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FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE  
THIRTEENTH AND  
FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

ESTHER G. ROPER, B.A.

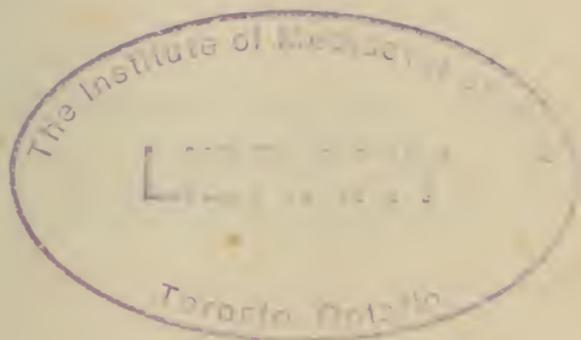
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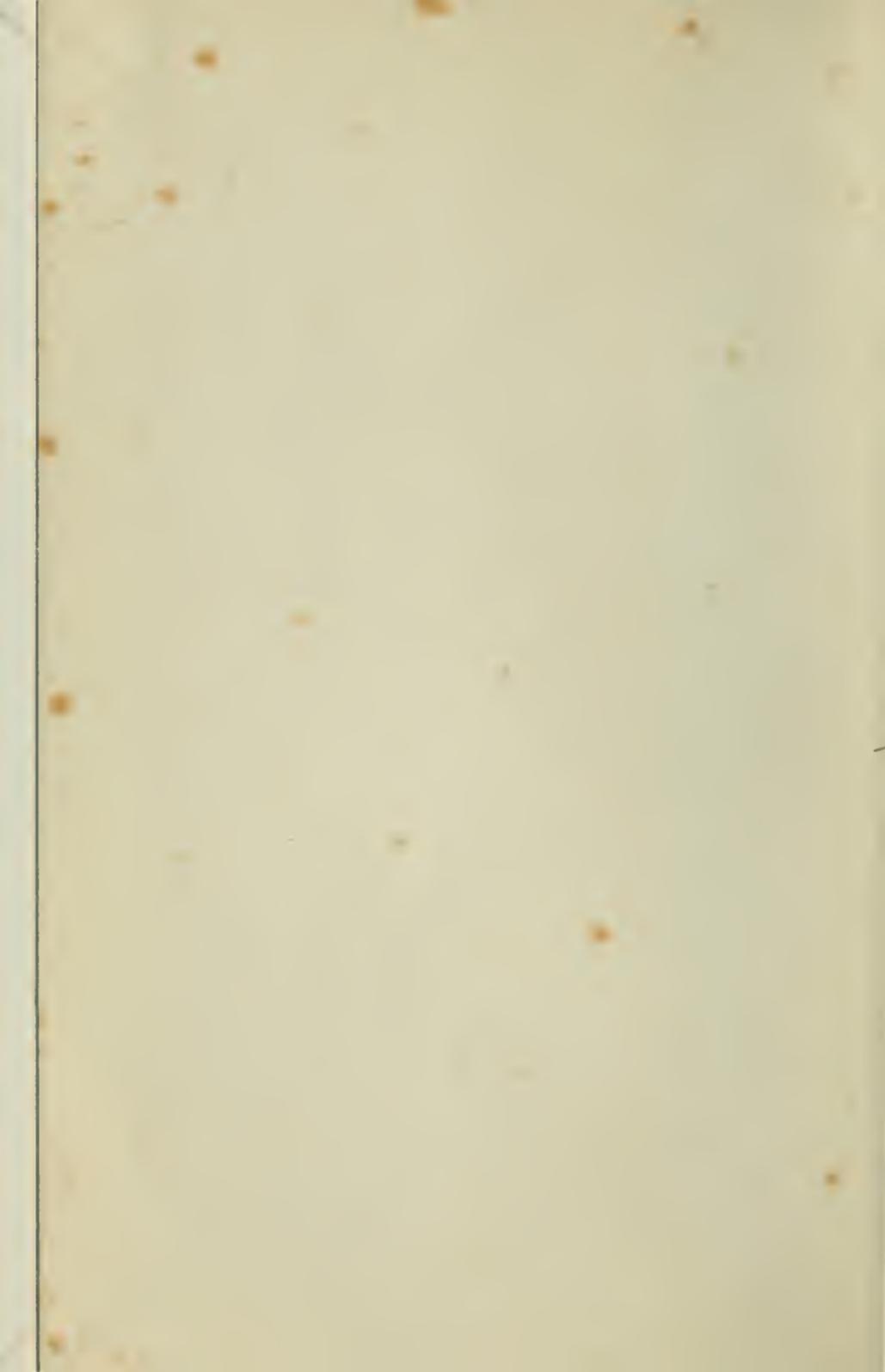
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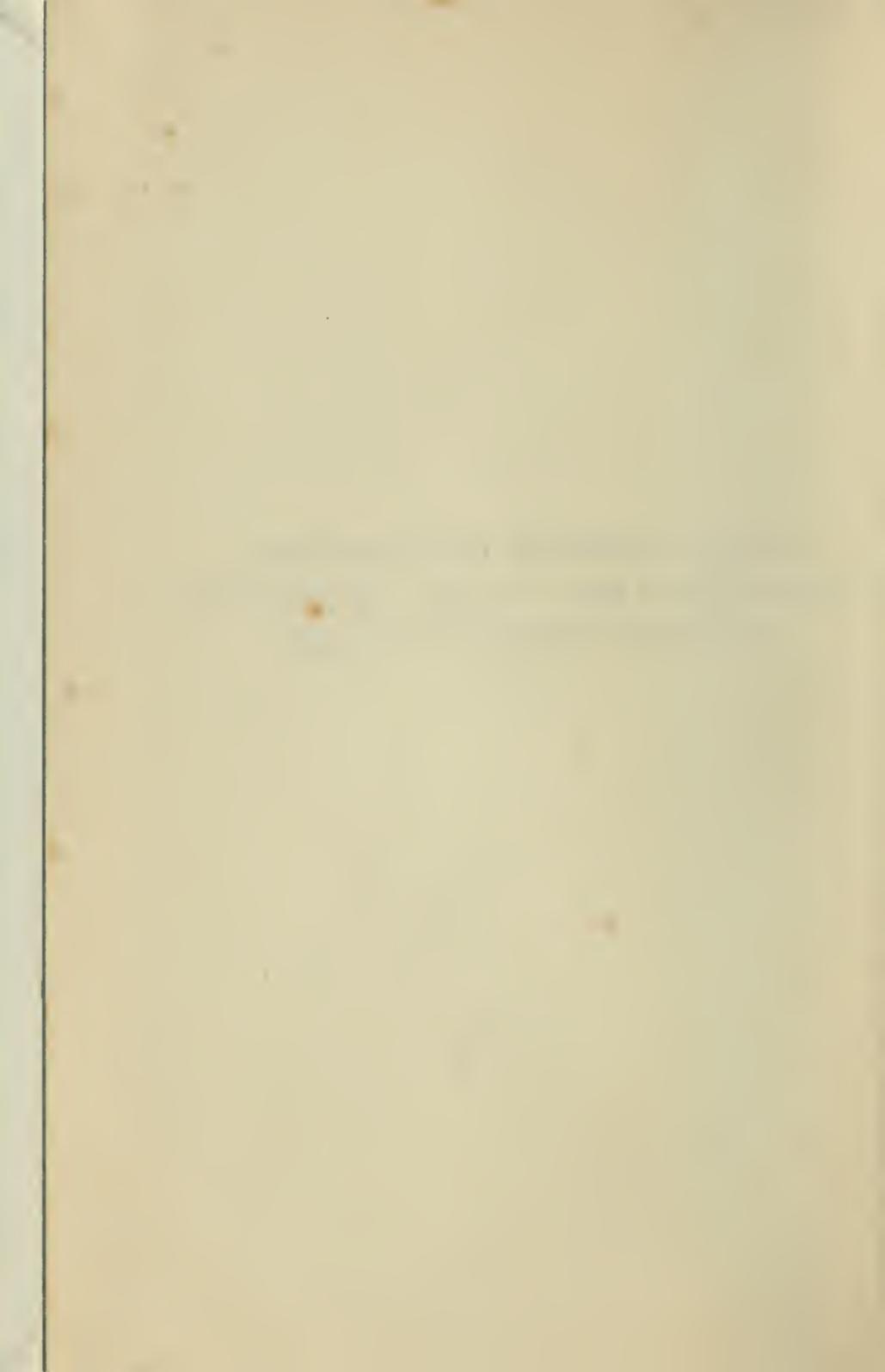
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[Continued on p. 3.]





SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING  
FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE THIRTEENTH  
AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES



TEXTS FOR STUDENTS. No. 19

GENERAL EDITORS: CAROLINE A. J. SKEEL, D.LIT.;  
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SELECT PASSAGES  
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BY

ESTHER G. ROPER, B.A.

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## PREFACE

THE extracts in this little book have been chosen to illustrate the social and industrial as well as the political life of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the practice of government based on Trade Guilds was in process of development.

To-day, when similar theories of government are widely discussed, the history of this experiment is of vital interest.

During those two centuries and under such rule all the most beautiful churches and palaces of Florence were built, many of its best known poets, novelists, and historians wrote, and some of its most famous sculptors and painters worked. Nearly all of them were members of Trade Guilds.

The aim of this necessarily short and inadequate work is to arouse in its readers a desire for more knowledge of those times. A brief bibliography is appended to the text.

My thanks are due to Mrs. Janet Ross and to her publishers, Messrs. Chatto and Windus, for permission to use extracts from her *Letters of the Early Medici*; to Messrs. Constable and Co. for permission to use Miss R. Selfe's translation of several passages from Books I.-IX. of *Villani's Chronicle*; to Messrs. Dent and Co. for per-

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ESTHER G. ROPER.

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# SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

## 1. FOUNDING OF FLORENCE.

IN old time, by means of these colonies many cities were either founded from the beginning, or being already founded were enlarged; in which number the city of Florence may be reckoned, which was begun by the inhabitants of Fiesole and augmented by colonies. It is quite true, as Dante and Giovanni Villani show, that the city of Fiesole, being situated on the top of a hill, nevertheless, to make her markets more frequented and to give more convenience to those who should wish to come thither with their merchandise, established her mart, not on the top of the hill but in the plain between the foot of the slope and the river Arno. These markets (in my judgment), which were the occasion of the first buildings on that site, made the merchants wish to have commodious warehouses for storing their goods, and these in time became permanent structures.—MACHIAVELLI: *History of Florence*, Book II.

