

BOOK VII

CHAPTER I

Connection of the other Italian governments with the history of Florence--Republics always disunited--Some differences are injurious; others not so--The kind of dissensions prevailing at Florence--Cosmo de' Medici and Neri Capponi become powerful by dissimilar means--Reform in the election of magistrates favorable to Cosmo--Complaints of the principal citizens against the reform in elections--Luca Pitti, Gonfalonier of Justice, restrains the imbursements by force--Tyranny and pride of Luca Pitti and his party--Palace of the Pitti--Death of Cosmo de' Medici--His liberality and magnificence--His modesty--His prudence--Sayings of Cosmo.

It will perhaps appear to the readers of the preceding book that, professing only to write of the affairs of Florence, I have dilated too much in speaking of those which occurred in Lombardy and Naples. But as I have not already avoided, so it is not my intention in future to forbear, similar digressions. For although we have not engaged to give an account of the affairs of Italy, still it would be improper to neglect noticing the most remarkable of them. If they were wholly omitted, our history would not be so well understood, neither would it be so instructive or agreeable; since from the proceedings of the other

princes and states of Italy, have most commonly arisen those wars in which the Florentines were compelled to take part. Thus, from the war between John of Anjou and King Ferrando, originated those serious enmities and hatreds which ensued between Ferrando and the Florentines, particularly the house of Medici. The king complained of a want of assistance during the war, and of the aid afforded to his enemy; and from his anger originated the greatest evils, as will be hereafter seen. Having, in speaking of external affairs, come down to the year 1463, it will be necessary in order to make our narrative of the contemporaneous domestic transactions clearly understood, to revert to a period several years back. But first, according to custom, I would offer a few remarks referring to the events about to be narrated, and observe, that those who think a republic may be kept in perfect unity of purpose are greatly deceived. True it is, that some divisions injure republics, while others are beneficial to them. When accompanied by factions and parties they are injurious; but when maintained without them they contribute to their prosperity. The legislator of a republic, since it is impossible to prevent the existence of dissensions, must at least take care to prevent the growth of faction. It may therefore be observed, that citizens acquire reputation and power in two ways; the one public, the other private. Influence is acquired publicly by winning a battle, taking possession of a territory, fulfilling the duties of an embassy with care and prudence, or by giving wise counsel attended by a happy result. Private methods are conferring benefits upon individuals, defending them against the magistrates, supporting them with money, and raising them to undeserved honors; or with public games and entertainments gaining the

affection of the populace. This mode of procedure produces parties and cliques; and in proportion as influence thus acquired is injurious, so is the former beneficial, if quite free from party spirit; because it is founded upon the public good, and not upon private advantage. And though it is impossible to prevent the existence of inveterate feuds, still if they be without partisans to support them for their own individual benefit, they do not injure a republic, but contribute to its welfare; since none can attain distinction, but as he contributes to her good, and each party prevents the other from infringing her liberties. The dissensions of Florence were always accompanied by factions, and were therefore always pernicious; and the dominant party only remained united so long as its enemies held it in check. As soon as the strength of the opposition was annihilated, the government, deprived of the restraining influence of its adversaries, and being subject to no law, fell to pieces. The party of Cosmo de' Medici gained the ascendant in 1434; but the depressed party being very numerous, and composed of several very influential persons, fear kept the former united, and restrained their proceedings within the bounds of moderation, so that no violence was committed by them, nor anything done calculated to excite popular dislike. Consequently, whenever this government required the citizens' aid to recover or strengthen its influence, the latter were always willing to gratify its wishes; so that from 1434 to 1455, during a period of twenty-one years, the authority of a balia was granted to it six times.

There were in Florence, as we have frequently observed, two principally

powerful citizens, Cosmo de' Medici and Neri Capponi. Neri acquired his influence by public services; so that he had many friends but few partisans. Cosmo, being able to avail himself both of public and private means, had many partisans as well as friends. While both lived, having always been united, they obtained from the people whatever they required; for in them popularity and power were united. But in the year 1455, Neri being dead, and the opposition party extinct, the government found a difficulty in resuming its authority; and this was occasioned, remarkably enough, by Cosmo's private friends, and the most influential men in the state; for, not fearing the opposite party, they became anxious to abate his power. This inconsistency was the beginning of the evils which took place in 1456; so that those in power were openly advised in the deliberative councils not to renew the power of the *balia*, but to close the balloting purses, and appoint the magistrates by drawing from the pollings or *squittini* previously made. To restrain this disposition, Cosmo had the choice of two alternatives, either forcibly to assume the government, with the partisans he possessed, and drive out the others, or to allow the matter to take its course, and let his friends see they were not depriving him of power, but rather themselves. He chose the latter; for he well knew that at all events the purses being filled with the names of his own friends, he incurred no risk, and could take the government into his own hands whenever he found occasion. The chief offices of state being again filled by lot, the mass of the people began to think they had recovered their liberty, and that the decisions of the magistrates were according to their own judgments, unbiased by the influence of the Great. At the same time, the friends

of different grandees were humbled; and many who had commonly seen their houses filled with suitors and presents, found themselves destitute of both. Those who had previously been very powerful were reduced to an equality with men whom they had been accustomed to consider inferior; and those formerly far beneath them were now become their equals. No respect or deference was paid to them; they were often ridiculed and derided, and frequently heard themselves and the republic mentioned in the open streets without the least deference; thus they found it was not Cosmo but themselves that had lost the government. Cosmo appeared not to notice these matters; and whenever any subject was proposed in favor of the people he was the first to support it. But the greatest cause of alarm to the higher classes, and his most favorable opportunity of retaliation, was the revival of the *catasto*, or property-tax of 1427, so that individual contributions were determined by statute, and not by a set of persons appointed for its regulation.

This law being re-established, and a magistracy created to carry it into effect, the nobility assembled, and went to Cosmo to beg he would rescue them and himself from the power of the plebeians, and restore to the government the reputation which had made himself powerful and them respected. He replied, he was willing to comply with their request, but wished the law to be obtained in the regular manner, by consent of the people, and not by force, of which he would not hear on any account. They then endeavored in the councils to establish a new *balia*, but did not succeed. On this the grandees again came to Cosmo, and most humbly begged he would assemble the people in a general council or parliament,

but this he refused, for he wished to make them sensible of their great mistake; and when Donato Cocchi, being Gonfalonier of Justice, proposed to assemble them without his consent, the Signors who were of Cosmo's party ridiculed the idea so unmercifully, that the man's mind actually became deranged, and he had to retire from office in consequence. However, since it is undesirable to allow matters to proceed beyond recovery, the Gonfalon of Justice being in the hands of Luca Pitti, a bold-spirited man, Cosmo determined to let him adopt what course he thought proper, that if any trouble should arise it might be imputed to Luca and not to himself. Luca, therefore, in the beginning of his magistracy, several times proposed to the people the appointment of a new balia; and, not succeeding, he threatened the members of the councils with injurious and arrogant expressions, which were shortly followed by corresponding conduct; for in the month of August, 1458, on the eve of Saint Lorenzo, having filled the piazza, and compelled them to assent to a measure to which he knew them to be averse. Having recovered power, created a new balia, and filled the principal offices according to the pleasure of a few individuals, in order to commence that government with terror which they had obtained by force, they banished Girolamo Machiavelli, with some others, and deprived many of the honors of government. Girolamo, having transgressed the confines to which he was limited, was declared a rebel. Traveling about Italy, with the design of exciting the princes against his country, he was betrayed while at Lunigiana, and, being brought to Florence, was put to death in prison.

This government, during the eight years it continued, was violent and insupportable; for Cosmo, being now old, and through ill health unable to attend to public affairs as formerly, Florence became a prey to a small number of her own citizens. Luca Pitti, in return for the services he had performed for the republic, as made a knight, and to be no less grateful than those who had conferred the dignity upon him, he ordered that the priors, who had hitherto been called priors of the trades, should also have a name to which they had no kind of claim, and therefore called them priors of liberty. He also ordered, that as it had been customary for the gonfalonier to sit upon the right hand of the rectors, he should in future take his seat in the midst of them. And that the Deity might appear to participate in what had been done, public processions were made and solemn services performed, to thank him for the recovery of the government. The Signory and Cosmo made Luca Pitti rich presents, and all the citizens were emulous in imitation of them; so that the money given amounted to no less a sum than twenty thousand ducats. He thus attained such influence, that not Cosmo but himself now governed the city; and his pride so increased, that he commenced two superb buildings, one in Florence, the other at Ruciano, about a mile distant, both in a style of royal magnificence; that in the city, being larger than any hitherto built by a private person. To complete them, he had recourse to the most extraordinary means; for not only citizens and private individuals made him presents and supplied materials, but the mass of people, of every grade, also contributed. Besides this, any exiles who had committed murders, thefts, or other crimes which made them amenable to the laws, found a safe refuge within their walls, if

they were able to contribute toward their decoration or completion. The other citizens, though they did not build like him, were no less violent or rapacious, so that if Florence were not harassed by external wars, she was ruined by the wickedness of her own children. During this period the wars of Naples took place. The pope also commenced hostilities in Romagna against the Malatesti, from whom he wished to take Rimino and Cesena, held by them. In these designs, and his intentions of a crusade against the Turks, was passed the pontificate of Pius II.

