BOOK V

CHAPTER I

The vicissitudes of empires--The state of Italy--The military factions of Sforza and Braccio--The Bracceschi and the Sforzeschi attack the pope, who is expelled by the Romans--War between the pope and the duke of Milan--The Florentines and the Venetians assist the pope--Peace between the pope and the duke of Milan--Tyranny practiced by the party favorable to the Medici.

It may be observed, that provinces amid the vicissitudes to which they are subject, pass from order into confusion, and afterward recur to a state of order again; for the nature of mundane affairs not allowing them to continue in an even course, when they have arrived at their greatest perfection, they soon begin to decline. In the same manner, having been reduced by disorder, and sunk to their utmost state of depression, unable to descend lower, they, of necessity, reascend; and thus from good they gradually decline to evil, and from evil again return to good. The reason is, that valor produces peace; peace, repose; repose, disorder; disorder, ruin; so from disorder order springs; from order virtue, and from this, glory and good fortune. Hence, wise men have observed, that the age of literary excellence is subsequent to that of distinction in arms; and that in cities and provinces, great warriors

are produced before philosophers. Arms having secured victory, and victory peace, the buoyant vigor of the martial mind cannot be enfeebled by a more excusable indulgence than that of letters; nor can indolence, with any greater or more dangerous deceit, enter a well regulated community. Cato was aware of this when the philosophers, Diogenes and Carneades, were sent ambassadors to the senate by the Athenians; for perceiving with what earnest admiration the Roman youth began to follow them, and knowing the evils that might result to his country from this specious idleness, he enacted that no philosopher should be allowed to enter Rome. Provinces by this means sink to ruin, from which, men's sufferings having made them wiser, they again recur to order, if they be not overwhelmed by some extraordinary force. These causes made Italy, first under the ancient Tuscans, and afterward under the Romans, by turns happy and unhappy; and although nothing has subsequently arisen from the ruins of Rome at all corresponding to her ancient greatness (which under a well-organized monarchy might have been gloriously effected), still there was so much bravery and intelligence in some of the new cities and governments that afterward sprang up, that although none ever acquired dominion over the rest, they were, nevertheless, so balanced and regulated among themselves, as to enable them to live in freedom, and defend their country from the barbarians.

Among these governments, the Florentines, although they possessed a smaller extent of territory, were not inferior to any in power and authority; for being situated in the middle of Italy, wealthy, and prepared for action, they either defended themselves against such as

thought proper to assail them, or decided victory in favor of those to whom they became allies. From the valor, therefore, of these new governments, if no seasons occurred of long-continued peace, neither were any exposed to the calamities of war; for that cannot be called peace in which states frequently assail each other with arms, nor can those be considered wars in which no men are slain, cities plundered, or sovereignties overthrown; for the practice of arms fell into such a state of decay, that wars were commenced without fear, continued without danger, and concluded without loss. Thus the military energy which is in other countries exhausted by a long peace, was wasted in Italy by the contemptible manner in which hostilities were carried on, as will be clearly seen in the events to be described from 1434 to 1494, from which it will appear how the barbarians were again admitted into Italy, and she again sunk under subjection to them. Although the transactions of our princes at home and abroad will not be viewed with admiration of their virtue and greatness like those of the ancients, perhaps they may on other accounts be regarded with no less interest, seeing what masses of high spirited people were kept in restraint by such weak and disorderly forces. And if, in detailing the events which took place in this wasted world, we shall not have to record the bravery of the soldier, the prudence of the general, or the patriotism of the citizen, it will be seen with what artifice, deceit, and cunning, princes, warriors, and leaders of republics conducted themselves, to support a reputation they never deserved. This, perhaps, will not be less useful than a knowledge of ancient history; for, if the latter excites the liberal mind to imitation, the former will show what ought to be avoided

and decried.

Italy was reduced to such a condition by her rulers, that when, by consent of her princes, peace was restored, it was soon disturbed by those who retained their armies, so that glory was not gained by war nor repose by peace. Thus when the league and the duke of Milan agreed to lay aside their arms in 1433, the soldiers, resolved upon war, directed their efforts against the church. There were at this time two factions or armed parties in Italy, the Sforzesca and the Braccesca. The leader of the former was the Count Francesco, the son of Sforza, and of the latter, Niccolo Piccinino and Niccolo Fortebraccio. Under the banner of one or other of these parties almost all the forces of Italy were assembled. Of the two, the Sforzesca was in greatest repute, as well from the bravery of the count himself, as from the promise which the duke of Milan had made him of his natural daughter, Madonna Bianca, the prospect of which alliance greatly strengthened his influence. After the peace of Lombardy, these forces, from various causes attacked Pope Eugenius. Niccolo Fortebraccio was instigated by the ancient enmity which Braccio had always entertained against the church; the count was induced by ambition: so that Niccolo assailed Rome, and the count took possession of La Marca.

The Romans, in order to avoid the war, drove Pope Eugenius from their city: and he, having with difficulty escaped, came to Florence, where seeing the imminent danger of his situation, being abandoned by the princes (for they were unwilling again to take up arms in his cause,

after having been so anxious to lay them aside), he came to terms with the count, and ceded to him the sovereignty of La Marca, although, to the injury of having occupied it, he had added insult; for in signing the place, from which he addressed letters to his agents, he said in Latin, according to the Latin custom, Ex Girfalco nostro Firmiano, invito Petro et Paulo. Neither was he satisfied with this concession, but insisted upon being appointed Gonfalonier of the church, which was also granted; so much more was Eugenius alarmed at the prospect of a dangerous war than of an ignominious peace. The count, having been thus been reconciled to the pontiff, attacked Niccolo Fortebraccio, and during many months various encounters took place between them, from all which greater injury resulted to the pope and his subjects, than to either of the belligerents. At length, by the intervention of the duke of Milan, an arrangement, by way of a truce, was made, by which both became princes in the territories of the church.

The war thus extinguished at Rome was rekindled in Romagna by Batista da Canneto, who at Bologna slew some of the family of the Grifoni, and expelled from the city the governor who resided there for the pope, along with others who were opposed to him. To enable himself to retain the government, he applied for assistance to Filippo; and the pope, to avenge himself for the injury, sought the aid of the Venetians and Florentines. Both parties obtained assistance, so that very soon two large armies were on foot in Romagna. Niccolo Piccinino commanded for the duke, Gattamelata and Niccolo da Tolentino for the Venetians and Florentines. They met near Imola, where a battle ensued, in which the

Florentines and Venetians were routed, and Niccolo da Tolentino was sent prisoner to Milan where, either through grief for his loss or by some unfair means, he died in a few days.

The duke, on this victory, either being exhausted by the late wars, or thinking the League after their defeat would not be in haste to resume hostilities, did not pursue his good fortune, and thus gave the pope and his colleagues time to recover themselves. They therefore appointed the Count Francesco for their leader, and undertook to drive Niccolo Fortebraccio from the territories of the church, and thus terminate the war which had been commenced in favor of the pontiff. The Romans, finding the pope supported by so large an army, sought a reconciliation with him, and being successful, admitted his commissary into the city. Among the places possessed by Niccolo Fortebraccio, were Tivoli, Montefiascone, Citta di Castello, and Ascesi, to the last of which, not being able to keep the field, he fled, and the count besieged him there. Niccolo's brave defense making it probable that the war would be of considerable duration, the duke deemed to necessary to prevent the League from obtaining the victory, and said that if this were not effected he would very soon have to look at the defense of his own territories. Resolving to divert the count from the siege, he commanded Niccolo Piccinino to pass into Tuscany by way of Romagna; and the League, thinking it more important to defend Tuscany than to occupy Ascesi, ordered the count to prevent the passage of Niccolo, who was already, with his army, at Furli. The count accordingly moved with his forces, and came to Cesena, having left the war of La Marca and the care

of his own territories to his brother Lione; and while Niccolo Piccinino was endeavoring to pass by, and the count to prevent him, Fortebraccio attacked Lione with great bravery, made him prisoner, routed his forces, and pursuing the advantage of his victory, at once possessed himself of many places in La Marca. This circumstance greatly perplexed the count, who thought he had lost all his territories; so, leaving part of his force to check Piccinino, with the remainder he pursued Fortebraccio, whom he attacked and conquered. Fortebraccio was taken prisoner in the battle, and soon after died of his wounds. This victory restored to the pontiff all the places that had been taken from him by Fortebraccio, and compelled the duke of Milan to sue for peace, which was concluded by the intercession of Niccolo da Esta, marquis of Ferrara; the duke restoring to the church the places he had taken from her, and his forces retiring into Lombardy. Batista da Canneto, as in the case with all who retain authority only by the consent and forces of another, when the duke's people had quitted Romagna, unable with his own power to keep possession of Bologna, fled, and Antonio Bentivogli, the head of the opposite party, returned to his country.

All this took place during the exile of Cosmo, after whose return, those who had restored him, and a great number of persons injured by the opposite party, resolved at all events to make themselves sure of the government; and the Signory for the months of November and December, not content with what their predecessors had done in favor of their party extended the term and changed the residences of several who were banished, and increased the number of exiles. In addition to these

evils, it was observed that citizens were more annoyed on account of their wealth, their family connections or private animosities, than for the sake of the party to which they adhered, so that if these prescriptions had been accompanied with bloodshed, they would have resembled those of Octavius and Sylla, though in reality they were not without some stains; for Antonio di Bernardo Guadagni was beheaded, and four other citizens, among whom were Zanobi dei Belfratelli and Cosmo Barbadori, passing the confines to which they were limited, proceeded to Venice, where the Venetians, valuing the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici more than their own honor, sent them prisoners to him, and they were basely put to death. This circumstance greatly increased the influence of that party, and struck their enemies with terror, finding that such a powerful republic would so humble itself to the Florentines. This, however, was supposed to have been done, not so much out of kindness to Cosmo, as to excite dissensions in Florence, and by means of bloodshed make greater certainty of division among the citizens, for the Venetians knew there was no other obstacle to their ambition so great as the union of her people.

The city being cleared of the enemies, or suspected enemies of the state, those in possession of the government now began to strengthen their party by conferring benefits upon such as were in a condition to serve them, and the family of the Alberti, with all who had been banished by the former government, were recalled. All the nobility, with few exceptions, were reduced to the ranks of the people, and the possessions of the exiles were divided among themselves, upon each

paying a small acknowledgment. They then fortified themselves with new laws and provisos, made new Squittini, withdrawing the names of their adversaries from the purses, and filling them with those of their friends. Taking advice from the ruin of their enemies, they considered that to allow the great offices to be filled by mere chance of drawing, did not afford the government sufficient security, they therefore resolved that the magistrates possessing the power of life and death should always be chosen from among the leaders of their own party, and therefore that the Accoppiatori, or persons selected for the imborsation of the new Squittini, with the Signory who had to retire from office, should make the new appointments. They gave to eight of the guard authority to proceed capitally, and provided that the exiles, when their term of banishment was complete, should not be allowed to return, unless from the Signory and Colleagues, which were thirty-seven in number, the consent of thirty-four was obtained. It was made unlawful to write to or to receive letters from them; every word, sign, or action that gave offense to the ruling party was punished with the utmost rigor; and if there was still in Florence any suspected person whom these regulations did not reach, he was oppressed with taxes imposed for the occasion. Thus in a short time, having expelled or impoverished the whole of the adverse party, they established themselves firmly in the government. Not to be destitute of external assistance, and to deprive others of it, who might use it against themselves, they entered into a league, offensive and defensive, with the pope, the Venetians, and the duke of Milan.

