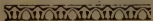


THE GREAT HISTORIES



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GUICCIARDINI

 HISTORY OF ITALY
AND HISTORY OF FLORENCE

Translated by Cecil Grayson/Edited and
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AND HISTORY OF FLORENCE

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The History of Italy

BOOK I

Chapter I

[*Aim and purpose of the work. Prosperity of Italy around 1490. The policy of Lorenzo de' Medici and the desire for peace among the princes of Italy. The alliance of the princes and the ambitions of Venice.*]

Future (mistake)
I have decided to write about the events which have taken place in Italy within living memory since the time when French armies called in by our own princes began to trouble her peace with great upheavals. A very rich theme for its variety and extent, and full of appalling disasters, for Italy has suffered for many years every kind of calamity that may vex wretched mortals either through the just wrath of God or through the impious and wicked actions of their fellow men. From the understanding of these events, so diverse and grave, all men will be able to draw many useful lessons both for themselves and for the public good. It will appear from countless examples how unstable are human affairs—like a sea driven by the winds; how pernicious, nearly always to themselves but invariably to the common people, are the ill-judged actions of rulers when they pursue only vain error or present greed. And forgetting how often fortunate changes, and converting to other peoples harm the power vested in them for the public good, they become through lack of prudence or excess of ambition the authors of fresh upheavals.

The calamities of Italy began (and I say this so that I may make known what was her condition before, and the causes from which so many evils arose), to the

greater sorrow and terror of all men, at a time when circumstances seemed universally most propitious and fortunate. It is indisputable that since the Roman Empire, weakened largely by the decay of her ancient customs, began to decline more than a thousand years ago from that greatness to which it had risen with marvelous virtue and good fortune, Italy had never known such prosperity or such a desirable condition as that which it enjoyed in all tranquillity in the year of Our Lord 1490 and the years immediately before and after. For, all at peace and quietness, cultivated no less in the mountainous and sterile places than in the fertile regions and plains, knowing no other rule than that of its own people, Italy was not only rich in population, merchandise and wealth, but she was adorned to the highest degree by the magnificence of many princes, by the splendor of innumerable noble and beautiful cities, by the throne and majesty of religion; full of men most able in the administration of public affairs, and of noble minds learned in every branch of study and versed in every worthy art and skill. Nor did she lack military glory according to the standards of those times; and being so richly endowed, she deservedly enjoyed among all other nations a most brilliant reputation.

Italy was preserved in this happy state, which had been attained through a variety of causes, by a number of circumstances, but among these by common consent no little credit was due to the industry and virtue of Lorenzo de' Medici, a citizen so far above the rank of private citizen in Florence that all the affairs of the Republic were decided by his advice. Florence was at that time powerful by virtue of her geographical position, the intelligence of her people and the readiness of her wealth rather than for the extent of her dominion. Lorenzo had lately allied himself through marriage to Pope Innocent VIII (who listened readily to his counsels); his name was respected throughout Italy and his authority was great in all discussions on matters of common interest. Knowing that it would be very dangerous to himself and to the Florentine Republic if any of the larger states increased their power, he diligently sought to

maintain the affairs of Italy in such a balance that they might not favor one side more than another. This would not have been possible without the preservation of peace and without the most careful watch over any disturbance, however small. Ferdinand of Aragon, King of Naples,²⁸ shared his desire for universal peace—undoubtedly a most prudent and respected prince; though in the past he had often shown ambitious designs contrary to the counsels of peace, and at this time was being egged on by Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, his eldest son, who resented seeing his son-in-law, Giovan Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan—now over twenty years of age though quite lacking in ability—merely keeping the title of duke and being overborne and crushed by Lodovico Sforza, his uncle. The latter, more than ten years earlier, had taken over the guardianship of the young Duke because of the imprudence and lewd habits of his mother Madonna Bona, and thus little by little had taken into his own hands the fortresses, soldiers, treasury, and all the instruments of power; and he now continued to govern, no longer as guardian or regent, but in everything except the title of Duke of Milan, with all the outward shows and actions of a prince. Nevertheless Ferdinand did not desire any upheaval in Italy, having more regard for present benefits than past ambitions or for his son's indignation, however well-founded. Perhaps because a few years earlier he had experienced, with the gravest danger, the hatred of his barons and his common subjects, and knowing the affection which many of his people still held for the name of the royal house of France, he was afraid that discord in Italy might give the French an opportunity to attack the Kingdom of Naples. Or perhaps he realized that to balance the power of the Venetians, which was then a threat to the whole of Italy, he must remain allied with the other states—particularly Milan and Florence. Lodovico Sforza, though of a restless and ambitious nature, must have shared this view, because the danger from the Venetian senate threatened the rulers of Milan no less than the others and because it was easier for him to maintain the power he had usurped in the tranquillity of peace than

in the vicissitudes of war. He always suspected the intentions of Ferdinand and Alfonso of Aragon, but knowing Lorenzo de' Medici's desire for peace and his fear of their power—and believing that because of the difference of attitude and ancient hatred between Ferdinand and the Venetians there was no fear that they might form an alliance—he felt fairly sure that the Aragonese would not find allies to attempt against him what they could not do alone.

Since there was the same will for peace in Ferdinand, Lodovico, and Lorenzo—partly for the same and partly for different reasons—it was easy to maintain an alliance in the name of Ferdinand, King of Naples, Giovan Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, and the Florentine Republic for the mutual defense of their states. This treaty, which was entered into many years before and subsequently interrupted for various reasons, had been renewed in 1480 for twenty-five years with the adherence of nearly all the small states of Italy. Its principal object was to prevent the Venetians from increasing their power, for they were undoubtedly greater than any one of the confederates, but much less so than all of them put together. They kept their own counsel, hoping to increase their power through friction and disunity among others, and stood ready to profit by any event which might open the way for them to the domination of the whole of Italy. It had been clear on more than one occasion that this was what they sought, especially when, on the death of Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, they attempted to seize that state under color of defending the freedom of the Milanese; and more recently when in open war they tried to occupy the Duchy of Ferrara. It was easy for the confederation to curb the greed of the Venetian senate, but it did not unite the allies in sincere and faithful friendship, because—full of jealousy and rivalry—they constantly watched one another's movements, mutually thwarting every design whereby any one of them might increase its power or reputation. This did not make the peace any less stable, but rather inspired each with a greater promptness to put out any sparks which might be the origin of a new outbreak.

Chapter II

[*Death of Lorenzo de' Medici. Death of Pope Innocent VIII and election of Alexander VI. The policy of friendship of Piero de' Medici toward Ferdinand of Aragon and the first fears of Lodovico Sforza.*]

Such was the state of things, such the foundation of the peace of Italy, so arranged and juxtaposed that not only was there no fear of any present disorder but it was difficult to imagine how, by what plots, incidents or forces, such tranquillity might be destroyed. Then, in the month of April 1492 there occurred the death of Lorenzo de' Medici. It was bitter for him, because he was not quite forty-four years of age, and bitter for his republic, which, because of his prudence, reputation and intellect in everything honorable and excellent, flourished marvelously with riches and all those ornaments and advantages with which a long peace is usually accompanied. But it was also a most untimely death for the rest of Italy, both because of the work he constantly did for the common safety and because he was the means by which the disagreements and suspicions that frequently arose between Ferdinand and Lodovico—two princes almost equal in power and ambition—were moderated and held in check.

The death of Lorenzo was followed a few months later by that of the Pope, as day by day things moved toward the coming disaster. The pontiff, though otherwise of no value to the common weal, was at least useful in that—having laid down the arms he had unsuccessfully taken up against Ferdinand at the instigation of many barons of the Kingdom of Naples at the beginning of his tenure—he turned his attention entirely to idle pleasures, and had no longer either any ambitions for himself or his family which might disturb the peace of Italy. Innocent was followed by Rodrigo Borgia of Valencia, one of the royal cities of Spain. A senior cardinal and a lead-

ing figure at the court of Rome, he was raised to the papacy, however, by the disagreements between the cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano di San Piero in Vincoli, and much more by the fact that, setting a new example in that age, he openly bought, partly with money and partly with promises of offices and favors he would bestow, many of the cardinals' votes. These cardinals, despising the teachings of the Gospels, were not ashamed to sell the power to traffic with sacred treasures in God's holy name, in the highest part of the temple. Cardinal Ascanio led many of them into this abominable contract, no less by his own example than by persuasion and pleading. Corrupted by an insatiable appetite for riches, he got for himself as the price of such wickedness the vice-chancellery, the principal office of the Roman court, churches, castles and his own palace in Rome, full of furniture of enormous value. But for all that he did not escape either divine judgment later or the just hatred and contempt of the men of his time, who were full of horror and alarm at an election conducted with such wicked devices, no less so because the character and habits of the man elected were in great part known to many. It is well known that the King of Naples, though in public he hid his grief, told his wife with tears—which he was unaccustomed to shed even at the death of his children—that a pope had been elected who would be fatal to Italy and the whole Christian world: truly a prophecy not unworthy of the wisdom of Ferdinand. For Alexander VI (as the new Pope wished to be called) possessed remarkable sagacity and acumen, excellent counsel, marvelous powers of persuasion and incredible ability and application in all difficult enterprises; but these virtues were far outweighed by his vices: utterly obscene habits, neither sincerity nor shame nor truth nor faith nor religion, insatiable avarice, immoderate ambition, more than barbarous cruelty and a burning desire to advance his many children in any possible way. Some of them—so that to execute his depraved designs a depraved instrument should not be lacking—were in no way less abominable than their father.

Such were the changes brought about in the state of

the Church by the death of Innocent VIII. Yet the affairs of Florence had suffered no less a change by the death of Lorenzo de' Medici. Piero, the eldest of his three sons, had succeeded him without meeting any opposition. He was still very young and, both by age and other qualities unfit to carry such a burden; and he was unable to proceed with that moderation by which his father—in internal and foreign affairs, while prudently temporizing with the allied princes—had in his lifetime extended his public and private estate, and at his death left among all men the firm opinion that, principally through his efforts, the peace of Italy had been preserved. For hardly had Piero entered the administration of the Republic than, in direct opposition to his father's advice and without informing the principal citizens whose advice was always sought in grave matters—induced by Virginio Orsino his kinsman (both Piero's mother and his wife were of the Orsini family)—he so closely allied himself with Ferdinand and Alfonso, on whom Virginio was dependent, that Lodovico Sforza had just cause to fear that, whenever the Aragonese wished to attack him, they would have the forces of the Florentine Republic with them by authority of Piero de' Medici. This alliance, the germ and origin of so many evils, though it was at first negotiated and concluded with great secrecy, was almost immediately by obscure conjecture suspected by Lodovico Sforza, a most vigilant prince and of very acute intelligence.

