

FLORENTINE HISTORIES

by

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

A New Translation by

LAURA F. BANFIELD

and

HARVEY C. MANSFIELD, JR.

With an Introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

COPYRIGHT © 1988 BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PUBLISHED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS,
41 WILLIAM STREET, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM:
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

MACHIAVELLI, NICCOLÒ, 1469-1527.

FLORENTINE HISTORIES.

TRANSLATION OF: ISTORIE FIORENTINE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: P.

INCLUDES INDEX.

1. FLORENCE (ITALY)—HISTORY—TO 1421. 2. FLORENCE
(ITALY)—HISTORY—1421-1737. I. TITLE.

DG736.3.M3313 1988 945'.51 87-38503
(ALK. PAPER)

ISBN 0-691-05521-1

ISBN 0-691-00863-9 (PBK.)

FIRST PRINCETON PAPERBACK PRINTING, 1990

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN COMPOSED IN LINOTRON BEMBO

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS BOOKS ARE PRINTED ON

ACID-FREE PAPER, AND MEET THE GUIDELINES FOR

PERMANENCE AND DURABILITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON

PRODUCTION GUIDELINES FOR BOOK LONGEVITY OF THE

COUNCIL ON LIBRARY RESOURCES

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C O N T E N T S

<i>Translators' Introduction</i>	vii
<i>A Note on the Translation</i>	xvii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xix

F L O R E N T I N E H I S T O R I E S

Letter dedicatory	3
Preface	6
BOOK I, Chapters 1–39	9
BOOK II, Chapters 1–42	52
BOOK III, Chapters 1–29	105
BOOK IV, Chapters 1–33	146
BOOK V, Chapters 1–35	185
BOOK VI, Chapters 1–38	230
BOOK VII, Chapters 1–34	276
BOOK VIII, Chapters 1–36	317
<i>Bibliography</i>	365
<i>Index</i>	369

ABBREVIATIONS

AW *The Art of War*

D *Discourses on Livy*

FH *Florentine Histories*

NM Niccolò Machiavelli

P *The Prince*

Florentine Histories



TO THE MOST HOLY
AND BLESSED
FATHER
OUR LORD CLEMENT
THE SEVENTH:
HIS HUMBLE SERVANT
NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

AFTER I was commissioned by your Holiness, Most Blessed and Holy Father, when your fortune was lower,¹ that I might write about the things done by the Florentine people, I used all the diligence and art lent to me by nature and experience to satisfy you. And since I have come now, in my writing, to those times which, through the death of the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici,² brought a change of form in Italy, and because the things that followed afterwards were higher and greater and are to be described in a higher and greater spirit, I judged it would be well to reduce to one volume all that I had described up to those times and to present it to Your Most Holy Blessedness, so that you may begin to taste in some part the fruits of your seeds and of my labors.

So in reading this, Your Holy Blessedness will see first, after the Roman Empire began to lose its power³ in the West, with how many disasters and how many princes over many centuries Italy overturned its states.⁴ You will see how the pontiff, the Venetians, the kingdom of Na-

¹ This work was commissioned on November 8, 1520, by Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) through the intervention of Giulio de' Medici, then a cardinal, who became Pope Clement VII in 1523. Eight books of the *Florentine Histories* (no more were completed) were presented to Clement VII in Rome by Machiavelli in May 1525.

² In 1492; see *FH* VIII 36, the last chapter.

³ NM does not use one word for "power," such as *potere* in modern Italian; rather, he uses two words, *potestà* and *potenza*. In this he follows the Latin usage of Thomas Aquinas and Marsilius, as well as the Italian of Dante. In their writings *potestà* and *potestas* appear to mean a power (sometimes legal) that may be exercised, as opposed to *potenza* and *potentia* for power that must be exercised. In this translation the less frequent *potestà* will be footnoted.

⁴ *Stato* means both status and state, as today, but the meanings are more closely con-

ples, and the duchy of Milan took the first ranks and commands in the land;⁵ you will see how your fatherland, which had removed itself because of its division from submission to the emperors, remained divided until the time when it began to govern itself under the shelter of Your House.⁶ And because I was particularly charged and commanded by Your Holy Blessedness that I write about the things done by your ancestors in such a mode that it might be seen I was far from all flattery (for just as you like to hear true praise of men, so does feigned praise presented for the sake of favor⁷ displease you), I very much fear that in describing the goodness of Giovanni, the wisdom of Cosimo, the humanity of Piero, and the magnificence and prudence of Lorenzo,⁸ it may appear to Your Holiness that I have transgressed your commands. For this I excuse myself to you and to anyone to whom such descriptions are displeasing as hardly faithful, because, when I found that the records of those who described them at various times were full of praise for them, I was obliged either to describe them as I found them, or out of envy to be silent about them. And if under those remarkable deeds of theirs was hidden an ambition contrary to the common utility, as some say, I who do not know it am not bound to write about it; for in all my narrations I have never wished to conceal an indecent deed with a decent cause, or to obscure a praiseworthy deed as if it were done for a contrary end.

But how far I am from flattery may be known from all parts of my history, and especially in speeches and in private reasonings, direct as well as indirect, which with their judgments and their order preserve the proper humor of the person speaking without any reservation. I shun hateful words in all places as of little need to the dignity and truthfulness of the history. Thus no one who correctly considers my writings can reproach me as a flatterer, especially when they see how I have not said very much in memory of the father of Your Holiness,⁹ the cause of this being his short life, during which he could not have made himself known; nor could I have rendered him illustrious by writing. Nonetheless, his deeds

nected. *Stato* is the status of a person or group while dominating someone else (in this case, the states of Italy dominating Italians). Although NM sometimes speaks of “the state,” he always means someone’s state and does not refer to an impersonal state. See Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., “On the Impersonality of the Modern State: A Comment on Machiavelli’s Use of *Stato*.”

⁵ Lit.: province.

⁶ The Medici House; see *FH* IV 11, 16.

⁷ Lit.: grace.

⁸ On Giovanni de’ Medici (1360–1429), see *FH* IV 16; on Cosimo de’ Medici (1389–1464), *FH* VII 5; on Piero de’ Medici (1416–1469), *FH* VII 5, 10, 23; on Lorenzo de’ Medici (1448–1492), *FH* VIII 36.

⁹ Giuliano de’ Medici (1453–1478), killed in the Pazzi conspiracy; see *FH* VIII 6.

were sufficiently great and magnificent for having fathered Your Holiness—a deed which outweighs those of his ancestors by a great deal and which will add more centuries to his fame than his stingy fortune denied him years of life. I have striven, meanwhile, Most Holy and Blessed Father, in this description of mine, while not staining the truth, to satisfy everyone; and perhaps I will not have satisfied anyone; nor would I wonder if this were to be the case, because I judge it impossible without offending many to describe things in their times. Nonetheless, I come happily to the task, hoping that just as I am honored and nourished by the humanity of Your Blessedness, so will I be helped and defended by the armed legions of your most holy judgment; and with the same spirit¹⁰ and confidence with which I have written until now will I pursue my undertaking,¹¹ so long as life does not leave me and Your Holiness does not abandon me.

¹⁰ *Animo* refers to the “spirit” with which human beings defend themselves, as opposed to the “higher and greater spirit” (*spirito*) they may rise to; see the first paragraph above and *P, Let. Ded.* *Animo* can also mean “mind” in the sense of “intent,” but not in the sense of “intellect”; see the first words of the Preface, below.

¹¹ *Impresa* will be translated as “undertaking,” “enterprise,” or “campaign.”

P R E F A C E

MY intent, when I at first decided to write down the things done at home and abroad¹ by the Florentine people, was to begin my narration with the year of the Christian religion 1434, at which time the Medici family, through the merits of Cosimo and his father Giovanni, gained more authority than anyone else in Florence; for I thought that Messer Leonardo d'Arezzo and Messer Poggio, two very excellent historians, had told everything in detail that had happened from that time backwards.² But when I had read their writings diligently so as to see with what orders and modes they proceeded in writing, so that by imitating them our history might be better approved by readers, I found that in the descriptions of the wars waged by the Florentines with foreign princes and peoples they had been very diligent, but as regards civil discords and internal enmities, and the effects arising from them, they were altogether silent about the one and so brief about the other as to be of no use to readers or pleasure to anyone. I believe they did this either because these actions seemed to them so feeble that they judged them unworthy of being committed to memory by written word, or because they feared that they might offend the descendants of those they might have to slander in their narrations. These two causes (may it be said by their leave) appear to me altogether unworthy of great men, for if nothing else delights or instructs in history, it is that which is described in detail; if no other lesson is useful to the citizens who govern republics, it is that which shows the causes of the hatreds and divisions in the city, so that when they have become wise through the dangers of others, they may be able to maintain themselves united. And if every example of a republic is moving, those which one reads concerning one's own are much more so and much more useful; and if in any other republic there were ever notable divisions, those of Florence are most notable. For most other republics about which we have any information have been content with one division by which, depending on accidents, they have sometimes expanded and sometimes ruined their city; but Florence, not content with one, made many. In Rome, as everyone knows, after the kings were driven out, disunion between the

¹ Lit.: inside and outside.