CHAPTER II

Death of Giovanni II.--René of Anjou and Alfonso of Aragon aspire to the kingdom--Alfonso is routed and taken by the Genoese--Alfonso being a prisoner of the duke of Milan, obtains his friendship--The Genoese disgusted with the duke of Milan--Divisions among the Genoese--The Genoese, by means of Francesco Spinola, expel the duke's governor--League against the duke of Milan--Rinaldo degli Albizzi advises the duke to make war against the Florentines--His discourse to the duke--The duke adopts measures injurious to the Florentines--Niccolo Piccinino appointed to command the duke's forces--Preparations of the Florentines--Piccinino routed before Barga.

The affairs of Florence being in this condition, Giovanna, queen of Naples, died, and by her will appointed René of Anjou to be her successor. Alfonso, king of Aragon, was at this time in Sicily, and having obtained the concurrence of many barons, prepared to take possession of the kingdom. The Neapolitans, with whom a greater number of barons were also associated, favored René. The pope was unwilling that either of them should obtain it; but desired the affairs of Naples to be administered by a governor of his own appointing.

In the meantime Alfonso entered the kingdom, and was received by the duke of Sessa; he brought with him some princes, whom he had engaged in his service, with the design (already possessing Capua, which the prince of Taranto held in his name) of subduing the Neapolitans, and sent his

fleet to attack Gaeta, which had declared itself in their favor. They therefore demanded assistance of the duke of Milan, who persuaded the Genoese to undertake their defense; and they, to satisfy the duke their sovereign, and protect the merchandise they possessed, both at Naples and Gaeta, armed a powerful fleet. Alfonso hearing of this, augmented his own naval force, went in person to meet the Genoese, and coming up with them near the island of Ponzio, an engagement ensued, in which the Aragonese were defeated, and Alfonso, with many of the princes of his suite, made prisoners, and sent by the Genoese to the Filippo.

This victory terrified the princes of Italy, who, being jealous of the duke's power, thought it would give him a great opportunity of being sovereign of the whole country. But so contrary are the views of men, that he took a directly opposite course. Alfonso was a man of great sagacity, and as soon as an opportunity presented itself of communicating with Filippo, he proved to him how completely he contravened his own interests, by favoring René and opposing himself; for it would be the business of the former, on becoming king of Naples, to introduce the French into Milan; that in an emergency he might have assistance at hand, without the necessity of having to solicit a passage for his friends. But he could not possibly secure this advantage without effecting the ruin of the duke, and making his dominions a French province; and that the contrary of all this would result from himself becoming lord of Naples; for having only the French to fear, he would be compelled to love and caress, nay even to obey those who had it in their power to open a passage for his enemies. That thus the title of king

of king of Naples would be with himself (Alfonso), but the power and authority with Filippo; so that it was much more the duke's business than his own to consider the danger of one course and the advantage of the other; unless he rather wished to gratify his private prejudices than to give security to his dominions. In the one case he would be a free prince, in the other, placed between two powerful sovereigns, he would either be robbed of his territories or live in constant fear, and have to obey them like a slave. These arguments so greatly influenced the duke, that, changing his design, he set Alfonso at liberty, sent him honorably to Genoa and then to Naples. From thence the king went to Gaeta, which as soon as his liberation had become known, was taken possession of by some nobles of his party.

The Genoese, seeing that the duke, without the least regard for them, had liberated the king, and gained credit to himself through the dangers and expense which they had incurred; that he enjoyed all the honor of the liberation, and they were themselves exposed to the odium of the capture, and the injuries consequent upon the king's defeat, were greatly exasperated. In the city of Genoa, while in the enjoyment of her liberty, a magistrate is created with the consent of the people, whom they call the Doge; not that he is absolutely a prince, or that he alone has the power of determining matters of government; but that, as the head of the state, he proposes those questions or subjects which have to be considered and determined by the magistrates and the councils. In that city are many noble families so powerful, that they are with great difficulty induced to submit to the authority of the law. Of these,

the most powerful are the Fregosa and the Adorna, from whom arise the dissensions of the city, and the impotence of her civil regulations; for the possession of this high office being contested by means inadmissible in well-regulated communities, and most commonly with arms in their hands, it always occurs that one party is oppressed and the other triumphant; and sometimes those who fail in the pursuit have recourse to the arms of strangers, and the country they are not allowed to rule they subject to foreign authority. Hence it happens, that those who govern in Lombardy most commonly command in Genoa, as occurred at the time Alfonso of Aragon was made prisoner. Among the leading Genoese who had been instrumental in subjecting the republic to Filippo, was Francesco Spinola, who, soon after he had reduced his country to bondage, as always happens in such cases, became suspected by the duke. Indignant at this, he withdrew to a sort of voluntary exile at Gaeta, and being there when the naval expedition was in preparation, and having conducted himself with great bravery in the action, he thought he had again merited so much of the duke's confidence as would obtain for him permission to remain undisturbed at Genoa. But the duke still retained his suspicions; for he could not believe that a vacillating defender of his own country's liberty would be faithful to himself; and Francesco Spinola resolved again to try his fortune, and if possible restore freedom to his country, and honorable safety for himself; for he was there was no probability of regaining the forfeited affection of his fellow-citizens, but by resolving at his own peril to remedy the misfortunes which he had been so instrumental in producing. Finding the indignation against the duke universal, on account of the liberation

of the king, he thought the moment propitious for the execution of his design. He communicated his ideas to some whom he knew to be similarly inclined, and his arguments ensured their co-operation.

The great festival of St. John the Baptist being come, when Arismeno, the new governor sent by the duke, was to enter Genoa, and he being already arrived, accompanied by Opicino, the former governor, and many Genoese citizens, Francesco Spinola thought further delay improper; and, issuing from his house with those acquainted with his design, all armed, they raised the cry of liberty. It was wonderful to see how eagerly the citizens and people assembled at the word; so that those who for any reason might be favorable to Filippo, not only had no time to arm, but scarcely to consider the means of escape. Arismeno, with some Genoese, fled to the fortress which was held for the duke, Opicino, thinking that if he could reach the palace, where two thousand men were in arms, and at his command, he might be able either to effect his own safety, or induce his friends to defend themselves, took that direction; but before he arrived at the piazza he was slain, his body divided into many pieces and scattered about the city. The Genoese having placed the government in the hands of free magistrates, in a few days recovered the castle, and the other strongholds possessed by the duke, and delivered themselves entirely from his yoke.

These transactions, though at first they had alarmed the princes of Italy with the apprehension that the duke would become too powerful, now gave them hope, seeing the turn they had taken, of being able to

restrain him; and, notwithstanding the recent league, the Florentines and Venetians entered into alliance with the Genoese. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and the other leading Florentine exiles, observing the altered aspect of affairs, conceived hopes of being able to induce the duke to make war against Florence, and having arrived at Milan, Rinaldo addressed him in the following manner: "If we, who were once your enemies, come now confidently to supplicate your assistance to enable us to return to our country, neither you, nor anyone, who considers the course and vicissitudes of human affairs, can be at all surprised; for of our past conduct toward yourself and our present intentions toward our country, we can adduce palpable and abundant reasons. No good man will ever reproach another who endeavors to defend his country, whatever be his mode of doing so; neither have we had any design of injuring you, but only to preserve our country from detriment; and we appeal to yourself, whether, during the greatest victories of our league, when you were really desirous of peace, we were not even more anxious for it than yourself; so that we do not think we have done aught to make us despair altogether of favor from you. Nor can our country itself complain that we now exhort you to use those arms against her, from which we have so pertinaciously defended her; for that state alone merits the love of all her citizens, which cares with equal affection for all; not one that favors a few, and casts from her the great mass of her children. Nor are the arms that men use against their country to be universally condemned; for communities, although composed of many, resemble individual bodies; and as in these, many infirmities arise which cannot be cured without the application of fire or of steel, so in the former, there often occur

such numerous and great evils, that a good and merciful citizen, when there is a necessity for the sword, would be much more to blame in leaving her uncured, than by using this remedy for her preservation. What greater disease can afflict a republic than slavery? and what remedy is more desirable for adoption than the one by which alone it can be effectually removed? No wars are just but those that are necessary; and force is merciful when it presents the only hope of relief. I know not what necessity can be greater than ours, or what compassion can exceed that which rescues our country from slavery. Our cause is therefore just, and our purpose merciful, as both yourself and we may be easily convinced. The amplest justice is on your side; for the Florentines have not hesitated, after a peace concluded with so much solemnity, to enter into league with those who have rebelled against you; so that if our cause is insufficient to excite you against them, let your own just indignation do so; and the more so, seeing the facility of the undertaking. You need be under no apprehension from the memory of the past, in which you may have observed the power of that people and their pertinency in self-defense; though these might reasonably excite fear, if they were still animated by the valor of former times. But now, all is entirely the reverse; for what power can be expected in a city that has recently expelled the greatest part of her wealth and industry? What indomitable resolution need be apprehended from the people whom so many and such recent enmities have disunited? The disunion which still prevails will prevent wealthy citizens advancing money as they used to do on former occasions; for though men willingly contribute according to their means, when they see their own

credit, glory, and private advantage dependent upon it, or when there is a hope of regaining in peace what has been spent in war, but not when equally oppressed under all circumstances, when in war they suffer the injuries of the enemy, and in peace, the insolence of those who govern them. Besides this, the people feel more deeply the avarice of their rulers, than the rapacity of the enemy; for there is hope of being ultimately relieved from the latter evil, but none from the former. Thus, in the last war, you had to contend with the whole city; but now with only a small portion. You attempted to take the government from many good citizens; but now you oppose only a few bad ones. You then endeavored to deprive a city of her liberty, now you come to restore it. As it is unreasonable to suppose that under such disparity of circumstances, the result should be the same, you have now every reason to anticipate an easy victory; and how much it will strengthen your own government, you may easily judge; having Tuscany friendly, and bound by so powerful an obligation, in your enterprises, she will be even of more service to you than Milan. And, although, on former occasions, such an acquisition might be looked upon as ambitious and unwarrantable, it will now be considered merciful and just. Then do not let this opportunity escape, and be assured, that although your attempts against the city have been attended with difficulty, expense, and disgrace, this will with facility procure you incalculable advantage and an honorable renown."

Many words were not requisite to induce the duke to hostilities against the Florentines, for he was incited to it by hereditary hatred and blind

ambition, and still more, by the fresh injuries which the league with the Genoese involved; yet his past expenses, the dangerous measures necessary, the remembrance of his recent losses, and the vain hopes of the exiles, alarmed him. As soon as he had learned the revolt of Genoa, he ordered Niccolo Piccinino to proceed thither with all his cavalry and whatever infantry he could raise, for the purpose of recovering her, before the citizens had time to become settled and establish a government; for he trusted greatly in the fortress within the city, which was held for him. And although Niccolo drove the Genoese from the mountains, took from them the valley of Pozeveri, where they had entrenched themselves, and obliged them to seek refuge within the walls of the city, he still found such an insurmountable obstacle in the resolute defense of the citizens, that he was compelled to withdraw. On this, at the suggestion of the Florentine exiles, he commanded Niccolo to attack them on the eastern side, upon the confines of Pisa in the Genoese territory, and to push the war with his utmost vigor, thinking this plan would manifest and develop the course best to be adopted. Niccolo therefore besieged and took Serezana, and having committed great ravages, by way of further alarming the Florentines he proceeded to Lucca, spreading a report that it was his intention to go to Naples to render assistance to the king of Aragon. Upon these new events Pope Eugenius left Florence and proceeded to Bologna, where he endeavored to effect an amicable arrangement between the league and the duke, intimating to the latter, that if he would not consent to some treaty, the pontiff must send Francesco Sforza to assist the league, for the latter was now his confederate, and served in his pay. Although the pope

greatly exerted himself in this affair, his endeavors were unavailing; for the duke would not listen to any proposal that did not leave him the possession of Genoa, and the league had resolved that she should remain free; and, therefore, each party, having no other resource, prepared to continue the war.

