

GARDNER EDMUND G.

THE STORY OF FLORENCE

Edmund Gardner
The Story of Florence

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24859091

The Story of Florence:

Содержание

PREFACE	4
CHAPTER I	7
CHAPTER II	38
CHAPTER III	74
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	113

Edmund G. Gardner

The Story of Florence

PREFACE

THE present volume is intended to supply a popular history of the Florentine Republic, in such a form that it can also be used as a guide-book. It has been my endeavour, while keeping within the necessary limits of this series of *Mediaeval Towns*, to point out briefly the most salient features in the story of Florence, to tell again the tale of those of her streets and buildings, and indicate those of her artistic treasures, which are either most intimately connected with that story or most beautiful in themselves. Those who know best what an intensely fascinating and many-sided history that of Florence has been, who have studied most closely the work and characters of those strange and wonderful personalities who have lived within (and, in the case of the greatest, died without) her walls, will best appreciate my difficulty in compressing even a portion of all this wealth and profusion into the narrow bounds enjoined by the aim and scope of this book. Much has necessarily been curtailed over which it would have been tempting to linger, much inevitably omitted which the historian could not have passed over, nor the compiler of a guide-book failed to mention. In what I have selected for

treatment and what omitted, I have usually let myself be guided by the remembrance of my own needs when I first commenced to visit Florence and to study her arts and history.

It is needless to say that the number of books, old and new, is very considerable indeed, to which anyone venturing in these days to write yet another book on Florence must have had recourse, and to whose authors he is bound to be indebted—from the earliest Florentine chroniclers down to the most recent biographers of Lorenzo the Magnificent, of Savonarola, of Michelangelo—from Vasari down to our modern scientific art critics—from Richa and Moreni down to the Misses Horner. My obligations can hardly be acknowledged here in detail; but, to mention a few modern works alone, I am most largely indebted to Capponi's *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, to various writings of Professor Pasquale Villari, and to Mr Armstrong's *Lorenzo de' Medici*; to the works of Ruskin and J. A. Symonds, of M. Reymond and Mr Berenson; and, in the domains of topography, to Baedeker's *Hand Book*. In judging of the merits and the authorship of individual pictures and statues, I have usually given more weight to the results of modern criticism than to the pleasantness of old tradition.

Carlyle's translation of the *Inferno* and Mr Wicksteed's of the *Paradiso* are usually quoted.

If this little book should be found helpful in initiating the English-speaking visitor to the City of Flowers into more of the historical atmosphere of Florence and her monuments than

guide-books and catalogues can supply, it will amply have fulfilled its object.

E. G. G.

Roehampton, *May* 1900.

CHAPTER I

The People and Commune of Florence

"La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza."

– *Dante.*

BEFORE the imagination of a thirteenth century poet, one of the sweetest singers of the *dolce stil novo*, there rose a phantasy of a transfigured city, transformed into a capital of Fairyland, with his lady and himself as fairy queen and king:

"Amor, eo chero mea donna in domino,
l'Arno balsamo fino,
le mura di Fiorenza inargentate,
le rughe di cristallo lastricate,
fortezze alte e merlate,
mio fedel fosse ciaschedun Latino."¹

But is not the reality even more beautiful than the dreamland Florence of Lapo Gianni's fancy? We stand on the heights of San Miniato, either in front of the Basilica itself or lower down in the Piazzale Michelangelo. Below us, on either bank of the silvery Arno, lies outstretched Dante's "most famous and most

¹ "Love, I demand to have my lady in fee, Fine balm let Arno be, The walls of Florence all of silver rear'd, And crystal pavements in the public way; With castles make me fear'd, Till every Latin soul have owned my sway." – Lapo Gianni (Rossetti).

beauteous daughter of Rome," once the Queen of Etruria and centre of the most wonderful culture that the world has known since Athens, later the first capital of United Italy, and still, though shorn of much of her former splendour and beauty, one of the loveliest cities of Christendom. Opposite to us, to the north, rises the hill upon which stands Etruscan Fiesole, from which the people of Florence originally came: "that ungrateful and malignant people," Dante once called them, "who of old came down from Fiesole." Behind us stand the fortifications which mark the death of the Republic, thrown up or at least strengthened by Michelangelo in the city's last agony, when she barred her gates and defied the united power of Pope and Emperor to take the State that had once chosen Christ for her king.

"O foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour;
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender:
The light-invested angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.

"And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul—and as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew."

Between Fiesole and San Miniato, then, the story of the Florentine Republic may be said to be written.

The beginnings of Florence are lost in cloudy legend, and her early chroniclers on the slenderest foundations have reared for her an unsubstantial, if imposing, fabric of fables—the tales which the women of old Florence, in the *Paradiso*, told to their households—

"dei Troiani, di Fiesole, e di Roma."

Setting aside the Trojans ("Priam" was mediæval for "Adam," as a modern novelist has remarked), there is no doubt that both Etruscan Fiesole and Imperial Rome united to found the "great city on the banks of the Arno." Fiesole or Faesulae upon its hill was an important Etruscan city, and a place of consequence in the days of the Roman Republic; fallen though it now is, traces of its old greatness remain. Behind the Romanesque cathedral are considerable remains of Etruscan walls and of a Roman theatre. Opposite it to the west we may ascend to enjoy the glorious view from the Convent of the Franciscans, where once the old citadel of Faesulae stood. Faesulae was ever the centre of Italian and democratic discontent against Rome and her Senate (*sempre ribelli di Roma*, says Villani of its inhabitants); and it was here, in October b. c. 62, that Caius Manlius planted the Eagle of revolt—an eagle which Marius had borne in the war against the Cimbri—and thus commenced the Catilinarian war, which resulted in the annihilation of Catiline's army near Pistoia.

This, according to Villani, was the origin of Florence.

According to him, Fiesole, after enduring the stupendous siege, was forced to surrender to the Romans under Julius Cæsar, and utterly razed to the ground. In the second sphere of Paradise, Justinian reminds Dante of how the Roman Eagle "seemed bitter to that hill beneath which thou wast born." Then, in order that Fiesole might never raise its head again, the Senate ordained that the greatest lords of Rome, who had been at the siege, should join with Cæsar in building a new city on the banks of the Arno. Florence, thus founded by Cæsar, was populated by the noblest citizens of Rome, who received into their number those of the inhabitants of fallen Fiesole who wished to live there. "Note then," says the old chronicler, "that it is not wonderful that the Florentines are always at war and in dissensions among themselves, being drawn and born from two peoples, so contrary and hostile and diverse in habits, as were the noble and virtuous Romans, and the savage and contentious folk of Fiesole." Dante similarly, in Canto XV. of the *Inferno*, ascribes the injustice of the Florentines towards himself to this mingling of the people of Fiesole with the true Roman nobility (with special reference, however, to the union of Florence with conquered Fiesole in the twelfth century):—

"che tra li lazzi sorbi
si disconvien fruttare al dolce fico."²

² "For amongst the tart sorbs, it befits not the sweet fig to fructify."

And Brunetto Latini bids him keep himself free from their pollution:—

"Faccian le bestie Fiesolane strame
di lor medesme, e non tocchin la pianta,
s'alcuna surge ancor nel lor letame,
in cui riviva la semente santa
di quei Roman che vi rimaser quando
fu fatto il nido di malizia tanta."³

The truth appears to be that Florence was originally founded by Etruscans from Fiesole, who came down from their mountain to the plain by the Arno for commercial purposes. This Etruscan colony was probably destroyed during the wars between Marius and Sulla, and a Roman military colony established here—probably in the time of Sulla, and augmented later by Cæsar and by Augustus. It has, indeed, been urged of late that the old Florentine story has some truth in it, and that Cæsar, not only in legend but in fact, may be regarded as the true first founder of Florence. Thus the Roman colony of Florentia gradually grew into a little city—*come una altra piccola Roma*, declares her patriotic chronicler. It had its capitol and its forum in the centre of the city, where the Mercato Vecchio once stood; it had an amphitheatre outside the walls, somewhere near where the Borgo

³ "Let the beasts of Fiesole make litter of themselves, and not touch the plant, if any yet springs up amid their rankness, in which the holy seed revives of those Romans who remained there when it became the nest of so much malice."

dei Greci and the Piazza Peruzzi are to-day. It had baths and temples, though doubtless on a small scale. It had the shape and form of a Roman camp, which (together with the Roman walls in which it was inclosed) it may be said to have retained down to the middle of the twelfth century, in spite of legendary demolitions by Attila and Totila, and equally legendary reconstructions by Charlemagne. Above all, it had a grand temple to Mars, which almost certainly occupied the site of the present Baptistery, if not actually identical with it. Giovanni Villani tells us—and we shall have to return to his statement—that the wonderful octagonal building, now known as the Baptistery or the Church of St John, was consecrated as a temple by the Romans in honour of Mars, for their victory over the Fiesolans, and that Mars was the patron of the Florentines as long as paganism lasted. Round the equestrian statue that was supposed to have once stood in the midst of this temple, numberless legends have gathered. Dante refers to it again and again. In Santa Maria Novella you shall see how a great painter of the early Renaissance, Filippino Lippi, conceived of his city's first patron. When Florence changed him for the Baptist, and the people of Mars became the sheepfold of St John, this statue was removed from the temple and set upon a tower by the side of the Arno:—

"The Florentines took up their idol which they called the God Mars, and set him upon a high tower near the river Arno; and they would not break or shatter it, seeing that in their ancient records they found that the said idol of Mars had been consecrated under

the ascendancy of such a planet, that if it should be broken or put in a dishonourable place, the city would suffer danger and damage and great mutation. And although the Florentines had newly become Christians, they still retained many customs of paganism, and retained them for a long time; and they greatly feared their ancient idol of Mars; so little perfect were they as yet in the Holy Faith."

This tower is said to have been destroyed like the rest of Florence by the Goths, the statue falling into the Arno, where it lurked in hiding all the time that the city lay in ruins. On the legendary rebuilding of Florence by Charlemagne, the statue, too—or rather the mutilated fragment that remained—was restored to light and honour. Thus Villani:—

"It is said that the ancients held the opinion that there was no power to rebuild the city, if that marble image, consecrated by necromancy to Mars by the first Pagan builders, was not first found again and drawn out of the Arno, in which it had been from the destruction of Florence down to that time. And, when found, they set it upon a pillar on the bank of the said river, where is now the head of the Ponte Vecchio. This we neither affirm nor believe, inasmuch as it appeareth to us to be the opinion of augurers and pagans, and not reasonable, but great folly, to hold that a statue so made could work thus; but commonly it was said by the ancients that, if it were changed, our city would needs suffer great mutation."

Thus it became *quella pietra scema che guarda il ponte*,

in Dantesque phrase; and we shall see what terrible sacrifice its clients unconsciously paid to it. Here it remained, much honoured by the Florentines; street boys were solemnly warned of the fearful judgments that fell on all who dared to throw mud or stones at it; until at last, in 1333, a great flood carried away bridge and statue alike, and it was seen no more. It has recently been suggested that the statue was, in reality, an equestrian monument in honour of some barbaric king, belonging to the fifth or sixth century.

Florence, however, seems to have been—in spite of Villani's describing it as the Chamber of the Empire and the like—a place of very slight importance under the Empire. Tacitus mentions that a deputation was sent from Florentia to Tiberius to prevent the Chiana being turned into the Arno. Christianity is said to have been first introduced in the days of Nero; the Decian persecution raged here as elsewhere, and the soil was hallowed with the blood of the martyr, Miniatus. Christian worship is said to have been first offered up on the hill where a stately eleventh century Basilica now bears his name. When the greater peace of the Church was established under Constantine, a church dedicated to the Baptist on the site of the Martian temple and a basilica outside the walls, where now stands San Lorenzo, were among the earliest churches in Tuscany.

In the year 405, the Goth leader Rhadagaisus, *omnium antiquorum praesentiumque hostium longe immanissimus*, as Orosius calls him, suddenly inundated Italy with more than

200,000 Goths, vowing to sacrifice all the blood of the Romans to his gods. In their terror the Romans seemed about to return to their old paganism, since Christ had failed to protect them. *Fervent tota urbe blasphemiae*, writes Orosius. They advanced towards Rome through the Tuscan Apennines, and are said to have besieged Florence, though there is no hint of this in Orosius. On the approach of Stilicho, at the head of thirty legions with a large force of barbarian auxiliaries, Rhadagaisus and his hordes—miraculously struck helpless with terror, as Orosius implies—let themselves be hemmed in in the mountains behind Fiesole, and all perished, by famine and exhaustion rather than by the sword. Villani ascribes the salvation of Florence to the prayers of its bishop, Zenobius, and adds that as this victory of "the Romans and Florentines" took place on the feast of the virgin martyr Reparata, her name was given to the church afterwards to become the Cathedral of Florence.

Zenobius, now a somewhat misty figure, is the first great Florentine of history, and an impressive personage in Florentine art. We dimly discern in him an ideal bishop and father of his people; a man of great austerity and boundless charity, almost an earlier Antoninus. Perhaps the fact that some of the intervening Florentine bishops were anything but edifying, has made these two—almost at the beginning and end of the Middle Ages—stand forth in a somewhat ideal light. He appears to have lived a monastic life outside the walls in a small church on the site of the present San Lorenzo, with two young ecclesiastics, trained

by him and St Ambrose, Eugenius and Crescentius. They died before him and are commonly united with him by the painters. Here he was frequently visited by St Ambrose—here he dispensed his charities and worked his miracles (according to the legend, he had a special gift of raising children to life)—here at length he died in the odour of sanctity, a. d. 424. The beautiful legend of his translation should be familiar to every student of Italian painting. I give it in the words of a monkish writer of the fourteenth century:—

"About five years after he had been buried, there was made bishop one named Andrew, and this holy bishop summoned a great chapter of bishops and clerics, and said in the chapter that it was meet to bear the body of St Zenobius to the Cathedral Church of San Salvatore; and so it was ordained. Wherefore, on the 26th of January, he caused him to be unburied and borne to the Church of San Salvatore by four bishops; and these bishops bearing the body of St Zenobius were so pressed upon by the people that they fell near an elm, the which was close unto the Church of St John the Baptist; and when they fell, the case where the body of St Zenobius lay was broken, so that the body touched the elm, and gradually, as the elm was touched, it brought forth flowers and leaves, and lasted all that year with the flowers and leaves. The people, seeing the miracle, broke up all the elm, and with devotion carried the branches away. And the Florentines, beholding what was done, made a column of marble with a cross where the elm had been, so that the miracle should ever be

remembered by the people."

Like the statue of Mars, this column was destroyed by the flood of 1333, and the one now standing to the north of the Baptistery was set up after that year. It was at one time the custom for the clergy on the feast of the translation to go in procession and fasten a green bough to this column. Zenobius now stands with St Reparata on the cathedral façade. Domenico Ghirlandaio painted him, together with his pupils Eugenius and Crescentius, in the Sala dei Gigli of the Palazzo della Signoria; an unknown follower of Orcagna had painted a similar picture for a pillar in the Duomo. Ghiberti cast his miracles in bronze for the shrine in the Chapel of the Sacrament; Verrocchio and Lorenzo di Credi at Pistoia placed him and the Baptist on either side of Madonna's throne. In a picture by some other follower of Verrocchio's in the Uffizi he is seen offering up a model of his city to the Blessed Virgin. Two of the most famous of his miracles, the raising of a child to life and the flowering of the elm tree at his translation, are superbly rendered in two pictures by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio. On May 25th the people still throng the Duomo with bunches of roses and other flowers, which they press to the reliquary which contains his head, and so obtain the "benedizione di San Zenobio." Thus does his memory live fresh and green among the people to whom he so faithfully ministered.

Another barbarian king, the last Gothic hero Totila, advancing upon Rome in 542, took the same shorter but more difficult route across the Apennines. According to the legend, he utterly

destroyed all Florence, with the exception of the Church of San Giovanni, and rebuilt Fiesole to oppose Rome and prevent Florence from being restored. The truth appears to be that he did not personally attack Florence, but sent a portion of his troops under his lieutenants. They were successfully resisted by Justin, who commanded the imperial garrison, and, on the advance of reinforcements from Ravenna, they drew off into the valley of the Mugello, where they turned upon the pursuing "Romans" (whose army consisted of worse barbarians than Goths) and completely routed them. Fiesole, which had apparently recovered from its old destruction, was probably too difficult to be assailed; but it appears to have been gradually growing at the expense of Florence—the citizens of the latter emigrating to it for greater safety. This was especially the case during the Lombard invasion, when the fortunes of Florence were at their lowest, and, indeed, in the second half of the eighth century, Florence almost sank to being a suburb of Fiesole.