When, according to the age-old custom of all Christendom, ambassadors were to be sent to pay homage to the new Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth, Lodovico Sforza suggested that all the ambassadors of the allies should enter Rome together, and together present themselves at the public consistory before the Pope, and that one of them should speak for all so that in this way, and with great increase of reputation to all, the whole of Italy should see that there existed between them not merely friendship and alliance, but rather such unity that they seemed as one prince and one state. It was typical of Lodovico to endeavor to appear superior to everyone else in prudence by putting forward ideas no

one else had thought of. The value of this plan, he said, was evident, because it had been believed that the late Pope had been encouraged to attack the Kingdom of Naples by the apparent disunity of the allies in having sworn obedience to him at different times and with different orations. Ferdinand made no difficulties about accepting Lodovico's suggestion, and the Florentines approved it on the authority of both, while Piero de' Medici said nothing against it in public council. Privately, however, he disagreed strongly, because as he himself was one of the representatives elected by the Republic and he had planned to make his own train most brilliant with fine and almost regal trappings, he realized that entering Rome and presenting himself before the Pope with the other ambassadors of the allies, he would not be able in such a crowd to display the splendor of his magnificent preparations. He was supported in this youthful vanity by the ambitious counsels of Gentile, bishop of Arezzo, likewise one of the chosen ambassadors. As it was to be his duty, on account of his episcopal office and his having professed those studies which are called the Humanities, to speak in the name of the Florentines, he was disappointed beyond measure to lose in this unexpected and unusual way the opportunity to show off his eloquence on an occasion so honorable and solemn. Therefore Piero, inspired partly by his own frivolity and partly by the ambition of others, and yet unwilling that Lodovico Sforza should learn that he was against his plan, asked the King to suggest that each party should act separately as had been done in the past, and to explain that he had thought it over and now felt that these proceedings could not be carried out together without great confusion. The King was anxious to please him, but not so anxious that he would incur Lodovico's displeasure; and so he complied more in the result than in the manner, for he did not hide the fact that it was only at Piero de' Medici's request that he went back on what he had at first agreed to do. Lodovico was angrier at this sudden change than the importance of the occasion merited in itself, complaining bitterly that as the Pope and the entire Roman court

already knew of the first plan and who had put it forward, it was now being withdrawn on purpose to damage his reputation. He was even more displeased when he began to realize, through this small and really unimportant incident, that Piero de' Medici had a secret understanding with Ferdinand. And this became more evident every day from the events which followed.

Chapter III

[Franceschetto Cibo sells his castles in Lazio to Virginio Orsino. The Pope's anger, stirred up by Lodovico Sforza. He tries to detach Piero de' Medici from his friendship with Ferdinand of Aragon. Alliance of Lodovico with the Pope and the Venetians. His plans to ensure his safety by means of foreign arms.]

Franceschetto Cibo, a Genoese and the natural son of Pope Innocent, owned Anguillara, Cervetri, and a few other small castles near Rome. After his father's death he went to live in Florence under the protection of Piero de' Medici, who was the brother of his wife Madalena. Soon after his arrival in that city, at Piero's instance, he sold those castles to Virginio Orsino for 40,000 ducats. This was negotiated primarily with Ferdinand, who secretly lent most of the money in the belief that it was to his advantage for Virginio, who was his own captain, supporter and kinsman, to extend his power in the neighborhood of Rome. The King thought that the papal power was an instrument very likely to disturb the Kingdom of Naples, an ancient fee of the Roman Church with an immensely long common frontier with the Church lands; and remembering the disputes he and his father had often had with the popes, and that there was always material at hand for fresh disagreements over frontier demarcation, levying of taxes, conferring of benefices, the petitions of the barons and many other differences which often arise between neighboring states and no less often between the feudal lord

and his vassal, he always regarded as one of the bases of his own security that all or most of the most powerful barons of the Roman territory should be dependent on him. At this moment he pursued this aim the more readily, as it was thought that Lodovico Sforza's influence with the Pope would be very great through Cardinal Ascanio, his brother. Also perhaps, as many people thought, he was no less moved by fear that the hatred and greed of his uncle Pope Calixtus III might prove to be hereditary in Alexander. Calixtus, out of an overweening desire for the aggrandizement of his nephew Pietro Borgia, would have sent an army to occupy the Kingdom of Naples at the death of Ferdinand's father Alfonso, if his own death had not interrupted these plans. He claimed that Naples then reverted to the Church and forgot (so short is man's memory of the favors he has received) that it was through Alfonso himself, in whose dominions he was born and whose minister he had been for a long time, that he had obtained his other ecclesiastical preferments and considerable help in attaining the papacy. But it is all too true that wise men do not always discern or judge correctly: inevitably evidence of the weakness of the human mind must often appear. The King, though he was reputed to be a prince of great prudence, did not consider how much blame could be attached to that decision—which at best held hopes of small profit and at the worst could be the origin of serious trouble. For the sale of those insignificant castles aroused the desire for innovations in those very people who shared the common unity and harmony and in whose interests it would have been to ensure its preservation. The Pope asserted that, as they had been transferred without his knowledge, the lands had reverted to the Holy See according to the provisions of the law; feeling that a severe blow had been dealt to papal authority and considering moreover what Ferdinand's motives were, he filled the whole of Italy with complaints against him, against Piero de' Medici, and against Virginio. He swore that wherever his power reached, he would leave nothing undone to promote the dignity and interests of the Holy See.

Lodovico Sforza, who was always suspicious of Ferdinand's actions, was no less agitated; because having vainly deluded himself that the Pope would act according to the advice he and Ascanio gave, he felt that any diminution of Alexander's power would be his own loss. But above all he was worried by the fact that there was no longer room for doubt that the Aragonese and Piero de' Medici, since they worked together in matters of this kind, must have contracted a close alliance. He urged the pontiff as strongly as he could to preserve his own dignity in order to thwart their plans, which were a danger to his affairs, and to draw Alexander more closely to him. And he pointed out to him that he should bear in mind not so much the nature of the present incident, as the importance of the dignity of his high office having been thus openly insulted in the earliest days of his tenure of the Holy See by his own vassals. He should not believe that it was just Virginio's greed or the importance of the castles or any other motive which had inspired Ferdinand, but the desire to try his patience and his temper with insults which might at first seem small. After these, if the Pope put up with them, he would make bold from day to day to attempt something bigger. His ambitions were just the same as those of the other kings of Naples, who were perpetual enemies of the Roman Church; and they had repeatedly attacked the popes and several times occupied Rome. Had not this same King twice sent his armies against two popes under his son's command, right to the walls of Rome? Had he not always been in open enmity with his predecessors? Ferdinand was moved now not only by the example of former kings and by his natural desire for domination, but even more by his desire for revenge for the injury done him by the Pope's uncle Calixtus. The Pope should pay careful heed to these facts and consider that if he bore these early offenses with patience, honored only with outward shows and hollow deference, he would in fact be despised by everyone and give encouragement to more dangerous projects. But if he reacted strongly he would easily preserve the ancient majesty and greatness and the true veneration owed by all the

world to the Roman pontiffs. To these powerful arguments he added even more efficacious deeds; for he promptly lent the Pope 40,000 ducats, and recruited 300 soldiers at their common expense, which should however be stationed wherever the Pope wished. Nevertheless, wishing to avoid the need to enter into fresh difficulties, he urged Ferdinand to persuade Virginio to pacify the Pope with some respectful gesture, pointing out that otherwise serious disturbances might arise from these small beginnings. More freely and with greater insistence he several times advised Piero de' Medici that, considering how expedient for the preservation of the peace of Italy had been his father Lorenzo's policy of acting as mediator and common friend between Ferdinand and himself, he should follow this domestic example and imitate a great man rather than, believing new counsel, give others cause or need to make plans which in the end must be harmful to all. He should remember how the long friendship between the houses of Sforza and Medici had ensured the security and reputation of both, and how many offenses and injuries his father and forefathers and the Florentine Republic had suffered at the hands of the house of Aragon—how often Ferdinand and Alfonso his father before him had attempted, sometimes by force, sometimes by treachery, to occupy the state of Tuscany.

These persuasions and counsels did more harm than good, because Ferdinand, thinking it undignified to give way to Lodovico and Ascanio, whose incitements he considered responsible for the Pope's anger, and urged on by his son Alfonso, secretly advised Virginio not to delay taking possession of the castles in accordance with the contract, and promised to protect him from any attack that might be made on him. On the other hand, with his natural cunning he suggested various kinds of settlement with the Pope, though meanwhile secretly advising Virginio only to agree to terms which would leave him the castles and compensate the Pope with sums of money. Thus Virginio was emboldened to refuse repeatedly the settlements which Ferdinand, so as not to offend the Pope unduly, pressed him to accept. It was evident that

in these negotiations Piero de' Medici followed the King's line and that it was useless to try to make him change his mind. Lodovico Sforza, therefore, realizing how serious it was that Florence should be influenced by his enemies, since its attitude had in the past constituted the principal basis of his security, and feeling that the future held many dangers for him, decided to make fresh provisions for his security. He knew how strongly the Aragonese desired his removal from the management of his nephew's affairs. Although Ferdinand, who brought to all his actions unbelievable guile and dissimulation, had tried to keep this feeling hidden, Alfonso, a man of a very open nature, had never refrained from lamenting openly the oppression of his son-in-law, uttering, with more freedom than prudence, threats and insults. Besides this Lodovico knew that Isabella, Giovan Galeazzo's wife, a vigorous young woman, constantly stirred up her grandfather and her father, saying that if they were not moved by the dishonor of seeing her and her husband in such a position, they should at least be moved by the danger to their lives in which they stood together with their children. But what most frightened Lodovico was the knowledge that his name was loathed by all the people of the Duchy of Milan, both because of the many unusual taxes he had levied on them and because of the sympathy everyone felt for Giovan Galeazzo, the legitimate prince. He tried to make people believe that the Aragonese wanted to take possession of the state of Milan and laid claim to it through the ancient provisions of the will of Filippo Maria Visconti who had made Alfonso, Ferdinand's father, his heir; and that to further this plan they wanted to deprive his nephew of his title. Nevertheless he did not succeed by these wiles in moderating the hatred they had conceived of him, nor did he prevent them from reflecting on the wickedness to which men are led by the pestilential greed for power.