² Leonardo Bruni of Arezzo (1374–1444) and Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1454), authors of histories of Florence; see the introduction.

nobles and the plebs arose and Rome was maintained by it until its ruin.³ So it was in Athens, and so in all the other republics flourishing in those times. But in Florence the nobles were, first, divided among themselves; then the nobles and the people; and in the end the people and the plebs: and it happened many times that the winning party was divided in two. From such divisions came as many dead, as many exiles, and as many families destroyed as ever occurred in any city in memory. And truly, in my judgment no other instance appears to me to show so well the power of our city as the one derived from these divisions, which would have had the force to annihilate any great and very powerful city. Nonetheless ours, it appeared, became ever greater from them; so great was the virtue of those citizens and the power of their genius and their spirit to make themselves and their fatherland great that as many as remained free from so many evils were more able by their virtue to exalt it, than could the malice of those accidents that had diminished it overwhelm it. And there is no doubt that had Florence enjoyed such prosperity after it had freed itself from the Empire as to have obtained a form of government to maintain it united, I know no republic either modern or ancient that would have been its superior, so full of virtue, of arms, and of industry would it have been. For one sees that after it had driven out the Ghibellines in such numbers that Tuscany and Lombardy were filled with them, the Guelfs, together with those who remained inside, drew off 1,200 men of arms and 12,000 infantry from the city's own citizens in the war against Arezzo, a year before the battle of Campaldino.⁴ Afterwards in the war waged against Filippo Visconti, duke of Milan, when the Florentines had to make trial of their industry rather than rely on their own arms (for these had been exhausted at the time), one may see that in the five years the war lasted,⁵ they spent 3,500,000 florins. When it was over, they were not content with peace, and to show further the power of their city, they went into the field at Lucca.⁶

I do not know, therefore, what cause would make these divisions unworthy of being described in detail. And if those very noble writers were restrained so as not to offend the memories of those whom they had to reason about, they were deceived and showed they knew little about the ambition of men and the desire they have to perpetuate the name of their ancestors as well as their own: nor did they remember that many who have not had the opportunity to acquire fame through some praiseworthy deed have contrived to acquire it with despicable things. Nor did they

³ See *D* 14–6.

⁴ A victory of the Guelfs in Florence over the Ghibellines in Arezzo, June 11, 1289.

⁵ 1423–1428; see *FH* IV 15.

⁶ 1430–1438.

consider that actions that have greatness in themselves, as do those of governments and states, however they are treated or whatever end they may have, always appear to bring men more honor than blame. When I had considered these things, they made me change my plan, and I decided to begin my history from the beginning of our city. And because it is not my intention to take the place of others, I will describe in detail until 1434 only things happening inside the city, and of those outside I will tell only what is necessary to a knowledge of the things inside. After having passed 1434, I will write in detail about both. Furthermore, in order that this history may be better understood in all times, before I deal with Florence I will describe by what means Italy came to be under those powers that governed it in that time. All of these things, Italian as well as Florentine, will take up four books. The first will narrate briefly all the unforeseen events⁷ in Italy following upon the decline of the Roman Empire up to 1434. The second will carry the narration from the beginning of the city of Florence to the war which, after the expulsion of the duke of Athens, was waged against the pontiff.⁸ The third will end in 1414 with the death of King Ladislas of Naples; and with the fourth we will come to 1434,⁹ from which time onward the things that happened inside Florence and outside, until our present times, will be described in detail.

⁷ Lit.: accidents. *Accidenti* will be translated as "accidents" or as "unforeseen events."

⁸ The duke of Athens was expelled from Florence in 1343, and the war of the Otto Santi took place in 1375. It is described not in Book II but in *FH* III 7.

⁹ The date of the return of Cosimo de' Medici to Florence.

BOOK III

I

THE grave and natural enmities that exist between the men of the people and the nobles, caused by the wish of the latter to command and the former not to obey, are the cause of all evils that arise in cities.¹ For from this diversity of humors all other things that agitate republics take their nourishment. This kept Rome disunited, and this, if it is permissible to compare little things with great, has kept Florence divided, although diverse effects were produced in one city and the other. For the enmities between the people and the nobles at the beginning of Rome that were resolved by disputing were resolved in Florence by fighting. Those in Rome ended with a law, those in Florence with the exile and death of many citizens; those in Rome always increased military virtue, those in Florence eliminated it altogether; those in Rome brought the city from equality in the citizens to a very great inequality, those in Florence reduced it from inequality to a wonderful equality. This diversity of effects may have been caused by the diverse ends these two peoples had, for the people of Rome desired to enjoy the highest honors together with the nobles, while the people of Florence fought to be alone in the government without the participation of the nobles. And because the desire of the Roman people was more reasonable, offenses to the nobles came to be more bearable, so that the nobility would yield easily and without resorting to arms. Thus, after some differences, they would come together to create a law whereby the people would be satisfied and the nobles retain their dignities. On the other side, the desire of the Florentine people was injurious and unjust, so that the nobility readied greater forces for its own defense; and that is why it came to the blood and exile of citizens, and the laws that were made afterwards were not for the common utility but were all ordered in favor of the conqueror. From this it also followed that in the victories of the people the city of Rome became more virtuous, for as men of the people could be placed in the administration of the magistracies, the armies, and the posts of empire together with the nobles, they were filled with the same virtue as the nobles, and that city, by growing in virtue, grew in power. But in Florence, when the people conquered,

¹ See *P* 9; *D* I 5; *FH* II 12.

the nobles were left deprived of the magistracies, and if they wanted to regain them, it was necessary for them not only to be but to appear similar to men of the people in their conduct, spirit, and mode of living. From this arose the variations in coats of arms² and the changes of family titles that the nobles made so as to appear as the people. So the virtue in arms and the generosity of spirit that were in the nobility were eliminated, and in the people, where they never had been, they could not be rekindled; thus did Florence become ever more humble and abject. And whereas Rome, when its virtue was converted into arrogance, was reduced to such straits that it could not maintain itself without a prince, Florence arrived at the point that it could easily have been reordered in any form of government by a wise lawgiver. These things can be clearly recognized in part through the reading of the preceding book, which showed the birth of Florence and the beginning of its freedom, with the causes of its divisions, and how the parties of the nobles and the people ended with the tyranny of the duke of Athens and the ruin of the nobility. It remains now to tell about the enmities between the people and the plebs, and the various accidents they produced.

2

THE power of the nobles having been tamed and the war with the archbishop of Milan ended, it appeared that no cause of scandal remained in Florence. But the evil fortune of our city and its own orders, which were not good, gave rise to enmity between the family of the Albizzi and that of the Ricci, which divided Florence just as at first that between the Buondelmonti and the Uberti and afterwards that between the Donati and the Cerchi had done. The pontiffs, who were then in France, and the emperors, who were in Germany, so as to maintain their reputations in Italy, had sent to it at various times a number of soldiers of various nations; so in these times Englishmen, Germans, and Bretons were there. As these men were left without pay when the wars ended, under an ensign of adventure they laid an assessment on one or another prince. Thus, in the year 1353 one of these companies came to Tuscany captained by Monreale, a Provençal.¹ His arrival frightened all the cities of that province, and not only did the Florentines provide themselves with men by public means but many citizens, among them the Albizzi and the Ricci, armed themselves for their own safety.

² Lit.: ensigns.

¹ Monreale of Albano, a Provençal and Knight of Jerusalem, who in 1354, not 1353, laid assessments on Perugia, Siena, Florence, Arezzo, and Pisa.

These families were full of hatred for each other, and each was thinking how it could crush the other so as to obtain the principality in the republic. They had not yet, however, come to arms but had only encountered each other in the magistracies and in the councils. Thus, when the whole city found itself armed, a quarrel² arose by chance in the Mercato Vecchio; and many people gathered, as they are wont to do in such unforeseen events. As the rumor of it spread, it was reported to the Ricci that the Albizzi were attacking them and to the Albizzi that the Ricci were coming to seek them out. At this the whole city rose up, and the magistrates were able with trouble to check both families, so that in fact the conflict, which had been spread about by chance and not by the fault of either of them, did not take place. Though this accident was slight, it rekindled their spirits further, and each sought with greater diligence to acquire partisans. But as the citizens had already attained such equality through the ruin of the great that the magistrates were more revered than they used to be in the past, they planned to prevail by the ordinary way and without private violence.

3

WE have told before¹ how after the victory of Charles I the magistracy of the Guelf party was created and how it was given great authority over the Ghibellines. Time, various accidents, and new divisions had pushed this authority into oblivion, so that many descendants of the Ghibellines now exercised the first magistracies.² Uguccione de' Ricci, head of that family, therefore arranged to have renewed the law against the Ghibellines, among whom, in the opinion of many, were the Albizzi, who had been born many years ago in Arezzo and had come to live in Florence. Hence Uguccione thought that by renewing this law he could deprive the Albizzi of the magistracies, providing by it that any descendant of the Ghibellines would be condemned if he exercised any magistracy. This design of Uguccione's was disclosed to Piero di Filippo degli Albizzi, and he thought he would favor it, judging that if he opposed it he would declare himself a Ghibelline. This law, therefore, renewed through the ambition of these men, did not subtract but gave reputation to Piero degli Albizzi and was the beginning of many evils: nor can a law be made more damaging to a republic than one that looks back a long time.³ Since Piero had

² Lit.: question.