With the advent of Charlemagne and the restoration of the Empire, brighter days commenced for Florence,—so much so that the story ran that he had renewed the work of Julius Caesar and founded the city again. In 786 he wintered here with his court on his third visit to Rome; and, according to legend, he was here again in great wealth and pomp in 805, and founded the Church of Santissimi Apostoli—the oldest existing Florentine building after the Baptistery. Upon its façade you may still read a pompous inscription concerning the Emperor's

reception in Florence, and how the Church was consecrated by Archbishop Turpin in the presence of Oliver and Roland, the Paladins! Florence was becoming a power in Tuscany, or at least beginning to see more of Popes and Emperors. The Ottos stayed within her walls on their way to be crowned at Rome; Popes, flying from their rebellious subjects, found shelter here. In 1055 Victor II. held a council in Florence. Beautiful Romanesque churches began to rise—notably the SS. Apostoli and San Miniato, both probably dating from the eleventh century. Great churchmen appeared among her sons, as San Giovanni Gualberto—the "merciful knight" of Burne-Jones' unforgettable picture—the reformer of the Benedictines and the founder of Vallombrosa. The early reformers, while Hildebrand was still "Archdeacon of the Roman Church," were specially active in Florence; and one of them, known as Peter Igneus, in 1068 endured the ordeal of fire and is said to have passed unhurt through the flames, to convict the Bishop of Florence of simony. This, with other matters relating to the times of Giovanni Gualberto and the struggles of the reformers of the clergy, you may see in the Bargello in a series of noteworthy marble bas-reliefs (terribly damaged, it is true), from the hand of Benedetto da Rovezzano.

Although we already begin to hear of the "Florentine people" and the "Florentine citizens," Florence was at this time subject to the Margraves of Tuscany. One of them, Hugh the Great, who is said to have acted as vicar of the Emperor Otto III., and who died

at the beginning of the eleventh century, lies buried in the Badia which had been founded by his mother, the Countess Willa, in 978. His tomb, one of the most noteworthy monuments of the fifteenth century, by Mino da Fiesole, may still be seen, near Filippino Lippi's Vision of St Bernard.

It was while Florence was nominally under the sway of Hugo's most famous successor, the Countess Matilda of Tuscany, that Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida was born; and, in the fifteenth and sixteenth cantos of the *Paradiso*, he draws an ideal picture of that austere old Florence, *dentro dalla cerchia antica*, still within her Roman walls. We can still partly trace and partly conjecture the position of these walls. The city stood a little way back from the river, and had four master gates; the Porta San Piero on the east, the Porta del Duomo on the north, the Porta San Pancrazio on the west, the Porta Santa Maria on the south (towards the Ponte Vecchio). The heart of the city, the Forum or, as it came to be called, the Mercato Vecchio, has indeed been destroyed of late years to make way for the cold and altogether hideous Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; but we can still perceive that at its south-east corner the two main streets of this old *Florentia quadrata* intersected,—Calimara, running from the Porta Santa Maria to the Porta del Duomo, south to north, and the Corso, running east to west from the Porta San Piero to the Porta San Pancrazio, along the lines of the present Corso, Via degli Speziali, and Via degli Strozzi. The Porta San Piero probably stood about where the Via del Corso joins the Via del

Proconsolo, and there was a suburb reaching out to the Church of San Piero Maggiore. Then the walls ran along the lines of the present Via del Proconsolo and Via dei Balestrieri, inclosing Santa Reparata and the Baptistery, to the Duomo Gate beyond the Bishop's palace—probably somewhere near the opening of the modern Borgo San Lorenzo. Then along the Via Cerretani, Piazza Antinori, Via Tornabuoni, to the Gate of San Pancrazio, which was somewhere near the present Palazzo Strozzi; and so on to where the Church of Santa Trinità now stands, near which there was a postern gate called the Porta Rossa. Then they turned east along the present Via delle Terme to the Porta Santa Maria, which was somewhere near the end of the Mercato Nuovo, after which their course back to the Porta San Piero is more uncertain. Outside the walls were churches and ever-increasing suburbs, and Florence was already becoming an important commercial centre. Matilda's beneficent sway left it in practical independence to work out its own destinies; she protected it from imperial aggressions, and curbed the nobles of the contrada, who were of Teutonic descent and who, from their feudal castles round, looked with hostility upon the rich burgher city of pure Latin blood that was gradually reducing their power and territorial sway. At intervals the great Countess entered Florence, and either in person or by her deputies and judges (members of the chief Florentine families) administered justice in the Forum. Indeed she played the part of Dante's ideal Emperor in the *De Monarchia*; made Roman law obeyed through her dominions;

established peace and curbed disorder; and therefore, in spite of her support of papal claims for political empire, when the *Divina Commedia* came to be written, Dante placed her as guardian of the Earthly Paradise to which the Emperor should guide man, and made her the type of the glorified active life. Her praises, *la lauda di Matelda*, were long sung in the Florentine churches, as may be gathered from a passage in Boccaccio.

It is from the death of Matilda in 1115 that the history of the Commune dates. During her lifetime she seems to have gradually, especially while engaged in her conflicts with the Emperor Henry, delegated her powers to the chief Florentine citizens themselves; and in her name they made war upon the aggressive nobility in the country round, in the interests of their commerce. For Dante the first half of this twelfth century represents the golden age in which his ancestor lived, when the great citizen nobles—Bellincion Berti, Ubertino Donati, and the heads of the Nerli and Vecchietti and the rest—lived simple and patriotic lives, filled the offices of state and led the troops against the foes of the Commune. In a grand burst of triumph that old Florentine crusader, Cacciaguida, closes the sixteenth canto of the *Paradiso*:

"Con queste genti, e con altre con esse,
vid'io Fiorenza in sì fatto riposo,
che non avea cagion onde piangesse;
con queste genti vid'io glorioso,
e giusto il popol suo tanto, che'l giglio

non era ad asta mai posto a ritroso,
nè per division fatto vermiglio."⁴

When Matilda died, and the Popes and Emperors prepared to struggle for her legacy (which thus initiated the strifes of Guelfs and Ghibellines), the Florentine Republic asserted its independence: the citizen nobles who had been her delegates and judges now became the Consuls of the Commune and the leaders of the republican forces in war. In 1119 the Florentines assailed the castle of Monte Cascioli, and killed the imperial vicar who defended it; in 1125 they took and destroyed Fiesole, which had always been a refuge for robber nobles and all who hated the Republic. But already signs of division were seen in the city itself, though it was a century before it came to a head; and the great family of the Uberti—who, like the nobles of the contrada, were of Teutonic descent—were prominently to the front, but soon to be *disfatti per la lor superbia*. Scarcely was Matilda dead than they appear to have attempted to seize on the supreme power, and to have only been defeated with much bloodshed and burning of houses. Still the Republic pursued its victorious course through the twelfth century—putting down the feudal barons, forcing them to enter the city and join the Commune, and extending their commerce and influence as well as their territory on all

⁴ "With these folk, and with others with them, did I see Florence in such full repose, she had not cause for wailing; With these folk I saw her people so glorious and so just, ne'er was the lily on the shaft reversed, nor yet by faction dyed vermilion."—Wicksteed's translation.

sides. And already these nobles within and without the city were beginning to build their lofty towers, and to associate themselves into Societies of the Towers; while the people were grouped into associations which afterwards became the Greater and Lesser Arts or Guilds. Villani sees the origin of future contests in the mingling of races, Roman and Fiesolan; modern writers find it in the distinction, mentioned already, between the nobles, of partly Teutonic origin and imperial sympathies, and the burghers, who were the true Italians, the descendants of those over whom successive tides of barbarian conquest had swept, and to whom the ascendancy of the nobles would mean an alien yoke. This struggle between a landed military and feudal nobility, waning in power and authority, and a commercial democracy of more purely Latin descent, ever increasing in wealth and importance, is what lies at the bottom of the contest between Florentine Guelfs and Ghibellines; and the rival claims of Pope and Emperor are of secondary importance, as far as Tuscany is concerned.

In 1173 (as the most recent historian of Florence has shown, and not in the eleventh century as formerly supposed), the second circle of walls was built, and included a much larger tract of city, though many of the churches which we have been wont to consider the most essential things in Florence stand outside them. A new Porta San Piero, just beyond the present façade of the ruined church of San Piero Maggiore, enclosed the Borgo di San Piero; thence the walls passed round to the Porta di Borgo San Lorenzo, just to the north of the present Piazza, and

swept round, with two gates of minor importance, past the chief western Porta San Pancrazio or Porta San Paolo, beyond which the present Piazza di Santa Maria Novella stands, down to the Arno where there was a Porta alla Carraia, at the point where the bridge was built later. Hence a lower wall ran along the Arno, taking in the parts excluded from the older circuit down to the Ponte Vecchio. About half-way between this and the Ponte Rubaconte, the walls turned up from the Arno, with several small gates, until they reached the place where the present Piazza di Santa Croce lies—which was outside. Here, just beyond the old site of the Amphitheatre, there was a gate, after which they ran straight without gate or postern to San Piero, where they had commenced.

Instead of the old Quarters, named from the gates, the city was now divided into six corresponding Sesti or sextaries; the Sesto di Porta San Piero, the Sesto still called from the old Porta del Duomo, the Sesto di Porta Pancrazio, the Sesto di San Piero Scheraggio (a church near the Palazzo Vecchio, but now totally destroyed), and the Sesto di Borgo Santissimi Apostoli—these two replacing the old Quarter of Porta Santa Maria. Across the river lay the Sesto d'Oltrarno—then for the most part unfortified. At that time the inhabitants of Oltrarno were mostly the poor and the lower classes, but not a few noble families settled there later on. The Consuls, the supreme officers of the state, were elected annually, two for each sesto, usually nobles of popular tendencies; there was a council of a hundred, elected every

year, its members being mainly chosen from the Guilds as the Consuls from the Towers; and a Parliament of the people could be summoned in the Piazza. Thus the popular government was constituted.

Hardly had the new walls risen when the Uberti in 1177 attempted to overthrow the Consuls and seize the government of the city; they were partially successful, in that they managed to make the administration more aristocratic, after a prolonged civil struggle of two years' duration. In 1185 Frederick Barbarossa took away the privileges of the Republic and deprived it of its *contrada*; but his son, Henry VI., apparently gave it back. With the beginning of the thirteenth century we find the Consuls replaced by a Podestà, a foreign noble elected by the citizens themselves; and the Florentines, not content with having back their *contrada*, beginning to make wars of conquest upon their neighbours, especially the Sienese, from whom they exacted a cession of territory in 1208.

In 1215 there was enacted a deed in which poets and chroniclers have seen a turning point in the history of Florence. Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, "a right winsome and comely knight," as Villani calls him, had pledged himself for political reasons to marry a maiden of the Amidei family—the kinsmen of the proud Uberti and Fifanti. But, at the instigation of Gualdrada Donati, he deserted his betrothed and married Gualdrada's own daughter, a girl of great beauty. Upon this the nobles of the kindred of the deserted girl held a council together to decide

what vengeance to take, in which "Mosca dei Lamberti spoke the evil word: *Cosa fatta, capo ha*; to wit, that he should be slain; and so it was done." On Easter Sunday the Amidei and their associates assembled, after hearing mass in San Stefano, in a palace of the Amidei, which was on the Lungarno at the opening of the present Via Por Santa Maria; and they watched young Buondelmonte coming from Oltrarno, riding over the Ponte Vecchio "dressed nobly in a new robe all white and on a white palfrey," crowned with a garland, making his way towards the palaces of his kindred in Borgo Santissimi Apostoli. As soon as he had reached this side, at the foot of the pillar on which stood the statue of Mars, they rushed out upon him. Schiatta degli Uberti struck him from his horse with a mace, and Mosca dei Lamberti, Lambertuccio degli Amidei, Oderigo Fifanti, and one of the Gangalandi, stabbed him to death with their daggers at the foot of the statue. "Verily is it shown," writes Villani, "that the enemy of human nature by reason of the sins of the Florentines had power in this idol of Mars, which the pagan Florentines adored of old; for at the foot of his figure was this murder committed, whence such great evil followed to the city of Florence." The body was placed upon a bier, and, with the young bride supporting the dead head of her bridegroom, carried through the streets to urge the people to vengeance. Headed by the Uberti, the older and more aristocratic families took up the cause of the Amidei; the burghers and the democratically inclined nobles supported the Buondelmonti, and from this the

chronicler dates the beginning of the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence.

But it was only the names that were then introduced, to intensify a struggle which had in reality commenced a century before this, in 1115, on the death of Matilda. As far as Guelf and Ghibelline meant a struggle of the commune of burghers and traders with a military aristocracy of Teutonic descent and feudal imperial tendencies, the thing is already clearly defined in the old contest between the Uberti and the Consuls. This, however, precipitated matters, and initiated fifty years of perpetual conflict. Dante, through Cacciaguida, touches upon the tragedy in his great way in *Paradiso* XVI., where he calls it the ruin of old Florence.

"La casa di che nacque il vostro fleto,
per lo giusto disdegno che v'ha morti
e posto fine al vostro viver lieto,
era onorata ed essa e suoi consorti.
O Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti
le nozze sue per gli altrui conforti!
Molti sarebbon lieti, che son tristi,
se Dio t'avesse concesso ad Ema
la prima volta che a città venisti.
Ma conveniasi a quella pietra scema
che guarda il ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
vittima nella sua pace postrema."⁵

⁵ "The house from which your wailing sprang, because of the just anger which

And again, in the Hell of the sowers of discord, where they are horribly mutilated by the devil's sword, he meets the miserable Mosca.

"Ed un, ch'avea l'una e l'altra man mozza,
levando i moncherin per l'aura fosca,
sì che il sangue facea la faccia sozza,
gridò: Ricorderaiti anche del Mosca,
che dissi, lasso! 'Capo ha cosa fatta,'
che fu il mal seme per la gente tosca."⁶

For a time the Commune remained Guelph and powerful, in spite of dissensions; it adhered to the Pope against Frederick II., and waged successful wars with its Ghibelline rivals, Pisa and Siena. Of the other Tuscan cities Lucca was Guelph, Pistoia Ghibelline. A religious feud mingled with the political dissensions; heretics, the Paterini, Epicureans and other sects, were multiplying in Italy, favoured by Frederick II. and

hath slain you and placed a term upon your joyous life," was honoured, it and its associates. Oh Buondelmonte, how ill didst thou flee its nuptials at the prompting of another!" Joyous had many been who now are sad, had God committed thee unto the Ema the first time that thou camest to the city." But to that mutilated stone which guardeth the bridge 'twas meet that Florence should give a victim in her last time of peace."

⁶ "And one who had both hands cut off, raising the stumps through the dim air so that their blood defiled his face, cried: 'Thou wilt recollect the Mosca too, ah me! who said, "A thing done has an end!" which was the seed of evil to the Tuscan people.'" (*Inf.* xxviii.)

patronised by the Ghibellines. Fra Pietro of Verona, better known as St Peter Martyr, organised a crusade, and, with his white-robed captains of the Faith, hunted them in arms through the streets of Florence; at the Croce al Trebbio, near Santa Maria Novella, and in the Piazza di Santa Felicità over the Arno, columns still mark the place where he fell furiously upon them, *con l'ufficio apostolico*. But in 1249, at the instigation of Frederick II., the Uberti and Ghibelline nobles rose in arms; and, after a desperate conflict with the Guelf magnates and the people, gained possession of the city, with the aid of the Emperor's German troops. And, on the night of February 2nd, the Guelf leaders with a great following of people armed and bearing torches buried Rustico Marignolli, who had fallen in defending the banner of the Lily, with military honours in San Lorenzo, and then sternly passed into exile. Their palaces and towers were destroyed, while the Uberti and their allies with the Emperor's German troops held the city. This lasted not two years. In 1250, on the death of Frederick II., the Republic threw off the yoke, and the first democratic constitution of Florence was established, the *Primo Popolo*, in which the People were for the first time regularly organised both for peace and for war under a new officer, the Captain of the People, whose appointment was intended to outweigh the Podestà, the head of the Commune and the leader of the nobles. The Captain was intrusted with the white and red Gonfalon of the People, and associated with the central government of the Ancients of the

people, who to some extent corresponded to the Consuls of olden time.

This *Primo Popolo* ran a victorious course of ten years, years of internal prosperity and almost continuous external victory. It was under it that the banner of the Commune was changed from a white lily on a red field to a red lily on a white field—*per division fatto vermiglio*, as Dante puts it—after the Uberti and Lamberti with the turbulent Ghibellines had been expelled. Pisa was humbled; Pistoia and Volterra forced to submit. But it came to a terrible end, illuminated only by the heroism of one of its conquerors. A conspiracy on the part of the Uberti to take the government from the people and subject the city to the great Ghibelline prince, Manfredi, King of Apulia and Sicily, son of Frederick II., was discovered and severely punished. Headed by Farinata degli Uberti and aided by King Manfredi's German mercenaries, the exiles gathered at Siena, against which the Florentine Republic declared war. In 1260 the Florentine army approached Siena. A preliminary skirmish, in which a band of German horsemen was cut to pieces and the royal banner captured, only led a few months later to the disastrous defeat of Montaperti, *che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso*; in which, after enormous slaughter and loss of the Carroccio, or battle car of the Republic, "the ancient people of Florence was broken and annihilated" on September 4th, 1260. Without waiting for the armies of the conqueror, the Guelf nobles with their families and many of the burghers fled the city, mainly to Lucca; and,

on the 16th of September, the Germans under Count Giordano, Manfredi's vicar, with Farinata and the exiles, entered Florence as conquerors. All liberty was destroyed, the houses of Guelfs razed to the ground, the Count Guido Novello—the lord of Poppi and a ruthless Ghibelline—made Podestà. The Via Ghibellina is his record. It was finally proposed in a great Ghibelline council at Empoli to raze Florence to the ground; but the fiery eloquence of Farinata degli Uberti, who declared that, even if he stood alone, he would defend her sword in hand as long as life lasted, saved his city. Marked out with all his house for the relentless hate of the Florentine people, Dante has secured to him a lurid crown of glory even in Hell. Out of the burning tombs of the heretics he rises, *come avesse l'inferno in gran dispetto*, still the unvanquished hero who, when all consented to destroy Florence, "alone with open face defended her."