Therefore, after he had considered at length the state of his affairs and the imminent dangers, setting aside all other concerns, he gave all his attention to seeking fresh alliances and support. Seeing a great opportunity

in the Pope's anger against Ferdinand and the desire the Venetian senate was supposed to entertain that the former alliance should be broken up (which had for so long stood in the way of its ambitions), he proposed to the Pope and the Venetians a new alliance for their mutual advantage. However, the Pope's ruling passion, over and above anger or any other feeling, was a boundless greed for the advancement of his sons. He loved them excessively, and unlike the former popes who to cover up their sinfulness somewhat, used to call them nephews, he always called them sons and showed them to everyone as such. Finding as yet no other opportunity to begin his efforts in this direction, he was negotiating to obtain as a bride for one of his sons one of Alfonso's illegitimate daughters, with a dowry of some rich territory in the Kingdom of Naples. Until he finally lost all hope of this, he lent his ear rather than his mind to the alliance proposed by Lodovico. If he had achieved this ambition, the peace of Italy might not have been destroyed so soon. Although Ferdinand was not against it, Alfonso hated the ambition and pomp of the popes and always refused to agree; and therefore, not showing their distaste for the marriage but putting difficulties in the way of the dowry, they failed to satisfy Alexander. For this reason he was angry and decided to follow Lodovico's advice, driven to it by greed and indignation and in part by fear; for not only was Virginio Orsino in the pay of Ferdinand and at that time extremely powerful in all the Church territories through the excessive favors he enjoyed from the Florentines and from Ferdinand and through the following of the Guelph faction, but also Prospero and Fabrizio, the heads of the Colonna family. Furthermore the cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli, a cardinal of the highest reputation who had withdrawn to the fort of Ostia which he held as bishop of that place, out of fear that the Pope might have designs on his life, had become very friendly with Ferdinand after having been his dire enemy and incited against him in the past first his uncle Pope Sixtus and later Pope Innocent. The Venetian senate, however, was not as ready as had been supposed for this confederation;

because although the disunity of others might please them well, they were given pause by the unreliability of the Pope, who grew daily more suspect to all, and by the memory of the leagues they had made with Sixtus and Innocent his immediate predecessors. From the former they had got much trouble without any advantage; and Sixtus, when the war against the Duke of Ferrara was at its height—which he at first had urged them to undertake—had then changed his mind and turned against them with spiritual arms, and also had taken up temporal arms against them together with the rest of Italy. But Lodovico's diligence and industry overcame all the difficulties with the senate and privately with many of the senators. Finally in April 1493 there was signed between the Pope, the Venetian senate and Giovan Galeazzo Duke of Milan (all the decisions of that state were taken in his name) a new league for mutual defense and specifically for the maintenance of Lodovico's rule, with the provision that the Venetians and the Duke of Milan each were to send at once to Rome two hundred men at arms for the safety of the ecclesiastical state and the Pope, and help him with these and if need be with larger forces to retake the castles occupied by Virginio.

These new deliberations had a notable effect throughout the whole of Italy because the Duke of Milan was now cut off from the alliance which for twelve years had maintained common security—although by it, it was expressly forbidden for any of the members to make new alliances without the consent of the others. Therefore, seeing that union on which the balance of power depended broken into unequal parts and the minds of the princes full of suspicion and anger, what else could one expect but that from such seeds like fruits must grow to the detriment of all Italy? The Duke of Calabria and Piero de' Medici, thinking it was safer to forestall than be forestalled, were inclined to listen to Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna. They, secretly encouraged by the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli, offered to occupy Rome by surprise with the men at arms of their companies and the men of the Ghibelline faction—provided the Orsini

forces followed them, and the Duke took up a position whence, three days after they entered the city, he could come to their assistance. However, Ferdinand wished not to irritate the Pope further but to pacify him and to put right what had been done imprudently up to that time; and he absolutely rejected these counsels which he thought would engender not safety but greater trials and dangers. He made up his mind to do all he could, no longer merely in appearance but in fact, to make up the quarrel over the castles, believing that if that cause of so much discord were removed, Italy would easily and almost of herself return to her earlier condition. But one may not always remove the effects by removing their causes. For, as it often happens that decisions taken through fear seem unequal to the danger to those who fear, Lodovico was not sure he had found adequate support for his security. Doubting, because the purposes of the Venetian senate and the Pope were so different from his own, that he could rely for very long on the alliance with them, and that therefore his affairs might for various reasons meet with many difficulties, he applied his mind more to curing from the roots the first ill which appeared than to those which might in consequence arise later. He forgot how dangerous it may be to use medicine more powerful than the nature of the disease and the constitution of the patient warranted. As though embarking on greater risks was the sole remedy to present dangers, he decided, in order to ensure his own security with foreign arms—as he could not rely on his own forces and his Italian allies—to do everything he could to persuade Charles VIII King of France to attack the Kingdom of Naples, to which he laid claim through the ancient rights of the Angevins.

Chapter IV

[The Kingdom of Naples up to the time of Ferdinand and the rights of succession of the House of Anjou. Charles VIII's claims on the Kingdom encouraged by Lodovico Sforza. The great nobles of

the Kingdom of France oppose the expedition. Pacts concluded between Charles VIII and Lodovico Sforza. The author's views.]

The Kingdom of Naples is absurdly described in the investitures and bulls of the Roman Church—of which it is an ancient fee—as the Kingdom of Sicily east of the Punto del Faro. After it had been unjustly occupied by Manfred, the natural son of the Emperor Frederick II, it was conceded in fee together with the island of Sicily, under the title of the Two Sicilies, from the year 1264, by Pope Urban IV to Charles, Count of Provence and Anjou. He was the brother of that King Louis of France who, famous for his power but even more so for the saintliness of his life, deserved after his death to be numbered among the saints. The Count of Provence effectively obtained by armed force what had been bestowed on him by title with legal authority; and after his death the Kingdom of Naples passed to his son Charles, whom the Italians called Charles II to distinguish him from his father; and after him to his grandson Robert. After that, Robert, having died without sons, was succeeded by Giovanna daughter of Charles Duke of Calabria who had pre-deceased his father. Her authority was soon held in contempt no less for her immoral conduct than for the weakness of her sex. On this account many disputes and wars arose over the years, but only among the descendants of Charles I, the children of various sons of Charles II. Giovanna, deciding it was the only way of defending her kingdom, adopted as her son Louis Duke of Anjou, the brother of Charles V of France whom the French called The Wise because he had suffered little misfortune and gained many victories. Giovanna met a violent death and the kingdom passed to Charles of Durazzo, who was also a descendant of Charles I. When Louis entered Italy with a very powerful army and victory was almost in his grasp, he died of fever in Puglia, so that the Angevins gained nothing from this adoption but the County of Provence which had been continuously in the possession of the descendants of Charles I. Nevertheless this was

the origin of the claim by virtue of which Louis of Anjou, the son of the first Louis, and later his grandson of the same name, encouraged by the popes when they quarreled with the kings of Naples, repeatedly attacked the kingdom, though with little success. However, Charles of Durazzo had been succeeded by his son Ladislao; and when he died childless in 1414, the crown passed to his sister Giovanna II. This was an unlucky name for that kingdom, and unlucky too to both those who bore it, for they were alike in imprudence and the lewdness of their habits. Giovanna placed the government of her kingdom in the hands of those to whom she shamelessly abandoned her body, and soon fell into such difficulties that, harassed by the third Louis of Anjou with the help of Pope Martin V, she was forced as a last resort to adopt as her son Alfonso, King of Aragon and Sicily. Soon, however, she quarreled with him and canceled the adoption on grounds of ingratitude. Then she adopted and called to her aid that same Louis for fear of whose attack she had been obliged to make the first adoption. Alfonso was driven out of the realm by armed force, and Giovanna enjoyed her kingdom in peace for the rest of her life.

When she died childless, she made (it was said) René Duke of Anjou and Count of Provence her heir. This was the brother of her adopted son Louis who happened to die in the same year. Many of the barons of the kingdom disapproved of the succession of René, and it was rumored that her will was a forgery of the Neapolitans, so Alfonso was called in by some of the barons and the people. This was the origin of the wars between Alfonso and René, which afflicted that noble kingdom for many years, and were waged by them with the resources of the kingdom itself rather than with their own. From this arose the factions of the Aragonese and Angevins, which are still not entirely extinct in our own day. In the course of the years the titles and appearances of right varied because the popes, following their own greedy impulses or the needs of the times rather than considerations of justice, accorded the investiture now to one and now to the other side. However, Alfonso,

a more able and powerful prince, was victorious in the war with René, and when he died without legitimate issue, he forgot his brother John who had succeeded to the Kingdoms of Sicily and Aragon, and left the Kingdom of Naples as his personal acquisition and therefore not the property of the crown of Aragon to his natural son Ferdinand. Almost immediately after his father's death he was attacked by Jean, René's son, supported by the principal barons of the realm, but not only did he defend himself with great success and courage, but he defeated his enemies so soundly that never again in René's lifetime (and he survived his son by several years) did he have to fear the Angevins or fight them. In the end René died; and being without male heirs he made Charles his brother's son heir to all his states and rights. The latter died shortly after without children and willed his inheritance to Louis XI King of France, who not only acquired by reversion as its feudal overlord the Duchy of Anjou, where, being crown lands, women may not inherit, but (although the Duke of Lorraine, who was the son of a daughter of René, asserted that the succession of the other states should be his) he also took possession of Provence, and could, by the terms of the will, claim that the Angevins' rights in the Kingdom of Naples reverted to him. These passed on his death to his son Charles VIII, in whom Ferdinand gained a considerable adversary, and a great opportunity was thus available to anyone who wished to attack him.

The Kingdom of France was at that time richer in men, in military glory, in power, in wealth, in authority among other kingdoms, than perhaps it had ever been since Charlemagne. She had recently extended her power in each of those three parts into which, according to the ancient writers, Gaul was divided. Only forty years before, under Charles VII—a king called The Fortunate on account of the many victories he gained in the face of grave dangers—Normandy and the Duchy of Guienne, which formerly belonged to the English, were added to the kingdom; and in the last years of Louis XI the County of Provence, the Duchy of Burgundy and nearly all Picardy; and after that, by a marriage of Charles VIII,

the Duchy of Brittany. Charles was not at all unwilling to attempt to acquire by force the Kingdom of Naples as his own rightful property. The idea had been with him almost instinctively since childhood, and had been nourished by the encouragement of certain people who were very close to him. They filled him up with vain ideas and made him believe this was an opportunity to surpass the glory of his predecessors, as, once he had conquered the Kingdom of Naples, he could easily defeat the empire of the Turks. These plans, already known to many, gave Lodovico Sforza the hope of easily persuading him to do what he wished. Besides, he could rely on the reputation of his family with the French court, because he and his brother Galeazzo before him had kept up the friendship founded by Francesco Sforza their father, with many good offices and tokens of good will. Thirty years earlier Francesco Sforza had received in fee from Louis XI—who always loathed everything Italian—the city of Savona and the rights he claimed over Genoa, which had formerly been held by his father, and he had never failed the King in time of danger with assistance and good advice. Nevertheless Lodovico thought it was dangerous to be the only one to start a movement of such gravity; and so, in order to negotiate the affair in France with more credit and authority, he sought first to win over the Pope to this cause with the spur of ambition and anger. He pointed out to him that he would never, either with the support of the Italian princes or their forces, have any hope of revenging himself on Ferdinand or of acquiring worthy states for his children. Having found him well disposed either through a desire for innovations or to obtain from the Aragonese through fear what they refused to give spontaneously, they secretly sent trusted men to France to sound the King and those who were in his confidence.²⁹ When they showed themselves not unwilling, Lodovico, full of enthusiasm for this plan, openly sent to France as ambassador Carlo da Barbiano Count of Belgioioso, although the purpose of his mission was given as something quite different. After he had been at court several days and had exercised his persuasions with

Charles in private and with the most important people, he was at last brought into the royal council in the King's presence, where besides the royal ministers there were present all the lords and many prelates and nobles of the court. And there he is said to have spoken as follows:

“If anyone for any reason, most Christian King, should mistrust the good faith and sincerity with which Lodovico Sforza urges you to the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples, offering also money and the assistance of his forces, he will easily dispel such ill-founded suspicions when he remembers the long-standing loyalty of Lodovico himself and his brother Galeazzo, and before that of Francesco his father, toward Louis XI your father, and then toward your own most glorious name; and all the more, considering that Lodovico may sustain grievous loss from this enterprise without hope of any profit, while for you yourself the chances are just the opposite. Victory would bring you a fine kingdom with infinite glory and the chance of still greater things; but Lodovico would gain nothing but a just revenge against the intrigues and offenses of the Aragonese. If, on the other hand, the attempt should prove unsuccessful, your greatness would not be diminished at all. But who does not realize that in that event Lodovico, hated by many and despised by all, would have no remedy for the danger he would be in? Therefore, how can there be mistrust of the counsel of one who in any event stands to gain less or to lose more than yourself? Yet the arguments in favor of your embarking on so honorable an expedition are so clear and powerful in themselves that they admit of no doubt, for all the foundations are abundantly there, which must principally be considered in deciding on such enterprises: the justice of the cause, the ease of success, the rich reward of victory. For it is well known to all how strong are the claims of the House of Anjou to the Kingdom of Naples, to which you are the legitimate heir, and how just is the succession which claims it for the descendants of Charles. He first of the royal blood of France obtained that kingdom with the authority of the Roman pontiffs and the prowess of his

own arms. The ease of conquest is no less than the justice of the cause. Who does not know how much weaker in armed strength and authority is the King of Naples than the first and most powerful of all Christian monarchs? How great and terrible the name of the French throughout the world, how much feared your arms among all nations? The petty Dukes of Anjou never attacked the Kingdom of Naples without reducing it to the gravest danger. It is in recent memory how Jean son of René had victory in his grasp against the present Ferdinand, if it had not been taken from him by Pope Pius and even more by Francesco Sforza who acted in this, as is well known, in accordance with the wishes of Louis XI your father. What then will the armies of so great a king not accomplish, when the opportunities are so much greater than those René and Jean enjoyed and the difficulties so much less, and now that those princes are allied with you, who prevented their victory, and who can attack the Kingdom of Naples with the utmost ease? The Pope can do so by land because of the proximity of the Church estates, and the Duke of Milan by sea from Genoa. No one in Italy will oppose you, for the Venetians will not want to face the expense and danger nor lose the friendship they have long held for the kings of France, to preserve Ferdinand who is their enemy; while it is impossible that the Florentines should abandon their natural affection for the House of France. And even if they wanted to oppose you, what could they do against such power? How often has your most warlike nation crossed the Alps against the will of all Italy, and still with inestimable glory and success carried off great victories and triumphs! When was the Kingdom of France happier, more glorious, more powerful than now? And when was it easier for her to make lasting peace with all her neighbors? If all these factors had come together in the past, your father would perhaps have been ready to undertake this same expedition.

“The enemy’s difficulties are increased in the same proportion as your advantages, because the Angevin party is still powerful in that realm, the followers are strong of the many princes and nobles unjustly driven

out a few years ago, and because such grievous harm has been continually done by Ferdinand to the barons and the people and even to those of the Aragonese faction. So great is his treachery, his avarice so immoderate, so horrible and frequent the instances of his cruelty and that of Alfonso his eldest son, that it is well known that the entire kingdom, moved by incredible hatred of them and remembering from recent experience the liberality, the kindness, the generosity, the humanity and the justice of the French, will rise with unbounded joy at the rumor of your coming, so that the mere decision to make the expedition will be enough to secure your victory. For when your armies have crossed the mountains, when the navy has gathered at Genoa, Ferdinand and his sons, terrified by the thought of their own wickedness, will think rather of flight than of defending themselves. So with the greatest of ease you will have recovered a kingdom which, though it may not be compared with the greatness of France, is yet a large and wealthy state, and one to be valued all the more for the profit and infinite usefulness it will bring to this kingdom. I would describe all these benefits, were it not well known that French generosity has higher aims, that so magnanimous and glorious a King has worthier and more noble thoughts, aimed not at his own gain but at the universal greatness of the entire Christian republic. What better opportunity could be found for this? What greater occasion? What place more convenient, more suitable for waging war against the enemies of our faith? It is well known that in some places the sea between the Kingdom of Naples and Greece is only seventy miles wide. From that province torn and oppressed by the Turks, its only desire to see the Christian banners, how easy it would be to penetrate the vitals of that nation, to strike at Constantinople, heart and head of that empire! Who better than you, most powerful King, should turn his thoughts and spirit to this holy enterprise because of the marvelous power which God has given you, the most Christian name you bear, and the example of your glorious predecessors? Often issuing forth in arms from this kingdom now to free God's Holy Church oppressed

by tyrants, now to attack the infidel, now to recover the Holy Sepulchre, they raised to the skies the fame and majesty of the Kings of France. With these counsels, with these devices, these actions, these purposes, the great and glorious Charles became Roman Emperor. And as you bear his name, now is your opportunity to acquire his glory and title. But why do I waste more time on these arguments, as though it were not more natural an instinct to preserve than to acquire? For who does not know what infamy it would be—especially when so great an opportunity invites you—to allow any longer that Ferdinand should occupy a kingdom of yours, which has been in the possession of kings of your blood by continuous succession for little less than two hundred years, and is clearly yours by law? Who does not know how much your dignity demands that you retake it, and what a pious action it would be to free those peoples, who revere your glorious name and are by rights your subjects, from the bitter tyranny of the Catalans? Therefore the enterprise is most just, most easy, and necessary. And it is no less glorious and holy, both in itself and because it opens the way to deeds worthy of a Most Christian King of France. To these not only men but God openly calls you, O great King; it is God who leads you with such wonderful and obvious opportunities, offering you the greatest success before you even begin. What greater happiness can any prince know than that the designs from which his own glory and greatness are to grow are accompanied by circumstances and consequences such that they appear to be undertaken equally for the benefit and safety of all men, and even more for the glorification of the whole Christian republic?”

This proposal was not heard with pleasure by the great lords of France, particularly by those who for their rank and reputation for wisdom enjoyed the greatest authority. They thought it could only be a war of infinite difficulty and danger, as the armies would have to go into a foreign country so far away from France against highly respected and powerful enemies. Ferdinand's reputation for sagacity was enormous, and no less was Alfonso's for skill in military affairs. It was

believed that Ferdinand, having ruled for thirty years and dispossessed at various times so many barons, must have accumulated vast quantities of treasure. They thought that the King was incapable of bearing by himself so heavy a burden, and that the counsel and experience of those who had influence with him more from favoritism than good reason, were inadequate for the management of wars and states. Furthermore he lacked money, of which they calculated a vast amount would be required. It had to be remembered how cunning and artful the Italians were, and borne firmly in mind that not only the other princes but Sforza himself—who was well known in Italy for faithlessness besides other things—could not really want the Kingdom of Naples in the hands of a King of France. Hence conquest would be hard, and holding it even harder. For this reason Louis, Charles' father, a prince who had always pursued the substance rather than the shadow of things, had never accepted the lures offered him in Italy nor valued the rights he had inherited in the Kingdom of Naples, but had always maintained that to send armies across the mountains was merely to buy trouble and danger at the cost of infinite blood and treasure of the Kingdom of France. It was essential before all else, if one were going to undertake this expedition, to compose their differences with neighboring kings. For there was no lack of causes for disagreement and distrust with Ferdinand King of Spain, and there were not only rivalries but many grievances with Maximilian King of the Romans and Philip Archduke of Austria, his son; and they could not be reconciled to friendship without concessions harmful to the French crown. Even so they might be reconciled more in appearance than in fact; for what agreement could ensure that, if the royal armies met with some difficulties in Italy, they would not attack France? It was not to be expected either that Henry VII King of England would not be influenced more by the natural hatred of the English for the French than by the peace they had made with him a few months earlier. It was clear that he had been persuaded to make it, more than anything else, by the fact that the preparations of the

King of the Romans did not match the promises with which he had induced him to lay siege to Boulogne.

These and other arguments like them were used by the great nobles, among themselves and to the King, to dissuade him from the new war. Among its opponents whose influence was strongest, was Iacopo Gravilla, Admiral of France, whose long-standing reputation for wisdom throughout the kingdom preserved his authority, though his greatness was somewhat diminished. Nevertheless Charles listened greedily to the other view. He was only twenty-two, little gifted by nature with understanding of human affairs, and carried away by a burning desire for conquest and the appetite for glory, based more on whim and impulse than on mature thought. Either of his own inclination or because of his father's example and advice he placed little reliance on the princes and nobles of his kingdom after he had outgrown the tutelage of the Duchess Anne of Burgundy, his sister; and no longer paying heed to the advice of the Admiral and others who had been influential in that government, he managed his affairs with the counsel of some men of low rank, almost all of them raised in his personal service. His favorites among them strongly urged him to undertake the expedition; some because—as the counsellors of princes are often venal—they had been corrupted by the gifts and promises of Lodovico's ambassador who neglected no art or effort to win over those who could influence the decision; and some because they had hopes either of obtaining lands in the Kingdom of Naples or of receiving from the Pope ecclesiastical preferment and revenues. The chief of all these was Etienne de Vesc of Languedoc, a man of low birth brought up for many years in the King's chamber and created by him Seneschal of Beaucaire. Another supporter was Guillaume Briçonnet, who from being a merchant had become first General of France, and then bishop of St. Malo. He was not only head of the administration of the royal revenues, which the French call the finances, but together with Etienne and through his influence, he had a hand in all the most important affairs, although he had very little talent for matters of state. They were also

supported by Antonello da San Severino, Prince of Salerno, and by Bernardino of the same family, Prince of Bisignano, and many other barons in exile from the Kingdom of Naples. They had taken refuge in France many years earlier and had constantly pressed Charles to undertake this expedition, urging that the kingdom was in a bad way, in fact practically desperate, and that they would receive strong support and following there. Amid these differences of opinion the decision remained in suspense for several days. Not only were the others doubtful as to what should be done, but Charles himself was vacillating and uncertain. Sometimes he was urged on by the desire for glory and empire, now he was held back by fear; sometimes he was undecided, sometimes he decided the very opposite of what he seemed at first to have resolved. Yet in the end his first impulse proved stronger than any opposition, and so did the unhappy destiny of Italy. He rejected all counsels of peace and concluded an agreement with Lodovico's ambassador, but kept it secret from all but the bishop of St. Malo and the Seneschal of Beaucaire. The terms of this agreement were kept hidden for several months, but the substance was that, when Charles entered Italy or sent an army to conquer Naples, the Duke of Milan was bound to give him passage through his state and contribute 500 paid soldiers, allow him to fit out as many ships as he liked at Genoa, and lend him, before he left France, 200,000 ducats. On the other hand the King pledged himself to defend the Duchy of Milan against all comers, with particular mention of preserving Lodovico's authority, and to keep in Asti, the Duke of Orléans' city, while the war lasted, 200 lances³¹ which should be ready if necessary to defend that state. Either then or not long after, in a document signed by his own hand, he promised that when he had taken the Kingdom of Naples, he would cede to Lodovico the Principality of Taranto.