In the meantime Niccolo Piccinino arrived at Lucca, and the Florentines, being doubtful what course to adopt, ordered Neri di Gino to lead their forces into the Pisan territory, induced the pontiff to allow Count Francesco to join him, and with their forces they halted at San Gonda. Piccinino then demanded admission into the kingdom of Naples, and this being refused, he threatened to force a passage. The armies were equal, both in regard of numbers and the capacity of their leaders, and unwilling to tempt fortune during the bad weather, it being the month of December, they remained several days without attacking each other. The first movement was made by Niccolo Piccinino, who being informed that if he attacked Vico Pisano by night, he could easily take possession of the place, made the attempt, and having failed, ravaged the surrounding country, and then burned and plundered the town of San Giovanni alla Vena. This enterprise, though of little consequence, excited him to make further attempts, the more so from being assured that the count and Neri were yet in their quarters, and he attacked Santa Maria in Castello and Filetto, both which places he took. Still the Florentine forces would not stir; not that the count entertained any fear, but because, out of regard to the pope, who still labored to effect an accommodation, the government of Florence had deferred giving their final consent to the

war. This course, which the Florentines adopted from prudence, was considered by the enemy to be only the result of timidity, and with increased boldness they led their forces up to Barga, which they resolved to besiege. This new attack made the Florentines set aside all other considerations, and resolve not only to relieve Barga, but to invade the Lucchese territory. Accordingly the count proceeded in pursuit of Niccolo, and coming up with him before Barga, an engagement took place, in which Piccinino was overcome, and compelled to raise the siege.

The Venetians considering the duke to have broken the peace, send Giovan Francesco da Gonzaga, their captain, to Ghiaradadda, who, by severely wasting the duke's territories, induced him to recall Niccolo Piccinino from Tuscany. This circumstance, together with the victory obtained over Niccolo, emboldened the Florentines to attempt the recovery of Lucca, since the duke, whom alone they feared, was engaged with the Venetians, and the Lucchese having received the enemy into their city, and allowed him to attack them, would have no ground of complaint.

CHAPTER III

The Florentines go to war with Lucca--Discourse of a citizen of Lucca to animate the plebeians against the Florentines--The Lucchese resolve to defend themselves--They are assisted by the duke of Milan--Treaty between the Florentines and the Venetians--Francesco Sforza, captain of the league, refuses to cross the Po in the service of the Venetians and returns to Tuscany--The bad faith of the Venetians toward the Florentines--Cosmo de' Medici at Venice--Peace between the Florentines and the Lucchese--The Florentines effect a reconciliation between the pope and the Count di Poppi--The pope consecrates the church of Santa Reparata--Council of Florence.

The count commenced operations against Lucca in April, 1437, and the Florentines, desirous of recovering what they had themselves lost before they attacked others, retook Santa Maria in Castello, and all the places which Piccinino had occupied. Then, entering the Lucchese territory, they besieged Camaiore, the inhabitants of which, although faithful to their rulers, being influenced more by immediate danger than by attachment to their distant friends, surrendered. In the same manner, they obtained Massa and Serezana. Toward the end of May they proceeded in the direction of Lucca, burning the towns, destroying the growing crops, grain, trees, and vines, driving away the cattle, and leaving nothing undone to injure the enemy. The Lucchese, finding themselves abandoned by the duke, and hopeless of defending the open country, forsook it; entrenched and fortified the city, which they doubted not,

being well garrisoned, they would be able to defend for a time, and that, in the interim, some event would occur for their relief, as had been the case during the former wars which the Florentines had carried on against them. Their only apprehension arose from the fickle minds of the plebeians, who, becoming weary of the siege, would have more consideration of their own danger than of other's liberty, and would thus compel them to submit to some disgraceful and ruinous capitulation. In order to animate them to defense, they were assembled in the public piazza, and some of the eldest and most esteemed of the citizens addressed them in the following terms: "You are doubtless aware that what is done from necessity involves neither censure nor applause; therefore, if you should accuse us of having caused the present war, by receiving the ducal forces into the city, and allowing them to commit hostilities against the Florentines, you are greatly mistaken. You are well acquainted with the ancient enmity of the Florentines against you, which is not occasioned by any injuries you have done them, or by fear on their part, but by our weakness and their own ambition; for the one gives them hope of being able to oppress us, and the other incites them to attempt it. It is then vain to imagine that any merit of yours can extinguish that desire in them, or that any offense you can commit, can provoke them to greater animosity. They endeavor to deprive you of your liberty; you must resolve to defend it; and whatever they may undertake against us for that purpose, although we may lament, we need not wonder. We may well grieve, therefore, that they attack us, take possession of our towns, burn our houses, and waste our country. But who is so simple as to be surprised at it? for were it in our power, we should do just

the same to them, or even worse. They declare war against us now, they say, for having received Niccolo; but if we had not received him, they would have done the same and assigned some other ground for it; and if the evil had been delayed, it would most probably have been greater. Therefore, you must not imagine it to be occasioned by his arrival, but rather by your own ill fortune and their ambition; for we could not have refused admission to the duke's forces, and, being come, we could not prevent their aggressions. You know, that without the aid of some powerful ally we are incapable of self-defense, and that none can render us this service more powerfully or faithfully than the duke. He restored our liberty; it is reasonable to expect he will defend it. He has always been the greatest foe of our inveterate enemies; if, therefore, to avoid incensing the Florentines we had excited his anger, we should have lost our best friend, and rendered our enemy more powerful and more disposed to oppress us; so that it is far preferable to have this war upon our hands, and enjoy the favor of the duke, than to be in peace without it. Besides, we are justified in expecting that he will rescue us from the dangers into which we are brought on his account, if we only do not abandon our own cause. You all know how fiercely the Florentines have frequently assailed us, and with what glory we have maintained our defense. We have often been deprived of every hope, except in God and the casualties which time might produce, and both have proved our friends. And as they have delivered us formerly, why should they not continue to do so. Then we were forsaken by the whole of Italy; now we have the duke in our favor; besides we have a right to suppose that the Venetians will not hastily attack us; for they will not willingly see

the power of Florence increased. On a former occasion the Florentines were more at liberty; they had greater hope of assistance, and were more powerful in themselves, while we were in every respect weaker; for then a tyrant governed us, now we defend ourselves; then the glory of our defense was another's, now it is our own; then they were in harmony, now they are disunited, all Italy being filled with their banished citizens. But were we without the hope which these favorable circumstances present, our extreme necessity should make us firmly resolved on our defense. It is reasonable to fear every enemy, for all seek their own glory and your ruin; above all others, you have to dread the Florentines, for they would not be satisfied by submission and tribute, or the dominion of our city, but they would possess our entire substance and persons, that they might satiate their cruelty with our blood, and their avarice with our property, so that all ranks ought to dread them. Therefore do not be troubled at seeing our crops destroyed, our towns burned, our fortresses occupied; for if we preserve the city, the rest will be saved as a matter of course; if we lose her, all else would be of no advantage to us; for while retaining our liberty, the enemy can hold them only with the greatest difficulty, while losing it they would be preserved in vain. Arm, therefore; and when in the fight, remember that the reward of victory will be safety, not only to your country, but to your homes, your wives, and your children." The speaker's last words were received with the utmost enthusiasm by the people, who promised one and all to die rather than abandon their cause, or submit to any terms that could violate their liberty. They then made arrangements for the defense of the city.

In the meantime, the Florentine forces were not idle; and after innumerable mischiefs done to the country took Monte Carlo by capitulation. They then besieged Uzzano, in order that the Lucchese, being pressed on all sides, might despair of assistance, and be compelled to submission by famine. The fortress was very strong, and defended by a numerous garrison, so that its capture would be by no means an easy undertaking. The Lucchese, as might be expected, seeing the imminent peril of their situation, had recourse to the duke, and employed prayers and remonstrances to induce him to render them aid. They enlarged upon their own merits and the offenses of the Florentines; and showed how greatly it would attach the duke's friends to him to find they were defended, and how much disaffection it would spread among them, if they were left to be overwhelmed by the enemy; that if they lost their liberties and their lives, he would lose his honor and his friends, and forfeit the confidence of all who from affection might be induced to incur dangers in his behalf; and added tears to entreaties, so that if he were unmoved by gratitude to them, he might be induced to their defense by motives of compassion. The duke, influenced by his inveterate hostility against the Florentines, his new obligation to the Lucchese, and, above all, by his desire to prevent so great an acquisition from falling into the hands of his ancient enemies, determined either to send a strong force into Tuscany, or vigorously to assail the Venetians, so as to compel the Florentines to give up their enterprise and go to their relief.

It was soon known in Florence that the duke was preparing to send forces into Tuscany. This made the Florentines apprehensive for the success of their enterprise; and in order to retain the duke in Lombardy, they requested the Venetians to press him with their utmost strength. But they also were alarmed, the marquis of Mantua having abandoned them and gone over to the duke; and thus, finding themselves almost defenseless, they replied, "that instead of increasing their responsibilities, they should be unable to perform their part in the war, unless the Count Francesco were sent to them to take the command of the army, and with the special understanding that he should engage to cross the Po in person. They declined to fulfil their former engagements unless he were bound to do so; for they could not carry on the war without a leader, or repose confidence in any except the count; and he himself would be useless to them, unless he came under an obligation to carry on the war whenever they might think needful." The Florentines thought the war ought to be pushed vigorously in Lombardy; but they saw that if they lost the count their enterprise against Lucca was ruined; and they knew well that the demand of the Venetians arose less from any need they had of the count, than from their desire to frustrate this expedition. The count, on the other hand, was ready to pass into Lombardy whenever the league might require him, but would not alter the tenor of his engagement; for he was unwilling to sacrifice the hope of the alliance promised to him by the duke.

The Florentines were thus embarrassed by two contrary impulses, the wish to possess Lucca, and the dread of a war with Milan. As commonly

happens, fear was the most powerful, and they consented, after the capture of Uzzano, that the count should go into Lombardy. There still remained another difficulty, which, depending on circumstances beyond the reach of their influence, created more doubts and uneasiness than the former; the count would not consent to pass the Po, and the Venetians refused to accept him on any other condition. Seeing no other method of arrangement, than that each should make liberal concessions, the Florentines induced the count to cross the river by a letter addressed to the Signory of Florence, intimating that this private promise did not invalidate any public engagement, and that he might still refrain from crossing; hence it resulted that the Venetians, having commenced the war, would be compelled to proceed, and that the evil apprehended by the Florentines would be averted. To the Venetians, on the other hand, they averred that this private letter was sufficiently binding, and therefore they ought to be content; for if they could save the count from breaking with his father-in-law, it was well to do so, and that it could be of no advantage either to themselves or the Venetians to publish it without some manifest necessity. It was thus determined that the count should pass into Lombardy; and having taken Uzzano, and raised bastions about Lucca to restrain in her inhabitants, placed the management of the siege in the hands of the commissaries, crossed the Apennines, and proceeded to Reggio, when the Venetians, alarmed at his progress, and in order to discover his intentions, insisted upon his immediately crossing the Po, and joining the other forces. The count refused compliance, and many mutual recriminations took place between him and Andrea Mauroceno, their

messenger on this occasion, each charging the other with arrogance and treachery: after many protestations, the one of being under no obligation to perform that service, and the other of not being bound to any payment, they parted, the count to return to Tuscany, the other to Venice.