For nearly six years the life of the Florentine people was suspended, and lay crushed beneath an oppressive despotism of Ghibelline nobles and German soldiery under Guido Novello, the vicar of King Manfredi. Excluded from all political interests, the people imperceptibly organised their greater and lesser guilds, and waited the event. During this gloom Farinata degli Uberti died in 1264, and in the following year, 1265, Dante Alighieri was born. That same year, 1265, Charles of Anjou, the champion of the Church, invited by Clement IV. to take the crown of the kingdom of Naples and Sicily, entered Italy, and in February 1266 annihilated the army of Manfredi at the battle of

Benevento. Foremost in the ranks of the crusaders—for as such the French were regarded—fought the Guelf exiles from Florence, under the Papal banner specially granted them by Pope Clement—a red eagle clutching a green dragon on a white field. This, with the addition of a red lily over the eagle's head, became the arms of the society known as the Parte Guelfa; you may see it on the Porta San Niccolò and in other parts of the city between the cross of the People and the red lily of the Commune. Many of the noble Florentines were knighted by the hand of King Charles before the battle, and did great deeds of valour upon the field. "These men cannot lose to-day," exclaimed Manfredi, as he watched their advance; and when the silver eagle of the house of Suabia fell from Manfredi's helmet and he died in the *melée* crying *Hoc est signum Dei*, the triumph of the Guelfs was complete and German rule at an end in Italy. Of Manfredi's heroic death and the dishonour done by the Pope's legate to his body, Dante has sung in the *Purgatorio*.

When the news reached Florence, the Ghibellines trembled for their safety, and the people prepared to win back their own. An attempt at compromise was first made, under the auspices of Pope Clement. Two *Fрати Gaudenti* or "Cavalieri di Maria," members of an order of warrior monks from Bologna, were made Podestàs, one a Guelf and one a Ghibelline, to come to terms with the burghers. You may still trace the place where the Bottega and court of the Calimala stood in Mercato Nuovo (the Calimala being the Guild of dressers of foreign cloth—panni

franceschi, as Villani calls it), near where the Via Porta Rossa now enters the present Via Calzaioli. Here the new council of thirty-six of the best citizens, burghers and artizans, with a few trusted members of the nobility, met every day to settle the affairs of the State. Dante has branded these two warrior monks as hypocrites, but, as Capponi says, from this Bottega issued at once and almost spontaneously the Republic of Florence. Their great achievement was the thorough organisation of the seven greater Guilds, of which more presently, to each of which were given consuls and rectors, and a gonfalon or ensign of its own, around which its followers might assemble in arms in defence of People and Commune. To counteract this, Guido Novello brought in more troops from the Ghibelline cities of Tuscany, and increased the taxes to pay his Germans; until he had fifteen hundred horsemen in the city under his command. With their aid the nobles, headed by the Lamberti, rushed to arms. The people rose *en masse* and, headed by a Ghibelline noble, Gianni dei Soldanieri, who apparently had deserted his party in order to get control of the State (and who is placed by Dante in the Hell of traitors), raised barricades in the Piazza di Santa Trinità and in the Borgo SS. Apostoli, at the foot of the Tower of the Girolami, which still stands. The Ghibellines and Germans gathered in the Piazza di San Giovanni, held all the north-east of the town, and swept down upon the people's barricades under a heavy fire of darts and stones from towers and windows. But the street fighting put the horsemen at a hopeless disadvantage, and, repulsed in the

assault, the Count and his followers evacuated the town. This was on St Martin's day, November 11th, 1266. The next day a half-hearted attempt to re-enter the city at the gate near the Ponte alla Carraia was made, but easily driven off; and for two centuries and more no foreigner set foot as conqueror in Florence.

Not that Florence either obtained or desired absolute independence. The first step was to choose Charles of Anjou, the new King of Naples and Sicily, for their suzerain for ten years; but, cruel tyrant as he was elsewhere, he showed himself a true friend to the Florentines, and his suzerainty seldom weighed upon them oppressively. The Uberti and others were expelled, and some, who held out among the castles, were put to death at his orders. But the government became truly democratic. There was a central administration of twelve Ancients, elected annually, two for each *sesto*; with a council of one hundred "good men of the People, without whose deliberation no great thing or expense could be done"; and, nominally at least, a parliament. Next came the Captain of the People (usually an alien noble of democratic sympathies), with a special council or *credenza*, called the Council of the Captain and Capetudini (the Capetudini composed of the consuls of the Guilds), of 80 members; and a general council of 300 (including the 80), all *popolani* and Guelfs. Next came the Podestà, always an alien noble (appointed at first by King Charles), with the Council of the Podestà of 90 members, and the general Council of the Commune of 300—in both of which nobles could sit as well

as popolani. Measures presented by the 12 to the 100 were then submitted successively to the two councils of the Captain, and then, on the next day, to the councils of the Podestà and the Commune. Occasionally measures were concerted between the magistrates and a specially summoned council of *richiesti*, without the formalities and delays of these various councils. Each of the seven greater Arts⁷ was further organised with its own officers and councils and banners, like a miniature republic, and its consuls (forming the Capetudini) always sat in the Captain's council and usually in that of the Podestà likewise.

There was one dark spot. A new organisation was set on foot, under the auspices of Pope Clement and King Charles, known as the Parte Guelfa—another miniature republic within the republic—with six captains (three nobles and three popolani) and two councils, mainly to persecute the Ghibellines, to manage confiscated goods, and uphold Guelf principles in the State. In later days these Captains of the Guelf Party became exceedingly powerful and oppressive, and were the cause of much dissension. They met at first in the Church of S. Maria sopra la Porta (now the Church of S. Biagio), and later had a special palace of their own—which still stands, partly in the Via delle Terme, as you pass

⁷ The Arte di Calimala, or of the Mercatanti di Calimala, the dressers of foreign cloth; the Arte della Lana, or wool; the Arte dei Giudici e Notai, judges and notaries, also called the Arte del Proconsolo; the Arte del Cambio or dei Cambiatori, money-changers; the Arte dei Medici e Speziali, physicians and apothecaries; the Arte della Seta, or silk, also called the Arte di Por Santa Maria; and the Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai, the furriers. The Minor Arts were organised later.

up it from the Via Por Santa Maria on the right, and partly in the Piazza di San Biagio. It is an imposing and somewhat threatening mass, partly of the fourteenth and partly of the early fifteenth century. The church, which retains in part its structure of the thirteenth century, had been a place of secret meeting for the Guelfs during Guido Novello's rule; it still stands, but converted into a barracks for the firemen of Florence.

Thus was the greatest and most triumphant Republic of the Middle Ages organised—the constitution under which the most glorious culture and art of the modern world was to flourish. The great Guilds were henceforth a power in the State, and the *Secondo Popolo* had arisen—the democracy that Dante and Boccaccio were to know.

CHAPTER II

The Times of Dante and Boccaccio

"Godi, Fiorenza, poi che sei sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e per l'inferno il tuo nome si spande."

– *Dante.*

THE century that passed from the birth of Dante in 1265 to the deaths of Petrarch and Boccaccio, in 1374 and 1375 respectively, may be styled the *Trecento*, although it includes the last quarter of the thirteenth century and excludes the closing years of the fourteenth. In general Italian history, it runs from the downfall of the German Imperial power at the battle of Benevento, in 1266, to the return of the Popes from Avignon in 1377. In art, it is the epoch of the completion of Italian Gothic in architecture, of the followers and successors of Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano in sculpture, of the school of Giotto in painting. In letters, it is the great period of pure Tuscan prose and verse. Dante and Giovanni Villani, Dino Compagni, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Sacchetti, paint the age for us in all its aspects; and a note of mysticism is heard at the close (though not from a Florentine) in the Epistles of St. Catherine of Siena, of whom a living Italian poet has written—*Nel Giardino del conoscimento*

di sè ella è come una rosa di fuoco. But at the same time it is a century full of civil war and sanguinary factions, in which every Italian city was divided against itself; and nowhere were these divisions more notable or more bitterly fought out than in Florence. Yet, in spite of it all, the Republic proceeded majestically on its triumphant course. Machiavelli lays much stress upon this in the Proem to his *Istorie Fiorentine*. "In Florence," he says, "at first the nobles were divided against each other, then the people against the nobles, and lastly the people against the populace; and it oftentimes happened that when one of these parties got the upper hand, it split into two. And from these divisions there resulted so many deaths, so many banishments, so many destructions of families, as never befell in any other city of which we have record. Verily, in my opinion, nothing manifests more clearly the power of our city than the result of these divisions, which would have been able to destroy every great and most potent city. Nevertheless ours seemed thereby to grow ever greater; such was the virtue of those citizens, and the power of their genius and disposition to make themselves and their country great, that those who remained free from these evils could exalt her with their virtue more than the malignity of those accidents, which had diminished them, had been able to cast her down. And without doubt, if only Florence, after her liberation from the Empire, had had the felicity of adopting a form of government which would have kept her united, I know not what republic, whether modern or ancient, would have surpassed her—

with such great virtue in war and in peace would she have been filled."

The first thirty-four years of this epoch are among the brightest in Florentine history, the years that ran from the triumph of the Guelfs to the sequel to the Jubilee of 1300, from the establishment of the *Secondo Popolo* to its split into Neri and Bianchi, into Black Guelfs and White Guelfs. Externally Florence became the chief power of Tuscany, and all the neighbouring towns gradually, to a greater or less extent, acknowledged her sway; internally, in spite of growing friction between the burghers and the new Guelf nobility, between *popolani* and *grandi* or magnates, she was daily advancing in wealth and prosperity, in beauty and artistic power. The exquisite poetry of the *dolce stil novo* was heard. Guido Cavalcanti, a noble Guelf who had married the daughter of Farinata degli Uberti, and, later, the notary Lapo Gianni and Dante Alighieri, showed the Italians what true lyric song was; philosophers like Brunetto Latini served the state; modern history was born with Giovanni Villani. Great palaces were built for the officers of the Republic; vast Gothic churches arose. Women of rare beauty, eternalised as Beatrice, Giovanna, Lagia and the like, passed through the streets and adorned the social gatherings in the open loggias of the palaces. Splendid pageants and processions hailed the Calends of May and the Nativity of the Baptist, and marked the civil and ecclesiastical festivities and state solemnities. The people advanced more and more in power and patriotism; while

the magnates, in their towers and palace-fortresses, were partly forced to enter the life of the guilds, partly held aloof and plotted to recover their lost authority, but were always ready to officer the burgher forces in time of war, or to extend Florentine influence by serving as Podestàs and Captains in other Italian cities.

Dante was born in the Sesto di San Piero Maggiore in May 1265, some eighteen months before the liberation of the city. He lost his mother in his infancy, and his father while he was still a boy. This father appears to have been a notary, and came from a noble but decadent family, who were probably connected with the Elisei, an aristocratic house of supposed Roman descent, who had by this time almost entirely disappeared. The Alighieri, who were Guelfs, do not seem to have ranked officially as *grandi* or magnates; one of Dante's uncles had fought heroically at Montaperti. Almost all the families connected with the story of Dante's life had their houses in the Sesto di San Piero Maggiore, and their sites may in some instances still be traced. Here were the Cerchi, with whom he was to be politically associated in after years; the Donati, from whom sprung one of his dearest friends, Forese, with one of his deadliest foes, Messer Corso, and Dante's own wife, Gemma; and the Portinari, the house according to tradition of Beatrice, the "giver of blessing" of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the mystical lady of the *Paradiso*. Guido Cavalcanti, the first and best of all his friends, lived a little apart from this Sesto di Scandali—as St Peter's section of the town came to be called—between the Mercato Nuovo and San Michele in Orto.

Unlike the Alighieri, though not of such ancient birth as theirs, the Cavalcanti were exceedingly rich and powerful, and ranked officially among the *grandi*, the Guelf magnates. At this epoch, as Signor Carocci observes in his *Firenze scomparsa*, Florence must have presented the aspect of a vast forest of towers. These towers rose over the houses of powerful and wealthy families, to be used for offence or defence, when the faction fights raged, or to be dismantled and cut down when the people gained the upper hand. The best idea of such a mediæval city, on a smaller scale, can still be got at San Gimignano, "the fair town called of the Fair Towers," where dozens of these *torri* still stand; and also, though to a less extent, at Gubbio. A few have been preserved here in Florence, and there are a number of narrow streets, on both sides of the Arno, which still retain some of their mediæval characteristics. In the Borgo Santissimi Apostoli, for instance, and in the Via Lambertesca, there are several striking towers of this kind, with remnants of palaces of the *grandi*; and, on the other side of the river, especially in the Via dei Bardi and the Borgo San Jacopo. When one family, or several associated families, had palaces on either side of a narrow street defended by such towers, and could throw chains and barricades across at a moment's notice, it will readily be understood that in times of popular tumult Florence bristled with fortresses in every direction.

In 1282, the year before that in which Dante received the "most sweet salutation," *dolcissimo salutare*, of "the glorious lady

of my mind who was called by many Beatrice, that knew not how she was called," and saw the vision of the Lord of terrible aspect in the mist of the colour of fire (the vision which inspired the first of his sonnets which has been preserved to us), the democratic government of the *Secondo Popolo* was confirmed by being placed entirely in the hands of the *Arti Maggiori* or Greater Guilds. The Signoria was henceforth to be composed of the Priors of the Arts, chosen from the chief members of the Greater Guilds, who now became the supreme magistrates of the State. They were, at this epoch of Florentine history, six in number, one to represent each Sesto, and held office for two months only; on leaving office, they joined with the Capetudini, and other citizens summoned for the purpose, to elect their successors. At a later period this was done, ostensibly at least, by lot instead of election. The glorious Palazzo Vecchio had not yet been built, and the Priors met at first in a house belonging to the monks of the Badia, defended by the Torre della Castagna; and afterwards in a palace belonging to the Cerchi (both tower and palace are still standing). Of the seven Greater Arts—the *Calimala*, the Money-changers, the Wool-merchants, the Silk-merchants, the Physicians and Apothecaries, the traders in furs and skins, the Judges and Notaries—the latter alone do not seem at first to have been represented in the Priorate; but to a certain extent they exercised control over all the Guilds, sat in all their tribunals, and had a Proconsul, who came next to the Signoria in all state processions, and had a certain jurisdiction over all

the Arts. It was thus essentially a government of those who were actually engaged in industry and commerce. "Henceforth," writes Pasquale Villari, "the Republic is properly a republic of merchants, and only he who is ascribed to the Arts can govern it: every grade of nobility, ancient or new, is more a loss than a privilege." The double organisation of the People under the Captain with his two councils, and the Commune under the Podestà with his special council and the general council (in these two latter alone, it will be remembered, could nobles sit and vote) still remained; but the authority of the Podestà was naturally diminished.

Florence was now the predominant power in central Italy; the cities of Tuscany looked to her as the head of the Guelfic League, although, says Dino Compagni, "they love her more in discord than in peace, and obey her more for fear than for love." A protracted war against Pisa and Arezzo, carried on from 1287 to 1292, drew even Dante from his poetry and his study; it is believed that he took part in the great battle of Campaldino in 1289, in which the last efforts of the old Tuscan Ghibellinism were shattered by the Florentines and their allies, fighting under the royal banner of the House of Anjou. Amerigo di Narbona, one of the captains of King Charles II. of Naples, was in command of the Guelfic forces. From many points of view, this is one of the more interesting battles of the Middle Ages. It is said to have been almost the last Italian battle in which the burgher forces, and not the mercenary soldiery of the

Condottieri, carried the day. Corso Donati and Vieri dei Cerchi, soon to be in deadly feud in the political arena, were among the captains of the Florentine host; and Dante himself is said to have served in the front rank of the cavalry. In a fragment of a letter ascribed to him by one of his earlier biographers, Dante speaks of this battle of Campaldino; "wherein I had much dread, and at the end the greatest gladness, by reason of the varying chances of that battle." One of the Ghibelline leaders, Buonconte da Montefeltro, who was mortally wounded and died in the rout, meets the divine poet on the shores of the Mountain of Purgation, and, in lines of almost ineffable pathos, tells him the whole story of his last moments. Villani, ever mindful of Florence being the daughter of Rome, assures us that the news of the great victory was miraculously brought to the Priors in the Cerchi Palace, in much the same way as the tidings of Lake Regillus to the expectant Fathers at the gate of Rome. Several of the exiled Uberti had fallen in the ranks of the enemy, fighting against their own country. In the cloisters of the Annunziata you will find a contemporary monument of the battle, let into the west wall of the church near the ground; the marble figure of an armed knight on horseback, with the golden lilies of France over his surcoat, charging down upon the foe. It is the tomb of the French cavalier, Guglielmo Berardi, "balius" of Amerigo di Narbona, who fell upon the field.