¹ *FH* II 10, 11.

² This was not in fact the case.

³ See *D* I 37.

thus favored the law, that which had been found by his enemies to impede him was the way to his greatness; for when he had made himself prince of this new order, he obtained ever more authority because he was favored by this new sect of Guelfs above any other. And because no magistrate was found to seek out who might be Ghibellines—which is why the law was not of much value—he provided that authority be given to the captains⁴ to declare who were Ghibellines and, when declared, to notify them and admonish them not to take any magistracy; and if they did not obey the admonition, they would be condemned. From this it arose afterwards that all those in Florence who are deprived of the power to exercise magistracies are called “the admonished.” Thus the captains, their boldness increasing with time, admonished without any respect not only those who merited it but anyone they pleased, moved by whatever avaricious or ambitious cause; and from 1357, when the order began, until ’66, already more than two hundred citizens were admonished. Consequently, the captains and the sect of the Guelfs became powerful, since everyone, for fear of being admonished, honored them, and especially their heads, who were Piero degli Albizzi, Messer Lapo da Castiglione, and Carlo Strozzi. Although this insolent mode of proceeding displeased many, the Ricci were the least content of any others, as it appeared to them that they had been the cause of the disorder through which they saw the republic being ruined and their enemies the Albizzi, counter to their schemes, become very powerful.

4

THEREFORE, when Uguccione de’ Ricci found himself one of the Signori, he wanted to bring an end to the evil of which he and his associates had been the beginning; and with a new law he provided that to the six captains of the party three should be added, two of them from the lesser guildsmen. He also wanted to have those declared Ghibellines to be confirmed as such by twenty-four Guelf citizens deputed for that purpose. This provision tempered for the time being a good part of the power of the captains, so that admonishing was in great part abandoned, and if they still admonished some, these were few. Nonetheless, the sects of Albizzi and Ricci were watchful, and each out of hatred for the other would oppose the other’s alliances, undertakings, and decisions. So they lived with such troubles from 1366 to ’71, during which time the sect of Guelfs regained its forces.

⁴ Of the Guelf party.

In the Buondelmonti family there was a knight called Messer Benchi, who because of his merits in a war against the Pisans had been made a man of the people and by this had become eligible to be one of the Signori. While he was waiting to take his seat in the magistracy, a law was made that no great man who had been made a man of the people be allowed to exercise the office. This act offended Messer Benchi very much, and, foregathering with Piero degli Albizzi, they decided to strike at the lesser people through admonishing and to be alone in the government. And through the favor Messer Benchi had among the ancient nobility and that which Piero had with the greater part of the powerful among the people, they enabled the Guelf sect to regain its forces, and with the new reforms made in the party they ordered things so that they could dispose the captains and the twenty-four citizens to suit themselves. Hence, there was a return to admonishing with more boldness than before, and the house of the Albizzi, as head of this sect, grew steadily. On the other side, the Ricci and their friends did not fail to impede their designs as much as they could; so they lived in very great suspicion, each fearing every sort of ruin for himself.

5

AFTER this, many citizens, moved by love of their fatherland, met in San Piero Scherragio and, having reasoned much about these disorders among themselves, went to the Signori, to whom one of them with more authority spoke in this sense: "Many of us feared, magnificent Signori, to meet together by private order even for a public cause, as we judged we could either be considered presumptuous or be condemned as ambitious. But when we considered that every day and without heed many citizens meet in the loggias or in their houses, not for any public utility but for their own ambition, we judged that since those who gather for the ruin of the republic have no fear, those who meet for the public good and utility ought also not to have fear. Nor do we care about what others judge of us, since others do not value what we can judge of them. The love that we bear, magnificent Signori, for our fatherland first made us gather and now makes us come to you to reason about the evil that one sees already great and yet keeps growing in this republic of ours, and to offer ourselves ready to help you eliminate it. You could succeed in this, though the undertaking may seem difficult, if you will put aside private considerations and with public forces use your great authority. The common corruption of all the Italian cities, magnificent Signori, has corrupted and still corrupts your city, for ever since this province extricated

itself from under the forces of the empire, its cities have had no powerful check to restrain them and have ordered their states and governments so as not to be free but divided into sects. From this have arisen all the other evils and all the other disorders that appear in it. First, there is neither union nor friendship among the citizens, except among those who have knowingly committed some wickedness either against their fatherland or against private persons. And because religion and fear of God have been eliminated in all, an oath and faith given last only as long as they are useful; so men make use of them not to observe them but to serve as a means of being able to deceive more easily. And the more easily and surely the deception succeeds, the more glory and praise is acquired from it; by this, harmful men are praised as industrious and good men are blamed as fools. And truly, in the cities of Italy all that can be corrupted and that can corrupt others is thrown together: the young are lazy, the old lascivious; both sexes at every age are full of foul customs, for which good laws, because they are spoiled by wicked use, are no remedy. From this grows the avarice that is seen in our citizens and the appetite, not for true glory, but for the contemptible honors on which hatreds, enmities, differences, and sects depend; and from these arise deaths, exiles, persecution of the good, exaltation of the wicked. For good men, trusting in their innocence, do not seek out, as do the wicked, those who will defend them and honor them extraordinarily, and so they fall undefended and unhonored. From this example arises the love of party and the power of parties, because bad men out of avarice and ambition, and good men out of necessity, participate in them. And what is most pernicious is to see how the promoters and princes of parties give decent appearance to their intention and their end with a pious word; for always, although they are all enemies of freedom, they oppress it under color of defending the state either of the best¹ or of the people. For the prize they desire to gain by victory is not the glory of having liberated the city but the satisfaction of having overcome others and of having usurped the principality of the city. Having been led to this point, there is nothing so unjust, so cruel, or mean that they do not dare to do it. Hence orders and laws are made not for the public but for personal utility; hence wars, pacts, and friendships are decided not for the common glory but for the satisfaction of few. And if other cities are filled with these disorders, ours is stained with them more than any other; for the laws, the statutes, and the civil orders have always been and still are ordered not in accordance with free life but by the ambition of that party which has come out on top. Whence it arises that always when one party is driven out and one division eliminated,

¹ The *Ottimati*.

another emerges. For in the city that prefers to maintain itself with sects rather than with laws, as soon as one sect is left there without opposition, it must of necessity divide from within itself, because the city cannot defend itself by those private modes that it had ordered in the first place for its own safety. And that this is true, both the ancient and the modern divisions of our city demonstrate. Everyone believed that when the Ghibellines were destroyed, the Guelfs would then live for a long time happily and respected; nonetheless, in a little while they divided into the Whites and the Blacks. After the Whites were conquered, the city was never again without parties: now to favor the exiles, now because of the enmities of the people and the great, always we fought; and by giving to others what we either would not or could not keep among ourselves by accord, we subjected our freedom now to King Robert, now to his brother, now to his son, and at the last to the duke of Athens. Nonetheless, we were never at rest in any state, as we were never in accord to live free and were not content to be slaves. Nor did we hesitate, so much were our orders disposed to divisions even while living in obedience to the king, to substitute for his majesty a very vile man born in Gubbio.² For the honor of this city one ought not even to remember the duke of Athens, whose bitter and tyrannical spirit should have made us wise and taught us how to live. Nonetheless, he had hardly been driven out when we had our arms in hand, and we fought with more hatred and greater rage than we had ever fought together, any other time, so that our ancient nobility was left conquered and again put under the will of the people.³ Nor did many believe that any cause of scandal or party would ever arise again in Florence, since a check had been put on those who by their pride and unbearable ambition appeared to have been the cause. But now it is seen through experience how mistaken the opinion of men is and how false their judgment, for the pride and ambition of the great was not eliminated but taken from them by our men of the people, who now, by the wont of ambitious men, seek to obtain the first rank in the republic. Having no other modes of seizing it than by discords, they have divided the city again; and they have revived the names of Guelf and Ghibelline, which had been eliminated and had better never existed in this republic. And it has been given from above, so that there be nothing perpetual or quiet in human things, that in all republics there be fatal families that are born for their ruin. With these, our republic has been more abundant than any other, for not one but many have agitated and afflicted it as did first the Buondelmonti and the Uberti, then the Donati and the Cerchi, and

² See *FH* II 25.