Florence continued in disunion and disturbance. The dissensions continued among the party of Cosmo, in 1455, from the causes already related, which by his prudence, as we have also before remarked, he was enabled to tranquilize; but in the year 1464, his illness increased, and he died. Friends and enemies alike grieved for his loss; for his political opponents, perceiving the rapacity of the citizens, even during the life of him who alone restrained them and made their tyranny supportable, were afraid, lest after his decease, nothing but ruin would ensue. Nor had they much hope of his son Piero, who though a very good man, was of infirm health, and new in the government, and they thought he would be compelled to give way; so that, being unrestrained, their rapacity would pass all bounds. On these accounts, the regret was universal. Of all who have left memorials behind them, and who were not of the military profession, Cosmo was the most illustrious and the most renowned. He not only surpassed all his contemporaries in wealth and authority, but also in generosity and prudence; and among the qualities which contributed to make him prince in his own country, was his

surpassing all others in magnificence and generosity. His liberality became more obvious after his death, when Piero, his son, wishing to know what he possessed, it appeared there was no citizen of any consequence to whom Cosmo had not lent a large sum of money; and often, when informed of some nobleman being in distress, he relieved him unasked. His magnificence is evident from the number of public edifices he erected; for in Florence are the convents and churches of St. Marco and St. Lorenzo, and the monastery of Santa Verdiana; in the mountains of Fiesole, the church and abbey of St. Girolamo; and in the Mugello, he not only restored, but rebuilt from its foundation, a monastery of the Frati Minori, or Minims. Besides these, in the church of Santa Croce, the Servi, the Agnoli, and in San Miniato, he erected splendid chapels and altars; and besides building the churches and chapels we have mentioned, he provided them with all the ornaments, furniture, and utensils suitable for the performance of divine service. To these sacred edifices are to be added his private dwellings, one in Florence, of extent and elegance adapted to so great a citizen, and four others, situated at Careggi, Fiesole, Craggiulo, and Trebbio, each, for size and grandeur, equal to royal palaces. And, as if it were not sufficient to be distinguished for magnificence of buildings in Italy alone, he erected an hospital at Jerusalem, for the reception of poor and infirm pilgrims. Although his habitations, like all his other works and actions, were quite of a regal character, and he alone was prince in Florence, still everything was so tempered with his prudence, that he never transgressed the decent moderation of civil life; in his conversation, his servants, his traveling, his mode of living, and the

relationships he formed, the modest demeanor of the citizen was always evident; for he was aware that a constant exhibition of pomp brings more envy upon its possessor than greater realities borne without ostentation. Thus in selecting consorts for his sons, he did not seek the alliance of princes, but for Giovanni chose Corneglia degli Allesandri, and for Piero, Lucrezia de' Tornabuoni. He gave his granddaughters, the children of Piero, Bianca to Guglielmo de' Pazzi, and Nannina to Bernardo Rucellai. No one of his time possessed such an intimate knowledge of government and state affairs as himself; and hence amid such a variety of fortune, in a city so given to change, and among a people of such extreme inconstancy, he retained possession of the government thirty-one years; for being endowed with the utmost prudence, he foresaw evils at a distance, and therefore had an opportunity either of averting them, or preventing their injurious results. He thus not only vanquished domestic and civil ambition, but humbled the pride of many princes with so much fidelity and address, that whatever powers were in league with himself and his country, either overcame their adversaries, or remained uninjured by his alliance; and whoever were opposed to him, lost either their time, money, or territory. Of this the Venetians afford a sufficient proof, who, while in league with him against Duke Filippo were always victorious, but apart from him were always conquered; first by Filippo and then by Francesco. When they joined Alfonso against the Florentine republic, Cosmo, by his commercial credit, so drained Naples and Venice of money, that they were glad to obtain peace upon any terms it was thought proper to grant. Whatever difficulties he had to contend with, whether within the city or without,

he brought to a happy issue, at once glorious to himself and destructive to his enemies; so that civil discord strengthened his government in Florence, and war increased his power and reputation abroad. He added to the Florentine dominions, the Borgo of St. Sepolcro, Montedoglio, the Casentino and Val di Bagno. His virtue and good fortune overcame all his enemies and exalted his friends. He was born in the year 1389, on the day of the saints Cosmo and Damiano. His earlier years were full of trouble, as his exile, captivity, and personal danger fully testify; and having gone to the council of Constance, with Pope John, in order to save his life, after the ruin of the latter, he was obliged to escape in disguise. But after the age of forty, he enjoyed the greatest felicity; and not only those who assisted him in public business, but his agents who conducted his commercial speculations throughout Europe, participated in his prosperity. Hence many enormous fortunes took their origin in different families of Florence, as in that of the Tornabuoni, the Benci, the Portinari, and the Sassetti. Besides these, all who depended upon his advice and patronage became rich; and, though he was constantly expending money in building churches, and in charitable purposes, he sometimes complained to his friends that he had never been able to lay out so much in the service of God as to find the balance in his own favor, intimating that all he had done or could do, was still unequal to what the Almighty had done for him. He was of middle stature, olive complexion, and venerable aspect; not learned but exceedingly eloquent, endowed with great natural capacity, generous to his friends, kind to the poor, comprehensive in discourse, cautious in advising, and in his speeches and replies, grave and witty. When Rinaldo degli

Albizzi, at the beginning of his exile, sent to him to say, "the hen had laid," he replied, "she did ill to lay so far from the nest." Some other of the rebels gave him to understand they were "not dreaming." He said, "he believed it, for he had robbed them of their sleep." When Pope Pius was endeavoring to induce the different governments to join in an expedition against the Turks, he said, "he was an old man, and had undertaken the enterprise of a young one." To the Venetians ambassadors, who came to Florence with those of King Alfonso to complain of the republic, he uncovered his head, and asked them what color it was; they said, "white;" he replied, "it is so; and it will not be long before your senators have heads as white as mine." A few hours before his death, his wife asked him why he kept his eyes shut, and he said, "to get them in the way of it." Some citizens saying to him, after his return from exile, that he injured the city, and that it was offensive to God to drive so many religious persons out of it; he replied that, "it was better to injure the city, than to ruin it; that two yards of rose-colored cloth would make a gentleman, and that it required something more to direct a government than to play with a string of beads." These words gave occasion to his enemies to slander him, as a man who loved himself more than his country, and was more attached to this world than to the next. Many others of his sayings might be adduced, but we shall omit them as unnecessary. Cosmo was a friend and patron of learned men. He brought Argiripolo, a Greek by birth, and one of the most erudite of his time, to Florence, to instruct the youth in Hellenic literature. He entertained Marsilio Ficino, the reviver of the Platonic philosophy, in his own house; and being much attached to him,

have him a residence near his palace at Careggi, that he might pursue the study of letters with greater convenience, and himself have an opportunity of enjoying his company. His prudence, his great wealth, the uses to which he applied it, and his splendid style of living, caused him to be beloved and respected in Florence, and obtained for him the highest consideration, not only among the princes and governments of Italy, but throughout all Europe. He thus laid a foundation for his descendants, which enabled them to equal him in virtue, and greatly surpass him in fortune; while the authority they possessed in Florence and throughout Christendom was not obtained without being merited. Toward the close of his life he suffered great affliction; for, of his two sons, Piero and Giovanni, the latter, of whom he entertained the greatest hopes, died; and the former was so sickly as to be unable to attend either to public or private business. On being carried from one apartment to another, after Giovanni's death, he remarked to his attendants, with a sigh, "This is too large a house for so small a family." His great mind also felt distressed at the idea that he had not extended the Florentine dominions by any valuable acquisition; and he regretted it the more, from imagining he had been deceived by Francesco Sforza, who, while count, had promised, that if he became lord of Milan, he would undertake the conquest of Lucca for the Florentines, a design, however, that was never realized; for the count's ideas changed upon his becoming duke; he resolved to enjoy in peace, the power he had acquired by war, and would not again encounter its fatigues and dangers, unless the welfare of his own dominions required it. This was a source of much annoyance to Cosmo, who felt he had incurred great expense and trouble

for an ungrateful and perfidious friend. His bodily infirmities prevented him from attending either to public or private affairs, as he had been accustomed, and he consequently witnessed both going to decay; for Florence was ruined by her own citizens, and his fortune by his agents and children. He died, however, at the zenith of his glory and in the enjoyment of the highest renown. The city, and all the Christian princes, condoled with his son Piero for his loss. His funeral was conducted with the utmost pomp and solemnity, the whole city following his corpse to the tomb in the church of St. Lorenzo, on which, by public decree, he was inscribed, "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY." If, in speaking of Cosmo's actions, I have rather imitated the biographies of princes than general history, it need not occasion wonder; for of so extraordinary an individual I was compelled to speak with unusual praise.

CHAPTER II

The duke of Milan becomes lord of Genoa--The king of Naples and the duke of Milan endeavor to secure their dominions to their heirs--Jacopo Piccinino honorably received at Milan, and shortly afterward murdered at Naples--Fruitless endeavors of Pius II. to excite Christendom against the Turks--Death of Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan--Perfidious counsel given to Piero de' Medici by Diotisalvi Neroni--Conspiracy of Diotisalvi and others against Piero--Futile attempts to appease the disorders--Public spectacles--Projects of the conspirators against Piero de' Medici--Niccolo Fedini discloses to Piero the plots of his enemies.

While Florence and Italy were in this condition, Louis XI. of France was involved in very serious troubles with his barons, who, with the assistance of Francis, duke of Brittany, and Charles, duke of Burgundy, were in arms against him. This attack was so serious, that he was unable to render further assistance to John of Anjou in his enterprise against Genoa and Naples; and, standing in need of all the forces he could raise, he gave over Savona (which still remained in the power of the French) to the duke of Milan, and also intimated, that if he wished, he had his permission to undertake the conquest of Genoa. Francesco accepted the proposal, and with the influence afforded by the king's friendship, and the assistance of the Adorni, he became lord of Genoa. In acknowledgment of this benefit, he sent fifteen hundred horse into France for the king's service, under the command of Galeazzo, his eldest son. Thus Ferrando of Aragon and Francesco Sforza became, the latter,

duke of Lombardy and prince of Genoa, and the former, sovereign of the whole kingdom of Naples. Their families being allied by marriage, they thought they might so confirm their power as to secure to themselves its enjoyment during life, and at their deaths, its unencumbered reversion to their heirs. To attain this end, they considered it necessary that the king should remove all ground of apprehension from those barons who had offended him in the war of John of Anjou, and that the duke should extirpate the adherents of the Bracceschi, the natural enemies of his family, who, under Jacopo Piccinino, had attained the highest reputation. The latter was now the first general in Italy, and possessing no territory, he naturally excited the apprehension of all who had dominions, and especially of the duke, who, conscious of what he had himself done, thought he could neither enjoy his own estate in safety, nor leave them with any degree of security to his son during Jacopo's lifetime. The king, therefore, strenuously endeavored to come to terms with his barons, and using his utmost ingenuity to secure them, succeeded in his object; for they perceived their ruin to be inevitable if they continued in war with their sovereign, though from submission and confidence in him, they would still have reason for apprehension. Mankind are always most eager to avoid a certain evil; and hence inferior powers are easily deceived by princes. The barons, conscious of the danger of continuing the war, trusted the king's promises, and having placed themselves in his hands, they were soon after destroyed in various ways, and under a variety of pretexts. This alarmed Jacopo Piccinino, who was with his forces at Sulmona; and to deprive the king of the opportunity of treating him similarly, he endeavored, by the

mediation of his friends, to be reconciled with the duke, who, by the most liberal offers, induced Jacopo to visit him at Milan, accompanied by only a hundred horse.