## 2. THE COUNTESS MATILDA (1046-1115).

And also in those same times was the worthy and wise Countess Matilda, the which reigned in Tuscany and in Lombardy, and was well-nigh sovereign lady over all, and did many great things in her time for Holy Church, so that it seems to me reasonable and fitting to speak of their

beginning and of their state, in this our treatise, forasmuch as they were much mixed up with the doings of our city of Florence through the consequences which followed their doings in Tuscany. . . . And she made a will and offered up all her patrimony on the altar of St. Peter, and made the Church of Rome heir of it all.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book IV., §§ 18, 21.

### 3. THE COUNTRY NOBLES EXACT A ROAD-TAX, 1135.

In the year of Christ 1135 the fortress of Montebuono was standing, which was very strong and pertained to the house of the Bondelmonti, which were Cattani and ancient gentlemen of the country, and from the name of this their castle the house of Bondelmonti took their name; and by reason of its strength, and because the road ran at the foot thereof, therefore they took toll,<sup>1</sup> for the which thing the Florentines did not desire, nor would they have, such a fortress hard by the city; and they went thither with an army in the month of June and took it, on condition that the fortress should be destroyed, and the rest of the possessions should still pertain to the said Cattani, and that they should come and dwell in Florence. And thus the commonwealth of Florence began to grow, and by force, rather than by right, their territory increased, and they subdued to their jurisdiction every noble of the district, and destroyed the fortresses.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book IV., § 36.

### 4. DISSENSION AMONG FLORENTINE NOBLES, 1177.

Wherefore in the selfsame year there began in Florence dissension and great war among the citizens, the worst that had ever been in Florence; and this was by reason of too

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, for the passage of Florentine merchandise.

great prosperity and repose, together with pride and ingratitude; forasmuch as the house of the Uberti, which were the most powerful and the greatest citizens of Florence, with their allies, both magnates and popolari, began war against the Consuls (which were the lords and rulers of the commonwealth for a certain time and under certain ordinances), from envy of the Government, which was not to their mind; and the war was so fierce and unnatural that well-nigh every day, or every other day, the citizens fought against one another in divers parts of the city, from district to district, according as the factions were, and as they had fortified their towers,<sup>1</sup> whereof there was great number in the city, in height 100 or 120 cubits. And in those times, by reason of the said war, many towers were newly fortified by the communities of the districts, from the common funds of the neighbourhood, which were called Towers of the Fellowships, and upon them were set engines to shoot forth one at another, and the city was barricaded in many places; and this plague endured more than two years, and many died by reason thereof, and much peril and hurt was brought upon the city; but this war among the citizens became so much of use and wont that one day they would be fighting, and the next day they would be eating and drinking together, and telling tales of one another's valour and prowess in these battles; and at last they ceased fighting, in that it irked them for very weariness, and they made peace, and the Consuls remained in their government; albeit, in the end they begot and then brought forth the accursed factions, which were afterwards in Florence, as hereafter in due time we will make mention.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book V., § 9.

<sup>1</sup> The nobles were organized into "Societies of the Towers." The expenses of fortifying and maintaining these, which communicated with the houses of neighbouring members and served for their common defence, was divided among them all.

## 5. THE FIRST PODESTÀ, 1207.

In the year of Christ 1207 the Florentines chose for the first time a foreign magistrate, for until that time the city had been ruled by the government of citizen consuls, of the greatest and best of the city, with the council of the senate, to wit, of 100 good men; and these consuls, after the manner of Rome, entirely guided and governed the city, and administered law and executed justice; and they remained in office for one year. . . . But afterwards when the city was increased in inhabitants and in vices, and there came to be more ill-deeds, it was agreed for the good of the commonwealth . . . that justice might not miscarry by reason of prayers, or fear, or private malice, or any other cause, that they should invite a gentleman from some other city, who might be their Podestà for a year, and administer civil justice with his assessors and judges, and carry into execution sentences and penalties on the person. . . . Yet the government of the consuls did not therefore cease, but they reserved to themselves the administration of all other things in the commonwealth.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book V., § 32.

6. THE STORY OF THE RISE OF THE GUELF AND  
GHIBELLINES IN FLORENCE, 1215.

In the year of Christ 1215, M. Gherardo Orlandi being Podestà in Florence, one M. Bondelmonte dei Bondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, had promised to take to wife a maiden of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; and afterwards as the said M. Bondelmonte, who was very charming and a good horseman, was riding through the city, a lady of the house of the Donati called to him, reproaching him as to the lady to whom he was betrothed, that she was not beautiful or worthy of him,

and saying : "I have kept this my daughter for you ;" whom she showed to him, and she was most beautiful ; and immediately by the inspiration of the devil he was so taken by her, that he was betrothed and wedded to her, for which thing the kinsfolk of the first betrothed lady, being assembled together, and grieving over the shame which M. Bondelmonte had done to them, were filled with the accursed indignation, whereby the city of Florence was destroyed and divided. For many houses of the nobles swore together to bring shame upon the said M. Bondelmonte, in revenge for these wrongs. And being in council among themselves, after what fashion they should punish him, whether by beating or killing, Mosca de' Lamberti said the evil word : "Thing done has an end" ; to wit, that he should be slain ; and so it was done ; for on the morning of Easter of the Resurrection the Amidei of San Stefano assembled in their house, and the said M. Bondelmonte coming from Oltrarno, nobly arrayed in new white apparel, and upon a white palfrey, arriving at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio on this side, just at the foot of the pillar where was the statue of Mars, the said M. Bondelmonte was dragged from his horse by Schiatta degli Uberti, and by Mosca Lamberti and Lambertuccio degli Amidei assaulted and smitten, and by Oderigo Fifanti his veins were opened and he was brought to his end ; and there was with them one of the counts of Gangalandi. For the which thing the city rose in arms and tumult ; and this death of M. Bondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed parties of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence, albeit long before there were factions among the noble citizens and the said parties existed by reason of the strifes and questions between the Church and the Empire.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book V., § 38.

## 7. EARLY CUSTOMS OF THE FLORENTINES.

And note, that at the time of the said Popolo, and before and afterwards for a long time, the citizens of Florence lived soberly, and on coarse food, and with little spending, and in manners and graces were in many respects coarse and rude ; and both they and their wives were clad in coarse garments, and many wore skins without lining, and caps on their heads, and all wore leather boots on their feet, and the Florentine ladies wore boots without ornaments, and the greatest were contented with one close-fitting gown of scarlet serge or camlet, girt with a leathern girdle after the ancient fashion, with a hooded cloak lined with miniver, which hood they wore on their head ; and the common women were clad in coarse green cambric after the same fashion ; and 100 lire was the common dowry for wives, and 200 or 300 lire was, in those times, held to be excessive ; and the most of the maidens were twenty or more years old before they were wedded. After such habits and plain customs then lived the Florentines, but they were true and trustworthy to one another and to their commonwealth, and with their simple life and poverty they did greater and more virtuous things than are done in our times with more luxury and with more riches.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book V., § 69.

## 8. THE BROTHERS OF THE MISERICORDIA.

In 1240, when the citizens of Florence were busily occupied in the selling, or rather the manufacture, of cloth, which by reason of its quality and excellence was sought after by all the cities of the world to such a degree that two annual fairs were held—one on St. Simon's Day and the other at Martinmas—to each of which all the richest merchants in Italy came, and sales were made to the

amount at each fair of from fifteen to sixteen millions of florins, it was necessary to have porters always at hand to carry the goods to and fro between the dyers' and washers' shops and any other places which suited the convenience of the manufacturers. Therefore most of the porters had to remain in the Piazza San Giovanni or the Piazza Santa Maria del Fiore to wait for the chance, which often came, of carrying goods to the places assigned by the Republic. Now in that Piazza San Giovanni there was a cellar which joined other similar cellars, believed to have belonged to the Adimari; but as it had always stood open because it had been flooded by the inundations of the Arno, the porters had taken possession of the place as a refuge from rain and cold while waiting for a job. They used to have a fire there and play dice when work was slack. There was amongst the seventy or eighty porters who were in the habit of sitting there a certain Piero di Luca Borsi, a man of advanced age and very devout. He was greatly scandalized by the many blasphemies uttered by his companions against the holy name of God; and as he was the head of the men, he resolved to suggest that each time one of them dared to blaspheme God and His Holy Mother he should put a "crazia" into a little box to expiate this grave sin. This proposal pleased all his companions and was agreed to, all promising that the rule should not be violated but kept to the glory of the Divine Majesty. When they had persevered a long time in this devout practice, a large amount of money accumulated in the aforesaid box, seeing which Piero di Luca made another proposal, which was to have six ambulances made, large enough to hold a person lying down, and to give one to each quarter of the city, and to appoint for each a bearer, who should be changed every week. The ambulances were to carry to the hospital poor sick persons and those who had met with accidents, the dead bodies of drowned and

murdered people, and those who were found helpless in the gutter.

He whose turn it was to carry the ambulance was to take from the box of fines a "giulio." This wise proposal of Piero di Luca pleased them all, and they swore to keep this rule faithfully even without payment, because the reward of our good actions in this world can only be looked for in the next world from the hands of God. For many years they continued this work of mercy, the citizens applauding them greatly. They knew they could have earned more money for each journey, but they kept faithful to the wish of Piero. About this time he died, and another leader was chosen. It occurred to him under the inspiration of God to procure a picture with the figure of the dead Christ on it, at the foot of which he would place a box with the inscription: "Give alms to the poor and sick and needy of the city." This picture was placed in the Church of San Giovanni on his festival, January 13. The idea was, with the money obtained, to build a room which should be used as an oratory, where the members might pray and also discuss the business of the Brothers of the Misericordia. This generous plan was commended and so quickly put into practice that the said box would not hold all the money poured in by the faithful. As much as five hundred florins was collected, which enabled them to buy some rooms above the cellars, and this was the foundation of the Misericordia.—LANDINI: *L'Istoria della Misericordia*, pp. xxv-xxvii (condensed).

#### 9. THE GOLDEN FLORINS FIRST STRUCK, 1252.

The host of the Florentines having returned, and being at rest after the victories aforesaid, the city increased greatly in state and in riches and lordship and in great quietness; for the which thing the merchants of Florence, for the honour of the commonwealth, ordained with the

people and commonwealth that golden coins should be struck at Florence ; and they promised to furnish the gold, for before the custom was to strike silver coins of 12 pence the piece. And then began the good coins of gold, 24 carats fine, the which are called golden florins, and each was worth 20 soldi. And this was in the time of the said M. Filippo degli Ugoni of Brescia, in the month of November, the year of Christ 1252. The which florins weighed eight to the ounce, and on one side was the stamp of the lily and on the other of St. John.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VI., § 53.