³ See *FH* II 42.

now—how shameful and ridiculous!—the Ricci and Albizzi agitate and divide it. We have not reminded you of our corrupt habits and our old and continuing divisions to frighten you, but to remind you of their causes and to show you that as you yourselves can remember them, so can we, and to tell you that the example of those old divisions ought not to make you diffident about stopping these. For so great was the power in those ancient families and so great were the favors they had from princes that civil orders and modes were not enough to check them; but now the empire has no force here, the pope is not feared, and all Italy and this city have been brought to such equality that for it to be able to rule itself is not very difficult for us. And this republic of ours especially can not only maintain itself united, notwithstanding former examples to the contrary, but reform itself with good customs and civil modes, providing that you, Signori, prepare yourselves to will to do it. To this we urge you, moved by charity for our fatherland, not by any private passion. And although its corruption be great, eliminate now the evil that affects us, the rage that consumes us, the poison that kills us; and credit the ancient disorders not to the nature of men but to the times, which having changed, you can hope for better fortune for our city through better orders. The malignity of fortune can be overcome with prudence by putting a check on the ambition of those ones,⁴ by annulling the orders that nourish sects, and by adopting those that do in truth conform to a free and civil life. May you be pleased rather to do now, with the benignity of laws, that which, after deferring, men may be required by necessity to do with the support of arms.”

6

THE Signori, moved first by what they knew themselves and then by the authority and urgings of these men, gave authority to fifty-six citizens to see to the safety of the republic. It is very true that most men are more apt to preserve a good order than to know how to find one for themselves. These citizens gave more thought to eliminating the present sects than to taking away the causes of future ones; so they achieved neither the one nor the other. For they did not remove the causes of the new ones, and of those they were watchful of, they made one more powerful than the other, with greater danger to the republic. They therefore excluded from all magistracies, except those of the Guelf party, for three years, three of the Albizzi family and three of the Ricci family, among whom

⁴ The Ricci and the Albizzi.

WHILE these things were proceeding, another tumult arose that hurt¹ the republic a good deal more than the first. The greater part of the arson and robbery that took place in the preceding days had been done by the lowest plebs of the city, and those among them who had shown themselves the boldest feared that with the greater differences quieted and composed, they would be punished for the mistakes committed by them and that, as always happens to them, they would be abandoned by those who had incited them to do evil. Added to this was the hatred that the lesser people had for the rich citizens and princes of the guilds, since it did not appear to them that they had been satisfied for their labor as they believed they justly deserved. For when the city had been divided into guilds in the time of Charles I,² each one was given a head and a government, and it was provided that the subjects of each guild were to be judged by their own heads in civil matters. The guilds, as we have already said, were twelve at the beginning but then, in time, grew until they reached twenty-one; and their power was such that in a few years they had taken over the whole government of the city. And because among them some were more and some less honored, they divided themselves into greater and lesser; seven of them were called "greater" and fourteen "lesser." From this division and from the causes we have narrated above arose the arrogance of the captains of the Party, because those citizens who had been Guelfs of old, in whose governance that magistracy always revolved, favored the people of the greater guilds and persecuted those in the lesser guilds together with their defenders: hence arose the many tumults against them that we have narrated. But in the ordering of the guild corporations, many of those occupations in which the lesser people and the lowest plebs were engaged were left without guild corporations of their own, but were subordinated under various guilds appropriate to the character of their occupation. In consequence, when they were either not satisfied for their labor or in some mode oppressed by their masters, they had no other place of refuge than the magistracy of the guild that governed them, from which it did not appear to them that they got the justice they judged was suitable. And of all the guilds, the one that had and has the most dependents under it was and is the Wool Guild.³ This guild, because it was the most powerful and the first, by authority of all sustained and still sustains with its industry the greater part of the plebs and the lesser people.

¹ Lit.: offended.

² See *FH* II 8.

³ Known as *i Ciompi*.

THUS the men of the plebs, those placed under the Wool Guild as well as those under the other guilds, were, for the causes mentioned, full of indignation. To these was added fear because of the arson and robbery they had done; and they often met by night to discuss events that had occurred and to point out to each other the dangers in which they found themselves. There, one of the most daring and more experienced spoke in this sense so as to inspire the others: "If we had to deliberate now whether to take up arms, to burn and rob the homes of the citizens, to despoil churches, I would be one of those who would judge it was a course to think over, and perhaps I would agree to put quiet poverty ahead of perilous gain. But because arms have been taken up and many evils have been done, it appears to me that one must reason that arms must not be put aside and that we must consider how we can secure ourselves from the evils that have been committed. Certainly I believe that if others do not teach us, necessity does. You see this whole city full of grievance and hatred against us: the citizens meet together; the Signoria is always on the side of the magistrates. You should believe that traps are being set for us and that new forces are being prepared against our strongholds.¹ We must therefore seek two things, and we must have two ends in our deliberations: one is to make it impossible for us to be punished for the things we have done in recent days, and the other is to be able to live with more freedom and more satisfaction than we have in the past. It is to our advantage, therefore, as it appears to me, if we wish that our old errors be forgiven us, to make new ones, redoubling the evils, multiplying the arson and robbery—and to contrive to have many companions in this, because when many err, no one is punished, and though small faults are punished, great and grave ones are rewarded; and when many suffer, few seek for revenge, because universal injuries are borne with greater patience than particular ones. Thus in multiplying evils, we will gain pardon more easily and will open the way for us to have the things we desire to have for our freedom. And it appears to me that we are on the way to a sure acquisition, because those who could hinder us are disunited and rich: their disunion will therefore give us victory, and their riches, when they have become ours, will maintain it for us. Do not let their antiquity of blood, with which they will reproach us, dismay you; for all men, having had the same beginning, are equally ancient and have been made by nature in one mode. Strip all of us naked, you will see that we are alike; dress us in their clothes and them in ours, and without a doubt we shall appear noble and they ignoble, for only poverty and riches make us

¹ Or heads.

unequal. It pains me much when I hear that out of conscience many of you repent the deeds that have been done and that you wish to abstain from new deeds; and certainly, if this is true, you are not the men I believed you to be, for neither conscience nor infamy should dismay you, because those who win, in whatever mode they win, never receive shame from it. And we ought not to take conscience into account, for where there is, as with us, fear of hunger and prison, there cannot and should not be fear of hell. But if you will take note of the mode of proceeding of men, you will see that all those who come to great riches and great power have obtained them either by fraud or by force; and afterwards, to hide the ugliness of acquisition, they make it decent by applying the false title of earnings to things they have usurped by deceit or by violence. And those who, out of either little prudence or too much foolishness, shun these modes always suffocate in servitude or poverty. For faithful servants are always servants and good men are always poor; nor do they ever rise out of servitude unless they are unfaithful and bold, nor out of poverty unless they are rapacious and fraudulent. For God and nature have put all the fortunes of men in their midst, where they are exposed more to rapine than to industry and more to wicked than to good arts, from which it arises that men devour one another and that those who can do less are always the worst off. Therefore, one should use force whenever the occasion for it is given to us; nor can a greater occasion be offered us by fortune than this one, when citizens are still disunited, the Signoria irresolute, and the magistrates dismayed so that they can easily be crushed before they unite and steady their spirits. As a result, either we shall be left princes of all the city, or we shall have so large a part of it that not only will our past errors be pardoned but we shall even have authority enabling us to threaten them with new injuries. I confess this course is bold and dangerous, but when necessity presses, boldness is judged prudence; and spirited men never take account of the danger in great things, for those enterprises that are begun with danger always end with reward, and one never escapes a danger without danger. Moreover, I believe that when one sees the prisons, tortures, and deaths being prepared, standing still is more to be feared than seeking to secure ourselves against them, for in the first case the evils are certain and in the other, doubtful. How many times have I heard you lament the avarice of your superiors and the injustice of your magistrates! Now is the time not only to free ourselves from them but to become so much their superiors that they will have more to lament and fear from you than you from them. The opportunity brought us by the occasion is fleeting, and when it has gone, it will be vain to try to recover it. You see the preparations of your adversaries. Let us be ahead of their thoughts; and whichever of us is first to take up arms again will without doubt be the conqueror, with ruin for the enemy and

exaltation for himself. From this will come honor for many of us and security for all.” These persuasions strongly inflamed spirits that were already hot for evil on their own, so that they decided to take up arms after they had secured more companions to do their will; and they swore an oath to help one another if it should happen that one of them were overwhelmed by the magistrates.

14

WHILE these men were preparing to seize the republic, their design came to the attention of the Signori; for they had in their hands one Simone dalla Piazza,¹ from whom they learned the whole conspiracy and how the conspirators meant to raise an uproar on the following day. Then, when the danger had been seen, they gathered the Collegi and those citizens who together with the syndics of the guilds negotiated over the union of the city (and before everyone was together, night had already come). By these men the Signori were advised that they should have the consuls of the guilds come, who then all advised that all the men at arms in Florence should come and that the Gonfaloniers of the people should be in the piazza in the morning with their armed companies. While Simone was being tortured and the citizens were gathering, the palace clock was being regulated by one Niccolò da San Friano. As Niccolò became aware of what was happening, he returned to his home and filled all his neighborhood with tumult so that in an instant more than a thousand armed men gathered in the Piazza Santo Spirito. This uproar reached the other conspirators, and San Piero Maggiore and San Lorenzo, the places designated by them, were filled with armed men.