Jacopo had served many years with his father and brother, first under Duke Filippo, and afterward under the Milanese republic, so that by frequent intercourse with the citizens he had acquired many friends and universal popularity, which present circumstances tended to increase; for the prosperity and newly acquired power of the Sforzeschi had occasioned envy, while Jacopo's misfortunes and long absence had given rise to compassion and a great desire to see him. These various feelings were displayed upon his arrival; for nearly all the nobility went to meet him; the streets through which he passed were filled with citizens, anxious to catch a glimpse of him, while shouts of "The Bracceschi! the Bracceschi!" resounded on all sides. These honors accelerated his ruin; for the duke's apprehensions increased his desire of destroying him; and to effect this with the least possible suspicion, Jacopo's marriage with Drusiana, the duke's natural daughter, was now celebrated. The duke then arranged with Ferrando to take him into pay, with the title of captain of his forces, and give him 100,000 florins for his maintenance. After this agreement, Jacopo, accompanied by a ducal ambassador and his wife Drusiana, proceeded to Naples, where he was honorably and joyfully received, and for many days entertained with every kind of festivity; but having asked permission to go to Sulmona, where his forces were, the king invited him to a banquet in the castle, at the conclusion of which he and his son Francesco were imprisoned, and shortly afterward put to

death. It was thus our Italian princes, fearing those virtues in others which they themselves did not possess, extirpated them; and hence the country became a prey to the efforts of those by whom it was not long afterward oppressed and ruined.

At this time, Pope Pius II. having settled the affairs of Romagna, and witnessing a universal peace, thought it a suitable opportunity to lead the Christians against the Turks, and adopted measures similar to those which his predecessors had used. All the princes promised assistance either in men or money; while Matthias, king of Hungary, and Charles, duke of Burgundy, intimated their intention of joining the enterprise in person, and were by the pope appointed leaders of the expedition. The pontiff was so full of expectation, that he left Rome and proceeded to Ancona, where it had been arranged that the whole army should be assembled, and the Venetians engaged to send ships thither to convey the forces to Sclavonia. Upon the arrival of the pope in that city, there was soon such a concourse of people, that in a few days all the provisions it contained, or that could be procured from the neighborhood, were consumed, and famine began to impend. Besides this, there was no money to provide those who were in want of it, nor arms to furnish such as were without them. Neither Matthias nor Charles made their appearance. The Venetians sent a captain with some galleys, but rather for ostentation and the sake of keeping their word, than for the purpose of conveying troops. During this position of affairs, the pope, being old and infirm, died, and the assembled troops returned to their homes. The death of the pontiff occurred in 1465, and Paul II. of

Venetian origin, was chosen to succeed him; and that nearly all the principalities of Italy might change their rulers about the same period, in the following year Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, also died, having occupied the dukedom sixteen years, and Galeazzo, his son, succeeded him.

The death of this prince infused redoubled energy into the Florentine dissensions, and caused them to produce more prompt effects than they would otherwise have done. Upon the demise of Cosmo, his son Piero, being heir to the wealth and government of his father, called to his assistance Diotisalvi Neroni, a man of great influence and the highest reputation, in whom Cosmo reposed so much confidence that just before his death he recommended Piero to be wholly guided by him, both with regard to the government of the city and the management of his fortune. Piero acquired Diotisalvi with the opinion Cosmo entertained of him, and said that as he wished to obey his father, though now no more, as he always had while alive, he should consult him concerning both his patrimony and the city. Beginning with his private affairs, he caused an account of all his property, liabilities, and assets, to be placed in Diotisalvi's hands, that, with an entire acquaintance with the state of his affairs, he might be able to afford suitable advice, and the latter promised to use the utmost care. Upon examination of these accounts the affairs were found to be in great disorder, and Diotisalvi, instigated rather by his own ambition than by attachment to Piero or gratitude to Cosmo, thought he might without difficulty deprive him of both the reputation and the splendor which his father had left him as his

inheritance. In order to realize his views, he waited upon Piero, and advised him to adopt a measure which, while it appeared quite correct in itself, and suitable to existing circumstances, involved a consequence destructive to his authority. He explained the disorder of his affairs, and the large amount of money it would be necessary to provide, if he wished to preserve his influence in the state and his reputation of wealth; and said there was no other means of remedying these disorders so just and available as to call in the sums which his father had lent to an infinite number of persons, both foreigners and citizens; for Cosmo, to acquire partisans in Florence and friends abroad, was extremely liberal of his money, and the amount of loans due to him was enormous. Piero thought the advice good, because he was only desirous to repossess his own property to meet the demands to which he was liable; but as soon as he had ordered those amounts to be recalled, the citizens, as if he had asked for something to which he had no kind of claim, took great offense, loaded him with opprobrious expressions, and accused him of being avaricious and ungrateful.

Diotisalvi, noticing the popular excitement against Piero, occasioned by his own advice, obtained an interview with Luca Pitti, Agnolo Acciajuoli, and Niccolo Soderini, and they resolved to unite their efforts to deprive him both of the government and his influence. Each was actuated by a different motive; Luca Pitti wished to take the position Cosmo had occupied, for he was now become so great, that he disdained to submit to Piero; Diotisalvi Neroni, who knew Luca unfit to be at the head of a government, thought that of necessity on Piero's

removal, the whole authority of the state would devolve upon himself; Niccolo Soderini desired the city to enjoy greater liberty, and for the laws to be equally binding upon all. Agnolo Acciajuoli was greatly incensed against the Medici, for the following reasons: his son, Raffaello, had some time before married Alessandra de' Bardi, and received with her a large dowry. She, either by her own fault or the misconduct of others, suffered much ill-treatment both from her father-in-law and her husband, and in consequence Lorenzo d' Ilarione, her kinsman, out of pity for the girl, being accompanied by several armed men, took her away from Agnolo's house. The Acciajuoli complained of the injury done them by the Bardi, and the matter was referred to Cosmo, who decided that the Acciajuoli should restore to Alessandra her fortune, and then leave it to her choice either to return to her husband or not. Agnolo thought Cosmo had not, in this instance, treated him as a friend; and having been unable to avenge himself on the father, he now resolved to do his utmost to ruin the son. These conspirators, though each was influenced by a different motive from the rest, affected to have only one object in view, which was that the city should be governed by the magistrates, and not be subjected to the counsels of a few individuals. The odium against Piero, and opportunities of injuring him, were increased by the number of merchants who failed about this time; for it was reported that he, in having, quite unexpectedly to all, resolved to call in his debts, had, to the disgrace and ruin of the city, caused them to become insolvent. To this was added his endeavor to obtain Clarice degli Orsini as wife of Lorenzo, his eldest son; and hence his enemies took occasion to say, it was quite clear, that as he

despised a Florentine alliance, he no longer considered himself one of the people, and was preparing to make himself prince; for he who refuses his fellow-citizens as relatives, desires to make them slaves, and therefore cannot expect to have them as friends. The leaders of the sedition thought they had the victory in their power; for the greater part of the citizens followed them, deceived by the name of liberty which they, to give their purpose a graceful covering, adopted upon their ensigns.

In this agitated state of the city, some, to whom civil discord was extremely offensive, thought it would be well to endeavor to engage men's minds with some new occupation, because when unemployed they are commonly led by whoever chooses to excite them. To divert their attention from matters of government, it being now a year since the death of Cosmo, it was resolved to celebrate two festivals, similar to the most solemn observed in the city. At one of them was represented the arrival of the three kings from the east, led by the star which announced the nativity of Christ; which was conducted with such pomp and magnificence, that the preparations for it kept the whole city occupied many months. The other was a tournament (for so they call the exhibition of equestrian combats), in which the sons of the first families in the city took part with the most celebrated cavaliers of Italy. Among the most distinguished of the Florentine youth was Lorenzo, eldest son of Piero, who, not by favor, but by his own personal valor, obtained the principal prize. When these festivals were over, the citizens reverted to the same thoughts which had previously occupied them, and each

pursued his ideas with more earnestness than ever. Serious differences and troubles were the result; and these were greatly increased by two circumstances: one of which was, that the authority of the *balia* had expired; the other, that upon the death of Duke Francesco, Galeazzo the new duke sent ambassadors to Florence, to renew the engagements of his father with the city, which, among other things, provided that every year a certain sum of money should be paid to the duke. The principal opponents of the Medici took occasion, from this demand, to make public resistance in the councils, on pretense that the alliance was made with Francesco and not Galeazzo; so that Francesco being dead, the obligation had ceased; nor was there any necessity to revive it, because Galeazzo did not possess his father's talents, and consequently they neither could nor ought to expect the same benefits from him; that if they had derived little advantage from Francesco, they would obtain still less from Galeazzo; and that if any citizen wished to hire him for his own purposes, it was contrary to civil rule, and inconsistent with the public liberty. Piero, on the contrary, argued that it would be very impolitic to lose such an alliance from mere avarice, and that there was nothing so important to the republic, and to the whole of Italy, as their alliance with the duke; that the Venetians, while they were united, could not hope either by feigned friendship or open war to injure the duchy; but as soon as they perceived the Florentines alienated from him they would prepare for hostilities, and, finding him young, new in the government, and without friends, they would, either by force or fraud, compel him to join them; in which case ruin of the republic would be inevitable.