It is certainly not wasted or unrewarding effort to consider how times and things change. Francesco Sforza, Lodovico's father, a prince of rare prudence and ability, was an enemy of the Aragonese because of the grave injuries he received at the hands of Alfonso, Ferdinand's

father, and an old friend of the Angevins. Nevertheless, in 1457, when Jean the son of René attacked the Kingdom of Naples, he supported Ferdinand so promptly that final victory was largely due to him. His only reason for doing so was that it seemed to him too dangerous to his own Duchy of Milan for his close neighbors the French to occupy a state so powerful in the affairs of Italy. The same motive had earlier led Filippo Maria Visconti to abandon the Angevins—whom he had hitherto favored—and to free Alfonso his enemy. The latter had been captured by the Genoese in a naval battle off Gaeta and had been brought a prisoner to Filippo Maria in Milan with all the nobles of his kingdom. On the other hand Charles' father Louis, though many had often urged him with strong chances of success to conquer Naples and although the Genoese had insistently invited him to rule their state which had been held by his father Charles, had always refused to become involved in the affairs of Italy, regarding it as full of expense and difficulty and in the end harmful to the kingdom of France. Now men's opinions had changed, though not perhaps the logic of things. Lodovico was calling on the French to cross the mountains, unafraid of a most powerful King of France holding Naples, where his own father, most valiant in arms, had feared to let it fall into the hands of a little count of Provence; while Charles burned with ambition to make war in Italy, preferring the temerity of low-born unqualified men to the counsels of his father, a king of great prudence and long experience. It is certain that Lodovico, likewise, was encouraged in his action by his father-in-law, Ercole d'Este Duke of Ferrara, who was longing to recover the Polesine of Rovigo—lands bordering on Ferrara and most vital to her security, which had been taken from him by the Venetians in his war with them ten years before. He realized that the only way of recovering it was a complete upheaval of the whole of Italy. Many believed, however, that Ercole, though he feigned great friendship for his son-in-law, nevertheless secretly loathed him because in the war we have mentioned—whereas the rest of Italy which had taken up arms on his behalf was far superior in

strength to the Venetians—Lodovico, who was already ruling the state of Milan, moved by his own interests, forced the others to make peace with the condition that the Venetians should keep the Polesine. So Ercole, who could not revenge himself by force of arms, now perhaps sought to do so by giving him fatal advice.

Chapter V

[Public declarations of preparedness for defense and secret worries of Ferdinand of Aragon. His action to avert the danger and reconcile himself with the Pope and Lodovico Sforza. The King of France makes up his differences with the King of Spain, the King of the Romans and the Archduke of Austria. The investiture of Lodovico Sforza as Duke of Milan. Embassy of Perron de Baschi to the Pope, the Venetian senate and the Florentines. Piero de' Medici and the demands of the King of France. The alliance between the Pope and Ferdinand of Aragon begins to weaken.]

As rumors of what was being planned beyond the Alps were already beginning to spread in Italy—though at first from unreliable sources—people took up a wide variety of attitudes. Many thought it a matter of the greatest significance, because of the power of the Kingdom of France, the readiness of that nation for new enterprises and the divisions among the Italian peoples. Others regarded it more as a youthful impulse than a considered decision, and thought that when it had boiled up for a while, it would easily pass off. Their reasons for thinking so were the age and character of the King, the natural unreliability of the French and the difficulties which always beset great enterprises. Ferdinand, against whom all this was being contrived, did not show much fear, saying that it would be a very difficult campaign because if they intended to attack him from the sea they would find him provided with a fleet large enough to fight them in the open sea, and the ports well

fortified and all in his hands: there was no baron in the country who could let them in as Jean d'Anjou had been by the Prince of Rossano and other great nobles. The expedition by land would be difficult, long and risky, since the whole length of Italy had to be traversed, so that every state would have cause to fear, and perhaps Lodovico Sforza most of all—although he pretended that the common danger applied only to others, because Milan was so near to France, and the King would find it easier and probably be more anxious to occupy it. As the Duke of Milan was so closely related to him, how could Lodovico be sure that the King did not intend to free him from Lodovico's oppression? Especially as just a few years before the King had openly stated that he would not allow his cousin Giovan Galeazzo to be so unjustly oppressed. The affairs of the Aragonese were not in such straits that the hope of their weakness should give the French courage to attack them, as he was well supplied with many fine troops, plenty of chargers, munitions, artillery, and all provisions needed for war, and so much money that he could easily obtain further supplies of anything he needed. Besides numerous able captains in his service, he had at the head of his armies his eldest son the Duke of Calabria, an officer of great renown and no less courage, with many years of experience in all the wars of Italy. To his own resources must be added the ready assistance of his relatives, since it was not likely that he would lack the help of the King of Spain, his cousin and his wife's brother, both on account of their close kinship and because he would not care to have the French so near to Sicily.

This was what Ferdinand was saying in public, exaggerating his own power and belittling as far as he could the strength and chances of his enemies. But as he was a king of remarkable prudence and very great experience, inwardly he was tormented by serious doubts, remembering the difficulties he had had with France at the beginning of his reign. He really believed that the war would involve him with an enemy who was extremely aggressive and powerful, far superior to himself in cavalry, foot soldiers, navies, artillery, money, and men

full of ambition to expose themselves to any danger for the glory and greatness of their king. He on the other hand could rely on nothing, as his kingdom was full of hatred for the name of Aragon or strong sympathy for the rebels, and the majority of his people in any case always eager for a change. Fortune would weigh more than fidelity with them, and common opinion of his situation more than reality. The funds he had amassed would not cover the expenses of defense, and as rebellion and tumult would break out everywhere because of the war, in a flash all his revenues would vanish. He had many enemies in Italy, and not one reliable and constant friendship. Who had not been damaged at one time or another by his arms or intrigues? From Spain, as past experience and the conditions of that kingdom showed, he could hope for no other assistance in his peril than generous promises and great talk of preparations—but only small and tardy results. His fear was increased by many predictions of misfortune to his house, which had come to his notice at different times, partly through newly discovered ancient writings, partly through the words of men who, often unsure of the present, claim certain knowledge of the future: things which in prosperous times are little believed, but gain all too much credence when adversity comes. Anguished by these considerations, and fear seeming incomparably greater to him than hope, he realized that the only remedy to these dangers was either to dispel such thoughts from the mind of the King of France by making an agreement as soon as possible, or to remove some of the causes which incited him to war. He already had ambassadors in France, sent there to negotiate the betrothal of Ciarlotta, the daughter of his second son Don Federigo, to the King of Scotland. As this girl was the daughter of a sister of Charles' mother and had been brought up at the French court, the matter was being handled there. Ferdinand gave these ambassadors further instructions in these affairs, and sent out in addition Cammillo Pandone who had been to France before for him. He was secretly to offer the nobles great gifts and bribes, and if there were no other way of pacifying him, he was to

do all he could to make peace with the King by offering him terms of tribute and other tokens of submission. Furthermore, not only did he intervene with all his energy and authority to settle the quarrel over the castles bought by Virginio Orsino, whose obstinacy he lamented as having been the cause of all the upheavals, but he also reopened with the Pope their former negotiations for a marriage alliance. But his main care and attention was directed toward mollifying and reassuring Lodovico Sforza, the origin and prime instigator of all the trouble, for he believed that it was fear more than anything else that had led him to so dangerous a step. So placing his own safety before the interests of his granddaughter and the safety of her child, he offered Lodovico through various channels to accept anything he liked to do in the affairs of Giovan Galeazzo and the Duchy of Milan. He ignored Alfonso's opinion, who, taking heart from Lodovico's natural timidity, and forgetting that the timid man is inclined to rash decisions through fear no less easily than the bold man through temerity, felt that the best way to make him withdraw from these plans of his was to frighten and threaten him.

In the end, after many difficulties arising more on Virginio's side than the Pope's, the dispute over the castles was settled. Don Federigo had a hand in the agreement, having been sent to Rome by his father for this purpose. It was agreed that Virginio should keep the castles, paying the Pope as much as he had paid Franceschetto Cibo for their purchase. The betrothal of Sancia Alfonso's natural daughter to Don Gioffredo the Pope's younger son was also concluded, though both were too young for the marriage to be consummated. The conditions were that Don Gioffredo should go to live in Naples in a few months time, and should receive in dowry the Principality of Squillace with an income of 10,000 ducats a year, and be given command of a hundred men at arms at Ferdinand's expense. This confirmed the belief held by many that what the Pope had negotiated in France had been done largely to frighten the Aragonese into submitting to these conditions. Ferdinand also tried to ally himself with the Pope for their

common defense, but the Pope raised many difficulties, and he obtained only a promise given by brief in strict secret, to help him defend the Kingdom of Naples if Ferdinand promised to do likewise for the papal state. When this was settled, the Pope dismissed from his territory the forces which the Venetians and the Duke of Milan had sent to help him. Ferdinand had equal hopes of success in the negotiations. He then began with Lodovico Sforza, who showed consummate art in soothing the other princes' fears and encouraging their hopes. Sometimes he expressed his disapproval of the French king's intentions as dangerous to all Italy; sometimes he put forward as his excuse that he had been obliged to listen to the demands made on him, as he said, by that king, because he held Genoa in fee and because of the ancient alliance with the house of France: sometimes he promised Ferdinand—and sometimes the Pope and Piero de' Medici separately—to do all in his power to discourage Charles, his object being to deter them from uniting against him before the French affair was decided and planned. He was believed the more easily because it was considered that bringing the King of France into Italy would be so unsafe for himself as well that it seemed impossible that he would not draw back in the end when he realized the danger.

The whole summer passed amid these discussions. Lodovico behaved in such a way that, while he avoided offending the King of France, neither Ferdinand nor the Pope nor the Florentines despaired of his promises nor entirely relied upon them. But all this time the preparations were being diligently made in France for the new expedition, for which the King's enthusiasm grew daily against the advice of nearly all the great nobles. To make his way easier, he made up his quarrel with Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, who were rulers at that time very celebrated and renowned for their wisdom, for having brought their kingdoms out of great turbulence into the greatest peace and obedience, and because they had recently, in a war lasting ten years, regained for Christendom the Kingdom of Granada which had been held by the Moors of Africa for

almost eight hundred years. Because of that victory they received from the Pope, with great approbation from all Christians, the title of Catholic Monarchs. In this treaty³² with Charles—which was confirmed with the greatest solemnity and with public oaths sworn by both parties in church—it was provided that Ferdinand and Isabella (Spain was ruled jointly in their names) would not help the Aragonese either directly or indirectly, would not form new ties of marriage with them or in any way oppose Charles by defending Naples. To obtain these pledges, Charles, beginning with certain loss in exchange for uncertain gain, returned without any payment whatever Perpignan and the whole County of Roussillon, which had been pledged many years before to his father Louis by King John of Aragon, Ferdinand's father. This was most harmful to the whole Kingdom of France, because that county, situated at the foot of the Pyrenees and therefore, according to the ancient frontiers, part of Gaul, prevented the Spaniards from invading on that side. For the same reason Charles made peace³³ with Maximilian King of the Romans, and with Philip Archduke of Austria his son, who had serious differences with him both old and new, their origin being that Louis his father had, on the death of Charles, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders and of many other neighboring lands, occupied the Duchy of Burgundy, the County of Artois and many other lands possessed by him. As a result there had been a war between Louis and Marie, the Duke's only child, who shortly after her father's death had married Maximilian. Then Marie being dead and Philip her son by Maximilian having succeeded to his mother's inheritance, peace had been made with Louis of France—more at the wish of the people of Flanders than that of Maximilian. To cement this peace Louis' son Charles was married to Marguerite, Philip's sister, and although she was a minor she was brought to live in France. After she had been there a number of years, Charles repudiated her and took as his wife Anne, who held the Duchy of Brittany since her father Francis had died without male issue. Thus Maximilian received a double insult: being deprived at once

of his daughter's marriage and of his own bride, because earlier he had himself married Anne by proxy. Nevertheless, as he was not powerful enough to carry on by himself the war which had broken out again as a result of this offense; and as the Flemish people, who were ruling themselves during Philip's minority, refused to be at war with the French, and because the kings of Spain and England had made peace with them, he agreed to do the same. By this peace Charles restored to Philip his sister Marguerite, who had been kept in France until then, together with the County of Artois, but retaining the fortresses with the obligation to give them back at the end of four years when Philip would attain his majority and so be able to ratify the agreement. These lands had been designated as Marguerite's dowry in the earlier peace made with Louis.