Day had already come—it was the twenty-first of July—and in the piazza not more than eighty armed men in favor of the Signori had appeared; not one of the Gonfaloniers had come because, having heard that the whole city was filled with armed men, they feared to leave their homes. The first of the plebs to be in the piazza were those who had gathered at San Piero Maggiore, and at their arrival the armed men did not move. After these appeared another multitude, and, finding no opposition, with terrible cries they demanded their prisoners from the Signoria; and so as to have the prisoners by force since they had not been given up by threats, they burned the houses of Luigi Guicciardini: so the Signori gave them over for fear of worse. Having recovered the prisoners,

¹ “Simone dalla Piazza” is known as “Simoncino dalla Porta a S. Pietro Gattolini” by NM’s source, and it is disputed whether “dalla Piazza” is intended as Simone’s name (Carli) or to describe his usual haunt or plebeian origin (Fiorini).

they took the standard of justice from its executor, and under that banner they burned the houses of many citizens, hunting down those who were hated either for public or for private cause. And many citizens, to avenge their private injuries, led them to the houses of their enemies; for it was enough that a single voice shout out in the midst of the multitude, "to so-and-so's house," or that he who held the standard in his hands turn toward it. They also burned all the records of the Wool Guild. And that they might accompany the many evils they did with some praiseworthy work, they made Salvestro de' Medici and many other citizens knights. The number of all these reached sixty-four, among whom were Benedetto and Antonio degli Alberti, Tommaso Strozzi, and the like who were their confidants, notwithstanding that many of them were knighted forcibly. In this incident, it was more to be noted than anything else that many who saw their houses burned were soon after, on the same day, knighted by the same ones who burned their houses, so close was benefit to injury: this happened to Luigi Guicciardini, Gonfalonier of Justice. The Signori, seeing themselves abandoned in such tumults by the men-at-arms, by the heads of the guilds, and by their own Gonfaloniers, were bewildered, for no one came to their support in accordance with the order that had been given, and of the sixteen standards, only that of the Golden Lion and that of the Squirrel, under Giovenco della Stufa and Giovanni Cambi, appeared. And they lingered in the piazza only a short time, for when they saw they were not being followed by the others, they too departed. On the other hand, some citizens, seeing the fury of this unleashed multitude and the palace abandoned, stayed inside their homes, and some others followed the rabble of armed men so that by being among them they could better defend their houses and those of their friends. And so their power came to be rising and that of the Signori declining. This tumult lasted the whole day; and when night came, they stopped at the palace of Messer Stefano behind the Church of San Barnaba. They numbered more than six thousand; and before day came, with their threats they compelled the guilds to send them their ensigns. Then when morning came, with the Standard of Justice and with the ensigns of the guilds before them, they went to the palace of the Podestà; and as the Podestà refused to give them possession of it, they fought for it and won.

15

THE Signori, attempting to conciliate them since they saw no mode of stopping them by force, called upon four of their Collegi and sent them

to the palace of the Podestà to learn what they had in mind. They found that the heads of the plebs, with the syndics of the guilds and certain citizens, had decided what they wanted to demand from the Signoria. So they returned to the Signoria with four men deputed from the plebs and with these demands: that the Wool Guild could no longer have a foreign judge; that three new guild corporations be formed, one for the carders and dyers, another for the barbers, doublet makers, tailors, and such mechanical arts, the third for the lesser people; and that from these three new guilds there would always be two Signori and from the fourteen lesser guilds three; that the Signoria should provide houses where these new guilds could meet; that no one placed under these guilds could be compelled, for two years, to pay a debt for a sum less than fifty ducats; that the *Monte*¹ suspend payment of interest and only repay capital; that those imprisoned and condemned be absolved; and that honors be restored to all the admonished. They demanded many other things besides these for the benefit of their particular supporters, and on the opposite side they wanted many of their enemies to be imprisoned and admonished. These demands, though dishonorable and grievous² for the republic, were, for fear of worse, immediately decided upon by the Signori, the Collegi, and the council of the people. But to have them brought to completion, it was necessary that they be passed also by the council of the commune, which, since the two councils could not meet on the same day, it was necessary to postpone until the next day. Nonetheless, it appeared that for the time being the guilds were left content and the plebs satisfied; and they promised that when the law was completed, all tumult would stop.

Then when morning came, while the council of the commune was deliberating, the impatient and fickle multitude came into the piazza under the usual ensigns with such loud and terrifying cries that they frightened the whole council and the Signori. On account of this, Guerrante Marnignoli, one of the Signori, who was moved more by fear than by any other private passion, went downstairs under color of guarding the door below and fled to his home. As he came outside, he was unable to conceal himself so as not to be recognized by the mob; nor was any other injury done to him than that the multitude cried out as soon as they saw him that all the Signori should abandon the palace or else they would kill their children and burn down their houses. It was in the midst of this that the law was decided upon and the Signori were enclosed in their chambers; and the council went downstairs and, without going outside, remained in the loggia and the courtyard in despair for the safety of the city, seeing such

¹ Lit.: mountain, the public debt.

² Lit.: grave.

indecent in a multitude and such malignity or fear in those who could have checked or crushed it. The Signori too were confused and doubtful of the safety of their fatherland, as they saw themselves abandoned by one of them and supported by not one citizen with help or even with counsel. Being thus uncertain of what they could or should do, Messer Tommaso Strozzi and Messer Benedetto Alberti, either prompted by their own ambition to remain as Signori of the palace or because they really believed it to be good, persuaded them to yield to this popular impetus and to return to their homes as private individuals. Though others might yield to this advice, given by those who had been at the head of the tumult, Alamanno Acciaiuoli and Niccolò del Bene, two of the Signori, became indignant; and, a little vigor returning to them, they said that if the others wanted to leave, they could not remedy it, but they did not wish, before time required it, to relinquish their authority, lest they lose their lives with their authority. These differences redoubled the fears of the Signori and the indignation of the people, so that the Gonfalonier, preferring to end his magistracy with shame rather than danger, put himself in the care of Messer Tommaso Strozzi, who took him from the palace and conducted him to his houses. The other Signori left in a similar mode, one after the other, so that Alamanno and Niccolò, so as not to be held more spirited than wise, seeing themselves the only ones remaining, also went; and the palace was left in the hands of the plebs and the Eight of War, who had not yet laid aside their magistracy.

16

WHEN the plebs entered the palace, one Michele di Lando, a wool carder, had in his hand the ensign of the Gonfalonier of Justice. This man, barefoot and scantily clothed, climbed up the stairs with the whole mob behind him, and as soon as he was in the audience chamber of the Signori, he stopped; and, turning around to the multitude, he said, "You see: this palace is yours and this city is in your hands. What do you think should be done now?" To which all replied that they wanted him to be Gonfalonier and lord, and to govern them and the city however seemed best to him. Michele accepted the lordship,¹ and because he was a sagacious and prudent man who owed more to nature than to fortune, he resolved to quiet the city and stop the tumults. And to keep the people busy and to give himself time to get in order, he commanded them to seek out one

¹ Lit.: the Signoria.

Ser Nuto who had been designated Bargello² by Messer Lapo da Castiglionchio; the greater number of those around him went off on this errand. And so as to begin with justice the empire he had acquired by grace, he had it publicly commanded that no one burn or steal anything; and to frighten everyone, he had a gallows erected in the piazza. And to give a beginning to the reform of the city, he dismissed the syndics of the guilds and appointed new ones; he deprived the Signori and the Collegi of their magistracies; and he burned the bags of the offices. Meanwhile, Ser Nuto was carried by the multitude to the piazza and hung on the gallows by one foot; and as whoever was around tore off a piece from him, at a stroke there was nothing left of him but his foot. The Eight of War, on the other hand, believing themselves by the departure of the Signori to have been left princes of the city, had already designated new Signori. Anticipating this, Michele sent word to them to leave the palace at once, for he wanted to show everyone that he knew how to govern Florence without their advice. He then had the syndics of the guilds assemble, and he created the Signoria: four from the lesser plebs, two for the greater and two for the lesser guilds. Besides this, he made a new bagging and divided the state into three parts; he wanted one of these to go to the new guilds, another to the lesser, the third to the greater. He gave the income of the shops on the Ponte Vecchio to Messer Salvestro de' Medici and gave himself the podesteria of Empoli; and he gave many other benefits to many other citizens friendly to the plebs, not so much to compensate them for their deeds as that they might at all times defend him against envy.

17

IT appeared to the plebs that Michele in reforming the state had been too partisan toward the greater people, nor did it appear to them that they had as great a part in the government as was necessary to enable them to maintain and defend themselves in it; so, driven by their usual boldness, they took up arms again and under their ensigns came in tumult into the piazza, demanding that the Signori on the stairway come down to decide upon new measures relating to their security and good. Michele saw their arrogance and, in order not to make them more indignant and without learning otherwise what they wanted, censured the mode in which they made their demands and urged them to put down their arms; and then they would be conceded that which by force the Signoria could not concede with dignity. On account of this the multitude became indignant

² Sheriff or police chief.

with the palace and withdrew to Santa Maria Novella, where they ordered eight chiefs from among themselves, with ministers and other orders that gave them reputation and reverence. Thus the city had two seats and was governed by two different princes.

