

**A TOUR**  
THROUGH  
**THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES**

OF  
THE KINGDOM OF  
**N A P L E S,**

BY  
THE HON. RICHARD KEPPEL CRAVEN.

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TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED  
**A SKETCH**  
OF THE  
IMMEDIATE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THE LATE REVOLUTION.

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## CHAPTER VI.

City of Bari . . . Hospitality of the Intendente . . . Aqua Stomachica . . . Port . . . Priory of St. Nicholas . . . Sepulchral Monument of Queen Bona . . . Cathedral . . . Citadel . . . Lyceum . . . Departure from Bari . . . Plague of Noja in 1816 . . . Mola di Bari . . . Convent of S. Vito.

**BARI** projects into the sea; a narrow road encircles it entirely on that side, and is resorted to by the inhabitants as their only drive or walk. Two gates had existed at the northern and southern extremities; but the last had been just demolished to enlarge the approach to the port and market-place, and make room for several public edifices, which will essentially tend to the convenience and improvement of the city. The *Intendenza*, or palace of the civil governor, is well placed, facing the harbour on one side, and looking on the other to the largest square in the town. Here I alighted, as he was apprized of my arrival, and a letter of introduction, which he had received previous to it, rendered my accepting his hospitality a matter of necessity; although there is, I suspect, a tolerable inn, and I should naturally have preferred making it my residence, as I had hitherto done, for I was aware of the constraint likely to be imposed upon an English traveller by the overstrained hospitality exercised by individuals whose habits and mode of life are so opposite to ours; and though

in the subsequent progress of my journey I was almost invariably, from the want of inns, compelled to submit to it, scarcely a day passed that the recurrence of the inconveniences attached to this mode of reception did not put my patience, and I fear my temper, to severe trials. I may probably hereafter make the reader better acquainted with these evils, however trifling in themselves, and only rendered irksome from their daily repetition; but in this instance it would be the height of injustice and ingratitude not to confess that I experienced nothing of the kind under the roof of Prince Zurlo; and that he united, to the unaffected hospitality and desire of pleasing which I found every where, the art of removing all restraint from his guests, a quality I rarely met with: his attentions were always sufficient to awaken my gratitude, while they never encroached on those occupations which necessarily require hours of solitude and tranquillity; at the same time his own conversation and manners were such as to render every instant passed in the enjoyment of them, full of interest and satisfaction; and, as in doing the honours of his own house, I found him the most complete gentleman and man of the world, so in his kind assistance in examining the objects most worthy of remark, I received the accurate information of a most judicious observer.

Bari is an old town, of 19,000 souls, which has lately received considerable embellishments and additions. The streets are dark, narrow, and winding, and as there are no sewers or conduits in all Apulia, the consequences may be imagined in a town where the level is in many parts not higher than that of the adjoining sea. The water, drawn from brackish springs, or ill-constructed cisterns, is mostly bad. The brisk trade it carries on with Trieste

and the ports of Dalmatia, consisting in exports of oil, cotton, and grain, in exchange for linen and other articles, gives it, however, an appearance of animation, ease, and opulence.

One of the principal, or at least the most noted productions of this city, is a certain liqueur or rosolio, known by the name of *aqua stomachica di Bari*, and chiefly composed of herbs and spices, that are supposed to impart many medicinal virtues to it. There are several convents celebrated for the perfection of this article, which is generally served after coffee; but the apothecaries also compound it. I presume that its grateful aromatic flavour to the palate goes a great way towards its fame as a cordial.

The port of Bari, formed by two moles, which give it the advantage of security against exterior winds, like most of those on this coast, wants depth; still, with the exception of that of Barletta, it was the best I had yet seen, as well as the most frequented.