#### 10. THE GUILDS OF ARTS FORMED, 1266.

When the news came to Florence and to Tuscany of the discomfiture of Manfred, the Ghibellines and the Germans began to be discouraged ; . . . wherefore the people of Florence, which were at heart more Guelf than Ghibelline, through the losses they had received, one of his father, another of his son, a third of his brothers, at the defeat of Montaperti, likewise began to take courage, and to murmur and to talk through the city, complaining of the spendings and the outrageous burdens which they endured from Count Guido Novello, and from the others which were ruling the city ; whence those which were ruling the city of Florence for the Ghibelline party, hearing in the city the said tumult and murmuring, and fearing lest the people should rebel against them, by a sort of half measure, and to content the people, chose two knights of the Jovial Friars of Bologna as Podestàs of Florence. . . . And the said M. Roderigo was the beginner of this Order ; but it endured but a short while, for the fact followed the name, to wit, they gave themselves more to joviality than to aught else. These two friars were brought thither by the people of Florence ; . . . and they ordained thirty-six good men,

merchants and artificers of the greatest and best which there were in the city, the which were to give counsel to the said two Podestàs, and were to provide for the spendings of the commonwealth. . . . And the said thirty-six met together every day to take counsel as to the common well-being of the city, in the shop and court of the consuls of Calimala ; . . . the which made many good ordinances for the common weal of the city, among which they decreed that each one of the seven principal Arts in Florence should have a college of consuls, and each should have its ensign and standard, to the intent that, if any one in the city rose with force of arms, they might under their ensigns stand for the defence of the people and of the commonwealth. And the ensigns of the seven greater Arts were these : the judges and notaries, an azure field charged with a large golden star ; the merchants of Calimala,<sup>1</sup> to wit, of French cloths, a red field with a golden eagle on a white globe ; money changers, a red field sewn with golden florins ; wool merchants,<sup>2</sup> a red field charged with a white sheep ;

<sup>1</sup> The Calimala Guild dealt in foreign cloth. In the fourteenth century it had agencies in France, Spain, Portugal, Flanders, England, and Germany. Its consuls were supreme over all persons and causes within the guild. Villani writes : "The Calimala merchants receive annually (A.D. 1338) more than 10,000 pieces of cloth from over the mountains and from France, to be improved in Florence. Their value exceeds 300,000 gold florins, and is all sold in Florence, without including such as was sent out of the city and sold in the East, along the Mediterranean, and in the principal cities of Europe" (XI., 94).

<sup>2</sup> The Guild of Wool was the oldest trade society in Florence ; its earliest extant statutes are dated 1309. Subordinate to it were the guilds of the shearers, the washers, the dyers, the carders, the spinners (male and female), the weavers, and the winders. Among the regulations of the Guild of Wool were the following : All noisy occupations were strictly forbidden between the tolling of the three o'clock bell (the general time for work to cease) and the striking of the bell at matins. Overtime work was forbidden. No worker was permitted to carry on his trade even secretly after compline. Every manufacturer was required to pay sufficient wages, the amount being submitted to the consuls of the guild for approval ; the average wage was about one shilling and sixpence a day.

physicians and apothecaries,<sup>1</sup> a red field, thereupon St. Mary with her son Christ in her arms; silk merchants and mercers,<sup>2</sup> a white field charged with a red gate, from the title of Porta Santa Maria; furriers, arms vair, and in one corner an Agnus Dei upon an azure field. The next five, following upon the greater arts, were regulated afterwards when the office of Priors of the Arts was created, as in time hereafter we shall make mention; and they had assigned to them after a similar fashion to the seven Arts, standards and arms: to wit, the Baldrigari (that is, retail merchants of Florentine cloths, of stockings, of linen cloths, and hucksters), white and red standard; butchers, a

<sup>1</sup> In 1197 the consuls of the Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries (with the consuls of other guilds) officially signed the anti-imperial league of Tuscan cities. No doctor might be admitted a member of the college nor be allowed to practise unless he had first been publicly examined by the consuls of the guild. In 1455 Matteo Palmieri, apothecary, poet, and member of the guild, was appointed ambassador to the King of Naples. "The ambassador," says the historian Giovanni Battista Gello, "behaved himself very wisely, and the King did ask what manner of man he was in his own country, and it was told him that he was an apothecary. 'If the apothecaries,' quoth the King, 'be so wise and learned in Florence, what be their physicians?'"

Some crafts subordinated to this guild were: Printing, making and selling of books, purse making, straw and felt hat making, hair-dressing, tennis-bat and ball making, ornamental sword making. About 1339 the Guild of Painters was enrolled as a subordinate guild of the apothecaries, "painters being beholden for their supplies of pigments to the apothecaries and their agents in foreign lands."

Among the members of the apothecaries' guild were: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), poet and statesman; Leo Battista Alberti (1404-1472), physician, astronomer, and architect; Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), surgeon and philosopher; Paolo Toscanelli (1397-1482), astronomer and geographer; Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512), merchant and explorer.

<sup>2</sup> The Guild of Silk was called in the fourteenth century the Guild of Silk and Cloth of Gold Manufacturers and Goldsmiths. The code of 1335 gave to the tribunal of the guild (1) the direction of all that pertained to commerce in silk; (2) the administration of justice to every person in the guild. Among goldsmiths enrolled in the guild were Lorenzo Ghiberti, maker of the Baptistery gates; Benvenuto Cellini, artist and worker in metals; Filippo Brunelleschi, architect of the Cathedral dome.

yellow field with a black goat ; shoemakers, the transverse stripes, white and black, known as the *pezza gagliarda* [gallant piece] ; workers in stone and in timber,<sup>1</sup> a red field charged with the saw, and the axe, and the hatchet, and the pick-axe ; smiths and iron workers, a white field charged with large black pincers.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 13.

11. POPE GREGORY X. TRIES TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN  
THE GUELFs AND THE Ghibellines, 1273.

The aforesaid Pope, the year after his coronation, set forth with his court from Rome to go to Lyons-on-Rhone to the council which he had summoned, and he entered into Florence with his cardinals, and with King Charles, and with the Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople. . . . And with the Pope, and with King Charles, there came to Florence many other lords and barons, on the 18th day of June, in the year of Christ 1273, and were received with honour by the Florentines. And the situation of Florence being pleasing to the Pope, by reason of the convenience of the water, and the pure air, and that the court found much comfort there, he purposed to abide there, and pass the summer in Florence. And finding that this good city of Florence was being destroyed by reason of the parties (the Ghibellines being now in exile), he determined that they should return to Florence, and should make peace with the Guelfs ; and so it came about, and on the 2nd day of July in the said year, the said Pope, with his cardinals, and with King Charles, and with the said Emperor Baldwin, and with all the barons and gentlemen of the court (the people of Florence being assembled on the sands of the Arno hard

<sup>1</sup> The Guild of Masters of Stone and Wood included the following famous sculptors, painters, and architects: Arnolfo di Cambio, Michel Angelo, Giotto da Bordone, Donatello, Taddeo Gaddi, Andrea Orcagna, Luca della Robbia, Leonardo da Vinci.

by the head of the Rubaconte Bridge, great scaffolds of wood having been erected in that place whereon stood the said lords), gave sentence, under pain of excommunication if it were disobeyed, upon the differences between the Guelf and Ghibelline parties, causing the representatives of either party to kiss one another on the mouth, and to make peace, and to give sureties and hostages. . . . And straightway the said peace was broken; wherefore the Pope was sorely disturbed, and departed from Florence, leaving the city under an interdict.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 42.

## 12. CREATION OF THE OFFICE OF PRIORS, 1282.

In the year of Christ 1282, the city of Florence being under government of the order of the fourteen good men as the Cardinal Latino had left it, to wit, eight Guelfs and six Ghibellines, as we afore made mention, it seemed to the citizens that this government of fourteen was too numerous and confused; and to the end so many divided hearts might be at one, and, above all, because it was not pleasing to the Guelfs to have the Ghibellines as partners in the government . . . they annulled the said office of the fourteen and created and made a new office and lordship for the government of the said city of Florence, to wit, the Priors of the Arts; the which name, Priors of the Arts, means to say "the first," chosen over the others; and it was taken from the Holy Gospel, where Christ says to His disciples, "Vos estis priores." And this invention and movement began among the consuls and council of the art of Calimala, to which pertained the wisest and most powerful citizens of Florence, and the most numerous following, both magnates and popolani, of those which pursued the calling of merchants, seeing the most part of them greatly loved the Guelf party and Holy Church. And the first

priors of the Arts were three, whereof the names were these: Bartolo di M. Jacopo de' Bardi, for the sesto of Oltrarno and for the art of Calimala; Rosso Bacherelli, for the sesto of San Piero Scheraggio, for the art of the exchangers; Salvi del Chiaro Girolami, for the sesto of San Brancazio and for the woollen art. And their office began in the middle of June of the said year, and lasted for two months, unto the middle of August, and thus three priors were to succeed every two months, for the three greater Arts. And they were shut up to give audience (sleeping and eating at the charges of the commonwealth), in the house of the Badia where formerly, as we have aforesaid, the Ancients were wont to assemble in the time of the old Popolo, and afterwards the fourteen. And there were assigned to the said priors six constables and six messengers to summon the citizens; and these priors, with the Captain of the Popolo, had to determine the great and weighty matters of the commonwealth, and to summon and conduct councils and make regulations. And when the office had endured the two months, it was pleasing to the citizens; and for the following two months they proclaimed six, one for each sesto, and added to the said three greater Arts the art of the doctors and apothecaries, and the art of the Porta Santa Maria, and that of the furriers and skindressers; and afterwards from time to time all the others were added thereto, to the number of the twelve greater Arts; and there were among them magnates, as well as popolani, great men of good repute and works, and which were artificers or merchants. And thus it went on until the second Popolo was formed in Florence, as hereafter, in due time, we shall relate. From thenceforward there were no magnates among them, but there was added thereto the gonfalonier of justice. — GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 79.