These chiefs decided among themselves that eight men, elected from the guild corporations, should always live in the palace with the Signori, and everything that was decided upon by the Signoria should be confirmed by them. They took from Messer Salvestro de' Medici and from Michele di Lando all that they had been conceded in their other decisions; they assigned offices and subsidies to many among themselves so that they could maintain their rank with dignity. When these decisions were taken, to validate them they sent two of their men to the Signoria to demand that they be confirmed by the councilors, with the purpose of getting what they wanted by force if they could not get it by accord. These two set forth their commission to the Signori with great boldness and greater presumption, and they reproached the Gonfalonier for behaving to them with so much ingratitude and so little respect after the dignity they had given him and the honor they had done him. And, when at the end of their speech they came to threats, Michele was unable to bear such arrogance; and, as he was mindful more of the rank he held than of his low condition, it appeared to him that he must check this extraordinary insolence with an extraordinary mode; and drawing the weapon he had at his waist, he first wounded them gravely and then had them bound and imprisoned. As soon as this thing became known, it inflamed the whole multitude with rage; and, believing that when armed they could attain what they had not obtained when disarmed, they took up their arms with fury and tumult and advanced to compel the Signori by their rage. Michele, on the other hand, was fearful of what might happen and decided to forestall it, thinking that it would be more to his glory to attack others than to wait for the enemy within the walls and to have to flee, as did his predecessors, with dishonor to the palace and with shame for himself. Thus he gathered a large number of citizens who already had begun to reflect on their error, mounted his horse, and, followed by many armed men, went to Santa Maria Novella to fight them. The plebs, as we said above, had made the same decision, and, almost at the same time that Michele advanced, it also left to go to the piazza; and chance had it that each took a different road so that they did not meet on the way. Thereupon Michele, having turned back, found that the piazza was taken and the palace was being attacked; and joining the fray against them, he conquered them; and part he drove out of the city, and part he compelled to leave their arms and hide. The campaign having succeeded, the tumults were settled solely by the virtue of the Gonfalonier. In spirit, prudence,

and goodness he surpassed any citizen of his time, and he deserves to be numbered among the few who have benefited their fatherland, for had his spirit been either malign or ambitious, the republic would have lost its freedom altogether and fallen under a greater tyranny than that of the duke of Athens. But his goodness never allowed a thought to enter his mind that might be contrary to the universal good; his prudence led him to conduct things in such a mode that many yielded to his party and others he was able to subdue with arms. These things caused the plebs to lose heart and the better guildsmen to reflect and to consider what ignominy it was for those who had overcome the pride of the great to have to bear the stench of the plebs.

18

WHEN Michele gained his victory over the plebs, the new Signoria had already been drawn. In it were two men of such vile and infamous condition that a desire grew among men to free themselves from such infamy. Thus, on the first day of September, when the new Signori assumed the magistracy, the piazza was found to be full of armed men. As soon as the old Signori were out of the palace, a tumultuous shout came from the armed men that they did not want any of the lesser people to be Signori. So the Signoria, in order to satisfy them, deprived those two of their magistracy, of whom one was called *il Tria* and the other *Baroccio*,¹ and in their places elected Messer Giorgio Scali and Francesco di Michele. They also annulled the guild of the lesser people and deprived of their offices those subject to it, except for Michele di Lando, Lorenzo di Puccio, and some others of better quality; they divided the honors into two parts, assigning one to the greater and the other to the lesser guilds; they wanted that among the Signori there always be only five of the lesser guildsmen and four of the greater, and that the Gonfalonier should go to one member and the other in turn. The state having been so ordered, the city was put at rest for the time being; and although the republic had been taken out of the hands of the lesser plebs, the guildsmen of lesser quality remained more powerful than the popular nobles, for the latter, to satisfy the former, were compelled of necessity to yield so as to take away the favors of the guilds from the lesser people. This was favored also by those who desired the continued suppression of those who had offended so many citizens with so much violence under the name of the Guelf party. And because among those who favored this sort of government were Messer Giorgio Scali, Messer Benedetto Alberti, Messer Salvestro de'

¹ *Il Tria* was Giovanni di Domenico; *Baroccio* was Bartolo di Jacopo Costa.

Medici, and Messer Tommaso Strozzi, they were left almost as princes of the city. These things, carried on and managed as they were, confirmed the division already begun by the ambition of the Ricci and the Albizzi between the popular nobles and the lesser guildsmen, because of which very grave effects followed at various times; and since this will have to be mentioned many times, we shall call one of these the popular party and the other the plebeian. This state lasted for three years and was filled with exiles and deaths because those who governed lived with the greatest suspicion for the many malcontents inside and outside. The malcontents inside either tried or (it was believed) they might try new things every day, and those outside, having no respect to check them, sowed various scandals through this prince or that republic on this side and that.

19

IN these times Giannozzo da Salerno was in Bologna. He was the captain of Charles of Durazzo, who was descended from the kings of Naples and was planning to make a campaign on behalf of the Kingdom against Queen Giovanna. He kept this captain of his in Bologna because of the favors that had been done for him by Pope Urban, an enemy of the queen.¹ Also in Bologna were many Florentine exiles who had had very close dealings with Giannozzo and with Charles, which gave cause to those ruling in Florence to live in the greatest suspicion and to lend faith easily to calumnies against citizens who were suspected. It was revealed, then, to the magistracy, when their minds were in such suspense, that Giannozzo da Salerno was to appear in Florence with the exiles and that many inside the city were to take up arms and give the city over to him. On account of this report, many were accused; first named among them were Piero degli Albizzi and Carlo Strozzi, and after these Cipriano Mangioni, Messer Jacopo Sacchetti, Messer Donato Barbadori, Filippo Strozzi, and Giovanni Anselmi, all of whom, except Carlo Strozzi, who fled, were arrested. Lest any one dare to take up arms in their favor, the Signori deputed Messer Tommaso Strozzi and Messer Benedetto Alberti with many armed men to guard the city. The arrested citizens were examined, and, with regard to the accusation and the evidence, no fault was found in them; so, as the Captain was unwilling to condemn them, their enemies so excited the people and moved it to such rage against them that they were forcibly sentenced to death. The greatness of his house was no aid to Piero degli Albizzi, nor was his former reputation, since for a long time he had been honored and feared above any other citizen. Hence

¹ See *FH* I 33.

someone, whether a friend, so as to make him more humane in his greatness, or an enemy, so as to threaten him with the fickleness of fortune, sent him at a banquet he gave for many citizens a silver goblet filled with sweets, among which a nail was hidden. When it was uncovered and seen by all the guests, it was interpreted as a reminder to him that he should drive a nail into the wheel; since fortune had led him to the top, if it were to continue in its circle it could only drag him down to the bottom. This interpretation, which came before his ruin, was later verified by his death.

After this execution the city was left full of confusion because both the conquered and the conquerors were fearful, but the more malign effects arose from the fears of those who were governing because every slightest accident made them inflict new injuries on the Party² by condemning or admonishing or sending its citizens into exile. And they added to this new laws and new orders that were made often for the strengthening of the state. All of these things were carried out with injury to those who were suspect to their faction; and that is why they created forty-six men who together with the Signori were to purge the republic of those suspect to the state. These men admonished thirty-nine citizens and made many men of the people great and many of the great, men of the people. And so as to be able to oppose outside forces, they hired Sir John Hawkwood, English by birth and of very high reputation in arms, who for a long time had fought for the pope and for others in Italy. Suspicion of those outside arose from learning that many companies of armed men were being ordered by Charles of Durazzo to mount a campaign for the Kingdom, in which it was said there were many Florentine exiles with him. Against these dangers they provided sums of money as well as the forces they had ordered; for when Charles arrived at Arezzo, he received 40,000 ducats from the Florentines and promised not to molest them. Then he carried out his campaign and successfully occupied the kingdom of Naples, and Queen Giovanna was taken and sent to Hungary.³ This victory again increased the suspicions of those who held the state in Florence, because they could not believe that their money could count for more in the mind of the king than that ancient friendship which his house had had with the Guelfs who were being oppressed by them with so much injury.

20

THUS, as suspicion grew, it made injuries grow, and these did not eliminate suspicion but increased it, so that the greater part of men lived very

² The Guelf party.

³ In fact, Charles had her killed in 1382.

BOOK IV

I

CITIES, and especially those not well ordered that are administered under the name of republic, frequently change their governments and their states not between liberty and servitude, as many believe, but between servitude and license. For only the name of freedom is extolled by the ministers of license, who are the men of the people, and by the ministers of servitude, who are the nobles, neither of them desiring to be subject either to the laws or to men. True, when it happens (and it happens rarely) that by the good fortune of a city there rises in it a wise, good, and powerful citizen by whom laws are ordered by which these humors of the nobles and the men of the people are quieted or restrained so that they cannot do evil, then that city can be called free and that state be judged stable and firm: for a city based on good laws and good orders has no necessity, as have others, for the virtue of a single man to maintain it. Many ancient republics endowed with such laws and orders had states with long lives; all those republics that have lacked and are lacking such orders and laws have frequently changed and are changing their governments from a tyrannical to a licentious state, and back again. In these, through the powerful enemies each of them has, there neither is nor can be any stability, because the one state displeases good men, the other displeases the wise; the one can do evil easily, the other can do good only with difficulty; in the one, insolent men have too much authority, in the other, fools. And both the one and the other must be maintained by the virtue and fortune of a single man who can either fail by death or become useless because of his travails.