The most remarkable edifice in the town is the priory of St. Nicholas, erected in 1087, when the bones of this saint were found at Myra, in Lycia, of which he was bishop, and transported by some Barian mariners to their native town. Roger, Duke of Puglia, endowed the church with a considerable grant of land, and the following year Urban the Second consecrated Elias, who was afterwards canonized, archbishop of Bari, and first grand prior of this foundation. In 1098 the same pontiff held a council at Bari, in which the procession of the Holy Ghost was determined according to the dogmas of the Latin church. Among the prelates who attended it we find Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The interior of this Gothic edifice is very extensive, and impressive in its effect. The arches which divide the aisles are

supported on coupled pillars of granite of different heights. Three several arches stretch across the body of the church; they only reach to the capitals of the pillars, and acquire thereby the unusual appearance of as many bridges; but, notwithstanding this circumstance, and their not being placed parallel, in consequence of the pillars from which they spring not always facing each other exactly, their effect is singularly picturesque. The ceiling is painted and richly gilt, and there are a few good pictures in the different chapels. But the principal object of attention is the sepulchral monument erected to Bona Sforza, dowager Queen of Poland, and only daughter of Isabella of Arragon, Duchess of Milan, from whom she inherited the principality of Rossano, and the duchy of Bari. This queen, instigated, as the historian Summonte somewhat maliciously observes, by the advice of her favourite, Giorgio Lorenzo Pappacoda, quitted Poland after her husband's death, and in the year 1556 removed to this her native inheritance and sovereignty; where, however, she only survived one year, leaving to Philip the Second, then possessor of these realms, her two principalities. The monument in question, raised by the filial devotion of her daughter, also Queen of Poland, consists of a sarcophagus of black marble, on which the statue of Bona, in white marble, is placed in the attitude of prayer. The sculpture is good, and the expression of the face and figure full of nature and simplicity, though perhaps somewhat deficient in the dignity which we look for in a queen. On each side are two symbolical figures of Polish provinces, and in niches behind those of St. Casimir and St. Stanislaus; but these four, though by the same sculptor, have no connexion with the rest of the

composition, which perhaps would be more striking without them, and certainly much less encumbered.

Three chairs are next shown as objects of curiosity: the first, from its curious and barbarous taste, seems very ancient, but there is no tradition annexed to it; the two others, richly gilt and painted, are meant for the use of the king himself, who is first canon of the order, and that of the prior upon certain great occasions. These date from the reign of Ferdinand the First of Arragon.

Among the sepulchral inscriptions of a remote period, that abound in this church, I noticed that of St. Elias, and another of a person of much greater note in the history of these realms, Robert of Bari, high prothonotary under Charles of Anjou: this magistrate, or rather statesman, publicly read the iniquitous sentence which condemned Corradino to an untimely and ignominious death; and was, if we may believe some of the native historians, killed on the spot by the indignant and high-minded Robert of Flanders, son-in-law to the usurping tyrant. Most of these inscriptions are Latin, in Gothic characters, and deeply engraven.

The bones of St. Nicholas rest in a subterranean church; the pavement of which was once much deeper than it is now, but was raised in consequence of being subject to inundations from the sea, which at high tides found a way in. The great altar is most magnificently decorated with silver bassi rilievi, representing various miracles and acts of the life of the Bishop of Myra. The execution of these, as well as that of a silver bust of the saint, is far above mediocrity. Under the altar a stone chest contains his bones, which Swinburne says are floating in a liquid. I was favoured with the permission, or rather invitation to examine them, and

could only see the reflection of a small taper, let down through a circular aperture in some very clear water: the silver candlestick which held this taper had a small hole in it, and being hollow, brought up some of this liquor, gravely said to distil unceasingly from these holy remains. I was desired to taste it, and found it resemble pure water, rendered sweet and glutinous by the addition of sugar, but entirely tasteless. This bears the name of *manna* of St. Nicholas, and is a remedy for all disorders. Several relics are here preserved with the greatest care, particularly the barrel which, for want of a more appropriate vessel, was used to contain the bones on their passage from Myra. A pillar is also shown, that, during the fabrication of the church, was changed from wood into iron by the saint; it is surrounded by a grating, as a defence from the attacks of the devout, who with knives or scrapers gather morsels of this transmuted substance.

I shall pass over the catalogue of chalices, vases, lamps, and other precious objects contained in the treasury. The coronation robes of Charles the Second of Anjou were disposed of during the French occupation; but the relics were left, which, as the head canon observed to me, *Sono il vero tesoro*.