## 13. THE COURT OF LOVE, 1283.

In the year 1283 in the month of June at the festival of St. John, the city of Florence being in a good and happy state of repose, tranquil and at peace, and prosperous for merchants and citizens, in the quarter of S. Felicita across the Arno there was formed under the leadership of the Rossi family and their neighbours a band of men a thousand and more strong, all robed in white, with a captain called "Lord of Love." This troop did nothing but play games and divert themselves with balls, to which came ladies and cavaliers and other citizens; they went about the streets with trumpets and hautboys in great joy and mirth, their tables being open to all for dinner and supper. This company lasted two months, and was the noblest and most famous there ever was in Florence and Tuscany. To it there came from various parts many gentlemen and jesters, and all were received and welcomed honourably. And note that in those days the city of Florence and the citizens were in the most prosperous condition they had ever known, and it lasted till the year 1284. . . . In those days there were in Florence three hundred cavaliers who kept open house, and many companies of knights and young men who had tables spread morning and night, and at Easter gave away many gowns of fur. Wherefore from Lombardy and all over Italy there came to Florence many buffoons and jesters and courtiers, who were well received, and no stranger of honourable rank passed through Florence who was not invited by these companies, who accompanied him on horseback inside or outside the city as he required.

—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 89.

## 14. GIANO DELLA BELLA, 1292.

But the nobles and magnates of the city waxed arrogant, and did many wrongs to the popolani by beating them and

putting other insults upon them. Wherefore many worthy citizens among the popolani and merchants strengthened the popolani government. Among these was a prominent and influential citizen named Giano della Bella, a wise, good, and worthy man, of high spirit and of good family, who resented the outrages committed by the nobles. He having recently been chosen as one of the priors, who entered on their office on February 15, 1292, had constituted himself head and leader of the movement, and was supported by the popolani and by his colleagues. And the priors added one to their number to hold equal authority with the rest, whom they called gonfalonier of justice . . . to whom was to be committed a standard with the arms of the people—that is, the red cross on a white ground—and a thousand foot-soldiers, all armed and bearing the said ensign or device, who were to be ready at every call of the said gonfalonier in any open place in the city, or wherever need might require. And they made laws, which were called Ordinances of Justice, against those magnates who should commit outrages against the popolani; and it was enacted that (1) one kinsman should be answerable for another, and that (2) the crimes might be proved by public report established by two witnesses. They decided, moreover, that all the members of any family who had had knights among its members should be accounted magnates, and that such persons should be ineligible for the office of prior, or gonfalonier of justice, or for their colleges; and the said families numbered thirty-three in all. And they further decreed that the outgoing priors, with certain men added to their number, should elect the new ones. And they bound the twenty-four guilds to observe these laws, granting certain powers to the consuls of the guilds.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, Book I., 11.

## 15. ORDINANCES OF JUSTICE, A.D. 1293.

It is provided and ordained that in case any of the nobles of the city or territory of Florence should commit, or cause to be committed, any injury against the person of any man of the people [popolani] of the city or territory so that from such injury death should ensue or shameful disfigurement of face or amputation of limb . . . then let Messer la Podestà send—and he is held and bound to send, putting aside all excuse and delay—one or more of the judges or cavaliers, with such of his officers as he may think fit, together with the said gonfalonier and the said armed men, with a strong hand and with force, to the houses and possessions of such noble as shall have committed, or caused to be committed, any such injury as those hereinbefore mentioned; and shall destroy and lay waste . . . such houses and possessions as may be in the city, suburbs, or townships of Florence, utterly from the foundations and from the roots of them before quitting the spot where such houses and goods are situated.—GIUDICI: *Storia dei Municipii*, Vol. II., p. 327.

## 16. STRIFE AMONG THE PEOPLE.

The arrogance of the evil men [among the popolani] increased greatly because the magnates were punished when they had incurred penalties, for the magistrates feared to violate the laws which required them to punish effectually. This “effectual punishment” was carried to such a length that the magistrates feared that, if a man who had been accused remained unpunished, the magistrate [in that case] would have no defence or excuse in the eye of the law, for which cause no accused person remained unpunished. The magnates, therefore, complained loudly of the laws, and said to those who carried them out: “If

the horse is running along and hits a popolano in the face with its tail, or if in a crowd one man gives another a blow in the chest without intending harm, or if some children of tender age begin quarrelling, an accusation will be made. But ought men to have their houses and property destroyed for such trifles as these?" — DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, Book I., 12.

#### 17. THE ARTS IN FLORENCE AT THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

Not only was there no city in Tuscany which durst offend Florence, but the power of Pisa being greatly diminished, and the name of the Ghibelline faction almost extinguished, that republic, as well as all the other communes, had come to be obedient to Florence either as subjects or as friends. Through the leisure resulting from this tranquillity, letters were then in a very flourishing condition. Wherefore that age produced many men of high excellence, and art began to arise at the same time, having been, as it were, dragged forth from its lurking-place amid the thickest darkness. The reputation of the Florentine merchants, based on their deserved character for industry and integrity, stood exceedingly high, not only throughout Italy, but in every country in the world. And the citizens, following the example of the commonwealth, were rivalling each other in the construction of magnificent buildings and palaces.<sup>1</sup> — AMMIRATO: *Istorie Fiorentine*, Book IV.

<sup>1</sup> The following 13th-14th-century buildings were the work of the Masters of the Comacine Guild, and the Guild of Masters of Stone and Wood, and the Guild of Goldsmiths:

*Churches.*—The Baptistery of San Giovanni (rebuilt 1202-94), the Duomo, or Santa Maria del Fiore (founded in the eighth century and rebuilt 1101-1298), Santa Maria Novella (begun in 1279), Santa Croce (begun in 1295), San Marco (begun in 1290), San Miniato (rebuilt by Calimala Guild in the thirteenth century).

## 18. BUILDING OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO.

In the said year 1298 the commonwealth and people of Florence began to build the Palace of the Priors, by reason of the differences between the people and the magnates, forasmuch as the city was always in jealousy and commotion, at the election of the priors afresh every two months, by reason of the factions which had already begun ; and the priors, which ruled the city and all the republic, did not feel themselves secure in their former habitation. . . . And they built the said palace where had formerly been the houses of the Uberti, rebels against Florence, and Ghibellines ; and on the site of those houses they made a piazza, so that they might never be rebuilt.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 26.

## 19. DANTE AND THE SMITH.

The most excellent poet of our native tongue, whose fame will never diminish, Dante Alighieri, the Florentine, lived in Florence near to the family of the Adimari. . . . Passing by the Gate of San Piero he saw a smith beating iron upon his anvil, and all the while he sang from Dante's poem as one singeth a song, and he so jumbled his verses, clipping here and adding there, that he seemed to Dante

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*Palaces.*—The Bargello (begun in 1258), the Palazzo Vecchio (1298-1314), and the Badia (990-1285).

*Bridges.*—Ponte Vecchio (1080-1333), Santa Trinita (1252), Alle Grazie (1237).

The decree of the Signoria for the building of the Cathedral was as follows : " Arnolfo di Cambio, architect of our commune, is to make a model or design for the renovation of Santa Reparata, of such noble and extreme magnificence that neither the industry nor the genius of man shall be able to invent anything grander or more beautiful that shall surpass it." No plan should be accepted unless it was " such as to render the work worthy of an ambition which had become very great, inasmuch as it resulted from the combined desires of a great number of citizens united in one sole will " (*Notizie Storiche delle Chiese Fiorentine*).

to be doing him a very great injury. He said nothing, but he approached the smith's shop—there where he had many irons with which he plied his trade. And Dante took the hammer and flung it into the street; he took the scales and threw them into the street; and thus he threw out many of the tools. The smith, turning upon him with a threatening gesture, cried:

“What the devil are you doing? Are ye mad?”

Dante asked him: “What art thou doing?”

“I am doing my own business,” answered the smith, “and ye are spoiling my tools, throwing them into the street.”

Said Dante: “If thou desirest that I should not spoil thy things, do not thou spoil mine.”

Said the smith: “What am I spoiling of yours?”

Dante answered: “Thou art singing out of my book, and are not singing it as I wrote it. I have no other trade but this, and thou art spoiling it for me.”

The smith was taken aback, and knowing not what to reply, he gathered his things together and returned to his work. And now if he wisheth to sing, he singeth Tristan or Lancelot and leaveth Dante alone.<sup>1</sup>—SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 114, tr. M. G. Steegmann.

## 20. RISE OF THE BIANCHI AND NERI, 1300.

In the said time our city of Florence was in the greatest and happiest state which had ever been since it was rebuilt, or before, alike in greatness and power and in number of people, forasmuch as there were more than 30,000 citizens in the city, and more than 70,000 men capable of arms in the country within her territory; and she was great in nobility of good knights, and in free populace, and

<sup>1</sup> There was no one in Florence who could not read; even the donkey boys sang verses out of Dante (*Dino Compagni*).

in riches, ruling over the greater part of Tuscany ; whereupon the sin of ingratitude, with the instigation of the enemy of the human race, brought forth from the said prosperity pride and corruption, which put an end to the feasts and joyaunce of the Florentines. . . . But now it came to pass that through envy there arose factions among the citizens ; and one of the chief and greatest began in the sesto of offence, to wit, of Porte San Piero, between the house of the Cerchi and the Donati ; on the one side through envy, and on the other through rude ungraciousness. . . . And the said Cerchi were the heads of the White party in Florence. . . . And with them took part many houses and families of popolani, and lesser craftsmen, and all the Ghibelline magnates and popolani ; and by reason of the great following which the Cerchi had, the government of the city was almost all in their power. On the side of the Blacks were all they of the house of the Pazzi, who may be counted with the Donati as the chiefs. . . . It came to pass a little while after that certain both of one party and of the other were riding through the city armed and on their guard. . . . On the evening of the first of May, in the year 1300, while they were watching a dance of ladies which was going forward on the piazza of Santa Trinità, one party began to scoff at the other, and to urge their horses one against the other, whence arose a great conflict and confusion, and many were wounded, and, as ill-luck would have it, Ricoverino, son of M. Ricovero of the Cerchi, had his nose cut off his face ; and through the said scuffle that evening all the city was moved with apprehension and flew to arms. This was the beginning of the dissensions and divisions in the city of Florence and in the Guelf party, whence many ills and perils followed on afterwards. — GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 39.

## 21. A RISING.

The good citizens remained very angry, and lost hope of peace. The Cavalcanti and many others complained, and so greatly did men's minds become inflamed that the people armed themselves and began to attack one another.

The della Tosa and the Medici came armed into the old market, shooting with their crossbows, going thence towards the Corso degli Adimari and down through Calimala; and they attacked and overthrew a barricade in the Corso which was guarded by people who had more mind for vengeance than for peace. . . . The leaders of the Black party had prepared fireworks, believing that there must certainly be fighting; and they came to an understanding with one Ser Neri Abati, Prior of S. Piero Scheraggio, a wicked and dissolute man, his kinsmen's enemy, and ordered him to set the first fire alight. And so, on June 10, 1304, he set fire to his kinsmen's houses in Orto San Michele. From the old market fire was shot into Calimala, and it spread so greatly through not being checked that, added to the first fire, it burnt many houses and palaces and shops.