When France had made peace with all her neighbors, the war against Naples was fixed for the following year, and in the interval all the necessary preparations were to be made, which were constantly being urged by Lodovico Sforza. He (as men's ambitions grow by degrees) no longer thought only of making himself safe in power, but aiming at higher things, had in mind to transfer the Duchy of Milan entirely into his own hands through the opportunity offered by the difficulties of the Aragonese. To give some color of justice to so great an injustice and establish his position more firmly against all eventualities, he married Bianca Maria, his niece and Giovan Galeazzo's sister, to Maximilian who had lately succeeded to the Roman Empire through the death of his father Frederick. As a dowry he promised him in installments 400,000 ducats in cash, and 40,000 ducats in jewels and other goods. In return Maximilian, who was more eager for the money than for the family alliance, undertook to give Lodovico, at the expense of his new brother-in-law Giovan Galeazzo, the investiture of the Duchy of Milan for himself, his children and descendants, as though that duchy had always lacked a legitimate duke since the death of Filippo Maria Visconti. He promised to send him the privileges drawn up in complete form as soon as the last installment was paid.

The Visconti, who were noblemen of Milan, during the most bloody factions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines in Italy, when the Guelphs were finally driven out, became (for this is nearly always the outcome of civil war) from being leaders of one part of Milan, masters of it all. When they had been in this position of power for many years, they sought, according to the usual course of tyrannies (so that what was usurpation might seem theirs of right), to give their fortunes the color of legality and later to illustrate them with fine titles. So they obtained from the emperors—of whom Italy was beginning to know the name more than the power—first the title of Captains and then of Imperial Vicars; and finally Giovan Galeazzo, who, having received the County of Virtus from his father-in-law, King John of France, called himself Conte di Virtù, obtained from Wenceslas King of the Romans for himself and his male descendants the title of Duke of Milan—in which he was succeeded in turn by Giovan Maria and Filippo Maria his sons. The male line failed on the death of Filippo who, in his will named as his heir Alfonso King of Aragon and Naples on account of the great friendship the latter had formed for him after he had set him free, and even more in order to ensure that the Duchy of Milan, with so powerful a defender, would not be occupied by the Venetians, who were already visibly aspiring to do so. However, Francesco Sforza, a most distinguished captain of that time and no less gifted in the arts of peace than in those of war, helped by a combination of circumstances and no less by his own determination to rule rather than to keep faith, seized the Duchy by armed force and claimed it for his wife Bianca Maria, the natural daughter of Filippo Maria. It is said that afterward he could have had the investiture from the Emperor Frederick quite cheaply; but he scorned it, being sure that he could retain the Duchy with the same arts by which he had first acquired it. Galeazzo his son went on without investiture, and so did Giovan Galeazzo, his grandson. Hence Lodovico was not only criminal toward his living nephew, but insulted the memory of his dead father and brother by inferring that none of them had

been legitimate Dukes of Milan, and he obtained the investiture from Maximilian as though the state had reverted to the Empire, taking the title of fourth Duke of Milan instead of seventh. However these actions were known only to very few while his nephew was alive. Besides he used to say—taking as his example Cyrus the younger brother of Ataxerxes King of Persia, and supporting it with the opinions of many legal authorities—that he had precedence over his brother, not in age, but in being their father's first son born after he had become Duke of Milan. These two arguments (leaving out the example of Cyrus) were stated in the Imperial Privilege. In order to cover up Lodovico's greed, though in a ridiculous manner, it was added in separate letters that it was not customary for the Holy Empire to give a state to anyone who had previously held it on the authority of others; and therefore Maximilian had turned down Lodovico's requests that Giovan Galeazzo should have the investiture, as the latter had already held the Duchy from the Milanese people. Lodovico's new family ties with Maximilian led Ferdinand to hope that he might be cooling off in his friendship for the King of France, supposing that his alliance with a rival—and an enemy for so many good reasons—together with his handing over so much money, would generate mistrust between them; and that Lodovico, taking courage from this new connection, would be bolder to separate himself from the French. Lodovico nourished these hopes with the greatest skill, and nonetheless (such was his sagacity and dexterity) at the same time he kept up relations with Ferdinand and the other rulers of Italy while remaining on good terms with the King of the Romans and the King of France. Ferdinand also hoped that the Venetian senate, to whom he had sent ambassadors, would object to a prince so much greater than themselves entering Italy where they held the highest position in power and authority. The Spanish monarchs too gave him hope and encouragement, promising him powerful assistance in case they were unable to prevent the expedition by their authority and persuasion.

On the other hand the King of France was making an

effort to remove the obstacles and difficulties he might meet on this side of the mountains now that he had dealt with those on the other side. Therefore he sent Peron de Baschi, a man not unskilled in the affairs of Italy where he had been under Jean d'Anjou. He communicated to the Pope, to the Venetians and to the Florentines the King's decision to regain the Kingdom of Naples and urged them all to join him in an alliance. But all he took away were hopes and replies in general terms, because as the war was planned only for the following year, none was willing to reveal his intentions so early. The King also summoned the Florentine spokesmen who had been sent to him with Ferdinand's consent to reassure him that they were not supporting the Aragonese, and requested them to promise him free passage and victuals for his army through their territory against due payment, and to send with it a hundred soldiers which he demanded, he said, as a token of the Florentine Republic's continuing friendship. Although it was pointed out to him that they could not make such a declaration without grave danger before his army was actually in Italy, and that he could in any case rely on the city for anything that was in accord with their long friendship and fidelity to the crown of France, nevertheless they were forced by French impetuosity to promise—being threatened otherwise with the closing down of Florentine trade which was very considerable in that kingdom. As it was later evident, this was done on the advice of Lodovico Sforza, who was then the guide and director of all their negotiations with the Italians. Piero de' Medici endeavored to persuade Ferdinand that these demands would matter so little to the result of the war that it might be more useful to him for Piero and the Republic to remain friends with Charles and so perhaps be in a position to mediate in some settlement. Besides this he also pointed out the terrible blame and hatred which would fall on him in Florence if the Florentine merchants were expelled from France. It was, he said, a matter of good faith, the principal basis of alliances, that each of the allies should bear with patience a certain degree of inconvenience so that the other might

not incur graver losses. But Ferdinand, considering how much his security and credit would be diminished if the Florentines abandoned him, did not accept these arguments and complained bitterly that Piero's constancy and faith should begin so soon to fall below what he had hoped of him. Therefore Piero, who was determined to keep the friendship of the Aragonese before all else, contrived to make the French wait for the answer they were urgently demanding, finally saying that the intentions of the Republic would be communicated through fresh ambassadors.

At the end of this year the alliance between the Pope and Ferdinand began to weaken, either because the Pope hoped by causing fresh difficulties to obtain from him greater concessions, or because he thought he could induce him in this way to force the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli to obey him. The Pope was extremely anxious for the cardinal to come to Rome, and offered as guarantors of his safety the College of Cardinals, Ferdinand and the Venetians. He was uneasy about his absence because of the importance of the fortress of Ostia (for around Rome he held Ronciglione and Grottaferata), the considerable following and authority he enjoyed at the court, and finally because of his natural fondness for change and his obstinacy in affronting any danger rather than give way in the smallest degree over anything he had decided. Ferdinand argued effectively that he could not force Vincoli to return, as he was so full of mistrust that no surety seemed appropriate to the risk he ran. Ferdinand also complained of his ill luck with the Pope, who always blamed him for what was really the fault of others. The Pope had thought Virginio had bought the castles on Ferdinand's advice and with his money, and yet the purchase had been carried out without his participation; whereas it was he who had got Virginio to come to an agreement with the Pope and put up the money which was paid in compensation for the castles. The Pope did not accept these excuses, but went on complaining about Ferdinand with bitter and almost threatening words, so that it seemed that there could be no lasting basis to their reconciliation.

Chapter VI

[The King of France expels the ambassadors of Ferdinand of Aragon. Death of Ferdinand. Author's judgment on him. Alliance between the Pope and Alfonso of Aragon. Attempts to reconcile Alfonso with Lodovico Sforza and the latter's dissimulation. The King of France's ambassadors attempt to secure from the Florentines an assurance of their alliance or at least friendly help for the French army. Charles VIII asks the Pope to proclaim him King of Naples. The Pope's reply. The Florentine government's reply to the orators of the King of France. The King's indignation with Piero. Venice's neutrality.]

In this mood and amid this confusion of affairs so clearly tending toward fresh troubles the year 1494 began (I count the beginning according to the Roman style), a most unhappy year for Italy, and truly the beginning of years of wretchedness, because it opened the way for innumerable horrible calamities which later for various reasons affected a great part of the rest of the world. At the beginning of that year Charles, who had no wish to come to any agreement with Ferdinand, ordered his ambassadors to leave the Kingdom of France as representatives of an enemy power. Practically at the same time Ferdinand died of a sudden catarrh, worn out more by worry than by old age. He was a king famous for the prudence and industry by which, with the help of good fortune, he kept his kingdom that had been recaptured by his father, in the face of great difficulties which arose at the beginning of his reign, and brought it to such greatness as few kings had enjoyed for many years past. He would have been a good king if he had gone on ruling with the same methods with which he began; but as time went on, either, like most princes, he had been unable to resist the violence which power brings and had changed his ways or, as most

people thought, his true nature showed itself which he had earlier concealed with great skill. And he became notorious for treachery and cruelty such that his own supporters judged it worthy rather of the name of bestiality.

Ferdinand's death seemed sure to harm the common cause. Besides the fact that he would certainly have attempted anything to stop the French crossing the Alps, there is no doubt that it would have been more difficult to get Lodovico Sforza to reconcile himself with the haughty and intemperate nature of Alfonso than to persuade him to renew his friendship with Ferdinand, who in the past had often been inclined to let Sforza have his way so as to have no cause for quarrel with the state of Milan. Apart from anything else it is well known that when Isabella, Alfonso's daughter, went to join her husband, Lodovico fell in love with her at sight and wished to get her from her father for his own wife. To this end he worked with spells and magic—so it was believed throughout Italy—so that Giovan Galeazzo was incapable for many months of consummating the marriage. Ferdinand would have agreed, but Alfonso was against it; so Lodovico, deprived of that hope, took another wife. And when he had had children with her, he turned all his thoughts to handing on the Duchy of Milan to them. Some have also written that Ferdinand was ready to put up with any trial and indignity to avoid the coming war, and had decided, as soon as the weather permitted, to embark in light galleys for Genoa and go thence by land to Milan to give satisfaction to Lodovico in anything he wished and bring his granddaughter back to Naples. His hope was that, besides the practical results, this public confession that his safety depended entirely on Lodovico would soften his heart, as it was well known what an unbounded ambition he had to appear the arbiter and practically the oracle of Italy.

