

1839.]

*America Vespucci.*

239

## A M E R I C A V E S P U C C I .

In the midst of the *melée* of the strife of parties at the seat of government, the arrival of a beautiful young female, a direct and lineal descendant of the famous old navigator whose name she bears, in common with this continent—an exile from country and home, to which she has bid an eternal farewell, on account of the political opinions which an Austrian despotism could not tolerate even in a woman—casting herself with a frank and noble confidence on the magnanimity of the great nation to which she has always felt herself bound by a peculiar tie, which may well be presumed to have insensibly given its direction to the formation of her character and opinions—such an arrival is too remarkable an occurrence, and too agreeable a relief to the embittered excitement of politics, to be suffered to pass without at least a brief and slight notice in these pages.

The circumstances which have led this interesting young stranger to our shores—if it is not a misapplication of the word to designate her as a *stranger*, though the soft accents of her native Tuscan are as yet the only language familiar to her lips—may be thus briefly stated.

After spending, like most of the young Italian ladies of rank, fourteen years of her youth in a convent for her education (the convent of *Le Signore della Quiete*, in the environs of Florence) she was introduced into the midst of the brilliant society of the capital and court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, at the age of seventeen. She was placed by her parents in the service of the Grand Duchess, as a "*demoiselle de compagnie*," or maid of honor. There she was of course surrounded with all the seductive influences of European aristocratic life, in the midst of the splendors and luxuries of the Pitti Palace. Her mind had, however, already—by its own self-derived impulses, as it would seem, for it was certainly entirely at variance with all the natural bias of such an education and such a position—taken a decided direction in the movement of liberal ideas which is the leading characteristic of the age, and which in no country has exercised a stronger influence upon the imagination of ardent youth than in Italy. Possessed of rare natural talents, highly accomplished by reading and cultivation, with remarkable force of character, vivacity of imagination,

and energy of will, it will not be a subject of surprise, that, during the agitations that were fermenting in the north of Italy immediately after the French Revolution, she was one of the few females whose social position and personal qualities gained them admission to the secret societies which were conspiring to rid Italy of the dominion of a foreign despotism, and to unite the whole of that beautiful and unhappy land under a single sovereignty, which might again restore it to a rank amidst the family of nations. But we are not aware of any others whose ardor carried them beyond the private machinations of conspiracy, to the actual field of battle and blood.

In the attempted rising of August, 1832, and in the engagement with the Austrians on the banks of the *Rimini*, in which it will be remembered by our readers that young Louis Bonaparte took part, she conducted herself with great gallantry, and received a severe sabre stroke on the back of her head, from an Austrian dragoon (to whom, however, though nameless, the justice ought to be done to state that he did not know her to be a woman;) and in her fall to the ground, her right arm was broken by the weight of her horse falling upon it. Though suspected, her disguised participation in this affair could not be proved, and after her recovery from her wounds she spent two years at her father's house in Florence, though under a vigilant surveillance. This resulted in the interception of a letter to her, as secretary of one of the sections of the Society of "*La Jeune Italie*," which made it apparent that she could disclose its entire organization in Tuscany. She was accordingly required either to betray her associates, or to quit Florence *within twenty-four hours*. Her choice between these two alternatives does not need to be stated. She found a present asylum under the protection of the Queen of the French; and it is under the auspices of the French flag, and the highest guarantees of the genuineness of her title to American sympathy and friendship, in all points of view, of character, conduct, family, and position, that she is now here, in the country to which she has always looked as her natural home of refuge and protection. Her letter to Congress, already before the public, presents her case to that body and to the country with an elegance and eloquence to which we can add nothing further, to support her simple and dignified appeal to the generous magnanimity of the great nation "christened," to use her own language, by the ancestor who has bequeathed to her, as to it, his imperishable name. Our limits permit us to quote only its concluding paragraphs:

"America Vespucci will make no demand on the American Government. Those who make demands are presumed to have rights to be established or justice to claim. She has neither. She knows that the Americans have been magnanimous towards all who have rendered services to the nation; that they have been generous towards all who have done a noble act for their country; and that they have, moreover, granted protection and even assistance to emigrants from other nations. There is but one Vespucci who has given his name to a quarter of the globe. Will the Americans do nothing for the descendant of Americus? She desires a country, she seeks a land that will receive her as a friend. She has a name; that is all her inheritance, all her fortune. May this hospitable nation grant her a corner of that land in which it is so rich, and may the title of citizen be bestowed upon the poor emigrant!

"If Americus Vespucci were now alive the Americans would rush in crowds to offer him honors and rewards. In the nineteenth century will this civilized nation forget that in the veins of his descendant flows the same blood? America Vespucci collected all her little fortune in order to reach this country; now, she desires only to make known her position to the Congress of this great nation, feeling confident that the Americans will never abandon her. She will not ask, having no other claim than that of bearing the name of America, but she will receive a gift from the nation by which she hopes not to be regarded as a stranger. That will not humiliate her. Such an act of generosity will console her feelings, honor her name, flatter her family, and even her country. The gifts of a nation always honor those who receive them. When the world shall know that the American nation has done an act of generosity in favor of the descendant of Vespucci, will not the approbation of all man kind be a glorious recompense? And true gratitude will remain in the heart of AMERICA VESPUCCI."