In Orto San Michele there was a large loggia, with an oratory of Our Lady, in which there were many votive images of wax, and when in addition to the heat of the air these caught fire, all the houses which were round that spot were burnt, besides the warehouses of Calimala and all the shops which were round the old market as far as the new market, and the houses of the Cavalcanti and the houses in Vacchereccia and Porta Santa Maria as far as the old bridge; for it is said that more than 1,900 dwellings were burnt, and no remedy could be applied.

And thieves openly plunged into the fire to rob and carry away what they could get, and nothing was said to them; and whoever saw his property being carried off

durst not demand it back, because the city was in utter confusion.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, III., 8.

## 22. STRIFE IN FLORENCE.

Thus is our city afflicted! Thus our citizens remain obstinate in evil-doing! And that which is done one day is blamed the next. Sages were wont to say: "The wise man does naught of which he may repent." But in this city and by these citizens nothing is done so praiseworthy but it is reputed to the contrary and blamed. Men slay one another here; evil is not punished by law; but in proportion as the evil-doer has friends and can spend money, he gets off scot-free from the crime he has committed.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, III., 42.

## 23. THE FALL OF THE BRIDGE OF CARRAIA.

In this same time that the Cardinal da Prato was in Florence, and was beloved by the people and by the citizens, who hoped that he might set them at peace one with another, on the first day of May, 1304, just as in the good old times of the tranquil and good estate of Florence, it had been the custom for companies and bands of pleasure-makers to go through the city rejoicing and making merry, so now again they assembled and met in divers parts of the city; and one district vied with the other which could invent and do the best. Among others, as of old was the custom, they of Borgo San Friano were wont to devise the newest and most varied pastimes; and they sent forth a proclamation that whosoever desired news of the other world should come on the 1st day of May upon the Carraia Bridge, and beside the Arno; and they erected upon the Arno a stage upon boats and vessels, and thereupon they made the similitude and figure of hell, with fires and other pains and sufferings, with men disguised as demons, horrible to behold, and others which had the appearance of

naked souls, which seemed to be persons, and they were putting them to the said divers torments, with loud cries, and shrieks, and tumult, which seemed hateful and fearful to hear and to see; and by reason of this new pastime there came many citizens to look on, and the Carraia Bridge, which then was of wood from pile to pile, was so burdened with people that it gave way in many places, and fell with the people which were upon it, wherefore many were killed and drowned, and many were maimed; so that the pastime from sport became earnest, and, as the proclamation had said, many by death went to learn news of the other world, with great lamentation and sorrow to all the city, for each one believed he must have lost his son or his brother there.—GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 70.

#### 24. REGISTER FOR PRESTANZA (NATIONAL DEBT), 1325.

In the name of God, Amen. Herein is inscribed all the money which I, Tano di Lapo della Bruna, have received for Gherardo Lanfredini, Camarlingo (treasurer) of the Commune of Florence, towards the impost of 50,000 gold florins levied by the Commune, which has been collected by the four companies Peruzzi, Bardi, Scali, and Acciajuoli. The said money is to be paid as a loan to the said Commune to pay to our Lord the Duke of Calabria 33,000 gold florins, a third of which was assigned to the Bardi on the Feast of S. Piero Scheraggio, March 25, 1325.—EDGCUMBE STALEY: *Guilds of Florence*, p. 190, quoted from *Archives of Florence*.

#### 25. FLORENTINE TRAVELLERS TO THE EAST.

(A.)

In the name of the Lord, Amen! This book is called *The Book of Descriptions of Countries*,<sup>1</sup> and of measures

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Goro Dati, *Istoria di Firenze*, iv. 56. "The Florentines were well acquainted with all the holes and corners of the known world."

employed in business, and of other things needful to be known by merchants of different parts of the world, and by all who have to do with merchandise and exchanges; showing also what relation the merchandise of one country or of one city bears to that of others, and how one kind of goods is better than another kind, and where the various wares come from, and how they may be kept as long as possible.—*The Book of the Descriptions of Countries*, by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, agent of the Bardi Company of Florence in London (1317), Antwerp and Cyprus. Printed in Colonel Sir Henry Yule's *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Hakluyt Society, revised edition, 1913-16, Vol. III., p. 143.

(B) *Pegolotti's Advice to Merchants.*

Honesty is always best,  
 And to look before ye leap:  
 Do ever what thou promisest,  
 And, hard though it may be, still keep  
 Fair chastity. Let reason tell  
 Cheap to buy and dear to sell,  
 But have a civil tongue as well.  
 Frequent the Church's rites, and spare  
 To Him who sends thy gains a share.  
 So shalt thou prosper, standing by one price,  
 And shunning pest-like usury and dice.  
 Take aye good heed to govern well thy pen,  
 And blunder not in black and white! Amen.

*Ibid.*, p. 146.

(C) *Information regarding the Journey to Cathay.*

In the first place, from Tana (Azov) to Gintarchan (Astrakhan) may be twenty-five days with an ox-waggon, and from ten to twelve days with a horse-waggon. . . . And from Gittarchan (*i.e.*, Gintarchan or Astrakhan) to

Sara may be a day by river, and from Sara to Saracanco, also by river, eight days. . . .

From Saracanco (Sarachik) to Organci (Urghanj) may be twenty days' journey in camel-waggon. . . . From Organci to Oltrarre (Otrár in Turkestan) is thirty-five to forty days in camel-waggon. But if when you leave Saracanco you go direct to Oltrarre, it is a journey of fifty days only, and if you have no merchandise, it will be better to go this way than to go by Organci. From Oltrarre to Armalec (perhaps Old Kulja) is forty-five days' journey with pack asses. . . . and from Armalec to Camexu is seventy days with asses. . . . —*Ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

(D) *Directions to Travellers.*

In the first place, you must let your beard grow long and not shave. And at Tana you should furnish yourself with a dragoman, and you must not try to save money in the matter of dragomen by taking a bad one instead of a good one; for the additional wages of the good one will not cost you so much as you will save by having him. . . .

The road you travel from Tana to Cathay is perfectly safe, whether by day or by night, according to what the merchants say who have used it. Only if the merchant, in going or coming, should die upon the road, everything belonging to him will become the perquisite of the lord of the country in which he dies, and the officers of the lord will take possession of all. And in like manner if he die in Cathay. But if his brother be with him, or an intimate friend and comrade calling himself his brother, then to such an one they will surrender the property of the deceased, and so it will be rescued. . . . And you may reckon that you can buy for one *somme* of silver (five golden florins—*i.e.*, £2 7s. 6d.) nineteen or twenty pounds of Cathay silk. . . . You may reckon, also, that in Cathay you should get three or three and a half pieces of damasked

silk for a *sommo*, and from three and a half to five pieces of *nacchetti* (cloth) of silk and gold likewise for a *sommo* of silver.—*Ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

(E) *Advice as to selling Goods at Constantinople.*

And don't forget that if you treat the custom-house officers with respect, and make them something of a present in goods or money, as well as their clerks and dragomen, they will behave with great civility, and always be ready to appraise your wares below their real value.—*Ibid.*, p. 169.

(F) *Recollections of Travel in the East by John de' Marignolli.*

I, Friar John of Florence, of the Order of Minors, . . . was sent with certain others, in the year of our Lord 133[8], by the holy Pope Benedict XI., to carry letters and presents from the Apostolic See to the Kaan or chief Emperor of all the Tartars, a sovereign who holds the sway of nearly half the Eastern world, and whose power and wealth, with the multitude of cities and provinces and languages under him, and the countless number, I may say, of the nations over which he rules, pass all telling. . . . (Description of journey from Avignon to Naples and Constantinople.) Thence we sailed across the Black Sea, and in eight days arrived at Caffa, where there are Christians of many sects. From that place we went on to the first Emperor of the Tartars, Usbec, and laid before him the letters which we bore, with certain pieces of cloth, a great war-horse, some strong liquor, and the Pope's presents. And after the winter was over, having been well fed, well clothed, loaded with handsome presents, and supplied by the king with horses and travelling expenses, we proceeded to Armalec [the capital] of the Middle Empire (*i.e.*, Almaliq, capital of the Khans of Turkestan).—*Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

## 26. THE POPULATION OF FLORENCE ABOUT A.D. 1336.

It was estimated that there were in Florence 90,000 mouths—men, women, and children—according to the notification of the amount of bread needed continually in the city. It was reckoned that there were there 15,000 men—foreigners, travellers or soldiers—not counting in the number of the citizens the monks, friars, and nuns. There were in the surrounding district of Florence 80,000 men. We find from the record of the parish priest who baptized the children (for each boy who was baptized at San Giovanni they dropped a black bean and for each girl a white bean, so as to count the number) that there were baptized in the year from 5,500 to 6,000, the males exceeding the females by 300 to 500 a year. There were of boys and girls who learned to read from 8,000 to 10,000; of boys who learned counting and arithmetic in six schools there were from 1,000 to 1,200; and of those who went to learn grammar and logic in four large schools from 550 to 600. The churches which were then in Florence and its suburbs, counting the monasteries and churches of the friars, were in number 110. Of these 57 were parish churches, 5 monasteries with 2 priors and 80 monks, 24 convents of nuns with 500 women, 10 orders of friars, 30 hospitals with more than 1,000 beds to divide among the poor and sick, and from 250 to 300 chaplains. The workshops of the Guild of Wool were 200 and more, where they made from 70,000 to 80,000 pieces of cloth, which was worth 1,200,000 gold florins. Of this fully a third was kept on the spot for works, without counting the earnings of the wool-dressers in these works, which supplied a living to more than 30,000 persons. . . . The factories of the Calimala Guild of French and other foreign cloth were 20 in number, to which were sent in each year more than 10,000 pieces of cloth of the value of 300,000 gold

florins, all sold in Florence, not including those sent out of Florence. The banks of money-changers were 80 in number. Of gold coins they struck from 350,000 florins, and sometimes 400,000, and of pence of four farthings to one penny they struck in the year about 20,000 pounds weight. The college of judges numbered 80, the notaries 600, doctors (physicians and surgeons), 60. Of apothecaries' shops there were about 100; of merchants and haberdashers there were a large number; the number of shoemakers', slipper-makers', and patten-makers' shops could not be estimated. There were over 300 whose business was with people outside Florence, and there were many other master-craftsmen and stonemasons and carpenters. They had 146 bakehouses, and we can tell from the tax on millers and bakers that every day there was needed within the city 140 *moggia* of grain.<sup>1</sup> Thus we can tell how much was needed in the year, not counting that the greater part of the rich and noble and well-off citizens lived with their families in the country outside Florence four months in the year and sometimes longer.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 93.