The arguments of Piero were without effect, and the animosity of the parties began to be openly manifested in their nocturnal assemblies; the friends of the Medici meeting in the Crocetta, and their adversaries in the Pieta. The latter being anxious for Piero's ruin, had induced many citizens to subscribe their names as favorable to the undertaking. Upon one occasion, particularly when considering the course to be adopted, although all agreed that the power of the Medici ought to be reduced, different opinions were given concerning the means by which it should be effected; one party, the most temperate and reasonable, held that as the authority of the balia had ceased, they must take care to prevent its renewal; it would then be found to be the universal wish that the magistrates and councils should govern the city, and in a short time Piero's power would be visibly diminished, and, as a consequence of his loss of influence in the government, his commercial credit would also fail; for his affairs were in such a state, that if they could prevent him from using the public money his ruin must ensue. They would thus be in no further danger from him, and would succeed in the recovery of their liberty, without the death or exile of any individual; but if they attempted violence they would incur great dangers; for mankind are willing to allow one who falls of himself to meet his fate, but if pushed down they would hasten to his relief; so that if they adopted no extraordinary measures against him, he will have no reason for defense or aid; and if he were to seek them it would be greatly to his own injury, by creating such a general suspicion as would accelerate his ruin, and justify whatever course they might think proper to adopt. Many

of the assembly were dissatisfied with this tardy method of proceeding; they thought delay would be favorable to him and injurious to themselves; for if they allowed matters to take their ordinary course, Piero would be in no danger whatever, while they themselves would incur many; for the magistrates who were opposed to him would allow him to rule the city, and his friends would make him a prince, and their own ruin would be inevitable, as happened in 1458; and though the advice they had just heard might be most consistent with good feeling, the present would be found to be the safest. That it would therefore be best, while the minds of men were yet excited against him, to effect his destruction. It must be their plan to arm themselves, and engage the assistance of the marquis of Ferrara, that they might not be destitute of troops; and if a favorable Signory were drawn, they would be in condition to make use of them. They therefore determined to wait the formation of the new Signory, and be governed by circumstances.

Among the conspirators was Niccolo Fedini, who had acted as president of their assemblies. He, being induced by most certain hopes, disclosed the whole affair to Piero, and gave him a list of those who had subscribed their names, and also of the conspirators. Piero was alarmed on discovering the number and quality of those who were opposed to him; and by the advice of his friends he resolved to take the signatures of those who were inclined to favor him. Having employed one of his most trusty confidants to carry his design into effect, he found so great a disposition to change and instability, that many who had previously set down their names among the number of his enemies, now subscribed them in

his favor.

CHAPTER III

Niccolo Soderini drawn Gonfalonier of Justice--Great hopes excited in consequence--The two parties take arms--The fears of the Signory--Their conduct with regard to Piero--Piero's reply to the Signory--Reform of government in favor of Piero de' Medici--Dispersion of his enemies--Fall of Lucca Pitti--Letter of Agnolo Acciajuoli to Piero de' Medici--Piero's answer--Designs of the Florentine exiles--They induce the Venetians to make war on Florence.

In the midst of these events, the time arrived for the renewal of the supreme magistracy; and Niccolo Soderini was drawn Gonfalonier of Justice. It was surprising to see by what a concourse, not only of distinguished citizens, but also of the populace, he was accompanied to the palace; and while on the way thither an olive wreath was placed upon his head, to signify that upon him depended the safety and liberty of the city. This, among many similar instances, serves to prove how undesirable it is to enter upon office or power exciting inordinate expectations; for, being unable to fulfil them (many looking for more than it is possible to perform), shame and disappointment are the ordinary results. Tommaso and Niccolo Soderini were brothers. Niccolo was the more ardent and spirited, Tommaso the wiser man; who, being very much the friend of Piero, and knowing that his brother desired nothing but the liberty of the city, and the stability of the republic, without injury to any, advised him to make new Squittini, by which means the election purses might be filled with the names of those favorable to his

design. Niccolo took his brother's advice, and thus wasted the period of his magistracy in vain hopes, which his friends, the leading conspirators, allowed him to do from motives of envy; for they were unwilling that the government should be reformed by the authority of Niccolo, and thought they would be in time enough to effect their purpose under another gonfalonier. Thus the magistracy of Niccolo expired; and having commenced many things without completing aught, he retired from office with much less credit than when he had entered upon it.

This circumstance caused the aggrandizement of Piero's party, whose friends entertained stronger hopes, while those who had been neutral or wavering became his adherents; so that both sides being balanced, many months elapsed without any open demonstration of their particular designs. Piero's party continuing to gather strength, his enemies' indignation increased in proportion; and they now determined to effect by force what they either could not accomplish, or were unwilling to attempt by the medium of the magistrates, which was assassination of Piero, who lay sick at Careggi, and to this end order the marquis of Ferrara nearer to the city with his forces, that after Piero's death he might lead them into the piazza, and thus compel the Signory to form a government according to their own wishes; for though all might not be friendly, they trusted they would be able to induce those to submit by fear who might be opposed to them from principle.

Diotisalvi, the better to conceal his design, frequently visited Piero,

conversed with him respecting the union of the city, and advised him to effect it. The conspirators' designs had already been fully disclosed to Piero; besides this, Domenico Martelli had informed him, that Francesco Neroni, the brother of Diotisalvi, had endeavored to induce him to join them, assuring him the victory was certain, and their object all but attained. Upon this, Piero resolved to take advantage of his enemies' tampering with the marquis of Ferrara, and be first in arms. He therefore intimated that he had received a letter from Giovanni Bentivogli, prince of Bologna, which informed him that the marquis of Ferrara was upon the river Albo, at the head of a considerable force, with the avowed intention of leading it to Florence; that upon this advice he had taken up arms; after which, in the midst of a strong force, he came to the city, when all who were disposed to support him, armed themselves also. The adverse party did the same, but not in such good order, being unprepared. The residence of Diotisalvi being near that of Piero, he did not think himself safe in it, but first went to the palace and begged the Signory would endeavor to induce Piero to lay down his arms, and thence to Luca Pitti, to keep him faithful in their cause. Niccolo Soderini displayed the most activity; for taking arms, and being followed by nearly all the plebeians in his vicinity, he proceeded to the house of Luca, and begged that he would mount his horse, and come to the piazza in support of the Signory, who were, he said, favorable, and that the victory would, undoubtedly, be on their side; that he should not stay in the house to be basely slain by their armed enemies, or ignominiously deceived by those who were unarmed; for, in that case, he would soon repent of having neglected an opportunity

irrecoverably lost; that if he desired the forcible ruin of Piero, he might easily effect it; and that if he were anxious for peace, it would be far better to be in a condition to propose terms than to be compelled to accept any that might be offered. These words produced no effect upon Luca, whose mind was now quite made up; he had been induced to desert his party by new conditions and promises of alliance from Piero; for one of his nieces had been married to Giovanni Tornabuoni. He, therefore, advised Niccolo to dismiss his followers and return home, telling him he ought to be satisfied, if the city were governed by the magistrates, which would certainly be the case, and that all ought to lay aside their weapons; for the Signory, most of whom were friendly, would decide their differences. Niccolo, finding him impracticable, returned home; but before he left, he said, "I can do the city no good alone, but I can easily foresee the evils that will befall her. This resolution of yours will rob our country of her liberty; you will lose the government, I shall lose my property, and the rest will be exiled."

During this disturbance the Signory closed the palace and kept their magistrates about them, without showing favor to either party. The citizens, especially those who had followed Luca Pitti, finding Piero fully prepared and his adversaries unarmed, began to consider, not how they might injure him, but how, with least observation, glide into the ranks of his friends. The principal citizens, the leaders of both factions, assembled in the palace in the presence of the Signory, and spoke respecting the state of the city and the reconciliation of parties; and as the infirmities of Piero prevented him from being

present, they, with one exception, unanimously determined to wait upon him at his house. Niccolo Soderini having first placed his children and his effects under the care of his brother Tommaso, withdrew to his villa, there to await the event, but apprehended misfortune to himself and ruin to his country. The other citizens coming into Piero's presence, one of them who had been appointed spokesman, complained of the disturbances that had arisen in the city, and endeavored to show, that those must be most to blame who had been first to take up arms; and not knowing what Piero (who was evidently the first to do so) intended, they had come in order to be informed of his design, and if it had in view the welfare of the city, they were desirous of supporting it. Piero replied, that not those who first take arms are the most to blame, but those who give the first occasion for it, and if they would reflect a little on their mode of proceeding toward himself, they would cease to wonder at what he had done; for they could not fail to perceive, that nocturnal assemblies, the enrollment of partisans, and attempts to deprive him both of his authority and his life, had caused him to take arms; and they might further observe, that as his forces had not quitted his own house, his design was evidently only to defend himself and not to injure others. He neither sought nor desired anything but safety and repose; neither had his conduct ever manifested a desire for ought else; for when the authority of the Balia expired, he never made any attempt to renew it, and was very glad the magistrates had governed the city and had been content. They might also remember that Cosmo and his sons could live respected in Florence, either with the Balia or without it, and that in 1458, it was not his family, but themselves, who had renewed it.

That if they did not wish for it at present, neither did he; but this did not satisfy them; for he perceived that they thought it impossible to remain in Florence while he was there. It was entirely beyond all his anticipations that his own or his father's friends should think themselves unsafe with him in Florence, having always shown himself quiet and peaceable. He then addressed himself to Diotalvi and his brothers, who were present, reminding them with grave indignation, of the benefits they had received from Cosmo, the confidence he had reposed in them and their subsequent ingratitude; and his words so strongly excited some present, that had he not interfered, they would certainly have torn the Neroni to pieces on the spot. He concluded by saying, that he should approve of any determination of themselves and the Signory; and that for his own part, he only desired peace and safety. After this, many things were discussed, but nothing determined, excepting generally, that it was necessary to reform the administration of the city and government.

The Gonfalon of Justice was then in the hands of Bernardo Lotti, a man not in the confidence of Piero, who was therefore disinclined to attempt aught while he was in office; but no inconvenience would result from the delay, as his magistracy was on the point of expiring. Upon the election of Signors for the months of September and October, 1466, Roberto Lioni was appointed to the supreme magistracy, and as soon as he assumed its duties, every requisite arrangement having been previously made, the people were called to the piazza, and a new Balìa created, wholly in favor of Piero, who soon afterward filled all the offices of government

according to his own pleasure. These transactions alarmed the leaders of the opposite faction, and Agnolo Acciajuoli fled to Naples, Diotisalvi Neroni and Niccolo Soderini to Venice. Luca Pitti remained in Florence, trusting to his new relationship and the promises of Piero. The refugees were declared rebels, and all the family of the Neroni were dispersed. Giovanni di Neroni, then archbishop of Florence, to avoid a greater evil, became a voluntary exile at Rome, and to many other citizens who fled, various places of banishment were appointed. Nor was this considered sufficient; for it was ordered that the citizens should go in solemn procession to thank God for the preservation of the government and the reunion of the city, during the performance of which, some were taken and tortured, and part of them afterward put to death and exiled. In this great vicissitude of affairs, there was not a more remarkable instance of the uncertainty of fortune than Luca Pitti, who soon found the difference between victory and defeat, honor and disgrace. His house now presented only a vast solitude, where previously crowds of citizens had assembled. In the streets, his friends and relatives, instead of accompanying, were afraid even to salute him. Some of them were deprived of the honors of government, others of their property, and all alike threatened. The superb edifices he had commenced were abandoned by the builders; the benefits that had been conferred upon him, were now exchanged for injuries, the honors for disgrace. Hence many of those who had presented him with articles of value now demanded them back again, as being only lent; and those who had been in the habit of extolling him as a man of surpassing excellence, now termed him violent and ungrateful. So that, when too late, he regretted not having taken the

advice of Niccolo Soderini, and preferred an honorable death in battle, than to a life of ignominy among his victorious enemies.