The Florentines had sent the count to encamp in the Pisan territory, and were in hopes of inducing him to renew the war against the Lucchese, but found him indisposed to do so, for the duke, having been informed that out of regard to him he had refused to cross the Po, thought that by this means he might also save the Lucchese, and begged the count to endeavor to effect an accommodation between the Florentines and the Lucchese, including himself in it, if he were able, declaring, at the same time, the promised marriage should be solemnized whenever he thought proper. The prospect of this connection had great influence with the count, for, as the duke had no sons, it gave him hope of becoming sovereign of Milan. For this reason he gradually abated his exertions in the war, declared he would not proceed unless the Venetians fulfilled their engagement as to the payment, and also retained him in the command; that the discharge of the debt would not alone be sufficient, for desiring to live peaceably in his own dominions, he needed some alliance other than that of the Florentines, and that he must regard his own interests, shrewdly hinting that if abandoned by the Venetians, he would come to terms with the duke.

These indirect and crafty methods of procedure were highly offensive

to the Florentines, for they found their expedition against Lucca frustrated, and trembled for the safety of their own territories if ever the count and the duke should enter into a mutual alliance. To induce the Venetians to retain the count in the command, Cosmo de' Medici went to Venice, hoping his influence would prevail with them, and discussed the subject at great length before the senate, pointing out the condition of the Italian states, the disposition of their armies, and the great preponderance possessed by the duke. He concluded by saying, that if the count and the duke were to unite their forces, they (the Venetians) might return to the sea, and the Florentines would have to fight for their liberty. To this the Venetians replied, that they were acquainted with their own strength and that of the Italians, and thought themselves able at all events to provide for their own defense; that it was not their custom to pay soldiers for serving others; that as the Florentines had used the count's services, they must pay him themselves; with respect to the security of their own states, it was rather desirable to check the count's pride than to pay him, for the ambition of men is boundless, and if he were now paid without serving, he would soon make some other demand, still more unreasonable and dangerous. It therefore seemed necessary to curb his insolence, and not allow it to increase till it became incorrigible; and that if the Florentines, from fear or any other motive, wished to preserve his friendship, they must pay him themselves. Cosmo returned without having effected any part of his object.

The Florentines used the weightiest arguments they could adopt to

prevent the count from quitting the service of the League, a course he was himself reluctant to follow, but his desire to conclude the marriage so embarrassed him, that any trivial accident would have been sufficient to determine his course, as indeed shortly happened. The count had left his territories in La Marca to the care of Il Furlano, one of his principal condottieri, who was so far influenced by the duke as to take command under him, and quit the count's service. This circumstance caused the latter to lay aside every idea but that of his own safety, and to come to agreement with the duke; among the terms of which compact was one that he should not be expected to interfere in the affairs of Romagna and Tuscany. The count then urged the Florentines to come to terms with the Lucchese, and so convinced them of the necessity of this, that seeing no better course to adopt, they complied in April, 1438, by which treaty the Lucchese retained their liberty, and the Florentines Monte Carlo and a few other fortresses. After this, being full of exasperation, they despatched letters to every part of Italy, overcharged with complaints, affecting to show that since God and men were averse to the Lucchese coming under their dominion, they had made peace with them. And it seldom happens that any suffer so much for the loss of their own lawful property as they did because they could not obtain the possessions of others.

Though the Florentines had now so many affairs in hand, they did not allow the proceedings of their neighbors to pass unnoticed, or neglect the decoration of their city. As before observed, Niccolo Fortebraccio was dead. He had married a daughter of the Count di Poppi, who, at

the decease of his son-in-law, held the Borgo San Sepolcro, and other fortresses of that district, and while Niccolo lived, governed them in his name. Claiming them as his daughter's portion, he refused to give them up to the pope, who demanded them as property held of the church, and who, upon his refusal, sent the patriarch with forces to take possession of them. The count, finding himself unable to sustain the attack, offered them to the Florentines, who declined them; but the pope having returned to Florence, they interceded with him in the count's behalf. Difficulties arising, the patriarch attacked the Casentino, took Prato Vecchio, and Romena, and offered them also to the Florentines, who refused them likewise, unless the pope would consent they should restore them to the count, to which, after much hesitation, he acceded, on condition that the Florentines should prevail with the Count di Poppi to restore the Borgo to him. The pope was thus satisfied, and the Florentines having so far completed the building of their cathedral church of Santa Reparata, which had been commenced long ago, as to enable them to perform divine service in it, requested his holiness to consecrate it. To this the pontiff willingly agreed, and the Florentines, to exhibit the wealth of the city and the splendor of the edifice, and do greater honor to the pope, erected a platform from Santa Maria Novella, where he resided, to the cathedral he was about to consecrate, six feet in height and twelve feet wide, covered with rich drapery, for the accommodation of the pontiff and his court, upon which they proceeded to the building, accompanied by those civic magistrates, and other officers who were appointed to take part in the procession. The usual ceremonies of consecration having been completed, the pope, to

show his affection for the city, conferred the honor of knighthood upon Giuliano Davanzati, their Gonfalonier of Justice, and a citizen of the highest reputation; and the Signory, not to appear less gracious than the pope, granted to the new created knight the government of Pisa for one year.

There were at that time certain differences between the Roman and the Greek churches, which prevented perfect conformity in divine service; and at the last council of Bâle, the prelates of the Western church having spoken at great length upon the subject, it was resolved that efforts should be made to bring the emperor and the Greek prelates to the council at Bâle, to endeavor to reconcile the Greek church with the Roman. Though this resolution was derogatory to the majesty of the Greek empire, and offensive to its clergy, yet being then oppressed by the Turks, and fearing their inability for defense, in order to have a better ground for requesting assistance, they submitted; and therefore, the emperor, the patriarch, with other prelates and barons of Greece, to comply with the resolution of the council, assembled at Bâle, came to Venice; but being terrified by the plague then prevailing, it was resolved to terminate their differences at Florence. The Roman and Greek prelates having held a conference during several days, in which many long discussions took place, the Greeks yielded, and agreed to adopt the ritual of the church of Rome.

CHAPTER IV

New wars in Italy--Niccolo Piccinino, in concert with the duke of Milan, deceives the pope, and takes many places from the church--Niccolo attacks the Venetians--Fears and precautions of the Florentines--The Venetians request assistance of the Florentines and of Sforza--League against the duke of Milan--The Florentines resolve to send the count to assist the Venetians--Neri di Gino Capponi at Venice--His discourse to the senate--Extreme joy of the Venetians.

Peace being restored between the Lucchese and Florentines, and the duke and the count having become friends, hopes were entertained that the arms of Italy would be laid aside, although those in the kingdom of Naples, between René of Anjou and Alfonso of Aragon, could find repose only by the ruin of one party or the other. And though the pope was dissatisfied with the loss of so large a portion of his territories, and the ambition of the duke and the Venetians was obvious, still it was thought that the pontiff, from necessity, and the others from weariness, would be advocates of peace. However, a different state of feeling prevailed, for neither the duke nor the Venetians were satisfied with their condition; so that hostilities were resumed, and Lombardy and Tuscany were again harassed by the horrors of war. The proud mind of the duke could not endure that the Venetians should possess Bergamo and Brescia, and he was still further annoyed, by hearing, that they were constantly in arms, and in the daily practice of annoying some portion of his territories. He thought, however, that he should not only be able

to restrain them, but to recover the places he had lost, if the pope, the Florentines, and the count could be induced to forego the Venetian alliance. He therefore resolved to take Romagna from the pontiff, imagining that his holiness could not injure him, and that the Florentines, finding the conflagration so near, either for their own sake would refrain from interference, or if they did not, could not conveniently attack him. The duke was also aware of the resentment of the Florentines against the Venetians, on account of the affair of Lucca, and he therefore judged they would be the less eager to take arms against him on their behalf. With regard to the Count Francesco, he trusted that their new friendship, and the hope of his alliance would keep him quiet. To give as little color as possible for complaint, and to lull suspicion, particularly, because in consequence of his treaty with the count, the latter could not attack Romagna, he ordered Niccolo Piccinino, as if instigated by his own ambition to do so.

When the agreement between the duke and the count was concluded, Niccolo was in Romagna, and in pursuance of his instructions from the duke, affected to be highly incensed, that a connection had been established between him and the count, his inveterate enemy. He therefore withdrew himself and his forces to Camurata, a place between Furli and Ravenna, which he fortified, as if designing to remain there some time, or till a new enterprise should present itself. The report of his resentment being diffused, Niccolo gave the pope to understand how much the duke was under obligation to him, and how ungrateful he proved; and he was persuaded that, possessing nearly all the arms of Italy, under the

two principal generals, he could render himself sole ruler: but if his holiness pleased, of the two principal generals whom he fancied he possessed, one would become his enemy, and the other be rendered useless; for, if money were provided him, and he were kept in pay, he would attack the territories held of the church by the count, who being compelled to look to his own interests, could not subserve the ambition of Filippo. The pope giving entire credence to this representation, on account of its apparent reasonableness, sent Niccolo five thousand ducats and loaded him with promises of states for himself and his children. And though many informed him of the deception, he could not give credit to them, nor would he endure the conversation of any who seemed to doubt the integrity of Niccolo's professions. The city of Ravenna was held for the church by Ostasio da Polenta. Niccolo finding further delay would be detrimental, since his son Francesco had, to the pope's great dishonor, pillaged Spoleto, determined to attack Ravenna, either because he judged the enterprise easy, or because he had a secret understanding with Ostasio, for in a few days after the attack, the place capitulated. He then took Bologna, Imola, and Furli; and (what is worthy of remark) of twenty fortresses held in that country for the pope, not one escaped falling into his hands. Not satisfied with these injuries inflicted on the pontiff, he resolved to banter him by his words as well as ridicule him by his deeds, and wrote, that he had only done as his holiness deserved, for having unblushingly attempted to divide two such attached friends as the duke and himself, and for having dispersed over Italy letters intimating that he had quitted the duke to take part with the Venetians. Having taken possession of Romagna,

Niccolo left it under the charge of his son, Francesco, and with the greater part of his troops, went into Lombardy, where joining the remainder of the duke's forces, he attacked the country about Brescia, and having soon completely conquered it, besieged the city itself.

The duke, who desired the Venetians to be left defenseless, excused himself to the pope, the Florentines, and the count, saying, that if the doings of Niccolo were contrary to the terms of the treaty, they were equally contrary to his wishes, and by secret messengers, assured them that when an occasion presented itself, he would give them a convincing proof that they had been performed in disobedience to his instructions. Neither the count nor the Florentines believed him, but thought, with reason, that these enterprises had been carried on to keep them at bay, till he had subdued the Venetians, who, being full of pride, and thinking themselves able alone to resist the duke, had not deigned to ask for any assistance, but carried on the war under their captain, Gattamelata.

Count Francesco would have wished, with the consent of the Florentines, to go to the assistance of king René, if the events of Romagna and Lombardy had not hindered him; and the Florentines would willingly have consented, from their ancient friendship to the French dynasty, but the duke was entirely in favor of Alfonso. Each being engaged in wars near home, refrained from distant undertakings. The Florentines, finding Romagna occupied with the duke's forces, and the Venetians defeated, as if foreseeing their own ruin in that of others, entreated the count to

come to Tuscany, where they might consider what should be done to resist Filippo's power, which was now greater than it had ever before been; assuring him that if his insolence were not in some way curbed, all the powers of Italy would soon have to submit to him. The count felt the force of the fears entertained by the Florentines, but his desire to secure the duke's alliance kept him in suspense; and the duke, aware of this desire, gave him the greatest assurance that his hopes would be realized as shortly as possible, if he abstained from hostilities against him. As the lady was now of marriageable age, the duke had frequently made all suitable preparations for the celebration of the ceremony, but on one pretext or another they had always been wholly set aside. He now, to give the count greater confidence, added deeds to his words, and sent him thirty thousand florins, which, by the terms of the marriage contract, he had engaged to pay.

