



letter no. 20

22) Busseto, 17 February 1850—Verdi repeats his assurance that he did not show Cammarano's letter to Bettini, explaining that he had merely informed Bettini that his failure in Rossini's *Otello*, and his being sued by the Naples theatre preclude a role for him in *Luisa Miller*, 1 page, 8vo, integral autograph address-panel to on verso, traces of red seal, postmarked ("Borgo S. Donnino, 19 Febb 1850"), some browning from postmarks etc.

23) [Busseto, 28 February -2 March 1850], VERDI'S PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN CONCLUSION TO THE LETTER CONTAINING HIS SCENARIO FOR *RE LEAR*, THE HITHERTO LOST FINAL PAGE, beginning "Eccoti le mie idee: fatene quell'uso che volete"—Verdi discusses the scenario in considerable detail, listing the most important numbers required and lamenting the vast chasm between Shakespeare's great play and his own wretched sketch, advising Cammarano to use it as he wishes, or throw it in the fire, admitting that many details have to be added to explain the plot, for example, a scene showing Goneril and Regan's love for Edmund, and another when Edgar receives Edmund's letter, asking how to deal with the Fool: should he disappear before the battle or stay on stage to the end, wondering whether the part of Lear is too big and that of Cordelia too small; Verdi urges Cammarano have the courage to join him in this great undertaking and concludes by listing the most important numbers, including an introduction, a tempest on the blasted heath in Act 1, a judgement scene in Act 2, a duet for Lear and Cordelia and a grand scena finale, ending by admitting that in fact all the numbers are important ("...quello

che spaventa si è la differenza che passa fra questa immense vastissima tragedia to Sha[k]espeare a questo miserabile sbizzo. Là tutto è grande, qui tutto è meschino. Chi sa che voi non facciate miracoli coi vostri versi. Coraggio addunque: una volta combinata l'andatura, e resa più grande che si può, noi si metteremo a tutt'uomo voi a fare dei versi ed io delle note, e staremo più in alto che potremo..."), 1 page, 4to (24.8 x 19cm), blind-stamp on upper corner, integral autograph address-panel to verso, no place or date, postmarked: "Borgo S. Donnino, 2 Marzo 1850", incomplete, containing just the final leaf and signature, seal-tear, wear and perforations at folds (some repaired), browning to verso

24) Busseto, 17 June 1850—Verdi urges Cammarano not to put *Re Lear* aside but to work seriously on it, regretfully returning the text received of another libretto (*Il Folco d'Arles*), explaining that he cannot keep it, because of pressure of time and work on *Stiffelio* ("...Spero che voi non meterete da banda il *Re Lear* e che vi occuperete seriamente a quello. Pel momento veramente non ne ho bisogno, ma badate che il tempo passa presto..."), 1 page, 4to autograph address-panel to verso, postmarked, traces of red seal, seal-tear, some staining

25) Busseto, 5 July 1850—Verdi explains that he has no time to compose the opera *Caterina Medici di Brono*, and that he has settled on another text that autumn [*Stiffelio*], even though he appreciates that Cammarano would have made a fine libretto out of Mauri's novel, and also for *Il Folco d'Arles*, which he is free to give to another composer; Verdi emphasizes that he would always keep Cammarano's *Re Lear* for himself, which, although not immediately pressing, he urges him not to forget ("...Il *Re Lear* è sempre per me. Per ora non avvi molta premura, nonostante non dimenticarlo..."), 1 page, 8vo (c.21 x 14cm), integral autograph address leaf, "Bath" paper (embossed stamp), Piacenza postmark

26) Busseto, 6 December 1850—Verdi enquires whether Cammarano has made any progress with the libretto of *Re Lear*, reminding him of his "sacrosanct promise" from which he will never be released, failing that, he needs another text immediately for Venice in February, 1 page, 8vo (c.19.3 x 12.5cm), integral autograph address-leaf, Piacenza postmark,, small tears, traces of red seal with tear, light foxing

Verdi had just learnt that the libretto for his forthcoming opera at Venice, *Le roi s'amuse* had been banned by the censors. In the event, featuring a duke rather than a king, that opera was staged as *Rigoletto* on 11 March.

*IL TROVATORE* (Rome, Teatro Apollo, 19 January 1853)

27) Busseto 6 February 1850 [recte 1851]—Verdi encloses his Italian version of *Il trovatore*, explaining that the original Spanish play was translated "by someone who knows no Spanish", with merely a dictionary to hand, "more divined than translated", but confident that the sense of it is there and that Cammarano's imagination will make up for what is lacking, promising to send him the missing fourth and fifth acts (which are the best) in a few days, expressing his enthusiasm for the subject, urging the librettist not to let him down with this project ("...mi raccomando a voi...mi raccomando...mi raccomando"), informing him that two main female roles are required, and that he would have sent him the original volume in Spanish but for fear that the police would have seized and not returned it ("...Eccovi il *Trovatore* tradotto da chi non sa una parola di Spagnuolo con un semplice dizionario alla mano. Egli è piuttosto indovinato che tradotto, in ogni modo credo che il senso ci sia, e voi sup[p]lirate col vostro grande ingegno