The exiles now began to consider various means of recovering that citizenship which they had not been able to preserve. However, Agnolo Acciajuoli being at Naples, before he attempted anything else, resolved to sound Piero, and try if he could effect a reconciliation. For this purpose, he wrote to him in the following terms: "I cannot help laughing at the freaks of fortune, perceiving how, at her pleasure, she converts friends into enemies, and enemies into friends. You may remember that during your father's exile, regarding more the injury done to him than my own misfortunes, I was banished, and in danger of death, and never during Cosmo's life failed to honor and support your family; neither have I since his death ever entertained a wish to injure you. True, it is, that your own sickness, and the tender years of your sons, so alarmed me, that I judged it desirable to give such a form to the government, that after your death our country might not be ruined; and hence, the proceedings, which not against you, but for the safety of the state, have been adopted, which, if mistaken, will surely obtain forgiveness, both for the good design in view, and on account of my former services. Neither can I apprehend, that your house, having found me so long faithful, should now prove unmerciful, or that you could cancel the impression of so much merit for so small a fault." Piero replied: "Your laughing in your present abode is the cause why I do not weep, for were you to laugh in Florence, I should have to weep at Naples. I confess you were well disposed toward my father, and you ought

to confess you were well paid for it; and the obligation is so much the greater on your part than on ours, as deeds are of greater value than words. Having been recompensed for your good wishes, it ought not to surprise you that you now receive the due reward of your bad ones. Neither will a pretense of your patriotism excuse you, for none will think the city less beloved or benefited by the Medici, than by the Acciajuoli. It, therefore, seems but just, that you should remain in dishonor at Naples, since you knew not how to live with honor at home."

Agnolo, hopeless of obtaining pardon, went to Rome, where, joining the archbishop and other refugees, they used every available means to injure the commercial credit of the Medici in that city. Their attempts greatly annoyed Piero; but by his friends' assistance, he was enabled to render them abortive. Diotisalvi Neroni and Niccolo Soderini strenuously urged the Venetian senate to make war upon their country, calculating, that in case of an attack, the government being new and unpopular, would be unable to resist. At this time there resided at Ferrara, Giovanni Francesco, son of Palla Strozzi, who, with his father, was banished from Florence in the changes of 1434. He possessed great influence, and was considered one of the richest merchants. The newly banished pointed out to Giovanni Francesco how easily they might return to their country, if the Venetians were to undertake the enterprise, and that it was most probable they would do so, if they had pecuniary assistance, but that otherwise it would be doubtful. Giovanni Francesco, wishing to avenge his own injuries, at once fell in with their ideas, and promised to contribute to the success of the attempt all the means in his power.

On this they went to the Doge, and complained of the exile they were compelled to endure, for no other reason, they said, than for having wished their country should be subject to equal laws, and that the magistrates should govern, not a few private individuals; that Piero de' Medici, with his adherents, who were accustomed to act tyrannically, had secretly taken up arms, deceitfully induced them to lay their own aside, and thus, by fraud, expelled them from their country; that, not content with this, they made the Almighty himself a means of oppression to several, who, trusting to their promises, had remained in the city and were there betrayed; for, during public worship and solemn supplications, that the Deity might seem to participate in their treachery, many citizens had been seized, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death; thus affording to the world a horrible and impious precedent. To avenge themselves for these injuries, they knew not where to turn with so much hope of success as to the senate, which, having always enjoyed their liberty, ought to compassionate those who had lost it. They therefore called upon them as free men to assist them against tyrants; as pious, against the wicked; and would remind the Venetians, that it was the family of the Medici who had robbed them of their dominions in Lombardy, contrary to the wish of the other citizens, and who, in opposition to the interests of the senate, had favored and supported Francesco, so, that if the exiles' distresses could not induce them to undertake the war, the just indignation of the people of Venice, and their desire of vengeance ought to prevail.

CHAPTER IV

War between the Venetians and the Florentines--Peace re-established--Death of Niccolo Soderini--His character--Excesses in Florence--Various external events from 1468 to 1471--Accession of Sixtus IV.--His character--Grief of Piero de' Medici for the violence committed in Florence--His speech to the principal citizens--Plans of Piero de' Medici for the restoration of order--His death and character--Tommaso Soderini, a citizen of great reputation, declares himself in favor of the Medici--Disturbances at Prato occasioned by Bernardo Nardi.

The concluding words of the Florentine exiles produced the utmost excitement among the Venetian senators, and they resolved to send Bernardo Coglione, their general, to attack the Florentine territory. The troops were assembled, and joined by Ercole da Esti, who had been sent by Borgo, marquis of Ferrara. At the commencement of hostilities, the Florentines not being prepared, their enemies burned the Borgo of Dovadola, and plundered the surrounding country. But having expelled the enemies of Piero, renewed their league with Galeazzo, duke of Milan, and Ferrando, king of Naples, they appointed to the command of their forces Federigo, count of Urbino; and being thus on good terms with their friends, their enemies occasioned them less anxiety. Ferrando sent Alfonso, his eldest son, to their aid, and Galeazzo came in person, each at the head of a suitable force, and all assembled at Castrocaro, a fortress belonging to the Florentines, and situated among the roots of the Appennines which descend from Tuscany to Romagna. In the meantime,

the enemy withdrew toward Imola. A few slight skirmishes took place between the armies; yet, in accordance with the custom of the times, neither of them acted on the offensive, besieged any town, or gave the other an opportunity of coming to a general engagement; but each kept within their tents, and conducted themselves with most remarkable cowardice. This occasioned general dissatisfaction among the Florentines; for they found themselves involved in an expensive war, from which no advantage could be derived. The magistrates complained of these spiritless proceedings to those who had been appointed commissaries to the expedition; but they replied, that the entire evil was chargeable upon the Duke Galeazzo, who possessing great authority and little experience, was unable to suggest useful measures, and unwilling to take the advice of those who were more capable; and therefore any demonstration of courage or energy would be impracticable so long as he remained with the army. Hereupon the Florentines intimated to the duke, that his presence with the force was in many ways advantageous and beneficial, and of itself sufficient to alarm the enemy; but they considered his own safety and that of his dominions, much more important than their own immediate convenience; because so long as the former were safe, the Florentines had nothing to fear, and all would go well; but if his dominions were to suffer, they might then apprehend all kinds of misfortune. They assured him they did not think it prudent for him to be absent so long from Milan, having recently succeeded to the government, and being surrounded by many powerful enemies and suspected neighbors; while any who were desirous of plotting against him, had an opportunity of doing so with impunity. They would,

therefore, advise him to return to his territories, leaving part of his troops with them for the use of the expedition. This advice pleased Galeazzo, who, in consequence, immediately withdrew to Milan. The Florentine generals being now left without any hindrance, to show that the cause assigned for their inaction was the true one, pressed the enemy more closely, so that they came to a regular engagement, which continued half a day, without either party yielding. Some horses were wounded and prisoners taken, but no death occurred. Winter having arrived, and with it the usual time for armies to retire into quarters, Bartolommeo Coglione withdrew to Ravenna, the Florentine forces into Tuscany, and those of the king and duke, each to the territories of their sovereign. As this attempt had not occasioned any tumult in Florence, contrary to the rebels' expectation, and the troops they had hired were in want of pay, terms of peace were proposed, and easily arranged. The revolted Florentines, thus deprived of hope, dispersed themselves in various places. Diotisalvi Neroni withdrew to Ferrara, where he was received and entertained by the Marquis Borso. Niccolo Soderini went to Ravenna, where, upon a small pension allowed by the Venetians, he grew old and died. He was considered a just and brave man, but over-cautious and slow to determine, a circumstance which occasioned him, when Gonfalonier of Justice, to lose the opportunity of victory which he would have gladly recovered when too late.

Upon the restoration of peace, those who remained victorious in Florence, as if unable to convince themselves they had conquered, unless they oppressed not merely their enemies, but all whom they suspected,

prevailed upon Bardo Altoviti, then Gonfalonier of Justice, to deprive many of the honors of government, and to banish several more. They exercised their power so inconsiderately, and conducted themselves in such an arbitrary manner, that it seemed as if fortune and the Almighty had given the city up to them for a prey. Piero knew little of these things, and was unable to remedy even the little he knew, on account of his infirmities; his body being so contracted that he could use no faculty but that of speech. All he could do was to admonish the leading men, and beg they would conduct themselves with greater moderation, and not by their violence effect their country's ruin. In order to divert the city, he resolved to celebrate the marriage of his son Lorenzo with Clarice degli Orsini with great splendor; and it was accordingly solemnized with all the display suitable to the exalted rank of the parties. Feasts, dancing, and antique representations occupied many days; at the conclusion of which, to exhibit the grandeur of the house of Medici and of the government, two military spectacles were presented, one performed by men on horseback, who went through the evolutions of a field engagement, and the other representing the storming of a town; everything being conducted with admirable order and the greatest imaginable brilliancy.

During these transactions in Florence, the rest of Italy, though at peace, was filled with apprehension of the power of the Turks, who continued to attack the Christians, and had taken Negropont, to the great disgrace and injury of the Christian name. About this time died Borso, marquis of Ferrara, who was succeeded by his brother Ercole.

