, Rome, Campania, Lucania, Apulia, and the islands lying in the sea between Genoa and Sicily.

CHAPTER I.

1. AT the foot of the Alps commences the region now known as Italy. The ancients by Italy merely understood *Ænotria*, which reached from the Strait of Sicily to the Gulf of Taranto, and the region about Posidonium,¹ but the name has extended even to the foot of the Alps; comprehending on one side that portion of Liguria situated by the sea, from the confines of *Tyrrhenia* to the *Var*; and on the other, that portion of *Istria* which extends as far as *Pola*. It seems probable that the first inhabitants were named Italians, and, being successful, they communicated their name to the neighbouring tribes, and this propagation [of name] continued until the Romans obtained dominion. Afterwards, when the Romans conferred on the Italians the privileges of equal citizenship, and thought fit to extend the same honour to the *Cisalpine Galatæ* and *Heneti*,² they comprised the whole under the general denomination of Italians and Romans; they likewise founded amongst them numerous colonies, some earlier, some later, of which it would be difficult to say which are the most considerable.

2. It is not easy to describe the whole of Italy under any one geometrical figure; although some say that it is a promontory of triangular form, extending towards the south and winter rising, with its apex towards the Strait of Sicily, and

¹ The Gulf of Salerno.

² Venetians.

its base formed by the Alps. [No one can allow this definition either for the base or one of the sides,] although it is correct for the other side which terminates at the Strait, and is washed by the Tyrrhenian Sea. But a triangle, properly so called, is a rectilinear figure, whereas in this instance both the base and the sides are curved. So that, if I agree, I must add that the base and the sides are of a curved figure, and it must be conceded to me that the eastern side deviates, as well ; otherwise they have not been sufficiently exact in describing as one side that which extends from the head of the Adriatic to the Strait [of Sicily]. For we designate as a side a line without any angle ; now a line without any angle is one which does not incline to either side, or but very little ; whereas the line from Ariminum¹ to the Iapygian promontory,² and that from the Strait [of Sicily] to the same promontory, incline very considerably. The same I consider to be the case with regard to the lines drawn from the head of the Adriatic and Iapygia, for meeting about the neighbourhood of Ariminum and Ravenna, they form an angle, or if not an angle, at least a strongly defined curve. Consequently, if the coast from the head [of the Adriatic] to Iapygia be considered as one side, it cannot be described as a right line ; neither can the remainder of the line from hence to the Strait [of Sicily], though it may be considered another side, be said to form a right line. Thus the figure [of Italy] may be said to be rather quadrilateral than trilateral, and can never without impropriety be called a triangle. It is better to confess that you cannot define exactly ungeometrical figures.

3. [Italy], however, may be described in the following manner. The roots of the Alps are curved, and in the form of a gulf, the head turned towards Italy ; the middle of the gulf in the country of the Salassi, and its extremities turned, the one towards Ocra and the head of the Adriatic, the other towards the coast of Liguria as far as Genoa, a mercantile city of the Ligurians, where the Apennines fall in with the Alps. Immediately under [the Alps] there is a considerable plain, of about an equal extent of 2100 stadia both in breadth and length ; its southern side is closed by the coast of the Heneti³ and the Apennines, which extend to Ariminum and

¹ Rimini.

² Capo di Leuca.

³ Venetians.

Ancona ; for these mountains, commencing at Liguria, enter Tyrrhenia, leaving but a narrow sea-coast ; they afterwards retire by degrees into the interior, and having reached the territory of Pisa, turn towards the east in the direction of the Adriatic as far as the country about Ariminum and Ancona, where they approach the sea-coast of the Heneti at right angles. Cisalpine Keltica is enclosed within these limits, and the length of the coast joined to that of the mountains is 6300 stadia ; its breadth rather less than 2000. The remainder of Italy is long and narrow, and terminates in two promontories, one¹ extending to the Strait of Sicily, the other² to Iapygia. It is embraced on one side by the Adriatic,³ on the other by the Tyrrhenian Sea.⁴ The form and size of the Adriatic resembles that portion of Italy bounded by the Apennines and the two seas, and extending as far as Iapygia and the isthmus which separates the Gulf of Taranto from that of Posidonium.⁵ The greatest breadth of both is about 1300 stadia, and the length not much less than 6000. The remainder of the country is possessed by the Bruttii, and certain of the Leucani. Polybius tells us, that traversing the sea-coast on foot from Iapygia⁶ to the Strait [of Sicily] there are 3000 stadia, the coast being washed by the Sea of Sicily ; but that going by water it is 500 stadia less. The Apennines, after approaching the country about Ariminum and Ancona, and determining the breadth of Italy at this point from sea to sea, change their direction and divide the whole country throughout its length. As far as the Peucetii and Leucani they do not recede much from the Adriatic, but on arriving at the Leucani they decline considerably towards the other sea,⁷ and traversing the remainder of the distance through the Leucani and Bruttii, terminate at Leucopetra,⁸ in Reggio. Such is a general description of the whole of present Italy. We will now endeavour to undertake a description of its various parts. And, first, of those situated below the Alps.