The cathedral, situated at no great distance from this church, is a fine building, with some vestiges of Gothic, and a light high tower. The interior has been so renovated by one of the archbishops, a Monsignor Gaeta, that it is impossible to look with feelings of complacency at his picture, which hangs in the sacristy, especially when one is told that among other judicious improvements, he caused some very fine verd antique columns to be stuccoed and white-washed, having first taken care to see them



well scraped and hacked, to secure the adhesion of the plaster. These are surmounted by clumsy chocolate-coloured capitals, well suited to such specimens of bad taste and barbarism. This church is dedicated to St. Sabino, and has a crypt in form like that of St. Nicholas, but far more splendid in the number and choice of coloured marbles used in its decoration. It also contains a miraculous image of Santa Maria of Constantinople, brought from that city by S. Macarius.

The castle or citadel of Bari is ancient and capacious, and has undergone several alterations and repairs from the care of successive sovereigns, but more particularly from that of the Queen of Poland, who died in it. An inscription, composed of large letters of brass, records her munificence, and runs all round the cornice of one of the courts, which is encircled by the apartments she once occupied: they are large vaulted rooms, somewhat gloomy, from the thickness of the walls and the smallness of the windows, looking towards the sea. At the extremity of this suite of chambers is a small chapel, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, and over the door of the latter is the following inscription:

Hic lascivientem puellam, vel sævientem Hydrum igne domuit  
Franciscus. Cinere exutus veste prudens qui ex aquis ortam  
Venerem et juxta aquas adortum flammis extinxit Fortis qui  
inexpugnabile reddidit in hoc castro pudicitie claustrum.

It seems that Frederic the Second, at that time residing in this castle, was inclined to play a kind of practical joke upon his guest St. Francis, who guarded against the fatal consequences of it by performing a miracle; which was, however, not new even in those days, and has been repeated since. The monarch and

his suite, who were hidden to watch the result of the temptation, were no doubt edified at so unexpected a denouement.

There is a provincial school or Lyceum at Bari, supported by government; a species of establishment now extant in most of the capital towns of this kingdom. This admits 120 scholars from four provinces, who are fed, lodged, clothed, and instructed for eight ducats a month each. It had been transferred some years back to a large convent, but was at the period I visited it restored to its first locality. The internal arrangements for the accommodation of the students and their masters were yet in their infancy; but the whole seemed laid out in the most judicious manner, and reflected great credit on those who had the management of it, as well as upon the different professors.

It was now the 11th of May, and after a fortnight of very sultry weather one short shower fell, and somewhat tempered the heat; but the hopes of a continuance of rain, which was highly necessary to the improvement of the corn, now ripening fast, were speedily checked; a circumstance the more to be lamented, as the winter had been unusually dry, and the crop was in consequence likely to be scanty. On my way from Giovenazzo to Bari I was surprised to find reapers at work on the barley, and in all probability the wheat harvest would soon begin: the latter is much earlier on this side of the peninsula than on the western coast.

From Bari my road lay along the sea-shore, but I deviated from this in order to see Noja, a small town, about seven miles distant, little known in history, but somewhat worthy of notice at this particular period, as having recently been the seat of the plague: as this event, however disastrous and alarming to the

kingdom of Naples, was little known out of it, except by general reports in the public papers of the time, I think a more detailed recital of it may not prove unacceptable to the reader.

The disease broke out as early as the 23d of November, 1815, for to this date the first death has been traced; but though it was speedily communicated to the family whose chief it had destroyed, and afterwards to several others, it was not until the last day of December that the nature of the disorder was publicly acknowledged, and the necessary precautions adopted to prevent its extension. When the intelligence reached Naples, and the consequences that might result from the delay which had already taken place were anticipated, the consternation, as may easily be imagined, was universal, and deeply felt; but the energy of the measures employed by government, and the readiness and activity with which they were seconded by the Intendente of Bari, and the local authorities of the surrounding country, by degrees allayed the public agitation, especially when two months had elapsed, and no symptom of the disease had made its appearance in any other part of the kingdom. A triple cordon, marked by deep trenches and guarded by military, was drawn round the town, and its only gate furnished with artillery. In the mean time the ravages of the plague in the town itself continued, accelerated in part by the unwillingness of the inhabitants to submit to the interior preventive laws, the only means of impeding its progress, and by the obstinate incredulity which led them to deny the contagious quality of the malady; while nothing but evidence the most appalling could overcome their blindness. A number of persons having, in direct opposition to the existing regulations, met and celebrated the last