Still the war in Lombardy proceeded with greater vehemence than ever; the Venetians constantly suffered fresh losses of territory, and the fleets they equipped upon the rivers were taken by the duke's forces; the country around Verona and Brescia was entirely occupied, and the two cities themselves so pressed, that their speedy fall was generally anticipated. The marquis of Mantua, who for many years had led the forces of their republic, quite unexpectedly resigned his command, and went over to the duke's service. Thus the course which pride prevented them from adopting at the commencement of the war, fear compelled them to take during its progress; for knowing there was no help for them but in the friendship of the Florentines and the count, they began to make

overtures to obtain it, though with shame and apprehension; for they were afraid of receiving a reply similar to that which they had given the Florentines, when the latter applied for assistance in the enterprise against Lucca and the count's affairs. However, they found the Florentines more easily induced to render aid than they expected, or their conduct deserved; so much more were the former swayed by hatred of their ancient enemy, than by resentment of the ingratitude of their old and habitual friends. Having foreseen the necessity into which the Venetians must come, they had informed the count that their ruin must involve his own; that he was deceived if he thought the duke, while fortune, would esteem him more than if he were in adversity; that the duke was induced to promise him his daughter by the fear he entertained of him; that what necessity occasions to be promised, it also causes to be performed; and it was therefore desirable to keep the duke in that necessity, which could be done without supporting the power of the Venetians. Therefore he might perceive, that if the Venetians were compelled to abandon their inland territories, he would not only lose the advantages derivable from them, but also those to be obtained from such as feared them; and that if he considered well the powers of Italy, he would see that some were poor, and others hostile; that the Florentines alone were not, as he had often said, sufficient for his support; so that on every account it was best to keep the Venetians powerful by land. These arguments, conjoined with the hatred which the count had conceived against Filippo, by supposing himself duped with regard to the promised alliance, induced him to consent to a new treaty; but still he would not consent to cross the Po. The agreement was

concluded in February, 1438; the Venetians agreeing to pay two-thirds of the expense of the war, the Florentines one-third, and each engaging to defend the states which the count possessed in La Marca. Nor were these the only forces of the league, for the lord of Faenza, the sons of Pandolfo Malatesti da Rimino and Pietro Giampagolo Orsini also joined them. They endeavored, by very liberal offers, to gain over the marquis of Mantua, but could not prevail against the friendship and stipend of the duke; and the lord of Faenza, after having entered into compact with the league, being tempted by more advantageous terms, went over to him. This made them despair of being able to effect an early settlement of the troubles of Romagna.

The affairs of Lombardy were in this condition: Brescia was so closely besieged by the duke's forces, that constant apprehensions were entertained of her being compelled by famine to a surrender; while Verona was so pressed, that a similar fate was expected to await her, and if one of these cities were lost, all the other preparations for the war might be considered useless, and the expenses already incurred as completely wasted. For this there was no remedy, but to send the count into Lombardy; and to this measure three obstacles presented themselves. The first was, to induce him to cross the Po, and prosecute the war in whatever locality might be found most advisable; the second, that the count being at a distance, the Florentines would be left almost at the mercy of the duke, who, issuing from any of his fortresses, might with part of his troops keep the count at bay, and with the rest introduce into Tuscany the Florentine exiles, whom the existing government already

dreaded; the third was, to determine what route the count should take to arrive safely in the Paduan territory, and join the Venetian forces. Of these three difficulties, the second, which particularly regarded the Florentines, was the most serious; but, knowing the necessity of the case, and wearied out by the Venetians, who with unceasing importunity demanded the count, intimating that without him they should abandon all hope, they resolved to relieve their allies rather than listen to the suggestions of their own fears. There still remained the question about the route to be taken, for the safety of which they determined the Venetians should provide; and as they had sent Neri Capponi to treat with the count and induce him to cross the Po, they determined that the same person should also proceed to Venice, in order to make the benefit the more acceptable to the Signory, and see that all possible security were given to the passage of the forces.

Neri embarked at Cesena and went to Venice; nor was any prince ever received with so much honor as he was; for upon his arrival, and the matters which his intervention was to decide and determine, the safety of the republic seemed to depend. Being introduced to the senate, and in presence of the Doge, he said, "The Signory of Florence, most serene prince, has always perceived in the duke's greatness the source of ruin both to this republic and our own, and that the safety of both states depends upon their separate strength and mutual confidence. If such had been the opinion of this illustrious Signory, we should ourselves have been in better condition, and your republic would have been free from the dangers that now threaten it. But as at the proper crisis you

withheld from us confidence and aid, we could not come to the relief of your distress, nor could you, being conscious of this, freely ask us; for neither in your prosperity nor adversity have you clearly perceived our motives. You have not observed, that those whose deeds have once incurred our hatred, can never become entitled to our regard; nor can those who have once merited our affection ever after absolutely cancel their claim. Our attachment to your most serene Signory is well known to you all, for you have often seen Lombardy filled with our forces and our money for your assistance. Our hereditary enmity to Filippo and his house is universally known, and it is impossible that love or hatred, strengthened by the growth of years, can be eradicated from our minds by any recent act either of kindness or neglect. We have always thought, and are still of the same opinion, that we might now remain neutral, greatly to the duke's satisfaction, and with little hazard to ourselves; for if by your ruin he were to become lord of Lombardy, we should still have sufficient influence in Italy in free us from any apprehension on our own account; for every increase of power and territory augments that animosity and envy, from which arise wars and the dismemberment of states. We are also aware what heavy expenses and imminent perils we should avoid, by declining to involve ourselves in these disputes; and how easily the field of battle may be transferred from Lombardy to Tuscany, by our interference in your behalf. Yet all these apprehensions are at once overborne by our ancient affection for the senate and people of Venice, and we have resolved to come to your relief with the same zeal with which we should have armed in our own defense, had we been attacked. Therefore, the senate of Florence, judging it primarily

necessary to relieve Verona and Brescia, and thinking this impossible without the count, have sent me, in the first instance, to persuade him to pass into Lombardy, and carry on the war wherever it may be most needful; for you are aware he is under no obligation to cross the Po. To induce him to do so, I have advanced such arguments as are suggested by the circumstances themselves, and which would prevail with us. He, being invincible in arms, cannot be surpassed in courtesy, and the liberality he sees the Florentines exercise toward you, he has resolved to outdo; for he is well aware to what dangers Tuscany will be exposed after his departure, and since we have made your affairs our primary consideration, he has also resolved to make his own subservient to yours. I come, therefore, to tender his services, with seven thousand cavalry and two thousand infantry, ready at once to march against the enemy, wherever he may be. And I beg of you, so do my lords at Florence and the count, that as his forces exceed the number he has engaged to furnish you, out of your liberality, would remunerate him, that he may not repent of having come to your assistance, nor we, who have prevailed with him to do so." This discourse of Neri to the senate was listened to with that profound attention which an oracle might be imagined to command; and his audience were so moved by it, that they could not restrain themselves, till the prince had replied, as strict decorum on such occasions required, but rising from their seats, with uplifted hands, and most of them with tears in their eyes, they thanked the Florentines for their generous conduct, and the ambassador for his unusual dispatch; and promised that time should never cancel the remembrance of such goodness, either in their own hearts, or their

children's; and that their country, thenceforth, should be common to the Florentines with themselves.

CHAPTER V

Francesco Sforza marches to assist the Venetians, and relieves Verona--He attempts to relieve Brescia but fails--The Venetians routed by Piccinino upon the Lake of Garda--Piccinino routed by Sforza; the method of his escape--Piccinino surprises Verona--Description of Verona--Recovered by Sforza--The duke of Milan makes war against the Florentines--Apprehensions of the Florentines--Cardinal Vitelleschi their enemy.

When their demonstrations of gratitude had subsided, the Venetian senate, by the aid of Neri di Gino, began to consider the route the count ought to take, and how to provide him with necessaries. There were four several roads; one by Ravenna, along the beach, which on account of its being in many places interrupted by the sea and by marshes, was not approved. The next was the most direct, but rendered inconvenient by a tower called the Uccellino, which being held for the duke, it would be necessary to capture; and to do this, would occupy more time than could be spared with safety to Verona and Brescia. The third was by the brink of the lake; but as the Po had overflowed its banks, to pass in this direction was impossible. The fourth was by the way of Bologna to Ponte Puledrano, Cento, and Pieve; then between the Bondeno and the Finale to Ferrara, and thence they might by land or water enter the Paduan territory, and join the Venetian forces. This route, though attended with many difficulties, and in some parts liable to be disputed by the enemy, was chosen as the least objectionable. The count having received

his instructions, commenced his march, and by exerting the utmost celerity, reached the Paduan territory on the twentieth of June. The arrival of this distinguished commander in Lombardy filled Venice and all her dependencies with hope; for the Venetians, who only an instant before had been in fear for their very existence, began to contemplate new conquests.

The count, before he made any other attempt, hastened to the relief of Verona; and to counteract his design, Niccolo led his forces to Soave, a castle situated between the Vincentino and the Veronese, and entrenched himself by a ditch that extended from Soave to the marshes of the Adige. The count, finding his passage by the plain cut off, resolved to proceed by the mountains, and thus reach Verona, thinking Niccolo would imagine this way to be so rugged and elevated as to be impracticable, or if he thought otherwise, he would not be in time to prevent him; so, with provisions for eight days, he took the mountain path, and with his forces, arrived in the plain, below Soave. Niccolo had, even upon this route, erected some bastions for the purpose of preventing him, but they were insufficient for the purpose; and finding the enemy had, contrary to his expectations, effected a passage, to avoid a disadvantageous engagement he crossed to the opposite side of the Adige, and the count entered Verona without opposition.

Having happily succeeded in his first project, that of relieving Verona, the count now endeavored to render a similar service to Brescia. This city is situated so close to the Lake of Garda, that although besieged

by land, provisions may always be sent into it by water. On this account the duke had assembled a large force in the immediate vicinity of the lake, and at the commencement of his victories occupied all the places which by its means might relieve Brescia. The Venetians also had galleys upon the lake, but they were unequal to a contest with those of the duke. The count therefore deemed it advisable to aid the Venetian fleet with his land forces, by which means he hoped to obtain without much difficulty those places which kept Brescia in blockade. He therefore encamped before Bardolino, a fortress situated upon the lake, trusting that after it was taken the others would surrender. But fortune opposed this design, for a great part of his troops fell sick; so, giving up the enterprise, he went to Zevio, a Veronese castle, in a healthy and plentiful situation. Niccolo, upon the count's retreat, not to let slip an opportunity of making himself master of the lake, left his camp at Vegasio, and with a body of picked men took the way thither, attacked the Venetian fleet with the utmost impetuosity, and took nearly the whole of it. By this victory almost all the fortresses upon the lake fell into his hands.

The Venetians, alarmed at this loss, and fearing that in consequence of it Brescia would surrender, solicited the count, by letters and messengers, to go to its relief; and he, perceiving that all hope of rendering assistance from the lake was cut off, and that to attempt an approach by land, on account of the ditches, bastions, and other defenses erected by Niccolo, was marching to certain destruction, determined that as the passage by the mountains had enabled him to

relieve Verona, it should also contribute to the preservation of Brescia. Having taken this resolution, the count left Zevio, and by way of the Val d'Acri went to the Lake of St. Andrea, and thence to Torboli and Peneda, upon the Lake of Garda. He then proceeded to Tenna, and besieged the fortress, which it was necessary to occupy before he could reach Brescia.