However, Alfonso, as soon as his father was dead, sent four ambassadors to the Pope. The latter was showing signs of wishing to go back to his first idea of friendship with France. In a bull signed by the college of cardinals he had recently promised, at the request of the

King of France, the rank of cardinal for the bishop of St. Malo, and at the joint expense of himself and the Duke of Milan he had recruited Prospero Colonna, who used to be the King's captain, and some other military commanders. Nevertheless he was ready to reach an agreement because of the great concessions which Alfonso offered him in the hope of making sure of him and of binding him to his defense. They therefore openly agreed that there should be an alliance between them for the common defense of their states with a determined number of troops on each side. The Pope was to grant Alfonso the investiture of the kingdom with the reduction of the tribute which Ferdinand had obtained from previous popes for his lifetime only, and should send a papal legate to crown him. He should make Lodovico, the son of Don Enrico who was Alfonso's natural brother, a cardinal—he was later called the Cardinal of Aragon. The King was to pay the Pope 30,000 ducats immediately, and he was to give the Duke of Gandia³⁴ lands in the kingdom with an income of 12,000 ducats a year and the first of the seven principal offices which fell vacant. During the Pope's lifetime the Duke should be commissioned at the King's expense with 300 men at arms with which he should be at the service of both of them. Don Gioffredo, who was to go and live with his father-in-law virtually as a pledge of his father's good faith, was to receive, besides all the things promised him in the first agreement, the protonotariate, which was likewise one of the said seven offices. Income from benefices in the kingdom was to go to the Pope's son Cesare Borgia, recently promoted by his father to the rank of cardinal. It was not normal to promote a bastard to such a dignity, so the Pope, to remove this obstacle, had proved with false witnesses that he was the legitimate son of someone else. Furthermore, Virginio Orsino, who represented the King in these negotiations, promised that the King would help the Pope to retake the fortress of Ostia if the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli refused to go to Rome; but the King stated that this promise had been made without his knowledge or consent. He felt that in such dangerous times it was imprudent to make an

enemy of this cardinal, who was powerful in the affairs of Genoa—on which, with his encouragement, Alfonso planned to make an attempt—and also as in all these upheavals there might arise questions of a general council or other matters prejudicial to the Holy See, he did his best to reconcile the cardinal with the Pope. However, as the latter would not agree to anything if Vincoli did not return to Rome, and as the Cardinal was absolutely determined never to trust his life to the word of a lot of Catalans, as he used to say, Alfonso's wishes and efforts were in vain. The cardinal, after he had pretended to be almost certain to accept the conditions which were being negotiated, suddenly left Ostia by night aboard an armed brigantine, leaving the fortress well-guarded. He spent a few days at Savona and then at Avignon—of which city he was the legate—and finally went to Lyons where Charles had recently gone to prepare for the war with greater ease and publicity. He was already openly declaring his intention of going to the war in person. The cardinal was received by the King with great honor and ceremony, and then joined forces with the rest of those who were planning the upheaval of Italy.

Alfonso, to whom fear had become a good teacher, pursued with Lodovico Sforza the efforts begun by his father, offering him the same concessions. Sforza, in his usual way, ingeniously fed him with various hopes, but gave him to understand that he was forced to proceed with the greatest skill and care so that the war planned against others should not begin against himself. On the other hand he never ceased pressing on the preparations in France. To do this more effectively and the better to establish all the details of what had to be arranged, and also so that there should be no delay in the execution of those plans, he sent to France—saying he had been summoned by the King—Galeazzo da Sanseverino, the husband of his natural daughter, who was greatly favored and trusted by him.

On Lodovico's advice Charles sent to the Pope four representatives with a commission to ask on their way through Florence for a declaration of the Republic's in-

tentions. These were Béraud Aubigny, a Scottish captain, the General of France, the President of the Parliament of Provence and the same Perron de Baschi whom he had sent the year before. These, according to their instructions drawn up mostly in Milan, explained in Florence and Rome the reasons why the King of France was the heir of the House of Anjou and because the line of Charles I had failed, pretended to the Kingdom of Naples, and they communicated his decision to enter Italy himself that very year—not to occupy anything which belonged to others, but only to take possession of what was rightly his. His ultimate aim, however, was not so much the Kingdom of Naples as the opportunity to turn his armies afterward against the Turks for the greater glory and fame of Christianity. In Florence they explained how much the King relied on that city which had been rebuilt by Charlemagne, and had been always favored by the King's forebears and recently by Louis his father in the war unjustly waged against them by Pope Sixtus, by the late King Ferdinand and the present King Alfonso. They recalled the great benefits which accrued to the Florentines through commerce in the Kingdom of France, where they were well received and privileged as though they were Frenchmen. Likewise, when the King ruled Naples, they could expect the same benefits and advantages there; whereas they had never had anything from the Aragonese but harm and offense. The ambassadors asked that they should give some indication of co-operation with the King in this enterprise; and if they were prevented from doing so by some just cause, they should at least allow passage and victualing through their territory, for which the French army would pay. They discussed these matters with the Republic. Privately they reminded Piero de' Medici of the many benefits and honors bestowed on his father and his ancestors by Louis XI—making many efforts in times of danger to preserve their greatness, and as a token of friendship, honoring their arms with the device of the house of France. On the other hand Ferdinand, not satisfied with having openly attacked them by force of arms, had wickedly taken part in the local conspiracies in which

his uncle Giuliano had been killed and his father Lorenzo gravely injured.³⁵

They reminded the Pope of the long services and constant devotion of the house of France toward the Apostolic See—to which all histories ancient and modern bore ample witness—and at the same time the obstinacy and frequent disobedience of the Aragonese. They asked for the investiture of the Kingdom of Naples for Charles as legally due to him, and offered the Pope great prospects and rewards if he would favor this expedition which had been decided upon as much through his encouragement and on his authority as for any other reason. The Pope replied that, as so many of his predecessors had given the investiture of that kingdom to three kings of Aragon in succession, because in Ferdinand's investiture Alfonso was included by name, it was not possible to grant it to Charles until it had been declared by legal authority that his title was the better one. The investiture of Alfonso had not prejudiced the issue because, with this in mind, it had been specified in it that it should be understood without prejudice. He reminded them that the Kingdom of Naples was in the absolute ownership of the Apostolic See, saying that he did not believe that the King wished to do violence to this authority—as he would if he attacked the kingdom, contrary to the custom of his predecessors who had always been its steadfast defenders. It was more fitting to his dignity and virtue—if he had a claim—to seek to substantiate it through legal processes, which he (the Pope) as feudal overlord and sole judge of this cause was ready to administer. A Most Christian King should not demand anything more of a Roman pontiff whose office it was to forbid, not foment wars and violence between Christian princes. He pointed out that, even if the King wished to do otherwise, it would be extremely difficult and dangerous because of the nearness of Alfonso and the Florentines, whose alliance drew the whole of Tuscany with it, and because so many barons owed allegiance to the King of Naples, whose territories reached right up to the gates of Rome. Nevertheless he sought not to remove all their hopes, although he him-

self had decided not to give up the alliance he had made with Alfonso.

In Florence there was strong feeling in favor of the French: so many Florentines traded in that kingdom; there was the ancient but untrue legend that Charlemagne had rebuilt the city after its destruction by Totila King of the Goths; there was the close and long-standing alliance of their ancestors, as Guelphs, with Charles I King of Naples and with many of his descendants who had been protectors of the Guelph party in Italy; and finally there was the memory of the wars which had been made on the city first by the old Alfonso and then in 1478 by Ferdinand, who sent his son Alfonso to fight in person. For these reasons the entire populace desired that the French should be allowed free passage. It was desired no less by the wisest and most eminent citizens of the Republic, who thought it the height of imprudence to bring into Florentine territory—for other people's quarrels—so dangerous a war by opposing the person of the King of France and so powerful an army, which would enter Italy with the support of the state of Milan and, if without the actual consent of the Venetian senate, at least not opposed by them. They supported their opinion with the example of Cosimo de' Medici who had in his time been considered one of the wisest men in Italy. In the war between Jean d'Anjou and Ferdinand, although the latter was supported by the Pope and the Duke of Milan, Cosimo had always counseled that the city should not oppose Anjou. They recalled the example of Lorenzo, Piero's father, who had always supported the same policy whenever there was a rumor of the Angevins' return. They recalled the words he often used when alarmed by the power of the French, especially after this king had acquired Brittany: that the Italians would face terrible ills if the French king ever realized his own power. But Piero de' Medici—judging affairs more by his own desires than by prudence and placing too much reliance on his own opinion, convinced that this affair would end with more noise than practical effect, and encouraged by some of his ministers, corrupted, it was said, by Alfonso's gifts—decided to persist

in the friendship with the Aragonese. With the result that, because of his power, all the other citizens had to agree. I have it on respectable authority that Piero, not satisfied with the power his father had obtained in the Republic—although it was such that all the magistrates were chosen according to his wishes, and they did not decide the more important affairs without asking his opinion—aspired to more absolute power and the title of prince. In this he did not wisely consider the state of the city, which was then powerful and rich, and had been nourished for centuries on republican institutions with the principal citizens accustomed to take part in government more as equals than as subjects. It was therefore likely that the city would not tolerate so great and sudden a change without considerable violence. For this reason Piero, knowing that some unusual basis must be found to sustain his ambition, had allied himself closely with the Aragonese and decided to link his fortune with theirs so as to create a powerful support for the preservation of his new principality.

It happened by chance that a few days before the French ambassadors reached Florence, there came to light certain negotiations which Lorenzo and Giovanni de' Medici—extremely wealthy young men closely related to Piero and hostile to him because of differences they had had in their youth—had opened through Cosimo Rucellai, half-brother of Piero, with Lodovico Sforza and through him with the King of France, and which were directed against Piero's rule. They were arrested by the magistrates, but let off lightly and exiled to their houses in the country because the most experienced citizens persuaded Piero, though not without great difficulty, that the utmost severity of the law should not be used against his own family. But as this incident confirmed to him that Lodovico Sforza was determined on his downfall, he thought himself all the more obliged to persevere in his earlier decision. The French envoys therefore received an answer in elaborate and respectful words but lacking the conclusion they had desired. They were told on the one hand of the natural friendship of the Florentines for

the house of France and their strong desire to please so glorious a king; on the other of the obstacles preventing them. Nothing was more unworthy of princes and republics than to fail in their promises, and without doing this they could not consent to his wishes, as the alliance was still in force which they had made with Ferdinand on the authority of King Louis his father,³⁶ with a clause that after Ferdinand's death it should hold good for Alfonso, and with the express condition that they should not only assist in the defense of Naples, but refuse passage through their territory to anyone going to attack it. They were extremely sorry that they could not do otherwise, but hoped that the King, most wise and most just, knowing their friendly disposition, would attribute their not being able to help him to these obstacles, and recognize them as just. The King was furious at this reply; he immediately dismissed the Florentine ambassadors from France, and deported from Lyons on Lodovico Sforza's advice, not the other merchants, but only the officials of Piero de' Medici's bank; so that in Florence it should be understood that he attributed this offense to Piero himself and not to the citizens in general.