## 27. THE CONDITION OF FLORENCE ABOUT A.D. 1338.

We find by the taxes paid at the gates that there entered into Florence every year about 55,000 *cogna* of wine [550,000 barrels], and in good years about 10,000 *cogna* more. They required in the city, in the year, about 4,000 oxen and calves, 70,000 sheep, 20,000 goats, 30,000 pigs. There came in by the San Friano gate in July 4,000 loads of melons, all of which were distributed about the city.

At this time they had in Florence the following foreign officials, each administering the law and with the power of applying the torture: the Podestà; the captain and

<sup>1</sup> A *moggia* is equivalent to 860 lbs.

defender of the people and the guilds; the administrator of the ordinances of justice; the captain of the guard or protector of the people (he had more power than the others)—these four had the power of punishing in person the judge of causes and appeals; the official of the taxes; the official for the ornaments of women; the official for trade; the official of the Guild of Wool; the ecclesiastical officials; the court of the Bishop of Florence; the court of the Bishop of Fiesole; the inquisitor into heretical pravity. The other dignities and magnificences of our city of Florence I do not forget, so that information may be given to those who come after us. It was well provided with many fair dwellings within the city, and in these times the work of building continued so that they became more commodious and well furnished, fine examples of all manner of improvements being brought from abroad. There were cathedral churches and churches for the friars of all orders, and magnificent monasteries, and outside the city there were no burghers or nobles who had not built, or were not building, great and rich houses with splendid outbuildings, much better than in the city. And in this they were wrong, and for their reckless expenditure they were deemed madmen.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 93.

#### 28. SUMPTUARY LAWS.

Not a long time ago when I, the writer, although unworthy, was one of the Priori of our city, there came as judge one whose name was Messer Amerigo degli Amerighi, of Pesaro, a man most beautiful in his person and very able in his business, and presenting himself at the place of our office upon his arrival, with all due solemnity and speeches, he entered into office. Now new laws<sup>1</sup> on the ornaments

<sup>1</sup> Among these sumptuary laws were the following: "No woman of any condition whatever may dare or presume in any way in the city suburbs or district of Florence to wear pearls, mother-of-pearl,

of the women having been passed, he was sent for some days after this, and bidden to carry out these orders. . . . It happened by chance that certain citizens, seeing how the women wore whatever they liked without any hindrance, and hearing of the law that had been passed, and also that the new officer had arrived, went some of them to the Signori and said that the new officer did his work so well that never before had the women had so much liberty in their dress as at the present time.

Wherefore the Signori sent for the judge and told him how they marvelled at the negligent manner in which he carried out the orders concerning the women. Messer Amerigo made answer as follows: "My lords, I have studied all my life to learn law, and now, when I thought that I knew something, I find that I know nothing; for when seeking for those ornaments which are forbidden to your women, according to the orders which you gave me, such arguments as they brought forward in their defence I never before found in any law, and from among them I should like to mention to you a few. There cometh a woman with the long peak of her hood fringed and twisted round her head. My notary saith: 'Tell me your name, because your peak is fringed.' The good woman taketh down the peak, which is fastened to the hood with a pin, and holding it in her hand, she telleth the notary that it is only a wreath. Then he goeth farther, and meeteth a woman wearing many buttons in front of her

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or precious stones, on the head or shoulders, or on any other part of the person, or on any dress which may be worn on the person.

*Item.*—She may not dare or presume to wear any brocade of gold or silver, or stuff gilt or silvered, embroidered or trimmed with ribbons, neither on her shoulders, nor on her head, nor on any garment as described above." (Mrs. Oliphant, *Makers of Florence*, p. 184.)

The Podestà and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia wore scarlet and gold, with fur linings, and pearls were reserved for their use. The consuls wore uncut diamonds and sapphires.

dress. He saith to her: 'Ye cannot wear those buttons,' and she answereth: 'Yes, messere, I can; for these are not buttons—they are beads, and if ye do not believe me look at them: they have no hanks, neither have they any button-holes.' The notary goeth to another who is wearing ermine, and wondereth, 'What will she have to say?' 'Ye are wearing ermine,' he saith, and is about to write down her name, but the woman answereth: 'Do not put down my name; for this is not ermine—this is the fur of a suckling.' The notary asketh: 'What is this suckling?' and the woman answereth: 'It is an animal'; and my notary is stuck like an animal!"

Said one of the Signori: "We do but knock our heads against a wall."

Another said: "We had best attend to business of greater import."

And a third said: "Let him who liketh it see to this trouble!"—SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 137, tr. M. G. Steegmann.

## 29. ENGLAND AND FLORENTINE BANKERS.

At the period of the aforesaid war between the Kings of France and England, the companies of the Bardi and Peruzzi of Florence were the King of England's merchants. All his revenues and wools came into their hands, and they furnished from them all his expenses. But his expenses so much exceeded the revenues that the King of England, when he returned home from the war, found himself indebted for principal, assignments, and rewards to the Bardi more than 180,000 marks [4½ gold florins = 1 mark] sterling, and to the Peruzzi more than 135,000 marks, the total being more than 1,365,000 gold florins, the worth of a kingdom. Of these sums a considerable portion consisted in assignments which the King had made to them in times past, but they were rash enough—whether from

covetousness of gain, or led on by the hope of recovering the entire debt—to give them up, and entrust all their own property and that of others in their keeping to this one Prince (Edward III.). And observe that a large part of the money they had lent was not their own capital, but had been borrowed by them or received on trust from fellow-citizens and strangers. And great danger thence befell both them and the city of Florence, as you will shortly learn. For not being able to answer the calls of their creditors in England, Florence, and other places where they trafficked, they lost their credit on all sides and became bankrupt, and especially the Peruzzi. Yet they avoided complete ruin by their possessions in the city and territory of Florence and by the great power and rank which they held in the republic. This failure and the great expenses of the State in Lombardy greatly reduced the wealth and condition of the merchants and traders of Florence and of the whole community. . . . For when the aforesaid companies had failed—which were two mainstays of trade, and through their influence in the days of their prosperity supported by their dealings a great part of the commerce and traffic of Christendom, and were in a manner the nourishment of all the world—every other merchant was suspected and mistrusted. Our city of Florence in consequence sustained a loss such as had not been experienced for many years. And, moreover, owing to the aforesaid causes and to the large sums that the Commune had exacted from the citizens by way of loan, and owing to the expenses of the undertakings in Lombardy and in Lucca, the failure of credit shortly afterwards brought about the fall of the smaller companies, as we shall mention hereafter. — GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 88.

## 30. THE POWER OF THE GUILDS, A.D. 1343

So the city of Florence had rest from so much uproar and danger, and the people having brought all their strength against the nobles and overcome all their forces and resistance in every part of the city, advanced to great state and boldness and power, specially the Mediani (the minor trade guilds) and the smaller artizans, who allotted what remained of the government posts in the city to the twenty-one heads of the guilds. And to make a reformation anew of the nine priors, of the twelve, the councils, the gonfalonier (standard-bearer) of the companies, the priors and the twelve, with the help of the ambassadors of Siena and Perugia and the Count Simone, so that the election might be more general, gave judgment in the following terms, and great concord followed, and the priors made a new scrutiny, which created nine priors, twelve counsellors, sixteen gonfaloniers of companies, five gonfaloniers of merchants, fifty-two men from the twenty-one heads of the guilds, and twenty-eight distributed by quarters, all of them from the artificers, so that there were in all two hundred and six putting into the ballot-box the name of every good man of the people worthy of being an official.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book XII., § 22.

## 31. CONCESSION TO THE NOBLES.

For the well-being and peace of the people and Comune, and to satisfy those nobles who wished to live well, they brought before the people two petitions :

1. That the chapters of the Ordinances of Justice in which there was excessive harshness (namely, that the innocent nobles who were related to evil-doers were condemned to bear the penalty of the latter's ill-doing) should be corrected.

2. That certain families of nobles who now possessed little wealth and were not evil-doers should be allowed to become "popolani."

These petitions were granted in part. . . . And now we are under the rule of the artizans and of the Lesser Guilds (*popolo minuto*) God grant that it may bring benefit and health to our republic!—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book XII., § 23.

### 32. THE PLAGUE, A.D. 1348.

The yeare of our blessed Saviour's incarnation, that memorable mortality happened in the excellent City, farre beyond all the rest in Italy; which plague, by operation of the superiour bodies, or rather for our enormous iniquities, by the just anger of God, was sent upon us mortals. Some few yeeres before, it tooke beginning in the Easterne partes, sweeping thence an innumerable quantity of living soules, extending itself afterward from place to place Westward until it seized on the said City. Where neither humane skill or providence could use any prevention, notwithstanding it was cleansed of many annoyances by diligent Officers thereto deputed. . . . And this pestilence was yet of farre greater power or violence; for not onely healthfull persons speaking to the sicke, comming to see them, or ayring cloathes in kindnesse to comfort them, was an occasion of ensuing death, but touching their garments, or any foode whereon the sicke person fed, or anything else used in his service, seemed to transferre the disease from the sicke to the sound in very rare and miraculous manner. . . . One citizen fled after another, and one neighbour had not any care of another, parents nor kindred never visiting them, but utterly they were forsaken on all sides. . . . Such was the pittifull misery of poore people, and divers who were of better condition, as it was most lamentable to

behold; because the greater number of them, under hope of healing, or compelled by poverty, kept still within their house, weak and faint, thousands<sup>1</sup> falling sick daily, and having no helpe of being succoured any way with food or physicke, all of them died, few or none escaping. — BOCCACCIO: *Decameron*, Introduction (English translation, 1620.)

### 33. THE WHITE COMPANY OF CONDOTTIERI, A.D. 1360.

In the peace made by the two Kings of France and England . . . : the King of England having returned with his sons and the host to their island, many English knights and archers who had become used to plunder and robbery remained in the country, and having ordered Messer Beltramo di Crechi and the arch-priest of Pelagorga to form a company, they gathered together every kind of person who was disposed to evil. There were Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen, Gascons, Burgundians, Normans, Provençals. In a short time they increased to a great number, and called themselves the "White Company." They began to disturb the country and to exact money and clothes from the people in all parts, and they remained till the peace was settled and the King of France released from prison. Then by the orders of the said kings, on pain of death and the taking of their goods, and pursued by their lords, they left the realm of France and assembled at Langres in the Empire, and there were in number 6,000 armed men.—MATTEO VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book IX., § 109.