Niccolo, on being acquainted with the count's design, led his army to Peschiera. He then, with the marquis of Mantua and a chosen body of men, went to meet him, and coming to an engagement, was routed, his people dispersed, and many of them taken, while others fled to the fleet, and some to the main body of his army. It was now nightfall, and Niccolo had escaped to Tenna, but he knew that if he were to remain there till morning, he must inevitably fall into the enemy's hands; therefore, to avoid a catastrophe which might be regarded as almost fatal, he resolved to make a dangerous experiment. Of all his attendants he had only with him a single servant, a Dutchman, of great personal strength, and who had always been devotedly attached to him. Niccolo induced this man to take him upon his shoulders in a sack, as if he had been carrying property of his master's, and to bear him to a place of security. The enemy's lines surrounded Tenna, but on account of the previous day's victory, all was in disorder, and no guard was kept, so that the Dutchman, disguised as a trooper, passed through them without any opposition, and brought his master in safety to his own troops.

Had this victory been as carefully improved as it was fortunately

obtained, Brescia would have derived from it greater relief and the Venetians more permanent advantage; but they, having thoughtlessly let it slip, the rejoicings were soon over, and Brescia remained in her former difficulties. Niccolo, having returned to his forces, resolved by some extraordinary exertion to cancel the impression of his death, and deprive the Venetians of the change of relieving Brescia. He was acquainted with the topography of the citadel of Verona, and had learned from prisoners whom he had taken, that it was badly guarded, and might be very easily recovered. He perceived at once that fortune presented him with an opportunity of regaining the laurels he had lately lost, and of changing the joy of the enemy for their recent victory into sorrow for a succeeding disaster. The city of Verona is situated in Lombardy, at the foot of the mountains which divide Italy from Germany, so that it occupies part both of hill and plain. The river Adige rises in the valley of Trento, and entering Italy, does not immediately traverse the country, but winding to the left, along the base of the hills, enters Verona, and crosses the city, which it divides unequally, giving much the larger portion to the plain. On the mountain side of the river are two fortresses, formidable rather from their situation than from their actual strength, for being very elevated they command the whole place. One is called San Piero, the other San Felice. On the opposite side of the Adige, upon the plain, with their backs against the city walls, are two other fortresses, about a mile distant from each other, one called the Old the other the New Citadel, and a wall extends between them that may be compared to a bowstring, of which the city wall is the arc. The space comprehended within this segment is very populous, and is called

the Borgo of St. Zeno. Niccolo Piccinino designed to capture these fortresses and the Borgo, and he hoped to succeed without much difficulty, as well on account of the ordinary negligence of the guard, which their recent successes would probably increase, as because in war no enterprise is more likely to be successful than one which by the enemy is deemed impossible. With a body of picked men, and accompanied by the marquis of Mantua, he proceeded by night to Verona, silently scaled the walls, and took the New Citadel: then entering the place with his troops, he forced the gate of S. Antonio, and introduced the whole of his cavalry. The Venetian garrison of the Old Citadel hearing an uproar, when the guards of the New were slaughtered, and again when the gate was forced, being now aware of the presence of enemies, raised an alarm, and called the people to arms. The citizens awaking in the utmost confusion, some of the boldest armed and hastened to the rector's piazza. In the meantime, Niccolo's forces had pillaged the Borgo of San Zeno; and proceeding onward were ascertained by the people to be the duke's forces, but being defenseless they advised the Venetian rectors to take refuge in the fortresses, and thus save themselves and the place; as it was more advisable to preserve their lives and so rich a city for better fortune, than by endeavoring to repel the present evil, encounter certain death, and incur universal pillage. Upon this the rectors and all the Venetian party, fled to the fortress of San Felice. Some of the first citizens, anxious to avoid being plundered by the troops, presented themselves before Niccolo and the marquis of Mantua, and begged they would rather take possession of a rich city, with honor to themselves, than of a poor one to their own disgrace; particularly as

they had not induced either the favor of its former possessors, or the animosity of its present masters, by self-defense. The marquis and Niccolo encouraged them, and protected their property to the utmost of their power during such a state of military license. As they felt sure the count would endeavor to recover the city, they made every possible exertion to gain possession of the fortresses, and those they could not seize they cut off from the rest of the place by ditches and barricades, so that the enemy might be shut out.

The Count Francesco was with his army at Tenna; and when the report was first brought to him he refused to credit it; but being assured of the fact by parties whom it would have been ridiculous to doubt, he resolved, by the exertion of uncommon celerity, to repair the evil negligence had occasioned; and though all his officers advised the abandonment of Verona and Brescia, and a march to Vicenza, lest he might be besieged by the enemy in his present situation, he refused, but resolved to attempt the recovery of Verona. During the consultation, he turned to the Venetian commissaries and to Bernardo de' Medici, who was there as commissary for the Florentines, and promised them the recovery of the place if one of the fortresses should hold out. Having collected his forces, he proceeded with the utmost speed to Verona. Observing his approach, Niccolo thought he designed, according to the advice he had received, to go to Vicenza, but finding him continue to draw near, and taking the direction of San Felice, he prepared for its defense--though too late; for the barricades were not completed; his men were dispersed in quest of plunder, or extorting money from the inhabitants by way of

ransom; and he could not collect them in time to prevent the count's troops from entering the fortress. They then descended into the city, which they happily recovered, to Niccolo's disgrace, and with the loss of great numbers of his men. He himself, with the marquis of Mantua, first took refuge in the citadel, and thence escaping into the country, fled to Mantua, where, having assembled the relics of their army, they hastened to join those who were at the siege of Brescia. Thus in four days Verona was lost and again recovered from the duke. The count, after this victory, it being now winter and the weather very severe, having first with considerable difficulty thrown provisions into Brescia, went into quarters at Verona, and ordered, that during the cold season, galleys should be provided at Torboli, that upon the return of spring, they might be in a condition to proceed vigorously to effect the permanent relief of Brescia.

The duke, finding the war suspended for a time, the hope he had entertained of occupying Brescia and Verona annihilated, and the money and counsels of the Florentines the cause of this, and seeing that neither the injuries they had received from the Venetians could alienate them, nor all the promises he had made attach them to himself, he determined, in order to make them feel more closely the effects of the course they had adopted, to attack Tuscany; to which he was strenuously advised by the Florentine exiles and Niccolo. The latter advocated this from his desire to recover the states of Braccio, and expel the count from La Marca; the former, from their wish to return home, and each by suitable arguments endeavored to induce the duke to follow the plan

congenial to their own views. Niccolo argued that he might be sent into Tuscany, and continue the siege of Brescia; for he was master of the lake, the fortresses were well provided, and their officers were qualified to oppose the count should he undertake any fresh enterprise; which it was not likely he would do without first relieving Brescia, a thing impossible; and thus the duke might carry on the war in Tuscany, without giving up his attempts in Lombardy; intimating that the Florentines would be compelled, as soon as he entered Tuscany, to recall the count to avoid complete ruin; and whatever course they took, victory to the duke must be the result. The exiles affirmed, that if Niccolo with his army were to approach Florence, the people oppressed with taxes, and wearied out by the insolence of the great, would most assuredly not oppose him, and pointed out the facility of reaching Florence; for the way by the Casentino would be open to them, through the friendship of Rinaldo and the Count di Poppi; and thus the duke, who was previously inclined to the attempt, was induced by their joint persuasions to make it. The Venetians, on the other hand, though the winter was severe, incessantly urged the count to relieve Brescia with all his forces. The count questioned the possibility of so doing, and advised them to wait the return of spring, in the meantime strengthening their fleet as much as possible, and then assist it both by land and water. This rendered the Venetians dissatisfied; they were dilatory in furnishing provisions, and consequently many deserted from their army.

The Florentines, being informed of these transactions, became alarmed, perceiving the war threatening themselves, and the little progress made

in Lombardy. Nor did the suspicion entertained by them of the troops of the church give them less uneasiness; not that the pope was their enemy, but because they saw those forces more under the sway of the patriarch, who was their greatest foe. Giovanni Vitelleschi of Corneto was at first apostolic notary, then bishop of Recanati, and afterward patriarch of Alexandria; but at last, becoming a cardinal, he was called Cardinal of Florence. He was bold and cunning; and, having obtained great influence, was appointed to command all the forces of the church, and conduct all the enterprises of the pontiff, whether in Tuscany, Romagna, the kingdom of Naples, or in Rome. Hence he acquired so much power over the pontiff, and the papal troops, that the former was afraid of commanding him, and the latter obeyed no one else. The cardinal's presence at Rome, when the report came of Niccolo's design to march into Tuscany, redoubled the fear of the Florentines; for, since Rinaldo was expelled, he had become an enemy of the republic, from finding that the arrangements made by his means were not only disregarded, but converted to Rinaldo's prejudice, and caused the laying down of arms, which had given his enemies an opportunity of banishing him. In consequence of this, the government thought it would be advisable to restore and indemnify Rinaldo, in case Niccolo came into Tuscany and were joined by him. Their apprehensions were increased by their being unable to account for Niccolo's departure from Lombardy, and his leaving one enterprise almost completed, to undertake another so entirely doubtful; which they could not reconcile with their ideas of consistency, except by supposing some new design had been adopted, or some hidden treachery intended. They communicated their fears to the pope, who was now sensible of his error in having endowed

the cardinal with too much authority.

CHAPTER VI

The pope imprisons the cardinal and assists the Florentines--Difference of opinion between the count and the Venetians respecting the management of the war. The Florentines reconcile them--The count wishes to go into Tuscany to oppose Piccinino, but is prevented by the Venetians--Niccolo Piccinino in Tuscany--He takes Marradi, and plunders the neighborhood of Florence--Description of Marradi--Cowardice of Bartolomeo Orlandini--Brave resistance of Castel San Niccolo--San Niccolo surrenders--Piccinino attempts to take Cortona, but fails.

While the Florentines were thus anxious, fortune disclosed the means of securing themselves against the patriarch's malevolence. The republic everywhere exercised the very closest espionage over epistolary communication, in order to discover if any persons were plotting against the state. It happened that letters were intercepted at Monte Pulciano, which had been written by the patriarch to Niccolo without the pope's knowledge; and although they were written in an unusual character, and the sense so involved that no distinct idea could be extracted, the obscurity itself, and the whole aspect of the matter so alarmed the pontiff, that he resolved to seize the person of the cardinal, a duty he committed to Antonio Rido, of Padua, who had the command of the castle of St. Angelo, and who, after receiving his instructions, soon found an opportunity of carrying them into effect. The patriarch, having determined to go into Tuscany, prepared to leave Rome on the following day, and ordered the castellan to be upon the drawbridge of the fortress

in the morning, for he wished to speak with him as he passed. Antonio perceived this to be the favorable moment, informed his people what they were to do, and awaited the arrival of the patriarch upon the bridge, which adjoined the building, and might for the purpose of security be raised or lowered as occasion required. The appointed time found him punctual; and Antonio, having drawn him, as if for the convenience of conversation, on to the bridge, gave a signal to his men, who immediately raised it, and in a moment the cardinal, from being a commander of armies, found himself a prisoner of the castellan. The patriarch's followers at first began to use threats, but being informed of the pope's directions they were appeased. The castellan comforting him with kind words, he replied, that "the great do not make each other prisoners to let them go again; and that those whom it is proper to take, it is not well to set free." He shortly afterward died in prison. The pope appointed Lodovico, patriarch of Aquileia, to command his troops; and, though previously unwilling to interfere in the wars of the league and the duke, he was now content to take part in them, and engaged to furnish four thousand horse and two thousand foot for the defense of Tuscany.