The eleven years that follow Campaldino, culminating in the Jubilee of Pope Boniface VIII. and the opening of the

fourteenth century, are the years of Dante's political life. They witnessed the great political reforms which confirmed the democratic character of the government, and the marvellous artistic embellishment of the city under Arnolfo di Cambio and his contemporaries. During these years the Palazzo Vecchio, the Duomo, and the grandest churches of Florence were founded; and the Third Walls, whose gates and some scanty remnants are with us to-day, were begun. Favoured by the Popes and the Angevin sovereigns of Naples, now that the old Ghibelline nobility, save in a few valleys and mountain fortresses, was almost extinct, the new nobles, the *grandi* or Guelf magnates, proud of their exploits at Campaldino, and chafing against the burgher rule, began to adopt an overbearing line of conduct towards the people, and to be more factious than ever among themselves. Strong measures were adopted against them, such as the complete enfranchisement of the peasants of the *contrada* in 1289—measures which culminated in the famous Ordinances of Justice, passed in 1293, by which the magnates were completely excluded from the administration, severe laws made to restrain their rough usage of the people, and a special magistrate, the *Gonfaloniere* or "Standard-bearer of Justice," added to the Priors, to hold office like them for two months in rotation from each *sesto* of the city, and to rigidly enforce the laws against the magnates. This *Gonfaloniere* became practically the head of the Signoria, and was destined to become the supreme head of the State in the latter days of the Florentine Republic; to him was

publicly assigned the great Gonfalon of the People, with its red cross on a white field; and he had a large force of armed popolani under his command to execute these ordinances, against which there was no appeal allowed.⁸ These Ordinances also fixed the number of the Guilds at twenty-one—seven Arti Maggiori, mainly engaged in wholesale commerce, exportation and importation, fourteen Arti Minori, which carried on the retail traffic and internal trade of the city—and renewed their statutes.

The hero of this Magna Charta of Florence is a certain Giano della Bella, a noble who had fought at Campaldino and had now joined the people; a man of untractable temper, who knew not how to make concessions; somewhat anti-clerical and obnoxious to the Pope, but consumed by an intense and savage thirst for justice, upon which the craftier politicians of both sides played. "Let the State perish, rather than such things be tolerated," was his constant political formula: *Perisca innanzi la città, che tante opere rie si sostengano*. But the magnates, from whom he was endeavouring to snatch their last political refuge, the Parte Guelfa, muttered, "Let us smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered"; and at length, after an ineffectual conspiracy against his life, Giano was driven out of the city, on March 5th,

⁸ Some years later a new officer, the Executor of Justice, was instituted to carry out these ordinances instead of leaving them to the Gonfaloniere. This Executor of Justice was associated with the Captain, but was usually a foreign Guelf burgher; later he developed into the Bargello, head of police and governor of the gaol. It will, of course, be seen that while Podestà, Captain, Executore (the *Rettori*), were aliens, the Gonfaloniere and Priors (the *Signori*) were necessarily Florentines and popolani.

1295, by a temporary alliance of the burghers and magnates against him. The *popolo minuto* and artizans, upon whom he had mainly relied and whose interests he had sustained, deserted him; and the government remained henceforth in the hands of the wealthy burghers, the *popolo grosso*. Already a cleavage was becoming visible between these Arti Maggiori, who ruled the State, and the Arti Minori whose gains lay in local merchandise and traffic, partly dependent upon the magnates. And a butcher, nicknamed Pecora, or, as we may call him, Lambkin, appears prominently as a would-be politician; he cuts a quaintly fierce figure in Dino Compagni's chronicle. In this same year, 1295, Dante Alighieri entered public life, and, on July 6th, he spoke in the General Council of the Commune in support of certain modifications in the Ordinances of Justice, whereby nobles, by leaving their order and matriculating in one or other of the Arts, even without exercising it, could be free from their disabilities, and could share in the government of the State, and hold office in the Signoria. He himself, in this same year, matriculated in the Arte dei Medici e Speziali, the great guild which included the painters and the book-sellers.

The growing dissensions in the Guelf Republic came to a head in 1300, the famous year of jubilee in which the Pope was said to have declared that the Florentines were the "fifth element." The rival factions of Bianchi and Neri, White Guelfs and Black Guelfs, which were now to divide the whole city, arose partly from the deadly hostility of two families each with a

large following, the Cerchi and the Donati, headed respectively by Vieri dei Cerchi and Corso Donati, the two heroes of Campaldino; partly from an analogous feud in Pistoia, which was governed from Florence; partly from the political discord between that party in the State that clung to the (modified) Ordinances of Justice and supported the Signoria, and another party that hated the Ordinances and loved the tyrannical Parte Guelfa. They were further complicated by the intrigues of the "black" magnates with Pope Boniface VIII., who apparently hoped by their means to repress the burgher government and unite the city in obedience to himself. With this end in view, he had been endeavouring to obtain from Albert of Austria the renunciation, in favour of the Holy See, of all rights claimed by the Emperors over Tuscany. Dante himself, Guido Cavalcanti, and most of the best men in Florence either directly adhered to, or at least favoured, the Cerchi and the Whites; the populace, on the other hand, was taken with the dash and display of the more aristocratic Blacks, and would gladly have seen Messer Corso—"il Barone," as they called him—lord of the city. Rioting, in which Guido Cavalcanti played a wild and fantastic part, was of daily occurrence, especially in the Sesto di San Piero. The adherents of the Signoria had their head-quarters in the Cerchi Palace, in the Via della Condotta; the Blacks found their legal fortress in that of the Captains of the Parte Guelfa in the Via delle Terme. At last, on May 1st, the two factions "came to blood" in the Piazza di Santa Trinità on the occasion of a dance of girls to usher in

the May. On June 15th Dante was elected one of the six Priors, to hold office till August 15th, and he at once took a strong line in resisting all interference from Rome, and in maintaining order within the city. In consequence of an assault upon the officers of the Guilds on St. John's Eve, the Signoria, probably on Dante's initiative, put under bounds a certain number of factious magnates, chosen impartially from both parties, including Corso Donati and Guido Cavalcanti. From his place of banishment at Sarzana, Guido, sick to death, wrote the most pathetic of all his lyrics:—

"Because I think not ever to return,

Ballad, to Tuscany,—
Go therefore thou for me
Straight to my lady's face,
Who, of her noble grace,
Shall show thee courtesy.

* * * * *

"Surely thou knowest, Ballad, how that Death
Assails me, till my life is almost sped:
Thou knowest how my heart still travaileth
Through the sore pangs which in my soul are bred:—
My body being now so nearly dead,

It cannot suffer more.
Then, going, I implore
That this my soul thou take
(Nay, do so for my sake),
When my heart sets it free."⁹

And at the end of August, when Dante had left office, Guido returned to Florence with the rest of the Bianchi, only to die. For more than a year the "white" burghers were supreme, not only in Florence, but throughout a greater part of Tuscany; and in the following May they procured the expulsion of the Blacks from Pistoia. But Corso Donati at Rome was biding his time; and, on November 1st, 1301, Charles of Valois, brother of King Philip of France, entered Florence with some 1200 horsemen, partly French and partly Italian,—ostensibly as papal peacemaker, but preparing to "joust with the lance of Judas." In Santa Maria Novella he solemnly swore, as the son of a king, to preserve the peace and well-being of the city; and at once armed his followers. Magnates and burghers alike, seeing themselves betrayed, began to barricade their houses and streets. On the same day (November 5th) Corso Donati, acting in unison with the French, appeared in the suburbs, entered the city by a postern gate in the second walls, near S. Piero Maggiore, and swept through the streets with an armed force, burst open the prisons, and drove the Priors out of their new Palace. For days

⁹ Rossetti's translation of the *ripresa* and second stanza of the Ballata *Perch'i' no spero di tornar giammai*.

the French and the Neri sacked the city and the contrada at their will, Charles being only intent upon securing a large share of the spoils for himself. But even he did not dare to alter the popular constitution, and was forced to content himself with substituting "black" for "white" burghers in the Signoria, and establishing a Podestà of his own following, Cante de' Gabbrielli of Gubbio, in the Palace of the Commune. An apparently genuine attempt on the part of the Pope, by a second "peacemaker," to undo the harm that his first had done, came to nothing; and the work of proscription commenced, under the direction of the new Podestà. Dante was one of the first victims. The two sentences against him (in each case with a few other names) are dated January 27th, 1302, and March 10th—and there were to be others later. It is the second decree that contains the famous clause, condemning him to be burned to death, if ever he fall into the power of the Commune. At the beginning of April all the leaders of the "white" faction, who had not already fled or turned "black," with their chief followers, magnates and burghers alike, were hounded into exile; and Charles left Florence to enter upon an almost equally shameful campaign in Sicily.

Dante is believed to have been absent from Florence on an embassy to the Pope when Charles of Valois came, and to have heard the news of his ruin at Siena as he hurried homewards—though both embassy and absence have been questioned by Dante scholars of repute. His ancestor, Cacciaguida, tells him in the *Paradiso*:—

"Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
più caramente, e questo è quello strale
che l'arco dello esilio pria saetta.
Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e com'è duro calle
lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale."¹⁰

The rest of Dante's life was passed in exile, and only touches the story of Florence indirectly at certain points. "Since it was the pleasure of the citizens of the most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome, Florence," he tells us in his *Convivio*, "to cast me forth from her most sweet bosom (in which I was born and nourished up to the summit of my life, and in which, with her good will, I desire with all my heart to rest my weary soul and end the time given me), I have gone through almost all the parts to which this language extends, a pilgrim, almost a beggar, showing against my will the wound of fortune, which is wont unjustly to be oftentimes reputed to the wounded."

Attempts of the exiles to win their return to Florence by force of arms, with aid from the Ubaldini and the Tuscan Ghibellines, were easily repressed. But the victorious Neri themselves now split into two factions; the one, headed by Corso Donati and

¹⁰ "Thou shalt abandon everything beloved most dearly; this is the arrow which the bow of exile shall first shoot." "Thou shalt make trial of how salt doth taste another's bread, and how hard the path to descend and mount upon another's stair." – Wicksteed's translation.

composed mainly of magnates, had a kind of doubtful support in the favour of the populace; the other, led by Rosso della Tosa, inclined to the Signoria and the *popolo grosso*. It was something like the old contest between Messer Corso and Vieri dei Cerchi, but with more entirely selfish ends; and there was evidently going to be a hard tussle between Messer Corso and Messer Rosso for the possession of the State. Civil war was renewed in the city, and the confusion was heightened by the restoration of a certain number of Bianchi, who were reconciled to the Government. The new Pope, Benedict XI., was ardently striving to pacify Florence and all Italy; and his legate, the Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, took up the cause of the exiles. Pompous peace-meetings were held in the Piazza di Santa Maria Novella, for the friars of St Dominic—to which order the new Pope belonged—had the welfare of the city deeply at heart; and at one of these meetings the exiled lawyer, Ser Petracco dall'Ancisa (in a few days to be the father of Italy's second poet), acted as the representative of his party. Attempts were made to revive the May-day pageants of brighter days—but they only resulted in a horrible disaster on the Ponte alla Carraia, of which more presently. The fiends of faction broke loose again; and in order to annihilate the Cavalcanti, who were still rich and powerful round about the Mercato Nuovo, the leaders of the Neri deliberately burned a large portion of the city. On July 20th, 1304, an attempt by the now allied Bianchi and Ghibellines to surprise the city proved a disastrous failure; and, on that very day (Dante being now far away at Verona, forming a

party by himself), Francesco di Petracco—who was to call himself Petrarca and is called by us Petrarch—was born in exile at Arezzo.

This miserable chapter of Florentine history ended tragically in 1308, with the death of Corso Donati. In his old age he had married a daughter of Florence's deadliest foe, the great Ghibelline champion, Uguccione della Faggiuola; and, in secret understanding with Uguccione and the Cardinal Napoleone degli Orsini (Pope Clement V. had already transferred the papal chair to Avignon and commenced the Babylonian captivity), he was preparing to overthrow the Signoria, abolish the Ordinances, and make himself Lord of Florence. But the people anticipated him. On Sunday morning, October 16th, the Priors ordered their great bell to be sounded; Corso was accused, condemned as a traitor and rebel, and sentence pronounced in less than an hour; and with the great Gonfalon of the People displayed, the forces of the Commune, supported by the swordsmen of the Della Tosa and a band of Catalan mercenaries in the service of the King of Naples, marched upon the Piazza di San Piero Maggiore. Over the Corbizzi tower floated the banner of the Donati, but only a handful of men gathered round the fierce old noble who, himself unable by reason of his gout to bear arms, encouraged them by his fiery words to hold out to the last. But the soldiery of Uguccione never came, and not a single magnate in the city stirred to aid him. Corso, forced at last to abandon his position, broke through his enemies, and, hotly pursued, fled through the Porta alla Croce. He was overtaken, captured, and

barbarously slain by the lances of the hireling soldiery, near the Badia di San Salvi, at the instigation, as it was whispered, of Rosso della Tosa and Pazzino dei Pazzi. The monks carried him, as he lay dying, into the Abbey, where they gave him humble sepulchre for fear of the people. With all his crimes, there was nothing small in anything that Messer Corso did; he was a great spirit, one who could have accomplished mighty things in other circumstances, but who could not breathe freely in the atmosphere of a mercantile republic. "His life was perilous," says Dino Compagni sententially, "and his death was blame-worthy."

A brief but glorious chapter follows, though denounced in Dante's bitterest words. Hardly was Corso dead when, after their long silence, the imperial trumpets were again heard in the Garden of the Empire. Henry of Luxemburg, the last hero of the Middle Ages, elected Emperor as Henry VII., crossed the Alps in September 1310, resolved to heal the wounds of Italy, and to revive the fading mediæval dream of the Holy Roman Empire. In three wild and terrible letters, Dante announced to the princes and peoples of Italy the advent of this "peaceful king," this "new Moses"; threatened the Florentines with the vengeance of the Imperial Eagle; urged Cæsar on against the city—"the sick sheep that infecteth all the flock of the Lord with her contagion." But the Florentines rose to the occasion, and with the aid of their ally, the King of Naples, formed what was practically an Italian confederation to oppose the imperial invader. "It was at

this moment," writes Professor Villari, "that the small merchant republic initiated a truly national policy, and became a great power in Italy." From the middle of September till the end of October, 1312, the imperial army lay round Florence. The Emperor, sick with fever, had his head-quarters in San Salvi. But he dared not venture upon an attack, although the fortifications were unfinished; and, in the following August, the Signoria of Florence could write exultantly to their allies, and announce "the blessed tidings" that "the most savage tyrant, Henry, late Count of Luxemburg, whom the rebellious persecutors of the Church, and treacherous foes of ourselves and you, called King of the Romans and Emperor of Germany," had died at Buonconvento.

But in the Empyrean Heaven of Heavens, in the mystical convent of white stoles, Beatrice shows Dante the throne of glory prepared for the soul of the noble-hearted Cæsar:—

"In quel gran seggio, a che tu gli occhi tieni
per la corona che già v'è su posta,
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,
sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,
dell'alto Enrico, ch'a drizzare Italia
verrà in prima che ella sia disposta."¹¹

¹¹ "On that great seat where thou dost fix thine eyes, for the crown's sake already placed above it, ere at this wedding feast thyself do sup," Shall sit the soul (on earth 'twill be imperial) of the lofty Henry, who shall come to straighten Italy ere she be ready for it."

After this, darker days fell upon Florence. Dante, with a renewed sentence of death upon his head, was finishing his *Divina Commedia* at Verona and Ravenna,—until, on September 14th, 1321, he passed away in the latter city, with the music of the pine-forest in his ears and the monuments of dead emperors before his dying eyes. Petrarch, after a childhood spent at Carpentras, was studying law at Montpellier and Bologna—until, on that famous April morning in Santa Chiara at Avignon, he saw the golden-haired girl who made him the greatest lyricist of the Middle Ages. It was in the year 1327 that Laura—if such was really her name—thus crossed his path. Boccaccio, born at Certaldo in 1313, the year of the Emperor Henry's death, was growing up in Florence, a sharp and precocious boy. But the city was in a woeful plight; harassed still by factious magnates and burghers, plundered by foreign adventurers, who pretended to serve her, heavily taxed by the Angevin sovereigns—the *Reali*—of Naples. Florence had taken first King Robert, and then his son, Charles of Calabria, as overlord, for defence against external foes (first Henry VII., then Uguccone della Faggiuola, and then Castruccio Interminelli); and the vicars of these Neapolitan princes replaced for a while the Podestàs; their marshals robbed and corrupted; their Catalan soldiers clamoured for pay. The wars with Uguccone and Castruccio were most disastrous to the Republic; and the fortunate coincidence of the deaths of Castruccio and Charles of Calabria, in 1328, gave Florence back her liberty at the very moment when she no

longer needed a defender. Although the Florentines professed to regard this suzerainty of the Reali di Napoli as an alliance rather than a subjection,—*compagnia e non servitù* as Machiavelli puts it—it was an undoubted relief when it ended. The State was reorganised, and a new constitution confirmed in a solemn Parliament held in the Piazza. Henceforth the nomination of the Priors and Gonfaloniere was effected by lot, and controlled by a complicated process of scrutiny; the old councils were all annulled; and in future there were to be only two chief councils—the Council of the People, composed of 300 *popolani*, presided over by the Captain, and the Council of the Commune, of 250, presided over by the Podestà, in which latter (as in former councils of the kind) both *popolani* and *grandi* could sit. Measures proposed by the Government were submitted first to the Council of the People, and then, if approved, to that of the Commune.