2

I SAY, therefore, that the state that had its beginning in Florence with the death of Messer Giorgio Scali in 1381 was sustained first by the virtue of Messer Maso degli Albizzi, later by that of Niccolò da Uzzano. The city lived quietly from 1414 until '22,¹ since King Ladislas was dead and

¹ Cf. *FH* III 29.

BOOK V

I

USUALLY provinces go most of the time, in the changes they make, from order to disorder and then pass again from disorder to order, for worldly things are not allowed by nature to stand still. As soon as they reach their ultimate perfection, having no further to rise, they must descend; and similarly, once they have descended and through their disorders arrived at the ultimate depth, since they cannot descend further, of necessity they must rise. Thus they are always descending from good to bad and rising from bad to good.¹ For virtue gives birth to quiet, quiet to leisure, leisure to disorder, disorder to ruin; and similarly, from ruin, order is born; from order, virtue; and from virtue, glory and good fortune. Whence it has been observed by the prudent that letters come after arms and that, in provinces and cities, captains arise before philosophers. For, as good and ordered armies give birth to victories and victories to quiet, the strength of well-armed spirits cannot be corrupted by a more honorable leisure than that of letters, nor can leisure enter into well-instituted cities with a greater and more dangerous deceit than this one. This was best understood by Cato when the philosophers Diogenes and Carneades, sent by Athens as spokesmen to the Senate, came to Rome. When he saw how the Roman youth was beginning to follow them about with admiration, and since he recognized the evil that could result to his fatherland from this honorable leisure, he saw to it that no philosopher could be accepted in Rome. Thus, provinces come by these means to ruin; when they have arrived there and men have become wise from their afflictions, they return, as was said, to order unless they remain suffocated by an extraordinary force. These causes, first through the ancient Tuscans² and then the Romans, have made Italy sometimes happy, sometimes wretched. And it happened that afterwards, nothing was built upon the Roman ruins in a way that might have redeemed Italy from them, so that it might have been able to act gloriously under a virtuous principality.³ Nonethe-

¹ See also *D* I 2, 39, II pr., 5, III 43, for NM's thoughts on the motion of worldly things.

² The Etruscans, whom NM likes to call Tuscans; see *D* II 4.

³ Or principate. *Principato* can mean the ruling or dominating office as well as the realm of domination.

less, so much virtue emerged in some of the new cities and empires that arose among the Roman ruins that, even if one did not dominate the others, they were nonetheless harmonious and ordered together so that they freed Italy and defended it from the barbarians. Within these empires the Florentines, if they had less dominion, were not less in authority or power; indeed, because of their position in the middle of Italy, rich and ready for attack, either they successfully resisted a war begun against them or they gave victory to the one with whom they sided.

If from the virtue of these new principalities times did not arise that were quiet through a long peace, neither were they dangerous because of the harshness of war. For one cannot affirm it to be peace where principalities frequently attack one another with arms; yet they cannot be called wars in which men are not killed, cities are not sacked, principalities are not destroyed, for these wars came to such weakness that they were begun without fear, carried on without danger, and ended without loss. So that virtue which in other provinces used to be eliminated in a long peace was eliminated by vileness in the provinces of Italy, as can clearly be recognized in what will be described by us from 1434 to 1494. There it will be seen how in the end the way was opened anew for the barbarians and how Italy put itself again in slavery to them. And if the things done by our princes outside and at home may not be read, as are those of the ancients, with admiration for their virtue and greatness, they may perhaps be considered for other qualities with no less admiration when it is seen how so many very noble peoples were held in check by such weak and badly directed armies. And if in describing the things that happened in this devastated world one does not tell about either the strength of soldiers, or the virtue of the captain, or the love of the citizen for his fatherland, it will be seen with what deceits, with what guile and arts the princes, soldiers, and heads of republics conducted themselves so as to maintain the reputation they have not deserved. It may, perhaps, be no less useful to know these things than to know the ancient ones, because, if the latter excite liberal spirits to follow them, the former will excite such spirits to avoid and eliminate them.

2

ITALY had been brought by those who ruled it to such a term that when a peace arose by the concord of princes, it was upset soon after by those who kept arms¹ on hand: and so they did not acquire glory from war or quiet from peace. When peace was made, therefore, between the duke of

¹ *Armi*: arms or armies.

charged them to find out how the war would have to be managed the next year. They instructed Neri that after he learned the opinion of the Venetians he should go to the count in order to learn his opinion and to persuade him to do those things necessary for the safety of the league. These ambassadors were not yet in Ferrara when they learned that Niccolò Piccinino had crossed the Po with six thousand cavalry, which made them hurry their journey. When they reached Venice, they found its signoria all wanting that Brescia should be relieved without waiting for better weather, because that city could not wait for relief until the next season or for a fleet to be built, but if it saw no other aid, it would surrender to the enemy; this would make the duke entirely victorious and make them lose all their state on land. On this account Neri went to Verona to hear out the count and what he had to argue to the contrary. The count pointed out with many reasons why rushing toward Brescia in that weather was useless now and damaging to a future campaign, for, considering the weather and the site of Brescia, it would bear no fruit but would only disorder and exhaust his troops, so that when the season suitable for activity came, it would be necessary for him to return with the army to Verona to provide for things consumed during the winter and necessary for the next season: so all the time suitable for war would be spent in going and returning. With the count in Verona, having been sent to negotiate these things, were Messer Orsatto Giustiniani and Messer Giovanni Pisani. After many disputes, it was concluded with them that the Venetians should give the count eighty thousand ducats for the new year and to the others of his troops forty ducats for each lancer, and that he should be urged to go forth with the whole army to attack the duke so that fear for his own affairs would make Niccolò return to Lombardy. After this conclusion, they returned to Venice. Because the sum of money was large, the Venetians provided sluggishly in everything.

29

NICCOLÒ Piccinino, meanwhile, continued his journey and, once he had reached Romagna, worked with the sons of Messer Pandolfo Malatesta¹ so that they left the Venetians and sided with the duke. This thing displeased Venice, but Florence much more, because they believed that this was the way they could hold out against Niccolò; but when they saw that the Malatesti had revolted, they were frightened, especially because they feared that Pietro Gianpaolo Orsini, their captain, then in the towns of

¹ See *FH* v 19.

the Malatesti, might have everything taken from him, leaving them disarmed. This news frightened the count as well, because he was afraid of losing the Marches if Niccolò crossed into Tuscany; and being disposed to go to the relief of his own house, he came to Venice. When he was brought before the prince,² he pointed out that his going to Tuscany was useful to the league, for war had to be made where the army and the captain of the enemy were, not where their towns and garrisons were, because an army conquered is a war won, but if towns are conquered while the army is left whole, the war often becomes more active. He asserted that the Marches and Tuscany would be lost unless there was vigorous opposition to Niccolò; if these were lost, there would be no remedy for Lombardy; but even if there were a remedy, he did not intend to abandon his subjects and his friends. He had come to Lombardy a lord and he did not mean to depart a condottiere. To this the prince replied that it was manifest to him that if the count not only left Lombardy but recrossed the Po with his whole army, all their state on land would be lost. And they were not about to spend anything more to defend it, for he is not wise who tries to defend a thing he will have to lose in any mode; and it is less infamy, and less loss, to lose states alone than states and money. And if the loss of their things should occur, one would then see how much the reputation of the Venetians mattered in the holding of Tuscany and Romagna. So they were altogether contrary to his opinion, because they believed that whoever won in Lombardy would win everywhere else; and winning was easy, since by the departure of Niccolò the state of the duke was so weak that he could be ruined before he could either recall Niccolò or provide himself with other remedies. Also, whoever examined each thing wisely would see that the duke had not sent Niccolò to Tuscany for anything else than to remove the count from these campaigns and to carry on elsewhere the war that he had at home. So if the count were to go after him, before an extreme necessity was visible, one would see the duke's schemes fulfilled and see him succeed in his intention; but if the troops were maintained in Lombardy, and in Tuscany one provided as one could, the duke would become aware of his wicked course too late, in time to have lost in Lombardy without remedy and not to have won in Tuscany.

Thus, each having stated and repeated his opinion, it was concluded that they should wait a few days to see what might come out of the accord of the Malatesti with Niccolò, if the Florentines could make use of Pietro Gianpaolo, and if the pope was keeping in step with the league as he had promised. This conclusion reached, a few days later they were assured

² The doge.

that the Malatesti had made their accord with him more out of fear than for any cause of ill will, that Pietro Gianpaolo had gone with his troops toward Tuscany, and that the pope was more willing to help the league than before. This information put the count's mind at rest, and he was content to remain in Lombardy and that Neri Capponi return to Florence with a thousand of his cavalry and with five hundred others; and if things in Tuscany should proceed so that the count's activity was necessary there, they would write, and then the count would leave without any hesitation. Neri arrived in Florence, therefore, in April with these men, and on the same day Gianpaolo joined him.