The Florentines, freed from this cause for anxiety, were still apprehensive of Niccolo, and feared confusion in the affairs of Lombardy, from the differences of opinion that existed between the count and the Venetians. In order the better to become acquainted with the intentions of the parties, they sent Neri di Gini Capponi and Giuliano Davanzati to Venice, with instructions to assist in the arrangement of

the approaching campaign; and ordered that Neri, having discovered how the Venetians were disposed, should proceed to the count, learn his designs, and induce him to adopt the course that would be most advantageous to the League. The ambassadors had only reached Ferrara, when they were told that Niccolo Piccinino had crossed the Po with six thousand horse. This made them travel with increased speed; and, having arrived at Venice, they found the Signory fully resolved that Brescia should be relieved without waiting for the return of spring; for they said that "the city would be unable to hold out so long, the fleet could not be in readiness, and that seeing no more immediate relief, she would submit to the enemy; which would render the duke universally victorious, and cause them to lose the whole of their inland possessions." Neri then proceeded to Verona to ascertain the count's opinion, who argued, for many reasons, that to march to Brescia before the return of spring would be quite useless, or even worse; for the situation of Brescia, being considered in conjunction with the season, nothing could be expected to result but disorder and fruitless toil to the troops; so that, when the suitable period should arrive, he would be compelled to return to Verona with his army, to recover from the injuries sustained in the winter, and provide necessaries for the summer; and thus the time available for the war would be wasted in marching and countermarching. Orsatto Justiniani and Giovanni Pisani were deputed on the part of Venice to the count at Verona, having been sent to consider these affairs, and with them it was agreed that the Venetians should pay the count ninety thousand ducats for the coming year, and to each of the soldiers forty ducats; that he should set out immediately with the whole army and attack the duke, in

order to compel him, for his own preservation, to recall Niccolo into Lombardy. After this agreement the ambassadors returned to Venice; and the Venetians, having so large an amount of money to raise, were very remiss with their commissariat.

In the meantime, Niccolo Piccinino pursued his route, and arrived in Romagna, where he prevailed upon the sons of Pandolfo Malatesti to desert the Venetians and enter the duke's service. This circumstance occasioned much uneasiness in Venice, and still more at Florence; for they thought that with the aid of the Malatesti they might resist Niccolo; but finding them gone over to the enemy, they were in fear lest their captain, Piero Giampagolo Orsini, who was in the territories of the Malatesti, should be disarmed and rendered powerless. The count also felt alarmed, for, through Niccolo's presence in Tuscany, he was afraid of losing La Marca; and, urged by a desire to look after his own affairs, he hastened to Venice, and being introduced to the Doge, informed him that the interests of the League required his presence in Tuscany; for the war ought to be carried on where the leader and forces of the enemy were, and not where his garrisons and towns were situated; for when the army is vanquished the war is finished; but to take towns and leave the armament entire, usually allowed the war to break out again with greater virulence; that Tuscany and La Marca would be lost if Niccolo were not vigorously resisted, and that, if lost, there would be no possibility of the preservation of Lombardy. But supposing the danger to Lombardy not so imminent, he did not intend to abandon his own subjects and friends, and that having come into Lombardy as a prince, he

did not intend to return a mere condottiere. To this the Doge replied, it was quite manifest that, if he left Lombardy, or even recrossed the Po, all their inland territories would be lost; in that case they were unwilling to spend any more money in their defense. For it would be folly to attempt defending a place which must, after all, inevitably be lost; and that it is less disgraceful and less injurious to lose dominions only, then to lose both territory and money. That if the loss of their inland possessions should actually result, it would then be seen how highly important to the preservation of Romagna and Tuscany the reputation of the Venetians had been. On these accounts they were of quite a different opinion from the count; for they saw that whoever was victor in Lombardy would be so everywhere else, that conquest would be easily attainable now, when the territories of the duke were left almost defenseless by the departure of Niccolo, and that he would be ruined before he could order Niccolo's recall, or provide himself with any other remedy; that whoever attentively considered these things would see, that the duke had sent Niccolo into Tuscany for no other reason than to withdraw the count from his enterprise, and cause the war, which was now at his own door, to be removed to a greater distance. That if the count were to follow Niccolo, unless at the instigation of some very pressing necessity, he would find his plan successful, and rejoice in the adoption of it; but if he were to remain in Lombardy, and allow Tuscany to shift for herself, the duke would, when too late, see the imprudence of his conduct, and find that he had lost his territories in Lombardy and gained nothing in Tuscany. Each party having spoken, it was determined to wait a few days to see what would result from the

agreement of the Malatesti with Niccolo; whether the Florentines could avail themselves of Piero Giampagolo, and whether the pope intended to join the League with all the earnestness he had promised. Not many days after these resolutions were adopted, it was ascertained that the Malatesti had made the agreement more from fear than any ill-will toward the League; that Piero Giampagolo had proceeded with his force toward Tuscany, and that the pope was more disposed than ever to assist them. This favorable intelligence dissipated the count's fears, and he consented to remain in Lombardy, and that Neri Capponi should return to Florence with a thousand of his own horse, and five hundred from the other parties. It was further agreed, that if the affairs of Tuscany should require the count's presence, Neri should write to him, and he would proceed thither to the exclusion of every other consideration. Neri arrived at Florence with his forces in April, and Giampagolo joined them the same day.

In the meantime, Niccolo Piccinino, the affairs of Romagna being settled, purposed making a descent into Tuscany, and designing to go by the mountain passes of San Benedetto and the valley of Montone, found them so well guarded by the contrivance of Niccolo da Pisa, that his utmost exertions would be useless in that direction. As the Florentines, upon this sudden attack, were unprovided with troops and officers, they had sent into the defiles of these hills many of their citizens, with infantry raised upon the emergency to guard them, among whom was Bartolomeo Orlandini, a cavaliere, to whom was intrusted the defense of the castle of Marradi and the adjacent passes. Niccolo Piccinino,

finding the route by San Benedetto impracticable, on account of the bravery of its commander, thought the cowardice of the officer who defended that of Marradi would render the passage easy. Marradi is a castle situated at the foot of the mountains which separate Tuscany from Romagna; and, though destitute of walls, the river, the mountains, and the inhabitants, make it a place of great strength; for the peasantry are warlike and faithful, and the rapid current undermining the banks has left them of such tremendous height that it is impossible to approach it from the valley if a small bridge over the stream be defended; while on the mountain side the precipices are so steep and perpendicular as to render it almost impregnable. In spite of these advantages, the pusillanimity of Bartolomeo Orlandini rendered the men cowardly and the fortress untenable; for as soon as he heard of the enemy's approach he abandoned the place, fled with all his forces, and did not stop till he reached the town of San Lorenzo. Niccolo, entering the deserted fortress, wondered it had not been defended, and, rejoicing over his acquisition, descended into the valley of the Mugello, where he took some castles, and halted with his army at Pulicciano. Thence he overran the country as far as the mountains of Fiesole; and his audacity so increased that he crossed the Arno, plundering and destroying everything to within three miles of Florence.

The Florentines, however, were not dismayed. Their first concern was to give security to the government, for which they had no cause for apprehension, so universal was the good will of the people toward Cosmo; and besides this, they had restricted the principal offices to a few

citizens of the highest class, who with their vigilance would have kept the populace in order, even if they had been discontented or desirous of change. They also knew by the compact made in Lombardy what forces Neri would bring with him, and expected the troops of the pope. These prospects sustained their courage till the arrival of Neri di Gino, who, on account of the disorders and fears of the city, determined to set out immediately and check Niccolo. With the cavalry he possessed, and a body of infantry raised entirely from the people, he recovered Remole from the hands of the enemy, where having encamped, he put a stop to all further depredations, and gave the inhabitants hopes of repelling the enemy from the neighborhood. Niccolo finding that, although the Florentines were without troops, no disturbance had arisen, and learning what entire composure prevailed in the city, thought he was wasting time, and resolved to undertake some other enterprise to induce them to send forces after him, and give him a chance of coming to an engagement, by means of which, if victorious, he trusted everything would succeed to his wishes.

Francesco, Count di Poppi, was in the army of Niccolo, having deserted the Florentines, with whom he was in league, when the enemy entered the Mugello; and though with the intention of securing him as soon as they had an idea of his design, they increased his appointments, and made him commissary over all the places in his vicinity; still, so powerful is the attachment to party, that no benefit or fear could eradicate the affection he bore toward Rinaldo and the late government; so that as soon as he knew Niccolo was at hand he joined him, and with the utmost

solicitude entreated him to leave the city and pass into the Casentino, pointing out to him the strength of the country, and how easily he might thence harass his enemies. Niccolo followed his advice, and arriving in the Casentino, took Romena and Bibbiena, and then pitched his camp before Castel San Niccolo. This fortress is situated at the foot of the mountains which divide the Casentino from the Val d'Arno; and being in an elevated situation, and well garrisoned, it was difficult to take, though Niccolo, with catapults and other engines, assailed it without intermission. The siege had continued more than twenty days, during which the Florentines had collected all their forces, having assembled under several leaders, three thousand horse, at Fegghine, commanded by Piero Giampagolo Orsini, their captain, and Neri Capponi and Bernardo de' Medici, commissaries. Four messengers, from Castel San Niccolo, were sent to them to entreat succor. The commissaries having examined the site, found it could not be relieved, except from the Alpine regions, in the direction of the Val d'Arno, the summit of which was more easily attainable by the enemy than by themselves, on account of their greater proximity, and because the Florentines could not approach without observation; so that it would be making a desperate attempt, and might occasion the destruction of the forces. The commissaries, therefore, commended their fidelity, and ordered that when they could hold out no longer, they should surrender. Niccolo took the fortress after a siege of thirty-two days; and the loss of so much time, for the attainment of so small an advantage, was the principle cause of the failure of his expedition; for had he remained with his forces near Florence, he would have almost deprived the government of all power to compel the citizens

to furnish money: nor would they so easily have assembled forces and taken other precautions, if the enemy had been close upon them, as they did while he was at a distance. Besides this, many would have been disposed to quiet their apprehensions of Niccolo, by concluding a peace; particularly, as the contest was likely to be of some duration. The desire of the Count di Poppi to avenge himself on the inhabitants of San Niccolo, long his enemies, occasioned his advice to Piccinino, who adopted it for the purpose of pleasing him; and this caused the ruin of both. It seldom happens, that the gratification of private feelings, fails to be injurious to the general convenience.

Niccolo, pursuing his good fortune, took Rassina and Chiusi. The Count di Poppi advised him to halt in these parts, arguing that he might divide his people between Chiusi, Caprese, and the Pieve, render himself master of this branch of the Apennines, and descend at pleasure into the Casentino, the Val d'Arno, the Val di Chiane, or the Val di Tavere, as well as be prepared for every movement of the enemy. But Niccolo, considering the sterility of these places, told him, "his horses could not eat stones," and went to the Borgo San Sepolcro, where he was amicably received, but found that the people of Citta di Castello, who were friendly to the Florentines, could not be induced to yield to his overtures. Wishing to have Perugia at his disposal, he proceeded thither with forty horse, and being one of her citizens, met with a kind reception. But in a few days he became suspected, and having attempted unsuccessfully to tamper with the legate and people of Perugia, he took eight thousand ducats from them, and returned to his army. He then set

on foot secret measures, to seduce Cortona from the Florentines, but the affair being discovered, his attempts were fruitless. Among the principal citizens was Bartolomeo di Senso, who being appointed to the evening watch of one of the gates, a countryman, his friend, told him, that if he went he would be slain. Bartolomeo, requesting to know what was meant, he became acquainted with the whole affair, and revealed it to the governor of the place, who, having secured the leaders of the conspiracy, and doubled the guards at the gates, waited till the time appointed for the coming of Niccolo, who finding his purpose discovered, returned to his encampment.