days of the Carnival with the usual demonstrations of convivial festivity, the consequences were fatal ; for within the space of seven days forty-five out of the fifty who composed the assembly expired victims of the infection. Another similar instance of imprudence was exhibited by a woman, who at the festival of Easter arrayed herself in the holiday clothes belonging to one of the early sufferers, since whose death they had not been worn. She survived but a few hours this act of temerity. To enforce the rigid observation of the preventive laws on the cordon of troops established round the town, some terrific examples of discipline occurred during the existence of the disorder. A priest of Noja, instigated by insanity, malevolence, or infatuation, had been seen to throw a pack of cards to two of the soldiers on duty, who had not only received but used it: the three culprits were shot, in obedience to the existing decrees ; and some time after another individual underwent the same punishment, for having wilfully secreted some goods, knowing them to be infected. It may seem a coincidence scarcely worth noticing, that the last, and the priest above mentioned, bore the same name, which was also that of the first person who died of the plague. A similar instance of severity was exemplified in an unfortunate person, who, while under the workings of delirium caused by the disease itself, leaped over the ditch which marked the line of the first cordon, and was shot dead by the sentry, who had in vain called upon him to desist.

It was on the 7th of June, 1816, that the last victim of this dire visitation perished, according to the report of the Committee of Health established at Noja ; but several instances of death caused by complaints bearing some analogy to it, added to the time

requisite for purifications, demolitions, and other precautionary measures, retarded the final liberation of the inhabitants from the painful state of restriction imposed upon them. The last quarantine, considered unavoidable after the disappearance of all the symptoms of contagion, was protracted for the space of two months by the tedious recovery of three patients; so that it was not until the first of November of the same year that the natives of Noja were allowed a free intercourse with the rest of the kingdom.

The solemnity with which it was deemed expedient to perform the ceremonies that took place on this memorable occasion is recorded with some minuteness in a work published the following year, by a physician of Putignano, in the vicinity; and from this book, and the additional information given me by the Intendente of Bari, and the syndic of Noja itself, I have collected the preceding account.

The general commanding the troops whose exertions had been so beneficial was present, attended by his staff, and accompanied by the Intendente of the province, the vicar-general, and all the public functionaries of Bari. They received at the barrier, which was yet closed, the declaration, upon oath, of the Medical Corps and Board of Health, to attest the regularity observed in the course of the superadded quarantine. Afterwards the syndic and magistracy of Noja presented to the general the keys of the town, now about to resume the privileges granted by the laws of the realm, which for ten months had been suspended. The general, in reply, testified the king's approbation of their conduct; and, after declaring them free from all future interdiction, gave his hand to the principal magistrate, and entered the town,

preceded by the troops themselves, who had previously cut down the chevaux de frize forming the barrier. The civil powers joined the military, and, accompanied by the acclamations of the joyous multitude, hastened to the principal church, where a solemn thanksgiving was rendered to the Almighty, and a *Te Deum* sung. Afterwards, a ceremony as impressive but more mournful took place in the pest ground, where the same assemblage of persons, including the surviving population of the town, offered up a prayer for the souls of the unfortunate victims whose remains were there deposited. Thus ended a calamity, which had kept the whole kingdom in a state of anxiety and alarm for nearly a year.