### 34. POPE URBAN V.'S VIEW OF THE CONDOTTIERI, 1364.

He gave ecclesiastical subsidies to princes and indulgences to the people who would take arms against "that multitude

<sup>1</sup> Three-fifths of the population died.

of villains of divers nations associated in arms by avidity in appropriating to themselves the fruit of the labours of innocent and defenceless people; unbridled in every kind of cruelty; extorting money, methodically devastating the country and the open towns, burning houses and barns, destroying trees and vines, obliging poor peasants to fly; assaulting, besieging, invading, spoiling, and ruining even fortresses and walled cities; torturing and maiming those from whom they expected to receive ransom, without regard to ecclesiastical dignity, or sex, or age; violating wives, virgins, and nuns, and constraining even gentlewomen to follow their camp, to do their pleasure, and carry arms and baggage."—Brief of Pope Urban V., February 17, 1364, quoted in *Sir John Hawkwood* by Temple Leader and Marcotti, pp. 50-51:

### 35. SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD AND THE FRIARS.

This was the merry answer which Messer Giovanni Augut<sup>1</sup> gave to two minor friars who, going to him on some business at one of his castles where he happened to be, and coming into his presence, said, as was their custom: "God give you peace, my lord." To which he replied instantly: "May God take away your alms." The friars in alarm said: "Signor, why do you speak so to us?" Hawkwood replied: "Why did you then speak so to me?" The friars replied: "We thought to be kind." And Hawkwood said: "How could you mean to be kind when you come to me and say: 'May God make you die of hunger'? Do you not know that I live by war, and that peace would be my undoing, and that as I live by war so you live by alms, and that the answer I made to you was the same as your salutation?"

The friars shrugged their shoulders and said: "You are

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English soldier of fortune, whose name was spelt Aguto, Aneud, Haccoude, etc.

right; forgive us. We are stupid men." . . . And certainly it is true that this man fought in Italy longer than any other man ever did—he fought sixty years, and nearly every part became his tributary. So well did he manage his affairs that there was little peace in Italy in his days. And woe to those men and peoples who believe too much in his kind, because peoples and cities live and grow by peace, and these men live and grow by war. — SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 181.

### 36. THE RULER'S VIEW OF A CONDOTTIERO.

The Council of the Podestà and Commune of Florence in 1393 carried the following: "The magnificent and potent lords, the Signori Priors of the Arts and Gonfaloniere of Justice of the people and Commune of Florence, being desirous that the magnificent and faithful achievements of the here-written Sir John, his fidelity to the honour and grandeur of the Florentine Republic, should not only be rewarded by remuneration during his life, as was done in his pension, but perpetually shown to his glory after death; and above all that brave men may know that the Commune of Florence recompenses true service with her recognition and beneficent gratitude . . . deliberate that the members of the Opera (Board of Works) of Santa Reparata (*i.e.*, the greatest of the Florentine churches), or even two parts of them if the other should be absent, or not forthcoming, or dissentient, or unwilling, shall as soon as possible, beginning at the coming year, cause to be constructed and made in the said church, and in a conspicuous place, high and honourable, as shall appear best to them, a worthy and handsome tomb for the ashes of the great and brave knight Sir John Hawkwood, English Captain-General of war to the said Commune, and who has more than once in the wars of the said Commune been

Captain-General. And the said sepulchre, in which the body of the said Sir John and no other body may be placed, shall be adorned with such stone and marble figures and armorial ensigns as shall seem convenient, either to the magnificence of the Commune of Florence or to the honour and lasting fame of the said Sir John. And they may and ought to spend . . . as much, how and whensoever they will."

—*Sir John Hawkwood*, by Temple Leader and Marcotti, p. 276.

### 37. FLORENCE AND THE PAPAL INTERDICT, 1376.

To answer the protests and admonitions of the Pope in those things which were concerned with the care of souls, the Signoria sent (in 1376) to Avignon Alessandro dell' Antella and Donato Barbadori, the one an excellent Doctor of Law and the other of Canon Law, and with them Domenico Salvestro, a sagacious lawyer and a man of great experience. . . . They argued that it was the pride, avarice, dishonesty, and terrible cruelty which the ecclesiastical ministers of the States of the Church had practised, and not the compulsion of the Florentines, which had forced their injured and suffering subjects to take up arms. The Papal agents had introduced the insolence of the French into Italy instead of seeking to render themselves attractive to their unhappy people; they had put all their trust in fortresses, prisons, citadels, and such-like places, more suitable to tyrants and lay rulers than to the mildness of ecclesiastics, from whom the inhabitants are wont to expect benefits and services and not harshness and rigour. . . . They showed, on the other hand, how the Florentine Republic had always been devoted to the Apostolic See—that when the Church was at war, the Florentines were always to be found armed in its defence. . . .

The honours and the gifts given to the (Papal) legates

who were sent to the city of Florence were innumerable and of infinite value: Of Florentine piety the clear and certain proofs were the magnificent churches, the many rich hospitals, the venerable convents for women and men, the confraternities of laymen, the almsgiving so great that the poor who were driven away from every other city in Italy found their sole refuge in the city of Florence. In this they could never change, but the wicked behaviour of the ministers of His Holiness and the Church of God had been the cause of all the evil that had happened. No words, though spoken not once but many times by the ambassadors, had any effect in appeasing the Pontiff, who blamed not so much the city of Florence as the madness of the governors, who could not be suffered to remain unpunished for so much boldness. Therefore, on the first day of April, in full consistory, the ambassadors of the Republic being present, he fulminated the sentence of excommunication against the Florentines, condemning their souls, for disobedience, to the pains of hell, confiscating their goods, and declaring that anyone might capture, sell, or kill them, or do anything else to them, as if they were infidels or slaves, without any remorse of conscience.

Barbadori, a man of deep feeling and love for his republic, moved by passion on hearing these words, threw himself on his knees, with head uncovered, before a crucifix which was painted there, and cried: "To Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, I appeal from the unjust sentence of thy Vicar. I appeal to that dread day when Thou shalt come to judge the world without respect of persons. Till then be Thou our just and incorruptible Judge, the defender of our republic against the cruel blasphemies thundered against it, with what justice Thou knowest." He ended with the words of the Psalmist: "Have regard for me, O God; be Thou my health and my strength. Leave me not nor forsake me when my father and my mother forsake me."

. . . When the ambassadors returned to Florence on October 4 (1377), and reported what the decision of the Pope had been, the citizens were very indignant, and not without having first taken counsel of the doctors of canon law, if they deserve to be so termed, they decided not in future to obey these interdicts. Therefore on October 22, when for about seventeen months no holy offices had been performed in the city, an order was given that in the city, the surrounding country, and the dominion of Florence, all priests, friars, and monks should open their churches and celebrate Mass and the offices of the Church as they did formerly; should sound the bells, administer the holy sacraments, go to the dead, and perform all other functions of the Church; that prelates who were absent from their churches and who would not return should be fined 10,000 lire, and ordinary priests should pay 1,000 from their private possessions; that in future no one should be absent from his church without permission from the gonfalonier and his colleagues under penalty of 500 lire.—AMMIRATO: *Istorie Fiorentine*, Book XIII.

### 38 (a). SLAVERY IN FLORENCE.

On May 7, 1376, I bought a slave for thirty-five florins from Bartolommeo of Venice, named Tiratea, or Dorothea, a Tartar from Russia. She was about eighteen years of age, and Creci, the broker, only put twenty-five florins into the bill of sale on account of the duty. With brokerage and duty she cost me one florin, and four florins for clothes, as she was almost naked when I bought her. I sold her in September, 1379, for thirty-six florins.—*Memoriale del Baldovinetti*, quoted by Mrs. Janet Ross in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 30.

## 38 (b). THE MORALS OF SLAVERY.

May a slave being born a Pagan, who becomes a Christian, be sold? I say Yes. None may be free who do not believe that Christ will come again. Even though I buy a slave who is then baptized, he or she is baptized as a servant and a subject, and is like unto one in prison who cannot give a bond or go bail, and most of them go to baptism like oxen. Baptism does not make them Christians, and no one is obliged to set them free, even if they be Christians, unless they wish.—SACCHETTI: *Sermoni Evangelici*, quoted by Mrs. Janet Ross in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 29.

## 39. THE CIOMPI RISING, A.D. 1378.

Salvestro [de' Medici], therefore, to carry out his intention, departed from the chamber alone, no one knowing where he meant to go. He went to the hall of the council, where all the council was already assembled, and began to speak in these words: "Wise councillors, I have tried this day to purge this city of the pestilent tyrannies of the great and powerful, and I have not been allowed to do it, for my companions and colleagues will not permit it. It would have been for the welfare of the citizens and of the whole city. But I have not been believed, nor listened to as the gonfalonier of justice should have been. And so, as I cannot do good, I have decided to be no longer prior nor gonfalonier, and therefore I mean to go to my own house. Make another gonfalonier in my place." With this he turned to leave the hall. At these words all the assembly jumped up and an uproar burst forth, and seeing that the gonfalonier was going down the staircase they prevented him and would not let him go. When he was brought back to the hall the tumult became fierce. And a shoe-

maker named Benedetto di Carlone took Carlo degli Strozzi by the collar, crying: "Carlo, Carlo, things shall go differently from what you think. Your majorities shall be done away with."

But Carlo, like a wise man, answered nothing. Benedetto di Nerozzo degli Alberti, who was on the council, sprang to one of the windows of the hall and began to shout: "Hurrah for the people!" and those who were in the piazza shouted: "Hurrah for the people!" At once the news went all over the city, and the shops were shut. The uproar was quieted for a time. Nevertheless the people began to take up arms. . . .

On the Sunday all the guilds assembled in their shops (and every artizan went to his workshop, too), and they appointed Syndics—one for each guild. On the Monday these went to the Palazzo Publico to the priors and they discussed matters, but could come to no agreement. On Tuesday the guilds began to arm, as had been ordered, and they marched out with their standards. Word was brought to the priors and the Signoria, and they rang the great bell to call a meeting. . . . But as the news was spreading the standards of the guilds reached the piazza with the shout: "Hurrah for the people!" . . . The Signori wandered one hither and one thither, one up and one down, and did not know what to do. The gonfalonier, like a worthless poor creature as he was, slunk away from his colleagues secretly, and went to Messer Tommaso Strozzi and implored him to save him. And Messer Tommaso took him away from the palace to his own house . . . and the two priors coming out from their rooms saw no one of their colleagues, and on asking were told that they had all gone to their homes.