CHAPTER VII

Brescia relieved by Sforza--His other victories--Piccinino is recalled into Lombardy--He endeavors to bring the Florentines to an engagement--He is routed before Anghiari--Serious disorders in the camp of the Florentines after the victory--Death of Rinaldo degli Albizzi--His character--Neri Capponi goes to recover the Casentino--The Count di Poppi surrenders--His discourse upon quitting his possessions.

While these events were taking place in Tuscany, so little to the advantage of the duke, his affairs in Lombardy were in a still worse condition. The Count Francesco, as soon as the season would permit, took the field with his army, and the Venetians having again covered the lake with their galleys, he determined first of all to drive the duke from the water; judging, that this once effected, his remaining task would be easy. He therefore, with the Venetian fleet, attacked that of the duke, and destroyed it. His land forces took the castles held for Filippo, and the ducal troops who were besieging Brescia, being informed of these transactions, withdrew; and thus, the city, after standing a three years' siege, was at length relieved. The count then went in quest of the enemy, whose forces were encamped before Soncino, a fortress situated upon the River Oglio; these he dislodged and compelled to retreat to Cremona, where the duke again collected his forces, and prepared for his defense. But the count constantly pressing him more closely, he became apprehensive of losing either the whole, or the greater part, of his territories; and perceiving the unfortunate step

he had taken, in sending Niccolo into Tuscany, in order to correct his error, he wrote to acquaint him with what had transpired, desiring him, with all possible dispatch, to leave Tuscany and return to Lombardy.

In the meantime, the Florentines, under their commissaries, had drawn together their forces, and being joined by those of the pope, halted at Anghiari, a castle placed at the foot of the mountains that divide the Val di Tavere from the Val di Chiane, distant four miles from the Borgo San Sepolcro, on a level road, and in a country suitable for the evolutions of cavalry or a battlefield. As the Signory had heard of the count's victory and the recall of Niccolo, they imagined that without again drawing a sword or disturbing the dust under their horses' feet, the victory was their own, and the war at an end, they wrote to the commissaries, desiring them to avoid an engagement, as Niccolo could not remain much longer in Tuscany. These instructions coming to the knowledge of Piccinino, and perceiving the necessity of his speedy return, to leave nothing unattempted, he determined to engage the enemy, expecting to find them unprepared, and not disposed for battle. In this determination he was confirmed by Rinaldo, the Count di Poppi, and other Florentine exiles, who saw their inevitable ruin in the departure of Niccolo, and hoped, that if he engaged the enemy, they would either be victorious, or vanquished without dishonor. This resolution being adopted, Niccolo led his army, unperceived by the enemy, from Citta di Castello to the Borgo, where he enlisted two thousand men, who, trusting the general's talents and promises, followed him in hope of plunder. Niccolo then led his forces in battle array toward Anghiari, and

had arrived within two miles of the place, when Micheletto Attendulo observed great clouds of dust, and conjecturing at once, that it must be occasioned by the enemy's approach, immediately called the troops to arms. Great confusion prevailed in the Florentine camp, for the ordinary negligence and want of discipline were now increased by their presuming the enemy to be at a distance, and they were more disposed to fight than to battle; so that everyone was unarmed, and some wandering from the camp, either led by their desire to avoid the excessive heat, or in pursuit of amusement. So great was the diligence of the commissaries and of the captain, that before the enemy's arrival, the men were mounted and prepared to resist their attack; and as Micheletto was the first to observe their approach, he was also first armed and ready to meet them, and with his troops hastened to the bridge which crosses the river at a short distance from Anghiari. Pietro Giampagolo having previous to the surprise, filled up the ditches on either side of the road, and leveled the ground between the bridge and Anghiari, and Micheletto having taken his position in front of the former, the legate and Simoncino, who led the troops of the church, took post on the right, and the commissaries of the Florentines, with Pietro Giampagolo, their captain, on the left; the infantry being drawn up along the banks of the river. Thus, the only course the enemy could take, was the direct one over the bridge; nor had the Florentines any other field for their exertions, excepting that their infantry were ordered, in case their cavalry were attacked in flank by the hostile infantry, to assail them with their cross bows, and prevent them from wounding the flanks of the horses crossing the bridge. Micheletto bravely withstood the enemy's charge upon the bridge; but

Astorre and Francesco Piccinino coming up, with a picked body of men, attacked him so vigorously, that he was compelled to give way, and was pushed as far as the foot of the hill which rises toward the Borgo d'Anghiari; but they were in turn repulsed and driven over the bridge, by the troops that took them in flank. The battle continued two hours, during which each side had frequent possession of the bridge, and their attempts upon it were attended with equal success; but on both sides of the river, the disadvantage of Niccolo was manifest; for when his people crossed the bridge, they found the enemy unbroken, and the ground being leveled, they could manoeuvre without difficulty, and the weary be relieved by such as were fresh. But when the Florentines crossed, Niccolo could not relieve those that were harassed, on account of the hindrance interposed by the ditches and embankments on each side of the road; thus whenever his troops got possession of the bridge, they were soon repulsed by the fresh forces of the Florentines; but when the bridge was taken by the Florentines, and they passed over and proceeded upon the road, Niccolo having no opportunity to reinforce his troops, being prevented by the impetuosity of the enemy and the inconvenience of the ground, the rear guard became mingled with the van, and occasioned the utmost confusion and disorder; they were forced to flee, and hastened at full speed toward the Borgo. The Florentine troops fell upon the plunder, which was very valuable in horses, prisoners, and military stores, for not more than a thousand of the enemy's cavalry reached the town. The people of the Borgo, who had followed Niccolo in the hope of plunder, became booty themselves, all of them being taken, and obliged to pay a ransom. The colors and carriages were also captured. This

victory was much more advantageous to the Florentines than injurious to the duke; for, had they been conquered, Tuscany would have been his own; but he, by his defeat, only lost the horses and accoutrements of his army, which could be replaced without any very serious expense. Nor was there ever an instance of wars being carried on in an enemy's country with less injury to the assailants than at this; for in so great a defeat, and in a battle which continued four hours, only one man died, and he, not from wounds inflicted by hostile weapons, or any honorable means, but, having fallen from his horse, was trampled to death. Combatants then engaged with little danger; being nearly all mounted, covered with armor, and preserved from death whenever they chose to surrender, there was no necessity for risking their lives; while fighting, their armor defended them, and when they could resist no longer, they yielded and were safe.

This battle, from the circumstances which attended and followed it, presents a striking example of the wretched state of military discipline in those times. The enemy's forces being defeated and driven into the Borgo, the commissaries desired to pursue them, in order to make the victory complete, but not a single condottiere or soldier would obey, alleging, as a sufficient reason for their refusal, that they must take care of the booty and attend to their wounded; and, what is still more surprising, the next day, without permission from the commissaries, or the least regard for their commanders, they went to Arezzo, and, having secured their plunder, returned to Anghiari; a thing so contrary to military order and all subordination, that the merest shadow of a

regular army would easily and most justly have wrested from them the victory they had so undeservedly obtained. Added to this, the men-at-arms, or heavy-armed horse, who had been taken prisoners, whom the commissaries wished to be detained that they might not rejoin the enemy, were set at liberty, contrary to their orders. It is astonishing, that an army so constructed should have sufficient energy to obtain the victory, or that any should be found so imbecile as to allow such a disorderly rabble to vanquish them. The time occupied by the Florentine forces in going and returning from Arezzo, gave Niccolo opportunity of escaping from the Borgo, and proceeding toward Romagna. Along with him also fled the Florentine exiles, who, finding no hope of their return home, took up their abodes in various parts of Italy, each according to his own convenience. Rinaldo made choice of Ancona; and, to gain admission to the celestial country, having lost the terrestrial, he performed a pilgrimage to the holy sepulcher; whence having returned, he died suddenly while at table at the celebration of the marriage of one of his daughters; an instance of fortune's favor, in removing him from the troubles of this world upon the least sorrowful day of his exile. Rinaldo d'Albizzi appeared respectable under every change of condition; and would have been more so had he lived in a united city, for many qualities were injurious to him in a factious community, which in an harmonious one would have done him honor.

When the forces returned from Arezzo, Niccolo being then gone, the commissaries presented themselves at the Borgo, the people of which were willing to submit to the Florentines; but their offer was declined,

and while negotiations were pending, the pope's legate imagined the commissaries designed to take it from the church. Hard words were exchanged and hostilities might have ensued between the Florentine and ecclesiastical forces, if the misunderstanding had continued much longer; but as it was brought to the conclusion desired by the legate, peace was restored.

While the affair of the Borgo San Sepolcro was in progress, Niccolo Piccinino was supposed to have marched toward Rome; other accounts said La Marca, and hence the legate and the count's forces moved toward Perugia to relieve La Marca or Rome, as the case might be, and Bernardo de Medici accompanied them. Neri led the Florentine forces to recover the Casentino, and pitched his camp before Rassina, which he took, together with Bibbiena, Prato Vecchio, and Romena. From thence he proceeded to Poppi and invested it on two sides with his forces, in one direction toward the plain of Certomondo, in the other upon the hill extending to Fronzole. The count finding himself abandoned to his fate, had shut himself up in Poppi, not with any hope of assistance, but with a view to make the best terms he could. Neri pressing him, he offered to capitulate, and obtained reasonable conditions, namely, security for himself and family, with leave to take whatever he could carry away, on condition of ceding his territories and government to the Florentines. When he perceived the full extent of his misfortune, standing upon the bridge which crosses the Arno, close to Poppi, he turned to Neri in great distress, and said, "Had I well considered my own position and the power of the Florentines, I should now have been a friend of the

republic and congratulating you on your victory, not an enemy compelled to supplicate some alleviation of my woe. The recent events which to you bring glory and joy, to me are full of wretchedness and sorrow. Once I possessed horses, arms, subjects, grandeur and wealth: can it be surprising that I part with them reluctantly? But as you possess both the power and the inclination to command the whole of Tuscany, we must of necessity obey you; and had I not committed this error, my misfortune would not have occurred, and your liberality could not have been exercised; so, that if you were to rescue me from entire ruin, you would give the world a lasting proof of your clemency. Therefore, let your pity pass by my fault, and allow me to retain this single house to leave to the descendants of those from whom your fathers have received innumerable benefits." To this Neri replied: "That his having expected great results from men who were capable of doing only very little, had led him to commit so great a fault against the republic of Florence; that, every circumstance considered, he must surrender all those places to the Florentines, as an enemy, which he was unwilling to hold as a friend: that he had set such an example, as it would be most highly impolitic to encourage; for, upon a change of fortune, it might injure the republic, and it was not himself they feared, but his power while lord of the Casentino. If, however, he could live as a prince in Germany, the citizens would be very much gratified; and out of love to those ancestors of whom he had spoken, they would be glad to assist him." To this, the count, in great anger, replied: "He wished the Florentines at a much greater distance." Attempting no longer to preserve the least urbanity of demeanor, he ceded the place and all

its dependencies to the Florentines, and with his treasure, wife, and children, took his departure, mourning the loss of a territory which his forefathers had held during four hundred years. When all these victories were known at Florence, the government and people were transported with joy. Benedetto de' Medici, finding the report of Niccolo having proceeded either to Rome or to La Marca, incorrect, returned with his forces to Neri, and they proceeded together to Florence, where the highest honors were decreed to them which it was customary with the city to bestow upon her victorious citizens, and they were received by the Signory, the Capitani di Parte, and the whole city, in triumphal pomp.