The origin of it has never been satisfactorily ascertained, but was supposed to have been derived from some infected merchandize brought over in the summer of 1815, by two of the trading inhabitants of Noja, from the coast of Dalmatia, where the disorder was then raging. It was reported that soon after their return some very fine linen had been sold in the town at so low a price that it was suspected to have been smuggled; and one of these individuals, who was absent from Noja at the time the plague declared itself, stimulated by the wish of seeing his family, applied to the magistrate of Bari for permission to return thither. He was denounced, arrested, and underwent one interrogatory, which threw but little light on the business; before a second took place, a violent fever, attended with almost immediate frenzy, put an end to his existence in a very short time, so that to this day the real source of the evil remains unascertained; though another account attributed it to the secret importation of some hides, which had been deposited in the house of the person who was first attacked by it.

Prince Zurlo was kind enough to take me in his carriage as far as Capurso, a small town, of 1500 inhabitants, situated four miles on the high road from Bari to Taranto, at the spot where that to Noja branches off. Capurso is remarkable for nothing but a church and convent, celebrated for an image of the Madonna, which, having been found in an old well in 1705, is called Santa Maria del Pozzo, and attracts yearly a number of devotees.

Three short miles brought me to Noja, where, to my great surprise, and, I may add, consternation, I found the syndic and many of the principal inhabitants, together with apparently all the infantine part of the population, waiting my arrival, just outside of the gate, and I was accompanied by this numerous retinue as I visited the various parts of the town. This is composed of an ancient and modern division, separated by walls and ditches; the former called *Pagano*. The lowness of the houses, the contracted space afforded by their interior to a crowded population, and the narrowness of the tortuous lanes along which they are constructed, rendered this portion of the town, where the disease originally broke out, particularly favourable to its quick propagation; and as more than two-thirds of its occupiers had fallen a prey to it, the whole was now untenanted, the habitations having been unroofed at the time that the general purification took place; this consisted in repeatedly burning all suspected clothes, goods, and furniture, and in renewed ablutions and fumigations, followed by a scraping of the walls and universal white-washing: the last operation has given the whole an appearance of cleanly freshness, which, added to the healthy looks and Sunday vestments of the natives, struck me forcibly, as my

mind pictured to itself the calamitous scene exhibited within these walls two years before. The principal church, a handsome Gothic building, has alone, in its exterior, escaped the universal application of white-wash or plaster; but its interior decorations were all prudently sacrificed to the observance of the preventive regulations; more especially as the first victims of the disorder had been buried within its walls. The tombs of these ill-fated individuals are, with the altar, the only objects to catch the eye as it wanders over the empty space: they are raised from the pavement in square piles of masonry, each bearing the following inscription:

Sepolcro di Appestati.

Pena di morte a chi osa aprirlo.

A large convent, near the entrance of the town, was converted into a plague hospital, and divided into wards, according to the gradations of the disease. Its cloisters surround a small garden filled with orange trees, the first I had seen since I quitted Manfredonia: through a small door, opening from this inclosure into some cultivated fields, the dead were conveyed to the cemetery appropriated to their particular reception, distant about a hundred yards from the convent, and now encircled with high walls. Noja is only three miles from the Adriatic in a straight line, and its situation, somewhat elevated above the surrounding level, enabled me to catch a full view of its clear waters beyond the olive groves and well-cultivated belt of ground which environs the town. Again the same contrast that struck me on my first arrival forcibly presented itself to my mind. I was now standing in what might be termed the very sanctuary of the plague; the mementos



of its ravages were presented in the tombs around me, and appeared on the persons of many of the bystanders; the seamed scars which several of them bore were exhibited to me with a feeling of grateful exultance, as striking as these indelible records were frightful. Two years since these walls must have inclosed scenes imagination can scarcely picture, and the individuals who now accompanied me were then either suffering under the actual infliction of the disease, bewailing the loss of friends who had fallen under it, or employed in offices as disgusting as they were hazardous: the country was then uncultivated and unproductive, commerce was suspended, and social intercourse prohibited; although it is not a little remarkable that many marriages took place during the infection. But now the breath of contagion had ceased its influence, and all its accompanying gloom was dissipated. Gaiety and industry had resumed their course; the operation of the one was clearly displayed in the appearance of the natives, whose handsome persons were decently if not expensively attired; while the effects of the other were evident in the well-tilled fields, and carefully trimmed gardens, which surrounded me.