Gismondo da Rimini, the inveterate enemy of the church also expired, and his natural brother Roberto, who was afterward one of the best generals of Italy, succeeded him. Pope Paul died, and was succeeded by Sixtus IV. previously called Francesco da Savona, a man of the very lowest origin, who by his talents had become general of the order of St. Francis, and afterward cardinal. He was the first who began to show how far a pope might go, and how much that which was previously regarded as sinful lost its iniquity when committed by a pontiff. Among others of his family were Piero and Girolamo, who, according to universal belief, were his sons, though he designated them by terms reflecting less scandal on his character. Piero being a priest, was advanced to the dignity of a cardinal, with the title of St. Sixtus. To Girolamo he gave the city of Furli, taken from Antonio Ordelaſſi, whose ancestors had held that territory for many generations. This ambitious method of procedure made him more regarded by the princes of Italy, and all sought to obtain his friendship. The duke of Milan gave his natural daughter Caterina to Girolamo, with the city of Imola, which he had taken from Taddeo degli Alidossi, as her portion. New matrimonial alliances were formed between the duke and king Ferrando; Elisabetta, daughter of Alfonso, the king's eldest son, being united to Giovan Galeazzo, the eldest son of the duke.

Italy being at peace, the principal employment of her princes was to watch each other, and strengthen their own influence by new alliances, leagues, or friendships. But in the midst of this repose, Florence endured great oppression from her principal citizens, and the infirmities of Piero incapacitated him from restraining their ambition.

However, to relieve his conscience, and, if possible, to make them ashamed of their conduct, he sent for them to his house, and addressed them in the following words: "I never thought a time would come when the behavior of my friends would compel me to esteem and desire the society of my enemies, and wish that I had been defeated rather than victorious; for I believed myself to be associated with those who would set some bounds to their avarice, and who, after having avenged themselves on their enemies, and lived in their country with security and honor, would be satisfied. But now I find myself greatly deceived, unacquainted with the ambition of mankind, and least of all with yours; for, not satisfied with being masters of so great a city, and possessing among yourselves those honors, dignities, and emoluments which used to be divided among many citizens; not contented with having shared among a few the property of your enemies, or with being able to oppress all others with public burdens, while you yourselves are exempt from them, and enjoy all the public offices of profit you must still further load everyone with ill usage. You plunder your neighbors of their wealth; you sell justice; you evade the law; you oppress the timid and exalt the insolent. Nor is there, throughout all Italy, so many and such shocking examples of violence and avarice as in this city. Has our country fostered us only to be her destroyer? Have we been victorious only to effect her ruin? Has she honored us that we may overwhelm her with disgrace? Now, by that faith which is binding upon all good men, I promise you, that if you still conduct yourselves so as to make me regret my victory, I will adopt such measures as shall cause you bitterly to repent of having misused it." The reply of the citizens accorded with the time and

circumstances, but they did not forego their evil practices; so that, in consequence, Piero sent for Agnolo Acciajuoli to come secretly to Cafaggiolo, and discussed with him at great length the condition of the city; and doubtless, had he not been prevented by death, he would have called home the exiles as a check upon the rapine of the opposite party. But these honorable designs were frustrated; for, sinking under bodily infirmities and mental anguish, he expired in the fifty-third year of his age. His goodness and virtue were not duly appreciated by his country, principally from his having, until almost the close of his life, been associated with Cosmo, and the few years he survived being spent in civil discord and constant debility. Piero was buried in the church of St. Lorenzo, near his father, and his obsequies were performed with all the pomp and solemnity due to his exalted station. He left two sons, Lorenzo and Guiliano, whose extreme youth excited alarm in the minds of thinking men, though each gave hopes of future usefulness to the republic.

Among the principal citizens in the government of Florence, and very superior to the rest, was Tommaso Soderini, whose prudence and authority were well known not only at home, but throughout Italy. After Piero's death, the whole city looked up to him; many citizens waited upon him at his own house, as the head of the government, and several princes addressed him by letter; but he, impartially estimating his own fortune and that of the house of Medici, made no reply to the princes' communications, and told the citizens, it was not his house, but that of the Medici they ought to visit. To demonstrate by his actions the

sincerity and integrity of his advice he assembled all the heads of noble families in the convent of St. Antonio, whither he also brought Lorenzo and Guiliano de' Medici, and in a long and serious speech upon the state of the city, the condition of Italy, and the views of her princes, he assured them, that if they wished to live in peace and unity in Florence, free both from internal dissensions and foreign wars, it would be necessary to respect the sons of Piero and support the reputation of their house; for men never regret their continuance in a course sanctioned by custom while new methods are soon adopted and as speedily set aside; and it has always been found easier to maintain a power which by its continuance has outlived envy, than to raise a new one, which innumerable unforeseen causes may overthrow. When Tommaso had concluded, Lorenzo spoke, and, though young, with such modesty and discretion that all present felt a presentiment of his becoming what he afterward proved to be; and before the citizens departed they swore to regard the youths as their sons, and the brothers promised to look upon them as their parents. After this, Lorenzo and Guiliano were honored as princes, and resolved to be guided by the advice of Tommaso Soderini.

While profound tranquillity prevailed both at home and abroad, no wars disturbing the general repose, there arose an unexpected disturbance, which came like a presage of future evils. Among the ruined families of the party of Luca Pitti, was that of the Nardi; for Salvestro and his brothers, the heads of the house, were banished and afterward declared rebels for having taken part in the war under Bartolommeo Coglione. Bernardo, the brother of Salvestro, was young, prompt, and bold, and on

account of his poverty being unable to alleviate the sorrows of exile, while the peace extinguished all hopes of his return to the city, he determined to attempt some means of rekindling the war; for a trifling commencement often produces great results, and men more readily prosecute what is already begun than originate new enterprises. Bernardo had many acquaintances at Prato, and still more in the district of Pistoia, particularly among the Palandra, a family which, though rustic, was very numerous, and, like the rest of the Pistolesi, brought up to slaughter and war. These he knew to be discontented, on account of the Florentine magistrates having endeavored, perhaps too severely, to check their partiality for inveterate feuds and consequence bloodshed. He was also aware that the people of Prato considered themselves injured by the pride and avarice of their governors, and that some were ill disposed toward Florence; therefore all things considered, he hoped to be able to kindle a fire in Tuscany (should Prato rebel) which would be fostered by so many, that those who might wish to extinguish it would fail in the attempt. He communicated his ideas to Diotisalvi Neroni, and asked him, in case they should succeed in taking possession of Prato, what assistance might be expected from the princes of Italy, by his means? Diotisalvi considered the enterprise as imminently dangerous, and almost impracticable; but since it presented a fresh chance of attaining his object, at the risk of others, he advised him to proceed, and promised certain assistance from Bologna and Ferrara, if he could retain Prato not less than fifteen days. Bernardo, whom this promise inspired with a lively hope of success, proceeded secretly to Prato, and communicated with those most disposed to favor him, among whom were the Palandra; and

having arranged the time and plan, informed Diotisalvi of what had been done.

CHAPTER V

Bernardo takes possession of Prato, but is not assisted by the inhabitants--He is taken, and the tumult appeased--Corruption of Florence--The duke of Milan in Florence--The church of Santo Spirito destroyed by fire--The rebellion of Volterra, and the cause of it--Volterra reduced to obedience by force, in accordance with the advice of Lorenzo de' Medici--Volterra pillaged.

Cesare Petrucci held the office of Provost of Prato for the Florentine people, at this period. It is customary with governors of towns, similarly situated, to keep the keys of the gates near their persons; and whenever, in peaceful times, they are required by any of the inhabitants, for entrance or exit, they are usually allowed to be taken. Bernardo was aware of this custom, and about daybreak, presented himself at the gate which looks toward Pistoia, accompanied by the Palandra and about one hundred persons, all armed. Their confederates within the town also armed themselves, and one of them asked the governor for the keys, alleging, as a pretext, that some one from the country wished to enter. The governor not entertaining the slightest suspicion, sent a servant with them. When at a convenient distance, they were taken by the conspirators, who, opening the gates, introduced Bernardo and his followers. They divided themselves into two parties, one of which, led by Salvestro, an inhabitant of Prato, took possession of the citadel; the other following Bernardo, seized the palace, and placed Cesare with all his family in the custody of some of their number. They then raised

the cry of liberty, and proceeded through the town. It was now day, and many of the inhabitants hearing the disturbance, ran to the piazza where, learning that the fortress and the palace were taken and the governor with all his people made prisoners, they were utterly astonished, and could not imagine how it had occurred. The eight citizens, possessing the supreme authority, assembled in their palace to consider what was best to be done. In the meantime, Bernardo and his followers, on going round the town, found no encouragement, and being told that the Eight had assembled, went and declared the nature of their enterprise, which he said was to deliver the country from slavery, reminding them how glorious it would be for those who took arms to effect such an honorable object, for they would thus obtain permanent repose and everlasting fame. He called to recollection their ancient liberty and present condition, and assured them of certain assistance, if they would only, for a few days, aid in resisting the forces the Florentines might send against them. He said he had friends in Florence who would join them as soon as they found the inhabitants resolved to support him. His speech did not produce the desired effect upon the Eight, who replied that they knew not whether Florence was free or enslaved, for that was a matter which they were not called upon to decide; but this they knew very well, that for their own part, they desired no other liberty than to obey the magistrates who governed Florence, from whom they had never received any injury sufficient to make them desire a change. They therefore advised him to set the governor at liberty, clear the place of his people, and, as quickly as possible, withdraw from the danger he had so rashly incurred. Bernardo

was not daunted by these words, but determined to try whether fear could influence the people of Prato, since entreaties produced so little effect. In order to terrify them, he determined to put Cesare to death, and having brought him out of prison, ordered him to be hanged at the windows of the palace. He was already led to the spot with a halter around his neck, when seeing Bernardo giving directions to hasten his end, he turned to him, and said: "Bernardo, you put me to death, thinking that the people of Prato will follow you; but the direct contrary will result; for the respect they have for the rectors which the Florentine people send here is so great, that as soon as they witness the injury inflicted upon me, they will conceive such a disgust against you as will inevitably effect your ruin. Therefore, it is not by my death, but by the preservation of my life, that you can attain the object you have in view; for if I deliver your commands, they will be much more readily obeyed, and following your directions, we shall soon attain the completion of your design." Bernardo, whose mind was not fertile in expedients, thought the advice good, and commanded Cesare, on being conducted to a veranda which looked upon the piazza, to order the people of Prato to obey him, and having done which, Cesare was led back to prison.