Within the next few years, in spite of famine, disease, and a terrible inundation of the Arno in 1333, the Republic largely extended its sway. Pistoia, Arezzo, and other places of less account owned its signory; but an attempt to get possession of Lucca—with the incongruous aid of the Germans—failed. After the flood, the work of restoration was first directed by Giotto; and to this epoch we owe the most beautiful building in Florence, the Campanile. The discontent, excited by the mismanagement of the war against Lucca, threw the Republic into the arms of a new and peculiarly atrocious tyrant, Walter de Brienne, Duke of

Athens, a French soldier of fortune, connected by blood with the *Realì* of Naples. Elected first as war captain and chief justice, he acquired credit with the populace and the magnates by his executions of unpopular burghers; and finally, on September 8th, 1342, in the Piazza della Signoria, he was appointed Lord of Florence for life, amidst the acclamations of the lowest sections of the mob and the paid retainers of the treacherous nobles. The Priors were driven from their palace, the books of the Ordinances destroyed, and the Duke's banner erected upon the People's tower, while the church bells rang out the *Te Deum*. Arezzo, Pistoia, Colle di Val d'Elsa, San Gimignano, and Volterra acknowledged his rule; and with a curious mixture of hypocrisy, immorality, and revolting cruelty, he reigned as absolute lord until the following summer, backed by French and Burgundian soldiers who flocked to him from all quarters. By that time he had utterly disgusted all classes in the State, even the magnates by whose favour he had won his throne and the populace who had acclaimed him; and on the Feast of St. Anne, July 26th, 1343, there was a general rising. The instruments of his cruelty were literally torn to pieces by the people, and he was besieged in the Palazzo Vecchio, which he had transformed into a fortress, and at length capitulated on August 3rd. The Sienese and Count Simone de' Conti Guidi, who had come to mediate, took him over the Ponte Rubaconte, through the Porta San Niccolò and thence into the Casentino, where they made him solemnly ratify his abdication.

"Note," says Giovanni Villani, who was present at most of these things and has given us a most vivid picture of them, "that even as the Duke with fraud and treason took away the liberty of the Republic of Florence on the day of Our Lady in September,¹² not regarding the reverence due to her, so, as it were in divine vengeance, God permitted that the free citizens with armed hand should win it back on the day of her mother, Madonna Santa Anna, on the 26th day of July 1343; and for this grace it was ordained by the Commune that the Feast of St. Anne should ever be kept like Easter in Florence, and that there should be celebrated a solemn office and great offerings by the Commune and all the Arts of Florence." St. Anne henceforth became the chief patroness and protectress of the Republic, as Fra Bartolommeo painted her in his great unfinished picture in the Uffizi; and the solemn office and offerings were duly paid and celebrated in Or San Michele. One of Villani's minor grievances against the Duke is that he introduced frivolous French fashions of dress into the city, instead of the stately old Florentine costume, which the republicans considered to be the authentic garb of ancient Rome. That there was some ground for this complaint will readily be seen, by comparing the figure of a French cavalier in the Allegory of the Church in the Spanish Chapel at Santa Maria Novella (the figure formerly called Cimabue and now sometimes said to represent Walter de Brienne himself), with the simple grandeur and dignity of the

¹² *i. e.* The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

dress worn by the burghers on their tombs in Santa Croce, or by Dante in the Duomo portrait.

Only two months after the expulsion of the Duke of Athens, the great quarrel between the magnates and the people was fought to a finish, in September 1343. On the northern side of the Arno, the magnates made head at the houses of the Adimari near San Giovanni, at the opening of the present Via Calzaioli, where one of their towers still stands, at the houses of the Pazzi and Donati in the Piazza di San Pier Maggiore, and round those of the Cavalcanti in Mercato Nuovo. The people under their great gonfalon and the standards of the companies, led by the Medici and Rondinelli, stormed one position after another, forcing the defenders to surrender. On the other side of the Arno, the magnates and their retainers held the bridges and the narrow streets beyond. The Porta San Giorgio was in their hands, and, through it, reinforcements were hurried up from the country. Repulsed at the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte Rubaconte, the forces of the people with their victorious standards at last carried the Ponte alla Carraia, which was held by the Nerli; and next, joined by the populace of the Oltrarno, forced the Rossi and Frescobaldi to yield. The Bardi alone remained; and, in that narrow street which still bears their name, and on the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte Rubaconte, they withstood single-handed the onslaught of the whole might of the people, until they were assailed in the rear from the direction of the Via Romana. The infuriated populace sacked their houses, destroyed and burned

the greater part of their palaces and towers. The long struggle between *grandi* and *popolani* was thus ended at last. "This was the cause," says Machiavelli, "that Florence was stripped not only of all martial skill, but also of all generosity." The government was again reformed, and the minor arts admitted to a larger share; between the *popolo grosso* and them, between burghers and populace, lay the struggle now, which was to end in the Medicean rule.

But on all these perpetual changes in the form of the government of Florence the last word had, perhaps, been said in Dante's sarcastic outburst a quarter of a century before:—

"Atene e Lacedemone, che fenno
l'antiche leggi, e furon sì civili,
fecero al viver bene un picciol cenno
verso di te, che fai tanto sottili
provvedimenti, che a mezzo novembre
non giunge quel che tu d'ottobre fili.
Quante volte del tempo che rimembre,
legge, moneta, offizio, e costume
hai tu mutato, e rinnovato membre?
E se ben ti ricordi, e vedi lume,
vedrai te simigliante a quella inferma,
che non può trovar posa in su le piume,
ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma."¹³

¹³ *Purg. VI.*—"Athens and Lacedæmon, they who madeThe ancient laws, and were so
civilised,Made towards living well a little signCompared with thee, who makest such
fine-spunProvisions, that to middle of NovemberReaches not what thou in October

The terrible pestilence, known as the Black Death, swept over Europe in 1348. During the five months in which it devastated Florence three-fifths of the population perished, all civic life was suspended, and the gayest and most beautiful of cities seemed for a while to be transformed into the dim valley of disease and sin that lies outstretched at the bottom of Dante's Malebolge. It has been described, in all its horrors, in one of the most famous passages of modern prose—that appalling introduction to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. From the city in her agony, Boccaccio's three noble youths and seven "honest ladies" fled to the villas of Settignano and Fiesole, where they strove to drown the horror of the time by their music and dancing, their feasting and too often sadly obscene stories. Giovanni Villani was among the victims in Florence, and Petrarch's Laura at Avignon. The first canto of Petrarch's *Triumph of Death* appears to be, in part, an allegorical representation—written many years later—of this fearful year.

During the third quarter of this fourteenth century—the years which still saw the Popes remaining in their Babylonian exile at Avignon—the Florentines gradually regained their lost supremacy over the cities of Tuscany: Colle di Val d'Elsa, San Gimignano, Prato, Pistoia, Volterra, San Miniato dei Tedeschi. They carried on a war with the formidable tyrant of Milan,

spinnest. How oft, within the time of thy remembrance, Laws, money, offices and usages
Hast thou remodelled, and renewed thy members? And if thou mind thee well, and see the light,
Thou shalt behold thyself like a sick woman, Who cannot find repose upon her down,
But by her tossing wardeth off her pain."—Longfellow.

the Archbishop Giovanni Visconti, whose growing power was a perpetual menace to the liberties of the Tuscan communes. They made good use of the descent of the feeble emperor, Charles IV., into Italy; waged a new war with their old rival, Pisa; and readily accommodated themselves to the baser conditions of warfare that prevailed, now that Italy was the prey of the companies of mercenaries, ready to be hired by whatever prince or republic could afford the largest pay, or to fall upon whatever city seemed most likely to yield the heaviest ransom. Within the State itself the *popolo minuto* and the Minor Guilds were advancing in power; Florence was now divided into four quarters (San Giovanni, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, Santo Spirito), instead of the old Sesti; and the Signoria was now composed of the Gonfaloniere and *eight* Priors, two from each quarter (instead of the former six), of whom two belonged to the Minor Arts. These, of course, still held office for only two months. Next came the twelve Buonomini, who were the counsellors of the Signoria, and held office for three months; and the sixteen Gonfaloniers of the city companies, four from each quarter, holding office for four months. And there were, as before, the two great Councils of the People and the Commune; and still the three great officers who carried out their decrees, the Podestà, the Captain, the Executor of Justice. The feuds of Ricci and Albizzi kept up the inevitable factions, much as the Buondelmonti and Uberti, Cerchi and Donati had done of old; and an iniquitous system of "admonishing" those who were

suspected of Ghibelline descent (the *ammoniti* being excluded from office under heavy penalties) threw much power into the hands of the captains of the Parte Guelfa, whose oppressive conduct earned them deadly hatred. "To such arrogance," says Machiavelli, "did the captains of the Party mount, that they were feared more than the members of the Signoria, and less reverence was paid to the latter than to the former; the palace of the Party was more esteemed than that of the Signoria, so that no ambassador came to Florence without having commissions to the captains."

Pope Gregory XI preceded his return to Rome by an attempted reconquest of the States of the Church, by means of foreign legates and hireling soldiers, of whom the worst were Bretons and English; although St. Catherine of Siena implored him, in the name of Christ, to come with the Cross in hand, like a meek lamb, and not with armed bands. The horrible atrocities committed in Romagna by these mercenaries, especially at Faenza and Cesena, stained what might have been a noble pontificate. Against Pope Gregory and his legates, the Florentines carried on a long and disastrous war; round the Otto della Guerra, the eight magistrates to whom the management of the war was intrusted, rallied those who hated the Parte Guelfa. The return of Gregory to Rome in 1377 opens a new epoch in Italian history. Echoes of this unnatural struggle between Florence and the Pope reach us in the letters of St Catherine and the canzoni of Franco Sacchetti; in the latter is some faint sound

of Dante's *saeva indignatio* against the unworthy pastors of the Church, but in the former we are lifted far above the miserable realities of a conflict carried on by political intrigue and foreign mercenaries, into the mystical realms of pure faith and divine charity.

In 1376, the Loggia dei Priori, now less pleasantly known as the Loggia dei Lanzi, was founded; and in 1378 the bulk of the Duomo was practically completed. This may be taken as the close of the first or "heroic" epoch of Florentine Art, which runs simultaneously with the great democratic period of Florentine history, represented in literature by Dante and Boccaccio. The Duomo, the Palace of the Podestà, the Palace of the Priors, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, Or San Michele, the Loggia of the Bigallo, and the Third Walls of the City (of which, on the northern side of the Arno, the gates alone remain), are its supreme monuments in architecture. Its heroes of greatest name are Arnolfo di Cambio, Giotto di Bondone, Andrea Pisano, Andrea di Cione or Orcagna (the "Archangel"), and, lastly and but recently recognised, Francesco Talenti.

"No Italian architect," says Addington Symonds, "has enjoyed the proud privilege of stamping his own individuality more strongly on his native city than Arnolfo." At present, the walls of the city (or what remains of them)—*le mura di Fiorenza* which Lapo Gianni would fain see *inargentate*—and the bulk of the Palazzo Vecchio and Santa Croce, alone represent Arnolfo's work. But the Duomo (mainly, in its present form, due to

Francesco Talenti) probably still retains in part his design; and the glorious Church of Or San Michele, of which the actual architect is not certainly known, stands on the site of his Loggia.

Giovanni Cimabue, the father of Florentine painting as Arnolfo of Florentine architecture, survives only as a name in Dante's immortal verse. Not a single authentic work remains from his hand in Florence. His supposed portrait in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella is now held to be that of a French knight; the famous picture of the Madonna and Child with her angelic ministers, in the Rucellai Chapel, is shown to be the work of a Sienese master; and the other paintings once ascribed to him have absolutely no claims to bear his name. But the Borgo Allegro still bears its title from the rejoicings that hailed his masterpiece, and perhaps it is best that his achievement should thus live, only as a holy memory:—

"Credette Cimabue nella pittura
tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido,
sì che la fama di colui è oscura."¹⁴

Of Cimabue's great pupil, Dante's friend and contemporary, Giotto, we know and possess much more. Through him mediæval Italy first spoke out through painting, and with no uncertain sound. He was born some ten years later than Dante. Cimabue—

¹⁴ "In painting Cimabue thought that he should hold the field, now Giotto has the cry, so that the other's fame is growing dim."

or so the legend runs, which is told by Leonardo da Vinci amongst others—found him among the mountains, guarding his father's flocks and drawing upon the stones the movements of the goats committed to his care. He was a typical Florentine craftsman; favoured by popes, admitted to the familiarity of kings, he remained to the end the same unspoilt shepherd whom Cimabue had found. Many choice and piquant tales are told by the novelists about his ugly presence and rare personality, his perpetual good humour, his sharp and witty answers to king and rustic alike, his hatred of all pretentiousness, carried to such an extent that he conceived a rooted objection to hearing himself called *maestro*. Padua and Assisi possess some of his very best work; but Florence can still show much. Two chapels in Santa Croce are painted by his hand; of the smaller pictures ascribed to him in churches and galleries, there is one authentic—the Madonna in the Accademia; and, perhaps most beautiful of all, the Campanile which he designed and commenced still rises in the midst of the city. Giotto died in 1336; his work was carried on by Andrea Pisano and practically finished by Francesco Talenti.

Andrea di Ugolino Pisano (1270-1348), usually simply called Andrea Pisano, is similarly the father of Florentine sculpture. Vasari's curiously inaccurate account of him has somewhat blurred his real figure in the history of art. His great achievements are the casting of the first gate of the Baptistry in bronze, his work—apparently from Giotto's designs—in the lower series of marble reliefs round the Campanile, and his

continuation of the Campanile itself after Giotto's death. He is said by Vasari to have built the Porta di San Frediano.

There is little individuality in the followers of Giotto, who carried on his tradition and worked in his manner. They are very much below their master, and are often surpassed by the contemporary painters of Siena, such as Simone Martini and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Taddeo Gaddi and his son, Agnolo, Giovanni di Milano, Bernardo Daddi, are their leaders; the chief title to fame of the first-named being the renowned Ponte Vecchio. But their total achievement, in conjunction with the Sienese, was of heroic magnitude. They covered the walls of churches and chapels, especially those connected with the Franciscans and Dominicans, with the scenes of Scripture, with the lives of Madonna and her saints; they set forth in all its fullness the whole Gospel story, for those who could neither read nor write; they conceived vast allegories of human life and human destinies; they filled the palaces of the republics with painted parables of good government. "By the grace of God," says a statute of Sienese painters, "we are the men who make manifest to the ignorant and unlettered the miraculous things achieved by the power and virtue of the Faith." At Siena, at Pisa and at Assisi, are perhaps the greatest works of this school; but here, in Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella, there is much, and of a very noble and characteristic kind. Spinello Aretino (1333-1410) may be regarded as the last of the Giotteschi; you may see his best series of frescoes in San Miniato, setting forth with much skill

and power the life of the great Italian monk, whose face Dante so earnestly prayed to behold unveiled in Paradise.

This heroic age of sculpture and painting culminated in Andrea Orcagna (1308-1368), Andrea Pisano's great pupil. Painter and sculptor, architect and poet, Orcagna is at once the inheritor of Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano, and of Giotto. The famous frescoes in the Pisan Campo Santo are now known to be the work of some other hand; his paintings in Santa Croce, with their priceless portraits, have perished; and, although frequently consulted in the construction of the Duomo, it is tolerably certain that he was not the architect of any of the Florentine buildings once ascribed to him. The Strozzi chapel of St Thomas in Santa Maria Novella, the oratory of the Madonna in San Michele in Orto, contain all his extant works; and they are sufficient to prove him, next to Giotto, the greatest painter of his century, with a feeling for grace and beauty even above Giotto's, and only less excellent in marble. Several of his poems have been preserved, mostly of a slightly satirical character; one, a sonnet on the nature of love, *Molti volendo dir che fosse Amore*, has had the honour of being ascribed to Dante.

With the third quarter of the century, the first great epoch of Italian letters closes also. On the overthrow of the House of Suabia at Benevento, the centre of culture had shifted from Sicily to Tuscany, from Palermo to Florence. The prose and poetry of this epoch is almost entirely Tuscan, although the second of its greatest poets, Francesco Petrarca, comparatively seldom set

foot within its boundaries. "My old nest is restored to me," he wrote to the Signoria, when they sent Boccaccio to invite his friend to return to Florence, "I can fly back to it, and I can fold there my wandering wings." But, save for a few flying visits, Petrarch had little inclination to attach himself to one city, when he felt that all Italy was his country.