Then they gave up all for lost; and seeing that in fact all the others had gone away to their own houses, they went down the stairs and gave up the keys of the palace gates to the provost of the guilds—his name was

Calcagnino, a tavern-keeper—and went both of them to their own homes. . . . And thus was destroyed, as one may say, the happy, prosperous, and tranquil government of the city of Florence. As soon as the Signori were gone the gates of the palace were thrown open and the populace rushed in, and one called Michele di Lando, a wool-comber, or a foreman in a shop of wool-combers and carders, had in his hand a gonfalon, which the people had taken from the house of the Esecutore di Giustizia, and he was barelegged, in shoes, but without stockings. With this flag in his hand he entered the palace at the head of the populace and proceeded straight to the audience chamber of the Signory, and there he came to a standstill. And the populace by acclamation gave him the Signory and declared their will that he should be gonfalonier and lord of Florence.

And then he made certain decrees and published them to the people; he made Syndics of the guilds whomsoever he thought fit, and gave them the charge of restoring order in the city. And so things remained all that day and part of the next; so that it may be said that this Michele di Lando, the wool-comber, was for more than twenty-eight hours absolute lord of Florence. And this was the result of our civil contentions and changes. O merciful God, how wonderful and great a miracle hast Thou manifested to us!<sup>1</sup>—GINO CAPPONI (in *Cronichette Antiche*, Vol. 468 of *Biblioteca scelta di opere italiane*, p. 297 ff).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, Book III., c. 16: "After this he (Michele di Lando) assembled the Syndics of the Guilds and created a Signory, four members out of the inferior sort of people, two for the Greater and two for the Lesser Guilds. Moreover, he made a new scrutiny and divided the public offices into three parts, one of them to be concerned with the new Guilds, another with the Lesser, and the third with the Greater. He gave to Salvestro de' Medici the rents of the shops upon the Ponte Vecchio and reserved to himself the governorship of Empoli."

## 40. THE CHARACTER OF THE FLORENTINES.

As for natural abilities, I for my part cannot believe that anyone either could or ought to doubt that the Florentines, even if they do not excel all other nations, are at least inferior to none in those things to which they give their minds. In trade, whereon of a truth their city is founded, and wherein their industry is chiefly exercised, they ever have been and still are reckoned not less trusty and true than great and prudent; but besides trade it is clear that the three most noble arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture have reached that degree of supreme excellence in which we find them now chiefly by the toil and by the skill of the Florentines, who have beautified and adorned not only their own city, but also very many others, with great glory and no small profit to themselves and to their country. . . . I am wholly of opinion opposed to that of some who, because the Florentines are merchants, hold them for neither noble nor high-spirited but for tame and low-born fellows. On the contrary, I have often wondered with myself how it could be that men who have been used from their childhood upwards for a paltry profit to carry bales of wool and baskets of silk like porters, and to stand like slaves all day and great part of the night at the loom, could summon when and where was need such greatness of soul, such noble and lofty thoughts, that they have wit and heart to say and do those many glorious things we know of them.—VARCHI: *Storia Fiorentina*, Book IX., cc. 48, 49.

## 41. THE GOVERNMENT OF FLORENCE

It should also be known that all the Florentine burghers were obliged to rank in one of the twenty-one guilds—that is, no one could be a burgher of Florence unless he or his ancestors had been approved and enrolled in one of these guilds, whether they practised it or no.

Without the proof of such enrolment he could not be drawn for any office, or exercise any magistracy, or even have his name put into the bags. . . .

Each guild had, as may still be seen, a house or mansion, large and noble, where they appointed officers, and gave account of debit and credit to all the members of the guild.

In processions and other public assemblies the heads (for so the chiefs of the several guilds were called) had their place and precedence in order. Moreover, these guilds at first had each an ensign for the defence, on occasion, of liberty with arms. Their origin was when the people in 1282 overcame the nobles (*grandi*) and passed the Ordinances of Justice against them, whereby no nobleman could exercise any magistracy; so that such of the patricians as desired to be able to hold office had to enter the ranks of the people, as did many great houses of quality, and enrol themselves in one of the guilds. Which thing, while it partly allayed the civil strife of Florence, almost wholly extinguished all noble feeling in the souls of the Florentines; and the power and haughtiness of the city were no less abated than the insolence and pride of the nobles, who since then have never lifted up their heads again. These guilds, the greater as well as the lesser, have varied in numbers at different times, and often have not only been rivals, but even foes amongst themselves; so much so that the lesser guilds once got it passed that the gonfalonier should be appointed only from their body.

Yet after long dispute it was finally settled in 1383 that the gonfalonier could not be chosen from the lesser, but that he should always rank with the greater, and that in all other offices and magistracies the lesser should always have a fourth and no more. Consequently of the eight priors two were always of the lesser; and of the twelve, three; of the sixteen, four; and so on through all the magistracies.—VARCHI : *Storia Fiorentina*, Book III., cc. 20, 21.

## LIST OF EVENTS

NOTE.—It should be remembered that in mediæval Florence the year began on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation.

- 1076–1115. Countess Matilda of Tuscany rules.
1177. First conflict between Grandi (nobles) and popolani (people). Società delle Torri (Societies of the Towers) and the Arti (Trade Guilds) already strong.
1207. Election of a Podestà:
1215. Murder of Bondelmonte de' Bondelmonti. Gueft and Ghibelline factions formed.
1245. Massacre of the Paterini (heretics).
1250. Il primo Popolo (popular Government formed).
1265. Dante Alighieri born.
1266. Trade Guilds reorganized.
1267. Establishment of Parte Guelfa.
1280. Election of first Signory.
1289. Abolition of serfdom.
1293. Ordinamenti della Giustizia (Justice).
1307. Executor of Justice appointed to enforce the Ordinances.
1312. Siege of Florence by Emperor Henry VII.
1323. Siege of Prato by Castruccio Castracane.
1328. Consiglio del Popolo and Consiglio del Comune formed.
1337. Death of Giotto.
1339. Losses of Bardi and Peruzzi firms through loans to King of England.
1340. Plague in Florence.

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1342. Duke of Athens appointed Captain of the Guard and Conservator of Peace.
1343. His expulsion. Defeat of "Grandi" by "popolani." Re-enactment of "Ordinances of Justice."
1348. The Black Death.
1358. System of "Admonitions" instituted.
1362. Sir John Hawkwood and the "White Company" fight for Pisa.
- 1375-8. War between Florence and the Church.
1378. Salvestro de' Medici elected gonfalonier. Rising of the Ciompi. Michele di Lando declared Signor of Florence.
1390. War between Florence and Milan.
1399. "The White Penitents" formed.
1402. Death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan.
1406. Capture of Pisa by Florence.

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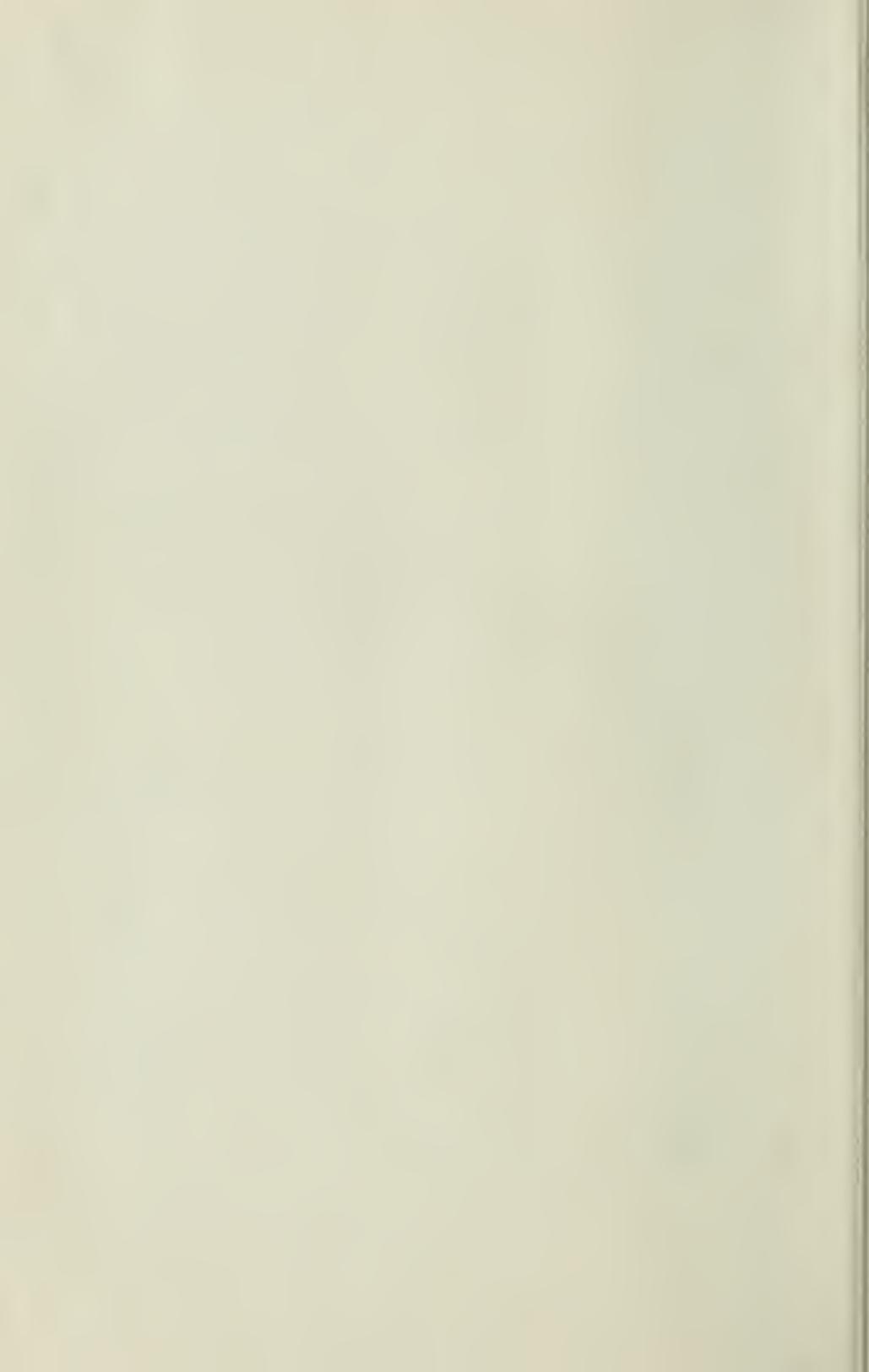
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