All the other Italian powers were now divided, some in favor of the King of France, some against him; only the Venetians decided to remain neutral and await quietly the outcome of this affair. Either they were not sorry to see Italy in turmoil, hoping to extend the Venetian domain through the long wars of others, or, being powerful themselves, they did not fear they would be easy prey to the victor, and regarded it as imprudent to join unnecessarily in the wars of other states. Ferdinand constantly urged them to do so, and the King of France both this year and the year before sent them ambassadors, who had argued that there had never been anything but friendship and good will between their states and affection and kind offices on both sides on all occasions. The King, wishing to increase still further this relationship, begged the most wise senate to add their advice and support to his expedition. They had replied briefly and prudently to this message: the Most Christian King was so wise and had the advantage of such grave and mature counsel that it

would be presumptuous on their part to advise him. They added that the Venetian senate would be delighted at any good fortune of his because of the friendship they had always had for the French crown. Therefore they much regretted their inability to translate their friendly feeling into action; but the Grand Turk kept them constantly in alarm, as he had the mind and the opportunity to attack them, and they were forced to guard at great expense all those numerous islands and shores which were near to him, and to abstain from getting involved in wars with other powers.

Chapter VII

[The French King's preparations for the expedition against the Kingdom of Naples and Alfonso's preparations for defense. Open signs of enmity of Alfonso toward Lodovico Sforza. Alfonso's plans and projects for war. The Pope with Alfonso's help takes the fortress of Ostia held by the force of Cardinal della Rovere. Lodovico Sforza, assuring the Pope and Piero de' Medici of his desire for peace, makes them waver in their support for Alfonso. Agreements for mutual defense between the Pope and the King of Naples. The commissioning of Fabrizio and Prospero Colonna.]

More important than the speeches of ambassadors and the replies they received were the preparations by land and sea which were being made everywhere. Charles had sent Pierre d'Urfé, his grand equerry, to Genoa, which was ruled by the Duke of Milan with the support of the Adorno faction and Giovan Luigi dal Fiesco, to prepare a powerful navy of great ships and narrow galleys. Other ships he had fitted out at Villefranche and Marseilles. It was therefore rumored at the French court that Charles intended to enter the Kingdom of Naples by sea as Jean, René d'Anjou's son, had done against Ferdinand. There were many in France who believed that owing to the King's lack of ability, the insignificant nature of those

who were encouraging him and the lack of money, all these preparations would come to nothing. Nevertheless, because of the King's enthusiasm—he had recently on the advice of those closest to him assumed the title of King of Jerusalem and of the Two Sicilies (which was the title of the kings of Naples)—preparations for the war were being made with great energy, raising money, organizing troops and determining the final plans with Galeazzo da Sanseverino who held all the secrets and intentions of Lodovico Sforza locked in his bosom.

Alfonso, on the other hand, who had never ceased preparing by land and sea, thought it was no longer possible to allow himself to be deceived by the hopes held out to him by Lodovico, and that it would be better to frighten and harry him than to attempt to reassure and soothe him. So he ordered the Milanese envoy to leave Naples and recalled his own from Milan, took possession of the Duchy of Bari—which had been held by Lodovico for many years as a gift from Ferdinand—and sequestered its revenues. Nor was he content with these open demonstrations of hostility (rather than insults): but he then made every effort to lure the city of Genoa away from the Duke of Milan. In the present situation this was a matter of the greatest importance, because if that city's allegiance changed, it would be very easy to turn the government of Milan against Lodovico, and the King of France would be denied the opportunity to harass the Kingdom of Naples by sea. Therefore he agreed secretly with Cardinal Paolo Fregoso, who had once been Doge of Genoa and had a following of many of the same family, and with Obietto dal Fiesco, both of them leaders of a considerable faction in that city and its neighboring coastlands, and with some of the Adorno family who for various reasons had chosen to leave Genoa; and he planned to reinstate them in the city with a powerful fleet. As he used to say, wars are won by anticipation and diversion. He likewise decided to go personally into Romagna with a strong army and thence into the territory of Parma. There raising his standard and proclaiming the name of Giovan Galeazzo he hoped that the people of the Duchy of Milan would rise against Lodovico.

Although these attempts might encounter difficulties, he regarded it as very valuable that the war should start in a place far away from his kingdom—and very important that the French should be overtaken by the winter in Lombardy. He was experienced only in the Italian wars in which the armies used to wait for the grass to grow to feed the horses, and so never entered on a campaign before the end of April; he therefore supposed that in the bad season the French would have to wait in a friendly state until spring. He hoped that this delay might give rise to some event which might save him. He also sent ambassadors to Constantinople to seek help in their common danger from Bajazet the Ottoman prince of the Turks, because it was said that Charles intended to invade Greece when he had conquered Naples. He knew Bajazet did not underestimate this threat, because the Turks remembered the expeditions made in the past by the French into Asia against the infidels, and were not a little afraid of their military strength.

While these matters were being arranged on both sides, the Pope sent his forces to Ostia under the command of Niccolò Orsini, Count of Pitigliano, with support from Alfonso by land and sea. The town was captured without difficulty, and they began to bombard the fortress with artillery when the governor, through Fabrizio Colonna as intermediary and with the consent of Giovanni della Rovere, Prefect of Rome and the brother of the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli, surrendered after a very few days. It was agreed that in exchange the Pope would not persecute with spiritual or temporal arms either the prefect or the cardinal, if they did not give him fresh cause. Fabrizio in whose hands the cardinal had left Grottaferrata was allowed to keep it on the same terms on payment of 10,000 ducats to the Pope.

Lodovico Sforza had been told by the cardinal on his way through Savona what Alfonso was plotting with the Genoese exiles on his advice and with his mediation, and Lodovico convinced Charles that this would be a serious obstacle to his own plans, persuading him to send 2,000 Swiss to Genoa, and to dispatch 300 lances immediately into Italy to serve under d'Aubigny, who had stopped at

Milan on his way back from Rome on the King's orders. These were to be ready to defend Lombardy and to advance if there were need or occasion for them to do so. With them there were to be 500 Italian men-at-arms recruited at the King's expense under Giovan Francesco da Sanseverino, Count of Gaiazza, Galeotto Pico, Count of Mirandola, and Ridolfo da Gonzaga; and 500 more which the Duke of Milan was committed to give him. All the same, Lodovico with his usual cunning still went on assuring the Pope and Piero de' Medici of his desire for peace and quiet in Italy, offering various hopes that there would soon be clear proof of this. It is almost impossible that what is earnestly stated should not create some doubt even in minds determined to believe the opposite. Even if his promises were no longer believed, his affirmations somewhat slowed down his adversaries' preparations. The Pope and Piero would very much have liked to make the attempt on Genoa, but as this would be a direct attack on the state of Milan, the Pope, when asked by Alfonso for his galleys and for the papal troops to join his in Romagna, agreed that their forces should join for their common defense in Romagna but not advance any further. And he made difficulties over the galleys, saying that it was not yet the moment to drive Lodovico into such a desperate situation. The Florentines who were asked to allow the royal fleet shelter and provision at Leghorn, were undecided for the same reason. Having rejected the King of France's requests on account of their alliance with Ferdinand, they were unwilling, before they were compelled by necessity, to do more than they were obliged to by that pact.

When further delay was no longer possible, the fleet at last left Naples under the command of the admiral Don Federigo. Alfonso himself collected his army in the Abruzzi to enter Romagna, but before he went any further, he thought he ought to discuss with the Pope (who was of the same mind) everything they should do for their mutual safety. Thus on July 13th they met at Vicovaro, a possession of Virginio Orsino, where they stayed for three days and then left having reached full agreement. It was decided at this meeting on the Pope's advice

that the King himself should go no further, but that part of his army—which the King said consisted of nearly 100 squadrons of soldiers of twenty men each, and more than 3,000 crossbowmen and light horse—should remain with him on the borders of the Abruzzi near Celle and Tagliacozzo to defend the Church states and his own. Virginio was to stay in the Roman region to counterbalance the Colonna—out of fear of whom there should remain in Rome 200 of the Pope's soldiers and part of the King's light horse. Ferrando Duke of Calabria (this was the title given to the eldest sons of the Kings of Naples) was to go to Romagna with 70 squadrons, the rest of the light horse and most of the papal troops, which were to be used only defensively. The Duke who was a very promising young man, was to have with him to guide his youthful inexperience, Giovaniacopo da Triulzi, governor of the royal troops, and the Count of Pitigliano who had passed from the Pope's service to that of the King—both captains of great reputation and experience. Ferrando's presence seemed very appropriate for an advance into Lombardy because he was closely and doubly related to Giovan Galeazzo, the husband of Isabella his sister and the son of Galeazzo brother of Ippolita his mother. One of the most important subjects discussed by the Pope and Alfonso was the problem of the Colonna, who it was clear were planning some change. Prospero and Fabrizio had been in the pay of the late King and had acquired lands and honors from him; and after the King's death Prospero, despite many promises to Alfonso that he would take service with him, had entered the joint service of the Pope and the Duke of Milan through the agency of Cardinal Ascanio; and he subsequently refused, when asked by the Pope, to hold his commission only from him. Fabrizio who had remained in the service of Alfonso, seeing the Pope's and the King's anger with Prospero, was making difficulties about going with the Duke of Calabria into Romagna if the situation of Prospero and the whole Colonna family were not first settled and assured. This was the excuse they offered for their difficulties; but in secret they had taken service with the King of France. They were inspired to do so by their close friendship with

Ascanio, who had left Rome a few days before out of distrust of the Pope, and taken refuge in their possessions; by hope of greater gain, and still more out of jealousy that Virginio Orsino should have the first place beside Alfonso and a greater share in his good fortune. To keep this secret until they thought it safe to declare themselves the King's captains, they pretended to wish to come to an agreement with the Pope and Alfonso, who were insisting that Prospero should leave the pay of the Duke of Milan and be commissioned on the same terms by them because otherwise they could not be sure of him. They continued negotiations, but so as not to come to a decision they kept on bringing up various difficulties over the conditions proposed. Over this matter there was a difference of opinion between the Pope and Alfonso. The former wanted to deprive them of the castles they held in the Roman territory and sought an opportunity to attack them. Alfonso had no other object than his own safety and saw in war only a last resort, though he did not dare to oppose the Pope's desires. Hence they decided to attack the Colonna, and they agreed on the necessary forces and strategy; but first they would wait and see if the affair could not be settled within the next few days.

Chapter VIII

[Expedition of Alfonso's fleet to Genoa; attempts on the eastern seaboard and their failure. Alfonso's army sent to Romagna; their first difficulties. Piero de' Medici sends troops recruited by the Florentines to join the Aragonese army. Démarches of the Pope and Alfonso with the Venetian senate, the King of Spain and Bajazet. Fresh intrigues of Lodovico Sforza.]

These and many other issues were being discussed in many quarters, but finally the Italian war was opened by Don Federigo³⁷ going to Genoa with a fleet beyond all doubt larger and better equipped than any seen in the Tyrrhenian sea for many years past. He had 35 narrow