The weakness of the conspirators was obvious; and many Florentines residing in the town, assembled together, among whom, Giorgio Ginori, a knight of Rhodes, took arms first against them, and attacked Bernardo, who traversed the piazza, alternately entreating and threatening those who refused to obey him, and being surrounded by Giorgio's followers, he

was wounded and made prisoner. This being done, it was easy to set the governor at liberty and subdue the rest, who being few, and divided into several parties, were nearly all either secured or slain. An exaggerated report of these transactions reached Florence, it being told there that Prato was taken, the governor and his friends put to death, and the place filled with the enemy; and that Pistoia was also in arms, and most of the citizens in the conspiracy. In consequence of this alarming account, the palace as quickly filled with citizens, who consulted with the Signory what course ought to be adopted. At this time, Roberto da San Severino, one of the most distinguished generals of this period, was at Florence, and it was therefore determined to send him, with what forces could be collected, to Prato, with orders that he should approach the place, particularly observe what was going on, and provide such remedies as the necessity of the case and his own prudence should suggest. Roberto had scarcely passed the fortress of Campi, when he was met by a messenger from the governor, who informed him that Bernardo was taken, his followers either dispersed or slain, and everything restored to order. He consequently returned to Florence, whither Bernardo was shortly after conveyed, and when questioned by the magistracy concerning the real motives of such a weak conspiracy, he said, he had undertaken it, because, having resolved to die in Florence rather than live in exile, he wished his death to be accompanied by some memorable action.

This disturbance having been raised and quelled almost at the same time, the citizens returned to their accustomed mode of life, hoping to enjoy, without anxiety, the state they had now established and confirmed. Hence

arose many of those evils which usually result from peace; for the youth having become more dissolute than before, more extravagant in dress, feasting, and other licentiousness, and being without employment, wasted their time and means on gaming and women; their principal study being how to appear splendid in apparel, and attain a crafty shrewdness in discourse; he who could make the most poignant remark being considered the wisest, and being most respected. These manners derived additional encouragement from the followers of the duke of Milan, who, with his duchess and the whole ducal court, as it was said, to fulfill a vow, came to Florence, where he was received with all the pomp and respect due to so great a prince, and one so intimately connected with the Florentine people. Upon this occasion the city witnessed an unprecedented exhibition; for, during Lent, when the church commands us to abstain from animal food, the Milanese, without respect for either God or his church, ate of it daily. Many spectacles were exhibited in honor of the duke, and among others, in the temple of Santo Spirito, was represented the descent of the Holy Ghost among the apostles; and in consequence of the numerous fires used upon the occasion, some of the woodwork became ignited, and the church was completely destroyed by the flames. Many thought that the Almighty being offended at our misconduct, took this method of signifying his displeasure. If, therefore, the duke found the city full of courtly delicacies, and customs unsuitable to well-regulated conduct, he left it in a much worse state. Hence the good citizens thought it necessary to restrain these improprieties, and made a law to put a stop to extravagance in dress, feasts, and funerals.

In the midst of this universal peace, a new and unexpected disturbance arose in Tuscany. Certain citizens of Volterra had discovered an alum-mine in their district, and being aware of the profit derivable from it, in order to obtain the means of working and securing it, they applied to some Florentines, and allowed them to share in the profits. This, as is frequently the case with new undertakings, at first excited little attention from the people of Volterra; but in time, finding the profits derived from it had become considerable, they fruitlessly endeavored to effect what at first might have been easily accomplished. They began by agitating the question in their councils, declaring it grossly improper that a source of wealth discovered in the public lands should be converted to the emolument of private individuals. They next sent advocates to Florence, and the question was referred to the consideration of certain citizens, who, either through being bribed by the party in possession, or from a sincere conviction, declared the aim of the people of Volterra to be unjust in desiring to deprive their citizens of the fruit of their labor; and decided that the alum-pit was the rightful property of those who had hitherto wrought it; but, at the same time, recommended them to pay an annual sum by way of acknowledgment to the city. This answer instead of abating, served only to increase the animosities and tumult in Volterra, and absorbed entire attention both in the councils and throughout the city; the people demanding the restitution of what they considered their due, and the proprietors insisting upon their right to retain what they had originally acquired, and what had been subsequently been confirmed to them by the decision of the Florentines. In the midst of these

disturbances, a respectable citizen, named Il Pecorino, was killed, together with several others, who had embraced the same side, whose houses were also plundered and burned; and the fury of the mob rose to such a height, that they were with difficulty restrained from putting the Florentine rectors to death.

After the first outrage, the Volterrani immediately determined to send ambassadors to Florence, who intimated, that if the Signory would allow them their ancient privileges, the city would remain subject to them as formerly. Many and various were the opinions concerning the reply to be made. Tommaso Soderini advised that they should accept the submission of the people of Volterra, upon any conditions with which they were disposed to make it; for he considered it unreasonable and unwise to kindle a flame so near home that it might burn their own dwelling; he suspected the pope's ambition, and was apprehensive of the power of the king; nor could he confide in the friendship either of the duke or the Venetians, having no assurance of the sincerity of the latter, or the valor of the former. He concluded by quoting that trite proverb, "Meglio un magro accordo che una grassa vittoria."[*] On the other hand, Lorenzo de' Medici, thinking this an opportunity for exhibiting his prudence and wisdom, and being strenuously supported by those who envied the influence of Tommaso Soderini, resolved to march against them, and punish the arrogance of the people of Volterra with arms; declaring that if they were not made a striking example, others would, without the least fear or respect, upon every slight occasion, adopt a similar course. The enterprise being resolved on, the Volterrani were told that

they could not demand the observance of conditions which they themselves had broken, and therefore must either submit to the direction of the Signory or expect war. With this answer they returned to their city, and prepared for its defense; fortifying the place, and sending to all the princes of Italy to request assistance, none of whom listened to them, except the Siennese and the lord of Piombino, who gave them some hope of aid. The Florentines on the other hand, thinking success dependent principally upon celerity, assembled ten thousand foot and two thousand horse, who, under the command of Federigo, lord of Urbino, marched into the country of Volterra and quickly took entire possession of it. They then encamped before the city, which, being in a lofty situation, and precipitous on all sides, could only be approached by a narrow pass near the church of St. Alessandro. The Volterrani had engaged for their defense about one thousand mercenaries, who, perceiving the great superiority of the Florentines, found the place untenable, and were tardy in their defensive operations, but indefatigable in the constant injuries they committed upon the people of the place. Thus these poor citizens were harassed by the enemy without, and by their own soldiery within; so, despairing of their safety, they began to think of a capitulation; and, being unable to obtain better terms, submitted to the discretion of the Florentine commissaries, who ordered the gates to be opened, and introduced the greater part of their forces. They then proceeded to the palace, and commanded the priors to retire to their homes; and, on the way thither, one of them was in derision stripped by the soldiers. From this beginning (so much more easily are men predisposed to evil than to good) originated the pillage and destruction

of the city; which for a whole day suffered the greatest horrors, neither women nor sacred places being spared; and the soldiery, those engaged for its defense as well as its assailants, plundered all that came within their reach. The news of this victory was received with great joy at Florence, and as the expedition had been undertaken wholly by the advice of Lorenzo, he acquired great reputation. Upon which one of the intimate friends of Tommaso Soderini, reminding him of the advice he had given, asked him what he thought of the taking of Volterra; to which he replied, "To me the place seems rather lost than won; for had it been received on equitable terms, advantage and security would have been the result; but having to retain it by force it will in critical junctures, occasion weakness and anxiety, and in times of peace, injury and expense."

[*] A lean peace is better than a fat victory.

CHAPTER VI

Origin of the animosity between Sixtus IV. and Lorenzo de' Medici--Carlo di Braccio da Perugia attacks the Siennese--Carlo retires by desire of the Florentines--Conspiracy against Galeazzo, duke of Milan--His vices--He is slain by the conspirators--Their deaths.

The pope, anxious to retain the territories of the church in obedience, had caused Spoleto to be sacked for having, through internal factions, fallen into rebellion. Citta di Castello being in the same state of contumacy, he besieged that place; and Niccolo Vitelli its prince, being on intimate terms with Lorenzo de' Medici, obtained assistance from him, which, though inadequate, was quite enough to originate that enmity between Sixtus IV. and the Medici afterward productive of such unhappy results. Nor would this have been so long in development had not the death of Frate Piero, cardinal of St. Sixtus, taken place; who, after having traveled over Italy and visited Venice and Milan (under the pretense of doing honor to the marriage of Ercole, marquis of Ferrara), went about sounding the minds of the princes, to learn how they were disposed toward the Florentines. But upon his return he died, not without suspicion of having been poisoned by the Venetians, who found they would have reason to fear Sixtus if he were allowed to avail himself of the talents and exertions of Frate Piero. Although of very low extraction, and meanly brought up within the walls of a convent, he had no sooner attained the distinction of the scarlet hat, than he exhibited such inordinate pride and ambition, that the pontificate

seemed too little for him, and he gave a feast in Rome which would have seemed extraordinary even for a king, the expense exceeding twenty thousand florins. Deprived of this minister, the designs of Sixtus proceeded with less promptitude. The Florentines, the duke, and the Venetians having renewed their league, and allowed the pope and the king to join them if they thought proper, the two latter also entered into a league, reserving an opening for the others if they were desirous to become parties to it. Italy was thus divided in two factions; for circumstances daily arose which occasioned ill feeling between the two leagues; as occurred with respect to the island of Cyprus, to which Ferrando laid claim, and the Venetians occupied. Thus the pope and the king became more closely united. Federigo, prince of Urbino, was at this time one of the first generals of Italy; and had long served the Florentines. In order, if possible, to deprive the hostile league of their captain, the pope advised, and the king requested him to pay a visit to them. To the surprise and displeasure of the Florentines, Federigo complied; for they thought the same fate awaited him as had befallen Niccolo Piccinino. However, the result was quite different; for he returned from Naples and Rome greatly honored, and with the appointment of general to their forces. They also endeavored to gain over to their interest the lords of Romagna and the Siennese, that they might more easily injure the Florentines, who, becoming aware of these things, used their utmost endeavors to defend themselves against the ambition of their enemies; and having lost Federigo d'Urbino, they engaged Roberto da Rimino in his place, renewed the league with the Perugini and formed one with the prince of Faenza. The pope and the king

assigned, as the reasons of their animosity against the Florentines, that they wished to withdraw them from the Venetian alliance, and associate them with their own league; for the pope did not think the church could maintain her reputation, nor the Count Girolamo retain the states of Romagna, while the Florentines and the Venetians remained united. The Florentines conjectured their design was to set them at enmity with the Venetians, not so much for the sake of gaining their friendship as to be able the more easily to injure them. Two years passed away in these jealousies and discontents before any disturbance broke out; but the first which occurred, and that but trivial, took place in Tuscany.