¹ The peninsula occupied by the people named Brettii, or Bruttii.

² The peninsula now designated Terra di Lecce, and called by the ancients sometimes Iapygia, at others Messapia, Calabria, and Salentina. The isthmus of this peninsula was supposed to be formed by a line drawn from Brindisi to Taranto.

³ The Gulf of Venice.

⁴ The Sea of Tuscany.

⁵ The Gulf of Salerno.

⁶ Capo di Leuca.

⁷ The Mediterranean.

⁸ Capo dell' Armi.

4. This is a superb plain variegated with fruitful hills. The Po divides it almost through its midst, one side being denominated Cispadana, and the other Transpadana. Cispadana comprehends that part next the Apennines and Liguria, and Transpadana the remainder. The former [division] is inhabited by Ligurian and Keltic nations, the former inhabiting the mountains and the latter the plains; and the latter [division] by Kelts and Heneti. These Kelts are of the same race as the Transalpine Kelts. Concerning the Heneti there are two traditions, some saying that they are a colony of those Kelts of the same name who dwell by the ocean.¹ Others say that they are descended from the Veneti of Paphlagonia, who took refuge here with Antenor after the Trojan war; and they give as a proof of this the attention these people bestow on rearing horses; which, though now entirely abandoned, was formerly in great esteem among them, resulting from the ancient rage for breeding mules, which Homer thus mentions:

“From the Eneti for forest mules renowned.”²

It was here that Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, kept his stud of race-horses. And, in consequence, the Henetian horses were much esteemed in Greece, and their breed in great repute for a long period.

5. The whole of this country³ is full of rivers and marshes, especially the district of the Heneti, which likewise experiences the tides of the sea. This is almost the only part of our sea⁴ which is influenced in the same manner as the ocean, and, like it, has ebb and flood tides. In consequence most of the plain is covered with lagoons.⁵ The inhabitants have dug canals and dikes, after the manner of Lower Egypt, so that part of the country is drained and cultivated, and the rest is navigable. Some of their cities stand in the midst of water like islands, others are only partially surrounded. Such as lie above the marshes in the interior are situated on rivers navigable for a surprising distance, the Po in particular,

¹ Of Vannes.

² From the Heneti, whence is the race of wild mules. Iliad ii. 857.

³ Transpadana. ⁴ The Mediterranean.

⁵ The whole of the coast from Ravenna to Aquileia at the bottom of the Gulf of Venice is still covered with marshes and lagoons, as it was in the time of Strabo. The largest of these lagoons are at the mouths of the Po, the others at the mouths of the torrents which descend from the Alps

which is both a large river, and also continually swelled by the rains and snows. As it expands into numerous outlets, its mouth is not easily perceptible and is difficult to enter. But experience surmounts even the greatest difficulties.

6. Formerly, as we have said, the district next this river was chiefly inhabited by Kelts. The principal nations of these Kelts were the Boii, the Insubri, and the Senones and Gæsataë, who in one of their incursions took possession of Rome. The Romans afterwards entirely extirpated these latter, and expelled the Boii from their country, who then migrated to the land about the Danube, where they dwelt with the Taurisci, and warred against the Dacians until the whole nation was destroyed; and they left to the surrounding tribes this sheep-pasturing district of Illyria. The Insubri still exist; their metropolis is Mediolanum,¹ which formerly was a village, (for they all dwelt in villages,) but is now a considerable city, beyond the Po, and almost touching the Alps. Near to it is Verona, a large city, and the smaller towns Brescia, Mantua, Reggio, and Como. This latter was but a very indifferent colony, having been seriously impaired by the Rhæti who dwelt higher up, but it was repopled by Pompey Strabo, father of Pompey the Great. Afterwards Caius Scipio² transferred thither 3000 men, and finally divus Cæsar peopled it with 5000 men, the most distinguished of whom were 500 Greeks. He conferred on these the privileges of citizens, and enrolled them amongst the inhabitants. They not only took up their abode here, but left their name to the colony itself; for all the inhabitants taking the name of *Νεοκωμῖται*, this was translated [into Latin], and the place called Novum-Comum. Near to this place is Lake Larius,³ which is filled by the river Adda, and afterwards flows out into the Po. The sources of this river, as well as those of the Rhine, rise in Mount Adulas.⁴

7. These cities are situated high above the marshes; near to them is Patavium,⁵ the finest of all the cities in this

¹ Milan.