Dante had set forth all that was noblest in mediæval thought in imperishable form, supremely in his *Divina Commedia*, but appreciably and nobly in his various minor works as well, both verse and prose. Villani had started historical Italian prose on its triumphant course. Petrarch and Boccaccio, besides their great gifts to Italian literature, in the ethereal poetry of the one, painting every varying mood of the human soul, and the licentious prose of the other, hymning the triumph of the flesh, stand on the threshold of the Renaissance. Other names crowd in upon us at each stage of this epoch. Apart from his rare personality, Guido Cavalcanti's *ballate* are his chief title to poetic fame, but, even so, less than the monument of glory that Dante has reared to him in the *Vita Nuova*, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, in the *Divina Commedia*. Dino Compagni, the chronicler of the Whites and Blacks, was only less admirable as a patriot than as a historian. Matteo Villani, the brother of Giovanni, and Matteo's son, Filippo, carried on the great chronicler's work. Fra Jacopo Passavanti, the Dominican prior of Santa Maria Novella, in the middle of the century, showed how the purest Florentine vernacular could be used for the purpose of simple religious

edification. Franco Sacchetti, politician, novelist and poet, may be taken as the last Florentine writer of this period; he anticipates the popular lyrism of the Quattrocento, rather in the same way as a group of scholars who at the same time gathered round the Augustinian, Luigi Marsili, in his cell at Santo Spirito heralds the coming of the humanists. It fell to Franco Sacchetti to sing the dirge of this heroic period of art and letters, in his elegiac canzoni on the deaths of Petrarch and Boccaccio:—

"Sonati sono i corni
d'ogni parte a ricolta;
la stagione è rivolta:
se tornerà non so, ma credo tardi."

CHAPTER III

The Medici and the Quattrocento

"Tiranno è nome di uomo di mala vita, e pessimo fra tutti gli altri uomini, che per forza sopra tutti vuol regnare, massime quello che di cittadino è fatto tiranno."—*Savonarola*.

"The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was in many things great, rather by what it designed or aspired to do, than by what it actually achieved."—*Walter Pater*.

NON già *Salvestro ma Salvator mundi*, "thou that with noble wisdom hast saved thy country." Thus in a sonnet does Franco Sacchetti hail Salvestro dei Medici, the originator of the greatness of his house. In 1378, while the hatred between the Parte Guelfa and the adherents of the Otto della Guerra—the rivalry between the Palace of the Party and the Palace of the Signory—was at its height, the Captains of the Party conspired to seize upon the Palace of the Priors and take possession of the State. Their plans were frustrated by Salvestro dei Medici, a rich merchant and head of his ambitious and rising family, who was then Gonfaloniere of Justice. He proposed to restore the Ordinances against the magnates, and, when this petition was rejected by the Signoria and the Colleges,¹⁵ he appealed

¹⁵ The "Colleges" were the twelve Buonomini and the sixteen Gonfaloniers of the

to the Council of the People. The result was a riot, followed by a long series of tumults throughout the city; the *Arti Minori* came to the front in arms; and, finally, the bloody revolution known as the Tumult of the Ciompi burst over Florence. These Ciompi, the lowest class of artizans and all those who were not represented in the Arts, headed by those who were subject to the great Arte della Lana, had been much favoured by the Duke of Athens, and had been given consuls and a standard with an angel painted upon it. On the fall of the Duke, these Ciompi, or *popolo minuto*, had lost these privileges, and were probably much oppressed by the consuls of the Arte della Lana. Secretly instigated by Salvestro—who thus initiated the Medicean policy of undermining the Republic by means of the populace—they rose *en masse* on July 20th, captured the Palace of the Podestà, burnt the houses of their enemies and the Bottega of the Arte della Lana, seized the standard of the people, and, with it and the banners of the Guilds displayed, came into the Piazza to demand a share in the government. On July 22nd they burst into the Palace of the Priors, headed by a wool-comber, Michele di Lando, carrying in his hands the great Gonfalon; him they acclaimed Gonfaloniere and lord of the city.

This rough and half-naked wool-comber, whose mother made pots and pans and whose wife sold greens, is one of the heroes of

Companies. Measures proposed by the Signoria had to be carried in the Colleges before being submitted to the Council of the People, and afterwards to the Council of the Commune.

Florentine history; and his noble simplicity throughout the whole affair is in striking contrast with the self-seeking and intrigues of the rich aristocratic merchants whose tool, to some extent, he appears to have been. The pious historian, Jacopo Nardi, likens him to the heroes of ancient Rome, Curius and Fabricius, and ranks him as a patriot and deliverer of the city, far above even Farinata degli Uberti. The next day the Parliament was duly summoned in the Piazza, Michele confirmed in his office, and a Balìa (or commission) given to him, together with the Eight and the Syndics of the Arts, to reform the State and elect the new Signoria—in which the newly constituted Guilds of the populace were to have a third with those of the greater and minor Arts. But, before Michele's term of office was over, the Ciompi were in arms again, fiercer than ever and with more outrageous demands, following the standards of the Angel and some of the minor Arts (who appear to have in part joined them). From Santa Maria Novella, their chosen head-quarters, on the last day of August they sent two representatives to overawe the Signoria. But Michele di Lando, answering their insolence with violence, rode through the city with the standard of Justice floating before him, while the great bell of the Priors' tower called the Guilds to arms; and by evening the populace had melted away, and the government of the people was re-established. The new Signoria was greeted in a canzone by Sacchetti, in which he declares that Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance are once more reinstated in the city.

For the next few years the Minor Arts predominated in the government. Salvestro dei Medici kept in the background, but was presently banished. Michele di Lando seemed contented to have saved the State, and took little further share in the politics of the city. He appears later on to have been put under bounds at Chioggia; but to have returned to Florence before his death in 1401, when he was buried in Santa Croce. There were still tumults and conspiracies, resulting in frequent executions and banishments; while, without, inglorious wars were carried on by the companies of mercenary soldiers. This is the epoch in which the great English captain, Hawkwood, entered the service of the Florentine State. In 1382, after the execution of Giorgio Scali and the banishment of Tommaso Strozzi (noble burghers who headed the populace), the newly constituted Guilds were abolished, and the government returned to the greater Arts, who now held two-thirds of the offices—a proportion which was later increased to three-quarters.

The period which follows, from 1382 to 1434, sees the close of the democratic government of Florence. The Republic, nominally still ruled by the greater Guilds, is in reality sustained and swayed by the *nobili popolani* or *Ottimati*, members of wealthy families risen by riches or talent out of these greater Guilds into a new kind of burgher aristocracy. The struggle is now no longer between the Palace of the Signory and the Palace of the Party—for the days of the power of the Parte Guelfa are at an end—but between the Palace and the Piazza. The party of

the Minor Arts and the Populace is repressed and ground down with war taxes; but behind them the Medici lurk and wait—first Vieri, then Giovanni di Averardo, then Cosimo di Giovanni—ever on the watch to put themselves at their head, and through them overturn the State. The party of the Ottimati is first led by Maso degli Albizzi, then by Niccolò da Uzzano, and lastly by Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his adherents—illustrious citizens not altogether unworthy of the great Republic that they swayed—the sort of dignified civic patricians whose figures, a little later, were to throng the frescoes of Masaccio and Ghirlandaio. But they were divided among themselves, persecuted their adversaries with proscription and banishment, thus making the exiles a perpetual source of danger to the State, and they were hated by the populace because of the war taxes. These wars were mainly carried on by mercenaries—who were now more usually Italians than foreigners—and, in spite of frequent defeats, generally ended well for Florence. Arezzo was purchased in 1384. A fierce struggle was carried on a few years later (1390-1402) with the "great serpent," Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti, who hoped to make himself King of Italy by violence as he had made himself Duke of Milan by treachery, and intended to be crowned in Florence. Pisa was finally and cruelly conquered in 1406; Cortona was obtained as the result of a prolonged war with King Ladislaus of Naples in 1414, in which the Republic had seemed once more in danger of falling into the hands of a foreign tyrant; and in 1421 Leghorn was sold to the Florentines by the Genoese, thus opening the sea

to their merchandise.

The deaths of Giovanni Galeazzo and Ladislaus freed the city from her most formidable external foes; and for a while she became the seat of the Papacy, the centre of Christendom. In 1419, after the schism, Pope Martin V. took up his abode in Florence; the great condottiere, Braccio, came with his victorious troops to do him honour; and the deposed John XXIII. humbled himself before the new Pontiff, and was at last laid to rest among the shadows of the Baptistery. In his *Storia Fiorentina* Guicciardini declares that the government at this epoch was the wisest, the most glorious and the happiest that the city had ever had. It was the dawn of the Renaissance, and Florence was already full of artists and scholars, to whom these *nobili popolani* were as generous and as enlightened patrons as their successors, the Medici, were to be. Even Cosimo's fervent admirer, the librarian Vespasiano Bisticci, endorses Guicciardini's verdict: "In that time," he says, "from 1422 to 1433, the city of Florence was in a most blissful state, abounding with excellent men in every faculty, and it was full of admirable citizens."

Maso degli Albizzi died in 1417; and his successors in the oligarchy—the aged Niccolò da Uzzano, who stood throughout for moderation, and the fiery but less competent Rinaldo degli Albizzi—were no match for the rising and unscrupulous Medici. With the Albizzi was associated the noblest and most generous Florentine of the century, Palla Strozzi. The war with Filippo Visconti, resulting in the disastrous rout of Zagonara, and an

unjust campaign against Lucca, in which horrible atrocities were committed by the Florentine commissioner, Astorre Gianni, shook their government. Giovanni dei Medici, the richest banker in Italy, was now the acknowledged head of the opposition; he had been Gonfaloniere in 1421, but would not put himself actively forward, although urged on by his sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo. He died in 1429; Niccolò da Uzzano followed him to the grave in 1432; and the final struggle between the fiercer spirits, Rinaldo and Cosimo, was at hand. "All these citizens," said Niccolò, shortly before his death, "some through ignorance, some through malice, are ready to sell this republic; and, thanks to their good fortune, they have found the purchaser."

Shortly before this date, Masaccio painted all the leading spirits of the time in a fresco in the cloisters of the Carmine. This has been destroyed, but you may see a fine contemporary portrait of Giovanni in the Uffizi. The much admired and famous coloured bust in the Bargello, called the portrait of Niccolò da Uzzano by Donatello, has probably nothing to do either with Niccolò or with Donatello. Giovanni has the air of a prosperous and unpretending Florentine tradesman, but with a certain obvious parade of his lack of pushfulness.

In 1433 the storm broke. A Signory hostile to Cosimo being elected, he was summoned to the Palace and imprisoned in an apartment high up in the Tower, a place known as the Alberghettino. Rinaldo degli Albizzi held the Piazza with his soldiery, and Cosimo heard the great bell ringing to call the

people to Parliament, to grant a Balìa to reform the government and decide upon his fate. But he was too powerful at home and abroad; his popularity with those whom he had raised from low estate, and those whom he had relieved by his wealth, his influence with the foreign powers, such as Venice and Ferrara, were so great that his foes dared not take his life; and, indeed, they were hardly the men to have attempted such a crime. Banished to Padua (his brother Lorenzo and other members of his family being put under bounds at different cities), he was received everywhere, not as a fugitive, but as a prince; and the library of the Benedictines, built by Michelozzo at his expense, once bore witness to his stay in Venice. Hardly a year had passed when a new Signory was chosen, favourable to the Medici; Rinaldo degli Albizzi, after a vain show of resistance, laid down his arms on the intervention of Pope Eugenius, who was then at Santa Maria Novella, and was banished for ever from the city with his principal adherents. And finally, in a triumphant progress from Venice, "carried back to his country upon the shoulders of all Italy," as he said, Cosimo and his brother Lorenzo entered Florence on October 6th, 1434, rode past the deserted palaces of the Albizzi to the Palace of the Priors, and next day returned in triumph to their own house in the Via Larga.

The Republic had practically fallen; the head of the Medici was virtually prince of the city and of her fair dominion. But Florence was not Milan or Naples, and Cosimo's part as tyrant

was a peculiar one. The forms of the government were, with modifications, preserved; but by means of a Balia empowered to elect the chief magistrates for a period of five years, and then renewed every five years, he secured that the Signoria should always be in his hands, or in those of his adherents. The grand Palace of the Priors was still ostensibly the seat of government; but, in reality, the State was in the firm grasp of the thin, dark-faced merchant in the Palace in the Via Larga, which we now know as the Palazzo Riccardi. Although in the earlier part of his reign he was occasionally elected Gonfaloniere, he otherwise held no office ostensibly, and affected the republican manner of a mere wealthy citizen. His personality, combined with the widely ramifying banking relations of the Medici, gave him an almost European influence. His popularity among the mountaineers and in the country districts, from which armed soldiery were ever ready to pour down into the city in his defence, made him the fitting man for the ever increasing external sway of Florence. The forms of the Republic were preserved, but he consolidated his power by a general levelling and disintegration, by severing the nerves of the State and breaking the power of the Guilds. He had certain hard and cynical maxims for guidance: "Better a city ruined than a city lost," "States are not ruled by Pater-Nosters," "New and worthy citizens can be made by a few ells of crimson cloth." So he elevated to wealth and power men of low kind, devoted to and dependent on himself; crushed the families opposed to him, or citizens who seemed too powerful,

by wholesale banishments, or by ruining them with fines and taxation, although there was comparatively little blood shed. He was utterly ruthless in all this, and many of the noblest Florentine citizens fell victims. One murder must be laid to his charge, and it is one of peculiar, for him, unusual atrocity. Baldaccio d'Anghiari, a young captain of infantry, who promised fair to take a high place among the condottieri of the day, was treacherously invited to speak with the Gonfaloniere in the Palace of the Priors, and there stabbed to death by hireling assassins from the hills, and his body flung ignominiously into the Piazza. Cosimo's motive is said to have been partly jealousy of a possible rival, Neri Capponi, who had won popularity by his conquest of the Casentino for Florence in 1440, and who was intimate with Baldaccio; and partly desire to gratify Francesco Sforza, whose treacherous designs upon Milan he was furthering by the gold wrung from his over-taxed Florentines, and to whose plans Baldaccio was prepared to offer an obstacle.

Florence was still for a time the seat of the Papacy. In January 1439, the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople, and the Emperor of the East, John Paleologus, came to meet Pope Eugenius for the Council of Florence, which was intended to unite the Churches of Christendom. The Patriarch died here, and is buried in Santa Maria Novella. In the Riccardi Palace you may see him and the Emperor, forced, as it were, to take part in the triumph of the Medici in Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco—riding with them in the gorgeous train, that sets out ostensibly to seek the Babe of

Bethlehem, and evidently has no intention of finding Him. Pope Eugenius returned to Rome in 1444; and in 1453 Mahomet II. stormed Constantinople, and Greek exiles thronged to Rome and Florence. In 1459, marvellous pageants greeted Pius II. in the city, on his way to stir up the Crusade that never went.

In his foreign policy Cosimo inaugurated a totally new departure for Florence; he commenced a line of action which was of the utmost importance in Italian politics, and which his son and grandson carried still further. The long wars with which the last of the Visconti, Filippo Maria, harassed Italy and pressed Florence hard (in the last of these Rinaldo degli Albizzi and the exiles approached near enough to catch a distant glimpse of the city from which they were relentlessly shut out), ended with his death in 1447. Cosimo dei Medici now allied himself with the great condottiere, Francesco Sforza, and aided him with money to make good his claims upon the Duchy of Milan. Henceforth this new alliance between Florence and Milan, between the Medici and the Sforza, although most odious in the eyes of the Florentine people, became one of the chief factors in the balance of power in Italy. Soon afterwards Alfonso, the Aragonese ruler of Naples, entered into this triple alliance; Venice and Rome to some extent being regarded as a double alliance to counterbalance this. To these foreign princes Cosimo was almost as much prince of Florence as they of their dominions; and by what was practically a *coup d'état* in 1459, Cosimo and his son Piero forcibly overthrew the last attempt of their opponents to

get the Signoria out of their hands, and, by means of the creation of a new and permanent Council of a hundred of their chief adherents, more firmly than ever secured their hold upon the State.

In his private life Cosimo was the simplest and most unpretentious of tyrants, and lived the life of a wealthy merchant-burgher of the day in its nobler aspects. He was an ideal father, a perfect man of business, an apparently kindly fellow-citizen to all. Above all things he loved the society of artists and men of letters; Brunelleschi and Michelozzo, Donatello and Fra Lippo Lippi—to name only a few more intimately connected with him—found in him the most generous and discerning of patrons; many of the noblest Early Renaissance churches and convents in Florence and its neighbourhood are due to his munificence—San Lorenzo and San Marco and the Badia of Fiesole are the most typical—and he even founded a hospital in Jerusalem. To a certain extent this was what we should now call "conscience money." His friend and biographer, Vespasiano Bisticci, writes: "He did these things because it appeared to him that he held money, not over well acquired; and he was wont to say that to God he had never given so much as to find Him on his books a debtor. And likewise he said: I know the humours of this city; fifty years will not pass before we are driven out; but the buildings will remain." The Greeks, who came to the Council of Florence or fled from the in-coming Turk, stimulated the study of their language and philosophy—though this had really commenced in the days of

the Republic, before the deaths of Petrarch and Boccaccio—and found in Cosimo an ardent supporter. He founded great libraries in San Marco and in the Badia of Fiesole, the former with part of the codices collected by the scholar Niccolò Niccoli; although he had banished the old Palla Strozzi, the true renovator of the Florentine University, into hopeless exile. Into the Neo-Platonism of the Renaissance Cosimo threw himself heart and soul. "To Cosimo," writes Burckhardt, "belongs the special glory of recognising in the Platonic philosophy the fairest flower of the ancient world of thought, of inspiring his friends with the same belief, and thus of fostering within humanistic circles themselves another and a higher resuscitation of antiquity." In a youth of Figline, Marsilio Ficino, the son of a doctor, Cosimo found a future high priest of this new religion of love and beauty; and bidding him minister to the minds of men rather than to their bodies, brought him into his palace, and gave him a house in the city and a beautiful farm near Careggi. Thus was founded the famous Platonic Academy, the centre of the richest Italian thought of the century. As his end drew near, Cosimo turned to the consolations of religion, and would pass long hours in his chosen cell in San Marco, communing with the Dominican Archbishop, Antonino, and Fra Angelico, the painter of mediæval Paradise. And with these thoughts, mingled with the readings of Marsilio's growing translation of Plato, he passed away at his villa at Careggi in 1464, on the first of August. Shortly before his death he had lost his favourite son, Giovanni;

and had been carried through his palace, in the Via Larga, sighing that it was now too large a house for so small a family. Entitled by public decree *Pater Patriae*, he was buried at his own request without any pompous funeral, beneath a simple marble in front of the high altar of San Lorenzo.