The most extraordinary circumstance in the history of this visitation is, that though Noja had been in constant communication with the adjoining towns and villages during a month after the plague broke out, none of these, including Rutigliano, only a mile distant, and Bari, with which the intercourse was daily, were infected. Many of the inhabitants, who had quitted the town on the first alarm, were traced, together with the goods they carried, some as far as Melito, only four miles from Naples, and others, in an opposite direction, beyond Taranto. They were immediately put into

quarantine, and there detained till all fears of infection had ceased. If all these circumstances are put together, and it be admitted that several individuals must have left the place and eluded discovery altogether, the preservation of the rest of the kingdom from this awful contagion may be considered as almost miraculous. It is to be observed that many of the natives even to this day cannot be induced to believe that the disease which proved so fatal to their fellow citizens was the plague.

From Noja to Mola di Bari is about seven miles, over a stony horsepath, winding through well-cultivated olive grounds. The only incident worth noticing that occurred during this ride was a rencontre with a man, whose musket and bayonet rendered him an object of suspicion to my escort, consisting, as usual, of two gendarmes, who turned a deaf ear to his assurances that he carried the same for the mere security of some women on muleback, who soon after followed. To my interposition alone he owed the restoration of his arms; and my guards assured me that it was not unlikely such a person might have robbed me had I been alone, as, though there were no regular associated bands of brigands in the whole province, it was not uncommon for single travellers to be stopped; and, they added, that the mere labourers frequently exchanged their spade or pickaxe for a gun, which they sometimes had in readiness to use as occasion might require. I had heard of this being the case in Calabria, but in this instance was certainly inclined to think these suspicions exaggerated, if not groundless.

Mola di Bari was once a flourishing town of 13,000 inhabitants, but 11,000 of them were carried off by the plague, which raged at Conversano, Polignano, Monopoli, Modugno, and other

circumjacent places, in the year 1710; so the space of little more than a century has seen a repetition of the same scenes of desolation. Mola di Bari counts now only 6000, and, like Noja, consists of two separate portions; the oldest, which is surrounded by a wall and ditch, is fortified by a castle, now the seat of a telegraph; the modern division is well built, along the sea side, and has three little creeks for the small vessels which come there to load oil, cotton, and caroubas. The traces of an unfinished mole show that it was once considered a spot of some commercial importance. I lodged here at a gentleman's house, to whom Prince Zurlo had recommended me; and as the owner was in the country, his younger brother, who received me, was sufficiently unpractised in the usual mode of doing the honours to allow me to have my dinner immediately, and leave me the uninterrupted disposal of many hours of freedom. The house was very comfortable, and the bed-room adorned with a painting of considerable merit.

On the following day, May the 13th, I set off with a much larger escort than I expected or wished, as four civic guards, or Legionarii, as they are termed, were added to my two gendarmes; and though they all agreed that their presence was only requisite to do me honour, and not service, I got nearly to Polignano before I could prevail upon them by entreaty, enforced by reward, to leave me. The sky was clouded and the air cool, and my ride through an open grove of olive and carouba trees, at a short distance from the sea, was enlivened by the changed appearance of the country on my right, which assumed a degree of elevation I had been unaccustomed to for some time. Several neat country houses, embosomed in verdure, appeared scattered on this gentle range of

hills. The road, consisting of a track obstructed by huge blocks of stone, rendered it to me quite incomprehensible how any vehicle could ever be made to proceed along its surface ; and yet this is, in fact, the high road to Lecce, the capital of the Terra d' Otranto.

At seven miles distance from Mola is the capacious convent of St. Vito, the opulence and hospitality of whose monks is so enlarged upon by the author of the *Voyage des deux Siciles*. The changes which have occurred since that work was published rendered it impossible for me to expect a similar reception, and I confined my admiration to its exterior appearance. This is highly picturesque and striking, as the building is very large, close to the sea, and surrounded by an extensive walled territory. Near it, a spring of excellent water, an invaluable treasure in a country like this, runs into a creek, that forms a small port for fishing or even trading vessels. The shore assumes a much more rocky aspect, and is frequently indented by small bays.