30

NICCOLÒ Piccinino, meanwhile, since things were at a stop in Romagna, was scheming to descend on Tuscany. Though he wanted to cross over the mountain at San Benedetto and through the valley of Montone, he found those places so well guarded by the virtue of Niccolò da Pisa that he judged all his effort in that direction would be vain. And because the Florentines were ill provided with both soldiers and heads for this sudden attack, they had sent many of their citizens to guard these passes in the mountains with a hastily assembled infantry, among whom was Messer Bartolomeo Orlandini, a knight to whom the defense of the castle of Marradi and the pass over that mountain had been assigned. Thus, when Niccolò Piccinino judged he could not get through the pass at San Benedetto by the virtue of the one defending it, he judged he could overcome the pass at Marradi through the vileness of the one who had it to defend. Marradi is a fortified place situated at the foot of the mountains that divide Tuscany from Romagna, but on the side that looks toward Romagna, where the Val di Lamona begins; and although it is without walls, nonetheless the river, the mountains, and the inhabitants make it strong, because the men are warlike and faithful, and the river has eroded the earth and raised the banks so that to come from across the valley is impossible whenever the small bridge over the river is defended; and from the mountain side the banks are so rugged that they make the site very secure. Nonetheless, the vileness of Messer Bartolomeo made these men vile and the site very weak; for no sooner had he heard the sound of the enemy troops than he abandoned everything and fled with all his men; nor did he stop until he reached Borgo San Lorenzo. When Niccolò entered the places that had been abandoned, he was full of amazement that they had not been defended and full of joy at having acquired them; and he descended to the Mugello, where he seized some fortified places. He

hidden in her room to this effect. She had made her father share in this thought, since he was hoping, after his son-in-law was dead, to become lord of Faenza. Therefore, when the appointed time came for this homicide, Galeatto entered his wife's room according to his custom, and when he had been with her a while to reason, the killers came out of secret places in the room and killed him without his being able to find any remedy. After his death there was a great uproar: his wife fled to the fortress with her small son dubbed Astorre; the people took up arms; Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio, together with one Bergamino, a condottiere of the duke of Milan, having first prepared themselves with many armed men, entered Faenza, where Antonio Boscoli was still Florentine commissioner. As all those heads congregated together during the tumult, and while they were speaking of the government of the town, the men of Val di Lamona, who had run to the noise as a people, started fighting against Messer Giovanni and Bergamino, killing Bergamino and taking Giovanni prisoner. Shouting the name of Astorre and of the Florentines, they entrusted the city to the Florentine commissioner. When this event was known in Florence, it displeased everyone very much; nonetheless, they set Messer Giovanni and his daughter at liberty; and by the will of the whole people, they undertook the care of the city and of Astorre. Besides these, very many tumults followed in Romagna, in the Marches, and in Siena for many years after the principal wars among the greater princes were settled. Because they were of little moment, I judge it superfluous to recount them. It is true that those in Siena, since the duke of Calabria had departed after the war of '78, were more frequent; and after many changes, in which sometimes the plebs and sometimes the nobles dominated, the nobles were left superior. Among these, Pandolfo and Jacopo Petrucci seized more authority than the others: they became like princes of that city, one from prudence, the other from spirit.

36

BUT after the war in Sarzana had ended, the Florentines lived in very great prosperity until 1492, when Lorenzo de' Medici died. For when the arms of Italy, which had been stayed by Lorenzo's sense and authority, had been put down, he turned his mind to making himself and his city great. To Piero, his eldest son, he joined in marriage Alfonsina, daughter of the knight Orsino; then he raised his second son, Giovanni, to the dignity of the cardinalate.¹ This was the more noteworthy since, beyond

¹ Later he became Pope Leo X.

every past example, he was brought to such rank when not yet fourteen years of age. It was a ladder enabling his house to rise to heaven, as happened later in the times that followed. For Giuliano, his third son, because of his slight age and the short time Lorenzo lived, he was not able to provide any extraordinary fortune. Of his daughters, one was married to Jacopo Salviati, another to Francesco Cibo, and the third to Piero Ridolfi; the fourth, whom he married to Giovanni de' Medici so as to keep his house united, died. In his other private things, he was very unprosperous in trade; for through the disorder of his agents, who administered his things not as private men but as princes, in many regards much of his movable property was eliminated; so it was required that his fatherland help him with a great sum of money. Hence, so as not to try the same fortune further, he set aside his mercantile interests and turned to landed property as a more stable and fixed kind of wealth; and around Prato, Pisa, and Val di Pesa he developed properties that for their utility, the quality of their buildings, and their magnificence were those not of a private citizen but of a king.

After this, he turned to making his city more beautiful and greater; and for this, since there was much space in it without dwellings, he ordered new streets to be lined with new buildings: hence, the city became more beautiful and greater. And so that he might live in his state more quietly and safely and that his enemies could be fought or held off at some distance from himself, toward Bologna, in the midst of the mountains, he fortified the town of Firenzuola; toward Siena, he began to establish the Poggio Imperiale and to make it very strong; toward Genoa, the acquisition of Pietrasanta and Sarzana closed that way to the enemy. Then, with stipends and pensions, he maintained his friends the Baglioni in Perugia and the Vitelli in Città di Castello; and he held the government of Faenza personally: all of which things were like solid ramparts to the city. Also, in these peaceful times, he kept his fatherland always in festivities: there frequent jousts and representations of old deeds and triumphs were to be seen; and his aim was to keep the city in abundance, the people united, and the nobility honored. He loved marvelously anyone who was excellent in an art; he favored men of letters—of which Messer Agnolo da Montepulciano,² Messer Cristofano Landino, and Messer Demetrio, a Greek,³ can give firm testimony. Hence, Count Giovanni della Mirandola,⁴ a man almost divine, left all the other parts of Europe where he had traveled and, attracted by the munificence of Lorenzo, made his home

² Angelo Ambrogini, il Poliziano.

³ Demetrio Chalcondylas.

⁴ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

in Florence. Lorenzo took marvelous delight in architecture, music, and poetry; and many poetic compositions not only composed but also commented on by him are in existence. And so that the Florentine youth might be trained in the study of letters, he opened in the city of Pisa a school to which the most excellent men in Italy then were brought. He built a monastery near Florence for Fra Mariano da Genazzano, of the order of Saint Augustine, because he was a very excellent preacher.⁵

Lorenzo was loved by fortune and by God in the highest degree, because of which all his enterprises had a prosperous end and all his enemies an unprosperous one. For besides the Pazzi, Battista Frescobaldi wanted to kill him in the Carmine and Baldinotto di Pistoia in his villa; and each of them, together with those who knew their secrets, suffered the very just penalties of their evil thoughts. His mode of life, his prudence and fortune, were known and held in admiration by princes not only in Italy but far away from it. Matthias, king of Hungary, gave him many signs of the love he bore for him; the Sultan sent him his spokesmen and presented his gifts; the Grand Turk put into his hands Bernardo Bandini, the killer of his brother. These things caused him to be considered wonderful in Italy. His reputation grew every day because of his prudence; for he was eloquent and sharp in discussing things, wise in resolving them, quick and spirited in executing them. Nor can vices of his be adduced to stain his great virtues, even though he was marvelously involved in things of Venus and he delighted in facetious and pungent men and in childish games, more than would appear fitting in such a man. Many times he was seen among his sons and daughters, mixing in their amusements. Thus, considering both his voluptuous life and his grave life, one might see in him two different persons, joined in an almost impossible conjunction. In his last days he lived full of distress caused by the illness that held him marvelously afflicted; he was oppressed by intolerable stomach pain, which so racked him that in April of 1492 he died, in the forty-fourth year of his life. Nor did anyone ever die, not only in Florence but in Italy, with such fame for his prudence and so much mourned in his fatherland. And that very great disasters⁶ must arise from his death, heaven showed many very evident signs, among which was the following: the highest tip of the church of Santa Reparata was struck by lightning with such fury that a great part of the pinnacle was ruined, to the amazement and marveling of everyone.⁷ Thus, all the citizens and all the princes of Italy mourned his death, of which they made manifest signs, because there was

⁵ Also because he was a determined opponent of Savonarola, whom NM does not mention.

⁶ Lit.: ruins.

⁷ Cf. *D* I 56.

no one who did not signify through his spokesmen the grief felt at such an event. But whether they had just cause to mourn him, the effect of his death demonstrated shortly after; for when Italy was left deprived of his advice, no mode was found for those who remained either to satisfy or to check the ambition of Ludovico Sforza, governor of the duke of Milan. Therefore, as soon as Lorenzo was dead, those bad seeds began to grow which, not long after, since the one who knew how to eliminate them was not alive, ruined and are still ruining Italy.