Cosimo was succeeded, not without some opposition from rivals to the Medici within their own party, by his son Piero. Piero's health was in a shattered condition—il Gottoso, he was called—and for the most part he lived in retirement at Careggi, occasionally carried into Florence in his litter, leaving his brilliant young son Lorenzo to act as a more ornamental figure-head for the State. The personal appearance of Piero is very different to that of his father or son; in his portrait bust by Mino da Fiesole in the Bargello, and in the picture by Bronzino in the National Gallery, there is less craft and a certain air of frank and manly resolution. In his daring move in support of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, when, on the death of Francesco, it seemed for a moment that the Milanese dynasty was tottering, and his promptness in crushing the formidable conspiracy of the "mountain" against himself, Piero showed that sickness had not destroyed his faculty of energetic action at the critical moment. He completely followed out his father's policy, drawing still tighter the bonds which united Florence with Milan and Naples, lavishing money on the decoration of the city and the corruption of the people. The opposition was headed by Luca Pitti, Agnolo Acciaiuoli, Dietisalvi Neroni and others, who had been reckoned

as Cosimo's friends, but who were now intriguing with Venice and Ferrara to overthrow his son. Hoping to eclipse the Medici in their own special field of artistic display and wholesale corruption, Luca Pitti commenced that enormous palace which still bears the name of his family, filled it with bravos and refugees, resorted to all means fair or foul to get money to build and corrupt. It seemed for a moment that the adherents of the Mountain (as the opponents of the Medici were called, from this highly situated Pitti Palace) and the adherents of the Plain (where the comparatively modest Medicean palace—now the Palazzo Riccardi—stood in the Via Larga) might renew the old factions of Blacks and Whites. But in the late summer of 1466 the party of the Mountain was finally crushed; they were punished with more mercy than the Medici generally showed, and Luca Pitti was practically pardoned and left to a dishonourable old age in the unfinished palace, which was in after years to become the residence of the successors of his foes. About the same time Filippo Strozzi and other exiles were allowed to return, and another great palace began to rear its walls in the Via Tornabuoni, in after years to be a centre of anti-Medicean intrigue.

The brilliancy and splendour of Lorenzo's youth—he who was hereafter to be known in history as the Magnificent—sheds a rich glow of colour round the closing months of Piero's pain-haunted life. Piero himself had been content with a Florentine wife, Lucrezia dei Tornabuoni, and he had married his daughters to Florentine citizens, Guglielmo Pazzi and Bernardo Rucellai;

but Lorenzo must make a great foreign match, and was therefore given Clarice Orsini, the daughter of a great Roman noble. The splendid pageant in the Piazza Santa Croce, and the even more gorgeous marriage festivities in the palace in the Via Larga, were followed by a triumphal progress of the young bridegroom through Tuscany and the Riviera to Milan, to the court of that faithful ally of his house, but most abominable monster, Giovanni Maria Sforza. Piero died on December 3rd, 1469, and, like Cosimo, desired the simple burial which his sons piously gave him. His plain but beautiful monument designed by Verrocchio is in the older sacristy of San Lorenzo, where he lies with his brother Giovanni.

"The second day after his death," writes Lorenzo in his diary, "although I, Lorenzo, was very young, in fact only in my twenty-first year, the leading men of the city and of the ruling party came to our house to express their sorrow for our misfortune, and to persuade me to take upon myself the charge of the government of the city, as my grandfather and father had already done. This proposal being contrary to the instincts of my age, and entailing great labour and danger, I accepted against my will, and only for the sake of protecting my friends, and our own fortunes, for in Florence one can ill live in the possession of wealth without control of the government."¹⁶

These two youths, Lorenzo and Giuliano, were now, to all intents and purposes, lords and masters of Florence. Lorenzo

¹⁶ From Mr Armstrong's *Lorenzo de' Medici*.

was the ruling spirit; outwardly, in spite of his singularly harsh and unprepossessing appearance, devoted to the cult of love and beauty, delighting in sport and every kind of luxury, he was inwardly as hard and cruel as tempered steel, and firmly fixed from the outset upon developing the hardly defined prepotency of his house into a complete personal despotism. You may see him as a gallant boy in Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco in the palace of his father and grandfather, riding under a bay tree, and crowned with roses; and then, in early manhood, in Botticelli's famous Adoration of the Magi; and lastly, as a fully developed, omniscient and all-embracing tyrant, in that truly terrible picture by Vasari in the Uffizi, constructed out of contemporary materials—surely as eloquent a sermon against the iniquity of tyranny as the pages of Savonarola's *Reggimento di Firenze*. Giuliano was a kindlier and gentler soul, completely given up to pleasure and athletics; he lives for us still in many a picture from the hand of Sandro Botticelli, sometimes directly portrayed, as in the painting which Morelli bequeathed to Bergamo, more often idealised as Mars or as Hermes; his love for the fair Simonetta inspired Botticellian allegories and the most finished and courtly stanzas of Poliziano. The sons of both these brothers were destined to sit upon the throne of the Fisherman.

A long step in despotism was gained in 1488, when the two great Councils of the People and the Commune were deprived of all their functions, which were now invested in the thoroughly Medicean Council of the Hundred. The next year Lorenzo's

friend and ally, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, with his Duchess and courtiers, came to Florence. They were sumptuously received in the Medicean palace. The licence and wantonness of these Milanese scandalised even the lax Florentines, and largely added to the growing corruption of the city. The accidental burning of Santo Spirito during the performance of a miracle play was regarded as a certain sign of divine wrath. During his stay in Florence the Duke, in contrast with whom the worst of the Medici seems almost a saint, sat to one of the Pollaiuoli for the portrait still seen in the Uffizi; by comparison with him even Lorenzo looks charming; at the back of the picture there is a figure of Charity—but the Duke has very appropriately driven it to the wall. Unpopular though this Medicean-Sforza alliance was in Florence, it was undoubtedly one of the safe-guards of the harmony which, superficially, still existed between the five great powers of Italy. When Galeazzo Maria met the fate he so richly deserved, and was stabbed to death in the Church of San Stefano at Milan on December 20th, 1476, Pope Sixtus gave solemn utterance to the general dismay: *Oggi è morta la pace d'Italia*.

But Sixtus and his nephews did not in their hearts desire peace in Italy, and were plotting against Lorenzo with the Pazzi, who, although united to the Medici by marriage, had secret and growing grievances against them. On the morning of Sunday April 26th, 1478, the conspirators set upon the two brothers at Mass in the Duomo; Giuliano perished beneath nineteen dagger-stabs; Lorenzo escaped with a slight wound in the neck. The

Archbishop Salviati of Pisa in the meantime attempted to seize the Palace of the Priors, but was arrested by the Gonfaloniere, and promptly hung out of the window for his trouble. Jacopo Pazzi rode madly through the streets with an armed force, calling the people to arms, with the old shout of *Popolo e Libertà*, but was only answered by the ringing cries of *Palle, Palle*.¹⁷ The vengeance taken by the people upon the conspirators was so prompt and terrible that Lorenzo had little left him to do (though that little he did to excess, punishing the innocent with the guilty); and the result of the plot simply was to leave him alone in the government, securely enthroned above the splash of blood. The Pope appears not to have been actually privy to the murder, but he promptly took up the cause of the murderers. It was followed by a general break-up of the Italian peace and a disastrous war, carried on mainly by mercenary soldiers, in which all the powers of Italy were more or less engaged; and Florence was terribly hard pressed by the allied forces of Naples and Rome. The plague broke out in the city; Lorenzo was practically deserted by his allies, and on the brink of financial ruin. Then was it that he did one of the most noteworthy, perhaps the noblest, of the actions of his life, and saved himself and the State by voluntarily going to Naples and putting himself in the power of King Ferrante, an infamous tyrant, who would readily have murdered his guest, if it had seemed to his advantage to do

¹⁷ The *Palle*, it will be remembered, were the golden balls on the Medicean arms, and hence the rallying cry of their adherents.

so. But, like all the Italians of the Renaissance, Ferrante was open to reason, and the eloquence of the Magnifico won him over to grant an honourable peace, with which Lorenzo returned to Florence in March 1480. "If Lorenzo was great when he left Florence," writes Machiavelli, "he returned much greater than ever; and he was received with such joy by the city as his great qualities and his fresh merits deserved, seeing that he had exposed his own life to restore peace to his country." Botticelli's noble allegory of the olive-decked Medicean Pallas, taming the Centaur of war and disorder, appears to have been painted in commemoration of this event. In the following August the Turks landed in Italy and stormed Otranto, and the need of union, in the face of "the common enemy Ottoman," reconciled the Pope to Florence, and secured for the time an uneasy peace among the powers of Italy.

Lorenzo's power in Florence and influence throughout Italy was now secure. By the institution in 1480 of a Council of Seventy, a permanent council to manage and control the election of the Signoria (with two special committees drawn from the Seventy every six months, the *Otto di pratica* for foreign affairs and the *Dodici Procuratori* for internal), the State was firmly established in his hands—the older councils still remaining, as was usual in every Florentine reformation of government. Ten years later, in 1490, this council showed signs of independence; and Lorenzo therefore reduced the authority of electing the Signoria to a small committee with a reforming Balìa of seventeen, of

which he was one. Had he lived longer, he would undoubtedly have crowned his policy either by being made Gonfaloniere for life, or by obtaining some similar constitutional confirmation of his position as head of the State. Externally his influence was thrown into the scale for peace, and, on the death of Sixtus IV. in 1484, he established friendly relations and a family alliance with the new Pontiff, Innocent VIII. Sarzana with Pietrasanta were won back for Florence, and portions of the Sienese territory which had been lost during the war with Naples and the Church; a virtual protectorate was established over portions of Umbria and Romagna, where the daggers of assassins daily emptied the thrones of minor tyrants. Two attempts on his life failed. In the last years of his foreign policy and diplomacy he showed himself truly the magnificent. East and West united to do him honour; the Sultan of the Turks and the Soldan of Egypt sent ambassadors and presents; the rulers of France and Germany treated him as an equal. Soon the torrent of foreign invasion was to sweep over the Alps and inundate all the "Ausonian" land; Milan and Naples were ready to rend each other; Ludovico Sforza was plotting his own rise upon the ruin of Italy, and already intriguing with France; but, for the present, Lorenzo succeeded in maintaining the balance of power between the five great Italian states, which seemed as though they might present a united front for mutual defence against the coming of the barbarians.

Sarebbe impossibile avesse avuto un tiranno migliore e più piacevole, writes Guicciardini: "Florence could not have had

a better or more delightful tyrant." The externals of life were splendid and gorgeous indeed in the city where Lorenzo ruled, but everything was in his hands and had virtually to proceed from him. His spies were everywhere; marriages might only be arranged and celebrated according to his good pleasure; the least sign of independence was promptly and severely repressed. By perpetual festivities and splendid shows, he strove to keep the minds of the citizens contented and occupied; tournaments, pageants, masques and triumphs filled the streets; and the strains of licentious songs, of which many were Lorenzo's own composition, helped to sap the morality of that people which Dante had once dreamed of as *sobria e pudica*. But around the Magnifico were grouped the greatest artists and scholars of the age, who found in him an enlightened Maecenas and most charming companion. *Amava maravigliosamente qualunque era in una arte eccellente*, writes Machiavelli of him; and that word—*maravigliosamente*—so entirely characteristic of Lorenzo and his ways, occurs again and again, repeated with studied persistence, in the chapter which closes Machiavelli's History. He was said to have sounded the depths of Platonic philosophy; he was a true poet, within certain limitations; few men have been more keenly alive to beauty in all its manifestations, physical and spiritual alike. Though profoundly immoral, *nelle cose veneree maravigliosamente involto*, he was a tolerable husband, and the fondest of fathers with his children, whom he adored. The delight of his closing days was the elevation of his favourite son,

Giovanni, to the Cardinalate at the age of fourteen; it gave the Medici a voice in the Curia like the other princes of Europe, and pleased all Florence; but more than half Lorenzo's joy proceeded from paternal pride and love, and the letter of advice which he wrote for his son on the occasion shows both father and boy in a very amiable, even edifying light. And yet this same man had ruined the happiness of countless homes, and had even seized upon the doweries of Florentine maidens to fill his own coffers and pay his mercenaries.

But the *bel viver italiano* of the Quattrocento, with all its loveliness and all its immorality—more lovely and far less immoral in Florence than anywhere else—was drawing to an end. A new prophet had arisen, and, from the pulpits of San Marco and Santa Maria del Fiore, the stern Dominican, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, denounced the corruption of the day and announced that speedy judgment was at hand; the Church should be chastised, and that speedily, and renovation should follow. Prodigies were seen. The lions tore and rent each other in their cages; lightning struck the cupola of the Duomo on the side towards the Medicean palace; while in his villa at Careggi the Magnifico lay dying, watched over by his sister Bianca and the poet Poliziano. A visit from the young Pico della Mirandola cheered his last hours. He received the Last Sacraments, with every sign of contrition and humility. Then Savonarola came to his bedside. There are two accounts of what happened between these two terrible men, the corruptor of Florence and the prophet of

renovation, and they are altogether inconsistent. The ultimate source of the one is apparently Savonarola's fellow-martyr, Fra Silvestro, an utterly untrustworthy witness; that of the other, Lorenzo's intimate, Poliziano. According to Savonarola's biographers and adherents, Lorenzo, overwhelmed with remorse and terror, had sent for the Frate to give him the absolution which his courtly confessor dared not refuse (*io non ho mai trovato uno che sia vero frate, se non lui*); and when the Dominican, seeming to soar above his natural height, bade him restore liberty to Florence, the Magnifico sullenly turned his back upon him and shortly afterwards died in despair.¹⁸ According to Poliziano, an eyewitness and an absolutely whole-hearted adherent of the Medici, Fra Girolamo simply spoke a few words of priestly exhortation to the dying man; then, as he turned away, Lorenzo cried, "Your blessing, father, before you depart" (*Heus, benedictionem, Pater, priusquam a nobis proficisceris*) and the two together repeated word for word the Church's prayers for the departing; then Savonarola returned to his convent, and Lorenzo passed away in peace and consolation. Reverently and solemnly the body was brought from Careggi to Florence, rested for a while in San Marco, and was then buried, with all external simplicity, with his murdered brother in San Lorenzo. It was the beginning of April 1492, and the Magnifico was only in his

¹⁸ The familiar legend that Lorenzo told Savonarola that the three sins which lay heaviest on his conscience were the sack of Volterra, the robbery of the Monte delle Doti, and the vengeance he had taken for the Pazzi conspiracy, is only valuable as showing what were popularly supposed by the Florentines to be his greatest crimes.

forty-fourth year. The words of old Sixtus must have risen to the lips of many: *Oggi è morta la pace d'Italia*. "This man," said Ferrante of Naples, "lived long enough to make good his own title to immortality, but not long enough for Italy."

Lorenzo left three sons—Piero, who virtually succeeded him in the same rather undefined princedom; the young Cardinal Giovanni; and Giuliano. Their father was wont to call Piero the "mad," Giovanni the "wise," Giuliano the "good"; and to a certain extent their after-lives corresponded with his characterisation. There was also a boy Giulio, Lorenzo's nephew, an illegitimate child of Giuliano the elder by a girl of the lower class; him Lorenzo left to the charge of Cardinal Giovanni—the future Pope Clement to the future Pope Leo. Piero had none of his father's abilities, and was not the man to guide the ship of State through the storm that was rising; he was a wild licentious young fellow, devoted to sport and athletics, with a great shock of dark hair; he was practically the only handsome member of his family, as you may see in a peculiarly fascinating Botticellian portrait in the Uffizi, where he is holding a medallion of his great grandfather Cosimo, and gazing out of the picture with a rather pathetic expression, as if the Florentines who set a price upon his head had misunderstood him.

Piero's folly at once began to undo his father's work. A part of Lorenzo's policy had been to keep his family united, including those not belonging to the reigning branch. There were two young Medici then in the city, about Piero's own age; Lorenzo and

Giovanni di Pier Francesco, the grandsons of Cosimo's brother Lorenzo (you may see Giovanni with his father in a picture by Filippino Lippi in the Uffizi). Lorenzo the Magnificent had made a point of keeping on good terms with them, for they were beloved of the people. Giovanni was destined, in a way, to play the part of Banquo to the Magnificent's Macbeth, had there been a Florentine prophet to tell him, "Thou shalt get kings though thou be none." But Piero disliked the two; at a dance he struck Giovanni, and then, when the brothers showed resentment, he arrested both and, not daring to take their lives, confined them to their villas. And these were times when a stronger head than Piero's might well have reeled. Italy's day had ended, and she was now to be the battle-ground for the gigantic forces of the monarchies of Europe. That same year in which Lorenzo died, Alexander VI. was elected to the Papacy he had so shamelessly bought. A mysterious terror fell upon the people; an agony of apprehension consumed their rulers throughout the length and breadth of the land. In 1494 the crash came. The old King Ferrante of Naples died, and his successor Alfonso prepared to meet the torrent of French arms which Ludovico Sforza, the usurping Duke of Milan, had invited into Italy.