² Apparently a mistake for Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus; we are unacquainted with any Caius Scipio.

³ The Lake of Como.

⁴ The source of the Adda is at the foot of Mount Braulio; the three sources of the Rhine issue from Mounts St. Bernardin, St. Barnabé, and Crispalt, at a considerable distance from the source of the Adda.

⁵ Padua.

district, and which at the time of the late census¹ was said to contain 500 equites. Anciently it could muster an army of 120,000 men. The population and skill of this city is evinced by the vast amount of manufactured goods it sends to the Roman market, especially clothing of all kinds. It communicates with the sea by a river navigable from a large harbour [at its mouth], the river runs across the marshes for a distance of 250 stadia. This harbour,² as well as the river,³ is named Medoacus. Situated in the marshes is the great [city of] Ravenna, built entirely on piles,⁴ and traversed by canals, which you cross by bridges or ferry-boats. At the full tides it is washed by a considerable quantity of sea-water, as well as by the river, and thus the sewage is carried off, and the air purified; in fact, the district is considered so salubrious that the [Roman] governors have selected it as a spot to bring up and exercise the gladiators in. It is a remarkable peculiarity of this place, that, though situated in the midst of a marsh, the air is perfectly innocuous; the same is the case with respect to Alexandria in Egypt, where the malignity of the lake during summer is entirely removed by the rising of the river which covers over the mud. Another remarkable peculiarity is that of its vines, which, though growing in the marshes, make very quickly and yield a large amount of fruit, but perish in four or five years. Altinum⁵ stands likewise in the marshes, its situation being very similar to that of Ravenna. Between them is Butrium,⁶ a small city of Ravenna, and Spina,⁷ which is now a village, but was anciently a celebrated Grecian city. In fact, the treasures of the Spinitæ are shown at Delphi, and it is, besides, reported in history that

¹ This appears to have been the last census of the three taken under the reign of Augustus. The first occurred in the year of Rome 726, twenty-eight years before the Christian era; the number of citizens then amounted to 4,064,000, or, according to Eusebius, 4,011,017. The second was in the year of Rome 746, eight years before the Christian era; the number of citizens was then found to be 4,163,000. The third census was in the year of Rome 767, in the fourteenth year of the Christian era; the number of citizens at this time was 4,037,000, according to the monument of Ancyra, but according to Eusebius, 9,070,000.

² Chioggia.

³ The Bacchiglione.

⁴ ξυλοπαγήσ ὄλη. We have followed the rendering of the French translators; however, Guarini, Buonaccivoli, Xylander, Siebenkees, and Bréquigny, all understand Strabo to mean that the city was built entirely of wood.

⁵ Altino.

⁶ Butrio.

⁷ Spinazino.

they had dominion over the sea. They say that it formerly stood on the sea; now, however, the district is inland about 90 stadia from the sea. Ravenna is reported to have been founded by Thessalians, who not being able to sustain the violence of the Tyrrheni, welcomed into their city some of the Ombrici, who still possess it, while they themselves returned home. These cities for the most part are surrounded, and, as it were, washed by the marshes.

8. Opitergium,¹ Concordia, Atria,² Vicetia,³ as well as some smaller cities, are less annoyed by the marshes: they communicate by small navigable canals with the sea. They say that Atria was formerly a famous city, from which the Adriatic Gulf, with a slight variation, received its name. Aquileia, which is the nearest to the head [of the gulf], was founded by the Romans,⁴ to keep in check the barbarians dwelling higher up. You may navigate transport ships to it up the river Natisone for more than sixty stadia. This is the trading city with the nations of Illyrians who dwell round the Danube. Some deal in marine merchandise, and carry in waggons wine in wooden casks and oil, and others exchange slaves, cattle, and hides. Aquileia is without the limits of the Heneti, their country being bounded by a river which flows from the mountains of the Alps, and is navigable for a distance of 1200 stadia, as far as the city of Noreia,⁵ near to where Cnæus Carbo was defeated in his attack upon the Kimbrians.⁶ This place contains fine stations for gold washing and iron-works. At the very head of the Adriatic is the Timavum,⁷ a temple consecrated to Diomede, worthy of notice. For it contains a harbour and a fine grove, with seven springs of fresh water, which fall into the sea in a broad, deep river.⁸ Polybius, however, says that, with the exception of one, they are all salt springs, and that it is on this account the place is called by the inhabitants—*the source and mother of the sea*. Posidonius, on the other hand, tells us that the river Timavo, after flowing from the mountains, precipitates itself into a chasm,

¹ Oderzo.² Adria.³ Vicenza.⁴ About the year 186 before the Christian era.⁵ Friesach in Steiermark.⁶ 113 years before the Christian era.⁷ S. Giovanni del Carso.⁸ The present Timavo.

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