Braccio of Perugia, whom we have frequently mentioned as one of the most distinguished warriors of Italy, left two sons, Oddo and Carlo; the latter was of tender years; the former, as above related, was slain by the people of Val di Lamona; but Carlo, when he came to mature age, was by the Venetians, out of respect for the memory of his father, and the hopes they entertained from himself, received among the condottieri of their republic. The term of his engagement having expired, he did not design to renew it immediately, but resolved to try if, by his own influence and his father's reputation, he could recover possession of Perugia. To this the Venetians willingly consented, for they usually extended their dominion by any changes that occurred in the neighboring states. Carlo consequently came into Tuscany, but found more difficulties in his attempt upon Perugia than he had anticipated, on account of its being allied with the Florentines; and desirous of doing

something worthy of memory, he made war upon the Siennese, alleging them to be indebted to him for services performed by his father in the affairs of that republic, and attacked them with such impetuosity as to threaten the total overthrow of their dominion. The Siennese, ever ready to suspect the Florentines, persuaded themselves that this outrage had been committed with their cognizance, and made heavy complaints to the pope and the king against them. They also sent ambassadors to Florence to complain of the injuries they had suffered, and adroitly intimated, that if Carlo had not been secretly supported he could not have made war upon them with such perfect security. The Florentines denied all participation in the proceedings of Carlo, expressed their most earnest wish to do everything in their power to put a stop to them, and allowed the ambassadors to use whatever terms they pleased in the name of the Signory, to command him to desist. Carlo complained that the Florentines, by their unwillingness to support him, had deprived themselves of a most valuable acquisition and him of great glory; for he could have insured them the possession of the whole territory in a short time, from the want of courage in the people and the ineffectual provision they had made for their defense. He then withdrew to his engagement under the Venetians; but the Siennese, although delivered from such imminent peril by the Florentines, were still very indignant against them; considering themselves under no obligation to those who had delivered them from an evil to which they had first exposed them.

While the transactions between the king and the pope were in progress, and those in Tuscany in the manner we have related, an event of greater

importance occurred in Lombardy. Cola Montano, a learned and ambitious man, taught the Latin language to the youth of the principal families in Milan. Either out of hatred to the character and manners of the duke, or from some other cause, he constantly deprecated the condition of those who live under a bad prince; calling those glorious and happy who had the good fortune to be born and live in a republic. He endeavored to show that the most celebrated men had been produced in republics, and not reared under princes; that the former cherish virtue, while the latter destroy it; the one deriving advantage from virtuous men, while the latter naturally fear them. The youths with whom he was most intimate were Giovanni Andrea Lampognano, Carlo Visconti, and Girolamo Ogliato. He frequently discussed with them the faults of their prince, and the wretched condition of those who were subject to him; and by constantly inculcating his principles, acquired such an ascendancy over their minds as to induce them to bind themselves by oath to effect the duke's destruction, as soon as they became old enough to attempt it. Their minds being fully occupied with this design, which grew with their years, the duke's conduct and their own private injuries served to hasten its execution. Galeazzo was licentious and cruel, of both which vices he had given such repeated proofs, that he became odious to all. Not content with corrupting the wives of the nobility, he also took pleasure in making it notorious; nor was he satisfied with murdering individuals unless he effected their deaths by some unusual cruelty. He was suspected of having destroyed his own mother; for, not considering himself prince while she was present, he conducted himself in such a manner as induced her to withdraw from his court, and, travelling toward

Cremona, which she obtained as part of her marriage portion, she was seized with a sudden illness, and died upon the road; which made many think her son had caused her death. The duke had dishonored both Carlo and Girolamo in respect to their wives or other female relatives, and had refused to concede to Giovanandrea possession of the monastery of Miramondo, of which he had obtained a grant from the pope for a near relative. These private injuries increased the young men's desire for vengeance, and the deliverance of their country from so many evils; trusting that whenever they should succeed in destroying the duke, many of the nobility and all the people would rise in their defense. Being resolved upon their undertaking, they were often together, which, on account of their long intimacy, did not excite any suspicion. They frequently discussed the subject; and in order to familiarize their minds with the deed itself, they practiced striking each other in the breast and in the side with the sheathed daggers intended to be used for the purpose. On considering the most suitable time and place, the castle seemed insecure; during the chase, uncertain and dangerous; while going about the city for his own amusement, difficult if not impracticable; and, at a banquet, of doubtful result. They, therefore, determined to kill him upon the occasion of some procession or public festivity when there would be no doubt of his presence, and where they might, under various pretexts, assemble their friends. It was also resolved that if one of their number were prevented from attending, on any account whatever, the rest should put him to death in the midst of their armed enemies.

It was now the close of the year 1476, near Christmas, and as it was customary for the duke to go upon St. Stephen's day, in great solemnity, to the church of that martyr, they considered this the most suitable opportunity for the execution of their design. Upon the morning of that day they ordered some of their most trusty friends and servants to arm, telling them they wished to go to the assistance of Giovanandrea, who, contrary to the wish of some of his neighbors, intended to turn a watercourse into his estate; but that before they went they wished to take leave of the prince. They also assembled, under various pretenses, other friends and relatives, trusting that when the deed was accomplished, everyone would join them in the completion of their enterprise. It was their intention, after the duke's death, to collect their followers together and proceed to those parts of the city where they imagined the plebeians would be most disposed to take arms against the duchess and the principal ministers of state, and they thought the people, on account of the famine which then prevailed, would easily be induced to follow them; for it was their design to give up the houses of Cecco Simonetta, Giovanni Botti, and Francesco Lucani, all leading men in the government, to be plundered, and by this means gain over the populace and restore liberty to the community. With these ideas, and with minds resolved upon their execution, Giovanandrea, together with the rest, were early at the church, and heard mass together; after which, Giovanandrea, turning to a statue of St. Ambrose, said, "O patron of our city! thou knowest our intention, and the end we would attain, by so many dangers; favor our enterprise, and prove, by protecting the oppressed, that tyranny is offensive to thee." To the duke, on the other

hand, when intending to go to the church, many omens occurred of his approaching death; for in the morning, having put on a cuirass, as was his frequent custom, he immediately took it off again, either because it inconvenienced him, or that he did not like its appearance. He then wished to hear mass in the castle, and found that the priest who officiated in the chapel had gone to St. Stephen's, and had taken with him the sacred utensils. On this he desired the service to be performed by the bishop of Como, who acquainted him with preventing circumstances. Thus, almost compelled, he determined to go to the church; but before his departure, caused his sons, Giovan Galeazzo and Ermes, to be brought to him, whom he embraced and kissed several times, seeming reluctant to part with them. He then left the castle, and, with the ambassadors of Ferrara and Mantua on either hand, proceeded to St. Stephen's. The conspirators, to avoid exciting suspicion, and to escape the cold, which was very severe, had withdrawn to an apartment of the archpriest, who was a friend of theirs, but hearing the duke's approach, they came into the church, Giovanandrea and Girolamo placing themselves upon the right hand of the entrance, and Carlo on the left. Those who led the procession had already entered, and were followed by the duke, surrounded by such a multitude as is usual on similar occasions. The first attack was made by Lampognano and Girolamo, who, pretending to clear the way for the prince, came close to him, and grasping their daggers, which, being short and sharp, were concealed in the sleeves of their vests, struck at him. Lampognano gave him two wounds, one in the belly, the other in the throat. Girolamo struck him in the throat and breast. Carlo Visconti, being nearer the door, and the duke having

passed, could not wound him in front: but with two strokes, transpierced his shoulder and spine. These six wounds were inflicted so instantaneously, that the duke had fallen before anyone was aware of what had happened, and he expired, having only once ejaculated the name of the Virgin, as if imploring her assistance. A great tumult immediately ensued, several swords were drawn, and as often happens in sudden emergencies, some fled from the church, and others ran toward the scene of tumult, both without any definite motive or knowledge of what had occurred. Those, however, who were nearest the duke and had seen him slain, recognizing the murderers, pursued them. Giovanandrea, endeavoring to make his way out of the church, proceeded among the women, who being numerous, and according to their custom, seated upon the ground, was prevented in his progress by their apparel, and being overtaken, he was killed by a Moor, one of the duke's footmen. Carlo was slain by those immediately around him. Girolamo Olgiato passed through the crowd, and got out of the church; but seeing his companions dead, and not knowing where else to go, he proceeded home, where his father and brothers refused to receive him; his mother only, having compassion on her son recommended him to a priest, an old friend of the family, who, disguising him in his own apparel, led him to his house. Here he remained two days, not without hope that some disturbance might arise in Milan which would contribute to his safety. This not occurring, and apprehensive that his hiding place would be discovered, he endeavored to escape in disguise, but being observed, he was given over to justice, and disclosed all the particulars of the conspiracy. Girolamo was twenty-three years of age, and exhibited no less composure at his death

than resolution in his previous conduct, for being stripped of his apparel, and in the hands of the executioner, who stood by with the sword unsheathed, ready to deprive him of life, he repeated the following words, in the Latin tongue, in which he was well versed: "Mors acerba, fama perpetua, stabit vetus memoria facti."

The enterprise of these unfortunate young men was conducted with secrecy and executed with resolution; and they failed for want of the support of those whom they expected would rise in their defense. Let princes therefore learn to live, so as to render themselves beloved and respected by their subjects, that none may have hope of safety after having destroyed them; and let others see how vain is the expectation which induces them to trust so much to the multitude, as to believe, that even when discontented, they will either embrace or ward off their dangers. This event spread consternation all over Italy; but those which shortly afterward occurred in Florence caused much more alarm, and terminated a peace of twelve years' continuance, as will be shown in the following book; which, having commenced with blood and horror, will have a melancholy and tearful conclusion.