In art and in letters, as well as in life and general conduct, this epoch of the Quattrocento is one of the most marvellous chapters in the history of human thought; the Renaissance as a wave broke over Italy, and from Italy surged on to the bounds of Europe. And of this "discovery by man of himself and of the

world," Florence was the centre; in its hothouse of learning and culture the rarest personalities flourished, and its strangest and most brilliant flower, in whose hard brilliancy a suggestion of poison lurked, was Lorenzo the Magnificent himself.

In both art and letters, the Renaissance had fully commenced before the accession of the Medici to power. Ghiberti's first bronze gates of the Baptistery and Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine were executed under the regime of the *nobili popolani*, the Albizzi and their allies. Many of the men whom the Medici swept relentlessly from their path were in the fore-front of the movement, such as the noble and generous Palla Strozzi, one of the reformers of the Florentine Studio, who brought the Greek, Emanuel Chrysolaras, at the close of the fourteenth century, to make Florence the centre of Italian Hellenism. Palla lavished his wealth in the hunting of codices, and at last, when banished on Cosimo's return, died in harness at Padua at the venerable age of ninety-two. His house had always been full of learned men, and his reform of the university had brought throngs of students to Florence. Put under bounds for ten years at Padua, he lived the life of an ancient philosopher and of exemplary Christian virtue. Persecuted at the end of every ten years with a new sentence, the last—of ten more years—when he was eighty-two; robbed by death of his wife and sons; he bore all with the utmost patience and fortitude, until, in Vespasiano's words, "arrived at the age of ninety-two years, in perfect health of body and of mind, he gave up his soul to his Redeemer like a most faithful and good

Christian."

In 1401, the first year of the fifteenth century, the competition was announced for the second gates of the Baptistery, which marks the beginning of Renaissance sculpture; and the same year witnessed the birth of Masaccio, who, in the words of Leonardo da Vinci, "showed with his perfect work how those painters who follow aught but Nature, the mistress of the masters, laboured in vain," Morelli calls this Quattrocento the epoch of "character"; "that is, the period when it was the principal aim of art to seize and represent the outward appearances of persons and things, determined by inward and moral conditions." The intimate connection of arts and crafts is characteristic of the Quattrocento, as also the mutual interaction of art with art. Sculpture was in advance of painting in the opening stage of the century, and, indeed, influenced it profoundly throughout; about the middle of the century they met, and ran henceforth hand in hand. Many of the painters and sculptors, as, notably, Ghiberti and Botticelli, had been apprentices in the workshops of the goldsmiths; nor would the greatest painters disdain to undertake the adornment of a *cassone*, or chest for wedding presents, nor the most illustrious sculptor decline a commission for the button of a prelate's cope or some mere trifle of household furniture. The medals in the National Museum and the metal work on the exterior of the Strozzi Palace are as typical of the art of Renaissance Florence as the grandest statues and most elaborate altar-pieces.

With the work of the individual artists we shall become better acquainted in subsequent chapters. Here we can merely name their leaders. In architecture and sculpture respectively, Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and Donatello (1386-1466) are the ruling spirits of the age. Their mutual friendship and brotherly rivalry almost recall the loves of Dante and Cavalcanti in an earlier day. Although Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) justly won the competition for the second gates of the Baptistery, it is now thought that Filippo ran his successful rival much more closely than the critics of an earlier day supposed. Mr Perkins remarks that "indirectly Brunelleschi was the master of all the great painters and sculptors of his time, for he taught them how to apply science to art, and so far both Ghiberti and Donatello were his pupils, but the last was almost literally so, since the great architect was not only his friend, but also his counsellor and guide." Contemporaneous with these three *spiriti magni* in their earlier works, and even to some extent anticipating them, is Nanni di Banco (died in 1421), a most excellent master, both in large monumental statues and in bas-reliefs, whose works are to be seen and loved outside and inside the Duomo, and in the niches round San Michele in Orto. A pleasant friendship united him with Donatello, although to regard him as that supreme master's pupil and follower, as Vasari does, is an anachronism. To this same earlier portion of the Quattrocento belong Leo Battista Alberti (1405-1472), a rare genius, but a wandering stone who, as an architect, accomplished comparatively little; Michelozzo

Michelozzi (1396-1472), who worked as a sculptor with Ghiberti and Donatello, but is best known as the favoured architect of the Medici, for whom he built the palace so often mentioned in these pages, and now known as the Palazzo Riccardi, and the convent of San Marco; and Luca della Robbia (1399-1482), that beloved master of marble music, whose enamelled terra-cotta Madonnas are a perpetual fund of the purest delight. To Michelozzo and Luca in collaboration we owe the bronze gates of the Duomo sacristy, a work only inferior to Ghiberti's "Gates of Paradise."

Slightly later come Donatello's great pupils, Desiderio da Settignano (1428-1464), Andrea Verrocchio (1435-1488), and Antonio Pollaiuolo (1429-1498). The two latter are almost equally famous as painters. Contemporaneous with them are Mino da Fiesole, Bernardo and Antonio Rossellino, Giuliano da San Gallo, Giuliano and Benedetto da Maiano, of whom the last-named was the first architect of the Strozzi Palace. The last great architect of the Quattrocento is Simone del Pollaiuolo, known as Cronaca (1457-1508); and its last great sculptor is Andrea della Robbia, Luca's nephew, who was born in 1435, and lived on until 1525. Andrea's best works—and they are very numerous indeed, in the same enamelled terra-cotta—hardly yield in charm and fascination to those of Luca himself; in some of them, devotional art seems to reach its last perfection in sculpture. Giovanni, Andrea's son, and others of the family carried on the tradition—with cruder colours and less delicate feeling.

Masaccio (1401-1428), one of "the inheritors of unfulfilled

renown," is the first great painter of the Renaissance, and bears much the same relation to the fifteenth as Giotto to the fourteenth century. Vasari's statement that Masaccio's master, Masolino, was Ghiberti's assistant appears to be incorrect; but it illustrates the dependence of the painting of this epoch upon sculpture. Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine, which became the school of all Italian painting, were entirely executed before the Medicean regime. The Dominican, Fra Angelico da Fiesole (1387-1455), seems in his San Marco frescoes to bring the denizens of the Empyrean, of which the mediæval mystics dreamed, down to earth to dwell among the black and white robed children of St Dominic. The Carmelite, Fra Lippo Lippi (1406-1469), the favourite of Cosimo, inferior to the angelical painter in spiritual insight, had a keener eye for the beauty of the external world and a surer touch upon reality. His buoyant humour and excellent colouring make "the glad monk's gift" one of the most acceptable that the Quattrocento has to offer us. Andrea del Castagno (died in 1457) and Domenico Veneziano (died in 1461), together with Paolo Uccello (died in 1475), were all absorbed in scientific researches with an eye to the extension of the resources of their art; but the two former found time to paint a few masterpieces in their kind—especially a *Cenacolo* by Andrea in Santa Appollonia, which is the grandest representation of its sublime theme, until the time that Leonardo da Vinci painted on the walls of the Dominican convent at Milan. Problems of the anatomical construction of the human frame

and the rendering of movement occupied Antonio Pollaiuolo (1429-1498) and Andrea Verrocchio (1435-1488); their work was taken up and completed a little later by two greater men, Luca Signorelli of Cortona and Leonardo da Vinci.

The Florentine painting of this epoch culminates in the work of two men—Sandro di Mariano Filipepi, better known as Sandro Botticelli (1447-1510), and Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494). If the greatest pictures were painted poems, as some have held, then Sandro Botticelli's masterpieces would be among the greatest of all time. In his rendering of religious themes, in his intensely poetic and strangely wistful attitude towards the fair myths of antiquity, and in his Neo-Platonic mingling of the two, he is the most complete and typical exponent of the finest spirit of the Quattrocento, to which, in spite of the date of his death, his art entirely belongs. Domenico's function, on the other hand, is to translate the external pomp and circumstance of his times into the most uninspired of painted prose, but with enormous technical skill and with considerable power of portraiture; this he effected above all in his ostensibly religious frescoes in Santa Maria Novella and Santa Trinità. Elsewhere he shows a certain pathetic sympathy with humbler life, as in his Santa Fina frescoes at San Gimignano, and in the admirable Adoration of the Shepherds in the Accademia; but this is a less characteristic vein. Filippino Lippi (1457-1504), the son of the Carmelite and the pupil of Botticelli, has a certain wayward charm, especially in his earlier works, but as a rule

falls much below his master. He may be regarded as the last direct inheritor of the traditions of Masaccio. Associated with these are two lesser men, who lived considerably beyond the limits of the fifteenth century, but whose artistic methods never went past it; Piero di Cosimo (1462-1521) and Lorenzo di Credi (1459-1537). The former (called after Cosimo Rosselli, his master) was one of the most piquant personalities in the art world of Florence, as all readers of *Romola* know. As a painter, he has been very much overestimated; at his best, he is a sort of Botticelli, with the Botticellian grace and the Botticellian poetry almost all left out. He was magnificent at designing pageants; and of one of his exploits in this kind, we shall hear more presently. Lorenzo di Credi, Verrocchio's favourite pupil, was later, like Botticelli and others, to fall under the spell of Fra Girolamo; his pictures breathe a true religious sentiment and are very carefully finished; but for the most part, though there are exceptions, they lack virility.

Before this epoch closed, the two greatest heroes of Florentine art had appeared upon the scenes, but their great work lay still in the future. Leonardo da Vinci (born in 1452) had learned to paint in the school of Verrocchio; but painting was to occupy but a small portion of his time and labour. His mind roamed freely over every field of human activity, and plunged deeply into every sphere of human thought; nor is he adequately represented even by the greatest of the pictures that he has left. There is nothing of him now in Florence, save a few drawings in the Uffizi and an

unfinished picture of the Epiphany. Leonardo finished little, and, with that little, time and man have dealt hardly. Michelangelo Buonarroti was born in the Casentino in 1475, and nurtured among the stone quarries of Settignano. At the age of thirteen, his father apprenticed him to the Ghirlandaii, Domenico and his brother David; and, with his friend and fellow-student, Francesco Granacci, the boy began to frequent the gardens of the Medici, near San Marco, where in the midst of a rich collection of antiquities Donatello's pupil and successor, Bertoldo, directed a kind of Academy. Here Michelangelo attracted the attention of Lorenzo himself, by the head of an old satyr which he had hammered out of a piece of marble that fell to his hand; and the Magnifico took him into his household. This youthful period in the great master's career was occupied in drinking in culture from the Medicean circle, in studying the antique and, of the moderns, especially the works of Donatello and Masaccio. But, with the exception of a few early fragments from his hand, Michelangelo's work commenced with his first visit to Rome, in 1496, and belongs to the following epoch.

Turning from art to letters, the Quattrocento is an intermediate period between the mainly Tuscan literary movement of the fourteenth century and the general Italian literature of the sixteenth. The first part of this century is the time of the discovery of the old authors, of the copying of manuscripts (printing was not introduced into Florence until 1471), of the eager search for classical relics and antiquities, the comparative

neglect of Italian when Latinity became the test of all. Florence was the centre of the Humanism of the Renaissance, the revival of Grecian culture, the blending of Christianity and Paganism, the aping of antiquity in theory and in practice. In the pages of Vespasiano we are given a series of lifelike portraits of the scholars of this epoch, who thronged to Florence, served the State as Secretary of the Republic or occupied chairs in her newly reorganised university, or basked in the sun of Strozgian or Medicean patronage. Niccolò Niccoli, who died in 1437, is one of the most typical of these scholars; an ardent collector of ancient manuscripts, his library, purchased after his death by Cosimo dei Medici, forms the nucleus of the Biblioteca Laurenziana. His house was adorned with all that was held most choice and precious; he always wore long sweeping red robes, and had his table covered with ancient vases and precious Greek cups and the like. In fact he played the ancient sage to such perfection that simply to watch him eat his dinner was a liberal education in itself! *A vederlo in tavola, così antico come era, era una gentilezza.*

Vespasiano tells a delightful yarn of how one fine day this Niccolò Niccoli, "who was another Socrates or another Cato for continence and virtue," was taking a constitutional round the Palazzo del Podestà, when he chanced to espy a youth of most comely aspect, one who was entirely devoted to worldly pleasures and delights, young Piero Pazzi. Calling him and learning his name, Niccolò proceeded to question him as to his profession.

"Having a high old time," answered the ingenuous youth: *attendo a darmi buon tempo*. "Being thy father's son and so handsome," said the Sage severely, "it is a shame that thou dost not set thyself to learn the Latin language, which would be a great ornament to thee; and if thou dost not learn it, thou wilt be esteemed of no account; yea, when the flower of thy youth is past, thou shalt find thyself without any *virtù*." Messer Piero was converted on the spot; Niccolò straightway found him a master and provided him with books; and the pleasure-loving youth became a scholar and a patron of scholars. Vespasiano assures us that, if he had lived, *lo inconveniente che seguitò*—so he euphoniously terms the Pazzi conspiracy—would never have happened.

Leonardo Bruni is the nearest approach to a really great figure in the Florentine literary world of the first half of the century. His translations of Plato and Aristotle, especially the former, mark an epoch. His Latin history of Florence shows genuine critical insight; but he is, perhaps, best known at the present day by his little *Life of Dante* in Italian, a charming and valuable sketch, which has preserved for us some fragments of Dantesque letters and several bits of really precious information about the divine poet, which seem to be authentic and which we do not find elsewhere. Leonardo appears to have undertaken it as a kind of holiday task, for recreation after the work of composing his more ponderous history. As Secretary of the Republic he exercised considerable political influence; his fame was so great that people came to Florence only to look at

him; on his death in 1444, he was solemnly crowned on the bier as poet laureate, and buried in Santa Croce with stately pomp and applauded funeral orations. Leonardo's successors, Carlo Marsuppini (like him, an Aretine by birth) and Poggio Bracciolini—the one noted for his frank paganism, the other for the foulness of his literary invective—are less attractive figures; though the latter was no less famous and influential in his day. Giannozzo Manetti, who pronounced Bruni's funeral oration, was noted for his eloquence and incorruptibility, and stands out prominently amidst the scholars and humanists by virtue of his nobleness of character; like that other hero of the new learning, Palla Strozzi, he was driven into exile and persecuted by the Mediceans.

Far more interesting are the men of light and learning who gathered round Lorenzo dei Medici in the latter half of the century. This is the epoch of the Platonic Academy, which Marsilio Ficino had founded under the auspices of Cosimo. The discussions held in the convent retreat among the forests of Camaldoli, the meetings in the Badia at the foot of Fiesole, the mystical banquets celebrated in Lorenzo's villa at Careggi in honour of the anniversary of Plato's birth and death, may have added little to the sum of man's philosophic thought; but the Neo-Platonic religion of love and beauty, which was there proclaimed to the modern world, has left eternal traces in the poetic literature both of Italy and of England. Spenser and Shelley might have sat with the nine guests, whose number honoured the nine Muses,

at the famous Platonic banquet at Careggi, of which Marsilio Ficino himself has left us an account in his commentary on the *Symposium*. You may read a later Italian echo of it, when Marsilio Ficino had passed away and his academy was a thing of the past, in the impassioned and rapturous discourse on love and beauty poured forth by Pietro Bembo, at that wonderful daybreak which ends the discussions of Urbino's courtiers in Castiglione's treatise. In a creed that could find one formula to cover both the reception of the Stigmata by St Francis and the mystical flights of the Platonic Socrates and Plotinus; that could unite the Sibyls and Diotima with the Magdalene and the Virgin Martyrs; many a perplexed Italian of that epoch might find more than temporary rest for his soul.

Simultaneously with this new Platonic movement there came a great revival of Italian literature, alike in poetry and in prose; what Carducci calls *il rinascimento della vita italiana nella forma classica*. The earlier humanists had scorned, or at least neglected the language of Dante; and the circle that surrounded Lorenzo was undoubtedly instrumental in this Italian reaction. Cristoforo Landini, one of the principal members of the Platonic Academy, now wrote the first Renaissance commentary upon the *Divina Commedia*; Leo Battista Alberti, also a leader in these Platonic disputations, defended the dignity of the Italian language, as Dante himself had done in an earlier day. Lorenzo himself compiled the so-called *Raccolta Aragonese* of early Italian lyrics, and sent them to Frederick of Aragon, together with a letter full

of enthusiasm for the Tuscan tongue, and with critical remarks on the individual poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Upon the popular poetry of Tuscany Lorenzo himself, and his favourite Angelo Ambrogini of Montepulciano, better known as Poliziano, founded a new school of Italian song. Luigi Pulci, the gay scoffer and cynical sceptic, entertained the festive gatherings in the Medicean palace with his wild tales, and, in his *Morgante Maggiore*, was practically the first to work up the popular legends of Orlando and the Paladins into a noteworthy poem—a poem of which Savonarola and his followers were afterwards to burn every copy that fell into their hands.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.